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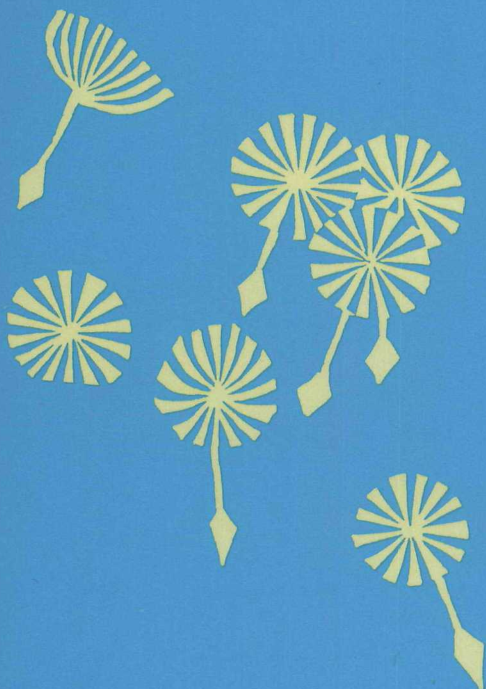

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Editorial

So Many Books

Susan Fisher

I often fear that books are taking over my life, as if reading were becoming the greater part of living. Here in the *CL* office, a similar impression prevails—books are winning out. Review copies crowd the shelves, pile up on the floor, annex desk tops, and fill our briefcases. We ship books out regularly, but the total quantity of books in our precincts never diminishes. We have brought this fate upon ourselves, for we order review copies of all titles that seem pertinent to the study of Canadian literature. The problem is the ever-increasing number of books that fall into this category.

As Laurie Ricou points out in "Last Pages" in this issue, it's hard to say what might be useful to our readers. If you reflect for a moment on the interests of the English department in your neighbourhood, you will soon conclude (as we have done) that just about anything from oral history to natural history, medicine to folklore, geography to genetics could, in some way, bear on the study of Canadian literature.

Of course, our first interest remains Canadian literature and literary criticism, but for most Canadianists, affiliations based on gender or postcoloniality or period can be just as important as strictly national concerns. A book of interest to a scholar working on Rohinton Mistry is unlikely to attract the eye of the Agnes Maule Machar specialist (though he or she may also be interested in Machar's near-contemporary, Sara Jeannette Duncan, and so the Indian material pertinent to Mistry may be useful after all). Nonetheless, our aim must be to serve all our colleagues.

We review literary criticism, novels, short stories, poetry, drama, travel writing, children's books, essays, autobiographies, reference works, art and film criticism, histories, diaries, local histories, cultural studies, and so forth. (We have even reviewed a few cookbooks.) Moreover, we try to do this in both official languages.

The relentless expansion of literary studies into neighbouring zones is not the only reason our reviews section keeps burgeoning. The number of books being published is steadily increasing. (One observer claims that somewhere in the world, a book is published every thirty seconds; in the face of this, even speed readers must admit defeat.) In Canada the pace is somewhat more leisurely—about one every forty minutes (based on the figures for 1999, the most recent year for which Statistics Canada supplies data). Many of these are not titles we would review; still, in our areas of interest as in other sectors of the market, a lot of books are being published. Between 1992 and 1999, the number of books published in English in Canada rose from 6,556 to 10,757. The growth in publishing in French was not so marked—from 3,155 to 3,682. (What is remarkable about French-language publishing is its size relative to the francophone population: about one-fifth of Canadians are francophone, but a quarter of all books published in this country are in French.)

If one judges only by the Statistics Canada picture of the 1990s, Canadian publishing is on a path of sustained growth. But the past three years have brought problems, most notably the bankruptcy of General Publishing and its allied distribution service in 2002. As Marc Côté pointed out in a recent issue of *Canadian Literature* (*CL* #177), the losses occasioned by the General Publishing debacle forced many small publishers to cut back their lists.

But a great many books are still being published in this country. In an article first posted in September of 2003 at www.dooneyscafe.com, Toronto writer Gordon Lockheed asserts that Canada simply "produces too many books." Consequently, like any over-produced commodity, the book is losing its value, both in the marketplace and in the cultural life of the country. Lockheed goes on to decry the state of reviewing in this country, pointing out the steadily diminishing amount of space given to books in the nation's newspapers. He also takes a swipe at journals like *CL*: "Canada's university journals have completely descended into jargon-mustering or have become glossy display cases for artifactual materials." We try not to muster jargon but rather to minimize it. (Lockheed, for his part, is mustering some pretty arcane words of his own: what, I wonder, are "artifactual materials"?) And if

newspapers and magazines are retreating from the domain of the serious review, then *Canadian Literature* has an even greater responsibility to provide the coverage not being provided elsewhere.

What is our duty to Canadian publishers, writers, readers, and scholars—and to the many Canadianists outside this country who read *CL*? What should our reviews accomplish? Laurie Ricou, writing in this space eighteen years ago (*CL* #109), described the reviewer's job as a "rear view" or a "turning around to look again"; he compared reviewing to walking through a Japanese garden, in which the "perspective going back the way you have just come is entirely different." Jan Zwicky, in the Fall 2003 issue of *Malahat Review* (a special issue on the topic of reviewing), asks that the reviewer become "a kind of literary naturalist, someone with sharp ears and a good memory." One of *CL*'s associate editors, Kevin McNeilly, also writing in the *Malahat Review* special issue, describes a review as "a speaking part that also attends to the voice or voices of another. It is a verbally proactive form of listening." In the October 2003 *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, Ronald W. Tobin likens reviewers to "guests at a banquet prepared by an author." (Those among us with long experience of reviewing may instinctively feel that if food analogies are to be used, survival rations, fast food, and steam tray leftovers should find a place alongside the haute cuisine, but this is cavilling.) The reviewer, like the guest at a banquet, has certain responsibilities, chief among them "to be critical but civil." This is a fine injunction and one that we all should remember. But David Henige in the October 2001 issue of *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* worries that shrinking word limits are forcing even conscientious and civil reviewers to resort to formulaic reviews (as predictable, he claims, as the average *Love Boat* episode): "a few sentences set the stage, followed by a brief description, and perhaps an analysis of the book's contents. Then, for balance, a few nits are picked, to be succeeded by a 'despite these, this is a useful contribution to knowledge' conclusion." The result is that reviews become only "ritual objects" instead of the "contributions to colloquy" that they ought to be.

Henige's fears do not seem unfounded. In 500 words, it is hard to do justice to a book that represents many months or years of a writer's time. But I am constantly impressed by how much information and analysis our reviewers manage to fit into the small space they are allotted, without resorting to the formulaic approach condemned by Henige. I am afraid that we are about to test their skills even further. We have decided to initiate an experiment at *CL*: for some new works (certainly not all), we will ask for a notice of only

200 words, somewhat like the "In Brief" section of the *Times Literary Supplement* or "Briefly Noted" in the *New Yorker.* This will be hard on our reviewers, and it may shortchange some writers (and their publishers). But only by reducing some reviews can we hope to continue to accommodate the many new titles we receive. We hope that a short notice will give our readers enough information to decide whether the book in question is one they want to acquire.

We also hope that, despite the limitations of space and the inevitable delays, our reviews will continue to serve as "contributions to colloquy." While editing the reviews section, I frequently stop to note the titles that I want to follow up on; I have also on occasion stopped to laugh out loud and even to wipe away tears. The scholarship, wit, breadth, care, and civility of our reviewers continue to impress me. I hope that other readers of *CL* also find the reviews pages a useful (and even entertaining and affecting) source of information about our field which, like the universe, seems destined to expand.

We are delighted to welcome two new associate editors to Canadian Literature.

Laura Moss, Assisant Professor of English at the University of British Columbia, joins us as Associate Editor (Book Reviews). Laura is the editor of a critical edition of Frances Brooke's The History of Emily Montague *(2001) and of the recent collection* Is Canada Postcolonial? Essays on Canadian Literature and Postcolonial Theory *(2003).*

Our new Associate Editor (Francophone) is Réjean Beaudoin, Professor of French at UBC. He is the author of Naissance d'une littérature. Essai sur le messianisme et les débuts de la littérature canadienne-française *(1989),* Le roman québécois *(1991) et* Une étude des *Poésies* d'Émile Nelligan *(1997). Réjean will play a central role not only in the book review section but in all the francophone elements of* Canadian Literature/Littérature canadienne.

We are very fortunate that Laura and Réjean have joined the CL *team; we look forward to presenting their work in future issues.*

Paddy McCallum

Empire

The great society of the alley
has found its way home
carrying ample treasures
one by one
offerings, sustenance, a little
something tucked away
for the children
                    it goes on all day
each morsel trucked
below the dusty lane.

I watched one bloody seed
of raspberry elevate
a culture, a single blade
of grass unfold new
testaments of earth
the progress vulnerable
to heat, the plow, the great
wheel's scorn
                    and went in
converted warehouse tubing
tending down, each face
averted, not a crumb
out of place. I pulled
my weight as good
as anyone afraid
of the rumble upstairs
the 4x4s and boot-crunch

the fenceposts cutting in
and putting no little
strain upon the retro-fitted
buttresses
                    pushing back
to preserve the family
hoards of fuel for
the slave-trade, the new
expansion, dreams
of a way through a solid-
looking edifice of cloud
mountains, tribal
gods beyond number
digging infinite portals.

Laura Robinson

Bosom Friends

Lesbian Desire in L.M. Montgomery's Anne Books

"Oh Diana," said Anne at last, clasping her hands and speaking almost in a whisper, "do you think—oh, do you think you can like me a little—enough to be my bosom friend?"
(Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables* 87)

When their work was done and Gilbert was out of the way, they gave themselves over to shameless orgies of lovemaking and ecstasies of adoration.
(Montgomery, *Anne's House of Dreams* 208)

"I am not a Lesbian," fifty-eight-year-old L.M. Montgomery wrote in her journal in response to an increasingly problematic relationship with Isobel,[1] a female schoolteacher in her late twenties (*Selected Journals* 8 Feb 1932). One might think that Montgomery protests too much, especially since she also, intriguingly, claims to understand the "horrible craving" of the lesbian "much better than [Isobel] understands it herself" (*Selected Journals* 24 June 1932). Yet Montgomery convincingly represents Isobel's relentless pursuit as pathological. The younger woman threatened suicide and professed undying love for the novelist: "I'll die without you. You've always shone like a golden star in my life . . ." (*Selected Journals* 8 Feb 1932). Montgomery was disturbed yet fascinated by Isobel's interest in her, labelling Isobel an "unconscious" lesbian (10 June 1932).

In *Anne of Windy Poplars* (1936), a novel published four years after these entries, Montgomery depicts a relationship that seems to draw on her own experience with Isobel. As I will discuss in detail later, Anne pursues a friendship with an unhappy spinster schoolteacher, Katherine Brooke. Katherine voices feelings for Anne that echo Isobel's for Montgomery: "I acknowledged to myself that you might just have come from some far-off star" (150). Similarly, Anne's frustration with Katherine mirrors Montgomery's exasperation with Isobel. While Anne exclaims, "Katherine

Brooke, whether you know it or not, what *you* want is a good spanking" (144), Montgomery wrote, "I would dearly have loved to have taken Miss Isobel across my knee and administered a sound and salutary spanking by way of giving her a lesson in elementary good manners, common sense and ordinary decency" (20 August 1932). Certainly, intense female friendships appeared frequently in novels for and by women at the time. Montgomery was patently aware that these friendships could suggest other possibilities, such as same-sex desire. Nevertheless, even after reading about lesbianism in a psychoanalytic study[2] and undergoing this troubling experience with Isobel, Montgomery maintained a focus on Anne's love for girls and women in *Anne of Windy Poplars* and *Anne of Ingleside.* Thus, lesbian desire in Montgomery's works is not an anachronistic issue, reflecting only our late twenty-first-century attitudes towards same-sex relationships; on the contrary, it arises directly from Montgomery's fiction and journals.[3]

Anne's friendship with Katherine is only one of many same-sex relationships that form the basis of the eight books in Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables series. From Diana, Marilla, and Miss Stacy to Miss Lavendar, Susan, and Rebecca Dew (to mention only a few examples), girls and women dominate the narratives. Anne's relationships with girls and women are central to every book. Yet Montgomery faced a generic and social imperative to marry the female characters off. By constructing a world where women's love for each other is a source of power and fulfilment, and then emphasizing the inevitability of marriage, Montgomery's novels underscore the fact that, at the turn of the twentieth century, heterosexuality was compulsory. At the same time, by exposing the operations of compulsory heterosexuality, Montgomery's Anne books subtly challenge the patriarchal traditions that intervene in women's relationships with each other.

Contesting Patriarchy: Scholarly Consensus

Montgomery scholarship has largely proceeded on the assumption that Anne is "naturally" heterosexual, an assumption that allows for feminist interpretations which highlight the heroine's empowerment. Critics such as Mary Rubio, Elizabeth Epperly, and Shirley Foster and Judy Simons agree that Montgomery criticizes or challenges her society, particularly its patriarchal structure. However, her challenge is couched in conventional terms. Rubio argues that Montgomery "embed[s] a countertext of rebellion" in her novels which nevertheless seem to "reinforce all the prevailing ideologies" (8). Montgomery manages this, in part, Rubio claims, through the lowbrow

literary form of domestic romance, through humour, and through narrative method and characterization. Similarly, Foster and Simons emphasize that through literary allusions and humour, Montgomery "challenge[s] codified established values" (154). Epperly emphasizes the subversive irony in *Anne of Green Gables* that is not carried through the rest of the series.

These critics acknowledge that, while Montgomery subtly challenges patriarchy in her fiction, she also follows generic conventions, such as those stipulating "that female heroines should be sexless, refined 'ladies'... who conformed to society's expectations;... [and] that the ideal closure for a 'good' young girl's story must be marriage" (Rubio 13). Thus, "Anne's only sensible choice is to embrace her destiny, realize her love for Gilbert, and get married" (Epperly 69). T.D. MacLulich agrees that Montgomery's heroines "meekly agree to marry the mate that Montgomery has created specifically for them" (466) because she "could not imagine an alternate way of ending a story" (471). Anne's inevitable marriage may also yield a reading that is less empowering for the heroine if readers do not assume that she is heterosexual. For if the reader concludes that Anne's love for women remains unfulfilled because she lives under a generic and social imperative to be heterosexual, then Anne capitulates to patriarchal pressures in return for acceptance by her community.

Some critics have pointed out that heterosexual love carries discomfort or ambiguity in Montgomery's novels by comparing them to Kevin Sullivan's 1985 television movie, *Anne of Green Gables.* Sullivan's version of *Anne* emphasizes the budding heterosexual romance between Anne and Gilbert; his handling of their relationship highlights the extent to which Montgomery does not emphasize romance. Susan Drain suggests that Montgomery is "uncomfortable in handling romance" in contrast to Sullivan because Montgomery does not dwell on the supposedly blossoming love between Anne and Gilbert (Drain, "Too Much" 71). Temma Berg, in response to Sullivan's movie version, notes that in the novel Anne seeks a friend, not a romantic partner, in Gilbert ("A Girl's Reading" 127).

The conclusion that Montgomery's novels subtly question heterosexuality is not new, although little has so far been published on the topic. In her article "My Secret Garden," Irene Gammel argues that the "eroticized" and "passionate girl-girl friendships" in Montgomery's Emily books provide the characters with transgressive power (42). These relationships, combined with nature and auto-eroticism as sources of energy and power, construct a female eros focused on health and well-being. However, Gammel shies away

from the conclusion that the friendships might be lesbian, even while she discusses the "female-centred eros" (59). While arguing that Montgomery advocates a "subversive eros," her article in fact demonstrates the opposite: Emily's acceptance into her community rests, in part, on her rejection of her same-sex desires in favour of heterosexual behaviour (53). Moreover, by suggesting that the Emily books expand the friendship motif established in *Anne of Green Gables*, Gammel seems to dismiss the potentially transgressive power of the expressions of same-sex love in the Anne books: it is mere friendship.

Marah Gubar argues that Montgomery's novels indicate that she is aware of the lack of choice in the ending: marriage is, in fact, compulsory. Focusing on the Anne series, Gubar argues persuasively that Montgomery postpones heterosexual marriages in her Anne books in order to "make room for passionate relationships between women that prove far more romantic than traditional marriages" (47). Like Gammel, Gubar does not address same-sex eroticism directly, but her point is clear: Montgomery's Anne novels focus on women's relationships with each other to a degree that displaces and disrupts heterosexual conventions. The Anne books convey the message that "only a misguided fool would dismiss a potential prince simply because he's a girl" (Gubar 65). However, as Gubar also notes, Montgomery can only postpone heterosexuality; she cannot evade it altogether.

Other scholars have made more direct connections between *Anne* and lesbian desire. Karen Dubinsky, a historian at Queen's University, places *Anne of Green Gables* in the context of Boston marriages ("platonic" live-in relationships between women in nineteenth-century America).[4] Linda Grant de Pauw, also a historian, invokes *Anne of Green Gables* when she defines lesbianism: "Some lesbians prefer sexual activity that is nongenital, the kind of kissing, hugging, holding hands, and sharing a bed once considered totally innocent and celebrated in such books as *Anne of Green Gables*, in which the heroine unselfconsciously seeks out a 'bosom buddy'" (8). In a paper entitled "Is Anne of Green Gables a lesbian?" presented to a children's literature conference in Nashville, Steven Bruhm concludes that indeed she is. In the memoir *No Previous Experience*, Elspeth Cameron describes the e-mail conversation she and her female best friend and lover had about Anne and Diana's relationship, in which they pose the question "Do you think L.M.M. had any idea how erotic [Anne and Diana's conversation] sounds?" (73). Whether Montgomery knew the erotic power of her language or not, the

relationships Anne has with girls and women in the eight novels are, at the very least, ambiguous in their treatment of passion.

In my own teaching and lecturing on the topic, audiences, readers, and students have responded with engaged interest to such arguments. But when I presented an early draft of this paper at Congress 2000 in Edmonton, the suggestion that the Anne books might contain expressions of lesbian desire prompted a public outcry and a media storm.[5] The two-and-a-half weeks of sustained media interest in this research led to articles by two scholars, Cecily Devereux and Gavin White, responding to my initial draft argument. Devereux's article is concerned primarily with a historical analysis of what she terms "The 'Bosom Friends' Affair," concluding that the resultant debate over Anne's sexuality reveals what Canadian culture holds dear. White's article acknowledges that the friendships in the Anne books are extremely important but focuses almost exclusively on defending Anne (and Montgomery) against the charge of lesbianism. The anxiety my research has caused could be considered evidence of the very same compulsory heterosexuality that I argue is at work in these novels. The suggestion that Anne's desires might not be heterosexual is deeply troubling to many readers.

Lesbian Desires: Historical Context

Montgomery's novels span a crucial period in the history of sexuality, from the end of the nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Historians such as Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Lillian Faderman have examined the love that flourished between women in the nineteenth century, both in Britain and the United States.[6] Women in "romantic friendships" were devoted to each other in ways that would now be regarded as erotically charged: they wrote love letters to each other; they pledged undying love; they spent their lifetimes "in love" with each other, even when they married men; they slept together and caressed and fondled; some women even lived together their whole lives. According to these historians, middle-class society at the time did not consider this intensely homosocial behaviour problematic. However, in the 1920s, for various reasons, including the new work of sexologists and women's emancipatory movements, mainstream culture began to view the love between women as threatening, pathological, and unacceptable. Smith-Rosenberg suggests that, prior to this time, in order to maintain separate spheres for males and females, middle-class families had discouraged young women's interest in men and, by extension, encouraged women's "homosocial ties" (74). Rosemary Auchmuty finds evidence of this

change in attitudes in Elsie J. Oxenham's girls' stories. She finds that "a very conscious love for women which in 1923 was fine and after 1928 became abnormal and unhealthy, represent[ed] a level of intimacy which was too threatening to be allowed to continue" (140). Faderman asserts that after 1920, British middle-class society perceived that "love between women, coupled with their emerging freedom, might conceivably bring about the overthrow of heterosexuality—which has meant not only sex between men and women but patriarchal culture, male dominance, and female subservience" (411).

Lisa L. Moore disputes Faderman's and Smith-Rosenberg's findings by pointing out that there was occasional disapprobation of close female friendships in the nineteenth century (8). Looking at the oppositional constructs of "the sapphist" and "the romantic friend," Moore shows that, from the eighteenth century onwards, women's intimacy with one another, whether in friendship or otherwise, has not been unproblematic. According to Moore, women's relationships with each other elicited a range of responses, from alarm to indifference. Rather than being encouraged (as Smith-Rosenberg argues), "intimacy between women formed a much more flexible category, one that could be recruited in the service of arguments from across the political spectrum" (Moore 145). Through her study of literature, Moore effectively shows that even before the 1920s, British middle-class society often did find women's love for women threatening. Similarly, Sheila Jeffreys cites evidence from Faderman's *The Scotch Verdict* that girls in British boarding schools in 1811 were gossiping, often maliciously, about lesbianism (27). While no one has conducted a full and detailed historical study of women's friendships in the Canadian context, it seems safe to assume that similarly complex attitudes prevailed in Canada.

Ultimately, as these studies underscore, the distinction between female friendship and lesbianism is exceedingly difficult to make. Surely the division between the "sapphist" and the "romantic friend" is an insignificant and socially constructed one, as Sheila Jeffreys points out in her article on lesbians in history, "Does It Matter If They Did It?" It is extremely difficult for modern scholars to determine whether women of the past who considered themselves romantic friends were in fact lesbians: the women could or would not document other dimensions to their relationships, or families suppressed or destroyed evidence (Lesbian History Group). In any case, the line between mere friendship and lesbian love is blurry at best. Regardless of the extent to which one might argue that genital contact is a defining feature of lesbianism, women can be in love with women for their entire lives

without experiencing sexual contact. Refraining from sexual contact with other women does not necessarily make a woman heterosexual. Similarly, women can have sexual encounters with women without defining themselves as lesbian. Nevertheless, there appears to be (at least in our own time) a need to label sexuality, perhaps as a response to sustained threats to patriarchal domination. As Jonathan Katz explains, "At this [the twentieth] century's end hetero and homo have settled into two fixed, concrete objects of everyday postmodern life" (170).

Through her framework of the "lesbian continuum," Adrienne Rich believes that feminist analysis should expose compulsory heterosexuality, or the extent to which heterosexuality is a rigidly enforced ideology rather than a sexual preference or choice. Rich suggests that all women occupy positions on a lesbian continuum which expresses "a range—through each woman's life and throughout history—of women-identified experience, not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman" (239). Rich's continuum disrupts the simplistic binary opposition between gay and straight. Identifying Anne's desires for her female friends as lesbian highlights the extent to which Anne is assimilated into patriarchal culture when she gets engaged to and marries Gilbert. More importantly, reading for Anne's lesbian desires exposes the possibilities for same-sex desire and the workings of compulsory heterosexuality in Montgomery's fiction.

Rachel Blau DuPlessis's analysis of conventions of the nineteenth-century domestic novel helps explain the generic constraints Montgomery faced—constraints that were, in a sense, enforcement mechanisms for compulsory heterosexuality. DuPlessis suggests that a "dialectic between love and quest" creates tension in nineteenth-century women's novels, a tension usually resolved in favour of love. In DuPlessis's view, narrative structure operates to transmit ideology: "As a narrative pattern, the romance plot muffles the main female character, represses quest, valorizes heterosexual as opposed to homosexual ties, incorporates individuals within couples as a sign of their personal and narrative success" (5). In order to be successful—to survive socially and generically—a character needs to embrace heterosexuality. Anne cannot marry Diana. Acceptance comes at a cost, DuPlessis would point out, as Anne's fulfillment is relinquished for her narrative survival: "Once upon a time, the end, the rightful end, of women in novels was social—successful courtship, marriage—or judgemental of her sexual and social failure—death" (1). Anne survives and achieves acceptance by submitting to

compulsory heterosexuality. Yet, even though Anne and her friends ultimately do embrace heterosexuality, Montgomery's novels establish women's intense homosocial relationships as the central concern. Anne manages to achieve acceptance by doing her duty as a heterosexual woman, yet she also succeeds in creating intensely passionate relationships with her female friends. These friendships present a quiet challenge to traditional patriarchy.

Montgomery's Alternatives to Compulsory Heterosexuality

Discussing Anne's desires in the context of Rich's lesbian continuum emphasizes the social construction of both heterosexuality and lesbianism. Calling Anne's sexuality into question, as some readers might phrase it, destablizes the naturalness of heterosexuality. Heterosexuality is perceived as biologically derived and natural in order to justify the gender roles that perpetuate patriarchy. While Montgomery's novels seem to maintain patriarchal conventions, they also reveal the pressures of compulsory heterosexuality. Her Anne novels present an array of creative alternatives to traditional, patriarchal family relationships. First, they establish from the outset that a heterosexual family is not the only option. Why are Marilla and Matthew siblings? The story would not have changed had the two been a married, childless couple. By having siblings rather than a married couple adopt a child, *Anne of Green Gables* makes clear that any grouping of individuals may constitute a family and that sexuality need not be the defining feature.

Women living on their own present another alternative to heterosexuality. As Gubar rather optimistically suggests, "the Anne series dramatizes the pleasures of single life . . . by rewriting and even eroticizing the figure of the old maid" (50). The eight Anne books begin and end with the stories of maiden mothers, Marilla and Rilla: these two maternal virgins "frame and extend the story of the redhead destined for Gilbert and submerged in the genteel marriage demanded by plot conventions" (Huse 137). Marilla and Rilla manage to have a complete life without heterosexual coupling—although, in Rilla's case, this lasts only for a time. While a "maiden" mother is not necessarily lesbian, neither is she necessarily heterosexual. Montgomery's novels suggest that a woman does not have to be heterosexually active to raise a child. Many of Anne's friends and cherished role models are single women, living fulfilling lives outside of heterosexual pairings: for example, Miss Stacy, Miss Josephine Barry, Miss Cornelia, Miss Katherine Brooke, and Rebecca Dew. Marilla and Rachel Lynde live together after Rachel's husband's death. This arrangement, which allows Anne to further her university

education, suggests the empowering possibilities that arise when women bond together. Moreover, the later Anne novels abound with horrific stories of marital abuse and domestic violence, indicating not only that heterosexual marriage produces a different reality from that promised by the romantic ideal but also that perhaps it is best avoided.[7] Needless to say, this motif of abuse undermines the matchmaking, courtship, and wedding plots that structure the novels.

Not only can women live without heterosexual romance in Montgomery's Anne books; they can also turn to each other for love and support, as Marilla and Rachel do. Critics have often noted that women dominate the world of Avonlea, and they have used terms such as "female utopia" to describe this world (as, for example, Eve Kornfeld and Susan Jackson do). In this respect, the Anne novels resemble other types of "girls' stories": "in contrast to the domestic and heterosexual tenor of the times, they [the school girls] inhabited a female world. All authority figures as well as colleagues and comrades were women" (Auchmuty 126). From Marilla and Mrs. Lynde to Mrs. Allan and Miss Stacy, female characters provide much of the strength in the Anne books: "in many ways, the town of Avonlea seems to be a town of Amazons" (Berg, "A Girl's Reading" 127). Moreover, Berg argues that Montgomery successfully represses her personal misgivings about female friendships in *Anne of Green Gables* by presenting a "perfect friendship" between Anne and Diana (Berg, "Sisterhood" 39).

Nonetheless, in certain ways the Anne books still insist that the alternatives to heterosexual romance are not particularly attractive. The single life, while an option, is simply not appealing. Marilla is a dry old maid. Wealthy Miss Barry laments her loneliness when Diana and Anne leave. Miss Brooke is devastatingly lonely. Others, such as Susan and Rebecca Dew, are servants and the objects of affectionate derision. Montgomery postpones Anne's wedding until book five, but, ultimately, Anne must marry or become a laughable old maid. By, on the one hand, affirming the power and fulfilment derived from women's love for each other, and then, on the other, emphasizing the inevitability of marriage, Montgomery's novels underscore the fact that, at the turn of the twentieth century, heterosexuality was indeed compulsory.

Anne and Her Friends

Arguably, Anne's most intense female friendships are with Diana Barry, Katherine Brooke, and Leslie Moore. While Anne's love for Diana begins in adolescence, her relationships with the other two women occur when all are

adults. Anne is twenty-one when she meets Katherine and twenty-four when she first sees Leslie. Her love for girls and women cannot be dismissed as just a passing phase of childhood. Moreover, in depicting these friendships, Montgomery's texts follow a repeated formula, as if to emphasize the heteronormative script and the apparent impossibility of straying from it. First, Anne displays an unbearable longing or desire for her friend. Then, some obstacle obscures the path of their love. The obstacle is finally overcome, only to have compulsory heterosexuality intervene.

Marrying Diana

The idyllic adolescent love shared by Anne and Diana and sustained through their adulthood highlights how inescapable heterosexuality is because, despite their love, they cannot ultimately be together. Anne can only express her intense love for Diana through the heterosexual paradigm of marriage. After the girls are forced to part company, they exchange love letters that borrow heavily from the discourse of courtship and marriage. Diana writes, "I love you as much as ever," and confesses that she tells "all her secrets" to Anne. Anne responds in kind and signs off with "Yours until death us do part," adding "I shall sleep with your letter under my pillow tonight" as a postscript (135). The marriage vow recurs when Diana gives Anne a card with the following inscription:

> If you love me as I love you
> Nothing but death can part us two. (146)

Of course, none of this language is inherently heterosexual, but it is the language that readers associate with adult romantic love rather than girlhood affections. The discourse of heterosexual romantic love permeates the text even while it represents homosexual desire. After Anne, mistakenly offering Diana red currant wine instead of raspberry cordial, gets her friend drunk, Diana's mother refuses to let her daughter associate with Anne. Anne bids farewell to Diana in a highly romantic manner: "Will you promise faithfully never to forget me, the friend of your youth, no matter what dearer friends may caress thee?" (131). She takes a lock of Diana's hair as a keepsake. Moreover, Anne claims to love Diana with "an *inextinguishable* love" (137; italics in original) and weeps with bitterness over the thought that Diana will marry someday, as she explains to Marilla: "I love Diana so, Marilla, I cannot live without her. But I know very well when we grow up that Diana will get married and go away and leave me" (119). That she tells her grief to

Marilla, a spinster living with her silent brother, highlights Anne's possible lonely future without Diana. The homoeroticism emerges again when Diana betrays jealousy of Anne's friend at Queen's: "Josie said you were *infatuated* with her" (290; italics in original). To reassure Diana, Anne says, "I feel as if it were joy enough to sit here and look at you" (290). The sensuous language of courtship establishes Anne as suitor to Diana.

The obstacles to their love are varied but fairly minor. The separation occasioned by the red currant wine incident foreshadows their repeated later separations and creates an urgency to their vows of love. Anne and Diana's repeated partings provide the occasions for their romantic exchanges, as if the fact of their being unable to connect physically allows them to pledge their eternal love for one another. Their love is postponed until it is finally redirected to acceptable heterosexuality. Diana pairs up with the boring Fred Wright, and Anne finally consents to marry Gilbert whom she had earlier rejected because she did not love him (*Anne of the Island* 143). However, almost every Anne book begins with Diana: *Anne of the Island* begins with both girls regretting the impending change as Anne prepares to leave for university; *Anne's House of Dreams* begins with Diana helping Anne get married; *Anne of Ingleside* begins with Anne and Diana, now older, reminiscing about their childhood love. They regret the passing of time because it reveals their intimate love, "their old unforgotten love burning in their hearts," which has necessarily been neglected for their domestic duties (*Anne of Ingleside* 13). When in *Ingleside* Anne mentions how lovely their friendship has been, Diana can hardly express herself: " Yes . . . and we've always . . . I mean . . . I never could say things like you, Anne . . . but we have kept our old 'solemn vow and promise,' haven't we?" (*Anne of Ingleside* 12). The nostalgic longing that colours the women's adult relationship exposes how sad they are about losing intimacy.

Spanking Katherine

While narrative and social conventions prevent Montgomery from allowing Anne to maintain a primary love relationship with Diana, she develops another same-sex relationship in its place. Katherine Brooke succeeds Diana in *Anne of Windy Poplars*. By donning an old pair of Diana's snow shoes when she visits Green Gables, Katherine literally and metaphorically fills Diana's shoes, as Diana is now side-tracked by domestic, wifely, and motherly concerns: "Katherine was with [Anne] in place of Diana" (160). Described as having "almost a man's voice," Katherine, the single school

marm in Summerside, is the embodiment of the anti-feminine ideal (29). Not only does she have an unattractive personality, but her looks are "dark and swarthy," and she is not well-dressed (29). In a letter to Gilbert, Anne still manages to compliment the unhappy woman, noting the shape of her hands, ears, eyes, and mouth. It is noteworthy that Katherine's physicality warrants such attention from Anne. Moreover, Anne and Katherine's relationship is informed by a sado-masochism. Katherine is hostile and unpredictable toward Anne. Anne writes to Gilbert: "Every time I pass her on the stairs I feel that she is thinking horrid things about me" (29). However, Anne wins the tyrant over, although one must wonder why she continues to try in the face of Katherine's hostility. After proposing that Katherine come to Green Gables for Christmas and receiving an offensive response, Anne loses her temper: "Katherine Brooke, whether you know it or not, what *you* want is a good spanking" (144). Katherine's hostility and anger ultimately dissipate when Anne refuses to play the masochist and, instead, threatens to adopt a sadistic role. Patricia Smith's concept of lesbian panic might help to explain the violence, hatred, and fear that characterize the relationship between these two women:

> In terms of narrative, lesbian panic is, quite simply, the disruptive action or reaction that occurs when a character . . . is either unable or unwilling to confront or reveal her own lesbianism or lesbian desire. Typically, a female character, fearing discovery of her covert or unarticulated lesbian desires—whether by the object of her desires, by other characters, or even by herself— . . . lashes out directly or indirectly at another woman, resulting in emotional or physical harm to herself or others. (2)[8]

If this is what motivates Katherine's hostility and Anne's outburst, it abates after Katherine confesses to hating Anne. She concludes by admitting that "In spite of my hatred there were times when I acknowledged to myself that you might just have come from some far-off star" (150). Katherine's hostility cloaks a rather traditionally romantic view of Anne as celestial being.

After Anne breaks through to Katherine, a love affair blooms that leaves Gilbert in the shadows. Anne and Katherine visit Green Gables for Christmas, and the narrative focuses on their growing friendship. One might think that Anne would visit with her fiancé since she has spent so much time away from him, yet the narrative hardly mentions Gilbert. Instead, Anne and Katherine spend all their time together. While they snow-shoe, they remain silent so as not to spoil "something beautiful. But Anne had never felt so near Katherine Brooke before. By some magic of its own the winter might have brought them together . . . *almost* together but not quite" (148; italics

in original). It is not quite clear what the narrator means here by "almost together," but one must suppose that some intangible emotion stands in the way of their connection as Kindred Spirits, or that a deeper connection of another kind is out of the question. Moreover, after Katherine confesses at length to having hated Anne in the past because, in Katherine's misperceptions, Anne's life was easy, they have a more comfortable bond: "Anne no longer felt afraid of her" (149).

With Anne's encouragement, Katherine quits teaching, which she hates; she goes to Redmond College and then becomes a secretary to a member of Parliament, thereby fulfilling her dream of travelling. This new position, however, does not fulfill all of her dreams, for Katherine, who claims to "hate men" (149), now finds herself subservient to a man. "I wish I could tell you what you've brought into my life," she writes to Anne (255), indicating something that remains unspoken or unspeakable. Much of their friendship remains outside of language, in a realm "where souls communed with each other in some medium that needed nothing so crude as words" (148). References to the unspoken and unwritten indicate that more is going on than the narrative can convey. However, Katherine and Anne's love does not progress: Katherine leaves to work for a man, and Anne finally marries Gilbert.

Desiring Leslie[9]

Anne's passion for Leslie Moore indicates clearly that compulsory heterosexuality might not be an overwhelming obstacle to homosexual love. Twenty-four pages into *Anne's House of Dreams*, the newly married Anne is on her way to her new house and her wedding night. Before even reaching the house and consummating her marriage, Anne sees the love of her life on the road, and it is not Gilbert or Diana or Katherine. Leslie Moore, above everyone else, is the object of Anne's desire:

> I am your friend and you are mine, for always. . . . Such a friend as I never had before. I have had many dear and beloved friends—but there is something in you, Leslie, that I never found in anyone else. You have more to offer me in that rich nature of yours, and I have more to give you than I had in my careless girlhood. We are both women—and friends forever. (129)

Leslie's beauty makes Anne "gasp" and her eyes "ache" (24, 149). Upon meeting Leslie, who speaks to Anne with an "odd passion" (66), Anne is surprised to discover she is married, as "there seemed nothing of the wife about her" (64), a comment that remains unexplained. Leslie is a barely controlled and inviting erotic being: at a small get-together with neighbours,

she dances with "wild, sweet abandon" as if the music has "entered into and possessed her" (100). Furthermore, "all the innate richness and colour and charm of her nature seemed to have broken loose and overflowed in crimson cheek and glowing eye and grace of motion" (100). After witnessing this sensual overflow, Anne confesses her feelings to Captain Jim: "I don't know why I can't get closer to her. . . . I like her so much—I admire her so much—I want to take her right into my heart and creep right into hers. But I can never get across the barrier" (103). Leslie Moore dominates *Anne's House of Dreams.* The story is hers, not even Anne's and certainly not Gilbert's. Gilbert, as usual, recedes quietly into the background.

Anne desires Leslie, yet, like Katherine, Leslie provides her own obstacle to this love. From the first moment she lays eyes on Anne, Leslie displays a "veiled hint of hostility" (24). Like Katherine, Leslie eventually admits that the barrier was her hatred of Anne. She admits to hating Anne one minute and craving her friendship the next: "then you came dancing along the cove like a glad, light-hearted child. I—I hated you more than I've ever done since. And yet I craved your friendship" (126). She explains her jealousy:

> I used to watch you from my window—I could see you and your husband strolling about your garden in the evening. . . . And it hurt me. And yet in another way I wanted to go over. . . . I could have liked you and found in you what I've never had before in my life—an intimate, real friend of my own age. (125)

Leslie's jealousy is ostensibly because of her unhappy marriage, and yet it could also be read as jealousy because of her desire for Anne. A tragic figure, Leslie has been trapped into a marriage with an insensible invalid who was once an abusive husband. But the marriage is ultimately revealed to be a case of mistaken identity: Leslie discovers that she has been tending her dead husband's cousin, so she is suddenly a single woman again. Shortly after this discovery, the two women admire Anne's new-born child together. In this passage, not only is the child not directly mentioned, but the language is also erotically suggestive: "When their work was done and *Gilbert was out of the way*, they gave themselves over to shameless orgies of love-making and ecstasies of adoration" (208; emphasis added). In 1922, these words might not have borne the sexual connotations they do today, but it does seem telling that the patriarch, Gilbert, needs to be removed for the lovemaking to occur. When Owen Ford, the writer in love with Leslie, returns to claim her now that she is single, he literally interrupts the lovemaking of Anne and Leslie. Once again, women's love is overcome by patriarchal intervention, for the novel concludes with Leslie's marriage.

In the case of Anne's relationships with Diana, Katherine, and Leslie, love is delayed or complicated, suggesting that their feelings are not quite as straightforward as "romantic friendships." Marriage displaces the love between Diana and Anne because the married Diana has no time for Anne. Marriage displaces the love between Katherine and Anne because Anne marries and Katherine serves as a travelling secretary for a man. Marriage displaces the love between Anne and Leslie because Leslie marries Owen Ford. Yet throughout, Anne consistently establishes intense relationships with women. Thus, even as she achieves acceptance in her community by marrying and ultimately producing children, Anne manages, in matters of sexuality as in everything else, to disturb complacent attitudes.

For my father, Karl Alexander Robinson (1933–2002).

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NOTES

1 Isobel is identified only by her first name in the journals, presumably in order to protect her privacy and that of her family. The editors of the journals offer only this explanation: "For legal reasons, we have excised one surname" (xxix). This decision to hide Isobel's identity ultimately accepts and reinscribes the fear of homosexuality. In a recent interview about the forthcoming fifth volume of Montgomery's journals, co-editor Mary Rubio said that "any concerns that she or the heirs have held back on or covered up salacious details in the Montgomery story will be resoundingly allayed" with the fifth volume and Rubio's biography of Montgomery. Isobel's real name will finally be released because she died in the past five years. When asked if Montgomery became a lesbian in the final years of her life, Rubio responded adamantly "absolutely not" (Adams R1).

2 Montgomery claims to have read "André Thedon's" *Psychoanalysis and Love*, particularly the chapter on "Unconscious Homo-sexualism," from which she diagnoses Isobel as Lesbian (*Selected Journals* 2 July 1932). The author is actually André Tridon—Montgomery made an error in her journal—and the book was published in 1922.

3 Of course, Montgomery's account of her fractious relationship with Isobel exposes her attitudes towards overt homosexuality. But the journals also reveal that Montgomery's dominant emotional relationships were with women, the most significant being Frede Campbell. While a more thorough examination of Montgomery's relationships with women is beyond the scope of this article, her account of Isobel's infatuation and of her own devotion to Frede suggest that a discussion of lesbian desire in Montgomery's fiction is not misplaced.

4 This discussion occurs in Dubinsky's class on gender and North American history. Similarly, Professor Maggie Berg, who teaches *Anne* in her course on myths of femininity at Queen's University, argues for a lesbian reading of the novel.

5 Among the news stories that appeared were the following: "Does lesbianism underlie Anne of Green Gables?" *Globe and Mail* (31 May/2000): A1, A5; "'Outrageously sexual' Anne was a lesbian, scholar insists" *Ottawa Citizen* (25 May/2000): A3; "Anne a lesbian?

'Poppycock!'" *Ottawa Citizen* (26 May/2000): A7; "Did our Anne of Green Gables nurture gay fantasies?" *Edmonton Journal* (26 May/2000): A3; "Lesbian of Green Gables? Professor says heroine had longings for women" *National Post* (31 May/2000): B4. Articles also appeared on many websites, such as CBC and CNN, as well as in American publications, such as the *Boston Globe.* Japanese media contacted me, and the story appeared on a Swedish website, so this unexpected phenomenon had an international scope. A more detailed examination of the response to my research is beyond the compass of this paper.

6 Both Faderman and Smith-Rosenberg have been criticized for their examinations of women's friendships. See Moore (8–10) for a discussion of both historians; see also Jeffreys for a discussion of Faderman's book.

7 For example, *Anne of Ingleside,* with its focus on the marital discord between Anne and Gilbert, has an undercurrent of stories of abusive husbands, such as the tyrannical Peter Kirk (220). Similarly, Miss Cornelia of *Anne's House of Dreams* offers a litany of men who abuse their wives: Fred Procter (44), Jennie Dean's husband (48), Billy Booth (113), and even Horace Baxter (91), to name some examples.

8 Smith's argument might be seen to suggest that anger and abuse result from desire. Taken further, this reading might justify male violence against women as derived from unacknowledged or repressed love. I do not agree with this position. My argument here is rather that Katherine's and Leslie's conflicted responses to Anne—their anger and their fascination—suggest feelings more complicated than friendship. The conflict communicates to the reader that more is going on than is readily apparent.

9 I have chosen to discuss the books as they tell Anne's story rather than in the order in which they were written. It is perhaps telling that the most intensely erotic relationship—that with Leslie—was written in 1922, whereas the more conflicted one—with Katherine—appears in 1936.

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Elana Wolff

Tulips

Loosely leaning down, around—
                                        a lemon carousel.

The nearest one is peering through a lone
triangular eye at me.
                    (Does foxglove bloom for the bee?)

Through the manzanilla glass of my own green eyes
these twenty-two yellows are light; this close-up cup,
a flood.

The miracle, not only spring—so
many things beginning.
But sexlessness
                    and rest.

Blue vase, bent stems; petals, pale and evasive.
Not a scent.

Susan Andrews Grace

from Flesh, A Naked Dress

Oh, don't worry,
she is a lake
blue and weak and he is

a mountain of heaven. He can take it
as he shelters his eyes with his forearm
to watch her. He is treading, holding
his mirror, her
perfect conduct. And she

makes her tent in the space a lake takes
clouts anchored to something fiery.

A tiger wilts with hunger at the forest threshold.
A stumbly father may soon come over
the delicious embankment.

She can see the tiger.

Monique Tschofen

"First I Must Tell about Seeing"

(De)monstrations of Visuality and the Dynamics of Metaphor in Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*

It is in fact upon the world of things needing to be uncovered that the world of merely visible things keeps exerting its pressure.
(Simonides fr. 598, trans. Carson, *Economy* 60)

1. A Metaphor of Metaphor

Anne Carson excavates and resurrects Geryon, the red monster with wings, in her "novel in verse," *Autobiography of Red*. Her portrait of a monster who makes photographic portraits offers a dense meditation on two related terms—vision and revision—that are key to Carson's implicit, yet consistent theorization of the relationships between language and images.

Carson claims she was a painter before she was a creative writer. Recalling the "rhapsodic" moment in an art class that she took as a child in which she was allowed to write a "kind of legend" on one of her images, she has explained that her first book of poetry, *Short Talks*, was originally intended to be a set of drawings with lengthy titles: "Nobody liked the drawings so I expanded the titles into the talks" (Interview). Despite the fact that her movement into poetry appears to have been initiated by the erasure of her work as a visual artist, traces of her interest in art appear throughout her writings. To read the body of her work is to be immersed in an exquisite frenzy of the visible in which inscription, painting, photography, film, and television collide in one textual space. Yet it would be a mistake to think that Carson's engagement with the visual reflects her simple assent to a notion with some currency in contemporary cultural studies, namely that cultural history has led to a dominance of visual media over verbal activities of speech, writing, textuality, and reading, and that this dominance comes at

the expense of other sensory modalities (Mitchell, *Picture* 16). Reviving such "tactics of imagination" (*Eros* 69) as monstrous structures and language while she bounces between antiquity and the contemporary moment, in *Autobiography* Carson pictures a monster's pictures in order to lead us away from the world of merely visible things and into "the counterworld behind the facts and inside perceived appearances" (*Economy* 60). It would also be a mistake to confuse Carson's interest in the visual with the disengaged, disembodied vision Norman Bryson associates with the aoristic mode that has dominated Western painting and philosophy. Carson's archaeological excavation and resurrection of the monster Geryon recovers a subordinate history of deictic practices within philosophy and art from antiquity to the present day, which "create and refer to their own perspective" (Bryson 88). In this revisionary "counterworld," signification is playfully carnal. Fascinated with their own genesis and development, the alternative forms of cultural practice Carson uncovers inscribe the spatiality and the temporality of both the producer and the receiver. So, although it might look like Carson sets her sights on the graphic, especially the photographic and cinematographic, her focus is wider, on "the act that Simonides calls λὸγος [*logos*] and defines as 'a picture of things' for it contains visibles and invisibles side by side, strangeness by strangeness" (Carson, *Economy* 68).

At the heart of Carson's investigation into *logos* lies metaphor, one of the chief "subterfuges" by which the visual domain may be introduced into the verbal arts (Bal 3). As Umberto Eco puts it, metaphor conflates two images: two things become different from themselves and yet remain recognizable (96). Metaphor is not merely ornamental. It is also a cognitive instrument:

> And thus the metaphor posits ('posits' in a philosophical sense, but also in a physical sense, as 'in *putting before the eyes,*' το ηρὸ ὀμμάτωνηοιεῖν a proportion that, wherever it may have been deposited, was not before the eyes; or it was before the eyes and the eyes did not see it, as with Poe's purloined letter. To point out, or teach how to see, then. (102)

What does metaphor point out or teach us how to see? asks Eco. Not the real itself, but rather a knowledge of the "dynamics of the real" (102). The best metaphors, he suggests, are those that point out the cultural process of semiosis (102).

Carson's red-winged photographer is one of these best metaphors. As a figure uniting strangeness with strangeness, her monster is an icon of the things that lie just beyond our physical vision (past the edge of our maps, on the other side of our waking state). Her monster is also a symbolic tool

, which she probes the secrets of perception, temporality, and language. Because Carson's monster refers to nothing phenomenally real, because he is a purely figurative sign, he can be understood as a metaphor of metaphor itself (Williams 12). That Carson develops the metaphor of the monster as a metaphor of metaphor in order to demonstrate language's power of "making and begetting" is no small thing, since, as the philosophers have long insisted, "metaphor seems to involve the usage of philosophical language in its entirety" (Derrida, "White" 209).

Carson has written extensively about the workings of metaphor. Before focusing on the way her metaphor of monstrosity is both visionary and revisionary, it is useful to turn to one of her poems, "Essay on What I Think About Most," where she claims that "From the true mistakes of metaphor a lesson can be learned. // Not only that things are other than they seem, / and so we mistake them, / but that such mistakenness is valuable. / Hold onto it, Aristotle says, / there is much to be seen and felt here" (*Men* 31). Referring to Aristotle's discussion of metaphor in the *Rhetoric*, Carson argues that the trope demonstrates novel and valuable ways of feeling as well as of seeing. Her injunction via Aristotle to "hold" onto mistakenness and "feel" it is made possible because of the operations of metaphor, of course, but what is important about this particular metaphor is its emphasis on the sensory. As she sheds light on both the participatory and embodied dimensions of our thinking made possible by metaphor, Carson issues a challenge to the difficult legacy of Cartesian dualism.

2. Monstrous Genres

Technically, *Autobiography of Red* is not an autobiography, nor really, as the subtitle suggests, is it "A Novel in Verse." Working with the fragments of a lyric poem about the monster Geryon from the sixth century B.C.E. poet Stesichoros of Himnera called the *Geryoneis*, Carson locates the work in a larger literary history and explicates its importance, translates it into English, and finally adapts its core elements to create an extended novelistic narrative. The central portions of the *Autobiography*, then, take the form of a *Künstlerroman*, but one that doubles an earlier telling of the same "cross section of scenes, both proud and pitiful" (6) of a monster struggling with human things like family and fate. To this mirrored image of mythic narrative materials, Carson adds a framing apparatus of prefaces and appendices that, through citation, also repeat earlier commentary on the Geryon matter (6). Generically, the text refuses to blend its constituent parts. Juxtaposing

the scholarly and the lyrical, the narrative and the journalistic, this is a hybrid text, what Judith Halberstam describes as a "stitched body of distorted textuality" (33).

That Carson refuses to blend the different genres into a more coherent structure recalls a debate in classical aesthetics in which the ideal text was figured through a visual metaphor as a healthy, intact, symmetrical, beautiful, static body, while writing that failed to live up to the ideal was figured as a monstrous body. Writers like Longinus and Horace imply that there is something devastatingly counterproductive, even self-annihilating, about a text that, "like a sick man's dreams," risks monstrous combinations (Horace 128). When contemporary reviewers have on occasion complained that Carson's combinations of the poetic with the scholarly are "unproductive" and give it a "stale air of pedantry and puzzle" (Kirsch), they seem to be blind to the fact that Carson's mission in this text—to resurrect *a monster* and demonstrate the powers of revision—hinges on her deliberate mating of disparate things. Form, content, and purpose could not be less at odds than they are here.

3. Revisioning Geryon

Just as *Autobiography of Red* is an assemblage of disparate genres, Carson's monster Geryon is a composite pieced together from fragments which originate elsewhere. To understand what Geryon demonstrates in Carson's work, it is important to trace the origins and history of the various elements which combine to form him.

Though Carson never mentions this incarnation of Geryon explicitly, it is not difficult to uncover the fact that Geryon was a significant, though marginal, figure in Canto XVII (the half-way point) of Dante's *Inferno.* Many of Carson's interests in the relationship between vision and visuality and poetic language reflect and refract Dante's. Described as a vile monster whose stench fills the world, Dante's Geryon carries Virgil and Dante on his back down to Malebolge, the eighth level of hell where the sin of Fraud is punished. Dante's Geryon is depicted as a figure of duplicity, "fraud's foul emblem" ("*imagine di froda*") (XVII 6). His sight fills the poet with terror but also with a sense of liberation, because, as the vehicle permitting the continuation of the poet's journey, the monster represents the very instruments of deceitfulness and lying that the poet must use. When Dante recounts that Geryon's back and breasts and both sides are "painted with designs of knots and circlets" more coloured in field and figure than any

cloth ever woven by a Tartar or Turk or the nets loomed by Arachne (XVII 13–15), it is clear that the monster is to be perceived as an emblem of an aesthetic fraud, an "image" (*imagine*) of the kind of lying performed by the pictorial art of poetry (XVII 6). Compared to a boat, a beaver, an eel, a falcon, and an arrow, Dante's Geryon is connected with motion, and this too allies him with the poet's tools. Du Marsais's definition of metaphor (which is indebted to Aristotle's definition) as "a figure by means of which the proper, literal meaning of a word is transported" facilitates an understanding of the analogy between monster and metaphor conveyed with Geryon's flight (Derrida, "White" 234). A consideration of Geryon's mobility—his ability to "transport," both literally and figuratively—leads to a consideration of another kind of mobility in Dante's text that is important to Carson: the mobility of the gaze of the viewer. In his depiction of Geryon, Dante makes a distinction between appearances and essences, between parts and wholes. His Geryon is an "image" of fraud, but in this image, appended to the trunk of a serpent and the paws of an animal, is the face of a just man, outwardly kind (*"La faccia sua era faccia d'uom giusto, / tanto benigna avea di fuor la pelle"*) (XVII 10–11). In order not to be deceived by the contradictory parts of the image, the beholder (the poet and also the reader) of such a hybrid composite must learn a way of seeing that is mobile enough to apprehend the whole, and powerful enough to penetrate the surface. Like Dante, Carson is interested in the ethics and aesthetics of fraud, and so when she transports Dante's Geryon into contemporary narrative, the monster also brings with him Dante's concerns about the poetic lie that can transport us, and about ways of seeing that can carry us past the surface of appearances.

Carson's Geryon initially knows nothing about lies, but notices quickly that words dissemble and dis-assemble: divorced from their literal meanings, words keep coming apart or cracking in half (26, 62). Herakles' rhetoric is particularly treacherous for Geryon. His promises are slippery, moving for instance from statements about intimacy—"we'll always be friends" (62)—to distancing—"we're true friends you know that's why I want you to be free" (74). Geryon begins his autobiography trying to put together the pieces of this fractured world of language, first with glue (34), then by adding a corrective in the form of a happier ending to a story he has written (38), but he soon abandons these palliative measures and makes the very paradox of the power and fragility of language the subject of his photographs.

If Geryon's connection to Dante's monster foregrounds a theory of poetic lying, Carson further develops this theory in the highly convoluted syllogistic

exercise she offers as "Appendix C" to the main body of the narrative of *Autobiography*. Here she suggests that as an integral part of stories, lies set things into motion. (Elsewhere, Carson suggests that lies make possible the continuation of story: "everytime you see I would have to tell the whole story all over again or else lie so I lie I just lie who are they who are the storytellers who can put an end to stories" [*Plainwater* 25–26].) Trespassing the boundaries between reality and the imagination (something monsters in stories also do), lies operate logical reversals, and in each reversal is the possibility of a return. The imagery Carson develops around her discourse on lies is dynamic: we are "in reverse"; we will "go along without incident"; we will "meet Stesichoros on our way back"; we will "be taken downtown by the police for questioning" (*Autobiography* 19–20). Her argument, if one can be stitched together, is that while we are thus transported by the lie (or by its kin, metaphor), we can either be eyewitnesses to a landscape that, because of the lie, looks inside out, or we can be blinded. In effect, both of these propositions mean the same thing: we learn to see in ways that exceed the merely visible world (19–20). The monster Geryon thus offers Carson a point of entry into an argument about the ethical, cognitive, and perceptual possibilities unleashed by language.

The scene in Dante's *Inferno* in which the monster Geryon appears is one of the text's most dramatic because of the sense of narrative visualization enabled by Geryon's flight. Robert Hollander remarks on the cinematic quality of Dante's prose in Canto XVII, all the more notable since it would be several centuries before the technologies of the cinema would be invented:

> In his innovative description of flight, Dante offers a cinematic succession of images designed to establish a "perspective vision" for the architectural complex of the eighth circle where, as we shall see, the variation in Dante's original topography with its "pouches," "ridges" and "bridges" requires—in modern terms—a clarity and precision of camera angles, depth of field, lighting and dimension. From Dante's timid aerial look down from Geryon's back into the pit below to numerous and even risky positionings on the little bridges to catch sight of a particular sinner, the narrator becomes even more insistent in his techniques of the "zoom to close-up," . . . the "wide pan" . . . and the "aerial shot" . . . making the reader at times even conscious of the "stage directions" of this visualization.

In Carson's hands, this proto-cinematic inheritance of "perspective vision" makes its appearance in her translation of Stesichoros's fragments which offers, as she puts it,

> a tantalizing cross section of scenes, both proud and pitiful, from Geryon's own experience. We see his red boy's life and his little dog. A scene of wild appeal

> from his mother, which breaks off. Interspersed shots of Herakles approaching over the sea. A flash of the gods in heaven pointing to Geryon's doom. The battle itself. The moment when everything goes suddenly slow and Herakles' arrow divides Geryon's skull. We see Herakles kill the little dog with His famous club. (*Autobiography* 6)

Observe the language demarcating scenes, fade outs, zooms, crane shots, and slow motion. Carson sees in Stesichoros's fragments, just as she also sees in Dante's scene of flight, a juxtaposition of different points of view in quick succession. She further develops this inheritance of (proto-)cinematic strategies with the disjunctions and collisions (Sergei Eisenstein would say "conflicts") that generate the motion of *Autobiography.* Zooming in on emotionally laden moments, as well as slowing down the motion and jumping between scenes, Carson's montage techniques celebrate all forms of juxtaposition. She sets up conflicts between genres such as between the narrative and the appendices; between events and their duration (Eisenstein 39), such as when Geryon contemplates the ascent of the rapist up the stairs as slow as lava (Carson 48); between matter and viewpoint (Eisenstein 54), such as when Geryon's contemplation of philosophic problems leads him to write,"I will never know how you see red and you will never know how I see it" (Carson 105); and between the frame of the shot and the subject (Eisenstein 40), such as when Geryon takes "a number / of careful photographs but these showed only the shoes and socks of each person" (72). Carson's insight is to construct a genealogy of the origins of a way of thinking in two separate time frames at once, modern and ancient. Cinematic montage sets two images side by side so that the things become different from themselves and yet remain recognizable. So too does metaphor. Through Dante, then, Carson's monster Geryon puts before our eyes the history of the apparatus (that is, the mental machinery) of a visual language upon which both literary and cinematic practices rely.

Dante, however, is not the only poet to write about Geryon, the monster with wings. Carson is explicit about the more ancient sources she and Dante draw upon. In traditional Greek mythology, Geryon, "most powerful of all men mortal," is a minor character who figures in Herakles' tenth labour. As traditionally narrated in such texts as Apollodorus's *The Library* (2.10), Hesiod's *Theogony* (979–83), and Pausanias's *Description of Greece* (1.35.7 and 4.36.3), the story is full of slaughter and bloodshed, "framed as a thrilling account of the victory of culture over monstrosity" (Carson 6). As an alternative to this rather excessive story of masculine power, Carson resurrects the version told in the fragments of Stesichoros's lyric *Geryoneis.*

According to Carson, Stesichoros's revision of the myth reverses the roles of protagonist and antagonist and thus shifts the point of view. Because we see things through his eyes, the monster becomes the character with whom we sympathize, and so the hero's qualities of masculine courage and zeal begin to appear monstrous. Instead of controlling and containing the monstrous sign, Stesichoros sets it loose.

4. Fragments

Fragmentation and recombination are the key principles in the composition and arrangement of Carson's monstrous text. The composition of the sections of *Autobiography* as a whole, their stark juxtapositions and seemingly random ordering, mimics the material decomposition of the principal interior text, Stesichoros's *papyrae*, over time. Carson explains:

> the fragments of the *Geryoneis* itself read as if Stesichoros had composed a substantial narrative poem then ripped it to pieces and buried the pieces in a box with some song lyrics and lecture notes and scraps of meat. The fragment numbers tell you roughly how the pieces fell out of the box. You can of course keep shaking the box. (6–7)

The textual fragments in Stesichoros's (and Carson's) box are ripped and torn, and, as if Carson wishes to underline that these are proper to monsters, they are shaken around with "meat." The image is striking. Just what is going on with all this red meat? If red is a "matter of the body," red meat is even more so (Derrida, *Secret* 100). Red meat is the very stuff we are made of, where we feel our pleasures and our pains. It is what feeds us, and what we are turned into when we die. This complex ambiguity is what Carson, in her commitment to a material, embodied deictic practice which has the potential to topple Cartesian abstraction, wishes to address when she invites us to manipulate the box and pull out and examine the fragments: "'Believe me for meat and for myself,' as Gertrude Stein says. Here. Shake" (7).

5. "What Difference Did Stesichoros Make?"

The association of monsters with language is, according to David Williams, "a profound, longstanding one that simultaneously reveals something of our historical conception of monstrosity as well as an ambivalence toward language itself" (61). His argument that the language of the monstrous is parasitic, feeding at the margins and limits of conventional languages "so as to gain the power to transcend these analytic discourses," helps explain the work of Carson's monster. Williams explains that "true to its etymology

(monstrare: to show)," monstrous language "points to utterances that lie beyond logic" (10). The title of Carson's first chapter—"Red Meat: What Difference Did Stesichoros Make?"—poses a question that follows from a statement in which neither the logical nor the syntactic relationship between these two parts is visible. Carson thus directs us to a place just beyond our range of experiences, perceptions, and modalities of understanding, where the juxtaposition of discrepant things lets us see and feel what was not before our eyes or what we could not already see.

What difference did Stesichoros make? Carson singles out two major "differences" that Stesichoros has made to literary history. Stesichoros's first contribution is tropic. According to Carson, Stesichoros unleashed the adjective from the fixity of the Homeric epithet, and thus "released being" (5). Homeric epithets tend to be straightforward: "In the epic world, being is stable and particularity is set fast in tradition. When Homer mentions blood, blood is *black.* [. . .] Death is *bad.* Cowards' livers are *white*" (4). Then Stesichoros came along, and "suddenly there was nothing to interfere with horses being *hollow hooved.* Or a river being *root silver.* Or a child *bruiseless.* [. . .] Or killings *cream black*" (5). Where in epic, adjectives are used to put things in their place and keep them there, in the lyric world that Stesichoros unleashes, adjectives are used to bring to things spectacular depths and dazzling ambiguities. To move from the "black" of "blood" to the "cream black" of "killings," for instance, is to leave behind the metonymic—a logic where connections are based on association—and to enter a realm of metaphor—a logic in which connections are limited only by the imagination. This new metaphoric logic is dynamic; in it, dramatic reversals and returns are possible. It also invites a complex and carnal sensory engagement, and this is how it connects with the first part of the proposition "red meat."

Stesichoros's adjectives are synaesthetic. His poetic language joins together two images in terms that belong to one or more differing perceptual modes or senses. The connotations and meanings of the images change, depending on which senses the reader considers. The seemingly simple image of killings as "cream black," for instance, juxtaposes the tactile with the visual—the texture with the colour of blood—just as it invokes the sense of taste, contrasting an image of richness and sustenance with an image of rot and putrescence. One "difference" Stesichoros makes is thus to find a way of using language that invites us to perceive with all of our bodily senses—to make us feel. Another "difference" has to do with how his use of language relates to the way we think. Just as the image formed by Stesichoros's adjectives

invokes specific sensory experiences, so too does it let us picture the processes of cognition and perception themselves. The rhetorical trope used here, the oxymoron, puts together two contradictory qualities that risk cancelling each other out. "Cream black" qualifies the noun "killing" through this type of cancellation, in effect performing a sort of "killing" on the level of language itself. Carson's writings frequently return to what she calls "iconic grammar" (*Economy* 52), that is, to statements that do what they say. Such use of language as a "synthetic and tensional" unit that "reenacts the reality of which it speaks," she says, requires "a different kind of attention than we normally pay to verbal surfaces" (52). The difference Stesichoros makes, then, is to expand the communicability of language. He lets us see that words say but that they also show, that they make us think, but they also make us feel.

According to Carson, Stesichoros's second contribution to literary history is narrative. Just as he unleashed words from the weight of the past, so too did he unleash story, completely altering the assessment of important mythological figures. In addition to the poet's revision of the "Geryon Matter" in the *Geryoneis*, Stesichoros turned his attentions to the origins of the Trojan War. After writing a poem about Helen of Troy that replicated the tradition of whoredom "already old by the time Homer used it," Stesichoros went blind (Carson, *Autobiography* 5). According to the *Testimonia* of Plato, Isokrates, and Suidas, his blindness occurred because Helen herself was furious at the slander. To regain his sight, Stesichoros wrote his famed palinode, or "counter-song," which recanted the poem he had just written: "No it is not the true story. / No you never went on the benched ships. / No you never came to the towers of Troy" (Carson, *Autobiography* 17). There is a perfect symmetry to the story; the palinode lets the heroine off, and she, in turn, lets the poet off. The story can thus be read as an allegory, with obvious appeal to a writer like Carson, about the power words have to transform the real.

If Stesichoros's contribution to literary history is to "undo the latches" (5) on the level of syntax, unleashing the adjective from its fixity in epic diction and, on the level of narrative, abandoning the oppressive sets of traditional assumptions about characters such as Helen of Troy and Herakles and Geryon, exactly what "difference" does Anne Carson's writing make? Like Stesichoros, Carson works to "release being," but against the directional image she uses to explain Stesichoros's work, in which all the substances in the world go "floating up"(5), Carson posits a bi-directional image to

explain her own work—bouncing (3). "Words bounce," Carson explains, and (echoing Gertrude Stein) she elaborates: "Words, if you let them, will do what they want to do and what they have to do" (3). This is a playful metaphor, but it involves a very serious kind of engagement. Words bounce when they connect with other words and with the people who use them. When a speaker picks up a word, she alters its velocity and trajectory forever. When a speaker catches a word, he holds history itself in his hands for an instant, and when he redirects that word, he lets go a different future. A dual movement in which time is dismembered and remembered thus infuses all of Carson's work. On one hand, Carson shows us ways to break free from the constraints of the past; on the other hand, she asks us to connect with it. Her image of words bouncing and connecting offers a brilliant corollary to her proposition of monstrous fragmentation and rupture. Resuscitative and vital, this image linking past and present recalls Carson's discussion elsewhere of two ancient practices: the *symbolon*, the concrete token of a gift, which "carries the history of the giver into the life of the receiver and continues it there" (*Economy* 18), and the monument, which has the purpose of "insert[ing] a dead and vanished past into a living present" (73). Re-presentation is thus posited as the point of connection that reunites the subject with the other, the object world, and history.

6. Picturing Escape

Despite the prevalence of narrative traditions which seek to suppress monstrous otherness, monsters can "evoke potent escapist fantasies; the linking of monstrosity with the forbidden makes the monster all the more appealing as a temporary egress from constraint" (Jeffrey Cohen 17). Carson's *Autobiography* celebrates all forms of egress and escape. In the five prefatory parts of the text and the concluding interview, Carson allies her work with that of writers who have shown how to break free from the ideological restraints of traditions, and who have revealed how linguistic and syntactical experiments can widen the possibilities for thought and expression. In the main body of the narrative, her own transformations of the Geryon matter further frame activities of revision in terms of freedom. The central difference between Carson's and other versions of Geryon's story has to do with the ending. The slaughter and bloodshed are gone, and in its place is the agony of passion and longing drawn out over time. Traditionally a figure intimately associated with death and the dead, Carson's Geryon lives well past forty (36, 60).

A comparison can better show the nature and the extent of Carson's revisions. We can begin *hors texte* with one of Stesichoros's fragments, translated by David Campbell, telling of how Herakles slaughters Geryon:

> in silence he thrust it cunningly into his brow, and it cut through the flesh and bones by divine dispensation; and the arrow held straight on the crown of his head, and it stained with gushing blood his breastplate and gory limbs; and Geryon drooped his neck to one side, like a poppy which spoiling its tender beauty suddenly sheds its petals. (77)

When Carson translates this fragment in the prefatory part of *Autobiography of Red*, she reveals a greater sensitivity to the poetic quality of the adjectives. Though more dense than Campbell's translation, these images remain tragic:

> XIV. Herakles' Arrow
> Arrow means kill It parted Geryon's skull like a comb Made
> The boy neck lean At an odd slow angle sideways as when a
> Poppy shames itself in a whip of Nude breeze. (13)

What in Campbell's translation suggests passivity—"drooping" his neck, "shedding" its petals—becomes, in Carson's translation, active and erotically charged—"sham[ing]" itself in a "whip of Nude breeze." Carson prepares us here to envision Geryon's strength rather than his weakness.

In the actual "Romance" section of *Autobiography of Red*, Carson presents the most radical changes to the fragment. The core metaphors and imagery remain, but the context has shifted. Red, the dominant colour, is now explicitly linked with *eros* (and I think the implicit punning on arrows is intentional) rather than *thanatos*, sex rather than slaughter:

> The smell of the leather jacket near
> his face [. . .]
> sent a wave of longing as strong as a colour through Geryon.
> It exploded at the bottom of his belly.
> Then the blanket shifted. He felt Herakles' hand move on his thigh and Geryon's head went back like a poppy in a breeze (118–9)

Having separated the mythic cause ("arrow") from its effect (the boy "neck lean"), Carson overlays a more carnal logic in which the phallus (which presumably is like an arrow) provokes sexual ecstasy (Geryon's head, back "like a poppy in a breeze").

Carson also transforms the weapon, which in the traditional versions of his story cuts Geryon's life short, into a metaphor for time and continuity.

Geryon's favourite question, one to which he returns again and again, concerns the substance of time: what is time made of? Different answers present themselves: "Time isn't made of anything. It is an abstraction / Just a meaning that we / impose upon motion" (90); "Much truer / is the time that strays into photographs and stops" (93). In a discussion about this topic of time, so obviously relevant to a character marked from birth by a powerful fate, we find the arrow, transmuted into a harpoon:

> Fear of time came at him. [. . .]
> he felt its indifference roar over
> his brain box. An idea glazed along the edge of the box and whipped back
> down into the canal behind the wings
> and it was gone. A man moves through time. It means nothing except that,
> like a harpoon, once thrown he will arrive. (81)

The simile retains a classical, quasi-tragic fatalism; a man moves inevitably towards his future just as a harpoon moves to its target. Notice, however, that in this version, there is no mention of what precisely his fate is. The transposition is subtle, but highly relevant. Instead of being represented as the victim of an arrow, Geryon is now figured as that arrow, moving through time towards a future that, though frightening, remains open.

Rather than wrap the story up and impose an ending of any sort, the narrative leaves us *in medias res*, with Geryon and his antagonists, Herakles and Ancash, pausing to ponder the beauty of fire. Time itself might be rushing, but the protagonist, reconciled with his enemies, is now immune to it: "We are amazing beings / Geryon is thinking. We are neighbors of fire. / And now time is rushing towards them / where they stand side by side with arms touching, immortality on their faces, / night at their back" (146). With this inconclusive conclusion, Carson has linked Geryon back to his beginnings as the "mighty son of immortal Khrysaor and Kallirhoe" (Campbell 67). And this is what Carson's bewildering syllogistic exercise in "Appendix C" prophesies for all who dare to step into the labyrinth with monsters, re-visioning storytelling and lies: "we are now in reverse and by continuing to reason this way are likely to arrive back at the beginning" (19). The way Carson leads us to this picture of immortality is noteworthy. Rather than seeking to transcend time or erase the traces of its passing, Carson's archaeological method, by excavating layer upon layer of past meanings, explicitly foregrounds the temporal. She encourages us to disinter the genesis and metamorphosis of each monstrous image she puts before our eyes, and in so doing, invites us to renew its life.

7. Geryon's Photography

Carson's portrait of the monster Geryon casts him as a photographer who specializes in portraits. The medium of photography provides an answer to his perennial question regarding the nature of time: "Much truer / is the time that strays into photographs and stops" (93). Geryon's musings on time and photography begin when he sees a photograph of a volcanic eruption taken by Herakles' grandmother, entitled "Red Patience," which "has compressed / on its motionless surface / fifteen different moments of time, nine hundred seconds of bombs moving up / and ash moving down / and pines in the kill process" (51), and when he hears the story of Lava Man, the only survivor of the volcano, who was a prisoner in the local jail. As a creature of reversals destined to go back to the beginning and revise his own ending, it is only natural that Geryon is compelled by the paradox of the form (it introduces motion into stasis and yet compresses the movement of time into an instant) as well as by the themes of this picture and the story that frames it: "identity memory eternity" (149).

Geryon's insights into the medium develop from these conceptual origins. He realizes that "Photography is disturbing [. . .] / Photography is a way of playing with perceptual relationships" and brings this realization into his practice (65). Many of Geryon's autobiographical photographs are technically impossible; framed by evocative titles and descriptions, they appear to picture things that cannot be seen with the eyes. Often, they are synaesthetic, linking what are usually discrete sensory phenomena: "this page has a photograph of some red rabbit giggle tied with a white ribbon. / He has titled it 'Jealous of My Little Sensations'" (62). Occasionally, their object is unreal, belonging somewhere between dreamspace and prehistory: "He had dreamed of [. . .] creatures that looked like young dinosaurs [. . .] [that] went crashing / through underbush and tore / their hides which fell behind them in long red strips. He would call / the photograph 'Human Valentines'" (131). In both of these instances, Geryon's photographs manage to capture and make permanent the fleeting and transient, repeating "what could never be repeated existentially" (Barthes 4).

Additionally, Geryon's photographs involve complex intertextual negotiations of abstractions. In seventh grade, we are told, Geryon "began to wonder about the noise that colors make":

> Roses came
> roaring across the garden at him.
> He lay on his bed at night listening to the silver light of stars crashing against

> the window screen. Most
> of those he interviewed for the science project had to admit they did not hear
> the cries of the roses
> being burned alive in the noonday sun. Like horses, Geryon would say helpfully,
> like horses in war. No, they shook their heads. [. . .]
> The last page of his project
> was a photograph of his mother's rosebush under the kitchen window.
> Four of the roses were on fire.
> They stood up straight and pure on the stalk, gripping the dark like prophets
> and howling colossal intimacies
> From the back of their fused throats. (84)

Geryon's acute perceptions of the noises of colour belong to a commonplace of the *Künstlerroman*, highlighting the qualities that will make the protagonist into a real artist. His attention to this particular form of synaesthesia, moreover, allies Geryon closely with artists such as Wassily Kandinsky and perhaps foreshadows Geryon's gradual turning from the representational to the abstract. (Kandinsky claimed he heard sound whenever he saw colours, and suggested that abstraction most effectively reveals the "inner sounds" of a picture [273].)

The most rhapsodic part of the "photograph" lies in the development of its legend. The density of the different moments compressed in the explanatory frame in which Geryon attempts to translate the meaning of his image through an analogy—"like horses in war" (84)—is characteristic of Carson's vast intertextual reaching. Carson's Geryon returns to his origins when he draws this image of horses in war from the very papyrus fragments Carson draws from to tell his story. Horses appear twice in Stesichorus's *Geryoneis*, and in both instances they are linked to chilling images of suffering. In fragment S22, horses are connected to sounds and the limits of the speakable: "(things speakable) and things unspeakable [. . .] untiring and un- [. . .] painful strife [. . .] battles and slaughterings of men [. . .] piercing (cries?); [. . .] of horses [. . .] " (Campbell 81). Fragment S50 sets horses within an image of tearing—" [. . .] (all?) [. . .] horse(s) [. . .] was torn," while the next very brief fragment, S53, seems to announce the location of the scene of tearing: "war" (85).

Geryon's explanation of the photo connects to other histories as well. Within the frame of modern art, the phrase "horses in war" conjures Pablo Picasso's painting of the agony of the Spanish Civil War, *Guernica* (1937), just as the dramatic movements of silver crashing against the screen evoke the swirling motions in Van Gogh's *Starry Night* (1889). Likewise, within the frame of contemporary theory, Geryon's impossible photograph with its

explanatory legend conjures the origins of structuralist linguistics. Geryon offers a verbal explanation in the form of a Saussurean punning for those who are not able to "hear" the noises compressed in these paintings. In the *Cours de linguistique générale*, Ferdinand de Saussure refers to the horse to demonstrate that language is arbitrary, that nothing but a social agreement links concepts (represented in the body of his text as pictures) to sound patterns. An understanding of Saussurean linguistics sheds light on the primary logical connection that leads Geryon from "roses" to "horses," namely a transposition of sounds rather than any translation of concepts. Geryon's connections between two seemingly visual images, the rose and the horse, demonstrate the invisible workings of language.

In Geryon's enigmatic photograph, the roses are on fire; distances shift as Carson brings additional images together to reveal their kinship. The contours of Moses' burning bush from the book of Exodus—a sign of God made visible—are apparent in Geryon's rose bush, especially since the flowers themselves grip the "dark like prophets." Geryon's photo also recalls the image of "fire and roses" in "Little Gidding," the fourth of T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* (223). In this poem about revisiting a "familiar compound ghost" (217), Eliot's burning roses are ambiguous emblems of time's passing and are used to conjure both endings—"Dust [from the ashes of a burnt rose] in the air suspended / Marks the place where a story ended" (216)—and beginnings—"All manner of things shall be well / when [. . .] / the fire and the rose are one" (223). For both Eliot and the book of Exodus, burning is linked to continuity rather than destruction; Moses' bush is miraculously untouched by the fire, while in Eliot's poem, the fire prompts renewal. Thus connoting endurance and eternity, the burning roses offer a fitting corrective to the devastation connoted by the image of horses in war. It should be apparent that the complex metaphorical framing provided by Geryon's "helpful" explanations is essential to the meaning of the untitled piece. Whether or not their sources are located intertextually in words or pictures, what is at stake in the analogies Geryon lays out as part of the frame is a perspective on those constant themes "identity memory eternity" (149).

Situated just past the limits of the visible, Geryon's photographs refuse to show merely what has been seen. Instead, they "show seeing" itself (Mitchell). This seeing, however, is planted firmly on the side of *logos*, and is firmly committed to the revisionary. Through Geryon, Carson shows seeing inflected through an implicit critique of violence. Presenting reversals—like photo negatives—of the usual tropes of violence, the portraits of

Autobiography revise the way we look at heroism and victimhood. This seeing is also inflected through a critique of disembodied vision. The portraits' synaesthetic qualities and the ways their meaning emerges from a mediation of word and image guarantee that their meaning climbs up inside and vibrates through the whole body. Finally, this seeing is inflected through a commitment to a dialectic of flux and duration. Carson believes that the image produced by a single phrase can compress an infinity of moments of time on its surface, and that an archaeological excavation of the past can animate what has been buried and even bring new things to life.

8. Reaching to Know

Through the deft strategies of revision and reversal made possible by Geryon's impossible photographic portraits, Carson's *Autobiography* brings us to "one of those moments / that is the opposite of blindness" in which nothing less than "the world" passes back and forth between our eyes (*Autobiography* 39). Clearly, in this image of an epiphany shared by two observers, she wishes to conjure more than mere physical sight, which extends "only to the surface of bodies" (*Economy* 50). Carson's interests are in the red meat, in what lies unseen underneath surfaces and appearances.

In her other more properly scholarly writings, Carson has explicitly developed a theory that remains only implicit in *Autobiography* about the hazards of understanding seeing as something we do only with our eyes. In *Economy of the Unlost*, she recalls Simonides' famous fragment in which he says "the word is a picture of things" (*Economy* 47). Against a reading of the phrase as a commitment to put words to the service of the visible world, Carson argues that Simonides means to conjure words' power to "point beyond themselves toward something no eye can see and no painter can paint" (51). From her analysis of Simonides' fragment, Carson makes it possible to arrive at an understanding that reality is twofold (19): visible and invisible worlds rest side by side (45). "The way to know" this dual reality, she echoes elsewhere in a poem, "is not by staring hard" (*Men* 11). The invisible world, simply put, is not accessible to the eyes or to the arts that restrict their gaze to the surface of things. Instead, using an image that brings together body and mind, she stipulates that to know, one must "reach— / mind empty / towards that thing you should know // until you get it" (11).

Reaching is what Carson does when she dips into the materials of a dead and vanished past and inserts it into the living present (*Economy* 73) and what she does when she mates disparate things in the body of her text. It is

what Carson asks her readers to do as they try to locate the connective tissues that bridge the spaces between the different segments she has positioned side by side. More important, as she demonstrates in the poetic legends to the portraits in Geryon's autobiography, reaching is all around us: it is the work of metaphoric language. Buried here beneath Carson's invitation to reach is a reference to Aristotle, who, in *On Metaphor*, writes that "All men by their nature reach out to know" (*Eros* 70). How can metaphor activate the kind of knowing that is conveyed in this image of reaching? Why is such reaching necessary in the first place?

In *Eros the Bittersweet*, Carson takes us to a moment in cultural history when our perceptual abilities were re-oriented away from the audio-tactile and towards the visual—the moment of alphabetization:

> As the audio-tactile world of the oral culture is transformed into a world of words on paper where vision is the principal conveyor of information, a reorientation of perceptual abilities begins to take place within the individual. (43)

One consequence of the new demands placed on vision, Carson suggests, is a global desensorialization of word and reader, and the introduction of distancing in the communication act:

> Literacy desensorializes words and reader. A reader must disconnect himself from the influx of sense impressions transmitted by nose, ear, tongue and skin if he is to concentrate upon his reading. A written text separates words from one another, separates words from the environment, separates words from the reader (or writer) and separates the reader (or writer) from his environment. Separation is painful. (50)

Metaphor and other virtuoso "tactics of imagination" (69) which "shift distances" from far to near (73) work against this separation.

Metaphor connects words to each other, to their environment, and to the reader or writer. Metaphor also connects reader and writer to each other. (Ted Cohen explores this notion when he argues that metaphor cultivates intimacy and community [6].) Metaphoric thinking is cognitive and imaginative, but it also is sensory and conveys powerful feeling (Ricoeur 154). It is dynamic, introducing motion into stasis and duration into flux, just as it fragments experiences and then reconnects them in new ways. And even more important, metaphor is liberating. As David Williams puts it, metaphor "jars the mind by disordering our expectations. . . . At the same time, we enjoy it . . . because while it disturbs, metaphor also frees the mind from its habitual course" (41). As a monstrous (that is hybrid, disorderly, and powerful) practice, metaphor demonstrates "what is proper to man" (Derrida, "White" 246).

Long ago, Carson argues in *Autobiography*, a poet named Stesichoros broke free from a restrictive cultural logic where connections were based on contiguity and association and entered into the realm of metaphor, where connections were limitless. In so doing, he undid "the latches" and "released being" (*Autobiography* 5). This connective gesture, one that Geryon repeats with every metaphor-driven image in his "autobiography," one that Carson repeats as she re-envisions this story about the things a monster can demonstrate, is one we can repeat every time we allow words and their deferral, which is "beautiful," "foiled," and "endless" (*Eros* 29), to take us to the edge. Outside things are mortal, Carson shows us in *Autobiography of Red*, but the realm of metaphoric language connects us back to time and thus to duration. Outside things can only be known through their surfaces, but the realm of metaphoric language lets us get to their meat and in so doing, can restore our own embodied pleasures. In response to a question about "a sort of concealment drama going on in [his] work" in the "Interview" staged with Stesichoros at the end of *Autobiography*, Stesichoros offers to tackle the question of "blindness" (147). "First," he insists, "I must tell about seeing" (147). And this is the point Carson's study of metaphor intends to make: until we understand that telling sets seeing into motion, we will remain blind to the world of things needing to be uncovered. Poetic telling invites us to bridge the gaps between the disparate things we see and lets us reach beyond "outside" things to connect with immortality itself.

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Roger Nash

Summer Solstice

I

On this longest day, sunlight can even be heard.
At noon, it's the hiss of hot whetstones.
By afternoon, gongs announce messengers.
We wait, but only more light arrives.

Light arrives all at once.
Like a girl in a starched cotton dress,
knees brown as walnuts. Like sorrow,
as much as love, at first sight.

The painter, Turner, said as he died:
"The sun is God." Breasts forming
on the trees shine with young apples.
Light prays entirely by itself.

II

Light says to the exile, "I'm your country."
It stamps the blue passport of the sea,
to travel anywhere. Waves hold up
suitcases that bulge with sea-weed and hope.

Today, the unceasing light makes
cracked bells ring in tumbled
foundries, all on their own. It's the true
resurrection: of bells and orange blossom.

III

On this longest day, even stalactites
in caves can flicker: endless dark
twirls of café au lait and tobacco.

Villages spin around their glittering weather-vanes.
East is west. To leave is to stay.
To travel is to arrive before your mind got started.

IV

Everything that happened today, has happened.
What did not happen, did that equally
visibly, too. On this one day,
the unconceived work equal shifts.

The sun is a decisive butterfly. It won't leave
the orange tree. Smoke from the bakery
won't leave the chimney. Scissors won't renounce
the shape of a cross. Hearts won't renounce
the shape of their love. If it cuts us, it cuts.

Laurie Kruk

"All Voices Belong to Me"
An Interview with Neil Bissoondath

Neil Bissoondath, born in Trinidad in 1955, emigrated to Canada when he was eighteen. Since his arrival, he has built a distinguished career as a fiction writer and essayist. His first volume of short stories, *Digging Up the Mountains*, appeared in 1985; a novel set in the Caribbean, *A Casual Brutality*, was published in 1988. In these works, as well as in his second story collection, *On the Eve of Uncertain Tomorrows* (1990), Bissoondath explored lives of dislocation, oppression, and uncertainty. *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada* (1994) attracted much attention, both positive and negative, and illustrated his interest in political debate. He has gone on to write three more novels: *The Innocence of Age* (1992), *The Worlds Within Her* (1998), and *Doing the Heart Good* (2002). Bissoondath also teaches at Université Laval in Quebec City.

I met Neil Bissoondath in Quebec in May 2001, just a month after the controversial summit on the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Bissoondath's fascination with border crossing made him a thoughtful observer of the move towards globalization and freer trade. After some conversation on the benefits and risks of this trend, we turned to explicitly literary matters.

LK I've tried to organize my questions around my main interest, which is short stories and the concept of "voice," used literally, as well as invoking larger, metaphorical meanings. I'm using the term "voice" here to suggest everything that we present ourselves as being, and our current wisdom is that we partly construct our voice, and we partly inherit it too.

Alistair MacLeod, for instance, is more on the "inheritance" side and Timothy Findley more on the "constructed" side. So I'm interested in where writers place themselves. All the writers I've met have resisted being pigeonholed—this is the way it should be. But they are all aware of having multiple and even contradictory identifications or affiliations—perhaps like Canada itself. Different markers of voice are important to different people. The main ones include gender difference, especially for the women . . . . But men are gendered, too, aren't they?

NB In *Selling Illusions*, I quote Nadine Gordimer on that, and I think she's right: essentially all novelists are androgynous. I've written stories, I've written a novel [*The Worlds Within Her*] in female voices, and I've always been attracted to female voices. It never seemed to me to be something that had to be considered; it simply happened in the telling of the story.

With *Digging Up the Mountains*, it was my editor who mentioned it to me: "You seem to know the voices." And it got me thinking, if that's so, why? And it may be linked to the fact that I grew up surrounded by lots of women, lots of strong, imposing, intelligent women. For instance, my grandmother Naipaul, who was to all appearances a traditional Hindu woman, wearing her *ohrni* [a thin head veil], dressing very conservatively and going to her temple every week, yet at the same time was the manager of a quarry! And every day she put a hardhat on top of her *ohrni* and gave orders to the 250-pound men, telling them where to place their dynamite and where to drive their tractors, and it's one of those astonishing images. And I was surrounded by aunts who were university professors, teachers, widely read, widely travelled. They were just part of my world.

LK Would you include your mother as another example?

NB Absolutely—she was a teacher and the most widely read person I've ever known, actually.

My attitude towards writing stories or novels is that all voices belong to me: if there is a voice that tells a story, that voice is simply part of me. And whether that voice is masculine or feminine, young or old, white, black, yellow, brown, or green has nothing to do with me. What interests me is the *world* and the *experience* of that voice, what it's helping me try to see, and understand.

LK I certainly notice in your second collection of stories, *On the Eve of Uncertain Tomorrows*, that you're ranging more widely with different

world views, different nationalities, ages. It becomes more cosmopolitan than *Digging*.

NB My own life, my own experience, has gone beyond the Caribbean. As with character, place: all places belong to me. I don't feel that I'm representative in my writing of *any* kind of label. I tend to follow my interests, and my interests vary. My favourite body of literature is nineteenth-century Russian writing. I love Japanese writing as well. None of these are choices. These are simply things that appeal to me, that speak to me in ways that I couldn't necessarily articulate.

My favourite country in the world is Spain. My favourite poet is García Lorca; I fell in love with his poetry. And many years later, 1984, when I got my first cheque for *Digging*, I bought a ticket to Spain because I had friends living in Barcelona. And I remember getting off the plane and suddenly feeling at home. There was this strange electricity at the airport that told me, "This is another place where you somehow belong."

Maybe it has something to do with the fact that I grew up in Trinidad wanting to leave. And so it seemed to me from the very beginning that the world was mine to discover. And that's the way I've essentially gone about living my life.

LK I'm interested also in the idea that you fell in love with Spain partly through reading Spanish poetry. The writer's *voice* drew you in, creating a world for you to enter. In an interview, you said: "Sometimes I hear my father's voice in myself. I don't like it, but I know where it comes from."[1] So how does that voice inform your writing?

NB When I start writing a short story, or a novel, like many writers, I have no idea what it's about or where it's going. It usually starts with a voice, a scene, a character taking me into a world that I'm not aware is in my head. And as I write, these things emerge naturally—I don't go in search of them—and it's at the *end* of the writing process that I can then step back and look at what I've written more consciously. I can begin to recognize things. And I can recognize that when I was ten, this particular thing happened, or when I was fifteen, somebody said this. I can hear my father in what I've written, and sometimes, of course, when I'm speaking—these voices emerge.

So all of that baggage is there—nothing is consciously sought, but nothing is consciously locked out either. And I try to allow my imagination to simply take all that, to meld things, spin things, and create a story.

LK You don't say, "I'd like this to be about"—

NB No, then I'd write an essay. Which is why I wrote *Selling Illusions.* The book was my publisher's idea, but then I thought it was a good idea and I knew what it was going to be about. With my fiction, I have no thesis. There *is* a thesis there, but I recognize it only at the end.

One of the tricks to writing for me is to in fact wait until the moment when I know in my gut that the right voice is there. There comes a moment when I know it's going to be first person or third person, present tense or past tense. And who the character is. But I don't go in search of those details; there comes a moment when they're there, and I know that's how the story is going to be writing itself.

There is a more conscious process which comes with the second draft. I'm writing a novel now[2]—I won't tell you what it's about—but the process is very much like that. I wasn't planning on writing this novel; I was planning on writing a book about Spain. And two, three months ago, I found myself getting agitated, saw myself going quiet at home. I didn't quite know what was happening. And then I realized that there was a character who was trying to emerge, who I'm still trying to get to know . . . from a world I've never been to, but I've read about, and I think has constructed itself because I've read enough about it. It got to the point where I simply had to start writing.

But for some reason this novel insists on being written by hand in pencil. And it's simply emerging that it's something to do with the rhythm, something to do with the pace at which the character is telling me about what's happening. My job as a writer is to find the words to be faithful to what they're showing me.

LK I'd like to quote from a critic: "Whether or not they are immigrants to Canada, Bissoondath's characters rename and reinvent themselves."[3] Is it your view that all identity *is* a construction?

NB I recognize that I've been lucky in the life that I've had. I recognize that there are people who don't have the freedom to construct themselves or remake themselves, but I do think it's possible to say that I will not be constrained by certain things that don't speak to me as an individual human being, and that I will reject certain things because I don't think that they are right, and I will acquire other values. That's a kind of freedom, and I've been lucky enough to have that freedom.

I came here as an immigrant of my own free will. And I think that's the primary freedom that can then allow me to move on. But if I had

been obliged to come here, fleeing a war, or some kind of economic deprivation, it would be different.

LK There are people who will say to you, "What about racial injustice, what about economic injustice, what about sexual discrimination—all these categories of oppression, means of holding people back?"

NB Yes, but I think that there's also a certain truth to this: if you accept the chains that others will put on you, then you become their victim. I think one can make a choice, as an individual, to simply not be constrained. Those injustices exist, and they have to be fought, and fought at every level we have, democratically. But at the same time, individuals have choice.

LK "The rhetoric of victimization"—that's another term that came up in *Selling Illusions*. At a certain point, you're right: it can become passivity and even apathy, because when do you escape from that group identity? You can make a hierarchy of injustices, but after a while, if that's all it is, it starts to seem like a waste of time.

NB It does. I think we are particularly lucky in Canada in that we do live in a liberal, open, democratic society, one that has made many efforts to protect the rights of its citizens. Look at Trudeau's Charter of Rights and Freedoms; here in Quebec, we have the same thing. We live in a society that's ruled by law.

Too often I will hear people condemn Canadian society as being racist or Quebec society as being fascist. Those are blanket statements that reduce to a kind of stereotype the society you're speaking about. We have to recognize not just the complexities of ourselves, but also of the societies in which we live. And if you run into a racist tomorrow, there will be a hundred other people who are not racist.

LK Another Trinidad-born Canadian writer, Claire Harris, has said something interesting about origins: "I don't think it matters where you were born—I think it matters to whom you were born. [In] Third World countries, it is the difference between life and death."[4] Do you agree?

NB I think it's probably right about most Third World countries, but it's also true of anywhere: the life that you lead depends a great deal on to whom you were born, the parents you had, the family you grew up in, the influences they bring to bear. If I am a writer today, and if I love books and reading, it's because of the family into which I was born. If I love travel, it's because of my family.

LK Yet there has to be a certain financial basis of support.

NB Yes, there has to be a certain financial basis, but it doesn't have to be huge.

LK Coming back to what you feel you left behind in Trinidad, you've also said you feel it was a very "macho" society. In what ways?

NB I was the only one of my generation who enjoyed reading. Everybody else wanted to go fishing, hunting, or was interested in cars—those "macho" subjects. Traditional "boy" activities. And there was very little room for someone like myself. I had to fight to make that space for myself. But I don't believe that the book, or reading, are facing imminent death. I also think there's a critical mass of readers which we'll always have.

LK Another topic I'm interested in is family fictions—family not necessarily as the nuclear unit, but communities as well, found families, chosen groupings. A comment by you about family which intrigued me was "Leaving Trinidad at eighteen, I never really got to meet my parents as an adult. My mother died before any of that could be done."[5] She died when you were still quite young?

NB No, she died when I was twenty-nine, in 1984. But you've got to remember I left Trinidad at eighteen—and I saw my parents, maybe, three times? I went back twice and then we met in New York one time. And my dream was as an adult with *Digging*, published on my thirtieth birthday, that there I would have an opportunity to reconnect with them as an adult.

LK And it's often tricky, isn't it, sharing your writing with family, for, in recognizing incidents you've drawn on from your childhood, or your life, family members may often feel that the writing is a kind of exposure, even betrayal.

NB Yet I knew that in *Digging* there was none—no autobiography. No one would recognize themselves.

There was a writer who once published a novel that was very well received and said, "Oh I couldn't have published it while my mother was still alive." That was not a problem for me. I'm intrigued by other people's lives, I'm intrigued by trying to understand them, what they've lived through and how they've been shaped.

LK I'm thinking of Alistair Ramgoolam, who appears first in "Insecurity" in *Digging*, and then again in "Security," in *On the Eve of Uncertain Tomorrows*. There he appears in Canada, but ironically, he feels far *less* secure now. It's a very poignant story, and it goes deeper into Alistair, his loss of identity, authority and control, and seems to end with him losing consciousness. In "Security," the second story dealing with Alistair Ramgoolam, you've said you were dealing a bit with your father.

NB Yes, but I saw that afterwards . . . it was my father, but it was also my uncles, people I knew who were living in an unstable society, people who were doing whatever they could to secure a future, because they were afraid, certain that one day everything would fall apart, and they would have to run.

The picture of Mr. Ramgoolam is not at all my father, in fact. It was simply the idea of living with that insecurity. I think the first story "Insecurity" is very much about a man trying to *find* some control, somewhere, and then, in the end, losing it. In fact, he ends up living the kind of life that he was preparing for—except that that life *means* a total loss of control.

LK You obviously reflect, fictionally, being part of a Caribbean "family" or community in your stories, where the narrator or protagonist is often being brought along, somewhat reluctantly, in order to be introduced to a larger group, connected by that shared origin and experience of emigration. You skewer the idea of sticking together for only that reason, satirically, in several stories of people who are very unpleasant or pretentious, so that ideal of cultural community shatters.

NB Exactly. And I realized eventually that, personally, I wasn't interested in that kind of life—being part of a community where people would get together and bemoan the fact that there were no sandy beaches outside.

LK It's a kind of victimization, again?

NB I think it's a kind of radioactive nostalgia. It's poisonous. The number of times that I heard the comment, "Well, Canada's like that—Canada's racist, Canada's this or that," from people who arrived in Toronto, settled in *an* apartment, went to work in *a* neighbourhood, returned to that apartment and encountered Canada at work and then through television, but decided that they knew what Canada was about and that they felt that they could justifiably condemn Canada. . . . But returning to family, I treasure my family; I enjoy family life a great deal.

LK Have you kept ties with your other relatives—uncles, aunts, cousins?

NB No, the extended family holds little appeal for me. I had the freedom to pick and choose. There are two aunts that I'm in touch with and an uncle. There are these aunts and my uncle V. S. Naipaul, who lives in London. We're in touch.

LK I see in *A Casual Brutality* the island custom that any relative can drop in at any time—

NB Which is precisely why I decided to pick and choose.

LK But it is the cultural norm, isn't it? Your relatives are physically close, and then they come into your space—

NB Absolutely. And they would come and suck all the air from around you. It was extremely claustrophobic. It was the kind of society where privacy was *not* valued at all. Before the demands of family and friendship, your own individual, personal life did not matter.

I'm not a joiner, I've never been a joiner. And that's part of it as well. I would never belong to a political party, and in the same way, I don't want to belong to any large extended family which will put demands on you.

LK Yet when you have children of your own, this is part of the motivation for sustaining these family ties. You'll tell your daughter about your mother, and you will create *her* voice, again. And maybe you have already brought her voice, perhaps with others, into your writing already—like the passage you read last night from *The Worlds Within Her*.[6] The older woman speaker, Shakti.

NB It comes from the voices of all those women I grew up with. That strength, that humour, that no-nonsense attitude. That's my mother, that's my Aunt Savi in Trinidad, my Aunt Mira who lives in Florida, my Aunt Nalla in London. It's a Naipaul voice.

LK So, what do you want your daughter to carry with her in terms of family heritage?

NB A sense that she's a very complex little girl. That she is shaped by two very different histories, two very different families. She knows the stories of my family, she knows about leaving India a century ago, and the struggles of those early generations. She knows that her grandfathers Naipaul and Bissoondath both started life in great poverty, working in the sugar cane plantations, and each of them, through their own efforts, changed the lives of their families dramatically. The sense I want to give her is that she belongs everywhere.

LK Let's talk a bit about the short story now. I'm obviously interested in what makes a short story different from a novel. It's a vexing question, because in some ways impossible to answer! Yet I think there's a closer association of story with voice, *character* voice, because there's often only one.

NB I have the same ambitions for the short story as I have for the novel. When a reader has finished a short story of mine, I want them to have the sense that they've entered a world, and they've encountered lives,

and they've come away with a sense of fullness. Not just that they've seen a snapshot, or a short documentary film, but that they've seen a movie.

I am no more or less attracted to the short story than to the novel. And that goes back to my writing process. When a character comes to me, I know in my gut whether this is going to be a short story or a novel. I sense the length of it. Even not knowing the details, there is something that tells me this is a short story as opposed to a novel. I also tend to write fairly long short stories. My short story manuscripts tend to be between thirty and thirty-five pages each, which is longer than the norm, I'm told.

LK Yes, you can compare a novel to a film, or a story to a snapshot, which sounds much more static and limited. I mean, look at Munro's short stories or Mavis Gallant's. It's fascinating what *can* be done in a short space of time or limited amount of words and usually with a single narrating voice, because in a novel, it's more do-able to have many voices. The reader's prepared for that, whereas to shift speakers in a short story—it seems there isn't enough time.

NB No, there isn't enough time in a short story to shift voice, although there's no technical reason why it couldn't be done.

LK I don't recall noting such a shift in your short stories, for instance.

NB No, but maybe I'll try it now. [laughs]

LK To go back to your first collection, *Digging*, I was most deeply affected by "Counting the Wind."

NB It's one of my favourite stories. I wrote it in two weeks. I remember it as a wonderful experience because my editor said, "I think we need one more story to round out the collection," and I said to her, "Well, I think I have something in my head."

LK And you also switched perspectives, with the same character focus, from first person to third person, without any explanation. That *was* different for you.

NB Oh, was that ever strange! Because the story wrote itself—I wrote the first section in one person, and then it came to an end. And then the other section came to me—in a different person. And I tried fighting it. I tried saying, "No, I'm going to continue as I began." But it wouldn't work. The story would not advance. And so I said, "Okay, I've got to get it done, because my editor is waiting for it. So I'm just going to do it, and at the end, I'll go back, look and see which person I should use. I'll decide later." Except that the story wrote itself as moving back and forth,

and in the end, I decided, there was no way I could change it, and so I gave it to her, and she thought it worked.

LK I found it gave an inside/outside shift, or a double perspective. Obviously, first person is more intense and intimate. You can do a lot to create voice that way, and you've used first-person speakers in the Caribbean island dialect—that expressive, non-standard English used in "Dancing" [*Digging*] and "Cracks and Keyholes" [*On the Eve*], which reflects a whole different mindset.

NB Yes, in "Dancing," the character would have spoken that way—that's how I heard her voice. So I did what I could to capture the rhythm.

Each story has got its own position, in which it places me, in order for me to write it. And I have to find that position, defining that position in terms of which narrative perspective, or person, or which tense. And I don't have a preference.

LK Shifting from first-person voice to third-person in "Counting the Wind" gives the reader both the feeling of being inside and then the more detached view from outside. It is jarring, of course, the schizophrenic narration, but it could be related to the whole dehumanization of the situation the man is in.

NB I think that's how it works, and I think that's *why* it works. The schizophrenia you mention, I think that's exactly it. He's got this personal situation with his wife and baby, and then he's got this other world, this other life, which is important in itself.

LK And the one invades the other. So you've never made the "mistake" where you started writing a short story, and it became a novel? Or the other way?

NB No, that hasn't happened. What has happened with *Doing the Heart Good*—that started as one short story. And then I found, as with Mr. Ramgoolam, the voice came back. What happened was that this one story was here, a fairly long story. And over a period of time, I found that the same character was telling more stories. And so I wrote them. And then he added something. These stories were written over a long period of time. He kept adding to his life. I didn't intend to write a collection or anything like that. And then, as I learned more about him, I understood where he was.

Essentially what this book has turned out to be is the same character, relating his life in a series of stories but also linking them all by means of a present tense that gives a kind of unity to the entire thing. So I think of

it as a novel, but its form is a blend of the short story and the novel.

The structure is as follows: one evening, Christmas Eve, and we start with him there, and end with him having dinner, just three or four hours in the present time. That's the present frame. And then, scattered throughout it, are these stories that he's written.

LK Your protagonist is a writer?

NB No, he's not a writer. He's a teacher, and he's written these stories because he's afraid that he's going to die and will be forgotten. And this is a desperate attempt to survive his death.

LK Did you publish any of these original stories separately?

NB No. I just put them aside, as I was working on other things. This happens to me once in a while. For instance, while working on *The Worlds Within Her*—the novel would be there, but suddenly there would be a story to write. And I would put it aside, and work on the story when I had the time. Other times, the urge would be strong enough that I would work on the story alone, which usually takes me four to six weeks. And then go back to the novel.

So I just kept these stories in a file folder, where they kept piling up, and I realized it was the same character, coming back.

LK Are there any obvious influences, or people you admire, especially in the short story—in Canada, or elsewhere?

NB The problem with a question like that is there are so many people I admire! I will tell you about a writer I've just discovered; she's well known in the United States and less well known here: Jhumpa Lahiri. She's a New Yorker and she won all these prizes, and she publishes in the *New Yorker*. And she's a wonderful short story writer. Not easy to find, for some reason, but she won the Pulitzer Prize.

Caryl Phillips is another example, an English novelist from the Caribbean who's been shortlisted for the Booker Prize. His book, *Crossing the River*, is one of the most moving I've ever read.

LK Of course, people have made much of the family connection with your uncle V. S. Naipaul.

NB Yes, they've tried. [laughs] It doesn't affect me one way or the other.

LK Except that you've had his example, his model . . . .

NB Yes, he's always been an example or a model, not as a writer but as a certain kind of lifestyle and approach to life. I mean, I'm a writer because of him; I grew up surrounded by his books on my mother's bookshelf. And that told me, "I could do that." And when I left Trinidad, he sent me a

letter, saying how wonderful the world was [and that I should] discover it. And he was encouraging with *Digging*. But I never felt intimidated by being related to V. S. Naipaul or anything like that. I never felt that I should be following in his footsteps. I think I was always aware that every writer makes his own path. The truth is, I write for myself. I wouldn't know how to categorize my work.

LK One thing you did say on this topic: "I like a page to look like a page."[7] What does that mean for you?

NB Well, I'm not a great fan of experimental writing. I like paragraphs, I like periods, I like commas, and I think they have important roles to play in the shaping of a story and the shaping of a page. I think not only of the rhythm of the words but also the way writing appeals to the eye. I think writing has to appeal to the eye as well—the shape of the page.

So often these experiments strike me as attempts to be clever. If you're going to be telling a story—I have a very traditional approach. I think it's partly why the nineteenth-century Russians appeal to me. In the end, you can be as clever as you want to be, but if what you are writing does not speak to the human heart and does not speak to the absolute reality of people's lives, then you're sort of doodling around with the page. This is a totally personal judgement and has nothing to do with anything except that this is what does, or does not, appeal to me. I become very impatient when I get a sense that a writer is trying to be clever. Clever for the sake of being clever.

LK Do you read your work aloud? Is that important to you?

NB To myself, yes. And I enjoy doing readings. The ear tells you a lot, but also the way it *looks*. You know, there are certain writers that I simply can't bother to read. Julio Cortazar, for example, with his pages of text with no break, no paragraphs. It doesn't please my eye. It tires my eye, and I don't think in that way. I don't think in huge blocks of text. So I suppose in the area of form, I'm a traditional writer.

LK Also, you've been very clear in saying that "Literature is literature; it's not politics."[8] Obviously, some writers would vehemently disagree with that. I guess maybe it comes down to how we define "politics," doesn't it? Some of your character studies, such as "The Revolutionary," "A Visit to a Failed Artist," "Kira and Anya," "Smoke," appear satiric in the Swiftian vein. The satirist's eye seems to be a political eye, in many ways.

NB Well, one of the themes that drives my writing—and I'm very interested personally in politics because it's one of those areas in which you see

human personality and the human being in its clearest form—is the effect of politics on people's lives. I believe strongly that the individual must have as much freedom as possible within a society to create his or her own life, yet politics will influence our lives in many ways, every day. And I'm interested in that dynamic. So politics, politicians have come into my writing.

But I don't have any ideology to sell, and if I did, I don't think the place to sell it would be in fiction. I've been called, in print, fascist, communist, a feminist because of the story "The Cage." Because of the portrait of the main character's wife in *A Casual Brutality*, I've been called a misogynist because she wasn't a very pretty woman. It was M. NourbeSe Philip who accused me, in an essay, of attacking Canadian womanhood because the portrait wasn't a very attractive one. But she wasn't an attractive woman. So I'm not trying to sell anything here—each character has to stand on his or her merits. Don't try to identify what Neil Bissoondath believes politically by reading his fiction. *Selling Illusions* is a different matter.

LK I appreciate your honesty. The "appropriation of voice" controversy which you wrote about in *Selling Illusions* is, I think, over now.

NB Yes, I think it was a period that was lived through, but the inherent absurdities were so clear.

LK But I guess the other side of that debate is to make sure that all people have opportunities to be heard, to be published, right?

NB Absolutely. I remember being at a writers' festival, and there were two Native women writers on this panel, and, quite frankly, I had read their work, and they were not good writers. But they did such a wonderful job of crying and complaining that the audience dared not object. Their point was "I should be published because I am a Native person who is trying to give voice to my people." And my point is that, one, you weren't elected, and two, you're not a very good writer. Those are not grounds for demanding that you be published! I think the writing has to be, in the first place, *good writing*. And then you can have it play any role you like. You know, my uncle [V. S. Naipaul] always said he's not a literary doctor. He's not there to cure ills; we have people who are there to do that.

I think a novel can succeed in teaching, but I don't think that should be the initial aim of the novelist as he sits down to try to write. If people read your book and they simply get a good cry, great; if they feel they have learned something, terrific. If they feel that they have not wasted

their time, great; if they feel that some of these characters have informed their lives in some kind of small way, that's wonderful. If they've been simply entertained, that's fine too. In fact I find it interesting that you mentioned "Kira and Anya" as being a satirical story because it's not meant as such.

LK I saw the juxtaposition of these women's opposed political positions as in some way a mockery of extremes.

NB But I think that's how extremes are. In fact, the man himself, Seepersad [the former politician being interviewed by Kira and Anya] is someone that I don't particularly like. And I don't like Mr. Ramgoolam. But there is something about both of them that I find very touching at the same time. I don't mean to skewer any of them.

"The Revolutionary" is a whole other thing, however. It *is* an attempt to write a satirical piece.

LK And there, you presumably want people to come away with something they've learned?

NB I'd like them to have a good laugh.

LK And to see what they're laughing at?

NB Sure. I fear ideology; I fear ideology of any kind, whether left-wing ideology as in "The Revolutionary," or nationalist ideology as in Yasmin's father [in *The Worlds Within Her*], or any kind of ideology. Religious ideology. Any system of beliefs that claims to have all of the answers goes counter to the true nature of human personality, which is one of contradiction.

LK I want to comment now on your last statement, at the end of *Selling Illusions*, which, as you have said, is in many ways a very personal book. Some political science reviewers have criticized it for not being theorized enough in that area; on the other hand, you have drawn from sources in the public domain, so it has a popular appeal. You were speaking as a writer, not as a member of a political party.

NB Nor as a specialist of any kind. But I wanted to do a book that was *not* by a specialist, a book that would speak to people who were living this every day, who weren't studying it, who were seeing themselves living day by day with this Multiculturalism Policy.

What's special about *Selling Illusions* is that it's nothing new; I'm not the only one to have these feelings about multiculturalism. There are hundreds of thousands of people across this country who have these feelings, except that they haven't put them together in a book. And when

I did that, it brought out the most diverse—ethnically, racially—set of people. And that's what was gratifying about it, and that's why I didn't want to do an academic book. I didn't want to be quoting too many things from sociological studies. I wanted to say, "Let's take a look at the everyday level—newspaper articles, films, the popular media." I wanted it at that level. And that's what was able to speak to people, I think.

LK At the end of it you said, and this sounds to me now like your credo as a writer: "I will continue to pursue, to the best of my ability, the demystification of the Other." I was thinking, is it possible ever to demystify the Other, entirely?

NB Ah, no—happily. That can never, ever be done entirely; human beings are much too complex for that. But that's part of the fun, and one of our roles as human beings: to try to understand others who are so different, in the full knowledge that I may think I understand now, but, God, tomorrow, something's going to happen and change that person in ways I can't anticipate, and I have to try and understand that too. That's what I enjoy doing as a novelist.

That's why I say you can't find the autobiography of Neil Bissoondath in his fiction. For instance, I try to put myself into the skin of Joaquin, in "On the Eve of Uncertain Tomorrows," and to try to sense what his reality, daily reality, is like. To try to demystify for myself a life that is not mine, an experience that is not mine.

LK And you do this in part by reading, by researching, what it was like to be a victim of political torture, escaped to a new country? And partly imagining?

NB By imagining, yes. Reading everything from newspapers, to official reports . . . meeting people. That will kick off fiction. These are all personal interests; I'm interested in what people go through in political oppression. But for me to enter that world, it will take, usually, something that I've seen that doesn't strike me at the time.

Remember the man's hands in "On the Eve of Uncertain Tomorrows," the description of his hands? A few years ago, in Toronto, there was a small coffee house on the Danforth, and there was a group of Chilean exiles who used to play there every evening. They were popular for a while. And I remember the drummer had no thumbs. They'd been removed by the secret police. And that stayed with me: the damage that could be done to hands.

LK That's an example of an encounter with "otherness." But you have also

said elsewhere that "every country is racist, unless it is a country that has only one race living in it."[9] In other words, this is almost inevitable.

NB Racism is part of the human experience.

LK We're always looking for otherness, then?

NB Well, there's difference, and so long as there's difference, there's fear. And that will manifest itself in various ways. We're most at ease with the familiar; it's a normal human reaction. How far you take that reaction, how you deal with that unease, is the question. I think it's essential for writers to approach difference—if you don't, what are you going to write about?

LK But also the otherness in the *self*—we change, as well.

NB Absolutely.

LK So, where do "self" and "other" overlap? There's often an otherness we personally own but don't want to acknowledge.

NB I think you have to acknowledge it. Unless you do that, you can't begin to approach the other who is external to yourself.

LK Exploring characters that you don't especially like, as well?

NB Oh, that I particularly enjoy. When I start off and I don't like a character, the challenge is to understand enough about his life to begin to feel for him. That's when I know a story is working.

All my characters are part of me, but I don't love everything about myself, so I don't love all my characters. Often, they say or do things that I don't like, that I disagree with—but that's who they are.

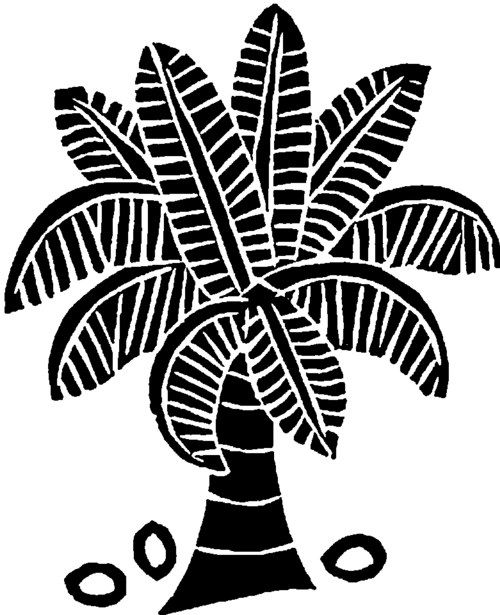
LK Does it appear that we often need to invent difference or otherness where it doesn't exist, then?

NB Let's face it: discovering someone else—making those connections, demystifying—takes an effort. It's easier to say, "Well, he's different." Or "They're different." And not necessarily in a vicious kind of way, just that you don't bother to make the effort to get through the *real* differences as well as the *apparent* differences to find out that this is a human being who has the same feelings, fears, desires, as you do. And that's where emphasizing difference works counter to what I see as the *true* adventure in life, in fact: discovering.

Quebec City,
May 2001

NOTES

1 Penny van Toorn, "Building on Common Ground: An Interview with Neil Bissoondath," *Canadian Literature* 147 (Winter 1995): 132.
2 Neil Bissoondath, *Doing the Heart Good* (Toronto: Cormorant, 2002). It will be published later in the US.
3 Penny van Toorn, "Positioning Neil Bissoondath: Post-Colonial, Multicultural and National Formations," *New Literatures Review* 27 (Summer 1994): 88.
4 Leslie Sander and Arun Mukherjee, "A Sense of Responsibility: An Interview with Claire Harris,' *West Coast Line* 22.1 (Spring/Summer 1997): 26.
5 Van Toorn, "Building on Common Ground," 128.
6 A reading at the annual conference of the Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English, held May 23–27, 2001 at Université Laval, where Bissoondath teaches.
7 Van Toorn, "Building on Common Ground," 132.
8 Interview with Aruna Srivastava, *Other Solitudes: Canadian Multicultural Fictions*, ed. Linda Hutcheon and Marion Richmond (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1990) 320.
9 Srivastava, 314.



Meredith Quartermain

For Robin Blaser

So what is this After after?

Beginning.

Man or nobody was before

a miracle
a mirror and terrible

Who are you?

The actor possible
only as speaker
cannot will her disclosure
her demon of a shadow
universe
on her shoulder.

Speak in the war.
You will disclose nothing
mere talk
mere propaganda
lip service.

We are
in oracles

parrots as signs

not things

being in between
being webbing

puppets
of invisible hands.

K.V. Skene

Adrift in the Xubaizhai Gallery

(The Hong Kong Museum of Art, Kowloon, 2001)

The Eccentrics

Shadows
step solidly
out of the dark
          catch fire,
          burn
          in the absence
of memory,
of that line, delicate
as a scar,
between yesterday
and today.
       Here, a weathered stone,
       split
       by growing grasses
and a road twist and turns
itself back to hill,
         tree,
         the water below—
a road to someplace real
and not-real
where light has more texture, colour
a soft sheen
that seems to come from within.

Skies
      are sure of birdsong. Clear
and invisible—
                                        flickering
wings
           cross a sun—there
and not-there
and dynasties
fall
through a language I'll never know—
alive
only a sparrow ago.

Carter F. Hanson

Still Here, But Still English

R. E.W. Goodridge and the Performance of Nationality in English Canadian Emigrant Writings

For middle-class English gentlemen who emigrated to Manitoba and the Northwest from 1880 to 1900, performing one's nationality became central to the emigrant's masculinity in a way that it had not for previous generations.[1] Prior to Confederation, class-conscious emigrants from England's middle ranks had sought to reassure themselves of their social superiority by invoking education and gentility, as opposed to nationality. Consider these two statements by Catharine Parr Traill in *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836):

> It is education and manners that must distinguish the gentleman in this country. . . . It is the mind that forms the distinction between the classes in [Canada]. 'Knowledge is power!' (62)

> [A]s a British officer must needs be a gentleman and his wife a lady, perhaps we repose quietly on that uncontestable proof of our gentility. (195)

During the 1880s, however, several influences converged to make the class distinctions crucial to Traill secondary to nationality in the minds of emigrants to Manitoba. In this decade, Canadian-born Manitobans developed stronger forms of regional and national identity that put English emigrants on the defensive. Manitoba's transformation from a Métis settlement into a British-Ontarian society and its disputes with the federal government over boundaries and railroads solidified a distinct sense of provincial identity. At the same time, a wider Canadian nationalism emerged and brought with it a heightened consciousness about the Canadian character. Most varieties of Canadian nationalism in the 1880s held that the culture of Manitoba should be firmly British and not French (Berger 78–108; Morton 234–250); certainly

nativist suspicion was stronger toward Mennonite and Icelandic settlers than British Protestants, yet genteel English settlers were still a visible minority (under 10 percent of the population) that attracted considerable scorn (Friesen 202, 482). Edward ffolkes, an English gentleman who emigrated to Manitoba in 1880, wrote in his letters home that there is "a great prejudice against English gentlemen [here]—they are generally lazy and proud, and do little work" (74).[2] Such condescension toward Englishmen naturally pricked many English settlers' nationalistic pride.

The emigrant preoccupation with nationality was never merely a reaction to Canadian nationalism, but also a sentiment fueled by developments in England. To be sure, emigrating to Canada had always been tricky for Victorian gentlemen. In Catharine Parr Traill's generation, the economic benefits of emigration were offset by the stigma of class failure and the fear of losing one's gentility through manual labour. These anxieties still existed in the 1880s and were discussed endlessly in the press, but with the democratization of the gentlemanly ideal, gentility gradually became seen less as an individual distinction of class and breeding, and more as a masculine icon of nationality, a signature of Englishness itself.[3] Robin Gilmour has argued that the Victorian middle classes so successfully wrested the gentlemanly ideal from the aristocracy and remade it in their own image that by the 1870s any male with a public school education could claim gentlemanly status (Gilmour 5–10). Once he was entrenched in Victorian culture as the embodiment of manliness, the gentleman became inseparable from English conceptions of empire as a civilizing enterprise; as Graham Dawson argues, the "dominant conception of masculine identity—the true 'Englishman'—was both required and underpinned by the dominant version of British national identity in such a way that each reinforced the other" (2).

Emigration posed problems for this model of national and masculine identity, however. In the 1870s, economic depression and a saturated professional job market meant that for many young gentlemen, emigration was the only option. By the 1880s, the steady drain of England's male population overseas fed into fears about a national "crisis of masculinity" that was leading to racial "degeneracy."[4] Though emigration was frequently represented in the public schools as a manly way for a gentleman to serve the empire, Anne Windholz demonstrates that popular British magazines expressed conflicting views of emigration that reveal fears that emigration threatened the gentleman's masculinity, and by extension, England's imperial power (633). If, on the one hand, a gentleman emigrant failed to adapt to condi-

tions in Manitoba and confirmed the popular belief observed by ffolkes that Englishmen were lazy and inept, his failure signified a weakening of English masculinity and imperial resolve. On the other hand, if the emigrant succeeded as a prairie settler, his very success suggested he had lost his gentility and become a vulgar colonist, sacrificing his titles of gentleman and Englishman. These anxieties over nationality and masculinity contributed to the gentleman emigrant's tendency to assert his Englishness and resist assimilation into Canadian culture.

Like the Victorian periodicals discussed by Windholz, autobiographical writings of Canadian immigrants also provide a site for reading conflicts of national identity and genteel manliness. The writings of one English gentleman emigrant, Richard E. W. Goodridge, who settled in Manitoba in 1880, reveal a long struggle over national identity (as well as the narrative strategies Goodridge used to perform his nationality). Goodridge was a retired artillery captain from Devonshire who had served in India; he came to Manitoba not to settle himself, but to establish his three sons. Goodridge purchased a farm near Headingley, just west of Winnipeg, and while he suffered setbacks along the way, his residence in Canada was, overall, pleasant and prosperous. Goodridge recorded his experiences as an emigrant, his opinions about Manitoba, and his advice for would-be settlers in two books, *A Year in Manitoba: Being the Experiences of a Retired Officer in Settling his Sons* (1882) and *The Colonist At Home Again; or, Emigration Not Expatriation* (1889). Initially, Goodridge disliked Manitoba's egalitarianism and ethnic diversity, and he rejected any hybrid sense of nationality or home. Subsequently, however, Goodridge developed a strong affinity for Manitoba, and his enjoyment of the province caused him to view his sojourn in Canada as a renunciation of his Englishness and his masculinity as a gentleman. As a result, Goodridge's later text, *The Colonist At Home Again* (1889), becomes an attempt to prove his Englishness, an attempt that unwittingly reveals Goodridge's complex and indeterminate subjectivity as a Canadian settler.

Richard Goodridge's first book, *A Year in Manitoba*, published in London in 1882, has much in common with other settlers' guides written by Victorian emigrants. While it is autobiographical, its author is not the central focus of the text. Goodridge's intent in *A Year in Manitoba* is not to "write the self," but to convey information and impressions about an external object, Manitoba. Goodridge clearly recognized the market that existed in England for reliable accounts of colonial life, and his book is written with prospective emigrants in mind. If *A Year in Manitoba* does not really func-

tion as autobiography because of its subject matter, in other respects it does belong to the genre, inasmuch as Goodridge speaks confidently in the first person. Goodridge embodies the authoritative "Western man" that Georges Gusdorf theorizes first produced the conditions for autobiographical writing. Autobiography takes hold under circumstances where "man knows himself a responsible agent: gatherer of men, of lands, of power, maker of kingdoms and empires" (31). In his preface, Goodridge quickly establishes the masculine ethos of a gentleman by claiming that his "age, antecedents, and associations" give him "authority" to offer his judgments on Manitoba (v). It was to secure for his sons the same self-assured brand of manhood that Richard Goodridge emigrated to Manitoba. Goodridge acknowledges the problem of middle-class masculinity in his preface: "the question of a suitable settlement for the sons of naval and military officers, clergymen, professional men, &c., has long been an anxious one; the system of competitive examinations having practically excluded all but the talented and studious from the prizes in the civil and military services, and professional life generally" (v). Perhaps one or more of Goodridge's sons had failed the military examinations and now faced unemployment. Given the bleak outlook in England, Goodridge comments that "Colonial Life seems the only 'refuge for the destitute' that in most cases offers itself" (v).

Goodridge's decision to seek "refuge" in Manitoba was popular at the time, 1877 to 1882 being the era of "Manitoba fever" that drew thousands of immigrants from Ontario, Britain, and Europe. Consecutive bumper harvests proving Manitoba's excellence as a wheat-growing province, the arrival of the railroad in 1878, and aggressive promotion overseas convinced emigrants like Goodridge that Manitoba had a bright future (Morton 176–98). Goodridge notes that "glowing accounts [of Manitoba] have been . . . broadcast over the United Kingdom, determining many hesitating emigrants to decide in its favour" (vi). Thus, having his three sons to settle, Goodridge writes that he

> determined to take a small farm . . . and there have my boys thoroughly schooled in every detail of husbandry, so as to be fitted for the work of emigrant farmers. . . . Seeing an advertisement . . . of a 'Farm and Cottage' to be let in the neighbourhood of the capital of Manitoba (Winnipeg), I . . . decided to take it as a base of future operations; there after, along with my wife and daughter, accompanying my three sons to the remote west, in order to see the boys fairly started, and then return home. (vi)

Fully intending to return to Devonshire when his sons were established, Goodridge did not consider himself an emigrant in 1880, but rather an

Englishman in temporary residence. It becomes apparent only when reading *The Colonist At Home Again*, written eight years later, to what extent Goodridge's plans altered and how his longer-than-anticipated stay in Manitoba provoked in him a crisis of national identity.

It is not necessary to recount in detail the events narrated in *A Year in Manitoba*. Like most other emigrants who wrote settlers' guides, Goodridge spends considerable time describing the sea and overland journeys that landed his family in Winnipeg on June 4, 1880. Once there, the Goodridges found their "Farm and Cottage" along the Assiniboine River to be in far worse condition than advertised. But with the labour of his sons and some hired help, Goodridge reports that "the seeds planted soon after arrival were developing wonderfully" (44). Based on his account, it is clear that Goodridge was an adept colonist: hard-working, a quick learner, and not easily discouraged. When the family's rented home was destroyed by fire, Goodridge built their new home's interior himself. Agriculturally, Goodridge's first year in Manitoba was a success, and this, along with a firm belief in his superiority as an English gentleman, emboldened Goodridge to criticize Canadian institutions and customs.

Some of what Goodridge says is no different from the complaints of earlier genteel emigrants like Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie, or of his contemporaries such as James Seton Cockburn. Like Cockburn, who disparaged the "'free country' rubbish that is talked here" (37), Goodridge is put off by the familiar tone of Canadian society and objects to the "insufferable roughness" of many Canadians who "assume the most perfect equality" (70). More important than this commonplace observation is Goodridge's criticism of Dominion government apathy in improving Canada's infrastructure, for here he reveals his resistance to cultural diversity and the hybrid identities it produces. Speaking on what he feels is the slow development of Manitoba's roads and railways, Goodridge writes:

> Unfortunately, in my observation of Canadians, they take a long time to make a start—they have impressed me as a people more of talk than of action; and hence as peculiarly unsuited, in a pioneer country like this, for the form of government they now enjoy—*self-government*. . . . Among such a number of mixed races—Canadians, Americans, English, Scotch, Irish, French, Mennonites, Icelanders, French and British half-breeds, and these last the most numerous—how can there be any sufficient unity of purpose[?] . . . It is impossible that the natives can for one moment assent to be taxed for improvements which, while indispensable to men accustomed to the conveniences of civilization, can have but slight attractions for those whose associations are still clinging to the wild Indian and the buffalo. With such an incongruity in the elements, how could vigorous action be

> expected? The only hope seems in the future, when the country shall have become sufficiently settled to make the present majority a helpless minority. (59-60)

Goodridge's perception that the Métis comprised an obsolete "majority" in 1881 is telling. Gerald Friesen argues that by the early 1880s, through the fraudulent abuse of Métis land grants, Manitoba had already "ceased to be a Métis community," and by 1886 only 7 percent of the province's population was Métis (201). Given his exaggeration of the Métis influence, it seems the presence of *any* Métis in Manitoba was unsettling to Goodridge, especially when combined with the influx of other ethnic groups. The Métis embody Goodridge's fear, perhaps then unconscious, of the mutability of Englishness—the fear that, in Canada, Englishness may be corrupted by foreign landscape and foreign race. Goodridge's interpretation of Manitoba's landscape and inhabitants is grounded in the desire for ownership and control, which W.H. New identifies as primary European tropes for reading Canadian lands (86-87). For Goodridge, civilization in Manitoba depends on a gradual homogenization into a more English, or at least British, province, along with the taxation of owned property and the disenfranchisement of the nomadic Métis.

In *A Year in Manitoba*, Goodridge displays his confidence that he possesses an uncompromised Englishness. Besides labeling Canadians as slow starters, Goodridge also asserts that Canadians owe their wealth to unfair tariff protection. To "prove" his argument about the folly of tariffs, Goodridge includes an editorial written in favour of protection by an anonymous "British Subject" and the text of his own rebuttal (signed "Another British Subject"), both published in a Winnipeg journal. Besides calling himself a "British Subject," Goodridge also lodges his protest "in the name of an Englishman [and] a staunch Conservative at home," and surmises that his adversary, "though 'a British Subject,' I should conceive, by his ignorance of facts, can never have been outside the American continent" (78). Whereas English law decreed that any persons living in colonies or dominions were British subjects, Goodridge asserts the more exclusive and place-bound identity of Englishman, the implication being that Englishness trumps Britishness. In 1881, Goodridge's position as an English gentleman seems secure, despite the troubling presence of the Métis. Writing only fifteen months removed from the home-place of Englishness, Goodridge easily sees Canadians as other: they are talkers, not doers; they don't deserve responsible government; they cheat at commerce. Goodridge also does not

expect his feelings about Canada to change: while he tells his readers that Canada offers a "better prospect of success than any other country" (100), he adds that "for my wife and myself, we should indeed be very sorry were we compelled to live here always. It is a pioneer country—everything rough, and . . . terribly uncivilised" (97).

Goodridge's hope of soon leaving Canada, however, did not materialize, and by the time his second book was published, he was unable to perform the identity of English gentleman so effortlessly. Prolonged residence in Manitoba altered Goodridge's feelings about home and self, and more specifically, challenged his belief that his Englishness was indelible. As post-colonial critics have observed, England's far-flung empire has confused attempts to locate a pure, undifferentiated form of Englishness. Ian Baucom argues that in the confusion engendered by England's imperial history and the corresponding desire of the English to establish a concrete identity, Englishness, for the past 150 years, "has consistently been defined through appeals to the identity-endowing properties of place" (4). As opposed to the global diversity of Britishness, Englishness has been felt to reside *within* literal and imagined places, such as the country house or cricket field, that confer Englishness on their occupants. Goodridge's extended absence from England and its privileged sites of identity formation undermined his Englishness; the very principle by which Goodridge had asserted his authority over the editorial-writing "British Subject" in 1881—the fact that he lived in England—by 1889 was calling it into question. Moreover, Goodridge's skilful assimilation to colonial life cast doubt on his gentlemanliness. The fact that Goodridge adapted readily to pioneer life in the province he termed "terribly uncivilised" hinted at his own descent into vulgarity. Thus, in 1889, to overcome the anxiety caused by his unstable sense of national and masculine identity, Goodridge used his second book to atone for his residence in Canada, to provide narrative proof of his nationality, and to justify his status as an English gentleman.

The Colonist At Home Again; or, Emigration Not Expatriation (1889) is a very curious book, one that bears little resemblance to other books by English emigrants in Canada, or to the large number of Canadian promotional books and pamphlets written about Manitoba, such as E. Hepple Hall's *Lands of Plenty in the New North-West* (1880) or Clarke Cliffe's *Manitoba and the Canadian North-West* (1884). One thing that makes *The Colonist At Home Again* singular is that it is very difficult for the reader to decipher what the book is about. Historians W. L. Morton and Patrick

Dunae have looked to Goodridge's text for its commentary on Manitoba. The majority of the book, however, has nothing directly to do with Canada at all. Most guidebooks written by emigrants or visitors to Manitoba and the Northwest, like Robert Christy's *Manitoba Described* (1885) or the letters of Herbert and Richard Church, entitled *Making a Start in Canada* (1889), presented themselves in a straightforward fashion. Readers could expect to find observations on geography and climate, the work of a farm, social conditions, and tips on pioneer life. That *The Colonist At Home Again* does not follow this formula causes no confusion in itself; rather, the reader's puzzlement occurs because Goodridge gives a clear précis stating that he will address conditions in Manitoba, but then veers off course and writes a travel book about England. The English/Canadian duality of the book is perhaps partly due to the fact that, like many emigrant texts, it was published in England and Canada, indicating two distinct audiences, the Canadian one presumably interested in learning about England. Eva-Marie Kröller's *Canadian Travellers in Europe, 1851–1900* demonstrates the wide popularity of Canadian travel books on England in Europe in Goodridge's day. Goodridge himself is thoroughly inconsistent with regards to audience; he frequently switches between addressing his readers as English, Canadian, or both simultaneously, and it becomes difficult, when Goodridge refers to "here" or "this part of the world," to tell which side of the Atlantic he means. However, Goodridge assumes his readers are English often enough to suggest he had other motives for writing about England than simply to entertain Canadian readers.

The text's undecidability—is it a book about Canada or about England?—is suggested by its title. The "colonist" of the main title is an inhabitant of Canada, but his "home" is England. At the same time, however, "colonist" also implies membership—one who is a member of a colony. In *A Year in Manitoba*, for instance, Goodridge never refers to himself as a colonist or emigrant, terms he would have considered misnomers. He was, properly, an "Englishman in Canada." But by 1889, after his extended residency, the term "colonist" seems undeniable. The subtitle, "Emigration Not Expatriation," provides the best clue as to what Goodridge really wanted his book to be about, but he only discusses the idea of expatriation in one paragraph in the book. If the subtitle was an afterthought, it nevertheless gives the reader some insight and the book a semblance of coherence. Essentially, the book's main title is meant to prove the validity of the subtitle; the fact the "colonist" has gone "home again" demonstrates that "emigration" and "expatriation"

are not synonymous. To be an emigrant in Canada does not require the renunciation of one's Englishness.

Like the book's main title, "Emigration Not Expatriation" also has exclusive and inclusive connotations. In one possible reading, the emigrant who is merely an inhabitant remains thoroughly English; in another, the emigrant who becomes a colonist experiences a convergence of nationalities and feels "at home" in both parent and adopted nation. A more disturbing possibility, which Goodridge seeks to foreclose, is that the emigrant finds that England no longer feels like home, even though no conscious expatriation has occurred. In her book on Canadian Prairie literature, *Making it Home*, Deborah Keahey writes that "it is entirely possible (and often actualized) to be not 'at home' at home. That is, there is often a strong disjunction between an actual experienced home and the abstract idealized home" (11). It is the tension between the possible meanings of home that Goodridge attempts to negotiate in his book. While the book's title suggests home is England, the narrative proper renders home ambivalent. Because Goodridge's *de facto* home is in Manitoba and because he has come to feel "at home" in Manitoba, it becomes necessary for him to clarify his use of the term. For instance, in a discussion of Irish self-rule, when Goodridge writes, "when one looks at the present state of things both at home (England) and abroad" (123), the parenthetical is required to avoid the assumption that "home" really means Manitoba. So while it becomes evident in the text that Goodridge is a colonist who has in fact experienced a convergence of nationalities, the book functions as his attempt to deny that transformation and to insist on the purity of his Englishness.

Understandably, Goodridge begins *The Colonist At Home Again* by trying to account for the fact that he is still in Canada. Goodridge explains that "from the outset" he had planned "to remain three years" (11) in Manitoba establishing his sons, but that after three years, "Something always . . . occurred to postpone" the "return home" (41). What occurred, Goodridge explains, was the crash of the Winnipeg Land Boom, a sixteen-month frenzy of real estate speculation that began in 1881 after the CPR syndicate agreed to run its main line through Winnipeg. In 1882, Goodridge bought a second farm in the Qu'Appelle district and had planned to sell his first, but the Boom's collapse rendered the original farm nearly valueless and Goodridge was forced to sell the second at a loss. Goodridge writes that it would have been "unfair to leave the boys to combat alone a condition of things brought about by no fault of their own"; this situation "necessitated

my remaining on so long a time in Manitoba, *and has practically constituted me,—though I disclaim it as a fact, clinging still to my native country—a Canadian settler*" (13; my emphasis). Goodridge, then, accounts for his continued residency in Canada by saying it is a matter of parental necessity, never mentioning that he himself began a second career as a cashier and bookkeeper in Winnipeg.[5] The reader is led to believe that had there been no economic collapse, Goodridge would have gladly returned to England. Goodridge acknowledges that his long stay has "practically constituted" him a "Canadian settler," though he asserts this status is of a conditional nature, not one of "fact" because he clings still to his "native country." While this disclaimer is crucial to Goodridge as a means of insisting on his Englishness, his disavowal of his settler identity as situational and undesirable is contradicted by his obvious attachment to life in Canada and his respect for Manitoba's progress.

After explaining his presence in Manitoba, Goodridge offers a rationale for his second book. "It has often been suggested to me," he writes, "'Why don't you write another book on Manitoba, re-casting the first, and embodying the changes, local, social and political, that have taken place in the interval?'" (13). For a short while, Goodridge sticks to this purpose, and while he does, he gives Manitoba such a glowing report that his claim of staying solely out of necessity becomes highly suspect. The "terribly uncivilised" province of 1880 has by 1889 undergone a dramatic transformation, and aspects of Manitoban society that Goodridge disparaged in his first book are now praiseworthy. Goodridge writes that "in short, the pioneer character of the entire country is rapidly disappearing; and, so far as . . . Winnipeg itself, in the city may be obtained today every luxury that money can procure, as in any city of the Old World" (14). Whereas Goodridge decried the deficiencies of Canadian railroads at length in *A Year in Manitoba*, in *The Colonist At Home Again* he praises the CPR train cars as completely equal to English cars and even includes a CPR dining car menu to demonstrate Canada's high level of sophistication. Goodridge also recommends Manitoba for its economic vitality and invigorating climate. Moreover, he makes no mention of the "insufferable roughness" of Canadian settlers that annoyed him early on. Beyond attesting to Manitoba's cultural maturity in order to attract emigrants, Goodridge's account validates his gentility and hence his masculinity as a gentleman. Had Manitoba remained uncivilized, as doubtless many English readers imagined it to be, Goodridge's increasingly permanent status as a "Canadian settler" would have compromised

his gentility. As with Baucom's argument that Englishness was felt to reside within particular locales, gentlemanliness was also produced at specific sites—the public schools—and nurtured by institutions like the church and the gentleman's club. Long-term absence from such institutions, combined with the manual labour of farming, threatened an emigrant's good breeding. Thus, unlike Catharine Parr Traill, Goodridge does not "repose" on the "uncontestable proof" of his gentility (Traill 62); through his description of railcar refinement or praise of Manitoba's abundance of good schools, Goodridge earnestly offers proof that Manitoba is a gentility-producing, gentility-preserving locale. Goodridge's testimony also demonstrates that he was fully acclimatized to life in Manitoba, that he felt an attachment to the province, and that his desire to leave it had weakened, all of which caused him considerable unease.

Only when Goodridge had no other choice did he actually return to England in the summer of 1887, just at the time of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. After discussing Manitoba for less than a third of the book, Goodridge writes that "finally, we were left no option—business matters there [England] . . . made it imperative that . . . we must return at once" (41). From this point on, the book consists of Goodridge's narration of his sightseeing in England and briefly in France. Only in the final chapter, when Goodridge returns (home?) to Manitoba, does the book come fully back to the subject of Canada. Given the title *The Colonist At Home Again*, it is perhaps not surprising that Goodridge describes his trip to England, but it is nevertheless perplexing because he provides no rationale for the shift from Canada to England. Unlike the travel books examined by Kröller, Goodridge's work never announces itself as a travel narrative. England, in short, seems to be almost randomly included in the text. The reader could surmise that Goodridge intends to use the chapters on "home" to continue his comparisons between England and Canada, and while Goodridge does make a few such comparisons, they form no cohesive thread through the narrative. In fact, the book's ending seems to elide England altogether; in his final sentence, Goodridge writes as if he had not even mentioned England: "To impress facts; and more, the actual possibilities of the future here [Manitoba] has been the object I have had in view" (160). Goodridge's book was undoubtedly poorly conceived, but assuming he was not simply a terrible writer, which his first book seems to disprove, the question remains of what to make of the large part of *The Colonist At Home Again* that is not set in Canada.

Near the end of the book, Goodridge suggests the rhetorical purpose of his English travelogue and relates his return "home" to the idea of expatriation:

> The impediments to emigration are no doubt very largely connected with the imagination. There is a natural repugnance in most minds to *expatriation*, the final—as supposed—severance of all direct association with persons and places, with which, perhaps, our very earliest days have been identified. The idea is that everything is distant, foreign, unhomelike; and therefore out of sympathy. But, when people are made to see with their own eyes a *fac simile* of things existent in all respects much as at home . . . that aversion becomes removed, and it is the very object of this little volume to accentuate this, and to show that Colonial life is . . . not essentially different from Home life. (143)

Goodridge's defence of emigration begins to reveal how his conceptions of emigration and national identity are linked. Goodridge asserts that "Colonial life" in Canada is essentially no different from "Home life" in England, a view he definitely did not hold when he wrote *A Year in Manitoba.* Nor was Goodridge alone in making such statements. J.G. Moore, for example, told prospective emigrants in *Fifteen Months Round About Manitoba* (1883) that in Manitoba "Above your head still will float the Union Jack of England, the same old language will meet your ear [and] English hands will grasp yours" (28). Even though Manitoba was known for its British character, as Morton has shown, Goodridge's and Moore's claims are nevertheless exaggerations (177, 245). For Goodridge, however, these claims are not just attempts to promote emigration but a crucial assertion of his Englishness. Goodridge's ability to declare himself English depends on a reading of emigration that does not require expatriation. Stephen Slemon has pointed out that Second-World settler identity is characterized by the subject's ambivalent and "internalized" sense of self and otherness, and it is this ambiguous form of identity that Goodridge feels compelled to resist (30–41). Since Goodridge insists in both his books that he is an Englishman and plans to return "home" to England (which, in fact, he did not do until after 1900), emigration is only acceptable if he can remain English while living in Canada.[6] Emigration becomes a threat to Goodridge-as-Englishman if his cultural preferences and sense of home shift in favour of Canada, which, as his text exhibits, was precisely what was occurring.

Walker Connor's distinction between the terms "state" and "nation" is useful for delineating Goodridge's uncertain Englishness. Praising Canada as a political entity, as an emerging industrialized state is not the source of Goodridge's anxiety. Goodridge could safely approve of Canada as a state because as a firm believer in the Empire, he, like Imperial Federationists of

the Canada First movement, considered Canada part of a larger British imperial state (Berger 49–77). Goodridge's anxiety about hybridity hinges rather on the cultural sense of national belonging. Nation, Connor notes, is notoriously hard to define, but its essence is a self-defined "psychological bond that joins a people and differentiates it, in the subconscious conviction of its members, from all other people in a most vital way" (36). *The Colonist At Home Again* shows that Goodridge's "subconscious conviction" of his own Englishness has been disturbed; he is consciously doubting whether he is still a "member" of the English nation, an anxiety which helps explain his motive for writing to English readers about their own country. In order to feel secure in his nationality, Goodridge needs to have it validated according to English standards; in other words, by English readers living on English ground. Thus, in all its confusion, the travelogue serves as Goodridge's attempt to prove to himself and to his audience that his Englishness had not become hybrid.

In his narrative, Goodridge describes numerous exhibits of the Queen's Jubilee, and his family's visits to the countryside and to France, but he also addresses social issues like poverty and Imperial Federation. Much of what Goodridge writes seems, at first glance, to be aimed at satisfying Victorian interests in travel and exhibitions, and not at the construction of any particular self-image. The text, like many travelogues, has a loose, meandering feel that resists topical organization. Goodridge proves a close observer of military processions and public gatherings, but he also foregoes any attempt at objectivity. Goodridge plays the role of reviewer more than recorder, passing judgment on spectacles and social ills. While Goodridge bases his authority on the claim of having no party loyalties that would taint his objectivity, his viewpoints are nevertheless crafted to appeal to a conservative English readership. I am not maintaining that Goodridge's opinions are insincere, but rather that he takes every opportunity to display them, to show that he thinks as an English gentleman should think.

Goodridge uses two methods of self-representation to enact his Englishness, either devoting entire chapters to various social questions or digressing from his travelogue to give opinions on matters relevant to his location. In London, for example, at the heart of the Empire, Goodridge espouses imperial, non-democratic government as the best "that human nature can devise" (82). Kröller points out that for many Canadian travellers, especially imperial loyalists like Robert Shields, visiting London was an act of patriotic duty.[7] Travellers expecting to find London the epitome of

civilization, however, were often disappointed at the poverty and social inequality they witnessed and came away affirming Canada's egalitarianism (Kröller 93). Goodridge, though, echoing his first book, maintains again that colonial self-government is inefficient and more liable to corruption than oligarchical rule: "it will be a woeful day for . . . the British Empire—when its destinies are controlled by a pure democracy" (124).

A bit later, in Somersetshire, Goodridge argues that large country estates, and by implication, the gentry class who inhabit them, should be permanent features of the English landscape:

> To how many hundreds year by year does the noble ancestral estate minister the highest enjoyment; where excursionists and picnickers . . . wander freely around. . . . There is nothing anywhere comparable with them [historic estates], and may their shadows never diminish in my day. Very certain I am that none of the children of Great Britain, our Colonies . . . would desire anything but their perpetuance. (90)

Goodridge's need to negotiate his settler and native identities is revealed in this passage where he attempts to represent his colonial experience while still speaking as an Englishman. Goodridge declares all British colonies and colonists (like himself) are loyal to the landed gentry, but tries to erase his own status as a colonist by speaking of "our Colonies" from the English perspective of paternal ownership—the colonies are "our children." Interestingly, the country estate itself, which Goodridge uses to express his Englishness while suppressing a wider imperial identity, embodies the very identity conflation he finds so problematic. The country estate has long been an icon of Englishness, redolent of noble lineage and well-ordered tradition. But as Edward Said argues of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* in *Culture and Imperialism*, the sustenance of country estates, like Sir Thomas Bertram's, were often "supplied by the wealth derived from a West Indian plantation" (92). The estate as signifier of nationality, then, becomes ambiguous; the supposed singular Englishness of the estate is underwritten by a larger colonial Britishness and history of exploitation. It is precisely this emergent Britishness as a Canadian settler that Goodridge attempts to contain.

Occasionally, Goodridge puts aside his travelogue altogether to discuss social questions of the day. In one chapter, Goodridge addresses Irish Home Rule, the state church, and the alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy. Moving from topic to topic without transitions and seemingly without reason, this chapter seems designed to prove that Goodridge was conversant

with contemporary Victorian debates. Claiming to be perfectly unbiased, Goodridge declares the Irish unfit for self-government because "have they not given all reasonable evidence that their régime would be one of the most degrading despotisms ever known to the civilized world?" (123). Goodridge also displays his patriotism in another chapter by denouncing "socialists and other malcontents" that he observes speaking out against the Queen in London's parks, saying that he "immediately checked their disloyal ebullitions of seditious language" (76–77). While Goodridge is highly self-congratulatory in this section, his statements are not intended to differentiate him from his assumed middle-class reading audience. Rather, his defence of Victoria is a request for inclusion; it is offered so that other English gentlemen may affirm that Goodridge, like Joseph Conrad's Jim, is "one of us" (391).

I have described *The Colonist At Home Again* as a bewildering text with no apparent centre. It is a text ostensibly about place, and is loosely organized thus, going from Canada, to England, to France, to England, and back to Canada, but where the text returns continually is to its author, Richard E. W. Goodridge. This is not necessarily all that surprising. Since Said's *Orientalism*, scholars of postcolonial theory have generally agreed that writing the "other" is an act of self-revelation (Said 1–12). A text (such as travel narrative) that seeks to represent some external "object" inevitably reveals more about its "subject." While Goodridge's text can certainly be classified as travel writing that contains this sort of self-revelation, its particular value lies in the way it reveals the anxiety of gentlemen emigrants. Whereas travel writing generally constructs its object as "other," in this case it is Goodridge himself who fears that he has become the "other" by adopting a hybrid English Canadian subjectivity. Thus, Goodridge represents England not in order to write the "other," but in order to write his way back to a unified self. In other words, he writes in order to be able to say, "I am an Englishman."

NOTES

1 Based on figures from the U.K. Board of Trade, Brinley Thomas estimates that approximately 45,000 British gentlemen emigrated to Canada from 1876 to 1900. See *Migration and Economic Growth*, 59–62.

2 Similarly to ffolkes, Mrs. Cecil Hall writes in *A Lady's Life on a Farm in Manitoba* (1884) that "the last servant [my brother] had in this house was the son of a colonel in the English Army, who was described as 'a nice boy but very lazy'" (27).

3 On the conflation of gentility with national identity, see Julian Wolfrey's analysis of Trollope's *The Prime Minister* (1876) in *Being English* (1994). Of the character Abel Wharton, Wolfreys writes, "for Wharton, a 'gentleman' and an 'Englishman' are one and the same, the questions of breeding, heredity, and national identity being linked inextricably" (169).

4 Numerous authors have written on imperial degeneracy and the crisis of masculinity. See, for instance, Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement*, 131–160; Robert Macdonald, *Sons of the Empire*, 16–17; Misao Dean, "The Construction of Masculinity in Martin Allerdale Grainger's *Woodsmen of the West*," 76.

5 With his sons remaining on the 340-acre farm in Headingley, Goodridge and his wife Adelaide bought a smaller farm east of Winnipeg in 1882, and he began working in the city. In *Henderson's Gazetteer and Directory of Manitoba and Northwest Territories*, Goodridge is listed in the Winnipeg Business Directory as chief cashier for H.B. Co. general stores in 1884 and then as bookkeeper for Dick Banning and Co. in 1890.

6 Goodridge remained in Manitoba probably until 1893 and then moved to Chicago, living there at least until 1900. He is listed as a bookkeeper in *The Lakeside Annual Directory of the City of Chicago* in 1900 (743), but does not appear in the 1905 directory. Although Goodridge left Manitoba, electors rolls from the Rural Municipality of Springfield show that he kept his farm in the village of Sunnyside (Section 28, township 11, range 5E) until at least 1916. In 1909 his residence is listed as Lupton and in 1916 as Coleraine, which are small towns in Michigan and Minnesota, respectively. Records from the Itasca County Recorder in Minnesota show that Goodridge bought land in Coleraine in 1909 and sold it in 1923.

7 In *My Travels: Visits to Lands Far and Near* (1900), Shields asserts his "loyalty as a British subject" by marking his "arrival on English soil" with "a journey to Windsor Castle. Why should a loyal and patriotic Canadian not do so?" (15, 12).

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John Reibetanz

She Goes Like

It's character assassination time
next to Captain Video, at Mr. Game's
arcade. Cool neon surf breaks over them,

green and purple rippling the metal O's
on lip or lobe. They breathe out a clear gas
of words to warm themselves. Ashley's exposed

navel shivers when they start in on Mr.
Spinelli's homeroom or his history classes.
Her mind fast-forwards *You should've seen the bastard*

this morning, stops, rewinds her eyes catching
his in World Civ sliding down her cleavage.
No, too gross: eject. Instead: "His clothes,

they're like so Yesterday." Safe choice, that place
half underground, walls papered with dead names,
the living room of all the guys' parents.

There, Ashley wears the name Anton and Eva
fit her into when she was only a dream,
in the Budapest whose air their dreams still breathe.

"Elektra." Imagine. Years of getting called
"Lightbulb" or "Hydro" in elementary school
sent her off to Central Tech as Ashley.

She broke it to them slowly. They have a thing
about new things—whatever some Hungarian
fossil didn't invent or eat. Anton's

instrument hatelist targets electric shavers,
digital watches, Japanese violins.
"And Eva goes like *Peanuts butter isn't*

a launch. Cheese isn't cheese unless it reeks.
Forget about sushi." She cringes when they talk,
their tongues caught up on consonants sticky

with foreign memories. Yet tonight, past one,
Ashley won't fall asleep till they come home
(the tables stacked, the door's sign switched to CLOSED)

and whisper the old world into her ear,
their breath threading with hers in endearments
like nothing spoken by her yesterday.

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Context of Controversy

Arturo Arias, ed.
The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy. U of Minnesota P US $19.95

Reviewed by Laurie McNeill

I, Rigoberta Menchú, the *testimonio* of the Nobel laureate and Guatemalan activist, has incited debate and often bitter controversy since its publication in 1983. In 1998, controversy erupted anew on the front page of the *New York Times* in Larry Rohter's investigative report "Tarnished Laureate." Rohter, inspired by David Stoll's forthcoming *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans* (1999), continued Stoll's questioning of many of the biographical facts in Menchú's narrative, but he went beyond Stoll's conclusion to label her a liar. Such an accusation in turn ignited battles between Rigoberta supporters and denouncers around the world, including the many factions in Guatemala and right- and left-wing academics in North America. Stoll was praised or pilloried by these various camps. Menchú herself, and more importantly the political organizations she had come to represent, also suffered from the doubt cast on her credibility. Coming at a crucial time in Guatemala's embattled history, during the first stages of the peace treaty, this controversy had the potential to disrupt that fragile process. Latin American studies scholar Arturo Arias has, in *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy,* assembled the newspaper articles, including Rohter's, that sparked off and reacted to this latest controversy, along with academic essays that discuss its context and consequences.

Arias's book opens with two comprehensive essays that provide essential background information. The first, by Arias, addresses the political and cultural history of Guatemala, from its sixteenth-century conquest by Spain to the present day, giving a clear sense of the racist and politically divided nature of this country. Arias also introduces Rigoberta, giving a thumbnail biography of her life and her transformation into political symbol and "lay saint"; his essay also recounts the contentious story of the interview process and publication of *I, Rigoberta Menchú.* Mary Louise Pratt's "*I, Rigoberta Menchú* and the 'Culture Wars'" is a similarly useful overview, looking at the Stoll controversy from a North American academic context and situating his text within the "Battle of the Books" that took place in the United States during the 1980s. By outlining what was happening in North American universities and the politics that allowed the Menchú controversy to become so polarizing, Pratt shows the relevance of the debate to American academia. She also provides a summary of Stoll's most contentious points (the first of many such summaries to appear in this collection). Briefly, these points concern the degree of indigenous support for the guerrilla movement (Stoll argues it was not universally supported, as Rigoberta suggests); the nature of the conflict over land ownership (Stoll contends that it was not a con-

test between Ladino landlords and "noble Indians" but a battle between peasants); and the status of the "new truth," a truth based, in Menchú's account, on eyewitness accounts and community narratives instead of on "objective" facts that can be verified by traditional means.

With this context in place, Arias then gives readers the original newspaper articles, many of which appear in English for the first time, before concluding with the academic essays debating the implications of these documents. These essays come from a range of disciplines, including Latin American studies (Arias, John Beverley, Duncan Earle, Claudia Ferman), literature (Allen Carey-Webb), history (Christopher H. Lutz), and anthropology (Carol A. Smith, Stoll); both Stoll critics and supporters are represented. The range of issues they examine is equally broad, with discussion of the definition of truth; narrative (and academic) authority; the multiple natures and consequent frequent misunderstandings of the *testimonio* genre; the Guatemalan civil war and its contexts; and the variety of pedagogical approaches to incorporating *testimonio* into the classroom.

Arias does his best to make the collection accessible, including concise introductions to each section that add further context and interpretive framework.

Postcolonial Futures

Bill Ashcroft

Post-Colonial Transformation. Routledge $26.95

Ralph Pordzik

The Quest for Postcolonial Utopia: A Comparative Introduction to the Utopian Novel in the New English Literatures. Peter Lang $56.95

Reviewed by Guy Beauregard

Bill Ashcroft's *Post-Colonial Transformation* is a clear and powerful intervention in debates in contemporary postcolonial studies, while Ralph Pordzik's *The Quest for Postcolonial Utopia* offers what he calls "a comparative introduction to the utopian novel in the new English literatures." In strikingly different ways, these books investigate the question of postcolonial futures: Ashcroft, in a forceful attempt to link postcolonial studies to current debates over globalization, insists that "the transformative energy of post-colonial societies tells us about the present because it is overwhelmingly concerned with the future," while Pordzik, in his analysis of utopian novels and related genres, investigates how "they make available perceptual alternatives to the poor future prospects of many postcolonial societies and cultures today."

Post-Colonial Transformation focuses on what Ashcroft calls "the resilience, adaptability and inventiveness of post-colonial societies." For Ashcroft, his title identifies the various ways postcolonial subjects have engaged with and ultimately transformed imperial culture. Ashcroft writes:

> The Western control over time and space, the dominance of language and the technologies of writing for perpetuating the modes of this dominance, through geography, history, literature and, indeed, through the whole range of cultural production, have meant that post-colonial engagements with imperial power have been exceptionally wide-ranging. The one thing which characterizes all these engagements, the capacity shared by many forms of colonial experience, is a remarkable facility to use the modes of the dominant discourse against itself and transform it in ways that have been both profound and lasting.

Ashcroft elaborates this thesis through chapters on resistance, interpolation, language, history, allegory, place, habitation, horizon, and globalization, each of which takes up a specific mode of postcolonial transformation. In each instance, Ashcroft engages energetically with fundamental and deeply challenging topics in contemporary cultural criticism.

These chapters provide highly readable essay-length overviews of particular "key words" in postcolonial studies, thereby making *Post-Colonial Transformation*, in Shao-Pin Luo's astute observation, a valuable "companion piece" to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's classic pocket handbook *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (1998).

Post-Colonial Transformation's principal contribution to contemporary scholarship is its insistence on the relevance of postcolonial studies to our understanding of global culture. In doing so, it responds indirectly to numerous portrayals of postcolonial studies as a field informed by a deluded nostalgia for earlier historical forms of subjugation and resistance that are presumably irrelevant to our understanding of contemporary geopolitical relations of power. Ashcroft's response to such dismissive portrayals of postcolonial studies is welcome and deserves careful consideration from a wide, multidisciplinary audience. In attempting to connect imperialism and globalization—and thereby assert the continued relevance of postcolonial studies—Ashcroft insists on the importance of understanding "the structure of global power relationships" as "an economic, cultural, and political legacy of Western imperialism"; postcolonial studies, therefore, remain valuable as a means for "understanding how local communities achieve agency under the pressure of global hegemony." I sense, however, that this crucial point in Ashcroft's argument rests on what may be an overly neat parallel between the transformation of colonial discourse and the appropriation of global culture. Ashcroft writes that "[t]he message of local responses to global culture is the same message delivered by colonial experience: no matter how oppressive the system, or how ubiquitous its effects, it is not immune to appropriation and adaptation by local communities for their own benefit"; likewise, for Ashcroft, "the diffuse and interactive process of identity formation proceeds in global terms in much the same way as it has done in post-colonial societies."

In this way, *Post-Colonial Transformation* underlines similarities at the expense of potentially messy shifts, ruptures, and discontinuities. As a consequence, readers who were dissatisfied with the opening claims of Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's foundational *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) (where the authors argue for the inclusion, in a postcolonial frame, of "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day") are unlikely to be satisfied with the notion of transformation put forward by Ashcroft to account for what he readily acknowledges are highly diverse experiences of—and responses to—colonization and globalization.

As an aside, readers of *Canadian Literature* will note that Ashcroft's brief references to Canadian literary production are limited to essays by Robert Kroetsch and Dennis Lee (both published in 1974) and Northrop Frye's *The Great Code* (1982). Readers of this journal may wonder whether Ashcroft would have allowed his notions of postcolonial transformation if he had to account for some of the dramatic changes in Canadian literary production over the past three decades. I make this frankly speculative observation not because Canadian materials are central to Ashcroft's argument—they clearly are not—but because focusing on a particular historical moment in the materials from Canada (that is, the 1970s and early 1980s) would inevitably raise questions about Ashcroft's broader conclusions. Would analysis of other historical moments have led to other conclusions? What sorts of arguments might have emerged through explicit attention to historical turns in literary and other forms of cultural production? Would examining interactions between colonial discourse and global culture help us

account for shifting or plural or discontinuous forms of transformation?

Pordzik's *The Quest for Postcolonial Utopia* argues that "more than any other literary genre the utopian novel has a particular interest in coming to terms with the problems created by the disenchantment with cultural nationalism and decolonization on the one hand and the disillusionment with Marxism and utopian idealism that followed the end of the socialist world [*sic*] on the other." Pordzik's insistence on the importance of "the utopian novel and its related literary forms" in the process of "remembering the future" is marked by an encyclopaedic drive (some thirty-two novels are named in the first two pages of the book), long paragraphs (often more than two pages), frequent use of the passive voice, and (in stark contrast to *Post-Colonial Transformation*) unclear signposting at the level of a larger argument. While Pordzik may be correct in emphasizing the potential significance of the utopian novel in our understanding of literary representations of postcolonial futures, it is difficult to imagine many readers searching out his elusive argument amidst the relentless and largely unstructured series of close readings that constitutes *The Quest for Postcolonial Utopia.*

Seeing Space

Ariella Azoulay
Death's Showcase: The Power of Image in Contemporary Democracy. MIT P $19.95

Scott MacDonald
The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place. U of California P $35.00

Reviewed by Ben Packer

Ariella Azoulay's *Death's Showcase* is a blend of museum studies, Middle East politics, photographic theory, and philosophy. Steeped in the critical thinking of writers like Baudrillard, Deleuze, and Lyotard, this study examines "the public display of death" by focusing on both planned and accidental images of violence and conflict in Israel in the twentieth century. Azoulay's thesis develops like an unfolding of the epigraph she repeats from Heidegger: "The fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture." For a postmodernist, familiar with French thought after Foucault, this should be an engaging book.

There is no need to be a postmodernist to read with engagement Scott MacDonald's *The Garden in the Machine.* It provides concise, descriptive readings of a wide selection of films by American independent filmmakers working almost exclusively in 16mm. Though focused on the ways natural and developed landscapes are depicted, MacDonald's readings also show how contemporary American concerns with race, gender, and spirituality become part of the cinematic discourse on environment. His stated "mission" is to promote these marginalized films as pedagogical tools for both artistic and social studies by encouraging their distribution and exhibition. He makes us regret the neglect of these films, and his book left me eager to see them.

One measure of the difference between these books is reflected in the kinds of notes their critical reading inspires. Azoulay is demanding and dense, and requires many re-reads, queries, and puzzled glosses. MacDonald, on the other hand, is swift and accessible, requiring self-imposed halts so that notes of some kind will get made at all. This could be a function of translation. *The Garden in the Machine* is an original English text. *Death's Showcase* is a gathering of essays previously published in Hebrew that have been revised for this edition.

Superficially, both books are about film and the way spaces are photographically framed and portrayed. Azoulay concentrates mainly on stills, MacDonald on

movies. There are occasional overlaps in theme and topic; both authors discuss, for example, Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (or Claude Lantzman's *Holocaust*—depending on which author one is reading). Both books also look closely at the different ways cities are represented: as whole and self-contained objects, as loci of diverse and sometimes conflicting confluences, or as collections of non-intersecting overlays—Jerusalem as a cultural and political heterotopia in Azoulay, New York and San Francisco as human and non-human landscapes in MacDonald.

Beyond such resemblances, however, these texts diverge considerably. *Death's Showcase* is, among other things, a postmodern analysis of how the camera critiques the image it creates. *The Garden in the Machine* is strictly a non-specialist survey of experimental filmmaking in the United States. *Death's Showcase* handles a great number of ideas, from economics to aesthetics, which appear at first to be unrelated; it attempts to demonstrate not only their relation, but their theoretical confederacy. *The Garden in the Machine* spends very little time on abstract thought or current theory, though it does discuss theories of art history, particularly with respect to the relationship between nineteenth-century American landscape painting and twentieth-century films of urban and rural spaces.

Both authors speak authoritatively and knowledgeably on their subjects, conveying the intellectual excitement of their fields. MacDonald tends to rely on a limited set of adjectives like "stunning" to convey the visual impact of widely different film imagery. Occasionally the selected figures are too small to illustrate the qualities MacDonald describes. There are also some curious omissions. In the sections that deal with filming the New York cityscape no reference is made to Woody Allen, though elsewhere MacDonald analyzes other big-name filmmakers. Nor does he discuss, or even refer to, animation. Finally, the absence of a glossary leaves one searching in vain for definitions of obscure terms.

There are omissions in Azoulay too. In the chapter on Hiroshima, despite some discussion of "censorship during the American occupation" and the repression of memorialization, there is no reference to John Hersey. Likewise, in the chapter on the assassination of Rabin and its capture on amateur video, there is only passing reference to Kennedy and an allusion to the Zapruder clip. There is no mention of the film of Sadat's assassination nor of the highly publicized execution by General Loan of a Viet Cong prisoner. All three films would seem to be discursively rich references for Azoulay's analysis. The writing regularly suffers from syntactical lapses that slow a reader down: "Lantzman, Renais, and Duras are actually speaking about an economy predicated on resistance to memory as sanctifier, a productive resistance that leaves its traces out of and around which more and more resistance activity can be strung together." One particular term Azoulay, or her translator (it is not easy to tell if these are translation issues) frequently relies on is "interpellate." It is used as if it were a hybrid of "interpolate," "interpret," "intercalate," and "interpose." On no occasion is it used in the dictionary sense (to require a member of a legislative body to explain an act or policy), nor does it seem to be used in the current postcolonial sense (to call into being a particular form of subjectivity). There is also a quirky unevenness to parenthetical explanations. At one point Azoulay refers to "Eva Braun (Adolf Hitler's beloved)," which is like writing "Adolf Hitler (Nazi dictator)." On another occasion the Baader-Meinhof gang is explained with a gloss, but in the same paragraph Kochava Levy is left unexplained except by vague historical allusion.

Except in the case of "interpellate," these concerns do not seriously interfere with the

impression that *Death's Showcase* is a valuable contribution to critical debate on the gaze, the subject, and the representation of space. A word about its physical makeup—this edition is hardbound with heavy, glossy pages that cause it to lie open like a coffee table book. The paper sticks to the fingers if held too long, forcing the reader, appropriately, to lean over the text as if studying photographs.

Pursued by Monsters

Deirdre Barrett, ed.
Trauma and Dreams. Harvard UP $18.95

Kristjana Gunnars
Zero Hour. Red Deer College P $19.95

Reviewed by Marlene Briggs

"Monster dreams may occur at any age," writes Kathleen Nader in her contribution to *Trauma and Dreams.* The monster is a staple of the nightmare. Deriving from both *monstrum* (divine portent) and *monere* (to warn), the word *monster* recalls the ancient belief that dreams could function as omens of future disaster. Moreover, the monster eludes location or definition: an amalgam of supernatural, human, and animal, the monster may possess no discernible ancestor or point of origin. As Nader notes, monster dreams are "a form of condensation in which assailants and their perceived overwhelming animalistic nature are combined into one being." Certainly, this collection of essays by psychologists, psychiatrists, and analysts discusses a diverse array of monsters, conjured and recollected, subject to varying degrees of mediation by dreamwork: Saddam Hussein pursues Kuwaiti child survivors of the Iraqi invasion; faceless men loom in the shadows of rape victims; fire reawakens to exact revenge on the California survivors inexplicably spared in a natural disaster; the Death Squads hound refugees from Central America in competition with relentless immigration officials; and a disfigured being christened Scarman lures a transplant patient back into the purgatorial realm of the dead. These examples illustrate that, across divides of age, gender, culture, ethnicity, and wellness, "dreams constitute a unique window on trauma and its effects," as editor and contributor Deirdre Barrett concludes.

Like the monster, the nightmare has become a resonant trope in relation to extreme events. James Joyce famously described twentieth-century history as a "nightmare"; specific instances of American historical trauma such as the Vietnam war are frequently likened to a "national nightmare." Yet, it is not quite clear how a nightmare functions in the complex processing of trauma. Perhaps it is for this reason that the gothic etiology of the nightmare, wherein the demon, hunched astride a sleeping form, exploits the immobility and blind thralldom of the dreamer, continues to compel contemporary fascination. In spite of the fact that nightmares and recurring dreams have long been defining symptoms of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), trauma therapists and sleep researchers, for the most part, remain divided by disciplinary and pragmatic impediments from pursuing a collaborative framework of exploration. Thus, as Barrett declares, "This book's purpose is to disseminate to dream analysts, trauma therapists, and other readers the work that exists at this interface." Nightmares may play a greater role in therapy; meanwhile, dream theorists would benefit from an enhanced understanding of the manner in which nightmares repeat and rework aspects of traumatic experience. But beyond the prospects of increased cooperation between dream specialists and counselling practitioners, *Trauma and Dreams* should suggest an important agenda of inquiry for scholars in the social sciences as well as the humanities.

Fundamental questions about the interaction between body, mind, and culture motivate this volume. Well-known contributors include Robert Jay Lifton and Oliver Sacks; the work of both Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung remains central to many of these present-day researchers.

According to Patricia Garfield, "The dead live on in our dreams long after they die." After the death of her father from cancer, Kristjana Gunnars tracks the painful disappearance of a world in *Zero Hour*: she writes of the plight of the "alien" who has become monstrous, without a perceived point of origin, unrecognizable to self or to others. The format and design of her book signal its displacement from familiar intelligible worlds: *Zero Hour* is generically unstable, a mode of self-conscious self-writing that incorporates autobiography, biography, literary criticism, and travelogue: "You are left with a story that is not a story. A novel that is not a novel, a poem no longer a poem." In this way, Gunnars conveys the multiple modes of absence that her writing must circle, both as elegy and as testimony. The text is without chapter breaks or indentation; instead word clusters are grouped together; dominated by short sentences and comprised of fragments, the work is paratactic. *Zero Hour* is a work that bears witness to the staggering labour and complexity of mourning: the author is attentive to the manner in which losses overlap and complicate bereavement. Accordingly, *Zero Hour* echoes the title of Roland Barthes's first book, *Writing Degree Zero*. Gunnars focuses more loosely on "*ground zero* writing," which she defines as writing "enacted exactly where the bomb fell." Metaphors of nuclear destruction inflect her meditations on the potentially catastrophic import of attachment loss in "the century of the countdown."

When her terminally ill father determines to forego further medical interventions, the anticipated moment of his death is troped and retroped as "zero hour": "There is no zero on the clock. To get to zero, you have to step outside of time." "Zero hour" is thus a contradiction in terms; the encounter with death demands that one's coordinates in time and space be reconceptualized. Appropriately, then, careful observation of the West and its landscapes, ranging from Manitoba to Oregon, demonstrate Gunnars's preoccupation with place. Given its extremes of geology, weather, and insect life, the West serves as an analogue for the location of the writer who feels she occupies a "landscape without language. Before language." After a childhood visit to a volcanic lake in Iceland with her father, Gunnars describes terrifying dreams that evoke a similarly haunting landscape: "I had nightmares of falling in: of falling down and sinking in the water forever." *Zero Hour* is an allegory of descent into that volcanic lake, a realm outside recognized conventions of time and space, explored with insight and sensitivity. Her writing summons and pursues the monstrous figurations of grief: in this sense, she may truly be commended for dreaming well.

Crises identitaires

Alain Baudot et Christine Dumitriu-Van Saanen, dir.
Mondialisation et Identité. Éditions du Gref n.p.

Régine Robin
La Québécoite. XYZ 14,95$

Comptes rendus par Melanie E. Collado

Mondialisation et Identité est un recueil de textes commémoratifs de la Grande Réunion d'écrivains francophones du Canada et d'autres pays. Cet ouvrage regroupe les contributions de quarante-cinq auteurs ayant accepté d'« écrire un texte de 500 mots (au plus) traitant de la tension (croissante) entre la mondialisation (inévitable) et la résurgence (nécessaire) des particularismes ». Les écrits retenus par

les éditeurs constituent un mélange hybride où se côtoient une majorité d'essais, de contes, de nouvelles, de légendes, de poèmes et quelques chansons. Dans son ensemble, le recueil évoque une tribune où chacun exprime ses certitudes, ses rêves et ses angoisses. Dans la nouvelle d'Abdelkader Djemaï, par exemple, les tournesols de Van Gogh deviennent « livides, amorphes, sans suc et sans beauté », après avoir été contaminés par des formules d'organismes génétiquement modifiés.

Quel que soit le genre littéraire choisi, le thème central d'un grand nombre de textes est la mondialisation économique et le risque d'uniformisation dont le libre-marché, l'internet, les médias, l'anglais et les plantes transgéniques sont les supports les plus souvent incriminés. Face à cette conception contemporaine de la mondialisation, quelques écrivains proposent de réfléchir sur la confusion terminologique entre mondialisation, impérialisme, américanisation, globalisation et universalisme. Ils rappellent que la mondialisation est un phénomène ancien, permettant la circulation des idées, des cultures et la reconnaissance de la diversité universelle. Plusieurs textes soulignent que tout déplacement en dehors de son propre microcosme peut être interprété comme un pas vers la mondialisation, avec ses risques, ses excès et ses violences, mais aussi ses bénéfices. Perçue comme inévitable, la mondialisation n'entraîne pas forcément la disparition de l'un dans la masse. Dans cette optique, Mireille Desjarlais nous invite à imaginer un universalisme où « le multiple et l'un [chemineraient] main dans la main ».

Mondialisation et Identité contient de beaux textes et d'autres moins marquants; c'est, dans l'ensemble, un ouvrage hétéroclite. Vu le sujet traité, l'hétérogénéité ne saurait être un défaut, au contraire. On peut cependant regretter que le pluralisme de ce recueil ne soit pas servi par la mise en page adoptée: la succession de messages officiels et de photos encadrant les récits leur donne un cachet institutionnel qui tranche un peu avec leur contenu.

La Québécoite de Régine Robin touche également au thème de la mondialisation et de la résistance identitaire, mais ici, c'est du mouvement des personnes et de l'expression de la parole immigrante dont il est question. Publié pour la première fois en 1983, et réédité en 1993 avec une postface où l'auteure aborde le sujet du pluralisme culturel au Québec, ce roman a fait l'objet de plusieurs analyses qui en soulignent la valeur littéraire et l'originalité.

La Québécoite est l'histoire d'une vie qui se fait et se refait. Le récit premier se compose de trois parties, portant chacune le nom d'un quartier de Montréal où la narratrice fait temporairement résider son personnage féminin de « juive ukrainienne de Paris provisoirement installée à Montréal ». Snowdon, Outremont et Jean-Talon sont des lieux d'ancrage transitoires que la narratrice ne cesse d'abandonner pour reconstruire son intrigue ailleurs. Elle (le personnage n'a pas de nom) reste « insituable ». Où qu'elle soit, Elle vit entre plusieurs mondes: l'Europe et l'Amérique; Paris et Montréal; Snowdon et Outremont; Snowdon et Jean-Talon. Son histoire personnelle et celle de son peuple ne l'enracinent pas en un lieu, mais au contraire la déploient dans le temps et dans l'espace. Comme la narratrice et les autres immigrants du roman, Elle va et vient entre le passé et le présent, tiraillée entre la nostalgie d'un lieu à soi et l'errance. Elle est désireuse de se trouver un lieu, mais incapable de n'être que dans un seul lieu.

Dès les premières lignes, le texte s'annonce comme un projet d'écriture: « Pas d'ordre. Ni chronologique, ni logique, ni logis. Rien qu'un désir d'écriture et cette prolifération d'existences ». Dans *La Québécoite*, chaque personnage en engendre plusieurs autres et chaque récit s'ouvre sur un autre. Le roman éclaté qui émerge de ce projet d'écriture est composé d'his-

toires inachevées, entrecoupées de lectures diverses et de multiples énumérations. Citons à titre indicatif les bribes de conversations entendues dans le métro, les slogans politiques, et publicitaires, les listes de stations de métro, les noms de rues, les enseignes, les menus; les résultats sportifs, les plaques minéralogiques. Ces mots lus ou entendus, récoltés au hasard de ses déplacements dans les lieux publics de Paris ou de Montréal, sont des fragments de quotidien que la narratrice collectionne comme d'autres collectionnent des photos. Ces mots ramassés dans la rue deviennent pour elle des trésors à préserver pour se constituer un monde à soi: « Tout emmagasiner, comme si tu devais te retrouver tel Robinson sur son île et ne plus rencontrer Montréal que par traces, signes, symboles, fragments sans signification, morceaux, débris, tessons hors d'usage ».

Récit de l'errance et de la parole immigrante, *La Québécoite* est un texte-carrefour où se télescopent lieux, discours, histoires, cultures et existences fictives ou réelles. Par l'adoption des techniques du collage au niveau de la forme et du contenu, le roman de Régine Robin se présente comme un texte en mouvement qui ne cesse de déplacer son lecteur à travers l'espace, le temps et le langage.

Vingt ans après sa parution, dans le contexte d'une mondialisation qui soulève des questions sur l'identité nationale et l'appartenance à un monde sans frontières, *La Québécoite* est plus que jamais d'actualité.

Blue Diamond Burial

Michelle Berry
What We All Want. Random House $32.95

Reviewed by Susan Wasserman

Sorting through the fragile aftermath of a mother's death from cancer and its impact on her three adult children, Michelle Berry's first novel, *What We All Want,* roots itself in the redoubtable family-relations tradition. Its main chords are familiar: domestic conflict, disillusionment, guilt, the promise of regeneration. Berry's characters echo those of Barbara Gowdy and Carol Shields in their isolation, vulnerability, and endearing loopiness. And hints of *A Jest of God* ripple through the novel: Margaret Laurence's Rachel Cameron and Berry's Hilary Mount have much in common, especially their oppressive ties to their mothers. But Berry tells her own story—of a pivotal week in the lives of siblings Hilary, Thomas, and Billy as they grapple with their loss, and with each other.

Opening with the removal of the mother's yellow corpse from her home and ending with her unconventional burial, the novel is preoccupied with death, from the minutiae of embalming to the crucial question of where to bury Rebecca. Unlike William Faulkner's Addie Bundren, Rebecca, as she lay dying, failed to issue a clear request for a final resting place. Addie's family at least knows its course, whereas Rebecca's lack of direction generates confusion and conflict among the surviving Mounts. But she abdicated the maternal role long before her death. Two decades earlier, when her husband walked out of the marriage, she dove into a crippling depression. Teenage Hilary had to leave school and take over the household. When Rebecca developed liver cancer, Hilary became her nurse. Fittingly, Hilary decides in the end what should be done with her mother's body.

Responsibility naturally devolves on the oddly distracted, unkempt Hilary. Thomas, the oldest, a successful architect, struggles with guilt over neglecting his mother and worries about his sister's eccentricities, but he lives a five-hour plane ride away. The utterly self-consumed, alcoholic Billy despairs over his failing marriage, his nasty, pregnant fifteen-year-old daughter, and his lost jobs. He wants only to bury his mother

and sell the house so he can get his cut. Hilary desperately wants to stay where she is. With her mother gone she feels abandoned: "The sudden knowledge that no one will touch her again makes Hilary's skin feel burned and raw." Scratching her face incessantly, trying to erase the imagined stain of her mother's final breath that she believes permeated her skin, she may be punishing herself. Mysterious bruises mark the corpse's neck; perhaps Hilary's saintly caring reached saturation near the end.

Over time, the Mount house has degenerated into a rotting mess: basement walls covered in black mold, dishes unwashed for weeks. The claustrophobic surreality attests to the years that Hilary and her mother sequestered themselves away from the rest of the world, filling their days watching TV, assembling puzzles, and obsessively putting up preserves. Even the linen cupboards bulge with chutneys and jellies. The living room floor, a peril to all but Hilary, is covered in small rocks. She explains, "Mother never went anywhere . . . I put rocks there so she could feel as if she had travelled distances." Hilary and Rebecca's doll collection adds to the Alice-in-Wonderland effect. For Thomas, "It's like hundreds of little children looking straight into his soul. Silent watchers."

The offbeat tenor keeps the novel from sinking into bathos, despite the characters' disappointments and frustrations. And with Rebecca's death come change and cautious hope: Hilary emerges from her solitude, Thomas introduces his long-time gay partner to the family, and Billy vows to quit drinking. In an almost slapstick ritual at the backyard burial (a nosy neighbour forces them to pretend to be barbecuing hotdogs instead of conducting a funeral), all three place objects in the casket, omens of acceptance. This coming together is reflected in the odd-couple bonding between Hilary, the skinny thirty-nine-year-old virgin, and Dick, the fleshy, amiable funeral director who prepares Rebecca's body. Once high school sweethearts, they shyly awaken old feelings in each other. Dick's courting gift to Hilary is the luxury "Blue Diamond" casket for her mother.

Though mostly a quick, enjoyable read, the novel nevertheless seems at times repetitive and heavy-handed. Having written two short-story collections, Berry may here have stretched a story or novella into a novel. We are told too often that Billy needs a drink, and characters occasionally repeat what has already been established by the narrator. Still, what remains is an imaginative, gentle story, sympathetically told, with no over-wrought drama, no grotesque skeletons squirming in closets, no incest, no revelations designed to shatter protective illusions, no villains. (Not that all is entirely well at the end: Hilary seems destined to stay in this house of little horrors.) The characters fumble in their loneliness and inadequacies but ultimately find, more or less, what they all want: affection, forgiveness, dignity.

Writing: Verb or Noun?

Michelle Berry and Natalie Caple, eds.
The Notebooks: Interviews and New Fiction from Contemporary Writers. Anchor Canada $25.95

Lorna Crozier and Patrick Lane, eds.
Addicted: Notes from the Belly of the Beast. Greystone Books $22.95

Eric Henderson and Madeline Sonik, eds.
Entering the Landscape. Oberon P $15.95

Reviewed by Stuart Sillars

The concept of writing as a personal and social activity, and its corrosive effects bind these books. *The Notebooks* document individual practices, approaches, and experiences; *Addicted* provides evidence of the sufferings that this process may engender; and *Entering the Landscape* presents the product of the writer's work, in relation to the landscape and to the state. In total, all

reveal much about writing and writers in contemporary Canada.

The Notebooks uses the *Paris Review* formula of combining fiction with interviews. It is a large volume and will doubtless find many readers among those eager to hear the newer voices in Canadian fiction. It addresses the question of what makes writing Canadian, but it also asks about the identity and social status of the writer. The book tells stories about identity construction. The accounts of how people write are fascinating for both their differences and resonances. But there is a great opportunity lost here, since the stories of the writers are not presented as alternative narratives. Certainly, we learn that Catherine Bush needs "homeopathic coffee" to get started, and that the screenplay has become a formal influence for Michael Turner, but the larger structural parallels remain undiscovered.

That is not to say that the book is without its pleasures. The stories themselves are in many cases taut and forceful, and the volume as a whole stands as a test-bore of contemporary writing, although the themes are often restricted to maturation, marriage, betrayal in small-town Canada. Esta Spalding's "Big Trash Day," an experimental piece which mixes poetry with story, is just that. The experiment works in places, but a lot of it covers familiar territory. Michael Winter uses some of the conventions of a screenplay, but in a manner that emphasizes the familiarity of his material rather than revealing something new.

Nowhere in *Addicted* is the parallel drawn between substance dependency and the business of writing, despite the similarities between some of the symptoms. The short pieces of personal experience that constitute this collection could and should be frightening, but they are not, because they are too self-consciously writerly. These memoirs are often present-tense close observations of working-class childhood and unwise marriage, described in brand-name, street-map detail. They generally begin with an appalling incident and then drop into flashback—"how did I come to *this*?"—before moving towards what in psychobabblelitcrit is termed "closure." They are neither genuine self-examinations nor explications of the link between the urge to write and the urge to abuse. True, there are moments that disturb, chief among them Patrick Lane vomiting blood on the opening pages. But here is the problem: the sort of syntactic twist that mainlines the addiction into the writing, and the writing into the addiction, is absent. The cover blurb calls the book "a potent concoction that will have readers hooked from the very first page." But even if literary judgement is having a day off, and moral responsibility is out collecting the laundry, it doesn't seem too much to hope that intellectual curiosity might have wandered into the office.

For the most part, the stories in *Entering the Landscape* are the material that *Addicted* parodies. There are explications of landscape in all its forms, a peculiar and insistent closeness that will not be overthrown, but it is an intensely literary perception that is being dealt with here, the focus by implication always on the gaze rather than the gazed upon. The best pieces are those that break clear of the urban-oppressed-female matrix: Mark Anthony Jarman's "Flat-out Earth Moving" opposes containment and displacement in its prison-wilderness setting, Bill Gaston's "The Northern Cod" uneasily parallels a woman scientist's observations of fish breeding with her own bleak coupling. Others are less secure, but hopeful. Kelly Cooper's "They secretly hope for rain" stops just short of self-parody in eroticizing the link with the land, and Joan Clark's "Latitudes of Melt," a child-from-the sea tale, verges on the fey but is determinedly unsentimental at its end.

All three books have worthy purposes but

they do not answer the questions they implicitly pose. The question of how writing works, and what its corrosive effects are must either be addressed or subsumed into process: self-absorption can too easily become self-satisfaction.

Many and Other

E. D. Blodgett
Five Part Invention: A History of Literary History in Canada. U of Toronto P $65.00
An Ark of Koans. U of Alberta P $19.95
Reviewed by Kevin McNeilly

Five Part Invention is a major undertaking, an impressive and sweeping history—or histories—of the practice of national literary history in Canada. Its scholarship is thick and persuasive, as Blodgett interrogates significant forays into national literary history in English and French Canada, from Edward Hartley Dewart and Edmond Lareau to W. H. New, Penny Petrone, and Diane Boudreau. As metahistory, Blodgett's work simultaneously adopts and dismantles narrative form. The first six chapters follow a piecemeal chronology from 1874 to the present, while subsequent sections revisit in counterpoint the same periods from the perspectives of outsiders and others. Blodgett argues that the "national impulse" in both traditions—from early modernist histories such as Archibald MacMehan's *Headwaters of Canadian Literature* (1924) to more recent productions like W. J. Keith's *Canadian Literature in English* (1985)—to discover a "commensurate" or "coterminous" relation between literature and nation is a discursive production that is inherently limited, often to the detriment of inclusive or accurate renderings of cultures, an enterprise of empowerment that remains the principal task of such historians. But Canada, as a historical construct both mimicked in and shaped by its literatures, is not for Blodgett a fabrication of two conflicted solitudes; instead, it is an assemblage of five distinct parts—anglophone, francophone, aboriginal, Inuit, and immigrant cultures—even if such elegantly reductive schemas as this one begin to unknit the moment they're offered as definitive.

English Canadian literary history, he suggests *pace* Frye, takes comedy as its genre: a movement toward the discovery and disclosure of the terms of community and national coherence. But these literary histories inevitably concern themselves with a rather well-trodden "argument of Canadian distinctiveness," uneasily laying claim to national traits as emergent historical topoi. French-speaking Canada, by contrast, takes up the tragic as its mode, but, for Blodgett, histories such as Samuel Baillargeon's *Littérature canadienne-française* (1957) manage to make "culture . . . synonymous with crisis" and so maintain a nationalism shaped by its own troubling. Whatever its literary mode, the history that contrives narrative coherence also (and this marks the essential brilliance of Blodgett's thought) introduces a structural alterity that challenges this very coherence. Baillargeon tends to defeat his own necessary fiction of national organism because his work "is a history of alterity that, rather than just growing in some unpredictable, yet organic fashion, is founded upon the shock of loss." Blodgett wants to tease out, particularly from the substantial histories of the two founding languages, an essential alterity that refuses historical closure, and thus also refuses to limit its cultural possibilities, instead aspiring "to place our thinking of Canadian culture outside the limits of all cultural exclusivity."

Such a challenge, however, is primarily articulated from the margins of the dominant cultures, or from its inner outsides, the other three of his five parts: "The challenge of alterity is constructed as marginal [in literary histories], that is, on the outside

of the culture that has the status of being Canadian. The true challenge, which argues implicitly that 'Canada' is not ontologically grounded, is not problematized in anglophone or francophone histories," at least not to the extent that Blodgett would wish. While histories of the remaining three cultural divisions—the aboriginal, the Inuit, and the immigrant—almost as a matter of course in the drive for agency trouble the fabricated ontologies of the other two dominant cultures, that troubling also defines, sometimes despite their nationalist nostalgias, any project of a Canadian literary history, because, as Blodgett persuasively argues, Canada is always beside itself, its foundations constituted by at least one (and no doubt more than one) unfixable fracture, as the nation emerges amid a multiplicity of historical narratives that will not resolve but rather "open [Canada] to its several selves." Blodgett's point is to overcome the self-betraying nationalist essentialisms that underlie most versions of Canadian Studies. Pushing the limits of whatever national unity a literary history can contrive, Blodgett's project seeks a trajectory from alterity, the recognition of Otherness (or what one chapter heading calls "The Acquisition of Difference") toward plurality, the articulation of multiple, conflicted positions: the orchestration (to borrow from his frequent musical tropes) of voices that simply cannot be made to agree.

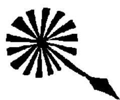
Such a project, for him, is fundamentally better, inasmuch as it emerges as an ethics, a critical mindfulness that shifts forward from responsiveness to responsibility for what it cannot comprehend, its outside. Blodgett's method, as he composes a history of literary histories, is contrapuntal, as he works to subvert the language of historical autonomy and to effect as many openings as he can in the approximately seventy literary histories he constellates and analyzes. But while he attends closely to the rhetoric of these narratives, he can only hint at a plural poetics of history, at the forms such a history might ultimately take, to bespeak the Other as "at once beginning and origin," a cracked and creatively provocative founding. So we may still need to ask in what specific ways Blodgett's plural history may already have been written, ghosted, in the poetry those literary histories appropriate, narrativize, and regulate. How can we be critically mindful, in the process of writing, of those differences and limits, or at least pay sufficient attention to draw them into the open?

Blodgett's own poetic practice may bear out this alterity, and find a means of moving toward a pluralized writing. In *An Ark of Koans* he assembles, Noah-like, about a hundred cross-rhymed trimeter quatrains, each of which captures a moment of transit of a given animal, some actual and some imaginary, but all of whom represent a transcendent alterity, moving images of unassimilable otherness—which has a theological character, signals of a divinity beyond the clutches of human language or conception: "Dogs come always out / of nowhere, before you know / if they have come, a shout / goes up and there they go." The best turns of Blodgett's accomplished voice, and this quatrain bears out such praise, subtly mix careful formal concision with colloquial offhandedness to draw from common speech a brilliantly unremarkable miracle, a deft shivering of meaning into slight tensions and counterpoints that are easily missed, but which, once heard, open words and lines temporarily, micrologically, to the pluralized ontologies that *Five Part Invention* seeks out on a much grander scale.

The poems can also be lyrically dense, vivid with phase-shifted syntax and surreal collisions of images: "A firefly is air / alive with minor keys / of moons. Breathe with care—/ tides turn on your knees." Blodgett's ear is closely attuned to the quiet plastics of rhythm, of bent time, as the gently dilating

syllables of the first line above suggest. There are many moments of such genius in this work, enacting the mindfulness Blodgett calls for, but there are also troubling failures to realize this task. His diction often slips into loose phenomenology—"they are," "they seem"—or insubstantial theology—"they are the guides to God"—to aver abstractions these small poems can't sustain; in such cases, the poems become dilettantish, a brand of armchair philosophy that belies Blodgett's erudition and craft. I appreciate the echoes of William Blake and Robert Frost—"lambs leap / so high"—but find the occasional lapses into Jay MacPherson-like preciousness grating. A description of eagles, who "sit enthroned / upon the highest peaks / of stars, worlds disowned / and bare beneath their beaks" illustrates for me the best and the worst tendencies of Blodgett's poetry, as the arresting sonic and semantic pull of the last line-and-a-half is grafted to redundancy (when you're enthroned you must be sitting) and cliché ("highest peaks") that nearly deflate the poem: it is a testament to Blodgett's ability that he can recuperate its verbal energies, although I still wish the text had been rewritten.

Similarly, a poem depicting how "Dolphins seem to raise / aloft the waters of / the world: flesh is praise / enough, its leaping love" hovers between bathos and virtuosity. And perhaps, in the end, this is Blodgett's strength, that he can rescue from a static and stale language—those overworked figures of God and Being—an immediacy of poetic shape-shifting and, by moments, startling word music that reanimates thought and that calls up active, mindful relations to an other, pointing to the transgression of the limits of a language that remains vitally just out of reach.



Chroniques de Tremblay

André Brochu
Rêver la lune. Hurtubise HMH 26,95$

Michel Tremblay
Le passé antérieur. Leméac/Actes Sud 11,95$

Michel Tremblay
Linda Gaboriau, trad. *Impromptu on Nun's Island. Talonbooks* 16,95$

Comptes rendus par Alain-Michel Rocheleau

L'œuvre de Michel Tremblay occupe une place considérable dans le paysage culturel québécois et bien au-delà de ses frontières. Il faut dire que peu d'écrivains ont réussi comme lui une telle symbiose entre le dispositif imaginaire que ses récits mettent en branle et la richesse carnavalesque des couches sociales qu'ils représentent. Les ouvrages qui font l'objet de ce compte rendu critique témoignent d'ailleurs pleinement de ce fait.

Dans *Rêver la lune,* André Brochu procède à une lecture éclairante et rigoureuse des Chroniques du Plateau Mont-Royal. Tout en laissant volontairement de « côté les problématiques qui font appel à des savoirs extérieurs à la littérature, comme la psychanalyse ou la sociologie », l'auteur a recours à des outils méthodologiques éprouvés—de portée narratologique (Genette), psychocritique (Mauron) et structuraliste (Greimas)—dans le but d'identifier les principaux « réseaux d'obsessions significatives » qui charpentent les récits et l'écriture de Tremblay.

A l'intérieur des deux premières sections du livre, Brochu procède à une mise en perspective des Chroniques tout en examinant très sommairement les œuvres narratives qui les précèdent, comme *Contes pour buveurs attardés* (1966), puis considère la poétique—celle de la chronique notamment—qui leur est sous-jacente. Dans les trois chapitres qui suivent, intitulés « Les constructions du Rêve », l' auteur examine certains réseaux thématiques des Chroniques

axés sur le symbole de la lune, tout en s'intéressant à trois figures masculines « inductrices de la symbolique lunaire »: Joséphat, Édouard et Marcel. Cet examen critique permet de mieux saisir l'importance, chez Tremblay, de la figure maternelle et de ses représentations multiples. Brochu poursuit d'ailleurs sur cette lancée en faisant état, dans le sixième chapitre de son livre, de la *prégnance du féminin* qui se manifeste aussi bien dans *La grosse femme d'à côté est enceinte* que dans *Thérèse et Pierrette à l'école des Saints-Anges*. Ce qui est dit du personnage de Victoire est d'ailleurs original et bien illustré. L'analyse de quelques motifs importants—liés à la coupure et la peur, notamment, et qui s'inscrivent en filigrane dans ces deux romans—complète fort bien l'étude du critique.

Dans cet ouvrage, André Brochu réussit globalement à démontrer l'importance que détient le symbolisme lunaire dans l'imaginaire tremblayen et à illustrer, plus spécifiquement, de quelle manière les protagonistes qui le composent s'efforcent de se libérer d'un réel qui les aliène, en se réfugiant sous les jupes d'une figure apaisante que la pleine lune symbolise mieux que tout. Bien que très pertinentes et habilement menées, les observations de Brochu se limitent toutefois beaucoup trop aux deux premiers tomes des Chroniques de Tremblay et—chose surprenante—n'accordent qu'une place décevante au *Premier Quartier de la lune* (1989). Par ailleurs, il aurait été souhaitable que l'auteur tienne compte—plus qu'il ne le fait—des études sur les Chroniques qui ont devancé—parfois même de plusieurs années—la publication de son ouvrage. On s'étonne, par exemple, que des articles fort connus, comme ceux d'Eva-Marie Kröller (publié dans *Voix et Images*, en 1992) et de Dominique Lafon (publié, la même année, dans *Le roman contemporain du Québec (1960–1985)* de François Gallays *et al.*), aient échappé à l'attention du critique.

L'une des figures les plus importantes des Chroniques du Plateau Mont-Royal est sans conteste Albertine, qui sera d'ailleurs, quelques années après la publication de *La grosse femme d'à côté est enceinte* (1978), le sujet privilégié d'une des meilleures pièces de l'auteur, *Albertine, en cinq temps* (1984). Dans la nouvelle pièce de Tremblay, intitulée *Le passé antérieur*, Albertine apparaît comme un être volontaire, semblable en cela à sa mère Victoire, mais encore plus buté qu'elle.

L'action de cette pièce en un acte se déroule en 1930, dans le salon d'une conciergerie du Vieux-Montréal. Albertine, qui a alors vingt ans, voit son futur anéanti lorsque son amoureux, Alex, décide de la quitter pour fréquenter sa sœur, Madeleine, de deux ans sa cadette. Dans un ultime essai de le reconquérir, Albertine revêt une robe nouvellement achetée par sa rivale et souhaite faire résonner un dernier cri d'amour pour celui qu'elle croyait être l'homme de sa vie. Cette stratégie du désespoir ne trompe toutefois personne: ni Victoire, ni Madeleine, ni même son frère Édouard, qui l'invite à faire preuve de bon sens. Tout en ressentant les effets d'une peine d'amour qui a déclenché en elle, quelques mois plus tôt, une grave dépression nerveuse, Albertine, fière et têtue, rencontrera malgré tout son opposant et n'aura alors qu'une seule question à lui poser: « Pourquoi vous m'avez sacrée là comme ça[. . .]? » Poussé à bout, Alex lui répondra ceci: « [. . .] quand on se rend compte qu'on peut pus respirer, [. . .] qu'on a pus de liberté [. . .], y'est trop tard pour reculer! Pis non seulement vous avez tout envahi [. . .] mais en plus [. . .] vous vous préparez [. . .] à nous empêcher de respirer jusqu'à la fin de nos jours! Pis vous avez le front d'appeler ça de l'amour! » Rejetée de la sorte, Albertine saura-t-elle trouver la force nécessaire pour résoudre le drame qui secoue son existence? Son avenir de jeune femme se limitera-t-il désormais à

travailler à l'*Américan Spéghatti*?

Ce que le lecteur soupçonne, c'est qu' elle risque de plonger pour le reste de ses jours dans une rage infinie, où elle noiera tout espoir de voir enfin l'amour illuminer sa vie. La conclusion de son entretien avec Alex tend d'ailleurs à confirmer cette interprétation: « Quand vous allez être parti [lui dit-elle], y'aura pus d'espoir pantoute! [. . .] Chaque jour de ma vie va être une souffrance, un reproche, un malheur! » Madeleine épousera Alex—leur vie de couple nous est rapportée dans *Le Vrai monde?* (1987) de Tremblay—et, pour vivre avec lui, devra se réfugier dans le silence, moyen par excellence d'éviter d'aborder les infidélités de son mari. Albertine, elle, comprendra peu à peu, à la façon des personnages de Beckett dans *Fin de partie*, que son existence est irrémédiablement placée sous le signe de la fatalité et que « [t]out est fini avant de commencer ».

L'histoire contenue dans *Impromptu on Nun's Island*, version anglaise de *L'état des lieux*, est d'une toute autre nature et nous raconte les faits suivants. Rentrée précipitamment à Montréal, la cantatrice Patricia Pasquetti—de son vrai nom Patricia Paquette—voit sa carrière s'écrouler à la suite d'une fausse note d'une incroyable dissonance et émise avec puissance dans la scène finale de *Salomé* de Richard Strauss. Tous les mélomanes rassemblés pour l'occasion à l'Opéra Bastille ont été témoins de ce couac retentissant. Depuis, la diva est boudée par ses pairs et ignorée par les journalistes.

Par l'entremise de Richard, pianiste accompagnateur et témoin impuissant de la chute de son idole, les démêlés de la cantatrice à Paris, puis les raisons de son retranchement dans un appartement de l'Île des Sœurs, nous sont expliqués. Une fois chez elle, Patricia s'en prend ouvertement à sa fille Michèle, une actrice encore méconnue qui privilégie le théâtre de création, et lui reproche de manquer d'envergure. Surgit alors sa mère, Estelle, qui modifie la dynamique cruellement instaurée. Actrice dans la soixantaine, elle sait ce qu'est le déclin d'une artiste réputée et ne se prive pas de dire à Patricia ses quatre vérités.

La traduction de Linda Gaboriau correspond à un travail consciencieux d'adéquation à l'œuvre originale. On peut même dire qu'en général, *Impromptu on Nun's Island* suit assez fidèlement l'économie verbale du texte de départ, dont la traduction se distingue néanmoins par le retranchement de plusieurs bouts de phrases et par la modification de notes didascaliques. Par exemple, « T'es ben toi, hein? T'assistes à un bon show! » devient « You enjoying the show? », alors que « *Empruntant l'accent français* » devient « *in a phoney accent* ».

Aux niveaux onomastique et toponymique, la traduction a retenu le nom des personnages (Estelle Champoux s'appelle toutefois Estelle Bergeron dans le texte traduit) et de l'endroit où se déroule l'action dramatique. On remarque aussi que plusieurs adaptations ont été faites dans le but de faciliter la réception du texte de Tremblay dans un contexte d'accueil autre que québécois. Ainsi, par exemple, la ville de Dolbeau (Lac-Saint-Jean)—lieu de naissance de Patricia—a été remplacée par Montréal. Par ailleurs, étant donné que *L'État des lieux* a été écrit dans une langue renfermant de nombreux idiomes régionaux, la version traduite les reproduit par des élisions empruntées à une langue beaucoup plus normative. Ainsi, l'expression « Ouagne » devient « Was I? », alors que « Ah, pis qu'y mangent donc toutes de la marde, gang de law, law » se lit comme « Let them all go to hell, pathetic bunch of nobodies ». Dans quelques passages, Gaboriau semble animée par l'intention d'expliquer le message de certaines répliques et n'hésite pas à traduire, avec pertinence, « le Centre culturel canadien » par « the Centre culturel at the Canadian Embassy ». Par contre, d'autres choix de

traduction semblent moins justifiables, comme « Mêle-toi donc de tes affaires, toi! » qu'elle traduit par « Easy for you to say! ».

En somme, les lecteurs de Michel Tremblay sauront apprécier l'ouvrage d'André Brochu, la traduction de Linda Gaboriau, et éprouveront un grand bonheur à lire l'une des dernières pièces de l'auteur: *Le passé antérieur.*

A Store of Fragments

Suzanne L. Bunkers, ed.
Diaries of Girls and Women: A Midwestern American Sampler. U of Wisconsin P $24.95

Allan G. Bogue
The Farm on the North Talbot Road. U of Nebraska P $19.95

Reviewed by Michael Fralic

Both of these books fall easily into the broad category of life-writing, and both use largely anecdotal modes of telling to describe the lives of quite "ordinary" people. Both also make connections between these lives and the broader cultures and histories in which they participate.

Although Bunkers's *Diaries* may offer a more satisfying literary experience than Bogue's *Farm*, Bunkers warns of the restrictions that reading for "literariness" places on readings of diaries. She also draws the reader's attention to the tactics of telling utilized by women diarists in order to compensate for restrictions placed upon their freedom of expression—tactics such as omission, euphemism, and repetition. In her introduction, Bunkers warns readers to be prepared to read with patience through the repetitive structures and with deep attention to the unspoken.

Sections of the book are highly engaging, especially sections on the religious and romantic struggles of Ada L. James, the growing social activism of Martha Ferguson Nash, or the joy of living expressed in the shared diary of Lucinda and Edward Holton. Sometimes the reading rewards are more sedate, as we explore daily activities under the keen eye of a twelve-year-old Iowa farm girl, whose snapshot writing throws us into the world she describes—"Go to school. kill 2 snakes. a beggar was here. . ."—or as we bear witness to Eliza Hamilton's deliberations on her public support of the antislavery movement.

There are tiresome passages in which the quotidian repetition seems habitual and devoid of rich subtext. Perhaps I am too much in need of literary seduction, but "Not very cold today" followed by extended weather reports fails to hold my attention. Despite this, I accept Bunkers's assertions of the importance of repetition in the diaries, for the mundane offers a glimpse into the daily rhythms of ordinary lives.

Diaries of Girls and Women covers a broad range of styles and perspectives, though limited by geography to Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa. Bunkers crosses various racial and class boundaries, and I think the book would be strengthened by either the inclusion of Native diarists or some brief discussion of their absence.

Bogue's memoir *The Farm on the North Talbot Road* explores the lives of a Depression-era Ontario farming family. When offering astute observations on social divisions, farming practices, and ways of relating to both place and past, Bogue manages to be, if not riveting, at least interesting. As he describes the emotional drama and comic moments of life on the family farm, he sometimes gets lost in his own reminiscences. One may be reminded of the fragmentary quality that Bunkers emphasizes in her introduction to the *Diaries*—in these moments of drift, the story is about the author's process of remembrance as much as it is about the events remembered.

In Bogue's book, these fragments of personal drama contrast with the more confident and coherent observations he makes

of farm life in general, and of the social and economic dynamics of Depression-era farms and villages. Through these observations, we move away from the story of Bogue as the youngest son and brother in his family, and toward Bogue as a man reflecting on a regional past. We learn about the purposes of the various rings on the party-line telephone; about technological changes, varieties of farms, and supplementary economic practices; about the divisions between "men's" and "women's" work, and the places where those lines could be crossed; about rural politics as they played out in his particular community. In short, we get a thorough, balanced picture of Depression-era Ontario farm life from a personal point of view.

The flatness of Bogue's presentation is relieved when he describes the tension between his parents. Their strained relationship is presented through a combination of anecdote and a thin skeleton of tentative gender and economic analysis.

As Bunkers does with her diarists, Bogue places considerable emphasis on the importance of location. He suggests that a sense of a particular place can exist among individuals arising from that place, regardless of their differences; but he also emphasizes that no person who grew up on a farm in a given area can, on deeper levels, have the same sense of the place as any other. This is perhaps part of what Bogue attempts to explain via his inclusion of episodes of family drama, and even of slight differences in soil, farming priorities, and economic status from one farm to the next.

Bunkers's *Diaries* and Bogue's *Farm* both straddle the literary and the historical, as Bunkers notes in her introduction. They ought to have interest for the scholar or enthusiast of life-writing, and for historians interested in the crucial historical details and stories now being broadly recovered by historians exploring experience outside of dominant political histories.

Contemporary Short Stories

Catherine Bush, Marc Glassman, and Hal Niedzviecki, eds.

The Journey Prize Anthology 2000. McClelland & Stewart $18.95

Joy Gugeler, ed.

Write Turns: New Direction in Canadian Fiction. Raincoast $24.95

Keith Harrison, ed.

Islands West: Stories from the Coast. Oolichan $22.95

Reviewed by Charles E. May

Each one of the fifty-seven stories in these three collections is a separate entity that should be read and commented on individually, but fifty-seven separate reviews, of course, would be unmanageable. Isolating current trends and social issues, and characterizing what is particularly Canadian about them would be controllable, but good stories are seldom trendy, timely, or limited by local culture. *The Journey Prize Anthology* contains twelve stories submitted by Canadian literary journals and short-listed by a three-panel jury to compete for the $10,000 annual prize. The fifteen stories in *Write Turns* are by authors who received MFAs from the University of British Columbia between 1990 and 2000. *Islands West* features stories by thirty West coast writers, beginning with one of UBC's most famous graduates, Jack Hodgins, and concluding with a story by the best living short-story writer in the world, Alice Munro.

Most authors who take the short story seriously know that it is a difficult form to master, for to succeed the writer must create a polished prose fiction that is as tightly structured, as thematically complex, and as meaningfully mysterious as a poem. Based on these criteria, I suggest that while there are many competent short stories in these three collections, relatively few are really good. The difference is most obvious in the

Islands West collection, in which Jack Hodgins's "After the Season," Audrey Thomas's "The Man with Clam Eyes," and especially Alice Munro's "Cortes Island" stand out as belonging to a different realm of artistic reality.

Several of the stories in *Islands West* are little more than the sum of their subject matter. Shani Mootoo's "A Garden of Her Own" is just an ordinary treatment of a lonely immigrant woman seeking intimacy and a sense of belonging. Murray Logan's "The King of Siam" is one more account of a teenage boy discovering that his father is not such a nice guy. Just because Liza Potvin's "After Hours, After Years" is about the complex subject of interracial relationships does not mean it is a complex story. And just because Evelyn Lau's "Fresh Girls" deals with the shocking phenomenon of drug/prostitute life does not necessarily mean it is a shocking experience for the reader.

Some stories in this collection are just commonplace transcriptions, with a bit of indulgent exposition thrown in, such as John Harris's "Report on the Nanaimo Labour School." Other stories read as if they were excerpts from loosely written novels. For example, in "Traplines" by Eden Robinson, a young boy talks on and on about how terrible his family was, how he was beaten, and how the schoolteacher was nice. And then there is Ron Smith's "The Last Time We Talked," in which inconsequential dialogue rambles on loosely as if there were all the time in the world.

Suddenly in the midst of all this ordinariness, there is a compelling story like Cynthia Flood's "Bodies of Water," about a divorced father who takes his son to his weekly soccer game and gets a catharsis about clashes. And then one discovers "Fishing Veronica Lake" about the commonplace event of a father teaching his fifteen-year-old son how to fly fish, which Stephen Guppy makes over into the magical. Or one runs across "Silent Cruise" by Timothy Taylor, who marvelously connects the stock market with the racetrack, and the random with the calculated, transforming it all into the mysteriously complex.

Most of the fifteen stories in *Write Turns* are tighter than those in *Islands West*, but many of them seem too well made and predictable. For example, "Black" by Annabel Lyon shifts back and forth in time in the sixties experimental mode of Robert Coover. "Pet the Spider" by Kelli Deeth is a "well-made" initiation story of youth encountering age and being afraid. The mannered style of Eden Robinson's "Dogs in Winter" could have been taught to her by Joyce Carol Oates. Madeleine Thien's "Dispatch" self-consciously combines fantasy and reality. And Nancy Lee's "Associated Press" uses a self-conscious narrative gimmick to identify characters. Although most of the stories in *Write Turns* are competently written, many are predictably patterned.

The Journey Prize Anthology is the best of the three. With an unprecedented three stories short-listed, Timothy Taylor is the star of the collection. His "Doves of Townsend," which won the prize, is a delicate, complex story about an antique dealer's discovery of a magical gift cleverly given to her by an admirer. "Pope's Own," another Taylor story, is about a woman who tries to buy a special cheese farm and gets caught in a complex war between two brothers. The structured complexity of "Silent Cruise" has already been mentioned.

It is not subject matter but style that makes Taylor's stories memorable. It is the same for others here. By all rights, Andrew Gray's "The Heart of the Land," about a doctor who falls in love with a comatose woman and can "hear" her speak to him should not work, but Gray makes us believe it. J. A. McCormack's "Hearsay" justifies its long, rambling nature by the creation of the absolutely believable voice of the woman

who tells the story of sexual misconduct and legal manoeuvres. Who would think that a story about a woman who becomes a yak and sells Amway products could transcend the silly? But Jessica Johnson makes it work in "We Move Slowly." And Andrew Smith's "Sightseeing," about two women who see a boy jump off a railing into Niagara Falls, is a complex little dialogue dance, and not just because one of the women is a transsexual.

Whereas one might forgive the loose, ordinary writing of many of these pieces if they were parts of a novel, the short story has to be complexly and mysteriously compact. It's a marvelous transformation when a writer can manage it, and it's not something one can be taught in an MFA program. One might be able to learn to write short stories by reading a writer like Joyce Carol Oates, who knows all the tricks but seldom transcends them. But one cannot learn to write short stories by reading Alice Munro, who dazzles readers with the mysterious complexity of what it means to be human.

On Returns

Jodey Castricano
Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing. McGill-Queens UP $19.95

Ian Angus, ed.
Anarcho-Modernism: Toward a New Critical Theory. Talonbooks $24.95

Reviewed by Charles Barbour

The biggest challenge facing deconstruction, one which has in many ways defined it since its inception, is how to remain challenging—how to avoid becoming one more critical methodology, or consumed by the academy it seeks to delimit. Jodey Castricano's *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing*, or rather the style of Castricano's text, provides an answer to this challenge. According to Castricano, "the term cryptomimesis draws attention to a writing predicated on encryption: the play of revelation and concealment lodged within *parts* of individual words." It is a question of turning language inside out, or of exhuming the remains of meanings buried within particular words. At this level, writing is not the transparent communication of intentions but a pixilated collection of fragments—a deferred promise of meaning. Castricano's aim is not merely to describe this "cryptomimetic" conception of writing but also to perform it. Thus her writing quite deliberately gives the uncanny impression that it is haunted by innumerable potential interpretations, or that the writer is always preparing for her own death and the emergence of countless readers (whose work is, as Derrida likes to say, a "work of mourning").

To the extent that we can claim it is "about" anything, *Cryptomimesis* is a reading of American gothic literature and Derrida. Rather, it uses a collection of *topoi* taken from gothic literature as tools for reading Derrida. The text is composed (or decomposed) as an assemblage of citations woven together by a diffuse narrative that attempts, like the use of citation itself, to break down distinctions between inside and outside, self and other, life and death. The suggestion is that meaning is something that returns at the moment of citation, but what returns in the citation is never what the author (the one who cites her) intended. What returns is always something uncanny and spectral—a diabolical image of what was expected. Thus all reading has the character of a haunting. The most successful articulation of this theme in *Cryptomimesis* is found in an astonishing interpretation of Steven King's *Pet Sematary*. Castricano provides not so much a Derridean reading of King as a Kingian reading of Derrida. "In King's novel," Castricano argues, "the dead return not only because they were not properly

buried but also because they represent, in Derridean terms, a certain remainder." Like the remains of the dead, writing is the remainder or supplement that both conditions and troubles our sense of identity, and of the difference between life and death. The fact that, in King, the spectres transgress boundaries—between life and death, and between human and animal, uprooting our assumptions about the kinds of ghosts we expect to find in a gothic narrative—only serves to reinforce Castricano's point. It is, in this text, always a question of "the crossing of certain lines or borders which constitute a threat to identity."

Not surprisingly, some of the most captivating material is found in the longer footnotes, which are more like protocols for a series of alternative readings of Castricano's text—or, perhaps, alternative research projects. There is more than a little at stake when, for example, Castricano asks

> What returns to haunt? . . . do the tropes and topoi of the Gothic show us that, rather than being unique to the Gothic, haunting, mourning, and revenance are integral components of subjectivity, language, and thought, thus comprising social and cultural reality?

Is being haunted not part of what it means to be alive? It is an old question, one that neither Castricano nor Derrida, nor even Heidegger or Freud, was first to articulate. And it is a question that is bound repeatedly to return, though differently and unexpectedly, each time. The crypt, as Heidegger reminded us, is what makes each repetition, each *Dasein*, something singular and discrete. Death individuates, even as it steals that individual in the process. But it is the living dead who return to trouble every individual or every "authentic" being. Castricano knows the phenomenon, it would seem, intimately.

As evidenced by Castricano's book, the current trend in deconstructive criticism seems to tend away from the explicitly political and ethical themes that dominated the last decade, towards more aesthetic questions. Not that the latter won't continue to have political implications, but they will have to be articulated otherwise.

From a very different, in many ways opposed, perspective, *Anarcho-Modernism: Toward a New Critical Theory*, a collection of nearly forty essays in honor of the Simon Fraser University professor Jerry Zaslove, also attempts a new articulation of the political and the aesthetic. Indeed, with the exception of a number of very moving and inspiring reflections on personal relationships with Zaslove, the book is more or less evenly divided between essays dealing with literary or aesthetic issues (including the fascinating "An Excursion into the Amature Grotesque" by Martha Langford, which deals with incidental photographs from the beginning of the twentieth century) and ones that focus on political topics (and particularly on the politics of pedagogy). Generally we find an anarchist critique of what the Frankfurt School first dubbed "the culture industry." And overall the essays hold up well, even in the wake of postmodernism, which tended to deny critique its privileged position of exteriority.

Probably the central theoretical essay—a manifesto, really—is Wolf-Dieter Narr and Martin Blobel's "Anarchism Today." While Narr and Blobel admit that anarchism is "not a constitutive, but a regulative principle," or that it is, in the Kantian terms invoked here, a regulative ideal, they also insist that "there is no history without anarchism." That is to say, human cultures will always be conditioned by a longing for emancipation from the institutional structures that nonetheless comprise those cultures—a world in which each is "fully self-conscious" of herself as a "concrete human being." But there are some theoretical problems here—not incidental oversights, but issues that go to the heart of

anarchism itself. Mixing contexts quite carelessly, even after having informed us that such a conflation of discrete situations is the gravest of errors, Narr and Blobel conclude that "if one can learn anything out of the KZ's, the Gulags and 'identity politics,' which exemplify the pressure and the longing toward identification, then it is to understand that one should never identify oneself with anything; not even with oneself." This attack on collective identity is formulated as an ethical, we might even say categorical, imperative. And it is the ethical claim at the core of anarchist thought that needs to be interrogated most rigorously. Is it not curious to realize that ethical coercion emerges most powerfully there at the limits of politics, or among those who dream of abolishing political institutions and replacing them with the spontaneous self-administration of the social?

That said, one cannot deny the generosity of spirit which permeates this text—a reflection, one suspects, of the character of the man to whom it is dedicated. In Kath Curran's contribution "Forever Mud: Zaslove as Teacher," it is recalled that, in the early seventies, Zaslove's nickname among students was "Old Muddy," and that he was known to be "clearly opposed" to what he himself called "premature clarity." This is probably a marker of the kind of influence that continental philosophy—Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger, as the conventional grouping has it—had on people of Zaslove's generation, a crash course in metaphysics which generally went hand in hand with what was then called "existentialism." While the two thinkers are very different, a great deal of what is happening in Derrida's thought relies on a knowledge of the same texts, so much so that it is difficult to imagine reading Derrida without (and I am sure he would despise the formulation) a grounding in the tradition. The fact that thinkers like Derrida or Zaslove are difficult, even serious, and that they demand a great deal of their readers, means that they will repeatedly return, and that each return promises something new.

Humming with Gould

Richard Cavell

McLuhan in Space: A Cultural Geography. U of Toronto P $65.00

Reviewed by Christoph Irmscher

The jacket of Richard Cavell's handsomely produced book shows a landscape, seen perhaps through the windshield of a car: basically flat, with a house and a few barns, some trees, a short, sandy stretch of a road that soon vanishes into the grass. Arching across everything is the vast, picture-book-blue sky, dotted with many clouds, white like the sheep in a child's dream. Artist Iain Baxter's photograph, with its suggestion of unbounded freedom, of worlds other than the one in which people drive cars or read books, will linger in the reader's mind throughout Cavell's discussion of Marshall McLuhan's ideas. But so will the title of the photograph, "Urban Landscape," printed on the jacket's inside flap. It disrupts the visual immediacy of the image and requires us to think about it as an artifact, ultimately making us doubt all the more romantic associations mentioned above. The photograph becomes a picture postcard, the fantasy of a viewer who doesn't live here and who only dreams about a refuge in the country that might not exist anywhere but in an urbanite's muddled mind. Rather than about the photograph itself, we have started to think about the concept behind it, and about the ways in which we construct images to meet our needs. McLuhan would have been pleased.

In the new *Norton Anthology of Literary Theory*, Marshall McLuhan is represented only by one explanatory footnote, which identifies him, rather quaintly, as a "Canadian media critic." But as Richard

Cavell demonstrates in this brilliant book, he was so much more, despite the fact that literary critics have shown less interest in his work than conceptualist artists like Baxter, concrete poets like bpNichol, and musicians like Glenn Gould and John Cage. An exception is Northrop Frye, and the pages detailing the complicated relationship between the two are perhaps among the most important in Cavell's book. In his conclusion to the *Literary History of Canada*, Frye evoked the spectre of a "post-Canadian world," in which everything "has the same kind of immediacy." Cavell, however, argues that Canada is of central importance in McLuhan's work. In absorbing and then dispensing with the influences of modernist artists such as Marcel Duchamp, McLuhan also displaced Europe as a cultural centre, endorsing Canada as the example of a new dynamic, cosmopolitan community.

Cavell successfully disputes the prevalent notion of McLuhan as "vulgarizer" of Harold Innis: McLuhan broke away from his predecessor when arguing that space and time are categories that can never be understood separately, that the objects we surround ourselves with are process as well as product. Nevertheless, he shared Innis's sense that any "re-organization of our perceptual lives" must have an ethical dimension, and that the point of becoming aware of the environments we have created is to alter them, to turn them into, as McLuhan would call them, "counter-environments"—expressions of our heightened awareness that who we are can never be distinguished from where we are. Canadians have been much maligned for their alleged lack of a national identity, but for McLuhan such absence was an opportunity. Canada, he thought, needs more, not fewer, cultures. Here dialogue will take place not between the established "centres of civilization," but in a decolonized, open space inhabited by equal, yet always different, partners in communication. Therefore, McLuhan had little patience for "Norrie Frye's" hankering after classical decorum and timeless mythic meaning, arguing instead that the interests of literature are not well served by shunning its media-age competitors. As McLuhan saw it, the new electronic media have rendered the traditional goal of artistic self-expression and therefore also the distinction between "highbrow" and "lowbrow" art meaningless. Cavell spends much time on McLuhan's protracted love affair with advertising, which to him was the most powerful example of a new, public form of art, allowing consumers, now liberated from the tyranny of the "private point of view," to breathe a collective sigh of relief: "Advertisements function paradigmatically as Happenings: they are anonymous, inclusive, often intermedial, and require audience interaction."

One of the seemingly most elite Canadian artists of the twentieth century, Glenn Gould, had a similar goal in mind. His idiosyncratic preference for the acoustic space of the recording studio, celebrated in McLuhan's *Counterblast* (1969), was not a retreat into the ivory tower but in fact a step forward into the modern media world where the barriers between composer and performer, performer and audience have become obsolete. In the recordings, Gould's humming, so irritating to musical purists, besides demonstrating his total involvement with the music, also serves as a reminder of the performer's own status as a listener: a dialogic practice meant to question the monologic principle of the concert hall performance, where hundreds of listeners, having paid the steep admission price, squirm in uncomfortable seats to witness, on a faraway stage, a pianist's lonely brilliance.

Cavell's lucid exposition of McLuhan's work and its links with Canadian culture is without a doubt the best treatment of the subject to date. It might seem ironical that

the author has chosen the form of a traditional academic monograph, complete with over seventy pages of densely printed endnotes, to document the impact of a thinker who devoted his life to attacking the hegemony of the printed word and who, in his own publications, would come to prefer more unorthodox formats, as he did in *Through the Vanishing Point* (1968), produced in collaboration with Harley Parker, a collection of "exhibits" supposedly engaged in a "spatial dialogue" with each other. Some readers might wonder, too, if McLuhan's unabashedly anthropocentric theories, in which the only possible protection against technology is technology itself, are helpful now that humans are busily turning the global village into a universal wasteland. (I can't help remembering the scientist at a recent conference who said that, from the perspective of geological time, human civilization, with all its gadgets, will eventually just end up as another trash-filled layer on the planet's surface.) It is true that McLuhan emerges from the pages of Cavell's groundbreaking book not as the media-happy proponent of consumerist compliance with whatever will be, but as a fierce critic of artistic snobbery and a staunch advocate of egalitarian politics. One of McLuhan's more unlikely heroes was the Reverend Mr. Dodgson, better known as Lewis Carroll. Dodgson's Alice expected the space behind the looking glass to be full of "beautiful things." However, as we follow her through the mirror, into the weird, non-Euclidean, multi-perspectival universe of McLuhan's dreams, we discover a world where everyone needs to run as fast as they can just to stay in the same place, where the smoke coming from a train engine, like each word of a language, is worth "a thousand pounds a puff," and where people, who will get punished for crimes they haven't yet committed, even *think* "in chorus." It is hard not to notice Alice's growing frustration and loneliness.

Oublis et Obsessions

Daniel Chartier

L'Émergence des classiques. Fides 35,95$

Chantal Bouchard

La Langue et le nombril. Fides 24,95$

Comptes rendus par Dominique Perron

Deux ouvrages remarquables nous arrivent de chez Fides qui ont le mérite de réexaminer chacun à leur manière les aléas de l'histoire ayant présidé, à des degrés différents, à la formation d'un discours critique sur une période littéraire cruciale au Québec comme à l'élaboration d'un discours social sur la question linguistique remontant pour sa part aux débuts de la Conquête. Ces deux travaux jettent un éclairage nouveau et nuancé sur les questions de la réception littéraire comme sur la problématique des questions relatives à la perception historique de la langue québécoise par les Québécois eux-mêmes et par les Anglo-Canadiens. Ces deux livres sont le résultat d'un travail de recherche exhaustif d'une qualité telle qu'ils doivent à mon sens faire dorénavant partie de toute bibliothèque d'un chercheur qui s'intéresse de près ou de loin au champ des études québécoises.

Le grand mérite de Daniel Chartier est d'avoir conçu et d'avoir mené à bien, d'une façon très convaincante, l'examen minutieux des phénomènes de réception critique qui ont présidé soit à assurer la pérennité d'une œuvre littéraire québécoise en l'inscrivant dans le registre de ce que l'on peut appeler un *classique,* soit à sa mise à l'écart par l'institution littéraire de sa saisie comme texte signifiant au sein de l'époque, et dès lors, le condamnant à l'oubli indépendamment des ses intrinsèques qualités littéraires.

Ainsi sont examinés les processus qui ont inscrit dans l'histoire littéraire des romans publiés entre 1933 et 1939, tels *Un homme et son péché, Menaud, maître-draveur, Les Demi-Civilisés* et *Trente arpents* alors que

des œuvres écrites par des femmes, *La Chair décevante* de Jovette-Alice Bernier, *Dans les ombres* d'Eva Sénécal, et *Cocktail* de Yvette Ollivier Mercier-Gouin ont été refoulées avec efficacité dans les limbes de l'amnésie institutionnelle assurée. Cette ségrégation quasi-systématique est d'autant plus choquante lorsque Chartier démonte l'appareil de diffusion qui a permis à l'unique roman de Claude-Henri Grignon d'occuper la place dominante que l'on connaît, reconduite indéfiniment par des sous-produits tels que des pièces de théâtre, des séries radiophoniques et plus tard télévisées, et dont le succès critique et populaire en était grandement redevable à la position même de commentateur tonitruant et redouté qu'occupait Valdombre dans l'appareil de diffusion critique de l'époque. Le consécration du livre de Mgr Savard semble pour sa part s'expliquer dans une grande mesure par la réponse esthétique et idéologique qu'il constituait à la publication de *Maria Chapdelaine*, vingt ans auparavant, rassurant un milieu de littérateurs qui avaient été littéralement traumatisés, c'est là l' expression de Chartier, par l'immense succès d'un livre parlant du Canada français sous la plume même d'un étranger. *Les Demi-Civilisés* de Jean-Charles Harvey va profiter d'une tapageuse publicité de scandale conférée par inadvertance grâce à une interdiction de l'Archevêque de Québec attirant par ressac l'attention sur une œuvre dont les qualités strictement littéraires ne justifiaient certes pas la consécration durable que l' auteur en retira. Pour sa part, le roman de Ringuet, de calibre différent il est vrai, bénéficia d'emblée des retombées positives assurées par sa publication en France et d'une confusion intéressante de la critique sur la position qu'il paraissait occuper au sein du mouvement régionaliste tel qu'il se dessinait en ces années trente. Par comparaison, les œuvres de Sénécal, Bernier, et Mercier-Gouin reçurent un traitement critique qui reflétait l'assignation périphérique dont la littérature écrite par des femmes était l'objet, marginalisation, puis mise au ban à laquelle les jugements moraux et éthiques portés, particulièrement sur les romans, (le théâtre était encore considéré comme un genre trop frivole pour être l'objet d'un discours critique sérieux) ne contribuèrent pas pour peu, alors que les œuvres des auteurs masculins parurent exemptées d'une telle évaluation de l'œuvre à l'aune de la vertu bigote. Daniel Chartier, grâce aussi à une recherche remarquable sur les publications critiques de l'époque, fait la preuve magistrale de l'opacité de la réception littéraire et de son caractère éminemment circonstancié, comme de l'autonomisation rapide et circonscrite du texte critique même qui décida du sort d'une œuvre. Un travail à consulter régulièrement pour finir de dissiper les mythes (s'il en reste) de l'ontologie littéraire.

C'est à un autre réexamen du processus historique de formation des discours sur les questions linguistiques au Québec et surtout sur les effets que ces mêmes discours eurent sur l'élaboration d'une identité collective des Québécois que Chantal Bouchard nous convie dans *La langue et le nombril*. Si on peut considérer cette recherche comme un ajout à la liste sans fin des travaux et essais polémiques sur la question explosive de la langue au Québec, le travail de Bouchard a l'immense mérite de s'aider d'une démarche sociolinguistique au sens large du terme pour démontrer ce qu'une certaine idéologie nationaliste, plus ou moins réalisée par le politique à partir des années soixante, doit à une intériorisation graduelle dans la psyché collective d'un sentiment d'insuffisance lancinante quant à la qualité du français écrit et parlé par les Québécois. Bouchard procède donc à l'historique fort bien documenté de cette reconnaissance progressive d'une langue maternelle vécue comme une défaillance et de son association, par une série de prises

de conscience radicales autour de la Révolution tranquille, à des causes socio-économiques qui ne pouvaient trouver de solution que dans l'action politique, permettant de passer de la dévalorisation identitaire du joualisant à la revalorisation culturelle du Québec à partir des années soixante. A cet égard, Bouchard attribue à la question linguistique, paradigme majeur de l'identitaire québécois contemporain, le rôle de vecteur fondamental d'une réappropriation de soi-même par le collectif qui conduira au désir de séparation politique d'avec le Canada, tant il fut possible pour les Québécois d'établir un lien direct et incontestable entre leur aliénation linguistique et la condition de « nègres blancs d'Amérique ». Un travail fouillé et une lecture passionnante qui change des habituels et larmoyants essais sur la question, dont seule la société distincte a le secret du pullulement.

In Living Colour

Chinosole
African Diaspora and Autobiographics: Skeins of Self and Skin. Peter Lang $19.95

Cheryl Robson, ed.
Black and Asian Plays Anthology. Aurora Metro P $19.95

Reviewed by George Elliott Clarke

African Canada is absent from two current considerations of African Diasporic literature. Chinosole, an associate professor of Women Studies at San Francisco State University, scrutinizes autobiographies by several African, American, and Caribbean writers, but none by Canadians. Cheryl Robson, offering the England-based Aurora Metro Press compilation of five contemporary Black and Asian dramas, writes "we . . . considered plays from Africa, America, Britain, India, and the Caribbean." But, Canada? *Nada*!

Despite African Canada's invisibility in the purviews of a scholar (Chinosole) and a writer (Robson), their precepts may still be useful for African Canadian writers and their critics. Nevertheless, of these two books, it is Chinosole's that shines most illuminatingly, while the plays selected under Robson's auspices are only three-fifths brilliant.

Chinosole examines nine "Black" autobiographical narratives to identify the vagaries of the status of "the autobiographical self" during felt oppressions, but also to interrogate the literary shape of Black self-styling. Her nine writers range from the Enlightenment's Olaudah Equiano to our common era's Audre Lorde. Chinosole cites convincingly the merits and faults of their texts, but she never explains her omission of celebrated works like *The Autobiography of Malcolm X.* All one is told is that her chosen texts were those that educated her "most about Black world views, aesthetics, and gnosis."

So what? Chinosole wants to contest "the wave of de-politicization overtaking Black autobiographical writing" by determinedly reading her subjects' works against the context of their crafting, their apparent stance toward their intended audiences, and their effectiveness in countering nasty social attitudes and practices. Rejecting faddish notions of the death of the author, Chinosole measures her writers against the exacting moral standards of her African American radical feminism.

Treating Equiano, Chinosole admires his "shuttling ironic humor" that skewers European racist imperialism, while she regrets the "mental colonization [that] was the price [he] paid for the privileged socio-economic position that permitted him to write and publish an autobiography" during slavery. Chinosole notes that such "two-toned" voicings mirror a "bifurcated" world, one black and white. In addition, "Dual allegiances . . . generate multiple textual selves."

Examining the mid-twentieth-century American writer and "maverick Marxist"

Richard Wright, Chinosole spies a painful divide in his portrayal of individual and collective selves. Because Wright privileged "individualism, the possibility of one person rising above his lot," only his singular self escapes, allegedly, "total social conditioning of his consciousness." In sorry contrast, the black community becomes the abyss of abjection, the domain of dejection. In a word, Wright's "consciousness is so advanced that his community seems brutal." Chinosole's insight is both essential and universal. Indeed, her reading may also be applied domestically—and disturbingly—to Dionne Brand's new essay *cum* autobiography, *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging.*

The only author to meet Chinosole's vaunted standards for progressive, *engagé* socio-political observation is Lorde, the US Virgin Islands-born lesbian poet, essayist, and memoirist. In her autobiography, Lorde limns, Chinosole thinks, a poetics of "matrilineal diaspora" both "explicitly collective and functionally revolutionary," while combining "history and myth, prose and poetry." Yet Chinosole's study of Lorde dissolves into hagiography. She maintains no sustained critique.

Still, Chinosole must be commended for her nicely anti-essentialist, essentializing insight that "people of African and European descent share the same languages and frames of reference but employ them differently." In one sentence, a central quarrel in African Diasporic literary study is satisfyingly resolved. Bravo!

Black and Asian Plays Anthology is laudable for its internationalist multiculturalism—and because three of the five plays are fine. In her foreword, Robson states, "We wanted the plays we selected to reflect the diverse and many layered societies we live in today as well as publishing texts we felt were to some extent, universal." For play director Afia Nkrumah, in her introduction, the need is to foster adequate minority drama production to end continuous "complaining about and scrabbling around for good Black and Asian writers" and the sidelining of "our immigrant experiences and their impact on British society."

Of the five plays, *Harvest* is by an Indian woman, Manjula Padmanabhan; *Made in Britain* is by an Indo-British man, Parv Bancil; *Calcutta Kosher* is by an Indo-Anglo-Jewish woman, Shelley Silas; and *Brother to Brother* and *Under Their Influence* are by male Black Brits Michael McMillan and Wayne Buchanan respectively. Padmanabhan is the only non-British contributor; Bancil and McMillan are British-born children of immigrants, while Silas is a newcomer from India and Buchanan a newcomer from Jamaica. This quintet defines the poco, pomo moment.

Padmanabhan's *Harvest* stages a literally visceral clash between Occidental-globalist, technological, capitalist liberalism and Indian "family values." To enrich his family, a man sells his vital organs to a US firm; consequently, it intrudes—robotically—into his home and promotes the dissolution of relationships. The play revisits Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World.* Thus, it demands recuperation of Canuck philosopher George Grant as a poco critic: his anatomy of modernity is mandatory here.

Bancil's *Made in England* enacts identity confusions in the era of consumerism: a British-born, "Indian" punk rocker only scores when he records ironic, self-mocking songs about being Indo-British. His success summons charges that he has sold out his culture along with his music. Grant is applicable to this text too.

McMillan's *Brother to Brother* is a poetic, Black British male revision of African American playwright Ntozake Shange's classic feminist drama, *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf.* Men named as colours—Red, Blue, Purple—discuss their frustrations and yearnings.

Calcutta Kosher reassembles a dispersed

Anglo-Jewish family in its native Calcutta. Silas's concept is important and intriguing, her execution prosaic and dull.

Under Their Influence is a *Grand Guignol* treatment of a drug-addled and racism-splintered psychology. McMillan is ambitious, but can one integrate *Othello* and *Macbeth*?

The anthology ends with a bibliography compiled by Susan Croft of Black and Asian playwrights in print, listing only works published or produced in Britain. Thus, African Canadian writer M. NourbeSe Philip appears with her *Coups and Calypsoes*, staged in London in 1999. But I suspect other Black Canadians are missing in action.

Atlantic Myths

Lesley Choyce, ed.
Atlantica: Stories from the Maritimes and Newfoundland. Goose Lane $19.95

Irene Guilford, ed.
Alistair MacLeod: Essays on His Work. Guernica $10

Reviewed by Lawrence Mathews

Lesley Choyce begins his introduction to *Atlantica* by advancing the proposition that the four Atlantic provinces constitute "a literary nation unto itself." Nonsense. For starters, Newfoundland is so different from the other three as to make such a claim untenable on its face. Beyond that, doesn't the notion of "a literary nation" itself seem outdated? Someone writing in Halifax may produce work with stronger affinities to fiction from Poland or Peru or New Zealand than to that of Ernest Buckler or Thomas Raddall.

Choyce is annoyingly vague about why his twenty contributors—and not others—are represented. It would be unacceptably pretentious, he says, to call them "our 'best' writers." It would also, in many cases, be wildly inaccurate. Most "might be described as 'mid-career.'" I'll say: only one was born after 1958. Nine are identified as based in Nova Scotia (as is Choyce himself), with only three from New Brunswick. There are excerpts from four well-known novels—by Wayne Johnston, Donna Morrissey, David Adams Richards, and John Steffler—that anyone interested in purchasing an anthology of fiction will probably already have read. Gender balance has been meticulously observed, but there are no contributions from Afro-Canadian or First Nations writers. Choyce doesn't explain any of these decisions.

Of the sixteen stories, about half read as though, to judge by their form and technique, they could have been written around 1930. A narrative unfolds with dull competence to articulate a single central "point" about character and theme. Fortunately, the others are considerably better. In particular, I like the strong contributions from Joan Clark and David Helwig (who, after decades of being a "Kingston writer," has now become a "Prince Edward Island writer"—and thus eligible, in Choyce's view, to participate in the rich tradition epitomized by Lucy Maud Montgomery). Lynn Coady's "Batter My Heart" is especially impressive, with its verbal energy and quick pacing.

And, inevitably, there's Alistair MacLeod, whose recent story "Clearances" leads off the collection, occupying as usual the no man's land where realism slides into parable and where intense scrutiny of a particular time and place leads the reader to reflect on issues that used to be called "universal." By the second sentence, the reader is well into familiar MacLeod territory: "The blanket was now a sort of yellow-beige although at one time, he thought, it must have been white." We follow the nameless protagonist through a series of experiences and reminiscences that culminate in a poignant, sure-to-be-futile gesture of rebellion against fate. The vision that informs the narrative is clear and uncompromising, the rhetoric unobtrusively effective.

"Clearances" is a fair representation of MacLeod's work—intense, understated, and immensely sure of itself, though never testing the boundaries of the relatively narrow range of thought and feeling that it explores. It seems almost irreverent to make that last point, obvious though it is. No one ever says anything about MacLeod's work that could be construed as even mildly negative. Quite the opposite. Despite the slightness of his output (one novel, sixteen stories) and despite the reluctance of academic critics to examine it closely, he has been allotted a secure niche in the Canadian pantheon. Even before the publication of *No Great Mischief*, his name could be uttered in the same breath as Atwood, Munro, or Ondaatje. This puzzles me. Strong as it is, MacLeod's work is not manifestly stronger than that of a number of worthy writers who seem doomed to perpetual semi-obscurity. (A longish list available on request.) Is it a regional thing? A Scots-ethnicity thing? Beats me, anyway.

In this context, the publication of *Alistair MacLeod: Essays on His Works* is a welcome event, as it does begin to fill in the nearly blank space normally occupied by academic criticism on a writer of MacLeod's reputation. It comprises seven contributions: five essays, a transcript of an interview with Shelagh Rogers, and an account of the prepublication history of *No Great Mischief* by Douglas Gibson, MacLeod's editor.

Irene Guilford sets the enthusiastic tone in her introduction to this collection when she refers to "the hold on the heart that is Alistair MacLeod's writing." Jane Urquhart tells us that the stories "seem to move effortlessly from the author's heart to the page and then to leap back from the page into the heart of the reader." The university-connected contributors don't invoke the heart metaphor but seem equally enthusiastic. Janice Kulyk Keefer concludes that "*No Great Mischief* is a work that speaks across cultural and social borders," while David Williams says that the novel "could nearly pass for a long-lost map of the peaceable kingdom." And so forth.

I confess that I'm somewhat suspicious of this hasty beatification of *No Great Mischief*. Yes, it did win a major international award, but we're not still so provincial as to regard that as conclusive evidence of anything (are we?). What's missing from this volume is an essay explaining in detail why the novel should be accorded the high valuation currently attached to it.

The academic essays ignore this issue. The topics are standard fare, the sort of thing associated with works that have long been comfortably canonized: the novel's relation to oral narrative, its handling of the theme of "the profound dignity and heroism of traditional labour," the "postmodern pattern" of its narrative structure. There's a significant gap between the content of such essays and the personal testimonies about how one's heart has been affected by the fiction.

It would also be interesting—though I recognize that it would violate the conventions of such collections—to see a devil's advocate sort of contribution, a thoughtful, dispassionate gesture of dissent. Its absence points to a common denominator of the two books under review here. Both are attempts to promote a fervently held belief: that Atlantic Canada constitutes "a literary nation," and that Alistair MacLeod is a major writer. The first seems absurd; as for the second, time, and only time, will tell.

Asian American/Canadian

Kandice Chuh and Karen Shimakawa, eds.
Orientations: Mapping Studies in the Asian Diaspora. Duke UP US $19.95

Susanne Hilf
Writing the Hyphen: The Articulation of Interculturalism in Contemporary Chinese-Canadian Literature. Peter Lang US $35.95

Reviewed by Jennifer W. Jay

Orientations: Mapping Studies in the Asian Diaspora is the latest of a number of exciting studies to identify current themes and to consolidate three decades of academic scholarship and discourse in Asian American studies. The tremendous growth in cultural, literary, and performative production involving Asian Americans in the last two decades makes this volume a timely project, as it crosses boundaries of academic disciplines and maps out the parameters of Asian diasporic studies. The fifteen essays derive from a conference at the University of Washington in 1996; there is much talent and versatility in the research of the mostly Asian American authors, who range from new scholars to established academics and who hail from various academic disciplines, including history, English, law, anthropology, ethnic studies, comparative literature, theatre, dance, and Asian American studies.

A strong introduction by the two editors provides a conceptual framework to the volume, which is organized under four themes: "Investments and Interventions," "Translating Knowledge," "Para-sites, or Continuing Borders," and "Asian/American Epistemology." The essays collectively present a broad critical study of the Asian diaspora (from Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, and South Asian, to interracial groups) through intersecting themes of racialization, globalization, transnationalism, postcolonialism, hybridity, and the East/Other and West/Self dichotomy. Common to the authors is an activist and politicized position of advocacy for the further development and inter-disciplinary pursuit of Asian American studies, where they seek to recognize and expand the "multiple meanings of Asianness." With one exception, the authors are Asian Americans who have lived through the Asian American experience and are articulating their experience as the production of knowledge, some in literary and artistic productions, and others in critical discourse. Grounded in one or more disciplines, all the authors wander between, and cross boundaries of, other disciplines through personal and academic knowledge, thereby expanding the horizons of both Asian and Asian American studies. For example, David Palumbo-Liu—originally trained in medieval Chinese poetry and whose *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier* (Stanford, 1999) considers a number of topics similar to this volume—presents here an essay about Japanese Americans.

Asian Canadian studies, especially by reclaiming the history of Asians in mainstream Canadian history and by producing award-winning literary works, has in the past two decades been much influenced by the activism and spirit of Asian American studies, which currently has programs at about fifty American campuses. While Asian Canadian cultural and literary productions have been featured in the Canadian media, the Asian Canada presence in academia is mostly felt in English and Sociology departments. Asian Canadian studies has yet to establish an independent program at Canadian universities beyond the modest beginnings at Simon Fraser University; as a discipline it has not yet founded disciplinary journals such as *Amerasia* and *Journal of Asian American Studies*, where Asian Canadian academic discourse could challenge or reconfigure the parameters and directions

of the discipline—the primary concern of *Orientations: Mapping Studies in the Asian Diaspora.*

Despite its title, the aim of Hilf's book is merely to examine one component of the Asian diaspora—Chinese Canadian writing in English from the 1970s to the present. The study is flawed from the beginning, as only the authors who identify themselves as Chinese Canadian are included, a scheme that excludes Evelyn Lau, whose literary production is indeed very much related to the author's ethnicity, family background, and in particular the interculturalism that Hilf herself defines. Unsubstantiated generalizations such as claims that "Chinese Canadian writing . . . is, after all, a literature of exile and migration" and weak analysis combine to render the volume inferior to Lien Chao's more competent survey, *Beyond Silence: Chinese Canadian Literature in English* (1997).

Ordure and Ornament

Lynn Coady
Saints of Big Harbour. Doubleday Canada $34.95

Thomas Wharton
Salamander. McClelland & Stewart $34.99

Reviewed by Allan Hepburn

Saints of Big Harbour and *Salamander* define two poles of contemporary Canadian fiction. Coady writes about teenagers in small-town Nova Scotia in 1982–83. Her characters speak a raw, colloquial English. They are small-minded, brawling, sentimental, banal, alcoholic. They live by rumour and manipulation. In stark contrast, Thomas Wharton uses a textured, ornamental language to describe wondrous experiences in the eighteenth century. His characters travel the globe. They are secretive, robotic, complex, piratical, long-suffering, amphibious. They live by ideas and ideals.

Coady's writing dwells on disjection and excrement. Shit signifies the messes in which her characters live their tawdry lives. All boys are "shit-disturbers." Hugh Gillis's parents give him "apocalyptic shit" for being charged with assault. Guy Boucher calls philosophical inquiry an "unending ocean of bullshit." Hugh tenders the opinion that "getting the shit kicked out of you together" bonds you with friends for the rest of your life. "Did Jesus *poo*?" wonders Corinne during a religious phase of her childhood. Everything, including language, relates to faeces: "a fat red mail box" swallows down letters in Nova Scotia "and shit[s] them out in America."

But, shit is only one of the excreta that fascinate Coady's characters. They bleed; they puke; they fart; they piss; they cry. Corinne Fortune, a prevaricating teenager, feels a "surge of mucus" in her throat while talking about men who allegedly stalk her. Alison Mason vomits into an orange salad bowl. While laid up with a bad back, Isadore pees into a jug that he sets beside the teapot. Bodily filth sustains metaphors too. Corinne rubs her temples in order to massage a voice from her mind, "like a blackhead from a pore." For Isadore, talking about his experiences in Toronto was "like picking a sore until it bled." Storytelling resembles "picking an unripened scab."

Saints of Big Harbour belongs to a genre I call "addiction realism," which has antecedents in the naturalist fiction of Émile Zola, Theodore Dreiser, and Frank Norris. In this bleak genre, characters commit acts of gratuitous violence. For this reason, in a Canadian context, addiction realism includes scenes at hockey rinks where men duke it out on the ice to the glee of howling spectators. Violence, we are given to understand, relieves the pressures of poverty and is therefore implicated in class oppression. In addiction realism, the idea of "family" is sentimentally adhered to, even when family members destroy property, steal, harm each other physically,

or insult one another verbally. Isadore Aucoin pretends to help his family; in truth he bullies and belittles them. Characters thrive on hatred. Isadore hates television, trendy lighting at the bar, disco music, homosexuals, and himself. In addiction realism, events repeat themselves as patterns. From generation to generation, people inhabit family homes. They binge drink and detoxify in cycles. Characters believe their own lies; Corinne hallucinates male suitors into being. The community, abiding by tribal ideas of justice and belonging, colludes with her delusions. The locals believe that women are sluts or victims, whereas men are aggressors or deadbeats. Gender, like class, is fixed and categorical. Moreover, addiction realism takes place in small towns, which are supposed to be "decent, normal" places, but are in fact hives of vigilante justice and untruth. In this genre, someone invariably lives in a trailer. (In *Saints of Big Harbour*, Ronald might "retire to his trailer in the woods.") Characters define themselves in terms of catastrophe, whether falling sixty feet from a building as Isadore supposedly does, or getting beaten to a pulp as Guy Boucher is twice. Lastly, in addiction realism, which is unremittingly grim while pretending to be funny, characters drink. They drink until they toss and pass out. They drink to forget their bodies, which disgust them. When they are not drinking, they think about booze. In *Saints of Big Harbour*, teenagers drink outside school doors. Adult men sip from hip-flasks during hockey games. As a tavern owner says about the people in Big Harbour, "everybody has a drinking problem."

Coady's characters are oblivious to what happens around them. On three separate occasions, Guy gets attacked from behind: by a hockey mom, by an irate brother, and by his uncle. Within the limited range of consciousness that her characters possess, Coady handles point of view deftly. Chapters narrated in the first person occupy the voice and swampy psychology of one character at a time. The diction of *Saints of Big Harbour* hardly rises above the monosyllabic. The plot resembles that of a television show about teenage angst. The historical moment at which the novel is set, 1982–83, supplies references to *Rocky*, AC/DC, *Flowers for Algernon*, *Happy Days*, and David Bowie. These references, all external to Nova Scotia, strangely demonstrate the imperviousness of provincial culture to foreign influences. Big Harbour remains a tiresome, small place.

Coady's novel resembles *Salamander* in one regard only: both works deal with freaks. Whereas Coady's characters use the term "freak" to describe their difference from others, Wharton's characters participate in an eighteenth-century world of curiosities and wonders—freaks who have oddities of the body. After the death of his son Ludwig on the battlefield, Count Ostrov hires a metallurgist to create an automaton as a replacement. Ludwig lives on in porcelain, if not in spirit. Other characters in *Salamander* have robotic or freakish tendencies. Irena, who nearly dies during a childhood illness, wears a "corset of steel bands, hammered into a poised, properly feminine shape." A six-fingered servant named Djinn works as a compositor because of his dexterity. A story circulates about a tribe of men whose bodies have been tattooed with verse epics and ancient tales. In China, porcelain messengers roam remote roads to deliver emperors' edicts.

Salamander meditates on the relation of stories to bodies, bodies to labour, and labour to art. Count Ostrov tries to eliminate all servants from his castle by creating machines that perform menial tasks. Consequently, the castle becomes a large gadget with moving parts. Objects and inhabitants exist in a web of relations defined mechanistically. By extension of

this gadget mentality, the earth is a "clockwork toy," filled with ingenious puzzles and surprises.

Like the castle, language itself has hidden workings. The word "salamander," for example, designates the animal that, according to myth, survives fire, yet the word also contains the letters "alam," which is both a Hebrew letter and a Sri Lankan word for father-in-law. Similarly, "Ostrov" means "island" in Czech, and Count Ostrov—like other characters in this novel—lives on an island. Such words are puzzles; each unfolds into a cabinet of curiosities. Words have materiality, even baroque bizarreness, yet they can also represent things that do not exist. They are ornamental yet vital to human intercourse.

Exquisitely written, *Salamander* takes cues from the stories of Italo Calvino and Jorge Luis Borges. In his acknowledgments, Wharton thanks Borges for "the novel that he never wrote." *Salamander* concerns the nature of books and the process of reading, including the interpretation of never-written books. Ostrov commissions Nicholas Flood, ingenious craftsman and printer, to make an "infinite book." This pursuit motivates the plot and provokes speculation about material culture. Is a book a physical or a metaphysical object? Are books the result of technology or a form of technology? Are books sources of, or repositories for, wonder? Do books order or disorder consciousness? Do they tell us what we know or what we do not know? Does reading occur linearly or haphazardly? Abbé de Saint-Foix spends his childhood in a library scanning blank pages in books, believing that all reading is an interpolation into blankness. So it may be.

Wharton posits brain-teasing paradoxes about libraries, lists, puzzles, coincidence, automata, velocity, time, islands, and collections. A magical book, *Salamander* eschews dreary realism in favour of an aesthetic of enchantment.

Modes and Discourse

Diana Crane

Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing. U of Chicago P $20.00

Jonathan Ned Katz

Love Stories: Sex Between Men Before Homosexuality. U of Chicago P $20.00

Reviewed by Stephen Guy-Bray

Diana Crane's main theme in her book on fashion is "how a person constructs social identity in contemporary society." She looks at the US, France, and the UK over the last two centuries; at men and at women; at leisure clothes, at work clothes, and at high fashion. For the earlier periods covered by her study, Crane uses a number of old studies, including Frédéric LePlay's fascinating and, as she points out, insufficiently studied investigation of the working classes in nineteenth-century France. For later periods she uses articles from the popular press and interviews, including some done with American women of various ages on their response to fashion advertisements in glossy magazines.

It should be clear from this description that there is rather too much going on in this book. Almost any one of the topics Crane discusses could have made a book in itself. This is especially true of her investigation of Parisian *haute couture* and of women's responses to fashion advertisements (an area of her book that is not well connected to the other areas). As well, Crane could easily have written a whole book just about LePlay's studies. Her determination to cover as much of her large topic as possible means that at times the book has too much information and not enough detail and even degenerates into a series of lists, although many of the statistics she cites are very interesting.

Crane's main contention is that what people wear in the three countries she studies reflects a shift from a class culture to a

segmented culture. In other words, whereas once people's clothing showed their class, as many of the fascinating photographs she reproduces demonstrate, now what we wear is more likely to show a different kind of affiliation: to a sexual preference (including heterosexuality, although Crane does not appear to consider this), to a political belief, even to a favourite leisure activity. Crane shows that Georg Simmel's now classic view that fashion is diffused downwards from social elites can no longer be universally applied: fashion is now just as likely to be diffused from marginal or oppressed groups.

The theoretical part of this book is one of its strengths. Crane is good with theory and with economics, but not so good with culture and with historical context. At times, her scene-setting is humorous (unintentionally so, I presume): "By the end of the 1950s, television was a fixture in many American homes, along with a new form of popular music, rock'n'roll, aimed specifically at adolescents." While Crane does provide a convincing analysis of how fashion typically provides a recombination of existing elements rather than novelty, she does not see that what she calls "postmodern" fashion—and, indeed, the sort of fashion that spreads upwards from marginal groups—is still just recombination. Look, for instance, at the recrudescence of elephant pants. Although in some ways we have moved from a class culture to a segmented one, there is still no escaping either from the class system or from the tyranny of fashion.

Jonathan Ned Katz's new book is similarly lacking in unity, but that is a necessary consequence of the kind of book it is. As he says near the beginning, "my project is . . . to rediscover men's native forms of ardor." What this means is that he cites a wide range of writings from the nineteenth century in order to arrive at some sense of how men described their romantic love and lust for other men. As anyone would expect, the main figure is Whitman. Katz deals to some extent with the poetry, but his primary emphasis is on the letters and the reported conversation. I suspect most people will end the book feeling some exasperation for Whitman's rhetorical strategies of display and concealment, but it is a fascinating case study.

The book begins with Abraham Lincoln, however, and this is sure to be the most controversial section south of the border. Throughout, Katz tries to balance both the famous and the obscure, and the particular and the general. He draws on letters, diaries, news reports, novels, and stories. The passages he cites are often very moving; I found poor Albert Dodd's diary of his emotional entanglements and his struggles to find the right words heart-rending.

Vocabulary is one of Katz's main concerns in *Love Stories*. He is resolved to use the words the men themselves use and to document shifts in vocabulary over the nineteenth century, with particular reference, of course, to the introduction of the word "homosexual" and the emergence of a medical discourse of sexuality. This is a story that has often been told, but it is rewarding to get some sense of how the men to whom those words were applied thought of them and how they categorized themselves. Katz is determined not to be the one doing the categorizing, and he insists that we cannot use contemporary sexual taxonomies to talk about the past. I felt he leaned on this point rather too hard, especially since it is no longer particularly controversial.

Katz proceeds by paraphrasing and quoting liberally from sources and then commenting on them. Sometimes the effect is bathetic, as when he ends an account of one man's heartbreak by asserting that his "emotions were certainly intense." More often, however, his comments are diverting, as when he says that "America's Manifest Destiny included men lying with men, women, and children, and men and women

lying with animals." This is certainly the most pleasant news ever received about Manifest Destiny. American jingoism will also get a boost from the news that fellatio appears first to have become popular in the US.

In a note just after the title page, Katz says that his research is ongoing. This book appears to be ongoing as well: not much has been done to shape it, and there are moments of repetition. Some readers may see the untidiness of *Love Stories* as a fault, but surely everyone will be fascinated by the stories themselves.

The Taste of the Past

Hasia R. Diner
Lower East Side Memories: A Jewish Place in America. Princeton UP $37.50

David E. Sutton
Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory. Berg $23.00

Reviewed by Norman Ravvin

In *Lower East Side Memories*, Hasia Diner examines the iconic—some might even say sacred—blocks of Manhattan bounded in the north by Fourteenth Street, in the south by Fulton, in the west by Broadway, and in the east by the East River. The unique status of the Lower East Side, she argues, is its ability to "stand for Jewish authenticity in America, for a moment in time when undiluted eastern European Jewish culture throbbed in America." By examining the photographs of Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine, the music of Mickey Katz, the novels of Henry Roth and Abraham Cahan, she conveys the contrast between Manhattan's historical downtown and the mythical "epicenter of American Jewish memory" that this area has become. For historical accuracy, Diner reminds us of the importance of Jewish immigration to other centres, such as Chicago and Philadelphia, and of the less documented Jewish enclaves in New York City, such as Brownsville and early Harlem. She reminds us, too, of astounding data connected with immigration patterns of the last 125 years: between 1885 and 1899, 471,010 Jews disembarked at New York City; while by 1910, over 500,000 Jews lived in the area we now think of as the Lower East Side. (In these early years the neighbourhood was simply called downtown, or the ghetto, or the east side.)

Diner argues that it was partly the weight of numbers that lent the Lower East Side its centrality in modern Jewish identity. But she points to other interesting factors as well. These include the sheer concentration of these numbers that created a blurring of public and private space, an antic street scene and public activity that "forced men to deal with each other." With this came uncommon institutional diversity, and a plethora of journalistic and literary venues, including the Yiddish press and theatre.

Diner is most interested in postwar developments that were at least as important as the actual cultural ferment of the Lower East Side's heyday. With Europe's Jewish world largely destroyed, the Lower East Side came to be seen by American Jews as a remaining source of authentic Jewish experience. Not only could those who had left for the suburbs return, usually for dinner, to "consume authenticity," but they could also more easily consume "the texts of Lower East Side memory" in their suburban living rooms. Mickey Katz on Delancey Street, Roth's recovered novel of a downtown childhood: these became the artifacts of what Diner suggests has become

> a sacred narrative—the Lower East Side as an all-Jewish neighborhood, a wholly eastern European one, as a poor and isolated neighborhood where the senses operated at a sharper level than elsewhere where other Jews lived and where the Lower East Side's residents later moved.

Some Canadian readers may find the iconic quality of this narrative familiar. The idea

of New York as a "Jewish City" has been echoed, though less stridently, in Montreal and Winnipeg. In the case of the former, the old Jewish "ghetto" has even passed its moniker to the less culturally bounded McGill student ghetto.

But the most peculiar aspect of Canadian experience regarding the iconic quality of urban Jewish space is the relative amnesia surrounding what was once Toronto's Jewish downtown, centred on Spadina Avenue. There, just before World War II, I.B. Singer found a recreated east European-style precinct, so reminiscent of Warsaw it made him uncomfortable:

> I was told that Spadina Avenue was the center of Yiddishism in Toronto, and there we went. I again strolled on Krochmalna Street—the same shabby buildings, the same pushcarts and vendors of half-rotten fruit, the familiar smells of the sewer, soup kitchens, freshly baked bagels, smoke from the chimneys.

Encountering Singer's portrait of Spadina is startling, because of how little of what it portrays has survived, as Diner puts it, as a "landscape of memory."

Hasia Diner's *Lower East Side Memories* focuses on textual memories—in book, photographic and filmic form—without commenting on the intersection between food and memory. It is the latter relationship that is examined in David Sutton's *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory*. Sutton's ethnographic study draws a portrait of the Greek island of Kalymnos, where, he argues, memory of food has contributed greatly to local identity. One of the issues he aims to explore is the way "the flux of new foods provide a threat to certain types of memories rooted in local knowledge." The Kalymnian diet, like the rest of the world's, has been influenced since World War II by American food, along with a standardization of foods through global markets. The impact of these changes, according to the Kalymnians Sutton interviews, is the introduction of food "unable to produce memories and identities." One of Sutton's interviewees calls such food "insipid," in a translation of the Greek used to describe it.

Sutton acknowledges a lack of theoretical work on the relationship between food and memory, especially in the American context. He makes use of Greek literature to expand his frame of reference, and if *Remembrance of Repasts* has a key theoretical influence, it is Mary Douglas's work on food and ritual. A somewhat undeveloped theme is the relationship between food and traumatic memory, which Sutton acknowledges has been explored in studies of the German concentration camps of World War II. For Kalymnians, trauma means the long Italian occupation of the Dodecanese, ending in 1942. But Sutton does not examine in detail the way hunger, loss, and a certain nostalgia for prewar innocence affect people's attention to such Kalymnian concerns as meals, hospitality, shopping, and food preparation.

Food memories on Kalymnos, like the Proustian madeleine, open a conduit to the past and its sensations. Sutton acknowledges that in forgetting there is freedom, but his book means to make us consider the cost of such freedom.

Things Made Beautiful

Marilyn Dumont
green girl dreams Mountains. Oolichan $14.95

Heather Harris
Rainbow Dancer. Caitlin $14.95

Reviewed by Renée Hulan

These two collections, one by a critically acclaimed poet and the other by a relatively new voice in contemporary poetry, offer poetry that is passionate and provocative. Marilyn Dumont's new collection *green girl dreams Mountains*, which won the 2002

Stephan G. Stephansson Award for Poetry from the Writer's Guild of Alberta, is her second book and follows on the success of her first collection, *A Really Good Brown Girl*, which won the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award from the League of Canadian Poets in 1997. *Rainbow Dancer* is the first book of poetry by Heather Harris, a professor of Native Studies and anthropologist at the University of Northern British Columbia.

In his introduction, Ward Churchill describes *Rainbow Dancer* as "first of all an honouring song—a testimony to and a prayer for ancestors whose struggles against the predatory madness of an invading culture have been carried from generation to generation over five centuries." Throughout the collection, the common struggles of each generation are expressed thematically by uniting images of past and present. In "Warriors with Briefcases," the ancestors who fought at battles such as Batoche are united with those who fight today "against the unlimited resources / coercive forces / of industry, finance and state." In this poem, as in others, Harris confronts the social structures that support the continued colonization of modern indigenous people. These structures provide common ground for the many peoples depicted in places ranging from Edmonton to Inuvik, Alaska to Hawaii. The pattern found in "Familiar Coyote," which unites Cree, Métis, and Gitxsan ancestors in a personal reflection on history and culture, can be found in other poems as well. The placing of the personal within collective experience enriches the poetic voice while short, rhythmic phrases and fragmentary syntax give the poems a warm, conversational tone. Many of the poems also assert symbolic land claims: "Deh Cho" renames the river using the original Dene; "Tahltan" celebrates life on the land; "Squatters on Their Own Land" denounces the situation of the landless. In other poems, cultural difference is a theme. The speaker sometimes addresses a particular interlocutor or a character created to represent ignorance or prejudice by voicing views that stand in the way of reconciliation and justice. In such poems, Harris seems to address the so-called white reader, to "talk out" to cultural outsiders by dispelling misconceptions and stereotypes. For example, in the poem "Indian Humour," differences between what "white people" and "Indians" find funny dismantles the image of the stolid Native. Perhaps written before humour became the topic of discussion it is these days, "Indian Humour" exemplifies the rhetorical tone that ranges from ironic to sarcastic, critical to enraged, illustrative to didactic. This tendency towards explanation, even instruction, performs a variation on Harris's description of "Indian Art" as "useful things made beautiful," for each poem serves a useful purpose. While the opposition between "white" and "Indian" risks reproducing racial stereotypes, it represents the discourse that has defined both identities and recognizes the pervasiveness of structures that continue to shape cross-cultural relations. Given the difficult issues Harris addresses in *Rainbow Dancer*, it is interesting that the last poem in the collection leaves the reader with the image of a woman who amazes all by dancing on hot coals.

The poems in Marilyn Dumont's *green girl dreams Mountains* are beautiful and moving. Intelligent and witty rather than merely clever, Dumont's poetry is a welcome relief from the performativity of much contemporary poetry. Dumont's poetics embraces image, sound, and figure. The first section, "Homeground," literally grounds the collection in intense experiences. Memory and loss are at the heart of these poems in which the speaker revisits childhood and family relationships with parent figures playing the central role. Some search for the father; others elegize the mother who has recently died and who is a creative force behind the poems. In

"kindling," the mother's handwriting leaves the speaker "broken twigs on the page / as kindling / for me"; in "yellow bird," her body ". . . diffused her limbs, leaving / a pile of twigs to start a fire." These hard-edged images are typical of the precision of Dumont's figurative language. In fact, many of the poetic features of *A Really Good Brown Girl* are sharpened: the alliterative, enjambed lines and prose rhythm patterns, the strong, assured poetic voice, the artfully crafted figurative language, and the tough, clear images. In "Oak," as a couple spreads the tablecloth for the evening meal, holding a corner of the cloth becomes a way of touching. Like the beautiful old hands described in "Wild Berries," from *A Really Good Brown Girl*, the hands express intimacy and comfort as the couple prepare to share their meal.

"Oak" is found in "City View," the second section of the collection. Each poem takes as its title the name of a street in downtown Vancouver. The poems in this section are taut with the tension of life in a city where the distance between rich and poor is immense. Each street is described through thick imagery: "stick figures hunt / more rock, powder, or dust" ("Powell"), "workers are dragging home to supper and the cafes are empty" ("Napier"), "the city hums and sirens and farts on religiously" ("Hastings"). Yet, no facile solutions or glib pronouncements undermine the poems' power, and the speaker does not cultivate the role of voyeur or tourist. Instead, the speaker is most often a witness who is also caught up in the life of the city until, in the final poem, the "I" and the city have become one.

Urban scenes are surrounded by rural, prairie, or mountain landscapes in the sections called "Gazing Ground" and "Mine Fields." The prairie landscape painted in these poems is some of the most beautiful anywhere. Perhaps the tenderness with which it is treated reflects the green time that the prairie represents, a time of youth, innocence, and energy in the speaker's memory; a more experienced voice addresses grown-up lovers with sensual lyrics. As memory pulls the speaker towards the prairie, an interior landscape inhabited by past selves, family, and friends emerges. In the title poem, "green girl dreams mountains," the young girl dreams dreams that are "verdant / monumental" that push towards the coastal mountains evoked in many of the other poems. The last section, "Among the Word Animals," addresses, among other things, the social significance of language, a theme explored in *A Really Good Brown Girl*. Language and power are figured in the English teacher breaking the language of Cree, Sioux, and Saulteaux students like wild horses in "Straw Boss" and in "the green-eyed / verbs and auburn adjectives" and "the tight-assed / suffixes" in "blond syllables." These hard-hitting poems add an edge to those that consider the poet's craft, such as "up/write," and those that explore the shape and sounds of language, such as "sound shard." A motif linking the human voice to the sound of wind instruments and bird and animal songs shapes the final section's poetics and seems to comment on as it concludes the collection. The final poem in the collection, "throatsong for the four-leggeds," begins with the sounds of creatures calling to one another as the speaker gives thanks and celebrates by reconnecting poetic form to breath, to life, and to all living things.

Lovely Damn Things

Ekbert Faas, with Maria Trombacco

Robert Creeley: A Biography. McGill UP $49.95.

Reviewed by Christoph Irmscher

Any biography of a living author that begins with the thinly veiled suggestion that the subject has been less than cooperative and then goes on to celebrate one of his former wives is bound to make the most

trusting reader suspicious. Ann MacKinnon divorced Robert Creeley in 1956, and not so amicably, as Faas tells us. Nevertheless, the last one hundred pages of *Robert Creeley* consist of extracts from MacKinnon's 1944 diary and her work-in-progress memoir, a no-holds-barred look at the poet and herself—from their first encounter around Christmas at Harvard, when Creeley stood next to her, caroling with his "thin dismal hesitant voice," to the mess that their marriage became as the growing family moved, in frantic pursuit of a congenial as well as cheap writing environment for Creeley, from Cape Cod and New Hampshire to southern France to Mallorca.

Faas's biography, which concentrates on the first forty years of Creeley's life and breaks off rather abruptly with the failure of his second marriage to Bobbie Louise Hall, comes to us highly recommended as a "new kind of life-writing." Here, as Faas explains in his preface, the biographer turns into the biographee, "impersonating voices, senses of humour, ironies, sarcasms, hypocrisies." The result is remarkable, and one easily forgets that Faas's intense book is in fact based on a rather simple and familiar premise—namely that, at least in the case of the poet, a wild life generates better works. *Le style est l'homme même*, and the nicer the man the duller the poetry. For Faas, the philandering, boozing, drug-abusing and wife-beating Creeley, while personally none too appealing, was a more interesting writer than the older, wiser but also wearier sage mumbling "post middle-age" platitudes about life and death. The one more recent photograph of Creeley in the book shows the bespectacled, grey-bearded writer in a sensible sweater, proudly cradling his new baby, his face, like that of his (third) wife, turned upward as if waiting for inspiration from above—a far cry from the youthful rebel Faas prefers. Ironically, since Faas has so much to say about Creeley's life (the fights, the insults and brawls, the shattered glass and broken hopes), he has no time left to persuade the reader that he is right about the poet's work.

A good example of the strengths and weaknesses of Faas's approach is perhaps his recreation of Creeley's encounter with Picasso in Aix on 14 July 1952. Walking past a café, Creeley noticed a short man with his young wife and small children, who was staring back at him. Only later did he realize that he had seen Picasso. His eyes had been such "lovely damn things," Creeley told Charles Olson, in a letter cited by Faas, that he would never forget him: "It was damn well worth all the christly hell of the past year, etc." A biographer less constrained by his method and agenda would have demonstrated why the seventy-year-old Picasso, the virile father of several children and lover of many women who nevertheless felt that his primary responsibility in life was to his art, would have seemed so attractive to Creeley. Perhaps he would have commented on the continuing importance of Picasso in Creeley's poetry, so obvious, for example, in the playfully titled recent poem "PP" (1997), where Picasso, his "bald ball" of a head solid as a rock, appears as the poet's "beau idéal": "He painted pictures / of a dislocatedness, lived in its fiction, / had no art apart from the distraction." But Faas is not really interested in continuities; in his writing he wants to evoke the moment in its full concreteness and complexity. And so he puts the reader right there with Creeley walking along the dusty Cour Mirabeau in Aix, during a heat wave, at a time when MacKinnon, bowed by previous miscarriages, was worrying about the imminent birth of their third child while the poet himself fretted that "nothing at all" seemed to be happening in his creative life. With minimal intervention on Faas's part, the reader realizes how important, how truly epiphanic this fleeting vision of the painter had been for Creeley.

On rare occasions, Faas takes a deep

breath and steps back from his tale to offer more general insights, but then his editorializing on Creeley's character deficiencies seems supererogatory, as do his speculations on the role of "destiny" in Creeley's life. Faas's writing works best when it is cumulative rather than interpretive. In the chapter about Creeley's unhappy teaching stint in Vancouver, for example, he lets the invectives, freely quoted or paraphrased from the poet's letters, pile up: George Bowering is "a sort of malevolent Uriah Heep," Al Purdy "a nervous animal caught in a small trap," and Phyllis Webb "a bitch." By the time the reader has reached the one important exception on the dismal list, Irving Layton ("impossible not to like"), she already knows that the Canadian paradise has soured for Creeley. For most of Faas's book, in an astonishing act of verbal mimicry, the biographer's voice blends with that of his subject, in an extended example of free indirect style: "Was it safe?"; "Was he suffering from cancer?"; "Would they have anything left to say to each other?" Faas doesn't just surmise, on the basis of the documents he has gathered and the interviews he has conducted, what Creeley could have thought and felt in any given situation but tells us what the very words *were* that the poet *did* use then, consciously or not. Such ventriloquizing is not limited to the book's protagonist; Faas easily slips into the minds, or holds the pens, of Creeley's friends and disciples ("How would a man whose writing could cause such turmoil in your brain affect you in person?") and troubled wives ("Would she have to give him shots?").

Truth be told, this procedure is not quite so innovative as the book's jacket would have us believe. Richard Ellmann, too, wanted us to experience the "movements within [Joyce's] mind," and Paul Mariani, in his 1981 biography of William Carlos Williams, liberally sprinkled his narrative with the quaint expletives also relished by Faas, such as "goddamn," "what the hell" and "by God," to give us an authentic piece of Williams's mind and, as it were, more than a piece of his speech. But if Faas's book does not really differ from previous biographies in kind, it certainly trumps them in degree. On this reader at least, Faas's insistent masking as Creeley had a mesmerizing effect. I enjoyed this book, as I would a well-written novel, realizing at the same time that *Robert Creeley*, in method and intent, takes us back to the olden days, when anxious biographers stayed clear of any discussions of their subject's works while literary critics, as Walter Jackson Bate once lamented, shrank from "the rich and embarrassing complexities of what it meant to be a living person." But perhaps this biography is also a kind of last-ditch effort to assert, in its fullest form, a genre that, in the age of cell phones, e-mail, and instant messaging, will soon have to change considerably or else die out. At one point, Faas mentions Creeley's acquisition, in 1962, of not one but *two* telephones, which "consigned to oblivion" much of what had previously appeared in the letters. An unhappy development for the biographer, to be sure, but perhaps not so terrible for a poet who claims that he has always wanted to let the words of his poetry speak for themselves.

Varied Voices

Mark Frutkin
Iron Mountain. Beach Holme $12.95

Tammy Armstrong
Bogman's Music. Anvil $13.95

Karen Connelly
Grace and Poison. Turnstone $18.95

Reviewed by Brook Houglum

Silence is a critical element in Mark Frutkin's work; his succinct poems are infused with images of echo and the white space of the page, both acting as invitations

for meditation on the lines. Drawing from Taoist and Buddhist poetic discourse, Frutkin emphasizes the transience and cyclical experience of a "traveler unknown" through deceptively simple constructions. He employs repetition throughout the collection in audible oral layers, rhyming opposing concepts of emptiness and presence, and continually re-inscribing the reader's path with tools for the journey, such as in a sequence that details travels to Iron Mountain through a labyrinth of various mountains and clouds in search of the goddess of compassion. Frutkin composes primarily in the rhythm of complete sentences. He develops images of nature throughout the poems with the precision of etchings on glass, while resisting inventive syntax or sound play. Several poems rely on phrases verging on the redundant, such as "deep with meaning" or "deep as the moon." Ultimately, *Iron Mountain* reads as a guide for rumination, a companion text for stations of pilgrimage, and presents the reader with probing observations of "a present so fleeting / a bull so alive / it hardly exists at all." Frutkin's poems are strongest when they employ such subtle directives and clarity of line.

Tammy Armstrong's first collection of poems establishes a strong lyrical (predominantly first-person) voice that transforms biography through illumination of the cracks, crags, and roughness of human relationships and experience. Mornings of "sky hyacinth" are juxtaposed with depictions of strained family and romantic relationships and an undercurrent of violence. Part one of *Bogman's Music* recalls a tense childhood in a series of memory poems; the narrator of these lines constructs a rural working-class household through vignettes such as a Sunday morning ritual of killing fowl for dinner, demonstrating tension, terror, and tough grace. The adult speaker in parts two and three sustains this tense tone and incisive scrutiny of the landscape of human relationships. Armstrong's facility with the languages of several geographies is clear as she guides us from Bali where the "sea slid into a recurring thought" to Vancouver, a "sin city beneath wind cripple." A language of "aphid-bitten honesty" attains its greatest level of succinctness in poems that stretch the lyric narrative form. "Asleep in Palm Desert," a prose poem, portrays a desert geography where babies' cries pierce the "bird call air like shredded silver." The longer poems "Rhume-Lines" and "Fragmentation of a Moment: Buck Shot" depict loss with stunning, chilling specificity. Armstrong's book closes with a line of tribute to her mother, who "would only love small things now," a phrase that could serve as a manifesto for the poet's detailed handling of language in the well-sculpted poems of her solid debut.

Karen Connelly's *Grace and Poison* combines *The Small Words in My Body* (1990) and *The Disorder of Love* (1997). Connelly's opening essay constructs a helpful trajectory of her journeys, including leaving home at age fifteen, studying in Thailand at age seventeen, and travelling later to Europe, travels which delineated and became the language of her poetics. It is clear that *Small Words*, written during Connelly's teens, marks the poetry of a young artist as it gestures with stark honesty toward the more precise fusion of images found in *Disorder*. Lines like "we love sadly, wild, / like a long storm that will not break" and tight descriptions of mornings that "offer thirsty roaches on the facecloth" are tempered in the earlier book by identity questions aware of their own nascence such as "I am confused, still the child / stretching a thin arm up the wall, / unable to reach the light." *Small Words* is useful as a measure of the poet's growth, an entrance answered by the mature, precise language of *Disorder*.

Poems in this second book radiate with energy and facility of expression. Connelly's fluidity of line reinvigorates the concept of

"free verse," and the confluence of tangible and surreal images infuses the stanzas with the varied intonation of a musical score. In "Ephemeroptera," a poem regarding the aftermath of a relationship, mayflies become fantastical "miniature dragons" brought to earth in exacting imagery of emotional carnage as the speaker's "naked feet crushed thousands on the roads." Connelly's poems in *Disorder* are sustained by metaphors that excavate old ground until it reveals new truths, finely tuned as "light, who writes her own chant in passing, / the way brilliance deepens as it fades." She writes with pleasure and precision.

Baroness Elsa

Irene Gammel

Baroness Elsa. Gender, Dada and Everyday Modernity. A Cultural Biography. MIT P US $21.95

Reviewed by Rosmarin Heidenreich

With her shaved and lacquered head, tomato-can brassieres, teaspoon earrings and coal scuttle hats, Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhofen made an indelible impression when she burst upon the art scene in New York's Greenwich Village. That she was a powerful influence on the American modernist avant-garde of the early twentieth century is well documented: she was promoted by Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, editors of the *Little Review*, who published Elsa's sexually explicit and esoterically encoded poems in spite of opposition. Other supporters were writers as diverse as Djuna Barnes and Ernest Hemingway. Berenice Abbott and Man Ray produced photographic portraits of Elsa in her stunning costumes; Ezra Pound praised "Elsa Kassandra, 'the baroness / von Freytag,'" in his *Cantos*, and William Carlos Williams said he drank "pure water from her spirit." Thanks to Irene Gammel's splendid "cultural biography," the role of the extraordinary baroness in exploding the various boundaries that defined art, writing, and gender at the beginning of the twentieth century can now be clearly understood and fully appreciated.

Although she is often designated as "the mother of dada" in America, the Baroness's dada inventions actually preceded the first dada performances in Zürich's Café Voltaire. Gammel makes a strong case that with her aggressive sexuality and playful, witty sculptures, assemblages, and poetry the Baroness was actually subverting the conventions of high modernism upon the proponents of which she exerted such a powerful influence. With the androgynous sexual identity she exhibited in her "performances," in her use of found objects, and in her cryptic, cross-cultural allusiveness, Gammel sees the Baroness rather as a precursor of postmodernism, transgressing the established borders of gender and genre, life and art.

In Canadian studies, "Baroness Elsa" became known in the 1970s when Douglas O. Spettigue identified her as the one-time wife of the Canadian novelist Frederick Philip Grove, who, in his former identity as the German writer and translator Felix Paul Greve, had written two *romans à clef* describing the extraordinary life of the former Else Plötz. As Gammel recounts it, Else's life was as remarkable as her groundbreaking art.

Born in the Baltic coastal town of Swinemünde, Else escaped her problematic family by running away to Berlin, where she lived a colourful bohemian life as a model and chorus girl before entering the artistic circle around art nouveau artist Melchior Lechter.

Greve first met Else in a Munich salon, when she was married to the art nouveau architect August Endell, a marriage which soon ended due to Greve's and Else's passionate affair. Despairing of ever being able to escape crushing debts and grinding

poverty, Greve faked a suicide in 1909 and went to America, where Else joined him a year later. Little was known about the couple's life together in the new world until Klaus Martens's recent biographical research on Greve alias Grove unearthed a wealth of new material that sheds some light on this period. We know that in 1911 Greve/Grove abandoned Else (whom he had married while they were still in Germany) in Kentucky, while he himself turned up in Manitoba. A year later, Else settled in New York.

Intimately connected with the avant-garde circles of Munich and Berlin, exposed to the major contemporary literary movements of all of Europe through her liaison with Greve/Grove, Else, who had begun writing herself, would seem to have been well equipped to make her way in New York's literary world. But she had daunting handicaps: "I spoke no English, had no working skills, was arrogant, and was considered crazy," she says in marginal notes made on one of her sheets of poetry. Abandoned and destitute, she married the German Baron von Freytag-Loringhofen, who soon returned to Germany to serve as an officer in World War I, committing suicide after the war.

In spite of his title, the Baron had been destitute, and "the Baroness," as she was now known, subsisted on the meagre fees she earned from modelling in art studios and on hand-outs from artists and supporters. The originality and intensity of her own art may have won her a prominent place in the memoirs of many famous artists and writers as well as the undisputed title of New York dada queen, but it did not earn her any money. When many of her American benefactors established themselves in Europe, her poverty became desperate. A campaign for donations from artists and writers enabled her to return to Europe. She went first to Berlin and then to Paris, where she died in her apartment of gas asphyxiation, possibly a suicide.

Gammel's meticulously researched and eloquently written book not only chronicles the *vie mouvementée* of the Baroness herself, but also defines and interconnects the diverse art movements on both sides of the Atlantic that gave rise to contemporary postmodernism. For Canadian readers, given Elsa's one-time relationship with Frederick Philip Grove, the book offers the added bonus of illuminating the life and European milieu of one of Canada's most famous and mysterious novelists.

Worlds of Difference

Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, ed.
Alternative Modernities. Duke UP US $21.95

Lynda Jessup, ed.
Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity. U of Toronto P $29.95

Reviewed by John Xiros Cooper

Studies of artistic modernism, cultural modernity, ideas of the modern, and, most interestingly, resistance to these are proliferating quickly now that the material processes of modernization have become nothing less than global destiny. As Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar notes in his introduction to *Alternative Modernities*, "Born in and of the West some centuries ago, modernity is now everywhere." Cocksure Western journalists like Thomas Friedman in the *New York Times* or Marcus Gee in Toronto's *Globe and Mail* might holler in triumph "Amen to that!" but all twenty-seven essays in these two books quietly beg to differ.

Gaonkar's collection considers modernity in terms of the dialectic of accommodation and resistance which the phrase "alternative modernities" implies. The contributors to *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*, edited by Lynda Jessup, examine varieties of resistance to the "onslaught of the modern

world," an antimodernism described by the historian T. F. Jackson Lears as "the recoil from an 'overcivilised' modern existence to more intense forms of physical and spiritual existence." Both of these books offer valuable contributions to the study of modernity and its discontents in specific national or cultural sites.

Gaonkar's introduction is especially good in sketching some of the theories and debates about modernism and modernity that have animated the topic for more than a century. The essays discuss the notion of "alternative modernities" both within and against the dominant Western "tradition of reflection" that runs from Marx and Weber, Baudelaire and Benjamin, to Habermas and Foucault. He identifies Arjun Appadurai and Paul Gilroy as key contemporary scholars who have contributed significantly to the development of an "alternative modernities" perspective.

To them one can now add the dozen or so scholars assembled by Goankar. Most of the essays examine modernity from specific national and cultural sites and most work from the same premise. We learn, once again, that modernity always eludes universalist definition. It is, instead, composed by the endless pluralism of differing cultural experiences. These differences form a kind of invisible planet that exerts gravitational influence, but the planet itself cannot be spotted. All the instruments agree it is there, but no one has ever seen it whole.

The modernization process, on the other hand, is flagrantly visible. The techno-economic juggernaut may affect different societies and cultures in different ways and the alert scholar must think his or her way through to those differences, but, like the eighteen-wheeler hurtling down the highway, modernization pursues a logic all its own.

We are taken to many places around the globe: settler-dominated Australia, nineteenth-century Russia, Shanghai in the 1930s, Calcutta, Zanzibar, Trinidad, Mexico, and so on. But for all the talk about cultural difference, we always seem to find the same unsettling fallout everywhere: modernity, that is the experience of modern times, is inevitably swathed in paradox, ambivalence, anxiety, shifting perspectives, and nostalgia. Meanwhile we all seem to get run over anyway. Despite this dismaying perception, the essays are very good, with plenty of new information and penetrating analysis. Dipesh Chakrabarty on the tradition of *adda* in Calcutta (a kind of pre-industrial chat room) is richly detailed and cogently presented. Leo Ou-fan Lee's study of Shanghai (the "Paris of Asia") in the 1930s makes excellent use of Benjamin's work on Baudelaire and the Arcades project. Claudio Lomntiz on the social construction of "citizenship" in Mexico is also worthy of note. In fact, it is unfair to single out three essays without saying that all of them are worth reading. Gaonkar has rendered valuable service in bringing these scholars together in a single volume. As most of them are based in Chicago, either at the University of Chicago or Northwestern, one might even speak of the book as defining a Chicago School of "alternative modernities" studies.

Antimodernism and Artistic Experience primarily features the work of Canadian-based scholars whose studies in alternative modernities go under the name of antimodernism. This refers to a (what else?) paradoxical "structure of feeling" (Jessup cites Raymond Williams in this connection): a pervasive sense of loss of traditional culture combined with an antithetical enthusiasm for material progress and modernization. As ambivalent and Janus-faced as antimodernism is said to be (no surprise here), the essays grapple mainly with loss as "a critique of the modern." Jessup sees this as "a perceived lack in the present manifesting itself not only in a sense of alienation, but also in a longing for the types of physical or

spiritual experience embodied in utopian futures and imagined pasts." As a result, the antimodernist artist attempts to recover the authentic immediacies of folk, primitive, or traditional pre-industrial cultures. The all-too-predictable failure to connect with them hardly needs any emphasis.

Whereas *Alternative Modernities* takes in a wider social and cultural perspective, *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*, as the title suggest, narrows the focus to art, making links between the formal arts of the metropolis and a variety of so-called primitive communities, cultures, and folk, naive, and primitive art practices. Inevitably that standard artist-intruder Paul Gauguin in the South Pacific comes in for extended attention. But so do many other artists and artistic communities, including many in Canada. These latter essays are particularly valuable because so much of the material they deal with will be new to the general reader interested in modernism. Specialists in anthropology, folk culture, or art history may disagree, but I found them very useful. Ruth Phillips on the performatives of native-icity alone is worth the price of admission. Gerta Moray on Emily Carr's "traffic" in native images and Ian McKay's study of the "handicrafts" phenomenon in Nova Scotia add considerably to the empirical data available to researchers.

There is a great deal of social, cultural, and historical material in both books that makes them important additions to scholarship, but I must confess that, at the end of the day, I was left a little confused about certain larger issues. For example, the contributors to the Jessup book do not seem to me to theorize the concept of a folk culture with sufficient clarity. When do the day-to-day routines and rituals of a people become a "folk culture"? We need to be told more forcefully that the idea of a "folk culture" *only* comes into being with modernity and that modernity *precedes*, as it were, the arrival of the folk idea. Ditto for notions of the primitive. The longing for authenticity and immediacy through the imaginary recuperation of a primordial moment of being and/in culture, then, must become the fruitless (or perhaps compensatory) pursuit of a mirage. How then does one distinguish, more than by simple assertion, the delicate recuperative strategies of the cosmopolitan artist-intruder from the implacable logic of modernization's charging lorry?

This is certainly a point that needs to be front and centre when discussing the work of European artists in contact with native traditions, Paul Gauguin or Emily Carr. But a certain residue of that longing and nostalgia from a hundred years ago persists even among the scholars who are trying to fathom the phenomenon today. The outbreak of political sentimentality in a number of places in both books, like, say, at the end of Gerta Moray's piece on Carr or Thomas McCarthy's politely well-meaning but ineffectual attempt to reconcile what he calls cosmopolitan unity (is there any more diverse and fractured site on earth than the modern cosmopolis?) and national diversity, are cases in point.

The problem in dealing with alternative modernities or antimodernism is that old-fashioned modernity and modernism were themselves historically constituted as alternatives, as counter-cultural strategies right from the start. Were they forms of resistance against the taking off of modernization in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, or were they, perhaps unwittingly, the decorative side of the very material and commercial progress they appeared to oppose? Gaonkar seems conscious of this in his introduction, although it is a dilemma that needs more extensive scrutiny than he gives it. Is Shazia Sikander's reworking of images from one of the great artistic traditions of the world, classical Indo-Persian miniature painting, an "alternative" modernity, or is her supposed "go[ing]

beyond" the astonishing refinement of, say, the sixteenth-century Mughal master, Abu'l Hasan, just one more hood ornament to give the Mack truck an indigenous makeover? As Sikander notes about her motivations in the interview with Homi Bhabha included in Gaonkar's book, "The distinctions do get confused." Indeed.

Queer and Now

Terry Goldie, ed.

In a Queer Country: Gay and Lesbian Studies in the Canadian Context. Arsenal Pulp P $23.95

Reviewed by Stephen Guy-Bray

This book comes out of the "Queer Nation?" conference held at York University in 1996. The essays here, still recognizable as conference papers, represent a range of topics in contemporary Canadian culture. An obvious effort has been made to produce a representative sample of Canadian queer scholarship, and the book is thus likely to appeal to scholars in a number of disciplines. *In a Queer Country* could, in fact, serve as a course textbook.

Goldie claims that these are "extended and updated versions" of the conference papers, but in several cases a good deal more extension was required. This is particularly the case with Gary Kinsman's "Challenging Canadian and Queer Nationalisms." Kinsman really needs a whole book to develop his sophisticated and persuasive arguments; as he only takes twenty pages (not counting notes and bibliography), the result is rather exhausting, especially for those not used to the rather frenetic approach to citation favoured in the social sciences. Similarly, Wesley Crichlow's analysis in his "Buller Men and Batty Bwoys: Hidden Men in Toronto and Halifax Black Communities" would also have benefited from a good deal more space. On the other hand, both Andrew Lesk (on John Glassco's *Memoirs of Montparnasse*) and Gordon Brent Ingram (on Wreck Beach) get amazing amounts done in very little space. Ingram's article—personal, political, geographical, sophisticated, and illustrated—is the strongest in the book: I could have read it all day.

One of the unifying factors in the book is a concern, observable in almost all of the articles, with questions of what makes a nation or a community. Many of the writers here make valuable contributions to debates on both personal and civic identity. Of course, these issues are of especial importance to queers, who are as a rule still brought up to be heterosexual and who will have other possible identities as well. The resulting tension is most perceptively confronted by Pauline Greenhill, who discusses festivals in Winnipeg, by Zoe Newman, who tackles bisexuality, by bj wray, who looks at this conflict on the national level in her discussion of Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan's "The Lesbian National Park Rangers," and by Crichlow.

A less pleasing unifying factor in the book is a rather cavalier attitude toward history. Although none of these essays is historical in the purist sense, almost all deal with history in some sense—usually a superficial one. This is particularly true of Elaine Pigeon's essay on *Hosanna*, which begins with a breathless characterization of the play's historical context. Similarly cursory uses of history can be found in most of the essays, however. The contributors should have been encouraged (or forced) to develop this aspect of their arguments when they extended their conference papers.

The "Queer Nation?" conference was organized by Goldie, who tells us in his introduction that he "wanted to do something new, to assemble a national meeting of those who wished to find the queer side of Canadian studies." Judging by this volume, Canadian studies—at least in its queer form—is overwhelmingly sociological, more interested in film than in litera-

ture and in the city rather than the country, primarily concerned with the last twenty or thirty years, and dominated by Goldie, who contributes an introduction, the first article (really a second introduction), and an interview with Lynn Fernie. I point to these things not primarily to criticize the book, but in the hope that other scholars will seek to discuss different queer Canadas—a hope that would surely be shared by the editor and the contributors.

Fantasy's Trickster

Hiromi Goto

The Kappa Child. Red Deer P $18.95

Reviewed by Marilyn Iwama

The Kappa Child is a beautiful book. Recognized for its design by the Book Publishers Association of Alberta, the cover features the elusive image of a kappa shimmering among green and gold blades of rice. The novel also received the James Tiptree Prize for having expanded gender roles in science fiction and fantasy. Expect the "unreal" then—a book that opens yet wider the door to a room of "spoken and unspoken tales" that Hiromi Goto explored in her earlier novel, *A Chorus of Mushrooms.* In many respects, Goto's approach to story in *The Kappa Child* remains constant: challenge stereotypical notions of race and gender, invoke myth, emphasize the impossibility of translation, and suggest worlds that alternate between the "real" and "fantastic."

Until recently, fiction by Canadian Nikkei, or those of Japanese descent, has largely concerned itself with constructing textual identities against "mainstream" ideas of what constitutes a Japanese Canadian. *The Kappa Child* makes a literary u-turn. Without surrendering the struggle with these familiar generalizations, Goto also engages with stereotypes that her Nikkei literary forebears constructed, in particular renaming the haven of home and family, and the "good wife, wise mother" model of Japanese and Nikkei womanhood.

She tells several stories to enact this renaming. The anonymous narrator's abusive father moves his family from the coast of British Columbia to fulfill his dream of growing rice on the Alberta prairie. In scenes reminiscent of the beet fields in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, the child narrator tries to make meaning of and endure this folly by searching out parallels in Laura Ingalls Wilder's idyllic *Little House on the Prairie.* The narrator's mother, Emiko, is so unable to protect her daughters or herself that abduction by aliens is her only escape. Goto reverses the idea of the impure, unsafe *soto* (outside) and the safety and purity of *uchi* (inside). Home is a defiled, dangerous place; the best Emiko's children can say about it is that it is "not outside."

Interspersed with the family narrative is a chronicle of the narrator's adult adventures. The character is a complete inversion of the highly (hetero)sexed exotic Asian female figure. Her job is corralling wayward shopping carts in an old Palm dairy van, clad always in the pyjamas and housecoat that best accommodate her square form, with its "big-boned arms and daikon legs." Cruising the Calgary urban range, unable to proclaim her feelings for any woman, the narrator finds release and, ultimately, herself in the arms of her own alien "stranger."

Although the novel invokes various mythological creatures, the kappa is the central one. Kappa are green, child-sized trickster creatures, whose heads are topped with a bowl-shaped hollow filled with water. Kappa feed on cucumbers and blood (often via the anus of their prey). They are capable of raping women and may challenge humans to sumo matches. Politeness is the kappa's ultimate undoing: trick the kappa into bowing, thus spilling its water, and its powers are lost.

Goto introduces just enough of the kappa myth for readers to appreciate the kappa-

esque pregnancy of her narrator. Minus any medical confirmation or remembered sexual encounter, the narrator's craving for Japanese cucumbers and movement within her body convince her that she is pregnant.

Goto offers a series of denouements. Emiko finds love with Janice, her swaggering, cursing, *nisei* neighbour. The father, after severe correction by the narrator, at least manages a life of solitude. Even the most damaged of the sisters emerges as a happy, successful adult. To the narrator falls the task of embodying and enabling each of these resolutions. While she never delivers a baby, the narrator nonetheless gives birth to an actualized self. The sun-bonneted kappa/Laura child, the cart handler with a make-over, the daughter who dares to challenge her father, the honest lover—all finally meet in an economical multiparous event as the narrator emerges, a person she "never imagined."

Transformation in *The Kappa Child* occurs through a series of confrontations, rejections, and reintegrations, much like the experiences of immigrants in the "new" land. As a writer without familial roots in prewar Canadian society, Goto engages with a national discourse that no longer speaks in terms of "the yellow peril." She is, therefore, "free" to engage with a more sophisticated racialization than Kogawa or Takashima or Kitagawa (via Miki) did in the 1970s and 1980s.

Goto's acknowledgement of earlier Nikkei writers and themes is obvious in *The Kappa Child*. Still, I am disappointed that she decided on such a heavy-handed approach. The extremity of oppositional discourse in *The Kappa Child* burdens it at times with excessive repetition and caricature, even beyond the typology of myth. Goto seems unconvinced that readers will connect her story with the irreverent, scatological aspects of Japanese mythology, or recognize its departure from both the established Nikkei lyric and heroic tales. This concern is unfortunate and warranted. In a nation only recently able to acknowledge them as loyal citizens, Canadian Nikkei—and their stories—may not yet be quite enough "like us" to enjoy freely the liberty of fantasy.

Loss and Longing

David Helwig
The Time of Her Life. Goose Lane $22.95

Michael Redhill
Martin Sloane. Doubleday Canada $29.95

Carol Bruneau
Purple for Sky. Cormorant $29.95

Reviewed by Eric Henderson

Women are central in these three novels, each of which focuses on the theme of loss. David Helwig's *The Time of Her Life* approaches loss as an existential human condition; Michael Redhill's *Martin Sloane* probes the psychological scarring and recovery from loss; of the three novels, however, Carol Bruneau's *Purple for Sky* most clearly embraces the liberating possibility of restitution and reconnection.

On the surface, *The Time of Her Life*, Helwig's sixteenth work of fiction, is the most conventional and least ambitious. The narrative relates the story of Jean, who grows up in Belleville, Ontario, during the prohibition era, travels to the United States to pursue an acting career, marries a French count and, after the devastation of World War II, returns to Canada, where she dies alone and unknown. One of the novel's characters is a photographer, and Jean spends much of her professional life in front of the camera lens. Characteristically, Helwig's technique is to present a sequence of jarringly disconnected scenes that unfold chronologically. The sharply drawn but unstable images of place and time serve to contextualize the main character, to define her selfhood at a given moment. Though Helwig's refusal to move beyond "the time of her life" into an exploration of Jean's

psychological complexity is inevitable, perhaps, given his reliance on the scenic and the literal, it is not without risks: there are only so many times we need to know that "Jean did what was necessary" or "Jean did as she was told" before we come to see her as a woman defined by her disengagement.

Yet by remaining consistently true to point of view and technique, Helwig allows a portrait of a heroine to finally emerge. As Jean deals with successive losses, she becomes defined less and less by time and place and more by her capacity to register pain and suffering and to persevere in spite of life's inevitable erasure. With this capacity, Jean assumes a larger and paradoxically enduring presence in our minds; her diminishing becomes Helwig's resolute celebration of her having lived. Helwig's accomplishment is the way he compels us to admire and mourn a woman whose inner depths are seldom revealed—indeed, for much of the novel, scarcely even entertained.

Poet-playwright Michael Redhill's first novel is a work as finely and complexly wrought as the "bereft little worlds" of Martin Sloane, the creator of miniature glass boxes containing found objects tantalizingly arranged to embody the artist's past (Sloane's art is based on the works of American collagist Joseph Cornell). Upstate New York student Jolene Iolas accidentally discovers one of Martin's enigmatic boxes on display at a Toronto gallery during a class field trip, becomes obsessed by the work, then by the Irish-Canadian artist himself, luring him to her college and becoming his lover. Martin, twenty-five years Jolene's senior, continues to live in Toronto, visiting Jolene on weekends for three years before his mysterious disappearance. Not surprisingly, Jolene is left with an enormous gap in her life, which eventually ends her career as a college teacher and her friendship with her roommate Molly, who refuses to return Jolene's desperate phone calls. But ten years later, with her life partly restored and living in Toronto, Jolene is beckoned to Ireland by Molly, who has discovered Martin's boxes in a Dublin gallery. The "trail" leads them to a Dublin house of two reclusive sisters (one of whom is Martin's abandoned elderly wife). Retracing Martin's steps as a boy when his family moved to Galway, Jolene meets Martin's father, also estranged from Martin (though the father, in this case, has done the abandoning) and pathetically attempting to forge a tenuous connection by clumsily reproducing his son's art for sale in Dublin.

Martin Sloane is a disquieting novel of psychological dependency, focusing on the complex, though not always convincing, love triangle involving the narrator, her artist-lover, and Molly, whom Martin and Jolene entertain the day Martin vanishes. Molly's determination to seek redemption for a brief flirtation with Martin (which she believes was responsible for the latter's departure) in light of the many betrayals—conscious and unconscious—in the book seems implausible. But the novel is really less about relationships than about the capacity for relationships to turn into destructive repositories of guilt and obsession that erode lives even as they are distorted by time and, sometimes, by art. *Martin Sloane* continually challenges our conception of the source of art and the power of memory, and the dependency of both on illusion and fabrication.

Throughout, the astonishing seamlessness of Redhill's design creates a multi-layered novel that incorporates perspectives on the past and present and prohibits closure. Obsessed with Martin's past, as if this knowledge could provide clues to his disappearance, Jolene slowly undergoes the process of self-recovery: as Jolene reassembles fragments of Martin's past (becoming a kind of miniaturist herself) she increasingly confronts her own past. At such

points of convergence as Jolene's memory of her visit to her family home, itself a site of absence and paternal abandonment, Redhill's prose eloquently negotiates the delicate balance between raw memory and the power to synthesize and transform experience.

Purple for Sky, Bruneau's engaging first novel, chronicles the lives of three generations of women over the span of more than a century. The narratives are complexly interwoven, like the threads of the crazy quilt created by the first of these women, Euphemia, who is thirteen years old when her large family immigrates to Nova Scotia. Effie marries Silas Lewis, whose parents run the village store and whose mother's religious and domestic fervor introduces Effie to a new life, but one which threatens to stifle her spirit, until the appearance of a childhood love recalls sexual desire. Effie's narrative takes the form of journal entries to her dead sister Fanny. The journal and its confessions are discovered by Effie's older child, Ruby, but it is Lucinda, the abandoned daughter of Ruby's younger sister, who has the potential to realize the kind of resolve expressed at the end of Effie's narrative : "Things to look forward to in my next life: 1) No feeding. No roasts, absolutely no pies. No cracked hands from peeling potatoes. 2) No washing. No dishes, no soap scum or wet cuffs. 3) No clothes to hang out. 4) No clothes to bring in. 5) No ironing. 6) No sewing, no mending. . . No regrets." One of the novel's weaknesses is that Effie's voice here does not really ring true as that of a feminist prototype; it is most authentic when it speaks from the depths of repression and regret, rather than when it openly challenges conventional gender roles.

Born after the much earlier death of a son (the childbirth scene is one of the most memorable in the novel), Ruby embodies and lives out the negative potential that, for Effie, marks the life of service and subordination. But, in her own way, Ruby, though stifled, is an admirable character. She endures a marriage of betrayal, adopting Lucinda, her younger sister's child, and running the family store prudently before succumbing to Alzheimer's disease and the discovery, on reading her mother's journal, of her illegitimacy. It is Ruby, victim of both the past and future, who destroys the quilt. Although it is the symbol of Effie's repressed individuality and creativity, the quilt's destruction does not signal the triumph of the rigid past, for Lucinda is able to redeem the quilt's symbolic qualities, to transmute feminine artistry into feminine life. Lucinda has some of her aunt Ruby's sense of duty, but more of her grandmother's potential for sexual expression, and her narrative reveals her awakening, in her mid-fifties, to her sexual identity. Unlike Ruby, Lucinda is not prepared to accept only what she is given; comically honest with herself and her desires, she hesitates but, in the end, affirms the necessity of stepping outside family and material obligation to probe her limits for vital, truly human relationships.

Seams of Language

Gerald Hill
The Man from Saskatchewan. Coteau $12.95

Elizabeth Philips
A Blue with Blood in It. Coteau $12.95

Russell Thornton
The Fifth Window. Thistledown $12.95

Reviewed by Bert Almon

A poetry collection entitled *The Man from Saskatchewan* sets up expectations: the reader assumes that the poetry will be studded with the word "prairie" and that images of sun and wind will abound. The expectations are increased by Courtney Milne's striking cover photograph of a very long human shadow cast over a texture of dried and cracked mud, a picture from his

W. O. Mitchell Country. But the photo is part of the postmodern subtlety of the book, for the shadow is clearly the photographer's, which literally creates a reflexive stance, a portrait of an artist creating art, and the visual mosaic of the cracked surface is more interesting for its composition than for its prairie subject matter. Hill's book has the predictable prairie poems, concentrated in the last two sequences, but he goes beyond recording prairie life. One sequence is a tribute to Robert Kroetsch's *Stone Hammer Poems* and the other (the title sequence) has the obligatory poems about hockey and prairie baseball games. But like Kroetsch, Hill is concerned with the structure and point of view and often "bares the device" in a Russian Formalist way, letting us know that he is not merely an observer of landscape. Rather, he is the controlling figure in the setting, which he creates as he observes it. The first poem in the book, "A Poetic," undercuts the notion that it is enough to reflect reality uncritically: he begins with a prose paragraph: "Much is said about place or voice or story as if a poem were a town on the Trans-Canada Highway or a simple man shouting from a tree or a continuous passage of words. . . ." The succeeding sections, "Town," "Man" and "Word" demolish this idea. The "Town" is a place where poetry walks the side streets; the "Man" utters an empty parenthesis; and "Word" presents an ordinary rhubarb plant in a set of witty images. The rhubarb plant, we are told, grows next to the home "Grace" next door, whose name is probed for its sweetness, and the poet concludes, "I leave life in a small town, / the webbed hands of rhubarb / dishing out the sun." A rhubarb plant is, in John Bunyan's phrase, grace abounding.

The best work in the book is "Life as a Visual Man," a sequence about a painter, which carries out a sophisticated inquiry into the nature of representation. The painter himself becomes a "painted man" quite literally when he tries to paint himself. Hill probes at the relationship between painted image and the word, which paints images in a different way. He also has some fine love poems, anti-love poems in a way, in his "No Way to Talk of Love." He misfires occasionally, as in his poems about the terribly limited life of a very ordinary character called Spike: the pathos aimed at never quite comes off. His set of poems about eyes—false eyes, snake eyes, wandering eyes—picks at the seams of representation in a way that, without seeming derivative, evokes Kroetsch. Hill has waited sixteen years to publish his second book (*Heartwood* appeared in 1985). He is now writing at a much higher level. We should hope that the third book appears with less delay.

Elizabeth Philips calls Andrew Marvell to mind: the great English poet used gardens as a symbolic locale in several of his finest poems. The garden is an interface of the real and the mythical, of nature and order, of immediacy and memory. Some of the gardens she describes seem literal, planted with seeds out of some of those seed catalogues which Robert Kroetsch made us all so aware of as a Canadian institution. At other times she creates a bush garden, a place where the blueberries are wild, not cultivated (usually the Qu'Appelle Valley), and the gentians have "a blue with blood in it." In one of the best poems, "The Clearing," a pregnant pioneer woman pauses in her housework to watch a bear grazing on berries, a spot of time where the sight of another creature "eats her loneliness."

Philips also brings the garden of Eden into her work, but transformed in subtle ways. In "The Garden, Remembered," the Eve and Adam figures are not quite the Biblical ones: the poet describes a male figure "discoursing" on hybrids, as if naming the Creation were an academic lecture. Her Eve is not concerned with theology but with gardening and regrets that she did not bring any seed heads along. In "A Woman

Walking," the Eve character has a baby on her hip and a load of firewood on her head and the Adam is preoccupied with his walking stick; her "elegant gait" is disturbed by the thought that the staff will give rise to terrible inventions. It might seem that the old story of lost Eden had been worked out, but Philips can revive it. Her book has other subjects: she writes a fine monologue by a soldier who survived D-Day, and her elegy for Gwendolyn MacEwen ("In This Country") is a rich and disturbing work. The diversity and intertextual qualities of this outstanding collection are hard to suggest in a review.

Russell Thornton's book, *The Fifth Window*, suffers from prolixity. He almost always says too much, and says it with adjectives, not often vivid ones. Sometimes the prolixity arises from a desire to write long, sinuous sentences drawn out of many lines, the Miltonic strategy, but too often the effect is lost. He does have some good scenes of Greece in the second part of his book, but even in those the poems need compression. The best poems in his book are the unrhymed sonnets, "Lazarus's Songs to Mary Magdalene." The fourteen-line restriction keeps his point of view focused, and he has some rich imaginings of the post-death experience of the man brought back to life by Jesus. And he is able to exploit the complex legend of Mary Magdalene at the same time: the symbol of contemplation, the reformed prostitute endlessly weeping, the eyewitness of Christ's resurrection. The pacing of his utterances is controlled by the four, four, three, three stanza pattern: he has important choices open to him about making each unit open or closed to the one after it. After so many centuries, the sonnet still offers fine structural possibilities and Thornton uses them well. Perhaps formal verse is a direction he should pursue. Hill and Philips make good use of formal freedom, inventing patterns suitable for each work.

Lyric Distances

Mavis Jones
Her Festival Clothes. McGill-Queen's UP $14.95

Linda Rogers
Rehearsing the Miracle. Poppy P n.p.

Kathleen McCracken
A Geography of Souls. Thistledown P $14.95

Reviewed by Susan Holbrook

In his *Lyric/Anti-lyric*, Doug Barbour identifies a "genial eclecticism" at play in contemporary Canadian poetry. Agreeing with Marjorie Perloff that two discrepant aesthetics emerged out of Modernism—one building on the Symbolists and one arising out of an experimental "poetics of indeterminacy"—Barbour suggests we in Canada embrace both. In my own writing and reading practices I think I'm fairly eclectic and also genial, but in the interests of challenging the objective tenor with which we habitually deliver the wildly subjective genre of the literary review, I admit to a preference for "indeterminacy," the disjunctive or innovative. I want to orient my response to three books of poetry exemplifying Perloff's other category, featuring what's come to be recognized as contemporary lyric, each poem adhering to all or most of an inherited set of givens: an expressive ego, brevity (usually one page), left-justified short lines, figurative language, a cadential epiphany. What interests me are ways these lyric givens prove variously productive and restrictive in their mediation of thematic concerns common to all three poets: distance and difference both within and between cultures.

The dust jacket of Mavis Jones's *Her Festival Clothes* promises "the secret knowledge of those who see but remain unseen." Thankfully the book doesn't deliver on this promise, one that would be presumptuous given that much of *Her Festival Clothes* is composed in the mode of travel writing, with particular focus on colonial and post-

colonial India. In "Patiala," for instance, a second-person voice positions the reader as a privileged visitor to a mansion in the titular city, where "you" are unconscious of a manservant until the final lines, when "you" belatedly determine that the "pile of rags / on the floor is only the old servant, / rubbing polish into the dark wood." While the indicting second person is an interesting strategy, the ending rings trite. Perhaps the imposition of sentimentality comes into play because of the firm cadential ending associated with the contemporary lyric. This rhythmic closure is not always a liability, however. Jones can deploy it with great finesse, as she does in "On the Antalya Road," where the subject at the edge of action is the speaker herself. She positions herself as a Western tourist in Turkey, observing her surroundings, listening to another language, and concluding that here is "so much life / that is not mine." These lines are at once melancholic and celebratory and, thanks to the lyric cadence, they continue to resonate as I proceed through the text.

Simile and metaphor appear to be *de rigueur* figures of the contemporary lyric; a good trope is (figuratively speaking) the triple Salchow of the poetic performance. I wouldn't agree to a moratorium on similes and metaphors—I love a good Salchow—but they can prove distracting if overused or sloppily executed. Jones's deployment of figures is uneven, unsurprising in a first book. She gets the ball rolling in the first poem with a simile for the perennial favourite object of tropical language, "breasts," but at least she compares them to the surprising "moths." By the time I got to "Shalimar Hotel," a third of the way through the book, I found myself elated to read "It was not falling water, / those notes from the grand / piano [. . .] ." It was *not* falling water! My relief indicated I'd read a few too many ornamental figures. Unfortunately, "Shalimar Hotel" goes on to portray "Young girls like orchids [. . .] their butterfly limbs / kneeling, as thin as stems." Remember my introductory caveat; a reader with different aesthetic proclivities might be disappointed the notes aren't water and relieved the girls are like orchids. What I find exciting in Jones's book are her deviations from standard lyric form. She experiments with a number of different modes, voices, and compositional strategies. "Shallal," for instance, gives us startlingly fresh lines, unusual syntax. The poem is a form of sestina: the final word of each line has been selected from a pool of six possibilities ("seashells," "cedar," "berries," "breath," "night," "shallal"), so that each of the seven six-line stanzas performs a shuffled version of the first stanza's right hand margin. This poem illustrates the generative engine of compositional limits beyond the default limits of the lyric. Testing these new limits is half the pleasure, as Jones shifts "sea shells" from noun to verb and substitutes "berries" with the homonymic "bury."

Linda Rogers, author of close to two dozen books, is practised at incorporating figurative language fluently. She'll usually forego "like" or "as" in favour of the more slick "the way"; a daughter can find her father "the way lambs in pastures find their mothers." It's this kind of interpersonal excursion and return that concerns Rogers in *Rehearsing the Miracle*. The distances engaged here are those between friends, members of a family, the living and the dead, the conscious and unconscious self. Rogers's tracking of these spaces is expressed in her signature voice, one that blends the vernacular and the whimsical. This voice is particularly effective in her more elegiac lyrics, introducing a sense of joy to meditations upon loss. The drawback of this voice is that it ultimately produces a homogeneity of tone, style, diction, so that this book lacks the sparkle and jazz of Jones's more ambitious, if uneven, collection. Worth mentioning is the physical beauty of Rogers's book; Victoria's Poppy

Press has printed the illustrated *Rehearsing the Miracle* by offset and letterpress, and included an original linocut signed by Vilém Tefr. I would not write in the margins of this book.

Kathleen McCracken's figurative language is neither ornamental nor slickly introduced. *A Geography of Souls* exhibits an uncommon fusion of poetic, colloquial, incantatory, private and public languages, achieving a resonance marking the best of what a lyric can do. Here we have evidence of that ineffable lifeblood of the lyric: music. McCracken's poems remind me of García Lorca's *Poema del Cante Jondo* in their passion and precision, and in the way that, by returning to certain touchstones, they refuse what Robert Kroetsch has called the lyric's "ferocious principles of closure." The word "distance," for instance, appears in almost every poem of Part II, the term accruing meaning with each new turn. McCracken explores distance and difference, both personal and cultural, in an open and respectful spirit. Other voices are introduced into her poems, and her stance as engaged witness is clear in lines such as "I listen to Mary Crow Dog / *It's hard being an Indian woman* / I listen to John Trudell / *Duck Valley my Wounded Knee*." Two poems from the beginning of the book, "Skushno" and "Saudade," are inspired by these untranslatable words (Russian and Portuguese, respectively), demonstrating McCracken's keen awareness of the limits of her own language. "Sky Daughter" is a poem in six parts chronicling a birth and celebrating the cultural wisdom that sustains the mother, who remembers, "Midwives, totems, shepherds and kings / out of a wilderness of affirmations / they entered my bloodstream, there to see you through." These lines ring true in a book that manifests throughout McCracken's commitment to honouring the myths, languages, and histories of the various cultures she sounds.

Memory, Family, Politics

Theresa Kishkan
Sisters of Grass. Goose Lane $18.95

Elizabeth Haynes
Speak Mandarin Not Dialect. Thistledown $15.95

M.A.C. Farrant
Girls around the House. Polestar $18.95

Maggie Helwig
Gravity Lets You Down. Oberon $14.95

Reviewed by Deborah Torkko

British Columbia's Theresa Kishkan has written six poetry collections, a book of essays, and a novella prior to *Sisters of Grass*, her first novel. The story is told from the point of view of Anna, a museum curator, whose task it is to catalogue "a packet of photographs; . . . letters bound with faded rose-coloured ribbon; a program for a concert; newspaper clippings; a copy of *Camera Work*, dated Autumn, 1906; [and] a length of thin, hollow bone," items that once belonged to Margaret Stuart, a half-Indian young woman who lived until the early twentieth century. As the novel unfolds, Anna works to construct Margaret's "life from the small scraps of ephemera."

The problem for the museum curator is to make the invisible visible, to select from the homely objects the information that determines the life of her subject and to help museum visitors "understand something about a community in a particular time and place." As she works to delineate Margaret's life, Anna must also come to terms with her own questions: "How do I balance the composition of what might be expected of a young woman of her time and place with what might be remarkable? What have I learned from dreaming her shape into my life, and how can I know what is memory and what is desire?"

In the process of reconstructing Margaret's life, Anna imagines how Margaret shuttles back and forth between

the two worlds bequeathed her by a Native mother and Scottish-American father, a family background that requires reconciliation as she matures. Margaret wears trousers, rides horses, and herds cattle on the family ranch. She carries within her "the pungent smell of damp rocks and sage, the flowering buckwheat, the blackbird's shrill whistle, the warmth of the sun." She knows "where to find lilies, where to find wild potatoes to bring back to her grandmother's cabin." She is also instructed in the ways of womanly propriety. Her father's sister and mother, Aunt Elizabeth and Grandmother Stuart, frown upon Margaret's tomboyishness and teach her how to cross-stitch, to stitch "a verse on fine linen with borders or bluebells and purple English violets." The novel is as much about Anna's recollection of her past, however, as it is about Margaret Stuart's history. Anna's thoughts move back and forth between her girlhood summers in the Nicola Valley and her present occupation as museum curator, "between the life of the body and what remains."

Lac Le Jeune, Kamloops, the Canadian Rockies, Mexico, China, India, and Budapest provide some of the geographical settings for the stories in Elizabeth Haynes's *Speak Mandarin Not Dialect.* This collection explores the pretexts of memory through family relationships, travel, and language, and the stories remind readers that although we may think we are finished with the past, the past is never finished with us.

"Krishna saw the universe in his mother's father's mouth," "African Sleeping Sickness," "Harry's Orphan's," and "The Week She Was Zsuzsi" are stories that concern father-daughter relationships and are told from the daughter's point of view. These relationships are often unfulfilled, bereft of heartfelt love and connection. In "The Week She Was Zsuzsi," Zsuzsi remembers her childhood and how her father would stand out in the river and wait for her to swim towards him, how "[h]e'd stand out, way out it seemed, farther than any of the other mothers or fathers, didn't open his arms like them."

The title story, "Speak Mandarin not Dialect," foregrounds how times and places intersect in a kind of isobar of the emotional and physical present. Elly, the protagonist, is travelling alone in China. While riding on a bus, Elly dozes off, and when she suddenly awakes, she has momentarily lost her bearings: "Where is she? On a road, trees, where? On a bus, WHERE? Home? Vancouver? . . . No. Singapore." Elly doesn't need to be half-awake to feel dislocated, however. When fully aware that she is swimming laps in her hotel's empty pool, she thinks she could be swimming elsewhere: "She's swimming, swimming Lake Ontario, the English Channel, the South China sea." For Elly, as for many of Haynes's characters, present experiences invoke the past so acutely that space is successive—she moves from one geographical viewpoint to another while remaining physically stationary—and time is simultaneous—for her the past and the present flow together in successive moments.

Translated into English, "Pido la Palabra" means "seize the word," a title that reminds readers of this story that "[w]hat is important in a culture is reflected in the language." The nameless protagonist "studying Spanish at the Instituto Cultural in Oaxaca" experiences first-hand that the "small, necessary words, survival words" of language study fail to convey the nuances of meaning and context implicitly understood by members of a cultural group. Robbery and rape and the manner in which these crimes are received by her Mexican friends and Mexican authorities show the protagonist that she needs to understand the beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions of Mexicans from the standpoint of their cultural logic and not her own.

The problems of language that Haynes's stories explore are not confined to cultural differences, however. The husband in "Synapsing: Diary of Barbara Evelyn DeChesnay" is unable to talk or write. The story is structured as a series of diary entries that chronicle two weeks in Barbara's life, beginning the day her husband suffers a stroke. The story is a meditation on language, on words and thought and their connections to the workings of memory: "Words without thought. Thought without words. If the words don't come, are they there? If we don't think in words, how do we think? If there are no words, what makes memory?"

The protagonist in M.A.C. Farrant's *Girls around the House* is a writer whose words entertain by making the mundane memorable. This collection of linked short stories is set in Sydney, a community on Vancouver Island. Farrant's stories are funny, often ironically funny, and they entertain the reader with anecdotes of ordinary middle-aged parents and their ordinary adolescent children. Farrant renders comic the everyday banalities of family life. Nothing spectacular happens, and one doesn't need to live in Sydney to appreciate these stories.

Marion, the protagonist from whose point of view these stories are told, is a writer, wife, mother, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, neighbour, and family chauffeur who struggles "to separate the writing self from the domestic self." "Holistic Ball of Wax" is a very funny tongue-in-cheek rejection of the tenets of New Age Spiritualism. Serenity, wholeness, and nirvana are not for Marion; she really likes "all this lovely, real-life neuroticism." Marion juggles the bewilderment and confusion of domestic life with the impossible demands of writing and has reconciled herself to accept "this split because, somehow, each side nourishes the other."

In "Panellist School" Marion is on a two-month book tour in Australia where she is also writer-in-residence at Macquarie University. Despite the exotic location, academic life in Australia is alarmingly familiar. She soon realizes that she didn't need to travel all the way "to the Southern Hemisphere . . . for the privilege of experiencing bewilderment, despair, confusion, hopelessness, dread and existential angst." Family life in Sydney provided her all of that.

Mothers who live with adolescent daughters will appreciate the ironic humour in "The Princess, the Queen & the Withered King: A Tale from Wit's End," a story that uses fairy-tale narrative to examine the often painful rivalry between mothers and adolescent daughters. The wicked queen of this story, driven to her wit's end, would put her self-absorbed, self-righteous Princess to sleep in order to preserve forever her childhood sweetness. The princess in this story appears "beautiful and gorgeous," but at best, the Queen reminds mothers, the princess is only "wonderful in training."

"Ritardando," the closing story, describes the family celebration of Nana's eighty-second birthday. A musical term, ritardando means "becoming gradually slower," but Marion thinks of it as "a way of being present in the midst of things, a way of both participating in and absorbing the scene before [her]." As both participant and observer, Marion reconciles her writerly self with her domestic self in a halcyon moment of sacred ritual. Nana's birthday party is as much a tribute to her eighty-second year as it is an affirmation and celebration of family solidarity.

Maggie Helwig's *Gravity Lets You Down* collects vignettes, anecdotes, reportage, reviews, and stories about the gritty political realities that exist outside the safe shelter of family connectedness and belonging. Not one to shy away from dangerous truths, Helwig invites readers into the darkness to see what it is like when we fall. The author's political underpinnings are made

clear by the book's dedication "to the demonstrators at the Santa Cruz cemetery, Dili, East Timor, 12 November 1991." Bleak and painful in their stark truthfulness, these narratives examine the imbrications of political events and personal culpability. The narrator of "Transmissions" acknowledges that "even if I never knew anything about East Timor in my life, this twelve-year-old girl who was raped in prison is also part of my life."

The collection deals with potentially explosive issues ranging from religious faith, brutal political regimes and abuses of power, to events of civil protest. The Morgenthaler Clinic bombings, the G-7 Economic summit in Toronto, East Timor's brutal campaign against the indigenous Timorese, nuclear missile and chemical weapons built in North America for war in the Middle East—all are targets for Helwig's incisive narratives.

"Canadian Movies" is a series of vignettes loosely connected by the ruminations of their nameless narrator. A circus story, a *Globe and Mail* excerpt about Canadian film-maker Claude Jutra, a brief blurb about the physiology of Alzheimer's disease, "[a] word about crazy people" comprise this story. The story begins recounting a macabre story about a man who eats the memory and motor centres of his brain and is carried away by two men who shock each other with cattle prods. The complications of this story, and of all the stories in this collection, are never resolved because we can't "resolve things on paper any more, because that is a lie."

Helwig's narratives rage against acts of inhumanity, but the possibility of grace and redemption, however slight, lingers. "In Byzantium" is a story for the city: "Toronto, New York, Rome and Byzantium and Toronto." The narrative juxtaposes the Byzantium idyll with Toronto street life. The biblical Mary is incarnated in Toronto's Mary the bag lady, combining divine audacity and grace, reminding readers that in cities everywhere the extraordinary prevails in the here and now.

Flattening Us Up

Rolf Lauter, ed.

Jeff Wall: Figures & Places: Selected Works from 1978–2000 Prestel $45.50

Reviewed by Roger Seamon

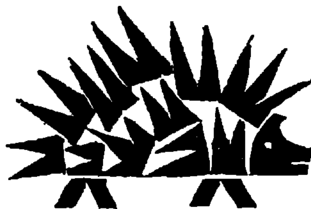
Vancouver and Canada are more or less immune to the appeal of Jeff Wall, although (because?) his work is unabashedly high art and the most successful effort yet to make serious photographs whose natural artistic companions are the canonical paintings of western art history. That is quite an achievement whether you value the pictures or not, and, in the opening essay of *Jeff Wall: Figures and Places*, Jean-Christophe Amman, the curator of the exhibition for which this is the catalogue, does not hesitate to compare his discovery of Wall to Vasari's story, in his canon- and legend-making *Lives of the Artists*, of Cimabue's encounter with the young Giotto. Only time will tell if that is pretentious or prescient, but for now Wall has to be reckoned with.

The exhibition was held at the Frankfurt Museum für Moderne Kunst in 2001-2002. The reproductions are ample and good. Many works not in the show but discussed in the various texts are included, and so the volume is, in effect, a miniaturized retrospective. Textually, *Figures and Places* consists of a long essay by the editor, Rolf Lauter, a story by Italo Calvino called "The Adventure of a Photographer," whose relationship to Wall's work is left to the reader to decide (it is about a man who scorns photography only to become obsessed by it), essays by various hands on various topics, and some interviews with Wall. The volume ends with "A Brief Biography," which is really a short list of where Wall

studied and worked, a list of works in the catalogue, a list of exhibitions, and a "Selected Critical Writings and Interviews." The main weakness of the texts is that there is a lot of murkiness, nonsense, and banality. One early sentence can illustrate all three: Wall's pictures "address the concept of place in its manifold meanings as relating to nature or society, and as one of the elements in that process of engendering memory which provides human beings and the objects in their everyday lifeworld with a system of coordinates and contextual organization." One needs to sift. What remains constitutes a good guide to the many uncertainties that surround Wall's work. The main one concerns the attitudes expressed in the pictures.

There is a consensus that Wall's pictures are "x-rays of the malaises [*sic*] of contemporary civilization" in its capitalist form, and Wall himself has encouraged that view, as when he says that his purpose is "to lift the veil a little on the objective misery of society and the catastrophic operation of its law of value." But in the interviews reprinted here he repeatedly takes that half back. Jean-François Chevrier, looking for an interpretation of *Insomnia*, a picture in which a man lies sleepless beneath a table in a meticulously recreated 1950s green kitchen, quotes Maurice Blanchot on "The hallucinatory heaviness of a sleepless night." But Wall doesn't buy it, and says, "the state of wakefulness, even of sleeplessness, isn't necessarily negative," and "the man in *Insomnia* is at home, and he has a home. He is comfortable enough in the house to wind up on the kitchen floor, and maybe he'll fall asleep there." Do Wall's words change how we see the picture? You have to look for yourself.

Lauter says of *Citizen*, a black and white picture of a man lying in a nondescript stretch of grass in a park, that it shows the "dream-linked isolation of the individual," and Chevrier sees it as an ironic comment, because a citizen is an active entity. Wall, however, tells us, surprisingly, that "Sleeping in public without fear of your fellow-citizens is a gesture about those fellows, and your relationship with them." Is that disingenuous, or a clue to the muted affect in Wall's work? Wall chooses subjects that would, taken as documentary images, normally elicit reflexive indignation in his liberal-left audience. But Wall would block that response and force reflection. "The rhetorical multi-culti propaganda is way less interesting than the creole of bad and not-bad attitudes reflecting off each other in actual American-type life." This satisfies neither the triumphalist celebrator of capitalist culture nor his radical opposition. I am not sure Wall brings off this balancing act. The resulting flatness of affect is probably not for most tastes, but it results from the deep ambivalence of the intelligentsia toward our civilization that Wall attempts to express, an ambivalence that is real and consequential. Wall addresses the unhappiness of the witness, but he does not want simply to reinforce that unhappiness with more documentary evidence: "We change our relation to those afflictions in contemplating them, making them objects of contemplation or dramatization, turning them into pictures." The light boxes, the scale, the cinematic emphasis, and the digitizing are all part of Wall's worthy effort to make what are normally rhetorical documents into pictures, into art that forces unhappy thought. For some that is anathema; for others, myself included, it is a fact of life.



Screening the Censors

Leonard J. Leff and Jerold L. Simmons
The Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship, and the Production Code. Rev. ed. UP of Kentucky US $19.00

Mark Cohen
Censorship in Canadian Literature. McGill-Queen's UP $55.00

Reviewed by Paul Stuewe

Censorship issues are often debated at ethereally high levels of abstraction, and so studies that take a more nuts-and-bolts approach to the censorship process are always welcome. *The Dame in the Kimono* focuses on the implementation of the Production Code, Hollywood's 1930 response to protests against the racy sexuality of films such as *Black Paradise* (whose star revealed "all of her legs and 82 percent of everything else") and *Paris* (wherein semi-nude chorus girls fled a theatre fire). Seeking to regulate themselves before public pressure forced government intervention, Hollywood's studio moguls created a Production Code Administration that attempted to balance the offended sensibilities of conservative religious and political groups with the sex-sells-seats mentality of avaricious film producers.

The Dame in the Kimono tells this story from the point of view of the Production Code Administration's day-to-day operations, and this constitutes both its strength and its weakness. The negotiations between the PCA and filmmakers could be as dramatic as the movies that the process eventually sanctioned; Clark Gable's memorable "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn" in *Gone with the Wind*, for example, was at one point bowdlerized into "Frankly, I don't care" before the producers made other concessions that permitted its restoration. For all the light that is cast on the PCA's activities, however, *Dame*'s only perfunctory attention to social context tends to reduce its narrative to a clash of egos between censors and censored. One also expects a certain amount of analysis and interpretation of evidence in an academic-press title, and this too is largely lacking in a volume that will certainly interest cinema buffs, but is likely to disappoint anyone looking for a more scholarly treatment of film censorship.

Censorship in Canadian Literature is an ambitious attempt to combine close textual reading with a re-examination of conventional thinking about censorship, and the results are decidedly mixed. Cohen defines censorship as "the exclusion of some discourse as the result of a judgement by an authoritative agent based on some ideological predisposition." Reconceptualizing censorship as a form of judgement will, according to Cohen, downplay censorship's pejorative connotations, help us to recognize that such judgements are an inescapable part of our lives, and encourage us to concentrate on how we can make "more appropriate and constructive judgements."

This Enlightenment vision of competing ideas settling their differences on the playing fields of rationality is certainly appealing, but unfortunately seems largely irrelevant to much of the discourse on censorship issues. "Ideological predisposition," for example, seems a rather tame description of the passions expressed by pro- and anti-abortionists, or by conflicts over classroom material that offends some students and parents. In suggesting that such strongly held beliefs can readily be transmuted into philosophical debating points, Cohen appears to be simplifying rather than enriching our thinking about censorship, as he articulates a position that would reduce complex contextual backgrounds into schematic outlines of adversarial argument.

Censorship in Canadian Literature's emphasis on making more satisfactory judgements also turns out to be involved with the problematic notion of essentialist truth claims, as demonstrated in references

to "the errors of judgement in given cases of censorship," and the assertion that "some truths can be deemed stable enough to be judged." Although Cohen's desire to make better censorship decisions is laudable, it is by no means clear that the way forward lies in the direction of seeking truth as the outcome of superior judgement. The thrust of much contemporary literary theory, in which abstract concepts such as truth are interrogated and destabilized from the point of view of their status as social and linguistic constructs, suggests that there are other possibilities for a more nuanced treatment of censorship; regrettably, such considerations do not inform Cohen's quest for the "'best' decisions to be made in censorship conflicts."

Censorship in Canadian Literature also presents well-researched close readings of texts by Timothy Findley, Margaret Atwood, and Margaret Laurence that either have been subject to censorial attack or respond to such attacks. These three chapters explore the interfaces between published text, authorial intention, and public reception from unusual, and largely productive, points of view that will make them essential reading for scholars specializing in these authors. The Findley and Laurence chapters are rich with insights into the background of *The Wars* and *The Diviners*, often based on archival material that will be unfamiliar to most readers. The chapter on Margaret Atwood is largely devoted to abstracting her 1980–85 views on censorship from work published during that period, and is thus of somewhat lesser interest; in addition, it is burdened by the assumption that Atwood's personal opinions can readily be inferred from the statements of her fictional characters.

The following chapter, "The Inevitability of Censorship: Beatrice Culleton and Marlene NourbeSe Philip," has useful things to say about the ways in which gatekeepers tend to impose dominant cultural standards on what are stigmatized as marginal discourses, but it is marred by a major factual oversight. As evidence of the "sociocultural censorship" imposed on non-white writers Cohen cites Dionne Brand's indictment of "white supremacy" after failing to win the 1992 Governor General's Award for Poetry, but he neglects to mention that Brand went on to win the GG in 1997. A more nuanced treatment of gatekeeping would note that the number of GGs won by non-white writers, which from 1985 to 1998 (a reasonable end-date for a work published in 2001) would include Fred Wah, Heather Spears, Rohinton Mistry, Michael Ondaatje, and Djanet Sears, suggests that there has been significant (but not necessarily sufficient) change in Canadian society's response to multicultural realities.

The concluding chapter reiterates the philosophical speculations that precede Cohen's studies of particular authors, but does very little to tie argument and analysis together. The disparity between the book's rarefied intellectual context and its frequently incisive discussions of specific cases of literary censorship compels this gatekeeper to pronounce the following judgement: *Censorship in Canadian Literature* has very little to contribute to general societal discourse on censorship in Canada, but does provide much stimulating and often groundbreaking commentary as to how individual Canadian authors have dealt with efforts to censor their work.

On Brevity and Bathing

Alexandra Leggat
Pull Gently, Tear Here. Insomniac $19.95

Gerald Lynch and Angela Arnold Robbeson, eds.
Dominant Impressions: Essays on the Canadian Short Story. U of Ottawa P $22.00

Reviewed by Claire Wilkshire

Alexandra Leggat's *Pull Gently, Tear Here* possesses a rare vitality: here is a collection

of bright new ideas. How well they work together is a matter for debate, but the innovation makes itself felt.

Leggat's first work of fiction draws together thirty-four stories, many of them fewer than four pages long. Like many collections of short-shorts, it presents two significant problems. The first is the impression of superficiality created when new subjects keep popping up, only to disappear after a few minutes' reading. Stories appear slight; they leave the reader wanting more substance. The second problem, repetition (of theme, plot, style, character, technique), may not arise in a dozen stories but grows irksome in three times that many. There is nothing wrong with showing a series of snapshots, but the snapshots must differ one from another. The stories in *Pull* feature too many bars, cigarettes, ex-boyfriends, and lonely narrators. They contain too many short, bland sentences: "It's a cold November morning. The bus is already ten minutes late on account of the weather." Stripped-down in this context does not mean spare; it means dull.

Every now and then a story reveals its promise, though, as when a narrator observes a woman weeping: "I had to love her when I saw her insides slide down her cheeks at dawn." The word "insides" is arresting; it challenges dullness in the way the collection as a whole challenges genre.

As a group these stories feel unpolished, not quite fully formed. Perhaps the question reviewers should ask themselves is not "Are these stories entirely successful?" but "What will Leggat's writing look like in five years?" The answer to that question might prove very interesting.

Dominant Impressions: Essays on the Canadian Short Story belongs to the Reappraisals series, critical anthologies collecting the work presented at the University of Ottawa during annual symposia on Canadian literature. This volume includes a fine introduction, which highlights key issues in short story theory and provides in addition an excellent compact history of short fiction in English Canada. The aim of this book, the editors explain, is to counter the notion that the story in Canada began in the 1960s by "addressing the question: What are some of the literary and cultural antecedents of the Canadian short story?" Eleven scholarly articles respond to this question, bookended by short essays by Bonnie Burnard and Alistair MacLeod.

The articles collected here convey an impression of due diligence, of earnest slogging with a view to the creation of a broad socio-literary backdrop for the more recent Canadian short story. They are relatively brief, and the topics often seem slight. As with *Pull Gently*, one keeps hoping for more substantial and as a (possible) result more engaging pieces. At times one feels sorry for the critic who has had to read the source material. Jean Stringam's study, "The Canadian Young Adult Short Story of the Nineteenth Century," explores how contemporary attitudes about, for example, gender and race are underlined or undermined in the fiction under consideration. Stringam tactfully points out some of the weaknesses of the stories she examines ("Unfortunately Saunders is never subtle"; "Mrs. Groser's story may never need to see the light of day again. . ."). Quotations from the primary texts, too, make the stories sound unspeakably dull. The reader is torn between respect for Stringam's sense of duty and wonder that anyone would want to write on such a topic. Similar sentiments may be provoked by James Doyle's "'Just Above the Breadline': Social(ist) Realism in Canadian Short Stories of the 1930s" and Alan Weiss's "Rediscovering the Popular Canadian Short Story."

Perhaps it is inexcusable to think of criticism in these terms. Some would argue that it is the reader's responsibility to bring interest to the text, that dullness is in the eye of the beholder, and maybe they are

right. This beholder, though, having long held brevity in high regard, finds herself longing, after these two books, for length, breadth and depth—not the splash of water on the face but the long hot bath.

Academic Discontents

Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Maria Herrera-Sobek, eds.
Power, Race and Gender in Academe: Strangers in the Tower? Modern Language Association $37.50

Marjorie Garber
Academic Instincts. Princeton UP $14.95

Reviewed by Graham Good

Strangers in the Tower : the subtitle strikes the keynote for this collection of essays about the experiences of new faculty from "non-traditional" backgrounds (i.e women and racial or sexual-preference minorities) in the American academy in the 1990s. The focus is not so much on hiring as on the years immediately afterwards: the difficulties with students and colleagues, the workload, and the struggle for tenure and promotion. More than the statistical and bureaucratic material, the anecdotes of the writers' personal experiences as junior teachers form the main interest of the volume.

There is a wide range of complaints. Robyn Wiegman's "On Being Married to the Institution" has the widest. It takes off from an inept speech at her tenure-celebration party by a dean who offered a toast to the newly promoted and their "marriage to the institution." To Wiegman this merely capped the years of subjection to "the oppressive atmosphere of heterosexual marriage" in the academy: among the objectionable "hetero-familial" manifestations are e-mail announcements of births, marriages, and deaths among the faculty and their families (is even death hetero-familial?), discussions of "kids'" activities at departmental receptions, and photographs of children prominently displayed on a dean's desk. Once, Wiegman only narrowly escaped having to listen to a brief piano recital by a faculty offspring. Even in feminist circles she found disagreeably familial talk of "sisterhood," as well as the consideration of child-care duties as a major factor in scheduling meetings and events. It is hard to see how these objections could be met, short of banning from academe any reference to the faculty's spouses or children, or any use of metaphors derived from family relations. This course of action would end up with the "construction" of a nonrelational, autonomous self akin to that of the male bourgeois individualism so often decried by some feminists.

Many of the difficulties stem from the idea that minority faculty "represent" the demographic group they come from. This leads, for example, to students who are also from that group expecting special help and understanding. It also leads to an expectation that minority faculty will teach the literature produced by their particular minority. Thus Sheila Minn Hwang complains, justifiably, that her specialization in eighteenth-century British literature is considered anomalous, and that she is "typecast" by the assumption that she will be in women's studies or Asian American studies. Yet this assumption of "representativeness" seems to follow naturally from the idea that a particular group is "underrepresented."

The individual's identification with the group can be both asserted and denied at various times, producing a classic double bind. If treated as an individual, the "non-traditional" faculty member may complain that her group identity (say, as a woman of colour) is being effaced. Carrie Tirado Bramen calls this "individualizing the political" in an unacceptable way. Yet being identified with one's group may be equally resented as limiting and typecasting. Sandra Gumming makes the complaint that members of visible minorities are "repeatedly put into the impossible position of becoming group representatives."

This may lead to an assertion of independence from the group, which is at other times seen as an ideologically suspect "individualizing."

To the question, "Do groups have common characteristics?" the answer is sometimes yes, sometimes no, with the choice governed mainly by strategic considerations. It may be advantageous at some times to claim that women are more nurturing than men, or at other times to denounce the idea as an exploitive stereotype. The same shifting evaluations are applied to same-sex gatherings. Men are seen as isolated individualists, but when they get together they are guilty of exclusionary male bonding. However, if the same-sex gatherings are female, they show women's superior relationship skills and willingness to cooperate. Many of the writers treat white males in much the same way as they complain of being treated themselves. Their view is homogenizing, stereotyping, and uniformly negative. In that sense, it is dehumanizing. No inkling of what life on campus is like for white male faculty members appears in this book. Hwang attributes "natural authority" to white male professors, oblivious to the trepidation with which many approach their colleagues and students, anxiously trying to do the right thing and fearful of offending.

Annette Kolodny's contribution, the only one from a senior academic, observes how women faculty "appear to be more cooperative and flexible in accepting course assignments, while men declare themselves limited to their specialty." She finds that women and minority faculty do much more mentoring than white males. They also have the problem of "burdensome invitations" to represent their race or gender, though presumably being uninvited would be exclusionary. Where two assistant professors are married and have young children, usually it is the woman's book that gets left unwritten, says Kolodny. And women are usually asked to take minutes at meetings. Kolodny describes how as a "feminist dean" she struggled to modify the tenure and promotion process to take account of these factors in ensuring equity for women and minorities, and these procedures are reproduced in full in an appendix.

The new faculty members' problems are not confined to colleagues, however. The anti-authoritarian pedagogy of the "raced-gendered" classroom also has its problems with students. Hwang puts it this way: "Though challenging 'natural' authority can lead to student empowerment, it can also lead to a lack of respect for instructors." The solution: "we must play a game of claiming respect and refusing authority at the same time." Of course, many students will fail to appreciate the distinction and will be accused of disrespect when they thought they were challenging authority. But complaints about the new-style instructors in this collection are often turned back on the students, as reflecting the students' inadequacies and elite class background.

Marjorie Garber's *Academic Instincts* deals more with issues of critical writing style and audience than with academic power struggles. Her book is a collection of three essays in defence of academic professionalism, interdisciplinarity, and specialized terminology, yet paradoxically her tone is light, witty, and even "amateur" in tone. The text reads like a set of public lectures, though no reference to such an origin is made. She has no difficulty breaking down the amateur/professional distinction by showing how often "amateur" and "professional" critics have changed places. Many "public intellectuals" have gone into the academy, and many academic stars have gone into journalism, in each case as a reward of success. The second chapter concerns how mutual envy can grow between one discipline and its neighbours.

Interdisciplinarity can be accused (sometimes by the same person) of lacking the professional standards fostered by the disciplines, but also of adopting a barbarous, over-professionalized, and incomprehensible writing style rather than the accessible prose of the amateur critic. In the third chapter, Garber delves into changes of meaning in some of the key words in the debate: she reminds us that "jargon" (a frequent reproach nowadays, but one with a long history) originally was used of the meaningless chatter of birds.

Garber positions herself somewhat above the culture wars, commenting ironically about how often the two sides echo each other. This gives a serene, tranquil, and good-humoured outlook on the binaries she discusses, a kind of "I'm OK, you're OK" approach very different from *Power, Race and Gender in Academe.* Garber rarely touches on these contentious issues. The "hermeneutic of suspicion" would no doubt attribute her sunny mood to her position as William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of English at Harvard University, but I for one appreciated her friendly tone and readable prose style.

Mixed Bag for Kids

Alison Lohans
Illus. Marilyn Mets and Peter Ledwon
Waiting for the Sun. Northern Lights $18.95

Thelma Sharp
Illus. Georgia Graham
The Saturday Appaloosa. Northern Lights $18.95

Maggee Spicer and Richard Thompson
Illus. Kim LaFave
We'll All Go Sailing. Fitzhenry and Whiteside $19.95

Julie Johnston
In Spite of Killer Bees. Tundra $17.95

Reviewed by Lynn Wytenbroek

Picture books vary tremendously in quality. Of the four books under review, three are picture books and they range from very good to quite poor. *Waiting for the Sun* is a very nice book indeed. The text itself is fairly simple: a curious child impatiently waits for the birth of a sibling. The girl wanders around the family farm, thinking of all the things she wants to show the new baby. It is aimed at quite young children, acquainting them with animals and landscapes they may not have seen before, as well as showing all the preparations and excitement around the birth of a new family member. However, the illustrations in this book are outstanding. Mets and Ledwon have provided illustrations that are so realistic they look like photographs taken with a special lens that slightly blurs parts of the picture, leaving the rest sharply focussed. In fact, there is no way to tell whether or not the illustrations are photographs, except for some of the backgrounds, which are obviously painted. The illustrations are warm, full of rich colours and meticulous detail. Faces are alive and the child's curiosity and excitement are vividly portrayed.

Lafave's art in *We'll All Go Sailing* is, in contrast, cartoonish, but more like the old sketchy cartoons of the sixties than his usual fairly detailed style. Simple line drawings delineate bodies and facial expressions for the children or the sea creatures illustrated. The children's eyes are nothing but open circles with no indication of eyeballs, while mouths, noses, and ears are simply slashes or semi-circles. The colours are deep and intense, often in large blocks. The sea is a different colour on almost every page, with brightly coloured sea creatures within it. The colours assigned the sea creatures have no relation to their real colours. This is a great book to teach very young children about colours, as that seems to be the focus of the pictures and the simple rhyming text written by the husband-and-wife team of Spicer and Thompson. However, beyond use as a teaching tool for colours, this book has little to recommend

it. While the book is fun, it offers nothing to really intrigue the young audience at which it is aimed.

The Saturday Appaloosa is a mixed bag. The story is simple, with lots of repetition that will engage a very young reader. However, the text is jerky and poorly written in places, with too many short sentences in a row, making it sound brusque and fragmented. The story, about a girl who always visits the horses next door with her grandmother, and who helps her favourite horse, the Appaloosa, when it is caught in barbed wire, is engaging enough, but the writing is uneven and dull in places. The art is also uneven. Some of the scenes are beautifully drawn; in particular, the wild flowers that border one side of each double page are exquisite. However, the horses are often drawn out of proportion, while the size of the horses is inconsistent. The child's face changes throughout the story so that sometimes she looks as though she is about four years old, and at other times, eight or nine. This book has promise, but neither art nor text is consistently strong enough to fulfil that promise.

The one novel of this selection, Johnston's *In Spite of Killer Bees*, unfortunately has few if any redeeming features. Written primarily from the point of view of fourteen-year-old Aggie Quade, the plot traces the experiences of Aggie and her two sisters, seventeen-year-old Jeannie, and twenty-two-year-old Helen, as they come to terms with their inheritance from the grandfather they never met—a ramshackle old house and a dotty great aunt in a rather unfriendly small town. They must also deal with the fact that there is no money and the discovery that people are reluctant to hire the older girls as their father was a convicted thief. Furthermore, there is the unexpected and unannounced visit from the mother who deserted the family six years previously.

The constantly bickering sisters rapidly become boring as they fall into obvious stereotypes. Aggie, in many ways the least interesting of the three, is obsessed with vintage clothes and movies of any age. She frequently compares her life to a movie. Used more subtly and sparingly, this motif could have been quite interesting, but it rapidly grows thin. The sisters' hatred for each other, the town's suspicions about the three, and the predictable story line around the returning mother (who is really after their inheritance and who leaves soon after she discovers there is absolutely nothing except the old and worthless house) rapidly become tedious because the first two themes are worked to death and the last is so obvious. As Johnston has won awards for other books, this one is something of a disappointment.

Words for Contortionist

Daniel MacIvor and Daniel Brooks
Monster. Scirocco Drama $12.95

Morwyn Brebner
Music for Contortionist. Scirocco Drama $12.95

Molly Thom
The Bush Ladies: In Their Own Words. Scirocco Drama $12.95

Reviewed by Len Falkenstein

Monologue, self-exploration, and performance are central to each of these new, attractively designed titles from Scirocco Drama. All three of these plays present us with the inherently dramatic and risky scenario of the lone artist engaged in high-stakes acts of unveiling and revelation. Solo acts have become increasingly common in Canadian theatre of late (for reasons that have as much to do with theatre companies' shrinking budgets as with any narcissistic proclivities of our theatre artists), and here are three of the most notable recent entries in the genre, all of them plays that, through a combination of imaginative for-

mal experimentation and accomplished writing, stretch and redefine the boundaries of monologue performance.

Of the three, the only truly one-person play is *Monster*, first performed in 1998, the last installment in a trilogy of solo works (together with *House* and *Here Lies Henry*) conceived by the creative duo. (MacIvor is primary author and performer while Brooks is dramaturge and director.) MacIvor conjures numerous characters of various ages, sexes, and walks of life over the course of *Monster*, all without the aid of props or costumes and while remaining fixed at centre stage for virtually the entire play. While in performance this economical staging showcased MacIvor's renowned virtuosity as a performer, it is also functionally and metaphorically perfectly suited to the Russian doll-like structure of the play, in which new stories and characters continually explode from within other narratives, forcing the audience member/reader to constantly reevaluate what within the play is fictional and what is "real."

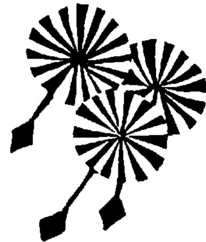
At the core of the onion that is the play is the story of a suburban teenager who tortures and murders his father over the course of a weekend, dismembering him piece by piece with a hacksaw. Other characters whose stories are interwoven with this one include the boy who lived next door, who becomes dangerously obsessed with the murder; a reformed alcoholic who, in one moment of visionary clarity, scripts a film that includes a scenario very much like the murder, only to fall into disrepute when accused of plagiarizing his plot from the unfinished work of a hack *auteur*; and the original filmmaker himself, who recounts how he refused to complete his film upon being stricken by a crisis of conscience, the fear that "perhaps the evil that exists in the world today has to do with men like me making films like that." As the play closes, he exhorts the audience to "turn your attention away from the darkness and toward the good things." In its questioning of where responsibility for incomprehensibly evil acts lies and whether art passively mirrors or actively influences life, *Monster* validates this simplistic moral directive, but simultaneously questions our ability to adopt it by giving the final word to Adam, the sinister m.c./narrator/guide, who revels in his self-defined role as a symbol of the urge toward violence that lurks in each of our dark hearts. The wit, power, and sheer theatrical inventiveness of *Monster's* exploration of this shadowy psychological terrain confirm Brooks and MacIvor's reputation as one of the most brilliant creative teams in contemporary Canadian theatre.

Music for Contortionist, first produced in January 2000 and subsequently nominated for a pair of Dora Mavor Moore Awards, ventures into similar territory, albeit through more abstract means and with less easily definable motives and results. The monologuist in this case is Valeska Gert, a real-life Weimar-era German cabaret artist who served as Brebner's inspiration for the play (at the suggestion of director Eda Holmes), but whose life and character are entirely fictionalized in the work. Valeska's performance consists of an unconventional monologue that comprises a disjointed string of anecdotes and observations—alternately startling, disturbing, and darkly humourous—interspersed with song, movement, and the bizarre reverie sequences she calls "trances." These trances are Valeska's singular talent and horror, self-induced yet resisted. During them she is joined on stage by a second actor, a contortionist whose movements harmonize with her trance-dances as (quoting from Urjo Kareda's introduction to the play) "a theatrical complement, a visual representation of her own double-jointed imagination." It is difficult for a reader to imagine how this device would work on stage, but reviews of the production suggest that it

was greeted with some confusion.

Notably, several seemingly puzzled reviewers seized on the frequently maligned genre of "performance art" to describe the work—more fittingly, perhaps, than they realized, for an exploration of the psychological complexities that underscore the art of performance is a central preoccupation of the play. Valeska's monologue is driven by that neurotic cocktail familiar to so many actors: the exhibitionistic urge to unveil and disclose all (an extreme case, she frequently expresses a desire to be vivisected on stage) mated to an equally powerful disgust with the voyeuristic gaze of the audience. Valeska commands our attention as a seductive and compelling presence, and many of her reveries are brilliantly and wildly imagined. It is equally apparent, however, that beneath them lies some fairly pedestrian outrage regarding a number of tried and true targets: the way girls are socialized, perceptions of beauty and body image within our media culture, the place of the artist within a conformist society. Even if there is little novelty in her message, however, the originality of Brebner's theatrical vision is worth the price of admission.

Molly Thom's *The Bush Ladies: In Their Own Words*, first produced in October 1998 and subsequently revised and revived, is monologue theatre crafted from journal entries, letters, and other writings of four early Canadian pioneer women: famous sisters Susanna Moodie (1803–1885) and Catharine Parr Traill (1802–1899), and the lesser-known Ann Langton (1804–1893) and Anna Brownell Jameson (1794–1860), each of whom settled in or travelled through central Canada in the 1830s. As her title suggests, Thom did not write the play so much as assemble it: all of the dialogue is taken verbatim from the women's extensive writings, selected, edited, and arranged through a process Thom refers to as a dramaturgical version of "cut-and-paste." The result is a narrative that charts the women's parallel, complementary, and sometimes contradictory experiences, from their initial excitement and fears about Canada through the deprivations and tribulations they experience on arriving (observations frequently tinged with bitterness, loneliness, and homesickness) to their eventual resignation to life in Canada, culminating in passionate protestations of love for their new home. Performed by four actors who each play one of the women and occasionally other Canucks, Yankees, and immigrants, the play is primarily an interweaving of separate and disconnected (albeit intriguingly overlapping) monologue voices. Through some inventive editing and staging, Thom also creates a number of charming and dramatically well-realized interactive scenes that bring the women together, almost—but not entirely—in "conversation" with one another. These scenes occasionally seem a trifle contrived, the seams of the stitching used in a somewhat forced attempt to create drama out of some relatively non-dramatic material showing a bit obviously. The style of the play also might potentially wear on the audience after a while. But the delight and strength of the work lies in the engaging voices of the four women and the fascinating insights—by turns funny, repellent, moving, and often startlingly modern—they reveal about themselves, the immigrant experience, and the fraught process of becoming Canadian.



Picture Books

Maria Elena Maggi
Gloria Calderon, illus. Elisa Amado, trans.
The Great Canoe: A Karina Legend. Douglas & McIntyre, $15.95

Adwoa Badoe
Baba Wague Diakite, illus.
The Pot of Wisdom: Ananse Stories. Douglas & McIntyre, $19.95

Celia Barker Lottridge
Joanne Fitzgerald, illus.
The Little Rooster and the Diamond Button. Douglas & McIntyre, $16.95

Ainslie Manson
Mary Jane Gerber, illus.
House Calls: The True Story of a Pioneer Doctor. Douglas & McIntyre, $15.95

Reviewed by Lynn Wytenbroek

Stories from many different cultures have become something of a hallmark of Canadian children's literature over the last few years, particularly picture books. A current selection of children's picture books bears out the fact that Canada supports a diverse population contributing a rich mosaic of stories from different lands and their cultures.

The Great Canoe: A Karina Legend retold by Maria Elena Maggi is a perfect example. The book has a minimal text which retells the story of the great flood, not the Noah's Ark version but a very similar version told by the Karina Natives (known to the Spaniards and therefore to history as the Carib Indians). It is the story of Kaputano, the Sky Dweller, who warns his children of a great flood coming. He is believed by only four couples who build a large boat under his direction, putting two of every animal species on the boat, as well as seeds from every plant. After the devastation of the flood that wipes all life from the land, Kaputano recreates the rich land his people once enjoyed and they and the animals they have saved repopulate the region. The similarity to the biblical tale of Noah is astounding, and bears out Sir James Frazer's report of similar Deluge myths all over the world.

The text is simply yet beautifully written, particularly in the way it reveals the emotions of both the people who disbelieve Kaputano's words and those who survive the flood. The illustrations by Gloria Calderon are bold and evocative of both place and people. They depict and expand the text, making it a rich book for readers young and old to enjoy. The afterword in the book explains a little of the history of the Karina people, of interest to older readers.

The Pot of Wisdom: Ananse Stories is a book of stories from Ghana about Ananse, the spider. Like Native American coyote stories, these tales depict both the wisdom and the foolishness of the African trickster figure, Ananse (who inspired the name of the House of Anansi). This collection of ten stories include many twists and turns as Ananse craftily changes the rules by which things work, or as he is caught and let down by his own "cleverness." These tales are accompanied by Baba Wague Diakite's amazing pictures, many of which are photographs of his painted and glazed earthenware tiles or bowls. These pictures are bright in colour and bold in shape, without a lot of detail. Each one- to three-page story is accompanied by one coloured picture, which often depicts several parts of the story in one amalgamated whole. The brightness of the colours is attractive while the boldness and lack of detail give a distinctly African "look" and atmosphere to the book. This picture book is a wonderful introduction to characters from a folklore tradition that will be unfamiliar to many readers, yet is reminiscent of stories of tricksters from all over the world. This is again a book that will delight both children and adult readers.

A folktale that is a little closer to home for many readers is *The Little Rooster and the*

Diamond Button, retold by master folktale story-maker Celia Barker Lottridge. This folktale comes from Hungary, although it has variants as far away as India. It tells the story of a diamond button found by a rooster belonging to a very poor woman, a button then taken by the greedy and incredibly wealthy sultan. The rooster follows the sultan back to his palace to reclaim the button and, through his persistence and cleverness, as well as his ability to swallow huge quantities of things like water, bees, and diamond buttons, does in fact get not only the button but other riches as well, so that he and the old woman can live the rest of their lives in comfort. The theme is a familiar one in European folktales, but is particularly endearing in this tale as it is the rooster himself who outwits the sultan for the sake of his mistress, whom he loves. The animal/human bond is explored here in a fresh way.

The illustrations by Joanne Fitzgerald are in keeping with the tale. The sultan is shown to be not only greedy and wealthy but dissipated in the illustrations while his servants are distinctly down at heel, adding to the reader's desire to see the rooster best this unpleasant character. The illustrations therefore add immensely to the atmosphere of the story, as well as being bright and colourful watercolour depictions of important parts of the story itself. Again, as is the case with most folktales with good illustrations, this book will appeal to both child readers and adult lovers of folktales.

The last book is not a folktale of any kind, but is rather a vignette of history from the Peterborough area in Ontario. *House Calls: The True Story of a Pioneer Doctor* is told by Ainslie Manson from the point of view of a girl who lives next door to the doctor and his family. She begins as the doctor's patient but ends up as his assistant. So the story is warmly and lovingly told through the memories of a child, memories of someone she loved, admired and respected. It is more an illustrated book than a picture book, having a lot of text and much historical detail, although Manson keeps that detail interesting and pertinent. Mary Jane Gerber's brown and white illustrations have a "folk art" look to them, entirely appropriate for the story but not appealing to a very young reader, who would not be interested in the detailed story anyway. This is a book definitely aimed at six- to ten-year-old readers and is a wonderful way to introduce children to an intimate portrait of a small piece of Canadian history that was repeated, with variations, again and again in pioneer communities throughout our country.

Every one of these stories, from the simply told *The Great Canoe* to the richly detailed and more complex *House Calls*, engages the reader through both story and art, offering a wonderful world of new perspectives through folktale or forgotten people of our own past.

Compositions

Kevin Major
Illus. Alan Daniel
Eh? To Zed: A Canadian Abecedarium. Red Deer $18.95

Michèle Lemieux
Stormy Night. Kids Can. n.p.

Antonio Skármeta
Illus. Alfonso Ruano
The Composition. Groundwood n.p.

Reviewed by Mavis Reimer

Eh? To Zed, an alphabet book by award-winning author Kevin Major, explicitly places the question of identity in national terms. As the press release accompanying the book explains, Major set himself the challenge of "finding four very Canadian words for each letter of the alphabet" and, further, of setting these words into rhyming couplets: "Arctic, apple, aurora, Anik/Bonhomme, Bluenose, beaver, bannock." The paintings Alan Daniel creates to

accompany the text repeat Major's verbal games in visual terms. Each is a montage of art styles and forms that are said to "have helped build our country and shape our history": for example, a black and white photograph of a nineteenth-century drilling operation illustrates "oil," an intricate paper cutting of a runner followed by a fox illustrates "Fox," and a puzzle version of Tom Thomson's *The Jack Pine* illustrates "jack pine." The many illustrations depicting toys and games—the wooden horse-drawn cart on which Bonhomme rides, a whirligig Mountie, marionette *habitants*, a flip-book featuring Graham Greene, Lorne Greene, and Nancy Greene, a corn doll holding a lacrosse racquet, among others—point to play and craft as the organizing metaphors of this book.

Such playfulness is a feature of many recent alphabet books. While the most conventional examples of the genre continue to present commonly recognized, isolated objects floating on solid backgrounds to stand unironically for letters and sounds, more complex books acknowledge the arbitrary nature of language by making the relations among things, words, and sounds puzzles to be solved by readers. As Perry Nodelman has pointed out in a recent article about alphabet books, the pleasure of such puzzles "depends on the use of a lot of [contextual] information to discover a small bit of [linguistic] information." In Major and Daniel's book, a reader requires a vast body of knowledge about Canadian political history, physical geography, and cultural history and geography to guess what words are illustrated by objects and, therefore, what the "right" connections are. Because they appear on the "K" page, for example, a reader can deduce that the flying bird here does not illustrate "B" and the wooden sled does not illustrate "S," but which is the komatik and which the kittiwake?

What qualifies and does not qualify as a right answer in this book is troubling. There are many traditional images and words from Aboriginal cultures, but little evidence of an Aboriginal presence in contemporary Canada. When actor Graham Greene is depicted, he is costumed in feathered headdress and leather leggings. A turbaned Mountie and a Zamboni driver with cartooned Orientalized features allude to the putative complexity of the Canadian mosaic, to be achieved in "the years ahead" (according to the book's explanatory appendix). This is a Canada defined by its dominant settler heritages, as the intertextual references to Robert Service, L.M. Montgomery, and Margaret Laurence confirm.

The provenance of the other three Canadian books for children under review complicates any simple notion of a distinctly Canadian identity. Michèle Lemieux's *Stormy Night* is a translation of a book by (Karl) Wilhelm Osterwald (1820–1887) first published in Germany under the title *Gewitternacht.* Lemieux's book hovers indecisively between the conventions of the wordless picture book and the graphic novel, an emerging genre built on such cartoon conventions as line drawings and surreal imagery. The narrative is simple: a young girl goes to bed on a stormy night and, unable to sleep, drifts into a reverie about such existential questions as "Who am I?" and "Will the world come to an end someday?" The storm ends, the girl sleeps, and a new day dawns. The spare lines of the pen-and-ink drawings on a white ground work nicely to imply the continuity between the world of the girl's bedroom and the fantastic worlds of her imaginings. On the other hand, Lemieux regularly depicts the outside world of the storm as far more fully real than any of these inside worlds: these are typically two-page spreads filled to the edges with cross-hatched fields and inky clouds. The graphic novel generally exploits the panel format of cartoons, a format that revels in often violent action. Lemieux, however, uses the picture book convention of one illustration

per opening and returns frequently to the depiction of the young girl in bed without any accompanying text. These choices slow the pace of the narrative, often bringing it literally to a standstill. The effect overall is one of redundancy, rather than of free-floating anxiety or desire. In fact, the links between the progress of the storm and the nature of the questions asked by the girl—when a lightening strike plunges the house into darkness, for example, she confesses to her fears of robbers, monsters, and abandonment—show the child's inner life to be rigidly determined by external frames. "I'd like to invent things that don't yet exist!" she exclaims at one point, but, in the world of this text, this reads as the merest whimsy.

First published in Venezuela in Spanish as *La composición*, *The Composition*, like *Eh? To Zed*, explores the terms of its own making through the metaphors of games and play. But in Antonio Skármeta's story, these metaphors take on a dark and dangerous cast. As the story opens, Pedro, the central child character, is content to play soccer with his friends despite the political turmoil surrounding him in an unnamed South American country. After his friend's father is taken away by military police, the game of childhood—the goal of which his mother defines as "to go to school, study hard, play and be good to [one's] parents"—no longer seems a simple one. It soon becomes impossible to follow all of the rules of the game. When his class is required to write compositions detailing what their families do at night, Pedro can choose either to work hard at his school assignments, which would involve telling about his parents' listening to clandestine radio broadcasts, or to be good to his parents. Pedro solves his dilemma by resorting to metaphor: his parents, he reports, regularly play chess until he goes to bed.

In his illustrations for Skármeta's story, Alfonso Ruano deftly uses the conventions of framing and line to register Pedro's shifting emotions, which are not explicitly discussed in the narrative. Circular openings communicate his sense of comfort at the opening and close of the story, a two-page spread of the neighbourhood game suggests the expansive mastery he briefly feels, while the illustrations of the police and the schoolroom are filled with vertical lines, frames within frames, overlapping objects, and bodies oddly cut-off by straight lines and frames. The final illustration of the chess game, with its squares and lines, echoes these earlier illustrations but also revises them by the oblique angle at which the board is set. Both in its verbal and its visual texts, then, *The Composition* conveys to readers an understanding of the implications of composition that are far more unsettling than any articulated by the other books under review here. As Skármeta and Ruano clearly know, composing identities can be a deadly serious game.

National Cinema

Katherine Monk
Weird Sex and Snowshoes and Other Canadian Film and Phenomena. Raincoast $26.95

Lance Pettitt
Screening Ireland: Film and Television Representation. Manchester UP $29.95

Esther C.M. Yau, ed.
At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World. U of Minnesota P $19.95

Reviewed by Peter Urquhart

Three more or less "hot," and in any case certainly fascinating, national cinemas receive three totally different treatments, illustrating at least as much about currents in contemporary criticism as they do about their subjects. Here we have one monograph by a film scholar (Pettitt) who adopts a cultural studies approach to representations of Ireland in film and television; one wide-ranging volume (Yau) on Hong Kong cinema with contributors who generally take

various approaches; and one badly flawed thematic reading of the Canadian cinema by a journalist/critic (Monk). It is not the contrast between the erudite film scholars and the breezy reporter which is so glaring—especially evident when Monk's work is held up beside the thorough-going account of national culture and the idea of "national images" provided by Pettitt and by Yau and her contributors—so much as the evident failure of outmoded, monolithic critical positions such as those adopted by Monk.

Weird Sex and Snowshoes is not entirely without value, however. The book does provide some useful profiles; it contains interviews with prominent Canadian filmmakers as well as some lively readings of canonical Canadian films. And Monk's nationalistic boosterism—clearly and self-admittedly the book's *raison d'être*—while primarily responsible for the book's glaring critical blind spots, does at least help provide some of the zip and forward momentum of this unwieldy work. As well, Monk usefully provides something of a recapitulation of the previously existing nationalistic thematic account of what constitutes a Canadian national cinema, trotting out Atwood on survival, the imagined persistence of a "Griersonian documentary tradition," and the old saw that "we make challenging, cerebral, ambiguous, and decidedly offbeat films."

Obviously, accounts such as these (including broad claims that Canadian films are all filled with "weird sex" and have strong female characters) obscure much more than they reveal, since it is no longer reasonable to promote such a totalizing view in light of the incredible heterogeneity of Canadian film production, a fact which Monk neither acknowledges nor explains. Canada produces many commercially calculated films in the popular idiom, and Canadians attend Hollywood movies in huge numbers, not entirely because we're suckers or because Hollywood owns our consciousness; at least part of the reason has to be because some of us some of the time enjoy commercial filmmaking. To claim, as Monk does, that the Canadian cinema consists solely of the contra-Hollywood aesthetics and ideology of experimental, documentary, and art filmmakers such as Guy Maddin reproduces a defunct circular argument: *The Care Bears Movie* and *Meatballs* (both Canadian productions) don't count as Canadian because they don't fit the model, and the model cannot account for *The Care Bears Movie* and *Meatballs*. Canadian cinema is more than just an art cinema. In her one hundred capsule reviews of Canadian films that conclude the book, Monk herself seems to recognize her argument's fatal flaw when she notes that Bob Clark's notorious teen sex comedy *Porky's* (the highest grossing Canadian film of all time) is "a genre film made for the mass market, so there aren't any real Canadianisms" in it. Countless other commercially calculated Canadian films also do not rate, simply because they do not meet Monk's thematic standard of "Canadianness," which is a clearly useless starting position for discussing any national cinema.

As if this glaring flaw weren't enough, Monk even confuses some important facts, claiming, for example, that one of the formative moments in the nation's cinema, the establishment of the National Film Board, occurred in both 1939 and 1949. One hopes that this is merely a typesetter's mistake, but in light of some of the other claims found in the book (recounting Guy Maddin's hilariously fanciful and self-mythologizing tale of riding piggyback on Bing Crosby as if it were true, for example, or that the Massey Commission reported in 1949), one has to wonder.

Pettitt's *Screening Ireland*, on the other hand, provides an excellent model for what a book on national images can be. He firmly situates his textual analyses in a context

that takes precise account of historical and social conditions (including policy and aesthetic fashions), of migration, and of local and global audiences' tastes. But the book's true value becomes evident as Pettitt takes consistent account of the transnational flow of national images, incorporating discussions of numerous Anglo-American productions about Ireland or set there, and of the reception of Irish-made images off the island.

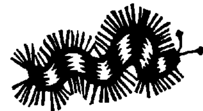
While Pettitt is extremely strong at situating the reader in historical and social contexts, one might be surprised to find little in-depth consideration in the book, beyond a lively discussion of the mid-nineties *Riverdance* sensation, of the curious explosion of international blarney peddling—which is seen in such diverse phenomena as the Guinness brewery backing Irish-style pubs all around the world, or Celtic music gaining enormous popularity above and among various global traditional "world" musics. The "branding" of Irishness and its long strange history certainly seems contextually essential to understanding such Hollywood dreck as Ron Howard's egregious "Irish" film *Far and Away* (1982).

Nevertheless, Pettitt does take a very broad account of cultural contexts in his reading of Irish images, for example in his section on the content and reception of the popular television comedy *Father Ted*, the value and/or offensiveness of which, because of its over-the-top satirical treatment of Catholicism and the priesthood, was hotly debated in Ireland as elsewhere, and which Pettitt ultimately claims "could be seen to simultaneously engage in the satiric examination of social and cultural changes taking place in the Republic throughout the decade."

Yau's collection of essays on Hong Kong cinema is initially off-putting because of its alarming subtitle, "Hong Kong cinema in a borderless world." *What world is that?* one is immediately forced to ask. The world I inhabit abounds with borders and border-specific cultural/film policies and national cinemas. If it weren't, what sense would it make to even speak of a "Hong Kong cinema" at all?

Happily, Yau's contributors, many of whom naturally invoke various notions of globalization, and are themselves clearly germane to any discussion of Hong Kong cinema, do not assume the untenable proposition of a "borderless world." Hong Kong cinema finds itself at the intersection of Hollywood genres, Chinese culture, and the colonialism and postcolonialism of simultaneous nostalgia for a distinctly traditional Asian past and celebration of a postmodern transnational future. Not surprisingly, many of Yau's contributors draw upon recent scholarship on the relationship of the local to the global in their discussions of Hong Kong cinema.

Among the many excellent essays we encounter in Yau's text are Law Kar's concise and vital history, "An Overview of Hong Kong New Wave Cinema," which perfectly serves the text as a whole by providing a concrete and succinct account of colonialism, policy, and the trans-national flow of images and genres that has always fueled the Hong Kong cinema. With strong essays taking a variety of current approaches (on star figures such as Jackie Chan, on feminist and queer readings across films, and especially the considerable attention paid to audience and reception studies), and with its richly specific contributions surveying the spectrum of the field, Yau's text is a model for books on national cinemas. Lance Pettitt's, though excellent for what it is, perhaps suffers slightly for its singular voice, while Monk's effort is a model for what ought to be avoided when tackling the prickly problem of delineating and discussing a national cinema.



Everything Within

Timothy F. Murphy, ed.
Reader's Guide to Lesbian and Gay Studies.
Fitzroy Dearborn $95.00

Reviewed by Stephen Guy-Bray

In the past ten or fifteen years many books like this one have appeared. What distinguishes this one, apart from its considerable weight, is that the editor has made an attempt to cover all aspects of lesbian and gay studies. While this decision inevitably limits the amount of detail the book can offer, it does mean that it is very handy for students, for people who are not academics and who wish to get some sense of what is going on in queer studies, and for specialists who want to investigate other areas of specialization. The most heavily represented areas are literature, history, pop culture, psychology, and what I guess we could call social work.

The word "studies" in the title turns out to be crucial, as the emphasis is on the studies (and mainly on studies written in the last couple of decades) rather than on the things studied, although most of the writers manage to pack in a good deal of primary information. For instance, the entry on Ancient Egypt is concerned with recent books and articles rather than with sketching the history of sexuality in Pharaonic times. The focus on secondary literature lessens the possibility that the book can be used as a cheater's guide: this is a work of reference that is designed to encourage further reading rather than to render such reading unnecessary, and is thus to be applauded. Most of the entries are written in a clear and accessible style (and some of them in a very lively one). For the most part, specialist terminology is not necessary.

The book is helpfully arranged. At the beginning the reader will find a list of advisers and contributors, an alphabetical list of entries, and a thematic list; at the end, a list of books and articles mentioned in the entries (although this is incomplete), a general index, and a section on the advisers and contributors that includes a list of what entries each one wrote. In this respect, this book is a model work of reference. I also thought that the contributors were a good mixture of established scholars, some of them very famous indeed, and young scholars.

Given the vast scope of this book, my evaluation will be highly selective, so I will concentrate on what I know, which is literary studies. The only classical writer to receive an entry is Sappho, and there is no entry at all for Christopher Marlowe or for Geoffrey Chaucer. I have chosen these three because queer scholarship on classical literature and on the literature of medieval and early modern England has been a particularly active field in recent years, and these are consequently serious omissions. The entries on Greek and Latin literature are admittedly quite good, but more detail is needed here.

I was also taken aback by the selection of twentieth-century authors. The book includes entries on May Sarton and Edmund White, both mediocre writers, but there was apparently no room for either Hart Crane or Virginia Woolf (she is lumped in under the tired rubric of the Bloomsbury Group), to name two authors who are generally considered pretty good and who have been absolutely central to queer studies. And why leave out Ivy Compton-Burnett or James Purdy, to name two superb writers who are not now perhaps as well known as they should be, when space was found for John Henry Mackay and Renée Vivien? While there are many good entries on literature, the omissions are startling. This may be a consequence of compiling a book with such a wide scope, although it seems to me that those editorial advisers for the project who are literary

scholars should have spoken out at some point. Of course, what I am saying here is that the entries that are on subjects outside my own field are the most useful to me and the *Reader's Guide to Lesbian and Gay Studies* remains a practical reference guide.

Kinetic Creations

Susan Musgrave
What the Small Day Cannot Hold. Beach Holme $18.95

Marilyn Bowering
Human Bodies: New and Collected Poems 1987–1999. Beach Holme $16.95

Reviewed by Renate Eigenbrod

"Kinetic creations are taking on / my personality" is a line from *Songs of the Sea-Witch,* the first re-published book in Susan Musgrave's *Collected Poems 1970–1985* entitled *What the Small Day Cannot Hold.* The *Songs* are followed by *Entrance of the Celebrant, Grave-Dirt and Selected Strawberries, The Impstone, Becky Swan's Book, A Man to Marry, A Man to Bury,* and *Cocktails at the Mausoleum.* There is a certain irony in the fact that the "subversive," "unteachable" poetry of Susan Musgrave, acclaimed as such by Sean Virgo in his introduction, is collected in the *Canadian Classics Series,* complete with the image of the maple leaf. On the other hand, the context for the publication of her earlier work would not likely concern Musgrave, who recently confessed on a University of Toronto website: "The poem or novel I am working on at the moment is what means most to me. . . . Books that are published, strangely, have very little meaning to me. . . . It's almost as if someone else had written it." This commentary echoes the shape-shifting theme in her poetry but also raises the question of accountability. By endorsing transformations of her (human) persona into an animal, a plant, a stone, a lover, an outlaw, or the ancestral spirit of Native people, she uses "the other." It is therefore noteworthy that the title of this collection is taken from the title of a poem in which the speaker wants "to give back"—love, the moon, the clouds, the sun.

Musgrave's desire for communion and community, poetically realized in metamorphic images of her "shamanic mode" in texts like *The Impstone* and *Kiskatinaw Songs* (co-written with Virgo), offsets her awareness of fragmentation, separation, and loss ("there is danger / in not understanding loss") as shown, for example, in "Requiem for Talunkwun Island":

> My eyes had seen
> the rivers full of fish but now the eyes
> were older and, like the rivers, empty.
> The salmon have gone elsewhere to find
> their origins. Like the ghosts of my
> people, they have no country.

Musgrave's oft-confessed love for the West Coast landscape (affirmed in her compilation *Clear-Cut Words: Writers for Clayoquot*) speaks to the genuineness of the poem's tone; however, her appropriation of Haida ancestry is problematic. I wonder if, after the experience with the *Kiskatinaw Songs* (which were only successful after they had been published under an Aboriginal pseudonym), Musgrave saw the need for another Grey Owl move. Her poem becomes particularly problematic in the context of this publication, not only because it is now a "Canadian Classic," but also because of Sean Virgo's praise of the composition in his introduction as "the most eloquent threnody ever composed in Canada, both heartbreaking and cathartic." Inadvertently, maybe, he dismisses similarly powerful laments composed by Aboriginal writers themselves, for example in the poem "Waking Up" by Inuk author Alootok Ipellie.

Marilyn Bowering's *Human Bodies* comprises *Anyone Can See I Love You, Grandfather Was A Soldier, Calling All The World, Love As It Is, Autobiography,* and the

new collection *When I Am Dead And My Heart Is Weighed.* Each section has to be "savoured" on its own, as Dave Godfrey advises readers in his introduction. Chronologically, this work continues where Musgrave's ends. Both authors are connected by friendship and joint projects (like the above-mentioned *Clear-Cut Words* to which Marilyn Bowering contributed a modified version of a poem from *Calling All The World*); both present different personae in their "kinetic creations" (Marilyn Bowering to the extent of creating dramatic performances), and both evoke themes of the other side of love—loss, regrets, futility, death. Because of her interest in historical events and characters and *human* bodies, Bowering does not follow the "shamanic mode" of connecting with nature quite as much as Susan Musgrave; however, she also celebrates ecological relations as in her poem "The Mind's Road to Love": ". . . and I flew / to the top of the tree as a bird / I entered into every species." In the same section of the volume, *Autobiography*, Bowering honours the Aboriginal poet Sarain Stump, whose work she featured in *Many Voices*, the anthology of Aboriginal literature she co-edited. In "She Goes Away *for P.K. Page, and in memory of Sarain Stump*," Bowering connects P.K. Page with Stump in an adaptation of Stump's shamanic imagery.

Throughout Bowering's collection we find links between different human bodies, like the relations between Stump and Page or the links among Marilyn Monroe's three husbands in *Anyone Can See I Love You*, as well as connections between dead and living bodies. The section *Love As It Is* contains "Native Land," in which the dead bodies of soldiers create a feeling of belonging, of being "native": "the dead appear / like sea anemones behind shop windows / . . . / This is the picture to step in: / now we are part of the land." The theme of war is most evident in the long poem *Grandfather Was A Soldier*. Here, living and dead, present and past, are blended in an association of images that uncover history in a landscape that has been "disguised" by the plough and Nature. With images of images (the war photographs in a museum), writings about writings (with Bowering's documentation in the notes at the end of the book), and a mix of imagined and "real" personae, Bowering creates a texture rather than a text compensating for the limitations of language: "Language fails, as you knew it would, lacks evidence of touch."

Bowering ends the epigraph to her first book of poetry *Anyone Can See I Love You*, in which she tells the story of picking up a seemingly grey stone which, when held up to the light "glowed like something alive," by affirming that "It was like everything in the world *was* that way, and all you had to do was pick it up, touch it." Both collections of poetry pick up and touch differently shaped bodies, making them come to life in spite of the cerebral leanings of language.

Loving and Leaving

Richard Outram
Dove Legend. Porcupine's Quill $14.95

David Solway
The Lover's Progress. Porcupine's Quill $14.95

Glen Sorestad
Leaving Holds Me Here: Selected Poems. Thistledown P $18.95

Reviewed by Ian Rae

Richard Outram's *Dove Legend* is a complex assemblage of rare and invented nouns wired together with speech rhythms collected from a variety of dialects, discourses, and periods. At its best, Outram's poetry moves rapidly between registers and modes and creates a vertiginous effect in which the "actual is abstract" and the ordinary is ornate. He fashions baroque complexities out of everything from philosophical musings to jive talk, Miltonic invocations to sea

shanties. In the long poems "Tradecraft" and "Millefleur," for example, Outram propels the narrative by continually changing the tonal register and toying with the reader's expectations. However, such a cornucopia of language conceals a strange kind of poverty. Outram's poems are brimming with verbal virtuosity, but many are curiously empty of feeling. Behind the artifice is a troubling void, in which archaic speech is frequently exalted into obsolescence. At its worst—as in the poem where Outram describes dancers in a Toronto pavilion as "quick knee-tremblers / that might to lewdness of the dance rude clodpolls lead"—Outram's syntax is as gaudy as the pink palm trees in the retouched cover photograph. On the other hand, the "flamingo-pink silk" in the title poem belongs to an ensemble whose elegance is striking. To his credit, moreover, Outram satirizes his own high rhetoric in "Island Residents," as well as making poignant use of understatement in an elegy for Northrop Frye. Similarly, in "Barbed Wire," he demonstrates an ability to sustain a restrained tone and develop a single, emphatic image, if he should so choose. By and large, however, he prefers to employ a lofty rhetoric that sometimes soars and at other times is merely inflated.

David Solway opts for a bawdier approach to the lyric in *The Lover's Progress.* He models his lyric sequence on William Hogarth's famous series of paintings, *The Rake's Progress* (1733–35), and transports the rakish protagonist at the centre of Hogarth's narrative into the twenty-first century. Solway makes the rake a "cruiser" of bars, women, and philosophies, as well as a dabbler in poetry. Perpetually in motion, the lover travels from Canada to Greece and revisits many of Solway's favourite haunts. The collection begins with a fascinating essay in which Solway explains the rationale for this globe-trotting, as well as suggesting continuities between the style of the poetry and paintings. As in Solway's books on the imaginary Greek poet laureate, Andreas Karavis, he cannot resist the temptation to write criticism on his own pseudonymous poetry in the introduction to *The Lover's Progress.* Solway goes to great lengths to connect his use of the image with Hogarth's use of the line, but in affiliating his sequence with Hogarth's celebrated work, and in comparing the lover with Don Juan, Solway establishes expectations for his poetry that the sequence does not meet. For example, although constrained by the limited narrative potential of painting, Hogarth managed to sustain a strong sense of narrative continuity in his account of the rake's decline. Solway has the advantage of working with the written word, but his series of poems still needs to be buttressed by an introductory essay, as well as an "Itinerary" detailing the lover's movements, and even then the sense of narrative progress in Solway's series is weaker than in Hogarth's paintings. There are several strong poems in *The Lover's Progress*, but even Solway seems anxious about the shortcomings of others. For example, Solway reaffirms his established penchant for the sonnet in "The Penitent" and "The Bankrupt," but then decides that the form of the latter poem is "ineffective" and playfully "rewrites it in a more accessible mode" as "lover@nowhere.q.e.d."

A further problem with Solway's essay is that he mistakenly follows Hogarth in asserting that the English painter invented the kind of pictorial sequence that is meant to be read and offer a moral. Such sequences were a commonplace of Italian painting in the period, and they grew out of the religious narratives recorded in the sculptures of medieval cathedrals. Hogarth, an outspoken Catholic-hater, would never have acknowledged this precedent, but Solway should. Fortunately, Solway does note the relation of Hogarth's ribald imagery to the *tableaux* of morality dramas and the framework of the proscenium

stage, which establishes a sound base for his discussion of Stravinsky and the operatic adaptation of Hogarth's sequence.

Glen Sorestad's *Leaving Holds Me Here* offers the reader an opportunity to survey the development of the Saskatchewan writer over a period of thirty years. As a collection of selected poems, *Leaving Holds Me Here* foregrounds continuities in the poet's career, as well as highlighting differences. Sorestad's early "Pub Poems" use matter-of-fact descriptions of Prairie barrooms and plain-spoken farmers and drinkers. His straightforward, anecdotal technique is the very antithesis of Outram's flamboyant manner. Although Sorestad experiments with a slightly more disjunctive style in his later poetry, for the most part he writes complete, unadorned sentences in which, for example, the placement and purpose of the line breaks is frequently unclear. Many of Sorestad's vignettes could be more effectively rendered as prose poems. The prosaic delivery in "The Matter of Poetic Discourse" defeats the argument on poetics that it advances. On the other hand, Sorestad's understated tone works well in his many elegies. He presents a moving sequence of poems detailing the decline and death of his mother, laments the passing of his brother and father, and honours an uncle who prophesied his own death and was brought down on the beaches of Normandy. While Sorestad lacks his uncle's sense of daring, his verse none the less documents the people and places most intimate to him and conveys a sense of a life lived. Sorestad's quiet and unobtrusive manner also suits the many fishing poems in this collection, of which the *Jan Lake Poems* stand apart because of their precise knowledge of the lake and its environs.

Sore Ear, Aching Hearts

Morris Panych
Earshot. Talonbooks $14.95

Mansel Robinson
The Heart As It Lived. Playwrights Canada $13.95

David French
That Summer. Talonbooks $15.95

Reviewed by Len Falkenstein

The solo act and the memory play, two favourite genres of contemporary Canadian playwrights, are revisited in this trio of recent offerings from three of Canada's best known dramatists. Although none of these plays is particularly innovative in form or genre, Morris Panych's *Earshot* and Mansel Robinson's *The Heart As It Lived* take their audience into distinctly imaginative and provocative dramatic terrain. David French's *That Summer* is a less satisfying effort, however—a play that, in keeping with its motifs of lakes and swimming, suggests a playwright creatively and dramaturgically treading water.

The solo act among the three plays is Panych's *Earshot* (first produced at Toronto's Tarragon Theatre in February 2001), a 75-minute monologue that draws us into the peculiar world of Doyle, a recluse who suffers from a rather unusual hearing problem, that of "hearing too much." Doyle's ears are so sensitive that he can hear everything that happens in his apartment building, from the scraping of razor on stubble two apartments away to the literal sound of a pin dropping next door, and the cacophony of his neighbours' domestic routines is driving him mad. It is an insanity born of an extreme case of information overload: by overhearing all, he knows all, every intimate detail of his neighbours' lives. Tormenting him further is his passion for Valerie, the lonely Bridget Jones-like loser who lives next door, whom he has never had the courage to approach. Doyle concocts a grandiose and twisted

scheme to reveal his love for her, only to lose all (and Valerie) when everything goes horribly wrong in a series of deliciously sad comic twists. Panych, a writer with a deft touch for comedy and a taste for black humour and the absurd, mines the gag potential of Doyle's affliction shamelessly, with the result that the play's concept ends up seeming stretched for its length. One wishes that Panych might have explored the dark side of his premise in more depth: Doyle as an emblem of the alienation and loneliness of contemporary urban life, a casualty of an information revolution that has left many of us better informed and connected, yet ironically more alone, than ever before. Panych does so to great effect on occasion: particularly striking is a wordless scene in which Doyle "presses and presses" his body against the wall of his apartment as he listens to Valerie on the other side, comforted yet tormented by the thought that, as he puts it elsewhere, "If I were right beside you, I couldn't be as close. In a way, thank God for this vast chasm of inches. This drywall, and these studs." For the most part, though, *Earshot* remains light fare throughout.

The same certainly cannot be said of Mansel Robinson's *The Heart As It Lived* (first produced by Alberta Theatre Projects in Calgary in 1997). Set in Regina in 1996, the play hearkens back sixty years to 1935, the year of the On to Ottawa Trek and the Regina Riot. The play's protagonist is Annie, a hard-bitten septuagenarian spinster haunted by her memories of that momentous summer, memories she is forced to relive when her home is invaded by Zak (the grandson of her sister Flo), whose presence conjures a trio of ghosts who visit Annie in flashback. Daughters of a wealthy family, Annie and Flo find themselves on opposite sides of the ideological warfare of 1935: Flo falls in love with the "bohunk" On to Ottawa marcher Zakarchuk and into sympathy with the socialist politics he espouses, while Annie, true to the ideals of her father and her RCMP officer boyfriend, Mitchell, denounces the strikers as "the enemy." When the police move in to crush the trekkers, Mitchell is killed in the melee, a tragedy that leaves Annie embittered and scarred for life. Meanwhile, Flo, pregnant by Zakarchuk and now estranged from Annie, struggles through a lonely life of hardship and disappointment, somehow remaining optimistic about the prospects of social revolution to the very end.

Zak, her progeny, is a dissolute Gen X slacker, a petty thief who complains of a "war against the young," and much of the drama of the play emerges in the clash of generations and values that erupts when he is taken on as hired help by the staunchly right-wing Annie. By the end of the play, Annie, enfeebled by a stroke, has come to realize her complicity (and that of her entire class) in the death of her working-class hero, Mitchell; the beauty of the love shared by Flo and Zakarchuk; and the injustice of their fate. Robinson denies the easy sentiment of allowing Annie's epiphanies to spark any moment of *rapprochement* between the generations, however, as the gulf between Annie and the increasingly unsympathetic Zak (now her abusive and parasitic caregiver, draining her bank account to buy pizza), remains as unbridgeable as ever. Robinson's is a bleak but disturbingly telling image of a politically polarized society in which idealism and optimism of the type Flo and Zakarchuk embodied is nowhere on the horizon. One wonders, though, whether the play might have been any different had it been written only a year or two later, amidst the rise of the organized anti-globalization protests that have marked a resurgence in left-wing politics and brought back to the fore many of the same issues of economic and social justice that galvanized the On to Ottawa trekkers.

Like *The Heart As It Lived*, David French's *That Summer* (premiered at the 1999 Blyth Festival) is a memory play that centres on a coming-of-age story involving the romantic entanglements of a pair of teenage sisters, but this is where similarities between the plays end. Whereas Robinson's focus is political, his style a brutal naturalism that eschews sentiment, *That Summer* is light romance that somewhat inexplicably turns into a weepy melodrama. One of French's strong suits has long been the mix of atmosphere, nostalgia, sentiment and romantic comedy that defined his hit *Salt-Water Moon* (1984), a recipe he returns to in *That Summer*. In a role that recalls Mary (*Salt-Water Moon*'s plucky heroine), *That Summer*'s protagonist is Maggie Ryan, one of a pair of budding American sisters who end up at their cottage in southern Ontario sans parents for one memorable week in 1958. Standing in for *Salt-Water Moon*'s Jacob as the charming ne'er-do-well who sweeps her off her feet is Paul Wyatt, a handsome waiter at a local lodge. While the course of true love is initially rocky (Paul must prove that he's actually a Lothario with a heart of gold), it eventually does run smooth, culminating in a Harlequin-worthy flashback to Maggie's loss of virginity in the local graveyard. Perhaps to suggest that in life's balance sheet such wanton pleasures must be weighed with sorrows, Maggie becomes pregnant, while things end even more disastrously for her sister, who drowns attempting to escape the advances of the local minister's son, followed in short order by the sisters' confidante and guardian, Mrs. Crump, who expires trying to rescue her. While French has prepared us for a tragic ending from early on, the double-whammy he delivers still seems incongruously lugubrious given the candy-floss flavour of most of the play. One senses on French's part an attempt to invest the work with meaning by framing it as a tale about the pain of guilt, suffering, and loss, when in fact *That Summer* is at its best as a simple paean to young love, Fats Domino on the car radio, and summer at the lake.

Désirs tumultueux

Stanley Péan
Le tumulte de mon sang. La courte échelle 19,95$

Marc Fisher
Les six degrés du désir. Lanctôt 18,95$

Comptes rendus par Christine St-Pierre

Voici deux œuvres narratives remplies d'érotisme, de passions et de sensualité. *Le tumulte de mon sang*, de l'auteur québécois Stanley Péan, raconte l'histoire d'un jeune couple montréalais qui se promet une escapade amoureuse loin du brouhaha quotidien. Ce couple, à la recherche d'une semaine de tranquillité sous la chaleur des tropiques, se réfugie en Haïti dans la demeure coloniale de l'oncle de Madeline. Mais dès le début, face aux gardes de sécurité du manoir, Madeline et son amant, le narrateur, se rendent compte qu' « il y a quelque chose de pourri dans l'empire ». Malgré les inquiétudes et l'angoisse de son conjoint, Madeline, journaliste acharnée, est déterminée à connaître le fin mot de cette histoire cachée par son oncle, *Ton* Rodrigue. Péan soutient ainsi l'intérêt du lecteur en évoquant, de façon purement fictive, certains éléments historiques de la culture haïtienne, tels « ses tragédies, ses démons réels et mythiques ». Ce sont les légendes vaudou, transmises par sa grand-mère, qui animent l'imaginaire du narrateur jusqu'au jour où toute cette magie ensorcelée enflamme le sang qui coule dans les veines de ce dernier. A titre d'exemple, l'auteur consacre le chapitre quatorze au conte mythique du Général Lannuit, sorte de mise en abyme qui, d'une certaine façon, renoue avec la tradition haïtienne du conte oral. Les personnages semblent être possédés par les démons du folklore vaudou

qui, eux, menacent la relation amoureuse et érotique des amants. En outre, la fin de l'histoire révèle la conclusion tragique et stupéfiante de l'origine ancestrale du narrateur. Au fait, toute son histoire se trouve cachée dans les murs du manoir de *Ton* Rodrigue, ancien colonel de Papa Doc. Le colonel Rodrigue Duché évoque le pouvoir du régime totalitaire de l'époque et les crimes commis pour accéder au pouvoir *coûte que coûte.*

Fantômes perfides, magie noire hallucinante, ces éléments qui sont au cœur de la culture haïtienne n'existaient, avant le voyage, que dans l'imaginaire du narrateur-poète : « Enfant du déracinement, je n'avais jamais osé revendiquer autre patrie que la littérature », dira-t-il. Par son style d'écriture très travaillé, sa langue somptueuse et savoureuse, le roman de Stanley Péan rappelle la grande époque romantique du dix-neuvième siècle. L'auteur désire d'ailleurs rendre hommage à deux auteurs, en particulier, qui l'ont profondément inspiré : Edgar Poe et Jacques Stephen Alexis. La fierté des Haïtiens repose sur une richesse culturelle et un métissage complexe comme l'atteste la bibliothèque de *Ton* Rodrigue, où s'entassent les « œuvres complètes des classiques du monde entier ». Conscient de son héritage, l'auteur intègre au dialogue des personnages, le niveau populaire de leur langue et ajoute, pour le lecteur non familier avec les mots créoles, un glossaire en guise de référence. Ainsi, le langage, la descriptions des lieux, les références à l'histoire et aux mythes haïtiens, les caractéristiques des personnages, apportent une saveur culturelle et authentique au *Tumulte de mon sang.*

Le plaisir de la lecture des œuvres romantiques du dix-neuvième siècle en particulier constitue un centre d'intérêt commun chez les protagonistes des deux romans. *Les six degrés du désir* évoque plusieurs fois les grands classiques (de Platon, Voltaire, Molière à Flaubert et Balzac), marquant ainsi l'influence de la culture française sur la nation québécoise. A cet héritage l'auteur n'hésite pas à ajouter des références contemporaines à la culture nord-américaine, tout en y intégrant, à titre d'exemple, des expressions typiquement anglaises comme « *You can't always get what you want* ». Les lecteurs québécois pourront aisément s'identifier au langage du roman. Par ailleurs, l'existence moderne des personnages dans leur travail et leurs désirs d'amour reflète un aspect universel.

Dans ce roman de Fisher, ce ne sont pas les démons d'un passé dévoilé qui menacent les relations intimes mais plutôt les différences entre les désirs sexuels de l'homme et ceux de la femme. L'auteur nous invite à réfléchir sur la nature des relations amoureuses. Ici, le lieu privilégié pour l'autoréflexivité est le journal intime—forme d'écriture qui s'adapte bien au roman psychologique. Les journaux intimes de Lisa et de son père Charles Granger permettent aux individus non seulement un débat avec leur *moi* intérieur et leurs sentiments les plus profonds mais aussi un processus de découverte personnelle. Tout en évoquant les joies et les peines des protagonistes, le journal intime élucide leurs désirs et leurs frustrations. Jeune fille de vingt ans, Lisa recherche le grand amour, celui qui donne des frissons et un sens à la vie. Embauchée à la même maison d'édition que son père, Lisa tombe éperdument amoureuse de son patron dès ce premier jour qu'elle a cru fatidique : « J'ai tout de suite pensé que ce n'était pas un hasard, que nous soyons tous les deux en noir. » Voilà le destin tragique de cette relation tumultueuse entre elle et son patron, Jean-Jacques, homme marié qui, par son caractère et son âge, reflète l'image du père de la jeune fille. Tout au long du roman, Lisa attendra la promesse du divorce de Jean-Jacques, qui ne viendra pas. En attendant, son journal lui procure un lieu thérapeutique grâce auquel elle réfléchit sur ses choix, évalue son comporte-

ment et projette d'agir différemment. Ainsi, en écrivant, elle se transforme, prend conscience de la lâcheté de Jean-Jacques et décide, mais trop tard, de se lier à Philippe.

Par sa taille volumineuse, le journal de Lisa semble, à première vue, prépondérant comparé à celui de Charles. Cependant, le journal de son père est aussi important car il représente l'antithèse de l'idéalisme de sa fille, c'est-à-dire le côté réaliste, pour l'homme, des relations intimes. C'est à Charles que Fisher confie la théorie de la dégradation du désir—de la naissance du désir à sa mort. Cette théorie qu'il développe à partir d'expériences personnelles fait écho au personnage de Jean-Jacques qui, selon sa femme, ne croit pas au grand amour. Selon lui, une fois que les premiers degrés du désir sont révolus, l'homme « ne peut vivre dans la tiédeur érotique ». Ce n'est qu'en lisant le journal de Lisa qu'il questionnera sa conception de l'amour en laissant entrevoir un espoir, c'est-à-dire une sixième possibilité de désir : la renaissance de l'amour.

Identités volées

Marie Hélène Poitras
Soudain le Minotaure. Triptyque 18,00$

Pierre Ouellet
Still. Tirs groupés. L'instant même 24,95$

Comptes rendus par Sébastien Simard

Dans son roman *Soudain le Minotaure*, Marie Hélène Poitras explore le thème du viol, l'exposant tour à tour du point de vue de l'agresseur et de la victime. La première partie du roman est en effet une exploration de la psychologie de l'agresseur, nommé Mino Torrès, qui, au fond de sa prison, nous conduit dans les méandres de son esprit tordu, dans une prose réaliste et crue (évoquant par moments l'*American Psycho* de Bret Easton Ellis). Cette partie du récit nous fait suivre la vie en apparence banale de Torrès, un jeune latino, entre son travail de marchand de fruits, sa vie de couple et ses pulsions de violeur, instinctuelles et insatiables: « On peut trouver ce qu'on veut chez une fille. Si l'homme a envie de violer, elle lui donnera l'impression de n'être bonne qu'à ça. D'attendre ça, même. » C'est sans compter l'apparition d'Ariane, une victime qui lui résistera—dont la résistance lui sera même objet de fascination—et qui marquera sa chute.

La deuxième moitié du roman est racontée par cette victime, une étudiante agressée par Torrès mais qui évitera le viol de justesse. Cette partie, plus sensible, amène une dimension supplémentaire au thème, puisqu'on y suit le parcours de la victime, de l'après-coup de l'agression jusqu'à un voyage en Europe où elle tentera de retrouver sa confiance en l'humanité: « Seulement, j'essayais de comprendre comment quelqu'un pouvait en arriver à violer, à tuer, ou à orchestrer une guerre. J'étais incapable de renoncer aux pourquoi qui me rongeaient. » C'est lors de ce voyage qu'elle visite l'Allemagne, « pays lourd d'histoire, celui des survivants », offrant au récit une occasion d'aller plus loin dans ses considérations sur le mal: Ariane tente ainsi, semble-t-il, d'exorciser son propre drame individuel en le reconsidérant à un niveau collectif et historique. C'est en visitant, en effet, les lieux des atrocités nazies qu'elle nous décrit la désillusion du personnage face à l'humanité, où transparaît toutefois la soif de vivre (notamment illustrée par sa relation avec un jeune voyageur) et son esprit de combativité devant l'adversité et dans son rôle de victime.

On passera outre aux allusions peu subtiles au mythe du labyrinthe—plutôt mal exploité—et l'on saluera l'écriture sans faille de la jeune auteure, qui signe un premier roman prometteur. Ici, la violence dépouille le personnage d'Ariane de son identité, la rendant vulnérable et méfiante, l'obligeant alors à retrouver le fil brisé de son existence par une recherche de soi qui

n'enlève rien au mal qu'on lui a fait, mais qui la projettera en avant dans la vie: « . . . une nouvelle force s'installe, laquelle peut amener la joie. . . . Mieux vaut être triste et fort que ravagé et faible ».

C'est de la recherche d'identité dont il est question dans *Still. Tirs groupés* de Pierre Ouellet. Ce roman hors normes se présente comme une sorte de Raymond Chandler existentiel, à la fois ludique (puisqu'il joue avec les codes du polar) et complexe (par sa portée philosophique et sa recherche formelle). Il s'agit du récit d'un policier amnésique nommé Chester Head, qui enquête sur une affaire de meurtres en série, tout en cherchant à retrouver les éléments de sa vie disparus avec sa mémoire: « C'est dans sa tête que ça grisonne: une mémoire poivre et sel, si vous voulez, une mémoire blanchie. » Par une prose poétique cérébrale (la tête y est d'ailleurs l'un des paradigmes principaux), par des phrases courtes et saccadées ici et de longues phrases tortueuses là, l'auteur nous conduit à travers un New York de série noire cinématographique mais dont le décor, à peine esquissé, laisse place à l'intériorité des personnages et à leur langage torturé et tortueux.

C'est à travers l'histoire des autres que Head tentera de se reconstruire: « quand on n'a plus de mémoire, autant remonter le passé des autres, revivre à rebours leur petite histoire. » C'est par le biais des récits sordides de meurtres dans le milieu des films *underground* que le personnage cherche sa nature, son être, réfléchissant sur la mémoire, d'une manière qui rejoint assez les préoccupations philosophiques de l'auteur, parfois exposées de manière théorique: « Le métier de flic, pour lui, c'était un genre de philosophie. Pas une éthique, ni une esthétique. Non, ce serait trop simple. Une *poétique*, comme il disait: une théorie de l'âme, une critique de la douleur, une pathétique. » Cette quête pour retrouver la mémoire perdue (symbolisée tout au long du roman par le thème de la décapitation), est également celle de l'écriture, comme pourraient le laisser croire les noms des personnages, qui ne sont jamais laissés au hasard: Head, Read, Wright, sans oublier les noms à résonance biblique (Adam, Ève), conférant au roman un autre de ses paradigmes primordiaux: celui de l'eschatologie: « . . . les noms se tissent les uns aux autres comme un seul Nom, certains diront le nom de dieu, cet autre nom de la Vérité. » L'enquête sur la mémoire et la vérité s'avère alors être une quête spirituelle et religieuse.

Si le cinéma—art de l'image par excellence—est ici l'un des thèmes, c'est sans doute pour créer un lien avec les œuvres de Michel Bricault qui ont inspiré à l'auteur ce roman. Le texte et les images se complètent à merveille: sur ces illustrations, on discerne des silhouettes sombres d'hommes sans visage dans une grisaille troublante, par le biais d'un regard flou donnant sur des non-lieux, sur des êtres qui paraissent sans mémoire, comme écrasés par le poids de leur seule existence. La rencontre de l'écriture de Ouellet et des œuvres de Bricault plonge le lecteur dans une atmosphère envoûtante.

Par ce texte riche et complexe, cette écriture exploratoire, ainsi que par l'iconographie qui l'accompagne, Pierre Ouellet nous offre un livre unique en son genre, une fascinante expérience d'écriture et d'édition.

Hyphenating Minorities

Andy Quan
Calendar Boy. New Star $20.00

Francisco Ibañez-Carrasco
Flesh Wounds and Purple Flowers: The Cha-Cha Years. Arsenal Pulp $17.95

Reviewed by Philipp Maurer

Are there minorities within minorities? Is a Canadian-born Asian gay man a queer Asian Canadian or an Asian Canadian queer? Is there such a thing as Asian Queer

Canadian? A Latino Canadian Queer? Are those differentiations relevant? Are they noticeable? Are they sensible? These are some of the questions that arise in *Calendar Boy* by Andy Quan and *Flesh Wounds and Purple Flowers: The Cha Cha Years* by Francisco Ibañez-Carrasco.

Andy Quan was born and raised in Vancouver and now lives in Sydney, Australia. *Calendar Boy* is a collection of short stories dealing with aspects of queer and immigrant life all over the world. Some of his work has appeared in anthologies such as *Contra/Diction*, *Queeries*, and *Queer View Mirror*. When asked for an author's statement for *Contra/Diction*, Quan wrote that for him, "being included in a collection like *Contra/Diction* is about challenging a monolithic view of what it is to be gay or queer in Canada or the world in the nineties. But I don't believe there is a monolithic view. Or even anything more than a contingent cultural or communal norm." This is exactly what, in a nutshell, *Calendar Boy* is about. Quan's stories challenge a monolithic view not only of being queer, but also of being the descendant of Chinese immigrants. They deal with being Asian in Canadian gay subculture; with "coming of age," "coming out" and "going public"; with racism and self-acceptance.

Quan's debut contains sixteen stories revolving around these issues; their tone is sometimes aggressive and threateningly sharp, sometimes ironic and subtle. All the characters seem to be facets of the same person; they are travellers in a geographical as well as a figurative sense. Quan uses simple and yet incisive metaphors in stories such as "How to Cook Chinese Rice," which presents a recipe as well as an observation on coming out as an Asian gay man, or in "Sleep," a story on the nature of monogamy and trust in a relationship. His stories portray "Asian-ness" against a backdrop of being queer—and vice versa, as in "Immigration," in which Quan sensitively draws a parallel between the emotions of an early twentieth-century Chinese immigrant and those of a Chinese Canadian gay man coming out at the turn of the millennium.

In addition, stories like "What I Really Hate" illustrate Quan's views on the politics of queer minorities and pseudo-multiculturalism: "Why do we have a separate club night anyways? Does that put us into the category of leather night, rubbermen, underwear parties? Are we a fetish or are we a theme party?" This kind of questioning of identity politics reappears throughout the book. Quan's stories seem to reveal that multiculturalism and the embrace of difference are substantially less developed in gay subculture than in Canadian mainstream culture.

Flesh Wounds and Purple Flowers also deals with minorities within minorities. Francisco Ibañez-Carrasco's novel is the AIDS memoir of a Chilean Canadian protagonist by the name of Camilo, who, from his hospital bed, recalls his life, during which he has often and even easily crossed all sorts of borders and boundaries between countries and has defied many norms and values. Ibañez-Carrasco was born in Santiago, Chile, and now lives in Vancouver. *Flesh Wounds and Purple Flowers* takes place in various locations in the Americas: Chile, Cuba, Canada and the United States.

Camilo leaves Chile for New York, on the way stopping by chance in Vancouver, where he decides to stay. The story of his life is an odyssey of emigration and immigration, of love, sex, and self-discovery. For Camilo, his disease is both plague and revelation. Like *Calendar Boy*, *Flesh Wounds and Purple Flowers* deals with racism and ethnic origin, and yet Ibañez-Carrasco's writing differs considerably from Quan's. Apart from being considerably more lascivious and erotic (a quality which, among other things, confers on it a certain touch of "gay nostalgia"), his novel is virtually closed against "intruders." Access is granted

selectively through the use of "Spanglish," which emphasizes cultural differences and keeps boundaries in place: some readers are intentionally left outside. Quan deals more directly with the exclusionary effect of language: in the title story "Calendar Boy," the protagonist Gary (a Chinese Canadian) is pitied by Hong Kong Chinese people for his inability to speak Cantonese, and is intentionally left out of conversations.

In the course of their skilfully crafted works, both authors construct and at the same time challenge and deconstruct "hyphenated minorities." As one of Quan's characters declares, "I'm checkerboard. Through and through, two-tone abstract art, multi-coloured swirl painting. Plaid, baby, I'm plaid, so out of fashion I'm in fashion and so stylish I'm on my way out. I don't go with anything you own."

Notez bien!

Pierre Rajotte, dir.
Lieux et réseaux de sociabilité littéraire au Québec. Nota Bene 19,95$

Robert Dion et al, dir.
Enjeux des genres dans les écritures contemporaines. Nota Bene 23,95$

Comptes rendus par Vincent Desroches

Créées en 1998, les Éditions Nota Bene continuent de se développer à un rythme étourdissant; pas moins de quatorze collections se déploient et plus de cent cinquante titres déjà ont été produits. Alerte aux bibliothécaires nord-américains! Il s'agit désormais de l'éditeur le plus important de la recherche universitaire québécoise en sciences humaines et en littérature. Parmi les titres publiés en 2001, voici deux ouvrages collectifs fort bien assemblés et présentés.

Lieux et réseaux, sous la direction de Pierre Rajotte, s'inspire des théories de Pierre Bourdieu sur l'autonomie du champ culturel et des travaux de sociologie de la littérature d'Alain Viala, qui signe d'ailleurs la préface. Tous les aspects des institutions littéraires sont couverts par les sept articles. Les auteurs passent en revue les cas de la correspondance entre auteurs (il s'agit ici de celle d'Alfred Desrochers, ce qui soulève la question du rôle du mentor), les salons littéraires, le rôle de l'éditeur, les revues littéraires (avec *la Relève*), les librairies, les académies, et les associations d'écrivains. À l'exception d'Isabelle Boisclair, qui signe aussi le seul article portant sur la scène littéraire contemporaine, tous les auteurs sont affiliés à l'Université de Sherbrooke et portent leur regard sur le dix-neuvième siècle ou la première moitié du vingtième. Il serait intéressant d'étendre ces observations à la deuxième moitié du vingtième siècle, alors que plusieurs acteurs sont encore vivants. L'étude de Boisclair, portant sur les Éditions Remue-ménage, s'appuie ainsi sur cinq entretiens avec les féministes québécoises actives dans cette maison d'édition, ce qui permet de documenter une période fort mouvementée avant de perdre une foule de détails. Notons que la thèse de doctorat d'Isabelle Boisclair, provisoirement intitulée *Ouvrir la voie/x* et portant sur l'ensemble du mouvement féministe sera également publiée aux Éditions Nota Bene.

Le parti-pris historique de l'ensemble n'est pourtant pas un handicap, au contraire, et permet de documenter finement et systématiquement l'émergence des institutions littéraires au Québec. Cet effort pourrait sûrement s'étendre jusqu'à inclure l'histoire de l'enseignement et de la critique littéraire universitaire telle qu'elles ont pu se pratiquer au Québec. Mais comme le précise Pierre Rajotte dans sa présentation, d'autres types de lieux et de réseaux littéraires restent à examiner, dont : « les académies de collège et les réseaux associés à l'enseignement, les cercles dramatiques, les théâtres, les associations de jeunesse catholiques, les cénacles, les clubs et cafés, les bibliothèques ». Saluons la vigueur de ce projet de recherche important, qui permet

à la fois d'asseoir solidement la notion de discours chère à la sociocritique et de dégager les conditions de production d'une part importante de la génétique des textes.

Enjeux et genres dans les écritures contemporaires, sous la direction de Robert Dion, Frances Fortier, et Élizabeth Haghebaert, présente quant à lui quinze articles par vingt-cinq auteurs québécois et européens (plusieurs articles sont écrits en collaboration). Mentionnons aussi la présence de Janet Paterson et de Claudine Potvin, du Canada anglais, qui détonnent un peu dans cet ensemble résolument orienté vers la théorie littéraire française. Ceci n'exclut pas la diversité des approches, malgré l'accent très sémioticien de l'introduction, qui préfère utiliser la longue paraphrase : « la production postérieure au renouvellement de la rhétorique et de la poétique (postérieure aux années 1960 et 1970, donc) » plutôt que de risquer la brûlure du mot *post-structuraliste*. Le livre s'ouvre sur deux études théoriques de Pierre Zima et de Denis Saint-Jacques et entreprend ensuite des études de cas mettant en lumière le caractère hybride des productions littéraires contemporaines. Où sont les frontières entre roman, poésie en prose, fictions, théâtre, description, autobiographie, cinéma, performance? Comment la production textuelle en rend-elle compte? Quelles stratégies textuelles se mettent en place? Comme on l'aura noté dans l'énumération ci-haut, le recueil tente, avec bonheur je crois, d'étendre au maximum la notion de genre jusqu'aux bornes de la littérature, comme dans le cas d'un article sur les installations artistiques par Paul-Émile Saulnier. Curieusement, le genre de la nouvelle, qui connaît un succès important au Québec, n'est examiné que tangentiellement par une étude de René Audet, Patrick Guay et Richard Saint-Gelais portant sur les écritures collectives.

Plus problématique peut-être, parce que ce choix éditorial n'est nulle part commenté, est la pratique de juxtaposer sur le même plan les articles portant sur la littérature québécoise et ceux portant sur la production littéraire française, comme si les écritures contemporaines évoquées par le titre subissaient les mêmes évolutions et les mêmes influences en synchronie. A cet égard, l'article de Hans-Jürgen Lüsenbrink est le seul à traiter du genre dans une perspective comparatiste pour l'ensemble des littératures francophones, y compris africaines, ce qui modifie la perspective critique considérablement, tout en indiquant peut-être les limites de cet exercice de théorisation. Ce recueil demeure un excellent outil pour apprécier l'évolution récente des genres, l'apparition continuelle de nouvelles formes hybrides et le caractère obsolète des catégorisations rigides. Il ne s'agit pas, précise-t-on en conclusion, de liquider le genre en soi, « dont la pertinence perdurerait au moins dans l'enseignement de la littérature et dans la littérature de masse », mais de reconsidérer notre rapport au genre, « ce qui conduit à une interrogation sur le bien-fondé de la littérature, son rôle, sa fonction ». La notion de genre devient ainsi un enjeu de lecture, ludique et fluide, un clin d'œil de connivence entre l'écrivain et son lecteur.

Sinclair Ross Reissued

Sinclair Ross
The Well. U of Alberta P $16.95

Sinclair Ross
Whir of Gold. U of Alberta P $16.95

Sinclair Ross
Sawbones Memorial. U of Alberta P $16.95

Reviewed by Alison Calder

If asked to name Sinclair Ross's writings, most people would come up with *As For Me and My House*, Ross's widely studied first novel; many would also list some of his short stories, particularly such frequently anthologized pieces as "The Lamp at Noon," "The Painted Door," "Cornet at

Night," and "One's a Heifer." These Canadian classics have largely defined the genre of prairie realism and have proven widely influential in shaping readers' views of the Canadian prairies. *As For Me and My House* holds the (somewhat dubious) distinction of being one of the most analyzed texts in Canadian literary history, and Ross has been cited as an influence by many Canadian prairie writers, such as Robert Kroetsch in his important essay "On Being an Alberta Writer." Although *As For Me and My House* first appeared in 1941, it continues to influence contemporary writers, as shown by the 1996 publication of *A Saving Grace*, Lorna Crozier's collection of poems based on Ross's narrator, Mrs. Bentley.

Yet relatively few people are familiar with Ross's later novels: *The Well* (1958), *Whir of Gold* (1970), and *Sawbones Memorial* (1974). More readers are likely to know these books in the future, as they have been reissued in handsome new editions by the University of Alberta Press. The books, each of which includes a generous contextual introduction by another author, are beautifully presented with attractive covers and illustrated throughout with representative icons. Together, the books reveal both the strengths and the limitations of Ross's range. All are concerned with alienation and failed or compromised communication, themes familiar to readers of *As For Me and My House*, and all show the breakdown of sexual relationships, often through infidelity. Ross's style remains consistent throughout the novels until his last, when the tightly constricted single narrator's voice of the previous works fragments into many overlapping and competing versions of the same story.

Although thirty-three years separate Ross's first novel from his last, he cannot be said to have mellowed with age. Reading his works in succession is a profoundly bleak experience. No one connects; love does not exist, except as a commodity bartered for refuge, respectability, or financial gain. *The Well* is a psychological thriller that tells the story of Chris Rowe, a young gangster forced to flee Montreal because he may have killed a man during a botched robbery. After riding the rails, he is offered a job as hired man on the Larson farm in Saskatchewan, where he is soon embroiled in a heated affair with Sylvia, Larson's young and dangerous wife. Larson, meanwhile, appears to see Chris as a replacement for his dead young son. Chris soon discovers that the harsh streets of Montreal are far less dangerous than the confines of an isolated prairie farm, as the text inexorably moves further into duplicity and ultimately murder. *Whir of Gold* (1970) preserves Ross's tightly constrained narrative style, but moves from Western Canada to Montreal to describe the declining fortunes of Sonny, a young would-be clarinet player from the prairies who is trying to make it in the big city. Impoverished and unemployed, Sonny picks up Madeleine, a waitress with a heart of gold who tries to move into his life as quickly as she moves into his boarding-house bed. At the same time, Sonny is being seduced into becoming a criminal by Charlie, another resident of the boarding house, who offers him a role in a robbery. Both the robbery and the relationship go badly, and at the end Sonny is again alone, abandoned by Charlie and sending Madeleine away. *Sawbones Memorial* (1974) marks a radical departure. This short novel has no single narrator, but is told through the varied voices of the residents of the small Saskatchewan town of Upward. Each character recalls the life and times of Dr. Hunter, the town's "Sawbones," during a party to celebrate his retirement. The competing and contradictory voices of the townspeople create a composite portrait of a small prairie town, a portrait that reveals both the warmth of the community and its bigotry and hypocrisy. Although the town looks forward to the opening of its new

hospital, the racist voices raised against the new doctor, Nick Miller, the "Hunky" son of Big Anna, the Ukrainian woman who took in the town's washing, suggest that the town's future is not as bright as the party setting would seem to suggest. The most significant secret revealed to the reader is that Nick is actually Dr. Hunter's son, the product of an adulterous encounter.

Another continuity between these books is their scapegoating of the female characters. In *The Well*, Chris despises Sylvia throughout their affair because she deceives her husband, although of course Chris is deceiving Larson too, not only sleeping with his wife but also playing the role of son when he thinks it might be to his advantage. By the novel's end, the narrative thoroughly constructs Sylvia as the spider tempting Chris further into her web: she initiates the plan to murder Larson, thus binding Chris to her through their shared culpability. The last scene makes it clear that Sylvia functions as the whore to the near-virginal figure of Elsie Grover, the innocent shopkeeper's daughter whom Chris had earlier seduced and seems to have abandoned. Faced with a choice between life with Sylvia and a jail sentence with Elsie Grover perhaps waiting faithfully for him at the end, Chris phones the police, sealing Sylvia's fate. Punishing Sylvia is Chris's victory and what proves his morality: the novel reports that "he had leaped and made his landing." In *Whir of Gold*, Madeleine too is punished, after appearing as a martyr throughout her relationship with Sonny, as he must drive her away in order to become an artist. The doctor who promises to link Sonny up with another musician seems only interested in Sonny as long as he represents the sexy, loose world of jazz. After the doctor leaves Sonny's apartment after a brief visit, Sonny is caught in the trappings of domesticity: "there they were, my socks and her nylons: a fact, on record; and here I stood, framed in them." In *Sawbones Memorial*, amongst the vicious gossips and small minds of the town, it is Anna who is most consistently abused. She is seen as little better than an animal, even by the "hero," Doc Hunter, who carries on an affair with her but is unable to forget her "hunky" status (or is that what attracts him?). "That's one thing about them," he muses about Anna's pregnancy, "just like a cow having her calf; in their country used to working in the field I suppose." The tragedies of Doc's life, if there are any, seem to be his mistaken marriage to a wife portrayed as passionless, and then his status as not-father to Nick, as neither Anna nor the town will allow him to involve himself with "the hunkies." The only love Doc feels is towards Nick, and that can never be spoken.

Preoccupied Spaces

Danielle Schaub
Mapping Canadian Cultural Space: Essays on Canadian Literature. Hebrew U Magnes P $35.00

Stacy Alaimo
Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space. Cornell U P $18.95

Reviewed by Meredith Criglington

"Space" and "place" are especially prominent in recent debates surrounding cultural and feminist identity, as evidenced by the collection of essays in *Mapping Canadian Cultural Space*. This collection suggests that one of the appeals of "spatial theory" is its adaptability to a vast range of readings, depending on how one chooses to define and apply that very malleable term "space." The contributors figure "space" variously as the linguistic landscape, the space of memory, migratory space, the internalized landscape of female subjectivity, the space of the maternal, the space of the mother-daughter relationship, and narrative space.

Given the fluidity of the key terminology in *Mapping Canadian Cultural Space*, it is

not surprising that the most effective analyses interrogate their own terms of reference by considering how concepts of space have been culturally constructed within specific socio-historical contexts. In this respect, the opening essay by Branko Gorjup provides a useful historical overview of the relationship between the Canadian imagination and its representation of spatial modes. Gorjup notes that until the latter part of the twentieth century, Canadians conceived of space according to the orderly, unified Aristotelian paradigm, which privileges "presence over absence, substance over accident and duration over instantaneity." This particular phase of fictional spatialization is linked to the colonial fate of "real" North American space, that is, the land and its indigenous inhabitants. The second half of the essay focuses on the poetry of Christopher Dewdney and Anne Michaels as emblematic of a radical reconceptualization of space as "a palimpsest of multiple traces," a model that is influenced by the notions of relativity and uncertainty in modern physics. According to Gorjup, such disruptions in the representation of space reflect the increasingly pluralistic character of Canadian culture.

Other essays that engage the question of how space is constituted include Bina Toledo Freiwald's "Cartographies of Be/longing: Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*" and Biljana Romić's "M. G. Vassanji's *The Book of Secrets* or the Art of Intricate Spatial Interplay." Freiwald applies Kathleen Kirby's taxonomy of "the space of the subject" to Brand's novel in order to map the movement of the two island-born protagonists within the oppositional topographies of Toronto and an unnamed Caribbean island. This sensitive reading of the novel balances Verlia's self-negating search for "the liberating anonymity of revolutionary space/time/self" in Toronto against Elizete's effort to bring "herself into existence in Toronto by naming and unmasking the social relations that constitute the city."

Similarly, Biljana Romić develops a postcolonial conception of space and place in order to examine the themes of homelessness, diaspora, and the loss of spatial memory in Vassanji's *The Book of Secrets*. Romić explores the novel's structure through a complex set of opposing and intersecting spaces and their corresponding temporalities, including the "mythic space" of Indian memory and the "calendrical space" of the immigrant's experiences of the new land. Distinguishing between different kinds of space in this way not only enables Romić and Freiwald to explore the paradoxes and complexities of immigrant experiences in these particular novels, it also provides the reader with critical frameworks that can be tested against other texts.

A striking feature of *Mapping Canadian Cultural Space* is that so many of the contributors, all except one of whom are women, link spatial representations with female subjectivity. This association, which sometimes appears to be unquestioned, is problematic when one considers the misogynist, heterosexist history of defining women in relation to space, in particular, domestic space and the space of nature. *Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space*, confronts just this issue in a timely, provocative, and thoughtful manner. Alaimo considers the ongoing feminist struggle with the historical legacy of "Mother Earth" and other female-gendered representations of nature. Feminist theory's "flight from nature," which aims to liberate woman from essentialism, generates the opposite effect, since severing nature from culture only further solidifies nature as the unyielding ground of essentialism. *Undomesticated Ground* explores a dazzling array of feminist texts that endeavour to inhabit and transform nature as a place of feminist possibility. Throughout, Alaimo remains sensitive to the pitfalls of any alliance between

women and nature. The texts are grouped chronologically and thematically, and each is carefully considered in relation to its social and historical moment.

In Part II, Alaimo considers how feminists have allied themselves with nature as a political space. Emma Goldman and several leftist writers of the 1930s, for example, summoned the bountiful and beneficent figure of "Mother Earth" to condemn economic inequalities. Part III, "Feminism, Postmodernism, Environmentalism," is, "naturally," the most playful and diverse section of the book, touching on everything from the queering of nature in Jane Rule's *Desert of the Heart* to the 1990 Earth Day TV special and the portraits of whale-tails used in the Whale Adoption Program. This section foregrounds Alaimo's indebtedness to those postmodern theorists who strategically blur the boundaries between nature and culture, in particular, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Judith Butler, and Donna Haraway. While the focus is on American texts and pop culture, a few Canadian works are also considered. Alaimo's lively, compelling reading of Marian Engel's *Bear* as an epistemological drama is a highlight, while her assessment of the problematic affirmation of the "natural woman" in Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* offers an important complement to Danielle Schaub's reading of that same novel in *Mapping Canadian Cultural Space.*

Let me conclude, therefore, by calling attention to Margery Fee's comment, tucked away in a footnote to *Undomesticated Ground*, that many of *Bear*'s critics have assumed that "nature and women, like nature and Canadians, have some special affinity." If one considers this statement in light of the promise and perils of this affinity outlined by Alaimo, it would seem that both women and Canadians have a particular interest in reconceptualizing the relationship between humans and nature in mutually beneficial, non-essentializing ways.

Pas de Deux

David Staines, ed.
Margaret Laurence: Critical Reflections. U of Ottawa P $19.95

Camille R. La Bossière and Linda M. Morra, eds.
Robertson Davies: A Mingling of Contrarieties. U of Ottawa P $21.95

Reviewed by Lorna Hutchison

Margaret Laurence: Critical Reflections is one of the most recent collections to emerge from the Reappraisals: Canadian Writers series, in which the "best" papers presented at the University of Ottawa's annual literary conference are chosen for publication. The collection brings together a splendid array of viewpoints from literary critics, authors, academics, and colleagues and friends of Laurence. The combination of perspectives on and approaches to Laurence and her art by Helen M. Buss, Aritha Van Herk, Robert Kroetsch, Joyce Marshall, and John Lennox (to name a few) accounts for the diversity, richness, and indeed quirkiness of the collection as a whole. The penchant of the majority of the essays towards personal connections to, or biographical aspects of, Laurence and her work—her values and work ethic; correspondence and professional relationships—distinguishes the collection from the rows of text-centred academic essay collections devoted to a single writer, and from the study of Robertson Davies reviewed here.

A strong sense of respect and affection for Laurence permeates the collection: the critics implicate themselves at a personal and engagingly emotional level that sensitizes the reader to the complexity of Laurence and her oeuvre. For example, in a study that grapples with Laurence's approach to children's storytelling, Janet Lunn candidly criticizes Laurence's failure to connect with her young audience, all the while revealing some of the major strengths of Laurence's

adult fiction. Nora Foster Stovel's research on the professional relationship between Laurence and Judith Jones, editor of *The Diviners*, explores her own concerns about the radical editing process of the novel. In her discussion of *The Diviners* as fiction about fiction she asks, "Did Laurence's editors miss her metafictional aim?" And John Lennox (who does not hide his delight at "working with exchanges of letters between gifted correspondents") reveals the growth of a writer and the creative, motivating influence of great friendships in his compelling analysis of Laurence's correspondence with Adele Wiseman and Al Purdy. The collection should be of interest to Laurence scholars and to "non-academic" readers as well.

Robertson Davies: A Mingling of Contrarieties deals with my favourite literary themes and devices: binary opposition, paradox, ambivalence, and that elusive space connecting language to cognitive processes known as the "in-between." The collection boasts many playful approaches to the dodgery of Davies's writings (and to the intriguing man himself, of course, as Michael Peterman explores in the first essay: "The Concert of His Life: Perspectives on the Masks of Robertson Davies"). The collection provides a timely, sophisticated look at the work of one of Canada's most prolific and well-known writers.

Perhaps less known to Davies's general readership is the writer's involvement with the theatre, which began, Lois Sherlow tells us, through his work as a playwright in the thirties. Sherlow situates Davies's dramatic writings within the movements of Canadian theatre, arguing that "In a Davies play, as in a Davies novel, the authorial voice always eventually overrides the play of difference," and thus "it is always the moralist, not the magician, who prevails." Mark Silverberg points to a similar function of the doubling technique evident in *World of Wonders*, in which the great magician's attempts to dominate both text and reader (as well as his audience within the story itself) are thwarted by a chorus of competitive narrative voices. These essays resound with a running theme in the collection: Davies's construction of tension through contrariety in his work illuminates the unknown opposite, which is somehow, somewhere, just another facet of the self.

Different approaches to the theme of contrariety include explorations of the grotesque, humour, and grotesque humour, as in K.P. Stich's entertaining study of the literary motif of alcohol; myth and magic, formal considerations of self-authenticating fiction, and "the conjunction of reader and writer" in narration (Andrea C. Cole). A highlight of the collection is its final essay, a collaborative work by Rick Davis, M.D., and Peter Brigg. Similar to one of the final essays in the Laurence compilation, in which Lois Wilson, a minister and long-time friend of Laurence cites the writer's views on vocation, grace, and justice, "'Medical Consultation' for *Murther and Walking Spirits* and *The Cunning Man*" is a performance piece about Davies's collaborations with a medical doctor. It is as humorous (for its morbid medical information) as it is illuminating of the purposeful side of Davies. A strong quality of the collection, including Camille LaBossière's introduction, is its success in portraying Davies as a controversial figure both admired and criticized by his literary audience.

Amour et fatalité

Carmen Strano
Les jours de lumière. Triptyque 18,00$

Marc Ménard
Itinérances. Triptyque 20,00$

Comptes rendus par Édouard Magessa O'Reilly

Triptyque nous propose deux premiers romans par des Montréalais où il est question d'amour et de fatalité. L'un nous parle

de l'amour inéluctable, l'autre d'un couple désuni par la machine de la vie urbaine.

Les jours de lumière de Carmen Strano explorent une situation incongrue mais bien amenée : une femme tombe amoureuse d'un sans-logis. Comment un membre de cette horde de marginaux peut-il être digne de l'amour de la narratrice, jeune professionnelle sérieuse ? Ils se rencontrent lorsque celle-ci est bénévole à la soupe populaire. On apprend avec elle que Raoul est artiste et qu'il se spécialise dans la restauration d'icônes ecclésiastiques. Il n'est pas un de ces démunis et inadaptés mais un « homme tendre, homme riche intérieurement » qui passe par un mauvais moment. Ses talents non négligeables sont malheureusement dans un domaine sous-estimé dans la société commerciale du moment. Du moment, dis-je bien, car tout est là : selon les commérages, Raoul n'est qu'un aliéné qui prétend venir du futur.

Les deux personnages font plus ample connaissance, font l'amour et au bout d'un moment décident d'un mode de vie à deux. Et lorsque la marginalité de Raoul est non seulement rationalisée mais oubliée, sa folie particulière se déclare. Effectivement, il se croit de l'avenir. Mais cette vérité arrive trop tard, la narratrice n'est plus libre, elle aime. « L'amour est une fatalité, dit son amie Rose. Une fatalité ». Le roman pullule d'exemples de fatalité dont la moindre n'est sûrement pas cette autre amie, Hélène, romancière en herbe. Après avoir fourni une série d'exemples d'auteurs qui « finissent par incarner le destin de leurs personnages », Hélène frisera la folie, tourmentée par les besoins opposés et également impérieux de donner une fin à son roman et d'éviter à tout prix de fixer son propre destin.

Dans cette histoire d'amour fatal, les églises se font souvent la scène de l'action. Pour Raoul, qui habite un temps disloqué, elles sont des îlots dans le temps. À son instar, la narratrice y cherche des repères lorsqu'elle ne sait plus quoi espérer. Strano crée un réseau symbolique religieux auquel ne sont pas étrangers un épisode chez une cartomancienne et le souvenir de Raspoutine. Par divers moyens, le récit maintient le doute sur les prétentions extratemporelles de Raoul sans sombrer dans le fantastique ni la science fiction.

Nous pouvons remarquer chez l'auteure un vrai sens de la description, don qu'elle n'a fait que gêner en optant pour la narration à la première personne. Les descriptions captent la touche réaliste, le trait actualisant d'un décor ou d'un geste. On peut certes critiquer ici et là, par exemple, quelques notations qui dépassent le point de vue homodiégétique ou un certain érotisme déplacé dans les descriptions de simples figurants masculins. Mais le style est généralement très compétent et le récit intéressant.

Le roman de Marc Ménard, *Itinérances*, n'a malheureusement pas les mêmes qualités. Autre narration à la première personne, le récit est cette fois pris en charge par un personnage qui est, quelques éclairs mis à part, fondamentalement sans ambition. C'est un « blasé de l'existence », un gars ordinaire atteint d'« un confortable sentiment de fatalité ». Conformément au personnage, malheureusement, son discours est plat, sans style, franchement banal par endroits.

Daniel raconte l'histoire du couple qu'il forme avec Judith. À l'encontre du narrateur, Judith fait preuve de force au début. Elle fonce « [a]vec une obstination démentielle et une énergie inépuisable », et ce malgré le fait qu'elle s'est « cassé la gueule à maintes reprises ». Mais lorsque les malheurs frappent pour de vrai, lui résiste, elle s'effondre. *Itinérances* raconte les épreuves de la vie urbaine, ses exigences et ses obstacles. Daniel se promène d'un travail à l'autre dans les secteurs de la vente et de la main d'œuvre. Judith fait partie de la horde de cols blancs qui se démènent pour trouver leur compte dans le monde des petites et moyennes entreprises. Elle est brasseuse de

bien petites affaires. Mais un jour Judith se révolte contre l'incertitude des contrats à terme et démissionne brusquement de son emploi. Ayant ainsi entamé sa propre marginalisation, elle rompt après une fausse couche tous ses liens affectifs avec le monde social. Daniel, pour sa part, résiste à la malchance. Mis à pied, il est effrayé par la misère qui le menace et cette peur l'anime. Malgré les revers, il s'agrippe à un emploi et à l'espoir. Nous observons un chiasme psychologique où le fataliste du début s'anime tandis que l'enthousiaste s'affaisse et s'écroule.

L'histoire, qui n'est pas sans intérêt, est mal servie par le récit. Quelques mots recherchés ici et là, mais aussi des pléonasmes, des contradictions dans les termes, beaucoup de clichés. Les expressions et tournures, tant de la narration que des dialogues, sont souvent celles de la conversation la plus banale. Il manque surtout dans ce roman le don du dialogue. Même un dialogue apparemment anodin doit être profondément surdéterminé par le contexte, tandis que les dialogues d'*Itinérances* sont souvent réellement anodins, ne servant qu'à faire passer le temps de l'histoire, sans apporter de profondeur au roman ni aux personnages (lors de la soirée, chapitre 2 ; dans le supermarché, chapitre 6 ; dans le bar, chapitre 7 ; chez Daniel et Judith, chapitre 14). Le chapitre 12, tout en italique, risque de paraître prétentieux. Il correspond au moment clé qui détermine Daniel à résister aux revers mais, sur le plan narratif, le chapitre reste imprécis (peut-être le souvenir d'une fugue faite pendant l'adolescence du personnage) et détonne dans le contexte.

Disons pour terminer *Félicitations !* à Triptyque pour l'intérêt que cette maison porte aux jeunes romanciers. Et *Bonne continuation !* à ceux-ci. Carmen Strano est une auteure prometteuse et ce premier roman mérite d'être lu. Nous pouvons espérer que *Les jours de lumière* seront suivis d'une autre œuvre encore meilleure.

A Cruel Separation

Guy Vanderhaeghe
The Last Crossing. McClelland and Stewart $37.99
Reviewed by Gordon Bölling

Guy Vanderhaeghe dedicates his most recent publication to "all those local historians who keep the particulars of our past alive." Although not a writer of history in the academic sense, Vanderhaeghe clearly feels a sense of kinship to Canadian historians. The author holds an M.A. in history from the University of Saskatchewan, and his historical fiction is meticulously researched. In *The Last Crossing*, he returns to the American and Canadian West of the 1870s, a historical period which also served as the setting for *The Englishman's Boy* (1996), which focused on the Cypress Hill Massacre of 1873 and its wilful distortion by Hollywood's film industry. Framed by chapters set in 1896 England, *The Last Crossing* looks back upon an epic journey through Montana and the south-western Canadian prairie.

A quarter of a century after his expedition to the New World, the English painter Charles Gaunt receives a newspaper clipping informing him of the demise of his former guide and interpreter Jerry Potts. This piece of news takes us back to 1871 when Gaunt and his older brother Addington travel to the North American West in search of Charles's twin brother Simon. However, Addington, a former military officer, is primarily interested in turning his experiences into a book. Charles, by contrast, is plagued by Simon's uncertain fate and in moments of despair regards himself as the "survivor of the cruellest separation," twins "who shared a womb torn from one another in the world." Although Gaunt is at the centre of *The Last Crossing*, other characters are equally important. Other members of the expedition, among them his lover Lucy Stoveall, the American

Civil War veteran Custis Straw, and Straw's companion Aloysius Dooley, serve as narrators. This multiplicity of voices is complemented by an omniscient narrator. As the reader follows the search party's route through the American and Canadian West, *The Last Crossing* gradually reveals each character's past.

One of the most complex figures in the novel is the scout Jerry Potts, a half-breed of Scottish and Blackfoot descent. As a mediator between Natives and Canadian government officials, the historical Jerry Potts, whose biography has fascinated Vanderhaeghe since his childhood, played a decisive, though mostly unacknowledged, role. A drifter between two worlds, he is known to Native people as Bear Child. Jerry Potts's close links to the Blackfoot and his intimate knowledge of the geography of the Canadian West prove to be indispensable to white society, but his multiple identities lead to his estrangement from his Crow wife Mary and their son Mitchell.

Among the many strengths of *The Last Crossing*, its attention to historical detail deserves special mention. Using extensive research, Vanderhaeghe creates scenes that will stay with the reader for a long time. Among these are Charles Gaunt's encounter with a Métis train of Red River carts on its way to Fort Edmonton, Custis Straw's haunting memories of the American Civil War, and the account of the Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864. *The Last Crossing* has everything a reader could ask for.

Picturing Childhoods

Budge Wilson
Illus. Susan Tooke
A Fiddle for Angus. Tundra $18.99

Ian Wallace
Illus. Harvey Chan
The True Story of Trapper Jack's Left Big Toe. Groundwood $18.95

Paul Yee
Ghost Train. Groundwood $15.95

Reviewed by Judy Brown

In a world many grown-ups say is going global and in a time they call post-national, three recent books for children use words and pictures to present their readers and viewers with definitions of that endangered idea known as "home."

In *A Fiddle for Angus*, writer Budge Wilson and illustrator Susan Tooke join forces to tell the story of a Cape Breton childhood. The Angus of the title is the youngest child of a musical family. Too young, too small, too insignificant to take on grown-up tasks, he is relegated to the role of humming in accompaniment to the music-making and singing of his parents and older siblings; feeling left out, he retreats and broods a bit. His family, alert to his unhappiness, gives him the opportunity to choose and the responsibility to learn an instrument. The story then becomes Wilson's account of a child discovering what it means to choose. Angus attends a ceilidh and, after "watch[ing] . . . and . . . listen[ing] hard to those fiddles," his attention focused in particular on "a girl called Natalie" (who looks for all the world like Natalie McMaster), whose fiddle captures the sounds of "the wind and the waves and every happy thing," he decides on that instrument so identified with the traditional and contemporary music of Atlantic Canada.

What is most pleasing about this story is that it doesn't end with Angus' choice:

it goes on to show the consequences for him as he struggles to learn—to replace the initial "*Squawk! Screech! Eeek!*" of bow across strings with "a wild jig" when "his fingers [have] learn[ed] to race up and down the strings like ripples over the water."

Susan Tooke's illustrations don't just co-exist happily with Budge Wilson's text; they intensify the links between music and place, between a boy and his Cape Breton village home. Images of the island's seascape and sea life—the waves, the beaches, the boats, the lobster traps, the herons, the sandpipers, the gulls—dominate the pages of the book as the sights and especially the sounds of this place inspire Angus's music-making. Most memorable, though, are Tooke's renderings of Angus. He is skinny, bespectacled, all knees and shins. His various facial expressions make him anything but a cartoon-like figure; instead, Tooke emphasizes what those who live and work among children know. Angus's spirits plummet when he feels left out; they skyrocket when he learns to free the island's music from his fiddle. His face betrays utmost intensity during his fiddle lessons with Big Murdoch MacDougall, and he grins from ear to ear as he plays "Song for the Mira" with his family on the beach. He becomes, as he says to his family, much like the character in that song, "a happy end to a sad story."

For the two boys depicted in *The True Story of Trapper Jack's Left Big Toe*, home is the North—Dawson City, Yukon, to be precise—and boyhood is lived in a community of mischievous adults who initiate youngsters not into a life of music-making but rather into a life of tall storytelling. Where Budge Wilson's book is an understated narrative voiced by a knowing adult, Ian Wallace's is a first-person account delivered by a boy named Josh. In Josh's tale, comic suspense created in the collaboration of words and pictures suggests a joke or a punchline around every narrative corner. Wallace does the work of both writer and illustrator here, and the result is the story of Gabe Kidder and Josh Yew, the latter a newcomer to the ways of the North. These two schoolmates set out to investigate the truth of the Yukon legend of the sourtoe cocktail, the principal ingredient of which is said to be the amputated toe of a wizened old trapper named Jack. A series of mishaps leads to the loss of the toe as it is first snatched out of the air by a three-legged dog and then spirited away by a teasing raven. Or so Josh asks his readers to believe. Where Wilson's story features a boy struggling to learn music, Wallace's shows a boy struggling to become a convincing spinner of tall tales.

The book's verbal wit—including any number of bad and funny puns on toes and pulling toes, on kidding and joshing—is neatly complemented by the visual humour of Wallace's illustrations. Pictures emphasize the snows lingering into a Yukon April: there is nothing romantic or soft about them. The mammoth illustration inside the book's front cover is the most clever geographical joke of all: it features road signs emphasizing how close Dawson City is to the Arctic Circle (185 miles) and how far it is from everywhere else: Haifa, Tokyo, Lagos, and Melbourne being among the cities mentioned. Most notable of all for Canadian readers is the requisite anti-Toronto joke—a sign reading "Toronto Who Cares."

The third of these books for young readers—Paul Yee and Harvey Chan's *Ghost Train*—pictures childhood past, childhood west, childhood serious. Yee's story here takes up the railway theme that also featured in several stories in his *Tales from Gold Mountain: Stories of the Chinese in the New World*. It looks at the building of the CPR not as the driving of the last spike caught in the famous photo of Donald Smith and company at Craigellachie, but as the long untold accounts of the men and boys who left their villages in China,

crossed the Pacific Ocean, and lived, worked, and died alone in the new land. *Ghost Train* tells the story of Choon-yi, a young girl physically disabled but gifted with a painter's vision and her father's love. Choon-Yi's father, like thousands of his countrymen, travels to the New World with dreams of making a better life for his family. But just after he has sent for his daughter to join him, he loses his life in those legendary gold mountains; he becomes one of many casualties produced in the treacherous project of building the railway.

Choon-yi's quest, like the quests of so many of the young characters in Yee's stories, is heroic. Her father's spirit communicates to her the need to paint the rail cars she has never seen before in her life, the necessity of evoking and riding the ghost train on which travel the spirits of the unnamed workers killed in the collapses, explosions and calamities of railway construction. He urges her then to take her railway painting back to China, promising her that if she burns her canvas on a certain mountaintop, the ghosts of the railroad will be released: their "ashes [will] sail on the four winds . . . [and their] souls will finally find their way home."

Harvey Chan's illustrations—paintings done in oils and drypoint etchings on copper—are complex, poignant, rich. They suggest the realistic and imaginative strands of Yee's historically based folktales. They emphasize the love of father and daughter for one another, the fear of a child alone in an indifferent if not hostile new world, and the presence of those spirits absent from traditional Canadian histories, the epic railway poetry of Ned Pratt, and the official photographs of the CPR.

Reading this trio of children's books at what Peter Hunt has called "picture speed" shows writers and illustrators for Canada's children defining home in places east, north, and west, and in times present and past. Text and pictures together remind us that Hunt was right when he called the reading of such books "a sophisticated act." And *A Fiddle for Angus, The True Story of Trapper Jack's Left Big Toe,* and *Ghost Train* suggest that the Alice of wonderland fame had more than an incidental point to make when she asked, "What is the use of a book without pictures or conversation?" What indeed.

A Legacy of Exploration

Ronald Wright
Henderson's Spear. Knopf $34.95

Barbara Hodgson
Hippolyte's Island. Raincoast $37.50

Reviewed by Alison Rukavina

A legacy of European expansion into the supposedly empty and unexplored reaches of the globe reverberates through to the present day, with global politics and policies still influenced by the remnants of past empire building. In the last forty years, the defining principles of exploration—discovering the unknown reaches of the earth, and the populating and civilizing of them—have begun to be questioned, and modern explorers, as well as armchair travellers, are today confronted with the consequences of imperialism. *Henderson's Spear* and *Hippolyte's Island* are two novels that examine the impact of European exploration on the descendants of the discoverers.

Henderson's Spear opens with Vancouverite Olivia Wyvern in a Tahitian jail under arrest for murder. Olivia travels to Tahiti in search of her father, missing in action since the Korean War, but believed to be alive and hiding somewhere in the South Pacific. The novel takes the form of a letter to the daughter Olivia gave up at birth, explaining her present predicament and her family's history. Included with the letter are passages from the journals of Olivia's distant relative, Frank Henderson,

who, as a young British officer in the nineteenth century, travelled to the South Seas on the *Bacchante* with Queen Victoria's grandsons Prince George and Prince Edward. Henderson's journal offers clues to the Henderson/Wyvern family secrets, including the origin of a spear that captivated Olivia and her father, the tragic fascination various family members have had with Tahiti, and the ways in which the legacy of Tahiti's colonial past shapes Olivia's past and present.

Henderson's Spear is an ambitious novel which alternates between the two points of view of Frank and Olivia, and the past and present of colonial politics in the South Seas. Ronald Wright probes the history and effects of empire, revealing that Olivia's quest to solve the mystery of her father's disappearance is intricately connected to Frank's journey to Tahiti a hundred years earlier. The novel suggests that the legacy of colonialism reverberates throughout the twentieth century and is less a legacy than a continuing actuality: depending on the eye of the beholder, empire building continues in the present.

The novel is made more poignant by the fact that Wright draws upon his own family history in the form of Frank Henderson, who actually existed and served on the *Bacchante* with Queen Victoria's grandsons. The Henderson passages, which seamlessly mix his actual journal entries with Wright's fictional plot, consequently reveal the flatness of Olivia's character and her sections of the novel. While Henderson is a fascinating study of a Victorian British adventurer—and the novel is worth reading for the Henderson passages alone—Olivia's character is fitfully developed through excessive plot twists that hinder the overall story rather than support it.

Hippolyte's Island also deals with the legacy of nineteenth-century politics and exploration. The novel is about one man, Hippolyte Webb, and his desire to emulate the early explorers and seek the unknown. However, Hippolyte is faced with the reality that in the modern age of global positioning systems, little is unknown or even unmapped. He decides to look not for the unknown, but the lost: the Aurora islands, a chain of three islands thought to have existed off the coast of South America a hundred years ago, but since discounted as fantasy. The first part of Hodgson's novel details Hippolyte's preparations and eventual voyage of re-discovery to these islands. The second part of the novel is set on the islands, as Hippolyte charts their flora and fauna, finding along the way evidence of past human settlement, including human remains. The last section of *Hippolyte's Island* is about what Hippolyte endures in trying to get a book about his voyage ready to print—not even his editor believes his account of islands that appear and disappear.

The mystery of Hodgson's novel is not whether the islands exist or not, or even that islands could go missing in the first place, but whether Hippolyte will be able to convince his skeptics and authenticate his claims. A lack of historical and photographic evidence leaves Hippolyte's editor questioning his discovery, and the final part of the novel is about this quest for authentication. The beautiful maps, charts, and pictures appended to this lively novel add to its apparent authenticity, as they represent Hippolyte's physical evidence under question. Eventually the novel reveals that past explorations of these islands directly influence Hippolyte's ability to authenticate his claims: what Hippolyte wants to uncover, others in the nineteenth century have attempted to cover.

Henderson's Spear and *Hippolyte's Island* examine the connections between modern travellers and their descendents, at the same time that they raise questions about the objectives of modern travel and its relation to past exploration.

L'écrivain et les honneurs: la nomination d'Herménégilde Chiasson au poste de lieutenant-gouverneur du N.-B.

Raoul Boudreau

L'importante controverse suscitée par la nomination de l'écrivain et artiste acadien Herménégilde Chiasson au poste de lieutenant-gouverneur du Nouveau-Brunswick au mois d'août 2003 est une bonne occasion de réfléchir d'une manière générale sur la place de l'art et de la littérature dans la société et plus particulièrement sur la place d'Herménégilde Chiasson dans la littérature acadienne.

Il est sans doute très imprudent et pour le moins délicat de se pencher sur un débat encore chaud sans bénéficier du recul indispensable à l'analyse sereine des positions exprimées. Néanmoins le recours à l'analyse de la structure et du fonctionnement de l'institution littéraire qui se dégage des travaux de Pierre Bourdieu peut fournir un cadre explicatif qui renvoie à une certaine généralité, mais qui affirme d'emblée la subjectivité de tous les agents dont le premier rôle est d'assurer la position qu'ils occupent dans l'institution. Ainsi Herménégilde Chiasson défend sa position d'écrivain institutionnalisé, tout comme ses opposants défendent leur position d'écrivains aspirant à la consécration, et comme moi-même, en tant que commentateur de la littérature acadienne contemporaine, je défends ma position d'interlocuteur crédible, sinon objectif, auprès des uns et des autres avec qui les contacts et les bonnes relations sont indispensables à la poursuite de mon travail. C'est donc dans ce contexte bien particulier où les positions institutionnelles ne sont pas réduites à des particularismes individuels, mais rapportées à des contraintes structurelles qu'on examinera cette controverse, sans oublier que le fait de déclarer sa position ne délivre pas de l'obligation de la défendre, mais relativise tout au plus cette défense. Il faut aussi considérer que l'idée d'un commentaire «extérieur» sur la littérature est une utopie puisqu'à partir du moment où on la commente, on s'engage dans l'institution. C'est d'autant plus vrai dans une institution de petite envergure où les positions sont multiformes : je suis ou j'ai été par exemple à la fois le professeur, le directeur de thèse, le critique et le commentateur, le dispensateur de prix littéraires et l'ami de bien des écrivains acadiens dont je parle.

Avant d'aborder la controverse comme telle, il convient de situer Herménégilde Chiasson dans la société acadienne et plus particulièrement dans l'institution littéraire acadienne. Cette dernière fonctionne comme toute institution littéraire, peu importe sa dimension : « Le champ n'est pas une coexistence d'individus ou de positions, c'est un lieu de forces et un lieu de conflit » (Pinto 112).[1] Les « positions caractéristiques . . . se définissent toujours relationnellement » (106) et celles-ci « n'ont de

sens qu'envisagé[e]s de façon différentielle : un poète d'avant-garde . . . est ce que n'est pas un romancier régionaliste . . . et, de même, leurs aspirations et leurs goûts se définissent par opposition » (109). C'est le principe de différenciation dont parle Bourdieu et l'institution littéraire acadienne, aussi conviviale qu'on ait pu la considérer, n'y échappe pas.[2] Antonine Maillet a été le premier écrivain acadien institutionnalisé ou consacré et au moment où, à partir de Montréal, elle prend l'envol qui la mènera au prix Goncourt en 1979, l'ensemble des jeunes poètes nationalistes et contestataires basés à Moncton se définissent en opposition à l'auteur de *La Sagouine.* Herménégilde Chiasson, qui est leur porte-parole le plus articulé, lui concède le mérite d'avoir fait passer la littérature acadienne de l'oral à l'écrit, ce qui est historiquement juste et tout à fait conforme à l'émergence des littératures, mais lui reproche le rôle de porte-parole de l'Acadie qu'elle accepte de jouer à partir de Montréal et surtout la vision traditionnelle, mythique, passéiste, voire exotisante qu'elle donne de l'Acadie et qui n'a rien à voir avec celle de ceux qui au jour le jour luttent sur le terrain pour construire un projet de société acadienne moderne et égalitaire, négocié avec les autres occupants du territoire. Par opposition, les poètes de Moncton se définissent comme modernes, la modernité étant le maître mot de tous les mouvements littéraires nouveaux qui tentent de s'imposer au détriment d'un mouvement déjà implanté, et cela depuis au moins la deuxième moitié du XIXe siècle. Ils habitent Moncton et non Montréal et font de cette donnée un choix politique; ils écrivent de la poésie et non du roman; ils particularisent leur langue, élément indispensable à la création d'une littérature, en ayant recours au besoin au vernaculaire moderne, le chiac du sud-est du Nouveau-Brunswick qui mélange l'anglais et le français, et non à l'acadien traditionnel comme le fait Antonine Maillet.

Ces poètes de Moncton sont solidaires et complices dans l'entreprise de création d'un champ littéraire autonome là où il n'existait rien de comparable dans la décennie précédente. Comme ils sont les seuls, avec les quelques critiques qui commencent à écrire sur la poésie acadienne, à pouvoir déterminer qui fera partie de ce champ, ils se dédicacent à qui mieux mieux chacun de leurs textes en un chassé-croisé de références qui marquent l'appartenance au champ et partant sa spécificité. Ils sont d'autant plus solidaires qu'ils sont égaux dans cette opposition à la tradition et que conformément à la phase d'émergence des littératures, aucun écrivain-modèle ne ressort, en dehors du contre-modèle que constitue Antonine Maillet. On assiste bien à cet «agencement collectif d'énonciation» dont parlent Deleuze et Guattari (29–35).[3]

Mais cette «convivialité» ne pouvait survivre à la phase d'émergence de la littérature et dès qu'un de ces poètes allait se démarquer à titre individuel comme le poète de la modernité, les autres devraient s'en différencier pour aspirer à une reconnaissance propre. Ce poète qui fut le premier à accéder au statut d'écrivain consacré, ce fut Herménégilde Chiasson. En plus de ses talents d'écrivain, il peut revendiquer une multidisciplinarité (artiste visuel, cinéaste, dramaturge) éminemment connotée comme moderne. C'est à partir du moment où Herménégilde Chiasson a commencé à prendre le statut d'écrivain consacré (entre 1990 et 1999, date de la consécration incontestable avec le prix du gouverneur général) qu'il a commencé à encourir les critiques des écrivains et artistes de la «relève» qui le considèrent désormais comme l'avant-garde consacrée face à leur propre volonté de se constituer en avant-garde véritable et légitime. N'oublions pas que la critique et la dénonciation sont des signes de reconnaissance de ceux vers qui on les dirige. On s'attaque à ceux qui représentent quelque chose

pour se construire en opposition, mais à leur hauteur. La critique est un signe de la valeur accordée à telle position, qui la définit comme un espace convoité. Comme Herménégilde Chiasson s'est opposé à Antonine Maillet, les jeunes poètes qui gravitent autour de la maison d'édition Perce-Neige et les artistes qui se regroupent au Centre culturel Aberdeen à Moncton s'opposent à Herménégilde Chiasson et en lui faisant parfois les mêmes reproches, comme celui de manifester un égocentrisme exagéré qui lui fait ramener l'ensemble de la production artistique acadienne à sa propre production. Ce qui est nouveau cependant et qui témoigne de l'évolution de l'institution littéraire acadienne, c'est que l'opposition ne se fait plus entre tradition et modernité, mais entre deux formes d'avant-garde, dont l'une est jugée consacrée par ceux qui aspirent à la remplacer.

Au cours des dernières années, Herménégilde Chiasson a été noyé sous une pluie de prix et de distinctions diverses : le prix du gouverneur général, trois prix Éloizes[4] pour la seule année 2000, le prix du Centre de recherche sur la civilisation canadienne-française, le Grand Prix de la francophonie canadienne, le prix Pascal-Poirier de la province du Nouveau-Brunswick, le prix quinquennal Antonine-Maillet-Acadie-Vie, récipiendaire de l'Ordre du Mérite et docteur honorifique en littérature de l'Université de Moncton, etc. Cela n'aurait guère de sens de dire qu'il a bien mérité tous ces prix puisque c'est une évidence que si l'institution littéraire le récompense, c'est qu'elle estime qu'il incarne le mieux les valeurs qu'elle représente. Mais il devient par le fait même une figure dont on doit se démarquer pour accéder à la reconnaissance. La contestation du statut d'écrivain d'Herménégilde Chiasson date de bien avant sa récente nomination au poste de lieutenant-gouverneur du Nouveau-Brunswick.

Ces rivalités à l'intérieur de l'institution littéraire ont aussi pris la forme de positions idéologiques divergentes sur quelques points précis qui ont servi de lieux de différenciation. Le premier est la vision de l'Acadie qu'on juge trop noire et pessimiste chez Chiasson et que les jeunes poètes veulent plus festive et libérée des fantômes du passé. Sur cette question du pessimisme de la vision de Chiasson, il ne faudrait pas perdre de vue que nous avons affaire ici à des textes de création et non de sociologie. Du point de vue de la littérature, le sentiment tragique qui se dégage des textes de Chiasson est pour moi d'une efficacité indiscutable, une puissante source d'émotion qui est une des raisons pour lesquelles ses textes ont été singularisés.

Le deuxième point de divergence, c'est la position par rapport à l'usage de l'anglais et du chiac dans les textes de la poésie et de la littérature acadiennes. Chiasson trouve que les jeunes poètes passent trop facilement à l'anglais et au chiac dans leurs textes, au risque d'une perte d'identité irrévocable, alors que ces derniers trouvent qu'il exagère la présence de ces variétés dans leurs textes et que sa position est trop puriste.

Un troisième point de divergence montre bien que le principe de différenciation fonctionne à plein et que de part et d'autre on accentue la distance avec son vis-à-vis pour faire reconnaître sa spécificité. Dans un article du magazine *Macleans*, H. Chiasson a porté un jugement sévère sur la relève artistique en Acadie, laissant entendre qu'elle était indigente (Demont 38). C'était bien sûr s'attaquer directement à la génération qui tente de prendre sa place et même si cette affirmation peut être modulée pour lui donner toutes les nuances et les réserves possibles, il reste qu'elle identifie clairement les forces en présence.

C'est sur ce terreau qu'est arrivée la nomination inattendue et c'est peut-être ce qui explique en partie la virulence du débat, quoique ces questions n'aient jamais été

abordées de manière très explicite. D'une certaine façon, on peut considérer que ces luttes de pouvoir qui émergent au grand jour sont un signe de l'évolution et de la maturation de l'institution littéraire et artistique acadiennes. Si la position d'écrivain reconnu suscite de telles luttes en Acadie, c'est le signe qu'il s'agit désormais d'un statut enviable et convoité.

À partir du 15 août 2003, date de la nomination d'Herménégilde Chiasson, jusqu'au début du mois d'octobre, le journal acadien *L'Acadie Nouvelle* a publié presque quotidiennement des articles, des chroniques, des éditoriaux, et des lettres d'opinion du lecteur partagés entre l'approbation et la désapprobation de cette nomination. Une grande partie du débat a très peu de choses à voir avec la littérature ou l'art, et la brièveté des interventions, de même que l'incapacité de certains à exprimer clairement leur pensée, rendent les propos parfois très ambigus. Il en a résulté, comme dans toute controverse, bon nombre de malentendus, certains involontaires et d'autres créés par la mauvaise foi.

On peut néanmoins constater que certains opposants considèrent le fait de se mettre au service de la reine et de lui prêter serment comme une trahison de la part d'un Acadien. Pourtant cet argument n'a pas été soulevé quand deux Acadiens ont précédemment été nommés lieutenant-gouverneur du Nouveau-Brunswick[5] et s'il fallait que tout Acadien renonce à prêter serment à la reine, il n'y aurait jamais eu ni députés acadiens, ni juges acadiens. Une telle marginalisation volontaire constituerait évidemment une dégénérescence collective programmée. Si on a réagi différemment dans le cas d'Herménégilde Chiasson, c'est sans doute parce que ses deux prédécesseurs proviennent du milieu de la politique et des affaires, alors qu'il est un artiste appartenant à la sphère restreinte de production, comme on le verra plus loin. Il semble en fait que l'opposition à la nomination d'Herménégilde Chiasson comme lieutenant-gouverneur se soit cristallisée autour de la question de la demande d'excuses à la reine pour la Déportation et que cette opposition ait été menée principalement par les plus militants des nationalistes acadiens. Herménégilde Chiasson s'est en effet déclaré contre cette demande d'excuses et proche de la position du député libéral de Beauséjour, Dominic Leblanc, sur la question.

Venons-en aux arguments qui touchent de plus près le domaine artistique et culturel qui m'intéresse particulièrement ici. Certaines des personnes favorables à cette nomination ont évoqué le fait qu'elle contribuerait à donner de l'importance aux arts et à la culture et le principal intéressé a lui-même parlé de la volonté que son travail ait un impact sur le monde culturel et de son souci d'inscrire la culture dans la société (Ricard 3). Certes, ce n'est pas la première fois qu'un artiste est nommé à un poste de pouvoir. On n'a qu'à penser, à l'échelle canadienne, à la nomination du couple vice-royal Adrienne Clarkson et John Ralston Saul et à la nomination de Jean Lapointe, humoriste et chanteur québécois, et de Viola Léger, comédienne acadienne et incarnation iconique du personnage de la Sagouine d'Antonine Maillet, au Sénat. À l'échelle internationale on peut citer André Malraux, Vaclav Havel ou Jorge Semprun, mais il y a une différence entre le fait de renoncer à sa liberté créatrice pour un poste de pouvoir ministériel au sein de l'exécutif d'un gouvernement et y renoncer pour un poste honorifique au pouvoir largement symbolique, comme c'est le cas pour le poste de lieutenant-gouverneur. Cela dit, il faut quand même accorder une certaine crédibilité aux arguments qui font état de l'impact d'une telle nomination sur le rayonnement des arts dans la société. Si l'on peut être nommé lieutenant-gouverneur sur la seule foi de son travail artistique, c'est une reconnaissance sociale remarquable de ce travail. L'art ne peut plus

à ce moment-là être considéré comme une activité marginale ayant un impact douteux sur la société et dont le producteur est au mieux soupçonné d'une incapacité à faire un vrai travail et au pire d'une paresse congénitale. L'art peut donc conduire à une véritable reconnaissance sociale dans des domaines qui sortent complètement de la sphère artistique. Une telle nomination marque une évolution de la société dans sa façon de considérer l'art et les artistes et la réponse de celui à qui on la propose n'a pas que des conséquences individuelles. S'il y renonce, il renonce aussi à cette reconnaissance non seulement pour son propre travail, mais pour l'art en général. Mais s'il accepte, il doit renoncer temporairement, pendant la durée de son mandat, à la fois à la liberté indispensable à la création artistique et à cette production même, du moins sous sa forme publiée. (Rien ne l'empêche de produire pour lui-même, quitte à publier plus tard.) Ainsi ce que certains interprètent comme le fait de céder aux sirènes de la sécurité financière peut aussi être vu comme une forme de renoncement pour la cause des artistes en général.

On peut aller plus loin encore, et considérer que l'artiste qui accepte une telle nomination doit renoncer à certaines valeurs qui sont associées au statut d'artiste de ce que Bourdieu nomme la sphère restreinte de production et c'est là que cette situation illustre avec éclat le paradoxe, ce que Dominique Maingueneau appelle la paratopie, de l'écrivain. L'artiste qui produit dans la sphère restreinte n'a pas de récompense monétaire justement parce qu'il touche un public restreint et sélect, une élite qui lui confère un capital symbolique considérable. Il s'établit ici un rapport inversement proportionnel entre la qualité et la quantité. Ce qu'on perd en capital monétaire, on le gagne en capital symbolique et inversement.

> . . . l'opposition entre l'artiste et le bourgeois, l'art et l'argent, tend à se répéter dans le champ littéraire. Ces groupes concurrents, s'ils entendent bien, les uns et les autres, obtenir une reconnaissance littéraire, n'en diffèrent pas moins sur leurs hiérarchies : qui entend exceller comme artiste pur ne peut le faire qu'au détriment de la réussite commerciale, et, inversement, la quête de la richesse et des honneurs présuppose et induit le renoncement à la pureté esthétique. . . . Il faut choisir : on ne peut guère cumuler toutes les espèces de profit. (Pinto 112)

C'est à ce principe implicite que la nomination d'H. Chiasson semble contrevenir. Certaines valeurs bien spécifiques sont associées peu ou prou, et avec toutes les variations et exceptions que l'on voudra, à l'artiste pur : la modernité, voire l'avant-garde, l'originalité et l'expérimentation en ce qui concerne son art. En ce qui concerne sa vie ou sa position sociale, la marginalité, la critique, la liberté parfois extrême par rapport aux conventions morales, sociales, religieuses, le renoncement aux biens matériels, la spontanéité, la franchise. Or ces valeurs sont directement opposées à celles qu'on associe à un poste comme celui de lieutenant-gouverneur entouré d'un protocole et d'un décorum très réglementés : la réserve et la retenue, les conventions, l'artifice, la représentation, les mondanités, la tradition, la célébration. On ne peut certes pas expliquer la virulence de l'opposition à cette nomination sans invoquer les motifs politiques, mais il n'est pas étonnant qu'on se soit étonné de voir Herménégilde Chiasson dans cette position, car il a été le critique le plus profond, aussi bien de la société acadienne elle-même, que des forces qui l'aliènent. C'est là tout le paradoxe de l'écrivain qui cherche la reconnaissance d'une société dont il se met en marge, qu'il critique sans réserve, dont il se distancie littéralement et qui finit par obtenir cette reconnaissance, qui suggère une forte intégration à cette société dont au fond il ne fait pas vraiment partie.

On peut considérer que la nomination du

15 août dernier n'est que la première étape d'une série d'événements et il faut tout au moins réserver son jugement en attendant la suite. On jugera H. Chiasson à ses actions pendant et après son mandat de lieutenant-gouverneur. S'il est devenu un écrivain reconnu, c'est parce qu'il a fait preuve d'une grande originalité, d'une grande diversité de moyens et de ressources. Indépendamment de ce qu'on peut penser de cette nomination, cela ne change rien à la qualité de l'œuvre déjà produite. Cet écrivain n'a jamais eu peur de la controverse et il a su se mériter le respect de ceux-là même qu'il a critiqués. Il a produit la critique la plus incisive de la société acadienne et celle-ci l'a reconnu au plus haut point. Il a dénoncé de la manière la plus virulente l'hégémonie du Québec sur la francophonie canadienne, mais il n'y a pas beaucoup de cercles québécois qui ne lui accordent la plus haute estime. Il n'est pas dit qu'il ne trouvera pas le moyen de tirer son épingle du jeu dans la position qu'il occupe présentement. Ses discours publics lors de son assermentation et de la réception de l'Ordre du Mérite de l'Université de Moncton ont été des prestations remarquables de perspicacité et de sensibilité, sans être véhémentes. Mais l'évolution de l'Acadie en est peut-être à un stade qui commande moins la véhémence que l'ouverture et la concertation.

NOTES

1 Tout mon commentaire s'inspire de manière générale de l'ouvrage *Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* de Pierre Bourdieu et du livre de Louis Pinto.
2 Voir l'article « Les poètes de la convivialité » de Marcel Olscamp.
3 Pour un commentaire magistral de ce texte, voir Lise Gauvin.
4 Les prix Éloizes sont des prix annuels décernés aux artistes acadiens dans toutes les disciplines artistiques par l'Association acadienne des artistes professionnels du Nouveau-Brunswick. En 2000, H. Chiasson a obtenu le prix en littérature, en arts visuels et en théâtre.
5 Hédard Robichaud, ancien ministre fédéral des pêches, lieutenant-gouverneur de 1971–1981 et Gilbert Finn, ancien président directeur général d'Assomption-Vie et recteur de l'Université de Moncton, de 1987 à 1994.

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Zigzag

Laurie Ricou

It's getting more and more difficult to remember what literary studies once were about. And most of us gasp, or know colleagues who gasp, at the implications in the latest conference program or journal table of contents or academic c.v. for what might now pass as research on literature. In sympathy—in both senses—the study of Canadian literature goes off in all directions, and readers of these end-pages will wonder how this or that title deserves mention, or micro-review, in the pages of a journal entitled *Canadian Literature.*

What do books on Rudyard Kipling, English gardens, and the history of the tomato have to do with Canadian literature? Individual interests will suggest different answers or disdainful dismissals. In my reading, I am looking for or speculating on the possible contact points: I'll try to imagine why or when a student of Can Lit might want to zig into a book on cruising Desolation Sound or zag into a history of grass.

Zigzag comes from the German word for tack, that nautical side-to-side movement crucial to sailing—especially against the wind. This literal connection is enough of a reason to start with four books about water travel. Anne and Laurence Yeadon-Jones's *Desolation Sound and The Discovery Islands* (Raincoast $44.95) is a large-format, glossy cruising guide and a good example of a book that zigzags widely from straight-ahead Canadian literature. Yet, the book's "Selected Reading" recognizes the value of some literary guidance to waterways: in addition to cookbooks and guides to shorebirds, the list includes books by M. Wylie Blanchet, Beth Hill, Charles Lillard, Kathrene Pinkerton, plus Hilary Stewart's lyrically opinionated *On Island Time* (1998). This "Dream-Speaker Cruising Guide" would be a nice text in which to study maps and mapping, both verbal and visual. The hand-drawn charts might be called anecdotal mapping, with opinions and folk wisdom casually jotted here and there. The book might also intrigue students of place names since the authors often add "named by us" to the place names; the index to place names would extend this understanding beyond standard dictionaries. Joanna Streetly's *Paddling Through Time: A Kayaking Journey through Clayoquot Sound* (Raincoast $29.95) is quite a literate account of a seven-day ocean kayaking trip, but its overt literary dimensions end with the book's epigraph from Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*: "There is nothing—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats." For those of us more apt to be messing about in books, the main interest here might be generic. As the title indicates, Streetly fuses the wondering and buoyant historical present tense with a musing homage to the history (especially aboriginal) of place. She thinks of the forest as "historical show case": "Museums are hardly necessary on this coast; all that is needed are eyes to look

with and time for contemplation." Helen Piddington contemplates mainly her personal and family history as, in discrete anecdotes of two to four pages, she remembers her family's twenty-six years of creating a home in Loughborough Inlet (250 km north of Vancouver). Again, the overt literary dimensions of *The Inlet: Memoir of a Modern Pioneer* (Harbour $32.95) are few, although I'm intrigued by the buried dialectic between Loughborough and Paris, which includes a return home lured by the call of Haida art and a tribute to the friendship of Mavis Gallant. The book might be of more interest to the fine arts: it is generously illustrated with Piddington's swirls of domestic impressionism in charcoal and pastels. As Canadian literature, the book will be of evident interest in the burgeoning field of autobiography (see *Canadian Literature* #172). If I were going there, I would begin where Piddington ends, with the evocative notion of the French *recul*, key to this memoir, and to the life described: it is a self-reflexive art form, the aesthetic patterning that comes from a willed stepping back, sailing obliquely to detect pattern where collision might have been.

Don Randall, a Canadian scholar, has published *Kipling's Imperial Boy: Adolescence and Cultural Hybridity* (Palgrave np), a postcolonial reading of Kipling's adolescent males as figures that at once "assert" and "sub-vert imperial authority." Although without explicit reference to Canadian literature, Randall's scrupulous unpacking of the ideology of "the boy" would be useful context for reading *The English Patient*, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, the gender issue in *The Imperialist*, and most especially, I think, the conundrum of Findley's Robert Ross. Ross is, of course, shaped by the genre of the boy's adventure tale. The influence of this genre in a host of places could be extended to other topics suggested by Randall's study: the constructing of native people as children, and the continuing figuring of Canada itself as gangling adolescent.

Stephanie Foote's *Regional Fictions: Culture and Identity in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (U of Wisconsin P, US $25.95), which incidentally also examines the ideology of the child figure, addresses a subject more central to Canadian Studies. Foote focuses on late nineteenth-century local colour fiction and its marketing, exploring the paradox that regional fiction assimilates—and sometimes elides—significant difference to articulate a representative nationalism. Of course, much recent work on Canadian regional fiction (by, for example, Alison Calder, Lisa Chalykoff, Frank Davey, and Ursula Kelly) reads the dimensions of ethnicity and class in construction of region. Foote's work will provide a useful extension of these studies.

In his foreword to Chris Czajkowski's *Cabin at Singing River* (Raincoast $21.95), Peter Gzowski gives us the lit crit context for a reissue of this book: Buckler, Seton, Mitchell, Mowat—maybe especially Mowat—and configurations of a "Wacousta Syndrome" and "garrison mentality." Most of these pieces were originally letters to Gzowski's *Morningside*. For Czajkowski, even Salmon Arm is an oppressively insulated urban garrison. As an alternative to the stifling city, she builds her own log cabin on Lonesome Lake in the Coast Range east of Bella Coola, twenty-seven miles from the nearest road. "This is why I am here," she writes to Canadians mythed on the North, "to experience one of the few places on Earth where great wild creatures still roam free. What a privilege it is to be a part of the primal world"(34). Readers (or listeners) can share the giant, wild experience vicariously in friendly prose, teasing with detail, packed with ecstatic modifiers. Perhaps more epistolary intimacy is found in Herb Curtis's anecdotes than in Czajkowski's letters to a national radio show. Certainly his avuncular dialect stories are more self-conscious. *Luther Corhern's Salmon Camp*

Chronicles (Goose Lane $17.95) are, after all, fiction, albeit masquerading as fireside conversations and banter—all musing on the magnetism of the Miramichi. Curtis's fictionalized self makes I-don't-know-what-I'm-talking-about his defining appeal to the reader's credibility. And whether it's his reflections on how to describe rain or his tribute to Alden Nowlan, the self-deprecating ego gives literary interest beyond the mythic. He sends up the very study of naming I emphasized above in discussing the Yeadon-Jones book. Even the "form" here is an entertaining burlesque. Luther is a logger, a role full of muscled gusto and tall tales that he understands as keeping a daily "log" of the fish caught (or not) along the Miramichi. Most of the entries make this element overt by ending the levity of this or that experience with a slightly stolid log entry designed to bring any pretentiousness back up against the banal.

Tom Allen's *Rolling Home: A Cross-Canada Railroad Memoir* (Penguin/Viking $35.00) leaves the lonesome cabin for the enclosure of the parlour car from sea to sea. The mythology of primal worlds meets the mythology of the transcontinental railroad: "Older Canadians speak mistily of the train. They talk of its spirit, and how it defined the land." But Allen seldom embraces the sentimentality of national essence without a twinkle of irony. Because the irony repeatedly extends to wry reflections on the possibilities and limits of its own storytelling, Allen's book entertains, delightfully and grumpily, and adds to a form of the quizzical memoir that might nicely be added to the study of forms of autobiography. One of the most memorable passages muses on the notion of "stone memory," the idea that stone actually stores sound indefinitely, that, therefore, the Shield literally has the "oral history of Canada stored in its vaults," and that the people who live in its small railroad towns are almost invariably "natural story tellers." I'm going to share some of Allen's thoughts with my students the next time I teach *Towards the Last Spike.*

Students of the pastoral tradition might be the most obvious among literary types to open Graham Harvey's *The Forgiveness of Nature: The Story of Grass* (Jonathan Cape $45.95). There they would find the literal, biological, working basis of a venerable literary type. They would also find an astonishing exemplar of the scholarly zigzag. Harvey describes himself as a "farming journalist": he has written a diffuse environmental and cultural history that opens with Édouard Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, zigs to turf technology at West Ham football club, zags to the importing into Britain of three hundred thousand tonnes of guano (for fertilizer) in the 1840s, zigs to Darwin on worms, all wrapped in epigraphs from John Clare and the Book of Job. These same students of pastoral might turn to sociologist Douglas Harper's study of the industrial transformation of US dairy-farming, *Changing Works: Visions of a Lost Agriculture* (U of Chicago P US $35), although Harper's work would, I think, most especially interest students of Canadian rural writing, who might be probing such topics as representations of landscapes, gendered roles, or material culture. Harper's is a scholarly report on an academic project, but—again it may be evidence of discipline-blur—it is also an album of photographs, a study of photography, "visual anthropology" (a subdiscipline I had been unaware of), an oral history, and a speculative discussion of "symbolic interaction" between humans and animals. The space available in this overview does not permit me to elaborate. But it is important to recognize that Harper does not over-interpret. Frequently, he is content to record the farmers' own stories and exchanges, to inflect the scholar's generalizing conclusions with the worker's individual idiosyncrasies. I learned that Buck Henry knows the only way to stop three angry bulls from destroying his cattle trailer is to

get on the road and then "slam the brakes . . . to throw them off balance." In short, to prevent damage, "Zigzag the truck" (225).

Readers of grass, pastoral, agricultural method, and the primal wild might also need information about particular species. (Let's say, for example, readers of Theresa Kishkan's *Sisters of Grass.*) Thirty-five species of grass (among a total of 485) are depicted in *Rare Vascular Plants of Alberta,* published by the Alberta Native Plant Council (U of Alberta P/Canadian Forest Service $29.95). This guidebook is accessibly designed, with good use of photographs, drawings, and two distribution maps (Alberta and North America) for each item. Detailed knowledge about a particular species may seem to be no more than incidental reference work and gloss for a student of literature. But recent books in the burgeoning field describing itself as ecocriticism show that an entire literature (and culture) might be found in a particular species. Michael Cohen's *Garden of Bristlecones: Tales of Change in the Great Basin* is, perhaps, the best exemplar. Andrew F. Smith shows what a historian will make of a single species in *The Tomato in America: Early History, Culture, and Cookery* (1994; rpt U of Illinois P 2001 US $14.95). This scrupulously documented book focuses on the US in the early decades of the nineteenth century, patiently considering competing introduction narratives for this fruit once considered poisonous, and demonstrating a linguist's care in contemplating names and their function. Canada does appear tangentially in the story, since it was apparently at McGill that Dr. John Cook Bennett first found tomatoes that could be used for medicinal purposes.

In 1992, I took my students, as I do most years, to UBC's Museum of Anthropology. Bill McLennan led us that year through the exhibit of some of the results of the Image Recovery Project. It was one of the most memorable visits because we were able to *see* what time and patina had elided. We were able to watch several First Nations artists recreating the once-hidden patterns in contemporary works. What was under erasure emerged un-erased, and doubled. Much of the 1992 exhibition and the project of infrared photography behind it is recorded in Bill McLennan and Karen Duffek's *The Transforming Image: Painted Arts and the Northwest Coast First Nations* (UBC P $65.00). The book is filled with story, ancient and recent, of wondering, transforming; it patiently explains regional distinction and the distinguishing signatures of individual artists. Bill McLennan acknowledges the insight provided by "Susan Point's ongoing work to revitalize the nuances of Coast Salish Style." That work spawned a major exhibit at the Spirit Wrestler Gallery in Vancouver, November-December 2000 and the accompanying catalogue *Susan Point: Coast Salish Artist* (Douglas & McIntyre/U of Washington P $39.95). Point works in glass, stone, polymer, and steel—as well as carving in wood and printing on paper. Her palette—burgundy, blue-grey, yellow—is a constant surprise to the viewer expecting something "traditional." The catalogue provides valuable commentary and starting points—often in Point's own words—to read this astonishingly varied artist. And if the visuals themselves are not enough, the student of Canadian literature can pause over Point's poem "Fragment," or contemplate her interest in Imagism or enjoy how, for example, the work "Camouflage" is both a visual and *verbal* pun: frog hides lily pad instead of using it for camouflage. Artist won't hide.

The prevailing wind in this review is the less-than-evidently-literary book. And to make any headway, we've had to tack one way or another in almost every paragraph. If we stay on this northwest leg for a moment more, we encounter the two most conventionally literary texts on this sailing. Dick Hammond has retold his father's sto-

ries in two earlier volumes. *A Touch of Strange: Amazing Tales of the Coast* (Harbour $32.95) is the final volume in the trilogy. Down-to-earth, rough 'n ready "Father" appears in his own stories in the third person, framed by his son's mediation and contextualizing. The stories tell of booming near Powell River, of monsters and canoes; they provide insider details about effective axe-work and growing baby arbutus trees. Despite the West Coast place names, this storyteller provides little sense of the physical setting, but a good sense of the place defined by narratives of the accidental and diffident male adventurer. The author does incorporate into his telling the problems of faulty memory, so that the book becomes a reflexive narrative of nostalgia and recall. Another amazing tale of the coast is a documentary novel by G. Stewart Nash titled *The Last 300 Miles* (Caitlin P $18.95). I have argued that the entrepreneurial romance based on resource extraction is a foundational narrative in BC fiction. Nash begins there, with the search for gold, but turns it, perhaps, in the direction of that larger Canadian myth of long-distance communication. Stephen Doyle leaves his San Francisco home to survey a telegraph line planned for northern BC and on through Alaska to Russia. Nash modifies lazily, maps generically, and curses euphemistically. A story of love lost and lost again shudders beneath the adventure story, but the tornadic encounters with Bukwas (Sasquatch) slam other possible stories aside, so that the historic underpinning and overt research are obscured by screams and violent shaking.

Entrepreneurial romance also structures Doreen Armitage's *Burrard Inlet: A History* (Harbour $32.95). A body of water rapidly evolves from safe harbour to a port trading "$30 billion in goods with more than 90 nations." But, for the most part, Armitage writes history to record facts, and narrative connection is more incidental than designed. Two of Burrard Inlet's poets make an appearance: Pauline Johnson (but in a footnote) and—irresistibly—Malcolm Lowry, who culminates the catalogue of the Inlet's squatters in a section titled longingly, if ironically, "Alternative Lifestyles." But many of the port's most interesting writers, Ethel Wilson or Joseph Ferrone (author of *Boom Boom*), make no appearance. Both Armitage and Nash pay some specific attention to place names, especially to ways in which half-understood aboriginal terms might hide and reveal different readings of place. This aspect of history—and an increasingly evident aspect perhaps of both Canadian writing and literary study—finds sprightly treatment in *Namely Vancouver: A Hidden History of Vancouver Place Names* (Arsenal Pulp $19.95) by Tom Snyders and Jennifer O'Rourke. Much of the information is borrowed, of course, but it is still entertaining. And the distinct big-business-bad/politicians-usually-corrupt bias here adds a bite, and some sense of insider's intimacy. I liked that the book includes the names of businesses, parks, buildings, and bridges, as well as of streets. And I did find something hidden in my own neighbourhood (and it's as local wordscape that such books function). Reading about the farming and fishing village of Ladner, just south of Vancouver, I learned that the UBC carillon I walk under every day was donated by Leon Ladner and is intended to honour BC pioneers. I live on Cypress Street, for which there is an entry, but no explanation. But the entry refers one to Hamilton's Arbor, one of many intriguing sidebars and cross-references in the book, and remarks approvingly that Lauchlan Alexander Hamilton, who proposed an alphabet of tree names, chose mostly those native to BC: "not bad for a transplanted Ontarian who had lived in BC for little more than two years." A glossy companion to *Namely Vancouver* would be *Vancouver Then and Now* by Chuck Davis, with photographs by

John McQuarrie (Magic Light $45.00), one in a series that has covered or will cover Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal, Quebec City, Halifax and Winnipeg.

Regional cuisine, surely, is more a matter of language than of local ingredients— as we might contemplate while preparing some "Cowboy Quesadillas with Avocado Cream Dipping Sauce" or "Lamb Chops in Rocky Mountain Mint Sauce" from Cinda Chavich's *High Plains: The Joy of Alberta Cuisine* (Fifth House $29.95). This attractively designed and thoughtful book features short essays on the food industry in Alberta throughout, and a list of producers with contact information. It's a cookbook that's more than a cookbook, and in both aspects likely to appeal to the growing number of Canadian literary scholars interested in food (as evident in *Essays on Canadian Writing* #78 [Winter 2002], which focuses on this topic).

The term wilderness is much contested these days, but it's perhaps somehow comforting to note that the equation Canadian = wilderness is still advanced unquestioningly in various quarters. Charles Williams writes a long general essay in *A Wilderness Called Home: Dispatches from the Wild Heart of Canada* (Penguin $33.00) that begins on board a freighter on the Great Lakes and extends from West Coast to East. The essence of wilderness for Wilkins, working etymologically, is "outlandishness" and he writes the combination of "seductive and unsettling" that will connect Canadian loonscape to planetary health. Wilkins describes an intricate tattoo of the rockscape and foliage of Blacks Harbour, New Brunswick on a man's back on Toronto's King Street. He insists on the crucial importance of identifying with animals, and is continually alert to the literary texts, Ken Kesey as well as W. O. Mitchell, that shape our connection to the places in which we live. These essays also listen to Canadian music and look at Canadian painting, always testing for synchronicity, both biological and linguistic. A book worth having. Maria Coffey and Dag Goering have written a journal with photographs titled *Visions of the Wild: A Voyage by Kayak around Vancouver Island* (Harbour $36.95). But here the wild is more a matter of a concept: of setting a goal, a personal test, and an adventure. And the reader will find the visions and the implied idealizing more memorable: learning to digest the gyros in a pub in Port Hardy, or the symmetry of the photo of Dag building a driftwood fire, or the Wildside Booksellers and Espresso Bar in Tofino. Such zigzag does have purpose and direction, although the trip takes a lot longer than the direct route. But in the zigzag you're mostly aware of turning sharply from a specific path or line of travel—and it may be enough just to enjoy the changes in direction.

Articles, Opinions & Notes

Raoul **Boudreau** est professeur titulaire et directeur au département d'études françaises de l'Université de Moncton, N.-B. Avec le soutien du Conseil de recherche en sciences humaines du Canada, il poursuit des recherches sur le rapport à la langue en littérature acadienne et sur les rapports institutionnels entre littératures acadienne, québécoise et française. Ses articles, principalement sur la littérature acadienne, paraissent dans les publications du réseau international des études canadiennes et francophones.

Carter F. **Hanson** is Assistant Professor of English at Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana. He is currently working on a book on the literature of nineteenth-century British emigration to Canada. His other research interests include adolescent literature and the Victorian novel. His recent scholarly work has appeared in *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* and the *American Review of Canadian Studies.*

Laurie **Kruk** teaches at Nipissing University in North Bay, Ontario. She has published articles on Atwood, Kogawa, Findley, and MacLeod. She is also a published poet (*Theories of the World*, 1992). Her collection of interviews, *The Voice is the Story: Conversations with Canadian Writers of Short Fiction* (Mosaic, 2003), has recently been published.

Laura **Robinson** teaches children's literature at Nipissing University in North Bay, Ontario. She has published articles on L.M. Montgomery, Margaret Atwood, and Ann-Marie MacDonald; her short fiction has appeared in *Wascana Review* and is forthcoming in *torquere.* Her research interests include Montgomery and Canadian women writers, feminist theory, queer theory, and the history of sexuality.

Monique **Tschofen** is Assistant Professor of English and Communications and Culture at Ryerson University. She is the editor of *Kristjana Gunnars: Essays on her Work* (Guernica 2004), and *New Critical Essays on Atom Egoyan* (Wilfrid Laurier Press, in progress). Her current research is on sensation, pleasure, and embodiment.

Poems

Susan Andrews **Grace** lives in Nelson, BC; Paddy **McCallum** lives in Gibsons, BC; Roger **Nash** lives in Sudbury, Ontario; Meredith **Quartermain** lives in Vancouver; John **Reibetanz** lives in Toronto; K. V. **Skene** lives in Swanage, England; Elana **Wolff** lives in Thornhill, Ontario.

Reviews

Bert **Almon** lives in Edmonton; Charles **Barbour**, Guy **Beauregard**, Marlene **Briggs**, Judy **Brown**, John Xiros **Cooper**, Graham **Good**, Stephen **Guy-Bray**, Brook **Houglum**, Laurie **McNeill**, Kevin **McNeilly**, Ben **Packer**, Alain-Michel **Rocheleau**, Roger **Seamon**, and Christine **St-Pierre** teach at the University of British Columbia; Gordon **Bölling** teaches at the University of Cologne; Alison **Calder** and Rosmarin **Heidenreich** teach at the University of Manitoba; George Elliott **Clarke** teaches at the University of Toronto; Melanie **Collado** at the University of Lethbridge; Meredith **Criglington** and Paul **Stuewe** live in Toronto; Vincent **Desroches** teaches at Western Michigan University; Renate **Eigenbrod** at Acadia University; Len **Falkenstein** at the University of New Brunswick; Michael **Fralic** lives in Saskatoon; Eric **Henderson** lives in Victoria; Allan **Hepburn**, Ian **Rae**, and Peter **Urquhart** teach at McGill University; Susan **Holbrook** teaches at the University of Windsor; Renée **Hulan** at St. Mary's University; Lorna **Hutchison** lives in Montreal; Christoph **Irmscher** teaches at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County; Marilyn **Iwama** lives in Halifax; Jennifer **Jay** and Alison **Rukavina** teach at the University of Alberta; Lawrence **Mathews** and Édouard Magessa **O'Reilly** at Memorial University of Newfoundland; Philipp **Maurer** teaches at the Universität Bonn; Charles E. **May** lives in California; Dominique **Perron** teaches at the University of Calgary; Norman **Ravvin** at Concordia University; Mavis **Reimer** at the University of Winnipeg; Stuart **Sillars** at the Universitetet i Bergen; Sebastien **Simard** lives in Alma, QC; Deborah **Torkko** and Lynn **Wytenbroek** teach at Malaspina University College; Susan **Wasserman** lives in Vancouver; and Claire **Wilkshire** in St John's.

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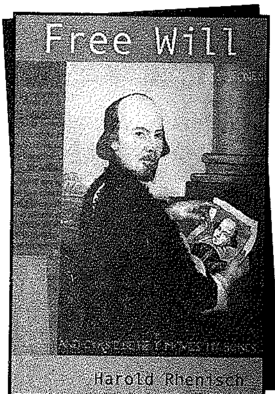

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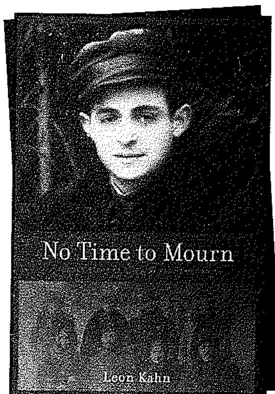

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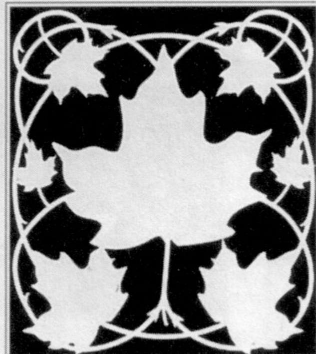

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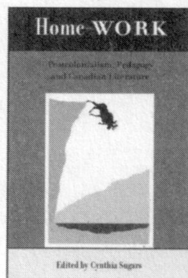

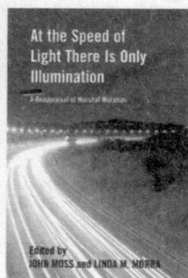

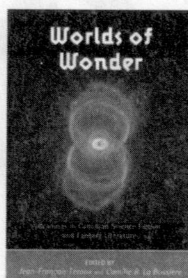

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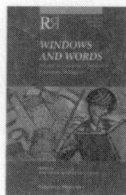

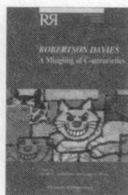

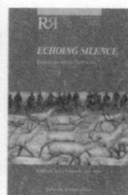

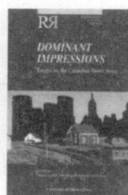

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