Canadian Literature / Littérature *canadienne*

A Quarterly of Criticism and Review
Number 188, Spring 2006
Published by The University of British Columbia, Vancouver
Editor: Laurie Ricou
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GST R108161779

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

Canada

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

For subscriptions, back issues (as available), and annual and cumulative indexes, write Managing Editor, *Canadian Literature*, at the address below.

Publications Mail Agreement NO. 40592543
Registration NO. 08647.

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO

Canadian Literature
The University of British Columbia
Buchanan E158 - 1866 Main Mall,
Vancouver, B.C.
Canada V6T 1Z1

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

SUBSCRIPTIONS: $50 INDIVIDUAL;
$79 INSTITUTIONAL GST INCLUDED.
OUTSIDE CANADA: US $70 INDIVIDUAL;
US $99 INSTITUTIONAL.

ISSN 0008-4360

Managing Editor: Donna Chin
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Layout: Artegraphica Design Co. Ltd.
Illustrations: George Kuthan
Printing: Hignell Printing Limited
Typefaces: Minion and Univers
Paper: recycled and acid-free

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of articles, interviews, and other commentaries relating to writers and writing in Canada, and of previously unpublished poems by Canadian writers.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

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

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Editorial

Soyez mystérieuses

Laurie Ricou

I have met Mavis Gallant perhaps four times. Two meetings were of the routine introduce-the-guest-writer sort. Surprise marked our first encounter and made it memorable. It was spring 1983; my family and I had been in Strasbourg less than an hour, but I was already in the streets searching for a hotel to which we might escape from our own dingy two-star and its seemingly hostile staff. I recognized Gallant crossing the street—I'm not sure how—and hailed her (quite uncharacteristically): "S'il vous plait, Madame Gallant? Is there any room in your hotel?" At once, Gallant took me and my 10-year-old son to her hotel, and when we found it full, she guided us down nearby streets to introduce us at two others. Gallant, I have since heard, has some reputation for prickliness. But, to a total stranger that day, she was understanding and reassuring. We did not find a better room, but we found a generous gesture in which to be happy.

This experience came back to me in April 2005, as I was warming to the noticeable pan-European warmth of Gallant's city. Seventy teachers and writers assembled at a conference in Paris focused on the short story, on Gallant's signature genre. The conference had many fine moments—a ringing salute to Alistair MacLeod's Celtic orality, an affectionate tracing of inter-textual intricacies in David Malouf, a challenging call to agree to a moratorium on the political in post-colonial analyses. We heard established short story writers—David Arnason's wry reinventing of the Icelandic Saga—and newer voices—Tamas Dobozy honing the flat voice into a knife of in between-ness; Warren Cariou teaching the puzzle of belongingness. The

conference—titled *colloque*—was entirely in plenary format: a small group of writers and students shared the same events for three days. The exigencies of product-based travel funding and CV-upholstering make such events rare in the 21st century academy. Multiple sessions, racing presentations, and scraps of chatter as the elevator ascends from the Mezzanine to the 10th floor often seem the standard forms of academic exchange.

In this case, participants had time to reflect over breakfast, to extend the discussion during coffee, and to reconfigure the argument at lunch. For me, two highlights: one was an animated reading of poems and stories by a group of 12 students, tutored for about two days by David Arnason. Most of them were writing in a second language. Listening to apprenticing writers, listening to writers writing out of two languages—in Gallant's city—was a perfect way to end a conference. Wrote Malik Ferdinand in a poem titled "Post-colored Girl": "Banished in my own tears, I cannot touch the deaf Seine color. / But I am still going overboard for these pearls in blessed eyes." In a story by Fiona McCann, a young woman overhears herself: "Why—just listen and see if you can explain this—Why in tennis do women players get less prize money than men? . . . Does she not train as much as him? Sweat as much? Take as many drugs?" In such moments, I fancied I could hear young writers beginning to try the ironies of Arnason and Gallant.

The other highlight was a reading by Gallant herself, and by two writers I wanted to style (on that occasion at least) as her followers—the reading was held at the Centre Culturel du Canada on rue de Constantine. Artwork surrounded us—short films reeling into under-exposure; three-dimensional maps in mixed media. Several of the pieces were teasingly iconic; thoughtful installations emerged from corners. I know they deserved more time.

But the reception in the gallery slipped easily into a reading in another space—darkened room, cabaret style seating, wine bottles circulating, and spotlight on a slightly raised platform. "I want to stand up to do my reading," Gallant said almost immediately. "Will that podium support me?"

Kristjana Gunnars read first. She read sympathetically about an old man trying to find his wife who had disappeared without explanation from her nursing home. Well, he *remembered* the *finding*. Janice Kulyk Keefer read next. Could a Ukrainian community re-configure the ethnic family reunion, her story wondered. After the readings, all questions were directed to Gallant, as much as she encouraged the audience and her stage mates to join in. I wanted to ask Gunnars and Kulyk Keefer for their reaction. As writers, I speculated, they might be admiring Gallant, and reworking, or imagining,

a story as they listened. But then again, maybe their stories should already be heard as mysterious, happy homage.

Gallant herself read what she described as the final phase of the Grippes and Poche story. It was politically astute, in the way she so often is—examining the big events (in this case the introduction of the Euro currency and the new community) as they figure in local streetscapes. Surprise hovered in the cadences of a Gallant sentence, in the *hearing* of that French-inflected English, in the writer's own surprised voice. In the cadences lie the irony and the politics. Gallant's story was, most impressively—and here especially the generosity of the writer emerged—so evidently materially, artistically *in progress*. She held up the scratch outs, she thrilled to new words she'd discovered, some pages were cut into pieces, she stumbled over her own inked-in corrections. "I love the Paris streets," she explained. "I am often startled in North America, in Canada, to realize I can see no other person on a given street. My stories often emerge from that feeling of a street life, of the glimpsed connections and the imagined stories."

I thought then of our first encounter in the street. Later, I sat across from Mavis at the concluding banquet, in the vaulted halls of *Le Train Bleu.* "I don't like spinach," she blurted. "It's the only vegetable I can't stand." And it's the only mildly prickly thing I've heard her say. After dinner, many people drifted away. Some paused to study the restaurant's grandiose murals. A few watched the cat wandering among the tables. Gallant stayed on, and on, talking with her fans.

The day after the conference, I joined the long queue to visit the Musée d'Orsay. I spent a lot of time looking at Paul Gauguin's *Porte d'entrée de la maison de jouir*, the imposing door carved out of sequoia wood. Somehow Gallant's stories place us at the door of the *maison de jouir*. Over the frame, Gauguin's motto:

Soyez mystérieuses
Soyez amoureuses et vous serez heureuses

John Reibetanz

Transformations

"Northern portrait masks are carved and painted asymmetrically: the transformation is subtly revealed as the mask is slowly rotated from the head-on view to profile. Other transformation masks consist of an external mask that can be split open to reveal a different form inside." – from *Spirit Faces* by Gary Wyatt

1. *Hatchling*

When you change from your human shell
to slip into killer whale, shark, coho,
slow rotation won't do.

The alabaster rigging of
your lungs, where air is spirited to life,
will flood and go under

before the hull outfits itself
with rows of gills, red-blooded galley slaves
pumping through cold salt waves.

Better to split. Rip off the pale
tissue paper of skin, cut through rough surf
in your steel-sequined suit,

and lift as if water were air,
arm winged into pectoral, feet a foam-
slapping scarf of tailfin.

2. *Cycling*

Green boy on green bike. Slow fade. First
Dad's arm, keeping both afloat, dissolves
from view. Next, training wheels

zero out. Chain guard exits. Green
fenders slip under black lacquer, then flee,
spirited off like leaves

or baby fat from the barbed chin
of the spandex-flanked cyclist emerging
profiled over the flung

water-scarf his bike's skidding wheels
unfurl as they rudder the puddled streets.
His spiked hair's dorsal fin

splits the damp air yellow zigzag-
ging goggles target through fog. Steel-scaled, an
earlobe flashes rainbows.

Sean Kane

Skaay on the Cosmos

1

Since its translation by Robert Bringhurst*, the work of Skaay of Qquuna (?1827-?1905) has acquired a following among non-Haida readers, most notably Margaret Atwood. She perceives in Skaay's Raven myth "a philosophical meditation on the nature of Being," though she leaves its elucidation to those "more skilled at such arguments" than herself (10).[1]

I am not skilled in philosophical argument either, but I cannot help viewing in Skaay's work an account of the meaning of life, arranged in a systematic exposition. The trouble is that, unlike conceptual prose, Skaay's thought is narrated. It is narrated in images of killer whales and mist-covered mountains, of mice turning into radiant goddesses, of abandoned children rescued by sexy witches, and the sea charging up the beach like a bear. This is oral philosophy, unrestricted by the written page, where ideas dance together musically instead of standing to attention for interrogation, one prisoner at a time. It takes a certain amount not of argumentative but imaginative skill to read thought that is embodied as story, but isn't that just the way, Plotinus asks, we read the body language of another human being? "For instance, we can come to conclusions about someone's character, and also about the dangers that beset him and the precautions to be taken, by looking at his eyes or some other part of his body" (2.3.7). In the cosmos, too, "All things are filled full of signs, and it is a wise man who can learn about one thing from another." Plotinus is talking about what he calls "the non-discursiveness of

the intelligible world." Concepts cannot catch it because the cosmos is a dance. But images can—like the ideograms he admires on Egyptian temple walls, in which "every image is a kind of knowledge and wisdom and is a subject of statements, all together in one, and not a discourse or deliberation" (5.8.6).

Helpful to the reader of Skaay's danced philosophy was the fact that he performed his work in five sets of three movements each, followed by an echoing shorter performance having the same structure. Bringhurst calls these compositions the "Qquuna Cycle" and the "Raven Poem"; I am inclined to call them "The First Theology" and "The Second Theology"—but whatever we call them, the point is that Skaay insisted on this double experience when he told his myths for anthropologist John Swanton in 1900, and Bringhurst's translation honours it. As a result, the Haida have a single coherent storytelling of the cosmos and their place in it, and world literature has what Atwood distinguishes as a masterpiece that "can stand with the best, because it goes beyond its culture of origin to stand side by side with the great myth-based artistic creations of the world" (10). I might add that Canada has in the figure of Skaay surely its first philosopher and one of the world's great minds.

These are heady claims, and difficult to illustrate in a composition that is orchestrated polyphonically. But there is one part of the Qquuna Cycle where the gritty, tangy, squishy, ovoid beachwalk that is Skaay's storytelling assumes a clarity about the physical world that readers can recognize by contrast with other mythological traditions. I refer to the finale of the Qquuna Cycle. Called "Born Through Her Wound" (*Ghahljuung ghii Nang Dlquiis*), it is a short narrative of 516 lines (in Bringhurst's translation), recounting an apocalyptic battle for control of the world by two adversaries—a mysteriously born boy, and a being of unimaginable age and power who turns out to be the boy's absent father. I use the word "apocalyptic" because the myth functions in relation to its preceding oral scripture like the great fugue of symbolic echoes that came in a dream to John of Patmos, who also speaks of a father and son reconciliation. The word comes from *apo*—"from" + *kalyptein*—"to cover, conceal," hence a "revelation," specifically a recognition that the universe is meaningful. But the word carries from its origin, in a host of agitated prophesies of its time, the sense of a final cataclysmic doom. In Skaay's vision of time and timelessness, a similar great reckoning is not the end of our beautiful world, but its perpetual beginning. This is one significant respect in which Stone Age

Thought (if I can use that term) differs from the earth-denying transcendence of the religions that emerged out of the late Neolithic. Skaay offers not a way back but inspiration for a way forward, beyond the culture *versus* nature impasses of human world-management.

2

"Born Through Her Wound" takes its name from the hero who emerged from a suppurating sore on his mother's hip. An only child, he is born after his sick mother is abandoned by her father, the village chief. The child grows precociously: he is walking even before he starts to eat; he is bawling for a bow and arrows, which his hard-pressed mother fashions; he isn't satisfied until she hammers a set out of divine copper. Out he goes, and brings back the bodies of birds, the practice prey of novice hunters—wrens, sparrows, mallards, geese—graduating quickly to a porpoise, a seal, and a humpback whale. Then, he demands that his mother make a set of blankets for him. They are to be woven from the sinews and feathers of Redshafted Flickers, Red-headed Sapsuckers, Scarlet Tanagers, Pine Siskins, and Golden or, more likely, Ruby-crowned Kinglets – five blankets in all. When held up, the blankets fly like flocks of birds, and one can imagine them, in an allegorical moment, filling the sky like so many sunsets (these are mostly crimson birds).

This new form of sky-blanket is, of course, a provocation to the Powers That Be, especially if those powers regard themselves as commanding the weather. But that anticipated reaction must wait its place in the order of storytelling, for first, right on cue, the splendid hero goes out and gets himself a wife. She is the daughter of a self-involved headman who was driven inland to wander. The behaviour indicates that the boy has married into shamanism. Nothing more is said of the wife, who stands briefly in the story as a symbol of the concerns of the forest world.

Then, the threats come. They are preceded in each case by a voice under the pillow: «Born Through Her Wound, are you awake?» it asks.

> «Doesn't it seem to you
> that spirit beings you haven't so much as imagined
> might be gathering against you?» (158-161)

Unsettled, the youth enlists the help of an elder who appears suddenly in the story. The elder, who is the most provocatively mysterious personage in the myth, appears first in the shape of a Great Blue Heron, later as a

carpenter patching a canoe. With his easy laconic style, he has no trouble distinguishing for the boy the threats that are ranged against him.

Those threats come from the sea: the hero's first impulse is to peer "throughout the ocean depths" (173) for their source. The first threat materializes above him in the form of a thunderbird—the spirit of heavy weather—carrying an entire village in its talons. «Grandfather, they're after me» (179). The old one replies: «How are the prows of their canoes?»—a strange question to ask, except that this myth has the childlike quality, and pleasure, of allegory. The elder is referring to the fronts and sides of spawning salmon which are red (coho) or streaked (chum). The colouration sets the struggle in autumn just before the sea begins to turn rampant. Following the wise one's counsel, the boy puts an arrow to his bow. "He aimed at it with the one [arrow] that bore the image of a mouse" (185)—here Mouse Woman and her concern for boundary is present in the story—and hits the flying village so that it splits open, revealing a population of skeletons which the youth revives. Skaay then says ineffably that it was the boy's "grandfather's town that he restored" (192). Since there is no further mention of it—no grandfather, no previous town—one must take the event as a symbol. Whoever sent the thunderbird destroys whole villages with oceanic storms. The grandfather in question is interested in having his people saved from the all-devouring sea. Presumably, Mouse Woman, a forest goddess, is too.

The hero's shamanic power established, now the awesome adversary raises the ante. The symbolic threats come thick and fast. First, ten (that is, a lot of) canoes with crimson prows («Grandfather, they're coming to hunt me down»—203). Coho salmon, they are stopped dead with a display of rice lilies scattered on the beach. Next, canoes with streaked bows—chum salmon, killed according to the elder's stratagem, with the same land plant. Then, canoes with formline paintings on their fronts—sand fleas. They, and the beach fleas that follow, are stopped by the hero putting urine in their path. These simple allegories depict a boundary war. The boundary is the beach, where Haida villagers traditionally went to urinate, and the contest is between the rising ocean and the beleaguered land.

Not so routine is the fifth assault by the sea, however. Here is the prospect of the surface world sinking and the fire of the heavens meeting the flood of the sea, sweeping all existence away. «The horizon is on fire» cries Born Through Her Wound, watching flames raging toward him across the sea surface. This time, the elder proposes to stop the march of destruction by

marking the beach with coffin bones, the coffins themselves placed facing seaward as they are in Haida tradition: «That's the custom in such cases, hero» (282). The bones of ancestors, kept in coffin poles erected along the beachfront, are authenticating deeds-of-land which say, in effect, "We've been here quite a while; we own this place because we've died here." But the unrelenting sea rises over this boundary marker—the seagod is changing the very outline of the world.

After three stalemates in the struggle between land and sea, the ocean finally breaks its limits, driving the hero and his wife and mother toward the highest part of the island. Voices of the land offer the dubious protection of allegorical tree houses. Each time the refuge is inadequate: the blazing flood pushes higher, past sea-level trees like "Toppled Over in the Waters," then past higher-ground trees like Yellowcedar, Yew and Spruce, and finally even to the highest safety represented by Rock. By this time, the hero has watched his magic blankets burn away and his mother with them. (His wife suddenly disappears later.) The boy finds protection in "the Marshland's house," and there finally at that ambiguous boundary of water and land the incursion ends. And that is the way it is today. The state of geography reached in myth-time is the one that the Haida and others know, with the Islands of the People sticking up everywhere like scattered defeats surrounded by an abeyance. Perhaps that is why Skaay now uses the phrase "these islands" (*aanis gwaayaay*) for the first time in the myth (358).

This is the way things stand today—but the performance is not done. Born Through Her Wound must recover his wife and mother and his blankets. The elder mysteriously reappears as a carpenter repairing a canoe. «At this moment,» the carpenter tells him, speaking of the blankets, «they are raising someone's status / over on the other side» (402-403). So the hero is guided by the elder across the ocean to the mythhouse of his adversary Fire in the Sky (*Qwiisjiin-ghwas*).

This scene, which is told with extreme concision by Skaay, goes by in a flash, and readers have to be patient with what can be achieved by the oral voice enacting the very thing it describes—a trance. We are at the house of Fire in the Sky in that region of the cosmos where the spirits habitually take the forms of birds. Born Through Her Wound has taken the form of a Sandhill Crane, and now he is going to perform a dance. What Fire in the Sky's people don't seem to recognize, however, is that the hero, in the shape of a crane, is going to sponsor a dance *for his wife*. Sandhill Cranes don't ever dance alone. They dance at mating time for their spouses, and they do

so in marshland. The boy has just come from marshland, the one place he seemed passably safe, and now as a Sandhill Crane he is about to stage a dance for his wife who sits at the back of the seagod's immense house. But the actual person detailed to do the crane dance for the boy is kept in a box he carries. That dancing figure is referred to by the seagod's people, in an excited buzz of recognition, as "his sister's son" (416). It is the Carpenter God huddled in diminutive form in the box, also in the shape of a crane. He is evidently masquerading as his own nephew, according to the observation of the spectators, an observation which the Carpenter himself confirms with the joking phrase "your good-for-nothing nephew" (421). It is part of the magic of the scene that maternal uncle and maternal nephew can seem to switch roles. The Carpenter Uncle instructs from within his box: «As you go in, / look behind the fire» (419-420), meaning as you, Born Through Her Wound, enter the god's house, look behind the fire for your wife (there is a typo in the published text). Meanwhile, the Carpenter says, he is going to emerge from the box and do tricks. First, he will do the Sandhill Crane dance, then he will turn into a weasel, a sapsucker, and a brown creeper. The pronouns in the passage I will quote refer to the boy apprentice hunched up then standing tall like a crane. However, it is actually the Carpenter who, dancing around his box, begins by holding his wingtip to his beak in the crane dance.

I cannot visualize this pose without thinking of another instance of the crane dance in mythological literature. This is the glimpse in the *Iliad* of what was evidently an ancient Greek custom. It is relevant because the person who is said to have first made the dance possible is the semi-divine artificer Daedalus, who builds a *choros* or dancing place for Ariadne. She has been rescued from the Minotaur, son of the sea-bull, by the hero Theseus. Skaay's piece of theatre, also intended to rescue a wife from a sea god, is orchestrated by the Heron elder, who as a patcher of canoes is clearly an artisan as well. In Homer, the dance was part of the design of Achilles' shield on which the artificer-god Hephaistos modelled the cosmos.

> A dancing floor [choros] as well he fashioned,
> like that one in royal Knossos
> Daidalos made for the Princess Ariadne.
> Here young men and the most desired young girls
> were dancing, linked, touching each other's wrists,
> the girls in linen, soft gowns, the men
> in well-knit khitons given a gloss with oil;

the girls wore garlands, and the men had daggers
golden-hilted, hung on silver lanyards.
Trained and adept, they circled there with ease
the way a potter sitting at his wheel
will give it a practice twirl between his palms
to see it run; or else, again, in lines
as though in ranks, they moved on one another;
magical dancing! All round, a crowd
stood spellbound as two tumblers led the beat
with spins and handsprings through the company. (18.590-605)

In Skaay's account of a crane dance, the whole submarine household together with its dreadful chief is mesmerized by a display it has never seen or heard of—a mating ritual marking the start of a season that will come to be known as Spring:

He walked up to the house,
and he was carrying his bentwood box.
(He also had a cane.)

He kept himself hunched up,
but once he got inside,
he stretched up tall.
Behind the fire – yes! – the blankets
  flapped their wings at him.
His mother sat beneath them too.

He took his place there, just midway along the side.
The firepit was ten tiers deep.

Then he poked around inside his bentwood box.
He took his nephew out of it.
Ooooooooooh my!

And then he stood him up.
That one struck a pose.
He held his wingtip in his beak.

When he had pranced around the box a little while,
the people in the house went Sssssssssss.
All those in the first row fell asleep. (424-442)

Born Through Her Wound does more tricks with the prancing nephew. Tossing him in the air, he transforms him into a weasel scampering up his wand. Now, he's a sapsucker rapping the staff with his beak. Now, a brown creeper. Row after row of spectators fall asleep in the house with its fabulous ten tiers surrounding the fire-pit. Then the hero puts his magician's assistant back in the box, remarking with a performer's self-satisfaction—

«That's all for now.
Better keep a treasure for a long time
than dance it all away at once.» (462-464)

The hero snatches his blankets, his wife, and his mother too, and the little raiding party takes off in a rush. Hardly are they halfway back when the tricked god comes raging across the sea as fire.

As it came close
he showed that he was frightened.
Right there is where it stopped. (475-477)

Blankets, mother, his wife as well, are burned away and go back to "the other side" (483). Whatever has been achieved in the raid—that brief mating dance, that short respite in which the god of storms has been lulled to sleep—is temporary.

Disconsolate, the hero wanders aimlessly, weeping like Orpheus returned from the Underworld. All of nature weeps with him, the ocean creatures as well as the creatures of the forest. But he hears an assembly of beings "chattering and laughing / as the birds do in the morning" (494).[2] Born Through Her Wound approaches the celebration, to discover some gods shooting leaves off a great tree. To their cheers, he fells the tree with a single arrow. The tree turns out to be a progenitor of tobacco plants—a mighty ancestor, since tobacco grows close to the ground. The hero now calls upon a goddess named Woman of the Clouds to plant the seeds throughout the islands, which she does, thereby preparing the ground for Haida civilization. Named only twice by Skaay—here (509) and in *Raven Travelling* (5.1291)—Cloud Woman (or Mist Woman: *Yaanang Jaat*) has no other function in the story. The hero calls her "my father's sister" (509), and she travels by canoe across the ocean to join her nephew. The genealogy reminds listeners of what they knew but may not have known that they knew—that the hero's fearsome opponent, controller of maritime weather, is none other than *Tangghwan Llaana*, The One In The Sea – and he is the boy's absent father.

3

Stories of ingenious sons matching wits with jealous fathers are common in mythology, as they are in life. Restless novelty must make a space for itself against self-satisfied order. This state of affairs gives us Zeus and Cronos, Ananse and the Sun God, Jesus of Nazareth and the Father Almighty. In the cosmic struggle between Born Through Her Wound and *Tangghwan Llaana*,

a mythology is probably adjusting itself to receive a new deity. Like fathers and sons in life, it is not an easy business. The worlds could fall apart over this issue. Usually in myths of fathers and sons, the reign of the new order is absolute, but not without anxiety that the titanic old order might break through in one final débâcle, as it does in the Norse *Edda*. What is alluring about Skaay's myth is that the father's identity is hidden from the son until the end, so that the boy's campaign to recover his power is also a quest to uncover his father. There is one myth that is like this—though it was told far away on another misty island.

It is the story of the Irish sky-god Lugh and his struggle with Balor, a god of the ocean. The myth comes down to us mainly in the historical and antiquarian speculations of the *Lebor Gabála / The Book of Invasions* (1939: 270-271; 1940: 10-15, 122-126, 134-143), and in an eleventh-century text, *Cath Maige Tuired / The Battle of Moytirra*. These manuscripts recount the conquest of the indigenous gods of Ireland, called the *Fomhóire*, by the invading *Tuatha Dé Danann* ("People of the Goddess Dana"), a family of continental gods who were brought by Celtic tribes that settled Ireland after 500 B.C. This war of the gods is a cosmological, as well as a historical, struggle. Lugh is the sun-god of mainland Celtic tradition. Balor is a chief of the *Fomhóire*, who are evidently "under" (*fo*) "spirits" (*mór*) or under "water" (*muir*) spirits concerned with the fertility of the soil. They may be under the damp earth or, as various texts have it, across the sea northward of Ireland. Balor can bring destruction: he has a great eye in the middle of his forehead which burns enemies to ashes. He is Lugh's maternal grandfather, but neither opponent knows of this relationship.

The time of their confrontation is *Samhain* ("summer's end"), the feast of the night before November when existence disappears into the dark half of the year. The location of the battle is Magh ("plain") Taireadh ("of the pillar"), now Moytirra in County Sligo. A place of evocative ruins even today, it inspired medieval storyteller-writers to tie the myth firmly to that landscape. Yet echoes of old sources in the *Lebor Gabála* speak of a tower, not a pillar, which the new gods wrest from *Fomhóire* control. In Nennius' *Historia Brittonum* §13 of the ninth century the tower is a tower of glass. Again, this could be a confusion of words: the genitive of *tor* ("tower") is *tuir* which sounds on the lips like *tuire*, meaning "pillar"—but I suspect the glass pillar is an ancient cosmological concept belonging to the indigenous civilization of the 3rd millennium B.C., whose cairns, dolmens, megaliths, passage-graves and tumuli must have astonished the incoming Celts. Irish

mythtelling as it survives in the Welsh *Mabinogion* speaks discreetly and gravely of a world-tree that extends up to a revolving castle made of light, the abode of souls, which we know as the Milky Way. *Lleû*, a Welsh form of the sun-god, dies and ascends this cosmic tree whose trunk is the pillar of the worlds and the axis on which the earth spins and wobbles, causing the seasons. He is brought back from spirit to physical form by his magician uncle singing a shamanic chant (58-60). Who shall control this invisible pillar which is the key to the procession of the seasons and to agricultural prediction? Who shall control the weather?

The weathergod Balor, in the Irish redactions, strikes an accord with the invading *Tuatha*. He gives his daughter Eithne in marriage to Cian, one of their leaders. They become the mother and father of Lugh. But this is too easy for mythtelling, for history, and for the psychology of father-figures and sons. Another tradition has Cian stealing into the tower where Eithne is locked away on account of Balor's fear that a child of his daughter will one day do him in. When Lugh, this nemesis, is born from the tryst, the angry father casts grandson and daughter to their fate – but the boat they are cast away in is found by Gobhniu, the god of artificers. Gobhniu has a fabulous cow, which Balor has taken, and the adventure is to get it back. Crossing the sea, the artisan god retrieves the cow's halter, and the cow follows, swimming across the ocean after it. Balor follows too, in a rage. The storm-god's fate is sealed when he opens his massive eye upon his grandson Lugh, and Lugh casts a sling-stone into it. In a myth, found in *Cath Maige Tuired*, Lugh and two others pursue the fleeing *Fomhóire* to their banquet hall where the harp of the Tuatha has been stolen. This harp has the power to play on its own, and it plays the three tunes that lull listeners to sleep. It does just that to the assembled *Fomhóire*, allowing Lugh and his companions to escape with their prize. All this subterfuge is directed by Gobhniu, who stands to Lugh in the role of druid elder to young hero. It shouldn't surprise us that the patron god of artisans is a presence in the myth. After all, the myth is about the *kosmoi* or orders of things, which are the responsibility of a divine craftsman. Homer, as we saw, alludes to the artificer god Daedalus immediately after describing the shield of Achilles, which is a model of the cosmos.

A boy who represents the spring sky, his uncle a magician-artificer who knows the *kosmoi*, a baleful opponent, the storm god – similarities between myths are uncanny because the earth is uncanny. Certainly, cultures as unique as the traditional Haida and the ancient Irish have their own historicity. But myth, while facing inward to provide a mirror in which a society

recognizes itself, also faces outward to the unseen, toward certain cosmic truths. If you go to Ireland, you will find cosmic resemblances to Haida Gwaii. One of them is the weather—the tense, prolonged, bitter drama of the weather. In November in Ireland, after the salmon runs, after the fair-weather clouds, the wind blows from the northwest, bringing an unending succession of dark Atlantic gales. The temperature falls; tides increase; water pours down mountain gullies; low-lying areas are flooded, and the whole land is covered with winter lakes. It seems like some cosmic shift of power has happened.

Myth says that is because the *Fomhóire* have taken over the weather. From their island tower out in the north Atlantic, they threaten to drown civilization and all its arts. Yet their rain-giving fertility leads nine months later to the August harvest. Three months after that is the year's quarterday, *Samhain*, when the rain cycle starts again—but also when Lugh sent the *Fomhóire* back to the sea where they came from, thereby limiting their dominion.

This meteorological struggle should be familiar to a resident of Haida Gwaii. Especially the brief summer. It feels like an interval, an introduced measure to existence. The periodic respite is figured in the quelling of the sea gods by the crane dance («Better keep a treasure for a long time / than dance it all away at once»). Its Irish counterpart is the lulling music of Lugh's harp. But there are other similarities. Born Through Her Wound made sky blankets for himself out of the feathers of scarlet birds. In O'Hógain's compilation of references, Lugh is called *leathshuanach* ("side-mantled") because "a red colour used to be on him from sunset to morning"; in one myth, he wears a beautiful shirt of woven red and gold (275). But his usual appellation is *Lugh Lámhfhada* in the Irish ("long-armed," because no one could escape his weapons), or *Lleû Llaw Gyffes* ("deft arm") in the Welsh. He is as skilled in shooting as Born Through Her Wound, who asks for a copper bow, and the infant Apollo, who calls for a bow and arrows on his fourth morning. "The man of every single art," Lugh is a paragon of that civilization which flourishes briefly when the dark weather abates. Those arts of civilization are personified in Lugh's shaman-guide, Gobhniu, the god of smithcraft or, in later legendary mentions, *Gobán Saor—saor* means "artificer"—who as a master builder is the son of a being who threw a hatchet against the tide to stop it from rising too high (241). Skaay's unnamed repairer of leaks (361) is a carpenter, as well as the bird who wades along boundaries. He re-appears to his apprentice shortly after the sea's inundation has left the marshland as

a final refuge. Marsh and swamp is the state of much of the Queen Charlottes during the winter storms, as it is in Ireland. This resaturation comes after the sea has brought the spawning coho and chum salmon («How are the prows of their canoes?») and the beginning of the November gales.

The Irish mythtellers thought of the period after *Samhain* as the gestating time of the year. One got through it, as hibernating animals did, by dreaming, or by the indoor enchantments of singing and storytelling which are practically the same thing. The mythtellers recognized that the rains sent by the *Fomhóire* were necessary to the fecundity of the land, and kinship with these dark forces was remembered in Lugh's birth from the daughter of Balor. Skaay outlines a similar contradictory kinship on the part of his hero with the gods of maritime weather. Through that kinship Born Through Her Wound gains the help of Woman of the Clouds. Sister of the seagod, she leaves the company of the storm spirits, to cross the ocean as the fair-weather clouds, ensuring a brief time that permits the planting and harvesting of tobacco. This was the only plant cultivated by the Haida in times past. For the Irish, there was considerably more planting and harvesting, siring and birthing, involved with the seasons, whose accurate prediction was made by standing stones and passage graves taken over from the old race. According to the *Book of Invasions*, Lugh and the *Tuatha Dé* extract the secrets of agriculture from the surviving *Fomhóire*. Lugh is thereafter the god of ripening wheat and the harvest, celebrated at *Lughnasadh*, the eve of the modern Irish *Lúnasa* or August. Yet it is not forgotten that he was a child of the *Fomhóire* through his mother, Balor's daughter, and Balor with his blazing eye brings fire and flood. Born Through Her Wound is similarly opposed, as son, to Fire in the Sky.

The relationship is unstable, and for anyone who lives in the tug-of-war that fills the atmosphere at the Boundary of the Worlds, strange weather is an ordinary fact of life. It is such an ordinary fact that it inspired a spontaneous storytelling jape between Skaay and his comrade Xhyuu, whose name means the Southeast Wind.[3] But a deep uneasiness underlies the jokes made about the weather. For the ancient Celts it showed nature's fragility, ever subject to an apocalyptic cataclysm. Strabo the celtographer reports a conversation between Alexander the Great and a Celtic chieftain. When asked by the emperor what the Celts feared most—"thinking that they would say himself"—the Celt replied instead that his people feared nothing, "unless it were that Heaven might fall on them" (7.3.8). The druids taught that "men's souls, and also the universe, are indestructible, although both fire and water

will at some time or other prevail over them" (4.4.4). This fear of a collapse of the Middle World, fire meeting water, defines the furious mortality of *Conchobar* in *Táin Bó Cuailnge* (*The Cattle Raid of Cooley*): "Are the heavens rent?" asks a chieftain. "Is the sea bursting its bounds? Is the end of the world upon us?" (§12, 218; see also 219 and 247). The weather might seem to swirl forever in the chaotic grip of the ocean, each change forgetting the one before. Or the weather might be part of some order that sparkles briefly through this sea of mutations.

For the Irish mythtellers, the answer to this question had everything to do with who controlled the axle-tree of the world. It is the periodic tilting of that axis which gives us the seasons. Unfortunately, very little narrative actually remains of this cosmology. Its appearances in the island "tower" that Lugh's father penetrates, and the "pillar" that Lugh wrests from Balor at Moytirra, are brief mentions, leading one to chase for meaning in a memory that is no longer on record. With Skaay it is different. His mention of a magical staff, while equally brief and fleeting, evokes a whole cosmology.

The scene is the Crane Boy doing tricks with the "nephew" until an audience is stunned. The cosmology is that sketched in earlier parts of the Qquuna Cycle, especially "Honoured Standing Traveller" with its image of a great housepole holding the three realms of ocean, land and sky together, and "Sapsucker" with its divine tree, surrounded by the ocean, on which a fledgling bird is given its plumage. Skaay tells us that when earthquakes shake the construction of the worlds, a marten runs up the world-pole, not the weasel scampering up the magician's staff but, as an allusion goes, close enough. The next transformation, of the nephew into a sapsucker rapping the staff, is, however, a direct allusion. It is underscored by the hero next turning staff and dancer into a brown creeper whose Haida name is "clings to his tree" (*qaaydang gu tldang*), again showing the vertical axis. From these allusions it seems that the artificer's apprentice is displaying an inner knowledge of the world-pole. But just who is his master, that fabulous artificer who knows so much?

Skaay never lets his thought-music evaporate into concepts, so he does not expound on Born Through Her Wound and his serenely casual guide. Ghandl (?1850-?1920) does though. In "The Way the Weather Chose to Be Born" (37-48), he recounts the triumph of a hero, named *Sing*, over sea-floor adversaries. Pressing for elaboration, Swanton was told by Ghandl and others that the word *sing* could mean, in different contexts, "daylight," "air," "weather," or "sky"—though the ordinary Haida word for "sky" is different.

As a mythtelling personage, *Sing* has the appellation *Sins Sghaanaghwaay*, which Swanton translated poetically as "Power-of-the-Shining-Heavens." The title is the exact equivalent of the Tsimshian *laxa*, literally "on the air," therefore "the sky." Swanton heard enough sayings and prayers in relation to *Sing,* this Spirit of the Atmosphere, to understand that he gave power to the other gods in the way supernaturals gave power to human beings. "[T]he clouds are represented as his blankets," Swanton reports, even while clouds are more typically the "dressing up" of the Sea Dweller (1905a: 22). The majestic theophany of this god of the atmosphere seems the entire point and effect of Ghandl's story. «I am going away,» the boy tells his mother, indicating that he is going to mark a boundary—and

> «Whenever I sit where the Tallgrass River reaches the sea,
> no wind will blow from any direction.
> The sky will be mine.
>
> «Whenever my face is the same as my father painted it,
> no wind will blow from any direction.
> Humans will feed themselves through me.» (161-167)

It does little for mythtelling to say that Skaay and Ghandl's youth of the copper bow is a kind of Celtic Lugh or Greek Apollo. It may do some good, however, to suggest that these fairweather deities of three cultures emerge as hypotheses out of similar perplexities about the cosmos, and carry those perplexities in their genealogies. The main perplexity in all three cases involves authority. Should this god, who is the source of sunshine and of the civilized arts and cultivations that flourish in the spring—should this god be seen as pre-eminent? And should he be pre-eminent over the storm deity who rules the physical world? Zeus himself is troubled enough by this predicament to keep a wary eye on Apollo, the brilliant son of Thetis of the older race of gods, who in the way of sons might easily usurp his reign. The potential of the upstart lurks in *Sins Sghaanaghwaay*, the only being to whom traditional Haida gave presents for luck, dropping the gifts over the side of their canoes at the outset of sea voyages. This fair-weather spirit enjoys an ambiguous supremacy. The solution of the Greek mythtellers, if it is a solution, to a similar marginal authority represented by Apollo is to leave the relationship of son to father as a tense paternity. The solution of the druidical mythtellers is to separate the adversaries by two generations, relaxing the conflict structurally while bringing it to a crisis in Lugh's defeat of Balor. With the god of perpetual winter out of the picture, the new alternation of the seasons is represented by the intermarriage of the two families

of gods left over from the struggle, Lugh himself the product of that outcome. Clearly mythtellers are driven to reaches of narrative subtlety in explaining the grand designs of life.

Skaay explains the issue of who controls the cosmos as a conflict between a father and son unknown to each other, and he resolves the contradiction by setting it in motion. Boundaries in time and space are delineated; the distinctions give us the seasons. Once the angry father's power is regarded by the son with respect, paternal wrath abates and a boundary is established. But this cosmic novelty is not the all of it: there must be someone, some third party, who knows all about the necessity of boundary in the construction of the cosmos. Skaay does not name this boundary-dweller who takes the form of a heron and is discovered patching canoes. Ghandl, however, does name him: he is *Watghadagaang*, Master Carver (68). But as non-Haida readers we have to travel in a roundabout way to understand who he is.

4

In "Born Through Her Wound," Skaay raises the cosmic concern of the Qquuna Cycle to its highest visionary power. While climactic in effect, the myth is light-spirited, even affectionately comic. The mythteller is deeply, gravely, concerned about how the physical world destroys all lives and hopes; he is confident of a happy outcome.

What concerns Skaay and mythtellers generally is the brutish overwhelming, arbitrariness of the Real. It sweeps life away. This devouring is primeval, a given. Haida artists personify that capricious and arbitrary force as a sea bear – its hackles are waves in a storm; its narrowed eyes guard the wealth it distributes randomly. King Lear, naked to elemental nature, knows who this being is: "Thou'ldst shun a bear; / But if thy flight lay toward the raging sea, / Thou'ldst meet the bear i' the mouth" (III.iv.9-11). What if this Shiva-like swirl of arms giving and taking away is all there is? It is a fair question to ask, especially on the Queen Charlottes. The Greek mythtellers, brooding on this melancholy fact of life, saw that arbitrary destruction-and-creation as cthonic. It came, as all biological life does, from *Okeanos* who circles the globe, Homer said (*Iliad* 16.201). Or it came out of an unimaginable "yawning" or "gaping" (*chainein*) abyss called "Chaos." That was what Hesiod said (*Theogony* 116). Centuries later, the civilized Giovanni Boccaccio is nervous about the conception. Reflecting on Hesiod, he thinks it a "folly of the ancients" to suppose that there was this "eternal being lurking in the

bowels of the earth, generated by nobody and the father of all things." Boccaccio would have been equally dubious about Skaay's Born Through Her Wound, who is the expression of raw unhealing substance, and Ghandl's god of the atmosphere, who issues as a wind in a cockleshell. He agrees with himself that chaos was not a principle of learned men but a superstition of "mountain dwellers and half-woodsmen" (I.i, vol. I, p. 13). Thus Boccaccio, spokesman of order. Yet feeling the tug of myth upon him, he goes on to name this awesome earthmind (from a scholiast of Statius, whom he misreads) *Demogorgon* "or rather the wisdom of the earth," identifying it with God (I.i, vol. I, p. 15). Later Christian mythography as represented by Leone Hebreo denominates a son who, issuing from a disturbance in the womb of chaos, gives us days of music and delight, sweet spring and the wealth of autumn. This is Pan, who played the shepherd's pipers and taught men to make many reeds with one wax. Pan is identified with "the All" (Greek *pan*, "all"), and Pan as the "all" of Nature with the son of God (108). This assimilation of pagan to Christian values does not quite hide the haunting prospect that the order of things emerges from chaos and that nature is wholly spiritualized. Even as austere a dogmatist as Calvin allows the possibility, saying: "I admit, indeed, that the expression 'Nature is God' may be piously used, if dictated by a pious mind"—though he adds that the phrase is "inaccurate and harsh (Nature being more properly *the order which has been established by God)*" (1.5.5). It is a roundabout of genealogy by which a son out of chaos becomes the "all" who gives chaos its measure. A similar narrative twist, and the anxiety that compels it, produces Lugh and Born Through Her Wound.

All of this is worth citing because it shows the redirection of earth-related values by spokesmen for a natural order seen to be stamped out of a superior mold or archetype. From the viewpoint of the architect's mold or model (*typos*), which so fascinated Plato for its capacity to produce multiple copies, chaos is bound to be, in Ovid's words, just a "rough unordered mass" (*rudis indigestaque moles*), ready to receive the divine imprint (1.7). But looking beyond these monumentalists, we hear the artisan-philosophers of Presocratic Greece saying something different. Workers in perishable wood and metal, instead of shapers of stone, for them chaos is the something in which measure appears. Chaos just came to be (*Chaos genet*), Hesiod says. It is a primeval space that was filled by heaven and earth ("wide-bosomed earth"), that aspect of the Real that is occupied by, made visible by, tangible rhythms and measures. On a smaller scale, it is the material from which

artisans extract their forms, just as the obscure underworld chaos, to which Hesiod later refers, is like the trash heap on a studio floor. Far from being the *opposite* condition to order, chaos is the invisible something which appears – which only appears – when it is given a significant arrangement (*kosmos*, from which we get the word "cosmetic"). According to Homer, the Greeks made the cosmos visible by dancing it. In the *Iliad*, he pictures the artisan-god Hephaistos making a cosmic dancing floor (*choros*) on Achilles' shield. And when in the *Odyssey* he shows *Demódokos* the mythteller singing, the activity is happening while the young people dance, the dancing space having been created first.[4] These references bring us back to traditional Haida culture, which is a culture of artisan philosophers (a better term than "oral"), and to the curious role of Skaay's artisan-god, sponsor of a dance right in the house of the sea, which has the result of giving chaos a measure experienced as the seasons.

Mythology is a fragile determination of the actual experience people have of an uncaring, random cosmos. Because of the fragility of myth, the cosmos has to be danced over and over; it has to be woven and rewoven; it has to be recreated daily. The philosophical outlook that is the expression of a culture of artisanship knows this provisionality, as it knows that no poetically made thing is absolute – each is a version, an interpretation, that cannot take the place of the Real. Skaay, I believe, addresses the concern by suggesting, not a legislator of wintry chaos and summer respite—for a legislator would mean an absolute order above nature—but rather an unnameable trickster who instigates the emergence of the *kosmoi*, or orders of things.

He appears as the elder whom Born Through Her Wound consults when the floods begin to rise. "That, they say, was the Great Blue Heron." He tells the boy how to bring back to life his mother's town from the catastrophe that has destroyed it. When the boy flees from this very destructiveness, voices guide him to a place of safety in the marshland, and for whatever safety high marshland offers from floods and fires, it is a boundary of sorts between water and land. It is also the usual dwelling-place of *Watghadagaang* whose name means literally "Maker of Flat Surfaces" and who likes to transform into a skunk cabbage (its leaves were used as sandpaper), which grows in marshland. The elder who repairs a canoe against sea leaks and takes the form of a heron is one who weaves dances and trances, who knows with serene confidence the behaviour of the sea and of the pole of the worlds. He reduces the household of the Sea Dweller to quiescence. Whereupon he vanishes from the story, into its charged unspoken surround.

NOTE

* In order to reflect the orality of the original, the author has retained Robert Bringhurst's use of guillemets as quotation markers for beings who speak in Skaay's text.

1 Reference is to Skaay (2001), which is based on the unpublished notebooks and typescripts of John R. Swanton, who transcribed the myths told to him at Skidegate in 1900, publishing the translations in 1905. The *aa* in Skaay's name is sounded like the *a* in "father," but lengthened.

2 A keenly poetic phrase in the Haida, it is used pointedly two times in the Qquuna Cycle. In "Born Through Her Wound," the Haida is *giina ga siinuut xhagandyas*: "*giina* = something • *ga* = indefinite animate • *siinuut xhagandyas* = making the *siinuut*: noise"—that is, a sound like the dawn chorus, linked not only to spring and the morning but also to calm clear weather. In the earlier "Honoured Standing Traveller" (261), the phrase is *ttl siinuut xhagandyas*, where the subject of the verb is "they" [*ttl*] instead of "somebody" [*giina ga*]. I am grateful to Robert Bringhurst for access to Swanton's Haida text and the lexicon developed from it.

3 Translated by Bringhurst as "Skaay's Flyting with the Southeast Wind," in Skaay, 273-280, discussed in Bringhurst, 213-220

4 For these Homeric and Hesiodic words and their values, see Kahn and McEwen.

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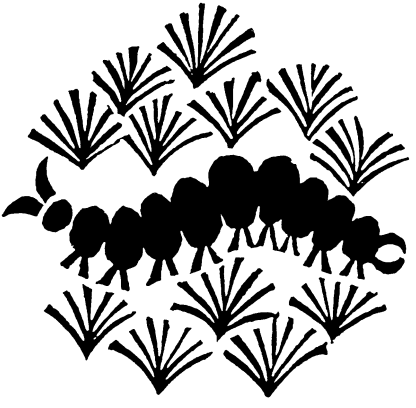

John Newton

When Eric plays guitar

Eric,
You dog,
Smiling sleepy-eyed over that guitar,
Fingers picking as gently as when you
    plucked those unbudded distant daisies
For those long-past summer golden girls,
Caressing the slender unresisting neck,
Chording the changes as you corded the flower chains
    that drugged them into dreams.

Eric,
You dog,
You with your saintly eyes, your hark-away ears,
Fingers picking at the buttons of beauty's blouse,
    trembling on unspoken secret strings,
Blessing those daisy-threaded curls,
Clasping the smooth bellied swell of sound,
Gnome head listening for each breath of surrender
    and the vibrations in their hearts.

Suzette Mayr

Absent Black Women
in Dany Laferrière's *How to Make Love to a Negro*[1]

About the woman of colour I know nothing about her.
—Frantz Fanon *Black Skin, White Masks*

Although numerous critics have noted the absence of black[2] female characters in Québécois writer Dany Laferrière's first novel, *How to Make Love to a Negro*, few critics have looked in depth at the implications of the black woman's absence in the book.[3] Daniel Coleman underlines the problematic nature of her absence with a provocative series of questions in his book, *Masculine Migrations: Reading the Postcolonial Male in "New Canadian" Narratives*:

> Certainly, the black woman is a silent figure in Laferrière's text. How are we to interpret Vieux's silence about her? Why do black women play no significant roles in this text? Are they too sacred to be submitted to parody? Or are they so insignificant in Vieux/Laferrière's paradigm that they merit no attention? (76)

But Coleman's extensive examination of the text necessarily revolves around that which *is* included in the text rather than what is not included. Coleman concentrates on the racial and sexual parodic[4] allegory involving the dynamic between the white man and woman, and the black man or "Black Stud" (Laferrière 94)/rapist—the three "types" or "typological figures" (Coleman 56) that compose a triangulated narrative of stereotypical, black/white "racialized sexuality" (Coleman 58). This narrative foregrounds the main character Vieux's desire to "fuck"[5] systematically every white woman he meets as a way of getting back at repressive colonial history and black oppression.

Critic Cameron Bailey further problematizes the black woman's absence by remarking that just as she has no presence in the text, neither do white

francophone Québécois—all the white characters in the book are anglophones and the francophones are all black. In effect, the novel operates in a strange vacuum that disregards elements such as white francophones and black women who "do not fit Laferrière's plan" (86) to expose and counter the power relations that occur when a black male francophone immigrant decides to get back at white men by fucking white anglophone women.

In his book, *Odysseys: Mapping African-Canadian Literature*, George Elliott Clarke obliquely suggests the place of black women in Laferrière's novel:

> Crucially, references to Black nationalist icons pervade [the novel]. Though few Black women appear . . . , Vieux catalogues an Afrocentric, religio-historical figure —'the Egyptian princess Taiah' (15)—and vital cultural signifiers—Ella Fitzgerald (69), Bessie Smith (70, 77) [sic][6], and Tina Turner (74). The text is rife with allusions to jazz performers, Fanon, and Cleaver, and the 'blackest' cult figure of them all, Malcolm X (74). (173)

So according to Clarke's observation, black women *do* "fit Laferrière's plan" but in a very specific and disembodied way, a way that recalls Coleman's suggestion that perhaps they are too "sacred" and can only be referred to in theory.

All these critics emphasize that the black woman *should* be in this text, but for some unfathomable reason or reasons, she appears to be left out. In this paper I propose that, in spite of her marked *physical* absence, the black woman does have a presence in *How to Make Love to a Negro*, but an ambiguous presence—she "haunts" this novel in the same way the fluorescent cross on Mont-Royal "haunts" (88) the view outside the narrator's window. Unlike the cross, however, her presence is not necessarily oppressive, and possibly serves as a counterpoint to the white, anglophone, Christian dominant culture that surrounds Vieux. As Clarke has already suggested with his references to Tina Turner, Ella Fitzgerald and Taiah, the black woman's role in the novel is to sing the background music; I suggest that she also presides as a central feature in the set decoration—the elephant in the room that no one will speak of. In this tale of inter-racial, ostensibly mutual, sexual exploitation, black women have no role in the "fantasies" (56) in this text—even as readers, black women are what critic Pamela Banting refers to as "the neglected constituency" (21)—but the black woman's presence/absence dominates the narrative.

Although she is never included as a potential character or acknowledged as a potential reader of the text, the black woman's notable absence makes

the novel possible. Her inclusion would collapse the ultimately flawed, ideological house of cards that designates Vieux's fucking of white women as a revolutionary, political act against racism and colonialism. She undermines Vieux's purposeful assumption of the "Black Stud" (94) myth as a legitimate bid for white privilege because her mere existence in this text would defy the "Black Stud" type; it would ground him in a larger community rather than allow him to remain as a single black man against a white (racist) world. Vieux has other black, single, male friends in the novel, but suddenly for example he would have girlfriends, mothers, or sisters. Also he would have to acknowledge problems that face other black people besides himself and that could also implicate *him* (one example being his disregard for black women as human beings rather than ideals). In this "parody" of racialized sexuality, the black woman can exist only in limited ways, ways that are not traditionally beneficial to a patriarchal black resistance that insists that the "struggle for black liberation [is] largely . . . a struggle to recover black manhood" (hooks, *Black Looks* 106) – a position that Vieux seems to espouse in his attempt to wreak vengeance for all black people through his cock. In the realm of types and "stock figures" (Coleman 64) dictated by the "overdetermined discourse of [black/white] racialized sexuality" (Coleman 72), the black woman's position is virtually guaranteed to result in the betrayal of the black man and therefore (according to some activists in the struggle for black liberation), "black resistance" in general.

Eldridge Cleaver in *Soul on Ice* and Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* propose that white women operate as a lure to black men, a means of countering and accessing white privilege. Consistent with such analysis, the novel's narrator, Vieux, embarks on a quest to bed every white woman he encounters in order to share in and mock white privilege. He further configures women as "types" and not as individuals by giving them nick-names preceded by "Miz": for example, Miz Literature is his most frequent sexual partner. He lets the fallacy that "the struggle for black liberation [is] largely a struggle to recover black manhood" take *him* to bed. Unlike Cleaver in *Soul on Ice*, however, Vieux does not rape the white women, but occupies more the position proposed by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* of engaging in consensual sex. As Fanon hypothesizes or fantasizes before rejecting the notion, "I wish to be acknowledged not as black but as white. Now . . . who but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man. I am a white man" (63). For Cleaver, the white women he lusts after and rapes to

achieve some semblance of white power are "The [irresistible] Ogre" (6). Prior to his official rejection of white women as lovers, Frantz Fanon, unlike Eldridge Cleaver, writes about how the white woman's "love takes me onto the noble road that leads to total realization" (63). Vieux takes the middle road between Cleaver and Fanon—he does not rape white women, nor does he love them or expect to be loved by them. His currency is race "hatred" (19) channeled into fantastic, consensual sex. As Vieux points out, "America loves to fuck exotic. Put black vengeance and white guilt together in the same bed and you [have] a night to remember! . . . If you want to know what nuclear war is all about, put a black man and a white woman in the same bed" (18-19). As far as Vieux is concerned, seduction is more effective than rape or love because seduction results in "nuclear" sex and therefore a more thorough—albeit limited—subversion of white male dominance through underlining white women's frustration with "the medicine-dropper sex of conventional unions" (18). Vieux "possesses" these women sexually, but also relies on what he believes will be the inevitable comparison between inferior sex with white men and the superior sex with "Black Studs." And although for most of the novel Vieux firmly espouses the belief that he can access white privilege by sleeping with white women, eventually Vieux and the novel, like Cleaver and Fanon, reject inter-racial sex as a means of achieving "whiteness"[7] and the power associated with it. (But, as I shall demonstrate, Vieux's rejection is strictly of physical bodies, not bodies written on the page.)

The "Black Stud's" time is over, as David Homel (the English translator of *How to Make Love to a Negro*) reminds the reader in the preface to the English translation; the novel "begins by pronouncing a funeral elegy for the myth of the Great Black Lover" (8). Playing the myth out to its very end is just one way that Laferrière signals the demise of the "Black Stud" as a figure of threat. Although his sexist sexual exploits seem separate from his writer's block and devotion to his typewriter, both are attempts to escape his lot as a displaced immigrant in Montréal. Besides sleeping with every white woman he meets, Vieux's other quest is to write the next great American[8] novel – a novel whose publication will ensure him of world-wide fame and will rescue him from poverty and from the apartment he lives in with his friend Bouba. Vieux is in Hell, even *below* Hell. Beelzebub lives upstairs and makes his presence known in the form of pink dust falling from the ceiling, and in the vocal racket of his sexual activities. When the muslim Vieux looks out the window, he sees the giant fluorescent cross on

Mont Royal: "I sit down in my work chair, turn my back on the typewriter and gaze stupidly on that lousy cross that haunts my window" (88).

The only time Vieux discusses black women, he states that "With his own woman the black man might not be worth the paper he's printed on, but with a white woman, the chances of something happening are good" (94). Even though he thus rationalizes their presence out of existence in the novel and gives their "ownership" to either himself or white men, black women must appear in the Montréal streets Vieux travels down when he leaves his apartment, but they do not register in his "fantasy" world, a world that will become the basis of the novel he writes in the second half of the book. The implausible absence of black women in Vieux's Montréal is a reminder that all the characters are "types" and are therefore unstable constructions in the racial "communities" (Chow 35) of white women and men and black men.

Interestingly, the black women who do appear—Bessie Smith, Billie Holliday, and Ella Fitzgerald—appear when Vieux finally sits at his typewriter; they sing to him in perhaps the same way a muse (or a siren?) would. Billie Holliday makes Vieux feel "like you've got a rope around your neck" (70); Bessie Smith is associated with "Two hundred years of desire thrown together, boxed in, piled up and sent down the Mississippi in the hold of a riverboat" (78); Ella Fitzgerald sings "Lullaby of Birdland" (69). The black woman is not allowed a body in this book—even when Vieux refers to Tina Turner, it is only because a woman he has nick-named Miz Punk is dancing like her (74). The only body a black woman has is the white woman imitating the absent black woman, but she *is* allowed a voice of sorts; she is a cheerleading squad Vieux takes for granted as he attempts to write his way out of Hell. She remains without a body, spectral, for to have her appear in a physical way, for her to enter the text as a character, however peripherally, would seriously disrupt the neat, triangular relationship Vieux has set up between white women and men and black men. It is not that she is too "sacred" or too "insignificant" that she is left out—it is that she is too *dangerous*.

Coleman discusses at length the typology of the black female in the "discourse of [black/white] racialized sexuality" when he restates Abdul Jan Mohammed's assertion that "The discourse of racialized sexuality derives from the white master's strategy of avoidance [of his rape of the black female slave] . . . . The pathological discourse of racialized sexuality, then, avoids its open secret by creating a new mythological story: the red-herring story of the black rapist's lust for the white virgin deflects attention away

from the hidden deeds of the white master rapist" (59). Coleman states that in effect, "If the master's rape of the black woman is the subtext for the discourse of racialized sexuality, the black man's putative rape of the white woman serves as its pretext" (62). In the narrative of typologized racialized sexuality, the black woman makes the black man vulnerable through her sexual exploitation by the white men who rape her. The black woman cannot "certify male dignity for the African man" (60) and so one possible reason she is left out of the novel is because she needs to be protected by the black male writer. And although in the novel white women appear to be complicit in the taboo sexual transaction, they are also victims of sexist typology; Coleman quotes Michele Wallace's summing up of the history of the racist, sexist typology when she describes the origin of the white woman's role as pawn in the power struggle between white and black men: "Early colonial men had needed partners in labor. Now the patriarchs of a plantation system needed a crown to their glory, the symbol of their success, a constant reminder of their strength and power. In the process the Southern woman was slowly transformed into an expensive, delicate, impractical pet" (Wallace 136). In the patriarchal, racist dialogue that ensues between black and white men, both black and white women are exploited and treated as currency. Vieux's attempts to parody and topple the stereotype of black men vehemently lusting for white women too conveniently excizes black women from his fantasy world. Vieux perpetuates black women's exploitation by refusing even to acknowledge it.

The stereotypical roles available to the black woman "type" are limited and self-defeating; unless she is excluded and/or made "sacred" and therefore asexual and untouchable, then she has no choice but to participate in the betrayal of her male counterpart, to be what critic Rinaldo Walcott describes in his examination of the "hood film" *Soul Survivor*, "a part of the emasculating apparatus of black men" (109). One choice is that she be the victim of the white man who has raped her and thereby work to underline the black man's ineffectiveness as a protector. Another common stereotype that fits in with the paradigm of the "Black Stud," is the black female "ball-breaker" (Walcott 109), who "because the black woman's master was the slaveowner, and not her husband, she became abusive to her husband, overly aggressive, bossy, domineering" (Wallace 139). Because she is contemptuous of her black male partner, she refuses to respect him and participates in his humiliation and oppression.

The other alternative, of course, is the black woman's own sexual potential for consensual miscegenation. In Laferrière's novel, a black woman with sexual desires would lead to chaos in the world that favours the "Black Stud" and which equates "black liberation" with restoring faith in black men's role as patriarch in the black community. Rey Chow discusses the awkward presence in the "Black Stud"-white woman equation when she takes apart Frantz Fanon's hypotheses about miscegenation:

> The ultimate danger posed by the Negress and the [female] mulatto is . . . not their sexual behaviour per se, but the fact that their sexual agency carries with it a powerful (re)conceptualization of community. . . . Because women are, with their sexual behaviour, powerful agents in the generation of a different type of community, the [black] male intellectual senses cannot trust – cannot bond with – them. He cannot trust them because he cannot control the potentiality that ensues from their acts of miscegenation. . . . [W]omen, because they are understood to possess a potent sexual agency, stand as an obstinate stumbling block in the way of revolutionary thought. (Chow 48-9)

Black women who could potentially fuck black men, white men, other men, or women, are an unknown, unwelcome variable in Vieux's world. He cannot conceive of black women fucking white men as parody in the same vein as his own parody; there is no such thing as a female "Black Stud." Neither can he imagine black women fucking other non-white men who would then dissolve the fantasy world of exclusively black/white antagonism *and* show black women to have independent sexual desires. There is little in *How to Make Love to a Negro* to suggest that Vieux feels actively threatened by black women's capacity for miscegenation, but his heavy leaning on Fanon's theories of sex with white women as a means of attaining white power suggests that this fear of the black woman as a traitor, as a carrier of internalized racist "poison" (Fanon 62) so carefully articulated by Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*, might be implicit in Laferrière's active exclusion of black women from the text. If Vieux can be a "Black Stud" who beds white women, the black woman could be the race traitor whom Fanon asserts chases white men in order to "avoid falling back into the pit of niggerhood" (47) represented by sexual and romantic partnership with black men.

In the essay "How can a black writer find his way out of the jungle?" written in 1996, Laferrière attempts to address the lack of black female characters in his work, and in literature by other black and white male writers. The essay is a dialogue between Laferrière the writer and a young black woman who demands that he "Talk about [her]" because she's "tired of

listening to black writers advertising for white women. White writers only talk about white women. So now with black writers onto white women, too, we [black women] don't stand a chance" (97). The narrator tells her that he cannot write about her because "we're [black male writers] only trying to protect you" ("How can" 97). Not surprisingly, and consistent with Laferrière's iconic representations of black women in the novel, the name of the young black woman in the essay is Erzulia, the name of the "dreadful voodoo goddess" (96). Interestingly, Erzulia embodies two contradictory visions of the black woman that potentially explains why she is not included in the novel: her goddess status does indeed make her "sacred,"[9] and she and other black women need to be protected; yet her "dreadfulness" implies her fearful black femininity, her "ball-breaking" potential. The essay concludes with the young woman proclaiming: "What do you care whether I'm in your book or not? I've got everything I need to be in a book, and you can't imagine what I might do!" (99). This uncertainty regarding what she and the black woman type "might do!" signals precisely why Laferrière does not include her in *How to Make Love to a Negro* – he wants types, not surprises.

Specifically, black women do appear as abstract, disembodied icons—as the Platonic idea or "form" that Vieux's room-mate Bouba defines while lounging on his couch, which Vieux refers to as Bouba's "wife" (22) or the "whore" he's married (14). Bouba expounds on the notion of beauty, referring explicitly to the ways in which Ella Fitzgerald, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday appear in the novel:

> [L]et's take the mouth. You meet a girl on the street. She has a sensual, hungry mouth, the whole package. You tell her this and that, she answers that and this, and a couple hours later you're kissing. But when you're kissing you can't see her mouth. When you're up that close you can't see anything at all . . . . [The] mouth in your mind, your ideal mouth, is better than the real mouth, the mouth that belongs to the girl you happened to meet on such-and-such a street and at such-and-such a time. At the last minute she could change mouths and you wouldn't be any wiser. (29)

For Bouba, the best lay is the one in his head. But this passage also suggests that for him black women are indeed only a type or intellectual concept and that the best black woman is the woman with no body, a music icon or goddess, or a long-dead historical figure. If readers are to believe what Laferrière explicitly states in his dialogue with Erzulia, she is sacred and to be "protected" by being perpetually hidden.

So what are the ramifications of Laferrière's ignoring the voodoo goddess in the room? His refusal to include the potentially messy complexity of the black woman's physical presence in the narrative results in a troubling statement about the main character's own sexuality and the novel's literary handling of black men's sexuality in general. Although until now I have primarily discussed the sex that occurs between Vieux and his various conquests, sex appears in a number of forms in the novel—the sex between Vieux and his various Mizzes perhaps being the least important. Pascale de Souza suggests that as the book progresses "le sexe cède peu a peu la place au processus d'écriture, dont il permet l'éclosion. . . . Le titre du chapitre 26, 'Ma vieille Remington s'envoie en l'air en sifflotant *ya bon banania*,' souligne le caractère gratifiant de l'écriture qui remplace le sexe comme source de jouissance" (65). The sex does not "cède" or surrender so much as get sublimated into the act of writing, so that writing and reading are *also* sexual acts, hence de Souza's assertion that both are "source[s] de jouissance." Vieux is often "in bed with Bukowski" (33). He goes to bed with Henry Miller, Blaise Cendrars, and Ernest Hemingway. He carries on an ambiguous, romantic relationship with his "always faithful" (101) Remington 22 typewriter that used to belong to the black American crime writer Chester Himes. Vieux personifies and adores the typewriter: it gives him "nasty look[s]" when he neglects it, as he does throughout the first half of the book, but it is also his "bouquet de lilas ruisselant de pluie" (67).[10] Much like the couch Bouba has "married" (14), the typewriter is also Vieux's life-partner – one could even say corporeal male muse who cajoles and shames Vieux into writing his novel. Vieux associates the typewriter with the natural image of the rosebush or bouquet of lilacs, and with the bicycle lovingly and repeatedly polished by the professional cyclist who lives across the hall. The novel he begins writing on it, *Black Cruiser's Paradise*, "wait[s] for [him]" (105). He is eager to return to the Remington and the novel, and unlike his relationship with the women around him, his lavish attention to it reveals that he and his typewriter have a relationship that relies on equality and cooperation if he and it are to write the great American novel. The typewriter has no obvious gender (although it does carry the Chester Himes "pedigree" (46) and in French Vieux refers to the Remington in the feminine as "la Remington"), although it is obviously a lover of sorts. When Vieux is in bed with Bukowski and the boys, he does not identify himself as anything other than heterosexual even though the majority of his writer bed-mates are

men, several of whom Coleman refers to as "virulent writers of male eroticism" (68).

With the typewriter Vieux unhesitatingly reveals his "naiveté," his "conscience," and the emotion that would, in front of his sex-partners, result in his "ass [being] grass" (27); he allows himself to be "down-hearted" (77) around la Remington. As de Souza suggests, as the novel progresses, Vieux becomes less obsessed with sex with white women, and more obsessed with the white page in his Remington 22 and writing his novel. Writing is not as racially charged an endeavour as sleeping with white women, in spite of his comparison of the white page to "the snowy grace of the cotton. Black bodies shining sensual, beaten by the cruel wind of the Deep South" (78), and his writing about sex with white women. In the realm of the page he loses some of his apparent disdain for white women by acknowledging white female writers and artists such as Gloria Steinem, Emily Dickinson, and Valery Miller, using their full names rather than the snide "Miz" nicknames. The shift suggests that the page does not operate within the same "discourse of racialized sexuality" as *actual* sex with white women nicknamed "Miz" does. Although both provide Vieux with "jouissance," writing (about sex) is not the same as actual sex; in a back-hand way he even seems to acknowledge the legitimacy of (white) women's struggle for equality by giving the final chapter of the book the title "You're Not Born Black, You Get That Way" – an almost direct quotation from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*.[11]

In contrast to his attitude towards white dominant culture, Vieux does not regard white writers such as Bukowski and Hemingway as rivals or enemies—instead he seeks to count them as his peers and dreams, for example, of sitting on a bench with Henry Miller and Blaise Cendrars (78-79) watching Charles Bukowski get arrested. Race enters the equation, however, in that he wants to "become the best black writer" and put writers such as James Baldwin and Chester Himes "out to pasture" (71).

In Vieux's attention to writing the parody, or what Daniel Coleman refers to as the "metaparody" around the triangulated representation of black/white racialized sexuality, loosens its grip. As he focuses his attention on the Remington and *Black Cruiser's Paradise*, Vieux channels, consciously or unconsciously, his sexual super-powers into his writing. The key turning-point in the text occurs when, at the urging of his friend Bouba and with Bessie Smith singing "Mississippi Flood" in his ear, he diverts his gaze from seducing white women – in a writer's block fever he rants about "Black

desire obsessed with pubescent white flesh. Desire flaming up. Desire for the white woman" (78)—and actually begins to write, starting with a description of the objects around him, leading up to the actual meta-fictional writing of *How to Make Love to a Negro*, disguised as the novel-within-the-novel, *Black Cruiser's Paradise*. From this chapter on, he fails at seducing white women such as Miz Snob, Miz Cat; and his most frequent lover, Miz Literature, tells him to "go to hell" because she doesn't know anymore if he is "still among the living" (100), presumably because he has been neglecting her in favour of Chester Himes's Remington.

The "Black Stud" is traditionally not an intellectual figure. As Fanon bluntly puts it, within the paradigm of New World colonialist thinking, "The Negro is the genital" (180). When Vieux finally grabs the white page and begins writing in earnest, he is no longer as securely entrenched in his role as "Black Stud." The other characters around him may remain "types" while he reads and writes, but *he* is no longer an authentic "Black Stud." Earlier in the novel Vieux's interest in reading provokes fascination from Miz Literature because it is an activity so inconsistent with his "Black Stud" primitivism. She interrupts him:

> "You're reading! Oh I'm sorry."
> And believe it or not, she really is sorry. Reading is sacred in her book. Besides, a black with a book denotes the triumph of Judeo-Christian civilization! . . . True, Europe did pillage Africa but this black is reading a book. (34)

Vieux's room-mate Bouba notes Vieux's writing as an exceptional event since Bouba—himself a "Black Stud"—does not like to read what Vieux writes because he "abhors being presented with a fait accompli":

> "You writing, man?"
> "I'm trying."
> . . . .
> "Great!" Bouba looks happy. "Tell me about it."
> "It's a novel."
> "No kidding. . . . A novel? A real novel?" (47)

Vieux is unlike the other black men in the book, including Bouba, because of his literary interests: it is his intellect, his activity outside of the "genital," that exposes the hair-line cracks in the racial-sexual parody that is the organizing principle of this novel. Additionally, Vieux does not use writing as a way to seduce women, unlike Bouba's philosophic, "bum-wipe Buddha" (53) routine. When he writes, he does it for the sake of writing with no other motive except to write the next great American novel, and escape the grime

and poverty of his situation: "I've got a thirst for a decent life. I am thirsty. The Gods are thirsty. [White] Women are thirsty. Why not Negroes? The Negroes are thirsty" (115).

The trouble with Laferrière's channeling of Vieux's sex drive into his work on *Black Cruiser's Paradise* and Vieux's subsequent "jouissance" while in the act of writing, is that Laferrière seems to suggest that the only "productive" sex, the only cooperative partnership, is sex with the typewriter or no sex at all. In the final sections of the novel, Vieux no longer actively lusts after white women who exist off the page; black women or women of any colour no longer enter the picture, and so the character falls into the "trap" Dionne Brand describes in her essay "This Body for Itself." Even though Brand's essay is about black women's bodies and the difficulty of writing about our bodies in sexualized terms, ironically the essay could also describe how Laferrière falls into the "trap" of not discussing the possibility of his character's healthy sexuality and vulnerability at all except within the safety of the inanimate Remington 22 typewriter and the company of the mostly dead writers he idolizes. Brand states: "In a world where Black women's bodies are so sexualized, avoiding the body as sexual is a strategy. . . . I know that not talking about the sexual Black female self at all is as much an anti-colonial strategy as armed struggle. But what a trap" (27).

Brand's feminist analysis of the dearth of representations of authentic, non-conformist, black female sexuality applies very easily to the situation of Vieux the writer, the intellectual and artistic "Black Stud" trying to find a "decent life" (115) rather than continue his role as a strictly sexual organism who will sleep with "girls that no one will take except the blacks and the bums" (115). In the case of a book all about the black male "type" having fantastic, politically-charged sex, not talking about the authentic, sexual black male body—a body that could have authentic, romantic sex with both black women and non-black women, *including* white women—is also part of the "struggle" to "protect" himself from damaging stereotype. Thus the trap re-emerges for black male experience as well as for black female struggles. The book ends with the character staring at his novel manuscript, describing it as his "handsome hunk of hope. [His] only chance," imploring the reader in David Homel's English translation to "Take it" (117), in the original French commanding "VA" (153). Vieux has discovered that by taking on the role of the "Black Stud" he has tried to invent himself in a literary history where he does not exist except as cliché that certainly could

never author the next great American novel. Once he gives in to his writing and proves himself as more than just "genital," he loses his place in the script of "racialized sexuality." He has never considered black women or other women of colour as sexual partners (or any other kind of partners), he has never thought of white women as anything but quarry, and so when he abandons the "game" of seducing white women, he leaves himself with no sex except with books by white male writers. The parody has played itself out to the end and collapsed on its inconsistencies and the restrictiveness it represents to the black male subject. Once the cliché has been exhausted, Laferrière as the writer has no choice but to end the book.

If black women could exist in this world Vieux has around him, he could also exist, and not just as a "Black Stud." Laferrière sees the limitations of the parody and so ends the book when his character no longer lives the parody/fantasy. But neither Vieux nor Laferrière *explode* the parody with a "nuclear" fervour that would, as Coleman suggests, "expose and ridicule the discursive system that produces the racist stereotypes which degrade men of African ancestry" without "recommodif[ying]" the same stereotypes (53). Instead, by the end of the book black women are where they started: without a body, an independent voice, or their own chance at "nuclear" sex with a partner of their own choice.

NOTES

1 The original French title is *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer* or "How to Make Love to a Negro Without Getting Tired."

2 For the purposes of consistency, I will be following Dany Laferrière's model and using the lower-case "black" and "white" throughout this essay.

3 According to narrator Vieux when he discusses his novel-within-the-novel *Black Cruiser's Paradise*, "there are no women in my novel. There are just types. Black Men and white women. On the human level, the black man and the white woman do not exist" (111). Because the narrator of this book deals only in "types," by extension, the black woman would also be a type.

4 See the chapter, "How to Make Love to a Discursive Genealogy: Dany Laferrière's Metaparody of Racialized Sexuality" in Coleman's book, *Masculine Migrations: Reading the Postcolonial Male in 'New Canadian' Narratives*, for a full discussion of parody and metaparody.

5 This term is used throughout the novel and describes not only Vieux's physical interaction with the white women he meets, but his political take on his interactions with white women and white dominant culture in general.

6 Billie Holiday, not Bessie Smith, is referred to on page 70 of *How to Make Love to a Negro*.

7 Cleaver realizes after he is sent to prison for rape that "for the first time in my life, [I admitted] that I was wrong, I had gone astray . . . for I could not approve the act of rape" (15). Fanon states that "This sexual myth – the quest for white flesh – perpetuated by alienated psyches, must no longer be allowed to impede active understanding" (81).

8 In an interview with Carrol F. Coates, Laferrière reminds her that "The Caribbean is a region of America. . . I belong to this continent that the United States has wanted to keep simply for itself. The idea of a 'Great *American* Novel' is not a novel that can only take place in the United States" (916). Interestingly, the "Great American Novel" that Laferrière proposes would presumably be written in French, even further dismantling the cultural hegemony associated with "America." This novel would in effect be Laferrière's rewriting of America and the racist, neocolonialist underpinnings that sustain stereotypes such as the "Black Stud."

9 The reformed Eldridge Cleaver takes a similarly worshipping approach to black women as "sacred," distant objects in *Soul on Ice*. In the chapter "To All Black Women, From All Black Men" he refers to black women as his "Queen-Mother-Daughter of Africa / Sister of My Soul / Black Bride of My Passion" (205). For Cleaver, black women do not represent human beings; rather he uses them as target practice when he prepares to rape white women, or as his goddesses after he has decided that raping women is "wrong."

10 The "bouquet of lilacs" sparkling with rain in the French version of the chapter title is changed to "wild rosebush" (41) in the English translation.

11 The quotation in *The Second Sex* is "on ne nâit pas femme, on le devient."

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Tom Wayman

MINE

On my side, knees brought waist-level,
or on my back with legs straightened,
I am lowered down a dimming shaft
to emerge into a viscous atmosphere,
thickened pressure. For hours here
a watcher seldom speaks or
even hears, with limbs that
mostly do not function, become a being
who is menaced, commits and regrets a murder,
screams at an adversary
without effect, is imperiled by the construction of
houses and sheds too close to another dwelling,
or is romanced
or tangled in a quest for
a tray of gold coins.
Nothing is eaten, drunk.
Yet this absence of ordinary sustenance
other than the dense air
is cushioning, as the lack of sky and other spatial
or temporal dimensions weaves a cocoon of monotone
malevolence or
benignity

until a cage jars into motion,
lifting the miner.
The emotions of the pit
are osmotically transferred into a self
during the ascent: when the conveyance
bursts onto the surface,
the events that recently occurred linger in tattered chunks
or crumble to silt as
physical memories abruptly return, shadow forth a body
poised to assume my name.

R. Darren Gobert

The Antitheatrical Paradox in Michel Marc Bouchard's *Les Feluettes, ou La Répétition d'un drame romantique*[1]

As Jonas Barish's still indispensable book documents, a vital tradition of antitheatrical prejudice has marked the history of Christianity. Theatre has been condemned, in many different historical contexts and under various denominational guises, as a serpent in the garden, offering God's subjects pleasure while ultimately leading them to sin. But religious practice has meanwhile been consistently shadowed by its attraction and resemblance to theatrical performance. Barish provides an evocative analogy from *Paradise Lost*: like Milton's Adam and Eve, having to improvise their prayers so as not to fall into ritualistic repetition and yet also having to repeat the improvisation each morning (Milton V.145-152, Barish 95-96), Christian religous practice is characterized by its paradoxical relationship to theatre—falling into theatricality with seeming inevitability even while trying to assert the theatre's blasphemous implications.

The subtitle of Michel Marc Bouchard's play *Les Feluettes, ou La Répétition d'un drame romantique* (1987[2], published 1988) plays on these associations, emphasizing the connections between "répétition" (as both reiteration and rehearsal) and "drame" (as playscript and in the pejorative sense of hypertheatrical behaviour). The play enacts the mutual attraction and deep suspicion between Christianity and theatre—and it does so in a way which resonates with the history of antitheatrical prejudice in French Canada, where public theatre was banned in 1694 by the bishop of Québec, Monsignor de Saint-Vallier, and has been threatened many times since.[3] Bouchard's play stages a 1952 performance by a group of prisoners of a series of events that occurred in 1912 Roberval—chief among these events

a staging of Gabriele d'Annunzio's (real) play *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien* at the (fictional) Collège Saint-Sébastien. D'Annunzio's work, which significantly was itself banned by the Vatican and specifically denounced by the Archbishop of Paris, Monsignor Amette, before its première,[4] therefore figures as a play-within-a-play-within-a-play.[5] My goals in this discussion are, first, to situate the antitheatrical arguments voiced in Bouchard's play in the context of several important Christian writers and French Canadian clerics and, second, to offer a reading of the play as an embodiment of antitheatrical paradox, especially as this paradox relates to the gay desire which shapes the main characters and propels the action forward. The play concedes key principles of antitheatrical prejudice but celebrates the transformational potential—which it understands in religious terms—of both theatre and homosexuality.

A historically recurrent claim of antitheatrical writers is that actors, by having to imitate vice, will themselves fall into vice. This claim is central, certainly, to the Jansenist antitheatrical discourse that colours Saint-Vallier's writing against the theatre. The endeavour of actors, on these accounts, is intrinsically hypocritical and therefore sinful since it requires them to substitute the "true" selves given to them by God for false, other selves. For example, the well-known tract *Traité de la comédie* (1659) by Pierre Nicole allows no distinction between *sin* and *representing sin* and presupposes that the ability to perform a sinful act on stage can be equated with the capacity, and indeed the desire, to perform that act off-stage:

> C'est un métier où des hommes & des femmes representent des passions de haine, de colere, d'ambition, de vengeance, & principalement d'amour. Il faut qu'ils les expriment le plus naturellement, & le plus vivement qu'il leur est possible; & ils ne le sçauroient faire s'ils ne les excitent en quelque sorte en eux-mêmes, & si leur ame ne se les imprime, pour les exprimer exterieurement par les gestes, & par les paroles. (spelling irregularities Nicole's; 41-2)

Given this attitude, it is unsurprising that actors carried with them social stigmas similar to those attached to prostitutes and Jews, two other groups whose lives, according to certain Christian views, were characterized by passionate dissimulation and wandering.[6]

In *Les Feluettes*, Père Saint-Michel tells his young actors that "[a]u théâtre, on peut tout faire, vous savez. On peut réinventer la vie. On peut être amoureux, jaloux, fou, tyran ou possédé. On peut mentir, tricher. On peut tuer sans avoir le moindre remords. On peut mourir d'amour, de haine, de passion" (31). He celebrates the potential of theatre that Nicole

warns against, without worry for the character's noxious effects on the actor. The play, however, does suggest the tenuous distinction between actors and characters in its repeated slippages from one ontological level to another in the complex dramatic structure. During a rehearsal of d'Annunzio's play, for example, the dialogue between Vallier (as the archer Sanaé) and Simon (as his captain, Sébastien) becomes doubly resonant:

> *Vallier:* Ainsi, je m'avance vers toi avec passion et, comme emporté par une fougue qui jusqu'alors m'était inconnue, j'étreins ton corps. *(Vallier se colle au corps de Simon. Délaissant le ton théâtral:)* Dis-mois que tu m'aimes et je te tue!
>
> *Simon, refusant de reprendre les mots de Vallier:* J'suis ben avec toé.
>
> *Vallier:* Que tu m'aimes!!!
>
> *Simon:* Tu ressembles à une fille quand tu fais ça. J'haïs ça. "Que je suis bien!!!"
>
> *Vallier:* ... Que tu n'as jamais été si bien avec quelqu'un d'autre?
>
> *Simon, tendrement:* Que je n'ai jamais été si bien avec quelqu'un d'autre ... de toute ma vie. . . . *Vallier et Simon se caressent et s'embrassent.* (31-2)

As Vallier's "je te tue" reveals, the shift from a tone of heightened theatricality noted by the stage direction does not signify a tidy shift from "representation" to "reality" or from Sanaé/Sébastien to Vallier/Simon. Such a shift is also contrarily keyed by Simon's movement from Robervalois dialect ("ben," "toé") to standard French ("bien," "quelqu'un"). Indeed, the play's quick movements from class-marked dialect to standard French and to the *langage soutenu* of the tourist Lydie-Anne de Rozier and d'Annunzio's play seldom parallel shifts between ontological levels in the play's structure.[7] Moreover, some of d'Annunzio's lines—for example, "Il faut que chacun / tue son amour pour qu'il revive / sept fois plus ardent" (d'Annunzio 252, cf. Bouchard 28, 107, 120)—are quoted multiple times in Bouchard's play, with slight variations and shifting ontological significance.

The antitheatricalist fear that represented vice will lead to genuine vice responds to the lack of practical difference between some acts and their theatrical mimesis. For instance, a staging of d'Annunzio's play necessitates an actor's partial nudity (in order to represent the iconographic Sebastian), and it requires men physically to enact the loves of both Sanaé and César for Sébastien. (This unsettling homoeroticism was obviated in d'Annunzio's première production: he had written the role of Sébastien to be originated by his friend Ida Rubinstein. Thus one Catholic taboo was replaced by another; Amette's denunciation specifically condemns the fact that Saint Sebastian was represented by a Jew [Rhodes 153].) Moreover, Bouchard's

play is tantalizingly ambiguous as to whether Vallier and Simon's love for one another grows out of their rehearsals or is merely conveniently enabled by them; in either case, the language and plot of d'Annunzio's play are vehicles for their love's expression. Following the antitheatrical argument, the mimetic reproduction of vice raises the spectre of further reproduction and contagion. The young antitheatricalist Bilodeau puts it this way:

> A [i.e., Bilodeau's mother] l'a dit que plus vous faites des séances, plus vous êtes malades, pis qu'y'a des gars comme Vallier pis Simon qui sont en train d'attraper vot'maladie. Mme Lavigne pis Mme Scott, y disent que vous êtes comme la peste . . . pis quand y'a la peste en quecque part, ben y faut s'en aller, ou ben se débarrasser d'elle. . . . . Roberval, à cause de vous autres [i.e., Vallier and Simon] pis du père Saint-Michel, ça pourrait être un autre Sodome. (35, 36-7)

In likening theatre to a plague, Bilodeau takes up a favoured metaphor of antitheatricalists (including Antonin Artaud, whom he predates[8]), highlighting a second characteristic charge: that vice represented—and therefore reproduced—by the actors will be transmitted to the audience, by introducing them to sins that they had not previously imagined or by causing them tacitly to approve of the sins by their vicarious participation. The Jansenist bishop Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, whose specific relevance to the interdiction against theatre in New France we should not underestimate, describes how the vice generated in the actor's body by his mimetic representation enslaves him and spreads to the spectator, whom it also transforms:

> En imitant . . . on devenait esclave avec un esclave; vicieux avec un homme vicieux; et surtout en représentant les passions, il fallait former au dedans celles dont on voulait porter au dehors l'expression et le caractère. Le spectateur entrait aussi dans le même esprit: il louait et admirait un comédien qui lui causait ces émotions. . . . Ainsi tout l'appareil du théâtre ne tend qu'à faire des hommes passionnés. (53)

Similarly, in his 1694 *mandement*, Saint-Vallier had warned of a play's ability to instil vice in the unwitting spectator, even when it pretends to do otherwise. These plays, he writes,

> ne tendent d'elles-mêmes qu'à inspirer des pensées et des affections tout-à-fait contraires à la Religion, à la pureté des moeurs, et à la charité du prochain, comme sont certaines pièces de théâtre qui tournent la piété et la dévotion en ridicule, qui portent les flammes de l'impureté dans le coeur, qui vont à noircir et à dechirer la réputation, ou qui sous le prétexte apparent de réformer les moeurs ne servent qu'à les corrompre et sous couleur de reprendre le vice l'insinuent adroitement et avec artifice dans l'âme des spectateurs. (303)

Nicole worries in particular that women will be so moved by the fantastic passions they see staged that they will be unable to carry out even their household affairs ("petites affaires de leur ménage" [61]). But if female spectators, in his view, are particularly vulnerable to the plague-like effects of theatrical spectatorship, male actors are more likely to suffer the insidious, feminizing effect of theatrical performance. Again, this notion runs through the entire history of antitheatrical writing, starting perhaps with Plato's concern that men will be softened by the licence theatre affords them to experience womanish pity and other "irrational" emotions (295 and *passim*). Before women actually took to the stage, this concern was of course intensified by the requirement that male actors cross-dress in order to represent female roles. In English theatre history, for example, where women remained off the stage later than in France, the concern finds expression in the Puritans' conflation of theatre with a host of other ills including (by the tally of Prynne's *Histrio-Mastix* [1633]) "effeminacy, lascivious songs, fantastique costly apparell, Pagan Customes, . . . wanton Fashions, Face-painting, . . . Long haire, . . . Periwigs, . . . amorous Pastoralls, lascivious effeminate Musicke" and other "wicked, unchristian pastimes" ($A3^{v}$-$A4^{r}$). Indeed, various Puritan attacks on theatre, such as Stephen Gosson's *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* (1582), are founded on the prohibition in Deuteronomy against men wearing women's clothing (Barish 90).

Bouchard slyly sets his play in contexts that require all-male casts: in 1912, d'Annunzio's play is staged in a *collège classique*,[9] and, in 1952, Simon's play unfolds in a prison. These twinned homosocial settings allow Bouchard to revive the homophobic concerns of centuries of antitheatricalists, for whom theatre becomes associated with a threat to masculinity that reaches its worrisome climax in the male actor's giving over his integral self to an inhabitation by a character. According to this view, to act is to allow an act of metaphysical passive sodomy. Tidily, Bilodeau's antitheatrical fervour in *Les Feluettes* becomes a strategy to overcome the town's perception of him as effeminate—"Ouais, pis l'monde va arrêter de rire de moé pace que je joue tout l'temps des rôles des filles" (50), he reasons. This strategy requires the salvation of Simon from the homoerotic productions of Père Saint-Michel and the ravishing caresses of Vallier, the "feluette" of Roberval. Notably Vallier is also non-Québécois, a quality he shares with two other hypertheatrical characters: his mother, the Comtesse de Tilly, and the beautiful Lydie-Anne de Rozier, who Bouchard's dramatis personae notes is a

"spécialiste du mensonge" (13). That their theatricality is aligned with their Frenchness and that the young Bilodeau disapproves of them so mightily—he refers to the French as a "[m]audite race d'importés" [35]—may not be coincidental. Later, post-Confederation antitheatrical writings by Québécois clerics perform a similar alignment, as Ramon Hathorn has demonstrated in his work on Sarah Bernhardt's reception in Québec during her nine visits between 1880 and 1917. In various clerical declarations about these visits, the shared language between French actors and Québécois spectators is seen as the sheep's clothing that disguises the insidious wolf of theatrical mimesis, which continues to be denounced along centuries-old lines.[10] (The example of Bernhardt's rough reception in religious circles also reminds us of the continuing interdependence of antitheatricalist and anti-Semitic discourses [Hathorn 110, 115].)

But *Les Feluettes* does not treat Bilodeau's antitheatrical concerns as the paranoid or wrong-headed misapprehensions of a provincial philistine. After all, and as theatre historians too often forget, antitheatricalist arguments respond to a genuine potential of theatre: its power to induce thoughts and emotions that can motivate action in its audiences.[11] Theatre can, and indeed frequently does, broaden the potential of its spectators by expanding their sense of what is possible and by presenting them with models for behaviour; this notion is central to all progressive theatre aesthetics since Brecht and probably before, as well as to the antitheatrical arguments of Rousseau and Nietzsche, for whom the theatre threatened to teach men that they were capable of action and no longer only "material for a society" (304). Bouchard demonstrates that theatre can be strategic in the sense that antitheatricalists allege. After all, the entire 1952 performance, which the older Bilodeau is literally forced to watch, succeeds in coercing him to admit his culpability in the 1912 death of Vallier and the subsequent imprisonment of Simon, who has directed the 1952 performance. Simon's theatrical strategy proves superior even to that of Hamlet's mousetrap play, which it resembles.

Notwithstanding this strategic success, Bouchard's play does not treat theatre primarily as a threat to social order. The motivational power of the emotions stirred by theatre can, of course, be mobilized to any number of ends. Elsewhere, *Les Feluettes* thematizes unambiguously the liberatory potential of both acting and spectatorship. As Vallier explains, his mother uses her imaginative role-playing as a therapeutic means to cope with the harsh realities of Roberval: "Elle n'est pas folle. Elle joue. Elle joue. Si elle

n'avait pas cru à ses histoires, elle n'aurait pu survivre dans la pauvreté et l'isolement où nous a laissés mon père" (62). Not surprisingly then, unlike many of the other Roberval parents who forbid their children to act in Père Saint-Michel's play because of the skimpy costumes (34), the Comtesse embraces the priest's unorthodox stagings. Significantly, the 1952 Bilodeau admits that the theatrical Vallier was the only one capable of combatting a greater threat to 1912 Roberval, Lydie-Anne, who arrived from Paris in her balloon and seduced Simon: "Je ne sais pas pourquoi, mais y fallait que j'aille dire au Feluette que Simon pis la Babylonienne se mariaient. Parce que sa mère, a dit que Lydie-Anne, c'est la Babylonienne. Y avait rien qu'une personne au monde qui pouvait éviter à Roberval de devenir Babylone, c'était le Feluette" (71). The positive theatricality of the Comtesse, which the young Bilodeau had attributed to madness, enables her recognition of her foil Lydie-Anne's theatricality, which is based on falsity. Hence, the Comtesse can identify Lydie-Anne's role ("Babylonian") and thereby diagnose the whorish threat that she represents. Only Vallier, whom Bilodeau has viewed as part of the plague-like threat posed to the town's morals, can stop her. The salvational potential of Vallier's theatricality, therefore, becomes apparent to Bilodeau only in contrast to the dissimulation of Lydie-Anne, who incriminates herself with her confession that she loathes the truth: "J'ai horreur des moments de vérité," she declares (60).

In other words, Bilodeau learns from Vallier that to act—"jouer"—means "intervenir" as well as "exercer l'activité d'acteur," "feindre," or "affecter."[12] And it is precisely acting that is needed to save Simon from Lydie-Anne. The play's pivotal scene is a multiply embedded performance. Vallier infiltrates the couple's engagement party and begins "playing" César from d'Annunzio's play and challenging Sébastien's faith:

> *Vallier:* Je suis l'empereur César et on vient d'amener devant moi le beau Sébastien, qui préfère une autre religion à la mienne.[13] Tu te souviens de ton texte, Simon? . . . Salut, beau jeune homme! Salut, sagittaire à la chevelure d'hyacinthe! Je te salue, chef de ma cohorte d'Émèse. Par ma couronne, je t'aime aussi. . . . Je veux te couronner devant tous les dieux. (*Un temps.)* C'est à toi, Simon.
>
> *Simon, jouant Sébastien:* César, j'ai déjà une couronne.
>
> *Vallier, jouant César:* On ne la voit pas.
>
> *Simon, jouant Sébastien:* Tu ne peux pas la voir, Auguste, bien que tu aies des yeux de lynx.
>
> *Vallier, jouant César:* Et pourquoi?

> *Simon, jouant Sébastien:* Parce qu'il faut d'autres yeux, armés d'une autre vertu.
>
> *Vallier, jouant César:* Où sont-ils, les magiciens qui t'aident dans tes artifices et t'enseignent tes prestiges?
>
> *Simon, jouant Sébastien:* Je n'ai d'autre art que la prière. . . . César, sache que j'ai choisi mon dieu. *Silence.* (92-94)

Simon, responding as Sébastien, seems to defend his heterosexual betrothal to Lydie-Anne. But the act of theatre has been successful, and he subsequently leaves her to go to Vallier's side and to declare his love. Joining Vallier in the bathtub, Simon continues to speak as Sébastien, addressing not César but Sanaé:

> *Simon:* Je vais revivre[,] Sanaé. J'atteste mon souffle et le ciel que je vais revivre... Je vous montrerai mon visage tourné vers l'Orient. Alors vous serez prêts. Nous trouverons des voiles, des voiles gonflées...
>
> . . . .
>
> *Vallier:* ... des voiles gonflées par les vents certains, et des proues aiguisées comme le désir de la vie belle! Nous serons libres avec toi. Libres avec toi sur la mer glorieuse. Ô aimé. Ô, aimé.[14]
>
> *Simon:* Il faut tuer son amour afin qu'il revive sept fois plus ardent. (106-07)

The scene's resemblance to a baptism is clearly intentional, and the god that Simon has chosen is love for Vallier. Simon reframes the scene at the engagement party, revealing that he had responded not as a straight Sébastien to a gay César, but, as in d'Annunzio's text, as a Christian to a pagan. Thus paganism (under the emperor Diocletian) and heterosexuality (in 1912 Roberval) are conflated as oppressive, hegemonic forces, and they are set in binary opposition to a persecuted love that brings salvation: love for Christ and love between men, respectively. The heterosexuality that the Babylonian offers is revealed to be akin to paganism, and concomitantly Simon's embrace of socially marginal homosexuality is aligned with Sébastien's life-imperilling embrace of Christianity. The fusion of the two terms is complete—a fusion foreshadowed when, in an echo of Sebastian's tortures, Simon's father had whipped him for his participation in a homoerotic rehearsal (Bouchard 61).

Through *répétitions*—rehearsals—Simon comes to declare his love, which he does without hesitation in the final of his performances from *Le Martyre de saint Sébastien*, before his and Vallier's botched double suicide.[15] And through *répétitions*—thematic reiterations—Christianity and homosexuality progress from overlapping to coextensive terms. The fuller impli-

cations of this progression have eluded many critics. Solange Lévesque, for example, condemns the play's message that "tuer ou être tué par celui qu'on aime constitue la plus belle preuve d'amour" ("À propos" 174). Similarly, reviewing the published English translation, Reid Gilbert sees it as continuing "the typical treatment of the homosexual (and especially the effeminate homosexual) as self-destructive and ultimately doomed" (80). Such readings miss Bouchard's most subversive trick: how deeply he infuses the play—which is set (1912, 1952) and was premièred (1988) in a predominantly Roman Catholic society—with a Christian and, indeed, pointedly Catholic regard for martyrdom, by the logic of which the greatest expression of love for Christ is death for Christ. Like d'Annunzio's play, Bouchard's play foregrounds spiritual salvation and not secular death: "Un homme qui croit fortement à quelque chose peut vaincre l'invincible, même la mort," as Père Saint-Michel puts it when helping Simon to understand the role of Sébastien (27). Accordingly, to quote Robert Wallace, we see "desire rather than death depicted" ("Homo" 220)—and, semiotically, we see the still-breathing actor whose body has never been touched by the flames which signify the character's end. Meanwhile, the mercurial dramatic structure, rife with the ontological border transgressions that have always inflamed antitheatricalists, serves partially to camouflage the play's unambiguous likening of gays in early twentieth-century Québec to Christians under Diocletian: in each case an ascendant (and clearly preferable, even "truer") practice or belief is suppressed by a governing (if outmoded) social force whose hegemony is on the wane. It is uncoincidental that, aside from the Baron de Hüe and his laughable wife, instances of heterosexual coupling are decidely rare: Vallier's mother has been long ago abandoned by her husband, Simon's brutal and alcoholic father Timothée is a widower, and the expressly malignant Lydie-Anne, who had tried to ensnare Simon in her heterosexual trap, is written out of the play: we never see her again after she leaves at the end of the fifth scene. The epithet applied to her, "Babylonian," is now revealed as multiply resonant: "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus," she is vanquished, as the righteous predict (Rev. 17:6).

And the righteous in *Les Feluettes* are unmistakably "les feluettes," as Lévesque and Diane Pavlovic note: "jeunes, beaux, sains, purs et innocents, nimbés de lumière, animés d'un Idéal dont la grandeur les auréole. Ce sont des Justes, qui ne rendent pas de comptes aux hommes mais à Dieu. . . . . La loi des hommes n'est past clémente à leur égard mais ils la méprisent, sûrs de posséder la vérité supérieure d'un sentiment qui n'est accessible qu'aux

élus" (155). But who, precisely, are these plural "feluettes," since the play's plot offers us only one, Vallier? In exploring this question, Lévesque and Pavlovic note, first, that the play's promotional material featured the entire cast in feminine white camisoles and, second, that male homosexuality is becoming the "thème dominant du répertoire québécois" (156). I would echo Wallace's observation—he reproduces one of the publicity photos (*Producing* 214)—that the actors are clearly posed as themselves, "out of character" (215), and I would add that most of the actors are themselves gay.[16] At three ontological levels (1912, 1952, 1987), a gay man (Père Saint-Michel,[17] Simon Doucet, André Brassard) directs a story of desire between, and enacted by, gay men. If we follow Louis Althusser in imagining that we are constructed as subjects by responding to the call of interpellation, there is something sly in the play's appeals to us from its monolithically gay perspective. We might say that it not only invites but in fact requires a gay gaze from its spectators.[18]

This spectatorial gaze is clearly focused: the 1952 play is written by Simon (in prison for Vallier's death) expressly for Monsigneur Bilodeau, over whose shoulder we watch the various levels of embedded, homoerotic theatricality. Significantly, our proxy is Bilodeau, for of all the characters he is changed most dramatically as a result of the acts of theatre and spectatorship in which he engages. In 1912, he is notably absent from Père Saint-Michel's rehearsal, forcing another boy to play d'Annunzio's Syrian slave. But despite his fulmination against the stage, he is himself eventually forced to participate in theatrical performance when Simon ties him up like Saint Sebastian and kisses him:

> *Bilodeau:* J'veux pas être malade comme vous autres. *(Simon lui clôt le bec en l'embrassant.)*
>
> *Vallier, déclamatoire afin d'enterrer les gémissements de Bilodeau:* Des profondeurs, des profondeurs, j'appelle votre amour terrible. Encore! Votre amour! Encore! Encore! Votre amour éternel! (39, cf. d'Annunzio 257-59)

By the end of the play, his faith in antitheatricality is evidently shaken. He willingly revisits his earlier act of theatre in the climactic moments before the fire, asking the young Simon: "Tu me donnes-tu un bec . . . comme les becs de saints?" (119). The 1952 Bilodeau, meanwhile, engages throughout in the act of spectatorship with the older Simon. (The monsignor's conversion from antitheatricality was underscored in Brassard's production by the fact that he was one of only two actors on stage wearing proper costumes. The other was Père Saint-Michel, suggesting how theatricality inheres in

Christianity.)[19] And as I have noted above, Simon's coercive act of theatre succeeds in that Monsigneur Bilodeau's spectatorship does elicit a confession of his culpability in Vallier's death:

> *Monseigneur Bilodeau:* C'était Sodome qui brûlait et j'étais Dieu qui vous punissait en te laissant vivre, en laissant mourir Vallier.
>
> *Le vieux Simon:* Pourquoi tu m'as pas laissé mourir avec lui?
>
> *Monseigneur Bilodeau:* Je voulais que tu penses à moi. De n'importe quelle manière, je voulais que tu penses à moi et je savais qu'en prison, tu ne cesserais de penser à moi. Et j'ai réussi. *(Temps.)* Je t'ai aimé au point de détruire jusqu'à ton âme. (124)

Narrating the final plot points of the 1912 narrative for Simon—and us—Monsigneur Bilodeau moves fully from spectator to actor, participating in the action of Simon's 1952 play rather than merely watching it. Having made his declaration of love after a dramatic pause ("je t'ai aimé"), Bilodeau then demands, "Tue-moi! Tue-moi!" (124). It is significant that he asks Simon for the play's by-now-established proof of love. He simultaneously confesses guilt, begs for expiation, and, perhaps most significantly, articulates gay desire.

This moment has been facilitated, even enabled, by acts of theatre and spectatorship, reminding us that the play has embraced the principles on which antitheatricalists ground their attacks: precisely through countless ontological transgressions, we see actors transformed by their acting, spectators transformed by their spectatorship. At the same time, *Les Feluettes* defends theatrical mimesis. Arriving at the truth, which is the goal of Simon's 1952 representation of the 1912 events, requires theatrical staging. When Bilodeau attempts to stop this performance, Simon tells him "[t]'as pas d'affaire à arrêter l'histoire!" (32). Bilodeau's retort—"[v]ous appelez ça l'Histoire?" (32)—nicely embodies the paradox in which all antimimetic discourse is trapped: as various philosophical and theological traditions have shown, the means by which we apprehend the truth cannot be distinguished from the truth itself.[20] The truth that Bouchard's *Les Feluettes* disseminates, meanwhile, concerns the transformational, even salvational, potential of gay love. The play concedes and celebrates the famous Jansenist charge that "l'appareil du théâtre ne tend qu'à faire des hommes passionnés" (Bossuet 53), sustaining throughout the antitheatricalist insistence that spectatorship can make emotional—and, indeed, passionate—men. Idealizing homosexuality, it aligns Simon's subversive love with that of Saint Sebastian, unwilling to recant before the emperor. Doing so, it also suggests that all of its

feluettes—actors, characters, and audience alike—share the potential of another Christian persecuted under Diocletian: Saint Genesius the Actor, transformed by the experience of theatrical performance.[21]

NOTES

1 While I was finishing this article, I was fortunate to have the research assistance of Kerry Manders and Basil Chiasson as well as the input of my colleague Robert Wallace. I acknowledge them all gratefully.

2 The play premièred at Salle Fred-Barry in Montréal on 10 September 1987 in a much-celebrated production directed by André Brassard. The early production history of the play is covered by Wallace (*Producing* 212-15) and elsewhere. Bouchard's most successful play, it has been produced several times subsequently in both French and English, including recently at San Francisco's American Conservatory Theatre (2005). The English-language translation of the play by Linda Gaboriau, published in 1990, was adapted for cinema: John Greyson's 1996 *Lilies* was similarly successful, winning a Genie Award for Best Film.

3 In French Canada as in France, seventeenth-century antitheatricalist sentiment galvanized in response to Molière's putatively anticlerical *Tartuffe*, which the Church sought vigorously to suppress. As Leonard Doucette notes, "whereas in France there were too many dioceses and too many opinions for one firm policy to prevail, in New France the one all-powerful religious authority made compromise and equilibrium impossible" (170). Therefore, in an incident that Jean Béraud characterizes as "le plus fameux incident de notre vie théâtrale sous le régime français" (11), Molière's play was banned by Frontenac at the urging of Saint-Vallier, who wrote in his 1694 *mandement* on the topic that plays such as *Tartuffe* "ne sont pas seulement dangereuses, mais qu'elles sont absolument mauvaises et criminelles d'elles-mêmes et qu'on ne peut y assister sans péché, et comme telles nous les condamnons" (303). As various historians have documented, almost all public theatre ceased for the rest of the French regime; see, for example, Doucette (170-172) and Béraud (11-14). Jean Laflamme and Rémi Tourangeau's *L'Église et le théâtre au Québec* treats the Church's attempts to restrict theatrical activity in Québec from 1606 to 1962.

4 D'Annunzio's work was included in the Congregation of the Catholic Index of prohibited books. Accordingly, before the première on 21 May 1911 at Paris's *Châtelet*, Amette declared it offensive to the Christian conscience and forbade Catholics to attend (Woodhouse 257-58, Rhodes 153-54).

5 However, *Les Feluettes*'s ontological structure is not tidy. As Piet Defraeye and Marylea MacDonald articulate, structural descriptions such as "play-within-a-play-within-a-play"—or "poupées russes" (Isabelle Raynauld) or "double mise en abyme" (Solange Lévesque and Diane Pavlovic)—are helpful, but they do violence to the play's complexities: "ces notions . . . ne parviennent pas à rendre l'intégration et la répétition complexes de ces niveaux multiples" (Defraeye 130). To represent the play's structure, Defraeye and MacDonald offer instead a model of five concentric circles bisected by an ellipse (131). Their diagram cannily separates the fourth-century setting in which Sebastian suffered under Diocletian from the 1911 context of d'Annunzio's play. It is important to recognize

the difference between these contexts—recall that Christianity figures as a socially marginal belief in one and a socially dominant belief in the other—to appreciate fully Bouchard's play's meanings.

6 Barish documents well the ill treatment of actors and especially itinerant actors historically; see Barish (464-69) for an overview of the parallel treatment of actors and Jews.

7 Bouchard's shifts in linguistic register are largely absent from Gaboriau's translation. Moving from French to English, many of the play's nuances are perhaps necessarily lost: not only the multivalence of the subtitle, which Gaboriau translates as "Revival of a Romantic Drama," but also most of the historical resonances I trace here (as well as at least one that I don't—i.e., the relevance of *duplessisme* to the play's 1952 ontology).

8 I follow Barish (454-58) and Martin Puchner (7) in thus characterizing Artaud.

9 Another historically relevant detail: theatre played a central role in Jesuit schools, whose elaborate stagings inflamed the Jansenists in France (Barish 163). In early Canada, the pedagogical use of theatrical productions in the *collèges classiques* was dealt a decisive blow by Saint-Vallier, who banned such productions in 1699; pedagogical theatre would not reclaim its role in the *collèges* until the end of the eighteenth century (Galarneau 205-09).

10 For example, Bishop Taschereau warns against a "fournaise diabolique," a troupe of "baladins étrangers" who have come to Québec to offer "un danger très grave qui menace vos âmes" (204). Hathorn cites various similar clerical declarations and contemporary newspaper articles, such as a 1905 *La Presse* report which notes that "[l]a grande faute des acteurs français, c'est de prendre le Canada pour la France et de ne pas faire de distinction entre deux milieux si différents" ("Nos lieux").

11 On this potential of theatre, see Mette Hjort's discussion of Puritan and Jansenist antitheatrical tracts in her *Strategy of Letters* (160-195).

12 The English verb "to act," of course, similarly carries the connotations of "to behave like an actor" and "to intervene" (in the sense of carrying out an action)—as well as "to feign" or "to affect," descriptions relevant to Lydie-Anne.

13 Significantly, Vallier's pointed first line is his own; it does not appear in *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien.* The rest of the text, with minor alterations, compresses a passage from d'Annunzio (199-206).

14 Another boundary transgression: Vallier joins Simon in speaking Sébastien's line, which he fuses with lines from Sanaé and the Archers d'Émèse; compare d'Annunzio (250-52).

15 The progression is tidy. During their rehearsal in scene one, which I quoted earlier, Simon can do no better than "je n'ai jamais été si bien avec quelqu'un d'autre" (32). In scene five, he manages "Je t'aime, Vallier"—but only with "toute la difficulté du monde" (105). In scene seven, he is emphatic. Note the mixed registers:

> Ast'heure, t'es mon amant, mon homme, mon amour. Seul, unique amour. Le soleil pis le lac sont nos seuls témoins... à la vie, à la mort. . . . J'vas avoir tout le courage qu'y faut. J'vas être aussi brave que toi. *(Il prend la lampe à l'huile et la fracasse sur le sol. Serrant Vallier contre lui:)* Je vais revivre, Sanaé. (120)

16 See Lévesque and Pavlovic 156 n.4. René Gagnon, the (straight) actor who played the Comtesse de Tilly to great acclaim in Brassard's production, expressed discomfort with working with a predominantly gay ensemble. "Ça m'a dérangé au début," he admitted to *La Presse* in a December 1988 interview, which characterized *Les Feluettes* as "une pièce audacieuse qui dans un premier temps, laissait croire à un théâtre essentiellement gay" (Beaunoyer D3).

17 Père Saint-Michel's sexual leanings are suggested by his fondness for homoerotic spectacle (all-male "spectacles à tendance érotico-ecclésiastique" [Bouchard 12]) and his prurient interest in Vallier and Simon's attic trysts (37). I read cautiously the young Bilodeau's accusation that the priest is "plus doux avec les p'tits gars" (35) given the pubescent Bilodeau's obsession with homosexuality.

18 See also Wallace's reading, in his "Homo Creation," of how Bouchard's play and others like it "homosexualize" the experience of spectatorship (219).

18 Lévesque and Pavlovic also evocatively describe the set for the production, which emphasized the parallels between a theatrical performance space and a church prepared for Mass (15-57).

20 For example, Hans-Georg Gadamer, following both Kant and Schiller, sees representation as central to the apprehending of knowledge:

> Thus the situation basic to imitation that we are discussing [i.e., theatrical imitation] not only implies that what is represented is there *(das Dargestellte da ist),* but also that it has come into the There more authentically *(eigentlicher ins Da gekommen ist).* Imitation and representation are not merely a repetition, a copy, but knowledge of the essence. Because they are not merely repetition, but a "bringing forth," they imply a spectator as well. They contain in themselves an essential relation to everyone for whom the representation exists. (114-15)

Plato himself praises the carpenter's bed—which is an appearance or representation of an unknowable, essential "form" of bed (286-87)—while condemning imitative poetry as an illusion that cannot "lay a hand on truth" (291).

In the Catholic context, the representational aspect of the Eucharist ritual enacts the sacrifice of Christ. The host is meanwhile said to be simultaneously bread and Christ's body; this simultaneity embodies a paradox fundamental to Christianity, since Christ is believed to be both man and the divine represented as man.

21 The legend of Genesius holds that he spontaneously converted to Christianity (for which he was martyred) as a result of performing in an anti-Christian play for Diocletian. His story is dramatized in both Lope de Vega's *Acting is Believing* (1621) and Jean Rotrou's *Le véritable saint Genest, comédien et martyr* (1645). The title of Jean-Paul Sartre's 1952 study of Jean Genet, *Saint-Genet, comédien et martyr*, adumbrates the relevance of Genesius' story to protheatrical theory—and to gay theatre history.

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John Donlan

Galactic Dynamics

So long as inertia's great flywheel holds all in place
why complain about the weather? Let it teach us
to vary, repeat ourselves, defy prediction.
At least we're here. "Cheer," calls the red-winged blackbird.

That call and one song are all it needs.
A better example might be the selfless moon
who climbs and sinks over the night-charmed earth,
horizons separating, entering each other.

Selves, bodies, wisdoms working together, wet
with complexity, weak and strong forces
constellated in us, what do you say?
Never stop

is all we know. One law
grinds our bones, another licks our pleasure
until it swells and flowers
into the future. Love what you have.

Heather Murray

"And every Lawyer's Clerk writes rhyme": Robert Baldwin as Poet, York, 1819-20

Robert Baldwin is known to Canadians as a politician rather than as a poet, although he was considered in his day a deeply cultured man and an adept rhetorician. The English-Canadian cultural imaginary positions Baldwin, in tandem with Louis-Hippolyte La Fontaine, as the "father" of responsible government: a chief tactician for the concept, he shared with La Fontaine the joint premiership of the united Canadas in 1842-43 and again from 1848-51. Despite his standing in the political patrilineage, and the solidity of his achievements, the scholarship on Baldwin is surprisingly scanty and there is no authoritative biography. His role may have been too mediative, his personal life too muted, for such attention.

This essay considers Baldwin before he was, literally or figuratively, a "father": this is a study of juvenilia.[1] Here is Baldwin in a different key, before he became an irretrievable melancholic after the death of his beloved wife, and an unremittingly public figure. The focus is a manuscript collection of poetry, authored by Baldwin and at least one other, written throughout 1819 and brought into final form in 1820.[2] Related letters provide what may be a first instance of sustained literary criticism in Upper Canada.[3] These items demonstrate the persistence of scribal publication in early Canada, and the interdependence of coterie cultural production with more public endeavours and institutions. And they raise issues additional to Baldwin's early cultural formation: what was the literary field of early York, only 26 years after its formal founding and six years after the American invasions?

Robert Baldwin was born in 1804 into one of the "first families" of "Little York," a family linked through dense Irish kinship connections, and then

Canadian marriage, to the prominent Russell and Willcocks clans.[4] The Baldwins' modest financial situation strengthened those ties: Dr. William Warren Baldwin, Phoebe Willcocks Baldwin, and their children lived for many years in a condition of mutual dependency at "Russell Abbey" with the aging and ailing Elizabeth Russell; in turn, Dr. Baldwin (first a physician, now a lawyer) managed the Russell holdings.

By 1818, however, the outlook had improved. Dr. Baldwin's land investments and legal practice were thriving with the boom in the colonial economy. Construction commenced on a large frame dwelling three miles from the town, on a 200-acre plot on Davenport Hill bequeathed by William Willcocks. An early sketch shows a simple and well-proportioned house, in the Georgian style, light and airy with long rows of six-over-six windows (Thompson 78). The new home became the centre of family life, although Dr. Baldwin retained offices at Russell Abbey, which remained the family's town home. "Spadina" welcomed the Baldwins for the new year of 1819.

On that new year, the young Robert Baldwin was nearing his fifteenth birthday, and in his penultimate year at the Home District Grammar School (the "Blue School" in the York vernacular) under the redoubtable John Strachan. He was a young man of substantial (although not as yet absolutely assured) expectations, to be realized three years later when the death of Elizabeth Russell passed half of the vast Russell holdings to his mother and made Robert heir-designate. But the great expectations were as much *of* him, as *for* him: his father intended him for the law and for reform politics, which suited the boy's own inclinations, although Dr. Baldwin's dynastic aspirations—his innately "feudal feeling," in the words of one relative—may have been less congenial (Scadding 33).[5] A complex interplay of family connections and political instabilities marked Robert Baldwin's early years: the nine-year-old Robert struggling on foot, with his mother and the younger children, north on Yonge Street ahead of the invading Americans, while his father stayed behind to prevent the sacking of Russell Abbey and to tend the wounded. The family connections were themselves a novelistic blend of affections and obligations, legacies and debts.[6] All contributed to make Robert Baldwin—or so he is invariably described—intensely idealistic, involuted, and preternaturally responsible. That he would turn poet as an adolescent is not surprising.

Indeed, a long literary strain runs in this political family, beginning with the first Robert Baldwin, bankrupted in Cork producing a political newspaper, the *Volunteer Journal* (Thompson 99).[7] Both Robert Baldwin (the

elder) and William Baldwin were classically trained: a letter from William Baldwin to his very young son recommends Virgil "as the most beautiful of the Roman poets" (cited R.M. Baldwin 84). A brother of Dr. Baldwin served on the frigate that carried the Irish poet Thomas Moore back to England from his 1804 trip to Canada and the United States; the family prized this connection to Ireland's "national" poet and, indirectly, to Byron, of whom he was an intimate (Thompson 75). The family's literary inclinations are symbolized by the building of a library at Spadina, and by the guest book in the picturesque summer house where family members, visitors, and even servants recorded impressions in verse (Robertson I: 175).[8] Family literary productions could be elaborate, as evidenced by the program for a play titled "The Revenge" produced with a cast of cousins as a Christmas entertainment in 1824. (Robert Baldwin took the lead as "Don Alonzo"; Dr. Baldwin's verse "Prologue" is witty and metrically adroit.)[9] In the autumn of 1819, Robert Baldwin's friend James Hunter Samson could quip that "I am happy Spadina contains such a host of poets. I suppose you are the Appollo [*sic*]" (28 Nov. 1819). The literary lineage would extend to Robert Baldwin's own grandson, the journalist and critic Robert (Robbie) Ross, who displayed the family trait of staunch responsibility in his courageous friendship to the vilified Oscar Wilde.

The major intellectual influence on the young Robert Baldwin (henceforth Baldwin) must have been the Reverend John Strachan: it could hardly have been otherwise. For 20 years, Strachan had been moulding the minds and souls of the young men of Upper Canada's elite and rising classes, and his curriculum was by now well-defined. A newly-hired assistant instructor recorded his first impressions in the fall of 1819, noting "a class of only two in Greek, who took up Horace and Livy in Latin, and there were three Latin forms below them. . . . None were much advanced in mathematics, and, with the exception of the senior two had not passed the fourth book of Euclid" (cited Robertson I: 118). Baldwin, head boy in his final year, was one of the advanced pair: he would also have been trained by Strachan in the rhetorical arts, particularly declamation. Strachan was confident of his educational principles: "Delay no more/ To plant instruction on Ontario's shore," he had exhorted in "Verses Written August 1802," foreseeing that in a not-too-distant future, "At Kingston, bards may glow with Milton's fire/ Or seek a calmer bliss from Dryden's lyre" (Strachan, ll. 129-30; 139-40).

But in early 1819, Strachan's educational ideals were proving a distinct impediment to one young Upper Canadian poet. Writing to his slightly

older friend James Hunter Samson (19 to Baldwin's 15) Baldwin complained that a surfeit of Greek was spoiling his Poetic Muse; to which Samson jokingly retorted that the law had not spoiled *his* ("you will perhaps say because you had none to spoil" [4 Feb. 1819]). Samson and Baldwin had become friends the previous year, when Samson was studying at York; now he was apprenticing law in the Kingston offices of Christopher Hagerman.[10] Samson accepted with alacrity and even ardour Baldwin's proposal to continue the correspondence.

Samson's reply set the tone: the swapping of verses and criticism, occasional discussion of political and legal matters, gossip about mutual friends, and confidences about crushes on local "belles." (In the time-honoured tradition of Petrarch and Boccaccio, Baldwin was especially vulnerable to any new "Gallery Goddess" in church [4 Feb. 1819].) Personal details and controversial opinions are hinted and even hidden given the vagaries of the post, and the need to entrust some letters to travellers between York and Kingston. Unfortunately, only Samson's side remains of this lively documentation of social mores, while Baldwin's responses must be read between the lines or reconstrued. This archival situation replicates an apparent imbalance in the original correspondence: Baldwin as poet to Samson as critic; Baldwin as confessor to Samson as advisor; while Baldwin never reciprocated the intense and sometimes intemperate nature of Samson's epistolary friendship. The letters provide a window onto the homosocial, possibly homoerotic, life of young men of Upper Canada, as well as their literary longings.[11] There are 41 extant letters from Samson between February 1819 and November 1822, tidily numbered by Baldwin and the date of receipt noted. Following a gap of several years are a further 14 letters, written from 1825 to 1827, dealing with legal matters primarily and charting the cooling of the friendship.[12]

Despite Baldwin's dry spell and Samson's self-deprecation, their exchange was under way, Samson leading with a parody of provincial social life:

> Our Kingston Belles had long work'd hard and steady
> At making dresses; getting flounces ready
> One object did the minds of all employ:
> The coming ball filled every soul with joy
> Point out the female look'd not with delight
> Unto the dance upon their Queen's birth night!
> See each striving to be first in fashion
> Their eagerness would move a stone's compassion. . . .

When the death of the Queen is announced and the ball postponed, the ladies weep—for the dresses they cannot wear. These couplets show Samson at his satiric best: "And now I have led the way I hope you will follow my example and send me any poetry you may make."

Baldwin responded with a draft poem on rejected love, and a request for honest criticism, which Samson supplied abundantly and with tact. "I admire your poetry extremely, and should not make any alteration in it if you had not told me to deal candidly, and was afraid if I left it as it was you might suspect I dissembled," he began. Moving sequentially through the text, Samson pens three pages of notes, correcting repetitions, tweaking the scansion, and choosing among, even devising, alternative wordings.[13] Equally pragmatic advice is offered to the (again) lovelorn Baldwin, who should keep his mind on his Greek and Latin and thus cultivate qualities attractive to any worthy young woman (25 Mar. 1819). But the educational and economic disparities were always there: Samson regretted the deficiencies in his own schooling and moral formation and felt sorely the lack of a classical education (11 April 1819; 20 June 1819). Throughout the correspondence he is attempting Latin in fits and starts, purchasing a Virgil, intending Cicero, studying with a local cleric, but with little lasting success.[14] Samson's English was more polished than Baldwin's however, judging by his constant corrections of Baldwin's slipshod spelling, and many little homilies on the topic. And his letters show a sound literary understanding: while Baldwin was surely right to stick to the law, Samson might well have been an editor, in another time and place.

Indeed, Samson's sustained reflections on the role of the critic show the influence both of Pope and of Horace (even if he knew the latter only in translation). Baldwin had sent paired odes to the seasons:

> I admire the simplicity of your spring; and compare it to the strains of nature's bard, my countryman, Burns. You desire me to correct autumn, which I shall try under these express conditions: That you do not praise my corrections, nor adopt any but what pleases your own taste. For example; if a writer of genius should adopt all the corrections, additions, and deductions of a petulant critic, In [sic] what kind of a garb would his productions appear? why, patched here, torn there, daubed, discoulered [sic], stained, and in short exhibiting every thing but its original appearance.

Again, a litany of corrections follows. "I have not the least doubt but the critic will be criticised. Send me your death of Achilles" (11 April 1819).

While sharing with Baldwin a taste for Burns, a veneration of the Greeks, and (like most young men of the day) a conviction that Byron was the avatar of the poetic, Samson shows a more neoclassical sensibility, admiring clarity, wit, and self-knowledge. These principles emerge in the doggerel he drafted in haste to catch the next post:

> The Poets now are such a race
> I'm almost sham'd to show my face
> You'll not find any now below it
> For every grocer's boy's a Poet
> A Cobler [sic], Blacksmith or divine
> And every Lawyer's Clerk writes rhyme.
> And though the blockhead hardly knows
> The difference between verse and prose
> H'el [sic] gabble on sans rhyme or reason
> And talk when always out of season
> He'll tell you all about mythology
> Misspel [sic] his words, commit tautology
> Some lines with seven feet some with six*
> In Short the whole amounts to nix.+
> Two themes alone employ their pens
> Backbiting and defaming friends. . . .
> * For instance me.
> + the vulgar word for nothing (18 April 1819)

Perhaps pleased by the poem, which he would later title "The Modern Poets," Samson made a proposal in his characteristically casual way:

> I shall collect all your and my poetry in a little Book, with the initials of the AUTHOR at the bottom of each piece. . . . In a former letter I said I had lost all taste for poetry, however, the maggot bites me sometimes, I retire, and feel no inclination for any other company than the Muse, but after writing half a dozen lines I start up ejaculate "Fudge" and leave the piece unfinished. . . . Notwithstanding you shall have all the overboiling of the noddle of—
>
> Your ever sincere friend... (18 April 1819)

It must have been apparent by now, for all the value of Samson's criticism, that their inclinations were dramatically different: Baldwin a Romantic, lyrical in spirit, sensitive to natural beauty, and obsessed with the role of heroic figures in the destiny of nations, as witnessed by the titles of some lost early poems: "Ode to Passion," "The Death of Achilles," "The Destruction of Mexico." (Baldwin ruefully recognized himself as the mythologizer of Samson's line 11.) There was an imbalance in their poetic production in quantity and, Baldwin may have suspected, in quality as well. Surely he did not see his own verse as the overboiling of his noddle.

Baldwin delayed in his response; perhaps sensing reluctance, Samson offered a sustained and more serious 12-line conceit, in which the mayflower-son is awakened to life by the sun-father (10 May 1819). Baldwin then produced a diplomatically ambiguous statement of prior plans, judging by Samson's reply: "You say you are going to collect your poetry in a book: Will you give mine a place? leave a margin at the bottom so as to make notes and corrections. If I were you I would first write it in its primitive state" (20 June 1819). Undampened, Samson continued with his original scheme: "You have sent me the following pieces. Ode to Spring, Ode to Passion, Mexico, Death of Achilles, Verses on Henrietta, Aeneas descent into hell, A verse composed going to school, all of which I shall enter in a book; indeed, the most part are already entered." (9 June 1819). In a later letter, Samson detailed how he transcribed poems as letters arrived, with the letter number at the top of the page, and renewed his request to be included in Baldwin's volume: "Will you do the same should you think the nonsensical effusion of my brain worth the trouble?" (5 Sept. 1819).

While many of the poems mentioned in the letters have vanished, evidently both poets attempted a variety of forms and models. On Samson's advice, Baldwin dropped work on an epic in order to continue with the "Ode to Tecumse" (a name spelled variantly throughout the poems and correspondence) which Samson had admired in an earlier draft (20 June 1819). Samson produced dialect verse including a bigoted exchange between a "Mungo" and a "Massa": Baldwin disapproved and Samson foreswore such "doggerel dirty poetry" (10 Oct. 1819). Possibly with Pope's "sacred eclogue" *The Messiah* in mind, both composed verse renditions of chapters of Isaiah and swapped this literary problem back and forth in their letters. Each also attempted to "metamorphose" or "transmetamorphose" (in their terms) some classical authors, with Samson presumably reliant on translations or interlinears. Perhaps heartened by their progress, Baldwin had taken the bold step of submitting one of his verses for publication—to crushing effect. Samson was robustly consoling:

> I shall say a word or two about your Monthly Critic and his poetry. You say he rejected your Tecumse without looking at it. I certainly think it was the much the same whether he looked at it or not; he knows as much about poetry as a horse does about his grandfather. You do not agree with him when he says the more pains you take the better you write poetry; ditto me. There is some excuse for him however on that point. He finds [sic] infinite labor to produce the barren effusions of his own brain. . . . His lines metre without regard to anything else; for instance he says in his anniversary "The [illegible] snow our eye balls stun."

> Here he makes a singular noun agree with a verb in the Plural [sic] number. In another place he says, "they'll impart," these contractions are very seldom found in any authors but such as Butler and Wolcot, and in the last line of the same he has 13 feet. (10 Oct. 1819)

Encouragingly, Samson praises Baldwin's poetry as resembling his "favorite Burns"—by which he means its "simple, easy, and natural style" with a "natural flow of sounds from beginning to end" (28 Nov. 1819; 10 Oct. 1819), contrasting such "effortless" composition to the "Prodigious" production of the "Monthly Critic." While they often quipped about their different heritages—Irish for Baldwin, Samson a Scot—"Burns" was an aesthetic common denominator.

While their letters more or less ceased in the winter months—the Upper Canadian mail slowed with the winter decommissioning of the steamboat, and Baldwin was ill in the new year (as worried letters from his friends attest)—early spring found them still scribbling. Baldwin remained fascinated by the Tecumseh theme and Samson generated a miscellany: three valentine verses, "scotch" dialect verses, and an encomium to women, with several other pieces started. But their literary correspondence was drawing to a close. In May, Samson reported he had completed nothing whether from laziness, idleness or "something else." By October he would write:

> I do not know whether I ought to be ashamed of it or no—but I have dropped the acquaintance of the muses in toto; so far as respects composing I am fond of reading good poetry notwithstanding—You therefore must not give me credit for more than I deserve—go on and leave me to climb parnassus [sic] easily—. . . . (11 October 1820)

"Do you ever write now?" he had enquired of Baldwin in the preceding month.[15]

Baldwin continued to write and to send verses for Samson's perusal, but not for long. His younger brother Henry, ailing since birth, had died at the age of thirteen in May: Samson's maladroit response to Baldwin's melancholy announcement—Samson wrote hastily, and chided Baldwin for owing him a longer letter—may have caused Baldwin to draw back from their collaboration. Baldwin had completed his studies at the Blue School; he had spent some of the summer serving in the militia; and he was admitted to the study of law.[16] In that year he wrote "FINIS" to more than his book of poems.

"Poems. By Robert Baldwin. & Others." is written in a 16 cm x 20 cm bound notebook, with marbled covers and lined numbered pages. It has a title page, 81 pages of contents, an editor's note, an alphabetical index by title, and an errata page with no corrections. The manuscript is fair copied in a single hand (probably Baldwin's), with short underrules after stanzas and longer underrules for the end of poems, not always consistently. No authorship is given for any of the individual items. The manuscript is in very good condition except for two missing leaves that appear deliberately ripped out; the tops of several other pages are torn (perhaps as a result) leaving several poems incomplete. The title page reads as follows:

> Poems.
> By
> Robert Baldwin.
> &
> Others.
>
> I confess it was want of consideration that made me an author; I writ because it amused me; I corrected because it was as pleasant for me to correct as to write; and I published because I was told I might please such as it was a credit to please. Pope
>
> Collected by James Samson Hunter.
> Vol. 1.st
> 1820.

The title page seems designed as much to mislead as to inform. Like the old canard about the Holy Roman Empire, "Poems. By Robert Baldwin. & Others . . . . Collected by James Samson Hunter" is not just poems; it is not apparently authored by "others"; and it wasn't collected by Hunter (or even Samson).[17] Only "Robert Baldwin and "1820" are entirely correct. As to the rest: the volume contains two prose selections as well; while the poems are primarily Baldwin's, the evidence points to a duet rather than multiple "others"; "Hunter Samson" is a literary sobriquet; and he was not in any case the "collector," a role assumed, as we have seen, by Baldwin. (To compound the situation: the term "collector" was by now a thinly-disguised simile for "author," since Walter Scott had been revealed as the "collector" of the ballads in *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.) "Vol. 1.st." implies other volumes, which are not extant if indeed they were ever planned. Last, is a cryptic closing comment informing the reader that "This vollume [*sic*] contains 1192 verses, most of which are the composition of Mr. Doe himself. Note of the Editor." Is the "editor" the same as the "collector," and (if not)

why is Baldwin (clearly identified on the title page) given a *nom-de-plume* here? The running jests and innuendoes of the Baldwin-Samson correspondence, as well as *à clef* comments in the volume's prose pieces, suggest that this title page could be decoded by only a select few.

Enough evidence exists, however, to overturn the assumption that this collection was assembled and copied by Samson.[18] The absence of chronological ordering or of letter numbers means that this is not the collection to which he refers in his letters; and the omission of many poems Samson earlier transcribed indicates that this is not a fair copy of Samson's version either. More likely, this is a much-pared and fair copied version of Baldwin's own collection; a (tentative) comparison of the hand to Baldwin's annotations on the received letters, and the many mis-spellings, suggest he is the copyist. Samson's title billing perhaps glosses his gratitude to Baldwin for giving him credit "for more than I deserve" (11 October 1820). While Baldwin could conceivably have used Samson's assemblage in producing his own, there are no references to notebooks passing back and forth. The provenance information for "Poems" lacks attribution or dating, only noting it was received from Baldwin family members.[19]

While the manuscript's bibliographic directions are confusing, the document functions more clearly as a guide to tastes and intents. The selection of an epigraph had been the source of some discussion in the spring of 1820: Samson was searching for a suitable "motto" but had few books to hand in Belleville where he was assisting lawyer James Macaulay for the month. "The easiest manner to find a motto would be to look into the Spectator where every piece bears one: but most probably you would disdain to get one so easily" (10 March 1820). The eventual selection from Pope must have struck just the right note of gentlemanly amateurism and even insouciance.

"Poems" consisted originally of 52 poems and two prose-poem pieces. Two poems are now missing, but the index identifies them as "To Adeline. A Dream." and "Ad Patrem." (Was "Ad Patrem" the verse penned in anticipation of Samson's father's visit? But only the two poems already quoted can be definitively deeded to Samson; my working assumption is that most if not all of the remainder are Baldwin's.) The contents may be sorted into some broad generic categories. Not surprisingly given the age and sensibilities of the authors, almost half are love addresses to young women: "To Anna" (recipient of nine addresses), and (sometimes multiply) to Adeline, Anna-Maria, Clara, Eliza, Fanny, Harriet, and Rosaline. Some poems take the pretext of an impromptu, fragment, dream, or farewell, and there is a

duo to Adeline occasioned by the (real or imagined) exchange of locks of hair (verses lent an unintended resonance by the epigraph from Pope). Given the care with which love-objects' identities are disguised even in the letters, these poems are not likely addressed to actual Annas and Adelines of York and Kingston (even if an amorous "Robert" is personified in one poem). Indeed, Samson's cavalier editorial suggestion, that "Henrietta" should replace "Harriet" in the interests of scansion (25 March 1819), indicates that names may have been chosen as much for their sonic properties or literary associations. (Although the crushes of these easily-smitten young men were a powerful prompt to composition: witness "An Impromptu to Rosaline (written in Church)." In the Samson-Baldwin correspondence, "belle" and "muse" are closely collocated terms.) In addition to the poetic addresses, "They Vow" and two poems titled "To Woman" treat this theme more generally. While these poems must have been of moment to their composer(s), their current worth is primarily as evidence of themes and forms then in vogue.

The remaining half of the poems can be divided into smaller categories. First, are poems of friendship and commemoration: there are poems "To Givins" and one "To Samson," while "To W. Stoughton" addresses another mutual friend, a teacher who had taken an especial interest in Baldwin, apparently written on the occasion of his departure from the Home District Grammar School.[20] "To De Hoen" praises the Baron Frederick De Hoen (formerly Von Hoen) a British army officer and close friend of the Baldwins (it was to his Yonge Street farm that the family fled in 1813), who had returned to Germany in 1817. One poem is addressed "To Miss Newpine," seemingly a childhood sweetheart for whom the author retains a warm regard; while a memorial verse "On the Death of Mrs McGill" mourns one of the Baldwins' earliest Canadian friends, whose "Davenport" estate was on the lot west of their "Spadina." The occasion for the fairly-generic meditation "On the Death of a Friend" cannot be determined. Biographical evidence supports Baldwin as the author of all or almost all of these poems, which are of interest from a social-historical perspective.

While the length of the epic had defeated Baldwin—and Samson had advised dropping one such effort, "the subject being too long and laborious for your present occupation" (31 May 1819) with the regiment—he tackled heroic topics by adopting more manageable literary forms and by staying closer to his frame of reference. "Death of Tecumsee" presents the slaying of Tecumseh, at the Battle of Moraviantown in 1813, as a martyrdom, by

conflating battlefield scenes with (what was believed to have been) the later desecration of Tecumseh's body; while "To Tecumsee" assures the departed hero of his eternal commemoration on history's page. Here Baldwin heads the long line of Canadian poets drawn to this compelling figure, and provides an early "mythologization" of the heroes of the recent war.[21]

Several poems clearly emulate admired authors. "To a Cricket" and "To a Moth. In November" are identifiably Burnsian, where an address to a small creature carries an encomium to domestic virtue or a wry reflection. A verse translation of a lyric by Anachreon was probably motivated by Thomas Moore's own "Odes of Anachreon" of 1800. The two "Ossianic" fragments follow the format with an opening "argument" or summary of the action, followed by narrative parodying the bardic rhythms of James Macpherson's "original." Other poems, less specifically indebted, rehearse the familiar *topoi* of the period: odes appreciating Nature's beauty and power, and lyrics on poetic inspiration and composition ("The Lyre"; "The Broken Wire"). A "Canadian" departure is quite literally provided by "The Canadian's Exile's Adieu," which eschews meadows, zephyrs, and muses for fields, strong gusts, and maidens who roam under "native skies."

While the poems show range in models and influences, Baldwin's novitiate status caused caution in stanzaic and metrical forms. Almost one-third of the poems are in cross-rhymed iambic tetrameter quatrains; a further four are in iambic tetrameter with a different stanzaic structure. This line gives a suitable aura of simplicity (and, some would sense, sincerity) to these youthful productions, but places expressive restrictions. And even then, the poems have a surplus of e'ens, 'eres, ne'ers, and other syncopic shortcuts (despite Samson's disapproval of "contractions"). Plural interjections and invocations also assist with metrical measure—a surplus of "ahs" give the addresses to young women a particularly love-sick quality—as do ingenious coinages and substitutions ("Canadia" is apostrophized in "The Canadian Exile's Lament," and Tecumseh placed on the banks of "Delaware" rather than the "Thames"). However, in contrast to his epistolary critic, Baldwin seems not to have been over-concerned with metrical regularity, favouring a looser line.

Baldwin's classical training probably led to some experimentation with syllabic lines or with hexameters. Quotations from the letters suggest that, in the well-trodden footsteps of Dryden and Pope, he chose heroic couplets for his classical "metamorphoses" or his own epics.[22] The extended line, when it does appear, is primarily hendecasyllabic. There are some ballad

stanzas, and approximations of a common measure; and Burns' influence is felt even if the Burnsian stanza is never strictly emulated. This point may be most economically made if the reader hums "Afton Water" while reading the opening of the ode "To Tecumsee."

Could Baldwin, or Baldwin/Samson, have printed "Poems" if they had wished to do so? Several years would pass before Hugh Thomson of the *Upper Canada Herald* in Kingston issued a first volume of verse (of unknown title) and soon a second, *A Poetical Address to the Liege Men of Every British Colony and Province in the World* (1823) (Parker 74). The first verse monograph in York was J.L. Alexander's *Wonders of the West, or, A Day at Niagara Falls in 1825*, printed in the year of its title (Firth LXXXXV). But the capacity was there: The King's Printer issued non-governmental materials such as almanacs and sermons; indeed, Charles Fothergill would print *Wonders of the West*. In spring 1820, a second press appeared in York with John Carey's fledgling newspaper, *The Observer*; and a skilled Edinburgh bookbinder, George Dawson, had been in business in York since 1817 (Hulse 79). Aspiring authors could also look to the presses of Kingston, Niagara, or even Lower Canada.

Publication of individual verses was also feasible. While the first Upper Canadian literary magazine, James Martin Cawdell's *The Roseharp*, would not appear until 1823 in Niagara, Baldwin would surely have known, in the summer of 1820, of his fellow literary society member's plan to launch the *Glencawdell Portfolio* (Fleming 451). Cawdell's plan remained unrealized, but would Baldwin have considered placing his verses there?[23] Newspapers published poetry, both short selections and longer productions—Adam Hood Burwell's *Talbot Road* had appeared in two instalments in the *Niagara Spectator* in 1818, for example (Bentley 92)—and even the *Upper Canada Gazette* published poetry, especially of an occasional or epideictic nature. Carey's new press, and Cawdell's proposed new magazine, must have raised exciting possibilities for publication in York. But the words of the "Monthly Critic" may have been felt more deeply than either young man would admit.

However, the verses were public, thus published, in a different way. Samson's soldier brother John couriered letters between York and Kingston, but was also a "bit of a Poetaster" (18 Apr. 1819) and an early audience: "John has got a few lines I wrote him extempore, in scotch, which if you wish you can obtain from him" (10 March 1820). James Givins, then a disgruntled store clerk in Cornwall, wrote to Baldwin about his own reading

and asked for, and received, examples of Baldwin's "muse" (21 Feb. 1820; 5 June 1820).[24] The Ossianic fragments, *jeux d'esprit*, also comically delineate a social set: the brothers Gador and Salmin, their friend the loosely disguised Balnor, and a maiden who mourns their deaths by the brook of Givna. In this respect the title of "Poems" is correct: it was written within a circle of "Others." Or, more precisely, "circles," if we add the "host of poets" assembled at Spadina. "Poems" is best defined as "coterie" verse, literature which functions to maintain a literary conversation among a deliberately restricted group. As a result, selections by friends and family are almost invariably included, according to David Shields' observations of similar collections in early America (Shields "Manuscript" 415). (Perhaps we should take Baldwin's word about the "Others.") Such social functions would be eclipsed by a too-narrow focus on the authorship of Baldwin alone. Some connotations of "coterie" are also misleading: frivolity, exclusivity. Coterie authorship may be needed to propagate controversial materials; to target an audience strategically; to protect the power of the authorial "signature"; and to build networks of like-minded individuals.

Similarly, the productive "finish" of the holographic work is underestimated if manuscripts are viewed as a pre-print stage of production. "Poems" is a book, generically and materially, even on more contemporary understandings of the term, including the "book-like" attributes of cover, title page, contents listing, index, and enumerated pages. (Shields also notes in coterie collections a characteristic care in the selection of addressees and epigrams, in the organization of contents, and in calligraphy ["Manuscript" 415].) "Poems," in sum, is a coterie book produced and circulated through scribal publication. Scribal publication, like coterie circulation, may well be a deliberate (rather than a default) choice, allowing the author an artisanal control over the finished book, and an ongoing participation in processes of production and distribution. Shields has emphasized in another context that, "discovery of the literature of British America depends on an understanding "the *mixed print and manuscript culture* that operated in the provinces": addition of "North" is a useful inflection of Shields' formulation (*Oracles* 6).

Whether "Poems" ever circulated, or was meant to circulate, outside of friends or family networks, cannot be ascertained. Clearer, however, is Baldwin's determinate role in expanding and institutionalizing such cultural circles.[25] In June of 1820 ten young "Gentlemen" convened the first literary society in Upper Canada: Baldwin, his cousin (and future brother-

in-law) Robert Baldwin Sullivan, James Givins, and James Martin Cawdell, were among the young literati, meeting for mutual improvement and debate.[26] The group was supplanted by Baldwin's next effort (to which Hunter Samson also belonged), a Juvenile Advocate Society inaugurated in February of 1821.[27] Initially a debating club (for legal topics particularly), it soon became a forum for the practice of "deliberative democracy" (in the term of Jeffrey McNairn) with the law-student members paying scrupulous attention to their own procedures and record-keeping, and tackling more contentious questions: "Has the Legislature of a Mother Country the right to tax a Colony which sends no representative to such Legislature?" Eventually, under pressure from Baldwin, the society developed a "bicameral" structure to handle both legal and general topics, and added reading and discussion to its mandate. Speaking always to a "side," they found, restricted treatment of topics compared to conversation, which "frequently starts a stream of ideas and knowledge long forgotten and makes the memory more alert in drawing forth its hidden stores" (Minutes 17 Dec. 1821). This group, which persisted until 1826, was quickly emulated by a Student Society in Kingston founded by Samson; the two groups kept in touch through letters, overlapping memberships, and the exchange of debate topics.[28]

Samson and Baldwin corresponded for several more years, with diminishing frequency and intimacy; political differences finally divided them. Samson drifted further from the York and Kingston circles, becoming Belleville's sole lawyer in 1823. He turned conservative, most notoriously helping to engineer the libel and breach of privilege charges against William Lyon Mackenzie that resulted in Mackenzie's expulsion from the House of Assembly. And, despite a loving and well-connected marriage, Samson became ever more embittered, dying an alcoholic in 1836 (Boyce 772-73).[29] Baldwin's life would appear the exact opposite: he was a prosperous, accomplished, and eminently trusted man, who retained lifelong, if somewhat moderated, literary interests.[30] But he became increasingly frail in both physical and mental health, a prisoner—like Hunter Samson, in this respect—of his own inwardness. Perhaps he should have remained a poet; perhaps he needed an expressive outlet for his ideals, his memories, and his grief. When Baldwin's body was exhumed and gutted in a post-mortem mimicry of his late wife's caesarean section, and when her coffin was disinterred so that his could be chained in perpetuity to it, the shocked family followed testamentary instructions that could have been scripted by Byron himself.

This essay is not the first to turn to the "private" Robert Baldwin.[31] But such private poetry—even the poetry of aspiration, friendship, and desire—fulfilled a distinctively public function and indeed was dependent on existing venues and circuits for its very composition. In an era when family ties were political bonds; when a new ruling bourgeoisie was formed through the forging of friendships; when the press could be considered either too restricted in view or too profligate in distribution to be trusted; and when (even, ostensibly, private) poetry served to integrate family, acquaintanceship, power, and information—the distinction between public and private cannot be clearly drawn. This would not be news to scholars of early Canadian politics (Jeffrey McNairn, for example, has tracked the rhetorical widening of "private" opinion into a public sphere); nor to book historians (Gwendolyn Davies has documented another instance of the persistence of scribal publication at the moment of print proliferation, in the analogous cycle of authorship, copying, and criticism of the Tory poet Jacob Bailey [Davies 371-72]). And David Bentley has recently reminded literary scholars of the continuing importance of authorial coteries, of the dependence of "individual" creative acts on collective endeavour, in his study of the Confederation *group* of poets. Robert Baldwin's "Poems" and its surrounding web of actors and circumstances, insist on a scholarly convergence of political history, book history, and literary history if we are to reconstruct the communicative terrain of early Canada.

Selections from the Poems of Robert Baldwin

From the Greek of Anachrion

As late I wish'd to sing Atridis' praise,
And twine a wreath for mighty Cadmus' name,
My Lyre refused to sound heroic lays,
And all its' [*sic*] accents breath'd a lovers [*sic*] flame.

Again I tun'd it and began to feel
A strong desire Alcides works to sing,
But love's soft accents from my Lyre would steal,
And lover's sighs the fond chords only ring.

Farewell then Heroes farewell then for me,
The lover's sighs my Lyre alone can move;
And every verse I'd proudly sound to thee,
It sweetly softens into kindling love.

[Excerpt from] To a Moth. In November

Little fluttering insect go,
And hide thee in thy nest,
For oh! th'approaching frost and snow
Will chill thy little breast. . . .

Then go and sleep in torpor while
Cold Winter's frosts are raging here,
Nor wake 'till Springs [*sic*] returning smile
Again unbinds the frosen [*sic*] year.

But oh! what thousands of mankind,
Who proudly boast a soul supreme,
Lay torpid with their thinking mind,
In Pleasure's more destructive dream.

[Excerpt from] The Broken Wire

I lately took my golden Lyre
From off the wall, where long it hung,
And struck the once extatic [*sic*] wire
To wake its'[*sic*] notes to life and song. . . .

At length the chord of love I found,
By some ill- govern'd hand was broke,
That once, with sweet mellodious [*sic*] sound,
Sooth'd softly every lay I woke. . . .

[Excerpt from] The Death of Tecumsee

. . . . Columbia's Heroes nearly yield,
They almost quit the groaning field;
When Lo!—in the tumult of the strife,
A wretch, who had not soul to dare
The Hero to an equal war,
Stole with a dastard hand his noble life;
Pierced in the back the Warrior lies;
His eye now languishes in death;
Midst thousands now he faints he dies;
Midst thousand foemen yields his breath.
Now crowds tumultuous throng around,
Each eager to inflict a wound.
How many plung'd within that heart
A sword the [*sic*] ne'er had dared to wield. . . .

[Excerpt from] To Tecumsee

Oh! shade of Tecumsee thou bravest of men
The valiant have fallen, go sleep thou with them;
For tho' o'er thy tomb no proud columns arise,
And plant their high heads in the wide azure skies,
Tho [*sic*] no tablet is rais'd to commemorate thy fame,
Nor the smooth polish'd marble engrav'd with thy name,
Thy deeds by tradition, and history's page,
Shall be handed successive from age down to age. . . .

[Excerpt from] The Canadian Exile's Adieu

. . . . Farewell, e'er again I revisit thy shore,
Let what climes, or what regions my footsteps explore,
What frowns, or what smiles of false Fortune I see,
Canadia—I'll fondly look back upon thee,
When my bosom beats high in the tumult of rage,
Or languishes soft in repose,
Yet Canadia thy fields will my thoughts still engage
While my bosom yet beats or my life blood yet flows. . . .

NOTES

1 The author is grateful to: Sandra Alston (on the *Glencawdell Portfolio*); Jennifer Bunting (Lennox and Addington County Museum and Archives); Patricia Fleming (on the Baldwin family); Douglas Fyfe (Spadina Historic House and Garden); David Galbraith (Scott as collector; coterie publication); Susan Lewthwaite (Archives of the Law Society of Upper Canada); Christine Mosser (Baldwin Room, Toronto Reference Library). Eli MacLaren searched the *Upper Canada Gazette*, hunted for the "Monthly Critic," analysed the York Reading Institution ticket, and found the 1828 Baldwin poem. David Bentley and J.R. de J. Jackson also assisted in the search for the mysterious "Monthly Critic."

2 "Poems. By Robert Baldwin. & Others. . . . Collected by James Samson Hunter. Vol.1st." Baldwin Papers, L 6. Baldwin Room, Toronto Reference Library.

3 Letters, John Hunter Samson to Robert Baldwin. Baldwin Papers, L5 (A69).

4 See Firth "Russell," Firth "Willcocks," and Fraser "William Warren Baldwin" for details of family history and interconnections.

5 Henry Scadding, married to Robert's cousin, noted how William Baldwin's liberal politics jarred with his desire to "establish in Canada a family whose head was to be maintained in opulence by the proceeds of an entailed estate" (Scadding 33-34).

6 While Russell Abbey was in the Georgian style (its name was initially a family joke, a connection made to *The Children of the Abbey* [Hounson 64-65]), there were gothic undertones. The relationship between Elizabeth Russell and her half-brother Peter was so devoted that the *DCB* calls them a "couple" (Firth "Russell"); she became mentally ill following his death and the American invasions.

7 There is a later and more radical Dublin journal by the same title (R.M. Baldwin 23).

8 While the Glen Cottage book is not available (apparently retained by Baldwin descendants), Robertson lists some contributors between 1820 and 1827, including a servant, Stephen Gwynn, who wrote a "metrical account" of the 1806 wreck of the American ship Patriot which he survived (Robertson I: 175).The young Robert also would have used the library at Russell Abbey, a fine (if slightly dated) collection. On reading in the Russell family see Joseph Willcocks, Letterbook and Diary, MU 1735, Archives of Ontario.

9 The Tragic Muse, caressed from earliest time,
Needs not from us a complimentary rhyme,
Yet, though our tyros would not wish to tear
One sprig of laurel from the poet's hair. . . .

Powell papers, Baldwin Room, TRL. For the "Prologue" (with some mistranscription), see Middleton *The Municipality of Toronto* (I: 159). The entertainment included a performance of *She Stoops to Conquer* and a "Bombastes Furioso."

10 They may have been friends even longer: later Samson would write that he met Baldwin in 1816 (11 July 182?).

11 This merits another article: the long debate (July 1819 to February 1820) between them as to whether male-male or male-female relationships were the nobler; and provocative albeit comic references to the gossip about their friendship (2 May 1819).

12 Letters 3, 32, 34, and 37 of the initial run are missing (the latter three perhaps destroyed because they referred to a feud between Samson and James Givins). One letter is unnumbered: probably because it arrived after its successor. The second series contains 11 dated items and three undated that appear to belong to the same period.

13 Two pages are missing of these (evidently extensive) suggestions.

14 Samson refers to "Homer's [F]rogs" (10 Mar. 1820). He was admitted to study just before the Law Society instituted entrance tests of applicants' liberal knowledge (including translation of Cicero).

15 Samson continued to write sporadically: an "anagram" on the name of a young woman (Letter JHS 20 Nov. 1822); and a "rhapsody" to R.B. Sullivan (Letter J.S. Cartwright 4 Dec. 1826, Baldwin Papers), for example.

16 Baldwin apparently served in John Samson's regiment (21 May 1820). While admitted in April to commence legal study in August, he postponed until Hilary term of 1821.

17 Henceforth, for simplicity, "Poems."

18 Assumed, for example, by Cross and Fraser ("'The waste'" 170).

19 There is another suggestive but inconclusive clue. The title of Samson's poem is amended to "The ladies' Disappointment. 1819." If the manuscript was copied in 1820, the change might have been made to prevent the reader thinking the poem a disrespectful reference to the death of Queen Charlotte in 1818. But "1819" is crowded onto the line: perhaps added later to prevent a similar connection to the death of Queen Caroline in 1821. In a third but less likely possibility, the entire manuscript may be a later copy of the initial 1820 transcription.

20 Samson notes Stoughton's gratitude for a "Farewell" Baldwin wrote (19 Aug. 1819).

21 Baldwin precedes George Longmore's *Tecumthé* (1824), and John Richardson's *Tecumseh* (1828).

22 Lines apparently from "The Death of Achilles," analysed by Samson, are in heroic couplets (2 May 1819).

23 No copies exist of the 1823 *The Roseharp*; the *Glencawdell Portfolio* is known only by a prospectus in the *Upper Canada Herald*.

24 Letters James Givins to Robert Baldwin, Baldwin Papers L5, A47, Baldwin Room, Toronto Reference Library. James Givins was one of the sons of administrator and "Indian agent" James Givins (also Givens).

25 One other endeavour may date from this time: Baldwin is listed as secretary on a book ticket for the "York Reading Institution," probably an early "social" or circulating library. MU 2097, #95, AO.

26 Literary Society of York. Rules and Regulations. Thomas Ridout Papers, MU 2391, AO.

27 Juvenile Advocate Society minutes, Archives of the Law Society of Upper Canada. Barker thoroughly analyses the JAS's legal training function.

28 On the Kingston group see JAS minutes (30 April 1822); Samson to Baldwin (22 Mar. 1822) and later allusions; and letters by John S. Cartwright (3 July 1824; 26 Sept. 1825; 31 Dec. 1825), also Baldwin Papers. This chronology corrects that of *Come, bright Improvement*! where the York Literary Society and JAS were at points conflated.

29 Samson married Alicia Fenton Russell, niece and ward of Sir John Harvey, lieutenant-governor of Nova Scotia. During this research a new item was identified by Jennifer Bunting: a love letter from Samson (16 Jan. 1828) detailing pre-nuptial negotiations. Item 035237, Lennox and Addington County Museum and Archives.

30 His later tastes are epitomized by his favourite novel, Fanny Burney's *Camilla* (Cross and Fraser 46). There was some further verse: see the fragment of a mock epic from 1828, "The Reply of ROBT. B*L*W*N, Esq." (CIHM 40807).

31 See, especially, work by Cross and Fraser; source, as well, for the testamentary instructions.

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David Zieroth

A Minor Talent

What attention comes his way
is sufficient only to enflame
He arrives at rage
as easily as water boils
un-watched, and talking to tools
leads to throwing them
the blame for inadequate show:
the paintbrush muddy, the wood wormy
his words corny
A neighbour offers
gormless pleasantries about work
that took his days, and weeks
and now, he looks, he sees
weakness piled and made to stand
from will-force, and nothing new

A minor talent
boosts himself above his street
at least, beyond both sides
—but when he ranges
farther, then he stops
comes back to that low room
where he prays he'll meet
coming down the stairs the other one
who might, once, twice, walk
through clutter and the past
to touch his sucked-in cheek
and raise him from the dead of
being ordinary
and content to watch
genius make the joining
of task and breath
that he cannot, he strikes out
each day to quell his dread
unable to leave alone the little bit
he knows, the best—the *beast*—
he's been given

Meredith Criglington

Urban Undressing:
Walter Benjamin's "Thinking-in-Images" and Anne Michaels' Erotic Archaeology of Memory

"A Berlin Chronicle," Walter Benjamin's exploration of the spaces that house his childhood memories, contains a passage that resonates profoundly with Anne Michaels' novel *Fugitive Pieces*, in particular its guiding metaphor for historical inquiry:

> Language shows clearly that memory is not an instrument for exploring the past but its theatre. It is the medium of past experience, as the ground is the medium in which dead cities lie interred. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. . . . Fruitless searching is as much a part of this as succeeding, and consequently remembrance must not proceed in the manner of a narrative or still less that of a report, but must, in the strictest epic and rhapsodic manner, assay its spade in ever-new places, and in the old ones delve to ever-deeper layers. (*Reflections* 25–26)

In addition to this archaeological imagery and the historical materialism it illustrates, Benjamin's influence is evident throughout Michaels' work. At a stylistic level, his example figures in Michaels' proclivity for aphoristic, fragmentary, and meditative expression, as seen in her essays "Cleopatra's Love" and "Unseen Formations." One could also construct a lineage from Benjamin to Michaels in their depiction of the city as a supreme cultural artifact, richly inscribed with the traces of the past. As well as sharing Benjamin's spatial sensibility, Michaels is indebted to her Jewish literary forebear's correlative understanding of the temporal dimension, especially his secular brand of messianism, whereby the historicist illusion of continuity and automatic advancement is dissipated under a critical backward gaze. This vision is encapsulated in the enigmatic image of the Angel of History

from Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History." The recurrent figure of the witness in Michaels' writing has much in common with the angel, who, to paraphrase Benjamin, turns his face in mute horror toward the pile of debris that is the past, but is prevented from making whole what has been smashed as he is irresistibly propelled into the future by the storm we call progress (*Illuminations* 257–58). Thus, Michaels can be seen as heir to Benjamin's distinctive method of messianic materialism, which, as Annick Hillger expresses it, "uses the kabbalistic tradition to combine historical materialism with the concept of messianic time in order to lay to rest a marxist materialism indebted to the ideas of a homogeneous and linear time" (41).[1]

More specifically, the Benjaminian image of the ruin—of fragments and remains—is central to Michaels' portrayal of urban space in *Fugitive Pieces* and is fundamental, as a metaphor, to her reflections on history, memory, mourning, and community. Michaels evokes the broken and buried forms of the city as a way of critiquing monolithic, teleological modes of history that are premised on purity of descent, as exemplified by the perverted racial ideologies of Nazism. The trope of recollection as a perpetual process of digging for the fragments of the past is used in the novel to take issue with historiographic approaches that pretend, in their infallible, totalizing stance, to be immune to the vagaries as well as the moral obligations of human memory. Correspondingly, images of sedimentation are associated with deliberate forgetting, as when Ben, the child of Holocaust survivors, and the narrator in the second half of the novel, observes that history has "silted up" inside his family because of his parents' refusal to acknowledge the past (*Fugitive* 243). Moreover, by showing how her grieving protagonists learn to live in a city densely populated by "ghosts," Michaels offers a model for accommodating the trauma of history within our present lives. Her narrative gaze, like that of Benjamin's angel, is oriented not toward some bright, amnesiac future but toward the past that we, as its heirs, are duty bound to preserve in memory. *Fugitive Pieces* thus reminds us that community is both a synchronic and diachronic entity, comprising not only the living but also the dead who haunt a specific locale, extending down through the strata of time. This chronotopic vision is epitomized by Jakob's fascination with geological formations that reveal "the way time buckled, met itself in pleats and folds" (*Fugitive* 30), thereby enabling him to project himself back through the millennia in empathetic time travel.

Through scientific imagery, Michaels achieves exceptional depth in her modeling of social and historical relations. Besides her archaeological references, many of Michaels' spatio-temporal models are drawn from the earth sciences, namely geology and meteorology, and from Einsteinian physics. These images provide a means of investigating the invisible operations of time, such as the mysterious developments conventionally ascribed to fate or chance. The seemingly unforeseeable crises of public and private life—which in *Fugitive Pieces* encompass everything from the terrors of the Holocaust to the shock of falling in love—are likened, for instance, to geological processes: "Just as the earth invisibly prepares its cataclysms, so history is the gradual instant" (*Fugitive* 77). Michaels has described her use of scientific discourses as an attempt to get at the "unseen forces" that shape us but are not experienced first hand ("Narrative" 18). As part of the generation born after World War II, she is particularly concerned with understanding how those who come after can commemorate the catastrophes that have indirectly yet profoundly affected them. Michaels' approach closely resembles Benjamin's hallmark technique of "thinking-in-images" (*Bilddenken*) in which philosophical concepts are made visible through concrete historical images; however, the differences between their approaches are just as instructive as the affinities when it comes to addressing some of the criticisms that have been leveled at Michaels' work.

In *Fugitive Pieces*, the narrator stresses the materiality of an "unearthed" history over any allegorical interpretation:

> It's no metaphor to feel the influence of the dead in the world, just as it's no metaphor to hear the radiocarbon chronometer, the Geiger counter amplifying the faint breathing of rock, fifty thousand years old. (Like the faint thump from behind the womb wall.) It is no metaphor to witness the astonishing fidelity of minerals magnetized, even after hundreds of millions of years, pointing to the magnetic pole, minerals that have never forgotten magma whose cooling off has left them forever desirous. We long for place; but place itself longs. Human memory is encoded in air currents and river sediment. (53)

Despite this insistence that it is "no metaphor," clearly a figurative dimension of Michaels' images equates human memory with the anthropomorphic notion of the earth remembering—images that are born, I would suggest, of the latent desire to find a "scientific" and hence incontrovertible basis for the responsibility to bear witness.[2] Critics have identified this conflation of conscious and unconscious processes as problematic in the context of Holocaust representation in that it seems to naturalize and hence potentially redeem historical crimes by obscuring questions of agency.[3]

Moreover, the act of investing places, objects, and the physical body with the power to hold our memories *for us* would seem to relieve us of the individual and collective burden of remembering and thus to actually promote forgetting. While a fair amount of scholarly concern has already been directed at Michaels' aesthetic treatment of the Holocaust, often in the form of a rehearsal of Theodor Adorno's famous dictum that to "write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (*Prisms* 34),[4] less has been made of the way in which Michaels' search for material images to symbolize the abstract, invisible workings of memory and history also manifests itself in the erotic objectification—and thus the diminished sense of agency—of her female characters. As intimated by the image of the womb wall, Michaels' concept of "embodied memory" relies on the female body as its metaphorical vehicle. In their substitutive function, Michaels' metaphoric images differ from Benjamin's material (or dialectic) images, which are concerned with showing the truth of the historical object in itself. In fact, Benjamin identifies a tendency toward the "consumption" and devaluation of the material world, and in particular the human body, in allegorical and emblematic representations of immaterial ideas, where the material thing is always something "other." As Sigrid Weigel elaborates in her discussion of Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*: "For him, there was a connection between allegory and practices of stripping naked sensuous things . . . , of rigidification, dismemberment, and deprivation of life" (98). The related problematic not addressed by Benjamin is that this devalued matter or body is conventionally associated with "the feminine" in a reductive opposition with masculine spirit or mind. In order to plot this complex argument through Michaels' work, we must return to Toronto, the city of her childhood and her imagination, and consider how the unseen forces of loss and longing are given shape in this most important of her material images.

Throughout Michaels' poetry and shorter prose, recurrent images of Toronto shed light on the extended portrait of the city in *Fugitive Pieces*. The piece "Where Once We Dwelled," written as the Foreword to John Sewell's *Doors Open Toronto: Illuminating the City's Great Spaces*, typically presents the theme of loss through both geological and architectural imagery (the ravines, pressurized limestone, the ancient lake bed, and abandoned or converted edifices): "lost places (lost possibilities) that continue to live their ghostly absence inside the same space as new buildings, or in the empty air of parking lots" (xiii). When these images of nature and artifice are applied to the theme of memory, however, the uneasy convergence of determinism

and accountability in Michaels' writing becomes apparent; she observes that in the city "geological and human memory meet, like fate and free will" (xiii). "Where Once We Dwelled" also exemplifies Michaels' native love for the city, at times nothing short of erotic in its focus and intensity. Indeed, this essay might best be described as an intimate declaration of love for Toronto, captured in rapturous, lyrical prose. In an extended simile, Michaels compares discovering the city's secret places to exploring a lover's body, beginning with an evocation of Toronto's distinctive geological formations: "Long before, and long after, I imagined undressing the city as one undresses a lover: each time differently. In the city's creases—the ravines, the twenty streams, the folds of the escarpment—a lifetime of desire slipped into laneways and cafés, like prayers slipped between the stones of a temple" (xii). Moving into a more explicatory mode, Michaels then invites readers to take advantage of the "Doors Open" weekend as an exercise in self-discovery and social history:

> The city is a body, with its hidden histories, with its structures and infrastructures, and for two days we have a chance to take a good look at who we are; all that a building can teach us—not only about its own usefulness and all that has gone on inside it and continues to, but about those who designed it and those who built it, about the local and not-so-local materials it's made from and the memory of the site itself. Every building, like every human, represents its times, its context. (xiii)

This passage, with its spatial, object-based sense of history, is reminiscent of Benjamin's materialist hermeneutics. Michaels directly acknowledges her literary mentor when she writes of the built world of the city as a memory site *par excellence*: "Every building is an intersection, where one's experience meets the experience of others, where the past lives in the present, Walter Benjamin's 'waking world toward which the past is dreaming'" (xiii). The reference here is to the dialectical image of dreaming and waking that underpins Benjamin's unfinished *Arcades Project*, as set out in his 1935 exposé of the project, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century." In this précis, Benjamin describes the "arcades and interiors, the exhibitions and panoramas" that are evidence of the mid-nineteenth century's commodity fetish as "residues of a dream world" and goes on to elucidate his thesis:

> The realization of dream elements in waking is the textbook example of dialectical thinking. For this reason dialectical thinking is the organ of historical awakening. Each epoch not only dreams the next, but also, in dreaming, strives toward the moment of waking. It bears its end in itself and unfolds it—as Hegel already saw—with ruse. In the convulsions of the commodity economy we begin to

> recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled. (Reflections 162)[5]

While Michaels does not pursue Benjamin's analysis of the phantasmagoria of capitalist culture, her more general treatment of the themes of memory and loss from a post-Holocaust perspective is indebted to Benjamin's materialist historiography. Based on the "dialectic image," this mode of critique involves unearthing the detritus of the urban landscape and reading it as a record of the real history of repeated destruction, violence, and institutionalized forgetting.[6] The shock value of the dialectical image in revealing the discarded historical object triggers a revolutionary awakening from the collective dream of fated historical progress. Awakening, in this metaphoric sense, is linked to the politically charged act of remembrance.

The mood of unfulfilled longing in "Where Once We Dwelled," or what the author calls the "eros" that saturates "[e]very city, no matter how modern or ancient, populous or abandoned" (xiii), also has a precedent in Benjamin's city essays. In "A Berlin Chronicle," for instance, Benjamin takes an imaginative journey through the city of his childhood, exploring memory in relation to the topography it inhabits. He draws a connection between the many "places and moments when it [Berlin] bears witness to the dead" and the "evanescent" quality these places and moments confer on childhood memories, making them "as alluringly tormenting as half-forgotten dreams" (28), while simultaneously mapping his earliest sexual experiences, his erotic history as it were, onto Berlin's public and domestic spaces. This conjunction of the morbid and the erotic as the unique register of memory can be recognized in psychoanalytical terms as unfulfilled longing—expressed in both mourning and sexual desire—for an original state of plenitude. Such a reading is supported by the oppositional relationship in both Benjamin's and Michaels' work between the mythical "true" language of the body and symbolic language, where the latter is both the marker of a primal loss and its consolation.[7] Weigel, who highlights the influence of Freudian psychoanalysis in Benjamin's concept of an unmediated, silent language of things or matter,[8] also elucidates Benjamin's theory of "language magic," or mimesis, in his allegorical interpretation of the Book of Genesis. According to this theory, the lost immediacy or "magic" of Adamite language only becomes visible through the predominating language of signs in momentary flashes of similitude (see Weigel 72). A psychic drama of absence and longing also plays out in a number of Michaels' poems, with the speaker straining to break through the barrier

of language into a corporeal mode of expression that is immediate, undivided, and authentic. For instance, Michaels' long poem from *The Weight of Oranges*, "Words for the Body," can be read as an expression of the insatiable desire for an ideal unity. The human body, like the "body" of the earth, is regarded as a fully present repository of memory and thus as an alternative to the indirection of symbolic language:

> The body has a memory:
> the children we make,
> places we've hurt ourselves,
> sieves of our skeletons in the fat soil.
> No words mean as much as a life.
> Only the body pronounces perfectly
> the name of another. (4.22–28)

A similar interplay between lack, desire, and language is found in another long poem, "What the Light Teaches" from the *Miner's Pond* collection. Here, language is characterized as an inadequate medium, as is most clearly revealed in the attempt to translate the extremes of human experience, both the horrors of history—"We can only reveal by outline, / by circling absence" (8.19–20)—and the passion of lovers—"Language was not enough / for what they had to tell each other" (10.28–29). Yet in spite of its failures, language is also presented as the only refuge for the exiled self: "It's a country; home; family: / abandoned; burned down; whole lines dead, unmarried" (11.6–7).

As suggested by the reference to exile, Michaels' response to longing and loss is deeply rooted in the history of voluntary and forced migration, particularly the Jewish diaspora. Accordingly, she examines the themes of miscommunication and dislocation in relation to the trauma of separation from one's native land and culture. This is most apparent in *Fugitive Pieces*, where immigrant Toronto is described as a "city of forsaken worlds; language a kind of farewell" (89). Yet as Michaels demonstrates, alienation is not just an injury to be suffered in isolation; it can also form the basis of an empathetic kinship. In this respect, silence may be regarded as its own form of communication: an expression of solidarity and an evocation of the ineffable that need not be filled in or recuperated.[9] This positive view of silence as receptivity is illustrated when Jakob, a holocaust survivor and exile, takes a stroll on a summer's evening through one of Toronto's immigrant neighbourhoods. An overheard word sparks the memory of a song his mother used to sing as she brushed his sister Bella's hair. Believing the dark

street to be "safely empty" (109), Jakob lets the remembered words tumble out of him, his "spirit shape finally in familiar clothes" (110):

> But the street wasn't empty as I thought. Startled, I saw that the blackness was perforated with dozens of faces. A forest of eyes, of Italian and Portuguese and Greek ears; whole families sitting silently on lawnchairs and front steps. On dark verandahs, a huge invisible audience, cooling down from their small, hot houses, the lights off to keep away the bugs.
>
> There was nothing for it but to raise my foreign song and feel understood. (110)

Darkness and silence are figured not so much as nothingness but as the presence of absence, a space or pause in which one might be encountered on one's own terms.

In *Fugitive Pieces,* partial and fragmentary urban forms remind of a social space in which the shared status of outsider constitutes a fundamental communal bond. Michaels presents derelict or disused sites as the outward manifestation of her protagonists' inner desolation. Paradoxically, then, the impression of desertion enables newcomers to feel that they belong in the city. Jakob, for instance, develops an affinity with those locations that echo and hence accommodate his own sense of loss. His explorations of Toronto mark his painful passage into adulthood. Surveying the city from the escarpment on Davenport Road, Jakob is drawn to the ghostly industrial landscape:

> At night, a few lights marked port and starboard of these gargantuan industrial forms, and I filled them with loneliness. I listened to these dark shapes as if they were black spaces in music, a musician learning the silences of a piece. I felt this was my truth. That my life could not be stored in any language but only in silence; the moment I looked into the room and took in only what was visible, not vanished. (111)

Again, in darkness and silence Jakob finds a means of expressing the unspeakable horrors of the past. Ben, who was born after the war and so, in a sense, like Jakob, "did not witness the most important events" of his life (*Fugitive* 17), is similarly attracted to absence and aftermath within the urban landscape: "The ravines, the coal elevators, the brickyard. . . . The silent drama of abandonment of the empty factories and storage bins, the decaying freighters and industrial ruins" (228).[10] *Fugitive Pieces* uses such vacant imagery to gesture toward the irredeemable while also demonstrating the necessity of working through grief by giving events shape and meaning. Thus, Michaels addresses the paradoxes of Holocaust historiography and the impossible imperative of testimony, of presuming to speak for the silenced and forgotten victims.

The manner in which Jakob adapts to Toronto by turning it into a repository of memory further illuminates Michaels' notion of the city as an object of love. Just as Ben comes to "an irregular and intimate knowledge of the city" (238–39) through the stories his wife Naomi shares, Jakob learns to make a personal connection to place. As a young boy travelling with his guardian, the Greek geologist Athos, through the ancient terrain of the Peloponnesus, which has been scarred by innumerable natural and human disasters, Jakob feels his "own grief expressed there" and has his first experience of "intense empathy with a landscape" (60). This impression will recur half a century later in Toronto, where Jakob manages to create a sense of home by finding a form for his own strangeness and longing within the physical features of the land. By comparison, Athos remains tied to the land of his childhood. Thus, when Athos dies, Jakob writes to their Greek friends Kostas and Daphne to tell them he will one day bring Athos' ashes to the island of Zakynthos: "I will bring Athos home, to a land that remembers him" (118).

The enormous wealth of time stored up in the city also offers consolation of another sort. A non-linear examination of the past enables Jakob to escape the tyranny of a preordained present and to imagine other possible futures. In so doing, Jakob comes to sympathetically identify his plight with that of the First Nations peoples of the Toronto region, who saw their culture razed by European settlers. Again, Athos' geological and archaeological knowledge provides the figure for Jakob's view of history: "Athos's backward glance gave me a backward hope. Redemption through cataclysm; what had once been transformed might be transformed again. I read about Toronto's dried-up, rerouted rivers—now barely gutter streams—that once were abundant tributaries fished by torchlight" (101). Jakob evokes here a distinctly messianic conception of history as a cycle of cataclysm and disruption, while the motif of redemption is likewise related to a Jewish tradition of remembrance that involves gathering up a fragmented and threatened past. Toronto's numerous forgotten rivers provide Michaels with a particularly apt metaphor for memory—which can long flow underground before rising to the surface again—since these waterways, so central to the material and spiritual life of the First Nations, were buried and diverted in the name of "progress" and "civilization," to make way for an industrial infrastructure. *Fugitive Pieces* critiques the perversion of these Enlightenment values where they underpin a linear, triumphal conception of history that was discredited by the Holocaust and, in particular, by Nazi Germany's attempts

to consign all voices that contested their vision of human destiny to oblivion. Michaels' description of Toronto's subterranean streams constitutes a dialectic image that in order to challenge the civilizing impulse links the Holocaust with the genocidal treatment of Canada's aboriginals.[11] The affinity between Athos' historical perspective and that of Benjamin's Angel of History is encapsulated in Susan Buck-Morss' commentary on the "Theses": "A construction of history that looks backward, rather than forward, at the destruction of material nature as it *has actually taken place,* provides dialectical contrast to the futurist myth of historical progress (which can only be sustained by forgetting what has happened)" (95).

Whereas Michaels' concrete archaeological images of historical destruction and denial constitute a politically effective way of reading the world, her topographical treatment of the female body points to the representational pitfalls of "thinking-in-images." Insofar as the women in *Fugitive Pieces* provide "matter" for Michaels' metaphors of memory, they become reified aesthetic objects of diminished autonomy relative to the male protagonists. As we have seen, Michaels, like Benjamin before her, carries on the tradition of representing the city as a sexualized body with feminine connotations; and just as space is eroticized and implicitly gendered in *Fugitive Pieces,* the female sexual body is, conversely, spatially "mapped out" to serve as a physical link between past and present. As D. M. R. Bentley's article makes clear, the dual theme of recovery and repression of the past is associated with the principal female characters, who are figured either as vessels of or impediments to memory. In the former ("positive") capacity, the bodies of Michaels' women are made to carry symbolic weight as vehicles of transmission, often by virtue of their concern with the body: in mourning the dead, in domestic nurturing, and, above all, in childbearing. A gender-specific division of labour is thus perpetuated in the novel, with feminine procreation being set in opposition to male creation. In fact, the novel's fundamental structure is based on the non-biological patrilineal transmission of memory from Athos to Jakob to Ben through their work as writers.[12]

The female characters in Michaels' novel serve an auxiliary function within the overarching masculine quest for self-knowledge, and as such their roles can be defined according to three allegorical archetypes: the woman may represent the ostensible goal of the quest, someone who needs to be found or rescued; she may be a beguiler, someone who poses an obstacle or threat to the hero; or she may be a guide, sage, or mediator for the

hero. In the case of *Fugitive Pieces*, as in many quest narratives, a fundamental correspondence unites the women who perform the functions of "goal" and "guide." The three women who fulfil the roles in Jakob's quest are Bella, Alex, and Michaela, respectively, each of whom is described in topographical images. Jakob's defining relationship is with his sister Bella, or rather her "ghost." His romantic idealisation of her memory, his obsession with her unknown fate at the hands of the German soldiers who killed their parents, and his endless melancholia all govern his subsequent relationships with women. Jakob's first wife, Alexandra, is shown to hinder his connection with Bella. Alexandra inherits from her English father a fascination with British military history, especially the "large-scale strategic illusions" used during World War II to disguise key sites from the enemy (129). In Jakob's narrative, Alex is implicitly linked to these topographical ruses because her name recalls the story of British intelligence agent Jasper Maskelyne, who "moved Alexandria harbour a mile up the coast; each night a papier-mâché city was bombed in its stead, complete with fake rubble and canvas craters" (129). The references to "phantom architecture" (129), which Jakob primarily associates with Hitler's chief architect, Albert Speer, underscore Alex's disorienting, suppressive influence. Jakob feels that she is brainwashing him, trying to make him forget the Holocaust by immersing him in her unfamiliar Canadian ways: "Alex wants to explode me, set fire to everything. She wants me to begin again" (144). Most tellingly, he wonders how the sister he has lost will ever find him "here, beside this strange woman" (126).

If Alex is a false landmark, Jakob's second wife, Michaela, enables him to integrate Bella's memory into his everyday reality, thus healing the psychic split between his past and present selves caused by the trauma of the war. Rather than creating an obstruction, Michaela facilitates memory and mourning by offering her own personal, erotic history to Jakob. This process is portrayed in distinctly topographical and corporeal terms, as when Michaela guides Jakob through the literal and figurative terrain of her past: "I enter the landscape of her adolescence, which I receive with a bodily tenderness as Michaela relaxes and imperceptibly opens toward it" (186). The sexual nature of this exploration is signalled earlier when Jakob describes "cross[ing] over the boundary of skin into Michaela's memories, into her childhood" (185).

Where Alex's restlessness and love of novelty suggest that she is future-oriented, a talent for living with the past characterizes Michaela, the archae-

ologist and museum conservator. The reader is encouraged to draw this comparison between the two women when the city of Alexandria is once more evoked. Jakob's description highlights Michaela's ability to negotiate the past within the present: "Her mind is a palace. She moves through history with the fluency of a spirit, mourns the burning of the library at Alexandria as if it happened yesterday. She discusses the influence of trade routes on European architecture, while still noticing the pattern of light across a table" (176). Michaela's greatest gift to Jakob is the wealth of ancestral memory stored up in her physical being: "In Michaela's eyes, ten generations of history, in her hair the scents of fields and pines" (178). Jakob hungrily devours these memories, and by laying claim to his wife's body finds a means of incorporating his own family history into his new life in Toronto, thereby making peace with the dead. Thus, their sexual relationship is presented as Jakob's physical exploration of Michaela, which is simultaneously an unlocking of memory. He inaugurates this process by tracing every line and shape of her body, and only after he "explore[s]" her this way, "an animal outlining territory, does she burst into touch" (180).

Jakob finally achieves physical and psychic release when, in a characteristically eroticized scene, he transmits Bella's memory to Michaela, who sheds tears for the dead girl (182). Michaela's ability to mourn heals for Jakob the broken link to the past.[13] Likewise, when she bakes a pie she keeps alive the traditions and knowledge passed down through the women not only in her family but also in Jakob's. Reminded of his mother teaching Bella in the kitchen, Jakob observes that Michaela's "hands carry my memories" (192). Michaela restores hope to Jakob and enables him to feel, "for the first time, a future" (267). In her reproductive role she also represents the potential for cyclical renewal. Husband and wife both die, however, before she can tell him that she is pregnant with a child whom she intended to name Bella if she was a girl or Bela if he was a boy (279). As King observes, "the possibility of redeeming the loss of his [Jakob's] sister is offered but not fulfilled" ("'We Come After'" 103). The decision to suspend the narrative between life and death is consistent with Michaels' sophisticated handling of the theme of loss. While the past can be imaginatively "re-presented" through language and memory, it can never be fully restored; gaps and silences remain; and the longed for reunification of self/other—of Bela/Bella—remains an impossible dream.

In Ben's half of the novel, a similar drama of remembrance is played out in relation to Ben's wife, Naomi, and the young American woman, Petra,

with whom he has a brief and passionate affair when he travels to Idhra to recover Jakob's journals. Again, the bodies of the two women become the symbolic ground of the male protagonist's pursuit of understanding. With a hint of complacency, Ben describes Naomi's body as "so familiar a map" (256), while in his infatuation with Petra he spends hours learning every intimate "line," "crease," and "curve" of her body as if it were a site to be sectioned and surveyed (276). Indeed, Petra's name links her to the earth—as well as to the ruins of the ancient city of Petra, with its famous Treasury and tombs carved into the stone cliffs—and thus to Michaels' extended archaeological metaphor of exhuming the past. This connection is made explicit when Ben notes: "Like conversation drifting up from the courtyard, single words rise into consciousness: Petra, earth" (275). Like Alex, Petra represents the erasure or betrayal of memory. During their lovemaking, Ben is seized by the violent impulse to obliterate himself and the spectre of the Holocaust in her body. The semen he spills is figuratively equated with the ghosts that weigh on his conscience: "*I shook myself free of a million lives, an unborn for every ghost*, over Petra's firm belly and brown thighs and slept carelessly, while souls seeped into the extravagance of sheets and flesh" (278). Ironically, when Petra "desecrate[s]" the house that has been "lovingly preserved" (281) as "a shrine" and "a museum" (278) to Jakob's memory, she inadvertently uncovers the notebooks that Ben hoped to "excavate" (261).

As Michaela is to Alex, Naomi is the foil to Petra. Whereas Ben's relationship with Petra is non-generative, Naomi participates in a symbolic form of matrilineal reproduction when Ben's mother entrusts Naomi, the "daughter she longed for," with the memory of her children, Hannah and Paul, who died during the Holocaust, so that "the truth would eventually be passed on" (252). In another parallel to the Jakob-Bella-Michaela triangle, then, the wife becomes a proxy for the lost sister. The shared history that connects Naomi and Ben—"I know her memories" (285), he declares—are instrumental in his decision to return to her in Toronto. The description of this anticipated homecoming in the final section of the novel hints at Ben's recovery of a sense of history and willingness to confront the past. Naomi thus completes the motif of the woman who embodies memory and initiates consciousness or "awakening" in the male subject.

As a novelist, poet, and essayist, Anne Michaels builds images that give spatial form to the intangible, mysterious processes of memory and history. To this end, she adopts Walter Benjamin's mode of materialist historiography, with its technique of thinking in images rather than abstract concepts.

In particular, she reworks the Benjaminian trope of the city as a site of exploration, where artifacts, fossils, ruins, and outdated or neglected objects of all kinds reveal the historical dialectic of redemptive hope and its violent betrayal. Benjamin's and Michaels' urban topographies both reproduce, however, the traditional sexualized metaphor of a masculine figure navigating the feminine landscape in search of enlightenment and a sense of self. In *Fugitive Pieces,* gender stereotyping also manifests itself in the representation of women in the passive corporeal role of a conduit or guardian of memory. Thus, while Michaels' writing exemplifies the powerful potential of Benjamin's historical materialism to make philosophical truths visible (and to keep the bodily fate of history's victims present in our collective memory and conscience), it also underscores the need for a feminist intervention to liberate "thinking-in-images" from a tradition of over-determined images that metaphorically equate the feminine with the "other." The need for this intervention would suggest that much is still to be learned from the history of symbolic or representational violence. The Nazi policy of "anti-matter," as Jakob describes it, represents a limit-case for humanity: "An old trick of language, used often in the course of history. Non-Aryans were never to be referred to as human, but as 'figuren,' 'stücke'—'dolls,' 'wood,' 'merchandise,' 'rags'" (*Fugitive* 165).

NOTES

1 In her study of Benjamin's *Arcades Project,* Buck-Morss observes that, in contrast to Christianity's purely spiritual and private vision of redemption, "the Jewish Messianic conception, which already has the attributes of being historical, materialist, and collective, translates readily into political radicalism in general and Marxism in particular" (231). In "Unseen Formations," Michaels similarly gestures toward a reconciliation of materialism and mysticism: "For me, the best writing doesn't let me forget the body for too long, the way the best theology binds us to the earth, to the mysteries and responsibilities of our mortality" (98).

2 In *Fugitive Pieces,* the trope of testimony is particularly associated with the indisputable evidence of mass graves: "In the holy ground of the mass graves, the earth blistered and spoke" (143, cf. 209). Images of memory being stored in the body or in other physical places are also central to many of Michaels' poems, such as "Lake of Two Rivers" and "Words for the Body" from *The Weight of Oranges*; "Miner's Pond," and "What the Light Teaches" from *Miner's Pond*; and "There Is No City that Does Not Dream" and "Fontanelles" from *Skin Divers*. The poem "Phantom Limbs" is representative in its attribution of human activities and qualities to the inanimate world: "Even the city carries ruins in its heart. / Longs to be touched in places / only it remembers" (6–8).

3 See, in particular, Nicola King's chapter on *Fugitive Pieces* in her book *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self*. King argues that the biological and geological metaphors Michaels applies to the Holocaust "draw attention away from the subject; the elision of natural, instinctive processes with politically motivated murder seems a mystification, and the kind of immortality here suggested a false consolation" (145). King refers specifically to a passage in which the transportation of prisoners to the concentration camps is likened to the migration of birds, with the suggestion that the dead, like migrating birds, might return. This is immediately followed by a description of the prisoners who were forced to dig up the mass graves: "the dead entered them through their pores and were carried through their bloodstreams to their brains and hearts. And through their blood to another generation" (*Fugitive* 52).

4 Méira Cook, for instance, argues that Michaels' solution to the problem of representing the unrepresentable is to employ "figurative devices that alternatively reveal and conceal the materiality of the event"; yet she finds this metaphorical approach problematic as it "unwittingly conceals the decidedly unpoetic nature of genocide" (16). Likewise, Adrienne Kertzer maintains that "by choosing to tell a transformative story about the Holocaust . . . Michaels risks adopting a narrative strategy that tends . . . to distract and console many readers with the 'beauty' of her story, the pleasure of her intensely woven language" (203). Such representations of the Holocaust are particularly troubling, of course, in that they restage the aestheticization of political violence associated with Nazi propaganda.

5 The notion of an urban environment that dreams its past is also found in her poem "There Is No City that Does Not Dream," which appeared in Toronto Transit Commission vehicles in 1998 as part of the Poetry on the Way series. For subway commuters, the lines "Dinosaurs sleep in the subway / at Bloor and Shaw, a bed of bones / under the rumbling track" (7–9) would have been particularly evocative of the spatio-temporal depths of the subterranean world they travelled through on a daily basis.

6 Max Pensky elegantly summarizes the materialist method of the dialectical image in the *Arcades Project*: "The slight aging of the "failed" commodity, through criticism, reveals capitalism's darkest secret: the allure of the brand-new hides the essence of capitalism as an endless compulsion to repeat. Stripped of their gleam, and reconfigured, cultural goods revert to their true status: as fossils unearthed from an ongoing history of compulsion, violence, and disappointment" (187–88).

7 I am referring specifically to Jacques Lacan's theory of "the Word," as expounded in "Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse," which builds on Sigmund Freud's recognition of the role of language in the differentiation of self and other.

8 "Benjamin follows Freud's lead," Weigel explains, "in the way he focuses on bodies, things, commodities, monuments, topography, and so-on, reading these as wish-symbols and as materializations of collective memory; and in so doing, he restores matter to its central significance for psychoanalysis and for the means of expression of a language of the unconscious" (11).

9 Compare Weigel's analysis of Benjamin's dialectical language theory, which conceives of muteness, sorrow, and sexual pleasure—all associated with passive feminine receptivity—as the other side of language (83–85).

10 Another parallel with Benjamin (and Baudelaire) is suggested by the ambulatory explorations of urban culture undertaken by the two narrator-protagonists in *Fugitive Pieces*. Jakob and Ben share the marginalized, critical perspective of the *flâneur*, who is not fully

integrated into the urban spectacle. As Benjamin describes in "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," "The *flâneur* is still on the threshold, of the city as of the bourgeois class. Neither has yet engulfed him; in neither is he at home. He seeks refuge in the crowd" (*Reflections* 156).

11 Michaels draws on archaeology in order to juxtapose different layers of history in the Toronto region, including those of the prehistoric Laurentian People and the later Iroquois, who displaced the Huron Confederacy in the region. See pp. 89, 102 and 105 in the novel for references to the First Nations.

12 Compare Weigel's discussion of the connection between (female) sexuality and (male) intellectual activity in Benjamin's work. In the *Arcades Project,* the whore, as a non-procreative producer, is conceived of as the female counterpart to the genius. "The problem," Weigel notes, "is that women remain silent, banished to that mute region of a different productivity" (88).

13 Given the similarity of their names, it is tempting to conclude that Michaels identifies herself with Michaela, who is certainly the most sympathetic and "fleshed-out" female character, as the keeper of memory.

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Hendrik Slegtenhorst

In the Laurentians

1 *Axiom*

Afternoon in the early stages of decay:
Another room forming a temporary retreat
From the lake, the light still full, the disorientation
Complete—delusion collapsing under the weight
Of intangibility, shifting from dreams to days.

2 *Continuity*

The light burns dazzlingly clear,
Sleep a vanishing substitute
For memory, and awareness as calmed
As the lake before sunrise.
Filtering through the eyes
As a certitude of unsure dreams,
The light falls within the iris—
Waves that glisten in the wind
And touch reflected forests, a saturated
Indigo and green allowing perfections
In a substance of sheets of illusion:
Rising towards the light,
The eyelids enclose the dream,
Open the dream, are sure of daylight
And the yellow waters of sun.

3 *Enigma*

The fragmentation of enigmas
Yields perforated tissues of rising light
That fall into the eyes:
Indecipherable are stratified visions
Of a monochromatic night, calcification
Without reflection—negligent insularities
That deflate in a geology of inorganic time,
Hymnals stained with memories stale
In ellipses of remembrance and oblivion:
Through the clogged hours history
Backs up and drowns itself, the refracted
Residues drawn out by fervent partisans.

Heather Milne

Something Fishy at Boundary Bay:
Frances Herring and the Literary Construction of British Columbia

British Columbia's relationship to Canada has always been marked by ambivalence; from the province's frustration over the slow pace of CPR construction in the 1870s and 1880s to current articulations of "western alienation," British Columbia occupies, or at least feels that it occupies, a marginal presence in the national imaginary. Historically, Canada's westernmost province has maintained strong cultural and economic ties with California, Oregon and Washington, which were less remote than the urban centres of Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes. British Columbia's official national and imperial affiliations often contradicted the more immediate reality of social and economic exchange with the western United States. Not only is British Columbia sandwiched between Alaska to the north and Washington to the south, but its relative proximity to Asia also promotes trans-Pacific exchange. All of these factors have influenced British Columbia's marginal position within the nation. As Geoffrey Bennington notes, "At the centre, the nation narrates itself as the nation: at the borders, it must recognize that there are other nations on which it cannot but depend" (131-22). Approaching the nation from its edge implies not only the difference between edge and centre, but also the difference between inside and outside, and the permeability of borders. However, British Columbia's isolation from central Canada complicated the province's social, economic and cultural alliances and invested the Canada-US border with specific significance.

In *The Arbutus/Madrone Files*, Laurie Ricou refers to the "western end" of the Canada/US border as "more of a site of exchange than a barrier. Or,

when a barrier, still a site of exchange" (206). William H. New refers to the border as "a synecdoche, a rhetorical part standing for a rhetorical whole" that "at once joins and divides two nation-states, permits contact, influence, choice, trade . . . and difference" (6). He also refers to borders as metaphorical, or as "*signs* of limits rather than limits themselves" (4). As synecdoche and metaphor, the border is invested with associative and symbolic meanings that suggest both division and permeability. In more concrete terms, the border between Canada and the United States is a political agreement actualized through the application of international treaties and laws that regulate the allocation of resources and the flow of people and goods between the two nations. The national border in British Columbia is a comparatively recent phenomenon. The 49th parallel divided the Canadian prairies from the American Midwest in 1818, but was only extended to the Pacific coast in 1846. The years between 1818 and 1846 were characterized by a policy of "free and open" exchange between British and American territory (Ricou, "Two Nations" 51). However, even after the extension of the national border, the trans-national flow of people and goods remained a source of anxiety, particularly in British Columbia. The discovery of mineral wealth on the Fraser River in 1858 and in the Cariboo in 1860 led to a flood of American gold-seekers in the interior of British Columbia, and the northward flow of Americans prompted panic among government officials, who perceived their presence as a threat to the integrity of the border and British cultural dominance. The colony of British Columbia was established in 1858, and united with Vancouver Island in 1866, in part as a protective measure against American interests, but the region did not become a Canadian province until 1871 (Brebner 171-72).

Frances Herring's *Canadian Camp Life,* published in 1900, addresses the complex figuration of British Columbia's relation to the nation and its border at the turn of the century. Herring uses a picaresque tale of holiday travel, adventure, and romance to provide detailed information regarding British Columbia's resource-based economy, and more importantly, its complex cross-border relations and the role of gender and race in maintaining these borders. *Canadian Camp Life* recounts the Le Ford family's summer camping holiday at Boundary Bay, on sandy beaches edging the body of water across which runs the border between Canada and the United States, just a few kilometers south of their home town of New Westminster. In spite of the explicit invocation of nation in the book's title, Herring is

primarily interested in exploring the cultural space of British Columbia and its relation to the United States and England; British Columbia's connection to Canada is of secondary importance, reflecting the province's ambivalent position within the nation state.

This examination of Herring's exploration of the geopolitics of the 49th parallel in *Canadian Camp Life* requires some background concerning this rather obscure writer. The details of Frances Herring's life and the role she occupied in early twentieth-century literary circles are difficult to verify. Her papers have not survived; her archival traces are few; and her legacy as one of British Columbia's earliest female writers is virtually non-existent. Her name appears only occasionally in surveys of early Canadian literature and her books are long out of print.[1] Adele Perry's entry on Herring in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* is the most comprehensive account of Herring's life. According to Perry, Frances Herring immigrated to British Columbia from England in 1874. She married her cousin, with whom she had eight children, and worked as a schoolteacher in Langley and New Westminster, and as a journalist for the New Westminster *British Columbian*. Herring began writing fiction at the turn of the century, and published six books between 1900 and 1914, five of which were set in British Columbia.

Herring has received considerably less scholarly attention than writers such as Sara Jeannette Duncan and L.M. Montgomery, although she, like them, addresses issues of female autonomy, first-wave feminism and imperialism in national and international contexts. *The Literary History of Canada* lists two of Herring's works in its chapter on Canadian fiction published between 1880 and 1920, but the authors erroneously refer to *In the Pathless West* as "On the Pathless West" and incorrectly list its date of publication as 1904 rather than 1909 (299). The bibliographic categorization of Herring's novels is even more misleading. Herring's works, though primarily fictional, contain elements of historical sketch and travel narrative, and are usually illustrated with photographs that lend her work a documentary quality. Although Herring draws on multiple genres, surveys of Canadian literature usually categorize her books as travel writing or history rather than fiction. Elizabeth Waterston lists two of Herring's books in her chapter on travel writing in the *Literary History of Canada* (358), and Marni L. Stanley also mentions Herring in her survey article on Canadian women's travel writing. University libraries tend to house Herring's books in the Canadian history section, and computerized search engines identify her works through the keywords "British Columbia—description and travel," "British Columbia—

women's history," and "British Columbia—social life and customs." Entering the descriptors "British Columbia" and "fiction" into library databases does not lead the researcher to Herring's work. Library searches bring up Herring's texts alongside historical, sociological, and anthropological works, thus limiting the contexts in which her books have circulated. As Foucault suggests, disciplinary categories are principles of limitation and constraint that structure our epistemological processes: "A discipline is not the sum total of all the truths that may be uttered concerning something; it is not even the total of all that may be accepted by virtue of some principle of coherence and systematization, concerning some given fact or proposition." In their recognition of "true and false propositions," disciplinary organization risks foreclosing "a whole teratology of learning" (223). Herring's novels appear to have fallen into an abyss between Canadian history, travel literature and fiction. Likely dismissed by historians because of their often lurid fictional elements, and dismissed by literary scholars because of their focus on historical and sociological detail and their often eccentric plotlines, Herring has been marginalized from studies of early Canadian women writers.

Yet Herring's writings provide insight into early British Columbian culture, and more specifically, into the symbolic position of white femininity in the formation of a British Columbian social imaginary at the turn of the twentieth century. However, I am somewhat wary of reclaiming Herring as a literary figure. Her texts are often haphazard in their composition and quality, and like many books from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they are fraught with contradictory and problematic discussions of race. Studies by scholars such as Carol Lee Bacchi and Mariana Valverde have explored the racism inherent in many first-wave feminist writings in Canada but, as Janice Fiamengo argues, "[c]ritical reassessment . . . has often shaded into outright dismissal, and in the process some of the complexities of early feminist discourse have been lost" (85). More recently, Jennifer Henderson's *Settler Feminism and Race Making in Canada* has articulated a nuanced and useful approach to the complex relationship between race and gender in early feminist texts. Notably absent from most of these studies is an extended consideration of early feminist writings from British Columbia. Because the literature of British Columbia developed slightly later than that of other regions of Canada, it tends to become sidelined in discussions of early Canadian writers.[2]

Historian Adele Perry has noted that British Columbia in the mid-nineteenth century "hovered dangerously at the precipice of Victorian

norms and ideals" (4) because of a scarcity of white women in the region. Canada's westernmost province was subjected to a series of concentrated social reform movements in the late nineteenth century designed to increase the population of white women and curtail the instances of mixed race relationships and homosocial domestic arrangements. However, by the time Herring wrote *Canadian Camp Life*, the urban centres of Victoria and her hometown of New Westminster were well established. Herring's books circulated primarily in England, and she seems intent on presenting British Columbia as increasingly settled, cultivated, and industrialized, perhaps to promote the region to prospective immigrants. [3] She notes, for example, the ease with which one can travel around the lower mainland of British Columbia, mentioning New Westminster's proximity to both Vancouver and their holiday destination at Boundary Bay. Bessie, the narrator, explains, "Accordingly, we set out in quest of a place not too far from Westminster. Vancouver, we decided, we knew all by heart for it is our sister city, and we ride or drive, go by electric tram or C.P.R. train, backwards and forwards all the time. Boundary Bay, everyone said, was exactly the place we wanted" (3). Bessie Le Ford and her family, their friends the Wentworths, and their Chinese domestic servant Ke Tan arrange to spend several weeks camping on the beaches of Boundary Bay.

The fluidity of national borders is overtly invoked through the novel's setting, since the Canada/US border bisects Boundary Bay. Bessie and her father have difficulty locating the campsite where the Wentworths await their arrival, but finally discover that their friends have set up camp a few metres over the border on the American side. Mrs. Wentworth informs Bessie, "there's Boundary Bay *and* Boundary Bay . . . . You didn't find the right part. . . . It's on the American side and we've been investing in stars and stripes galore, so as to have one floating over every tent, you know" (20). In spite of Mrs. Wentworth's willingness to adopt the American flag, if only for the duration of her camping holiday, she maintains a strong allegiance to England, as is shown when they visit the monument that marks the border. Mrs. Wentworth speculates on the possible unification of Canada and the United States:

> "Some day we shall see them all under one government," said Mrs. Wentworth looking at daddy.
> "What a grand Republic that will be!" returned he, seriously, pretending to understand that as her meaning.
> "Or Monarchy!" she retorted quickly.
> We all laughed and began to talk upon other subjects, for daddy always teased Mrs. Wentworth upon this point, and she as invariably took him in earnest. (103-04)

Notably, Bessie's father refers to the northern section of Boundary Bay as the "British side" (30), underscoring an identification with the British empire that overrides the identification with Canada implied by the book's title. The younger generation readily identifies with Canada. Bessie's brothers explicitly position themselves as Canadian as they cheer "Hurrah for Canada! Canada for ever!" (172). However, they also collapse Canada and Britain as "all the same" implicitly positioning Canadian nationalism at the service of the British imperial project (172). Herring depicts British Columbia as pulled between national, imperial, and regional interests that reflect shifting and often ambivalent patterns of identification.

In addition to its preoccupation with the 49th parallel, *Canadian Camp Life* is largely concerned with the civic and domestic roles of men and women in late-nineteenth-century British Columbia, providing various examples of masculinity and femininity that inflect aspects of British Columbia's cultural formation. Remittance men, the "second sons" of wealthy British families who were sent to the colonies where their behaviour was an object of much scrutiny and suspicion, arrived in British Columbia in large numbers in the late nineteenth century. Bessie offers a negative assessment of these men, implying that their actions lead to the material deprivation of their female family members: "I can't help wondering if some of those dudish, white-handed farmers wouldn't be better working for themselves, instead of sitting down smoking away their precious time, when perhaps their mothers and sisters have to go short of many things to keep these dear pets in funds" (4-5). In contrast to this demographic, Herring also provides numerous examples of diligent and hardworking young gentlemen, such as Thomas Templeton, the Cambridge graduate whom Bessie marries at the end of the book.

Herring seems more concerned, however, with the exploration of femininity and the role of women in the context of British Columbian culture; many of her white female characters exhibit traits associated with the stereotypical frailties of Victorian femininity. Bessie tells us that her mother is recovering from "la Grip," a condition that was followed by a severe bout of nervous prostration (2). Their camping holiday is the result of their doctor's recommendation, and Mrs. Le Ford appears to undergo a treatment that resembles S. Weir Mitchell's rest cure. Mrs. Wentworth is also suffering from a mysterious extended illness; she claims she reached the "verge of insanity" after the death of her daughter, and has been travelling for therapeutic reasons for the past four years (54). Mrs. Wentworth's brush with insanity is linked to her loss of official maternal status, and she serves as

second mother figure to the Le Ford children. Herring is a proponent of what Angelique Richardson refers to as "civic motherhood," or "maternity as citizen making" (229). As Cecily Devereux has argued in relation to L.M. Montgomery's treatment of maternity and female ambition, first wave feminism in English Canada is "characterized not necessarily by suffragism . . . not by the 'new woman,' but by the idea of woman as 'imperial mother of the race'" (125). Devereux suggests that Anglo-imperial feminists at the beginning of the twentieth-century "increasingly capitalized on the appeal of woman as mother" (127). Herring situates women as agents of maternity and civility, charged with the task of domesticating British Columbia through their roles as wives and mothers. By symbolically linking social and geographic boundaries in the text, Herring also implicates white women in the enforcement of border regulations.

In contrast to Mrs. Le Ford's embodiment of the ideals of Anglo-European femininity and maternity, Herring resorts to a range of negative stereotypes to represent First Nations women, in Adele Perry's words, as the "dark mirror image to the idealized nineteenth-century visions of white women" (*Edge* 51). From the "hideous-looking old squaw" (48) collecting cockles on the beach, to Jenny, the "virago" who abuses her husband both physically and psychologically (162), First Nations women in Herring's text are contrasted with the ideals of Anglo-Imperial femininity. Jenny, who has recently returned to her husband Billy after temporarily eloping with a Japanese fisherman, comes looking for Billy at the Le Ford's camp with her aunt and children in tow and beats her husband with a maple stick for leaving without her permission (177). Notably, Mrs. Le Ford manages to curtail Jenny's rage toward her husband by giving her several gifts, including two pink flannelette nightgowns and a bonnet, as well as a promise to make her a morning wrapper like the one she herself is wearing. Here the white woman resolves the domestic conflict with gifts that represent Anglo-European femininity, and thus symbolically contains Jenny's behaviour.

Bessie and her twin sister Josie go to great lengths to provide their frail mother with all the domestic comforts of home. Bessie describes the sanctum that she and her sister have constructed for their mother:

> It was such a pretty little nook, for all the washstand was a water-washed log of wood about two and a half feet high and some three feet through, round which we had tacked a piece of bright cheap muslin. The toilet table was another of these logs treated in the same way. But, what do you think? We had forgotten to put in a looking glass! Daddy laughed heartily at the bare idea of two girls, each twenty-two years of age, who could commit such an appalling blunder. (38)

The Le Fords create a domestic sphere quite literally on the national border; perhaps not surprisingly, this overtly feminized space is soon implicated in colonial, national, and transnational politics.

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha considers the connection, in the context of the nation state, between women, the uncanny, and boundary maintenance. He suggests that the ambivalent structure of the nation rests on the "unhomely" boundary between public and private, between things that should be hidden and those that ought to be shown (10). The domestic sphere is, of course, that which is traditionally hidden from sight. Bhabha argues that feminism makes visible the "forgetting of the 'unhomely' moment in civil society . . . disturbs the symmetry of private and public which is now shadowed, or uncannily doubled, by the difference in genders which does not neatly map on to the private and the public, but becomes disturbingly supplementary to them" (10-11). As the domestic becomes implicated in the geopolitics of boundary maintenance, Herring's *Canadian Camp Life* presents a version of what Bhabha calls the "world-in-the-home" (11).

A national border is, in effect, a political agreement, but it is also a legal fiction and an inscription on the landscape that marks the contours of the nation against the backdrop of a supposedly unsignified landscape that becomes intelligible as territory through the process of boundary-mapping. Mrs. Wentworth informs Bessie that the American side of the bay is now a United States military reserve (20), but she also draws attention to Boundary Bay's aboriginal name, "Chil-tin-um," which, she explains, means "couldn't see it" allegedly because of the fog that led to its accidental discovery by a "party of Indians" trying to cross Georgia Straight in a storm (20- 21). However, for Herring, "couldn't see it" might also signify that the boundary is an invisible marker that structures and regulates the movement of the campers.

Herring suggests that the landscape upon which the national border is inscribed is haunted by its prior incarnation as an aboriginal gathering place, thus underscoring the extent to which the geographic border is a cultural fiction that cannot quite contain its own history:

> The immense mounds of calcine shells, upon which maples, said to be one thousand to fifteen hundred years old, are growing, give evidence of the numbers of Indians who used to come, and of the centuries ago when these revelries were held. . . . During a storm one of the oldest of these trees was blown down last winter, and the skeleton of a man with arms and legs outstretched was exposed under its roots, which had been buried in the mound of calcined shells before the giant maple had been planted. (22)

The skeleton that comes to the surface at Boundary Bay signifies the return of that which was buried both literally and metaphorically; it is both the skeletal remains of an indigenous person and a symbol that the land precedes and cannot be completely contained by the relatively recent creation of national borders and military bases. Herring draws attention to the collision between the languages of the past and present, between the teleology of "progress" enacted through political boundaries and white settlements and a prior system of understanding that disrupts the contemporaneity of the present. Homi Bhabha might liken Herring's juxtaposition to the "tension signifying the people as an *a priori* historical presence, a pedagogical object; and the people constructed in the performance of narrative, its enunciatory 'present' marked in the repetition and pulsation of the national sign" (*Nation* 298-99). The exposed skeleton underscores the fragility of the border. Like Freud's uncanny, it is quite literally that which "ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light" (Freud 225).

The 49th parallel is one of the text's central symbols, but Herring seems most interested in writing about the permeability of the national border. Mr. Milton Bowes, an overzealous American customs officer, suspects the Le Ford family of smuggling contraband goods and hovers around their campsite looking for evidence of suspicious activity. The Le Fords do in fact have something illegal to hide: their Chinese domestic servant Ke Tan. After the US government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, Chinese men illegally entering the United States from Canada were automatically imprisoned or deported to China. Ke Tan has no choice but to sneak back across the 49th parallel to escape deportation. His departure has a profound effect on the family's holiday. Through Ke Tan's enforced departure, the transnational politics of immigration law directly affect the private sphere of the Le Ford's campsite; his absence creates difficulties for the campers, who must do their own cooking and cleaning. The reference to the Chinese Exclusion Act further complicates Herring's treatment of the nation by illustrating not only the differences between Canadian and US treatment of their Asian residents, but also the ways in which both nations are internally marked by cultural difference and shaped by strategies of exclusion. In a Canadian context, legislation such as the Head Tax and the Asiatic Exclusion Act functioned similarly to exclude Asian residents from belonging to the nation.[4] Herring emphasizes British Columbia's geographic proximity to Asia when Bessie and her friends observe "one of the *Empresses* that ply between the Orient and Vancouver" (105). The sight of the ship return-

ing to British Columbia from the East configures the relation with Asia as yet another frontier and an exchange that both defines and complicates the contours of nation and region.

Herring satirizes the actions of the American customs officer, who appears to be far more concerned with maintaining national laws and boundaries than are the Canadian characters. In his formal capacity as boundary keeper, Mr. Bowes is associated with patriarchal, state, and legal authority. However, the character most concerned with upholding national trade laws is depicted as somewhat inept. Mr. Bowes pays a visit to the Le Ford family camp in search of the "contraband" Ke Tan, and in an effort to escape the loud and overbearing man, the women decide to go swimming. Accompanied by his wife and wearing a bathing costume that is described as "very abbreviated" (199), Mr. Bowes intrudes on the swimming party. Bessie recounts the event: "Poor mother hardly knew what to do. She was so insistent that we should take our dip with only the ladies of the camping parties; and here was this great, red lobster of a man swimming and diving, and showing off his aquatic powers as well as he could for the shallowness of the water. . . . Mammy then excused herself" (200-201). Later in the text, Mr. Bowes allows his appetite to override his concern over the Le Ford's camp and the following day, accepts Josie's invitation to consume "contraband pies, cakes, bread and so on . . . made by a contraband Chinaman" (204).

In spite of Ke Tan's departure, Mr. Bowes continues to express interest in the Le Ford camp, as does the mysterious Mr. de Quincy, a shifty character who appears part way through the narrative and shadows the customs officer. These men are not merely interested in Ke Tan's tasty contraband confections, they also suspect the Le Fords of opium smuggling. Mr. de Quincy has a history of involvement in cross-border drug trafficking. Mr. Templeton, Bessie's suitor, explains the somewhat convoluted situation to Bessie:

> A person living on the border must learn to keep a still tongue. It is no business of ours to interfere. As Mr. de Quincy is following the other one's false scent, he can't understand if you people are friends or foes. He keeps up the detective idea, which has somehow gotten about, of course; he may be one, and Mr. Milton Bowes isn't sure if he's being 'shadowed' by his department. (237-38)

Mr. Templeton suggests that Mr. de Quincy plans to blackmail the Le Fords into sharing their profit with him (238). Herring emphasizes the perceived connection between borders and duplicity, criminal activity, false accusations, and questionable alliances. In actual fact, no opium is smuggled across

the border in *Canadian Camp Life*. Early twentieth-century anti-Asian discourses frequently associated Chinese men with opium smuggling (Li 20); and Herring invites us to read the illegal importation of Ke Tan across the border in relation to these charges. Mr. Milton Bowes is obsessed with tracking two contraband goods: opium and Chinese men, both of which are, within the prevalent Anti-Asian sentiment, conflated under the sign of the "yellow peril."

A constellation of images and events symbolically link boundary maintenance to the regulation of race, gender, and sexuality. Although the British and Canadian characters seem less concerned than their American counterparts with monitoring national borders, the transgression of boundaries does have direct implications for Bessie and her family. The highly symbolic landscape of Boundary Bay becomes a site upon which social codes and gender norms are inscribed. Shortly after Ke Tan's flight across the border, rotting fish begin mysteriously washing up on the beach. We eventually learn that the presence of the rotting fish is directly related to the activities of the American customs officer, who polices the bay in "a revenue cutter of Uncle Sam's" (134) to ensure that Canadian fishing vessels do not take fish from American waters. A Canadian boat, fishing illegally in American waters, is chased back over the border and forced to release fifteen thousand dead salmon just off shore from where Bessie and her family are camping. These dead fish wash up on the beach and pollute the Le Ford's pastoral campsite. When Bessie's father takes his children swimming, his youngest daughter Maudie becomes frightened by the dead fish: "poor Maudie soon came running out with the skeletons of fish clinging to her bathing dress, round her ankles, and tangled in her long, fair hair" (157). The episode involving the fish skeletons clinging to young Maudie is directly followed by one of Mrs. Le Ford's only statements in the entire text. In a speech that seems decontextualized, she informs her daughters that a "woman has fulfilled her highest destiny . . . when she has retained the confidence and regard of a good man for near a quarter of a century. No amount of success in other ways could ever content the inner heart of a true woman or compensate to her for the home life" (159). If Herring's decision to place this statement directly after Maudie's encounter with the fish skeletons seems bizarre, the oddity of this passage is compounded by having Mrs. Le Ford's speech in support of marriage directly followed by another reference to the rotting fish. Bessie's father takes each of his daughters by

the arm in a gesture that mimics walking them down the aisle on their wedding day: "Daddy took an arm of each, and pretended to march us out, and we were soon splashing and laughing, swimming and floating with the merriest. But the decaying fish were very unpleasant, touching us in unexpected places, the broken pieces clinging to us, and the very water was redolent of them" (159). By locating Mrs. Le Ford's commentary in the midst of this scene, Herring suggests a connection between the laws of marriage and those of resource extraction. The importance of marriage is first introduced in the book's opening pages when Bessie's father tells her "[a] man without a wife is like a mariner tossing at sea without a rudder. Every wind catches him and turns him this way and that; when he has a good wife, he has anchor and ballast and rudder" (7). Marriage is a stabilizing influence that brings the tumultuous life of the bachelors and remittance men under control. Here Herring brings together cross-border fishing laws that are designed to regulate the resource-based economy, and the laws of courtship and marriage that are designed to regulate sexuality and reproduction in the new and somewhat fragile culture of British Columbia.

Marriage locates sexuality and reproduction within the realm of the proper; cross-border fishing restrictions regulate the resource-based economy of British Columbia and Washington. But it is virtually impossible to police and regulate boundaries in the murky waters of the Pacific. As the fisherman involved in the chase with the customs officer explains, "Now the forty-ninth parallel is easy enough to see on a map, but where it passes through Point Roberts, amongst forest and brush and stumps, it ain't so easy to keep track of it" (167). The dead fish, which are casualties of the fishing dispute, pollute the bay on both sides of the border and serve as a reminder of the permeability of national boundaries. The dead fish unsettle the girls by touching them in "unexpected places," and are suggestive of bodily contact that falls outside the laws of marriage. Irigaray's consideration of the connection between marriage and the market economy helps illuminate this equation. Irigaray suggests that society is based on the exchange of women within the patriarchal structure of marriage, and marriage protects culture from falling back into primitivism; the social order is made possible by the exchange of women, and the so-called excess of female sexuality is regulated through the appropriation and submission of nature to labour and technology (184). If the dead fish are a sacrifice to the law of the land, women's bodies are a sacrifice to the law of the father. But it is a

sacrifice that Herring seems to advocate because it preserves Anglo-feminine ideals from border transgression. However, the boundaries in *Canadian Camp Life* are never quite able to contain what they seek to regulate. Like the skeleton exposed when the tree falls, the rotting fish underscore the concept of the boundary as a symbol, an arbitrary mark that the laws of nature do not necessarily obey. Herring's depiction of the relationship between sexual relations and geopolitics resonates with what Angelique Richardson refers to as "the politics of the state mapped onto bodies" (*Love and Eugenics* 8). Perhaps predictably, the novel ends with the pending double marriage of Bessie and her twin sister Josie to Thomas Templeton and John Wilbur, two family friends who have been camping nearby.

In *Canadian Camp Life*, women's bodies are implicitly associated with the resource-rich landscape, and female propriety is configured as crucial to the maintenance of the boundaries between private and public, proper and improper, and Canada and the United States. In Herring's account, sexual relations are contained and managed through marriage, and white women are valourized as wives and mothers partially because of the assumption that their reproductive capabilities can be contained through marital relations and deployed as a form of civic duty. Through the vilification of Billy's wife Jenny as a bad mother and an abusive spouse, Herring suggests that these regulatory structures are the preserve of white femininity. Jenny, through her violation of gender codes and marriage laws, is symbolically associated with the transgression of boundaries and might be read in relation to the salmon that wash up on the beach, just as Ke Tan is symbolically equated with the smuggled opium. The network of symbols related to sexuality, race, resource extraction, and cross-border trafficking in this text suggests a complex interplay of racist logic and gender anxiety in the development of British Columbia. The transnational politics of the public sphere and the sexual politics of the private sphere become mutually interdependent. The inscription of laws, regulations, and borders onto the landscape and economy of British Columbia propose a strategy of containment, but one that is never entirely successful. The Le Ford's tent, perilously pitched on the national border, becomes "the world-in-the-home" (Bhabha 11), an uncanny space continuously unsettled by the excesses of landscape, nation, sexuality, and racial difference that undermine the fixity of borders and boundaries.

NOTES

1 One of Herring's short stories has been republished in Lorraine McMullen's collection *Aspiring Women: Short Stories by Canadian Women, 1880-1999*; and *Canadian Camp Life* is archived at Early Canadiana Online (www.canadiana.org). Herring's other works, *The People of British Columbia, Red, White, Yellow and Brown* (1903); *In the Pathless West with Soldiers, Pioneers, Miners, and Savages*, (1909); *Ena* (1913); and *Nan and Other Pioneer Women of the West (*1913) are all available on microform through CIHM.

2 Herring's works might be considered alongside those of Constance Lindsay Skinner, a historian from British Columbia who achieved some success writing "experiential" historical accounts of the American Frontier for Yale University Press' *Chronicles of America* series, and who later turned to fiction and poetry to write about British Columbia in *Red Willows* (1929) and *Songs of the Coast Dwellers* (1930). For a detailed account of Skinner's life and work, see Jean Barman's *Constance Lindsay Skinner: Writing on the Frontier (*2002).

3 When read in conjunction with her other books, most notably the short stories collected in *Nan and Other Pioneer Women of the West*, where she explicitly positions white women as agents of moral reform, Herring's interest in the role of women in the social development of British Columbia becomes more pronounced. *Nan and Other Pioneer Women of the West* is set in the mid-nineteenth century and depicts British Columbia as an unruly space in desperate need of the moral influence of what Herring refers to in her preface as the "motherhood of women."

4 The Anti-Chinese Society was established in Victoria in 1873, and the Canadian government passed a law disenfranchising its Chinese citizens in 1874 and introduced the Head Tax in 1885. The Asiatic Exclusion League was founded in 1907 and Chinese emigration to Canada was prohibited under the Asiatic Exclusion Act between 1923 and 1947. Anti-Asian sentiment was prevalent on both sides of the border and permeated judicial, economic, political, and social discourses. For a detailed account of the implementation of anti-Chinese policies, see Peter S. Li, *The Chinese in Canada*.

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Not There Yet

Laura Moss, ed.
Is Canada Postcolonial? Unsettling Canadian Literature. Wilfrid Laurier UP $34.95

Reviewed by Penny van Toorn

Is Canada Postcolonial? is an anthology of 23 essays, most of which began as conference papers presented at the University of Manitoba in 2000. This seems a long time ago now, before the fall of the twin towers, before the war in Iraq, before the images of maimed children, beheaded hostages, and bombed Iraqi towns. In this context, and in the grip of a bad attack of *academic impotentitis*, I am wondering what is gained and lost by continuing to ask the question, "Is Canada postcolonial?" in a collection that includes no Indigenous contributors.

Despite the absence of First Nations and Métis voices, this is an important, thought-provoking collection, ably edited by Laura Moss. In such a strong collection, it's difficult to do justice to all. For me the papers that resonated most powerfully were those by Judith Leggatt, George Elliott Clarke, Manina Jones, Marie Vautier, Robert Budde, Diana Brydon, and Stephen Slemon. Africadian George Elliott Clarke's "What Was Canada?" comes aptly at the beginning of the volume. Invoking George Grant, Clarke triangulates Canada's position within empires old and new.

Diana Brydon's long, searching essay, "Canada and Postcolonialism: Questions, Inventories, Futures" is, for me, the centre-piece of this collection. Articulating a view expressed implicitly in several other papers, Brydon argues that "postcolonial work in Canada will need to move beyond a politics of representation towards a politics of accountability before we can speak of Canada as a de-colonized space." She highlights the multiplicity of interlocking systems of oppression, and stresses that Western academics are accountable both for their actions and their inactions, bearing in mind that in some contexts, observing limits is just as important as building bridges. Acknowledging the disparate views of postcolonialism held both within and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous intellectual traditions, Brydon enters into dialogue with Mohawk Taiaiake Alfred. She expresses doubts about some of his ideas, but insists nonetheless that serious, respectfully critical cross-cultural engagement is necessary if "Indigenous and settler versions of the postcolonial might purposefully work together."

Whether focusing on recent writing, or on texts from the colonial period, the papers in *Is Canada Postcolonial?* are all present-centred and self-reflective. Robert Budde's "After Postcolonialism" is especially incisive in its questioning of the politics of academic labour in the postcolonial field. Budde argues that "[t]he troubled crux of postcolonial thinking in Canada is not so much whether Canada is postcolonial or not, it is how the language of postcolonial thought is translated into justice activism, antiracist action, and the transfor-

mation of colonial-inscribed institutions." Budde's refreshingly forthright comments on the politics of academic life are relevant to all academics who might sometimes feel like mice running frantically in an exercise wheel, working up an intellectual sweat producing promotion-worthy publications, without exerting any influence at all outside the academic sphere.

Stephen Slemon's "Afterword" surveys a set of absences, the rejected easy answers and unproductive approaches to the question of whether Canada is postcolonial. Valuing the interrogative essay over the assertive, utilitarian monograph, he locates the strength of the collection in the fact the "essays refuse to speak in one monotonous voice," and understands "this lack of consensus and uniformity to be one of the real strengths of this collection" because it stimulates further dialogue, highlights the incompleteness of the project, and reaffirms the necessity for "persistent, unremitting critique." For Slemon, a good question is one that exceeds all possible answers. He is pleased that "the question that names this collection provokes many critical speech-acts." Is this an adequate end product? Many critical speech-acts? My worry here is that the intellectual traditions and practices that Slemon values most highly are not necessarily the ones most likely to lead to beneficial outcomes for colonized peoples, but are rather those that keep academics securely in work, expending their energies diligently in the mouse-wheel.

Revisiting Neil Besner's question—"What useful work can we do as scholars and critics in the project of seeking real social change?"—Slemon sees the institutionalization and conceptual ossification of postcolonial studies as threatening the spirit of postcolonial critique, which he essentializes as interrogative. This essentializing of postcolonialism is problematic because, while it condemns a progressivist approach to the question of whether Canada is post-colonial, it seems also to forget that some changes may actually be beneficial to colonized peoples. If academic work is to be socially meaningful, questions must sometimes be answered and acted upon. On some issues, there is broad consensus among Indigenous people regarding what changes are necessary. As Diana Brydon's discussion of Mohawk Taiaiake Alfred implies, Indigenous communities don't necessarily share Western academic ideals of "unremitting critique." Without underestimating the sometimes bitter conflicts of Indigenous opinion, it's necessary to remember that Indigenous and other minority groups have won some important political battles by speaking in ways that are radically different from the progressivist individualism that underlies conventional academic debate.

Judith Leggatt's paper offers a timely reminder that the majority of Native writers, students, and readers "find the term [postcolonial] and its theories neocolonial and repressive." Leggatt's essay is important because, in the absence of any First Nations or Métis essays in the collection, it carries Indigenous voices into the book. (Spivak says that's OK now.) Although Slemon and others reject the question "Are we there yet?," this absence of Native voices in a book called *Is Canada Postcolonial?* signifies nonetheless that Canada is definitely *not* there yet. Does the danger of asking "Are we there yet?" lie in its foreclosure of what "we" and "there" denote, or in its exposition of the tacit investment that all po-co scholars have in the nation's *not* being there yet?

Best Banff Essays

Moira Farr and Ian Pearson, eds.
Word Carving: The Craft of Literary Journalism. Banff Centre P $21.95

Reviewed by Andrew Bartlett

This collection—one of impressive vitality, maturity, and range—assembles essays nurtured by the Banff Centre's Creative Non-Fiction and Cultural Journalism program. The most successful essays explore intense memories of parents. Alyse Frampton's tragic leftist in "My American Father" is a man whose devotion to extravagant left-wing political projects leads him to waste his inheritance. A. Farman-Farmaian evokes the dignity of his widowed mother as she takes her boys from Baghdad into exile in 1978. Douglas Bell investigates the in-hospital aftermath of a bad bicycle accident—interviewing doctors, reading medical files on himself, discovering his mother just hated the nurses. Ostensible quests for freedom from the past in these pieces inadvertently leave powerful trails of nostalgia.

Other pieces, less nostalgic, stem from friendship. Philip Marchand explores his involvement in the Therafields movement in 1960s Toronto; Camilla Gibb carries us through the dramatic tale of her career as an anthropologist and friendship with an Oroma refugee from Ethiopia; Johanna Keller remembers the distinguished accompanist Samuel Sanders, a child prodigy pianist who endures lifelong chronic pain. The pieces least rooted in personal attachment offer pleasures of the outrageous: Matthew Hart's tale of the two-time theft from an isolated Scottish mansion of a priceless Vermeer, and Ellen Vanstone's laugh-out-loud exposé of inanities inside the editorial rooms of *The National Post.* Other pieces meditate on literary genre. Anita Lahey confesses the obstacles to the authentic expression of grief while defining the eulogy (neither elegy nor epitaph nor obituary); Katherine Ashenburg tracks her feelings about feminism by way of remembering the *Sue Barton, Nurse* romances and profiling their creator, Helen Dore Boylston.

Canada has no counterpart to the *Best American Essays* series. The people at Banff should continue this project annually. It would be delightful to anticipate the *Best Banff Essays* every year.

Dancing in the Mud

Gary Geddes
Skaldance. Goose Lane Editions $19.95

Charles Noble
Doubt's Boots: Even Doubt's Shadow. U of Calgary P $23.90

Joseph Sherman
American Standard & Other Poems. Oberon $16.95

Reviewed by Shane Rhodes

Skaldance is Gary Geddes' sixteenth book of poetry and, as the title hints, the book dances to the alternating currents of the present and the past, of history and family narrative juxtaposed, of im- and emigrations. The book focuses, through constantly shifting personae, on the Orkney Islands where Geddes' ancestors once fished for herring: a landscape with "no trees / just scars, and monuments to periodic invasion." Geddes steps into the persona of the skald, the old Norwegian court poet, as one stepping into a period costume; my problem, a narrator states, is that "when I read a book or see a movie I identify with every character."

Skaldance moves deftly and enigmatically through historical markers of the Orkney islands and various Canadian cities—the changing landscapes joined by the connectives of family narrative and travel anecdote. Though common and collected, the book has all the surprise of a miscellany.

Charles Noble's *Doubt's Boots* features a mud-covered bare foot on the cover. Strange, though, that a book so given to grounding remains so far above the world's surface. Noble mixes philosophical contemplations with anecdotal observations of the mundane; however, in the end, the book is claustrophobically limited by the strictures of its referents, while most of its philosophical musings remain distantly academic or disengagingly detailed. Although there are occasional pauses in the work where everything comes together, more often the poem just seems jaggedly chatty. The book presents itself as an experiment in language, yet the project's visionary verve does not follow through and we are left instead with expected word games and pun play.

Joseph Sherman's fourth book of poetry, *American Standard & Other Poems,* is a miscellany of collected poems. As in any collection of this nature, the juxtaposition of widely different tones can be both beneficial and detrimental to the book; more attention could have been paid to the book's layout and progression. However, the book is engaging, and Sherman writes with a style hard-wired for the lyric.

Glossed Over Glossed

Julian Wolfreys, ed.
Glossalalia: An Alphabet of Critical Keywords.
Routledge $41.95

Reviewed by Travis V. Mason

Brian Rotman begins his foreword to *Glossalalia*: "The end of the book? Yes." While he's not talking about *Glossalalia* itself but *the book* as a material and conceptual entity, Rotman's earnest cleverness should alert readers to the sort of academic-speak that lies ahead. Consider, for example, that editor Julian Wolfreys has written—prefatory to Rotman's foreword—that "[t]his is a project for which there is no justifiable introduction, no excusable prefatory remarks." Hence a foreword beginning at the end.

Glossalalia is an alphabetized collection of essays purporting to gloss "critical keywords," by which I take Wolfreys to mean theoretical terms currently being bandied about by American and British academics. Equally a mixture of the predictable and the trite—e.g., Chora, Difference, Jouissance, Love, Nation, Origins, Reification—and the novel—e.g., Animality, Flirting, Genetics, Quilting, and Yarn—not all of the book's contributors succeed in enlightening the book's audience, identified on the back cover as "[a]nyone with theoretical interests in the humanities and in the future possibilities of theory."

In Wolfreys' alphabetic universe, A is for "Always Already," an overused phrase that makes far too many appearances in the first entry alone (9 times in 11 pages). While I'm neither surprised nor entirely put off by the occasionally banal academic-speak, especially considering Wolfreys does not propose an encyclopedic collection, I am dismayed by the frequently B-is-for-Bad writing and editing that render many entries less-than-helpful. In "The Story of I/i," for just one example, Thomas Pepper attempts to enlighten the reader: "About this question of mixity, hybridity, hubris, I have much to say anon [!], inasmuch as this moment of this letter-which-is-more-than-just-one touches precisely on the simple and undivided phenomenological core of the transcendental ego . . . ." Transcendental ego indeed. C is for confusion.

Simon Critchley ("Music") and John P. Leavey, Jr. ("Quilting") provide excellent essays, the latter having fun and playing with form and content, quilting disparate passages and quotations together to form a comment on the quilt as metaphor and positioning his argument within the book's larger project. Actually, had Wolfreys been open to playing with alphabetic order,

Leavey's entry would have made an effective introduction. Geoff Ward ("Poetics") identifies one of the key problems I have with this book: "The term 'poetics' is one that has been stolen by theory." He wants to remind readers "that the practice of writing poems does itself . . . signal a theoretical dimension, a poetics." Perhaps I find Ward's chapter among the most stimulating and practical because Ward is one of the few contributors who does not default to the ubiquitous D-is-for-Derrida, or because he encloses the term 'always already' in scare quotes and calls it "a motto sure to bring a stab of nostalgia in decades to come, like The Commodores singing 'always and forever.'" It is this sort of reflexive positioning against, as opposed to derivative alignment with, current critical conversations that is largely missing from *Glossalalia*.

Now I know my ABCs. Next time I'll just read Derrida.

Loss and Remembrance

Sunil Kuruvilla
Rice Boy. Playwrights Canada P $15.95

Michael Lewis MacLennan
Last Romantics. Playwrights Canada P $17.95

Djanet Sears
The Adventures of a Black Girl in Search of God. Playwrights Canada P $16.95

Reviewed by Nadine Sivak

These plays may seem unlikely companions for a review, but their preoccupations with traumatic loss and memory's unrelenting grip on individual, familial, and communal psyches emerge as powerful thematic continuities.

Sears' play opens with a frightening dramatization of loss: the central character, Rainey Baldwin Johnson, runs through the rain, desperately praying to God as she clutches her dying daughter in her arms. A paramedic arrives, too late. From this pivotal trauma, the play details her multiple previous losses, including the death of her mother and stepmother, and a series of miscarriages. The void left by the death of her child is compounded by her abandonment of her medical career and the breakdown of her marriage. These traumas in turn precipitate the crisis of faith which gives the play its title. Now hoping to begin a PhD thesis titled "The Death of God and Angels," Rainey struggles, movingly and at times melodramatically, with her loss of faith in God and in herself.

In a parallel plot, her father, Ben Abendigo, leads a group of friends in a series of covert operations involving the "liberation" of black garden gnomes and other "thoroughly seditious artifacts symbolizing the oppression of African people" from various community locations.

The personal and the political collide as Rainey discovers the stash of artifacts shortly before Abendigo suffers his first serious heart attack. Learning that her father has only days to live, Rainey also uncovers the group's plans for its final and most important venture: the repossession of her soldier-ancestor's uniform from the local museum. Rainey's efforts to stop the mission fail, and the uniform is recouped.

The play concludes with a sense of closure around Rainey's most difficult losses, and, in the final scene, she accepts comfort from her estranged husband, suggesting a possible reconciliation between them. Sears effectively mines her rich material for its multiple resonances although these are not always fully served by her straightforward naturalistic writing.

The losses explored in *Rice Boy* are filtered through the experiences and memories of Tommy, a twelve-year-old boy who has a mild mental disability. Set alternately in the summer of 1975 in Kottayam, India, and six months later in Kitchener, Ontario, the play examines loss in the context of geographic and cultural dislocation and inter-

generational division. Effectively evoking the shifting, disorienting nature of hyphenated identities, *Rice Boy*'s short, suggestive, though at times dramatically inert scenes paint a back story involving Tommy's father, a math professor in India, and his mother, who settled in Kitchener, where Tommy was born. Barred from practising his profession in Canada, Tommy's father took a series of retail and restaurant jobs. Two years later, during a family visit to Kottayam, Tommy's mother drowned while swimming in the river behind the family home. The summer of 1975 marks the first visit of Tommy and his father to India since the tragic incident. It also coincides with wedding preparations for Tina, Tommy's 16-year-old cousin, a paraplegic who has been housebound all her life and has never met her husband-to-be. As family elders instruct Tina in proper wifely duties, Tommy sneaks his cousin into the city at night to explore a world she has never seen.

Vivid in Tommy's memory is the night before his cousin's wedding, when she insisted that he leave her in the city. Tina's disappearance echoes that of Tommy's mother, and leaves the boy feeling lost, abandoned, and confused. His cousin's rebellion against traditional ways finds a parallel in Tommy's somewhat confrontational relationship with his father, and his rejection of things "Indian" in favour of those he deems "Canadian." Despite these tensions, the play's final moments suggest that father and son are each other's only ballasts against the uncertainty and displacement that characterize their lives.

With some similarity to *Rice Boy*, *Last Romantics* addresses the end of an era. The title refers to a loose community of proponents of the aesthetic movement in Western European art, primarily Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon, and their circle of contemporaries, including Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley. Set mainly in London, England between 1882 and 1937, the play highlights the movement's peaks and last gasps, as seen through Ricketts' life and career and particularly through his relationship with Shannon, a painter whom he champions as an artist and loves as a life partner.

At the century's close, Wilde is in prison, Beardsley's health is failing, and Ricketts is offered the directorship of the National Gallery, a position he rejects, believing it will spell the end of his career as an artist. When a fall from a ladder damages Shannon's brain, Ricketts devotes himself to restoring his partner's lost memory through exposure to paintings that had once transformed him, but the passage of time and his own worsening angina force Ricketts to sell off pieces of their collection. Resisting the end of the era he champions, he tries to convince Prime Minister Mackenzie King to acquire several great works for the new National Gallery of Canada. Ironically, when Shannon's exposure to art finally succeeds in jogging his memory, Ricketts' period of celebration is cut short by a fatal heart attack. Shannon ends the play, appreciative of the moments of love and beauty he has experienced, but aware of their transitory, fleeting nature. Successful at evoking their period, MacLennan's scenes feel insufficiently assimilated and the play seems to lack a clear centre. As in *Rice Boy* and *Adventures . . .* , the characters in *Last Romantics* must ultimately reconcile themselves to the inevitable progress of time.

Inscapes of Loss and Love

Kathy-Diane Leveille
Roads Unravelling. Sumach $16.95

Donna E. Smyth
Among the Saints. Roseway $16.00

J. Jill Robinson
Residual Desire. Coteau $18.95

Reviewed by Kathryn Carter

Three accomplished short story collections document love and loss in Canadian locales. The characters in Kathy-Diane Leveille's stories are enmeshed with their New Brunswick settings while Nova Scotia exerts a presence in the stories of Donna E. Smyth. Saskatoon writer J. Jill Robinson's stories are more geographically dispersed and occur (when they are identified) in British Columbia, the Prairies, and Calgary. More significant than the geographical settings, though, are the emotional landscapes and inscapes mapped in each collection.

Roads Unravelling is an apt title for Leveille's collection. Plots don't unfold but unravel. Each story shares a discernible rhythm, ebbing before flowing, moving back and then forth, showing how actions in the present cannot be understood without the past. The title story offers another interpretation of unravelling, however. When high-achieving Andrea cannot accept her flawed but loving mother, Mona, she drives away in cold anger only to find that her mother's knitting, forgotten on the floor of the car, has fallen out and become tangled in the tires. She stops the car, gathers then unravels the filthy wool, and asks, "Why couldn't life be like that? Why couldn't you unravel days, minutes, hours, years, and go back and start all over again after you had dropped a stitch or misread directions or screwed up altogether?" The "unravelling" mentioned in the title, then, refers not only to passive, entropic disintegration but to actively untangling relationships, often in the midst of a turbulent, erotic undertow that winds through like the Kennebecasis River. The author does not feel compelled to save her complex characters from their flaws—the narrative voice is judicious and shot through with wry merriment. The weakest story, "The Chair," begins the collection, featuring a few clichéd descriptions of setting and a bit of clunky, unrealistic dialogue. The following stories improve, with the most technically assured piece of writing appearing at the end. "The Dill Pickle Dance" uses Leveille's narrative technique of weaving past and present to full effect. In this story a wedding veil, like Mona's yarn, flies out the window of a travelling car. It reminds readers of the prevailing motif in this collection: something textured and once-treasured slips out of a window and under the wheels of life as it hurtles down the highway. That the characters often go back to pick it up demonstrates their desire to take life by the "right end of the thread," in the words of Gabrielle Roy.

Donna E. Smyth is the most experienced of the three writers, and her stories benefit from a sure authorial hand. Vehement anger underlies most, if not all, of the stories in *Among the Saints*, but the stories are not unidimensional or monochromatic. The anger assumes an assortment of voices and ideological stances and propels characters to different results. Sometimes it is emancipatory; sometimes it is disabling; in all cases it is viscerally felt. Smyth is not a writer to shy away from the pain and sadness that often attend anger. One story concerns the multiple personalities of a "pain artist"; another, "The Hunger Artists," looks upon the drama of a teenager's battle with anorexia. Smyth attaches the word "artist" to both, insisting on an intimacy between sadness and beauty, but the narrative voice is a bracing Atlantic wind.

Smyth's fiction is not nailed to reality. So, for instance, the characters in "A Fine and Private Place" trespass into the afterlife, but

the story is ultimately less concerned with the possibility of cellphone calls from the dead than the real-life possibilities for Ashley, an ex-punk turned interning mortician. The first and last stories in *Among the Saints* incorporate reality in the form of actual court cases and references to nonfiction by such writers as Rachel Carson and Vandana Shiva. Even when incorporating facts, Smyth spins satisfying yarns and everywhere takes delight in pushing the boundaries of the genre. George Elliot Clarke compares Smyth's prose style to Angela Carter's, and the resemblance is most evident in the final story about the connections between goats and humans. "Women Flying" is a tour de force, anchored in the blood and emotions of goat birth and death and soaring to a poetic finale in which the narrator proclaims, "the goats have taught / me how to dance." Like the goat dance, Smyth's stories at their best are "dazzled and free to slough off gravity," while rooted in a potent natural world of death trumpet mushrooms, reindeer magic mushrooms, marijuana crops, and vulnerable hummingbirds "buffeted by air."

Award-winning author J. Jill Robinson tells the most heartbreaking and most realistic stories of the three. She handles the material in *Residual Desire*, for the most part, with a light touch, allowing words and their absence to season the flavours and textures of loss. Evocative titles like "Quicksand" and "Pier" are anchored in the material world but also acquire metaphorical resonance. A small incident, such as spotting an old friend in a store, reveals a chasm of shame and remorse and pulses with remembered details. Characters generally inhabit a world of loss: a grief-stricken mother cannot recover from the loss of her son, sisters cannot speak to each other, lovers are estranged for wrong and right reasons, gulfs of misunderstanding open between parent and child. Perhaps the most optimistic of the stories concerns Willa, a recovering perfectionist who begins to inject more creativity into her life with the help of eccentric, artistic Maidie. The story ends with Willa's sexual awakening, as she remembers "the almost audible buzz" when her arm brushed Maidie's. The title of the collection seems rather fussy for the gritty realism of the writing. But make no mistake: readers will weep over the death of Chester the dog and three-year-old Michael and they should not be misled by the too-elegant cover of this moving debut collection.

Play Gathering: Western Imaginaries and Toronto Snappy Shorts

Moira Day, ed.
The West of All Possible Worlds: Six Contemporary Canadian Plays. Playwrights Canada P $40.00

Andy McKim, ed.
Snappy Shorts at Tarragon Theatre. Playwrights Canada P $25.00

Reviewed by Kirsty Johnston

Two 2004 publications by Playwrights Canada Press make available a broad range of largely unpublished plays which have enjoyed successful Canadian productions either recently or in the past few decades. The first, *The West of All Possible Worlds: Six Contemporary Canadian Plays*, takes its title from the final line of editor Moira Day's introduction, itself a play on Voltaire's *Candide* as invoked in the anthology's first play, *Noble Savage/Savage Noble* by Bob Armstrong. Day explains that the anthology merely presents the "tip of the iceberg" of the vibrant, multi-faceted Western theatre scene of the past decade. Her informative and insightful introduction places these more recent works in a longer history of Western Canadian drama, beginning with Elsie Park Gowan and concluding with a nod to the "newest wave" of playwrights like Marty Chan, Padma Viswanathan, and

Mieko Ouchi. This survey is concise and effective. It not only suggests key factors that stimulated a "revolution" in western playwriting between 1970 and 1990 but also situates this and subsequent developments within the longer history of the region and its playwriting traditions.

Strikingly, the anthology's "West" focuses on the Prairies but stops short at the Rockies—the six plays include two each from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Respectively, these are *Noble Savage/Savage Noble* by Bob Armstrong, *The Invalids* by George Hunka, *Saddles in the Rain* by Pam Bustin, *Ka'ma'mo'pi cik/The Gathering: The Calling Lakes Community Play* by Rachel Van Fossen and Darrel Wildcat, *Letters in Wartime* by Kenneth Brown and Stephen Scriver, and *Einstein's Gift* by Vern Thiessen. Both the first and the last of these plays represent imagined conversations between European philosophers and innovators: Rousseau, Voltaire, and a Canadian fur-trader in the first; Einstein and F.J. Haber in the last. *The Invalids* offers three acts, each of which present a core triangle of two characters in a café attended by a waiter. Each act includes aspects which seem to connect with the others, not least through the characters' various injuries, but the narrative is marked by ambiguity. By contrast, *Saddles in the Rain* offers a vivid and disturbing narrative of family violence interwoven with surprising moments of compassion and comic lightness. *Letters in Wartime*, written in response to the CBC production of "The Valour and the Horror," is a two-hander in which a young prairie couple trade letters during the Second World War, each one reflecting the challenges faced respectively by a pilot trained and forced to bomb Germany and a young woman drawn into the Albertan war efforts. The most epic play in the anthology is *Ka'ma'mo'pi cik/The Gathering: The Calling Lakes Community Play*. An outdoor spectacle, it traces the history of the Qu'Appelle Valley from the myriad perspectives shared by the hundreds of Aboriginal and white community members who contributed to the play's first production at Fort San, Saskatchewan, 1992. Building a further context for the individual works, each play is preceded by a biography of the playwright, an introduction to the play by the playwright(s), a selected bibliography of his or her other works, and reviews of the anthologized play in production. Marked differences among the playwrights' methods and the six plays' forms and themes evince the kind of diversity in contemporary Western Canadian drama that Day describes.

In the spirit of the plays that follow, and in marked contrast to Day, Jason Sherman's introduction to *Snappy Shorts at Tarragon Theatre* is brief. He describes the two rules that guided the creation of the "Tarragon Shorts": "Rule 1: set a play in an office. Rule 2: make it ten minutes long, no more, preferably no less." Each play was developed as one part of Tarragon Theatre's annual Spring Arts Fair, the twentieth anniversary of which this book celebrates. The office plays grew out of Fair founder Andy McKim's desire to set a play in his theatre office, an impulse which grew to be a popular staple of subsequent Spring Arts Fairs. Audiences would gather each hour in the small space to watch four of these ten-minute plays. Over the past 20 years, nearly 200 such plays have been developed. Although the editor's selection process is not made clear, this anthology offers 45 "Shorts," including one or more plays by such well-known Canadian playwrights as Morwyn Brebner, Richard Greenblatt, Michael Healey, Karen Hines, Wendy Lill, Bruce McCullough, Joan MacLeod, John Mighton, Jason Sherman, Judith Thompson, and Guillermo Verdecchia. Dedicated to late Tarragon Theatre Artistic Director Urjo Kareda, the volume and strength of the plays attests to yet another

facet of the Company's fostering of Canadian playwriting talent and industry.

Although the plays are more remarkable for their diversity, some common threads emerge. Quite a few maintain the office setting suggested by Rule 1. Many of these use the space to investigate office politics, hostilities, or frustrations. Even more specifically, a number of plays are set in a local theatre office. In *My Cigarette Break with Guillermo*, for example, playwrights Richard Greenblatt and Guillermo Verdecchia play themselves as they gossip and gripe between rehearsals of their respective plays, the real-life Andy McKim appearing at the office door to ask them to stop smoking. While this play sends up the specific theatre culture in which the shorts are produced, others in the anthology raise the hot-button topics of the local theatre scene. For example, Jason Sherman's *The Merchant of Showboat* investigates the Toronto *Showboat* musical controversy. Other plays abandoned office settings entirely and invited the audience to imagine that they were in such different circumstances as a Warsaw-bound airplane (Michael Redhill's *Information for Visitors to Warsaw)* or an apartment kitchen with a curtain, behind which lurks the world's most hilariously evil roommate (Bruce McCulloch's *The Two-Headed Roommate*, later produced by Tarragon as a full-length play). While comic sensibilities dominate the anthology, a few plays swiftly build to alarming climaxes. See, for example, Wendy Lill's *Genie*, in which a pregnant couple is asked to make choices when told that their foetus is "testing high" for Down's syndrome. A primary advantage of each of the plays is the ease with which they might be produced by theatre amateurs, students, or professionals. Each play requires no more than three actors and has minimal set requirements. For both practitioners and readers, the shorts are indeed snappy and a pleasure.

Playwrights Canada Press is to be congratulated for gathering, preserving, and making this range of works available for reading, study, and further production. Both collections expose readers to the diverse interests, concerns, methods, and accomplishments of contemporary Canadian playwrights.

Future Shocked

Dennis Foon

The Dirt Eaters. Annick P $12.95

Reviewed by Kevin McCabe

The futuristic fantasy, *The Dirt Eaters*, is set a couple of generations after a nuclear war. Its hero, 15-year old Roan of Longlight, has just witnessed the complete destruction of his community by raiders. He is thrust into a world where life tends to be "nasty, brutish, and short." Earth's survivors live mainly in pockets ruled by warlords. Only one city has survived, and it exercises its malevolent influence over these scattered tribes.

The speech patterns of earth's future inhabitants are difficult to predict, but Foon's language is sometimes too contemporary/colloquial: "Only good things, kid! He can't stop bragging about you! C'mon, let's eat." Nor are the characters always consistently portrayed. Initially, it is emphasized that Governor Brack has a more than fatherly interest in the young healer Alandra. Subsequently, he holds a knife to Alandra's heart to force Roan to surrender.

Despite such bizarre shifts, I strongly recommend this novel. On one level, it has the urgency of a detective story, which, in part, it is. More importantly, it raises, in a manner which 15-year-olds can understand, issues of violence and non-violence, and toxic devastation versus a healthy earth.

Growing Up Funny

Norma Charles
All the Way to Mexico. Raincoast $10.95

Shelagh Lynne Supeene
My Name is Mitch. Orca $8.95

Reviewed by Linda Pratt

In *All the Way to Mexico*, Jacob Armstrong is twelve years old and he is on a honeymoon—his mother's, that is. Thus begins Norma Charles' humorous and empathetic story about a blended family learning to come to terms with each others' food preferences (spicy Jamaican food or Kraft dinner), values (free-spending or thrifty), and pastimes (cow jokes or soccer). Not only are all the characters working through their feelings about being in a blended family, but also about travelling together. At first each child clings to what is familiar in the midst of change in order to cope with being stuck in the same vehicle together. Gradually Jacob, his sister, and his stepbrothers learn about what each of the others holds dear, perhaps not always amicably but with respect and humour. By the time Jacob and his family reach their destination, he discovers that giving to one another is what all families should have in common.

This is an enjoyable read for young readers who loathe doing book reports as well as for those who have acquired step siblings through a parent's second marriage. The characters are ones that readers can easily identify with from the soccer game, the school bus, or sitting in the back seat next to a sibling on a long family road trip. When Jacob's stepfather Fred states, "Sometimes we overlook the simplest and most obvious solutions," he is not only speaking of traffic jams but of each character's coming to terms with change.

In *My Name is Mitch*, Mitch MacLeod is dealing with two creeps in his life, the class bully and his absent father. To make things worse, he is the shortest boy in grade six and the worst reader. Fortunately for him, his hard-working mother and free-spirited grandmother give him all the encouragement and love he deserves. With this support Mitch is resourceful enough to notice opportunities when they arise, whether it is meeting his father for the first time, or catching the class bully red-handed in a school prank. From these experiences Mitch learns who he is and how to stand up for himself. The adults in his life learn a thing or two about dealing and living with unspoken feelings.

Mitch is an endearing yet exceptional character who learns to read not just words but the actions and reactions of people around him. His perceptions of himself and the world around him realistically reflect those of any youngster who has lived with learning disabilities, single parenthood, or unfriendly classmates. These kids can change their worlds just by reading between the lines.

High Wind in CanLit

Paul Quarrington
Galveston. Random House Canada $34.95

Reviewed by Robert McGill

A recent gathering of Margaret Atwood scholars in Ottawa debated the relative lack of attention devoted to her 1981 novel *Bodily Harm*, which is set on the fictional island of St. Antoine and blends political thriller with postcolonial critique. Had Atwood strayed too far from her usual terrain, or were current Canadianist paradigms simply unable to accommodate fiction written by a white Ontarian about the Caribbean?

It will be interesting to see whether a similar fate greets Paul Quarrington's *Galveston*, a novel that adds tiny Dampier's Cay to an archipelago of imagined Caribbean islands stretching at least as far back as Caliban's. Indeed, Shakespeare seems particularly

relevant here, since it's a tempest that threatens Dampier's Cay and attracts two emotionally scarred "weather weenies" from southern Ontario, Caldwell and Beverley, who share a desire to meet the storm head-on. Their meeting on the island and reasons for the trip constitute the substance of the tale.

In this respect, Dampier's Cay is less post-colonial symbol than symbolic topography. Like Crusoe's island or Dr. Moreau's, it represents the world in miniature, and events there take on a cosmic resonance. Like Jonah or Ahab before them, Beverley and Caldwell confront not only the universe but their place in it—and, by extension, our own. The conclusion *Galveston* offers is not cheery; the book's apocalyptic overtones range from evocations of Noah and the biblical flood to the novel's title, which refers ponderously to a Texas city wiped out by deluge.

While *Galveston*'s literary pedigree is clear, Quarrington is just as much indebted to a tradition of Hollywood disaster movies, not just the blockbusters like *Twister*, but films such as *Key Largo* and *A High Wind in Jamaica* that feature hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico. And *Galveston* is intensely cinematic, from its snappy dialogue and highly visual set-pieces to its flashbacks and stock characters. Of the few people we meet in this novel, Quarrington gives only Beverley and Caldwell significant personal histories. Even Jimmy Newton, an American hurricane-chaser who occupies centre stage for much of the book, seems on hand principally to keep the plot going and to offer meteorological trivia.

The effect of this focus is to shrink a small world even further. Nevertheless, close attention to the psyches of Beverley and Caldwell creates more, not less, bewilderment in the face of the storm. What are we to make of the fact that Beverley began searching out tornadoes after her daughter's drowning was caused by the "cyclonic action" of a swimming pool's intake valve? Or the fact that Caldwell spends his days hoping to be struck by lightning after he has beaten the odds twice in one day, both winning the lottery and losing his family in a car accident? Whether Quarrington is parodying the melodramatic motivations of such characters in disaster films or sacrificing plausibility for the sake of symbolism, *Galveston* seems on more stable ground in its lively descriptions of the climactic hurricane, which demonstrate that even the most expensive computer-generated effects can pale beside the written word.

Visualizing Vancouverites

Karen Love, ed.
Facing History: Portraits from Vancouver. Arsenal $29.95

Sheryl Salloum
Underlying Vibrations: The Photography and Life of John Vanderpant. Horsdal and Schubart $35.00

Reviewed by Antony Adolf

The difference between sight and vision is the difference between a great photograph and a good one. Or, more precisely, a spectrum exists with sight at one end and vision at the other, with an infinity of gradations separating them and upon which a subjective appreciation of photographs can be measured. In these two elegant pictorial anthologies, one witnesses both sights and visions, as well as everything in between.

Editor Karen Love raises two significant guiding questions in her introduction to *Facing History*: "I wonder if a selection of portraits from this city can relay the very mobile realities of urban living, that theatre of human endeavour which is cause for celebration, caution, and action? Can a body's depiction imply the complex social, political, psychological map which this person negotiates?" Not only do the photographs *attempt* to answer these questions but, by and large, they *succeed* in doing so

affirmatively. Love defines the word "portraits" broadly, to extend standard face shots to multimedia works of abstract art: they provide a full view from many perspectives of the people who have made Vancouver the cosmopolitan city that it is. As a colourful (both metaphorically and literally) chapter of the city's visual history from 1950 to 2001, the book attains its greatest triumph with shots of unnamed masses rallying for political reasons or for Elvis Presley, as well as of individuals—their happiness and sorrow, period fashion choices, and favourite local hangouts from street corners and bars to living quarters. The famous, such as Pierre Trudeau and Terry Fox, are, however, shown in their most characteristic poses, making one wish for something a little more unexpected in the book's "Public Life" section. It is a shortcoming somewhat overcome by the writings that accompany the photographs, an important contribution to Canadian ekphrastic literature, by such local luminaries as Roy Miki, Robin Blaser, and Wayde Compton, among others, which would be worthy of rereading even apart from the photographs they relate to.

Vancouver is also associated with *Underlying Vibrations: The Photography and Life of John Vanderpant*, as the Canadian photographer of Dutch origin—whose simultaneously magisterial and intimate works may be compared, in complexity of composition, to those of his more famous American contemporary, Ansel Adams—considered the city his home. Sheryl Salloum's biography of the man shows excellent archival and manuscript research, and is to be credited for also giving the reader a full sense of the way Canadian and international photography developed in the early part of the twentieth century. It also provides a compelling personal story of Vanderpant in his relationships with fellow artists of his time, including members of the Group of Seven, Emily Carr, and others who were to become cornerstones in the history of Canadian art. Her critical analyses of his work are remarkable for their clarity and precision, and are written with a full awareness of trends in photography at the height of modernism. Vanderpant's entirely black and white work can be divided into two categories: his portraits, which he did mostly for commercial reasons (and which in some cases, nevertheless, still show more talent behind the camera and in the dark room than some of the more mundane color photographs in *Facing History*), and those of purely artistic expression, of which his series of studies on the angles and shadows of cement buildings, and pattern studies in close-ups of vegetables and flowers bring out the mysticism from the everyday, with a simplicity that only a deeply spiritual man could have accomplished. Both of these aspects of his work live up to his principle of photography as "entirely a process of gradation between white and black; pictorially . . . more a balancing of contrasting or blending spaces," leaving the viewer with the sense that she is beholding the work of a master photographer.

Taken together, these two books are much more than tabletop ornaments—they represent what is best in photography, Canadian or otherwise: a commitment to an aestheticism that does not replace what is already beautiful in the world, but rather enhances and transforms into something worthy of the adjective "new" through the medium of a camera.

Who Controls Academic Freedom?

Len M. Findlay and Paul M. Bidwell, eds.
Pursuing Academic Freedom: "Free and Fearless"? Purich $28.50

Corynne McSherry
Who Owns Academic Work?: Battling for Control of Intellectual Property. Harvard UP $29.95 (US)

Reviewed by Batia Boe Stolar

Pursuing Academic Freedom provides a good introduction to a variety of issues regarding academic freedom and the conditions that limit such freedom. As the subtitle suggests, these papers (from a wide variety of disciplines and perspectives) seek to dismantle the illusion that scholars are freely and fearlessly pursuing their research and knowledge. The message is the same in all the essays, but many take opposing positions and dialogue with one another. In doing so, this collection shows how the issues of academic freedom are evolving to include tenured faculty and non-tenured faculty in the university, teachers in the public school system, university and public school students, librarians, administrators, and journalists writing about the university.

The collection moves beyond issues of faculty unions and job security with essays addressing how academic freedom is curtailed in the classroom, in the faculty lounge, and in the library. Marvin Brown's provocative essay outlines some of the limitations faculty face because of political correctness on campus, arguing that some views ought to be "offensive to someone." Some of the essays in this collection equate academic freedom with freedom of speech, and by extension with freedom of the press, suggesting that academic freedom manifests itself most in controversial and potentially offensive cases. Linda Fritz argues against censorship, noting that all texts, including those deemed dangerous or offensive (such as Holocaust denial material), ought to be available in the university's library since ideas by themselves are not dangerous and critically trained readers will be able to make informed decisions about what they read. Bruce MacDougall, Marie Battiste, and Jackie Heslop respond indirectly, describing the limitations that sexual and racial minorities face when the university and the educational system impose and operate on heterosexist, Eurocentric, and masculinist ideologies. This collection of essays thus asks us to consider who has the legal and social right to academic freedom in theory and practice, and what conditions are put in place to limit or enable that freedom to exist. This is a collection of essays about the limitations of academic freedom, but it is equally a collection about the social nature of the university. Jerry Zaslove, Dawne McCance, and Len Findlay analyze the history and social role of the university, and the place that the university has held and ought to hold within the community, the state, and the marketplace.

I appreciate the ideal of academic freedom the collection voices, and the papers that envision what needs to change within the institution to attain that ideal. But I would also have appreciated a paper that explored what would happen if academic freedom, in its idyllic form, were to exist. I cannot, however, fault the collection for not providing such a paper. The collection does what it sets out to do: provoke the reader into participating in this important ongoing dialogue.

Academic freedom is one issue also explored in *Who Owns Academic Work?*. Although McSherry's analysis is primarily about copyright law as it pertains to patents and multi-authored research and publications in the sciences, her book is appealing to those of us working in the humanities, particularly as we are shifting into a time when research-granting bodies privilege collective interdisciplinary projects. While we may not have to worry about patents,

we may have to think about who can be assigned ownership (or authorship) of a group project. In the case of publications, who should own the copyright? The publisher, the university, or the author? McSherry's argument circles back to the issue of where academic labour fits legally and socially, and how defining intellectual property can change the nature of the academy and of academic labour. McSherry investigates these questions from a cultural studies perspective. She analyzes the discourse of intellectual property law, tracing the historical development of how authorship is transformed into ownership, and pays considerable attention to the many paradoxes within this discourse, such as the role the university plays in the socially divided public and private domains, and how academic freedom can exist when ownership of intellectual work limits its social and academic use. McSherry also provides a history of the university, focusing on the American research university. Her arguments are equally applicable to Canadian institutions, especially as we reconsider what the role of the university is and ought to be.

As long as nobody questions our right to pursue a certain line of research, or tries to limit our words or ideas in the classroom, we might not think too deeply about academic freedom or the labour we provide. When we are confronted with legal and social issues resulting from our work or our inability to pursue our work, however, these issues become all too real. Anyone working in academia, in any capacity, should think about these issues and enter into the critical dialogue of which these texts are a part, thus ensuring we put theory into practice.

Rambunctions

Jim Christy
Cavatinas for Long Nights. Ekstasis Editions $15.95

John Pass
Water Stair. Oolichan $14.95

Peter Trower
There are Many Ways: Poems New and Selected. Ekstasis Editions $18.95

Peter Trower
Sidewalks & Sidehills CD. Transsiberian Music Company $12.50

Reviewed by Laurie Ricou

A cavatina is an operatic solo aria (in one rather than three sections), or, more simply, any song-like air. Christy's title is ironic: although song, even melody, is a frequent subject, his poems are seldom melodic. The dominant hey-you vernacular clashes with a roguish taste for rarefied words and a ragtag catalogue of place and brand names—local and global. If you can have an erudite folk poetry, Christy's work would define it. Metaphor shifts as in a "gaudy dream"; laments for the abuses of political and financial power are more sarcastic (albeit muted) than polemical; jazz improvisation is both theme and poetic; blues-style tongue-in-cheek angst the pervasive tone. Christy seems more often to be talking in lines than listening to his own language. Nevertheless, the many poems that begin in a character sketch of a person observed out of place in the streets and cafés of the world, then shift into a small drama of momentary encounters are as charming as they are atonal.

You could call Christy's poems "Haywire Choruses," which is the title of the poem in which he sings a character portrait that ventures beyond sketch into tough tribute. Christy describes the wise talker "who didn't swallow his poetry in universities / but got it in kick around camps and woods, / from bootleggers and bandits": Pete Trower. Trower's new book, much of it reprinted poems, realizes a long-time dream to

combine his poems with the intricate, crowded, pen-and-ink drawings of Jack Wise. Well, Trower might be intricate and crowded (or at least colliding), but I am not knowledgeable enough about drawing to presume much of an analogy. I do think the perplexing cloud-castles, with touches of the grotesque, could be nicely summed up by Christy's wonderment at Trower's daring lightness: "off he goes / skywriting on apricot air." The derivation of cavatina suggests both hollowing out and drawn out, an apt program for a poet who looks at the insides of events, lightens them, and extends/pauses our attention.

I have long admired Peter Trower's poetry. Here the poem "Thunderstorm" provides a dozen phrases to quote and savour both for their zest, and for their aptness in defining the typical Trower poem. First, and always, he embraces "rambunctions": the sound of ramming any bunk, the etymology signalling a collision of *bump* and *fractious* hit again by *ram,* and the haywire neologism from *rambunctiousness* that makes an affectionate quality into a plural entity. Rambunctious, too, might describe his narratives and the clawing, haunted forest-gothic that is his most characteristic setting. Thunderstorm appears through the window as "spasming light": again the involuntary reaction. Trower makes noun verbal to create an energized stasis. The words track one another in a spasming poetic, in an alliterative orgy whose basis shifts every line or three, and then bumps into that compulsive compounding: "Poe-touched roof-rims" near Squamish, and later the "peace-rich place." For all their brawling battle imagery, Trower's poems are, at their core, "peace-rich"—maybe because, as he says in the midst of the storm, "simple naiveté held me invulnerable." I doubt naiveté as an epistemology is likely to be simple, but it certainly works for Trower in opening up the combinability of words, and the potential of well-worn vocabulary freshly encountered.

In *Sidewalks & Sidehills*, Trower's first CD, the guitars of Neal Ryan and Randy Forrester slide with sadness and vibrate more peace-rich than brawling. Muted as the moody accompaniments—more like parallel string-poems—Trower's "tumbl[ing] toughtalk" still sometimes drifts below earshot as if the poet himself is occasionally distracted by the gentle riffs. But that itself may be an essential of the Trower voice and poetic, and anyone teaching Trower's poetry, or building a teaching library will want this CD.

A water stair is difficult to climb, slippery, and in constant change. It's fascinating to watch. It compels contemplation, but defies understanding. John Pass' *Water Stair* ebbs and flows through these associations and possibilities. Although it has neither the boisterous humour nor polemic of David James Duncan, the book might be thought of as Pass' *My Story as Told By Water*, in which water, its search compelled by gravity, is endlessly thwarted by land: "the result? Riffle: rapid; eddy; pool; . . . endless music; sustenance; life." (And, we might add, stair.) Certainly the great river poet Richard Hugo is an inspiration for Duncan as for Pass, and all three believe that *creation* is ongoing and that "our words, actions, and songs still determine the nature of the hills and forest, and still help create / sustain, or destroy the animal, fish, and bird people."

So, after Pass, sea blush [*Plectritus congesta*] must be both "blue-white sparks" and a "sliding touch," created and sustained by this exquisite acting and singing:

> Tongue in her name each foundering first time
> at sundown her look catches sea's deep colour
>
> in a held breath recklessly lingers.

Perhaps even in these three lines we can catch some sense of the water-stair poetic:

the noun "tongue" that might be a verb, the "her" at once earth, or flower, or human; the fusion of senses asking if breath can have colour. If this were prose, we might label it drifting, or sliding modifiers, anxious that "in a breath" might attach differently than "recklessly" and confuse the subject that "lingers." In Pass, the serial, slippery modifiers are the current of falling water, here slowing, then impeded, then turning abruptly, even back on itself, dividing in several directions, and then reuniting. It is a grammar also found in several short serial poems, where the sections serve the same riffling movement. These are poems continuing a syntax of catch and release, at once relaxing and drawing your attention. Try to follow the "blue scribble," the jostle and hesitation. As Duncan knows "when writing of place, you can't *be* in a hurry . . . we must be going nowhere in order to be somewhere. Sense of place is received, not aimed at."

Claiming Hongkongness

Eliza W.Y. Lee

Gender and Change in Hong Kong: Globalization, Postcolonialism, and Chinese Patriarchy. UBC Press $29.95

Reviewed by Maria N. Ng

Gender and Change in Hong Kong is a collection of nine essays, including the introduction, edited by Eliza W.Y. Lee, an associate professor in the Department of Government and Public Administration at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The obvious strength of this collection is its timeliness, as it deals with the unique cultural and political entity that Hong Kong has become after its handover to China in 1997. The goal of the collection, with contributions from Anthropology, Intercultural Studies, Law, Political Science, and Sociology, is to "illuminate the complex interactive relationship between globalization, postcolonialism, and Chinese patriarchy, as well as the complex and sometimes conflicting effects these categories of forces have given rise to."

The essays in the volume examine such topics as women's activism during political transition, industrial restructuring and its effects on women, as well as the role Christianity plays in gender identity. In the essay "Discourse on *Baau Yih Naai* (Keeping Concubines)," Ka-ming Wu argues that the controversy surrounding the practice of keeping concubines not only challenges gender equity and the concept of monogamy, but also provides a discourse that articulates "Hong Kong superiority" and reinforces "the constructed ethnic categories" of "Hong Kong people" and "mainland Chinese." While, in order to maintain their "Hongkongness," Hong Kong people promote their consumer lifestyle to the mainlanders as one to emulate, at the same time they marginalize mainland Chinese through institutional means. Although not overtly positioned as such, Wu's essay manages to be both specifically focussed and connected to other colonial and postcolonial situations in the world.

Hong Kong lifestyle is also focused upon in Siumi Maria Tam's "Empowering Mobility: 'Astronaut' Women in Australia." Tam's essay attempts to address the so-called "astronaut" families in Chinese immigrant culture and how "the removal away from the husband-centred household in Hong Kong actually prompted an empowering process" in the women who have to act as the head of the family. Unlike the other essays in the volume, "Empowering Mobility" concerns the re-creation of aspects of Hong Kong in a foreign culture; in this instance, Sydney. The immigrants' need to reinstitute "their Hong Kong identity by contributing to the construction of a diasporic Hong Kong community" and to "create a greater Cantonese culture with Hong Kong as its centre" can also be seen in other cities such as Vancouver. What is revelatory

in Tam's investigation is the fact that the women, who have to cope without their husbands, do not all become victims of cultural displacement. Instead, some of them adapt and become more independent and versatile in dealing with problems.

In a short but concise conclusion, Lee revisits the essays and evaluates "the prospect for the emergence of a critical feminist discourse" in postcolonial Hong Kong. "[A]n increase in political authoritarianism" and more state intervention in economic management in Hong Kong's political order mean that women's interests are either marginalized or restricted. This is overall an insightful collection of essays.

Toronto Translated

Juan Butler, trans. Michel Albert
Journal de Cabbagetown — Été 67 à Toronto.
Triptyque $20.00

Émile Zola, trans. Dorothy E. Speirs; Dorothy E. Speirs and Yannick Portebois, eds.
Notes from Exile. U of Toronto P $27.95

Reviewed by Ralph Sarkonak

Juan Butler (1942-1981), a high school dropout who came to Canada from England at age six and whom some saw as a Canadian Rimbaud, was the author of three books of which *Cabbagetown Diary* (1969) was the first. Now it has been translated into French by Michel Albert, a poet in his own right.

Set in the centennial summer of Canada's feast of self-glorification, the action takes place largely in Cabbagetown, an inner city Toronto neighbourhood now extensively gentrified. But in 1967 the area around Allan Gardens (established 1860) is a metaphor for the real Canada as Butler's 23-year-old first-person narrator, Michael Armstrong Taylor, sees it. Once an elegant hangout for Victorian ladies and gentlemen promenading through its paths and greenhouses, the park has become a gathering place for drunks, exhibitionists, and the local branch of the Salvation Army that comes to rescue wayward souls. Mike spends his time, when he is not working as a bartender at an Anglo-Saxon ladies club, drinking and having sex with a new girl friend, Terry, another lost soul albeit more naïve. Like the convenient hallway in some Classical French play to which the characters must inevitably return, Allan Gardens—apart from beer parlors and a pad for sleep and sex—is the locale and focus of much of the action as the narrator and his cronies take refuge from the heat and humidity of the Toronto summer in what has become a human junkyard. Canadian history, like its high society, has moved on elsewhere whether to the greener vales of Rosedale or Ottawa where politicians attempt to navigate dangerous diplomatic waters as their nearest neighbour fights a neo-colonial war. Fittingly, Mike's last entry describes a large anti-war demonstration. Of Expo 67 or the attendant praise of Canada as a unified nation—a fiction brought down crashingly by General de Gaulle's injection of rhetoric and the reality principle—there is little mention, although the use of *joual* by Michel Albert adds a nice touch, reminding the reader of this translation of another geographical and linguistic space.

We tend to forget just how long ago 1967 was: beer was fifteen cents a glass plus a two-cents hospitality tax, there were two-dollar bills, and being gay, "tapettes" as the narrator says, or rather being discovered as one, could cost you your job. The latest hippy chic in Yorkville was to forego bathing but in Cabbagetown:

> Ici, il y a des enfants qui n'ont même jamais entendu ce mot. Leurs parents puent, leur école—pour ceux qui y vont—pue, leurs maisons puent! Tout pue! Ici, c'est le dépotoir municipal de Toronto, où la société rejette ceux dont elle n'a pas besoin. On les relègue ici et on les laisse se vautrer comme des bêtes dans leur crasse. Et on s'assure qu'ils n'en sortent pas.

Clearly there is an intertextual debt to Michel Tremblay, if not on the author's part then certainly on the translator's, for Cabbagetown sounds a lot like the Plateau Mont-Royal and its chief thoroughfare, "la Main."

In 1967 Canadians were neither as naïve nor as innocent as we like to think, and Butler has textualized the contradictions, hypocrisy, and racisms endemic to this microcosm of our cultural mosaic.

Les éditions Triptyque are to be commended for publishing this translation of the carnivalesque book by a promising but doomed writer who ended up so internalizing the alienation he lived with that he killed himself. The drive to write, to create a material object of some order, in the face of troubled feelings and thoughts as well as society's injustices, can be a saving grace from final chaos.

Emile Zola (1840-1902), known for his 20-volume novel cycle *Les Rougon-Macquart, Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire* (1871-93), defended Alfred Dreyfus, an officer of Jewish origin in the French army, against false accusations of high treason. The Affaire Dreyfus, as it was known, split France on an ideological fault line that has not disappeared to this day as right wing politicians, the Catholic church, and defenders of France's military were opposed by intellectuals such as Zola, Proust, and other defenders of fair play, philological accuracy (documents were forged), and truth. Dreyfus was deported to the infamous prison on Devil's Island before he was eventually pardoned and reinstated in the French army (he later fought in World War I). Zola, whose death remains suspicious, may have paid with his life for his famous letter "J'accuse" written in 1898, attacking the political and military hierarchy of his country for what became a national coverup to save the fragile honour of the French army. He had to flee to England to avoid twelve months of prison that would have been his fate had he remained in the country that had previously celebrated him as its premier writer of the time.

The diary Zola wrote in England was first published in 1964 but this is the first time it has become available in translation. The book contains a critical apparatus with a useful introduction, a chronology of the Dreyfus affair, and a bibliography. Although the actual text by Zola is only 60 pages, the book includes 43 photographs taken by the writer as he travelled around Sussex on his new hobby horse, his beloved bicycle, so readers will get a first-hand idea of his talents as photographer. Interestingly, there are no portraits and almost no images of people—perhaps the writer was afraid of alienating the country folk of his place of refuge—just village churches, railway stations, and country roads. Although the work of an amateur photographer, the images bear a certain resemblance to Atget's if for no other reason than the ever present emptiness of the landscapes. There is an undoubted need to document—Zola was always good at researching his novels—and at times one is struck by an uncanny Barthesian *punctum* of time past, for example, two photographs of the Crystal Palace, which by then had been moved from Hyde Park to the countryside where it would later burn down.

The diary begins on 18 July 1898 and ends with a composite entry for 23 August to 21 October when Zola stayed on in England for another seven months until it was safe to return to France. Unfortunately for diary readers, he got busy writing *Fécondité*, a 752-page novel. We do not read about the visits he received from both his wife and his mistress but we do hear his complaints about the food in England. At times Zola becomes introspective:

> I think that this wound inside me that won't heal comes from all the anger and all the scorn which I feel towards the

> abominations that are going on in France. Is this possible? Is it really me hiding here? So this is where forty years of work have led me, with a whole wretched country behind me, shouting me down and threatening me.

The first person soon fades since Zola turns a blind eye to the opportunities of self-writing. He is predictably good at description and there is some political analysis in this literary curiosity. One wishes for more of Zola's own text, more self-writing.

What Butler and Zola share is a sense of outrage. Today Dreyfus, via Vichy, lives on in the hearts and minds of many French men and women. Recently in the Montparnasse cemetery in Paris, I visited the Dreyfus family plot. The tombstone memorializes several family members, including a woman who died at Auschwitz.

Monuments to Neglect

David Fennario
The Death of René Lévesque. Talonbooks $11.95

Tomson Highway
Rose. Talonbooks $16.95

Reviewed by Gregory J. Reid

These plays are significant works of dramatic literature, blueprints for future performances, and monuments on the landscape of Canadian theatre history—unfortunately, they are markers and reminders of the inevitable destiny of Canadian playwrights in Canada: neglect.

When *The Death of René Lévesque* was first presented at Centaur Theatre in 1991, it was booed by a group said to have included the theatre critic Robert Lévesque. *Le Devoir* (Quebec's newspaper of the intelligentsia) published Lévesque's review, in which he chided English theatre-goers for being "Communists for a night" and called the play "une merde," on its front page. Not since the 1970s and the likes of George Ryga's *Captives of the Faceless Drummer* (1971), Denise Boucher's *Les fées ont soif* (1977), and Chris Brookes' *They Club Seals, Don't They?* (1978) had a Canadian play created such furor. Although the recently published script is a significantly rewritten, tighter and more incisive version of the original production, the play's central thesis that René Lévesque was as a social democrat compelled to swing to the right once in power remains. Fennario has been acknowledged as the leading dramatic voice of the working class in Canada and the poet warrior of Pointe Saint-Charles and the Montreal Irish, who introduced the Québécois expression "Balconville" into Canadian English, but no one has dared to give his play, *The Death of René Lévesque,* a second production.

Tomson Highway has been a groundbreaking, foundational dramatist—the inaugural voice of a generation of First Nations playwrights in Canada. Although *Rose* is the sequel to Highway's national and international successes, *The Rez Sisters* and *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, according to his afterword, entitled "Should Only Native Actors Have the Right to Play Native Roles?" the play, which was admirably produced by students and professors at the University of Toronto in January of 1999, has never had a professional production. The experience of trying to get his play produced led Highway to conclude that his "career as a playwright had been destroyed by political correctness."

In both plays, footwear becomes a central icon. Fennario's characters suggest that the "flourescent blue Wallabies" that Lévesque wore when he was forced to kowtow to banking moguls in New York were a passive-aggressive symbol of his resistance. As such the shoes also symbolize the defeat and impossibility of his dream of Quebec as a truly independent social democracy.

Rosabella Jean Baez, one of three spirits of the dead who share the name Rose and haunt Highway's play, is a bisexual, Cree,

Las Vegas showgirl, who first appears in the play as "a goddess in black leather, straddling a motorcycle." Her "shocking-red six-inch stiletto-heeled shoes" are an iterated symbol of the not-so-passive resistance of women to the brutality of men. Rosabella is remembered wearing the shoes when she "enticed him [a male chauvinist] into her confidence, primed him like a pump, and then, arghh, sunk her teeth into his tongue, dragged him to the door, down the fire escape and spat him out into the street." The shoes are eventually passed on to Liz Jones, one of Rosabella's biker acolytes, so that she can seduce Big Joey, the villain of the central melodrama (which pits Chief Big Rose and the women against a criminal conspiracy to establish a casino on the Reserve), in order to drug then castrate him for having tortured and raped one of their sister bikers.

Although Highway assures us in the production notes that "as impossible as it sounds to produce" the play is "surprisingly do-able," with a minimum requirement of 17 actors, over 20 speaking parts and almost as many plot and theme lines, music, songs and dancing, lavishly described sets and costumes, and a number of *deus-ex-machina* ritual/symbolic conflict resolutions, this play bids adieu to "small is beautiful," the "kitchen sink," small-scale magic realism and the "poor theatre"—although some readers may, at points, feel they have stumbled upon a lost James Reaney play. The underlying rationale for the play, its hybridity, can be best understood through a *mise-en-abyme* anecdote told by Highway's raisonneur, Liz, "a full-blooded cute little Sioux Indian woman from the Rosebud Indian Reservation . . . graduate of the North Dakota Conservatory of Music" and self-proclaimed "dyke." She describes an Apache powwow near a fairground with merry-go-rounds and Ferris wheels so that the two images become one "circus music, circus lights . . . and Apache chants 30,000 years old. It was like hearing the Earth singing, breathing, wheezing out its last gasp." Whatever its challenges, the play deserves and would be well served by the rough polishing of a professional production.

Fennario's published script is spare and intense in relation to the play performed in 1991. The chansonnier character, Barbotte, and the music and circus-like features he brought to the play, have been replaced by René Lévesque himself in the form of a statue. Four characters, Lévesque's lover, his business and political advisors, and a union leader, in harmonized choruses and contrapuntal monologues (reminiscent of the best of Michel Tremblay—*À toi, pour toujours, ta Marie-Lou* and *Bonjour, là, bonjour*) tell the poignant and dramatic story of how Lévesque's dream died. Theatre companies might find the script short for a full production, but combined with another shorter Fennario play like *Banana Boots*, *Gargoyles,* or *Perimeter*, *The Death of René Lévesque* would provide the centre piece of a full evening of dramatic entertainment.

The Life of Harold Sonny Ladoo

Harold Sonny Ladoo
No Pain Like This Body. Anansi $19.95

Reviewed by David Chariandy

> I'd never seen the urge to write so badly founded.
> Nor so quiet, deadly, and convincing.
>
> Dennis Lee, *The Death of Harold Ladoo*

When first published in 1972, Harold Sonny Ladoo's *No Pain Like This Body* quickly earned acclaim from a variety of critics and writers; however, with the untimely death of Ladoo only a few months later, the unusually strong first novel thereafter became something of a "lost classic" in the emerging canons of Canadian and Caribbean

literatures. Happily, the newly reincarnated Anansi Press has now republished *No Pain*, this time with an introduction by Dionne Brand, which is itself one of the most astonishing critical statements by an African Caribbean writer on Indo Caribbean expressive culture since Derek Walcott's Nobel Prize address. Set in 1905 in the Tola district of the fictional "Carib Island," *No Pain Like This Body* offers a horrific glimpse into South Asian indentured labour in the Caribbean. The environment is not idyllic and sunshine drenched, but overcast, cruel, and quite literally poisonous. The transplanted Hindu community is comprised neither of happy labourers nor heroic resisters of oppression, but of individuals consumed by fear, self-hatred, and madness—casualties of the voyage over the *Kala Pani* or "the Black Waters." In this respect, Ladoo's novel is uncompromisingly bitter. Yet we continue to read precisely because of Ladoo's extraordinary talent in leavening such grim circumstances with the ironic, bacchanalian, and occasionally even poignant voices of those who live in Tola. As the narrator himself reminds us, "there was life in Tola." And it is precisely this life, "quiet, deadly, and convincing" (as Dennis Lee reminds us) which remains Ladoo's enduring accomplishment.

Life Lessons

Robert Sedlack
The Horn of a Lamb. Anchor Canada $21.00

Reviewed by Ian Dennis

Fred Pickle, a middle-aged but perpetually young former junior hockey star, brain-damaged long ago in an on-ice accident (but *was* it an accident?), shares a ramshackle sheep farm in the Canadian West with his uncle, retired policeman and widower Jack Pickle. Fred's best friend is Badger, a saintly 81-year-old former environmental radical (leader of the Flin Flon Five of 1960s bombing fame). From such premises and in a laconic, short-sentence style resembling that of radio raconteur Stuart McLean, except endless and not very funny, *The Horn of a Lamb* spins a farrago of improbable plot and crudely melodramatic incident. Rather an odd second offering from Robert Sedlack, whose successful debut, *The African Safari Papers,* may more properly have earned its "darkly comic" label. The new book is only murkily sentimental.

We have, in Fred, the latest incarnation of the wise fool, whose brain damage and resulting droll-but-wise-and-even-poetic utterance, of course, most of us can only envy. We have a greedy American businessman stealing Canada's game and poor Fred's sole comfort. (No greedy hockey players.) We have a big-breasted, big-hearted, self-reliant neighbour woman to partner Jack and her libidinous teenage daughter, who makes sexual advances to the wise fool (who is then scapegoated in the resultant outrage) until the wise fool (who survives) teaches her in a touching speech to respect herself *for* herself. There is also a crowd of sadistic neighbour boys, who are taught a lesson (well, beaten up) by a tough guy. There is a young hockey talent, who is a lout until he learns true dedication and selflessness from the wise fool. And there are sheep, about whose slaughter there is some hand-wringing, but one of whom, Fred's own lamb, is preserved. Above all, we have a heroic guard dog, whom we *several* times think has been martyred for noble behaviour, but (I hope I do not give too much away) always survives. Indeed, all endings in this book are happy—every foe humiliated, every good person and beast rewarded.

In most senses, this is not an adult novel, and should not be marketed as such. But minus a few senior moments (Jack's erectile difficulties), and at about two-thirds its current bloated length, it could make quite

acceptable adolescent or "young adult" fiction if not the classic kind that speaks to all. The sentiment could become life lessons (respect for the disabled and so forth), a prose tedious to maturer taste might be merely "accessible," and the loveable pets, of course, could be its most delightful feature.

Writing for Our Lives

Mary Eagleton, ed.
A Companion to Feminist Theory.
Blackwell $77.00

Miriam Fuchs
The Text is Myself: Women's Life Writing and Catastrophe. U of Wisconsin P $24.95

Reviewed by Marni Stanley and Kathryn Barnwell

Feminist theory has, in recent years, expanded beyond the categories of feminism (radical, liberal, socialist, psychoanalytic, etc.) that served as organizing principles for previous surveys of feminist thought. Undergraduate women's studies classes are less likely to be planned around these various feminisms than to follow students' interests in the big topics: gender, race, and class, and how to transform received social constructions which impact the lives of women. Mary Eagleton's collection of new essays written by twelve feminist theorists offers a concise overview, not of the founding manifestos of various feminisms, but of the concerns and debates within a range of fields in chapters with short titles such as "Time," "Sexuality," "Subjects," and "Cyberculture." This approach avoids the territorialism that results from attempts to label theoretical perspectives; the focus is, instead, on following the course of debates which arise from the problematizing of gender in a variety of discourses and acknowledging the proliferation of new cross-disciplinary matrices. This openness produces a collection which is both concise and, largely, companionable.

Eagleton, in her introduction, says that the essays in this collection "are conscious of both the purpose of theory and political and practical reasons for lucidity." They do succeed in finding a point of balance between macro and micro theory, between theory and political practice which would make this an eminently useful text both for introducing undergraduates to feminist theory and for reviewing the ever-deepening engagement with those theories and their implications for both specific discourses and praxis.

It is more European than North American in its emphasis, as is to be expected from a volume in the Blackwell series of *Companions*, and perhaps this tilt accounts for the absence of several subjects which we assume to be central to feminist discussion: gender, lesbian theory, theories of the female body, and spirituality. Each of these would warrant a chapter of its own. Of these, the most serious oversight is the lack of attention to lesbian challenges to feminism to deal with "difference," to lesbian ethics and sexuality. Chris Weedon's otherwise excellent chapter, "Sexuality," makes brief mention of Adrienne Rich's "lesbian continuum" but does not venture into subsequent developments in queer theory and its questioning of received ideas about the body, the meaning of gender, and political activism, to name a few. Also, significant areas such as race, ethnicity, difference, and development, to which feminist theory owes so much, should not be largely confined to a single chapter: "Race."

These limitations may have resulted from the demands of concision. So, while we may fault the editor for what she has overlooked in assembling this collection, we cannot fault her for what she has chosen to include. The essays are thoughtful, readable, and accompanied by carefully selected bibliographies, all of which would make this a very useful text in a variety of gender, women's studies, and theory courses.

Miriam Fuchs' *The Text is Myself* is part of the excellent Wisconsin Studies in Autobiography series. An earlier work in the series was Sidonie Smith and Jane Watson's *Women, Autobiography, Theory* in which they suggest that the time has come for critics to stop focusing on the way autobiographies reveal women's alterity because "feminist criticism needs to consider how gender intersects with other components that comprise identity." Fuchs' project perfectly illustrates the approach they advocate. She undertakes to show how women who have had their lives suddenly, and often violently, overturned have nevertheless found their voice, and regained authority in their own lives. Her book adds to our understanding of the effect of catastrophe on the self and on the task of self-representation; her choice of texts also adds to the discussion of what constitutes an autobiographical text.

Fuchs begins by defining catastrophe in contrast to crisis. Catastrophe is sudden and violent change, "change that is extreme enough to constitute an overturning, a revolution or subversion of the established order," whereas crisis is change of an ongoing or continuous nature. Fuchs is interested in the writer who finds herself in a political or medical situation out of her control but who nevertheless attempts to survive through exploring how external events operate within her life. Her point is that catastrophe narratives are distinguished by "an unleashing of the past as a dynamic response to the exigencies of the present, making self-representation . . . tropological."

The texts chosen also challenge the limits of autobiography, although Fuchs clearly establishes the ways in which these works fulfill her criteria. Grete Weil's autobiographical novel *The Bride Price* deals with her treatment as a Holocaust survivor and, collapsed into the same experience, her later treatment as a stroke patient, all worked into the story of David's first wife drawn from the Tanakh. Lil'uokalani's *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen* is a political rejoinder to America's annexation of her homeland. She uses her people's proud past to help them continue to see themselves as the Hawaiian nation, not an American state. Isabel Allende in *Paula* is literally writing for her comatose daughter's life and, as the task becomes more futile, the text shifts more and more towards biographical tribute. The other two works studied, H.D.'s *The Gift* and Anna Banti's *Artemesia*, are partially about each author's struggles with fear and danger in the upheavals of World War II.

As Fuchs points out, these works were challenged as well as challenging. Weil was attacked by critics, Lil'uokalani was accused of not writing her book, and H.D. was originally published in a form so heavily edited that the subject of the war—and the bombing of her neighbourhood—was largely removed. Fuchs' theoretical strategy provides a coherent way of looking at these widely divergent texts. She invites us to see how, when these writers found their lives overturned, each drew on a more stable personal or cultural past to safeguard the self during the chaos of catastrophe.

Recent Canadian Shakespeares

Ric Knowles
Shakespeare and Canada: Essays on Production, Translation, and Adaptation. Peter Lang $22.95

Harold Rhenisch
Free Will. Ronsdale P $14.95

Leon Rooke
Shakespeare's Dog. Thomas Allen $22.95

Reviewed by Wes Folkerth

"There's much to be said for looting the past," Will Shakespeare says near the end of *Shakespeare's Dog*. Twenty years on, there is still much to be said for Rooke's own looting of the past in this work. One of the novel's

more remarkable features is the depth of the author's immersion in Elizabethan argot, especially the coarse, delightfully imaginative invective that springs from the protagonist's canine mind, as well as from the mouths of Will and Anne as they talk dirty to each other during sex in some of the book's funnier scenes. Rooke's narrative fills in the late adolescent blank in Shakespeare's biography from the perspective of his dog, Mr. Hooker. While the dog's name recalls that of influential Anglican bishop Richard Hooker, those versed in the language of the Elizabethan underworld will also recognize the contemporary name for thieves who used long hooks to steal sheets and laundry drying outside on hedges. Mr. Hooker is just such a thief, responsible for poaching a deer which forms part of the legend of his master's life, a theft that acts as the catalyst which eventually puts Shakespeare on the road to London and a life in the professional theatre. Although the meshing of historical incident and character is deftly carried out here, the book's greatest triumph is the portrait of its canine protagonist, Mr. Hooker, beside a complex weave of stream of consciousness, narrative flashback, wryly grotesque humour, and existential speculation worthy of Hamlet. Where the book begins to show its age after 20 years is in its treatment of Shakespeare's attitude toward Catholicism, since scholarly opinion on this has shifted significantly over the past decade.

In Harold Rhenisch's recent collection of poetry, Shakespeare's characters and the actors who portray them struggle against the will of a creator who has literally penned them in. As the title *Free Will* suggests, freedom is a central concern in this collection. A recurrent image is of monkeys who perform chaotic rewrites of Shakespeare's works, remaining free of them in a way Rhenisch cannot. He describes himself waking up "in the middle of the night, sweating, repeating lines from the play," trapped by the role he takes on as a kind of strange burden. The collection moves with admirable dexterity between the perspectives of actors, characters, and the roles both are destined to play and replay. The final poem, "Give Me Your Hands," returns to the dreams Rhenisch recounts as the impetus for the collection. A troupe of spirits materializes to replay an after-hours performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in an empty theatre. In the morning the human actors reappear and continue rehearsing their lines. The feeling of being haunted, of having a sympathy with these nocturnal spirits, becomes a fundamental condition of their activity. The poem closes with the actors uneasily "remembering that they are playing a part, / which the midnight actors are dying to forget." *Free Will* is a rich collection, one which promises to haunt its more careful readers in a similar fashion.

Ric Knowles' *Shakespeare and Canada* is animated by two related impulses. The first is to explore how Shakespeare "haunts different collectivities within Canada," and the second is to "(re)discover a productive place to stand for the Euro-Canadian critic, among other, equally important subject positions." Part One provides an institutional reading of the Stratford Festival, from its early history and development to a closer look at the Festival's 1993 season. Part Two turns to Shakespeare in Quebec; the first of these two chapters contains the book's strongest essay, which links contemporary translation theory and Martine Beaulne's 1995 direction of *La Mégère apprivoisée*. Part Three's two chapters critically canvas representations of Ophelia and Othello in an impressively wide range of productions from the Maritimes, Quebec, Ontario, and the Prairies. *Shakespeare and Canada* does not offer an overarching narrative, but rather a set of discrete narratives calculated to constitute a unity in their very diversity. And like Canada itself, it hangs together surprisingly well.

Stars and Songs

Charles Foster
Once Upon a Time in Paradise: Canadians in the Golden Age of Hollywood. Dundurn Group $35.00

Peter H. Riddle
The American Musical: History & Development. Mosaic $20.00

Reviewed by Monique Tschofen

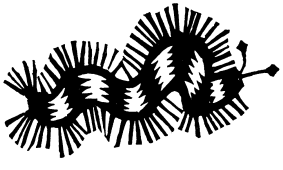
Charles Foster's *Once Upon a Time in Paradise* uncovers 14 stars from Hollywood's Golden Age who have Canadian origins, and the value of the book is chiefly anecdotal: as the title promises, there is much storytelling here. Foster's heavy reliance on what I presume is a combination of personal interviews, and quotations excised from film histories, journalism, and studio press releases, means that the history more often follows the exigencies of narrative than of scholarship. Fifi D'Orsay's reminiscences on the reasons for her standing ovations in vaudeville—her legs, which, she recalls "without any blushing, were very delectable"—is as charming as Ruby Keeler's comment that if she could write her life story it would only be about the 28 wonderful years she spent with her second husband is touching. While these details contribute to engaging character studies, they do not by themselves further an understanding of the tricky territory between citizenship, identity, and national culture in the realm of the cinema. Because Foster does not distinguish between private and public, or past and present conversations, nor between studio propaganda and his subjects' memories, the truth value of the vast information gathered remains ambiguous, which will limit this text's usefulness for future researchers.

Other texts such as Christopher Gittings' *Canadian National Cinema* have sought to interrogate rigorously the significance of nation in our national cinema. In Foster's *Once Upon A Time*, Canadianness is never problematized, never doubted; a Canadian origin suffices to warrant a star's inclusion in the volume. And while scholars such as Michael Dorland and Ted Magder reveal the importance of policies that shape the relation between these culture industries, Foster's work depicts a world in which decisions hinge on charismatic personalities rather than on institutions, economics, or ideologies. Still, Foster offers an enjoyable reminder that there is so much more to understand about Canada's relation to American mass culture.

Like Foster's, Riddle's book *The American Musical* is intended for a non-specialist audience, and like Foster's, Riddle's book takes many of the categories scholarly researchers seek to examine critically, such as "nation," for granted. The starting place is Riddle's observation that musical drama is inherently fantastic, but its content is often anything but trivial; musical theatre, Riddle argues, can tackle social issues at the same time as it promises to entertain. As he traces the major developments in the form, born from opera, operetta, vaudeville, burlesque, and the revue, Riddle is most interested in signalling breakthrough moments, such as when librettists sought to integrate song and story more closely, or when stage entertainment was elevated to the level of serious drama and social commentary. The book as a whole seems designed to convince readers to take this popular form seriously.

The American Musical offers biographical information about the composers, lyricists, and choreographers, outlines of the musicals' plots, and details on production runs. Far less discussion of the music, the lyrics, or the choreography appears than one would expect. More problematic still, in his attempts to frame social issues, Riddle misses opportunities to engage in contemporary debates about the politics of representation in the genre. His brief discussions of slavery, religious diversity, and sexism in America are simplistic, and he even hints that these

systems may have evolved because they were essential to "survival" in the colonies. Slightly more subtle is his discussion of such musicals as *Showboat, The King and I*, *Flower Drum Song*, *South Pacific,* and *Sound of Music*. Riddle establishes that they emerged from a social backdrop where racism and anti-Semitism were realities, and then argues that, by bringing attention to these issues, musicals about cultural difference make "powerful and effective statements against prejudice in America." Perhaps they did at one time. But Riddle does not inquire into what happens when American musicals are exported into other national cultures or into the nature of their influence when they are still performed decades later before audiences with new sensibilities. It seems to me that a diachronic perspective is warranted, since, as the musical travels across geographical distances and through time, its ideological work and investments in the social become not only more visible but more contentious. Many Canadians will no doubt remember the calls for boycotts in 1994 of the Toronto productions of *Showboat* and *Miss Saigon* instigated by writers such as M. Nourbese Philip and Richard Fung on the grounds that they perpetuated anachronistic and racist stereotypes. More recently, Canadian productions of American musicals have met fierce challenges on economic grounds by the Canadian Actors Equity Union. In making the case for the musical's seriousness, Riddle might have done more to address its formal elements—lyrics, music, and choreography—as well as its ideological work within and beyond the nation.



Travelling Solo

Katherine Govier, ed.
Solo: Writers on Pilgrimage.
McClelland and Stewart $39.95

Mark Anthony Jarman
Ireland's Eye. Anansi $32.95

Reviewed by Suha Kudsieh

In *Ireland's Eye,* Mark Jarman narrates an interesting story about Ireland and family that challenges the reader's traditional perception about both. Jarman, a Canadian writer with Irish roots, visited Ireland in 1981; 20 years later, he visits it again. His recollections oscillate between first and second visits, which sometimes clash and sometimes complement each other.

In 1922, near Macroom in County Cork, Michael Collins, the Commander-in-Chief of the Irish Free State Army (IRA), was shot dead. On that same day, Michael Lyons, Jarman's maternal grandfather, drowned in Dublin's Royal Canal. Jarman tries to find out if his grandfather was murdered during the Irish Civil War. The grandfather worked for the Guinness factory, which had links to the English. The two deaths parallel each other on many levels: Collins is well known in Irish history, the grandfather is not, and the names of "who dunnit" in both cases remain elusive.

Chasing truth, that is to say Irish truth, proves to be a challenge. Orality contrasts with archival accuracy as Jarman peruses different archives and listens to his relatives telling him stories. While some readers might not be satisfied with Jarman's findings, *Ireland's Eye* illustrates the difficulty of struggling for definite answers in a country torn by ethnic violence.

In addition, the book dwells on Ireland's changing society. Racism is on the rise, as well as crime, drugs, and violence. Globalization is changing Ireland as well: it is flooded by different brands; pseudo-Irish pubs are marketed to tourists, and Guinness

is becoming a well-known brand. One of Jarman's cousins dies of AIDS; Jarman's mother suffers from Alzheimer's dementia; another cousin, a cop, gives Jarman an insider's perspective on the social malaise plaguing Ireland. *Ireland's Eye* is reminiscent of Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* but without Ondaatje's lyricism. Instead, the reader is introduced to a different type of travel, a different personal and national history, and a different quest.

Likewise, Katherine Govier's second travel anthology introduces another quest for home and for self. *Solo* focuses on the theme of solitary pilgrimages, which are defined as "a basic human form of expression." In this sense, the anthology is not about traditional pilgrimages and travelling through distant strange lands; instead, as Govier puts it, the "biggest surprise when the stories came in was that by far the most popular destination was home." Consequently, the anthology encompasses different and non-typical "solo" experiences. The reader accompanies Margaret Atwood as she explores the doomed Franklin Expedition; Nuruddin Farah, the well-known African novelist, as he returns to Somalia and observes the effect of civil war on his native country; Kate Grenville as she travels to the Australian bush to visit the house of her ancestor where she confronts the pre-colonial past of her family; Wendy Law-Yone as she traces the old road that brought her Chinese and British ancestors to Burma; Michael Collins, originally from Ireland, as he describes the challenges and dangers of a foot race high in the Himalayas, contrasting the vastness of the mountains with his small, dimly lit office at Microsoft in Seattle; Roddy Doyle, from Ireland, as he recounts the ups and downs of his favourite soccer team in the 1990 World Cup; Vijay Nambisan, originally from India, as he narrates his own experience during a Hindu festival; Douglas Coupland as he plays solitaire on an airplane; Ivan Klíma, from the Czech Republic, as he visits Terezin, the concentration camp where he was interned as a young boy; Katherine Govier as she travels to Japan and visits the grave of Miyamoto Musashi, the Japanese sword master who lived in the sixteenth century; Joy Kogawa, the Japanese Canadian writer, as she returns to her childhood house in Vancouver; and Mark Kurlansky, from the US, as he spends a week in a medieval monastery.

Mixed Pleasures

Barry Callaghan, ed.
Morley Callaghan: The Complete Stories. 4 Volumes. Exile Editions $29.95 EACH

Reviewed by Gary Boire

Reading through these four volumes of Morley Callaghan's short stories is a mixed pleasure. On one hand this publishing enterprise is a touching, self-reflexive tribute—an homage—from son to father, from contemporary writers to an influential forebear. Once again Barry Callaghan has used his Exile Press to republish long out-of-print works by his father; Barry's drawings of the Callaghan home in 1948 grace the cover of each volume; in addition, there are gentle, anecdotal introductions to each volume, respectively, by Alistair MacLeod, André Alexis, Anne Michaels, and Margaret Atwood. Mimicking both Callaghans' own (self-perpetuated) reputations as literary anarchists disconnected from the conservative literary canon, the collection neither presents the stories chronologically nor groups them thematically, but includes them randomly throughout the four books. The dubious argument for this decision is that Morley "liked to think that a great story stood for what it was, in and of itself, whether he had written it when he was twenty-two or forty-five." This deliberate randomness continues throughout the Editor's Endnotes, which seem to have no unifying principle:

in one volume they reprint an Introduction from 1985's *Lost and Found Stories of Morley Callaghan*, reproduce in another volume some rare historical photographs, and, in yet another volume, provide—without detailed explanation—a snippet of an early unpublished story.

But then there are the stories themselves. Small, pristine treasures abound: "A Sick Call," "Ancient Lineage," "A Regret for Youth," "A Predicament," "Two Fishermen." They're all here: a litany of 85 brilliant little stories that date back to the mid 1920s. Reading through these oversized books with an oversized, vaguely archaic font is superbly nostalgic. As a bonus, Barry Callaghan includes such rarely printed stories as "An Autumn Penitent," "In His Own Country," and, most pleasing of all, the short story/novella, "The Man With the Coat." As a Callaghan potpourri, *The Complete Stories* is a pleasing anthology for the general reader.

But this compendium is not for everyone, especially *not* for a scholarly audience. The decision to present the stories in a non-chronological order seems quixotic at best and is one of many decisions that renders the collection useless for scholarly research. A singular lack of scholarly apparatus in these volumes—no information about provenance, revision or reprinting histories for any of the stories—diminishes rather than enhances the elder Callaghan's true importance as an artist of exceptional talent and devoted perseverance. The absence of any explicitly stated editorial principles likewise does a profound disservice to Morley Callaghan, who *still* has not received the serious, sober editorial attention he deserves. As a result of this nonchalance, the collection is neither complete, accurate, nor especially helpful to those scholars who wish to explore the complexity and intellectual richness of the Callaghan canon.

For example: Barry Callaghan includes "The Man With the Coat" from 1955, yet admits that it is really a novella (which *Exile* already reprinted in 1987). The inclusion is nonetheless welcome because the novella became the core of the long novel, *The Many Colored Coat,* whose ending Callaghan radically revised in 1960. The inclusion, in short, is a gift to scholars and researchers interested in the elder Callaghan's compulsive rewriting of his earlier works. Yet mysteriously the younger Callaghan excludes the long stories/novellas, "The Meterman, Caliban, and Then Mr. Jones" and "From *The Stepping Stone*" (both published, ironically, in Barry's *Exile* magazine in 1973 and 1979 respectively). These exclusions are particularly vexing since both are apparent re-visitations by Morley Callaghan to his 1931 short novel, *No Man's Meat*—a book he returned to repeatedly in his later years whilst writing and re-writing *The Enchanted Pimp* and *Our Lady of the Snows*.

These silent editorial exclusions distort or occlude the rewriting activities that characterize Callaghan's entire career, but especially his later years. It is, therefore, doubly unfortunate that *The Complete Stories* excludes approximately 17 stories listed by Judith Kendle in her 1984 annotated bibliography of Morley Callaghan. Admittedly some of Kendle's inclusions are debatable—some are merely fragments, some are early versions of later sections of novels like *A Fine and Private Place*, and some are quasi-fictional semi-journalistic reports. But precisely because of their amorphous nature these earlier writings are of tremendous interest to Callaghan scholars. At the very least, an editorial explanation as to *why* these items (but not others) were excluded would be helpful and possibly illuminating.

There is also, finally, the curious decision not to address the cluster of seven stories which the young Morley sent to Ernest Hemingway in Paris in the early 1920s. The event is painfully familiar to readers of *That Summer in Paris*: the young Callaghan wrote semi-regularly to Hemingway, who had left

Toronto for the City of Light. In the correspondence, Morley included at least seven stories for Hemingway to circulate amongst the little magazines. The seven included "A Girl With Ambition," "Amuck in the Bush," and "Last Spring They Came Over," which Callaghan eventually did publish largely *without* Hemingway's help. But four of the seven stories remain unpublished to this day and are currently housed, ironically, in the Hemingway papers of The John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library in Boston. Why did the editor choose to exclude "Along with Youth," "I Should Have Been a Preacher," "On the Way Home," and "Things"? What editorial principles were used? What *drove* the decision to remain silent on the existence of these stories? Are they to be published in yet another Exile edition of the elder Callaghan by the younger Callaghan? The answers to these questions are especially important because these stories—as rough and as unpolished as they are—illustrate brilliantly the experimentation the young Callaghan was involved in, experimentation which show him to be quite independent of his American compeers and to have excitingly embarked on a path of creative innovation. In short, this editorial decision to pass over the stories in *The Complete Stories* unfortunately ignores the opportunity to provide readers with a fuller "complete" picture of the elder Callaghan.

The Complete Stories is an important publication. Having most of Callaghan's early short works in one place is, for general readers, a very good thing. But the casualness of the publication directly underlines a significant need in Callaghan (and Canadian) scholarship in general: the simple need to return to serious editorial practice and sound bibliographical principles. Such a return would ensure the preservation of crucial filaments in our literary history and would accord our major authors—like Morley Callaghan—the *complete* scholarly respect they deserve.

Full-length yet Partial

D'Arcy Jenish

Epic Wanderer: David Thompson and the Mapping of the Canadian West.
Doubleday Canada $37.95

Reviewed by I.S. MacLaren

Readers who know the chief details of the life and work of fur trader, surveyor, and cartographer David Thompson (1770-1857) will find very familiar the portrait drawn by *Epic Wanderer* even though it is the first full-length biography about what J.B. Tyrrell called "the greatest land geographer the world has produced." Still, *Epic Wanderer* is a very well-written volume which features a wealth of information about Thompson's 45 years of life after his retirement from the fur trade in 1812. Appearing in time for the bicentennial celebrations being planned in Canada and the western United States in 2007, it is especially welcome, but it will not supplant what remains the best book about the man, *Sources of the River* (1994), Jack Nisbet's account of Thompson's career on the Pacific Slope. Whereas Nisbet tried to understand Thompson, Jenish contents himself with placing him on view.

Jenish does however provide good context for Thompson's achievements. He explains the Piegan blockade of 1810 well before siding with those who speculate that Thompson's response to it was prudent, not craven. John Jacob Astor's fur trade enterprise is also well set out. The treatment of the War of 1812 brings Thompson's wartime activities into engaging focus. An accurate recapitulation of the dispute that was settled by the Oregon Treaty of 1846 clarifies Thompson's keen interest in having his maps play a diplomatic role in the pressing of Britain's lamely fought claim for a more southerly international border than the forty-ninth parallel.

The Afterword, however, makes an exaggerated claim for the cartographer: that

his famous map of 1814 bore the title "the North-West Territory of the Province of Canada" suggests to Jenish that Thompson was far ahead of his time in envisioning a transcontinental dominion. The possibility must be allowed, but it must also be remembered that Thompson created his map for his partners in the North West Company, trading out of Canada, not, as its rival was doing, out of Hudson Bay. The map, which included the location of the company's posts, showed the partners the vast domain that they controlled or for which they were successfully competing in that year; its title aptly describes the vast extent of the business, as impressive as Napoleon's military reach had been in the same epoch.

Jenish claims to be the first to capture the drama of Thompson's full story. True, he *does* cover the entire life, but three years before his work appeared in hardcover, *Canada: A People's History* (2000) dramatically rehearsed (in both television series and book form) the exploration of the northwestern half of the continent by framing it around Thompson's career and family.

Regrettably, *Epic Wanderer* is mistitled; Thompson seldom wandered anywhere, and his penchant for surveying left him far more knowledgeable of his whereabouts than most wilderness travellers. Other regrettable aspects of this book are the wretched reproductions of Thompson's maps—they are so small as to be risible—and the misplacement of some of the later reproductions of pages from his journals (one on page 220 refers to text that appears 32 pages later).

By emphasizing deeds, Jenish leaves his reader still to wonder about aspects of Thompson's life that continue to cry out for consideration. What role did his allegedly deep Christian faith play in his life apart from prompting him to observe the Sabbath? Did he choose to travel the West with his family because of his faith? Did his faith induce him to be Glengarry's banker later in life, such a soft touch for loans that he did himself in financially? Did his penchant for careful detail present an obstacle when he decided to compose a narrative of his career, such that he managed only to amass a welter of material with no overall structure to it? Was he a misfit, a loner who, because he "cared nothing for society," was incapable of promoting his interests? Did his curiosity, so important a quality for his explorations and even his later career as a government surveyor, render him a poor provider for his wife and thirteen children? What challenges did the rearing and maintenance of a mixed-blood family in nineteenth-century eastern Canada present, and was Thompson up to them? Bent on expanding on the familiar picture of a figure who deserved fame but encountered only misfortune, bankruptcy, and subsequent neglect, *Epic Wanderer* leaves these questions unaddressed. A full portrait of the man remains still to be written.

Cape Breton and Beyond

Claudia Casper
The Continuation of Love by Other Means.
Penguin Canada $34.00

D.R. MacDonald
All the Men are Sleeping: Selected Fiction.
Doubleday Canada $34.95

Reviewed by Gordon Bölling

The short stories gathered in *All the Men are Sleeping* display the broad range of D.R. MacDonald's gifts as a writer of prose fiction. The collection includes new work as well as several stories which were previously published in *Eyestone* (1988), MacDonald's first volume of short stories. Set for the most part on Cape Breton Island, these well-crafted stories repeatedly revolve around questions of loss and memory. In the opening story, "The Flowers of Bermuda," Bilkie Sutherland, a fisherman of Scottish descent, tries to come to terms

with the death of his young son and the murder of his friend, the Reverend Gordon MacLean. After his son's death in an accident, Bilkie had taken comfort from Gordon's words. Now, he loses him as well. It is D.R. MacDonald's great strength in this and in several other stories to convincingly evoke the disorientation of his varied characters. In some cases his protagonists undergo a development and reach a new understanding of their situation. However, the conflicts are rarely resolved. In such stories as "Vikings," "Eyestone," and "Of One Kind," MacDonald focuses on the brief encounter between very different personalities and the power struggles that ensue. In "Sailing," a son is looking at the life of his elderly father for guidance: "Put my father on a dark and empty sea and still he will not be lost. I think he has never been lost. I must memorize the constellations, learn to guide myself through these winter nights." The precise and tightly structured storytelling combines a concern with the intricacies of human relationships with a memorable portrait of Cape Breton Island. D.R. MacDonald's short stories are examples of regionalism in the best sense of the term. But like the fiction of such writers as Alistair MacLeod and David Adams Richards, MacDonald's stories transcend the regional and attain a much wider significance.

Whereas D.R. MacDonald's short stories are informed by a strong regional focus, Claudia Casper's *The Continuation of Love by Other Means* lacks a singular sense of place. Instead, in her second novel, Casper takes her readers to such diverse countries as Germany, Canada, England, Romania, Argentina, and Brazil. The novel chronicles the life stories of Alfred and his daughter Carmen, from Alfred's youth in Nazi Germany to Carmen's death as a 75-year-old woman in a car accident in Vancouver. Similar to Carol Shields in *The Stone Diaries*, Casper refrains from presenting a continuous narrative and instead only cuts into the lives of her two protagonists at specific intervals. Alfred's entire life is overshadowed by the sudden disappearance of his mother during the time of the Nazi regime and by the traumatic experience of helplessly witnessing the rape of his great-aunts by Russian soldiers. In contrast, Carmen suffers from the absence of her father, who all but disappears from her life after the marriage of her parents unravels. Carmen and Alfred only see each other on annual visits as his career as a mining engineer takes Alfred to ever new locations around the globe. While Alfred is working in Argentina, the numerous conflicts between Carmen and her father culminate in their contrary views on the Dirty War. Whereas Alfred condones human rights violations and even the murder of dissidents, Carmen gradually abandons her indifferent position and finally takes a more active stand against these atrocities.

Claudia Casper shows great skill in capturing the nuances of this complex and at times painful relationship between daughter and father. However, what mars her otherwise impressive novel is the strong need Casper apparently feels to spell things out for her readers. In several instances, a less detailed narrative might have been more effective than the minute commentary offered by Casper's narrator. A good example is a scene in which Alfred's car is stopped by heavily armed men at a roadblock in Buenos Aires. In order to appease his questioner, Alfred mentions that his great-grandfather as well as his father were also soldiers. Casper follows this brief exchange with a short paragraph in which she explains her protagonist's strategy in dealing with the precarious situation: "Alfred, by suggesting they shared the same roots, was trying to communicate submissiveness." A little bit more faith in the skills of the readers of *The Continuation of Love by Other Means* would surely be justified.

Between Exposures

Mark Frutkin, et al.
Cinquefoil: New Work from Five Ottawa Poets. Mosaic P $15.00

Catherine Hunter, ed.
Exposed. The Muses' Company $9.95

Sheri-D Wilson
Between Lovers. Arsenal Pulp P $15.95

Reviewed by Travis V. Mason

The first line I responded to in Sheri-D Wilson's *Between Lovers* is an instruction at the bottom of the acknowledgements page: "These poems are to be read aloud." So, I invited some friends over for a reading. I wanted some help *hearing* the poems in order to comment on the work they do off the page. The results, perhaps not surprisingly, were uneven. Just as the *overall* tone shifts from politically earnest responses to human rights violations in South Africa ("Face of Freedom") to a critique of media hypocrisy and censorship ("A Brief History of My Cunt"), so the oral accessibility of the individual poems changes throughout.

Some of these pieces contain elements of great sound poetry (and the most successful of these is, ironically, found in the least aural, the least playful of the sections):

> your names resurrection blows a slow
> swinging song
> a susurration South African –
> a susurration
> a susurration – South African –
> a susurration
> on and on and –
> ("The Indian Ocean Said Your Name")

Still, without benefit of rehearsing, many of these poems seem too long to sustain the rhythmic coherence Wilson herself must surely feel. And therein lies the strength of individual poems and the weakness of the collection: "These poems are to be read aloud"—by Sheri-D Wilson.

No such caveat prefaces *Exposed*, a collection edited by Catherine Hunter. The five poets whose work Hunter collects here, while searching for some degree of clarity through precise renderings of the observable world, are well aware of the ambiguities and complications such clarity and precision threaten. Chandra Mayor—whose edgy lyrics on the painful life of a cutter open the collection—makes this awareness into a thesis statement for the anthology:

> The precision of our
> sentences stings like sleet, and the clarity
> of our vision
> strips the world, encircled in our arms.
> ("Sweet Mouthful")

Other strong poems are on offer from Alison Calder and Sharanpal Ruprai. Calder hasn't published much poetry in the past few years, so it is not surprising (yet still a bit disappointing) to see two poems from *Breathing Fire: Canada's New Poets* (1995) mixed with more recent work. Her attention to the specific (a landslide, a wolf tree, a stone) does not detract from her account of a world in flux where "[t]he sun is out / and I am shivering. The wind pushes / and nothing moves" ("Tie Me to the Place"). Ruprai is a poet to watch for in the future; her voice is sure, balancing perilously on some unspoken line between the richness of cultural hybridity and cliché.

The title of *Cinquefoil: New Work from Five Ottawa Poets* refers to a family of plants with five petals or leaves. While the metaphor does not quite fit this decidedly unbotanical collection (if it does, it is in a trite manner, comparing poems to flowers and poets to an extended family), its incongruousness is perhaps fitting. The "unifying principle" behind the collection is that the poets "all live in Ottawa," and yet apparently "this fact has no bearing on the discussion." That is not to say I expect all of these poets to write about Ottawa simply because the book's cover locates them there. I do, however, expect Ottawa to modify "the discus-

sion" as much as it modifies "poets" in the collection's subtitle. I am still looking for the poet's keen narrowness of attention enabling one to move beyond words on the page and enter into a discussion upon which even the minutest details have a bearing.

Having said that, I remain impressed that the two experienced poets (Mark Frutkin and Seymour Mayne) do not overshadow the relative newcomers. Such balance stems, I think, from the group that gathered, according to the "Preface," beginning in the winter of 1997 to "talk poetry." Fortunately for the individual poets, then, the responsibility for awkward lines, as much as for a metaphor's success, in any given poem falls to the group as a whole.

Poetic Journeys

Chris Banks
Bonfires. Nightwood $14.95

Cornelia Hoogland
Cuba Journal. Black Moss $17.95

W.H. New
Night Room. Oolichan $15.95

Lisa Pasold
Weave. Frontenac House $15.95

Reviewed by Sonnet L'Abbé

W.H. New invites us in his latest collection to visit the psychological darkness of *Night Room,* the dwelling place of a lonely protagonist who calls himself Snowman. New's Snowman is disguised as human: "do not believe the skin: / its shudders, hot rises, hair - / rippling prickled lurches / all lies . . . touch the skin: it closes / over ice."

This is a vision that cannot or will not turn inward to know itself, but that searches for a reliable mirror that will reflect a wholeness back to his hunger for validation. Speaking of the third person, Snowman says: "count the paces separating / you and him: it's not far … another *you* sits with / begging bowl and mirror, . . . confounded by middleground and dancing." The waltz of interaction, the shared presence of intimacy, eludes this character.

The poetic urge fed through the Snowman character is to catalogue, to provide detail in lists, and to break off again and again from the complete sentence, and hardly ever to risk the definitive statement. New graces him occasionally with startling lyric moments—a veteran is "a stalker out of the inkwells of red adventure"—but Snowman never has confidence enough to let loose with this more personal approach, and so his subjects are always only touched with language, never caressed.

The Prague-born protagonist of Lisa Pasold's *Weave* tells of a childhood of modest privilege, based uneasily on the profitability of war to the garment industry. For her, thread "spread a sort of web across the / continent, it made roads / out of the map of the world . . . the factory's machinery . . . held what I knew of the world together." Her story is at once individual journey, sibling relationship, and collective longing:

> The third character is not a person at all.
> It is a place, the absence of such.
> The third character in the story is the one
> we were both searching for.

Homelessness forces this voice to question where to locate the common ground of belonging for herself, her brother, and her husband. Ultimately identity is woven in strands of narrated memory. Though at the level of reading experience and evocation of mood, it is not without effect, "Weave" is not as tight as it could be. These often blurry poems only truly work when read in sequence, and lack the formal rigour of individuated poems that demand a word-by-word attention.

Cornelia Hoogland's *Cuba Journal* blends genres of poetry, prose, and personal diary in a chronicle of one woman's brief time as a tourist in Cuba, where she gains a visceral

understanding of the intangible borders between cultures and languages. Two events are catalysts for her musing: first, a misreading of "no writing" as a sign that in fact says "no hunting." This misreading prompts her self-reflection:

> I haven't been persecuted for what
> I write, but I'm
> female and therefore part of the
> population that inserts
> itself into a language that has been
> dominated by the
> powerful few, the privileged, the
> patriarchy.

The second event is her falling into the ocean and feeling herself held up. Gradually Hoogland lets this experience influence her reconsideration of the "turbulent vastness of language." Self-consciousness about language is the topic of deliberation and the argued point here, rather than an authorial motivation to reclaim or reinvent a new language mechanics. Hoogland's dramatization of the feminist impulse to strategize her resistance seems at first a familiar, often explored emotional journey. But these experiences open into a whole new level of signification when she realizes her tour guide has been capitalizing on (prostituting?) his family's history and hospitality. Her situation as a woman inside androcentric language becomes an allegory for the position of Cuba in the sea of world politics.

Chris Banks offers a striking debut with his first collection, *Bonfires.* His poems resonate with a "pure" intention to capture a moment, and to find the elusive link between experience and its attendant cluster of emotions.

Against the backdrop of Southern Ontario are set Banks' concise explorations of meaning, navigations of memory, and rallies against loneliness. Each near-miss at capturing the truth of pain's presence, at getting down "what it is trying to say / and how it is probably right" resonates with the conflicting bravery and loss of confrontation. Over the course of the collection the voice reconstitutes itself, and consequently its reader, as its own companion. The poems are bare with self-honesty, and smolder with stock-taking.

This is a lyric voice honed from real speech and developed by a keen ear for cadence. It has the quiet assuredness of the best lyric poets and yet is for the most part free of the practiced rhythm that inhabits and anesthetizes so much contemporary work: rather than putting voice in the service of intellectualized argument, here emotion sings, and uses craft to modulate the pace and decibel level.

Queer Books

Angela Cozea
L'énigme thérapeutique au coeur de la philosophie. XYZ $16.00

Anne-Marie Gronhovd
Du côté de la sexualité: Proust, Yourcenar, Tournier. XYZ $18.00

Reviewed by Ralph Sarkonak

Anne-Marie Gronhovd's book is of a rather rare breed: a study of sexuality in the French novel based on queer theory. Queer studies are beginning to make inroads in France: for example, a 2003 issue of the journal *Rue Descartes*, published by the prestigious Presses universitaires de France, was entitled "*Queer": repenser les identités*. Gronhovd's 2004 book does not take into account this special issue; instead she makes extensive and happy use of those strange but not so uncommon bedfellows, Foucault and feminist theory, with some gay theory thrown in for good measure. Twenty years after his death in 1984, Foucault continues to inform and inspire students of literature, an influence which is likely to continue as more of his lectures at the Collège de France become available in print form. (Unlike Roland Barthes', they are not yet available on CDs.) The other theorists whose names occur

most frequently here are Judith Butler, Didier Eribon, Teresa de Laurentis, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, but also Gilles Deleuze and Georges Bataille.

The first chapter of Gronhovd's study justifies her corpus and sets out her research goals in good thesis form. She does not critique Foucault but gives a succinct review of his principal ideas, such as the construction of homosexuality, state apparatuses, and the appropriation of the libido for study, regulation, and exploitation. The following two chapters are devoted to Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, and one each to Marguerite Yourcenar's long short story-cum-novel *Un homme obscur* and Michel Tournier's carnivalesque novel, *Les météores*. In each case the critic has chosen to focus her analysis on one male character, Saint-Loup (Proust), Nathanaël (Yourcenar), and Alexandre Surin (Tournier), who represent respectively a closeted bisexual, a straight man who has had homosexual experiences, and a out and out gay man who abhors all things heterosexual, with which he associates Nazism. Just as much as theory, Proust's novel and the sexual adventures of this troubled marquis inform the analysis of the other two queer characters for that is what, according to Gronhovd, all three have in common: queerness. Gronhovd is to be congratulated for concentrating on Robert de Saint-Loup en Bray rather than the critically ubiquitious Baron de Charlus.

Saint-Loup's transcendence, his narcissism, and the various activities he gets up to in Proust's sexual hall of mirrors, including a visit to Jupien's male brothel but also the many mistresses with whom he deceives the long-suffering daughter of Swann—all are delineated and deconstructed by the critic but it is difficult to get a grip on sexuality in Proust's characters, and this analysis remains partial at best. For example, Swann is not quite as straight as an arrow, at least according to Charlus, a bitchy queen who, like the narrator, tends to see sexual "deviance" everywhere. While it is technically true to characterize Saint-Loup as "l'inverti amoureux de virilité," in the last volume of the novel, *Le temps retrouvé*—familiar to many nonreaders on account of Raul Ruiz's 1999 film adaptation—the Marquis' virile militarism throws into question the Judeo-Christian model of the earlier *Sodome et Gomorrhe,* where inverts are constructed as sexual outcasts, descendants of a "race" of misfits who have been wandering around since the damnation of the Cities of the Plain. The effeminate *tante* (queen, nelly, or what you will) gives way in Saint-Loup's final metamorphosis to a gay warrior more reminiscent of Alexander or Frederick, both called "the Great," and other queer military heroes. The lives of shame of Proust's *tantes* are transcended, at least in part, when Saint-Loup almost espouses the Greek model. An informed reader does think of the Sacred Band of Theban lovers, although the Marquis cannot come out, much less act out his love for the men serving under him. Gronhovd's analysis becomes truly exciting as she traces the final evolution of Saint-Loup after he loses his Croix de Guerre in a brothel that leads to his own *chemin de la croix* (one that for Proust was representative of a collective sacrifice). The Albertine parallel could have been developed, and I am surprised that more use was not made of Sedgwick's magisterial *Epistemology of the Closet* rather than Eribon. The former is an innovative thinker, the grande dame of queer studies, whereas the latter's work is somewhat derivative, although it has certainly been useful in vulgarizing North Amercian theory in France.

Un homme obscur may seem a strange choice, since the sexual activities of Nathanaël are almost incidental to the life journey of this harmless "idiot." True, an entirely happy coupling with a Métis cook, both his master and his benefactor but also his racial inferior, on a seventeenth-century ship headed for the Caribbean does add

a nice twist to the sexual figures at play here. (I use the word *figures* in a quasi-narratological sense.) Nathanaël lives equally queer adventures in entirely non-sexual purviews as he frequents sailors and intellectuals, proofreaders and religious fanatics, not to mention his Jewish wife. Here one remembers the Jewish subtext of Saint-Loup's own *parcours*, for one of his greatest loves was Rachel Quand Du Seigneur, a sometime prostitute who prefigures his even greater passion for the musician Morel, who looks like Rachel in male drag. And in Tournier too there is a Jewish subtext, for Alexandre draws our attention to the parallel between Nazi oppression and extermination of European Jews and what happened to gays and other social misfits in Germany. Strangely, Gronhovd does not mention any of this, although one can think of much interesting work that could be done on Jewishness in literature as a form of narrative queerness.

But the main point is made very clear: Nathanaël escapes all reductive meaning just as he escapes social belonging and sexual identity. Perhaps I am too old-fashioned, but it is difficult not to read him as a stand-in for Yourcenar herself: her character spends parts of his life on islands; he works with books; avoids Catholic France like the plague; he is as accepting of his own frailties (he is partly crippled, lives with and then dies from tuberculosis) as he is tolerant of others' differences, including his unfaithful wife, who like Proust's Rachel, turns out to be a prostitute. The intertextual, not to mention the ideological, dimensions could speak volumes—Gide is an "absent" presence here too—but Gronhovd's methodological rigour becomes a critical weakness, for these equally significant forms of queerness are not touched upon.

The chapter on *Les météores* is the least satisfactory, although it deals with the only gay male in this group of literary queers. Alexandre, who describes himself as "empereur de la gadoue," (an expression that will give birth to a (Hervé) Guibertian intertext) is an egotistical, manic-driven capitalist prone to violence and power trips. He (almost) takes up too much of the narrative space, which may be why Tournier kills off this strange character, one of his best, three quarters of the way through the novel. (It does not recover from this loss despite a description of Stanley Park in Vancouver.) The critic concentrates on rather banal passages such as one where an employee of a muncipal bathhouse moons the clients, whereas there could be no better defence and illustration of queerness than chapter nine, "Le poil et la plume." Alexandre comes upon his beloved Daniel, who is as weak as the other man is supposedly strong, just after the younger man has been attacked by thousands of rats in the Marseilles garbage dump during a Mistral wind storm. The text is at once disgusting and poignant. After the rats tear apart and feast on Daniel's genitals, they in turn are attacked and killed by their only enemies, seagulls hungry for fresh flesh. Alexandre is reduced to a hapless and helpless witness. This death of queer love in an urban ass/ash hole occurs the day before the French general mobilization in World War II, but the allegorical dimensions remain unsounded by Gronhvod. Nevertheless, Nazi concentration camps, explicitly mentioned by Tournier, form the necessary subtext that must inform any serious reading of the novel.

In the final analysis, death, whether on the Moroccan docks (Alexandre dies as a result of gay bashing), an island in the North Sea (Nathanaël), or the mud of Flanders (Saint-Loup), is the ultimate queer "character," the final but nonsaving grace as portrayed by these authors writing so close to that peculiar set of attributes we call humanity. Queerness has, I believe, something—but not everything—to do with sexuality. But then, *on est toujours le queer de quelqu'un,* as Gronhovd points out.

Angela Cozea's essay is a work in progress that will no doubt eventually lead to a book,

but this was neither the occasion nor the right forum, for her ideas and scholarship are still incomplete, and she would have been better advised to delay publication. Her heterogeneous, even odd corpus consists of Montaigne, a film by Zacharias Kunuk, Kant, and Proust. If Gronhovd's easy-to-follow prose still has some trappings of a dissertation, Cozea's reads as a series of arbitrary lateral associations, more idiosyncratic than useful, written in rather infelicitous French.

The pages devoted to Proust should be read with caution. This critic confuses the narrator with the author; there are some problems with quotations (the copy-editing is sloppy); no critics are cited; and—most damning of all—Proust's humour remains undetected. The comic scene, discussed at some length, is a description of alcohol-induced euphoria in Marcel as he dines out with Saint-Loup. Proust is being deadly serious at the same time, of course. In a novel entitled *In Search of Lost Time*, there can be no better example of wasted time than hours spent eating and drinking even and especially with a friend—as opposed to a lover of whatever gender. Marcel's perceptions of time and space are so distorted that he forgets all about his grandmother (a really bad sign in Proustian terms) and inevitably delays his writerly vocation that he is preparing himself for, paradoxically, by living it up with his favourite (and as we now know, queer) aristocrat. The enigma here is as therapeutic as Cozea's title claims, but all of this needs to made much clearer to the reader, especially the dual point of view of Marcel *qua* silly ass and wiser narrator.

Unfortunately, Proust's great novel is no guarantee of the quality of the literary research in which it finds itself in these days of theoretical inflation. Inevitably, the reader is drawn back to the vibrantly queer books that make up the corpora of these two critical studies.

Cultural Angst and Diasporic Echoes

Amita Handa
Of Silk Saris and Mini-Skirts: South Asian Girls Walk the Tightrope of Culture. Women's P $24.95

Reviewed by Satwinder K. Bains

Writer and sociologist Amita Handa strides skillfully into the lives of 14 young South Asian Canadian women in her book *Of Silk Saris and Mini-Skirts*. In her interviews with the women she seeks to uncover the particular cultural angst of their dichotomous lives in Toronto. Their candid, poignant, and often confused revelations expose the cultural binaries that haunt and define their experiences.

Handa uses her own experiences as a South Asian immigrant to highlight the almost natural state of identity suspension that happens to immigrants. She uncovers how, unable to be content with being South Asians, teenage girls constantly test cultural boundaries to see how far cultural expectations can be pushed. In their stories one hears the struggle of young people everywhere for acceptance and social relevance while searching for the self; except that these experiences come with the added weight of the pressures for preservation of the "home" culture in daily living.

The South Asian community in Canada has a vibrant and evocative hundred year history. It is a testimony to the community's resilience that the culture is still a force to be reckoned with for South Asian girls. While it would appear that they want to make Canadian lives, they also realize that they are inextricably tied to their roots through their music, clothes, gender, and languages. Handa's research uncovers the continuing struggle for identity within and outside the cultural domains of roles, traditions, values and judgments. These domains are sometimes self-imposed and sometimes

externally developed in response to both Canadian and Indian interactions.

The book carefully exposes the continuing divide between South Asian children and their parents. Partly fuelled by the vigorous attempts of parents to maintain cultural rules and behaviours, the young women rebel against these constraints. An evaluation of how identity formation for young immigrant children bears the brunt of this conflict is reflected in the interviews and Handa's analysis. There are many occurrences of young women leaving home and running away from the ties that bind them to their cultural norms. The parents' struggle to provide guidance sometimes is exacerbated by their own incapacity to find meaningful Canadian identities within their nostalgia.

It is evident that young women are growing up facing many struggles in their daily Canadian lives and in living within their South Asian identities. These struggles will fade with time, but for now *Of Silk Saris and Mini-Skirts* exposes the conflict between what they have and what they aspire to.

Surfaces and Secrets

Alice Munro
Runaway. McClelland and Stewart $34.99

Carol Shields
The Collected Stories. Random House Canada $39.95

Reviewed by Coral Ann Howells

The appearance of these two books in 2004 is a double cause for celebration. Alice Munro's latest short story collection, *Runaway,* has won the Giller Prize, and Carol Shields' *Collected Stories,* published on the first anniversary of her death, is a testament to her achievements in the genre. It includes the 55 stories in her three collections: *Various Miracles, The Orange Fish,* and *Dressing Up for the Carnival,* plus the previously unpublished story "Segue." Between them, Munro and Shields have been largely responsible for reinventing the shape of the English-Canadian short story, with Munro leading the way.

Runaway displays Munro's characteristically unsettling mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar, always contained within a realistic framework which is progressively undermined by shifting perspectives across wide stretches of time and by moments of sheer strangeness which defy reason and logic. Who but Munro would have summoned up the "miracle" of Flora the little runaway goat returning the same night as the young runaway wife in the title story, and then with delicate malice turned Flora into a scapegoat? Such occurrences are always startling and somehow immeasurably definitive in stories which are filled with accidents and transgressions (titles like "Chance" and "Trespasses" merely underline this), where lies and betrayals and inarticulate feelings wind their devious courses.

Yet the apparent unpredictablity of these particular lives is shadowed (as it was in *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage)* by wider patterns beyond individual apprehension, which are intimated through frequent allusions to other literary texts. (*As You Like It* , *Paradise Lost, The Divine Comedy,* a Wordsworth sonnet, and Greek myths overlap the "scrambled surfaces" of everyday life in "Tricks," "Powers," and the story sequence "Chance," "Soon," and "Silence.") Together they offer a kind of sign language which promises a vaster understanding: "what to the partial vision of the living appears as the act of a fiend, is perceived by the wider insight of the dead to be an aspect of cosmic justice" ("Chance"). But Munro's characters, like her readers, are still in the land of the living, and such revelations are infinitely deferred. The overarching patterns available to us are the ones which Munro constructs across the collection, for the title story introduces thematic and emotional motifs which resonate

throughout, coming to a mysterious closure with "Powers" at the end. "Runaway" (reminiscent of Hélène Cixous' "Sorties") signals a young woman's attempt at escape but also its failure; any attempt at "perfect flight" is an illusion, as "Passion" illustrates. Many of these stories revolve around women's escape fantasies and the mistakes they cannot help making as they are forced to revise the plots of their lives. Only one woman is reprieved, and that is Nancy at the end, who in old age dreams of an alternative ending to someone else's story and a life "of hope and honor." But even this is a vanishing consolation as Nancy is returned "inexorably" to the real world.

Carol Shields' narrative experiments are of a different kind, concentrating on story fragments, *faits divers,* and oblique angles of vision "that renew our image of where we are in the world." She has been described as a postmodernist of the middle ground, refocusing realistic fiction through a metafictional lens so that reality becomes "benignly decentred by an altered view." As the elderly woman sonnet writer comments in the opening paragraph of "Segue," "Something is always saying to me: Be plain. Be clear. But then something else interferes and unjoints my good intentions." We hear the inimitable voice of Shields—unassuming, endlessly surprised by oddity, masking serious intent behind feminine playfulness. Her writing has often been described as "charming." Oh, really? One of her fictional characters, also a woman writer, called charm "a crumpled sheet of tissue paper." We should read these stories warily.

Shields' novels may belong to the genre of domestic fiction in the realistic tradition though signals of her resistance to convention are always there, and in her short stories she gives free play to her narrative imagination, slipping between genders and genres into magic realism, allegory, and fantasy. Many of Shields' women are writers and readers, like Hazel, who reads in bed, "reading herself out of her own life," or Sally who keeps a travel diary where she rewrites her husband Harold more satisfactorily as "H" ("The Journal"). There are also professional writers like the young Cuban-born novelist in the first story in *Various Miracles,* or the woman who is trying unsuccessfully to write a story with one key on her word processor not working. Another woman memorizes French verbs "in an attempt to give meaning to her life" ("Soup du Jour"). Shields, too, is obsessed by the magic powers of language to create parallel realities, suggesting that it is in "that narrow gap between symbol and reality" that we may find temporary refuge ("The Orange Fish"). Many of Shields' stories look closely (and frequently ironically) at what she calls "the chambered beginnings, middles and ends of human encounters" and at occasional dazzling moments of connection between human beings. Nevertheless, reading this volume is like watching a carnival parade of stories, where conventional surfaces split open to reveal the transgressive energies of Shields' narrative imagination.

Moral of the Life Story

Paul John Eakin, ed.
The Ethics of Life Writing. Cornell UP $47.50.

Reviewed by Laurie McNeill

Because the modes of life writing are affective and effective genres assumed to tell the "true" story of a real person's life, they have significant potential to perform social actions, to enact change in the lived world. As a result, they also carry the potential for greater "real life" consequences for their subjects than do other, non-referential genres such as fiction. Yet until recently theorists have been relatively silent about the ethical implications of telling the stories of our selves and/or others. Despite the enormous popularity of auto/biography in its many forms, no code of conduct exists to

guide writers, and even legal definitions of privacy and slander may fall short or be unevenly applied. Seeing this gap, Paul John Eakin, a preeminent life writing scholar whose own work on ethical issues in auto/biography has been influential, and David Smith (director of the Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions) mounted a collaborative, interdisciplinary colloquium to explore such issues. *The Ethics of Life Writing*, edited by Eakin, brings together the papers that grew out of that colloquium, with contributions from scholars working in applied ethics, literary studies, sociology, anthropology, religious studies, and philosophy. This collection, in its breadth and transdisciplinarity, is an extremely useful starting point for further discussions of ethics across the various fields that study and produce life writing.

Clearly Eakin imagines—and will reach—a diverse audience, expanding the purview of life writing beyond "auto/biography studies," a field traditionally dominated by literary studies. His introduction is accordingly accessible to scholars new to life writing, and situates the collection within all the contributing disciplines. Surprisingly, however, while the introduction does indicate clearly that the collection will not explore legal implications or understandings of the ethical, it does not actually define "ethics," which appears in this context to mean "good," or at least the absence of harm, in a particular moral system. As "ethical" and the related term "moral" have different nuances and applications across disciplines, a definition, or even a series of them, would illuminate how these particular contributors and the fields they represent employ them (a problem Craig Howes also raises in his Afterword). Contributor David Parker, reading Edmund Gosse through Charles Taylor, establishes one of the most explicit positions when he explains that "[f]or Taylor, the question *What is it good to be?* is integral to ethics, not least because our sense of what is worthy of respect or admiration—and the reverse—plays into our conscious deliberations on the question *What is it right to do?*" This language of the good and the moral, which several contributors engage, raises unanswered questions about what (or whose) moral code is being used to measure these ethical turns, what communities' values are foundational to this loose definition of the ethical. Though Howes acknowledges that Western "theological master narratives" are "deeply embedded," the collection's moralistic foundations remain unexamined.

Turning to both canonical and contemporary works, the writers address a variety of topics, including celebrity biographies, illness and disability narratives, fictionalized life writing, and the potential pitfalls (personal and practical) of writing one's life and /or another's. Strengths include pieces by theorist-practitioners Nancy K. Miller and Richard Freadman, who both explore the limits of ethical life-writing at the points where the story and interests of the autobiographer intersect with those of others, who may or may not consent to their part in a published narrative. Alice Wexler presents a case study of how the writing and publishing of a family history, an already ethically fraught act, becomes both complicated and motivated by a genetic disease, Huntington's, which carries social stigma. Marianne Gullestad analyzes the possibilities for people of colour in an increasingly right-wing, anti-immigrant Europe to tell their stories in the mass media. These two papers, along with Arthur Frank's examination of life writing about children with disability as "moral non-fiction" and Tom Couser's essay, reprinted from his book *Vulnerable Subjects*, form a provocative grouping that reads the ethics of telling "counterstories," narratives (and subjects) resisting dominant cultural scripts.

In his comprehensive Afterword, Craig Howes explores connections and overlap between the papers and provides some context from the original colloquium. The questions raised by Howes and all the contributors need to be asked and answered in a number of settings, from the classroom to the writing desk, the publishing house to the scholarly journal. These writers argue for the relevance of life writing as the ideal vehicle for addressing ethics. As Eakin has written elsewhere, he sees ethics as the "deep subject of autobiographical discourse," a sentiment that contributor John D. Barbour echoes when he suggests that life writing is "the best vehicle in our culture for sustained, probing, and public examination of the process of moral judgment." This volume sets the stage for such examinations and for informed teaching, writing, and theorizing.

An Honest Book

Karen Armstrong
The Spiral Staircase: My Climb out of Darkness. Knopf Canada $35.95

Anne Coleman
I'll Tell You a Secret: A Memory of Seven Summers. McClelland and Stewart $29.99

Patrick Lane
There is a Season: A Memoir in a Garden. McClelland and Stewart $34.99

Reviewed by Helen M. Buss

When Montaigne declared, "this, reader, is an honest book," he was thinking of the genre of the essay, which through many generic borrowings has become the contemporary memoir, the lively genre that is redefining the relation between reader and writer. At the heart of the memoir are the values of honesty and sincerity, values that would seem to lie outside the aesthetic values of artistry. Yet, ironically, the reader can only be convinced of honesty through the subtle use of that most complex of literary devices, the narrative voice, which constructs the sense of a guiding authorial presence, one which in memoir, unlike fiction, merges writer, narrator, and main character. The best contemporary memoirs experiment with a tripartite balance of a narrator who is participant in the action of the text, who also witnesses as fully as possible the lives of significant others, and who offers a reflective viewpoint that includes a self-reflexive knowledge gained over time.

When Karen Armstrong sets out to tell what the subtitle of *The Spiral Staircase* refers to as "my climb out of darkness," she is faced with the task of representing her participant stance as a woman who has survived, in her search for spirituality, not only the strictures of two ancient systems of education, the nunnery and the academy, but also an unheeding and unyielding medical/psychiatric culture. Her voice witnesses strongly to the odd combination of British culture, the Catholic Church, the youth rebellion of the 1960s, Oxford University, and the contemporary alliances between television and book-making that constructs the author figure she becomes, a woman who has written over a dozen books on subjects as diverse as Buddha, Muhammad, and St. Paul. Her life experience allows her to reflect compellingly and with admirable reflexivity on the need for "the spirituality of empathy" as an essential principle of life. Yet I confess to not being able to fully "empathize" with the central figure of this book. A stoic reserve causes the narrative voice to move too quickly to cultural critique at key moments when the reader needs to enter more fully into the life that gained this empathetic philosophy. As a result, the text takes on the generic aspects of the meditation or the apologia, where the life is illustrative, rather than intimately central, as in memoir.

The memoir form is more easily adapted to the "coming of age" story that Anne Coleman offers in *I'll Tell You a Secret*, her memory of the seven summers of her youth

spent at North Hatley, Quebec in the company of the novelist Hugh MacLennan. The titillating title tends to suggest otherwise, but Coleman manages to convince us that ensconced in the safe cocoon of English-language privilege in an ocean of muted Francophone culture, a non-exploitive friendship between a very young girl and a middle-aged writer was both possible and necessary to a girl of intelligence with a desire for a broader life than could be provided in the bell jar of middle class girlhood. Since the book concerns the stifling of female ambition and its redirection into hero worship, we cannot read this memoir for what it tells us about its significant other, the great man, for he is, like Jane Eyre's Mr. Rochester, only a glass into which the girl pours herself. And on this level Coleman's memoir is very successful, but what would make it a superior memoir would be a reflexivity that might look back in anger, love, frustration, even with amused irony, at the cultural restrictions that resulted in second wave feminism and the self-supporting single mother that Coleman later becomes. Coleman's choice to place her "I" not in the present moment of writing but in moments closer to the original actions undercuts this third, essential, aspect of memoir voice. The exception is in one brief moment late in the text, when recognizing her own anger, Coleman speaks with the wisdom of the voice of 50 years of living past her youth, the reflexivity born of the tranquility of age that makes for the best memoir work.

One could hardly call Patrick Lane's *There is a Season: A Memoir in a Garden* a recollection in tranquility, since it is written by a man who lives each day with the aftereffects of a life of addiction. Yet, with a wise balance of its tripartite voice, this memoir becomes a space of dignity where even the most painful confessions promote honest recognition between reader and writer. Like Montaigne, who liked to place himself and his reader in the relationship of friends sitting together in armchairs by the fire, Lane invites the reader into his garden and once he has made us comfortable there, he guides us through the pain he has suffered and the pain he has caused so that we can emerge with empathy. This is not to say that when the terrible scenes of a life complicated by addiction emerge they do not spread like red blood on the page. They do, but we are in the garden with the voice we know has survived and is surviving and so we will as well. With a poet's economy of image, the suffering others are witnessed: the mother lost to the living through the death of a child, the father lost to the family first through war, then through a senseless murder, the talented brother whose poetry is ended by premature death. It might be tempting in such a text to shy from the voice of the participant, to avoid the exposure of self involved in telling the physical and emotional devastation of decades of addiction. Yet the suffering others and the betrayed self are portrayed unblinkingly. But like the friendly spiders that inhabit Lane's garden, creating seemingly fragile but actually tough webs of intricacy, this memoirist never allows us to lose the sight and smell of the balm of the garden, the hopefulness of a new path undertaken in what was once only a place of debris, of crowded plants judiciously pruned by the gardener. And finally, we are assured, as poet Lorna Crozier, the largely silent but ever present beloved of this memoir has assured us before, of the garden's ability to go on without us.

Guy Vanderhaeghe has called this memoir "the best book I have read in a decade," and I might go that far if I were a reader of novels or plays or history alone. As an avid reader of memoirs in the last ten years, I find this one ranks with Mary Karr's *The Liar's Club* for its tenderness to imperfect parents, with Lauren Slater's *Lying* for its wily artfulness, and with Elizabeth Ehrlich's *Miriam's Kitchen* in its creation of a common domestic space as metaphor of self and other.

Surviving Memory

Byrna Barclay
Girl At the Window. Coteau $19.95

Reviewed by Anne Kaufman

Byrna Barclay's most recent short story collection is suffused with memory and the power of personal history. The nine stories are rooted in Saskatchewan, as all the central characters call or have called it home, but the stories range widely in physical setting from Canada to Europe. Barclay includes snippets of ostensibly historical narrative from the Spanish and Greek Civil Wars, World War II, immigration, and the world of art. This collection, shortlisted for a Saskatchewan Book Award, is ultimately more successful as an interrogation of the effect of memory than as a vehicle for evoking those historical moments.

Many of Barclay's central characters are women struggling to understand familial relationships: Becky, in "Misfit," whose previously unimagined half-brother Joel shows up on her elk-breeding farm; Phoebe, left behind in "Bride's Lament," to care for her terminally ill husband and then her mother while her brother gets an education and departs for the war; Ruth, in "Kasja's Ghost," whose efforts to understand her mother result in the inheritance of a series of ghostly visions and memories. Barclay portrays women who allow their families pervasive agency in their lives and who often sacrifice dreams for relationships. Her landscapes are evocative and contain some truly memorable images, as in "The White Mountains of Crete," in which Zoe, returning to her homeland after years of exile in Regina, returns to her family home and long-remembered sky, mountains, sea.

"Girl at the Window," the title story in the collection, like "Misfit" has soap-opera overtones, built as it is on the physical resemblance of Paula, whose grandmother was a nurse in the Spanish Civil War, to a girl in a Salvador Dali painting. This story was the least satisfying of the collection. It felt both under-developed, as it touched only briefly on a number of ideas that could each have been the heart of a successful and well-developed short story, and over-dramatic, as the notion that strangers on the street would instantly recognize a person's resemblance to a painting.

The book, too, contains some rather jarring typographical errors that detract from reading Barclay's clear and well-written prose. Her focus on characters' complex engagements with memory, landscape, and family is also engaging. The stories themselves, it seemed to me, are almost outlines for novellas or other longer pieces, and the haunting memories each character invokes cry out for further development.

Growing up with War and Beauty

Shree Ghatage
Brahma's Dream. Doubleday Canada $34.95

Jaspreet Singh
Seventeen Tomatoes: Tales from Kashmir. Esplanade $16.95

Reviewed by Terri Tomsky

Jaspreet Singh's *Seventeen Tomatoes* is a collection of fragmentary short stories linked by the life of a young Sikh boy, Arjun. These stories overlay one another, so that minor characters introduced casually in one story enter the foreground in the next. As the subtitle suggests, the stories unfold around the Kashmir, the disputed region simultaneously claimed by the independent—and now nuclear—states of India and Pakistan.

Accordingly, Singh presents a Kashmir beset with tensions and replete with army camps, POWs, military officers, and various religious and ethnic groups. Alongside these macropolitical manoeuvrings run domestic,

familial, and neighbourly rivalries. The strength of *Seventeen Tomatoes* lies in its richly detailed representation of the lives of people caught up in Kashmir's internecine violence. Quotidian institutions, such as schooling, parenting, unrequited love, and cricket are not simply positioned at the local end of a national-local dyad; they are often implicated within the conflict, co-opted by and cooperating within acts of nationalism and terrorism. In one story, a man threatens a teacher with his revolver so that his daughter can attend the all-boys school.

In another story, "Border Cricket," Singh portrays Arjun's Uncle Ranji umpiring a cricket match "for peace" between India and Pakistan. On the surface, cricket gives the Kashmir valley "a human face." Such rhetoric is belied by the eventual kidnapping and mutilation of Uncle Ranji's daughter and the revelation that the original umpire had been murdered. Yet, the Muslim women who have committed this terrorist act have more urgent concerns than any grand national victory for a country they do not reside in. Living as a minority in India means they view the cricket match in terms that impact on their immediate life. They demand the match be fixed for the *Indian* side, since a Pakistani victory will ensure the looting and burning of their houses by Indian commandos. Adding to this irony, the cricket players themselves are insulated from the narratives of nation and bellicosity. Instead, Singh describes them as neither Indian nor Pakistani but "from the country of rupees."

Singh skilfully shifts tone and mood in his fourteen stories, some barely a page long. Humorous and playful pieces fuse math, miracles, and magic realism. In other stories, such as the morbid "Hair" and "Arjun," he portrays sickness and horror, the banalities of a wasting cancer, and the fury of communal violence towards Sikhs after Indira Gandhi's assassination.

Prefacing *Seventeen Tomatoes* is a quotation from Jawaharlal Nehru, also a Kashmiri, which describes Kashmir as "the face of the beloved . . . that fades upon wakening." In this vein, Singh treats the landscape poetically and elusively. He confers a mythic quality to the Himalayan backdrop of lakes and multiple gardens. Yet Kashmir remains ever ambivalent, evoking nostalgia and the possibility of change, while reiterating a pattern of ongoing violence.

Whereas Singh foregrounds the violence of Kashmir in everyday life, Shree Ghatage pushes the communal conflicts of the 1947 Indian partition well into the background of her novel, *Brahma's Dream*. Set in Bombay, during India's transition to independence, Ghatage's novel portrays a Brahmin family and their struggle to deal with the rare anaemic disorder, Cooley's Anaemia, of the thirteen-year-old daughter Mohini.

Mohini is the sympathetic central figure of *Brahma's Dream* and Ghatage privileges her thoughts and perspectives. Physically restricted at the best of times and often forced to remain inert because of her condition, the uncomplaining Mohini reflects on the complex relationships of people surrounding her with liveliness and curiosity. Through the snatches of conversations that Mohini overhears, Ghatage builds a portrait of her parents' anxiety, their crumbling marriage, and her mother's commitment to caring for her daughter.

Mohini feels removed from the political upheavals that are leading to Indian independence and acknowledges that she cannot fully comprehend them because of her prolonged illness. Only Gandhi's assassination causes a major ripple in the novel, since it placed Brahmin families like Mohini's at risk. Though the family emerges unscathed and is even able to help some fellow Brahmins, the immanent attacks are not particularly disturbing. In Ghatage's novel, the individual pain and suffering caused by

the illness always trumps the collective pain and suffering caused by political violence.

In describing illness, Ghatage excels. Discomforting and detailed evocations of everyday medical procedures, blood tests, transfusions, ether and lumbar punctures, litter the text. Ghatage describes Mohini's bodily pains with a touching and vibrant intensity. Headaches are transformed into "swollen knot[s]"; Mohini's head, "hardened like stone," feels as though "it might roll off her shoulders and drop to the ground. She would not be sorry to see it go." In these descriptions, Ghatage's humour also vies with pathos: "A desert wind was searing through her body, rearranging her bones as though they were shifting sands, slicing into her like rolling gusts of flame." The insistent presence of Mohini's illness provides the spark for the less convincing philosophical issues discussed in the novel: the belief that life could be Brahma's dream. The characters frequently question their religious and caste traditions, with reference to their own lives and the constraints of free will. This somewhat fatalist approach does not always deal satisfactorily with a range of issues, including the pressures of being a young widow in a traditionalist Indian society.

Ghatage presents a rich variety of characters, such as the academic grandfather, the local Muslim "Irani" shopkeeper, and a multitude of relatives and friends. This cast is perhaps too broad and the plethora of names becomes confusing at times, which explains perhaps why a genealogical tree prefaces the novel. Overall *Brahma's Dream* is a slow-paced novel that focuses on the minutiae. It is a subduing but thought-provoking piece of work.

Directions in Newfoundland Memoir

Michael Crummey and Greg Locke
Newfoundland: Journey into a Lost Nation. McClelland and Stewart $29.99

Cyril Goodyear
The Road to Nowhere. Creative $14.95

Reviewed by Jennifer Delisle

After years away from their native Newfoundland, both photographer Greg Locke and poet and novelist Michael Crummey felt compelled to return to their home province. And while the reasons may be hard to describe, readers of their book *Newfoundland: Journey into a Lost Nation* begin to get a sense of why. Newfoundland, as Crummey explains, is where they "belong to."

Crummey's essay is at once an elegy for his father and an elegy for the way of life his father knew. His work is indeed a "journey," through his father's history on "the Labrador" beginning at age nine, through the public history of the fishery collapse, and through Locke's photos. As he overlaps these scenes, the vista of Crummey's Newfoundland emerges. And while loss is a prominent theme of Crummey's passage home, much is also to be found: a thriving arts scene, a return that is also a renewal.

Locke's photographs are stunning: beyond the typically breathtaking icebergs and sunsets, the majority of the photos are of people, of Newfoundland life, and are full of motion. They are not all postcard pretty, but they all tell a story. Many of the stories also speak of loss, of lost livelihood, lost nation, lost opportunities—but not of lost culture. Some critics have argued that the rich outpouring of literature from Newfoundland and its tendency to focus on the past is spurred by the sense that the traditional culture is dying. This claim is a primitivizing move, a condescension reminiscent of

colonial ethnography. As Crummey writes, even his book's title

> slants the contents towards the past in a way that makes me slightly uncomfortable. It was meant to point to a way of life in the midst of unprecedented upheaval, a 'sea change' of sorts, which will permanently alter what it means to live here. If it also suggests that there's nothing to Newfoundland but nostalgia, however, it does a disservice to the people and the place itself.

Nevertheless, historical novels and memoirs about Newfoundland have been undeniably popular lately. Hence, Cyril Goodyear's "memoir" *The Road to Nowhere* is subtitled "Memories: Newfoundland and Labrador." The book's cover entices the reader with Goodyear's biography as former Newfoundland Ranger, RCMP officer, and Provincial Court Judge, who has "experienced things that few of us can imagine." Yet those who are hoping for a first-hand history of the Newfoundland Rangers, or those expecting an absorbing Newfoundland autobiography in the standard of Crummey's essay, Wayne Johnston's *Baltimore's Mansion,* or David Macfarlane's *The Danger Tree,* will be disappointed. Not only are the majority of Goodyear's anecdotes set outside of Newfoundland and Labrador, belying the outer packaging, but they are also trite, juvenile, and exceedingly dull.

When I first began reading *The Road to Nowhere,* I honestly thought that it was a book for young adults. "We should never laugh at people because they don't look or talk like us," the story "Blowing Out the Candle" begins. "None of us are perfect, whether we are little girls and boys or grown-ups." Yet despite the moralizing and simplistic tone, and the fact that several of the chapters have the structure of children's stories or even fables, as I read on it became clear that the tales of grisly murders and suicides are not intended for kids. The juvenile style of some of the stories must be designed for some aesthetic effect; just what that effect may be eludes me.

While Goodyear claims that all of the stories are connected by the broad theme of "space," the chapters are so diverse in style and content that they form a rather bewildering collection. Mixed with the dull fables about why we shouldn't laugh at people and the unremarkable accounts of his RCMP cases from 1950s Nova Scotia, are bizarre and rambling chapters full of self-indulgent and facile musings about outer space, cloning, race, and whatever other issues he happens to have a passing opinion about. A chapter that begins with an assertive anti-Confederation statement, veers abruptly to a ramble on Galileo, and ends with an anticlimactic story about a few men caught in a storm. Unlike Crummey's work, the fragmentation is not stylistic, but jarring and pointless. Throughout the book, the bad puns, non sequiturs and gratuitous tangents, the patronizingly simplistic tone and clichéed attempts at the profound, all take us on a road to nowhere indeed.

While these books are both non-fiction "memoirs" by Newfoundlanders, they could not be more different. The richness and distinctiveness of Locke and Crummey's Newfoundland belies the loss in their title. Goodyear just seems a little lost.

Porter le deuil

Paul Chanel Malenfant
Si tu allais quelque part. La courte échelle 9,95 $

Jacques Ouellet
N'y allez pas. Noroît 15,95 $

Jean Royer
Poèmes de veille. Noroît 16,95 $

Compte rendu par Luc Bonenfant

Sobres, posés, sensibles, les recueils de Paul Chanel Malenfant et de Jacques Ouellet méritent qu'on les lise avec l'attention patiente qui caractérise tout lecteur de poésie. Les deux poètes se tournent du côté des années d'apprentissage pour mettre en scène un deuil : Malenfant nous montre un adolescent qui apprend à vivre avec la perte de son grand-père aux côtés d'une grand-mère qui, elle-même, « serait tombée en enfance / dans son vieux pays », alors que Ouellet retourne vers l'enfance d'un sujet lyrique qui recouvre le souvenir d'une mère et d'un père disparus. Contrairement à Royer, les deux poètes évitent les écueils de la lamentation égocentrique pour réussir, chacun à sa façon, à partager avec leurs lecteurs cette expérience du deuil qu'ils mettent en vers.

Ainsi, Paul Chanel Malenfant se sert sans ostentation de l'art, en parsemant ses poèmes de références à la tradition culturelle occidentale. Et par-delà les évocations explicites de Bach ou de Baudelaire, c'est sans doute dans la tradition québécoise que ce recueil s'inscrit le plus fermement, comme l'indiquent les vers suivants, aux accents si hébertiens, si garnéliens aussi : « le cœur vacille, / aveugle, / dans la poitrine. / Tu promets, funambule, / de tenir en équilibre / sur la ligne d'horizon ». Ailleurs, le poème reprend la fragilité du sujet poétique d'un Loranger pour la conjuguer à la force désormais humanisée d'un sujet christique au « cœur saignant entre les côtes / comme une lampe de nuit ».

Tout deuil exige des survivants qu'ils portent avec eux les décombres persistants d'un être jadis aimé, tout en acceptant que ces restes de mémoire se transforment au gré de la vie. De ce point de vue, le recueil de Malenfant reconduit ce travail mémoriel du deuil dans sa structure puisque le passé poétique (Hébert, Garneau, Loranger . . .) y rencontre le présent de la vie réelle. Car les poèmes de *Si tu allais quelque part* se nourrissent de la tradition, mais toujours pour la dépasser, pour la rendre actuelle. Le deuil du sujet se déroule en conséquence sur un fond contemporain de catastrophe où « L'Amérique vole en éclats de verre. / Des corps hurlent dans les airs / avec des gestes lents d'oiseaux de proie / sur le point de mourir ». Sa mémoire se trouve inscrite dans celle plus vaste du monde ; son « âme est à vif. / À l'abandon parmi les désordres du jour. / Le globe terrestre fait le tour de l'horloge ».

Plus seul, voire isolé, semble le sujet poétique de *N'y allez pas*. S'adressant directement à ses morts dès le titre, celui-ci dit le gouffre, la béance à laquelle il semble difficilement pouvoir trouver un sens. La lumière le transperce, lui qui semble vide, « le ventre troué de lumière ». Il se nourrit de la mémoire des gens dont il porte le deuil, mais sans jamais être rassasié : « Tes humeurs orageuses et tendres / me traversent / m'affament ». Toutefois, le « jeune enfant / consent à l'invisible », trouve finalement dans la nature environnante le fondement nécessaire pour supporter la douleur de la perte, laquelle laissera finalement percer la possibilité de la continuation de la vie dans les tous derniers vers, alors que « la lumière du matin / argente la courbe des pensées / dépouillé d'objet / l'instant respire ». Si la sensibilité du recueil n'est pas complètement étrangère à une certaine naïveté romantique, le lyrisme y reste néanmoins toujours contenu, ce qui permet justement que nous nous sentions le désir de partager, par la

lecture, le lent travail du deuil qui le traverse : « Il fait si froid / si je voulais nommer cet égarement / je lui donnerais ton nom ».

Contrairement à ces deux beaux recueils, celui de Jean Royer va rapidement, reste dans les clichés maintes fois usés : « Si ta vie dure / le temps d'un songe / imagine l'éveil / il faut douter / de ce qui est / si tu veux croire ». Entre Apollinaire et Miron, entre Héraclite et Perrault, les *Poèmes de veille* ne portent rien, tous tournés qu'ils sont sur eux-mêmes, tous occupés à convoquer avec suffisance des intertextes dont ils ne se nourrissent jamais véritablement. Alors que le titre de Malenfant dit la possibilité d'un après, que celui de Ouellet exprime la volonté de garder au plus près de soi des êtres aimés, celui de Royer ne parle d'ailleurs que du veilleur, qui se substitue aux éventuels sujets dont il s'agirait pourtant de faire le deuil. Nous devons ainsi supporter tout au long de la lecture le narcissisme d'un sujet poseur dont la mise en scène ne laissera finalement aucune trace en nous. Voilà pourquoi sans doute il faut préférer le doux lyrisme d'un Ouellet et l'universelle fragilité d'un Malenfant.

Inspiring Immigrant

Julie Johnston
Susanna's Quill. Tundra $24.99

Reviewed by Elizabeth Hopkins

Award-winning Julie Johnston's *Susanna's Quill* does for adolescent readers what Charlotte Gray's *Sisters in the Wilderness* has recently done for their mothers; that is, make accessible the complex and challenging life of Susanna (Strickland) Moodie, author of *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852). *Susanna's Quill* is divided into two parts: Susanna's youth in Suffolk, England and Regency London prior to her marriage, and the eight years she spent as a wife and mother on backwoods farms in south-central Ontario. The book ends with a short "Afterword," which summarizes Moodie's life from 1839 until her death in 1885.

This focus on the first 36 years of Moodie's life allows Johnston to reveal two inspirational themes. The first is the familiar "adaptation to a new land is not easy, but if you persevere with determination and spirit you will succeed." The second is the universal encouragement to young readers to follow their dreams, "if you want to be a writer, then write, no matter what." But Johnston does not preach, and both themes emerge naturally as the story unfolds.

One of the book's most appealing sections is the creation of Susanna's personality as an energetic, rebellious, and determined youngster who becomes an independent and competent young "bluestocking" before she meets her future husband and embarks on life in Canada. The chapters detailing life in the large Strickland household are lively fictionalized scenes based on Catharine Parr (Strickland) Traill's manuscript notes about her sister's childhood. Johnston also draws inventively on the content of Moodie's earliest stories and sketches to reveal her developing imagination and taste for the dramatic.

When Thomas Strickland's premature death leaves his wife and children in straitened circumstances, Susanna and her sisters turn to careers as writers. Their mother's apparent resistance to her daughters' efforts is a dramatization of the problems faced by young women in the Stricklands' circumstances in the 1820s. As she embarks on her writing career in London, Susanna meets several of the reform-minded thinkers and artists of her day, especially Thomas Pringle, the Secretary of the Anti-slavery League, who appoints her to transcribe the stories of Mary Prince and Ashton Warner, two former slaves living with the Pringles.

The Canadian sections of the book are equally compelling, filled with Susanna's turbulent feelings, her observations of the people and circumstances of the backwoods,

and a sub-plot concerning two young servants which blends youthful love with the realities of their situation. Johnston's writing is clear and polished, her vocabulary appropriately challenging for her readers. The story moves along, aided by fictionalized conversations and actions that build on Moodie's own suggestions in *Roughing It in the Bush* and in her correspondence. The book is well-designed and attractive to young readers—though the cover picture of Moodie is not, as attributed, a self-portrait, but rather a miniature done by her cousin, the engraver Thomas Cheesman.

Worthy Tribute

Dorothy W. Rungeling
Life and Works of Ethelwyn Wetherald.
Dorothy Rungeling-Premier Impressions $16.00

Reviewed by Samara Walbohm

The work of Agnes Ethelwyn Wetherald (1857-1940) appeared in major anthologies of the early twentieth century in Canada, including Wilfred Campbell's *Oxford Book of Canadian Verse* (1913) and John Garvin's *Canadian Poets* (1916). While she has been overlooked by recent scholarship largely because her poetry was thought too sentimental or trite, much of Wetherald's writing hints at a more subtle presentation of nature, often eroticized, and certainly of more sophisticated quality than has been acknowledged. Hooray for Dorothy Rungeling's account of Wetherald's life, which brings to light at least some of the context surrounding one of Canada's "lost" women poets. Rungeling (an adopted daughter of Wetherald) uses mainly personal anecdotes about her writer-journalist mother. Despite the often haphazard arrangement of the biographical stories and artifacts, we must heartily applaud Rungeling for her tribute. Letters, photographs, published columns, and stories from childhood personalize Rungeling's text and add much value, despite a lack of thorough historicization or rigorous documentation. Wanting a deeper understanding of Wetherald's storied life and the literature it produced, readers will crave sources for Rungeling's account, but sadly none is provided. Scholars of women's history and/or early modern Canadian poetry will have to search for the particulars surrounding Wetherald's prolific and important contributions to Canada's literary narrative.

That said, Rungeling often inserts vital details about Wetherald's life which would be virtually impossible to find elsewhere. For instance, Wetherald's father received a printing press while she was a teen and it was her learning of type-setting which most likely began her journalistic career and the creative writing which followed. Similarly, Rungeling casually notes the friendship between Wetherald and better-known poets Marjorie Pickthall and Helena Coleman. These details are fascinating, but readers are left to make their own connections about the importance of such networks and contexts and, perhaps most significantly, to trust Rungeling's informal style of presentation and sources.

The final section of the book includes a selection of Wetherald's work. While at least some close readings of the poetry would have greatly enriched the text, Rungeling, in her self-published tribute, is to be commended for producing the first study of Ethelwyn Wetherald.

The Return of the Ethnic?

Domenic A. Beneventi, Licia Canton, and Lianne Moyes, eds.
Adjacencies: Minority Writing in Canada. Guernica $20

Tess Fragoulis, with Steven Heighton and Helen Tsiriotakis, eds.
Musings: An Anthology of Greek-Canadian Literature. Véhicule $18

John Miska, ed.
Blessed Harbours: An Anthology of Hungarian-Canadian Authors. Guernica $20

Reviewed by Albert Braz

In a recent interview (*Canadian Literature* 172) Myrna Kostash mentions one of the inadvertent consequences of the emergence of race politics in Canadian letters—the elision of the ethnic. Kostash, who has long been identified as a Ukrainian Canadian voice, despite her boisterous pan-Canadian nationalism, describes a writers' conference in Calgary in the late 1980s. When she noticed that all the questions from the audience were addressed to the one non-white member of the panel, it dawned on her that Canadian cultural politics had changed fundamentally, and so had her own public function. As she notes, "Something had happened and it was no longer about me and I was suddenly part of the problem. I was not part of the solution, I was part of the problem." Of course what had transpired was that writers like Kostash had gone from being seen as ethnic to white. Yet, while the advent of race politics clearly has expanded the national discourse, it also has camouflaged some significant differences. Terms like Afro-, Asian-, Euro-, and Indo-Canadian conceal as much as they reveal. In particular, they tend to minimize the divergences among members of those groups—notably their ethnic specificity. The question of the place of ethnicity in Canadian literature, and culture in general, is at the core of these three books.

Adjacencies, which grew out of a 1998 conference at the University of Montreal called "The Third Solitude: Canadian Minority Writing," contains 13 academic essays on various aspects of the construction of minority subjectivity. Among its contributors are Amaryll Chanady, Lucie Lequin, Daisy Neijmann, Samara Walbohm, Heike Harting, Julie Rak, Don Randall, Pamela Sing, and the editors, writing on such authors or topics as Austin Clarke, Robert Majzels, Michael Ondaatje, Marguerite-A. Primeau, Aritha van Herk, Sheila Watson, Icelandic Canadian, Italian Canadian, and Doukhobor writing. In her compelling introduction to the collection, Sherry Simon acknowledges that "There is a kind of discomfort which comes in attaching writers to their biological origins." At the same time, she agrees with Smaro Kamboureli's statement that "much of the most innovative and energetic writing in Canada is today by minority writers." Christl Verduyn, similarly, asserts that she is uncomfortable with "the terminology of minority, ethnicity and solitude," which she wishes to declare "obsolete." The editors themselves concede that one of the questions that their collection addresses is the very existence of ethnic literature. The publication of these three books would seem to demand an affirmative answer. Yet, one cannot help but enquire, if such prominent writers as van Herk and Ondaatje are minority, who is mainstream? In fact, one element that seems to unify these books is the conflicting desire to contend that minority writing is ignored in Canada and yet to claim that some of the most famous (and widely discussed) writers in the country are really minority authors.

The other two volumes collect not scholarly essays, but poetry and prose. In her introduction to *Musings*, Fragoulis states that she has been "continually frustrated by people's lack of knowledge of Greek culture as it currently exists in both the country

itself and its diaspora." She strives to correct the situation, by collecting the work of writers who explore the Greek dimension with both "recognition and identification." Fragoulis includes established writers like Steven Heighton, Hélène Holden, and Pan Bouyoucas, alongside lesser known ones. Interestingly, one of the more compelling works she has assembled is the poem "Family Tree," by Helen Stathoupulos. A Torontonian who is working on her first collection of poetry, Stathoupulos captures the immigrant reality with both intelligence and humour:

> Father, like Plato, held
> in his mind a world of ideal things,
> solutions exact in their symmetry,
> universal truths without deviations.
>
> Merciless, he criticized the food
> my mother made. He fantasized ideal meals,
> noodles salted perfectly, textures
> found only in dreams.

Fragoulis justifies the need for her anthology by contending that her "specific experience as a Greek-Canadian has been, for the most part, absent in Canadian literature." With writers such as Stathoupulos, the gap begins to be filled.

Like *Musings, Blessed Harbours* comprises writings by both prominent and beginning authors. John Miska, who states that the purpose of his collection is "to keep the reader abreast of current literary trends created" by Hungarian Canadians, includes such writers as Tamas Dobozy, George Faludy, Endre Farkas, George Jonas, Judith Kalman, Tom Konyves, Anna Porter, Eva Tihanyi, and Robert Zend. Yet if one had to highlight a single work that captures the ethnic experience in Canada, it would be John Marlyn's "Good for You, Mrs. Feldesh." In his short story, Marlyn traces the intellectual emancipation of a Hungarian woman, a process that seems to parallel her Canadianization. Anna Feldesh starts to work with her husband on a Manitoba farm only a few days before the outbreak of the World War I. At first, she is as shocked as her husband when the residents of the neighbouring town turn on him after he strikes her in public, unable to grasp "what he had done to provoke them." Seeing him so afraid of a society neither one understands, she actually feels "sorry for him." However, after she learns from her children's teacher to read and write, she gradually starts to enter a new world, which eventually gives her the courage to leave her abusive husband and move to Winnipeg. Anna Feldesh's victory is clearly a small one, that of someone whose Canadianization allows her, not to find untold riches, but to discover that she has a mind of her own. Indeed, not the least of the cultural ironies in Marlyn's story is that the ability to read the Eaton's catalogue can be a great "joy" in a person's life.

Subverting Synecdoche

Kim Anderson and Bonita Lawrence
Strong Women Stories: Native Vision and Community Survival. Sumach P $26.95

Reviewed by Jo-Ann Episkenew

For better or for worse, the Indigenous people of this country continue to function as a sign that signifies a limited vision of our identities and our choices, limitations that the settler culture projects upon us. Eduardo and Bonnie Duran argue in *Native American Postcolonial Psychology* that, for Indigenous men, identity options are often restricted to that of the medicine man or drunk, while the options for Indigenous women, as Janice Acoose contends in her *Iskwewak—kah ki yaw ni wahkomakanak*, are "Indian princess or squaw drudge." Duran and Duran point out that, as a result, "Indian" has become an "overdetermined and overloaded sign [which] was and is always more and less than real tribal people could ever hope or dread to be."

It follows that Indigenous people have become synecdoches for the settler population. Thus, individual Indigenous people too often find ourselves asked to represent the whole—not only the whole of a specific nation but all the Indigenous nations in the country. What Indigenous person cannot tell a story of a time when she or he was asked, "What do Native/Aboriginal/First Nations/Métis [pick one] people think about [insert issue]?" At the very least, this is annoying. At worst, it places individual Indigenous people under colossal pressure. The consequences of bearing the burden of the "overloaded and overdetermined" sign "Indian" are devastating in their effects on the health of the Indigenous population and our communities.

Strong Women Stories: Native Vision and Community Survival is a collection of narratives that subvert the notion of Indigenous people as synecdoche. Editors Kim Anderson and Bonita Lawrence acknowledge the many differences of the Indigenous population but argue that the one factor that unites the anthology is the same one that unites Indigenous people. They write that "our experiences represent different sides of the same coin. One way or another, the stories are about the fallout of colonization and the challenge to rebuild." Although Anderson and Lawrence have compiled stories that draw upon commonalities in the Indigenous experience, the stories they select do not essentialize Indigenous people. Rather, the narratives in *Strong Women Stories* are healing stories in that they acknowledge the wounds that colonization has inflicted upon us while celebrating our resilience as Indigenous people. Although the collection speaks for the whole of the Indigenous population, it does so on its own terms.

Strong Women Stories contains essays by 16 Indigenous people from across the country. As its title suggests, the focus of the anthology is on women and their stories. Thus, 15 of the contributors are Indigenous women who are academics, artists, community leaders, and executives. Their accomplishments provide proof that they have earned the right to be identified as "strong women." Anderson and Lawrence divide the anthology into three thematic sections—Coming Home, Asking Questions, and Rebuilding Our Communities—and the narratives contained in each section address the issue of the survival of Indigenous communities. The narratives that comprise the first section describe the experiences of Indigenous women who, having been displaced from their communities, either reconnect with their communities or build new ones. The narratives in the second section examine "the central question of *What happens when we come home and we don't like what we find?*" The contributors examine Indigenous communities critically, unafraid to articulate the hard questions regarding the challenges that our communities face. In the third section, the narratives describe a multiplicity of attempts by Indigenous people and organizations to rebuild and transform our communities, drawing "on tremendous vision to bring about the kind of communities we do want." The anthology ends with the contribution of its lone male contributor, who discusses gender equity in an Indigenous context from a young man's perspective.

The collection is democratic. The editors allow the voices of the contributors to speak for themselves. Rather than interpreting and controlling, their introduction merely sets the stage. And, as contributors themselves, the editors' voices are merely two among a group of equals.

Strong Women Stories is an important resource for those teaching Indigenous literatures. Often, the study of Indigenous literatures is divorced from the living communities that have given birth to those literatures. This approach gives rise to

misinterpretations that could be problematic not only in a scholarly sense but also in a societal one. In the past, the absence of Indigenous voices in scholarly discussions about Indigenous people and issues has caused misunderstandings between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, which have, in turn, given rise to a multitude of problems, especially given the power of the scholarly voice in society. Misinterpretations that misrepresent a living community, especially ones that have been so maltreated as Indigenous communities, beget even more harmful results. *Strong Women Stories* provides the voices that will give scholarship about Indigenous literatures some much-needed context. I highly recommend this book.

Reading Pleasure

Susan Swan
What Casanova Told Me. Knopf Canada $34.95

Reviewed by Alison Calder

What Casanova Told Me, Susan Swan's latest novel, is intensely textual. Two narratives, set in different times, are linked by acts of reading and coincidences of geography. The novel's main character, Luce, is an archivist travelling the Mediterranean with her late mother's ex-lover, Lee. Their journey has two purposes: to make a memorial visit to Zaros, the site of Luce's mother's accidental death; and to deposit Luce's family papers at the Sansovinian Museum in Venice. These papers contain the novel's second narrative, the story of Asked For Adams, an American woman who comes to Venice with her father in 1797, makes the acquaintance of Jacob Casanova and, on the death of her father, travels with Casanova to Turkey, learning on the way about desire and life. Embedded in the family papers are other treasures, including letters from Casanova to a friend; letters to Casanova ostensibly from Aimee, his true love; and a journal written in Arabic that details the continuing adventures of Asked For after her own journal ends. Luce's trip echoes Asked For's earlier one, as she seeks out those landmarks that her ancestor identifies.

The text's highly artificial structure makes for some narrative clunkiness. Because the exposition of Asked For's narrative requires that documents be read, Swan must spend much of the present day narrative constructing situations that allow Luce to sit and read. While having Luce move from café to café allows the genuinely interesting story of Asked For and Casanova to unfold, it does not do much to develop the story of Luce and Lee. The effect is a bit like reading an epistolary novel, in which the heroine keeps writing even though her ravisher is breaking down the door: at times the reader may wish that Luce would just shut the book and *do* something. The narrative energy here is firmly located in Asked For's voice, and when it falls silent, the book sags.

A number of ambitious projects figure in this novel. Swan does some very intriguing things with seduction, not only the sexual seduction traditionally associated with Casanova, but also with the seductive nature of reading. Casanova uses letters to seduce Asked For, but Luce is also seduced by reading, unable to overcome her curiosity about the earlier characters. The reader is likewise drawn in by Asked For's style: her commentary on late-eighteenth-century politics and social mores is engaging. (Her descriptions of her body as "My Poor Friend" are particularly charming.) When Casanova's literary deception is finally revealed, readers may realize that they too have been seduced, led astray by the written word. Swan is less successful with some other narrative strands, particularly the conflict between Luce and Lee over Luce's mother's interest in matriarchal Goddess cultures. Some connections might be made between the lost mother, the lost Goddess,

and the search for a literary foremother (like Asked For), but these connections remain unclear.

For Fools Rush In

Constance Backhouse and Nancy L. Backhouse

The Heiress vs The Establishment: Mrs. Campbell's Campaign for Legal Justice. UBC Press $45.00

Reviewed by Jessica Schagerl

Where Angels Fear to Tread, written by Elizabeth Bethune Campbell (1880-1956) and self-published in 1940, is the story of the first Canadian woman to appear as a self-represented litigant in front of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London, England. In so doing, Campbell defied members of the Ontario judiciary, some of whom had attempted to discredit her efforts to have a full accounting of her mother's estate. In *The Heiress vs The Establishment,* Constance Backhouse and Nancy L. Backhouse use the reprinting of Campbell's narrative—which rumour has it was once hidden from law students at the University of Toronto—as the opportunity to explore questions about gender, judicial trust, and legal frameworks of early-twentieth-century Canada. Framing the five books of Campbell's *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, which is at its centre, *The Heiress vs The Establishment* consists of an introduction containing biographical material and historical context, an epilogue, the sequence of legal proceedings, and scholarly notes.

The cover images synecdochally tell the tale. The top photograph is of a debutante Elizabeth Bethune, the woman later called the "Privy Council's Portia" in newspaper coverage; beneath it is a photograph of 12 chief justices and judges of the Ontario Supreme Court. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* is a clearly teleological narrative designed to lead the reader to the Privy Council's decision, and one has a constant sense of being baffled by the behaviour of the many lawyers and judges that pass through the narrative (a "cast of characters" is supplied by the authors as part of the book's paratextual material). Campbell's book opens with a Prologue written in the third-person, in which "the thrill of achievement" is described as the birth of a son: "[h]ours and hours of torture, then a blessed oblivion from which she had emerged." (Thankfully reading the book cannot be described this way.) Books One through Five are written in a more direct style, and through these books the reader is taken from the discovery of possible fiduciary impropriety to the Privy Council. Questions of access permeate the account: she gains admittance into prestigious law and trust company offices on the strength of her pedigree (her father was a well-known barrister), yet her claims are continually thwarted as the "legal fraternity [rises] to protect its own" in ways both obvious and subtle. Campbell makes this a narrative of one woman's reactions to "nefarious transactions" conducted against her mother's estate and a tale of a high-stakes quest where "never short of the Privy Council can [she] win this case."

The success of *The Heiress vs The Establishment* is that this legal terminus is not the end point of analysis. In the Epilogue, Backhouse and Backhouse trace the protracted legal battles after the monumental decision of the Privy Council. While less time is spent speculating on a family ripped apart by protracted squabbles over inheritance, questions of gender and legal history are perforce front and centre. The section on W.D. Hogg, the trustee of Mrs. Campbell's mother's estate, is an even-handed indictment "that Hogg's stature insulated him from legal attack." Mrs. Campbell's racist attitudes, her perceived vulnerability in London, and the newspapers' focus on her "refined" appearance are well-contextualized. Campbell's tale begins in 1922; she

argues in front of the Judicial Committee of Privy Council in 1930, and the final decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal related to her case is in 1935—yet, there is no indication of the Great Depression. One gets the sense that there was scarcely an economic downturn for the law minds of Ontario.

Backhouse and Backhouse have annotated *Where Angels Fear to Tread* well; their notes are generally a careful mix of relevant legal history and archival details about characters. Occasionally the notes miss opportunities or seem unnecessary. For instance, "there was a Paul Jones" is not annotated, but there is an explanatory note that "[t]here were, of course, no photocopying or duplicating machines available in 1926." Likewise, the explanation that "Portia" was a common term for female lawyers, because they were seen to be play-acting, should have come in the introduction, when the term is first used. While the critical apparatus is geared to questions of legal history, there is much to recommend to literary scholars in this book. Those interested in the "Persons Case" will want to take note of the many historical parallels. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* can be usefully read for its ambivalences about feminist and imperial politics and the transatlantic intersections of power and privilege maintained throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Ultimately, Mrs. Campbell's case is placed firmly within its contradictory and confusing context. It is the mark of a well-researched critical introduction, epilogue, and notes that one is never quite able to applaud wholesale her victory.

Escape Routes

Leo Furey

The Long Run. Key Porter $24.95

Reviewed by Timothy Callin

The Long Run is set in the Mount Kildare Orphanage located in St John's Newfoundland circa 1960 and is told from the point of view of an innocent observer. The first-person narrative, while necessarily posing limitations and difficulties, lets the reader feel connected, in this case, to the orphaned Aiden Carmichael. Carmichael's voice relates the plight of the boys, a plight that is equal parts institutional corruption, religious indoctrination, and the crippling effects of confinement and abandonment. The camaraderie of the boys in "The Dare Club" has everything to do with the universal themes of freedom and escape in a place segregated from the outside world.

However, the main strength of the novel—I am thinking here of the narrative voice—is its most obvious weakness. Carmichael is likeable enough, but he is—despite the fact that he goes on kitchen raids, sneaks out for long runs with the other boys and so on—rather flat. Furey's Carmichael often only translates his own neutrality in his treatment of the other characters; he sees them while rarely seeing *into* them, which more often than not limits the dimensions necessary to make them truly memorable.

The Long Run also seems unclear about its audience; however, the central consciousness seems to suffer at times from the damaging legacy of *Harry Potter* in its attempts to be all things to all readers. Stylistically, Carmichael's voice is inconsistent, moving from elevated poetic language to adolescent colloquialisms, while at other times adopting the Hemingway propensity for serial compound sentences reminiscent of the *Nick Adams Stories*. Such inconsistencies fracture the power of the voice and undermine realism.

The problems of voice are inescapable, but do not diminish the fact that *The Long Run* is a solid first novel. For many readers it is only the story that matters, while for others it is how the story is told. And while the two are rarely exclusive, it is the story itself that is the real strength of *The Long Run*.

Damage's Otter

Jack Hodgins

Damage Done by the Storm. McClelland and Stewart $32.99

Reviewed by Duffy Roberts

In the title story of Jack Hodgins' collection, Albert Buckle needs guaranteed transport: "If a train cannot guarantee to get you where you are going it should never have left in the first place." When the train is delayed by a tree that has fallen on the tracks, Albert goes a little bit crazy. In "Balance," a man "restore[s] the balance" of the molds of orthopedically challenged feet. He also kisses the delicate toes of one foot belonging to a Miss Donna Rossini. The boy in "Over Here" thinks that Nettie Tremblay ought to know that she's Indian, but has been instructed not to tell. Frieda Macken's "Inheritance," although the title refers to a literal one, seems to show the early signs of Alzheimers. A pianist "challenges conventional approaches" to Mozart in "Astonishing the Blind." She also writes a letter to "you," her father, and the reader, about blindness, memory, amnesia, and her husband's betrayal.

Much modal imagination leaks out of the *people* who populate these pages: the "should," for example, of the pianist who should be practising rather than writing a letter and, "imagining" the bridge where her husband, Carl, and his lover meet, probably should have blinded him for his infidelity. I write "people" instead of characters because I think that readers who dismissed the characters in *Spit Delaney's Island* as exercises in magic realism do not have the neighbours that Hodgins does. This collection tells me two (and more) things: Hodgins must now have different neighbours, and his neighbours still make good stories.

Damage Done by the Storm is 28 years removed from *Spit Delaney's Island*. Although multiple novels are located in the space between, an initial wonder remains: as a person who crafts short stories like an otter balances an oyster on its belly—hungrily, purposefully, playfully, floating in a sea of other otters doing similar things—why the temporal dislocation of 28 years? I have heard whispers that Hodgins does not consider himself a short story writer, but that the short stories he does write (that remain modal, that might or might not be published) contain characters that refuse to remain silent for him.

His recent collection *does*, however, allow a large and wonderful space for the reader: answers become questions in this collection, answers which, in turn, contract to expand again. The collection simultaneously resists easy reading, is suspicious of closure, and contains an attention to the world through a gentle unpacking of its organizational metaphor, "damage." Rather than the word/idea simply connoting the irrevocably destroyed (although blindness, Alzheimers, and trees broken by the weight of snow are irreversible), damage becomes more sonic, lateral, and metaphorical as a result of fracture: damage rendered as dam plus age, or damn age, or even damn image.

I also see much of Hodgins' craft in Frieda Macken's thinking: recognition of the things she could do before, the things she "couldn't risk" now. The dam of age affects Hodgins too, I think: sadness born of loss, or the fact of the uncontrollable, unclayable in prose, Albert Buckle's weather (and else) "thrown into doubt" (although I too, like Hodgins' characters, imagine). There is less play in this collection, fewer words: there is distrust of overt exuberance, perhaps a distrust tempered *by* experience. "This Summer's House" is problematic, and suffers from too many characters diffusing its focus, its polyphony a cacophony. I also wonder if setting "Astonishing the Blind" in Germany and "Galleries" in Mississippi strengthens them. But these two blips are easily offset

by the well-crafted second person perspective in "Astonishing the Blind," perhaps the first time I have not been annoyed by a fiction writer's use of the tense.

Damage Done by the Storm is a collection that attends to the questions that arise when we either distrust the information that circulates around us or inhabit those spaces between guaranteed meaning: Frieda Macken, in spite of being encumbered with a memory that fails her, still "like[s] to make more of things than just question and answer." So, a collection can be wonderful by nine/tenths, which is a whole lot more than not half-bad. However, Mr. Hodgins, this reader's itch for more stories still needs scratching.

Foundational Images

R. Scott Sheffield
The Red Man's on the Warpath: The Image of the "Indian" and the Second World War.
UBC Press $29.95

Reviewed by Madelaine Jacobs

Citizenship and identity are most salient during war. As Canadians extended their ever-forming national identity during the World War II, an oft-dismissed segment of the population chose service and sacrifice, proving their Canadianness, despite their lack of official citizenship. R. Scott Sheffield reveals the impact of this effort on the wider English-Canadian public by describing the "image" of the "Indian."

Sheffield's task is monumental and, accordingly, the scope of his documentary analysis is impressive. His work's greatest strength lies in its analysis of Canadian newspapers. Using these sources and government documents, Sheffield extracts images of the "Administrative Indian" and "Public Indian" for the period between the Depression and 1948. He demonstrates that, despite their generous contributions to the war effort and the recognition that these sacrifices evinced, Aboriginal Canadians were generally seen through lenses of Eurocentric stereotypes: "noble savages," weak remnants of a dying "race," or dangerous degenerates. Nevertheless, Sheffield asserts that English Canadians' capacity to consider Aboriginal persons in a positive light was "forced on them" by the Aboriginal war effort and resulted in the "end of the 'era of irrelevance'" for Aboriginal Canadians.

Although the candid intent of *The Red Man's on the Warpath* is to investigate the "characteristics, imagery, stereotypes, and assumptions" that comprise the public understanding of Aboriginal Canadians, trading in stereotypes is a delicate task in which the issue of scale is crucial. Sheffield emphasizes the ease with which these oversimplified and imprecise images were accepted: "Canadians, through their media, and as a result of the segregation of the First Nations on remote reserves, had the luxury to think of the 'Indian,' or not, in whatever way they wished." Nonetheless, Aboriginal Canadians were not uniformly remotely-located nor of a singular "race." In many areas of the country, despite the restrictions of reserve life, Aboriginal Canadians met and interacted with English-Canadians and formed a diversity of impressions through everyday exchanges, relationships, and influences.

Although Sheffield is understandably limited by a lack of literature on the subject of Aboriginal involvement in the Great War and is only able to discuss this important precursor briefly, he omits the important point that Aboriginal enlistment in the Great War was greater than that in World War II both proportionately and absolutely. In his discussion of Aboriginal soldiers, in particular, it follows that the images and attitudes that Sheffield investigates may have had a significant relationship to those formed in the Great War.

Sheffield has clearly made a valuable contribution to an underdeveloped area of

scholarship. He has laid the pioneering framework for future work that will, I hope, fill in the remaining gaps and address the particularities that Sheffield strategically avoids.

The Gift of Redress

Roy Miki
Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice. Raincoast $34.95

Reviewed by Guy Beauregard

Roy Miki's *Redress* looks back to the 1988 redress agreement between the federal government of Canada and the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) to explore how and why this event should matter to us now. Miki was a member of the NAJC negotiating team that successfully worked toward this agreement, and his meditation on this process brings together a remarkable range of materials while consistently foregrounding the politics of the knowledge produced around "Japanese Canadian" subjects. We read, for instance, about Miki's work as a student at United College (now the University of Winnipeg) writing a book report on Forrest LaViolette's *The Canadian Japanese and World War II* (1948). Miki's narrative tells us that the book report is "long gone" but that the act of writing it "triggered a desire to know more—not only about the wartime dispersal, an event woven into all our family stories, but also the various discourses through which 'Japanese Canadian' would be produced by historians, sociologists, government officials and others as an identity formation." From this formative moment, we learn about other key texts that have sparked Miki's lifelong investigation. Miki found one of these sources listed in the card catalogue at the University of British Columbia: Kunio Hidaka's "Legal Status of Japanese in Canada," an unpublished study from the late 1930s or early 1940s that set out to list "the legal means through which a certain group was excluded from the rights that mainstream (white) Canadians took for granted" and thereby marked, for Miki, "an early instance of a Japanese Canadian undertaking critical research to resist the official erasure of his personal identity." In some respects, the first five chapters of *Redress*—which together track the history of Japanese Canadians up to and including the 1940s—can be read as a meditation on and extension of Hidaka's unpublished study. At the heart of Miki's project here is an attempt to name the different ways that Japanese Canadians have been racialized and—crucially—the ways that have nevertheless acted as historical agents in these circumstances. On this register, we read about the case of Tomey Homma in 1900; the Canadian Japanese Volunteer Corps in World War I; the collective work of Japanese Canadian fishers in the 1920s; the work of the Japanese Canadian Citizens' League in the 1930s; and the work of the Nisei Mass Evacuation Group during the tumultuous events of the 1940s. In tracking this history, Miki situates the redress movement that emerged in the 1980s in the context of the voices and actions of many Japanese Canadians that have otherwise been written out of standard liberal historiographical accounts that represent Japanese Canadians as uniformly passive victims of anti-Japanese racism.

A key turn in the argumentative structure of *Redress* appears in a short and evocative interlude entitled "The Call for Justice in Moose Jaw." Here, Miki tells the story of a small group of Japanese Canadians who "took a 'last stand'"—at the time, unsuccessful and unrecognized—"in a lonely government hostel just outside of Moose Jaw" in 1948 to demand compensation for their losses and to protest their forced resettlement in Saskatchewan. But while in 1948 "the voice of Japanese Canadians who were directly affected by dispossession and

dispersal could not be heard," the remaining chapters of *Redress* describe how, from the early 1980s onward, the Japanese Canadian community could forge a collective movement that eventually, after many twists and turns, negotiated an agreement with the federal government of Canada. In these chapters, Miki explores—among other issues and events—the reclamation of history and the renewed sense of community sparked by the 1977 Japanese Canadian Centennial Project (JCCP); the subsequent work of the JCCP Redress Committee (of which Miki was a member); and the tensions and sometimes spectacular controversies that ensued as "a new language of redress was formed, word by word."

In telling this story, *Redress* does not simply celebrate how Japanese Canadians successfully mobilized themselves in the 1980s (even though they did); nor does it simply tell us how Canada as a nation underwent a significant transformation during this process (even though it has). *Redress* instead takes a more difficult critical turn to ask how an account of this mobilization and transformation could be composed and represented. In the Preface, Miki writes that

> A form for a work I had in mind became apparent when I started to think that a complex of sources—archival documents, journals, letters, interviews, tapes, studies of Japanese Canadians, critical theory and even memory—could be incorporated in tandem. This approach opened up a flexible procedure that enabled me to interweave the personal and the historical, the two strands of my own negotiations with "Japanese Canadian" as a shifting frame of reference.

The "flexible procedure" named here draws attention to the question of the form of *Redress* and how this question may be fundamental to the broader critical project of representing—and possibly intervening in—personal and collective histories of racialization in Canada. In this respect, *Redress* joins other works of critical nonfiction in Canada—including Miki's earlier essay collection *Broken Entries* (1998), Fred Wah's *Faking It* (2000), and, in a different register, Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return* (2001)—that foreground their method of composition in order to represent histories of displacement and diaspora. In taking on this larger problem of representation, *Redress* thereby delivers what Miki calls, in another context, "the gift of redress": an invitation to consider its distinctive "flexible procedure" as *one* lens through which we can learn to view, with clarity and in remarkable detail, "shifting frames" of racialization in Canada and a collective movement for social justice that challenged and indelibly transformed its composition.

George Ryga Revisited

James Hoffman, ed.
George Ryga: The Other Plays. Talonbooks $29.95

James Hoffman, ed.
George Ryga: The Prairie Novels. Talonbooks $24.95

Reviewed by George Melnyk

It was Talonbooks publisher Karl Ziegler's idea to collect into a single volume all the plays by George Ryga, except for *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, his most famous work. To this collection he added a second volume titled *The Prairie Novels*, giving readers and students an easily accessible body of the writer's major work. Some years earlier Talonbooks had published two collections—*The Athabasca Reader* and *Summerland*—which provided examples of his "other" literary work from short stories to essays. This omnibus approach allows Ryga's creative achievement to remain an active part of Canadian literary studies.

Editor James Hoffman is the author of Ryga's authorized biography (*The Ecstasy of*

Resistance: A Biography of George Ryga) and so is well-placed to provide readers with a definitive edition of Ryga's work. He is Professor of Theatre at Thompson Rivers University and editor of *Textual Studies in Canada*. His introductory essay to *George Ryga: The Other Plays* is titled "Unsettling Colonial Voices," an expression of the editor's belief in Ryga's early contribution to what is now considered postcolonial writing in Canada. He considers the "contemporary, multicultural nation of immigrants" and their postcolonial view of "First Nations heritage" to be the Canadian sensibility that Ryga represents. In total the volume contains 16 plays and Hoffman provides a brief introduction to each. While providing criticism of their theatrical value ("unwieldy, almost unplayable"), he seeks to provide an explanation of why this is the case (". . . because he lived and dramatized the profoundly ambivalent experience of the 'settler postimperial culture'"). In general, Hoffman provides an effective and multifaceted description for the student seeking a quick understanding of Ryga's stature as a playwright.

The companion volume, *The Prairie Novels*, is another matter. Hoffman's introductory essay, "Colonial Passages: Rereading the Prairie Novels of George Ryga," is about half the length of the previous introduction and there are no brief introductions to each novel as was the case with the plays. Perhaps this lesser treatment reflects the smaller amount of material since there are only three short novels (one novel is missing because it does not fit the "prairie" theme) and Ryga's status in the canon as a minor novelist, his reputation still tied to the ground-breaking play, *The Ectasy of Rita Joe*. It may also be the case that Hoffman, because of his expertise in theatre, is better qualified to discuss the plays than the novels. Nevertheless, his essay is a serious treatment of Ryga's work, reflecting his authoritative insights.

It is not my purpose to review Ryga's sixteen plays and three novels, about which there is already commentary. What is of greater interest is how Ryga's reputation as a playwright and a novelist has fared since his death in 1987 and how our "reading" of his work has evolved. The entry for George Ryga in the 1973 *Supplement to The Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature* was written by James Noonan of Carleton University. The entry praises *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, pans *Grass and Wild Strawberries* and deals factually with the incident over *Captives of the Faceless Drummer*. Noonan goes on to comment favourably on the two then published novels, concluding with the observation that their writing makes ". . . one wish Ryga would publish more in this form." In 1973, although Ryga was best known as a playwright, it was felt that his novels were underrated.

The 1997 edition of *The Oxford Companion to Canadian literature* justifiably contained a much longer entry, also written by Noonan. Ryga had been dead for a decade and his stature in Canadian letters seemed to have increased significantly since that first entry 25 years earlier. Noonan provides synopses of the major plays and then continues his praise for Ryga's fiction, which by this time had increased to four novels (the final novel *In the Shadow of the Vulture* is not included in the current collection because it is set among migrant Mexican workers). He uses the same adjectives to describe them—evocative and intense—that he used previously and then adds that they are also "authentic and suspenseful." In a way the tension between the plays and the novels is highlighted by these entries. Fame, both popular and critical, tends to skew our perception of a writer and in Ryga's case fame is definitely related to the stage and not the page.

I share Noonan's taste for Ryga's fiction. While I compliment Talonbooks for keeping his fiction available in this collection, I

believe that Noonan would have been a better choice to edit the volume and write the introduction because the novels seem to resonate more for him than for Hoffman. The "post-colonial settler" figure that Hoffman sees dominating Ryga's fiction is one that is difficult for readers to embrace. I remain convinced, as I wrote in *The Literary History of Alberta: Volume Two* (1999), that Ryga's fiction "awaits its great interpreter and defender." While Hoffman fits Ryga's work into the postcolonial canon with skill, there seems to be something missing in his analysis—a genuine spirit of empathy for Ryga's fiction.

It would seem that when Ryga broke through the silence surrounding the situation of First Nations Peoples in Canada in the 1960s he was able to reach out and create a sympathetic figure in the character of Rita Joe—aboriginal, female, exploited, yet strong. The country was ready for this. But at the same time he was creating his impoverished, ethnic, male protagonists in fiction for whom there was not the same resonance. One may conclude that the harsh treatment of class issues totally within the Euro-Canadian paradigm of Canadian nationality was and remains something to be avoided. Postcolonial critical thinking is more interested in the troubled history of non-Euro-Canadian peoples, a history to which Ryga made a great dramatic, but not fictional, contribution.

Whose Canada?

Charlotte Gray and Sara Angel
The Museum Called Canada.
Random House $65.00

Reviewed by Carole Gerson

In *Quill & Quire*'s memorial tribute to Pierre Berton (January 2005), Charlotte Gray commended him as a mentor who "kept alive the tradition of narrative history in an era when academic historians had turned their backs on it." Herself the winner of the Berton award for 2003, conferred since 1994 by Canada's National History Society, Gray is in some ways his successor—indeed, the same issue of *Quill & Quire* acclaimed *A Museum Called Canada* as "a project of pure celebration" and placed it at the top of their list of the best books of 2004. This volume is certainly ambitious—to quote *Quill & Q*uire one last time: "Canadians can now have their own national museum on their coffee table." I regret that this volume is a coffee-table book, as many of its carefully chosen images would benefit from being shown on a larger scale. It is also regrettable that the role of curator Sara Angel, whose team selected and organized the objects, is minimized by the publisher, whereas Gray, whose job was to choose among these artefacts for the subjects of her essays, receives top credit.

Arranged as 25 "rooms of wonder," the volume begins in the "Fossil Foyer" and ends in the "Earth & Sky Atrium." Each section presents a collage of images and texts, in a feast of material culture. As a whole, the project is an organizational triumph, integrating the larger sweeps of history with anecdotes and artefacts that bring the past to life. Interspersed with official documents and portraits are implements, clothing, and arcane tidbits of information —such as the invention of Pablum during the 1930s by doctors at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children. Thus Martin Frobisher's disastrous quest for northern gold is captured in a sixteenth-century stone wall in Dartford, England, containing chunks of his useless ore. Wolfe's conquest of Quebec is personalized through his annotated copy of Grey's *Elegy*, now reposing in the Fisher Library at the University of Toronto. In addition to formal photographs of the Fathers of Confederation, we see the Confederation Quilt stitched by seamstress Fanny Parlee from remnants from the gowns of the dignitaries' wives who attended the ball at the

Charlottetown Conference of 1864. The charisma of the Franklins is captured in two Staffordshire figurines, and that of Louis Riel in the coat, moccasins and pieces of rope laying claim to the status of relics. The human cost of World War I appears in a heart-stopping pre-printed field service postcard and a gripping essay on gas warfare—a brilliant juxtaposition to the tear gas cannister deployed in a later section to encapsulate the demonstrations in Quebec City against the 2001 Summit of the Americas. The artifacts include samples of Canada's print and literary heritage: we see the first newspaper published in Canada, the *Halifax Gazette* of 23 March 1752, and also the press on which Joseph Howe produced his reformist *Novascotian* eight decades later. Coverage of books ranges from Joseph Brant's Mohawk translation of *The Book of Common Prayer* (1787) to a page celebrating the global success of *The English Patient*.

Interestingly, there is no "Ladies' Parlour." Rather than being segregated into separate quarters, women are sprinkled throughout the volume—although vastly outnumbered by important men, a feature that could have been adjusted with greater stress on families and communities. In addition to meeting expected historical figures such as Susanna Moodie, Nellie McClung, and Thérèse Casgrain, we encounter the Black presence in Ontario through a full page on Mary Ann Shadd Cary, and Native culture in an essay on Pauline Johnson. However, the refreshing inclusion of under-acknowledged women artists such as Jane Ellice and Molly Bobak does not compensate for the surprising absence of Emily Carr and Joyce Wieland, especially as their male counterparts are showcased with Tom Thomson's shaving mug on display alongside *Canoe Lake*, and samples of Michael Snow's *Walking Women*.

While the book's array of artifacts includes many intriguing surprises, several aspects of its selectivity and presentation troubled me. This celebratory volume tends to downplay some features of Canada's past. For example, while the existence of slavery in Canada is acknowledged in the reproduction of François Malépart de Beaucourt's 1786 painting, *La Négresse*, the accompanying text elides the presence of slaves in the Maritime colonies and the region's subsequent black communities. First Nations artifacts receive considerable admiration, many displayed in a dedicated "First Peoples' Room," but the narrative is sanitized: we don't learn why the buffalo vanished or that Aboriginal children were forced to attend residential schools. My second concern is that the treatment of French Canada is particularly light, restricted mostly to the "Salon de la Nouvelle France." We see little of post-Conquest life, nor do we meet Maurice Duplessis, or get much sense of the enormous impact of the Quiet Revolution. I wonder what this museum would have contained if one of its curators were francophone, and I remain curious about the reception of this book in Quebec.

The pedants among us will enjoy the appendices which (in the tiniest of fonts) cite locations of the images and references used in composing the texts. The index and the fold-out time-line assist in navigating through the displays, though signposting is often sparse; a few modern maps would be helpful, as would the more consistent presence of page numbers. On a number of occasions, the book presumes that the reader already knows the context of a display, such as the origins of the Winnipeg General Strike. Despite such oversights, most teachers and students of Canada's past will relish discovering the unusual artifacts collected by Angel and the accompanying stories written by Gray. My own classes will certainly benefit.

Soul Survivors

Dionne Brand
What We All Long For.
Knopf/Random House $29.95

Reviewed by Evelyn C. White

Shortly after reading the final, suspense-filled page of Dionne Brand's new novel, I received a copy of *Children of the Movement*. In this non-fiction work, journalist John Blake examines the enduring impact of the US civil rights struggle on the sons and daughters of such towering figures as Martin Luther King, Jr., segregationist George Wallace, and Elaine Brown, the only woman to lead the Black Panther Party. In her exploration of a multi-racial group whose trailblazing parents settled in 1970s-era Toronto, Brand, like Blake, tells a story of loss, promise, sacrifice, and transformation.

With the city central to her narrative, Brand opens *What We All Long For* with an evocative description of Toronto: "Have you ever smelled this city at the beginning of spring? Dead winter circling still, it smells of eagerness and embarrassment and, most of all, longing. . . . Lives in the city are doubled, tripled, conjugated – women and men all trying to handle their own chain of events. . . . At times they catch themselves in sensational lies . . . juggling the lines of causality, and before you know it, it's impossible to tell one thread from another."

Rich in its contemporary ethnic diversity yet constrained by its Anglo heritage, Toronto serves as the backdrop for the intersecting lives of Tuyen, Oku, Carla, and Jackie, four friends in their 20s struggling to reconcile pained family histories with a future of their own design. Here Brand details the tension between "old world" immigrants to Canada and their twenty-first-century progeny: "No more stories of what might have been, no more diatribes on what would never happen back home, down east, down the islands, over the South China Sea, not another sentence that began in the past that had never been their past. . . . They'd never been able to join what their parents called 'regular Canadian life.' The crucial piece, of course, was that they weren't the required race." In a deft move, the author also notes that regardless of race, few acknowledge Canada's aboriginal roots. "All of them sit on Ojibway land, but hardly any of them know it or care because that genealogy is willfully untraceable."

As the saga unfolds, Brand reveals that skin colour is not the only "burden" the four friends share. Carla (a bike courier) and Tuyen (an artist) are each negotiating difficult relationships with their respective brothers, Jamal and Binh. The emotional strain the women endure complicates a growing eroticism between them. A poet and jazz aficionado, Oku lusts for Jackie (a daughter of blacks who migrated to Toronto from Nova Scotia). He is undone more by his personal demons than by Jackie's love affair with Reiner-Maria, a German musician Oku disparages as "Nazi boy."

Apparently not content with a full palette, Brand crafts another plot line. Readers meet Quy (which means "precious" in Vietnamese), brother to Tuyen and Binh, Quy, who by a tragic twist of fate, was unable to immigrate to Canada with his family. He remained in South Asia where, like the four friends in Toronto (and their parents) he was also compelled to fashion an identity and learn how to survive. A shadowy figure who is both absent and present in the novel, Quy adds an intriguing momentum (and undertow) to the otherwise soap opera-ish leanings of *What We All Long For.*

Offering reflections from Quy's perspective, the author writes: "Innocence is important for a hero. I'm not innocent; neither was the monk. Innocence makes a story more appealing to some. It's dangerous where I'm concerned."

Indeed, in a classic case of "less is more," Brand might have delivered a dazzling novel had she forgone the humdrum Oku-Jackie dynamic (replete with predictable sex scene) and given flight to a narrative that turned solely on the intertwined familial worlds of Quy and Carla. For in the latter configuration, Dionne Brand primes readers for an experience that is both fantastically cinematic (à la Alfred Hitchcock) and reminiscent of another novel that explores, to magnificent effect, a similar immigrant theme: *The Book of Salt* by Monique Troung.

What We All Long For is an ambitious novel weakened by a surplus of weak characters. Still, it stands as a worthy contribution to the rising chorus of ethnic voices in Canadian literature who are proudly singing, "We Shall Overcome."

Making Mourning Work

Christian Riegel, ed.
Response to Death: The Literary Work of Mourning. U of Alberta P/Canadian Review of Comparative Literature $34.95

Reviewed by Elizabeth M.A. Hodgson

This collection of essays, published simultaneously as a book and as an issue of the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, encounters in a variety of contexts what its editor calls "the literary work of mourning." In studies of English, French, Canadian, American, New Zealand, and Indian authors, the essays have in common an interest in the ethical force of literary texts addressing mourning and loss. Tending toward psychoanalytic readings, the collection sees grief in literature as part of a developmental process. Reading texts ranging from medieval plays to contemporary poets, the collection addresses the utility of literary grief for readers, writers, and critics.

Because the literary subjects here range from the York mystery plays through Shakespeare to George Eliot and Arundhati Roy, it is difficult to imagine an area- or genre-based readership. These essays do share a commitment to reading literary texts according to their ethical value, be it for the individual's psychological growth or for the health of sociopolitical systems. Almost every essay wishes to claim for its authors the "healing," the "growth," the "reform" of the self or the social body through corrective mourning. Note these examples: "George Eliot understood that engaging in idealization . . . might actually, in circumstances such as Adam's, be both healthy and productive. If we do not allow such a process to take its natural course, . . . then we may well block or at worst disrupt the work of sorrow." "Perhaps if men and women themselves were to come to believe in the truth of the embodied experiences of women, including maternal mourning . . . then perhaps (but this is too naïve to hope for, don't you think?), perhaps then people would be much more reluctant to sacrifice those children . . . to . . . brutal and grotesque myths of nation."

Increasingly, as the collection moves from past to present, the essays invite this identification of the critic with the fictional character and the author under discussion. Several essays make claims about the "pain," the "denial," the "bitterness," or the "repression" in which both characters and authors are engaged. Barbara Hudspith promises that "the connection between the author's mourning and that of her protagonist will be explored" because "the contributions of contemporary grief counsellors about the nature of healthy grief . . . speak directly to Adam's 'case'." Garry Sherbert's study of the character Nora in Barnes' *Nightwood* argues that "if Nora's hieroglyphic figure . . . cannot find the right words to express her pain, then neither Nora's, nor Barnes's, nor the reader's mourning work is finished." She goes on to say that "The reader or critic who

attempts . . . to explain the significance of the grandmother suffers a similar wound." Todd F. Davis and Kenneth Womack's "Reading the Ethics of Mourning in the Poetry of Donald Hall" states this paradigm most explicitly. Davis and Womack read Hall's collection *Without* (written about the death of his wife) as a form of narrative therapy which plays a "significant role in the grieving process for both the writer and his audience." The essay both argues for and enacts what it calls "an ethics of mourning": "as an act of literary interpretation, an ethics of mourning cultivates empathy in the reader. Without the ability to assume the role of the characters who grieve within the confines of the story or poem, the reader will not be transformed." They go on to compare an ethics of mourning to the suspension of disbelief that "draws us into the circle of grief so we may shed tears that are at once our own and not our own." The suspension of disbelief is a performative convention with no particular ethical weight and a chequered past, not really analogous to this project of compelling readers to empathize with grieving characters. Hall and Womack also imply that readers need the "transformation" of this chosen medicine. I find this a problematic line of reasoning, both as literary theory and as an ethical judgement of readers and reading. Certainly this model allows (requires) these critics to consult with Hall himself and invites assessments of Hall's personal life: "In their marriage, Hall and Kenyon truly cleaved to one another; their love . . . binds them with an irreplaceable intimacy." This statement would be moving if verifiable. If there is no accessible evidence for such a claim, though, what distinguishes it from a wish? If this *is* a fantasy, could there not also be a self-analytical turn, in which the authors examine their own motivations and positions? This would at least indicate that the authors have the courage of their convictions.

Perhaps none of this matters if *Response to Death* can yield sensitive literary readings of texts addressing grief and mourning. Many of the articles do. Heather Dubrow's article on Shakespeare's "The Rape of Lucrece" compares the active and passive grief of the poem's male characters; Stephen C. Behrendt provides a fascinating study of the public mourning for two royal princesses. Ernest Smith incisively reads Berryman's and Plath's attempts to "figure the father"; Lloyd Edward Kermode thoughtfully analyzes Paul Monette's AIDS elegy as a new disease-elegy. Several essays provide very helpful historical contexts for their arguments, and the theorists cited, from Derrida and Kristeva to Freud and Klein, supply rich texture to the collection. If these highly empathetic approaches can be framed and articulated within such shared intellectual paradigms, or treated as exploratory, speculative, and self-analytical when not, they certainly have the potential to generate good literary work, whether in response to death or otherwise.

Ducharme le ferrailleur

Élisabeth Nardout-Lafarge
Réjean Ducharme : Une poétique du débris.
Fides 24,95 $

Compte rendu par André Lamontagne

En dépit de l'abondante réception critique dont elle fait l'objet, la production romanesque de Réjean Ducharme résiste depuis toujours au regard du poéticien. Dégager des règles discursives et des choix thématiques récurrents dans une oeuvre éclatée qui, de surcroît, piège le discours sur la littérature tient du paradoxe. Il y a là un défi qu'Elisabeth Nardout-Lafarge relève dans son étude au titre oxymorique : reconstituer une poétique du débris - un peu à la manière dont Kristeva parlait de « poétique ruinée ». La visée critique consiste ici à faire apparaître, sans la forcer, la cohérence

formelle et thématique des romans de Ducharme, de *L'avalée des avalés* à *Gros mots*, à partir de deux vecteurs d'analyse : les livres et l'élaboration d'une morale.

Intitulée « Des usages de la lecture », la première partie de l'ouvrage s'intéresse tout d'abord à la matérialité livresque qui informe les textes de Ducharme, de l'atlas dans *L'océantume* aux dictionnaires dans *L'hiver de force*. Entre la sacralisation et la dévaluation des livres, les personnages atteignent à une érotisation et à un absolu de la lecture qui s'opposent à la récupération de la Littérature par l'institution. Le chapitre suivant explore la « bibliothèque Ducharme », débusquant les intertextes de Barrès, Balzac, Ferron, Lautréamont, Nelligan, Proust et Rimbaud, sans oublier les classiques « maghanés » et les productions télévisuelles, et mettant en lumière une certaine idée de la littérature et du rôle de la culture populaire. S'inspirant des thèses d'André Belleau, l'analyse révèle comment Ducharme traite les questions du rapport intertextuel à la France et de l'identité nationale d'une façon inédite : par un bricolage qui opère une dissolution du patrimoine et recycle le sujet québécois à partir de débris culturels.

En deuxième partie, l'auteure déchiffre le code d'éthique propre à l'oeuvre de Ducharme, une répartition du bien et du mal qui fédère de nombreux thèmes (l'impossibilité de l'idéal esthétique et amoureux, le deuil de l'enfance) et catégories antithétiques (le chaste et le sexuel, le pur et le sale). Entre la profanation de la figure maternelle et la remise en question du père biologique ou littéraire, les réprouvés qui peuplent l'univers ducharmien adhèrent à une morale de la marge, dans une tension avec les valeurs et discours sociétaux. Outre ses considérations novatrices sur la judaïté des romans de Ducharme, cette deuxième partie revisite certaines idées reçues, notamment le mythe d'un écrivain instinctif et spontané qui célébrerait le génie de l'enfance.

Récipiendaire de nombreux prix, *Réjean Ducharme. Une poétique du débris* est un ouvrage des plus accomplis, superbement écrit, qui se distingue par la finesse de l'analyse et son ouverture à maintes contributions critiques et théoriques. La magnifique introduction, « Lire et faire lire Ducharme », s'avère un microcosme de l'ensemble par la clarté du commentaire et sa volonté de faire corps avec les textes. La fidélité n'exclut toutefois pas la critique, Elisabeth Nardout affirmant que l'invention verbale, la fête langagière tourne parfois court et mal chez Ducharme. La conclusion rappelle joliment comment les romans à l'étude se nourrissent des déchets de la langue :« la poétique de Ducharme déploie une pensée sans illusion où, dans l'éclatement des discours défaits, l'écrivain ramasse les mots comme des débris ».

Last Worlds

Michael Helm
In the Place of Last Things.
McClelland and Stewart $32.99

Reviewed by Russell Morton Brown

Michael Helm's second novel tells the story of the deeply divided Russ Littlebury, a former English instructor who combines the instincts and physical prowess of a hockey enforcer with a longing to live according to the wisdom drawn from great books rather than by the religion that guided his father. Unable to negotiate these tensions—between mind and body and between the claims of authority offered by faith and the satisfactions of rational uncertainty—Russ has become mired in a professional crisis in his past and a personal crisis in the present.

Once employed by a Toronto college, Russ had attempted to impart meaning to students who were an impossible mix of those who "had professional standing or university degrees from other countries that held them in no stead here" with those

who "were a few months out of high school and had never in their lives so much as taken the subway downtown" and those who "were working people who'd lost their industry or been hurt on the job and forced to retrain." In a scene that resonates with Jane Jacobs' critique of higher education as *credentialing* rather than educating, Russ' attempt to do the principled thing in dealing with a student who will not or cannot pass the required course leads to a disaster that causes him to leave teaching. Returning to the prairies for his father's death, he finds himself lacking both paternal authority and the consolation offered by religion. Hungering for significance, he tries to bring justice and order to the life of a troubled young woman by setting out in pursuit of the man who has abandoned her, a shadowy figure named Jack Marks.

In the novel's hallucinatory climax, Russ takes on a new role, an alter ego to that of the brooding intellectual who cannot put his life in order: he becomes a kind of tough-guy detective, even an avenger of innocence. In this brilliant set-piece, which shifts in point of view between the pursuer and pursued, he successfully apprehends the elusive hyper-male, the half-crazy Marks, after trailing him through a Texas border-town and into the squalid neighbourhoods of Juarez, Mexico. Becoming more literary *roman noir* than novel of ideas, this section of *In the Place of Last Things* opposes the earlier settings of urban classroom and small-town prairie community with a dark milieu chiefly defined by the mindless seeking of physical pleasures and the constant threat of physical violence. Entering this netherworld to confront Marks allows Russ to lay claim male authority for himself, yet it proves less than satisfying, for it leaves him still wishing for "a consolation, a judgement, almost anything."

I have not yet suggested the playful wit that leavens this narrative. Helm's choice of *Marks* for the name of the man who takes Russ on his long chase invites us to see a connection between Russ' desire to set accounts right and his earlier uncertainty over imposing standards in grading and evaluation. His pursuit of "Marks" suggests other possibilities as well, including the general slipperiness of language—writing as so many arbitrary marks on a page. Helm's playfulness is similarly visible in his rich use of intertextuality. The title of the book, because it alludes to apocalyptic Christianity, a faith in which perfect justice is providentially imposed and meaning is derived from external authority, reminds us that it was Mark's gospel that was the beginning of the Christian narrative of search for signs and higher meaning.

There are other important intertexts as well. Russ' journey becomes Odyssean—but the novel is not so much a writing back to Homer as to that classic of prairie fiction, *The Studhorse Man*, Robert Kroetsch's 1969 retelling of the *Odyssey*, the centre of his Out West triptych. Helm's take on the tale is less Homeric, however. Referring to the fact that his working title for his novel was "Utter West," Helm, in an interview with Michael Redhill, identifies "the controlling metaphor" of *In the Place of Last Things* as "drawn from Canto 26 of Dante's *Inferno*, the one that tells of Ulysses' last voyage. . . . The punishment of an eternity spent telling the story from within a flame simply because Ulysses had the hope of finding the last world, in the utter west."

In his own search for an elusive "last world," Russ, like Dante's Ulysses, abandoned home "to press on toward manhood." He not only left the Canadian prairies to cross the border into the United States, he moved across a second border and into a realm where he knows not how to navigate. When, on the threshold of Latin America, he realizes that at last it's time to turn homeward, his travels become a *tour d'horizon*, one that allows Helm to reflect on the difficulty for contemporary

Canadians seeking to locate themselves in North America's space and place.

Homes in the World

Shyam Selvadurai
Story-wallah. Thomas Allen $34.95

Reviewed by Jisha Menon

Shyam Selvadurai's *Story-wallah* offers a rich collection of short stories by new and established writers that proffer complex and multivalent elaborations of imagined communities, of shifting allegiances, of homes in the world. In his insightful introduction, Selvadurai plumbs the potentially liberating uses of the term "diaspora," which emphasizes the enabling impurities generated by transnational crossings and juxtaposes it to "immigrant" which, he contends, subscribes to bounded ideas of hermetically sealed cultures. However, Selvadurai discourages romantic recuperations of the diaspora and points to the many ways in which fluid migrant identities ossify into ethnic absolutisms.

Several writers in the collection engage with the dialectics of nation and migration, of home and belonging. Indeed a number of writers trouble assumptions about belonging and the refuge of "home." Chitra Fernandes, for example, abstains from sentimental portrayal of subaltern victimhood in her depiction of the servant's reprisals against the grandmother's prior acts of cruelty. Likewise, Selvadurai explores the everyday tactics of terror and abjection that are used within the home to discipline the production of "proper" gender and sexual identifications in youth. Farida Karodia and Sandip Roy's accounts revolve around the secret of homosexuality and illustrate the gradual estrangement of home and the alienation from family and friends.

The stories grapple with wide-ranging themes from clandestine acts of intimate violence to tragic political events that profoundly alter lives. Amir Hussein explores the perpetual sense of homelessness that haunts the multiple migrations of political refugees in the wake of the Indian partition and subsequent creation of Bangladesh. Bharati Mukherjee illustrates the despair of survivors who attempt to reconstruct their brutally disordered lives in the wake of the 1985 Air India bombings. While Mukherjee demonstrates that ethnic violence cannot be curtailed within the jurisdictional bounds of the nation-state thus illuminating the very real ties of the diaspora to their nations of origin, Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi illustrate the ways in which non-European minorities are victims of racial violence and hate speech. Kureishi eloquently depicts the traumatic, everyday experience of racial violence that Azhar encounters and explores his perpetual otherness from competing white and South Asian masculine, homosocial utopias. Ginu Kamani's story, however, is troubling because here the racism is turned inward as the protagonist internalizes dominant racist rhetoric. She dis-identifies herself as Indian and vehemently disavows and stereotypes all Indians as purveyors of an unenlightened and stultifying tradition.

The theme of political and everyday violence structures some of these stories, whereas others offer scenes of fragile bonds. Through the image of a snapshot, Anita Desai renders the ineffability of profound bonds of nurture and love between two sisters. Rohinton Mistry's story of a tenuous relationship between two neighbors converges on a mutual passion for stamp collection and delineates how a secret betrayal disperses that delicately assembled friendship. Other stories explore themes central to narratives of migration; while in Sam Selvon's story the family becomes the site upon which to craft the authenticity of one's ethnic roots, Shani Mootoo illustrates the persistent performance and recuperation of an authentic "Indian" subject-hood and

deploys language as the stage upon which competing claims to authenticity are staged.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of this collection is that it heterogenizes the diaspora—the multiple locations of origin (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka), arrival (US, South Africa, Australia, UK, Canada, Caribbean), and places and positions traversed in between. The collection dispenses with linear and uniform narrations of migration to chart the complex and variegated terrain that constitutes the South Asian diaspora. *Story-wallah* teems with the lush variety of rich, diverse, discontinuous voices that destabilize monolithic formulations of the South Asian diasporic experience.

Imagining London

John Clement Ball

Imagining London: Postcolonial Fiction and the Transnational Metropolis. U of Toronto P $45.00

Reviewed by Ann Martin

London is to cities what Big Ben is to clock towers, and it is no coincidence that the cover image of John Clement Ball's *Imagining London* is the highly recognizable clock tower of the Houses of Parliament. But the myth of London as "the centre of the world, the fountainhead of culture, the zero-point of global time and space" is rewritten as migrants from Britain's former colonies present their own versions of the city. In a detailed exploration of "the fascinatingly varied ways" in which "relations between metropole and (former) colony are imagined in postcolonial London texts," Ball shows how historical connections between these spaces undermine a binary model of power and resistance. Postwar London is instead viewed as a site at which the "complex process of *mutual* exchange, influence, and transformation" is manifested in the changing faces and representations of the city.

Ball's insightful readings of works by writers such as Robertson Davies, Sam Selvon, Anita Desai, and Hanif Kureishi trace London's role as both an historical entity tied to an imperial past and a physical space that is lived in the present. The two visions of the city are reflected in the spatial metaphors that Ball uses to organize his discussions of Canadian, Caribbean, Indian, and "black British" fiction, as the chapters correspond to compass-points in London. The city is navigated from these cultural and geographical locations, which Ball explores by drawing upon a range of spatial theorists, including Raymond Williams, Henri Lefebvre, Richard Sennett, Yi-Fu Tuan, and Marc Augé.

Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* provides the central theoretical paradigm, and it's a particularly appropriate choice. According to de Certeau, individuals are able to find "*ways of using* the constraining order of the place" and to establish "within it a degree of *plurality*." In other words, though there are strategies that organize city space, there are also tactics by which subjects can interact with those official mappings, an approach that Ball links to Homi Bhabha's distinction between the "pedagogical" and the "performative." The trick, however, is to avoid the reductive sense of stability that such binary oppositions imply. This is where Ball invokes Michael Parker Smith's term "transnational," which, unlike the corporate imperialism denoted by "multinational," acknowledges the "spectrum" of spaces, both real and remembered, that are negotiated by citizens on an everyday basis. The local informs the national and the national in turn informs the global in this relational model of identity formation, where London connects and is connected to multiple histories and geographies.

Though sophisticated, Ball's interpretations of specific texts remain clear and accessible. And while the argument could,

in less capable hands, run the risk of seeming repetitive, he provides historical, literary, and critical backgrounds for many of the works and thus contextualizes them in relation to specific cultural and national issues. The result is that each chapter presents a slightly different facet of the ways in which London is depicted. For example, in Canadian writing, encounters with London prompt the characters to "continually rethink and reconstruct their identities," and lead not just to new perspectives on Canada but to "numerous elsewheres." In contrast, Ball links the perceived artificiality of London in Indian fictions to the Vedantic concept of *maya*, arguing that the authors "reimagine metropolitan life through Indian sensibilities."

The book relies on a combination of thematic criticism and cultural materialism, which results in persuasive interpretations of literary trends, individual texts, and London itself. There are some glitches, however. The section on Jean Rhys, for example, works well thematically, where she "anticipates the portrayals of London as a complexly relational locale in much more recent novels by West Indians." But, despite his recognition that *Voyage in the Dark* was published in 1934 and set in 1914, Ball fails to examine the differences between modern and postmodern cities. It's a point that becomes problematic when he invokes Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin in discussing the "Caribbean *Flâneur*." While *flânerie* is an effective way of comparing the newness of London for modernists and migrants alike, it breaks down in relation to women in the early-twentieth century: V. S. Naipaul's Ralph Singh can at least mimic the role, but walking the streets has a very different connotation for Rhys' Anna Morgan.

Even so, Ball's inclusion of a range of perspectives, including Rhys', is what makes *Imagining London* a useful and interesting book, both in terms of the trends it identifies and the interpretations it contains. It is a compelling exploration of how the spaces and significance of what Joseph Conrad called "the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth" are represented in postcolonial fiction from the later twentieth century.

Imagined Geographies

Freeman G. Henry
Geo/graphies: Mapping the Imagination in French and Francophone Literature and Film.
Rodopi $44.00

Reviewed by Jacqueline Viswanathan

This volume of scholarly essays was published in conjunction with the annual French Literature Conference, held at the University of South Carolina. The 15 essays, most in English, some in French, are drawn from the conference papers. They explore geographies of the imagination, examining representations of place as imaginary constructs, rather than transcriptions of external reality. Under this common theme, the critics deal with a great diversity of lands, authors, and historical periods. The reader should not expect to find a significantly new critical methodology or theory of the representation of space in fiction. However, the general high quality of the essays and the wide scope in the choice of topics provide a fresh outlook on the fundamental concepts of the Self and the Other, as developed through these imaginary geographies.

Except for the introductory lecture, articles are presented in chronological order: Renaissance, Montaigne; Eighteenth Century, Crébillon fils; Nineteenth Century, Mérimée, Sand, Zola; Twentieth Century, Le Clézio, Doubrovski, Perec. Expanding these geographies of the imagination, the last essays discuss two films by African directors, French Canadian novels of the 1930s, French writings about Australia, and finally, unexpectedly, a French grammar textbook. Regrettably, this grouping does not encourage the

reader to explore conceptual and methodological affinities among papers from different periods or countries. The short introduction only points out the common reference to Said's concept of "imaginative geography" and Bhabha's re-definition of homogeneous national cultures, but without explaining how the papers collected in this volume exploit, expand, or revise the foundations of postcolonial criticism. Had such a general reflection been included, this collection would have transcended the usual shortcomings of conference proceedings.

The first essay, A. James Arnold's keynote address, is a useful general introduction to constants in colonial, particularly in French Caribbean, literature. Arnold discusses the need for exoticism and its remnants in postcolonial literature and then shows how recent works move beyond the binary opposition between Self and Other. Another article demonstrates that Australia's imaginary geography, as developed in French writings, is built on a similar opposition. The essays about two African films also relate the representation of space to postcolonial identities. A different theme, common to another group of papers, is the malleability of the Self linked with the metamorphosis of space in Montaigne's *Essays* or with the notion of "nomadic space" in Le Clezio, which also points out the correlation between geography and autobiography in Doubrovski. Readers will devise their personal itineraries among the 15 essays, which unfortunately cannot all be cited. "Literature discovers, when playing with geography, that what makes a good traveler, makes a good reader" is a fitting conclusion taken from the last, stimulating paper about a 1964 textbook for French children.

Of Note

Roo Borson
Short Journey Upriver Toward Oishida.
McClelland and Stewart $16.99

First, some advice for readers of Roo Borson's new collection: start at the back. The final section, "Upriver toward Oishida," is a prose commentary on Basho's *Narrow Road to the Deep North*. Since the entire book is suffused with the spirit of Basho—his humility and his fierce devotion to poetry—this final section, a deeply serious, finely tuned appreciation of his work, is an excellent entry point.

The opening section, "Summer Grass," is not so inviting. The poems are dense and hermetic. At times, the images seem arbitrary: what, for example, is "the shrill algal bloom of spring nights"? And big questions ("Do you still love poetry?" "Why be born?") appear with disconcerting abruptness. So begin, via Basho, at the end.

The form and texture of Borson's book derive from the Japanese poetic diary, the genre of which Basho's *Narrow Road* is the most famous example. In the poetic diary, the convention of allusive variation requires the incorporation of lines and images from distinguished predecessors. Borson honours this convention through her own homage to Japanese writers, not only Basho, but also Saigyo (the twelfth-century wandering poet whom Basho took as a model for poetry and for life), and the modern writers Jun'ichiro Tanizaki and Torahiko Tamiya.

Borson, who has sometimes been faulted for prosiness, has found in the poetic diary a form that accommodates prose without compromising poetic intensity. The three prose sections of *Short Journey* are written in a plain, unassuming voice, yet they are remarkably evocative and richly descriptive. A fourth section, "Autumn Record," consists of prose vignettes, punctuated with short poems; on the page, this looks very

much like modern translations of the classical Japanese poetic diaries. In the middle section entitled "Water Colour," Borson works more obviously with Japanese form and content. "Garden," for example, is composed of tercets with allusions to leaves, birds, a teahouse. Borson manages to write haiku-like verse (even using its shopworn lexicon of natural imagery) without ever sounding imitative or less than true to her own poetic purposes.

Throughout the collection run rivers—the Oishida of Japan and four rivers of South Australia. The water cycle—"from rain to underground springs, from springs / to fountains, freshets and rivers / from rivers to the sea"—is invoked as a metaphor of every writer's indebtedness to the traditions that flow from "upriver." Borson attributes her own openness to the world, to the poetry in each "candid" moment, to her great master: "Basho, / surely this is your doing." If so, then this book gives us yet another reason to be grateful to him. — SUSAN FISHER

John Lunn
The Mariner's Curse. Tundra $12.99

The Mariner's Curse begins with 12-year-old Rory Dugan aboard an ocean liner, tagging along on his mother's honeymoon with Rory's new stepfather. The story involves Rory's fascination with ships, and his computer searches for information on the "Titanic" and other famous shipwrecks. Although the book contains interesting material, it appears to tackle too many themes for the average 12-year-old to handle comfortably. These include issues about Rory's absent father, and ever-present stepfather; his problems relating to other children, and resulting emotional dependence on his computer; his fascination with shipwrecks; his first boy-girl relationship; his testing of boundaries and authority; demon-possession; his guilt regarding the drowning of his younger brother; the mystery surrounding Morgan, the ancient mariner; and the growing distance between Rory and his mother.

Any two or three of these would have been enough for a story. As a result, *The Mariner's Curse* lacks the unity and organic development of a really good story. Nonetheless, character and plot are handled skilfully, and this book might appeal to those young people between the age of 8 and 12 who, like Rory, are fascinated with the themes that the book presents. — KEVIN MCCABE

Mike McCarthy
The Journey Home. Tuckamore $12.95

David Carr's story begins in Ontario; his young life is torn apart when his parents are killed in a car accident. David is sent first to an orphanage, and then to one unloving foster home after another. A combination of dubious friends and poor judgement lands him in trouble with the law. On the run, he climbs into the back of a transport truck which takes him to Newfoundland where he is befriended by an old salt named Silas.

Living in a remote cove, David soon toughens up while working as a lobster fisherman. His life takes a new turn when he meets Jeanie from up the coast. In Newfoundland he experiences new dangers on the lonely coast at Deadman's Cove, and eventually discovers that his old life is catching up with him.

The story is very suitable for ages 11 and up. It addresses the desire for human love as well as how bad associations can spoil good habits. It demonstrates David's growth as a character from his struggles as a young child, his choices on life's path, and finally through his strong desire to live within the laws of the country. — DIANNE J. FERRIS

Giles Blunt
The Delicate Storm. Random House $34.95

The Delicate Storm is the second in a series of police procedurals featuring Detective John Cardinal of "Algonquin Bay," a barely fictionalized version of North Bay, Ontario where Giles Blunt grew up. As in *Forty Words for Sorrow* (2000), Cardinal and his Francophone colleague, Det. Lise Delorme, occupy distinctively Canadian space. A deceptively delicate ice-fog blankets the shores of Lake Nipissing. The first victim has been dismembered and the body parts scattered for gnawing by marauding bears. The second, a young female doctor, is found encased in a shroud of ice. The province is in the grip of cut-backs to medical care at the hands of conservative Premier Geoff Mantis and his golfing coterie. And the crimes have their roots in political intrigue that goes back to Quebec's FLQ crisis of 1970.

Detective fiction is formulaic, and indeed much of the pleasure of such texts lies in the fine deployment of expected ingredients—the finding of dead bodies, a plethora of clues, ingredients of luck and coincidence during the chase, a satisfying solution, and the restoration of social order. Blunt does a fine job in creating the complex John Cardinal with his emotionally fragile wife. Blunt is an extraordinarily visual, almost cinematic writer—which is not surprising given his 20 years in New York as a television scriptwriter for programs such as *Law and Order*, *Night Heat,* and *Street Legal*. His plot is complex, devious, and satisfying enough to have earned *The Delicate Storm* Canada's Arthur Ellis Award for 2004. With this novel, Giles Blunt joins Peter Robinson as one of the very best Canadian crime fiction writers. — MARILYN ROSE

Clint Hutzulak
The Beautiful Dead End. Anvil P $14.95

The jacket blurb claims *The Beautiful Dead End* is a combination of Russell Banks' "wintry realism" and "the poisonous hell" of Sartre's *No Exit*, "all tangled up in barbed wire noir." The noir comment is telling: it points to the stylization of grief, or loss, or sorrow, rather than to raw experience; indeed, it points in some ways to the title itself, and the implicit aestheticisation that the title invokes.

The novel, the story of the journey of a lost soul, is framed by two perverse sexual encounters that alienate and damage the participants. The first is essentially a case of necrophilia; the second is Stace's childhood traumatic witnessing of his father's rape of an unconscious girl that he was expected also to participate in. A yearning for closeness attends the other sexual encounters that occur between these two extremes, but that closeness eludes, and, for a soul as lost as Stace's, is clearly impossible. The novel is full of yearning but not quite regret: regret would imply more autonomy than is actualized. It begins with the death of the main character, and ends with his movement from some waiting zone to whatever one might imagine comes after death.

This novel is not "wintry realism," though it deals with a very bleak "real world." It is gritty only in the way that someone wishing to represent "gritty" would write it. This is not Charles Bukowski down-and-out territory, but a world that only gestures towards that territory. — STEVEN D. SCOTT

Graeme Gibson
Five Legs. Anansi $26.95

Upon publication in 1969, *Five Legs*, Graeme Gibson's first novel, was generally met with critical praise and initial commercial success. It has not had the lasting impact its initial

reception might have suggested: it has received little critical commentary over the past few decades. Its recent republication by Anansi provides an opportunity to re-evaluate the novel, absent the sense of stylistic novelty with which it was initially received. *Five Legs* is narrated through the consciousnesses of Lucan Crackell, an English professor at Western, and Felix Oswald, a graduate student in the same program, as they attend the funeral of a former graduate student in Stratford, Ontario. But the plot, such as it is, simply provides a vehicle for the book's attack on conventionality, exemplified by the constraints and hypocrisies of marriage and careerist academia, and an Ontario WASP ethos that cripples both protagonists. Gibson's use of stream of consciousness is generally effective at bringing us into the minds of Lucan and Felix, and his disjointed, fragmentary, and allusive prose style is energetic if a little over the top and unnecessarily awkward at times. Yet today *Five Legs* seems dated, both stylistically and thematically. Ultimately, its focus on the purposelessness and alienation experienced by white, middle-class males seems too parochial and too narrowly located in its era, and its stylistic innovations have lost their impact. It remains an object of historical interest, particularly for anyone interested in Canadian fiction of its era, and for that reason I am glad to see it republished, but I am afraid it will be of little interest to most readers today. — DOUGLAS IVISON

Roy MacSkimming
The Perilous Trade: Publishing Canada's Writers.
McClelland and Stewart $39.99

This is an important book. Part history, part memoir, part cautionary tale, *The Perilous Trade* is a study of English Canada's publishing industry from the post World War II era to the present day. And that history is brought to life through MacSkimming's own experience as someone who knows the business intimately and understands the impact of personality on it. Reading his account against the shrewd and sympathetic spirit of the telling underscores the extent to which publishing in English Canada bears the imprint of the individuals who shaped and dominated it. As the narrative unfolds and moves from the limited number of players of the 1940s and 1950s into the kaleidoscopic proliferation of publishers in the 1960s, 1970s, and beyond, the acceleration of productivity, scope, and specialization is remarkable—as are the perils associated with narrow profit margins, publication runs, sales, competition, the vagaries of public support and private distribution, global forces, and individual ambitions.

The first half of the book describes Canadian publishing in the 1950s with its emphasis on agency business and the publication of school texts—not a challenging climate for Canadian literary publishing in which MacSkimming is principally interested. Four figures dominate his account of this era: John Gray, publisher of Macmillan Canada, who understood the connection between writer and publisher, but who found change difficult; William Toye, with a formidable breadth and depth of talents and accomplishments; Marsh Jeanneret, whom MacSkimming dubs the "scholarly entrepreneur"; and Jack McClelland, "prince of publishers." MacSkimming's judgements of the achievements and limitations of each of these men are astute and sympathetic. Not surprisingly, it is McClelland who embodied the revolutionizing of Canadian publishing and created a force field of tireless activity, challenge, and chutzpah that put the writer at the centre of McClelland and Stewart and Canadian publishing in an unprecedented manner. The series of financial cliff-hangers that beset M&S were in part a side-effect of McClelland's efforts to promote Canadian writers.

With the arrival of the mid-1960s, Coach House Press and House of Anansi Press marked the advent of new personalities, innovation, and different publishing priorities. Cultural nationalism, regionalism, the emergence of small publishers, the success of children's literature publishing, Canadian international publishing, and the ubiquity of market forces are all dealt with in the second half of MacSkimming's history. He untangles and links the complexity of the era with skill. In so doing, he underscores the perils of publishing in Canada in the face of high financial risk, growing government disinclination to intervene, and the emerging, colossal force of globalization. His narrative is full of examples that illustrate the successes and the risks over the last two decades. The receivership of Clark Irwin and disappearance of Macmillan saw the departure of the old guard; the closing of Lester & Orpen Dennys, Hurtig Publishers, and Macfarlane Walter & Ross marked the departure of the new. In addition, the deleterious effects of the advent of the Chapters chain and the thunderclap of the Stoddart bankruptcy were profound.

In order for the Canadian publishing industry to survive, MacSkimming's recommendation is clear: "many publishing achievements of the past thirty years have resulted from an implied covenant between the private sector and the public sector; the industry has amply delivered the goods, but the government needs to keep its end of the bargain." For members of his generation, the notion of cultural sovereignty is bound to this country's literature and literary production in which the publishing industry is prime. MacSkimming admits the possibility that in light of the current, reduced state of Canadian-owned publishing, other views may prevail in a world of mass marketing linked through the Internet. He hopes that such will not be the case. This clear, well-told, and fascinating account gives full contextual measure to what hangs in the balance. — JOHN LENNOX

Soustitrage à rebours

Mark Harris

—*"Franchement, ma chère, je m'en fiche."* [Literal translation of Rhett Butler's most famous line in *Gone with the Wind*].

As with most things Canadian, one can't consider the issue of subtitling in Canada without first taking into account the countervailing pressures exercised by the United States. While our painfully close proximity (to the most powerful nation on earth) makes some form of US domination more or less inevitable, in no other field has the process of cultural colonization penetrated so deeply or travelled so far. While Hollywood's control of the international movie market is much more than just a local problem—aside from India, very few countries make most of the movies that appear on their screens, a bitter reality that forces even a country as stubbornly proud as France to settle for 35% of its own domestic market—nowhere is this stranglehold more oppressive than in Canada. Canadian video stores, including the ones that are not directly owned by US corporations, traditionally relegate Canadian product to the "foreign" film ghetto. Québécois features are sometimes conflated with French and Belgian entries; English Canadian movies, conversely, are more likely to be squeezed between Australian and New Zealand tapes in some ill-lit, rarely visited corner of the store. What this means in practice is that American films are seen as "domestic," while Canadian movies are regarded as esoteric, on a par with comedies from Bulgaria and epics from Uzbekistan.

The fact that vertical integration (the centralized control of motion picture production, distribution, and exhibition) has never been outlawed in Canada as it has in the United States is another aggravating factor. What's more, as all readers of *Variety* know, the US domestic gross includes Canadian figures. So far as Hollywood is concerned, Toronto and Vancouver are as American as Toledo and Seattle. If the distribution system is a little more democratic in Quebec—for obvious reasons, francophone features get a lot more screen time, while dubbing and subtitling requirements cause US movies to appear at a slightly different pace, as well as in slightly fewer numbers—its freedom is only relative, thrown into sharp relief by the absolute cultural imperialism that overshadows the Rest of Canada.

One of the hallmarks of Hollywood cinema is its aversion to subtitled features (*The Passion of the Christ* excepted). Americans, Jack Valenti never tires of telling us, don't want to read writing at the bottom of shimmering screens (except, seemingly, when the dialogue is in Aramaic). How this prejudice could hold sway in a country obsessed with computers, web sites, and video games is a subject the bellicose spokesman of the Motion Picture Producers of America prefers not to explore.

A more genuine—and genuinely disturbing—prejudice is the seemingly innate inability of Americans to relate to any narrative in which the principal protagonists are foreign. Even stories featuring their closest cultural cousins (Englishmen, Australians, Canadians) must first be filtered through a yankee prism before they can become acceptable Hollywood commodities (*U-571*). Thus, an industry that depends on the world for its success is insultingly indifferent to global diversity. When Jack Lang was French Minister of Culture, he regularly pumped money into movies that had no Gallic content whatsoever (such as Yilmaz Guney's extraordinary *Yol*, an anguished *cri de coeur* against the injustices the imprisoned writer/director perceived in his native Turkey). Sadly, there appear to be no Jack Langs in America's corridors of power, only an endless supply of Jack Valentis.

Perhaps because of Hollywood's traditional suspicion of overseas movies, especially those made in languages other than English, a surprisingly large number of the subtitled films that actually *do* appear on North American screens were obviously subtitled in the UK, since they employ "boot" for "trunk"; "petrol" for "gas"; and so forth. Miramax might own the worldwide rights, but somebody in Blighty actually does the grunt work.

Outside of Quebec, the number of dubbed films to be exhibited in Canada is negligible. For the most part, they consist of *anime, gialli* (bloody Italian thrillers), gothic German horror movies, Asian sex romps, and Europorn. Only in French Canada can dubbers hope to make a living, largely thanks to the francophone voice-overs that are recorded onto most Hollywood blockbusters. Films made in neither English nor French—slightly more numerous in Québécois multiplexes than they are in the rest of Canada—are usually dubbed or subtitled in Europe, not Montreal.

As for indigenous dubbing/subtitling, that mostly travels in one direction: from French to English Canada. Considering the frequently high quality of Québécois cinema this would be an unabashedly good thing if a number of political, cultural, and economic factors did not muddy the waters of cultural understanding.

On the technical side of things, most of the subtitling of Québécois films is entrusted to one firm: John Grey and Associates. One would like to think this is because the company in question beats the pants off the opposition. There does not, however, appear to be an opposition worth trouncing. Sadly, this seems to have less to do with the excellence of John Grey's associates than it does with the limited commercial opportunities enjoyed by such endeavours.

The most common destination of subtitled Canadian films was, and probably still is, Telefilm. The reason for this is twofold. First, the funding organization needs copies of all the films it finances, and, second, bilingual screening copies are a must for unilingual Genie judges (most of whom are anglophones).

Some of these subtitled features will appear in film festivals, while others will not. A number will be postdubbed, usually abominably, by the CBC, for subsequent broadcast (this dire fate is particularly probable in the case of mini-series such as *Omerta: La Loi du silence*). Very few will sail down the commercial conduits leading to English Canadian cinemas in cities west of Toronto or east of Montreal.

To conform to the laughably low Canadian content norms "imposed" by Ottawa, the nation's two major theatrical chains (Famous Players and Cineplex Odeon) will occasionally show five Canadian films a day in the smallest screening rooms of their most deserted shopping mall multiplex to virtually non-existent audiences over the span of a week. In the absence of viable quota regulations, this sleight-of-camera

sometimes accounts for an entire year's worth of home-grown viewing. If free trade has not made this situation notably worse, that is only because things were already about as bad as they could possibly be.

To put it mildly, the US majors are not interested in furthering the fortunes of Canadian filmmaking. Hollywood's fondness for shooting on location in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal is entirely predicated on the relatively weak Canadian dollar and cut price production crews (a state of affairs doubly threatened, at present, by unhappy unions and the strengthened loonie). At best, they see indigenous Canadian motion pictures as a practical training ground for the hewers of cinematic wood and drawers of celluloid water upon whom the Californian studios so heavily rely (*pace* Arnold Schwarzenegger).

But many distribution problems originate closer to home. At present, English Canadian filmgoers are only slightly more sympathetic to subtitles than are their US counterparts. (Québécois viewers are more accepting in this regard, although they continue to prefer—indeed, demand—postdubbing.)[1] More fundamentally, there are generic differences between the French and English Canadian film industries that make mutual understanding extremely difficult.

Outside of Quebec, there are only two directors with strong generic profiles, economic viability, and artistic cachet. David Cronenberg and Atom Egoyan make movies that are as cosmopolitan as they are indigenous; whether shot at home or abroad, their motion pictures are couched in a universally accessible idiom.

While they are not the only anglophone Canadian cinéastes with a strong international reputation—the little seen Guy Maddin, for instance, is much admired by the cognoscenti—they are the ones who define our national cinema for the benefit of foreigners. Domestic social dramas rarely travel beyond the borders of English Canada—they usually don't travel much within them, either—and the independent Canadian films that *do* make a minor splash (Lynne Stopkewich's *Kissed*, for example) tend to share in the general weirdness exhibited by Cronenberg, Egoyan, and Maddin.

While fantasy is certainly no stranger to Québécois cinema, the industry lacks an equivalent to English Canadian Cinema's Major Weirdos. This is ironic, since the *average* quality of Québécois features is considerably higher than that of their anglophone counterparts. Gilles Carle, André Forcier, Léa Pool, Gilles Groulx, Pierre Falardeau, and Jean-Pierre Lefebvre have all created estimable oeuvres, while many of the younger talents (Manon Briand, Charles Binamé, Denis Villeneuve) seem slated for even greater things. Nevertheless, despite this depth of achievement, only Denys Arcand is what one might call an internationally bankable name, his reputation being based on just three of his many features (*Le Déclin de l'empire américain, Jésus de Montréal*, and the Cannes-crowned, Oscar-validated *Invasions barbares*).

Arcand's success is somewhat anomalous in that he is a master of high comedy, the kind of cinematic terrain that has previously been mapped out by the likes of Ernst Lubitsch, Joseph L. Mankiewicz, Eric Rohmer, Woody Allen, and George Cukor.[2] There has been talk of re-making *Le Déclin* as an American comedy for the past 17 years (that is, after all, what Hollywood has already done to more than a dozen French farces). Arcand is elegant, sophisticated, witty, and polished (as he recently demonstrated during his televised conversations with Charlie Rose). He is also, at least in the three films just mentioned, about as atypical a Québécois director as it is possible to be.

So what *are* the major styles and themes of Québécois filmmaking? Well, if one

excludes the English-language faux-Hollywood knock-offs (*The Art of War*; *Screamers*), they tend to come in the following categories: poetic/magic realist fantasies with a tragicomic sense of the world and a strong sense of eroticism; nativist features which celebrate Québécois triumphs and tragedies of past years, especially the doomed rebellions of the 1830s; *polars (thrillers)* with a distinctively Québécois flavour; and broad, popular farces of an unabashedly satirical bent.

Not only each genre, but even each subgenre, employs a different style of speech, but these idiomatic idiosyncracies are rarely the main reason for Québécois cinema's tendency to stay at home.[3]

In the case of the patriotic movies, politics rears its polarized head on a fairly regular basis. This doubtless explains why *Octobre*, Pierre Falardeau's pro-FLQ—at least that was the Progressive Conservative perception—take on the 1970 Pierre Laporte kidnapping/murder, was granted such short trans-national shrift. Parliamentary complaints that the film was "treasonable," and that absolutely no governmental money should have been invested in a work with such a strong anti-federalist bias likely prompted distributors to cut their losses and settle for limited distribution on safer (Québécois) ground. Thus, the rest of Canada was deprived of the chance to see a movie that could easily have provoked countless late-night debates. The disputatious cinema of the 1970s, now defunct in most parts of the world, is still very much alive in Quebec, but the rest of us are rarely allowed to appreciate this.

As befitted its *Québec pour les québécois* ideology, the dialogue in *Octobre* was written in very thick joual. The use of so-called "street French" was seen as progressive in the 1960s, the *indépendentiste* decade that witnessed the production of Michel Tremblay's ground-breaking plays, in particular *Les Belles soeurs*. In *joual*, artistic nationalists saw not just a means of confronting the English-speaking business class of Quebec, but a way of creating a culture entirely separate from that of France, the haughty former homeland that looked at its ex-colony with a mixture of sympathy and contempt (or at least condescension). It would enjoy a privileged role throughout the 1970s.

Thanks to the sequential successes of Félix Leclerc, Robert Charlebois, Carole Laure, Diane Dufresne, Luc Plamondon, and Céline Dion, the French perspective on Quebec changed during the last quarter of the twentieth century. The region's unique (and to Parisians frequently incomprehensible) *patois* began to be seen as something of a cultural asset, in the same way that Irish English was celebrated as a much-needed invigoration of English literature during the 1920s and 1930s.

France is still France, however, and for the Gauls a little bit of *joual* goes a long way. Thus, Québécois productions that hungered for significant franco-European sales tended to utilize either a mid-Atlantic French, or what could best be described as *haut joual*.[4] Costume pictures, especially those that were launched as franco-québécois co-productions, were particularly susceptible to this form of linguistic alchemy, although the results were not always fruitful. (Claude Jutra, for instance, lost virtually all the cultural capital he had accrued, thanks to the intensely nationalist *Mon oncle Antoine*, in the deracinated quagmire of the lushly produced but economically ill-fated *Kamouraska.)*[5]

Because the underworld rarely attracts the well-educated elite of any society (corporate/government n'er-do-wells exempted), *joual* continues to hold sway in the unjustly neglected realm of the Québécois *polar* (which Denys Arcand first got off the ground during the earlier, less successful half of his career). Sadly, for linguistic reasons or otherwise, the two greatest examples of this genre—

Robert Morin's *Requiem pour un beau sans-coeur* and Michel Jetté's *Hochelaga*—have rarely travelled beyond the narrow Canadian film festival circuit. The shelving of *Hochelaga* is particularly puzzling, as this is by far and away the best biker film to be made by anyone anywhere ever.

Language concerns are equally central to the limited range of movement artificially imposed on the so-called "low" comedy. To be sure, low comedies are the bread-and-butter of most national film industries—if only one feature makes it onto a given country's top ten box-office list, odds are it will belong to this genre—but their humour is often too topical to succeed further afield. Ironically, runaway success can sometimes embarrass the Québécois cultural establishment more than total obscurity.

Nowhere is this more true than in the case of the Elvis Gratton saga, a series of deliberately crude farces that are officially ignored because they are believed to make Quebeckers look bad.

Played with Rabelaisian gusto by Julien Poulin (who also has a hand in writing the scripts), Gratton is a right-wing garage-owning Elvis impersonator who embodies everything that Poulin and director Pierre Falardeau detest about lower-middle-class Québécois voters. Méo, Elvis' best friend, speaks a brand of *joual* impenetrable to everyone but Gratton and himself. Federal and provincial politicians are mocked unmercifully, and the humour is gleefully vulgar. The following is a prime example of this. Elvis has just told a companion that a French documentarist is coming to make a movie about his life. When asked for the director's name, Elvis replies, with a straight face, "Raymond Culet," a moniker that is phonetically indistinguishable from "*Ray m'enculé,*" or "Ray fucked me up the ass." That these films are funny is beyond question. Clearly, their rejection by the rest of Canada has nothing to do with a perceived lack of mirth.

The low profile of poetic/magic realist cinema (a hybrid term that welds *le réalisme poétique* favoured by French filmmakers from the 1930s to the literary alchemy practiced by Latin American authors some 30 years later) is somewhat harder to explain. Its ashcan grittiness is typically counterpointed by Prévertian romanticism, alleycat sexuality, and a wry sense of humour that follows the logic of feverish dreams. While this formula might sound a tad high-faluting, in practice it is extremely audience-friendly. Indeed, the best of these pictures compare favourably with celebrated films made elsewhere in the world at roughly the same time time. Gilles Carle's *La Tête de Normande Ste. Onge* has much in common with Ingmar Bergman's *Cries and Whispers,* while André Forcier's *Une histoire inventée* is rather *more* successful than Spike Lee's *Mo' Better Blues*.

I first became interested in the practicalities of subtitling when the Vancouver International Film Festival asked me to do the soft-titles for Eric Rohmer's *La Cambrure*. Soft- (or sur-) titles are most commonly used in opera: the lyrics appear in electronic letters beneath, above or beside the stage. Recorded on a Powerpoint program, they must be "played" by a keyboard operator every time, an operator who knows the text well enough to make split-second decisions (which means that the translator is often the "pianist" as well).

Subsequently, I worked with Kate Castello on two Argentine features for the VIFF—we needed someone familiar with Buenos Aires slang—and sent the *La Cambrure* text to the Hong Kong International Film Festival. I was then asked to organize an English-to-French dubbing operation by a commercial production company, although nothing eventually came of this offer. (I put a team together in record time over a holiday weekend, then never heard from the producers again, an object lesson in cinematic power politics if ever there was one!)

Eventually, these efforts resulted in Creative Writing 439 at the University of British Columbia, a course I designed to explore the art of subtitling. Initially, our ambitions were very great. We dreamed of one day having a talent pool that could handle just about any language, as well as a group of writers who could idiomize a given text to satisfy provincial, never mind national, needs. If computer geniuses joined the programme, we would design new fonts that could transmit layered dialogue, background song lyrics, and other ambient verbiage economically and simultaneously. Latin American music videos, Indonesian genre pictures: everything was up for grabs.

On a more practical level, our first goal was to render English-language versions of francophone films that had been distributed exclusively in Quebec. We would provide timed texts: the major problem in subtitling is the 40-character/3-second formula, a Moses-on-Mount-Sinai commandment that argues that this is the maximum amount of written information that can be absorbed by the viewer. We would work free of charge, asking only that the "primary" translator—subtitlers often work in teams, although in this instance, the use of the word "primary" was partially inspired by its application to the detectives on the HBO series *Homicide: Life on the Street*—be credited for his or her labours. Putting crude optical titles onto given videos was a theoretical option, although it was never exercised (student films excepted). Instead, we concentrated mainly on such vexatious issues as the best way to handle expository explosions, those rapid-fire plot points that cannot easily be handled by the aforesaid 40-character/3-second rule, and the importance of making jokes funny (rather than verbally accurate). The distributors would then be given the chance to use the titles on a Canada-wide version of their films. Obviously, the next step was entirely their call.

Alas, the current crackdown on video copyright in Canadian universities has obliged us to turn our attentions to more experimental, multi-disciplinary activities, even though translating someone's film gratis sounds pretty inoffensive.

Remarkably, although we live in an electronic universe where virtually every TV show is close-captioned for the benefit of hearing impaired audience members, very few companies claim to be able to *do* subtitles, which makes no sense at all. What this probably means is that very few companies *want* to do them, preferring to settle for the next English-language liner or scow to sail down the Hollywood canal. To claim an organic inability is as absurd as arguing that Canadians are incapable of building or maintaining automotive engines—or even ski-doos.

Still, if one *pretends* that the world is a certain way with sufficient conviction, it's pretty much the same as if it actually *were* that way. Thus, despite the boxoffice successes of *Life Is Beautiful*, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Les Invasions barbares*, and—especially—*The Passion of the Christ*, we are still a long way from living in a subtitler's paradise. The 500-channel universe allows one to watch *Seinfeld* re-runs 499 times a day; it does *not* allow us to see even one Indonesian "flying head" movie.

Québécois features fare little better. They were in outer darkness when I started CrWr 439; in outer darkness they remain.

NOTES

1 In most parts of the world, dubbing is not the exception but the rule. In Italy, for instance, all foreign movies must be given an *Italiano* voice over—for the most part, by the same small coterie of actors—although that nation becomes quite incensed when its own films are similarly treated abroad. (Under this second set of circumstances, Rome's belief in the value of subtitles is absolute.) Perhaps because of the *benshi* legacy (the *benshi* was the traditional storyteller who

would sit behind the screen and narrate the story for the audience, during the silent era, in lieu of intertitles, frequently changing the basic plot to keep the material fresh and the viewers amused), Japanese overdubbers are now perhaps the best paid in the world, frequently earning a quarter of a million US dollars a year once their training is complete.

2 It should not be forgotten that Mack Sennett, founder of Keystone Studios and practical inventor of slapstick comedy, was born in Quebec's Eastern Townships.

3 As John Greyson demonstrated when he made *Lilies*, an English language translation of *Les Fleurettes*, a Québécois drama that, according to the director, employed no fewer than 15 different French dialects.

4 This tendency was particularly marked in *La Turbulence des fluides*, Manon Briand's scintillating scientific romance about stopped tides and human hearts that was partially produced by French mega-mogul Luc Besson.

5 Ironically, the land where *joual* has fared the best has been Scotland, another province/nation. In particular, Michel Tremblay's populist theatre became a hot cultural commodity after being translated into "Scots," the closest English-language equivalent to *joual*.

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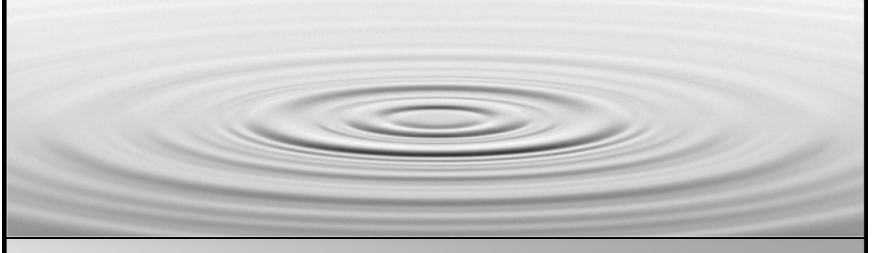

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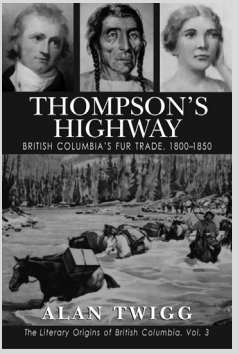

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