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Editorial

The Literature of Atlantic Canada

Marta Dvorak and Coral Ann Howells, guest editors

Atlantic Canada has both regional definition and imaginative definition which far exceed its geographical location. It is a place of paradox: the stark beauty of primal rock and sea belies long-established intellectual pursuits and a literary tradition. Nova Scotia holds chronological primacy in the intellectual development of a nation, already producing books and magazines in the mid-eighteenth century when the rest of what is now Canada was largely unsettled by Europeans. Halifax was notably the site of Canada's first newspaper (1751), and as early as 1774 held the first performance of a play by an English Canadian author. (The shadows of history are long and bilingual in Nova Scotia; this theatrical performance was in fact preceded by another over 150 years earlier—Marc Lescarbot's *Le Theatre de Neptune* was produced aboard ship in Port Royal harbour in 1606.) The first Canadian university, the Anglican King's College (1802), preceded the founding of Montreal's McGill, Toronto's King's College, and Kingston's Queen's College. Atlantic writers have generated an extraordinary literary output from the nineteenth century on, with pathbreakers such as Thomas Haliburton and Thomas McCulloch, who blazed the trail for satirists like Mark Twain and Stephen Leacock. The region produced the first distinctive Canadian landscape poets: Archibald Lampman, Duncan Campbell Scott, Charles G.D. Roberts, Bliss Carman, and E.J. Pratt. The remarkable production never flagged throughout the twentieth century, with strong writing by Frank Parker Day, Charles Bruce, Ralph Connor, Thomas Raddall, Hugh MacLennan, Nellie McClung, L.M. Montgomery, Alden Nowlan, and Ernest Buckler.

Revaluations and reassessments often produce the unexpected, or much more than the expected. Looking closely into the literature of Atlantic Canada from the other side of the Atlantic and reading through the critical responses to it from a host of contributors reveal such a richness of social and cultural histories, such a multiplicity of voices speaking from so many different angles and in such a variety of literary modes that what is produced amounts to far more than a mapping of region. It is more like an archaeology of region, which both comprehends and exceeds any definition of regional specificity. For we read the literature of Atlantic Canada (as we read any other literature) for the writing, for the particular imaginative crafting of the raw materials of place, lived experience, social history, and folk memory into language and narrative. Of course, the East Coast is a geographical location marginalized from centres of political and economic power in Canada, yet it is against the dynamics of marginalization that Maritime writers have struggled, in the process creating a multifaceted yet distinctive literature. Significantly, Atlantic writers jostle one another on best-seller lists, and have not only been regularly short-listed for the country's top literary awards, but have also become an undeniable part of the international publishing trade. Atlantic Canada has provided compelling prose, drama, and poetry by writers such as David Adams Richards, Joan Clark, Alistair MacLeod, Wayne Johnston, Bernice Morgan, Helen Porter, Maxine Tynes, George Elliott Clarke, Rita Joe, David Woods, Lynn Coady, and most recently Michael Crummey and Lisa Moore, with their heterogeneous yet distinctive textures and flavours. This writing speaks out of many small communities with their own histories, legends, and traditions, their own fierce local loyalties, their own catalogues of deprivation and disaster, together with their own long memories, dreams, and aspirations.

Ann-Marie MacDonald, though she was born "away" (on a Canadian air force base in West Germany), has always, through her Scottish-Lebanese family affiliations, regarded Cape Breton Island as her spiritual home. At the beginning of *Fall on Your Knees*, she offers readers a glimpse of the layered history written onto one small part of the East Coast landscape. She opens her Cape Breton family saga with a marriage back in the 1880s between a young woman from Wreck Cove and a young man from Port Hood:

> He promised her father he wouldn't take her far from home. He married her and took her to Egypt and that's where James was born. Egypt was a lonely place way on the other side of the island, in Inverness County.

To see those Old World place names so exotically relocated in New World space induces a geographical dizziness in readers, confronted as we are with the traces of a colonial settlement history. Haunted by ghostly presences, realistic landscape description begins to falter under the subversive influences of a more fantastic gothic topography. We find a similar example of realism teetering on the edge of fantasy and the surreal in George Elliott Clarke's poem "Halifax" (page 84), an ambiguous celebration of the sights and smells of the city which is not likely to make it into any tourist brochure:

> Halifax is where *History* looms from garbage
> Like a giant cannibal, quaffing piss and lye,
>
> And the Public Gardens are Augean stables,
> And statues are politicians all kneeling.

Such evocations of worlds elsewhere give the literature of Atlantic Canada an expansiveness which far exceeds its temporal and geographical location.

The fiction, poetry, and drama featured in this issue has all been written over the past 80 years, representing only a fraction of the strong literary tradition that has existed in Atlantic Canada since the middle of the eighteenth century. Though the francophone minority component of Acadian culture is featured in a commentary on France Daigle, the emphasis here is almost exclusively on writing in English. Valuable supplement may be found in this journal's recent issue on Francophone Writing Outside Quebec (187, Winter 2005).

Frank Parker Day's novel *Rockbound*, winner of the CBC's Canada Reads contest in 2005, has enjoyed a resurrection nearly 80 years after its publication in 1928. The literature of Atlantic Canada has featured prominently since this popular competition began in 2001: in the first year George Elliott Clarke's *Whylah Falls* was the runner-up to Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion*, and Wayne Johnston's *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* was the winner in 2003. (See Laura Moss' Editorial in *Canadian Literature* 182). In "Revisiting *Rockbound:* The Evolution of a Novel," Gwendolyn Davies traces the novel's development from its genesis in an unpublished short story through its five manuscript versions to its New York publication, an event which drew down on Day the wrath of the inhabitants of Nova Scotia's South Shore. They felt he had betrayed them by exhibiting them as a kind of freak show, converting their ex-centricity into eccentricity for outsiders'

entertainment. Ironically, if it was Day's meticulous realism which so offended the locals, that same quality has made his novel "the most perfect regional expression of antimodernist naturalism and essentialism" for readers ever since. However, as Davies shows, Day's fictional discourse was rather more conflicted than the term "antimodernist" suggests, for Day wrote with the double vision of an insider who had moved away—studying in Oxford and Berlin, and becoming President of Union College in Schenectady, New York. Indeed, from this distance it is possible to see in the novel many of the characteristics associated with a high modernist text like Joyce's *Ulysses,* for Day never lets his readers forget the epic quality of his young hero's struggle with Destiny as realism resonates against biblical and classical myths. By his constant allusions to Chaucer and Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Day firmly situates his narrative of the harsh life of a Maritime fishing community within the English literary tradition while he ends with a Lawrentian visionary moment where realistic description of rocky Barren Island dissolves into the contours of a medieval painting.

George Elliott Clarke's essay on Anna Minerva Henderson rescues a pioneer African Canadian modernist poet from near oblivion. His method of "reading *blackly*," which combines biography, history, and close attention to writing, unveils Henderson's African Canadian identity under her (almost) "raceless and genderless" poetic discourse. A Black woman from New Brunswick, who worked as a civil servant in Ottawa during the period covering the two World Wars before publishing her chapbook *The Citadel* in Canada's Centennial Year, Henderson adopted a persona which subsumed race under a colour-blind British and regional identity. However, as Clarke argues, such tactics of disguise were common to women writers of the Harlem Renaissance (and also to modernist women writers in general; as Virginia Woolf remarked, "Anon was usually a woman.") Race and gender are elided in Henderson's poems scattered through little magazines in the 1930s, and even those collected in *The Citadel* situate themselves within an English literary tradition from Shakespeare to the Modernists. It takes an ear attuned to a different idiom to identify the Black subtext in her poetry; Clarke's essay enacts a fascinating process of unearthing an embedded black consciousness.

Clarke's own memorializing of his Afro-Canadian heritage is the subject of Katherine Larson's essay on *Beatrice Chancy*. She offers a new perspective

on historiographic metafiction (or, in this case, metadrama) with her formal analysis of Clarke's use of the "paratext" in his historical verse drama probing slavery in early nineteenth century Nova Scotia. For Larson, "paratext" becomes the key to exploring the role of the author and the function of Clarke's multiple intertexts. Her critical account is responsive to his dialogues with Nova Scotian slave history and more widely with histories of oppression and resistance, from his sixteenth century Italian tragic heroine Beatrice Cenci to violence in the present day. By placing a strong emphasis on the resonance of Clarke's poetic language, Larson demonstrates the uniqueness of Clarke's political commitment in giving voice to the "resistance of people at the margins."

Claire Omhovère's "Roots and Routes in a Selection of Stories by Alistair MacLeod" looks at other histories embedded in the Maritime landscape, exploring MacLeod's distinctive rhetoric of place as he reconfigures the tropes of home and exile. MacLeod's Cape Breton fishing and mining communities were established in the eighteenth century by Scottish settlers fleeing after the Highland Clearances, and his stories are filled with the echoes of Gaelic traditions and legends transmitted through speech, storytelling and fragments of song: the refrain of "Home" blurs the boundaries between the Island and the Highlands. Like *Rockbound*, these stories are grounded in an unmistakably regional context, though their rhetorical strategies exert a contradictory pressure against sentimental regionalism toward wider geographical and imaginary spaces. Cape Breton is never depicted by MacLeod as an isolated secluded haven; on the contrary, as Omhovère shows, its position on the edge of the Atlantic confirms it as an exposed site of arrivals and exchanges, a place of cultural interaction between different ethnic communities with competing but complementary claims to the land.

Alexander MacLeod's essay on *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* examines the history and geography of Newfoundland refigured in historiographic metafiction, though once again there are tensions—this time between the realism of much regional writing and a postmodern skepticism toward the grand narratives of history. As MacLeod argues, Johnston's novel is both regional and postmodern, for although the history of Joey Smallwood's career may be reinvented and fictionalized, the geographical realities of Newfoundland's climate and landscape remain implacable forces that shape

the psyches of the protagonists and the collective history of the province. Harking back to *Rockbound*, the environment once again represents the force of destiny against which the hero's quest must be measured. MacLeod's essay is an example of the new regionalist criticism with its recognition of the complexities of writing region within the spaces of fiction; he shows how Johnston embeds a very traditional concept of geographical determinism within a postmodern historical novel.

Herb Wyile situates his analysis of Lynn Coady's *Strange Heaven* within the critical debate around concepts of literary regionalism, a debate in which he has been an authoritative voice since the early 1990s. His emphasis here is on Coady's engagement with the cultural politics of region and gender as she reconfigures the traditional tropes of Maritime fiction by exposing the uncomfortable realities of life for a girl growing up in a small town in Cape Breton. This is a regional novel that parodies conventional assumptions about the regional literature of Atlantic Canada, and Wyile adapts Danielle Fuller's critical term "strategic regionalism" to analyze the fictional strategies through which Coady challenges sentimentalized constructions of the "Home Place" as a refuge from the threats of urbanization and modernity. Not only does she adopt an insider's ironic perspective on the idea of an authentic folk culture, but she also parodies outsiders' misconceptions about these socially marginalized communities. Coady's rebuttal of the curious gaze of the tourist or the visitor from Ontario or the US is not quite so gothically staged as Mort Ransen's Cape Breton film *Margaret's Museum* (1995), but her dark comedy just as successfully deconstructs the regional idyll of popular imagination. We hear a similar challenge to sentimentalism, this time from a novelist's point of view, in the conversation between Joan Clark and Danielle Fuller, which took place just before *An Audience of Chairs* was published. With her powerful mix of realism, fantasy, myth, and zany humour, Clark shows her Maritime affiliations, though it is her wry comment on the recent shift from obscurity to celebrity enjoyed by Atlantic Canadian writing which unmistakably marks her as an insider. "We were largely overlooked . . . for so long that we had nowhere to go except up."

Best known for his brilliant first novel *The Mountain and the Valley*, Ernest Buckler also wrote dozens of stories, short fictions, and prose poems that began appearing in Canadian and American magazines in the 1940s. Set in

the farming communities of the Annapolis Valley, these pieces, by a writer farmer who grew up in a bookless society but went on to earn a graduate degree in philosophy, often blur the borders between high art and popular culture. Often celebratory and sensuously romantic, Buckler's modernist writings engage in age-old concerns such as childhood, social bonding, and commitment, or the collision of values. "The Line Fence" printed here in its original version for the first time, partakes in the Nova Scotian oral story-telling tradition of the Tall Tale, which was first developed by Thomas Chandler Haliburton. Understated, filled with brilliantly idiomatic dialogue, and apparently as unhurried as its protagonists, it shares the irony and humour which characterize that genre, but it also transcends the genre through its serious ethical and social comment on community relations deftly woven into the story structure.

In her commentary on Acadian novelist France Daigle, Cécilia Francis explores a subtly different approach to the cultural politics of region and the challenge of marginality, for here the margin becomes the space for imaginative regeneration. In her two recent novels, Daigle is writing about Moncton, New Brunswick, though these are postmodern urban novels where social realism is filtered through the prism of art and dream, creating a fictive reality, a kind of imaginative blueprint for a revitalized Acadian cultural community, a collective enterprise confidently affirming its difference.

Regions are simultaneously distinctive and "traditionally; subordinate" as Herb Wyile and Jeannette Lynes have suggested. This sampler of writing from Atlantic Canada demonstrates that the ex-centric position can be transformed from a weakness into strength as these artists continue to "ride a rolling wave."

Marta Dvorak is Professor of Canadian and Postcolonial Literatures and co-director of the Centre for Canadian Studies at the Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris. She is the author of *Ernest Buckler: Rediscovery and Reassessment* (2001) and *Vision/Division: l'oeuvre de Nancy Huston* (2004), and editor of several books including *Lire Margaret Atwood: "The Handmaid's Tale"* (1999) and *Thanks for Listening: Stories and Short Fictions by Ernest Buckler* (2004). A book on Carol Shields is forthcoming. She is currently editor of *Commonwealth Essays and Studies.*

Coral Ann Howells is Professor Emerita of English and Canadian Literature at the University of Reading, England. She has lectured and written extensively on Canadian women's fiction, and has been associate editor of the *International Journal of Canadian Studies.* Her most recent publications include *Contemporary Canadian Women's Fiction: Refiguring Identities* (2003), and *Margaret Atwood* 2nd edition, revised (2005). She is editor of the *Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood* (2006), and co-editor, with Eva Marie Kröller, of the forthcoming *Cambridge History of Canadian Literature*.

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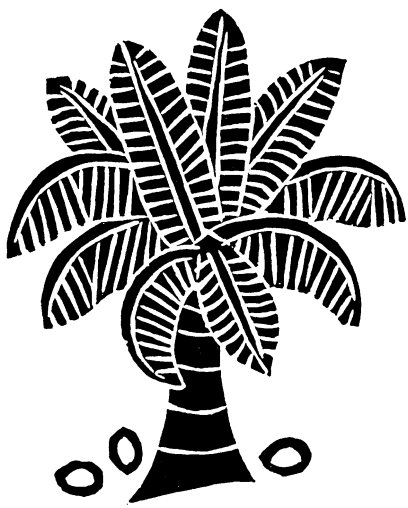
This is the first issue of Canadian Literature *to have been edited by European-based scholars, and hence should be seen as celebration and acknowledgement of the growing internationalization of Canadian literary studies. I am grateful to Marta Dvorak and Coral Ann Howells both for the imaginative devotion which they brought to developing and producing this issue, and for their own extensive contributions to Canadian studies.* LR



George Elliott Clarke

Annapolis Valley Sanskrit

Among apple blossoms and the sea,
Surge of light coming frothing
In petals, with April,
Sigh and silver-pink-white of the blooth,
Sheltering lovers.

See two lolling there,
Not quite undressed—
And then secret skeletons
Feeding the apple tree roots,
Nourishing this song.

The lovers cavort in cells, caverns, of pines,
Just doing it,
In the open, ignoring mosquitoes,
Stinging them as they sting each other,
Until the sea moistens the breeze.

Now raindrops chase each other, spoon-fashion.
The powdered scent of apple blossoms drifts,
Wild, mauve, in rain,
And the lovers cuddle, spooning,
Their trembles shaking April.

Gwendolyn Davies

Revisiting *Rockbound*: The Evolution of a Novel

In *Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity* (2001), Lynda Jessup introduces antimodernism as a "broad, international reaction to the onslaught of the modern world that swept industrialized western Europe, North America, and Japan in the decades around the turn of the century" (3). Linking her observations to the work of T. J. Jackson Lears and Raymond Williams, she notes the ambivalence of antimodernism as a movement, often accommodating itself to the contemporary while at the same time writing in protest against it. As such, she notes, "it embraces what was then a desire for the type of 'authentic' immediate experience supposedly embodied in pre-industrial societies—in medieval communities or 'Oriental' cultures, in the Primitive, the Traditional, or the Folk" (3).

Jessup's comments provide a perspective from which to revisit Frank Parker Day's 1928 *Rockbound*, a work that, in its evolution from short story to novel, reveals the consistent humanist underpinnings of Day's antimodernism. Although dismissed by historian Ian McKay in *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* as possibly the "most perfect regional expression" of antimodernist naturalism and essentialism (244), *Rockbound* nevertheless asserts in its celebration of humankind's potential for courage and selflessness the very qualities that have ensured its ongoing popularity (including its winning CBC Radio's highly visible literary contest, "Canada Reads," in 2005). An epic tale of a young man's quest for fulfillment in the context of family feuds and

elemental survival against the sea, *Rockbound* also carries with it the appeal that island stories have had throughout centuries of recorded Western culture. As liminal places, argues John R. Gillis, islands are appropriate sites for "rites of passage" stories. "We do not just think with islands," notes Gillis, "we use them as thresholds to other worlds and new lives." Thus, Greek heroes "turned to islands as a place to shed the mortal self," medieval Christians found them sites of transcendence, Renaissance writers engaged them as spaces "to imagine new worlds," and modern day anthropologists turn to them for field work (4). "Today," adds Gillis, "islands are the places we go as tourists and vacationers to find out who we really are. But as in the past, the island journey is always a sojourn undertaken with the ultimate intention of returning to the mainland somehow changed" (4). In other words, in whatever era humankind has traveled to islands, there is almost always an association with antimodernism. Set apart as it is, the island becomes a symbolic site for continuity, isolation, and, in Gillis' words, is "the West's favourite location for visions of both the past and the future" (3).

As Canadian novelist Frank Parker Day returned to his native Nova Scotia in the summer of 1926, island associations preoccupied him. A Rhodes Scholar who had worked on Ben Jonson at Oxford and Beowulf at the University of Berlin, Day had been balancing English Department responsibilities at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh and active fiction writing throughout the academic year 1925-26. His story "The Epic of Marble Mountain," published in *Harper's Magazine* in September, 1923, had drawn favourable notice and had caught the interest of both Hal Roach and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer as a potential Hollywood film.[1] Throughout the winter term, he was overseeing the publication of his first novel, *River of Strangers* (New York, 1926; London, 1927), and of his memoir, *The Autobiography of A Fisherman* (New York, 1927). But he was also struggling with the working manuscript of a short narrative that he had tentatively entitled "Ironbound." At some point prior to 1926, he had read this draft to the Authors' Club in Pittsburgh.[2] And, in January 1926, he had sought feedback from Nella Broddy of Doubleday, Page & Co. on whether "there is a book in 'Iron Bound.'"[3] The working story opened with a description of East Ironbound as an island "girt with slaty iron-stained rock, its rounded knolls roughened with scrubby wind-mauled spruces" standing "grimly against the thrust of the sea" ("Ironbound" 4.10.1). The story immediately evoked archetypal images of Atlantic offshore ruggedness already familiar to 1920s admirers of Nova Scotian photographer Wallace MacAskill. His photograph, "Gray

Dawn," exhibited in the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain in 1924, not only won MacAskill over a hundred awards during his lifetime (Bruce 14), but also escalated his work to iconographic status. By 1929, he had gained recognition in Europe and had also graced a Canadian stamp (Bruce 14). Thus, Day's description of the Ironbound fleet—"ten stout Tancook-built boats, an oilskin clad giant in each, standing erect, no matter how great the wash of the sea, and sawing patiently with a hand-line on either side of his craft" (4.10.2)—complemented MacAskills' photographs of seafaring life, in particular anticipating his archetypal "Toilers of the Sea, 1928."[4] Ironbound fishermen "are sinewy giants," added Day in his draft story, "and play the part of men but their lives are neither simple nor idyllic. Though there are but fifty souls on the island, though it is far out to sea, remote and unvisited, it is a world in miniature" (4.10.2).

Day's depiction of the island as a microcosm of the macrocosm not only anticipated Gillis' observations on islands as metaphors for the West's understanding of itself (3) but also revealed the way in which Day was envisaging his fictional island as an extension of the mainland. At this embryonic stage of his narrative, however, Day seemed more inclined to address the sociological than the spiritual challenges of living in isolation by the sea. "Disease is there," he noted; "they live in perpetual dread of cancer and tuberculosis that have thinned the ranks of these island dwellers. The men, great vigorous animals, drink secretly and regard bodily strength and endurance as the greatest virtues; the women who play a decidedly second part, till the soil and are submissive and obedient as they always are in the face of danger" (4.10.2). The tone is deterministic, observant of a species uniquely removed from the gaze of the "passenger standing on the port side of a steamer plying between Halifax and New York." It also positions the island in the path of a wider cosmic fate, for "some day there will be two islands in place of one and ages hence two shoals marked on the chart with some such legend: 'Ironbound shoals, five fathoms, dangerous to mariners'" (4.10.1). Thus, while the urban narrator at the beginning of the "Ironbound" draft might yearn for an antimodernist haven "remote, unspoiled, where men lead simple lives" (4.10.2), he quickly disabuses his readers of that possibility by describing not only the social realism of work, illness, and death, but also the physical destruction of the landscape by environmental forces beyond the control of humankind.

The sheer determinism of the draft opening would seem to reinforce historian Ian McKay's argument that Day wrote *Rockbound* with a "Spencerian

sense of the 'survival of the fittest'" in mind (244). Certainly, the physicality of hard work, the cold challenge of the sea, and the fisticuffs resolution of the battle for island heroine Mary Mader in the draft narrative all reflect the realism of life on Ironbound. Thus the visiting American artist, Charles Antriquet (resonant of Day's real life artist friend Charles Amiguet who may have traveled with him to Ironbound in 1926),[5] flinches with distaste when Ironbound-bred dogs sniff out avian prey and devour "with a horrid crunching sound" eggs, birds, and feathers. By contrast, the "sight and sound" ("Ironbound" 4.10.15) are uncompromisingly part of species selection on the island for Mary Mader, who, at the end of the physical fight for her favours, defines a sense of the island's Darwinian world view by pleading with Harris: "Don't kill him, Harris, don't kill him; he is not island-bred like us. He has no chance with you in a fight" (4.10.34).

Yet, as her name suggests, Mary also has regenerative significance in both the short narrative, "Ironbound," and the final novel *Rockbound.* As she gazes at one of Antriquet's paintings in the draft story, she agonizes that "My picture tells me that there is something fine in the world that we don't know about." Her love of Antriquet's art, and Harris' appreciation for fine wood carving, both function as counterpoints to a purely naturalistic reading of the narrative. Feeling "like a prisoner here . . . like the princess in the fairy tale who has lost her kingdom" (4.10.21), Mary seizes the opportunity to travel to the urban United States with Antriquet, prepared to sacrifice agency for knowledge. In doing so, she allies herself with a man who has long ago resolved "that he would work no more for capitalists" (4.10.23), but who discovers that Uriah and his boys on Ironbound during World War I are as much "the slaves of things they covet" (4.10.23) as are the American capitalists whom he has rejected. This recognition of the universality of human nature sends Antriquet back to the two things that are immutable: his love of Mary, who lives for his representations of Ironbound landscape, and the landscape itself:

> the power of the rocks, the savagery of the sea, the rude heaving and thrusting of nature, the violence of the gales that had torn the stunted spruces, the glory of the dawn, the mystery of falling night and ignoring the obvious objective things about him, he put these upon canvases with an easy technique that was unusual and uncanny to himself. (4.10.26)

Thus, the working draft of "Ironbound" resonates with themes commonplace to the mid-1920s when it was written, not least of which is middle class America's search for therapeutic release from a society of conspicuous

consumption and rapid urbanization. In *No Place of Grace,* T.J. Jackson Lears has argued that "the yearnings of romantic activists" from the late nineteenth century onward "for more intense, immediate experience became common among educated Americans" (107). Thus, Day's positioning of Antriquet at the heart of his working draft of "Ironbound," and Antriquet's artistic renewal in the unindustrialized ruggedness of a Nova Scotian island, underwrite Lears' perception of an American middle class of journalists, ministers, academics, and literati who "as some of the most educated and cosmopolitan products of an urbanizing, secularizing society . . . were the 'point men' of cultural change. They experienced and articulated moral and psychic dilemmas which later became common in the wider society" (*Preface* xvi-xvii).

Day explores these cultural soundings in his working draft by casting his artist figure in the same mode as Canada's emerging Group of Seven painters, who, in the 1920s, as Claire Elizabeth Campbell in *Shaped By The West Wind: Nature and History in Georgian Bay* has noted, "presented the Bay as an ideal of wilderness, for an urban audience" (146). "Ironbound" creates a similar antimodernist construct, revealing that after Antriquet's being "three years in the city, the strangeness" of the island inspires him "with many paintable subjects" (4.10.26). A relentless self critic, he destroys most of his work, placing his new pictures beside the one that he had done for Mary Mader three years before "to see if they held up" (4.10.26.). In the end, he succeeds, "making a marvelous pattern of red rocks, blue-green spruces and swirling water." Humans are as absent from his paintings as they are from the Georgian Bay canvases of the Group of Seven. Thus, a romanticized representation of wilderness landscape becomes Antriquet's protest against the modernized world. "Knowing," he says as he leaves the island, "is nothing but feeling is everything" (4.10.28). Or, to quote Campbell in her analysis of the Group of Seven, it is "the meeting of expectation and place, of ideas and geography," that "produces a series of intellectual and practical adjustments—in ways of thinking about nature and ways of living in a difficult environment." This process of adaptation is "integral to the construction of regional identity" (139), she adds, a process as true of Antriquet's artistic creation of difference in "Ironbound" as of the Group of Seven's dramatic evocation of place along the shores of Georgian Bay.

Significant to any reading of "Ironbound" as the genesis text of *Rockbound* is Day's conflicted discourse, both the omniscient outsider descending on the island and the culturally-sympathetic insider who had been born in

Nova Scotia in 1881. Having attended Lunenburg Academy for two years in his teens, Day knew Lunenburg as the home of the schooner fleet sailing each spring to the Grand Banks cod fishery and as the eighteenth-century locus for the German-descended inhabitants scattered around the mainland and islands of Mahone Bay. As a young man he had worked in the inshore fishery, sailing with Captain Enoch Mason of the *Nova Zembla*, a schooner briefly referenced in the text of *Rockbound* (192). "How happy and miserable I was then!" he recalled in his 1927 memoir, *The Autobiography of a Fisherman*: "I was seasick most of the time. There was not the slightest convenience, and bobstays are cold and slippery when seas slop round your knees of a brisk morning, but I was learning to be tough and a sailor" (46). But by the time that Day returned to Lunenburg County in the summer of 1926 with his working draft of "Ironbound," he had also acquired the cultural lens that his fictional figure, Antriquet, brings with him to the island. Educated abroad in Oxford and Berlin and promoted to Lieutenant Colonel on the battlefields of World War I France, Day had become a professor of English and an administrator in institutions ranging from the University of New Brunswick to the Carnegie Institute of Technology in the United States. A great admirer of novelists such as Dickens ("a teller of tales, a creator of characters") and John Masefield ("spiritualism and fine idealism . . . a fine stylist"), Day had made it clear in a 1920s lecture on modern novelists that, in his view, "the function of the artist is not to depict life photographically but to help us to interpret the beauty of life as it may be, to present to us romance, adventure, idealism, and to reveal the nobility lying latent in every human breast" ("Modern Novelists" K.6.4). Thus, his valorization of Harris, the "Ironbound" fisherman who demonstrates qualities of courage, grace, and self-sacrifice in the face of losing Mary to the artist Antriquet at the end of the short story draft, is consistent with his appreciation of literary works which "are often tragic" but are "full of an inner spiritual understanding of life" ("Modern Novelists" K.6.6).

Nowhere is this essentially romantic approach so clearly articulated as in Day's own personal memoir, *Autobiography of a Fisherman*, where he cites *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Swiss Family Robinson* as imaginative benchmarks in building a retreat in the wild. More specifically, the wilderness provided him with a therapeutic outlet, an escape physically and mentally from what he described as the burden of "the city in winter" before he could be released into the freedom of the summer months:

> In the city, I write endless letters in my office, I am busy over executive work, I rush about day and night getting only half enough sleep, my mind full of ambitious and often angry thoughts. But in summer, all is different: in a country almost untouched by man, I get up fresh and clear-eyed to watch the sun rise out of the forest and chase the mist wraiths from the lake, I take my canoe and paddle over to the still-water for trout, I swim in the cool clean water, I gather pond lilies and berries in season, I cut the wood or hoe my garden or drive back the forest of alders that is forever encroaching. I explore some new part of the forest, boil my kettle by some singing brook, and lie in the sun for hours. (73-74)

Day's rhetoric of urban-rural wilderness tensions, particularly as it informs the first working versions of *Rockbound*, is consistent with popular antimodernist perceptions of the early twentieth century already alluded to in the works of various commentators ranging from T.J. Jackson Lears and Ian McKay to Lynda Jessup and Claire Elizabeth Campbell. The "brain-fag" (Jasen 112) described by Day in *The Autobiography of a Fisherman* was a popular middle class concern, notes Jasen in *Wild Things, Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario: 1790-1914*, creating a perceived need throughout North America for recuperative rural holidays. Expanding on Lears' analysis of middle class yearning for therapeutic escape, Jasen notes the way in which sojourners from the city sought new sensations in rugged landscapes and "engaged in a quest for signs" (7). That this questing was part of a much wider international antimodernist reaction against "overcivilization" is not only germane to her analysis but also to that of Ian McKay's discussion in *The Quest of the Folk* as he situates Day's *Rockbound* in the popular attitudes of its time. "From the late nineteenth century on," notes McKay, "and across the western world, skepticism about 'progress' and fear that unprecedented social and economic changes were destroying the possibility of 'authentic' experience (and even undermining the basis of selfhood itself) shaped social thought and cultural expression across a wide ideological spectrum" (31). Although McKay is particularly sensitive to the way in which Nova Scotian "local cultural producers," amongst them Frank Parker Day, foregrounded Nova Scotian society and history in their fiction and art to satiate "the international cultural marketplace" (31), he nonetheless finds Day's realistic portrayal of fishermen's work and of small community in-fighting in *Rockbound* "refreshingly" different "from the portrayals of tidy, idyllic fishing villages in other accounts" (243). However, Day's merits do not outweigh his demerits, argues McKay, for he interprets Day as representing "Nature as all-powerful and determining" (244). As such, he argues, Day's "fisherfolk" remain

"'rockbound,' inarticulate human figures locked in an all-determining landscape of coastal rock and sea" (245).

Yet, what McKay's thesis overlooks in *Quest of the Folk* is Day's belief in man's inherent nobility, a conviction not only developed in his fiction but also articulated in his personal writing. Not unlike D.H. Lawrence, notes John Ferres, Day celebrated nature as "the great life force," and in *Rockbound* he links that life force to "natural morality," the "generous instinctive spontaneity of those living in harmony with nature," and "a new generation that is liberated and enlightened" (107). Day saw World War I as challenging that spirit of liberation and enlightenment, but, in spite of being caught up in an industrialized war of aeroplanes, poisonous gas, and flame throwers, he was consistently moved by the spirituality and selflessness that he encountered on the battlefield. That faith in the essential humanity of man, and in the relationship between what Ferres calls "nature and natural grace" (107), remained the core of Day's antimodernist approach to life after he returned to Nova Scotia in 1918 and for the first time met his young son. "The war was over," he wrote in *The Autobiography of A Fisherman* in 1927: "I came home tired and worn-out, obsessed with one idea—

> I wanted rest, quiet, peace; I wanted never to speak again without necessity or to give or receive an order. I wanted to live in the woods, and be alone along my streams. A puny hand that reached up and clutched my forefinger warmed in my heart a hope, but even that faded in the memories of the war. "Poor little chap," I thought, "he, too, may march away proudly in twenty years, to fight in a horror that some perverted madman has initiated." What sorry hopes has poor humanity—War or Famine—to preserve a foothold on a soon overcrowded world! "Still," I thought, "I can perhaps teach him to be a fisherman and to love brooks that brawl down from the hills." (144-45)

Thus, when Day returned to Nova Scotia in the summer of 1926 to spend part of his holiday researching "Ironbound," he did so in the context of being something of a late Victorian humanist who valorized personal dignity, subscribed to concepts of heroic manhood, and embraced a romantic view of the restorative powers of pristine wilderness. His story "The Epic of Marble Mountain" (1923) set in Cape Breton and the Baie de Chaleur, his sketch "The Iroquois" (1925) set in World War I France,[6] and his first novel *River of Strangers* (1926) situated in the Canadian north, had explored human nature in environmentally harsh settings. In such contexts, notes John Bell, Day "could strip his characters of the false accoutrement of civilization, until against a stark, primal background they displayed their humanity in its simple beauty and tragedy"(17).[7] His working draft of

"Ironbound," constructed along similar lines, seemed only to be awaiting Day's research on East Ironbound to flesh out the localisms that would enrich his fictional text. In this sense, his purpose seemed to differ little from that of subsequent Canadian writers such as Margaret Laurence or David Adams Richards who were to draw upon their knowledge of regional landscape, physical communities, economic challenge, and historical context to construct their imaginative literary worlds of Manawaka and the Miramichi respectively. As Stephen Amidon has noted in a review of Michael Millgate's *Thomas Hardy: A Biography Revisited*, "Great writers are capable of redrawing maps. Joyce with his Dublin, Faulkner with Mississippi, Cheever and the New York suburbs—each of these authors appropriated an existing landscape for his own purposes, investing actual terrain with imaginary characters, events, and places" (D8).

Like these writers, Day appropriated an existing landscape. Physically moving onto the islands for two weeks in July-August, 1926, he clearly enjoyed a warm rapport with fishermen on Ironbound, the lighthouse keeper at Pearl Island, and at least one family on the Aspotogan Peninsula. Writing on 28 November 1926 after Day had returned to Pittsburgh, a resident from Blandford thanked Day for a box of seed that he had sent and chattily reported that they had ceased fishing for the season and were currently killing cattle.[8] The Pearl Island lighthouse keeper also wrote in the fall of 1926, thanking Day for a copy of H.G. Wells' *Outline of History*, commenting on the coming of the eider ducks, and reporting that "next day after you left I had a 200 lb. hallibut."[9] It is relationships such as these that clearly deepened Day's understanding of the community, but representative Ironbounders in February 1929 nonetheless felt sufficiently incensed about his fictional selectivity in *Rockbound* to protest to the Lunenburg *Progress-Enterprise* and the *Halifax Herald*.[10] Day's only response, in a letter to one of the lighthouse keepers with whom he corresponded, was that "the story refers to a time long ago not to present-day conditions and I learned of the stories when I was a little boy before I had ever heard of Ironbound."[11] Although references in the novel to London suffragettes and the absence of wireless communication at sea reinforce Day's claim to a pre-1920s setting, there is every evidence in the Frank Parker Day fonds at Dalhousie University that Day's visit to Ironbound and its adjacent islands in July-August, 1926, enriched various levels of the story on which he had been working.

Not least of this enrichment was the visual way in which Day approached the background of his text, for, once on the islands, Day drew topographical

maps of East Ironbound, the islands of Mahone Bay, and the lighthouse on Pearl Island. Sherrill Grace has argued in *Canada and the Idea of North* that maps show "that the author has been *there*, seen that, and knows what he/she is talking about" (80). Day seemed to map in that spirit, apparently having no intention of including his sketches in the final publication that was to emanate from Doubleday Doran. However, his drawing of the Pearl Island lighthouse (to become the Barren Island light in the novel) enabled him once back in Pittsburgh to recall the shape and placement of such items as the bookcase, the stove, the kitchen, and the "Table where I wrote on the sly pretending I was preparing Shakespeare lecture."[12] He experimented with names, crossing out "Lunenburg," "Magdeburg," and "Coppenburg" on his map of the mainland and bay before deciding on "Liscomb" as the substitution for "Lunenburg."[13] And his detailed map of Ironbound[14]—filled with such denominators as "Cove Launch Landing Place," "The Light," "The Rock—North-east Shoal ? fathom—Mather's father never left Green Island when 'the Rock' broke," and "Whale Cove—whale ran ashore in the olden days"—reveals the level of oral research that gave him what Grace calls "cultural power" over his material (80). Clearly, for Day, what emerged from this visual mapping was a sense of the lighthouse and islands as sites of significance in his narrative, the places where David, his protagonist, would fulfill his quest for difference.

As well, once on Ironbound, Day realized the literary importance of the rich "Lunenburg Dutch" (*Deutch*) vernacular of the islanders to his island mapping—what linguist Lewis Poteet has called "the aesthetics of speaking" (5). Despite Day's youthful exposure to this dialect, he had clearly forgotten much of it by the time that he worked on the short narrative version of "Ironbound" in Pittsburgh. However, once again in the dialect-rich environment of Lunenburg County, Day became attuned to what Poteet, a student of the county's idiom, has called "the interplay of speech communities in the culture (who hears and understands the local dialect)." "We may also see how the language works and plays in the culture," Poteet has argued in his exploration of South Shore dialect: "for example, in bits of language that give 'rough measure' to a part of the world not as bound up in technology, in the metric or non-metric dilemma, as the urban world" (5). Given Day's already articulated anti-modernist bias in fiction, and his literary depiction of the island as an escape from urbanization in the short narrative version of "Ironbound," it is not surprising that he seized upon the distinctive vernacular of the islands as one way in which to dramatize "a part of the world not

as bound up in technology, in the metric or non-metric dilemma, as the urban world." Thus, the confrontation scene between Uriah and Harris, originally conceived in Pittsburgh prior to 1926 in standard English, became much more heavily localized in its speech patterns in Day's working text of *Rockbound* once he had been on the island:

> "An' what might ye be wantin?" said the old man, the king of Rockbound.
> "I wants fur to be yur sharesman," answered David.
> "Us works here on Rockbound."
> "I knows how to work."
> "Knows how to work an' brung up on de Outposts!" jeered Uriah. "Us has half a day's work done 'fore de Outposters rub sleep out o' dere eyes, ain't it!"
> "I knows how to work," repeated the boy stubbornly.
> "Where's yur gear an' clothes at?"
> "I'se got all my gear an'clothes on me," said David, grinning down at his buttonless shirt, ragged trousers, and bare, horny feet "but I owns yon dory: I salvaged her from de sea an' beat de man what tried to steal her from me."
> Uriah's eyes showed a glint of interest. (4-5)

Kirsten Stevens has noted that the contrast between this scene and its earlier version represents a stylization of dialect, revealing what H. Rex Wilson has called "Lunenburg Dutch" as not so much "a dialect of German but a peculiar way of speaking English in an area where the original colonization was by German-speaking settlers"(35).[15] Thus, as Stevens has illustrated, characters in the final version of the novel will say "let him go wid as a favour" instead of "let him go with you as a favour," will substitute "d" and "t" for the "th" sound, will pronounce "v" as a "w," and will often add "Ain't it" to the end of a sentence for confirmation (not unlike the German *nicht* or *nicht wahr* requesting confirmation) (35-37). Already beginning to de-emphasize the urban artist theme that had been a focus of his original "Ironbound" text, Day began in the summer of 1926 to make lists of birds, songs, expressions (for example, "to rutch up" against), and books (for old Gershom's library in the lighthouse on Barren Island).[16] He visited the cemetery at Smith's Cove on the mainland to get a sense of regional names, and recorded folktales, superstitions, expressions, seasonal occurrences, and the rhythm of work. His descriptive notes, interspersed with parts of his novel in progress, form a running commentary almost novelistic in their vividness. Beginning on 30 July 1926 with the dramatic statement, "Charles is dead," the memoir-like text builds around dialogue, authorial questions, and factual detail that he is collecting as background (for example, members of the Jung family have sold potatoes, strawberries, vegetables, butter, eggs, and

herring on the mainland on 30 July 1926, and Day records the amounts sold and the income generated). Ghost stories that Day hears while traveling by boat or visiting the lighthouse on Pearl Island will get reworked into the novel, while his visit to a "great red-faced giant" of a local lighthouse keeper ("What a Viking!") leads to a vivid thumbnail sketch in his working notes: "I'm an agnostic, an atheist, a free thinker," he announced, "and I read all the time, Byron, Shakespeare, Wordsworth and history." Appended to this is Day's observation: "a great drinker and lover of women."[17] It is not difficult for readers of the final version of *Rockbound* to see in this encounter the genesis of the old and young Gershoms, both of whom appear in the evolving novel only after Day's visit to Mahone Bay in 1926.

More significantly, once on Ironbound, and once committed to the process of physically mapping the islands, Day seemed to become much more conscious of the importance of "islandness" to his narrative. He sailed to the more remote Pearl Island (Barren Island in the novel) and wrote in his working draft of looking back at Ironbound from the second floor of the Pearl Island lighthouse tower. As Janice Kulyk Keefer has pointed out, in the fictional world that *Rockbound* creates "it is not the shore which stands as antithesis to the 'wearisome argument of the sea,' but the lighthouse, on whose steady, faithful guidance the fisherman's very life depends" (73). Thus, as he reworked "Ironbound" into a romance of quest, ordeal, and triumph for his protagonist David Jung (his reworking of the Harris Mader figure in the earlier versions), he dropped altogether the trope of the island as a regenerative force for world-weary urbanites. Instead, his fictional Ironbound/Rockbound becomes a site of the same twentieth century malaise that confounds the urban East Coast cities from which Antriquet is escaping in the original draft story. Women are victims of patriarchy. Greed motivates bad behaviour. Religion fails to regenerate. Education struggles against tradition. Change is unsettling.

As Day worked through different versions of the text, from the short story of "Ironbound" to a changing novel variously entitled *His World—The Islanders*, *The Devil's in the Sea*, *The Islanders,* and, finally, *Rockbound*,[18] the island and its outer islands become liminal spaces. Each physical move—from Big Outpost to Rockbound to Barren Island—takes Day's protagonist, David, further out to sea away from "civilization" to eventually find his happiness in turning Barren Island into what David Creelman calls an "edenic state" (32). Destroying the soil-polluting carey-birds ("cursed birds of night"), David Jung of the final version of *Rockbound* restores the farming

capability of the island, becomes a symbol of trust by running the government lighthouse, and eventually raises his son with Mary (his Eve figure). His journey has archetypal overtones reminiscent of Huckleberry Finn's decision to reject "sivilization" and instead "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest." But whereas Mark Twain leaves Huck Finn suspended between "sivilization" and the unknown, Day turns David's journey into a revelation of self discovery.[19] By moving David into the government-appointed role of lighthouse keeper, a role that ironically centres this antimodernist hero in the modernist world of contemporary travel and trade, Day challenges Ian McKay's claim that "man" in *Rockbound* "is essentially an animal dependent on the rhythms of nature" (244). Rather, as J.D. Robins argued in a 1928 review of the novel in *The Canadian Forum*, "Hardy's characters war with Destiny, but it is a losing fight: they are creatures of Destiny, playthings for the 'President of the Immortals.'" However, "back of *Rockbound*," Robins argues, "by no means explicit in it, but rolling in distant thunder behind it, is the sense of the supremacy of man again, working with Destiny if you will, but achieving by means of an indomitable will which can bend even Destiny to its purpose" (245). Moreover, by rejecting the elemental greed, lust, and revenge that unfold on Rockbound, mirrors of what David Creelman calls "the disruptive forces of the modern world" (32), Day posits an ideal of service based on "the nobility lying latent in every breast" articulated in his 1920s lecture on contemporary fiction. It is an "individualist liberalism," notes David Creelman, that emerges "naturally" from David's personality, "not as the product of an external religious or educational system" (32). In this sense, it is consistent with the same essence of "tenderness, international & timeless" that artist and writer Robert P. Tristram Coffin had identified elsewhere in Day's work.[20]

That Day struggled to articulate these idealized antimodernist themes in his novel is evident from the five surviving manuscript versions and their aborted endings. While the visit to East Ironbound in the summer of 1926 was critical to the evolution of *Rockbound,* his New York artist friend, Charles Amiguet, had noted in a letter from the Aspotagan Peninsula that "your visit to Ironbound was a helter skelter affair that cannot have been very satisfactory to you."[21] Nonetheless, Day seems to have accumulated enough background to enable him to complete a typescript of a novel entitled *His World—The Islanders* for Doubleday Page & Co. by the beginning of 1927. Although this early version of the novel contained characters and episodes later found in *Rockbound*, Day still retained allusions to the artist

theme that had informed the story "Ironbound." This impelled reader and lawyer, Allan Davis of Pittsburgh, to criticize the novel intensely in January 1927, arguing that "the artist people, one and all, do not belong in the story. . . . The yarn is about Iron Bound people, and these others have no real place in it." "Make this *your book*," he added as he concluded his letter: "It's about your own country, your own people. You may not get a second or a third chance at anything so big again."[22]

Editorial notes on the surviving typescript of the novel reinforce Davis' analysis, urging the elimination of the artist theme and the retention of the Ironbound motifs: "Your sea & fishing material has the look & sound of the real. So has old Uriah. Harris [later renamed David in *Rockbound*] has faded as the story has progressed."[23] By 1 June 1927, a revised novel entitled *The Devil's in the Sea* was closer to what was eventually to be published by Doubleday, Doran and Company in 1928 as *Rockbound*. Throughout the revision process, Day struggled with various endings for David Jung, projecting him to age 40, surrounding him with children, and contemplating, "as upon a map," his peaceable kingdom encompassed by a sea that, he notes philosophically, both "feeds us an' drowns us."[24] The conclusion chosen for the 1928 version of the novel ultimately confirms the universal values central to Day's work. David's kingdom at the end of the novel is no outpost of civilization but its symbolic centre. By focusing on the birth of the family, it resonates with hope, a sense of the future, and a commitment to a wider social good. Read as romance and universalized by Chaucerian headnotes and allusions to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *Rockbound* therefore conveys in its resolution Day's tribute to the triumph of the human spirit. But it also stands as a powerful if selective extension of Day's imaginative reading of an island fishing culture just prior to World War I and the way in which that microcosm echoed the wider macrocosm.

NOTES

1 See: Brady, Colonel J.E. Letter to Maude Guthrie. 26 April 1926. Frank Parker Day fonds, Ms.2.288. Correspondence, Folder 16.4. Killam Lib., Dalhousie University Archives, Halifax.
Day, Frank Parker. Letter to Colonel J.E. Brady. 10 May 1926. Frank Parker Day fonds, Ms.2.288. Correspondence, Folder 16.4. Killam Lib., Dalhousie University Archives, Halifax.
Note: All future manuscript/typescript references will be to this collection. Unless otherwise indicated, references are to the 2005 finding aid and re-cataloguing of the papers.

2 Davis, Allan. Letter to Frank Parker Day. 31 Jan. 1927. Folder 16.5.

3 Day, Frank Parker. Letter to Nella Broddy Henney. 28 Jan. 1926. Folder 16.6.

4 *Wallace MacAskill: Seascapes and Sailing Ships,* 31. See: http://www.Macaskill.com/Wallace/wallace.html. A second MacAskill site is http://www.gov.ns.ca/nsarm/virtual/macaskill/essay.asp?Language=English.

5 Amiguet, Charles. Letter to Frank Parker Day. no date. Correspondence, A-Z. Folders 17.3-17.5. Like Day's protagonist, Charles Antriquet in the story "Ironbound," Charles Amiguet worked at odd jobs (shingling, house painting) in order to fund his artistic life. Part of an Arts and Crafts artistic colony in Woodstock, Ulster County, New York, in the 1920s (originally formed around 1902), Amiguet indicates in a letter to Day that he knows that Day is drawing on him as a basis for the story "Ironbound." He subsequently visited the Days at Lake Annis in Nova Scotia, and may have been part of Day's Ironbound visit in the summer of 1926. I wish to thank Nancy Edgar, a doctoral candidate in English at the University of New Brunswick, for assisting me in finding information on Amiguet.

6 "The 'Iroquois'" was published in *Forum*, 31 (1925): 752-764.

7 David Creelman notes "*Rockbound* creates a fascinating tension as the dominant romance blends a conservative chronicle of a fading way of life with a thoroughly liberal celebration of the potential of the human spirit" (29).

8 Young, Harris. Letter to Frank Parker Day. 28 Nov. 1926. Folder 16.12.

9 Pearl, M.B. Letter to Frank Parker Day. 22 Sept. 1926. Folder 16.10.

10 "Letter to The Editor." *Progress-Enterprise* [Lunenburg] 20 February 1929: vol. 52.14.1; "New Book is 'Ridiculous,' Citizens Say." *Halifax Herald* 26 February 1929: 3. See also: Davies, Gwendolyn. Afterword. *Rockbound*. By Frank Parker Day. 1989. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2005. 305-310, and Bevan, A.R. "Rockbound Revisited: A Reappraisal of Frank Parker Day's Novel." *Dalhousie Review,* 38(1958): 37.

11 Day, Frank Parker. Letter to Allan M. Langille. 18 May 1929. Ms. 2.288. C240, Old Finding Aid.

12 Day, Frank Parker. "Day Papers." Folder 20.3.96.

13 Day, Frank Parker, "Day Papers." Ms.2.288.9.9. I wish to thank Karen Smith, Head of Special Collections, Killam Library, Dalhousie University, for her assistance in providing this reference.

14 Day, Frank Parker. "Day Papers." Ms.2.288.9.9. Folder 20.7.

15 Stevens quotes H. Rex Wilson (40). See also M.B. Emeneau, 34-44.

16 Day, Frank Parker, "Day Papers." Ms.2.288.9.9. Folder 20.6, 210-213; Folder 9.8, 210, 214-226, 236.

17 Day, Frank Parker. "Day Papers." Folder 9.8.13. Old Finding Aid: E4c (i), 24-26

18 "Day Papers," *His World, The Islanders*, Folders 9.10-9.11; *The Devil's in the Sea*, Folders 9.3,9.5; *The Islanders*, Folders 8.11-8.13,9.1-9.2. In 1928, Doubleday Page & Co. became Doubleday, Doran And Company. In June, before publication, Day and Doubleday Doran agreed to change the title to *Rockbound* even though the dies for *The Islanders* had been cast and the book was in galleys. See Stowe, Beecher. Letter to Frank Parker Day. 26 June 1928. Folder 16.5.

19 In *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, Leo Marx comments on the elusiveness of the refuge that Clemens (Twain) seeks for Huck in the "territory" (340). Day suggests no such fragility in David's future.

20 Coffin, Robert P.T. Letter to Frank Parker Day. 11 October 1926. Folder 16.5.

21 Amiguet, Charles. Letter to Frank Parker Day. no date. Aspotogan Sunday, Correspondence, A-Z. Folders 17.13-17.15.

22 Davis, Allan. Letter to Frank Parker Day. 31 January 1927. Folder 16.5.

23 Day, Frank Parker. *His World – The Islanders*. Ts., Folder 9.10-9.11, 138.
24 Day, Frank Parker. *The Islanders*. Ts., Folder 9.2.

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Eleonore Schönmaier

Journey

Midnight is a wicker basket
dropped over the earth, each house blazing

its nightlights through the loose reeds.
An air traveler, serene:

the cup in her hand evokes neither grit
nor salt nor stardust. She imagines

a glide path into a sudden
comforting darkness: wilderness like a tea

leaf floating.
The stars drip dust, echo-locate

the lovers on Muise Island below:
vertigo moves into their dreams.

Only a red blanket separates them from the earth.
At sundown they taste earlobes and sand.

Asleep they absorb the saw-whet owls' whistles
and the faint unmapping of a jet's journey.

By dawn the lovers ache
as the spider-charted dew

evaporates.

George Elliott Clarke

Anna Minerva Henderson
An Afro-New Brunswick Response to Canadian (Modernist) Poetry

FOR ANNA MINERVA HENDERSON (1887-1987)[1]

A native of Saint John, New Brunswick, Anna Minerva Henderson worked in Ottawa for many years as a civil servant, but took time to publish her poetry in *Canadian Poetry Magazine* in 1937 and 1939 as well as in an anthology, *Harvesting: Contemporary Canadian Poetry, 1918-1938* (1938), edited by Ethel Hume Bennett. At age 80, in celebration, perhaps, of the Canadian Centennial year as well as of her own fine age, she published her chapbook, *Citadel* (1967),[2] which thus became the first collection of poems by an African-Canadian woman. Even so, in her poetry, Henderson strikes a "raceless"—almost bloodless—stance, addressing her auditors as just another British-descended, Anglophile, Loyalist New Brunswicker; that is to say, she writes like an *assimilada*. Henderson's poetry avoids, save for two surreptitious moments, any statement of racial surveillance, and her verse is centred on the presumably white Anglo "Home" of New Brunswick and her fidelity to the white-run British Empire and its "daughter," the equally Caucasian-dominated Dominion of Canada. However, identity is always complicatedly complex: Henderson may participate, at a remove, in the often "colourless" African-American women's writing of the Harlem Renaissance, not to mention the *race*-evasive poetry of English Canadian verse. Nevertheless, read closely, Henderson may be "blacker" than she first appears.

Is She or Isn't She?

Born in 1887, Anna Minerva Henderson, a literate black woman in Saint John, New Brunswick, lived in a milieu where ideas from the trans-Atlantic

African Diaspora washed ashore, delivered by itinerant preachers and politicized sailors. Perhaps, then, she perused copies of the once-Saint John-based, African-Canadian lawyer Abraham Beverley Walker's eleven-month-lived, five-issue journal, *Neith*, or a copy of his 1890 speech, *The Negro Problem; or, the Philosophy of Race Development from a Canadian Viewpoint*. In this address, Walker (1851-1909) urged all Negroes to make "periodical visits to Great Britain and Ireland," the centres of civilization, where there was no racial prejudice, and he felt that all should emulate the virtues of English gentlemen, who are "a chosen people who cling to [God's] right hand" (Winks 398). But if Henderson did read Walker, it was not for his Pan-Africanism, but for his Anglo-Saxonism.

One can only guess about Henderson's familiarity with African-American women poets like Phillis Wheatley (ca. 1753-84) and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825-1911), or, for that matter, the most famous African-American poet of her time, Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906), revered for his Negro dialect verses about plantation life.[3] His *Lyrics of Lowly Life* (1898) and *Lyrics of the Hearthside* (1899) would have turned up in even Saint John homes, for, a century ago, as one scholar declares, Dunbar was "the most *popular* poet—black or white—in the United States" (Bruce 57). African-Canadian readers in New Brunswick would surely have possessed copies of Dunbar's works, as would those European-Canadian readers fascinated by his half-comic, half-sentimental depictions of "Dixie." But whatever her acquaintance with African-American poets, Henderson must have known Anglo-Canadian ones, especially such revered voices as Charles G.D. Roberts (1860-1944) and Bliss Carman (1861-1929).

Thanks to the labours of African-Canadian scholar Adrienne Shadd,[4] we know that Henderson obtained a teacher's certificate, taught school in Nova Scotia, and then, in 1912, at age 25, was hired into the federal civil service after writing an entrance test and earning the third highest grade in the Dominion (3). Henderson started out as a stenographer in the Dominion Lands Branch of the Department of the Interior, but, by 1938, was working as "the principal clerk in the Immigration Branch, Department of Mines and Resources" (Shadd 3). While in Ottawa, she wrote a column for the Ottawa *Citizen* titled "The Colyum" or "Just Among Ourselves" (Shadd 3). By the time she was 50, Henderson was actively publishing her verse in little magazines. The bio note attending her publication of her sonnet, "Parliament Hill, Ottawa," in *Canadian Poetry Magazine* (edited by E.J. Pratt) in 1937, allows only that she is unmarried ("Miss") and "a civil servant of Ottawa"

("News" 63). A year later, when this poem is reprinted in *New Harvesting: Contemporary Canadian Poetry, 1918-1938*, edited by Ethel Hume Bennett, the "Biographical Notes" remain laconic: "Anna M. Henderson, of Ottawa, has published verse in periodicals and magazines" (194). (An enterprising scholar will have to scour all of English-Canada's century-ago little magazines to find Henderson's poems.) When Henderson self-publishes *Citadel*, a slim booklet of 31 pages, in Fredericton in 1967, at age 80, she does not offer us either a "collected" or a "selected" poems. Indeed, one of her best poems, "Parliament Hill, Ottawa," is missing from the collection. The latest dated poem in the book is from the winter of 1965 (30) and the earliest refers to 18 May, 1947 (9). Yet, some of the poems appeared before 1947. This fact indicates that *Citadel* is a crafted chapbook focused on Saint John's cityscape and history, the British connection, faith, and the strife between artist and critic: it is neither a hodge-podge of musings nor a select batch of the author's "best."

Before I examine *Citadel*, however, "Parliament Hill, Ottawa," in its 1937 appearance, demands attention as an example of Henderson's general approach to poetry. A Shakespearean sonnet, its Ottawa setting and its form cannot help but recall Archibald Lampman (1861-99), the first major European poet of the capital. Irrefutable resemblances couple Henderson's sonnet to Lampman's Petrarchan version, "In the City" (1900). Henderson is more descriptive than is Lampman—perhaps a result of the Modernist influence on her Victorianism—but both give us the vision of a voyeur watching a city's features alter within the flaming pall of dusk. The most striking similarity between the two poems is their unfolding Transcendentalist philosophy. Lampman's sonnet is a mass of abstractions, especially in the second quatrain's enumeration of the qualities of the city: "The mysteries and the memories of its years, / Its victors and fair women, all the life, / The joy, the power, the passion, and the strife, / Its sighs of hand-locked lovers, and its tears" (375). In contrast, Walker delivers what Lampman delivers in his better poems, I mean, vibrant details: "the young moon swings, a slender, golden arc / Above the town; and yellow street lamps glow / Like crocuses against the purple dark" (51). In such lines, Henderson demonstrates her mastery of Lampman *and* her apparent mastery of the tenets of imagism.[5] Unfortunately, her whole sonnet is not as vivid as these lines (though the description of the sun as "a departing conqueror" is notable), but where she displaces Lampman with images worthy of Amy Lowell (1874-1925), or Isabella Valancy Crawford (1850-87), or her contemporary,

Marjorie Pickthall (1883-1922), she achieves writing of power. (In its appearance in *Contemporary Canadian Poetry*, "Parliament Hill, Ottawa," attracts an accompanying drawing by J. M. Donald.)

Of course, in Henderson as in Lampman, *race* is an evacuated subject, one present only in its absence.[6] But Henderson cannot be read as straightforwardly as Lampman here. According to Maureen Honey, editor of *Shadowed Dreams: Women's Poetry of the Harlem Renaissance* (1989), "Poetry was the preferred form of most Afro-American women writers during the 1920s" (1), the period of the African-American arts revival, centred in New York City, and often titled the Harlem Renaissance. Still, these women writers seemed to conform to a "genteel school of "raceless" literature, having largely confined themselves to the realm of private experience and the natural world. Known primarily for their lyrical, pastoral verse, [they] have been judged as imitating European traditions" (2).[7] Clearly, Henderson may be claimed for this camp. Shadd explains that, by "Adopting a 'raceless, genderless' public discourse, Henderson was merely playing by the standard rhetorical rules deemed appropriate to the creation of great art" (16). However, in defence of these writers and their aesthetic, Honey observes, their "poetry uses the landscape of nature and romantic love to affirm the humanity of women rendered invisible by the dominant culture" (3) and their use of classical poetic forms such as "the sonnet, the ode, the elegy" (6) reflected their sense that such modes were "politically neutral vehicles through which Black culture could be made visible" (7). Honey points out further that Harlem Renaissance generation writers "saw no contradiction between social activism and the production of nonracial literature because the two were fused in their minds: artistic achievement moved the race upward" (5).[8]

One may speculate that Henderson felt delicious *frissons* in seeing her poems—those of a New Brunswick "Negress" (the term some would have used to describe her)—appearing in a magazine edited by E.J. Pratt, along with an essay by Lorne Pierce, the literary editor of Toronto's Ryerson Press, and poems by Arthur Stringer, and the then-young Ralph Gustafson ("Contents" [3]).[9] One may imagine she enjoyed some small thrill of vengeful subversion by appearing in a major Canadian anthology alongside luminaries like Charles Bruce, Robert Finch, Dorothy Livesay, Pratt, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, Duncan Campbell Scott, F.R. Scott, and A.J.M. Smith, all the makers of a modern English-Canadian verse tradition ("Contents" 1938 [xiii-xvii]). Here was one are(n)a where Henderson could seize a veiled equality. Remember the African-American radical intellectual W.E.B. Du

Bois's own exaltation in the democratic essence of literature: "I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the color line I move arm-in-arm with Balzac and Dumas, where smiling men and welcoming women glide in gilded halls" (139).

If Honey's perception is right, that African-American women poets of the 1920s signaled their concerns regarding race and racism obliquely, chose deliberately to use the standard forms of the British canon to demonstrate their intellectual equality to whites, and wrote lyric poetry "because it transported both poet and reader to a place where women could feel safe, unbound, and powerful" (14), there is every reason to suspect that Henderson penned her verses in a similar mode for similar reasons. Honey agrees with scholar Michael Cooke that "self-veiling [was] a major stage in the development of Afro-American literature, one that occurred in the early part of the century and extended through the 1920s" (17). In her poetry, too, the reclusive Henderson, so sparing in her issuance of autobiographical details, and almost never hinting at *race*, is also "self-veiling." Shadd believes Henderson typified "The 'I am Black but we will pretend I am not and that I am like everybody else in every way' approach . . . a typically Black Canadian coping mechanism" (19). But the poetry itself, as Shadd agrees, sings a different song. Indeed, Henderson's "racelessness" may represent black deception of the clearest sort. *Citadel*, Henderson's slim booklet of 22 poems, uncovers her strategy of invisible visibility.

In "Market Slip," a poem consisting of two Shakespearean sonnets, each subtitled with the date of 18 May, but indicating 1783 and 1947 respectively, the poet celebrates the landing, at Saint John, New Brunswick, of British American Loyalists fleeing the just-established Great Republic. Neither sonnet refers to *race*; it is possible to treat the whole poem as a simple anthem. The sonnet titled "May 18, 1783," praises those who, "Voyaging . . . came at last to land / Here in this sheltered inlet of the bay, / Curved like the hollow of a mighty hand." (9). The speaker, standing on a pier near the Saint John City Market, marvels at the site of the historic landfall, off the Bay of Fundy, in a "hollow" prepared, apparently, by divinity. But one line troubles this easy reading of the sonnet. Henderson describes the archetypal, pilgrim Loyalist as possessing "The cherished dream of freedom as his goal," and the immediate sense here is that the speaker values British constitutional monarchy over rude Yankee Republicanism. But such a reading, while valid for a patriotic ode, relies too much on an elaborate, poli-sci distinction between the virtues of King and Country and those of "We the People."

Henderson's line makes better sense if it is understood as referring to Black Loyalists, who truly were, in abandoning the still-slaveholding United States, electing to enjoy physical liberty within a hierarchically organized monarchy over experiencing continued enslavement within a violent, white supremacist democracy. Indeed, the British promise of land and liberty for African Americans who rallied to its flag did not have to be extended to the Crown's white supporters. They knew that, win or lose, they would keep their slaves (euphemistically termed "servants") and gain prime land tracts, wherever the British flag continued to fly. The concluding trio of lines in "May 18, 1783," drops the third-person-plural and third-person-singular pronouns ("they" and "his") of the rest of the sonnet to assume a dramatic, second-person-singular address:

> You took the challenge of the woods and seas
> And captured in a single classic phrase
> The moving story of those valiant days. (9)

These lines could refer to Loyalists, black and white. Yet, whatever the valour of government-assisted white Loyalist settlers, the valour of the poorly provisioned, landless, despised, and ignored black brethren must have been greater still.[10]

Henderson's second-sonnet part of "Market Slip" is headed with the date of "18 May, 1947," marking the 164th anniversary of the Loyalist landing in Saint John. It is an atypical anniversary date, unless one notes that 1947 marked Henderson's sixtieth year of life.[11] It seems she desires, in the poem, to connect the Loyalist birth of New Brunswick (the colony was formally sundered from Nova Scotia in 1784 so that Saint John River Loyalist settlers would not "be governed from Halifax [Spray 16]) and its growth with her own life experience. Shadd notes that Henderson "retired from the civil service in 1945 and returned to Saint John, where she worked for three years as a stenographer in the law firm of Fairweather and Stephenson" (4). Presuming that the firm's offices were near the City Market and thus the waterfront, Henderson may have had occasion to visit the market slip and feel inspired to pen her paean. Certainly, in honouring the Loyalist—and Black Loyalist—arrival, she also honours her own ancestry and successes.[12]

In her fine analysis of "Market Slip," Shadd emphasizes "1783 is a pivotal year in Canadian Black history. In that year, almost three thousand Blacks—10 percent of all Loyalists—sailed to Nova Scotian shores (which at the time included New Brunswick) in search of freedom. With this migration, the first free African communities in North America were forged" (6).

Interpreting the second sonnet, Shadd explains, "Henderson makes the point here that just as African migrants from America sought freedom on these shores over two hundred years ago, so have hundreds of thousands of European immigrants sought peace and freedom during and after World War II" (7). I also suspect that lines promising newcomers, "Tempered in the New World's alembic," will "build a future of broader vision," permitting Canada to attain "The beauty . . . of freedom and of power" (9), hints that Canada, in 1947, possesses a restricted social vision. Thus, in the first poem of *Citadel*, Henderson gestures toward immigration and multiculturalism as policies that will serve to liberalize Canada, even racially. Shadd holds that "Only the tone of hope and optimism itself [in the poem], and the plea that Canada live up to its image as a place of opportunity for all people is suggestive that Canada was not [in Henderson's mind] all that it could be" (8).

Although Shadd and I tease out potential *black* inklings in Henderson's otherwise *race*-erased verse, the fact remains this sounding is not obvious. But Henderson's subtlety is a strategy engaged by many early twentieth-century, African-American women poets. Honey claims that, for these poets, the "search for roots and identity led inward, moved backward to an imaginary Eden where sensitivity could survive and even flourish" (18). Honey cites Bernard Bell's perception that Harlem Renaissance Romantic pastoral poetry "might best be understood as ancestralism, arising from a desire to reconcile the urban present with a rural past" (18). Arguably, the two sonnets of "Market Slip," one singing of pioneers landing in a virginal-forested bay and the next praising the growth of a city, achieve this reconciliation. Shadd reports that Henderson's barber-father, William, was likely a fugitive slave—that is to say, immigrant—from the United States (2), while her schoolteacher-mother, Henrietta, a New Brunswick native, had parental roots extending back, possibly, to the Black Loyalist colonialists (2). "Market Slip" allows Henderson to laud her ancestors abstractly, even as she praises explicitly the Loyalist, wood-and-water origin and immigration-propelled, urban growth of Saint John and Canada.[13]

Another Henderson sonnet, "The Old Burying Ground," may refer, Shadd submits, to "the Black Settlement Burial Ground in Willow Grove, a one-time Black settlement on the outskirts of Saint John" (14). However, the poem speaks of "sloping walks with leafy shade" where "Old men on benches talk the hours away," and where "the hallowed dead" have left "their legacy of faith and dreams / Forever graven on the city's heart" (11). These details,

along with the play on *grave* and the placement of the cemetery at the "city's heart,"[14] establish, indubitably, that the poem's setting is the Old Loyalist Burial Ground in central Saint John, uphill from the harbour, and overlooking both it and the market. But *race* may haunt the last image of the poem, where the delegating dead—"A paradox of life and death, . . . pass / As light and shadow drift across the grass" (11). Here the reader encounters explicit "ancestralism." Too, one must remember Honey's theory that, in black women's poetry of the era that shaped Henderson, images of light and dark, day and night, white and black, and shadow and brilliance are frequently allegorical (8-17). Read in light of this perception, "The Old Burying Ground" becomes a site of ironic racial integration, where the spectres of white and black settlers, Loyalists and slaves, now free of all fleshly or worldly prejudices, drift fraternally in mingling "light and shadow" (11).

Henderson's "Corner Grocery Store," a poem in which her persona discovers a London shop that reminds her of a Saint John corner store she knew in childhood, asserts "Oceans do not divide us, but unite. / It was like coming home when all was said" (14). This poem seems a perfectly Anglophilic pronouncement. Yet, the "us" that "oceans" unite is not just Canada and Britain, or Canada, the United States of America (the poem opens with a reference to Boston), and Britain, or even the British Commonwealth: it is also Africa, Europe, Australia, Asia, and the Americas. Certainly, the London "grocery store" is a "counterpart" to one in Saint John, N.B., or in Boston, Mass., but, "with its goods from everywhere," it provides "A jolly place to learn geography!" (14). The London shop is a locus of British imperialism (now translated into a global supply of consumer goods for "home" consumption) and of the world-wide extension of English civilization.[15] Even if Henderson is ignorant of the role of African slavery in establishing the Anglo-Saxon imperium (an impossible supposition), her "home"—or the experience of finding a sense of "home" in a "borderless" store, whether in London, or Boston, or Canada, or Africa—is utterly the result of the forced migration of Africans and coerced migration of Asians and Europeans. Given that Britain once "ruled the waves" (and still more-or-less did so when the poem was written), it was under its blood-coloured banner (the British naval flag—or Red Ensign—Canada's official flag until 1965) that the Arctic, Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans were, metaphorically, "united." Henderson's vision of "home" and "coming home" is far more complicated than it first appears. Her "us" refers to all who use English—the global language, one established by imperial (British) and semi-imperial (American) domination.[16]

The single poem in *Citadel* that seems almost unabashedly "black" in tone and subject is "Prayer-Meeting" (26-27). This ten-quatrain lyric narrates the decision of Sister Susie Gray to remain outside amid a blizzard, to avoid hearing the prayers of the deacon with whom she has just quarreled. As usual in Henderson, there are no direct references to *race* in the poem. However, some details in description and language conjure up images of black church folk. One notes the "brightly-lighted meeting-house" (26), the church or chapel so vital to rural black communities, an oasis of "comradeship and singing" (26), especially "down East" (27), where Africadians[17] are isolated from the larger current of African-North American life. One reads that "from her seat and down the aisle, / Marched Sister Susie Gray" (26), and that one plain verb and noun sets before the mind's eye a transplanted, "Southern" black woman, bustling, with mighty energy and powerful determination, through the church (an institution nominally mastered by black male preachers, but almost always, in reality, staffed and overseen by black women). Sister Susie's name is not African, of course, but its quadruple appearance in the poem and its associations with African Diasporic communities,[18] serve again to suggest the lyric's black origin and intended destination. Henderson allows Susie only a fragment of speech—"Susie said / She'd never listen to his [the Deacon's] voice / Though she 'should be struck dead'" (27)—and it cannot be described as Ebonics—or Black English—in any sense. Even so, just as one finds in other Henderson poems, the context deepens if the lyric is read *blackly*. In addition, if Henderson's lines, "The tangy salt sea breeze down East / preserves a hardy folk" (27), are permitted to denote Afro-New Bruswickers (or Africadians) as much as they may denote any New Brunswick village, one accords black settlers the same courage and dignity automatically accorded white ones. (This "two-toned" reading jibes with those I grant "Market Slip" and "Pioneer.") Finally, Shadd has found a letter Henderson addressed, on 19 November 1967, to historian Robin Winks (11). In the letter, Henderson reveals the genesis of "Prayer-Meeting" as having been in her experience teaching school "in a 'colored Baptist community' in Nova Scotia at the age of nineteen (which would have been in 1906) and attend[ing] a revival meeting in the Baptist church" (Shadd 11):

> Everyone went to revivals. I boarded in a house a good half mile from the main road, in a spot surrounded by evergreen trees and I was afraid to stay there alone at night, so went along too! (Qtd. in Shadd 11)

Shadd notes "Prayer-Meeting" is the only poem Henderson "mentions in her letters as being a direct reflection of the Black community" (12). Justly, Shadd wonders, "How many more [Henderson] poems are [really] about the Black Canadian experience?" (12)

"Prayer-Meeting" and its "back story" disclose Henderson's actual *black* consciousness and her feelings of connection to a wider black community. Yet, her work had to find its place within what Québécois nationalist Henri Bourassa (1868-1952) terms "cette mer immense . . . saxonisant" (49)—or, in her case, a sea of bleach, that is to say, an Anglo-Saxon dye.

Henderson's poem "Crow and Critic" (28-29) is perhaps her most sophisticated statement about herself. It is "A Portrait of the Poet as a (Closeted) Black Woman." Moreover, in a gesture toward Modernism, it rejects rhyme and metre, and, in a nod toward Post-Modernism, it is self-conscious about its own artifice. The poem begins with the speaker describing the arrival of spring with "Patches of soft green" appearing "Between the red bricks of the street," a sky "cloudlessly blue, and the air / Laden with the fragrance of growing things," and seeming "all colour and light" (28). The sky—and the page—is intruded upon by a crow that "Contrary to the usual opinion of crows / . . . could be called beautiful" (28). Immediately, one may consider the crow a symbol for the poet herself, now an elderly black woman, but beautiful in her creative soul. The lyric continues, positioning the crow "On the steeple bell of the old Lutheran Church" from which "the singing / In great waves of glorious sound / Came to me in my window" (28). Enraptured by the scene and the sound, the speaker muses, "The crow, looking down with its head on one side / Listened intently and—could it have been?— / With intelligence and enjoyment" (28). If the crow is read as a *familiar* of Henderson herself, then, in three deft lines, she rehearses the rejection of black writers by white critics who refuse to credit blacks with faculties of intelligence and imagination, feeling and subtlety. Perhaps Henderson is even alluding to the *race*-blinded criticism that Thomas Jefferson offered African America's first major poet Phillis Wheatley: "Religion indeed has produced a Phyllis Whately [*sic*]; but it could not produce a poet. The compositions published under her name are below the dignity of criticism" (140).[19]

This possibility is strengthened when one considers what feels like the second part of "Crow and Critic," where the speaker defends the poem that resulted from her observations of the "Spring day at its best" and "what I saw from my window, / Including, of course, the crow" (29). Her defence is

necessitated by a critic who has charged, "The Crow flapping seems to be / A digression. What does it really contribute / To the meaning of the poem?" (29) In reply, Henderson's persona states, "I might have quoted Archibald MacLeish[20] / 'A poem should not mean, but be'" (29). Instead, the persona tells her critic: "It was part of the picture / I saw from my window, so I put it in" (29). In the name of spiritual wholeness, she must integrate her pleasures in God's spring day, (white) Lutheran singing, and the behaviour of the savvy black crow (whose "feathers glistened and scintillated in the sun" [28]). The poet adds to her response to "The Critic" by noting that Welsh poet Dylan Thomas has included a crow in one of his poems: "I was glad it was part / Of the picture he saw from *his* window, / And that he, too, 'Put it in'" (29). Finally, she writes, in seeming opposition to an assertion in the Thomas poem, "I am not, however, buying a blind / For my window" (29). As a black-identified black woman, Henderson has room for the crow in her Modernist poem, and appeals to the work of two Modernist poets to support her inclusiveness. Given that "Crow and Critic" follows immediately after "Prayer-Meeting," one may hear here the poet's Declaration of Independence, her own Ars Poetica:

> I will write of blackness as spectrally or as opaquely or as clearly as I wish.
> I will write wholly of the world as it appears to me.[21]

At least, this *black* reader wants to read this assertiveness into Henderson's poem and into all of her poetry.[22]

The careful reader of *Citadel* must recognize its ambitious, formal sweep. Henderson applies Miltonic Neoclassicism (likely under the sway of Wheatley) to her Shakespearean sonnets (see "Market Slip"), updates the organic imagery of the spiritual (see "Pioneer"), employs Wordsworthian Romanticism (see "The Old Burying Ground"), tackles Negro dialect verse by omitting dialect (see "Prayer-Meeting"), and reveals herself to be a wily and allusive Modernist in the ragged rhythms and Poundian (pugnacious) artiness of "Crow and Critic." She tries on all of these forms in a slender—no, skinny—self-published chapbook. In her little offering, she attempts to replicate the entire African-American, Anglo-American, and Anglo-Canadian aspiration to rewrite British poetry in their—I mean, *our*—own terms. Her endeavour is daunting, but she is undaunted.

Henderson's veiled references to blackness and her own cultural heritage are poignant in their opacity. Yet, she may still be deemed insufficiently subversive. While her verse is open to *black*-focused or Afrocentric readings, she is curiously silent about the presence of Others—Acadians, Francophones

in general (despite all her years in Ottawa), and Mi'kmaq and other First Nations peoples, not to mention other African peoples—in the Maritimes or in Canada. Then again, as Shadd opines, Henderson participates in an African-Canadian (and Canadian) tradition of masking *race*: "At a time when one did not wear one's 'Blackness' on one's sleeve, African-Canadians cultivated a 'just people' approach to manoeuvre through the unspoken but blatant daily affront to their humanity" (21).

Conclusion

Henderson's intellectual career underscores the complex dilemmas of African-Canadian literature and culture. Henderson establishes that good Canadian "Negroes" can write verse of genteel civility. She assures her questioning readers that she (or *we*) will not smash teacups when invited, finally, to tea (utilizing the Saint John-based *Red Rose* brand of course). But she also wants to civilize British imperialism, to convert it into integrationist liberalism. Nevertheless, her voice is, even with its glaze of invisible *blackness*, accommodationist—or Booker T. Washington-like. Still, Henderson was a product of New Brunswick and its Atlantic orientation. She looks across that expanse to Britain (Big Mama to Canada, the United States, and the white-dominated Dominions, but also, via imperialism, to Africa, the Caribbean, and a good swath of the so-called Third World). To examine her thought is to verify that "blackness," as an intellectual position, while always *regional* (i.e. its conceptualization is always based on one's location), is never *provincial* (i.e. its conceptualization is always international). But one question persists: Why does Henderson fail to address other "Negro"—or Black or African—Canadians? I think the answer is, she was waiting for *us* to declare *ourselves*.

NOTES

1 This paper is excerpted from the W. Stewart MacNutt Memorial Lecture presented at the University of New Brunswick—Fredericton and Saint John, New Brunswick, on 17-18 November, 2004. I am grateful to my auditors for their helpful critiques and comments. I dedicate this essay to the memory of Anna Minerva Henderson, who deserves greater appreciation as a pioneer African-Canadian Modernist.

2 This biography and bibliography is drawn from Winks, *History*, 393n.6.

3 Adrienne Shadd cites a 1968 letter wherein Henderson tells her correspondent, "I have quite a number of good books and quite a collection on the Negro. . . . I am trying to dispose of my books as I have quite a collection—nearly 2000." (qtd. in Shadd 9). Given this fact, Henderson was most likely acquainted with works by major "Negro" and American, British, and Canadian authors.

4 Adrienne Shadd (1954-) is a Toronto, Ontario, M.A. degree recipient in Sociology and an independent scholar of African-Canadian sociology, history, and literature. Her essay on Henderson, so central to my own, has been prepared for an academic essay collection on African-Canadian women.

5 In my use of the word *mastery*, I allude to African-American literary critic Houston Baker's argument that African-American literary Modernism utilized two strategies: 1) "mastery of form"—whereby the black writer establishes his or her equality to whites by working triumphantly with(in) a "European" form (arguably the practice of Henderson) and 2) "deformation of mastery"—whereby the black writer exploits his or her own cultural "'voice"' and "'style,"' satirizing and subverting the "'official"'—white—"'norm."' See Baker's *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (1987).

6 Lampman is not any more blind to *race* than is Henderson—even if he does not repress his whiteness as much as she represses her blackness. In Lampman's poem, "At the Long Sault, 1660" (1898), French defenders, led by Daulac, stave off an Aboriginal attack upon the infant city of Sault Ste. Marie. In Lampman's eyes, the "Silent, white-faced" Europeans confront a plain "dark with the rush of the foe . . . the Iroquois horde" (83). Eventually vanquished by "the red men" who shout "triumph-songs" around "camp-fires" (a vision of savagery), Daulac and his men are transfigured into "lilies asleep in the forest" (84). Here Lampman speaks for white-settler supremacy.

7 See Note 5 and Baker's theories regarding black "mastery of form."

8 Again, Henderson seems to value "mastery of form" as a means of passively—I mean, intellectually—asserting her racial equality to Caucasian writers.

9 One must note, however, that when Earle Birney (1904-95) resigned from his editorship of the *Canadian Poetry Magazine*, in 1949, he condemned its sponsoring organization, The Canadian Authors Association, for supporting "standards of judgment . . . of the Victorian age only" (148). One must note, though, that such standards would have appealed to Henderson.

10 In his history, *The Blacks in New Brunswick* (1972), W.A. Spray states that "There were probably at least 500 Black slaves in the Saint John area in 1784" (16). These people enjoyed no rights. Spray tells us "A number of slave-owners' homes had rooms in the basement equipped with chains, which were used to confine slaves who had attempted to run away" (21). But even free, Black Loyalist settlers endured privation and much discrimination: they were excluded from voting "for many years and there are no records of when Black people were first allowed to vote" (34); "Blacks were unable to become freemen of the city" of Saint John, which meant they were not permitted to practice a trade or to open a business" (34-35); 3) "The free blacks had no spokesman in government and their pleas for aid were repeatedly rejected" (36). Illiterate and landless, many of these settlers elected to be removed to Sierra Leone in 1792. Those who remained in New Brunswick, plus the later Black Refugee arrivals from the War of 1812, were considered "little better than slaves" by the New Brunswick government (43). In 1836, the colonial government allotted "1,050 acres in the so called 'Black Refugee Tract' . . . to *six White men*," but only a mere "55 acres was considered to be sufficient for the Black settlers" (49). Spray's chapter on education verifies that black people, until well into the twentieth-century, received only sporadic and insufficient schooling, thus perpetuating their marginal, socio-economic status (52-61).

11 Anniversary dates were important for Henderson. She must have been aware, for instance, that, in 1967, she was publishing *Citadel*, not only in her eightieth year, but in the centennial year of the Dominion of Canada.

12 Henderson's poem "Pioneer" yields more evidence that the settlers and pioneers celebrated in the first sonnet of "Market Slip" are also black. In "Pioneer," the poet imagines this archetypal settler facing "The difficult, the danger-ridden" and "enemies" who strove "In vain . . . to ensnare him / With the '*yoke of iron* / *And the bands of brass*'" (16). Again, as much as this poem may be read as pro-Loyalist propaganda, with the "enemies" cast as tyrannical Republican America, it just makes plainer sense read as a displaced slave spiritual. Here the pioneer is an ex-slave, who "Hurt, but undaunted, . . . pressed on" and "overcame" all obstacles, "And then his heart sang" (16). Even the poem's imagery replicates the elemental geography of the spiritual:

> Levels and foothills
> In green and soft deception,
> Tested his strength. The mountain
> Took all of his strength and courage.
> . . . The air
> Grew clearer, keener, as he climbed,
> And when he reached the top,
> An instant's light revealed
> The world-road he had made. (16)

Anyone familiar with such spirituals as "Go Tell It on the Mountain," "Rise, Shine, for the Light Is A-Coming," "Wade in the Water," and "Down by the Riverside" (all titles included in my anthology, *Fire on the Water*, vol. 1), just to name a few, will recognize the resemblance between their Biblical and topographical images and those Henderson employs. Nevertheless, Henderson maintains the dual application of her poem to white settler and ex-slave by noting that the pioneer was "guided" by "light"—"The Merlin Gleam" (16). Her speaker implies the rough equality of both the white and black newcomer ("Adventure claimed him"), but also their mutual investment in Anglo-Christian mysticism. As in "Market Slip" (and "The Old Burying Ground" [11]) then, Henderson skillfully allows, "in Pioneer," a simultaneous black-and-white reading, while arguing for the Anglo-milieu equality of settler and (ex-)slave. Adrienne Shadd, in her trail-blazing paper on Henderson, says, of "Pioneer," "Here Henderson proclaims that the African-American fugitives to Canada are just as surely Canadian pioneers as the early French and English explorers or later European settlers who continue to command centre stage in our official historical drama" (15).

13 A supplementary reading of "Market Slip" must acknowledge the ironies of its title. First, it may designate a wharf or dock as a "slip" from the market. But may it not also signal a 'runaway slave,' one who has given the (slave) market a "slip" (in the slang sense). Perhaps, too, "slip" represents a receipt—one acknowledging the poet's liberty.

14 Also present at Saint John's downtown "heart," as Henderson tells us in another sonnet, is King Square: "The heart of Saint John is King Square, laid out / Like the Union Jack . . . " ("King Square" 12). The square is adjacent to the Old Loyalist Burial Ground.

15 Note here that Henderson, as in "Market Slip," employs a site of commerce as the grounds for reflection on migration.

16 This poem may also be read as a statement of post-colonial equality. If visiting the corner grocery store on "a busy thoroughfare" in "London-town" was "like coming home

when all was said" (14), then "London-town" (and her use of this intimate and down-to-earth term is significant) is on a par with Saint John and Boston. Both of these smaller cities are its equals—and all are connected (and equalized) as well by the history of slavery and the struggle for freedom.

17 "Africadia" is my neologism for the piece of Canadian *terra firma* occupied originally by displaced African American ex-slaves and settlers, namely Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island—the "Black Maritimes," in other words, and "Africadian" is my coinage for the people, their *essence*, and their being.

18 An Africadian elder in the community of Preston, Nova Scotia, bore the name, "Mom Suze," circa the 1980s. Suzette Mayr, born in 1967, is an African-Canadian writer based in Calgary. Peter E. McKerrow's *History of the Coloured Baptists of Nova Scotia* (1895) lists many marriages performed by African Baptist ministers, and one was of S. Robson to Susan Gibson, in Halifax, N.S., on 16 Aug. 1844 (Boyd 77), while another was of W. Rodgers to Sus. Bride on 2 July 1872 (Boyd 81). This testimony cannot establish that Henderson's Susie Gray is black, but it should indicate that Susan and its derivations are not uncommon names in the African-Maritimes and elsewhere in the African Diaspora.

19 African-American literary scholar Henry Louis Gates Jr. states that Wheatley has been attacked by "black and white critics alike for being the *rara avis* of a school of so-called [black—i.e. African-American] mockingbird poets…" (78). It is highly probable that Henderson knew of—and identified with—Wheatley. Like the African-American poet, Henderson was well-educated, well-read, deeply religious, and stood—as she may have felt—in the vulnerable, terrifying, and lonely position of being 'the first'—Negro Canadian woman—to challenge presumed white supremacy in a European art form. Henderson's self-consciousness of her relative uniqueness is revealed in a letter to American historian Robin W. Winks:

> I am enclosing my chap-book "Citadel" published in August [1967]. It is difficult for Canadians to believe that a colored person—or negro, as the U.S.would call me—can write good poetry. I believe I'm the only one in Canada who has ever written a chap-book! (Qtd. in Shadd 9)

Henderson is partly incorrect in her assertion. The first poetry collections by African-Canadian men—Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943) and Theodore Henry Shackelford (1888-1923)—appeared in the United States in 1911 and 1916-18 respectively. The US-born, but Canadian citizen Alma Norman (1930-) published a poetry collection in England in 1964. (See my article, "A Primer of African-Canadian Literature," for further details.) Nevertheless, for most of her life, Henderson was right to consider herself the only publishing black poet in Canada, and she was certainly the first to publish a chapbook *in* her native country.

20 MacLeish (1892-1982), an American poet, is best known for his much-anthologized poem, "Ars Poetica" (1926), which concludes, "A poem should not mean / But be" (493).

21 Maureen Honey asserts that early twentieth-century African-American poets saw no connection between "Western cultural domination" and "their adoption of European literary forms" (6). They "did not consider the models they followed [the sonnet, the ode, the elegy, et cetera] to be the province or reflection of the conqueror" (7). Like these poets, Henderson, I believe, viewed conventional poetic forms as "timeless and universal," as "a common tongue, to which all might have access and by which all might be spiritually enlightened" (Honey 6). If "mastering" these forms "was a political act" (Honey 6),

especially for the descendants of abject slaves, then so could the "'raceless'" content of a *black* poet—a poet expected by white readers to be *race*-obsessed—be viewed as progressive, even radical. Henderson attempted, delicately, to do both: to be a *black* poet with *universal* content and to be a *raceless* poet with *black* subtext.

22 "It has become obvious that reading between the lines is an essential exercise in coming to a fuller understanding of Anna Minerva Henderson's racial self" (Shadd 12-13).

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Christopher Levenson

Bequest

I lie awake: no big city white noise here.
At most a late returning cyclist contests
the claims of silence, then unexpected snow,
ticking across the window panes as softly
as the ash of Europe's history.

Most of the folk I knew
in the volunteer work camps have died,
moved on, assumed other names. I survive
fifty years later only by
a thread of memory.

My travelling clock's unadjusted,
Ottawa time. Here it is 2 a.m.
I turn on the bedside lamp, weigh up
my assets: memories, an eye
for classical proportion, tall eighteenth century windows,
an affection for certain trees, birds, animals,
a love for this or that composer, painter, nothing
I can pass on. If I died now, who could re-assemble
the shards of my past and how could I bequeath
the simple happiness I felt
admiring old archways, courtyards, the abbey's carillon,
or strolling beside an elegant canal? At the end of the day,
there is only the night, so little to bequeath.

Claire Omhovère

Roots and Routes
in a Selection of Stories by Alistair MacLeod

> The fact is that the beginning always begins in-between, intermezzo.
> GILLES DELEUZE AND FÉLIX GUATTARI, *A THOUSAND PLATEAUS*.

Central to Alistair MacLeod's *Island* is the return to the original island or Highlands, phonetic closeness somehow reducing the geographical distance between the two referents. The motif is particularly prominent in four of the collection's sixteen short stories: "The Return" (1971), "The Closing Down of Summer" (1976), "As Birds Bring Forth the Sun" (1985), and "Clearances" (1999)—a corpus that roughly spans Alistair MacLeod's writing life.[1] Starting from W. H. New's inspiring remark that "the English-language vocabulary for characterizing landscape (and people's relationship with land) interconnects with the vocabulary for characterizing language and the use and function of language" (New 1998 164), I propose to analyse the functioning of pairs that combine spatial and linguistic displacement—returning and iteration, but also crossing and analogy. I will then be using a tropical approach to shed some light on the creative tension between roots and routes which lies at the core of Macleod's fiction. His stories are indeed equally concerned with the centripetal forces of the ethnic culture in which they are embedded and with the centrifugal expansion of writing that announces its scope and concerns as universal, as if immune—or perhaps indifferent—to five decades of post-humanist critique and deconstructive doubt.[2]

Because MacLeod's stories foreground the singularity of their Gaelic protagonists and their habitat, analysing the tropes through which the regional is made coterminous with the universal is then likely to throw light on the tacit acceptance evidenced in their reception. In his review of Irene Guilford's *Alistair MacLeod*, the only volume of critical essays so far devoted to

MacLeod's writing, Lawrence Mathews pointedly wonders why "no one ever says anything about MacLeod's work that could be construed as even mildly negative. . . . Despite the slightness of his output . . . and despite the reluctance of academic critics to examine it closely, he has been allotted a secure niche in the Canadian pantheon" (Matthews 119). My hypothesis is that, in MacLeod's short fiction, the operations of iteration and analogy allow local place to resonate with a national sense of space beyond the immediate insularity, or regional specificity, of their plots and setting. The consonance of MacLeod's stories with a general, indeed national, response to the particulars of place suggests that their alleged universal value may rest upon the consensual validation of their contribution to the "imagined geographies"[3] (Fiamengo 241) in which the nation, fragmented and diverse as it is, grounds its own existence.[4]

What happened?

What distinguishes the short story as a genre from the tale and the novel, Deleuze and Guattari explain, is the secret that informs its narrative development and orients it towards the past. In a short story, they add, one does not expect anything to happen for everything has *already* happened:

> It is not very difficult to determine the essence of the [short story] as a literary genre: Everything is organized around the question, "What happened? Whatever could have happened?" The tale is the opposite of the [short story], because it is an altogether different question that the reader asks with bated breath: "What is going to happen?" . . . Something always happens in the novel also, but the novel integrates elements of the [short story] and the tale into the variation of its perpetual living present. (Deleuze and Guattari 192)[5]

Hence, the implacability driving Alice Munro's "The Time of Death," or Mavis Gallant's "Voices Lost in Snow." As their narratives resist the accomplishment of what has just occurred, they delineate a tear in the fabric of events even as they attempt to mend it. MacLeod's stories are no exception to Deleuze and Guattari's principle—nothing takes place in them that did not take place long ago and, one may add, far away. The characters' individual present is enfolded in the clan's collective past—the Highland Clearances which, at the end of the eighteenth century, forced them away from their home to Nova Scotia. Six generations later the ancestral culture that was transplanted into the New World is withering under the joint pressures of poverty and progress. The secret MacLeod's characters share, but will not admit, is constrained within a double bind, staying in Cape Breton being

just as impossible as leaving it. The narrative then obsessively recounts the moment of returning, when the home place provisionally coincides with the characters' longing to dwell there again.

Such is the case in "The Return," an initiation story built on concentric excursions from and back to home's still centre: the return of the prodigal son and his family to North Sydney, Alex's return to his grandparents' house, the men's return from the pit, and finally the family's return trip to Montreal. About to depart for another mining season overseas, the men in "The Closing Down of Summer" are already anticipating their return to Cape Breton and the eventuality that it may be their final journey home to one of the small island cemeteries. In "As Birds Bring Forth the Sun," a tremendous big grey dog, saved as a pup by the clan's ancestor, disappears and returns to cause its master's accidental death. Later on, it will reappear as the big grey dog of death that all the man's descendants glimpse at the moment of their demise. Likewise, the blanket mentioned five times in the opening of "Clearances" is a synecdoche of a narrative weaving together the past and present of the central character, an ageing widower whose property is coveted by a clear-cutter and a German couple smitten with the ocean frontage. The clashing interests of the tourist industry and those of a local population barely surviving on the island's depleted resources are set in parallel with the territorial struggles of World War II and the silent eviction of thousands in the eighteenth century, suggesting the constancy of the economic pressures which have beset the Gaelic community and condemned them to poverty and exile.

In all four stories, the narrative is syncopated. It points insistently beyond its own narrow scope, so that even as it explores the present, one feels the story cannot be comprehended outside its relation to the formal dimension of the past (Deleuze and Guattari 237). What happened then may account for a sense of belonging Alex "knows and feels but cannot understand" (R 91; see also 82, 83, 90), an intimation which impresses itself even more brutally upon the characters of "As Birds Bring Forth the Sun." Both "The Closing Down of Summer" and "Clearances" take this investigation further as their narratives are concerned with liminality, specifically with the interstitial differences and similarities through which the characters define themselves in relation to distant origins but also in respect to other close-knit communities—Highland Scots (CS 185, C 418), French and Irish mining crews (CS 202), the Acadians and neighbouring Mi'kmaq (C 148). In musical terms, a syncopation occurs when the strong note is *not* on the beat.[6] These stories

similarly feature a contrast between iteration—the recurrent motifs that encode territory and sustain a sense of belonging—and analogy, a syncopation which cuts short the refrain of home and distends its limits to accommodate intersubjective distance.

The refrain of home

In "De la ritournelle,"[7] Deleuze and Guattari observe the territorializing function of repetitive sound patterns, whose effectiveness rests upon the pervasiveness of the sound which irresistibly includes the subject within its reception. In this respect, hearing is to be opposed to sight, a selective sense that requires a separation between perceiving subject and perceived object.[8] Both perceptual modes contribute to the tracing and shaping of territory. Visually, or from a discriminating perspective, a territory can be defined as the critical distance between two individuals of the same species (Deleuze and Guattari 319). Aurally, the approach being now inclusive, an interval is induced by expressive sound patterns that mark off space as territorial insofar as they supersede and exclude any other expressive matter: "We call a refrain any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes. . . . In the narrow sense, we speak of a refrain when an assemblage is sonorous or 'dominated' by sound" (Deleuze and Guattari 323).[9] The meaning of *territoire*, in Deleuze and Guattari's analysis then diverges slightly from the legal implications of the word *territory*,[10] the French concept containing notions of appropriation and identification associated in English with local, heterogeneous place as opposed to global, homogenous space.[11]

In their relation to place, Gaelic and, to an even greater degree, song are evident territorial markers. In "Clearances," they create the distance that ostracizes strangers and trespassers (C 428). And, when during World War II the central character visits the ancestral Highlands, the rustle of Gaelic, its "soft sounds" and "subliminal whispers," signals his entry into a territory where markers are aural and haptic rather than optic and distant (C 418-419). Back in Cape Breton, the young man has pups sent in from the Highlands to breed them following the instructions of a Scottish shepherd (C 421). The line of Border collies that later accompanies him into old age also embodies the territorializing function of sound. The man addresses his otherwise nameless dogs with the phrase the shepherd initially uttered to identify the animal and its territorial vigil: "*S'e thu fhein a tha tapaidh* (It's yourself that's smart)" (C 423). From the point of view of reception, the Gaelic fragment also has a

definite territorializing value. The reader's ability to *voice* the inscription indexes belonging to the island/Highland sound continuum whereas those who need the translation are merely permitted provisional access to it, a limitation materialized visually in the writer's use of brackets.

The recurrence of a Celtic phrase is more ambivalent in "As Birds Bring Forth the Sun." The silhouette of the big grey dog also serves as a transition between the clan's mythic past and the narrator's present but, instead of suggesting their seamless continuation, the recurring name of the "*cù mòr glas*" impresses a punctuation denying the character escape or progress (B 312). The Gaelic refrain suggests that change, whether spatial or temporal, can be checked through the repetition of a set formula, not a language for communication, but signifiers whose musicality moves speaker and listener alike, hemming them in the voicing of territory.[12] Gaelic is then only marginally concerned with exchanging information. Instilled in infancy, it partakes of the sacred and its rituals. It is the language used in prayers, to love or to mourn, in lament and in exultation. As one of the characters puts it, Gaelic is the "reflexive" tongue that conveys and causes affects (C 418). As they come in sight of Cape Breton, his father's tears remind Alex of earlier ceremonies when listening to Celtic music had the double function of commemorating home and inculcating its significance in a child who had never been there:

> My mother does not like [my father's violin records] and says they all sound the same so he only plays them when she is out and we are alone. Then it is a time like church, very solemn and serious and sad and I am not supposed to talk but I do not know what else I am supposed to do; especially when my father cries. (R 80-81)

Focalization upon a ten-year-old's limited understanding leaves some space for the quiet humour of a mature narrator who recalls the sentimental ritual with mingled feelings; it is hard to tell whether it is genuine concern for his father's grief, or plain boredom that predominates in the recollection. Equally ambivalent are the revelations as to filiation, masculinity, and their connection to home, that await Alex in Cape Breton. At the ferry landing, their small party is greeted by a drunkard's obscene song, causing the outrage of Alex's mother. As a genteel Montrealer, she finds the local filth—at once a class, a gender, and a regional marker—quite insufferable (R 82). A whole story, and a two weeks' lapse, will be necessary for Alex to begin to fathom what he senses but cannot understand about Cape Breton and its sway upon his family.

In both "The Closing Down of Summer" and "The Return," the traditional family plot refers both to the grave that awaits the characters in the local cemetery and to the course and purpose of their lives. One of its avatars is "the hereditary salmon net," another beautiful and cumbersome inheritance in "Clearances." The characters' names repeat those of the previous generation and it is expected of their descendants that they will replace those whose untimely death has left a vacancy down the pit, or on the fishing boats. In "The Return," the narrator's uncle died "buried under tons of rock two miles beneath the sea." (R 87). As it combines drowning with the shaft accident, the event epitomizes the suffocation that awaits the men, a prospect only liquor may blunt, male alcoholism turning into another, more insidious but just as fatal, form of drowning (R 87, B 317, CDS 207). Belonging *in* Cape Breton is rife with contradictions, the home place being at once life-preserving and suffocating as revealed in the climax of "The Return." Fresh from the ferry, Alex approaches the new environment with the references of any ten-year-old raised on a staple of boy's magazines and US frontier adventures.[13] But it is contact with male dirt and toil that signals his entrance into masculinity and his Gaelic lineage:

> [My grandfather] places his two big hands on either side of my head and turns it back and forth very powerfully upon my shoulders. I can feel the pressure of his calloused fingers squeezing hard against my cheeks and pressing my ears into my head and I can feel the fine, fine, coal dust which I know is covering my face and I can taste it from his thumbs which are close against my lips. It is not gritty as I had expected but is more like smoke and sand and almost like my mother's powder. And now he presses my face into his waist and holds me there for a long, long time with my nose bent over against the blackened buckle of his belt. Unable to see or hear or feel or taste or smell anything that is not black; holding me engulfed and drowning in blackness until I am unable to breathe. (R 93-94)

The grandfather's gesture evokes the baptism rituals which, to Anne McClintock, are so crucial to male land claiming (McClintock 29). Alex experiences an earthy drowning and rebirth through the matrix of two rough hands that impress their own mark and the physicality of place upon him. The sensation, "almost like my mother's powder," is associated with a gentle but definitely smothering affection. And as the fine dust saturates the boy's five senses it causes a rapture that borders on malaise, an excess perceptible in the insistent use of redundancies—"pressure," "pressing," "presses"—and a string of isocolons culminating in an alliterative outburst of sibilants and plosives. Because it implies that the embrace of kin and place is so overwhelming it is potentially lethal, the scene calls to mind the tragic reunion of

the *cù mòr glas* with the founder of the line in "As Birds Bring Forth the Sun."

As the dog's offspring have never had any contact with people, they misunderstand their mother's boisterous joy for an attack on the man's supine body; the wild pack then pounces on him and tears him apart under the eyes of his helpless sons. Although the plot partly recalls the cautionary tales in which a foundling brings disaster into the community that gave him shelter, its concern goes beyond the spatial distinctions ancient myth sought to establish between outside and inside, *hostes* and *hospites* (Serres 1983 145-152). Rather, it addresses the endurance of an archaic articulation between man and the environment framed by the title and its echo in the denouement, "we are aware that some beliefs are what others would dismiss as 'garbage.' We are aware that there are men who believe the earth is flat and that the birds bring forth the sun." (B 320) The hounds are emanations from the rock and the sea; their conception on the strand results from the pull cosmic energy exerts on the alternation of tides and seasons as well as on the breeding frenzy of animals (B 312). Of the elements that concurred in their birth, the dog's offspring has retained the colour, the ruggedness and, above all, a formidable force that is both life-giving and devastating. "The ambiguous force of the *cù mòr glas*" (B 317) has the characteristic duality of the eco-symbols through which human beings have vested meaning in their surroundings, laying the foundations of the "proto-landscape" (Berque 39-40 and 59-60) that predated the advent of a Western aestheticizing gaze, and the subsequent perception and representation of landscape as distinct because distant from the spectator who assesses his dominion over the view he beholds.[14]

Neither in "The Return" nor in "As Birds Bring Forth the Sun" is the environment quite objectified into a landscape: there is not enough distance, or distancing, between the characters and the place they inhabit.[15] In Alex's eyes, his grandparents are metonymically related to their surroundings, "My grandmother is very tall with hair almost as white as the afternoon's gulls and eyes like the sea. . . . My grandfather . . . has a white moustache which reminds me of the walrus picture at school" (R 84). The mine is insistently described as having the characteristics of a living organism—"the black gashes of coal mines . . . look like scabs," (R 82) "green hills with gashes of their coal embedded deeply in their sides" (R 97). In "As Birds Bring Forth the Sun," the big grey dog is silhouetted against a land endowed with human attributes as in the dead metaphor "the brow of the hill," used three times

when the old man is crushed by his own creation (B 313-314). Generations later, as the narrator's father lies in hospital awaiting his vision of the big grey dog of death, his six grey-haired sons sitting around the bed eerily recall the six grey hounds who encircled their ancestor and devoured him, his mangled body materializing the foundation of a line in which genealogy, language, and territory are inextricably interwoven.[16]

"As Birds Bring Forth the Sun" illustrates in an exemplary fashion the iterative patterns that characterize MacLeod's stories. Through them, the refrain of home is made consonant with the territory the characters inhabit. It also leads to a temporal inscription which shuns the linearity of chronological progress for the cosmic cycles that regulate life in its manifold forms, an aspect brilliantly analyzed by Simone Vauthier in the essay she devoted to MacLeod's unconventional use of the present tense.[17] At times, the refrain of home may have the weight of a burden. The emplotment of the character's future limits its accomplishment to the prolongation of a line in which genealogical, linguistic, and territorial strands combine and bind the characters to the island conceived as a verbal extension of the original Highlands.

Conserving / conversing

The continuity of the cultural practices that produce territory, for instance the fashioning of vegetal badges or the ritual sharing of drink and song in "The Closing Down of Summer," is also manifest in the characters' concern for their animals. Dogs, in particular, are tokens of permanence. Being descended from the animal companions of the first exiles, or later imported from the Highlands, they are quite literally "from another time" (B 310). Only careful breeding has ensured the preservation of their original traits requiring that they be kept "in pens during the breeding season so that they might maintain their specialness" (C 421). Here man's control of animal instincts signals a clear line between nurture and nature. No dubious cult of roots can be found in MacLeod's stories, their narrators being rather wary of the confinement ethnicity may involve.[18] In "The Closing Down of Summer," McKinnon's miners are distinguished from rival crews who will not leave their province because "they are imprisoned in the depths of their language" (CDS 203). Equating territorial entrapment with unilingualism,[19] the metaphor derives its ominous overtones from all the cave-ins recounted in "The Closing Down of Summer." "Clearances" similarly features a dilemma between conservation and conversation. For minorities, the preservation of their language is indeed an asset for ethnic cohesion but it is also a liability

that may contribute to their exclusion from wider cultural and economic exchanges:

> But in the years between the two world wars they realized when selling their cattle or lambs or their catches of fish, that they were disadvantaged by language. He remembered his grandfather growing red in the face beneath his white whiskers as he attempted to deal with the English-speaking buyers. Sending Gaelic words out and receiving English words back; *most of the words falling somewhere into the valley of incomprehension that yawned between them.* Across the river the French-speaking Acadians seemed the same as did the Mi'kmaq to the east. All of them trapped in the beautiful prisons of the languages they loved. "We will have to do better than this," said his grandfather testily. "We will have to learn English. We will have to go forward." (C 418, my emphasis)

Once again land and language are brought together in a metaphor capturing the isolation caused by ethnic entrenchment. Here the "valley of incomprehension" which renders exchanges impossible finds its counterpart in the "chasm" cutting across generations in "The Return" (R 91). Because it is out of place in the maritime setting, the image jars and draws attention to a decision that links communication with spatial progress. Going forward is indeed emblematic of the dynamics that impel MacLeod's characters and the awareness that cultivating one's distinctiveness within the nation is incompatible with a stubborn clinging to the past.[20]

This paradox is confirmed on two occasions when the return to the Scottish Highlands leads to an encounter with desolation and death immediately followed by the reassertion of Cape Breton's hold upon the character. In "As Birds Bring Forth the Sun," one of the grown-up sons is battered to death outside a Glasgow pub by seven large, grey-haired men in a scene that reiterates his father's fall under the claws and fangs of the island's big grey dogs. In "Clearances," the soldier's excursion to his ancestors' villages holds no revelation for him either, except perhaps an intimation of his own mortality, some of the gravestones bearing his very name (C 420). The narrator's resentment surfaces in a description which refers to the discontents of the past only to foreground the constancy of the power politics that, having caused his community's eviction, brought him back to Europe five generations later, to defend interests in which he still has no part. History is presented as a crushing inevitability, the character's present a puny re-enactment of past oppressions. The passage of time is then irrelevant or, at least, secondary to the territorial clashes that go on pitting individuals and communities against one another. The Highland shepherd implies just as much when he exclaims, "'You are from Canada? You are from the Clearances?'

. . . as if it were a place instead of a matter of historical eviction" (C 419). MacLeod then drives the point home when he has his ageing character defend his ocean frontage property against European interests whose financial pressure is presented as far more irresistible than the military expansion he fought as a young man in World War II trenches.

It would therefore be inaccurate to mistake the narrators' concern with the fractures of long ago for nostalgia. The commemorated past is quite uninhabitable and offers little, if any, refuge against the economic uncertainties of the present. In "The Closing Down of Summer," descriptions of the drought and industrial decay combine into pervasive evocations of ruin. The representation of the island then splits into two irreconcilable extremes: the parched wasteland of the summer coast or the inland cemeteries of the torrential fall. And the slender beach where the characters are waiting for a change in the weather provides the geographical analogy of all the transitions their community is engaged in. In "Clearances," the diaphoric use of "clear" allows the narrator to collapse three distinct periods into one territorial struggle fusing the evictions, land clearing in Cape Breton and, finally, the pressure exerted on small land owners by the clear-cutting industry on the coast and the extension of the National Park to the north (C 426). The demonstration reaches its conclusion in a self-conscious doubling of the young soldier's discovery of the Highlands and their "unpopulated emptiness" when the soldier, now an elderly man, registers a similar desertion in Cape Breton (C 420 and 429).

The consequences of territorial strife—eviction, itinerant labour, and, ultimately, immigration—lead to spatial displacements that assert the link between the story's agent and its action, indexing the structuring role of the search for employment and its consequence, the journey, identified by Chklovski first in the tale, then in the episodic structure of early novels (Chklovski 194). And yet, for all their departures and returns, MacLeod's stories do not feature the circularity of the completed quest. Neither do they have the verticality of a picaresque itinerary, the ups and downs of the hero's fortune delaying narrative progress, exacerbating the reader's involvement, but never representing any serious threat to the ultimate social ascent of the hero. But MacLeod's narratives are not impelled by the necessity of an accomplishment. Their trajectory is characterized by its periodicity, their plot occupying the interval between a departure and a home-coming, the intermittence of resources and seasonal labour sending the characters from Cape Breton across the country into the wider world and back. Looking

back but moving on, these stories therefore conjoin roots and routes in a lateral dynamics of successive crossings.

Crossings

In MacLeod's stories, Cape Breton is never pictured as a self-contained, sufficient, and secluded haven. Cut off from the mainland but open and exposed to Atlantic influxes, the island is first and foremost a site of exchanges. In all four stories, insularity transforms any displacement into a crossing of some significance, "a journey on the road to understanding" (CDS 197). In "Clearances," the middle-aged couple's trip to Prince Edward Island turns into a profane pilgrimage to the manufacturer where they have been sending their wool production since the early years of their marriage: "Later his wife was to tell her friends, 'We visited Condon's Woollen Mill on Prince Edward Island,' as if they had visited a religious shrine or a monument of historical significance and, he thought, she was probably right" (C 414). The exclamation receives unexpected rhetorical relief, its iambic lilt getting amplified in the sway of the two equal-length segments that frame the preposition *on*. The wife's fervour suggests two analogies to the narrator—"religious shrine" and "monument of historical significance"—which shun the spectacular or the picturesque to elevate the prosaic and the germane into a local pride.[21] In MacLeod's stories, analogy has an informing function that goes well beyond that of decorative artifice. Because it captures an identity which is not essential but relational, the trope establishes a partial equivalence between the local, insular event and a global, plural field of reference.

In its strict Aristotelian sense, analogy fuses comparison and reason, as it formulates a ratio between four items and two sets of relations (a/b = c/d) (Borella 24). The relation therefore allows the conjunction of the similar with the different but also the passage from one plane to another superior sphere, as implied by the idea of elevation contained in the Greek prefix *ana*.[22] Mediaeval theologians then developed complex analogies to approach the ineffability of the divine through a subtle, rigorous gradation of the manifestations of the One in the many. In the secular world of MacLeod's stories, analogy with its related forms, the simile and the comparison, are repeatedly used to inscribe the singular, insular experience within a wider referential frame. The *cù mòr glas*, to cite but one example, is thus related to a Scottish and a West Coast manifestation of the *genus loci*: "For a while she became rather like the Loch Ness monster or the Sasquatch on a smaller scale. Seen but not recorded. Seen when there were no cameras. Seen but

never taken" (B 316). Bridging the geographical and cultural extremity of its components, the analogy isolates in both an identical response of the human mind to a space alive with intensities that have not been objectified into a stable, external spectacle.

In "The Closing Down of Summer," several references to the Zulus similarly extend the story's referential and figurative scope beyond the immediate concerns of the crew and the future of their communal lifestyle. Their impressive physicality and the mastery of skills that shake the earth are not the only traits the Zulus share with the miners. Both communities belong to oral cultures in which group cohesion is achieved through ritual. And both have adapted to a fast-changing, increasingly global world where exotic forms of authenticity are all the more valued as they are becoming extinct. In this respect, the Celtic Revival concert and the Zulu dance performance are analogous in their reception by audiences who, well-intentioned though they may be, are unable to comprehend their profound signification. Communication subsequently aborts and each group remains confined within its linguistic and cultural limits, a seclusion to which the narrator reacts with unease, as evidenced in his choice of the word "archaic," used recurrently in reference to Gaelic and its speakers.

Beyond an outward likeness, analogy then isolates an intractable core of difference into which the narrator yearns to delve. Intellectual apprehension and physical displacement are expressed in identical dynamic terms, the narrator's failure "to understand [the Zulus] more deeply" being equated with the impossibility "to enter deeply into their experience" or "to penetrate behind the private mysteries of their eyes." Tracing the occurrences of the adjective "private" in this short story will highlight the pull within a trope which, even as it brings the disparate together, will not assimilate the similar with the same: "Yet in the end it seemed *we too* were only singing to ourselves. . . . songs that are for the most part local and private and capable of losing almost all of their substance in translation" (CDS 196). Ultimately, the analogy between the two communities conveys to the outsider the incommunicability of local experience. And yet the trope circumvents the aporia of the untranslatable, the identity it posits being necessarily relative, circumstantial, possibly debatable:

> He looked at the land once cleared by his great-great-grandfather and at the field once cleared by himself. The spruce trees had been there and had been cleared and now they were back again. They went and came something like the tide he thought, although he knew his analogy was incorrect. He looked toward the sea;

> somewhere out there, miles beyond his vision, he imagined the point of Ardnamurchan and the land which lay beyond. He was at the edge of one continent, he thought, facing the invisible edge of another. (C 430)

The unexpected syntactic reversal in "they went and came something like the tide" jars and throws into relief the flawed logic that would derive identity from a mere recurrence. The analogy between spruce and tide is rejected as spurious because it confuses man's intervention in the vegetal cycle with the cycle itself. In doing so, the analogy naturalizes the clash between competing economic interests, and disqualifies the character's rebellion. The evocation of the Scottish coast has no elegiac, reconciling virtue. Rather it confirms the narrator's awareness of the profound, essential difference that lies between the bare Highlands and the land of trees, his commitments to the past and the challenges of the present.

Often undermined by the disparity it seeks to limit, its validity threatened by an intrinsic inaccuracy, analogy is regarded with suspicion by the mathematician and the philosopher alike. For the writer, however, analogical approximation may come close to an approach, the trope triggering the associations and correspondences that open onto the multiplicity and complexity of shared experience. In the case of MacLeod's bilingual characters, Gaelic and English are frequently paired in translation, one language cleaving into the other's necessary yet inadequate shadow, "'*M'eudal cù mòr glas*,' shouted the man in his happiness—*m'eudal* meaning something like dear or darling" (B 314). Because it engages with an intractable nucleus in signification,[23] translation may be regarded as the overarching analogy out of which all the narratorial attempts to convey the bond between the characters and the land proceed. "The Closing Down of Summer," for instance, repeatedly laments the miners' failure "to tell it like it is" (CDS 206). The grammatical impropriety of the conjunctional use well captures the narrator's effort to *stretch* his argument beyond the literal in order to communicate the elation of the crew's physical engagement with the elemental world:

> I suppose I was drawn too by the apparent glamour of the men who followed the shafts. . . . We are always moving downward or inward or forward or, in the driving of our raises, even upward. We are big men engaged in perhaps the most violent of occupations and we have chosen as our adversary walls and faces of massive stone. It is as if the stone of the spherical earth has challenged us to move its weight and find its treasure and we have accepted the challenge and responded with drill and steel and powder and strength and all our ingenuity. In the chill and damp we have given ourselves to the breaking down of walls and barriers. We have sentenced ourselves to enclosures so that we might taste the

> giddy joy of breaking through. Always hopeful of breaking through though we never will break free. (CDS 201)

The Conradian overtones of the opening signal the amplification of the miners' labour into an age-old confrontation between man and the elements. The central comparison—"It is as if the stone of the spherical earth has challenged us to move its weight and find its treasure"—initiates a prosopopeia through which Cape Breton's mining tradition is elevated into a geste of man's struggle against a stinting nature, a motif which is not without resonance in the national imagination. The final chiasmus ("breaking down . . . breaking through . . . breaking through . . . break free"), plural abstractions and the syllabic expansion in the series "walls," "barriers," "enclosures," lead the reader to consider in this miniature mining epic the ambivalence in any confinement, at once an obstacle and an enticement to movement. The contradiction, interestingly, is also present in the formal compression that characterizes the genre, an enabling constraint in terms of narrative efficiency and reader participation.

In MacLeod's stories, intensity similarly results from the contradictory pull between iteration and analogy, the territorializing impulse of conservation and the deterritorializing force that operates in conversation but also in literature, each participant turned towards the other, text and reader tuned to the other's reception.[24] Such is the assurance I read in Terry Eagleton's words: "It is not just experience, but language, that takes a writer away from home because there is something curiously rootless about writing itself which is writing only to the degree to which it can survive transplantation from one context to another" (qtd. in Simpson-Housley 123). And MacLeod's stories have survived transplantation. Territorializing refrains do bind their characters to Cape Breton. Grounded in the island/Highland sound continuum, their iterations of home register the passage of time as a mere intermittence, the pause before a repetition—the oscillation of the tide, the flashes of the lighthouse, the occupation of the land, the rise and fall of cultures—all of them *ritornellos*. And yet, in these stories permanence is checked by their narrative's restlessness, an impatience with geographical and temporal constraints, that seeks an outlet in analogical forays into the distance, and the possibilities that lie somewhere, out there. These short stories therefore rely upon a sense of liminality, an in-betweenness to which a Canadian audience is likely to respond because it is emblematic of a shared relation to both region and nation as borderlands, zones of contact but also of interaction (Brown; New 1998), between different communities with competing and yet complementary claims to the land.

NOTES

1 Subsequent page references will appear directly in the text after the following abbreviations: (R) for "The Return," (CS) for "The Closing Down of Summer," (B) for "As Birds Bring Forth the Sun," and (C) for "Clearances."

2 In her review of *No Great Mischief*, Dianne MacPhee typically winds up citing MacLeod's claim that "what makes things universal is that they touch a core, a storehouse of human experience and concerns that transcend regions and transcend time" (qtd. in MacPhee 167). Jane Urquhart concurs when she writes that "MacLeod's stories have been called – albeit with great admiration – traditional, even conservative, by a literary world cluttered with theories and ''isms' (Guilford 37).

3 Janice Fiamengo uses this heading to introduce her chapter on "Regionalism and urbanism" in the 2004 *Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature*. The phrase, of course, obliquely refers to the communities of the imagination which, as Benedict Anderson has famously argued, underlie the formation of nations. At a second remove, it also allows Fiamengo to emphasize the vitality of regional writing in Canada and its lasting role in the definition of a Canadian canon and tradition.

4 An anonymous reader has pointed out to me that my field of investigation frequently overlaps with that of David Williams in his *Imagined Nations* (2003). Contrary to Williams, I did not feel the need to elaborate on the different positions of the speech community and the writer writing, or MacLeod's subtle adaptation of a community's oral fund to the requirements of a written communication, as these various points have been argued in great detail by Williams himself. My own interest rather lies in Macleod's elaborate written style and the rhetorical strategies his stories develop to bring the local to converse with the distant. My initial intention was to understand why and how MacLeod could be widely read and appreciated by people who do not necessarily feel bound by clan cohesion, a solidarity with, or even a nostalgia for, Cape Breton's Gaelic past.

5 I have amended Brian Massumi's translation and restored the word "short story" where he opted for the word "novella," presumably to foreground the idea of a recent development in the course of events, the latter being implicit in French as *nouvelle* may refer either to a short story or to a piece of news. The original reads as follows: "L'essence de la 'nouvelle', comme genre littéraire, n'est pas très difficile à déterminer: il y a nouvelle lorsque tout est organisé autour de la question 'Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé? Qu'est-ce qui a bien pu se passer?' Le conte est le contraire de la nouvelle, parce qu'il tient le lecteur haletant sous une tout autre question: qu'est-ce qui va se passer? . . . Quant au roman, lui, il s'y passe toujours quelque chose bien que le roman intègre dans la variation de son perpétuel présent vivant (durée) des éléments de nouvelle et de conte." (Deleuze et Guattari 235)

6 The *OED* defines the word as "the action of beginning a note on a normally unaccented part of the bar and sustaining it into the normally accented part, so as to produce the effect of shifting back or anticipating the accent; the shifting of accent so produced."

7 The translator of *A Thousand Plateaus* entitled this essay "Of the Refrain," an approximation that does not quite capture the melodious and obsessive connotations of the *ritornello* that gave the French *ritournelle* in the original version.

8 Michel Serres explains that sound does not really take place but rather *occupies* place: "Though its source may remain ill-defined, its reception is wide and all-encompassing. Sight delivers a presence but sound does not. Sight distances, music touches, noise

besets" (Serres 1985 53, my translation). *A Thousand Plateaus* similarly emphasizes the privilege of the ear, "Colors do not move a people. Flags can do nothing without trumpets. Lasers are modulated on sound. The refrain is sonorous par excellence, but it can as easily develop its force into a sickly sweet ditty as into the purest motif, or Vinteuil's little phrase" (Deleuze and Guattari 348).

9 "On appelle ritournelle tout ensemble de matières d'expression qui trace un territoire, et qui se développe en motifs territoriaux, en paysage territoriaux. . . . En un sens restreint, on parle de ritournelle quand l'agencement est sonore ou dominé par le son" (Deleuze et Guattari 397).

10 "'Territory' is a designation of claim over land, of *jurisdiction*, the power to *say the law*" (New 21).

11 *Place* has no satisfactory equivalent in French, its translation as *lieu* lacking the oppositional articulation *place* derives from its assonance with *space* (Staszak 252-253). This may account for the reliance of French geography (and Deleuze and Guattari's geophilosophy) upon the notion of *territoire* to address the specificities of the local.

12 In "The Road to Rankin's Point," and "Vision," singing the song "Never More Shall I Return" (*Island* 158-159 and 346) has an evident metonymic function for the characters. Performing the song together is a clear substitute for inhabiting the lost land, an instance of reterritorialization in song.

13 "I do not know what I'm supposed to do until my cousins come back and surround me *like the covered wagons around the women and children of the cowboy shows*, when the Indians attack. . . . My almost-attackers wait awhile, scuffing their shoes on the ashy sidewalk, and then they separate and allow us to pass *like a little band of cavalry* going through the mountains." (R 89, my emphasis)

14 Analyzing the ambivalence of the ancient Celts' response to the forest, Augustin Berque draws upon the constitutive duality of Gilbert Durand's archetypes, their signification being either positive or negative depending upon the diurnal or nocturnal regime in which they are envisaged.

15 I am using the word "landscape" in the restricted sense Augustin Berque has defined to distinguish the notion from any unspecified reference to the natural environment. For Berque, a landscape is not an object per se but a "médiance," i.e. the outcome of a series of mediations between a perceiving subject, perceived surroundings and a fund of cultural, social and historical representations (Berque 16-19).

16 This passage is highly reminiscent of the foundational rituals in Ancient Greece and Rome where the fragmented body of the victim was shared by the community, giving birth to a sense of the collective through political representation and art (Serres 1983 118).

17 Although she concentrates upon one specific story, Vauthier's valuable conclusions throw considerable light on the frequent and spectacular shifts from the preterite to the present that characterize MacLeod's writing in general. Laurent Lepaludier has also drawn attention to the iterative value of the present tense in his analysis of "The Closing Down of Summer."

18 "Second Spring," a story revolving around a young boy's dream of breeding a prize-winning calf, is a wonderfully comic refutation of ideals of purity. The boy sets off on the island's roads, determined to take his precious cow to the perfect bull which, he knows, is available in a nearby farm. As Hazard Lepage leading his stallion on Alberta's tricky roads in Kroetsch's *The Studhorse Man*, the boy will have little choice but to adjust to the vagaries of animal desire.

19 By using the adjective "unilingual," MacLeod ironically suggests that, for many, bi- or multilingualism is the norm, as in the following description: "The real estate agent stood listlessly between them while the July sun contributed to the perspiration forming on his brow. He looked slightly irritated at being banished to what seemed like a state of unilingual loneliness" (C 428).

20 For a fine analysis of the inscription of *No Great Mischief* within the wider frame of the nation, see David Williams' "From Clan to Nation."

21 The narrator's awareness and implicit refusal of the pastoral alternative is just as interesting: "This was in the time before the Anne of Green Gables craze and they did not really know what people were supposed to visit on Prince Edward Island" (C 414).

22 "La notion *analogia* . . . exprime l'idée d'un rapport (*logos*) entre ce qui est haut et ce qui est en bas (verticalité), parce que ce qui est en bas est comme ce qui est en haut (répétition), avec, éventuellement l'idée d'un renversement (le plus petit comme analogue du plus grand)" (Borella 25).

23 "The transfer can never be total, but what reaches this region is that element in a translation that goes beyond transmittal of subject matter. This nucleus is best defined as the element that does not lend itself to translation. Even when all the surface content has been extracted and transmitted, the primary concern of the genuine translator remains ellusive. Unlike the words of the original, it is not translatable, because the relationship between content and language is quite different in the original and the translation. While content and language form a certain unity in the original, like a fruit and its skin, the language of the translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds." (Benjamin 75).

24 In this respect, it is not indifferent that the etymology of the noun "trope" should be a Greek verb meaning "to turn," referring to the rhetorical twist given to expression to achieve greater effect and perhaps also, this is my own interpretation, to the pull carefully-wrought statements exert on the reader's attention.

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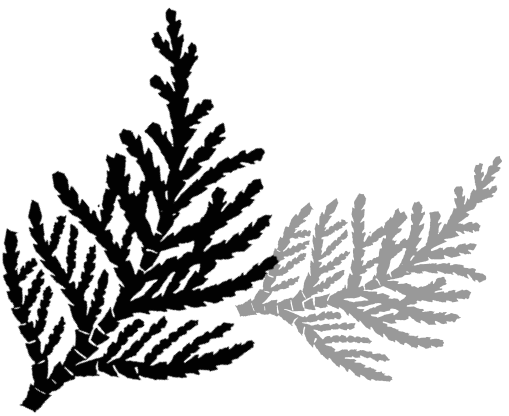

Bill Howell

An Absence of Cenotaphs

Dawn tattoos the streetcar windows, downs
the last flayed leaves. Leaving lesser questions alone, with
or without their latest seasonal reasons – last night's tracers
zapping lime-rickey bubbles across that CNN fish tank
before we fall asleep. *How late could it get?*

"Do you think we worry too much?"
"Yes. Especially you."

( )
Meanwhile embedded moles whisker themselves deeper
underground as we disarm ourselves in each other's arms,
just having us for breakfast. This: the end of the ageless
dream the breathless fairytale forest hides from itself.

"We're not going to live forever, are we."
"No, we're not even going to live for long."

If we stay here forever, our appetites will stop clocks.
Then won't own any menu or agenda. You'll smile as
usual and always, lovely in every lately. And nobody else
will miss us. *So what's the point, when we're already wet,
of braving the weather of others again?*

"Of training ourselves to forgive and forget" –
"Or searching for ghosts in the rain . . . "

Alexander MacLeod

History versus Geography
in Wayne Johnston's *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*

Perhaps no text published in the last ten years qualifies as a better example of "historiographic metafiction" than Wayne Johnston's 1998 novel, *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*. Johnston's retelling of Joseph R. Smallwood's slow but relentless rise to political prominence in Newfoundland meets all requirements of the genre Linda Hutcheon sees as a distinctive feature of Canadian postmodernism (Hutcheon 13): the novel freely departs from the established biographical facts of the long-serving premier's life; it comically undermines the linear objectivity of D.W. Prowse's *History of Newfoundland* by replacing that magisterial 750-page text with an ironically "condensed" fifty-page summary of the same events; and its narration oscillates between two first-person points of view that interpret the same historical events from opposite perspectives.

Although the vast majority of reviewers praised the novel, the book's most influential Canadian commentator condemned Johnston for his blatant misappropriation of the "real" Joseph R. Smallwood. Writing in the *Globe and Mail*, Rex Murphy (perhaps the most prominent cultural representative of Newfoundland on the national stage) criticized Johnston for what he called a poor attempt at "fictional ventriloquism" (D15). According to Murphy, *Colony*

> drains and diminishes the Smallwood that so many Newfoundlanders still remember, producing a pastework substitute. The fictional Smallwood, the Smallwood whose thoughts and voice are rendered here, the sensitive, love-conscious and tormented Smallwood is (the adjectives are unavoidable) smaller and more wooden. (D15)

Though Murphy admits that any writer is "free to combine and invent as he or she chooses," he argues that by virtue of the same kind of allowances, readers of historiographic metafiction are "also free to feel a disappointment if the original is within reach of memory and experience and the created version is less persuasive, or compelling or present" (D15). For Murphy, the very existence of Johnston's fiction relies directly on the historical existence of the real Smallwood and [i]t is only with the real, historical Joey Smallwood that the story, the fable, of *The Colony of Unrequited Love* (*sic*) can oblige serious engagement" (D15).

A month after Murphy's article appeared, the *Globe and Mail* printed an angrily worded response from Johnston. In "Truth vs. Fiction," Johnston suggests that since *Colony* never attempts to represent objectively a specific social or temporal reality, it should not be evaluated on its adherence to the historical record. The author explains his

> intention in writing *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* was to fashion, out of the formless infinitude of 'facts' about Smallwood and Newfoundland, a story. A novel. A work of art that would express a felt, emotional truth that adherence to an often untrustworthy and inevitably incomplete historical record would have made impossible. (D1)

Johnston advises his readers to be open to such fictional reconfigurations and more suspicious toward the supposed objectivity of historical authority. "There is no reason for us to be so much in the thrall of our historical figures," he argues, "that we cannot suspend our disbelief when writers of fiction ring variation on their lives" (D1).

Environmental Determinism

Although this very public and clearly divided debate introduced many general readers to the complexities of historiographic metafiction, most of the commentary written about *Colony* focuses not on the novel's appropriation of the historical record, but on its representation of Newfoundland geography. For the vast majority of *Colony's* reviewers, especially those outside of Newfoundland, Johnston's novel is not so much a playful re-telling of a history they have probably never heard in its original form, as much as it is an almost naturalistic representation of a harsh physical environment they have probably never visited. With remarkable consistency, the national and international press interpreted *Colony* as a text in which the brutal topography of Newfoundland holds a deterministic power over its inhabitants. In the *New York Times*, Newfoundland is described as "a formidable entity that

will always dwarf human beings . . . a place more willful than even its toughest inhabitants" (Sante 6); in the *New Statesman*, "Newfoundland looms like a troubled deity" over the novel and "Johnston presents an awe-inspiringly barren and relentless landscape" (Hunter 3); in the *Times* of London, "Newfoundland is as much a character as Smallwood or Fielding" (Bradbury 41); in the *Toronto Star*, there is "[s]omething about Newfoundland that overpowers the imagination of its inhabitants [and] resists the mind's attempt to impose shape and perspective (Marchand K15); in the *Calgary Herald*, "[t]he setting is entrancing and the harsh beauty of Newfoundland and its magnetic power on its inhabitants are stamped onto every page (Fertile J8).

Hans Bak's essay, "Writing Newfoundland, Writing Canada: Wayne Johnston's *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*," describes *Colony* as a "hybrid" text, a work that is both a "compellingly ironic postmodern meditation on the fictionality of history" (218), and a "narrative in [the] nineteenth-century mode," which explores a "geography that impresses itself most deeply upon its inhabitants' souls and sensibilities" (220). Simultaneously contemporary and traditional, postmodern and naturalistic, Johnston's text wavers between two polarities. Depending on your point of view, *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* is either a cutting-edge masterpiece of narrative technique—a text that effectively explodes the objectivity of established historical truth and fits very nicely into the trajectory of Canadian Postmodernism established by Hutcheon—or it is a reliable, nearly realistic work of Canadian regionalism, a book that would easily fit into those now infamous thematic studies of Canadian "Survival" or the "Garrison Mentality." In *Colony*, it seems that although we are encouraged to read history as a subjective, infinitely re-workable narrative that can be accepted, rejected, or edited at any time, we are simultaneously taught that there is nothing flexible about geographic discourse.

Johnston's text provides several self-reflexive meditations on this subject. In one of the novel's memorable early moments, Charlie Smallwood, Joey's father, is slowly driven mad by his relations with a forged "autographed" copy of Prowse's *History of Newfoundland.* Placing his inscribed copy of the *History* in the middle of the family's kitchen table, Charlie spends weeks "talking to that book" and imagining himself in an impassioned dialogue with Prowse (69). Eventually, Charlie goes on a drunken bender and misses three days of work so he can devote all his available energy to this ongoing conversation. On the third night of this ordeal, after her husband has finally

given up for the evening and stumbled off to bed, Smallwood's mother secretly steals "The Book" and throws it out of their house into the winter darkness.

Mrs. Smallwood's passionate rejection of Prowse's *History* is a crucial, but ambivalent scene in *Colony*. If the episode simply concluded here, with such an overt denial of Newfoundland's accepted historical record, then it might be easy to fit Mrs. Smallwood's actions, and Charlie's negotiations, into a standardized interpretation of *Colony* as a postmodern historiographic metafiction.However, Johnston's narrative does not even pause to consider the historical implications of this potentially evocative dismissal of the text. Seconds after the book has been thrown away, Joey hears "a low rumbling sound, like far-off thunder" (70). Mrs Smallwood's tossing away of Prowse's book—a text so massive Joey believes it is "not a record of the past, but the past itself, distilled, compacted to a density that [he] could barely lift" (46) —sets off an avalanche which roars past their house, destroying everything in its path and killing one of their neighbours. The next morning, a search team discovers the corpse of 83-year-old Mr. Mercer. He is found with his eyes wide open, his body frozen solid, and his mouth "stuffed with snow" (72). (A more iconic "Canadian" death would be hard to imagine.)

Predictably perhaps, the young Smallwood immediately establishes a connection between his mother's rejection of Prowse's book and the subsequent disaster. The avalanche is interpreted as a natural "judgement" on her behaviour (73). This pattern will continue throughout the text: in *Colony*, postmodern readings of history and deterministic depictions of geography often seem interdependent: Whenever the power of history is challenged and/or questioned, the power of geography is reinforced and / or acknowledged. Although we are taught that the story of the past can be retold in multiple variations, we are also reminded that the story of space is literally set in stone.

The Geographic Response to Historiography

In his influential trilogy—*Postmodern Geographies* (1989), *Thirdspace* (1996) and *Postmetropolis* (2000)—the American cultural geographer Edward Soja examines this tension between traditional readings of geography and contemporary readings of history. He suggests that the relation has always been unbalanced and that generations of thinkers have "preserved a privileged place for the 'historical imagination' in defining the very nature of critical

insight and interpretation" (*PG* 10). The special status that history enjoys in humanities research, Soja argues, has become so "unbudgeably hegemonic . . . that it has tended to occlude a comparable critical sensibility to the spatiality of social life" (*PG* 11). According to Soja, the dialectal richness of cultural geography has been greatly underestimated and underappreciated because most scholars still tend to think of social space as an intellectual void, a perfectly blank slate, unaffected by human activity and conveniently untouched by culture, politics, or ideology. In the rush to explore the fascinating complexities and the startling incongruities of historical narrative, theorists have simply taken geography for granted, positing it as a neutral, stable, and unchanging background. When scholars privilege time over space, they activate the progressive dialectic of history and simultaneously arrest any parallel possibilities for geographic discourse. In other words, history appears to "move" in time only because geography is expected to remain steadfastly immobile and perfectly "natural." Soja suggests that our entire "critical hermeneutic is still enveloped in a temporal master-narrative" and that this narrative is so dominant it denies other ways of reading and writing geographical discourse (*PG* 11). To partially reverse this tendency, Soja calls for a "far-reaching spatialization" of contemporary humanities scholarship and for a brash reassertion of "the interpretive significance of space in the historically privileged confines of contemporary critical thought" (*PG* 11). In Soja's writings, geography strikes back at history's traditional dominance and claims a position of equivalent importance in the study of social life.

The reassertion of spatiality in humanities research holds the potential to realign the study of Canadian literature radically. Hutcheon's readings of postmodernism, for example, are quite clearly influenced by this historical bias. A seemingly endless discussion of geographical identity and literary regionalism has dominated Canadian criticism for decades, but the critical readings of social space on which these debates rest have been limited. Contemporary Canadian scholars are only beginning to appreciate the "spatial turn" in recent cultural criticism. Although the idea that the physical environment can and perhaps even should exert a deterministic power over Canadian writers has been modified, challenged, deconstructed, and selectively reconstructed by many excellent contemporary scholars such as Wyile, David Jordan, W.H. New, Francesco Loriggio, and Alison Calder, the regionalist debate remains highly polarized in Canadian criticism. Most critics continue to struggle for an acceptable working definition of

regionalist literary theory or a critical methodology adequate to the complex interconnections that link subjectivity and social space.[1] As Lisa Chalykoff observes in her essay "Overcoming the Two Solitudes of Canadian Literary Regionalism," the spatial assumptions that support most traditional studies of Canadian regionalism are "ripe for reassessment" (161).

By referencing Soja's work and, more directly, Henri Lefebvre's seminal text, *The Production of Space*, Chalykoff argues that most Canadian regionalist criticism can be divided into "Two Solitudes" of spatial thought. Critics who view cultural geography as an environmentally pre-determined, materialist product or a set of inert physical facts fall into Chalykoff's "First Solitude." These thinkers are influenced by what Lefebvre calls the "illusion of opacity" (27). They interpret social space as impenetrably "natural" or objectively "real" and generally accept the assertion that society plays "no role in the processes of spatialization" (Chalykoff 161). Regionalist critics who fall into Chalykoff's "Second Solitude" draw their readings of geography more directly from the idealist philosophical tradition. They are influenced by Lefebvre's "illusion of transparency" and view geography more as a mental construction or a completely imaginary creation dominated by subjective readings and writings of the landscape as versions of text (27).[2] In Chalykoff's binary, critics such as Edward McCourt in *The Canadian West in Fiction* and Henry Kreisel in "The Prairie: A State of Mind" are first solitude regionalists embracing the materialist belief that "the landscape itself exercises a uniform impact on its inhabitants" (165). New's *Articulating West* and *Land Sliding*, as well as Eli Mandel's "Images of Prairie Man," are works of second solitude regionalism because they idealistically "locate regions in mental space . . . [or] posit literary regions simultaneously as regions of the mind or of the nation-space" (174).

When we combine Soja's critique of the dominating historical bias of humanities research with Chalykoff's equally forceful assessment of the materialist and/or idealist tendencies that influence readings of social space in Canadian literature and apply these arguments to the study of Johnston's novel, we begin to understand how dramatically different are *Colony's* postmodern reading of history and its naturalistic interpretation of geography.

Smallwood's Newfoundland or Newfoundland's Smallwood

Although Johnston's postmodern reconstruction of Smallwood's life rewrites the historical record, his narrative is fused to a "first solitude" interpretation of regionalist environmental determinism.[3] In *Colony,* the landscape of

Newfoundland is an active participant in the narrative and provides far more than just setting for the Smallwood-Fielding love story. As Wyile observes, "[t]hough Smallwood is the central figure of the novel, in many ways Newfoundland itself is the protagonist" (127). Smallwood is portrayed almost as a mechanical outcome or product of his geography. According to Wyile, Joey is a near anthropomorphic representation of Newfoundland's colonial experience in the early-twentieth century. Smallwood literally stands in as "the personification of Newfoundland's inferiority complex, the continuation of its colonial cringe, and the continuation of its economic, cultural, political, and psychological dependence as part of the Canadian Confederation" (130).

The ties that bind Smallwood to Newfoundland are clearly illustrated in the scenes that depict his first attempt to leave the colony. In Johnston's narrative, Smallwood's real-life journey to New York City in 1920 is interpreted as one of the major events of his life. Fielding describes the move as a transfer from a "New found land" to an "old New world" (130). Before Smallwood leaves home, he climbs to the top of Signal Hill and ponders the vast power of the sea: "I never felt so forlorn, so desolate as I did looking out across the trackless, forever-changing surface of the sea, which, though it registered the passage of time, was suggestive of no beginning and no end, as purposeless, as pointless as eternity" (131). He then walks down to the Narrows and wonders if he, like his father, who returned to St. John's after a disastrous attempt to live in Boston, will also fail to find a place in the wider world:

> I thought of my father's stint in Boston, where he had discovered the limits of a leash that up to that point he hadn't even known he was wearing. I wondered if like him, I would be so bewildered by the sheer unknowable, unencompassable size of the world that I would have to come back home. How could you say for certain where you were, where home left off and away began, if the earth that you were standing on went on forever, as it must have seemed to him, in all directions? For an islander, there had to be natural limits, gaps, demarcations, not just artificial ones on a map. Between us and them and here and there, there had to be a gulf. (132)

This passage conveys a first solitude reading of social space: it illustrates Smallwood's desire for a secure environmental determinism. In the place of the "artificial" borders drawn on a map, he demands "natural limits," a clearly established, and therefore non- negotiable "gulf" that might delimit and define his native geography. The psychological leash that pulls his father back to St. John's is understood as another natural outcome, a causal

connection between the landscape and its inhabitants. After Smallwood has made the long train ride from St. John's to Port-aux-Basques, he boards the ferry that will carry him away from home for the first time. Because he feels it is "the appropriately romantic thing to do," he plans to stand at the railing of the ship until the island disappears from his vision (143). To Smallwood's surprise, however, Newfoundland never seems to leave his sight. The connection to his place will not be broken: "[t]hough I stood staring at if for what seemed like hours," Smallwood claims, "the island got no smaller . . . [it] was always there, as big as ever, as if we were towing it behind us" (143). When he arrives in New York after stops in Halifax and Boston, Smallwood interprets the American metropolis as the exact antithesis of his home. The comparison between these two social spaces and these two cultures—one a naturalized, starkly physical Canadian landscape and the other "a dingy maze" of urban American streets—is one of the novel's key juxtapositions (156). Like Quoyle, the protagonist of E. Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News* (the text to which *Colony* is most often compared), Johnston's Smallwood is transformed by his travels between two worlds. In both novels, the geographical portraits of the two countries are unambiguous. American social space, especially New York City, is entirely "made up," imaginary, lacking in substance, and unavoidably uncertain. Canada, on the other hand, and especially Newfoundland, is authentic, real, substantial, and metaphysically stable. Exactly as Proulx's Quoyle leaves the chaos of America behind to uncover (or rediscover) his true identity in a pure Newfoundland geography, Smallwood's sojourn in America only reinforces his commitment to his home. These two characters and these two novelists both fall back into the familiar spatial epistemologies consistently used to interpret Canadian and American cultural geography. In aesthetic terms, Canadian social space—even when it is presented in a postmodern novel—is almost always more securely realistic than American social space. After his painful five-year hiatus in the city—during which he has moved from flophouse to flophouse, gone through a fumbling proposal and break up with Fielding, and experienced both political and religious disappointment—Smallwood eventually decides to return home because he is "afraid of being pulled further into that weird [American] world . . . in which there was no telling what was and was not true" (204).

Immediately before and immediately after Smallwood's journey to New York, Johnston presents his readers with two remarkable scenes that re-establish the deterministic relation between landscape and protagonist.

Twice—once as a young journalist and again as a hopeful union organizer—Smallwood throws himself against the brutal contours of Newfoundland's geography and both times the landscape transforms him rather than the other way around. The first of these scenes takes place in 1916 aboard the doomed sealing ship, the *S.S. Newfoundland.* Although the actual Joseph R. Smallwood never experienced this disaster first-hand, the story of the *Newfoundland* is a very real historic event.[4] Caught in a brutal storm in 1914, seventy-seven members of the *Newfoundland's* crew froze to death on the exposed ice of the Atlantic Ocean. Johnston redramatizes this scene and relocates it two years after the actual event in order to place his version of Smallwood onboard the ship as a cub reporter who is supposed to file romantic biographical sketches about the adventurous lives of the sealers. In Johnston's version of the story—a highly controversial historiographic adaptation of the official record—Smallwood is actually there at sea with the men when the fateful storm hits. He spends three brutal days locked in his cabin while the ship is surrounded and slowly crushed by ice, and he is there on the deck when the lost crewmen are finally re-discovered. Smallwood sees their frozen bodies stranded on an open pan of ice and memorably describes them as a "strange statuary of the dead" (107).

For Johnston, there are many reasons why it is important that Smallwood witness this scene first-hand. In his fictional recreation, the events onboard the *Newfoundland* are interpreted as the catalysts that push Smallwood into politics and into his muddled engagement with socialist doctrine. Smallwood, the political animal, is literally *created* by the brutal confrontations—both natural and social—he witnesses onboard the *Newfoundland.* For the young Smallwood, the sealers who die on the ice are the victims not only of a harsh Newfoundland climate but of an unjust Newfoundland society. He places the blame for their deaths squarely on the shoulders of the St. John's upper class: the unscrupulous merchants, ship captains, and owners who send their employees out into extreme conditions without any concern for their welfare. While researching the journalistic pieces he writes in the aftermath of the tragedy, Smallwood discovers that when the storm began, the crew of the *Newfoundland* were denied shelter on another ship, the *Stephano*, and sent back into the squall, eventually to their deaths. Smallwood's experience on board the *Newfoundland* is perhaps the most important moment in the entire novel; it is also the point where Johnston's postmodern interpretation of history intersects most dramatically with his deterministic reading of geography. In *Colony's* definitive historiographic scene, the actions

and motivations of an entirely imaginary Joey Smallwood are directly determined by the physical environment.

This same combination of natural and cultural forces dominates Johnston's other great scene: Smallwood's heroic walk across the interior of Newfoundland. After his return from New York, Smallwood decides that, as part of his "grand, momentous homecoming," he will walk the full distance from Port-aux-Basques to St. John's in an effort to unionize the sectionmen who maintain the rail-line between the cities (213). He sets out from Port-aux-Basques in mid-August and plans to walk twenty miles a day for more than three months. In total, the journey covers more than 700 miles and cuts through some of Newfoundland's least hospitable landscape. "The Walk," as Johnston calls it, has both a pragmatic and a symbolic function for Smallwood (211). By sacrificing himself to the marginalized, non-urban Newfoundlanders who will later make up the core of his confederation-minded constituency, Smallwood, literally, takes the first steps towards establishing himself as the political champion of rural Newfoundland. At the same time, The Walk again reinforces his connection to the physical environment. Like his experience on the *Newfoundland*, The Walk *makes* Smallwood into the politician he later becomes. His environmentally determined union with the landscape is consummated by this journey, by walking every step of the way from one end of the colony to the other.

As he makes the journey, Smallwood is gradually worn down and reshaped by environmental conditions. Despite his egomaniacal self-confidence, Smallwood is unable to deny the influence of the Newfoundland landscape. Instead, the process is reversed and he begins to see himself as a victim of geography, an insignificant human presence standing against an unstoppable natural force. While completing a particularly arduous section of his hike down the Bonavista branch line, Smallwood realizes that he is "inching ever closer to some sort of breakdown," and that he cannot keep the landscape from intruding into his thoughts, transforming him, and remaking him in a directly causal way (220). At one of his weakest moments, he observes that, no matter how strong he believes himself to be, he can no longer combat the forces of nature. Buffeted by 120 mile-per-hour gusts, he admits that it is "impossible not to personify the wind" and that it is a "pathetic fallacy" to believe in one man's power to transform the landscape (220). Overwhelmed by the very place he is trying to embrace, Smallwood falls victim to his own misreading of geography.

Confederation as Rural Revenge

In *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, even Newfoundland's entrance into Confederation is environmentally determined. While the wealthier urbanites of St. John's voted against Smallwood in large numbers, the Baymen of the colony's outport communities supported him with a majority that eventually won the historic second referendum on 22 July 1948. By essentially bribing the outports with the promise of baby bonuses and other socialized benefits that a union with Canada offered, Smallwood tapped into a deep reservoir of anti-urban sentiment. For many of his supporters, a vote for Confederation was a way of lashing out against the corrupt monopolies of the St. John's merchant class, a way for the "natural" environment to strike back at the city.

As Richard Gwynn points out in *Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary*, the real Smallwood fashioned himself into the only viable candidate for outport Newfoundlanders by becoming the only urban politician committed enough to maintain a presence in these far-flung communities. Though the vast majority of the colony was so sparsely populated that most politicians simply ignored "the regions," Smallwood—with his trademark tireless energy—embraced these expanses of empty space and created a constituency for himself by binding together a group of voters no one before him had ever sought to unify. Using communications and transportation technologies, Smallwood's voice—delivered through the articles in his newspaper, *The Confederate*, through the radio broadcasts of his alter-ego, "The Barrelman," and, in person, through the amplified stump speeches he gave in every remote corner of the colony—became the voice of rural Newfoundland. As Gwynn describes it, Smallwood's early dedication to the outport communities bordered almost on religious fanaticism. Like a deranged, barnstorming preacher, Smallwood moved rapidly from community to community, announcing the "good news" of Confederation:

> To spread his message in a country with almost no roads, Smallwood took to the air. He campaigned in an ancient seaplane that took the best part of a mile to taxi into the air . . . Bellowing down over twin loudspeakers, he flew above tiny, far-flung communities until the outharbourmen, many of whom had never seen a plane before and considered anyone connected with such machines faintly God-like, had taken to their boats and put out into the harbour. Smallwood would then land, one hand clutching a strut, the other a hand microphone. After the speech and the cheers and the shouts, he clambered back into the plane and took off—the people's champion who had cared enough to come. (99)

Smallwood's belief that "the land itself" holds a "permanent imminence" over his decisions profoundly influences Johnston's characterization. Throughout the novel, Smallwood is perpetually confronted with and continually accepts a deterministic geography. The fact that Johnston even creates a fictional scene to complement the many historic examples of Smallwood's outport consciousness only reinforces this interpretation of a political leader who was effectively "produced" by the social space he wished to govern. The introductory avalanche, the experience on the *S.S. Newfoundland,* the retreat from America's imagined social space, the death-defying walk across the colony, the countless union and campaign visits, the battle against the entrenched urban power of the St. John's merchants: all of these demonstrate Smallwood's understanding of cultural geography. In his mind, it is the environment—more powerful even than the Newfoundlanders who live on (and in) it—which demands Confederation. Johnston's poetic phrasing seamlessly combines history and geography: If the landscape is "permanently imminent," then it is always in the process of arriving at its destiny, always *nearly* here.

In this definitively postmodern Canadian novel, geographical determinism is endorsed rather than deconstructed. Even Fielding, Smallwood's consistent critic and herself a master practitioner of historiographic metafiction, shares in his awe before the colony's topography. In her final *Field Day* column, written after Smallwood's victory, Fielding observes that although "[i]t doesn't matter to the mountains that we joined Confederation, nor to the bogs, the barrens, the rivers or the rocks," it is these brute physical contours of geography which define the essential character of the colony or province (560). "These things, finally, primarily are Newfoundland," Fielding admits (562). In this formulation, Newfoundland is clearly not a nationalist ideology, nor a cultural entity, nor an imagined community. Though the colony is free to transform itself into a province, it remains, resolutely, a Rock, a "hard" Canadian place where the forces of environmental determinism continue to shape the subjectivities of inhabitants. Even as Fielding laments the cultural transformations that Smallwood has brought to her home, she understands that Newfoundland's connection to its landscape remains consistent. In a line that could well be used to describe the unique geographical epistemology that dominates much of Canadian postmodernism, Fielding suggests that "[f]rom a mind divesting itself of images . . . those of the land [will] be the last to go" (562).

NOTES

1 The sophistication of regionalist criticism in Canada has increased immeasurably in the last decade. During the 1990s, Wyile consistently produced one insightful essay after another: see his "Taking the Real Home to Read" (1990); "Firing the Regional Can(n)on: Liberal Pluralism, Social Agency, and David Adams Richards' Miramichi Trilogy" (1997), co-authored with Christopher Armstrong; "Ransom Revisited: The Aesthetic of Regionalism in a Globalized Age" (1998); and "Regionalism, Postcolonialism and (Canadian) Writing: A Comparative Approach for Postnational Times" (1998). Similarly, Jordan's important essay "Representing Regionalism" appeared in 1993 and was soon followed by *New World Regionalism* in 1994. Jordan also edited the collection *Regionalism Reconsidered* in 1995. This volume contains, among many other excellent essays, Loriggio's penetrating analysis of "Regionalism and Theory." In 1997, the University of Toronto Press released New's *Land Sliding*, the first book-length work of Canadian criticism to incorporate Lefebvre's theoretical arguments into its study of the country's regionalist literature. *A Sense of Place: Re-evaluating Regionalism in Canadian and American Writing*—a groundbreaking anthology of comparative essays edited by Wyile and Christian Riegel—arrived in 1998. This collection included a strong piece by Calder, "Reassessing Prairie Regionalism," as well as Davey's stinging critique of regionalist discourse, "Toward the Ends of Regionalism." In the same year *Studies in Canadian Literature* devoted an entire special issue to the question of "Writing Canadian Space." Chalykoff's essay appeared in this volume. In 2004, The University of Toronto Press launched a series of cultural studies texts, edited by Richard Cavell and Imre Szeman, devoted to "Cultural Spaces." Thus far, no literary texts have appeared in the series.

2 Other critics, most notably Wyile and New, reference the arguments of Soja and Lefebvre in their studies of Canadian literary regionalism, but Chalykoff's essay was the first to provide a sustained engagement with this branch of spatial theory.

3 For more on the relation between postmodernism and regionalism in Johnston's fiction see Jeanette Lynes' essay "Is Newfoundland Inside that T.V.?: Regionalism, Postmodernism and Wayne Johnston's *Human Amusements*." In her study of Johnston's only "Toronto Novel," Lynes argues that in *Human Amusements* a "skeptical postmodernism" combines with a "subliminal regionalism" (82).

4 For more on the history of the *S.S Newfoundland*, see Cassie Brown's *Death on the Ice: The Great Newfoundland Sealing Disaster of 1914.*

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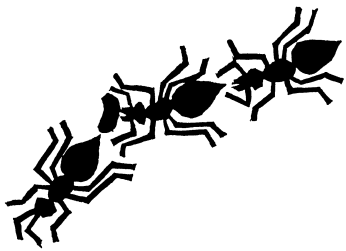

George Elliott Clarke

Halifax

Drunks reek of chocolates, *Moir's noir* sweets,
Despite the reek of putrid fish on the wharfs.

Brewery smells seep from rancid taverns
As bleak as ale—or sailors' brothel blather.

Gotti'gen Street unfolds zillions of Zombies—
All zonked by cocaine, or cops' crack clubs.

Citadel Hill hosts scruffy wolfmen on all fours,
M.L.A.'s sauntering there, scarfing sex.

Halifax is where *History* looms from garbage
Like a giant cannibal, quaffing piss and lye,

And the Public Gardens are Augean stables,
And statues are politicians all kneeling.

Halifax streets slouch to their appointed dooms
While the toilet harbour stinks.

Herb Wyile

As For Me and Me Arse
Strategic Regionalism and the Home Place in Lynn Coady's *Strange Heaven*

The narrative of a sensitive soul struggling to survive in a claustrophobic small town is so ubiquitous in Canadian literature as to be practically consonant with it. Think of, for starters, Margaret Laurence's Manawaka novels, W.O. Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind* and (perhaps the pinnacle of the genre) Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House*. That claustrophobia, furthermore, is often compounded by the dynamics of the dysfunctional family, as in Martha Ostenso's *Wild Geese*, Alden Nowlan's *Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien*, and, more recently, Lynn Coady's *Strange Heaven* (1998). However, as much as we might be inclined to read such preoccupations as defining the larger national literary culture, those preoccupations (as with so much else in Canada) are shot through with regional differences that complicate the unity that such shared concerns suggest. Coady's novel, for example, which is about a Cape Breton teenager who returns from a spell in a psychiatric ward to her "cuckoo's nest" of a family after giving up her baby for adoption, can certainly be seen as a significant and overlooked comic addition to these Canadian specialties. However, whereas typically the critique of the small town implicitly invites the critical gaze of the outsider, *Strange Heaven* turns that gaze back on the observer in a fashion that foregrounds the cultural politics between centre and periphery. In the process, the novel provides a good example of Atlantic-Canadian literature's increasing and subversive self-consciousness, foregrounding and deconstructing the way in which Canada's eastern edge tends to be framed from outside.

The prevalence of dysfunctional (or at least seemingly dysfunctional) families in Atlantic-Canadian writing notwithstanding, the home place as a nurturing environment, as Gwendolyn Davies has argued, is a key trope in Maritime literature, contributing to a strong association between Maritime literature and a sense of community on the East Coast. In "The 'Home Place' in Modern Maritime Literature" Davies argues that "the emergence of the image [of the home place] in Maritime literature in the 1920s . . . has its genesis in social, economic, and cultural realities on the east coast that distinguish it from similar images in other areas of Canada" (193). "[T]hroughout the outmigration and declining economic and political influence" of the rest of the century, the image of the home place "has continued . . . to illuminate Maritime literature with a sense of cultural continuity and psychological identification" (199). Davies concedes that the pastoral and nostalgic resonances of this image render it susceptible to charges of romanticism, but argues that "to dismiss this literature as static, merely the product of middle class romanticization, is to ignore the elements of realism, irony, and economic cynicism permeating much of it" (196).

Here Davies addresses Ian McKay's skeptical view of modern literature and culture in Nova Scotia, subsequently developed at greater length in *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia*. McKay's influential study chronicles the formation of a powerful cultural paradigm in which Nova Scotians are constructed as a hardy, simple, innocent people, close to the land and unravaged by modernity: "They lived, generally, in fishing and farming communities, supposedly far removed from capitalist social relations and the stresses of modernity. The Folk did not work in factories, coal mines, lobster canneries, or domestic service: they were rooted to the soil and to the rockbound coast, and lived lives of self-sufficiency close to nature" (26). McKay points to how pervasive and influential such pastoral, nostalgic, romanticized images of the Folk have been in shaping cultural identity in Nova Scotia. He also underscores how those images have been increasingly reconfigured and subverted by contemporary artists and writers. McKay argues that the "romance of the rural Folk," though intensified in response to certain conditions of postmodernity, such as the desire for images of authenticity in a consumerist culture of simulacra, "has run aground on the shoals of its own implausibility. In the context of a countryside that bristles with satellite dishes and shopping-malls . . . and that is in a hundred ways so evidently *not* a haven set apart from late twentieth-century capitalism, the notion of the 'simple life' of the Folk can only be ironic" (308). Contemporary

cultural and economic conditions in the Maritimes, in other words, render untenable the antimodern, pastoral paradigm in which the region is so often framed.

One of the principal reasons that this hegemonic cultural construction needs to be contested, McKay argues, is that it reinforces and naturalizes an imbalance of social power and cultural capital. The imposition of an essentializing Folk innocence "establish[es] a political and social 'commonsense,' based on a commandeering of history and identity, which excludes at the outset a critical dialogue with the past and a realistic grasp of the present" (295). Subscribing to the concept of the Folk is thus politically neutralizing and disempowering, as it "leads one to a complacently organic view of society in which there are no fundamental social contradictions and no underlying differences in perspectives" (298). Thus the attenuation of the Folk within the conditions of postmodernity provides the conditions for the development of an alternative and oppositional culture (308). McKay sees emerging in the latter part of the twentieth century "an entirely new group of cultural producers" whose work subverts "conventionalized commercial images of the Folk." The concept of the Folk "has come to be a thinly spread rhetoric, vulnerable to articulate and subtle moral critiques, including those of people who were brought up in the rural areas it romanticizes" (310). At the end of *The Quest of the Folk*, McKay lists a series of writers, artists, and cultural commentators (including George Elliott Clarke, M.T. Dohaney, and Gerald Ferguson) whose work heralds a subversive reconfiguration of culture on the East Coast. Ten years after the appearance of *The Quest of the Folk*, many others could be added to that list, including Lynn Coady.

One of the problems with the concept of the Folk, McKay argues, is its exclusionary ideology (308). In *Writing the Everyday: Women's Textual Communities in Atlantic Canada,* Danielle Fuller extends a similar skepticism about exclusionary and essentialist constructions of regional identity to the idea of the home place. Fuller argues that Atlantic women writers "tend to debunk nostalgic and romantic notions of home as the products of privilege or the reluctance to accommodate cultural change" (34) and underlines that the home place is often the site of physical and emotional conflict (33-4). Fuller is furthermore suspicious of the implications for women of traditional constructions of literary regionalism because they "do not allow us to understand regions as differentiated spaces, and they encourage critics to select texts that fall into a narrowly defined aesthetic" (37). Rather than dispensing with the notion of regionalism altogether, however, Fuller adopts in her study of Atlantic-Canadian women's writing a "strategic regionalism" that

emphasizes the networks of relationships within which women write but also articulates the "common grounds, intra-class and cross-racial alliances that are informed and made possible by subordinate (non-elite) knowledges of economic marginality, geographic isolation, and various forms of social exclusion" (38).

Having been picked up by a major publisher (Random House) after Fredericton's Goose Lane published *Strange Heaven* and having departed Cape Breton for the West Coast, Lynn Coady fits uneasily with Fuller's emphasis on regional "textual communities." The second sense in which Fuller employs the term "strategic regionalism," though, nicely articulates the gendered politics of a novel such as *Strange Heaven*, which challenges essentialist constructions of the East and dramatizes the patriarchal strictures that complicate the image of the home place as a nurturing environment for women. As importantly, though, the novel resists the idea of an essentialized Folk culture by highlighting and spoofing the ways in which the region is constructed through the gaze of the outsider.

If prominent Maritime *Bildungsromane* such as Ernest Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley* and Nowlan's *Kevin O'Brien* have emphasized development of the masculine subject, *Strange Heaven*, by contrast, emphasizes the challenges of growing up female in a small Maritime community. McKay notes that part of the current countering of essentialist images of the Folk is that "the illusion of a happy seaside patriarchy has been challenged by very different stories" (309); this formulation is readily applicable to the development of Coady's protagonist Bridget Murphy. To the degree that *Strange Heaven* portrays the traditional rural culture of Cape Breton familiar from the work of Alistair MacLeod, the novel emphasizes the way in which that culture is heavily gendered and affords males and females unequal degrees of agency and freedom. As Coady's narrator succinctly reflects, "if [Bridget] had been a boy it would have been more fun" (158). Bored by an adolescent female culture characterized by stuffed animals, talk of parties and proms, and the emotional melodrama of relationships, Bridget longs for her cousins' masculine culture of hunting and fishing, which her brother Gerard has rejected: "Bridget would have gone, if she had been a boy. She would have killed and castrated the deer and gutted them on the spot. She would have sat around the campfire with the boys, passing around a thermos of hot buttered rum" (158). Bridget's physical and psychic development takes place within what Judith Butler describes as a framework of regulatory social practices that serve to reinforce polarized and essentialist gender identities and to obscure the fundamentally performative nature of gender. Gender, that is, is a behaviour performed according to a tacit collective agreement

about what it means to be male or female, an agreement to be flouted at one's peril (Butler 140). In Coady's novel, the expectations that define the boundaries of gendered identity are reinforced by Bridget's father Robert's ham-handed attempts at socialization, reflected in his choice of religious icons for his children: "Bridget always got the Virgin, the Baby, or the Virgin with the Baby, whereas Gerard always got a grown-up Jesus doing stuff—cleansing the temple or showing Thomas the holes in his hands or what-have-you. Her father had this idea that girls liked Mary and boys liked Jesus just as girls liked Barbies and boys liked G.I. Joes" (117). Robert's differential treatment of his son and daughter suggests the way in which "acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires," encouraged and regulated by society's gendered scripts, "create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality" (Butler 136).

Such rigid gender divisions frustrate Bridget's spiritual as well as social development. As a young girl, the enthusiastic and knowledgeable Bridget not only aspires to the Catholic priesthood, but also aspires to be John the Baptist and ultimately Jesus: "A religion teacher had told her that Jesus was perfect, and the more perfect Bridget was the more like Jesus she would be. So Bridget had walked around trying to be perfect for a while." Subsequently voicing her dismay "that she would never be Jesus," Bridget is reassured by a kindly priest that "she could do no wrong in the eyes of Jesus because she was a child." With puberty, however, comes the Fall: "once Bridget hit fourteen, saw the lumps pushing their way up under her shirt, started getting all the stuff at school, the movies and the pamphlets, started cramping and bleeding, began to witness her parents' horror, Gerard's disgust, she knew she had left the state of grace and could get away with nothing any more" (157). Reconceptualizing gendered identity as a performative effect, Butler argues, is necessary to open up "possibilities of 'agency' that are insidiously foreclosed by positions that take identity categories as foundational and fixed" (147), and Bridget's dilemma in *Strange Heaven* is rooted precisely in such a foreclosing of possibilities. As a narrative of thwarted development, *Strange Heaven* resembles what Susan Fraiman in *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development* sees as "those dissenting stories that cut across and break up the seemingly smooth course of female development and developmental fiction" and "account for growing up female as a deformation, a gothic disorientation, a loss of authority, an abandonment of goals" (xi). In various respects, Bridget is thus an "unbecoming woman."

The crisis of identity around which the novel revolves comes when this fall from grace is completed by Bridget's pregnancy. Not only does she feel even more betrayed by her body but she is also forced by her mother to give up her baby for adoption. Having weathered the psychologically abusive and volatile behaviour of her boyfriend Mark prior to the pregnancy, Bridget afterwards emotionally disengages herself from the past: "a thing could be so entirely annihilating that the things responsible for it happening in the first place were not there any more" (71). Suffering from post-partum depression, Bridget ends up in the psychiatric ward of the children's hospital because she is too young for the adult hospital. Here Coady's hilarious but chilling portrait of an alienating, pathological institutional culture evokes and alludes to Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, and Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*, as Bridget struggles not only with her own ennui and her body's stubborn will to persist but also with the institution's perverse and arbitrary culture of surveillance, discipline, and rehabilitation. Mistrustful of their motives and wary of doing anything that will stall her release, Bridget strives to elude the institution's attempt to diagnose her and treat her, while being subjected to the collective and individual humiliations of the institutionalized.

Bridget's experiences in the institution are recurrently juxtaposed with her life back home, and one of the novel's central motifs is the implicit parallel between the bedlam of the psychiatric ward and the tumultuous atmosphere of the Murphy household. Bridget's obsessive-compulsive "retarded" uncle Rollie, her senile and demented grandmother Margaret P., and not least of all the profane and overbearing Robert combine to render *chez* Murphy a perfect "[g]oddamn cuckoo's nest"—as Robert himself mutters (133). For the traumatized and alienated Bridget, the Murphy home falls short (to say the least) of providing a nurturing, rehabilitative atmosphere. This is not, at first glance anyway, Davies' Maritime "home place," "a symbol of cultural continuity and psychological identification in the face of social fragmentation, outmigration, and a continuing hardscrabble economy" (194).

Rebellion against the mores of the family and the community, of course, has been a crucial feature of the *Bildungsroman*, and central to Bridget's development is the way in which she reaches the limits of a putatively rebellious adolescent culture that she ultimately finds unfulfilling and stifling. Throughout the novel, Coady develops a tension between the self-destructive inertia of Bridget's social circle and the chaotic climate of a household that drove her into the clutches of her peers in the first place: "Happily, Bridget did it happily, thinking she was making herself free. Drinking and doing hot

knives and puking, always puking, and waking up in the mornings with one eye pointing off in the wrong direction and no feeling in the skin surrounding it" (144). Before her pregnancy, she "could never get out of the house enough, and for a while it seemed as if Mark was her only way out of the house. Then it became the case that she couldn't get away from Mark fast enough, and the house was the only place where he couldn't get to her." In a state of profound ambivalence after her release, Bridget finds herself back in the same liminal state: "she saw now that it was hopeless and it didn't matter what she did. There would always be people, inside and outside, always at her" (123).

Resolving to opt out of the melodramatic emotional politics that obsess her social circle, "like one long, lurid movie she had watched eons ago whose plot she could no longer remember" (153), Bridget comes up against the conformist disapproval so familiar from other fictional portraits of Canadian small towns. As Bridget has come to realize, her peers' absorption in the personal lives of others is ultimately a question of social power and control: "People never want anything except to have power, and that's what knowledge about others gives them. . . . Bridget now believed that most people couldn't tell the difference between wanting knowledge for power and wanting knowledge out of concern. Bridget didn't actually believe there was a difference" (120-21). Partly because it challenges their sense of self-importance and partly because Bridget's plight feeds her friends' craving for melodrama and excitement, opting out is difficult and unpopular. As Bridget is sucked back into the vortex of adolescent histrionics, she realizes, "They make you be in it" (164).

The denial of Bridget's agency as a young woman gives an important twist to the familiar narrative of the sensitive protagonist's resistance to a suffocating social order. Her pregnancy clearly confirms for Bridget that her attraction to Mark was merely a symptom of her own boredom. In turn, Mark's reaction to her rejection exemplifies the town's largely proprietorial and patriarchal attitude towards relationships. Already abusive and volatile before the pregnancy—he sees himself and Bridget as "the next Sid and Nancy" (159)— Mark becomes more belligerent and self-righteous upon Bridget's return from the hospital. His masculine pride has been wounded not only by Bridget's unilateral decision to give up the baby but also by her seeming indifference, breaking the unwritten rule: "Everybody knew that the girl wasn't supposed to dump the guy after getting pregnant" (92).

Bridget's sense of being scrutinized, assessed, under surveillance is a crucial effect of the juxtaposing of Bridget's life inside and outside the institution. Just as Bridget was monitored, interviewed, even videotaped in the

hospital, after her release she is monitored both by her concerned family and by the community at large, institutions similarly desiring to identify and regulate deviant behaviour. Such psychic discipline, distinctly grounded in patriarchal assumptions, has a potentially nasty edge in a climate in which so many (including Mark and Bridget's father) are "eternally spoiling for a fight, a new enemy" (92). After friction had developed earlier in their relationship, Mark had started essentially stalking Bridget, alternately making friendly phone calls and menacing ones, aggressively and self-righteously twisting Bridget's words in order to make her the aggrieving, and him the aggrieved, party. Bridget also describes how "sometimes she'd be on her way to bed and have almost all the lights turned out when she'd spot the double reflection of his glasses outside the front door" (44). After her return from the hospital, Bridget is keenly aware that she continues to be monitored, that her behaviour will be reported to Mark by their mutual acquaintances. Their friend Stephen's self-aggrandizing attempt to play the Good Samaritan and bring the two back together reveals his blind acceptance of Mark's interpretation that he has been wronged and his unwillingness to accept the idea that, from Bridget's perspective, Stephen "wasn't in the middle of anything at all, that there was nothing on either side of him" (152). To put it in Althusserian terms, Bridget struggles against being interpellated with such obviously patriarchal assumptions.

The claustrophobia of such a tight circle of bored, sensation-seeking adolescents is complemented by the fishbowl quality of the town itself. Shortly after her return, Bridget, "practicing being out," wades back and forth through the snowdrifts in the church parking lot, "[j]ust for the hell of it" (137). This mildly eccentric behaviour, however, is observed by her friend Daniel Sutherland and others gathered at a family Christmas party, who collectively diagnose and commiserate: "Poor Bridget Murphy" (138). Forced to work in her family's store, Bridget is looked upon by solicitous or tongue-tied, aloof customers who in either case "seemed to find it in somewhat bad taste to have come across Bridget on display" (118). Bridget contemplates how in a small town "everybody knows your business" and keeps a mental file or "information roster" of the various inhabitants (180). Particularly traumatizing is the idea of people thinking about her "beyond what they already had on their roster. Making suppositions and surmises. People you scarcely even knew. The idea was, for some reason, nauseating" (181).

This impression of the small town as a variation on Foucault's description of the Panopticon—whose effect is "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (201) —is consolidated by the staging of the climactic confronta-

tion between Bridget and Mark during a power outage in the central and highly visible post office, temporarily illuminated by emergency lights. Mark claims to have been betrayed by Bridget and threatens to fight back, expressing his custodial rights in a patriarchal variation on the this-town-isn't-big-enough-for-the-two-of-us speech: "If Bridget thought she could live in the same town with him and do whatever she pleased and fuck around with the likes of Dan the big fat fairy Sutherland and Troy fucking Bezanson she was fucking crazy" (194). Bridget fleetingly wonders if she has underestimated Mark's commitment to the relationship, but the outcome of their altercation reveals that Mark's concern is not reconciliation but power. Infuriated by Mark's self-righteous, patriarchal assumption that he "had a son" and that "Bridget had taken him away from him" (195), Bridget finally and unequivocally repudiates Mark. In doing so, she ostensibly gives him the victory for which he is looking by puking on the floor, a sign of weakness that concedes all that matters to him—her relative lack of power: "He wanted to be friends now. It had all been about winning. It had all been about making the woman puke" (196). Despite this apparent capitulation, however, the ultimate victory can be read as Bridget's. She had talked to Mark hoping that "if she could just stand there and listen for as long as it lasted, then maybe she wouldn't have to do it again" (194). Her physical punctuation of the exchange figuratively suggests that she has purged herself of him at last.

Bridget's extrication of herself from her oppressive relationship with Mark and their peer group, though, is coupled with a renewed understanding of her responsibility to and engagement with others. She realizes that her retreat from her family has been motivated by a myopic self-interest: "Wanting to be herself, wanting to be alone. That was selfish. You can't be that way when there is an old woman and her retarded son to look after" (144). As David Creelman contends, "the last pages pull us back from the abyss of meaninglessness" when Coady affirms, against the nihilistic tide of much of the novel, "that an identity is possible, though it is available only when the protagonist freely produces it from her own, painful, emotional experience" (192). As Franco Moretti notes, the *Bildungsroman* moves between "[s]elf-development and integration," which are "complementary and convergent trajectories, and at their point of encounter and equilibrium lies that full and double epiphany that is 'maturity'. When this has been reached, the narration has fulfilled its aim and can peacefully end" (18-19). In Coady's novel, the typical resolution and closure of the *Bildungsroman* come about through a rapprochement with the family. In that respect, the ending of *Strange Heaven* seems compatible with Davies' claim that an "'intensified realization' of self is what the 'home place' conveys in Maritime

literature" (199). But that reconciliation more specifically takes the form of an identification with the resilient Margaret P., evoking Fraiman's suggestion of an alternate resolution to the *Bildungsroman*, which is "to reconceive a girl's progress as the building of solidarity between women" (10). Nonetheless, in its underscoring of the patriarchal culture that limits Bridget's sense of agency and that psychically and emotionally warps her, the novel reflects what Fuller describes as "a resistant regional sensibility, one that is ideologically opposed to regionalisms that represent social and cultural coherence where there is none, and that, by doing so, mask acts and articulations of protest" (39).

The denizens of *Strange Heaven* are obviously a far cry from the simple, content, unreflective fisherfolk who are the staples of the Folk ideology that McKay describes. At the same time, though, Coady's portrait of an oppressive, patriarchal small town, and the self-destructive adolescent histrionics its lack of opportunity breeds, lends itself to the obverse of the paradigm of Folk innocence: pervasive constructions of the East Coast as Canada's social, economic, and cultural basket case, populated by alcoholic deadbeats, welfare mothers, and rockbound trailer trash. However, Coady complicates the politics of this exposé of small-town claustrophobia through her portrait of Bridget's relationship with Alan Voorland. An "older man" from Guelph, Alan works as an engineer at the local mill and wanders "around town examining and exclaiming at everything like an anthropologist" (32). Alan exemplifies McKay's observation that despite the obvious, undeniable artificiality of the ideology of the Folk "certain central Canadians will probably always have a soft spot for the notion of the happily underdeveloped east coast Folk—but probably not as a source of powerfully unifying myths and songs in Nova Scotia itself" (308). The characterization of Alan highlights how Coady's strategic regionalism involves contesting the ways in which the region is constructed not only from within but also from without.

Through her portrait of Alan's relationship with Bridget, Coady turns back on itself the anthropological gaze that *Strange Heaven*'s dissection of the small town otherwise seems to invite. As a "come-from-away," Alan, although working, is consciously transient, and his attitude is reminiscent of John Urry's description of the "tourist gaze": "When we 'go away' we look at the environment with interest and curiosity. It speaks to us in ways we appreciate, or at least we anticipate that it will do so. In other words, we gaze at what we encounter" (Urry 1). Through Alan's commentary on the town, his parodic media discourse, Coady stresses his assumption of an ironic superiority to his surroundings that for Alan "were positively alien" (33). Though Bridget finds his posture amusing— "You sound like a

newscaster" (33)—the tenor of his commentary is commensurate with negative stereotypes of the region so aptly summarized by Conservative leader Stephen Harper's infamous attribution of Atlantic Canada's troubles to the prevalence of a "culture of defeat" ("Negative talk"). "Do not get me wrong," Alan tells Bridget. "This is a wonderful place, a fascinating people with a thriving, unique culture. And yet there is a sadness. A hopelessness about it all. The dependence on welfare, unemployment insurance. The bottle" (32).

Though Alan sees Bridget as a refreshing exception to his impression of Maritimers as evolutionary throwbacks, he nonetheless treats her as a regional novelty and employs the same commentator's voice in framing his interaction with her: "Here I am with Bridget Murphy. . . . A fascinating young lady" (33). Even his taking advantage of Bridget is ironically framed through, and associated with, the language of sensationalist media. "Here I am in love with pregnant teenager Bridget Murphy" (40) he intones, after he and Bridget make love in his Ford Escort—an ironic tone distinctly different from, but no less stylized than, the melodramatic histrionics of Bridget's peers. If Bridget is a novelty for Alan, however, the loquacious Alan is equally of interest to Bridget, who is used to a culture in which masculinity is consonant with monosyllabic reticence: "He talked just for the sake of talking, using words that weren't even necessary to get the meaning across. He may as well have had a horn coming out of his forehead" (34). Equally exotic are the images of an affluent, dynamic, middle-class Ontario with which Alan longingly regales Bridget, underscoring the culture of deprivation in Cape Breton: "To think of her and Alan and Deanna and all of Alan's cool buddies who worked in television and were photographers and played in rock and roll bands, real rock and roll bands, not George and Mark mangling Aerosmith in Chantal's living room" (39). Alan and Bridget's mutual attraction, in other words, is grounded in an exoticism born of both regional and class disparities.

Strange Heaven, however, provides a particularly regional variation on the old cliché that familiarity breeds contempt. The authority of Alan's reportorial stance, for instance, wavers as the "place that had once been so fascinating [loses] its rustic charm" (38) and as his distance from the subjects of his "field work" shrinks. Reporting that Mark has been telephoning him as well as Bridget, he purses his lips: "It was all too sordid. Tabloid news. Alan couldn't wait to go home" (40). Alan's simultaneous fascination with and revulsion toward his surroundings—his tabloid irony—is implicitly associated with the media's lurid coverage of the murder of Bridget's schoolmate Jennifer MacDonnell by her estranged boyfriend. The incident is sensationalized not only as an instance of adolescent violence—"there was a

piece on the local news about violence in our schools, even though it happened outside of a donut shop" (11)—but also, in keeping with the concept of the Folk, as an instance of urban depravity migrating to the margins: "What was happening to the young people? This, according to the news, was what people of the area were asking themselves. It was because of television, and music, and videos. It was getting as bad as the city" (11). The murder further jars Alan out of his complacent anthropological distance. Reflecting on how the murder happened near his apartment, Alan responds to Bridget's skeptical query "They don't shoot people in Guelph?" with mild hysteria: "'It's not so close. Not right under my nose like that. If I hadn't been at work, I could have stood at my window and watched the whole thing. Oh, I want to go home,' he said, loudly and suddenly, not like he was reading the news" (39). Clearly, Alan's fascination with a "thriving, unique culture" imbued with a sense of disappointment and despair reflects another form of Folk innocence, and his authoritative newscaster's tone falters when the proximity of the murder shatters that illusion and his sense of detachment.

Unconsciously presuming superiority, Alan takes for granted Bridget's acquiescence to his critical perspective, and for the most part she passively demurs, mesmerized by his apparent sophistication. However, prior to his departure, the gulf between them—and, more broadly, the caricature of the East Coast as Canada's lumpenproletariat—is dramatized during a brief encounter with two stoned acquaintances of Mark and Bridget. As the two emerge from their "basement shit-box" (90), eyes "at half-mast" (91), Alan chirps "'How's she going?' . . . stupidly imitating the local idiom," and then observes, blithely unaware of the blanket condescension his comment entails, "I see even the Maritimes has white trash." Though Bridget says nothing in response, the insult registers all the same: "You have more or less just pissed on my flag, she might have said to him then" (92).

Nobody ever said federalism was easy, and the faltering romance at the heart of *Strange Heaven* metonymically dramatizes the undercurrent of ambivalent desire running through regional cultural politics in Canada. In "Books That Say Arse," her introduction to the anthology *Victory Meat: New Fiction from Atlantic Canada*, Coady could well be referring to Alan as she describes the fetishizing of the region by outsiders:

> every initial infatuation must inevitably mature into respect or else degrade into contempt. . . . It can also be called resentment, the other side of infatuation, when instead of fetishizing a culture that clearly differs from the one you inhabit, you become annoyed with it. You make fun of the accent, so to speak, as if it's not genuine but some kind of folksy contrivance affected to score personality points. Somebody told me recently of a complaint some writer made about "all these

> new books from the east coast that say 'arse.'" So resentment—the state of the disenchanted lover—permeates the arts community too, but to me it's like complaining about British novels for using words like "chap" and calling elevators "lifts." (3)

Indeed, Bridget had worried that Alan's friendship might simply have been infatuation, the "allure of a quiet, tortured, passive teenager" (88), and their parting of ways at the end of the novel certainly corresponds to Coady's description of regional disenchantment. When Bridget calls Alan in Guelph as she reaches a crisis of sanity, Alan starts out by making fun of her accent, implicitly assuming his southern Ontario idiom as the norm:

> "How are you?"
> "Good, good. It's stormin out."
> "Stahr-min, is it?" he said.
> "Ha, ha."
> "Well dat's how ya sound, lord t'underin."
> "I do not."
> "Ah doo nut." (189)

Alan's treatment of Bridget, furthermore, emphasizes not only his centrist presumption of superiority but also his subscribing to the same patriarchal assumptions as Mark. Like Mona, Bridget's central Canadian friend on the psychiatric ward, whose "eternal point of reference had been herself" (81), Alan narcissistically expounds on his own problems and ultimately shuts Bridget out, oblivious to her unarticulated *cri de coeur*. Expressing the same masculinist wariness of heterosexual platonic friendship as Mark, he lectures Bridget about what his pregnant girlfriend will think of him getting nocturnal phone calls from another woman: "Don't take this the wrong way, but this isn't the kind of thing you can do" (190). Despite Alan's farewell salutation, "From my strange and wonderful Bridget Murphy" (191), it is clear that the novelty—Bridget's appeal as an anthropological curiosity—has worn off. For all his sympathy and kindness, Alan confirms his own advice to Bridget: "Guys are fucking pigs and the sooner you get that figured out the better off you'll be" (170).[1]

While Coady's portrait of Alan rebuffs the paternalistic gaze of a central Canadian and his self-fulfilling, derogatory stereotypes of the East, however, her intent is not to reinscribe a sense of an innocent, authentic Folk culture. Indeed, an important part of her subversion of the gaze of the outsider is her parodic approach to the idea of an authentic Folk culture. This subversion is carried out principally through Coady's depiction of Robert as a parodic Folk artist. Disillusioned by the community's resistance to his attempts to revolutionize the town's spring festival to bring in more tourists—including

doing away with "the traditional bagpipe contest that led him to refer to the festival as 'Cat Killing Days'" during a radio interview (73) —Robert retreats to his workshop. Resistant to the idea that his woodworking is art rather than a craft, Robert declines an invitation to "be on some program about Maritime folk art. 'I'm no dope-smoking hairy-faced fruit'" (74). Though Coady satirizes Robert's reactionary, homophobic caricature of the artist—he makes "flitting gestures with his short yellow fingers" (74) —she nonetheless employs his approach to his craft to deconstruct the concept of Folk art, "an art that supposedly inhered in materials and in people enjoying an unmediated relationship with nature and an unproblematic, 'fresh,' 'spontaneous' relation between conception and execution" (McKay 292). Robert playfully carves caricatures into diseased, bulbous (and particularly sexually suggestive) pieces of wood, delighting "in any chunk of wood that bore a passing resemblance to parts of the human anatomy" (74). Robert's subversive inclinations extend to his business practices, as he cannily "overprice[s] his art work outrageously for the tourists" (74-5) and exploits his reputation as "a character" by browbeating customers into making purchases if they linger too long in his shop.

Robert's other creations likewise suggest Coady's parodic presentation of regional culture. Similarly overpriced are Robert's handcrafted golf balls, to produce which "he peeled away half of the ball's pitted skin and then carved goofy faces into the hard rubber beneath. Everyone thought this was ingenious" (75). Set in contrast with Robert's decoys, such apparent kitsch suggests Coady's playful questioning of purist notions of authentic Folk art. Whereas Robert's golf balls are individualized creations crafted out of mass-produced objects, Robert's decoys are handcrafted originals that appear mass-produced:

> His decoys were simply beautiful, more beautiful than any actual duck. They were completely smooth and flawless—he did not bother with feathers or any other realistic detail that might disturb the decoy's linearity. The result was a perfect, liquid platonic ideal. Perfect duckness. He stained—never painted—and then varnished them. The wood was what mattered. The acknowledgement and refinement of the wood rather than any attempt to deny it was what made the carvings very nearly sublime. People came from far and wide to purchase one of Bridget's father's ducks. They were all exactly the same. (75)

In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" Walter Benjamin argues that "the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition" and that "that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art" (221). Robert's production of identical decoys blurs the boundaries between the

lost aura of authenticity in capitalist mass production and the erstwhile authentic individuality of the handicraft, and hence blurs the boundary between premodern Folk innocence and the homogeneity of industrial modernity. His golf balls and his decoys playfully confound Benjamin's argument that the "whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical . . . reproduction" (220).

Robert's taking on his brother Rollie as an apprentice likewise reflects his canny, subversive exploitation of consumerist desire for Folk authenticity. When Rollie's school is shut down, Robert turns him loose in his workshop and retails the results as the work of "a religious artist" (77): "Little cards in front of each announced what the wooden blobs were supposed to represent, from 'Jesus Heals the Sick' to 'Saint Paul on the Road to Damascus.'" Shrewdly exploiting the notion of Rollie as an *idiot savant*, as well as tourists' readiness to conflate price with quality, Robert

> daringly set them at the same price as his carved golf-balls, a great favourite among locals and tourists alike, and in a flash of inspired business savvy put up a bigger sign above them all which read:
>
> *Religious Wooden Statues.*
> *Done by Retarded Man.*
> *Twenty-five dollars a piece. (78)*

Coady's depiction of Robert as a happily cynical cultural entrepreneur provides a playful indictment of the tourist industry in Nova Scotia, which represents a paradoxical commodification of Folk innocence and authenticity, "simultaneously celebrating the pre-modern, unspoiled 'essence' of the province and seeking ways in which that essence could be turned into marketable commodities within a liberal political and economic order" (McKay 35).

A final element of Coady's parodic commentary on folk culture is the popularity of "The Ballad of Jenny Mac," reflecting with arch irony the community's morbid fascination with the death of Jennifer MacDonell. Here a murder outside a donut shop—emblem of postmodern consumer culture—takes the form of a traditional ballad:

> *A sweeter girl you never saw,*
> *Her parent's special pride,*
> *She had a smile for all she knew*
> *Until the day she died*

The ballad goes "on and on, actually going into lurid detail about Jenny meeting Archie and Archie chasing her with a gun and pointing it in her face and saying: '*If you'll not be my love, / You'll be the love of none*'" (161).

Cleverly synthesizing the tabloid's obsession with murder victims and the narrative lyricism of the traditional Folk ballad, Coady underscores the sentimentality and idealization behind the memorializing of Jennifer. As if cryptogenically frozen in a state of innocence, Jennifer is transmogrified and commodified: "Jennifer MacDonnell, who had never been called Jenny in her life, had sunk entirely beneath the horizon. Something else being erected in her place. She was queen of the prom, on her parent's mantelpiece forever, now" (163). The posthumous perfection of Jenny has a macabre appeal for the underachieving and passively suicidal Bridget. Indeed, Jennifer's violent death at the hands of a distraught boyfriend implicitly suggests a fate that might well await Bridget; Mark ends one of his phone calls with the enigmatic but chilling line, "Jennifer MacDonnell rots in the earth" (160). Thus Coady dramatizes the dangers of proprietorial patriarchal attitudes toward women while simultaneously spoofing what McKay sees as the preoccupation in constructions of the Folk "with essence—with locating the genuine wisdom, the true and original ballads, the cultural bloodstream uncontaminated by the virus of modernity, the fixed and final forms of culture" (275).

Strange Heaven thus presents us with a familiar portrait of a sensitive soul straining against the prevailing social mores of a small town, not in a pastoral, romantic, premodern Maritime landscape but in a "fallen" postmodern world of welfare apartments, tabloid violence, and donut shops—call it *Anne of Tim Hortons.* Coady's East refuses the polarized alternatives of what might be termed a homespun, Made in Canada, lower-case orientalism. It is neither the idealized, pastoral "ocean playground" of Anne Shirley nor the retrograde, underdeveloped, and parasitic "culture of defeat" of Stephen Harper. The "home place" is, as ever it was, a complex site, and Lynn Coady, like so many East Coast writers writing today—David Adams Richards, Christy Ann Conlon, Wayne Johnston, Edward Riche, Lisa Moore, Michael Winter, George Elliott Clarke and others—explores those complexities with a dark and combative humour. Culture of defeat me arse.

This essay took shape during a graduate course on contemporary Atlantic-Canadian literature at Acadia University in the Fall of 2004, and I would like to extend my thanks to the students from that class for really stimulating my thinking around Coady's novel. I would also like to thank the editors, Marta Dvorak and Coral Ann Howells, for their work in putting this collection together.

NOTE

1 Coady provides a sequel to the relationship between Bridget and Alan in the story "Look, and Pass On" in *Play The Monster Blind*, in which Alan, having phoned up Bridget on a whim during a return trip through the Maritimes, agrees to drive Bridget to university in Ontario. In this story, Alan's self-regard proves much more vulnerable, as his sense of confidence is shaken by Bridget's impervious passivity during their road trip.

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Lorna Crozier

The Dead Twin

Is it better, after all, to be the other twin,
the limbless innocent, the dumb? The one
my mother carries like a small greasy
thumbprint on the wall of her old womb.
My life in this world is almost done;
I've cheated, lied, envied my betters,
pinched a child just to hear it cry,
mourned a cat more than my father,
betrayed, betrayed. As Roethke said,
I'd rather eat than pray.
The other one is gentle as a Mayfly,
delicately daft, a mouthless moth,
a midge of being, pure and never tried.
It has no bones, I have holes in mine.
Newt, wren, snow cricket: they nudge me
like a memory, it hurts to look at them.
Light dowses the beauty in a lily's throat,
falls across a wrist, turned just so
on a windowsill. All my life I've praised
the moon beyond all other but the moon
loves best the nearly-born. The day dies in me;
no matter what I want the rain as it falls
is saying no one's name.

Katherine Larson

Resistance from the Margins in George Elliott Clarke's *Beatrice Chancy*

George Elliott Clarke characterizes his 1999 verse drama *Beatrice Chancy* as "a feast of intertexts" (Personal interview).[1] His Acknowledgements catalogue the dramatic, visual, musical, historical, and even architectural texts to which *Beatrice Chancy* responds.[2] The list is long, testifying to an interpretative love affair with Beatrices in general and, in particular, with Beatrice Cenci, the noblewoman executed in Rome in 1599 for parricide after being raped by her father (Clarke, *Beatrice Chancy* 152-3). Although the notorious Cenci tragedy arguably stands as the primary intertext for Clarke's work, *Beatrice Chancy* also draws on the plethora of retellings, through sculpture, opera, and drama, which that story prompted, notably Shelley's 1819 drama *The Cenci*. Moreover, Clarke's "martyr-liberator" (10) Beatrice amalgamates elements from a host of Beatrices: Dante Alighieri's divine paragon; Shakespeare's romantic wit; Thomas Middleton's manipulator; Dante Rossetti's devout saint. Clarke combines, adapts, and elaborates on these intertexts, positioning his version of the Cenci story, set in the context of the early nineteenth-century Nova Scotia slave trade, as a conflict between the Black Acadian slave Beatrice and her lustful father/master.

Even as this list of texts signals the intertextual richness of *Beatrice Chancy*, Clarke's Acknowledgements also foreground the strategic function within the verse drama of what Gérard Genette calls the paratext: the elements located on the peripheries of a text that together provide a guiding framework for a reader. Genette's coinage of the term draws on J. Hillis Miller's examination of the prefix "para" as a marker of threshold, a space of blurred boundaries "signifying at once proximity and distance, similarity and

difference, interiority and exteriority" (219). The paratext operates as a "vestibule" (Genette, *Seuils* 8), a permeable area that facilitates a reader's approach to a text.[3] This liminal zone exists largely within the text itself, in what Genette dubs the peritext, namely the title, author name, publication information, chapter headings, dedications, epigraphs, preface, introduction, illustrations, afterword, or notes. The paratext also includes elements beyond the physical boundaries of a work that nonetheless influence a reader. This "epitext" includes reviews, interviews with the author, letters, and editorial remarks. These peripheral elements, both peritextual and epitextual, assume a force that Genette likens to the performative impact of speech acts. They can impart information, relay authorial intention and interpretation, or signal a text's engagement within or against a particular genre. Indeed, Genette depicts the paratext as a "lieu privilégié d'une pragmatique et d'une stratégie, d'une action sur le public au service, bien ou mal compris et accompli, d'un meilleur accueil du texte et d'une lecture plus pertinente" (*Seuils* 8).[4]

Crucial to Genette's understanding of the paratext is his insistence on its strategic role, a feature epitomized by *Beatrice Chancy*. For example, Clarke entitles the section containing his Acknowledgements "Conviction" and begins it with an epigraph by Chilean writer Antonio Skàrmeta: "*Las Beatrices producen amores incommensurables*."[5] The function of both the section title and its epigraph is complex. On one level, these paratextual elements hearken back to the events of the verse drama. The title of the section serves as a reminder of Beatrice's conviction and hanging; the epigraph recalls the blossoming love between Lead and Beatrice as well as the incestuous passion that Beatrice unwittingly sparks in her father. At the same time, the epigraph points forward to the "*amores incommensurables*" that Beatrice Cenci and Beatrices more generally have prompted in literature and history, the tradition that shapes *Beatrice Chancy*.

The ambiguity of the word "Conviction" in this context is even more problematic. If the word is taken to mean "[d]emonstration, proof" (*Oxford English Dictionary*), then it announces Clarke's list of historical, artistic, and literary sources as validation for his project. If it is understood as "detection and exposure" (*OED*), then it could set up the catalogue of intertexts as a key to Clarke's poetic code. "Conviction" can also mean "bringing any one to recognize the truth of what he [*sic*] has not before accepted; convincing" (*OED*), in which case the Acknowledgements become a crucial source of evidence grounding Clarke's depiction of the horrific reality of slavery in Nova Scotia. Regardless of how the reader interprets this section's title and epigraph, reading Clarke's Acknowledgements in isolation from the rest of

the work is not possible. The section occupies a liminal place, both part of and outside of the text, prompting the reader to question the role of the ensuing catalogue of intertexts in shaping *Beatrice Chancy*. In so doing, "Conviction" exemplifies the paratextual strategies that inform the work.

One of the most powerful functions of the paratext is its ability to advise or command a reader to approach a text in a particular way. Genette offers the example of the Preface to Victor Hugo's *Contemplations*: "Ce livre . . . doit être lu comme on lirait le livre d'un mort" (*Seuils* 16).[6] Genette characterizes the fringe space of the paratext as a transaction zone that conveys direct authorial commentary or information validated by the author to the reader, thereby guiding the reader closer to the author's interpretation of the text. Interestingly, the prefix 'para' can also mean "to make ready, prepare" or "to ward or defend" (*OED*). The space of the paratext both prepares a reader to enter into and interpret a text and defends that text against readings that clash with authorial and editorial goals. This emphasis on authorial control and strategy becomes particularly important in *Beatrice Chancy*, as Clarke deliberately constructs paratextual elements as framing devices to guide readers' interpretations of his verse drama.

It could be argued that Genette's insistence that the primary role of the paratext is to signal authorial intention problematically resurrects the figure of the author. Graham Allen points out that this emphasis on authorial intention helps to "neutralize the radically destabilizing . . . nature of intertextuality" and to "keep transtextual relations within a determinate and determinable field" (107). By extension, however, Genette implies that the paratext remains under the sole control of the text's author. Rather, the paratext remains particularly vulnerable to outside influence. As editions change, original prefaces might be replaced by updated versions, sometimes after an author's death. In addition, the media helps to shape the epitext, highlighting certain aspects of an author's background or of a text at the expense of other, usually less marketable, features. Editors influence the relative impact of a peritext by exerting control over the physical layout of a text. Finally, the influence of the paratext may elude the reader who skips paratextual material, deeming a preface, notes, or acknowledgements to be separate from or even irrelevant to the text. What Genette lauds as the map leading a reader to an author's intentions appears rather as a surprisingly unstable area, susceptible to alteration, excision, omission, and subjective interpretation.

Indeed, not all readers will interpret authorial signals in identical ways. Genette's insistence on the paratext's ability to direct a reader toward the author's intended interpretation does not mitigate the potentially infinite

range of intertextual relationships that might be triggered by a particular epigraph, dedication, or illustration. Genette is right to point out that a reader who, for example, recognizes the epigraph from Skàrmeta that begins the Acknowledgements in *Beatrice Chancy* will glean a different meaning from the text than a reader who does not recognize the intertext. Genette remarks: "Je ne dis pas qu'il faut le savoir: je dis seulement que ceux qui le savent ne lisent pas comme ceux qui l'ignorent" (*Seuils* 13).[7] If a reader knows that the epigraph is taken from *Ardiente Paciencia*, Skàrmeta's 1985 novel centering on poet and political activist Pablo Neruda who endured a period of exile from Chile for his political views, or knows that Skàrmeta himself was temporarily exiled from Chile and used his writing as a form of political resistance, that information will shape his or her interpretation of *Beatrice Chancy*. A reader may bring further unexpected intertexts to bear on a particular paratext on the basis of personal experience; Skàrmeta's quotation, for example, might trigger allusions to Michael Radford's interpretation of poetry's revolutionary potential and the relation that develops between Mario and the idealized Beatrice in the 1994 film adaptation of Skàrmeta's novel, *Il Postino*. The paratext's function is best understood as a primary intertext coexisting with many possible subjective readings; indeed, in his discussion of hypertextuality, Genette recognizes the multiple intertexts that might hover behind a text, whether contributed by author or reader.[8]

Although the paratext's impact on a reader's interpretation of a text does not necessarily stem from authorial intent, authorial strategy and control remain integral to the function of the paratext, particularly in the case of *Beatrice Chancy*. *Beatrice Chancy*'s paratext—and especially its peritext—becomes a key tool through which to explore the role of intertextuality in Clarke's verse drama. The unusual attention which Clarke devotes to peritextual material in *Beatrice Chancy*, and indeed throughout his works, is manifested not only in the abundance of epigraphs, photographs, and stage directions but also through his discussions of his verse drama. So, it is fitting that an article devoted to Clarke's fascination with peripheral elements should itself rely on an authorial epitext in the form of an interview. Reflecting on *Beatrice Chancy*, Clarke consistently maintains that his poetry is meant to be violent, to jolt readers into memory, awareness, and action. The surfeit of peritextual material in *Beatrice Chancy* is vital; even if a reader does not catch the nuance of every epigraph, their prominence and blatancy forces awareness. Moreover, Clarke deliberately formulates his peritext on both structural and thematic levels to provide intertextual commentary on the events of *Beatrice Chancy*.

Beatrice Chancy is consistently and persuasively framed by and infused with peritext. A sixteenth-century Italian map bookends the work on its front and back inside covers, while the introductory pages are peppered with epigraphs. Clarke prefaces his verse drama with a reflection: "On Slavery in Nova Scotia." Two more epigraphs, coupled under the heading "Charge," separate this reflection from the *dramatis personae*. Each of the five acts of the verse drama itself is marked with an epigraph, a title drawn from John Fraser's *Violence in the Arts* ("Ambivalences," "Violators," "Victims," "Revolt," and "Responsibility"), and a photograph of a solitary Black woman. A poeticized article from *The Halifax Gazette* immediately follows the conclusion of Act 5, along with another epigraph and an extract of newspaper "Apologies." Then come Clarke's Acknowledgements. Clarke goes on to include the performance histories of both the verse drama and its opera version, again prefacing the section with an epigraph. The Colophon positions typesetting credits under a final epigraph, and the work concludes with a brief biography of George Elliott Clarke. Not including stage directions, over 60 elements within the verse drama could be construed as peripheral.

Clarke describes *Beatrice Chancy* as the "maximum of my maximalist aesthetic" (Personal interview). In one sense, the plethora of peritextual material, particularly the number of epigraphs, characterizes Clarke's maximalist poetic style. However, the peritext of *Beatrice Chancy* plays a strategic role on both structural and thematic levels, positioning the events of the verse drama within a context evoking the resistance of Acadians, slaves, Black women, Black artists, and poetry itself. After briefly considering the structure of the peritext as a whole, this article will examine the function of the peritext in *Beatrice Chancy* through close analysis of two of the work's most pervasive peritextual elements: the epigraph and the stage direction. Throughout *Beatrice Chancy*, these peritexts reveal a preoccupation with resistance even as they themselves resist generic and linguistic categorization and containment. As such, they consistently mirror and enter into dialogue with the themes and events explored in the drama itself.

Genette posits that the impact of a peritext on a given work stems partly from its position in the narrative. Clarke's peritext identifies his verse drama as a response to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Nova Scotia travelogues and holiday brochures detailing journeys to sites associated with Longfellow's poem *Evangeline*. Clarke notes that, as a Nova Scotian, he could not ignore *Evangeline*, which tells the story of two lovers separated when the British deported the French Acadians from Nova Scotia in 1755.[9] The land associated with *Evangeline* became a popular tourist destination, marketed

by Dominion Atlantic Railway and Windsor & Annapolis Railway among others. *Beatrice Chancy* mimics the structure of Dominion Atlantic Railway's travel brochures, guides for genteel travelers as they journeyed by ship from Boston to Yarmouth and then took the train through the Annapolis Valley (Clarke, Personal interview). The frontispiece of such brochures typically included a map of the area around Grand Pré, the site of the Acadians' deportation. The brochures then presented a brief history of the Acadians, a biography of Longfellow, a description of the sights one might see along the journey, with a special focus on the Annapolis Valley, and scheduling and hotel information.[10]

The structure of Clarke's introductory peritext, with its map, epigraphs, and brief account of slavery in Nova Scotia, mimics these brochures. At the same time, Clarke's sixteenth-century Italian map of Acadia fuses the intertext of the Cenci tragedy with the commercialization of the Acadian deportation prompted by *Evangeline*.[11] Moreover, even as Clarke's reflection on slavery in Nova Scotia continues to mirror the structure of these travel brochures, it foregrounds Clarke's shift in focus from the Acadians' expulsion to slavery; coupled with the dedication to Lydia Jackson and Marie-Josèphe Angélique, two African Canadian slaves noted for their acts of resistance, the structure prepares the reader for his or her own journey into the Annapolis Valley.[12] By figuring these early peritextual elements as a travelogue, complete with map, Clarke ironically literalizes Genette's characterization of the paratext as a guide leading the reader into a text.

Clarke's strategic framework operates in conjunction with the peritext's thematic insistence on acts of oppression and resistance. The epigraphs establish a rich intertextual dialogue between the events of *Beatrice Chancy* and the context out of which each epigraph emerges. The epigraph, according to Genette, can comment on, clarify, or undermine a section or title; it can also provide valuable information about the time period, genre, and biases of a particular work. Frequently, the allusion to a specific political or historical context prompted by the identification of the author of the epigraph plays a more important role than the text of the epigraph itself (*Seuils* 145-8). If one ignores, for the moment, the identities of the authors to whom Clarke refers, the epigraphs still provide important strategic commentary on the events of the verse drama. Indeed, as Genette remarks, in many ways the epigraph remains "un geste muet dont l'interprétation reste à la charge du lecteur" (*Seuils* 145). If a reader does not recognize the name of the author referred to, for example, the impact of the epigraph's intertexts shifts. Regardless of author identity, the epigraphs, positioned throughout the text, function as a thematic map. Clarke juxtaposes his depiction of the development

of Beatrice's agency, the slaves' desperation, Beatrice and Lead's decision to kill Chancy, and the "violence" ("Embracing" 19) of his poetry with the epigraphs' consistent emphasis on the role of women in countering acts of oppression, contemporary manifestations of slavery, the ethical quagmire that surrounds the decision to kill an oppressor, and art's role in resisting tyranny.

The epigraphs instruct and even order the reader to approach the text with these themes in mind. Clarke positions two of the epigraphs that precede Act 1 under the performative title "Charge," a word that, mirroring the ambiguity of the Acknowledgements' "Conviction," brings with it paradoxical connotations of command, duty, attack, and accusation. The two epigraphs included in the section, emphasizing women's duty to abolish slavery and women's right to defend themselves from a rostrum rather than from a scaffold, reinforce all of these connotations (*Beatrice Chancy* 9).[13] At the same time, Clarke structures these epigraphs as thematic directives to the reader. Positioned amongst and already in dialogue with four other introductory epigraphs that range from a testimony to the power of beauty to a meditation on modern slavery manifested in "bondage to . . . financial institutions" (11), this charge implicitly extends to the epigraphs throughout *Beatrice Chancy*. The lyrics of the spiritual "Lonesome valley" (67) hover over both Beatrice's rape and Lustra's "invisible, silent . . . chains" (74) in Act 3; Trudeau's famous "Faut-il assassiner le tyran?" (123) problematizes Beatrice's parricide in Act 5 as well as the slaves' debates throughout the verse drama concerning the proper means of resisting their master.

Along with a map, Clarke bookends the verse drama with important reminders of the prevalence of slavery in contemporary society: "And if the African belief is true, then somewhere here with us, in the very air we breathe, all that whipping and chaining and raping and starving and branding and maiming and castrating and lynching and murdering—all of it—is still going on" (158). This concluding epigraph appears under the heading "Colophon," assuming the function of a thematic authorial imprint. Perhaps the overriding charge to the reader, shared by all of the epigraphs and reinforced by the allusions to the manifold guises of slavery, is an injunction to remember history. Clarke himself posits that *Beatrice Chancy* was meant to "jet blood and saliva in amnesiacs' faces" ("Embracing" 16). The sheer excess of Clarke's paratext underscores the implicit violence of that injunction.

The identities of the epigraphs' authors only add to this intertextual dialogue. Clarke includes the words of Maryse Condé, a Black Caribbean writer, storyteller, and activist whose works deal extensively with slavery and racism; George Bourne, an American abolitionist who warned against the moral

danger of slavery; Ann Plato, a nineteenth-century American educator who was the second Black woman to have her writing published in the United States; Hardial Bains, the Indian-born former head of the Canadian Communist party; Carrie Best, activist, journalist, and writer who founded the first newspaper for Blacks in Nova Scotia; Angela Carter, a novelist and feminist fascinated with intertextuality and intertextual theorists, particularly Genette; Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, whose manifesto evinces the futurist demand for a cultural uprising against tradition and custom. The authors of the epigraphs span centuries, languages, countries, and genres, opening up a dynamic interrelation among *Beatrice Chancy* and the history of slavery, the history of Nova Scotia, the history of Black women writers and activists, and the struggle against constraining customs that continues to be waged on political and artistic levels.

The epigraphs retain a focus on the revolutionary and defiant potential of art and artists, consistently reinforcing the artist's role in resisting tyranny. Marinetti, for instance, insists that beauty manifests itself in struggle, while the words of African American spirituals conjure up the history of hope and resistance that coexists with that of slavery's oppression. Similarly, Clarke's inclusion of the words of contemporary novelists, writers, and storytellers testifies to the continued political role of the writer and poet. Most important, Clarke marks his own poetry as a form of resistance. In a recent article, Clarke writes that poetry and, indeed, beauty in any form, functions as a form of justice ("Embracing" 24). The potency and agency of poetry, Clarke argues, stem from anger, ugliness, and violence: "My poetry must come from anger / Or nothing from it comes" (21). While the poetry of "the howl [and] the lament" (17) that characterizes *Beatrice Chancy* exemplifies this aesthetic, Clarke also inscribes himself into two of his epigraphs, discreetly joining the ranks of the abolitionists, writers, politicians, and activists whose words he invokes.

The first epigraphs in *Beatrice Chancy*, hidden at the bottom of the publication and copyright information on the title page's verso, are Clarke's own. Clarke playfully structures his disclaimer as two poetic epigraphs:[14]

> Blessèd reader
> Every line is true, or it is a lie:
> Honey poured – honest – over lye.
> Ogni riferimento a fatti e persone è del tutto casuale e le vicende,
> Personaggi ed i loro nomi sono immaginari.[15] (4)

By figuring these disclaimers, one conventional and one unconventional, as epigraphs, Clarke implicitly links them with the copious epigraphs

interspersed throughout the text that testify to histories of oppression and resistance. Moreover, like the "Charge," Clarke presents the epigraphs as a direct address to the reader, appropriating the nineteenth-century appeal "*Blessèd reader*." The epigraphs mark Clarke's own poetry as a form of resistance, and problematize the way in which a reader should respond to *Beatrice Chancy* and its peritext. Surrounded by publication information that the reader usually skips en route to the main text, these epigraphs are not likely to be noticed by most readers. Moreover, even if they are noticed, the disclaimers are themselves ambiguous. The second epigraph is in Italian, which the average reader will not be able to read, thereby masking the story's fictional roots. Similarly, the first epigraph remains unwilling to commit to truth or fiction: "Every line is true, or it is a lie." The epigraphs occupy a liminal position between history and truth that echoes their physical position in relation to the verse drama. Warning readers of the danger of ignoring even the most seemingly irrelevant paratextual material, the epigraphs anticipate the strategic import of extra-textual material throughout the work. At the same time, they introduce Clarke's poetry as wielding historical and political consequences that are unmitigated, perhaps even intensified, by its imaginary roots.

The epigraph attributed to Junius, inserted within the excerpt from the *Halifax Gazette* at the conclusion of the verse drama, is similar. This time, instead of concealing the epigraph within copyright details, Clarke appropriates a fictitious name. The true identity of Junius, the pseudonym of an eighteenth-century English writer noted for his consistent refusal to submit to arbitrary measures of authority, remains unknown. This epigraph, which parodies the Toronto *Globe and Mail*'s daily quotation from Junius, is in fact Clarke's own poetry: "Noises of panting, running, muskets, creaking hounds, snarling wheels, sagging wind, moon screaming in the trees, the Gaspereau River groaning" (151). In linking his words with those of Junius, Clarke positions his own poetry as a public and lasting voice with the power to challenge oppressive authority. Moreover, by introducing the epigraph into a newspaper excerpt that is itself poeticized, Clarke validates poetry as a medium for transmitting and defining news and history. The decision further problematizes the tenuous relation between truth and fiction introduced by the initial epigraphs, while also underscoring the defiant potency of poetry as a genre.

This partly fictionalized selection from the *Halifax Gazette*, like the hidden epigraphs, explicitly merges Clarke's poetry, the text, with peritext, foregrounding the question of where text ends and peritext begins. Genette's

definition of the peritext emphasizes the difficulties of determining where the boundaries between text and peritext lie: "on ne sait pas toujours si l'on doit ou non considérer qu'elles lui appartiennent, mais [elles] en tout cas l'entourent et le prolongent" (*Seuils* 7).[16] The problem of differentiating between text and peritext becomes especially difficult in *Beatrice Chancy*, complicated not only by Clarke's explicit injection of poetry into seemingly peritextual material but by the question of performance.[17] As a verse drama, the work lies on the border between poetry and drama. What becomes of the peritext in performance? If it simply disappears, how does that omission affect audience response? If peritextual elements such as the epigraphs and the map are included in a theatre program, does the spectator understand those texts interacting in the same way that the reader does? What peritextual elements need to be included in performance in order for an audience to appreciate some of the subtleties available to a reader? If included, do those elements then become part of the text? These questions are further complicated by the reality that any performance functions as an interpretation of a text, drawing out through costume, set design, blocking, and casting certain intertexts at the expense of others.[18] Despite the directorial challenges presented by such realities of collaborative performance, *Beatrice Chancy*'s refusal to adhere to generic limits and the resultant shifting boundary between text and peritext function strategically as large-scale enactments of art's resistant potential.

The poetic stage directions in *Beatrice Chancy* stand as a prime example. Genette does not include stage directions as an example of a peritext in *Seuils*, perhaps because they arguably function as integral to a printed dramatic text. Because dramatic texts are performance-based, however, stage directions generally assume a peritextual function, providing crucial guidance and commentary on characterization and setting. At the same time, they remain vulnerable to the omission and alteration characteristic of the peritext. Most audiences do not have access to stage directions. Moreover, a director retains the right to alter characterization and staging depending on his or her interpretation. Stage directions therefore become unstable elements operating at the border of a text, exemplifying the features of the peritext.[19]

Because Clarke's stage directions cross the line between the dramatic and the poetic, the boundaries between dramatic peritext and primary text remain continually blurred. Clarke's stage directions sometimes work to convey onstage action. Immediately following Beatrice's rape, for example, the stage directions simply establish the scene's location and announce Beatrice's arrival onstage: "*Lustra's chambers. Beatrice enters, staggering,*

bedraggled. Lustra shadows her" (90). In the majority of cases, however, Clarke's stage directions are crucial to his poetry and the verse drama's thematic content, providing subtle commentary on the atmosphere of a scene even as they continue to implicate the reader or audience in writing stories of oppression.[20] In Act 4, scene 1 for instance, Clarke intensifies the impact of Beatrice's rape through stage directions: "*A violin mopes. Invisible shovelfuls of dirt thud upon the scene—as if those present were being buried alive—like ourselves*" (91). The highly sensory peritext, which continually features sound, sight, and smell, paradoxically does so in directives impossible to stage: "*A damp, mushroom odour of shame, a whiff of disease, prowls among the flowers*" (33). The force of the scent of shame, or of Peacock "*stink*[ing] *secretly of spit*" (24) lies in the language, not in staging.[21]

Clarke never intended his stage directions to be taken literally. He describes them as "gestures toward a kind of feeling" meant to be "enjoyed in terms of [their] poeticality" (Personal interview). Significantly, his description explicitly recalls Genette's peritext. He wrote them to be "a hint" or "a guide" (Personal interview) for a reader or a director, an atmospheric map that would shape interpretation of the larger work. However, in performance, the director ultimately determines how those directions are used. If they are omitted or ignored, *Beatrice Chancy* loses some of its most potent poetry. If a staging excises the harsh onomatopoetic quality of the directions surrounding Beatrice's whipping, for instance, much of the sharpness of the scene disappears: "*Moonlight grates upon the graveyard. The wind is staggered by the sounds of the whip—and worse—then resumes. The thin, biting tone of E-flat clarinet insinuates bitter silences*" (70).[22] Excluding the stage directions also deprives the work of the intertextual impact of such stage directions as, "*Beatrice remembers Jeremiah 8:21*" (119) and the critiques directed to reader or spectator concealed within the stage directions: "*Too many of us destroy ourselves*" (15); "*Slavery is global industry and trade—the future*" (25); "*There's no freedom this side of the grave*" (95). Indeed, recalling the language of the epigraphs, the stage directions play a crucial role in negotiating the relation between fiction and truth, history and the present.

The 1997 staged reading of *Beatrice Chancy*, directed by Colin Taylor, opted for a compromise.[23] Taylor omitted the stage directions that seemed limited to the action of the drama and included a narrator in the cast who would read the directions that, in Clarke's words, "added to the texture" (Personal interview). That compromise still poses the question of how to determine which directions constitute action and which texture. However, it testifies to the extent to which Clarke's poetry resists confinement within peritextual or generic limits. Clarke muses that a successful staging of the

play would require Shakespearean actors "who could . . . carry the language" (Personal interview). The poetry of the verse drama must remain a priority in performance, a feature that blurs conventional distinctions between text and peritext, poem and play.

This linguistic and generic resistance mirrors the force of the poetry wielded by Clarke's enslaved protagonists. Ironically, it is Chancy who likens the resistance of his slaves to the defiance promised by poets: "Our world's infected by slaves and poets!" (27). Indeed, the slaves on the Paradise plantation continually invoke poetry as a means to freedom. Dumas likens Beatrice's courageous actions to "Seven millennia of poetry" (146) while Beatrice herself, eyeing the gallows, maintains that, "I find it hard to breathe / Outside of poetry" (142). Moses points to poetry's ability to wound (121). Clarke identifies Dumas, the revolutionary seer, as a poet. Even George, the escaped slave who is the subject of the *Halifax Gazette*'s Reward column, "fancies himself a poet" (150). Their poetry is far from innocent, exemplifying Maureen Moynagh's contention that Clarke "makes poetry the means of rending the veil of decorum historically dropped over the most violent and gruesome acts of slavery" (114). In Act 4, scene 5, for example, Lustra recoils when Beatrice describes her father as her "raper": "These words aren't poetry, Beatrice; they canker" (109). Throughout *Beatrice Chancy*, poetry, and Clarke's poetry in particular, embeds a language of anger, struggle, and revolution.[24] It offers freedom and condemns rape. It overflows the limits of the text to merge with the peritextual words of abolitionists and politicians and newspapers. It refuses generic categorization and demands to be performed. At the beginning of Act 2, scene 2, Francis Chancy unwittingly points to the political potency of poetry that Clarke inscribes in both text and peritext: "Plays spawn treason, / Poems assassination" (49). The words echo Clarke's insistence that his words, springing from anger, "promise only murders [and] executions" ("Embracing" 21). The tyrant, it seems, is right to fear the poet.

Clarke's peritext guides the reader into a narrative of struggle that remains continually framed by and in dialogue with peritextual elements testifying to oppression and the work of those who choose to fight it. Moreover, even as *Beatrice Chancy*'s peritext enjoins the reader not to forget this history, it itself resists categorization. Clarke enacts poetry's resistant potential on a textual level even as he depicts Beatrice's acts of resistance through and as poetry. Fittingly, the peritext, verbal and visual elements lying on the physical margins of a work, plays a pivotal role in the intertextual strategies of *Beatrice Chancy*, a verse drama that centres on the resistance of people at the margins.

NOTES

1 I would like to thank Linda Hutcheon and the anonymous peer readers at *Canadian Literature* who offered valuable suggestions and comments on earlier versions of this article. I am also grateful to George Elliott Clarke and James Rolfe for the opportunity to interview them; this article is indebted to insights that emerged during those discussions.

2 The list is by no means exhaustive. Clarke's work draws on intertexts ranging from Titian's *Venus d'Urbino* to the Bible to aphorisms. For a judicious account of the influences pervading *Beatrice Chancy*, see Clarke, "Embracing" 15-24.

3 *Seuils* provides a comprehensive overview of Genette's theory of paratextuality. See also Allen 97-115; Maclean 273-80; and Hallyn and Jacques 202-15.

4 A privileged space of pragmatics and of a strategy, of an action on the public in the service, whether successfully or badly understood and accomplished, of a better reception of the text and of a more pertinent reading (My translation.).

5 Beatrices trigger incommensurable loves (My translation.).

6 This book must be read like one would read the book of a dead person (My translation.).

7 I'm not saying that one must know it [the intertext]: I'm only saying that those who do know it will not read like those who don't (My translation.).

8 Genette divides the ways in which texts can enter into relation with others (what he calls transtextuality) into five categories: intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality, and architextuality. For helpful overviews of these terms and the specific intertextual relationships that each alludes to, see Genette, *Palimpsests* 1-10 and Allen 101-15.

9 For judicious accounts of the history of the French Acadians and of the Acadian deportation, see Arsenault, Cazaux, N.E.S. Griffiths, and Naomi Griffiths.

10 For examples of these brochures, see Douglas; Holiday Tours Through Evangeline's Land; The Land of Evangeline; Old Acadia In Nova Scotia; and Through the Land of Evangeline.

11 Interestingly, editions of Longfellow's poem also often included a map of "Evangeline country."

12 Lydia Jackson, having arrived in Nova Scotia along with the eighteenth-century influx of Black Loyalists, was indentured and eventually impregnated by her master, Dr. Bulman. She finally fled to Sierra Leone with other Black Loyalists in 1792. Marie-Josèphe Angélique was the slave of a wealthy Montreal tradesman. On 17 April, 1734, hearing she was going to be sold, Angélique escaped, setting fire to her owner's house to distract her pursuers. In June 1734 she was captured, tortured, and hanged.

13 The two epigraphs are: "The abolition of slavery … is emphatically the duty and privilege of women" (Bourne) and "La femme a le droit de monter sur l'échafaud; elle doit avoir également celui de monter à la tribune" (Gouges). Women have the right to ascend the scaffold; they must equally have the right to ascend the [court] rostrum (My translation.).

14 Clarke draws on a range of languages in his epigraphs and throughout *Beatrice Chancy*. His extensive use of French, Spanish, Italian, and Latin functions partly to reinforce the particular context of slavery in nineteenth-century Nova Scotia that grounds *Beatrice Chancy*. The slaveowners of Nova Scotia were landed gentry, well-educated and well-read individuals who established universities and libraries in Nova Scotia. Library records from the 1890s reveal a preponderance of multilingual book collections. The multilingual poetry of *Beatrice Chancy* invokes this history (Clarke, Personal interview).

15 Every reference to facts and persons is totally casual, and the events, people, and their names are imaginary (My translation.).

16 We do not always know whether or not we must consider the paratextual elements as belonging to the text, but in any case they surround the text and extend it (My translation.).

17 Interestingly, the page numbers of *Beatrice Chancy* do not demarcate peritext and text by, for example, enumerating title page and publication information with lower case Roman numerals and marking the beginning of the verse drama with Arabic numerals. Page numbers are listed using Arabic numerals beginning with the first title page. In a way, therefore, Clarke signals that every page constitutes part of the text.

18 See Carlson 111-17.

19 The *dramatis personae* and the description of the setting assume similar roles in *Beatrice Chancy*. However, both of these elements would normally be included in a program and would therefore be available to an audience.

20 Maureen Moynagh points out that Clarke's stage directions even scan as poetry and goes on to argue that such peritextual features suggest that *Beatrice Chancy* should be read as poetry rather than as theatre (101).

21 Clarke's epigraph attributed to Junius shares these sensory qualities, implicitly connecting the stage directions to the epigraphs.

22 A large number of Clarke's stage directions centre on sound, particularly musical, imagery. Such references as "*African-tuned bagpipes*" (134) and "*F-minor music – note of immorality*" (82) abound. Significantly, the verse drama of *Beatrice Chancy* developed as an offshoot of George Elliott Clarke's collaboration with composer James Rolfe on the opera version of *Beatrice Chancy*. While neither Rolfe nor Clarke considers the music of *Beatrice Chancy* as exercising detailed influence on the stage directions of the verse drama or vice versa, both artists maintain that there was inevitable "cross-fertilization" between the two projects on both linguistic and musical levels (Clarke, Personal interview). Rolfe credits Clarke's poetic stage directions with providing the "atmosphere" for much of his music, going on to argue that music assumes the role of the verse drama's stage directions in the opera (Rolfe, Telephone interview).

While the vast majority of the peritextual material that pervades the verse drama is excised from the opera score and libretto, a few elements remain. Rolfe retains three of Clarke's musically descriptive stage directions in the libretto: "*A bell shivers the dusk*"; "*A violet bell bleeds in the white wind*"; and "*Slaves, sunflowers, stars, sparks.*" Moreover, Rolfe prefaces his score with a "Charge" to the listener consisting of the same epigraph by Hardial Bains that introduces Act 1 of the verse drama. Finally, the section entitled "Conviction" appears in nearly identical form at the conclusion of both verse drama and libretto. The libretto also includes a variation on the verse drama's "Charge" as well as the performance history of the opera. Even in the highly edited medium of a libretto, *Beatrice Chancy* continues to be informed by peritextual elements. For a summary of the development of the two projects, see Clarke, "Embracing" 15-17.

23 The verse drama was staged as a reading with minimal blocking on July 10 and 11, 1997 at the Theatre Passe Muraille in Toronto. It played to an audience of approximately eighty people over the two nights and received "reasonable acclaim" (Clarke, Personal interview). Unfortunately, the verse drama has not been performed since. For a detailed performance history of both verse drama and opera versions of *Beatrice Chancy*, see Clarke, *Beatrice Chancy* 155-7.

24 See also Clarke, "Embracing" 19-21.

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J.A. Wainwright

Elegy in White

for Irving Layton

1.

Snow slants through pines
At Tirgu Neamt
You warm
At her breast dreaming
Your long journey
Keine Lazarovitch
Sleeps at last

2.

Snow falls like rain
On east coast
City streets
You open your
Box of brushes
Like a lover's
Full heart

3.

There is snow
On mountain peaks
When you spy
The island village
For two months
We drown
In your sea's blue light

4.

From your mouth
Smoke pours
Like clouds of snow
Across the chess board
As I move the queen
You have willed me
To move

5.

All the Montreal
Memories of snow
Cannot eclipse
The heat we held
I dance on white
Pavement
Songs you gave me

6.

Static over the phone
On your birthday
One poet to another
I hear you cough
And say 'Yes'
Our lives melt
Like snow

Danielle Fuller

Riding a Rolling Wave
A Conversation with Joan Clark

Joan Clark is the only writer in Canada to have been awarded both the Marian Engel Award for a body of adult fiction (1991) and the Vicky Metcalf Award for Children's Literature (1999). A resident of St John's, Newfoundland, for 20 years, Clark was born in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, and grew up there as well as in Sydney Mines, Cape Breton and Sussex, New Brunswick. The author of 14 books, she has won the prestigious Mr Christie Award twice for two children's novels—*The Dream Carvers* (1995) and *The Word for Home* (2002)—each of which explores a different aspect of Newfoundland history. Clark's adult work has also received many award honours, in particular for *The Victory of Geraldine Gull* (1988), and *Latitudes of Melt* (2000).

Both Acadia University and Memorial University have recognized Joan Clark's many achievements by awarding her honorary doctoral degrees. This conversation via email took place on the eve of publication of Clark's fourth adult novel, *An Audience of Chairs* (Knopf Canada, 2005).

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DANIELLE FULLER (DF): Having just finished reading *An Audience of Chairs*, I have been moved by your protagonist's (Moranna's) story of loss and reconciliation with her two daughters, her journey through various mental states (one medic in the novel suggests that she is manic depressive) and her experiences of love—romantic, sexual but most importantly, it seemed to me, parental and sibling love. What was the starting point for you?

JOAN CLARK (JC): The starting point was my knowing a woman who, as a result of her madness, lost her children: a tragic situation that affected me deeply. I attempted to write the novel 30 years ago, and then again ten or twelve years ago—and on both occasions frightened myself off. It's a rare family that hasn't been touched by some form of madness, and mine is no exception. There was a time in my life when I was seriously, though briefly, depressed. For these reasons, I was afraid of becoming too deeply immersed in the story and had to wait until I was ready, which, in this case, meant safe.

Readiness is a huge factor in writing fiction and in some cases it's better to wait until you've grown into the story. When I came up for air after finishing *Eiriksdottir* (1994) I realized that, while working on the novel, the hardships and difficulties the Greenlanders endured got me down. For the most part, their lives were brutish and short and to do what I wanted to do with the novel I couldn't avoid that fact and so, when I was writing about those people, I sometimes felt like I was hauling a heavily laden sled over pack ice. When I turned to *Latitudes of Melt* (2000), I felt like I was holding onto a balloon—Aurora's flying over the Barrens as she's dying comes directly from that feeling. Because I am so impressionable—I frighten myself—I was apprehensive that *An Audience of Chairs* would be dark and I was delighted to be able to indulge my zany sense of humour and have fun.

Having said all that, I think one of the starting points for my adult novels is that I am drawn to women like Geraldine, Freydis, Aurora, and Moranna who don't fit the norm: women who are on the outside. My preoccupation with loss and what we can retrieve from it is another starting point, a preoccupation that is probably rooted in the loss of my first son shortly after he was born, and the death of my mother—when she was 65 she was killed by a speeding truck.

DF: I think you've articulated a relationship between a writer's life and her work that is not adequately captured by the term "autobiographical." You seem to explore, transform—translate?—particular life events into fiction. Moreover, you've revisited and re-imagined certain incidents over the years: I'm thinking particularly here of the way that your mother's death informs two earlier stories: "From a High Thin Wire" (title story of 1982 collection) and "Sisters" (*Swimming Toward the Light*, 1990). In relation to *Audience of Chairs*, you've identified experiences of loss and depression as influential experiences. Am I going too far if I

suggest that lived experience is employed by you as a form of knowledge that requires expression in fiction rather than in a supposedly "factual" genre such as the essay?

JC: You put it well when you suggest that lived experience is employed as a form of knowledge that requires expression. Because I am a storyteller, that knowledge finds expression in fiction which allows endless freedom to develop and explore, whereas I think of the essay as bound by facts. When you are bound by facts, your emotions are not allowed to roam as they can and do in fiction.

DF: I'm struggling to find appropriate words to describe your prose style: it has held me rapt for the length of the novel. As a reader, I find your style almost addictive. Clean, clear, calm in tone. Unadorned. Unforced. Not heavily imagistic. Deceptively easy to read. These descriptors are inadequate really. I know that you are a writer who revises your writing a great deal (something you have in common with Alice Munro). Could you comment upon your experience of that process—do you, for instance, spend time working over each line, each word? Do earlier drafts of your prose look very different from the published version?

JC: My early drafts are all over the place as I try to locate the heart of the story, its inner life and how it plays out in characters' lives through time—making decisions about how to manage time is one of the biggest challenges facing a fiction writer. This was a particular difficulty in *An Audience of Chairs*, which criss-crosses time throughout. I call this part of the process "wrestling the dragon to the ground." At this stage, I like to keep the story flexible and open to change—I don't like to nail down a story too soon, especially before my editor Diane Martin sees it. Throughout this process I am developing a voice, the trajectory that will carry the story and dictate style. By voice I mean the narrative voice which includes the characters' voices as well. I like a narrative voice that is clean and clear without sacrificing subtlety. I want the prose to be natural, unadorned yet strongly visual. It takes three or four drafts of cutting, trimming, always trimming, to reach the point where I lean hard on the language, weeding out the clichéed and obscure, using words that are precise. I also pay particular attention to rhythm, reading the manuscript aloud to make it flow. I find this part of the process addictive and sometimes think I could revise forever.

DF: The drive for precision, the attention to rhythm and the reading of your work out loud all appear to inform your prose style. You have also

worked closely with several translators. Could you tell us more about your experience of the author-editor and author-translator relationship?

JC: I think writers owe a considerable debt to translators and editors who care so much about realizing the best possible book, and are willing to throw themselves into the melée of publishing with its many uncertainties. Lori Saint-Martin was the intrepid translator of *Latitudes of Melt* and she picked me up on several slips in precision. I also listen closely to what a good editor has to say about my work-in-progress and consider her comments and suggestions carefully. If I disagree with a comment or suggestion, I don't act on it, but that is rare. I've been fortunate with editors and have only encountered one who was controlling. Mostly I see my editor's task as a laying-on-of-hands. I know writers who, after pitching a scenario, work with an editor chapter by chapter. This probably saves time in the long run but I prefer to involve my editor only after I have wrestled the novel in place.

DF: You've spoken about language. Now could you speak about narrative form and when you know if something is going to be a short story or part of, or the germ of, a novel?

JC: An interesting question. It has been said that a short story is a slice of life, meaning that the narrative is concentrated on selected scenes that focus on a particular time in a character's life. Extending that metaphor, a novel is the entire life of a character, if you like, the whole pie. Oversimplistic though this analogy may be, it does point to the fact that the determining factor in writing short or long fiction is time and space. Having the time to develop an idea/impulse/image/germ through narrative allows me to think big at the outset, and to craft a structure with plenty of space to move around—imaginative not page space: I aim for clean, economical prose. When I wrote my first collection of short stories, *From a High Thin Wire*, I had only two hours a day, if that, to write. When I wrote the linked stories in *Swimming Toward the Light*, I had an hour more a day. My inclination was to track a woman's life but, lacking the time, I used the short story form. As my children became more independent, I had more time and turned to the longer narrative form.

For me, the short story has more in common with a poem than with a novel. Although the novel, the short story, and the poem are sparked by observation, insight, incident and feeling that occurs in daily life, the novel quickly moves you away from that life and projects you into another

reality that for years tends to distance you from the contemplation of the life you're living. With the short story and poem you are usually set free within weeks and months. When working on a novel, my attention is necessarily on the imagined world and I sometimes wonder how much of my life slips away uncelebrated and un-remarked.

DF: A decade ago, in an article that was published in *Books in Canada,* you wrote, "the difficulty of any story has to do with what is being risked, with how the story shifts and slides, with problems of craft rather than genre"(1995, 19). Do you still feel this way? Are you prepared to comment on "what [was] being risked" in *An Audience of Chairs*?

JC: What was being risked in this novel (quite apart from the personal risk mentioned earlier), was the portrayal of a woman whose life was a compilation of "many varieties of error"—to use Virginia Woolf's words. It's always risky writing about an anti-hero because many readers want a character they can like. I'm aware that for some readers Moranna's overweening pride and madness may make her difficult to like. What's important to me as a writer is not so much liking a character, but gathering insight into who she is. I'm interested in understanding my characters (especially within myself). I want to be inside them, feel their delights and the rawness of their nerves. All that is risky and whether or not I pull it off has a great deal to do with craft.

DF: Could you comment further on the process of that craft, in particular how you feel your way into relating to characters in your historical fictions for children and adults?

JC: To begin with, when thinking about character, I don't set up barriers of gender, age, culture, or history. Of course I take these factors into account but they never override the essential humanness of a character. When I was writing *Eiriksdottir*, for instance, I asked myself if the Norse, that is the Greenlanders and Icelanders of a thousand years ago, were more like us today than unlike and came to the conclusion that they were more alike. From reading the Icelandic sagas, I understood that basically the Norse had the same passions and desires we do. But there was one significant difference between us, which I learned from researching their daily life, particularly their work. In order to survive the harsh life on the edge of the then-known world, the Norse risked death on a daily basis, which made them psychologically tough—there was no place for the pamperings, self-indulgences, and sentimen-

tality we take for granted today. As Newfoundlanders would say, the Norse were "a hard crowd." Once I had established that key difference between people living then and now, I was away to the races.

In shaping character, I was also helped by my decision to write the novel using a stripped-down language of mostly Germanic-rooted words, and this gave the characters the effect of being a practical, sober-minded, pragmatic people—with exceptions of course. Using language in this way—which was the biggest challenge in writing the novel—also created a voice that seemed to be coming from a long way back, a voice of authority that, like the saga voice, I hoped readers would be disinclined to challenge.

DF: Can we speak now about a different sense in which "voice" is important to your writing, namely, your interest in oral storytelling? Aunt Hettie in *An Audience of Chairs* is the latest in a long line of storyteller characters who appear in your work. Madge's father Laddie in *Swimming Towards the Light* looms large in my memory, but there are many others. Could you comment on the role and theme of storytelling in your work?

JC: I'm what you might call an instinctive writer and the compulsion to tell stories is strong. My father was a storyteller (but not a reader) and told stories over and over again and at length. I was a good listener but not a storyteller. I was shy, and better at soaking them up. Having been imprinted by my father's storytelling, I am drawn to collected stories and myths. But my view of time is also a factor. I see the past as part of the present and not necessarily historical. All too often, the preoccupation with the present is arrogant and short-sighted.

DF: Could you comment further on the impact of oral storytelling upon your craft as a writer—rather than an orator—of stories?

JC: My father's stories were often about odd and unusual people and absorbing them, I understood the importance of character, and how people revealed themselves through dialogue, which is an essential component of the craft of writing fiction—as Alice Munro has said, "Dialogue is everything." I also understood that my father's stories were rich in incident. Something happened. There was cause and effect, a shape, an arc. Character, dialogue, incident are, of course, ingredients in the craft of writing fiction.

DF: To turn to your children's novels, *The Moons of Madeleine* (1987) and *Wild Man of the Woods* (1985), how did you envisage your child readers:

what age group did you have in mind? And did you envisage them as being read to or as reading by themselves? And how did you shape your themes and concerns to appeal to a child's perspective?

JC: I avoid aiming my children's novels at a particular age group and never second-guess whether the story will be read to a child, or by the child. The only age I concentrate on is the age of the children in the story, in an effort to understand and maintain their point of view. Children who are good readers—and if I aim a book at all, it's for good readers—usually read about children several years older than themselves. (They are, after all, forward bound.)

DF: How do you see the relationship between your writing for adults and your writing for children?

JC: For me, the key differences are point of view and the idea or impetus that sets the novel in motion. If the idea suggests a highly complex story then I know I'll be writing an adult novel; if the idea is relatively straightforward, then it may well turn out to be a children's novel. (To avoid complicating the issue, I'm assuming novel writing here.) The challenge in writing a children's novel is to suggest complexity without the story being complex, which is not to suggest for a moment that it be oversimplified. As for point of view, if the idea is a preoccupation I share with children, then I know I'll probably be writing a children's book. Now that I've been working in both genres for a while, I find myself alternating between the two, which serves me well, because it offers a kind of breathing space while enabling me to continue writing. I don't pretend to understand it but for some reason it works. Inevitably, working in both genres influences how I write in both.

DF: I've enjoyed your novels "for children" a great deal, and I've noticed a number of stylistic and thematic connections to your adult fiction. I was struck, for instance, by the mythic quality of many incidents in *An Audience of Chairs*: Margaret McWeeny (Moranna's mother) literally hooking her future husband while fishing in a river; Aunt Hettie's appearance to Moranna in a tree; the old woman and her stories of Callanish encountered by Moranna in the Highlands, and later, Moranna's epic trek around the Trail after Ian's and Edwina's sudden deaths. Could you comment on your (long-standing) interest in myth, fable and the fantastic?

JC: Myth looms large in my imagination and in the imagination of many Canadian writers—especially those writers who live or have lived close

to a wilderness of one kind or another. I think it has to do with the emptiness of the land and our need to furnish it, much as a child would furnish an empty doll house. Another dichotomy because now I'm talking about a miniature, enclosed landscape (which also fascinates me), not an immense one. Myth-making is a way of taming a wilderness that is often cold and bleak without a warm fire nearby. Also we have a relatively short history—which is why we have to invent our own through myths.

DF: You are adept at realizing vivid, recognizable worlds for your characters. At the same time, your work repeatedly demonstrates an interest in creative expression and the place for the fantastic that it can construct within people's everyday lives. Can you speak further about the "split level" quality of realism and the fantastic/ mythic/ visionary in your fiction?

JC: One need only look to the other worlds of much of today's fiction to realize that for many of us venturing into fantastic and unknown worlds helps us to understand what being human means. I prefaced *Wild Man of the Woods* with a quotation from Oscar Wilde, "Give a man a mask and he will tell the truth." I understood this to mean the truth about himself. In both *Wild Man of the Woods* and *Moons of Madeleine*, I was interested in exploring those parts of ourselves we don't understand or even know exist. When Stephen and Madeleine don masks, each becomes someone else and enters another reality, an experience akin to acting. In *Eiriksdottir*, entering the fantastic allowed me to embark on the quest for Vinland, that utopian world of the Norse, and to explore what it could mean to a dreamer like Helgi. To create Vinland, I transformed Carter's and Summerville beaches on the south shore of Nova Scotia and if anyone were to follow the sailing directions in the novel, they would lead back to these beaches, where I spent the summers of my childhood reimagining the landscape. I think the "split level" quality of realism and the fantastic has been in my head since childhood and it's second nature for me to use it in my fiction to achieve what I otherwise couldn't in a novel.

DF: Your notion of myth-making as a form of—or even substitute for—history has been articulated by many Canadian writers descended from settler groups. Do you think it has any particular resonance for non-Aboriginal Atlantic Canadians?

JC: There are notable examples in Atlantic Canadian writing. Wayne Johnston's *Colony of Unrequited Dreams* is full of myth-making, thanks to Sheilagh Fielding, and Patrick Kavanagh's *Gaff Topsails* is soaked in myth. Alistair McLeod's *No Great Mischief* relies on the myths of a childhood in Cape Breton to assuage the pain of homesickness.

DF: We could also add Bernice Morgan to this list. It strikes me that the younger generation of Atlantic writers such as Lynn Coady, Leo McKay, and Lisa Moore are less interested than the writers you mention in myth-making as theme or form. What does cut across the different generations of contemporary Atlantic Canadian writers is their preference for the genre of realist fiction. David Creelman maps the long tradition of this genre in *Setting in the East: Maritime Realist Fiction* (2003).

To return to *An Audience of Chairs,* Hettie's narratives about the MacKenzie family history are crucial to Moranna's self-construction as a "proud" person of Scottish ancestry with the strength to face down opposition, criticism—even ostracism—from others. Moranna's prolonged visit to Scotland echoes the journey of Margaret Laurence's Morag, in *The Diviners,* although Moranna has a greater need to keep the ancient stories alive it seems to me. However, she can also satirize her "reconstructed ethnicity" by donning a wig, kilt, and knee socks as a pose for tourists who come to buy her wooden carvings! What are the dangers and pleasures for a contemporary writer of exploring Maritime "Scottishness"?

JC: Moranna's pride in being a MacKenzie was monumental and her shifting sense of self found an anchor in the fact that she was Scottish. Prey to delusion, she always came back to that fact, needing to celebrate and exaggerate it. But as a canny businesswoman whose male descendants were grocers, she wasn't adverse to playing the eccentric Scot in order to draw attention to her carvings. As a writer I had fun playing with this dichotomy and used it to point out the stereotypical view of Scots. It has been said that Cape Bretoners are more Scottish than the Scots. The Gaelic Mod, the kilt and bagpipes, the Highland dances and games are more than tourist fare, and oatcakes are a staple in Cape Breton supermarket bakeries. The danger for a fiction writer exploring Scottishness in Canada is to avoid stereotyping by challenging it, which I tried to do by using humour.

DF: Perhaps we can talk a little now about the importance of place and landscape in your writing. It seems to me that your fictional geographies are

informed by the histories and geology of specific, recognizable places, but also by an acute observation of power dynamics as they operate within families and small communities. I've particularly enjoyed the picture of the Cape Breton community that you paint in *An Audience of Chairs*: a contemporary society in which much change (not all of it beneficial) has occurred, and one that is connected to other places through the internet, television news, economic globalization, environment change, the Iraq war, tourism, the sea, and histories of migration. What prompted you to write a story based largely in Cape Breton after writing several books (for both adults and children) which are located in Newfoundland—your home for 20 years now?

JC: My father was a Cape Bretoner, a proud Scot (although he had never been to Scotland) who passed that pride on to my sister and me; in part, the novel grew out of that pride. Also, I lived in Sydney Mines for four years when I was in my early teens: those formative years that lay claim to a huge part of you.

DF: Your oeuvre maps a series of domestic, physical, and emotional landscapes for your characters. In much of your work, the ocean is a space where the imagination has free rein, even as the physical body may be placed in danger. How important is the landscape and the ocean to you as a Maritime writer?

JC: Very important. Alistair McLeod's wonderfully evocative title, *The Lost Salt Gift of Blood*, encapsulates the primal pull of the sea. I was born and grew up beside the Atlantic. Smelling it, watching and listening to it inspires and restores me. It's a well- spring. Also, when I'm beside the sea, the horizon is in the right place—as it is on the prairies.

Carol Shields and I shared similar views on many aspects of literature but we parted company on the issue of landscape in fiction writing. A sense of place was central in Carol's work, but for her the idea of landscape was too ephemeral and imprecise to be taken seriously. For me, the significance of landscape in the process of inspiring and writing fiction is an emotional not an intellectual issue—but that in no way diminishes its importance.

DF: You've just mentioned two fine Canadian writers, so I'd like to ask you now about your portrayal of Canadian writing in *An Audience of Chairs*. I laughed out loud at Murdoch, Moranna's pragmatic brother, reading *Cape Breton Road* by JH MacDonald at his wife's behest when he'd rather be reading Churchill (she thinks it would enable him to make

interesting dinner party conversation). Canadian Literature gets short shrift in this novel: Moranna prefers the British canon and imagines an epistolary relationship with Robert Burns. I loved the image of her stolen library copy of Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*—the only Canadian novel she believes worth keeping. Could you comment on these references and images?

JC: Well, I was having fun! Moranna considered herself an authority on so many subjects, dismissing people left and right (no wonder Davina, her sister-in-law, disliked her), that I couldn't resist the temptation of showing how wrong-headed she was on the subject of Can Lit about which she knew nothing. Her reading choices were limited to her father's library which, like many others in the 1950s and 1960s in Cape Breton, were the tried and true. (I don't know what I would have done without my mother's Book of the Month Club choices and the *Book of Knowledge*.) As for Burns, when I was Writer-in-Residence in Edinburgh, I fell in love with him and drafted a novel about him and the women in his life which will rightly remain unpublished.

DF: What types of books do you remember reading from the Book of the Month Club? Were there any writers or books from those early reading years that have particularly shaped your own work? Do you read poetry?

JC: Most of the Book of the Month Club books were forgettable—*The Queen's Physician* by Frank Yerby for example. In high school I was much influenced by Shakespeare, Dickens, Coleridge, Dickinson. I have always read poetry and in fact wrote (and published) it before I wrote fiction. Four years ago, I tried to write a poem and couldn't do it—which saddened me.

DF: How important is a sense of "Canadianness" in your own writing—or is a regional awareness more important?

JC: Thomas Raddall and Hugh MacLennan were on my mother's bookshelves and, although they were Atlantic writers, I didn't really appreciate the fact that they were Canadian. I read their work without connecting with them at a profound level. It wasn't until I was living in Calgary and discovered Margaret Laurence, Alice Munro, and Marian Engel that I made the connection, probably because they were women and, like me, mothers of young children. Until that awakening, I had a colonized mind—everything written elsewhere was more highly valued than homegrown fare.

Now, many books later, I never think of the "Canadianness" of my own writing. I assume it's there along with regionality. How could it not be? It's not a question of being more regionally than nationally aware, of owing more allegiance to a region than the country. Literature is about transcending boundaries of all kinds.

DF: Could you comment on how your time in Alberta and co-editing *Dandelion* affected your awareness of Canadian writers and writing?

JC: Edna Alford and I began *Dandelion* (foolishly, we often said, as we struggled to find money to get started!), because there was no other literary magazine in Alberta at the time, the *Snow Goose* having died an early death. Once we were launched, the manuscripts poured in, manuscripts by Guy Vanderhaeghe, George Bowering, Claire Harris, Gloria Sawai, Christopher Wiseman, Merna Summers, Robert Kroestch, Robert Hilles, to mention a few. Edna and I worked out of the Dandelion Cooperative in the Deane House where we ran an artists' gallery on what had once been the veranda and, from the beginning, the magazine was highly visual. The veranda was where new art shows opened and Dandelion readings were held. As a mother of three children living in a Calgary suburb, *Dandelion* was a heady experience for me, and a lifeline connecting me to Canadian writers and writing.

DF: It's not only younger Atlantic writers who have been gaining visibility lately, since the media have also drawn attention to some regional "classics." I'm thinking particularly here of Frank Parker Day's *Rockbound,* first published in 1928, and resurrected to win the CBC's Canada Reads competition in 2005. Would you care to comment on this phenomenon?

JC: Having been immersed in the final editing of *An Audience of Chairs*, I haven't yet read *Rockbound*, but its inclusion in Canada Reads brings to mind Thomas Raddall's work and in particular, *The Nymph and the Lamp* which, unless I'm mistaken, was also published in a new edition a few years ago. Ernest Buckler's wonderful *The Mountain and the Valley* is a Canadian classic, as is Hugh MacLennan's *The Watch that Ends the Night*. Quite apart from their fiction, I admire these and other writers who worked without benefit of the Canada Council and, except for the Canadian Author's Association, without writers' associations and the numerous workshops, readings and festivals which make a writing life more possible today.

DF: Here we are, having an email conversation for a special issue of *Canadian Literature* on Atlantic writing. Other Canadian academic and

literary journals have also recently celebrated Atlantic Canadian literature with themed publications. Moreover, since the late 1990s writers—especially novelists—from the Atlantic provinces have been far more successful in producing "bestsellers," winning international awards, and generally attracting attention from readers, the media, and publishers. What do you make of this "rising tide" of Atlantic Canadian writing?

JC: There is some truth in the fact that we were largely overlooked and dismissed by academe and media critics in Ontario, Western Canada, and elsewhere for so long that we had nowhere to go except up. And because we had been working all along, by the mid 1990s when we began to be noticed, we had something to offer: solid work and a unique point of view firmly rooted in place. So it was partly a question of timing, hanging in there and being ready. Also, we have isolation working for us. And magnificent scenery. And the sea. When it came, the rising tide, aided by electronic communication, energized and validated artists in Atlantic Canada, creating a rolling wave we're (hopefully) still riding.

DF: That seems like a highly appropriate image to end on! Thank you for taking part in this conversation.

Stories of English

John Algeo, ed.
The Cambridge History of the English Language, Volume VI: English in North America. Cambridge UP $200.95

Reviewed by Janet Giltrow

Readers of Lee Pederson's chapter "Dialects" in *English in North America* will hear American voices in all their linguistic diversity and will relish their familiar strangeness. The familiarity, the strangeness, the diversity itself—all these conditions rise in the capacity of language to register the imprint of history: travels and settlement, exchange and appropriation, policy and technology. Taking this imprint, language inspires its users to tell its story—or stories, for there are different ways of explaining linguistic change and difference. So chapter 1, "External History," by volume editor John Algeo, composes stable generalities of US history: immigration and occupation, economic downturns and upswings, lists of canonical authors, as well as the record of material innovation. Air conditioning, for example, affected population mobilities and thereby language, as northern speakers headed south. Suzanne Romaine's chapter on "Contact with Other Languages" stages history on a smaller scale. From Richard Dana's *Two Years before the Mast* (1840), she borrows stories of Hawaiians working on their own terms in nineteenth-century San Francisco. In what Canadians call residential schools, Romaine finds English functioning as a *lingua franca* among students from different Aboriginal linguistic communities—a story Canadians may find less useful currently than the one about English as a suppression rather than an endowment. Salikoko S. Mufwene's chapter on "African-American English" grapples with competing stories of creolisation and African substrates, leaving an impression not only of the radical complexities in historical studies of African American English but also of their political sensitivity: from their beginning in the early twentieth century, accounts of the development of AAE have been "controversial," for they "reflect general social attitudes toward African-Americans, either by expressing those attitudes or disputing them." Although most readers would endorse Mufwene's claims for the importance of the study of AAE, some will see his claim for schooling—"It is very useful for teachers to know how their students communicate in order to teach them standard English more effectively"—as naïve.

Several chapters list loan words from Aboriginal and other languages. Further inspection, from a dialogic, Bakhtinian perspective, might rate the citational quality of some of these words: for example, while "smorgasbord" doesn't have much left to say about Swedes as Other, and "canoe" doesn't say much for either its original Aboriginal owners or its secondhand Spanish speakers, "fire water" and "paleface" and other loan words may still be

spoken with quotation marks. In the meantime, however, we see that loan words are a valued way of telling the story of North American English.

"Colonial lag"—a longstanding account which proposed that "the development of English was arrested in the colonies" (Fisher)—has also been a favoured theme in the story, but writers in this volume mainly discount it. Thereby, the popular and persistent story of Appalachian dialects being "Elizabethan" or the "language of Shakespeare" is forfeited, along with matches between populations of US speakers and regions of England. In his chapter on "British and Irish Antecedents," Michael Montgomery is very sharp on the idea of Elizabethan Appalachia: it "has taken on a life of its own and become a hardy myth in American culture, part of a popular view that the southern mountains have remained static in time and its people have maintained a cultural repository of balladry and other music, traditional story cycles, traditional dancing, and quilting." He is probably right in predicting that these stories are not likely to be overruled by expert evidence: none of it will, for example, "refute an idea [of the linguistic kinship between New England and East Anglia] that has passed into folklore and is promoted in the region's living history museums." As these parts of "constructed American memory" redeem stigmatized speechways by ancestral testament and antiquarian reference, they participate in the formation of linguistic consciousness itself, and, as many of the chapters in this volume confirm, the history of a language is not only a record of its lexical, grammatical, and phonological features but also the record of attitudes toward these features.

Jonathan E. Lighter's chapter on "Slang" (a phenomenon which the volume editor describes as "the aspect of American vocabulary that is arguably the most prolific and the most characteristic") reports some intense attitudes toward particular wordings, both historical and contemporary, amateur and professional. For example, the relatively moderate warnings issued by Greenough and Kittredge in 1901 recognize social practicality: although they find "nothing abnormal about slang," they still advise speakers to avoid it for fear of bad associations. But these two also predict cognitive deterioration: slang words have "no fixed meaning," or "nice distinctions" of meaning, so users of slang will find their thinking reduced to an "ignorant" level. Lighter works bravely to conceptualize the wordings which incite such proclamations. Slang, he says, both bestows and withdraws prestige; both includes and excludes; some slang items spring from xenophobia. His two most promising audits of slang are, first, his observation that its growth was contemporaneous with the spread of certain national publications and syndicated genres; and, second, his portrait of the wisecracking American he-man—and his opposite, the sucker.

Slang (and handbooks' priggish proscriptions of it) may be characteristically "American," but slang is not the only category of language which qualifies as "Americanism." Frederick G. Cassidy and Joan Houston Hall's chapter on "Americanisms" points out that some items counted as such are survivors rather than innovations (e.g., "fall" vs. "autumn"). Others are the spirited sayings of an outspoken populace, common folk and dignitaries alike; others are artifacts of literary representation of the Old West; others are exponents of North American value schemes (e.g., "biodegradable," "endangered species"). But, as Richard W. Bailey's chapter on "American English Abroad" makes clear, "Americanism" in language has been, most notably, a designation hosting pejorative views of speakers and their speech. While eighteenth-century English commentators were fairly quiet

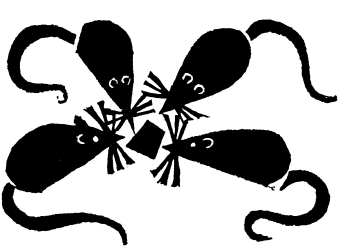
about trans-Atlantic difference, by the nineteenth-century "Americanism" had shouldered much of the work done by "Scotticism," deploring and scoffing at national difference, but exploiting it too, to certify metropolitan prestige. "Americanism" must have its most vituperative sense in British usage: for example, "In 1979, in a House of Lords debate on English, a peer declared: 'If there is a more hideous language on the face of the earth than the American form of English, I should like to know what it is!'" It must have quite a different sense in the US, and still another in Canada—and elsewhere: for example, a New Zealand commentator fears that his country "may fall out of the British frying pan into the American fire."

Throughout these chapters, there are many indications of the history of linguistic consciousness—especially, the itinerancy of prestige markers (signs of "good English"), their invention, disappearance, and rehabilitation, and their reversals in their disorienting travels back and forth across the Atlantic. Even the silence of prescriptivists can be intriguing ("intriguing" being a word once frowned upon): in his chapter on "Grammatical Structure," Ronald R. Butters lists many non-standard usages which, he says, are *never mentioned* in handbooks. At the same time, we learn, in Edward Finegan's long, excellent chapter on "Usage," that some formations which could *never* have been spoken *are* displayed for correction—elements of an "error-hunting" campaign. Finegan's chapter is one of several which invite Noah Webster into the story—prominent for his linguistic nationalism, for his struggle to both establish and contain "custom" as the source of a standard, for the extent and limit of his authority. Webster's is not the last word—far from it: his pronouncements are followed by those of a long roster of commentators, scolding and prescribing, rationalizing their severe judgements according to the times. Finegan explains some of their righteousness as deriving from religious attitude, but it seems more likely that religious sensibility simply offered contemporary terms for the sleepless work of improving the capacity of language to execute social distinction. Finegan shows the ascendancy of relativism in mid-modernity in the 1952 National Council of Teachers of English document "The English Language Arts" and the publication of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* in the 1960s—and the backlash of fantastically alarmist reaction carrying us to the end of the century and suggesting that late modernity, in matters of language at least, is rendered in both "scientific" relativism and "commonsense" absolutism. For example, the most recent edition of *American Heritage Dictionary* (which, as a conservative answer to *Webster's Third*, originally sold usages which were beyond reproach) reports that hopefully as a sentence adverb is "unacceptable to many critics, including a large majority of the Usage Panel." But it goes on to say that "It is not easy to explain why critics dislike this use of hopefully [and] increased currency . . . appears only to have made the critics more adamant. . . . No one can be blamed who uses hopefully in blithe ignorance of the critics' disdain for it, since the rule could not be derived from any general concern for clarity or precision." (Another *AHD* usage panel had, in their common sense, called "hopefully" "slack-jawed, common, sleazy.")

Matters of language inevitably tangle with matters of value, and also incite national feelings. So when Canadian readers come to Laurel J. Brinton and Margery Fee's chapter on "Canadian English" and to William J. Kirwin's on "Newfoundland English," they may feel their national-value faculties tweaked. In "Newfoundland English" they will find an account of settlement patterns which makes the interanimation of language and history nearly tangible: the West Country origins of both permanent and

seasonal residents in early days; Irish arrivals after 1720; outport geography and the small élite capital with metropolitan ties producing model conditions for a colonial prestige variety. Most readers will probably appreciate the lists of "colourful" words (here is one: "angishore," "meaning either 'sickly, unfortunate person' or 'worthless fellow, avoiding work'"). Will they regret to hear that confederation may be washing out some of the colour? If so, their linguistic consciousness has been tickled. When readers come to Brinton and Fee's "Canadian English," will they be disappointed to learn that Canadian English is undoubtedly a variety of Northeastern American English (yes, what Susanna Moodie heard *was* a Yankee sound)—and "[remarkably]" homogeneous as well? Will they be relieved to know that "Canadian raising" (the diphthong production which produces, for Canadians, different vowel sounds in pairs like the following: bout/bowed, lout/loud, spouse/espouse, bite/bide, knife/knives) is still (mainly) in good working order? Will they regret that "Yod" is slipping, and more Canadians are pronouncing "news," "due," and "Tuesday" in what has been thought to be an American fashion? Should we do something to preserve this distinction? Would we go so far as to embrace "narrative eh" ("That was when we almost intercepted a pass, eh?")—which is distinctively Canadian but which is also earmarked for lower stations in the social order? While it is wise to assume that language cannot be controlled the way mavens and purists desire, linguistic consciousness—or conscience—can be aroused nevertheless: for example, *The Globe and Mail* purposefully, and, we could assume, nationalistically, readopted our spellings in 1990. And Canadian speakers themselves may cultivate a particularly temperate and peculiarly Canadian form of linguistic consciousness—one which vacillates: "What perhaps most characterizes Canadian speakers, however, is their use of several possible variant pronunciations for the same word, sometimes even in the same sentence."

This volume aims, successfully, to be an "intermediate" work: useful "both to the anglicist who does not specialize in the particular area to hand and to the general linguist who has no specialized knowledge of the history of English," and useful also to others who take an interest in English "for its own sake, or for some specific purpose such as local history or the effect of colonization." While some parts of some chapters may be challenging to readers with no background in language study, those readers will soon catch up, and other chapters are careful to touch on basics before providing more advanced summaries of current scholarship. Moreover, the volume is successfully "intermediate" in, first, offering historical-linguistic grounds for assessing some claims about language made in adjacent disciplines, such as literary studies and rhetoric, or new-media studies, and, second, provoking further, timely questions for Canadian discourse studies. For example, given what is known about loan words, interlingual contact, and spelling standardization, how should we read—or hear—the re-spellings of words like "Mi'kmaw" ("Micmac"), or the renaming of Haida Gwaii? Can we compare national attitudes towards linguistic change? Consulting Pierre Bourdieu's measure, we might inquire as to how "unified" the linguistic marketplace is in "multicultural" economies.



Travels and Social Impact

John Irwin Cooper; James Woycke, ed.
James McGill of Montreal: Citizen of the Atlantic World. Borealis $24.95

Jean Barman
Sojourning Sisters: The Lives and Letters of Jessie and Annie McQueen. U of Toronto P $27.95

Reviewed by Bryan N.S. Gooch

John Irwin Cooper's *James McGill of Montreal* and Jean Barman's *Sojourning Sisters* both offer valuable and often penetrating insights into the social and cultural results of travel to distant parts of the British North American lands. Cooper's book, carefully edited by James Woycke after the McGill University history professor's death, is a chronologically ordered study of the life of James McGill (1744-1813), from boyhood to fur trader, Montreal merchant, politician, military officer, and founding benefactor of one of Canada's illustrious academic institutions. Barman's volume deals with the McQueen family of Pictou County, Nova Scotia, focusing on the correspondence of two sisters, Jessie (1860–1933) and Annie (1865–1941), who travelled to British Columbia in 1886–87 to take up teaching posts in rural schools in the province's interior, motivated by the need for income to support their Maritime household and bringing with them to their work the Presbyterian religious and social values with which they had grown up.

Following Ian Steele's Foreword, which offers a concise historical background to the story of McGill, Cooper's carefully documented account traces McGill's life from boyhood in Glasgow through his early years (1766 on) as a voyageur and fur-trader, his association with the North West Company, his interests in the Detroit and Mississippi areas, and the effects of the American colonial war. As the narrative proceeds, the reader is given not just a biography of one man but a clear picture of national (and international) concerns, commercial development, and the principals in McGill's life and business interests as he moved to centre his activities in Montreal. There he rose to prominence as an entrepreneur and trader with an eye to Atlantic and West Indies trade and as an influential figure in the legislative and military life of Lower Canada. Cooper's book, utterly readable and clearly organized (the notes and bibliography are gold mines in themselves), is clearly something of a labour of love, the result of long study and consideration—a must-read even for those who feel their grasp on our national past to be firm enough already.

While Barman's *Sojourning Sisters* does not have at its centre a figure of national fame, it offers in its letter-based narrative a striking commentary on the careers of two young girls who, venturing to British Columbia shortly after the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, intending to stay only for a few years (i.e., to sojourn), continued their connection with western Canada for many years. One issue which surfaces here is the way in which life at the frontier could, at various points, come to absorb and reflect the values and manners of eastern Canadian society. Barman, preserving chronology (like Cooper) as neatly as possible in her account of the McQueen sisters' lives, depicts the not unusual situation in which young people, unable to find sufficient employment at home, sought jobs not only in the United States but in the western part of Canada as it opened in response to the new transcontinental link. Replete with details of everyday life and elementary schools in small towns and small communities in the BC interior (e.g., Kamloops, Upper and Lower Nicola, Trail, Rossland), this book is more than biography: it is social and cultural history of an intriguing and essential kind, taking the reader, as it were, away from the railway and national political issues (the mileposts of much basic historical consideration) into

the hills and the development of a society which, in time, would display its connection with established traditions and find itself a part of the national fabric. The McQueen girls were colonizers of a kind; British Columbia would grow up, and they were ministers to its youth and adolescence. Their goings and comings and their domestic lives are fully documented. Of the two, only Annie married; she had a prominent role in family settlement in the 1920s and became President of the BC Women's Institute, and her son Dal had a significant influence on J.R.R. Tolkien. Their professional activities and their interaction with pupils (including those with First Nations roots) and friends are remarkably detailed (the notes are extensive), and their interwoven stories take on a vitality which derives directly from the fact that personal letters are the main source of information and insight. There is compassion and understanding in Barman's approach, and there is much of the eyewitness here that allows the reader, as it were, direct access to the kitchen, the schoolroom, or the country road, and saves the book from the potential dangers of an overwhelmingly third-hand account.

Both the Cooper and Barman volumes constitute important contributions to the consideration of the Canadian social and cultural mosaic. They can be read with profit not only for the historical material they provide but also for the compelling drive of the accounts of human endeavours they portray.

Recollections

Barry McKinnon
The Centre: Poems 1970-2000. Talonbooks $18.95

Peter Van Toorn
Mountain Tea. Signal Editions $16.00

Anne Wilkinson; Dean Irvine, ed.
Heresies: The Complete Poems of Anne Wilkinson 1924-1961. Signal Editions $24.95

Reviewed by Iain Higgins

Not much happens in the eleven pieces collected in *The Centre: Poems 1970-2000*. Their author, Barry McKinnon, sometimes drinks beer in seedy stripper bars or coffee at Tim Hortons, shops at Sears, drives his truck somewhere, cuts wood, paints his house, marks essays. The real action takes place inside his head, for the pieces collected here are all sequences and serial poems recording the play of their author's consciousness, a brooding, often emotionally evocative play that makes pleasingly heavy weather of the clouded mind as it registers social and natural as well as psychological phenomena. Not quite a poet of negative capability, except for his habit of remaining broodingly happy in doubt, not quite a poet of the negative way, except for his habit of tracing the paths and particulars of diminishment, McKinnon is the traveller—the mental traveller—of the epigraph borrowed from Robert Creeley's "Poem for Beginners": "it is the road / and its turnings that is the traveler, / that comes back and remains unexplained."

"Somebodies walked in the woods," McKinnon says in the opening line of the opening poem ("The North") of the opening sequence (*The Death of a Lyric Poet*)—and in the streets and in the malls too—and some of them, all named McKinnon, kept a partial record, taking the notes that make up the sequences of *The Centre*. Here is one example, from the same opening sequence, called "In the Face of It No One Would Touch Her," which records impressions of

an afternoon in a stripper bar: "the weight of it is, the afternoon disappears. / reality is a G string, the rest is imagination" or McKinnon's own particular imaginings. These imaginings range, by free association, from the sordid and the pathetic to the poignant and the searching. The poem's opening thought of cheap sex leads to the price of popcorn and chips, which leads to the price of beer, which leads to the matter of paying the band, whose singer has a terrible afro, which image leads back to the G string that started this chain of associations: "or her pubic hair curled at the edge of a / G string // (she spreads her ass / & we laugh. all our teeth are / crooked. . . ." The parenthesis does not close, in the manner of Charles Olson, whose *Maximus* mode is here rejigged to suit a kind of *minima moralia*, perhaps to suggest an unfinished train of thought, the open-endedness of musing. In any case, this parenthetical turn takes us to the heart of the poem and McKinnon's gift as a poet, for in the turn we register *how* as well as *what* McKinnon sees—not, or not only, the displayed crotch, but also the laughing mouths and the crooked teeth. The potential sentimentality or banality of the juxtaposed orifices disappears in the resonant detail of the *crooked* teeth. We know now who the onlookers are: a group marked by poverty and necessary indifference to cosmetic perfection, or, in another idiom, unmarked by shifts in social consciousness and advances in orthodontics.

At his best, which happens frequently if also irregularly throughout *The Centre*, McKinnon makes his particulars pay their way; they are not there for the free ride of local colour.

In subsequent texts, the poetic texture tends to thicken, and some of the perceptions change as the poet ages—musing on *Sex at 31* and *Sex at 38* and *Arrhythmia*—but the book presents what is essentially an oeuvre, an interrelated body of works bound together by a presiding multi-faceted consciousness whose manifesto is announced in the closing lines of "The North": "a kind of ownership / not to care." As these various quotations suggest, ordinary economic life and its sometimes harsh consequences are often at the centre of McKinnon's poetic attention (the prices noted in the various poems comprise a small history of the Canadian economy over three decades), and the result is a set of works pretty well unique in Canadian poetry—borrowing the misprision of someone at a reading, McKinnon wittily calls his sequences "traumatic monologues" (author statement in *The New Long Poem Anthology*, ed. Sharon Thesen). How well this serial monologue by an alert "human mind poking here & there for possibilities" ("Journal" from *Thoughts/Sketches*) will hold up over time is hard to say, but the fact that the earliest poems in the collection do not yet read as dated augurs well for the whole.

The consciousness at play in Peter Van Toorn's *Mountain Tea* is every bit as engagingly idiosyncratic as that in McKinnon's *The Centre*, but it is hard to imagine two collections more different from each other. If McKinnon's master is Charles Olson, downsized from his large, somewhat slow-footed American embrace of the world, the traditional lyric "I" still central but now dispersed serially, Van Toorn's is the entire European lyric tradition, the expected "I" variously stolen or absent, and the tradition itself remade in a style all his own, line after scintillating line supercharged with hot-footed jazzy verbal high-jinks. Originally published in 1984 as *Mountain Tea and Other Poems*, and nominated for the Governor-General's Award for Poetry, the book and its author have since disappeared from the radar screen (despite brief appearances in anthologies edited by Margaret Atwood and Dennis Lee), so this Signal Edition revised reprint is most welcome (the revisions consist of poems both added to and dropped from the two parts of the

book, "In Guildenstern Country" and "Mountain Tea"; according to David Solway's appreciative and insightful Introduction, Van Toorn has written no more poems besides the eight added here). Twenty years on, *Mountain Tea* has lost none of its invigorating kick, and I can think of no better antidote to the numbing effects of the tepid, watery concoctions that now pour endlessly from small presses across Canada.

Word-crazy, yet clear-eyed, the poems in this book hold their own with anything produced in English in this century. "In Guildenstern Country," for example, is a very different poem from Basil Bunting's "Briggflatts," but it shares with that northern English masterpiece the virtue of making its local language seem like God's own tongue, so fine is the fit between sound and well-stretched sense. Nor will quotation do the poem justice, since part of its triumph is its jazzy improvisation as the rich play of sound, sense, and line provoke further play, but here's a small sample: "Right off / wawa / slaps a skin on you: / butterfly eggspit, cobweb, gumsawgrass. Shake'n'bake. / Flips you up on / pingo—just to mash your knuckles, / rush them / like windblown spuds." Against such virtuoso horn-play, whose semantic colourings sound faintly like surrealism, one can also set quieter lines, moments as subtle as some of Miles Davis' solos in *Sketches of Spain*: "To make the old river come back to life, / we're going to throw iron stars in it— / to shine all night long like warm green coral." These lines, incidentally, like the poem that contains them, are remade from the French of Sylvain Garneau. Many of the poems in *Mountain Tea* are thus remade in English (poems by Tibellus, Ronsard, Goethe, Heine, Baudelaire, Ungaretti, amongst others), and it is one of the many virtues of the book that familiar authors suddenly look strange again, as if you had met them for the first time and not where you had expected to.

Once again, though, selective quotation cannot really do justice to Van Toorn's gift, since, like the very different Barry McKinnon, he is not a poet of the Palgrave flower, or a maker of palm-sized poetic touchstones. A tonal trickster, he is rather a master of the extended jam session, riff-raffing and mischievously tom-fooling his long-playing way through the startled ear to the still susceptible heart. There are the odd squawks, clumsy fingering, and sour notes, yes, but who could not be charmed by a poet whose rich and diverse oeuvre includes a serio-comic hymn to "The Cattle" that is surely unrivalled in world literature?— "[f]or breathing steamy up at the cold steerhorned moon no peers[!]"

Cows come in for no such highfalutin praise in *Heresies: The Complete Poems of Anne Wilkinson 1924-1961*, but she shares with Van Toorn and McKinnon a deep love of the natural world that manifests itself throughout her work. Not quite as neglected as Van Toorn, in part because of feminist interest in her work, Wilkinson nevertheless deserves to be better known and her poems more widely available. Dean Irvine's new edition ought to help serve that end, since it brings together all of Wilkinson's known poetic work, renovating A.J.M. Smith's 1968 collected edition (reprinted in 1990 with a biographical introduction by Joan Coldwell) by adding 46 previously uncollected poems. In addition, Irvine has written an insightful biographical and literary-historical Introduction and appended copious textual notes that trace the composition, revision, and publication of the poems now collected. The latter will probably be of interest only to scholars, but between the introduction and the notes an alert reader will learn, for example, how Wilkinson found herself reluctantly following Louis Dudek's advice that she truncate her beautiful long "Letter to My Children" to a mere three stanzas; Smith published the poem in two parts—the first bodiless, the second headless—but

Irvine has rightly reassembled it, so that the reader can appreciate both the bodiless version that appeared in *The Hangman Ties the Holly* (1955) and the latest full-bodied version that Wilkinson continued to work on in her copy books. If nothing else, the episode that thus emerges from Irvine's sleuthing in the historical record shows the obstacles Wilkinson faced as a woman publishing her poems in the 1950s. Irvine also brings together in one place the poems that Wilkinson was gathering for a third volume, tentatively titled "Heresies and Other Poems," showing the stage she had reached as a writer before her untimely death prevented its publication.

What matters ultimately is the poetry, of course, and this edition makes it abundantly clear that Wilkinson's poetry still matters. Some of her early work is a little too besotted with Dylan Thomas to be fully engaging, but there is enough strong work here to show that Wilkinson is a poet to return to. Her deep involvement with her children colours much of her work, as she borrows from nursery rhymes and fairy-tales and other so-called children's literature to make her own very grown-up verses. The result is often a pleasing simplicity of form with an affecting complexity of tone that makes the poems resonate long after in the reader's head. Here, for instance, is the very Blakean first stanza of "Nature Be Damned" from the incomplete "Heresies and Other Poems," with its provocative, almost proverbial closing line: "Pray where would lamb and lion be / If they lay down in amity? / Could lamb then nibble living grass? / Lamb and lion both must starve; / For none may live if all do love." Such deceptively simple sing-song is Wilkinson's preferred manner, and it may well have prevented her from being seen as the sharp-eyed, canny-eared poet that she is, but she can do other voices too, like this from "Greek Island": "These male and muscled hills trace their line / Back to the smoking draughtsmanship of Zeus." More than anything else, though, whatever her tone, Wilkinson is a consistently engaging poet of the immediate physicality of mindful bodily existence, and *Heresies* offers readers the welcome opportunity of either reacquaintance or a first meeting.

Writing About Others

François Paré
La Distance habitée. Nordir $25,00

Janet M. Paterson
Figures de l'autre dans le roman québécois. Éditions Nota bene $23.95

Reviewed by Anthony Wall

François Paré's and Janet M. Paterson's recent books should be read in the light of Winfried Siemerling's work on otherness in the Canadian novel (1994): Paré discusses Francophone groups in Ontario and Acadia, comparing their cultural situation to minority groups across the world; Paterson's book, while focusing on the Québécois novel, suggests ideas that are relevant for literature in general.

Both books recognize that various types of "otherness" inhabit linguistic expression, logical distinctions, and social manifestations. An implicit philosophy of otherness resides in the ways a language gives birth to its others. The choices imposed on speakers by their culture and language are better mastered when subtleties are spelled out. For example, the opposition separating two members of a single dyad gives meaning to the "other" (*alter* in Latin, *heteros* in Greek) differently from "other" based on membership in a larger set (*alius* in Latin, *allos* in Greek). In English we choose between "another" and "someone else"; we realize that *heteros* is unlike *barbaros* and that *alius*, while related to *alienus*, is not reducible to it. The other can be a companion, even an intimate one, a *Mitmensch* or a neighbourly *Nebenmensch*. Far from representing esoteric nuances, the meanings attributable to

otherness, more varied than any binary distinction between the "other" and "Other" can hope to attain, regulate our ability to comprehend, ignore, or even oppress other human beings.

François Paré's *La Distance habitée* follows his *Les Littératures de l'exiguïté* (1992) and *Théorie de la fragilité* (1994). Conceptions of otherness are linked to "minority culture": Paré focuses less on what it means to "inhabit distances," despite his title, than he stresses the "itinerant" nature of minority cultures, their "diasporic" qualities, and their difficult "cultural memory." The aim is "to understand the birth and disappearance both of linguistic and cultural identities; it uses other tools than 'resistance' or the 'struggle for collective survival' to achieve this end." This other basis involves a "comparative" approach since Paré's work, perhaps more aptly than any other, has allowed "French-Canadian Studies" to exit a tightly knit community and enter the big wide world out there. The multiple comparisons suggested between the French-speaking cultures of Canada and other minority cultures around the world are both his strength and his weakness, often opening up suggestive possibilities, while sometimes losing sight of the specificities of Canadian groups.

Every Francophone culture is different: comparisons must explain precisely what is being compared and what is not. If, for example, Acadia is related to the French-speaking Caribbean, a claim that Acadian culture has a certain undefined West Indies flavour creates more incomprehension than useful insight, the danger being that things become so "metaphorical" that both cultures seem to lose their hard reality. Ironically, their loss resembles what Paré vehemently criticizes about the arrival of the internet in the minority landscape: specifically, mixed metaphors involving archipelagoes, interior and exterior, decentring, fords, mountain passes, and parabolic antennae do not always help explicate the problems of Acadia, while those relevant to the French Caribbean also take on an unreal aura. Further conceptual fuzziness occurs when descriptions of either French Ontario or Acadia are buttressed with quotations taken from Quebec authors referring to Quebec's cultural situation.

Thirteen chapters, unequal in length, broach a wide range of topics. Paré points to societies that "have no real spaces of their own" and can ensure their continued existence only through (linguistic) accommodation. Which societies are these? Several lists, long and short, mention minorities of different sorts (ethnic, religious, linguistic, social, assimilated, happy, militant): Corsicans, Gallicians, Navajos, Basques, Tamils, Serbs, Catalans, Ojibways, Micmacs, Québécois, Haitians, Peurto Ricans, the Portuguese in France, Franco-Ontarians, French-speaking North-Africans, the Moluccans of Indonesia, Chicanos, Samoans, Cajuns, Jews, Africans, Armenians, Kurds, Palestinians, Chinese, Bretons, Scots, Acadians. Will we study a specific minority or the general phenomenon of "cultural minorities?" Issues described as relating specifically to minority groups, stemming from globalization and cultural fragmentation, seem applicable to virtually any society of the Western World. At one point, the focus becomes the Americas, at another the situation of French-speaking minorities. When expressing general observations, Paré gives examples hailing almost exclusively from literature (novels, poetry, and the theatre). While artistic manifestations clearly belong to minority cultures, the absence of radio, television, artistic installations, sculpture, dance, and the visual arts, not to mention advertising, fashion, the written press, magazines, public meetings, church gatherings, and school plays, is surprising. In an ironic twist on Hubert Aquin's famous article on French-Canadian culture, the only valid cultural manifestations of

French-speaking Canada seem to derive from its writers, as if French Canada still needed more writers to express itself. Literature appears as the last rampart against the forces of postmodernity, everyday life being too susceptible to "multiplicity and fragmentation." Representatives adduced for Francophone groups are almost always writers: Amélie Nothomb is Belgian, Maurice Henri a Franco-Ontarian, Abdelkebir Khatibi Moroccan, Assia Djebar Algerian, Sony Labou Tansi from the Congo, Édouard Glissant from Martinique, Daniel Jacques from Quebec, Andrée Lacelle from Ontario, Ben Jelloun from Morocco, Ana Menéndez from Miami, Hélène Dorion from Quebec, Julio Cortázar from Argentina, Dyane Léger, France Daigle and Hélène Halbec from Acadia, Lola Lemire Tostevin and Daniel Poliquin (the two authors most thoroughly discussed) from Ontario. Yet these authors work in heterogeneous spaces where French plays entirely different cultural roles (the cultural space taken up by French in Algeria is not that of Acadia, not that of Belgium), beside the fact that Paré also mentions in his "corpus" writers working in English and Spanish.

Himself a Franco-Ontarian born in Quebec, Paré writes as a university critic writing about writers. A curious use of the "we" pronoun ensues, sliding between inclusive and exclusive usages. "We never cease," writes Paré, "to produce an illusory presence for the past, which in turn constitutes us both as subjects and as material for the present." Whereas the "we" appearing in Paré's book often belongs to a minority French-speaker, it sometimes encompasses those, like myself, who are not part of the diaspora. Ambiguous uses of the academic "we" can detract from clarity. When Janet Paterson speaks about the Quebec novel, she mentions "our critical, philosophical and social paradigms." Who belongs to this "we," and who is excluded from it? Perhaps those excluded from the academic "we" are precisely those "others" who are the "objects of study." As Paterson points out, with repeated reference to Éric Landowski's *Présences de l'autre* from 1997, "otherness" is necessarily a relational concept, understandable only with reference to an identifiable group, never in absolute terms. The socialist Jean-Claude Kaufmann shows, in his *L'Invention de soi* (2004), that "otherness," like "identity," is perhaps not even a "concept." Paterson opts to treat it as a product of discourse mechanisms, begging the question of what the writing of others puts into discourse. Is this just another concept or a person? Circular arguments lurk when the object of writing about others is discursivity on otherness. If Toronto has become the world's most cosmopolitan city, Torontonians must accept new ways of thinking about otherness; on the other hand, if Torontonians seem preoccupied with cosmopolitanism, it may be because they are always asking "question[s] of otherness." Otherness indeed appears to "be" somewhere, even when seen as the result of a relation or of discursive mechanisms. But can it lie simultaneously *in* literary discourse, be *the result of* literary devices and function as *the source of* discourses about otherness?

Paterson shows that the others for her study are the "others of fiction." Such a move avoids the problem of discussing only literary authors when studying cultural issues; yet it still invites the question of what a fictional other would look like as opposed to a "real" one. In discussing the other in the Quebec novel, one needs to underline the text's rhetorical and semiotic qualities. Appropriately, a major semiotic feature pertains to the distinction between "we" and "they." Applicable without much surprise to novels such as Germaine Guèvremont's *The Outlander*, and Anne Hébert's *Kamouraska*, this semiotic feature also provides tools for analyzing Régine Robin's *Québécoite* and Sergio Kokis'

Funhouse. We witness much less a "semiotic" feature, however, than the interplay between an implicit "we" based on inclusiveness and another on exclusivity.

Paterson postulates that novels about others written in the third person are "radically different" from those whose narrators say "I." But does this difference lie in the nature of otherness per se, or is it better understood, using Émile Benveniste, as the difference between "personal" and "impersonal" pronouns ("I," "you," "we" as opposed to "he," "she," "they")? Is this difference merely linguistic (rhetorical? semiotic?) or is it anchored in something lying beyond literary words? Assuming the latter, Paterson and Paré indicate that further research is needed to understand the proper place of the aesthetic in the life of minority cultures and in arriving at precise definitions of otherness, no longer seeing others as merely assumed or shamelessly neglected.

Tragedy of Everyday Life

Christl Verduyn and Kathleen Garay, eds. *Marian Engel: Life in Letters.* U of Toronto P $40.00

Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston, eds. *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery. Volume V: 1935-1942.* Oxford UP $37.94

Reviewed by Laura M. Robinson

As recorded in *Marian Engel: Life in Letters*, Margaret Laurence wrote to Marian Engel 27 February 1974: "I find book reviews hell to do, quite frankly—I sweat blood." At the best of times, this statement is very apt, and in this case—a review of Engel's letters and Montgomery's final volume of journals—more than true. These two books elicit tears. Lots of them. Both volumes convey a sense of the inescapable tragedy of everyday lives and the bravery or loneliness that results, a message made perhaps more profound because it emerges from the personal words of such successful women writers.

Christl Verduyn and Kathleen Garay's collection of letters to and from Engel conveys a compelling portrait of a woman at once privileged and struggling. The letters span from 1960 as she embarked on travel to France until just before her death in 1985. While she managed world travel and grand adventures, she and her family always seemed to be teetering on the edge of financial ruin. The reader can watch the development of the writer as the years progress, and then feel deeply Engel's battle with cancer as it is expressed in letters of concern and reassurance. Verduyn and Garay explain that they worked from a tremendous number of letters and needed to make very specific selections from within this abundance. They make their criteria for selection explicit, one being to choose letters which were a "joy to read." The editors certainly achieved their goal as the collection reads like narrative. The letters are snippets of Engel's life that blend to tell a life story and flesh out a historical moment. They also reveal much about other important literary figures of the day through their own voices and others' discussions about them (and this list is by no means exclusive): Margaret Laurence, Timothy Findley, Dennis Lee, Jack McClelland, Alice Munro, George Woodcock, Jane Rule, Hugh MacLennan, Aritha van Herk, Rudy Wiebe, and Margaret Atwood. However, this volume is not just literary name-dropping. Engel's letters to and from friends and family are most revealing of her sense of humour and compassion.

A similar poignancy characterizes the much-anticipated fifth volume of L.M. Montgomery's journals, edited by Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston. I must confess that I flipped to the final page of her journal entries the moment I received the volume. I had to know once and for all how the story ended. Montgomery's final entry, the only one for 1942, is a wail: "Since then my life has been hell, hell, hell. My mind is

gone—everything in the world I lived for has gone—the world has gone mad. I shall be driven to end my life. Oh God, forgive me. Nobody dreams what my awful position is." The editors explain in a footnote to this entry that Montgomery's cause of death one month later was coronary thrombosis. This fifth volume of journals paints a devastating portrait of this woman's descent into despair. Montgomery repeats throughout these journal entries her "imprisoned feeling" and keeps referring to an untold "something that has happened," quite clearly cueing her reader to the silences that tell another story. The extraordinary emotional pain of this woman's life seems to stem, in part, from her concern about what people will think. She needed to hide her husband's mental illness and to present her sons in the best light possible, for example. Both of these desires became increasingly difficult as her husband, Ewan, became more and more obviously ill and as her son Chester would not behave as she wished. Two particular moments of devastation: when her cat Lucky dies, the seemingly endless entry tallying her utter resigned despair is almost unsurpassed in all of her journals; the revealing editors' note under the heading for 1940 reads "[There are no entries for 1940]."

Rubio and Waterston provide a rigorous and thorough introduction to this last collection of journal entries. They point out that Montgomery's careful writing and rewriting of her journals allowed her to construct "herself as she wanted to be remembered." Because Montgomery focused so much time and energy on her journal writing, Rubio and Waterston suggest that "the journals . . . *consumed her*. Her journals may have increased her despair precisely because they often give an unbalanced representation of her life. She had used these journals so often to release her darker, 'down' side. She read and reread them throughout her life, reinforcing this record of her life." Rubio and Waterston provide a fascinating lens through which to wonder about Montgomery's life, encouraging readers, quite correctly, to realize that they are not getting the whole story of the "*real* L.M. Montgomery—a saddened, tormented, judgmental woman, revealing her true self in her diaries." The editors caution readers to hold Montgomery in balance, and their theory may be true. Montgomery's own venting and revisiting the venting through her journals might have increased her despair. However, their theory undermines Montgomery in two ways. First, it suggests that her self-scrutiny in the form of re-working the journals repeatedly was, in large part, the cause of her unhappiness rather than the result of her unhappiness. Second, encouraging readers to keep a balanced picture of Montgomery persuades them to overlook the actual facts of Montgomery's life. Instead, readers need to scrutinize the life of a middle-class white woman in that historical moment for what might make her so deeply depressed. The editors mention that the dominant ideology that a woman must not complain or be negative would have restrained her in her daily public life; however, they do not engage with the degree to which Montgomery, while not being more honest or true to herself in her journals, might well be sending yet another strong and pointed message to her readers, for whom she was sculpting her entries so carefully.

All four editors have done literary studies, Canadian history, and gender studies a service in bringing forth these two volumes that detail the trials and joys and pains of women's lives and that animate two distinct time periods in Canada. Both volumes evince superior scholarship, with notes and commentary that enhance the main texts. Just be sure you have lots of tissues when you sit down to read them.

Recovering Voices

Coral Ann Howells, ed.
Where Are the Voices Coming From?: Canadian Culture and the Legacies of History. Rodopi $40.00

Reviewed by Rocío G. Davis

The governing metaphor of this collection, which invites us to consider the constructed nature of representations of Canadian history and its legacies in contemporary writing and film, is the idea of "voice." The essays focus on the important emancipatory work that writers and filmmakers have done to widen Canadian cultural awareness and revise uncritical concepts of nationhood. Understanding that the history of Canada can be told in multiple ways from diverse perspectives, the volume strives to juxtapose these diverse versions/visions of the past in order to privilege previously silenced voices and tease out new, more complex, versions of history. Ultimately, the contributors aim to revise problematic representations of Canadianness which they consider inseparably connected to constructions of history. *Who* tells the stories that compose Canada's history and *how* these stories are used (to quote from historian Carolyn Steedman) become the central concern of the volume.

The scope of this project is its strength and its weakness. The authors embark on a very ambitious undertaking: a cross-cultural —English Canadian, Québécois, Acadian, Native, Jewish Canadian, among others— and interdisciplinary analysis of literature and film of the 1980s and 1990s in Canada. Thus configured, the volume posits a highly creative and promising approach to Canadian studies. Yet the actual execution of the volume does not fulfill the expectations raised in the introduction. Divided into two general parts—Literature and Film—each further subdivided into five repeated sections on wilderness, history and secrets, Maritime Gothic, dispossession, and nomadism, the book does not go beyond presenting well-written analyses of the texts under consideration. In the subsection entitled "History and Its Secrets: Criminality and Violence," for example, Coral Ann Howells' essay on Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* and Peter Noble's on Anne Hébert's *Kamouraska* and *Les Fous de Bassan* read histories of violence and women. The individual analyses are short and adequate but do little to engage in real depth the complex perspective proposed in the introduction. Surprisingly, there is little acknowledgement throughout the book of the extensive criticism already published on many of these books. For instance, the essays on *Alias Grace*, Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces*, or Antonine Maillet's novels ignore scholarship that has already noted many of the points made.

The diversity of the texts, particularly the films, is praiseworthy, but the contributors and the editor should have worked harder to make the texts effectively dialogue with each other and with the thesis presented. Further, the repetition of the subsections in the literature and film parts makes the analyses less coherent. This format limits the possibilities of the essays, which remain discrete contributions that stand on their own but do not further the book's purposes. Though the governing principle of the volume is a valid and necessary approach to Canadian studies, the work offers little that has not already been done earlier in the contextualization or actual analyses of the texts.

History in the Novel

Bruce Allen Powe
Aldershot 1945: The Novel. NeWest $22.95

Joan Givner
Playing Sarah Bernhardt: A Novel. Simon and Pierre $21.99

Reviewed by Gregory Betts

When Europe fell to war in 1939, Canadians rushed to help. We fought the bloodiest and costliest battles, convinced our sacrifices mattered. When the Americans finally showed up years later, Canadian soldiers, now poorly equipped and exhausted, muttered about the disproportionate media attention the newcomers received. When the Nazis fell, the Americans were rushed home on the first available boats. The Canadians, however, were sent to Aldershot, England, to languish in dilapidated barracks waiting for their turn. When they saw in newsreels American soldiers triumphing in glorious celebrations, the broken and frustrated Canadians rebelled. They rioted and looted for two nights straight, inflicting the violence of war on the small British community. Winston Churchill was furious. Hundreds were arrested, but they eventually made it home, chastized but not dishonoured.

This is a story one is likely to hear in a Royal Canadian Legion. Bruce Allen Powe, himself a veteran, builds *Aldershot 1945: The Novel* around this particular narrative of the rioting Canadians and many other similar tales of war. Powe evokes intricate wartime phenomena with the dispassionate eye of one hardened to truth. He details his scenes with an insider's language and speech patterns. Not since Earle Birney's *Turvey* have we been treated to such a deft handling of Canadian military dialogue. Powe uses this technique exhaustively; stream-of-consciousness narration and dialogue comprise the greater part of the book.

The narrative, the characters, and even the settings, however, seem awkwardly draped over the well-researched and carefully reimagined historical context that emerges in the dialogue. The settings are never more than cursory sketches—which is fine—but as they are not filled by rich characters or used for distinctive scenes, they become rather abstract. Something geometrical or functional governs the characters. Driven by their recapitulations of the wartime experiences, the characters all seem figurative—as if they were already aged veterans reflecting on their youth lost to battle. The murder mystery itself, while carefully and elaborately mapped, always seems distant and reflective rather than immediate and urgent.

Joan Givner's *Playing Sarah Bernhardt* presents another means to fictionalize history. While following the tradition and style of Canadian life writing, as by the likes of Carol Shields and Alice Munro, Givner's novel adds a unique literariness by weaving her narrative into the historical life of Mazo de la Roche—Canada's most popular novelist from between the wars. The central plotline follows the life and development of Harriet, an actor struggling at the end of her career. Givner plants echoes of Harriet's story throughout the world she inhabits. For instance, in an almost schizophrenic delusion, trail signs in a national park—"PLEASE STAY ON THE TRAIL"—provide Harriet with important advice on how to resolve her professional crisis. Similarly, Harriet resurrects the life story of Mazo de la Roche as an echo of her own dilemmas. The echoes become delightfully complicated when Harriet earns a role in a biographical play of Roche's life—naturally playing the great author herself. Reminiscent of the original Echo myth that pervades so much of this novel, Givner allows Harriet's voice to emerge by selectively quoting passages from the mouth of the character Mazo as read by Harriet. This use of allusion,

however, extends beyond mere glossolalia: Harriet begins improvising lines while in character, blurring the division between characters. The literariness of such a technique becomes an extremely useful means of integrating the gradual discovery of personal connections between Harriet and Mazo de la Roche. The denouement emerges through the literary trope and elegantly unifies the narrative both symbolically and immediately.

While Givner's narrative method is nicely refined and polished, her mode of writing itself is distinctly realist. The language is precise, occasionally simplistic, and honed to draw readers into the real world scenes being described. Even these scenes, though, she narrativizes within the consciousness of her characters. Throughout the novel she reminds readers that "books [don't] just appear, suspended in a vacuum, but [are] written by actual human beings about other human beings and connected to real people and places." The novel, in fact, tells the story of a reader—Harriet—discovering her own tangible connections to the real, historical people behind Mazo de la Roche's literary world. Thus, art becomes a mere mask of the real world waiting to be decoded; furthermore, history becomes necessary to understand and make sense of the present situations, relationships, and even art. Ironically, though, the book begins with an author's note admitting that Harriet's connection to Mazo de la Roche "is pure fiction. Any resemblance to actual people is coincidental."

Reclamation, Exploration

Ernest Buckler; Marta Dvorak, ed.
Thanks for Listening: Stories and Short Fiction by Ernest Buckler. Wilfrid Laurier UP $24.95

Kristjana Gunnars, ed.
Transient Questions: New Essays on Mavis Gallant. Rodopi $56.00

Reviewed by Laurie Kruk

Famed for his 1952 *bildungsroman*, *The Mountain and The Valley*, Ernest Buckler also contributed dozens of stories to Canadian and American magazines in their mid-century heyday. Marta Dvorak has reclaimed these to show the shrewdness, and excellence, of Buckler the story writer, whose example shaped the next generation. More than just collecting 36 stories, Dvorak has exercised her judgement by selecting variants truest to her reading of authorial intention. Writing short stories is often a pragmatic decision for a writer and Buckler acknowledges the "molasses of sentimentality" in some of his writing, due to his "whoring" as a writer who must "keep the market in mind." Although his most popular pieces verge on the moralistic, the range here, including unpublished pieces such as the wartime montage ("Thanks for Listening"), allows us to recover a more textured picture of Buckler.

An inhabitant of the Annapolis Valley, Buckler evokes loyalty to the rural as well as competing attractions to city life—but also its traps of sterility and materialism. Like Alistair MacLeod, he uses family circles to enact struggles between those who articulate with their bodies and those who prefer words, frequently through brothers, as in "The Clumsy One," "The Wild Goose," or "It Was Always Like That." Most of Buckler's stories look back to the first half of the past century where men and women inhabit strictly gendered spaces/roles while unmarried individuals long to be "Just Like Everyone Else." Buckler appealingly captures

simple Christmas holidays and courtship rituals such as the pie social, yoking an agrarian past with lost childhoods. Yet in his stories Buckler also focused on home and family "when male writers rarely concerned themselves with the domestic sphere," as Dvorak points out. As well, she observes that "modernist privileging of subjectivity and consciousness over verbs and action . . . is undeniably a guiding aesthetic principle for Buckler." Dvorak underscores this aesthetic by restoring ambiguous openings or endings, showing the author as capable of "indirection revolving around epiphanic moments." For instance, of a young wife's frustrations: "[T]hat afternoon, after all the years when there'd been so little youth about her that she'd ceased almost to feel the brightness of her own, now suddenly she felt her own again sharply, like clean linen in a breeze, and suddenly burstingly and sadly too, like something that had been yours and neglected and that sometime would die without notice that it was gone" ("The Locket"). Given Buckler's obvious contribution to the modernist story in Canada, it is time to give him a place in the national short-fiction canon.

Mavis Gallant is already there—despite her expatriate status. Exile is one of her prominent themes, and transience, as indicated by the title of this exploration of her admired but often elusive body of work. Gallant has made her career writing stories, perhaps another reason for the struggle to "fix" her unique writing identity. Gunnars notes that "she renders sharp portrayals of people caught in the middle of cross-conflicted conditions, in strange places." In keeping with Gallant's own preference for exploring transitional spaces, these nine essays are distinct in style, length and focus, showing a certain "nomadicism," as the editor describes it.

Irony and the construction of narrative "voice" are two topics central to critical readings of Gallant. Nicole Côté draws attention to her alternation between ironic and oneiric modes, or a "poetics of exile" offering "a widened perspective on a situation, pertaining as much to the subjective as to the objective." This widening of perspective may provide a connecting thread in this study, narratively as well as thematically, by means of Gallant's characteristic historical framing of individual dilemmas. Closure, and the adaptation of the epiphany from modernist to postmodernist ends, is the focus of John Lent's analysis of Gallant's technique, with special attention to Joyce's *Dubliners* as antecedent. Peter Stevens makes links between autobiography, essay, story, and Gallant's attempts to make her stories "novelistic" but also historical. Gallant's career seems to encourage a "widening out" of critical response into diverse literary-historical digressions—occasionally, diffuse ones. I found a smaller focus more useful, as in Maria Noelle Ng's look at the gendering of space through Gallant's hotel-dwelling women, and Neil Besner's re-reading of the opening, and closing, paragraphs of "The Moslem Wife." Other intriguing critical lenses used here include the theory of the short story cycle, which Gerald Lynch applies to the "Linnet Muir" stories, and the political potential of the maternal perspective, explored by Di Brandt, in "The Pegnitz Junction" novella and other stories. The last word is given—aptly, I think—to the late scholar of the Canadian short story, Simone Vauthier, who thoroughly explores "The Wedding Ring": from narrative frames to deliberate "discoherence" to syntactic sound patterns. Her commitment to fiction's "microcircuitry" is a welcome reflection of Gallant's craft and a reminder that "short[er]" is not necessarily "lesser." Considering the boundaries Gallant crosses—Canada/Europe, French/English, history/fiction, ironic/oneiric—it is fitting that this collection, if somewhat diverse in destinations, should also be so adventurous.

Muslim Women

Sajida S. Alvi, H. Hoodfar, and S. McDonough, eds.
The Muslim Veil in North America: Issues and Debates. Women's P $39.95

Salima Bhimani
Majalis al-ilm: Sessions of Knowledge. Reclaiming and Representing the Lives of Muslim Women. TSAR $36.95

Reviewed by Heiko Henkel

Seeking to bring to bear the particular experiences of Muslim women living in Canada on the ongoing debate on the role of Islam in liberal multicultural society, *The Muslim Veil in North America* and *Majalis al-ilm* are engaged in a delicate double conversation. They aim at countering the Western stereotype of the passive and oppressed Muslim woman that has become emblematic in liberal representations of Islam, while the authors also seek to counter the often male-dominated interpretation of the Islamic tradition, both in Muslim communities and in Islam's scholarly literature.

The Muslim Veil is a collection of essays by mostly Muslim, female Canadian scholars in cooperation with the Canadian Council of Muslim Women. The volume offers a timely and valuable introduction to the controversial issue of the Muslim headscarf, or *hijab*, focused on the Canadian context (the volume's title is thus somewhat misleading). It is a tremendously interesting and readable book, which should be of interest both for a general public and for an academic audience. Much of the book's success stems from the decision of the editors to juxtapose two thematically distinct but complementary parts. The first part of the volume documents veiling practices in everyday life in Canada. After a useful introduction by Homa Hoodfar, P. Kelly Spurles offers the reader an ethnographic account of veiling practices in a Muslim school in Toronto, R.A. Meshal discusses a survey among Canadian Muslims about their veiling practices, and Sheila McDonough compiles testimonies of numerous Muslim women. The chapters show the complex and often highly self-reflective reasoning of Muslim women and the diverging motives for their decisions to wear, or not wear, the headscarf. McDonough's compelling account of Canada's own not-too-distant history of debate over women's rights, their proper roles in public life, and political suffrage nicely contextualizes contemporary Canadian anxieties about the Muslim headscarf debate.

The second part of the volume consists of three substantial investigations into Muslim history and the scholarly Islamic tradition with the aim to reconsider systematically the issue of the Muslim headscarf from a Muslim perspective. The essays thus offer scholarly advice on how the issue has been addressed historically by the Islamic tradition. Perhaps more importantly, the essays themselves are case studies in contemporary Muslim reasoning on the issue. As such, all take their vantage point from a re-reading of the pertinent passages of the Qur'an, discuss various classical and more recent authorities on the topic, and on that basis develop their own arguments on the issue of the role of the Muslim headscarf in the Islamic tradition.

McDonough notes that from the outset the aim was "to create something that stimulates thought, rather than stir[s] up hostility and divisiveness." And indeed, *The Muslim Veil in North America* is an immensely positive book. The Muslim headscarf is shown as part of an "adaptive strategy" (Hoodfar) in which Muslim women bring their commitment to and knowledge of the Islamic tradition to bear on negotiating dignified lives vis-à-vis Canadian society and the demands of Muslim communities. Claiming Muslim women's "agency" in their interpretation of the Islamic tradition emerges here as the

crucial link that mediates between the often conflicting demands of liberal multicultural Canadian society and the demands made by Muslim communities with reference to the Islamic tradition.

The volume's positive agenda, however, is also one of its limitations. Tensions and contradictions that emerge in chapters are seldom addressed or followed up. At several points in the book, for example, the authors describe the decision of young women to wear the headscarf and to take up "pious" lifestyles as testimony to their "agency." And yet, it is very clear from the context provided that this agency is profoundly shaped by the demands made by their families and the particular moral framework they impose on these women's lives. I don't mean to suggest that the authors should have been more forthright in criticizing the moral frameworks sometimes imposed by Muslim families on their daughters. But a more critical investigation of the headscarf's role might have explored more closely the matrix of powerful institutions in contemporary Canadian society (families, communities, public spheres, schools, universities) that shape the "agency" of the volume's protagonists, and of which the institution of "pious dress" is one aspect.

One of the defining characteristics of the Islamic tradition in recent decades has been the emergence of national and transnational Muslim public spheres. Greatly increased literacy, the spread of professional middle-class sensibilities, and widely available media of communication (books, journals, tapes, radio and TV channels, and the internet) have led to the democratization of Muslim knowledge. While "ordinary" believers have now unprecedented access to a virtually unlimited range of interpretations and to investigating the rich heritage of the Islamic tradition by themselves, traditional forms of authority, have become increasingly challenged. *The Muslim Veil in North America* is a case in point. Established interpretations of religious authorities are challenged on the basis of individual re-readings of the Islamic tradition: both in the case of the young women who acquire knowledge of the Islamic tradition as a way to gain agency within Muslim families and communities, and in the case of the volume's editors, who bring their scholarly expertise to bear on their re-interpretation of the place of women in the Islamic tradition.

Salima Bhimani's *Majalis al-ilm: Sessions of Knowledge* is another case in point. Bhimani offers a spirited interpretation of the Islamic tradition's inherent plurality. Ordering the book as a sequence of "sessions of knowledge" which "are about resistance and challenge to reductionist, racist, sexist, and orientalist messages about Muslim women and Islam," Bhimani weaves her own re-reading of the Islamic tradition together with the testimonies of eight Muslim women she interviewed for the book. Despite her commitment to "participatory knowledge creation," and her claim that through the book "we are taking hold of our own power to represent and speak for ourselves," however, Bhimani's voice remains dominant. This in itself is not, perhaps, a problem. But given that Bhimani's references to the Islamic tradition and to contemporary scholarship remain incidental, I remain unconvinced that the book fulfils its promise to be "an educational and media tool for non-Muslim Western and Muslim audiences."

Writing the Eighteenth Century

Greg Hollingshead
Bedlam. HarperCollins $34.95

Reviewed by Christina Lupton

Bedlam's greatest strength may be its refusal to clear up just how ill James Tilley Matthews, one of the novel's three central characters, actually is. Locked up in

Bethlem (London's oldest hospital for the treatment of the insane, commonly known as Bedlam), Matthews imagines himself under attack from a gang of Jacobin revolutionaries who use an "Air Loom" to control his mind. Yet his letters to his wife Margaret, which Hollingshead recreates with enormous sympathy, suggest Matthews' loving and lucid engagement with reality. The details of his own involvement in the political relations between Britain and Revolutionary France compound this uncertainty by making it possible that Matthews is really the victim of political revenge. And his doctor, John Haslam, can hardly clear up this uncertainty: his own career depends upon his demonstrating the incurable madness of his famous patient. When Matthews appears before the Bethlem subcommittee twelve years after his imprisonment, our sense of confusion about whether he would survive in the world outside Bethlam helps to make the controversies at stake in the history of psychiatry palpably real.

Hollingshead's portraits of Margaret Matthews and John Haslam are also complex. Their sections of the narrative expose us to accounts of eighteenth-century love, ambition, grief, and parenthood. Our proximity to these three characters' emotions, which Hollingshead emphasizes by giving them expressive, candid, and often flamboyant voices, orientates us in the novel's descriptions of London as a place of unfathomable intrigue and rapid change. Hollingshead explains that he used eighteenth-century language in this novel to "tap into a pre-Romantic and pre-Freudian consciousness" and in some sense this is just what he manages, giving his characters' worlds a verbal texture that at times becomes more substantial than the actual events or consciousnesses described. The fact that the letters between Margaret and James Matthews are constant objects of dispute and theft in the narrative only underscores the materiality of language that Hollingshead works with so well.

This said, don't expect reading *Bedlam* to be like reading eighteenth-century letters or diaries. While Boswell's descriptions of London, Fanny Burney's journal, or Mary Wollstonecraft's letters to William Godwin bring details of eighteenth-century life and experience into focus, such famous eighteenth-century writers generally remain quite alien to twenty-first century readers, especially in their approaches to love, sex, and child raising. *Bedlam* has something like the opposite effect, with exchanges between characters sounding almost too close for comfort, and sometimes uncomfortably like contemporary cliché. The fact that Matthews, Margaret, and Haslam share eloquence as narrators, a strong will to disclosure, and a mood of loss, gives the narrative fabric of *Bedlam* a density that can also make their letters, conversations, and thoughts difficult to distinguish from each other. It is, though, very much worth entering into this world, not only because of the novel's wonderful climax, but because of what *Bedlam* achieves in general by experimenting with the grandeur and the intimacy of eighteenth-century prose as well as with the themes of reality and illusion.

Lieu de mémoire

Alain Gagnon
Jakob, fils de Jakob. Triptyque 18,00 $

Antonio D'Alfonso
Un vendredi du mois d'août. Leméac 18,95 $

Compte rendu par Lauren Butters

À première vue, rien de plus disparate que ces deux textes: l'un offre le récit d'un rescapé de la Shoah immigré à Montréal dans les années d'après-guerre sous la protection d'un parent lointain, l'autre celui d'un cinéaste italo-canadien (ou –québécois, titre qu'utilise D'Alfonso dans une anthologie publiée en 1983) en visite dans sa ville natale. Le lieu est donc ce qui les lierait au départ. Mais rien d'aussi simple, car

Montréal, ce fond géographique par excellence, sert surtout de point de départ dans un parcours mémoriel des deux personnages principaux.

Avec le sous-titre « roman », on est sûr de l'identité fictive du narrateur de *Jakob, fils de Jakob*, qui se place sur un plan temporel loin du déroulement du récit : il s'agit, en effet, d'une remémoration de son parcours en tant que jeune Juif en mouvement constant, réfugié de la guerre. Sans pouvoir retourner à l'espace physique des origines, le narrateur est obligé de trouver des repères là où il peut – adolescent, il entreprend malgré lui une quête sexuelle initiatrice, toujours hanté par sa première expérience dans les camps, et le roman se base notamment sur les retours en arrière sur ces épisodes, nombreux, qui sont des moments aussi fortunés qu'amers.

Auteur prolifique, Gagnon fournit un récit simple et elliptique, sautant d'épisode en épisode sans véritable développement du narrateur. Mais ces omissions sont aussi liées à la thématique des points de repères, la représentation même de la péripétie de Jakob. Dans ce sentiment de perte, plusieurs éléments viennent fournir des bouées mémorielles, dont le souvenir des proverbes yiddish qui garnissent le récit et qui sont une façon de s'accrocher à un passé et à une identité autrement perdus. Car questionnement d'identité il y a dans ce court récit. Témoin des atrocités commises des deux côtés pendant la guerre – d'abord, les camps de la mort des Nazis où périssent ses parents, et ensuite, les attaques contre Dresde et le viol des civiles par les forces alliées – Jakob se trouve dans un dilemme identitaire. En s'identifiant avec l'ennemi, il ressent la culpabilité inévitable qui préoccupe tout survivant d'atrocité.

La transformation identitaire qui s'opère à travers les multiples changements de nom de Jakob ne fait que confirmer cette incertitude, rôle que jouent également les retrouvailles à la fin du roman. Le retour vers le connu, ici sous la forme d'une amante perdue de vue depuis des décennies, signale l'importance dans le texte de la recherche d'identité. Comme le dit le narrateur : « […] une portion arrière de vie était rappelée soudain dans le présent, pas par le souvenir, cette fois, […] mais par un être de chair et de sang qui rappelait la chair et le sang de tous les siens, leur chaleur, les vibrations de leur voix. »

D'Alfonso, qui, dans sa carrière prolifique de poète, essayiste et cinéaste, a beaucoup écrit sur les enjeux de l'ethnicité et de l'identité de l'immigrant au Québec, continue une exploration de cette identité dans son dernier roman. Deuxième volet d'une suite romanesque commencée en 1990 avec *Avril ou l'anti-passion*, *Un Vendredi du mois d'août* est le récit d'un jour dans la vie de Fabrizio Notte, cinéaste quelque peu raté en tournée à Montréal, ville qu'il a quittée pour l'autre métropole, celle-là anglophone, où il partage sa vie (à moitié) avec une femme turbulente et leur jeune fille.

Mettant en question plus directement le rôle de l'écrivain dans la société contemporaine (notons, par exemple, cette déclaration de Fabrizio : « Je veux écouter le grain de la voix de l'écrivain, et il y a si peu de voix dans la masse de livres publiés en Amérique du nord. »), le roman de D'Alfonso joue aussi sur des rapprochements autobiographiques entre auteur et narrateur. Le personnage principal partage la profession de cinéaste indépendant avec l'auteur, ainsi que son patrimoine. En insistant notamment sur la diversité et la pluralité des langues et des cultures, la visite de Fabrizio devient un éloge des grandes villes, particulièrement les villes canadiennes. Un passage admirable pèse M. et T. comme on le ferait avec deux personnes, (deux amant(e)s?). Certes, il s'agit de Montréal et de Toronto, et le cosmopolitisme se mue en prétexte pour une exploration identitaire. Comment le lieu nous affecte-t-il? Comment forme-t-il notre identité? Dans un style

lucide et évocateur de sentiments et de sensations forts, D'Alfonso tente de répondre à ces questions et à d'autres en superposant la recherche d'un premier amour au retour à la ville natale—revenir à ses origines devient pour Fabrizio une quête d'autocompréhension et d'autoévaluation.

Tous les deux, Gagnon et D'Alfonso, exploitent des thèmes qui renforcent la notion de définir ce qu'on est non seulement par les origines, mais aussi par ce qu'on subit dans nos parcours humains—les personnes qu'on rencontre, les amours qu'on perd, les deuils qu'on fait. Avec ces réflexions sur l'identité, les deux auteurs nous interpellent et nous invitent à reconnaître que, comme les proverbes qui perdurent de génération en génération, ou les souvenirs d'amour qui restent avec nous toute une vie, pour emprunter les mots de Fabrizio, on a « besoin d'une solidité dans ce vaste terrain mouvant qu'est la mémoire ».

Un Dragon qui fait tomber la pluie

Stephan Cloutier
Fuego. Prise de parole 15,00 $

Compte rendu par Jacqueline Viswanathan

Il est difficile d'écrire pour les enfants et difficile de rendre compte de la littérature enfantine. Il faudrait pouvoir consulter le public visé. Avec ces réserves, je suis d'avis que la pièce de Stephan Cloutier plairait beaucoup à un jeune public, de la maternelle jusqu'en septième année. Elle a d'ailleurs déjà fait ses preuves. La première représentation a eu lieu en 2000 en coproduction par le Théâtre la Seizième de Vancouver et la Troupe du Jour de Saskatoon et a été reprise à Montréal en 2003 par le Théâtre du Grand Cornu. Sa publication opportune la rendra accessible aux éducateurs et aux praticiens de théâtre.

Comme tous les contes de fées, *Fuego* reprend une histoire déjà bien souvent racontée. Tout va mal au début puisqu'un méchant sorcier a dérobé la « Rose des pluies », porteuse de l'eau, source de vie. Une jeune Elfe, envoyée par ses parents, accepte héroïquement de se sacrifier et réussit à récupérer la fleur. Ce sont cependant surtout les conséquences de cette aventure qui sont célébrées dans la pièce. Axia transforme la vie de ses compagnons de fortune : elle envoie comme messager du Bien chez les hommes un petit garçon peureux qui s'est transformé en preux chevalier et elle rend son feu et sa joie de vivre à un jeune dragon maniaco-dépressif, le fuego du titre.

Les adultes, qui n'ont que des rôles mineurs, sont franchement antipathiques. Les personnages principaux, y compris le dragon, se conduisent comme des enfants d'aujourd'hui. La langue quotidienne et contemporaine du dialogue contribue aussi à rapprocher la pièce de son public. En plus de l'enchantement du merveilleux, le comique de mots et de situations réjouira les petits et les plus grands. Le rythme rapide et les multiples péripéties et effets scéniques gardent les spectateurs en haleine. À un autre niveau, la pièce raconte l'histoire d'une renaissance qui n'est peut-être pas sans rapport avec un vécu personnel de l'auteur.

Problematic Relations

Joan Clark
From a High Thin Wire. Goose Lane $17.99

Tamas Dobozy
Last Notes and Other Stories. HarperCollins $24.95

Bill Stenson
Translating Women. Thistledown $18.95

Reviewed by J. Russell Perkin

These three collections of short stories, by three very different writers, are all preoccupied with family life. Joan Clark and Tamas Dobozy are also concerned with the problematic relation between a present existence

in Ontario or western Canada and a past lived elsewhere, in the Maritimes in Clark's case and in Hungary in Dobozy's. Bill Stenson's work is quite different in effect from the other two, partly because he employs a voice that is closer to oral narration, and partly because a number of his stories are shorter (his collection contains eighteen stories, compared with ten in each of the other books). Stenson's fiction highlights the oddity of the everyday, especially when viewed from an unexpected perspective.

Clark's stories were first published in 1982 by NeWest Press, and according to the publicity sheet for this new edition from Goose Lane they have been "re-edited . . . from the perspective of a more mature writer." My not very rigorous comparison of the two versions suggests that the editing was light: the main changes are that the new edition uses several real names for places and institutions, instead of the fictionalized names of the first edition, and that several times Clark has removed a sentence which might be thought to have underscored a theme too obviously.

The first four stories deal with the same character at different stages in her life. The majority of the stories focus on a female protagonist in early middle age. These women resemble each other in significant ways: having grown up in small towns in the Maritimes, daughters of teachers, ministers, or bank managers, they now live in Toronto or Calgary. The first and last stories in the collection deal with a time-honoured theme in Maritime literature, the return home. In "God's Country," Emily Prentice returns to Cape Breton to find the local coal mine turned into a tourist attraction and the boy she loved become a man ravaged by illness and prematurely old; in the title story a woman returns home to "the Dairy Centre of the Maritimes" after the sudden death of her mother. At first glance, these are quiet stories about unremarkable people, but in most of them the domestic world is fragile, threatened by violence, illness, or death. Clark's women view sexuality warily, and the stories generally present them in situations where their husbands or lovers are absent, whether temporarily or for good. A number of the stories end with bodily images or images of self-expression: a woman who has had a bladder operation is suddenly able to urinate again; a girl sees her first period as "a sign from God, a symbol of her salvation"; another woman tells off two strangers who have come to gawk at her mother's body in the funeral home. In "Territory," one of the strongest stories in the collection, a neighbourhood turf war begins when a housewife finds that a dog from down the street has dragged garbage onto her property. This leads to problems with a neighbour that escalate horribly, causing her to realize the vulnerability of the suburban world she has tried to believe in and the limits of the naïve faith in human benevolence that her father has bequeathed to her. Clark's book is a fine achievement and deserving of its new edition.

Translating Women is Bill Stenson's first book, but many of the stories in it have previously been published in respected literary magazines. They construct a quirky, distinctive fictional world, and at their core are the kinds of tall tales that people tell one another every day. The subjects the stories deal with include a large truck-driving woman who marries a small man, a boy who collects suicide notes, a man who lives in his nephew's root cellar, a bus driver who loses his passengers, and a man who starts living in a tree in his yard. Sometimes these situations just seem ludicrous, but in the successful stories the characters' actions cast a disturbing light on what we regard as normal behaviour. A good example of the way they work can be found in the following passage, in which the narrator of the title story is summing up its narrative point of origin: "You can look back on some days that

change your life. That's how I look back on the Saturday I offered to loan Lloyd my car jack. Hindsight's a bugger sometimes." Some of the stories are reminiscent of Raymond Carver, but with a more genial and folksy ambience, while in a couple of the very short ones the whimsical imagination resembles John Cheever.

Of the three collections, Dobozy's *Last Notes* is the most substantial achievement. His best stories have an imaginative richness that makes them seem like compressed novels, evoking complex worlds. For the most part, the contents of *Last Notes* can be divided into two categories: stories about the Hungarian immigrant experience and the relation between the Canadian present and the Hungarian past, and stories about the artistic life. In both groups, madness is never far away, and "trauma" is a key word in the book. The stories deal with political and aesthetic issues in a way that sometimes overlaps with expository writing. Such concern with ideas has affinities with the fiction of writers such as Milan Kundera. In "Tales of Hungarian Resistance," the narrator tries to pin down the truth of his grandfather's stories about the Hungarian resistance, and in doing so he imaginatively identifies himself with his grandfather's Nazi interrogator. He must sort out the relation between the stories the grandfather told and his grandmother's commentary on them. This relation between story and commentary is also the focus of "The Laughing Cat," where a group of friends meet every Saturday and share stories with one another. In the outstanding "Four Uncles," a refugee who left Hungary at the start of 1958 after a year in hiding tries to deal with the problematic figures of the uncles who preceded him to Canada. He reflects that "if I'd really known what my uncles were like they would not have been there to guide my steps." In "The Inert Landscapes of György Ferenc," an exiled Hungarian painter is unable to find inspiration in the Canadian landscape. All of the stories have first-person narrators, who tend to be either Canadians trying to understand their family past and its Hungarian historical context, or somewhat hapless figures who witness the lives of gifted and mentally troubled friends or relatives. Dobozy likes to begin with a striking sentence that engages the reader, and from which a complex narrative unfolds, moving back and forth in time and out into a network of relationships. For example, the title story begins: "On a cold Monday in the winter of 1995 a nurse unwound the bandages from around Felix Frankenbauer's head, and the composer walked unassisted for the first time since the accident, staggering to a piano to find he could no longer write musical notation." At its best, Dobozy's fiction is very good indeed, and I look forward to reading more of his writing.

Hard Lives, Hard Reads

Catherine Safer
Bishop's Road. Killick $19.95

Kenneth J. Harvey
Shack: The Cutland Junction Stories. Mercury $17.95

Reviewed by Jennifer Delisle

Catherine Safer's *Bishop's Road* and Kenneth J. Harvey's *Shack: The Cutland Junction Stories* are both works of fiction set in Newfoundland and written by Newfoundlanders. They both involve elements of magic realism and the supernatural. And they both dabble in human tragedy. But in tone and texture they could not be more different. Safer's novel balances suffering with redemption, while Harvey's collection of short stories is a cold litany of horror and gloom.

Safer's first novel is the story of the tenants of Mrs. Miflin's boarding house in St. John's. The women are unlikely friends, united by the personal tragedies they have experienced and the hardships they have yet

to face. The camaraderie between these tough but haunted women, who come from different backgrounds and who range in age from teenagehood to old age, has the familiarity of a Hollywood chick flick.

Yet at the same time the action is frequently farfetched. While we might accept the ghosts, the telepathy, the strange coincidences, and the murder, and while we may be charmed by the bizarre behaviour of the characters and Safer's quirky sense of humour, the more mundane workings of the novel can be hard to believe. The characters are not always convincing, and their motivations are not always clear. They change too quickly, too suddenly, and the things that happen to them, from marriages to disappearances, are not always sufficiently explained. There are too many threads to this story, too many characters whose lives could be novels unto themselves, and whom the novel leaves wailing for more time on the page. Safer is still finding her rhythm, and this unpredictable novel has a tendency to leap forward with bewildering speed, leaving me craving the developments that seem to have taken place on missing pages. Some events happen much too easily and neatly, while other questions are never resolved at all.

And yet somehow it is easy to keep returning to *Bishop's Road.* Mrs. Miflin's house is a place that, as the tenants discover, seems to get into your head and stay there. The characters are engaging and there are moments of fine writing, which make the novel's flaws all the more disappointing.

Shack: The Cutland Junction Stories is much more difficult to read. The settings are bleak, the characters are not particularly likeable, and the stories are grim and static. But it is also physically difficult to read. Harvey's overuse of phonetically spelled dialect is cumbersome and distracting, and adds little to the stories except a tone of condescension. His use of magic realism is also jarring and confusing, and while this feeling of alienation may be the effect Harvey was hoping to achieve, the lack of resolution or movement in the stories makes the volume a frustrating read.

The stories are all set around the poverty and despair of the fictional Cutland Junction in middle-of-nowhere Newfoundland. Marred by abuse, mental illness, and death, these lives could inspire deep empathy and sadness. But the coldness of the writing instead renders them lifeless. The best story is "One Letter," in which Harvey is finally able to evoke some sympathy for the protagonist Ruddy's tragic life. But on the whole I don't care about these characters, and their stories simply bleed into one another.

Harvey has a reputation for being a dark writer and he lives up to it here. But darkness alone cannot evoke the fear and grief that Harvey seems to strive for. Instead, the collection suffers from an emotional apathy that makes these short stories feel very long.

L.M. Montgomery Studies

Aïda Hudson and Susan-Ann Cooper, eds.
Windows and Words: A Look at Canadian Children's Literature in English. U of Ottawa P $22.00

L.M. Montgomery; Cecily Devereux, ed.
Anne of Green Gables. Broadview $12.95

Irene Gammel, ed.
The Intimate Life of L.M. Montgomery. U of Toronto P $25.95

Reviewed by Benjamin Lefebvre

Given the increasing proliferation of scholarly interest in the life and work of L.M. Montgomery, it is hardly surprising to find three book-length studies that attest to the wide range of critical approaches that Montgomery's legacy prompts. But while these books have unique concerns and goals, they all point to a set of new critical directions that will affect future scholarship on this vast and endlessly fascinating body of work.

They also, perhaps more subtly, point to the same ambivalences about this work, particularly in terms of its intended audience(s).

Although not meant to focus exclusively on Montgomery, Aïda Hudson and Susan-Ann Cooper's collection of essays, *Windows and Words* (part of the Reappraisals: Canadian Writers series), ends up bumping into her at every turn in their purported survey of the larger field of Canadian children's literature. The volume's stated central premise—that "Canadians have a national literature for the young that is indeed *literature*," an idea that apparently was "rediscovered" at the 1999 children's literature symposium at the University of Ottawa, where these papers were first presented—is hardly novel, given that the journal *Canadian Children's Literature / Littérature canadienne pour la jeunesse*, which recently moved to the University of Winnipeg, has been tracing the development of this literature since 1975. The volume contains some worthwhile work that will be valuable to scholars who want to get a sense of the field—Judith Saltman's useful overview of children's publishing in Canada, Beverley Haun's thoughtful framing discussion of the development of an Aboriginal literature for children, Gregory Maillet's contextualizing of the overall project of "multiculturalism" as it pertains specifically to Saskatchewan—but while it is difficult to negotiate scope and consistency in a collection of conference proceedings, the overall volume nevertheless lacks a clear direction. Formal papers are mixed in with unrevised "commentaries" (with greetings to fellow panelists left extant in the text) about various aspects of book production in the field of Canadian children's literature, such as design and illustration, an area of inquiry that would be of sufficient importance to merit its own book. Further, although chapters by Cecily Devereux, Irene Gammel, Helen Siourbas, John R. Sorfleet, Margaret Steffler, and Virginia Careless offer some groundbreaking work on Montgomery's fiction, none of these chapters seems particularly concerned with the complexities of child readers. In other words, they take for granted that Montgomery's fiction is self-evidently "children's literature," but neglect to incorporate into their discussion how these texts might attract and inculcate actual child readers.

Devereux's critical edition of Montgomery's best-known novel, *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), is a welcome addition to Montgomery studies, providing for the first time a version of the text that will appeal to scholars and general readers while at the same time proving ideal for the undergraduate classroom. Devereux's introduction and choice of supplementary materials help contextualize the novel's ambivalent feminism (particularly its negotiation of the figure of the New Woman) and address questions of British imperialism, but without overwhelming readers with an excess of materials, as did the gargantuan *The Annotated Anne of Green Gables*, which Oxford University Press published in 1997. Using the first edition of the novel as her copytext (including a reproduction of the original illustrations by M.A. and W.A.J. Claus), Devereux provides detailed information about the book's publishing history (in the US, Canada, and Britain), about variants between these three major editions, and about the original manuscript, housed at the Confederation Centre Art Gallery and Museum in Charlottetown. In a series of appendices, Devereux includes a bibliography of further scholarly sources, eight early reviews of the novel in the popular press, four of Montgomery's early short stories that she reworked into chapters of the novel, extracts from three of Isabella Macdonald Alden's *Pansy* novels, as well as essays and interviews that indicate Montgomery's public stances on writing and on gender roles for girls and women. None of these materials indicates that *Anne of Green Gables* was

intended for children or initially received as such; when Montgomery rewrites her own short stories or the didactic *Pansy* novels, she excises the moral normally found in the resolution, suggesting that she is parodying, rather than replicating, these types of stories for a more mature audience.

Finally, Irene Gammel's latest collection of essays, *The Intimate Life of L.M. Montgomery*, draws from a range of critical and theoretical approaches to broaden our appreciation of "Canada's most enigmatic writer" and her complex use of a wide variety of forms of life writing, including journals, correspondence, and scrapbooks. Following the critical success of Gammel's two previous collections, *Making Avonlea: L.M. Montgomery and Popular Culture* (2002) and, co-edited with Elizabeth Epperly, *L.M. Montgomery and Canadian Culture* (1999), the book features ten papers that tease out gaps and contradictions in Montgomery's "official" records of romance, depression, and passionate female friendships; for example, Gammel's own historical research persuasively counters some of the details of Montgomery's "private" confession of her wild (yet apparently chaste) romance with Herman Leard. The essays by such Montgomery heavyweights as Cecily Devereux, Elizabeth Epperly, Janice Fiamengo, Jennifer Litster, Mary McDonald-Rissanen, Hildi Froese Tiessen, and Paul Gerard Tiessen culminate in a lively colloquy between Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston, editors of Montgomery's *Selected Journals*, on Montgomery's later fiction and life writing. The highlight of the collection is the complete text of a collaborative diary written by Montgomery and her friend Nora Lefurgey, who boarded with Montgomery for six months in 1903. The hilarious diary, edited and annotated by Gammel and accompanied by an analytical chapter by Litster, shows the two women using hyperbolic language, banter, jesting, and mutual teasing in their descriptions of their own (and each other's) schemes to win the romantic attention of a number of local men. The tone of this diary provides a stark contrast with Montgomery's published journal entries for this same time period, adding more substance to the claim that her gloomy journals tell only part of her life story. Gammel's notes help readers keep track of the motley characters that appear throughout the diary; the numerous parodies of well-known poems and popular songs, which form a new strand of Montgomery's rich use of intertextual allusion in her fiction, are unfortunately not annotated for the most part.

In short, these volumes indicate that there remains much to be explored in Montgomery's fiction and life writing; just when you think you've read it all, an elusive new thread will be discovered and will prompt her readers to reconsider their assumptions about her work and find new aspects and approaches to contemplate.

Beyond the Burning Rock

Ramona Dearing
So Beautiful. Porcupine's Quill $18.95

Lawrence Mathews
The Sandblasting Hall of Fame. Oberon $18.95

Reviewed by Sean Conway

Though Lawrence Mathews and Ramona Dearing are members of the fiction collective The Burning Rock, and though both are based in Newfoundland, their short story collections do not share a particular writing style or a connection to one particular place. Rather, what their writings have in common is an interest in characters that, to varying degrees, are disconnected—from wherever they are, from whatever they are doing, or from whomever they are with (and even from themselves). And throughout their collections, in their own ways, Mathews and Dearing seem to pursue a common aim: both to take the reader in unexpected directions, to settings well

beyond the Rock, and to breathe new life into the seemingly commonplace.

Neither Mathews nor Dearing sets stories exclusively in Newfoundland. Mathews, especially, is comfortable setting his stories in cities across Canada: in Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa, or St. John's. However, it's not the city that matters in Mathews' stories. Instead, what matters for him are the often odd and hilarious circumstances his characters find themselves in and what we glean about them through these circumstances (and what they glean about themselves, however dimly). In "Fjord," the main character tries to find his direction in life as he works the nightshift in a cheap and seedy Fawlty Towers-like motel in Vancouver. In another, the main character tries to figure out what's bothering his girlfriend after she confronts a stranger about his beer gut in a Shoppers Drug Mart in St. John's. It often seems that, for Mathews, the more mundane the location—a cheap motel, a drug store, a cubicled office—and the more offbeat the characters and circumstances, the more fertile the ground for a story. That Mathews can craft such artful and imaginative writing out of settings like these is part of what makes his writing so refreshing to read.

Dearing's stories also criss-cross the country, but even more varied than the settings in *So Beautiful* are the characters and situations Dearing chooses to focus on, from a quietly distraught elderly man who finds a dead body, to a bruiser named Lucy drinking away her time in Goose Bay, to a neurotic parking meter attendant crying out for help, to a former Christian brother being charged with sexual abuse. The list goes on. However, throughout all of her stories, Dearing is interested in the small details of everyday life, and she intentionally avoids the kind of epiphanies or life-changing moments that have become clichés of the short story form.

When Dearing's stories do threaten to turn ponderous, her writing changes gears. In the first story of *So Beautiful*, not long after the main character and a young stranger discover a dead body, Dearing writes: "A life, a human breathing life, and it's been taken. And even though he thought he already understood this, there's an unpleasant buzzing in his head, the same kind he used to get when he was still going for syrup on his pancakes. Lyle waits for the girl to sit, his own legs aching. He's got to get into the sauerkraut again, the stuff is fantastic for circulation." Throughout *So Beautiful*, Dearing's writing consciously steers away from contrived literary romanticizing but also tries to bring out the unnoticed beauty of everyday life.

In his own stories, Mathews explicitly criticizes the conventions of the short story. In "Silas," Mathews writes: "Here's what should probably happen: a complex combination of circumstances results in Silas's being, despite himself, put in a position where he has to act decisively in some manner, thereby defining or revealing his 'true' or 'authentic' character. A labour dispute, a major interpersonal conflict, a life-threatening emergency. Sorry." However, despite Mathews' obvious aversion to writing conventionally, there is still the sense (as he himself says) that "something in him . . . longs for clarity, for—if this doesn't sound too pompous—truth." It is this ambition that keeps Mathews' unconventional and sharp writing from being merely glib novelty, however quirky it gets—and it does get delightfully quirky (one word: "photonipplography"). I hope a collection as unique and well crafted as *The Sandblasting Hall of Fame* gets the wide readership it deserves.

If there were a manifesto for the writers in The Burning Rock, it might simply be: make it original and make it good. Mathews' and Dearing's collections certainly succeed in this respect.

Random Act

Lisa Moore
Alligator. Anansi $29.95

Lori Lansens
The Girls. Knopf $34.95

Reviewed by Kristen Warder

Lisa Moore's latest novel opens with a foreboding image: an alligator with open jaws. While absentmindedly flipping through a fashion magazine, a teenaged Colleen watches the animal in one of her Aunt Madeleine's industrial safety videos. A man expertly approaches the alligator. He carefully places his head in its mouth. Without warning the jaws snap shut, and the alligator farmer is viciously mauled on film. Although it seems improbable, Madeleine, watching the television over Colleen's shoulder, claims that Loyola Rosewood survived the attack. Miraculously he did, and his physical scars embody the less visible, but equally disfiguring, emotional scars of the novel's major characters who have all been ravaged by that which the title animal symbolizes: the brutal vicissitudes of life. Above all, *Alligator* is a novel about the various ways in which individuals respond to seemingly random life-changing events.

Comprised of chapters told from different points of view, the novel recounts the various relationships and fateful meetings of six people in St. John's, Newfoundland. All have been forever altered by losses of loved ones. Following the unexpected death of her beloved stepfather David, for instance, Colleen, a happy, well-adjusted kid, transforms into a troubled, self-destructive adolescent who, to the surprise of her mother Beverley, is caught committing an eco-terrorist act. Beverley, a steely woman, determinedly vows to "drive on" after the devastating death of her husband, yet she has lost her "joie de vivre" and emotionally withdraws from those around her. Beverley's older sister Madeleine, a workaholic who willingly gave up her marriage for a successful career in filmmaking, feels a similar emptiness. Suffering from heart failure throughout the making of what will be her first and last feature film, she misses her ex-husband Marty desperately, and so fixates even more on her art. Frank, the aptly named nineteen-year-old hotdog vendor, works relentlessly after having witnessed his mother's long and painful death from breast cancer in the hopes that he will attain a life in which he no longer has to settle for second best. A shocking turn of events set in motion by Valentin, a calculating Russian sailor with a violent past, however, puts both Frank's and the aging actress Isobel's futures in jeopardy. Moore's complex characters are by turns compassionate and cruel, loving and merciless. All share one thing: a determination to survive. They no longer wait for life to attack: they make things happen.

Told with a rare precision of detail and filled with vital characters, this cinematic novel is much like the randomly spliced footage Colleen watches at the novel's outset: *Alligator* is full of visual detail, abrupt cuts, and startling juxtapositions. Moore switches effortlessly from topic to topic, scene to scene, past to present, and one perspective to another, as one might switch channels on a television. Fittingly, the novel achieves just what Madeleine proposes her documentaries offer: an unexpected story, a strong message, at least one belly laugh.

Lori Lansens' *The Girls* chronicles the fictional lives of Rose and Ruby Darlen, the world's oldest surviving craniopagus twins. After they are diagnosed with an aneurysm at the age of 29, "the girls," as the conjoined twins are generally referred to in their home town of Leaford, Ontario, set out to write their autobiography. This is the novel Lansens presents: an autobiography told in two distinct voices. Although joined at the head, Rose and Ruby couldn't be more different. Whereas Rose enjoys reading, writing, and following sports, Ruby likes

watching television and searching for First Nations artefacts. It is Rose who, knowing that she has less than six months to live, becomes obsessed with writing the story of their lives. She initially plans to call it "Autobiography of a Conjoined Twin." After Ruby questions how Rose can write the story of her life when it is actually the story of *their* lives, however, Rose encourages her twin to write some of the chapters. Ruby reluctantly goes along, and the twins decide not to discuss what they write with one another. What results is a series of stories told from strikingly different points of view and a novel that, consequently, deals with questions of identity, perception, memory, narrative, and genre.

Filled with irony, gentle humour, and a cast of eccentric minor characters led by the girls' loving adoptive parents, Aunt Lovey and Uncle Stash, the twins' stories evoke a vivid picture of small-town life in Southern Ontario. Lansens' episodic novel somewhat surprisingly contains echoes of earlier Canadian coming-of-age novels, such as *Anne of Green Gables*. Looking back on their lives, the girls recount a series of often humorous misadventures, successes, and otherwise formative moments that result from their attempts to navigate an often foreign and unwelcoming world. *The Girls* is chiefly about their lifelong quest for belonging. Although they never transcend their misfit status, the reader cannot help but notice that the twins have the same desires and aspirations as other young women: they want to make friends, travel, be kissed, obtain jobs, and become independent. Despite their unusual situation, they experience it all and more.

The real triumph of *The Girls* is its capacity to show that these extraordinary twins are, at bottom, exceedingly ordinary. The novel's book jacket claims, "The sisters attempt to lead a normal life, but they can't help being extraordinary." The opposite is equally true: however extraordinary the twins might initially seem, one quickly realizes that they are just two sisters who work in a small-town library. The novel's title, which Rose ultimately settles on near the end of her writing, suggests their ordinariness. It also symbolizes the tension in Lansens' novel between connectedness and separation: this one phrase names both twins but does not singularize them. The twins' unique bond is itself characterized as ordinary when Rose insightfully proposes, "Ruby and I endure *because* of our connectedness. Maybe we all do." Lansens' novel suggests just that.

Skinny Dipping with Seals

Harry Thurston, ed.
The Sea's Voice. Nimbus $22.95

Reviewed by Rebecca Raglon

This anthology is a fine introduction to the intertwined natural and cultural history of Atlantic Canada and to the writing inspired by a place where land and sea commingle. Editor Harry Thurston provides an essay on nature writing itself in his introduction to the collection, and because it is a slippery genre which moves between memoir, science, poetry, and environmentalism, his comments are helpful in providing a certain unity and rationale to his choices. Thurston has left out many nineteenth-century writers and explorers in this collection, preferring to concentrate more fully on examples of what he calls "imaginative literature," that is, writing where literary qualities predominate over concerns for historical comprehensiveness. Thurston touches on the fact that nature writing is often considered to be a "poor cousin in the literary family" and his anthology is meant to challenge this assumption.

Thurston's choices range from writers like the American Rachel Carson, who wrote rather tangentially about New Brunswick in *Silent Spring,* to a selection from Farley

Mowat's *Sea of Slaughter.* Both selections profile environmental problems which have altered the natural beauty and abundance of the area. But these selections are balanced by highlighting those other aspects of writing about Atlantic Canada, including the adventuresome spirit of Captain Joshua Slocum preparing for his solo circumnavigation of the world, or Mina Benson Hubbard's account of the migrating George River caribou taken from her 1905 account, *A Woman's Way through Unknown Labrador.* Charles G.D. Roberts and Fred Bodsworth provide examples of the Canadian nature story, and Bruce Armstrong goes skinny dipping with harbour seals in *Sable Island.* No account of Atlantic Canada would be complete without a history of cod, represented here with an excerpt from a chef-turned-writer, Mark Kurlansky's *Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World.* Professional forester Gary Saunders offers a paean to a humble and ubiquitous tree in a selection from *Alder Music: A Celebration of Our Environment.*

The idea of home is investigated in various ways: Beth Powning, a US immigrant, learned to call New Brunswick home, while David Adams Richards viewed the drama of back-to-the-land aspiration and modern feelings of homelessness in a sharply observed and moving piece entitled simply "Land."

Such a varied palette of authors, topics, and styles might lead the reader to view such a collection as a mere miscellany, but taken together there is a certain coherency here that provides a strong sense of the land and the sea to which these writers are all responding. Harold Horwood perhaps expresses this sense of place most profoundly in the excerpt from his book, *Dancing on the Shore.* In the piece, he writes about the millions of migrating birds that twice yearly visit the tidal flats along the Fundy coastline. The interplay between sea and land is perhaps what most profoundly defines the region and Horwood is at his best when he writes, "The tides sweep over the clam flats in a great flood twice daily. The migrants sweep through the sky in great flocks twice a year. These vast rhythms, so visible in such a small place, seem very like the heartbeat and the breathing of a living planet." Editor Thurston, himself a talented nature writer, has done an admirable job of selecting writing from his home which conveys this special sense of a "living planet."

Innocence and Experience

Lynn Coady
Mean Boy. Doubleday $29.95

Reviewed by Gisèle M. Baxter

Lynn Coady's fourth novel, *Mean Boy*, is set in a small New Brunswick university town, over the 1975–76 academic year. Its narrator, 19-year-old Larry Campbell, came here to escape a small town on Prince Edward Island, and to pursue the art of poetry with his hero, the rambunctiously singular Jim Arsenault, who teaches writing in the English Department. Despite his ritualistic bouts with the typewriter, Larry knows very little about life, or poetry for that matter, and is detached and bluntly judgemental. Consequently, the novel at first seems populated by clichés: the sexy blue-eyed curly-haired blonde Sherrie, the big dumb football player Chuck Slaughter, the turtlenecked artiste Claude, the enthusiastic working-class bard Todd Smiley; waitresses and secretaries are busty and blowsy, the faculty, apart from the vigorous backwoods-dwelling Jim, are tweedy and dull. Yet Larry dreads becoming a cliché himself: the naïve hick.

Through its clever episodic narrative structure and precisely, unsentimentally observed detail, this novel skilfully avoids calcifying to fit a generic slot (the academic satire, the regional Gothic, the period piece, the portrait of the artist as a young man), even while it flirts with all of these genres. *Mean Boy* is not a 30-years-hence memory

piece, framed as the reminiscences of a mature man whose fate we know. Instead, it has the immediacy of recollection not long after the fact, but after some stepping stone to greater perception has been negotiated. Events are described in the moment; "Memory delayed doesn't make memory better." No huge revelations arrive: we never fully learn why Jim drinks so much, what (or who) Sherrie really wants, whether Claude is gay, what exactly happens between Larry and Janet. Smaller, more crucial lessons are learned: hero worship can provide dangerous weapons to the needy god, mentors can be found in unexpected people, childhood memories reverberate in adult nightmares, betrayal can be felt and revenge motivated in many ways. This is a novel of discoveries recorded as grace notes that redefine each character, bringing them fully to life: Sherrie suddenly turning ugly in unleashing her capacity for anger and passion, Bryant Dekker admitting he changed his given name "Obed" for something more Byronic, the memory of Larry's father's kindness in letting hippies camp on his land, the inspiring performance of Dermot Schofield's poems in front of a small audience on a stormy night, even Grandma Lydia's expletive. Questions arise, concerning poetry but also concerning relationships, aspirations, sexuality; they are left unresolved, as they should be: this is ultimately a novel of latency. We do not know if Larry will become a poet, but we realize he has the capacity, in his own attention to detail (the gesture of a squirrel, the shape of a chair, the texture of a sweater, the quality of sunlight through a window, the imagery of a nightmare), his love of the almost tactile quality of words, in speech, as formations on paper, and in his growing accumulation of experience and developing realization that other people are not always what they seem.

Lynn Coady ends the novel with a poem, printed as if produced on an old manual typewriter. It is tempting to think Jim wrote this poem when Larry let him sleep off a hangover in his apartment. I like to think this is Larry's poem, using the anecdote about the squirrel invasion he tells early on to figure his perception of Jim, who is also alluring through the glass, destructive once inside.

Mean Boy is confident, funny, and deeply moving. It is also remarkably accurate. Lynn Coady probably started grade school in 1975; I started university the following year (in Nova Scotia). I am not quite sure why she chose this period, though it is a point before the evolution toward contemporary academia experienced its greatest seismic shifts. It is a point before poetry slams, as well as online discussion groups and social networking sites, allowed aspiring writers ways to experience and produce poetry outside academia. Once or twice I wondered if an expression had actually been current then, and even aspiring poets seemed more engaged by the outside world (and more conscious of no longer living in the 1960s) than this group (though there are hints via Claude of the opportunities of greater awareness through travel). However, the Stanfield's undershirts and the parkas, the love of strong tea, the still mostly male (and mostly British and American) faculty, the cubed cheese on toothpicks and plastic wineglasses, the encroachment of feminism, the odd sense of for the first time being in a world of adults unlike your family, outside your family: those things she captures, and some of them endure.

Taking Refuge

Camilla Gibb

Sweetness in the Belly. Doubleday $32.95

Reviewed by Amy Leask

There is indeed sweetness in Camilla Gibb's latest novel, *Sweetness in the Belly*. Rife with irony, the novel finds beauty in even the

most devastating of human tragedies and challenges the traditional notion of "foreigner." Constructed with intricacy and sensitivity, the novel follows the struggle of an outsider who, despite a lifetime of discrimination and poverty, becomes fiercely loyal to her adopted culture and faith.

Lilly, the only child of vagabond British parents, is left orphaned in North Africa, and is raised by a local Muslim spiritual leader. Ethnically distinct from her adopted community, Lilly finds fulfillment in her new faith and culture, perhaps more so than most of the locals. The novel alternates between her ongoing struggle to belong in Ethiopia during the infamous famine of the 1980s and her present life in the UK, where she lives as a refugee in the home of her biological parents. Lilly comments, "I exist somewhere between what they know and what they fear, somewhere between the past and the future, which is not quite the present." As she toils to help other Ethiopians establish new lives in Britain, she is forced to abandon some of the traditions that have sustained her, the makeshift families that nurtured her, and a lover lost to his own ideals amidst political upheaval.

Though adorned with rich imagery, Gibb's narrative style is simple but elegant. The novel is meticulously crafted to be evocative without sensationalizing sensitive subjects such as ethnic cleansing, female circumcision, and abject poverty. Chapter divisions between Lilly's past and present not only punctuate the irony of her status as a "stranger" in both countries, but elucidate her difficult rebirth in the western world. Lilly is the quintessential lost child, a veritable Cinderella, having only her virtue and the remnants of her faith as survival tools. The irony and complexity of Lilly's identity, at home in a strange land and forlorn in her own, provide a compelling tension throughout the novel.

Characterization in *Sweetness in the Belly* is equally rich. Lilly, the protagonist, is tragically hopeful and desperate to live up to the demands of her faith. She comments, "The certainty of our world was reinforced at the beginning of every new day as we woke with the call to prayer." She continuously discusses the Muslim notion of Jihad, not as an outward battle, but as an internal struggle for self-control and self-improvement. Lilly tells her story through a series of encounters with others, as a hopeful initiate into Ethiopian society, and as a would-be midwife to those attempting to reassemble their families in London. Her charges, whether they be children learning the Qur'an or fathers re-evaluating their role as breadwinner, are featured as major influences. Readers come to know Lilly through the tragedies of those she assists, as if they were her own tragedies.

The thread that connects the two worlds of the novel, as well as its formidable cast of characters, is faith. It forms a tenuous bond between a white Muslim child and a nation in turmoil. It is also faith that bridges the gap between Lilly's tumultuous life in Ethiopia and her equally troubling existence as a healer and counsellor in England. Countering the backlash of recent political events, Gibb captures the intricate beauty of Islam through the eyes of a true pilgrim.

Narrating and Reading

Paul Perron

Narratology and Text: Subjectivity and Identity in New France and Québécois Literature. U of Toronto P $63.00

Reviewed by Estelle Dansereau

Originally formulated as a structuralist theory to illuminate strategies for reading and interpreting texts, narratology as a hermeneutical tool has lost some of its influence since the heyday of the 1960s and 1970s, but, rather than disappearing entirely, it has evolved today to include considerations of intersubjectivity. As Paul Perron's intricate study indicates, narratological theory and methodology, renewed by questions

raised by socio-semiotics, provides new tools for reading and interpreting texts, and in particular, sheds light on our contemporary preoccupations, subjectivity, and identity.

Perron shifts narratology's usefulness from a programmatic practice to a more flexible and eclectic one focused on subjectivity in language: to "concentrate on the enunciative strategies and mechanisms established in each text to position, to manipulate cognitively, and to move the enunciatee-reader." While remaining a follower of A.J. Greimas' structural semantics, he incorporates the seminal work done by Émile Benveniste on enunciation and Paul Ricoeur's monumentally influential *Time and Narrative* (1984, 1985, 1988) in which he puts forward his phenomenological and hermeneutic theory of narrative as temporalized action. While not original to his critical practice, Perron's socio-semiotical approach looks at intersubjective relations as they are mediated through a sign system, and thus devises fascinating readings of Quebec's founding and fictional texts. He calls it a "theory of production and reception that takes into account the pragmatic dimension of discourse."

Organized logically in three parts, *Narratology and Text* provides both theoretical background in narrative semiotics for the English-language reader of key thinkers such as A.J. Greimas, and powerful and dense readings of some of Quebec's canonical texts. The least interesting section of the book is Part I on "Narratology," although it will provide the novice to Parisian narratology with an essential foundation for the subsequent analyses. For readers even minimally familiar with this theoretical approach, it would have been more useful, and in the long run more enlightening, if Perron had explained the methodology of semio-narrative theory as *he* practises it, thus giving his reader a basic guide and still providing a sense of socio-semiotics's relevance for reading narrative texts.

In his examination of the founding texts in Part II entitled "Discovery, Conversion and Colonization," Perron focuses on Cartier's discovery narratives, *Voyages*, and the historically important *Jesuit Relations*, the "most detailed and complete texts available to us regarding the social, religious, political, and cultural organization of Amerindian society as it existed in seventeenth-century New France" in order to identify major topoi expressed in the discursive representations of encounters "at the origin of New World historiography." From these discovery and conversion narratives, Perron sets the parameters for his analyses in Part III, "Historiography and the Novel: Nation and Identity," of Quebec's canonical fictional texts written before the Quiet Revolution. Particularly notable chapters deal with Albert Laberge's "stemmatic" narrative *La Scouine*, Louis Hémon's allegorical *Maria Chapdelaine*, and Yves Thériault's innovative *Agaguk*. Each situated in its ideological moment, these texts nevertheless reveal, under Perron's methodical and erudite scrutiny, interesting twists in their expression of a collective and national distinctiveness. For example, concluding on a writer whose work he has commented upon frequently, Perron claims that in *Agaguk* Thériault proposes a "radical critique of the group/nation and of group political, moral and religious structures that condition each and every subject." With 54 pages of endnotes (not to be overlooked) as testimony to Perron's scientific method, this book yields one reader's invaluable picture of discursive formations in Quebec's grand narrative.

Rereading Frye

Jean O'Grady and David Staines, eds.
Northrop Frye on Canada: Collected Works of Northrop Frye. Volume 12. U of Toronto P
$125.00

Reviewed by Waldemar Zacharasiewicz

Northrop Frye shares with Marshall McLuhan the reputation of being one of Canada's most prominent academics and cultural critics, and while the archetypes proposed in his *Anatomy of Criticism* of 1957 are now less frequently referred to, the sheer breadth of his vision still cannot fail to impress. The University of Toronto Press has recently made available a welcome addition to its projected sequence of 31 volumes of Frye's works. In accordance with its stated intention to make accessible to a wider readership not only his published works but also his unpublished and uncollected materials, his private writings, as well as his addresses, Volume 12 collects his writings and the various speeches he gave on specifically Canadian topics.

The full range of the texts contained in the volume reflects Frye's interest in combining cosmopolitan universalism with a keen sense of a national culture. Many of Frye's pronouncements are, of course, familiar to Canadianists everywhere, while some of the texts in this volume are relatively little known yet deserve closer scrutiny. They merit re-reading at a time when an ethical turn is noticeable in literary and cultural studies and when the domination of poststructuralism and deconstruction seems to be on the wane.

With few omissions, all of Frye's essays on Canadian culture appear in this volume, which basically uses the first editions as copy texts and provides information on the original publications, on complete or partial reprints, and on the existence of manuscripts generally held in the Northrop Frye fonds at Victoria University Library. The editors of this volume have also succinctly annotated more than 90 items ranging from very short reviews of a mere paragraph or two, brief contributions to debates, to essays exceeding 30 pages in length. The items, arranged in chronological order, mirror Frye's chief concerns and preoccupations. The editors have not eschewed repetition and allow recurrent formulations to highlight the direction of Frye's thoughts. A fairly concise introduction co-written by the two editors underlines his favourite themes, and sketches the personal background of Frye's wrestling with the issue of the specificity of Canadian culture. His juxtaposition of the different sensibilities and collective experiences shaping the cultures of the United States and its northern neighbour, his memorable formulation of the prototypical "garrison" mentality in Canada, contrasted with the presence of the frontier and the corresponding spirit in the United States, have furnished a *locus classicus* for many an introductory survey.

From the outset, Frye displayed an acute awareness of the manifestation of the "national spirit" in the paintings of the Group of Seven and asserted the connections between the subjective and lyrical sensibility of early Canadian poets and this first group of national artists. In his perceptive introduction, David Staines convincingly relates the development of Frye's concept of the Canadian imagination in his reviews of individual books of poetry and in his essayistic surveys to the formative influence of three mentors at Victoria College, three professors of English whose variegated talents complemented each other. Several pieces in the collection—introductions to texts of these teachers he edited, obituaries, commemorative remarks preserved on tape, and public addresses remaining in manuscript—generously acknowledge his debt of gratitude to these three men: John D. Roberts, also an expert on German literature; Pelham Edgar, originally a professor of French; and,

finally, E. J. Pratt, the prolific poet. There are, for instance, half a dozen pieces directly or indirectly concerned with Pratt's poetry and its place in the narrative tradition in English-Canadian poetry.

As might be expected, the concluding essays to the two editions of Klinck's *Literary History of Canada* of 1965 and 1976, with helpful editorial notes identifying Frye's allusions and references, find their place in this volume. Additional annotations might have perhaps indicated the elisions in the version of the better-known first essay reprinted in an edited form in *The Bush Garden*, as is the case with the reprint of his poetry reviews from the *University of Toronto Quarterly* included in his early essay collection. Almost a quarter of the volume is given over to reprints of these annual surveys.

The volume also reprints the introductions to Canadian classics Frye edited, and introductions to little-known books such as one by the founder of the Royal Ontario Museum. The increasing inclusiveness of his analyses, which reflect his role as a cultural theorist, shapes his later public comments on the "cultural life of Canada" and cultural policies prompting the Massey Report that led to the founding of the Canada Council. Also to be found within the 742 pages of the book are several unpublished speeches Frye made, such as the one on the occasion of the conferring of an honorary degree on Prime Minister Diefenbaker, or addresses prepared for Governor-General's awards, which all reflect his openness to new aspects of the cultural life in Canada as late as 1990, though he was reluctant to embrace "the new buzzword of multiculturalism." While his interest in the emergence of a national consciousness in Canadian culture never flagged, his response to new trends of political and cultural imperialism from the south led to an elaboration on his thoughts on the differences between the two neighbouring countries. Even more than the novelist Hugh MacLennan, the national writer five years his senior who turned his attention in the post-World War II years to this very issue, Frye made a critical review of US-Canadian relations and cultural differences a significant topic if not the central theme in several essays and presentations, a concern that, in spite of NAFTA, has not lost its relevance in the eyes of European observers.

Following almost 30 pages of explanatory notes is an even longer index that provides biographical dates for a large number of public and literary figures mentioned at least in allusions in Frye's essays or their annotations. It is another useful item in this handsome and significant volume.

La Trilogie sud-américaine de Pierre Samson aux Herbes rouges

Pierre Samson
Le Messie de Belém. Les Herbes rouges 12,95 $

Pierre Samson
Un Garçon de compagnie. Les Herbes rouges 16,00 $

Pierre Samson
Il était une fois une ville. Les Herbes rouges 19,95 $

Compte rendu par Guy Poirier

La trilogie romanesque de Pierre Samson publiée aux Herbes rouges de 1996 à 1999 fera grand plaisir aux amateurs de narration éclatée. Il est d'ailleurs très difficile de faire un résumé des intrigues de ces romans, car les personnages, tout comme les segments narratifs, suscitent brièvement notre intérêt avant d'être abandonnés, parfois repris, puis de nouveau abandonnés. Certains lecteurs vont rapidement se lasser de cette violence qui leur est faite, alors que d'autres vont peut-être y trouver une source d'émerveillement. André Roy, par exemple, dans un extrait de la revue *Fugues,* cité en quatrième de couverture du second roman, nous dit que le *Messie de Belém* est une merveille et que l'on pense souvent à Vargas Llosa, à Garcia Marquez et à Carlos Fuentes en le

lisant. Moi, j'en suis encore au combat avec l'ange.

Si l'on avance avec peine dans les atmosphères des trois romans, c'est peut-être parce que l'on ne sait pas les lire: on s'y englue alors que le narrateur fait preuve d'ironie; on s'attache aux personnages, alors qu'ils sont soudainement remplacés par une autre brochette de protagonistes; si l'on s'habitue au décor, il n'est qu'éphémère. D'autres que moi découvriront probablement qu'une lecture poétique servirait mieux cette trilogie brésilienne à l'esthétique fantasmatique qu'exprime peut-être ainsi l'un des personnages: « On me demande de relier les points par un cordon de mensonges, au mieux, de fantasmes. Parmi ces entorses à la vérité comptent mes propres souvenirs et ma perception de ce que plusieurs s'amusent à appeler la réalité. » Voilà peut-être la richesse poétique du romancier que le lecteur doit saisir, de force; sinon, il sera laissé pour compte et ne pourra que sombrer dans les méandres de l'œuvre.

Le troisième roman de la trilogie, *Il était une fois une ville*, procède d'une même esthétique que les deux premiers mais emprunte l'enveloppe formelle du chemin de croix et de ses stations. Une section intitulée « Retour » précède le calvaire, et deux séquences temporelles et au moins trois récits identifiés par des sous-titres viennent brouiller les pistes de la narration. Selon la quatrième de couverture, qui peut servir de bouée au lecteur, ce chemin de croix est « un pèlerinage hallucinant au pays de la mémoire et des regrets », un « voyage inoubliable dans les arcanes du désir et des passions exacerbées ». J'aurais probablement aussi ajouté en exergue, si j'avais été éditeur, ce court récit à la première personne de celui que je pense être le personnage Antonio Francisco Lisboa dit l'Aleijadinho, le Petit Estropié, qui est devenu la ville dont on parle, Ouro Prêto : « J'ai donné à Ouro Prêto l'apparence de ma folie, peut-être, de mon désespoir, sans doute aucun. Et, bien sûr, la ville est désormais l'illustration de ma rancœur, aussi chrétienne soit-elle. Lentement ses monuments de pierre tendre s'effaceront, rongés par les ans, incapables de résister aux assauts de la pluie ou des flammes ou du vent. »

On ne sait évidemment pas ce que deviendra le cycle brésilien de Pierre Samson. S'il est bien difficile de le situer dans la mouvance des Herbes rouges, il faudrait peut-être que ces éditions, qui nous ont habitués à bien faire ressortir les parcours esthétiques de leurs poètes, nous éclairent.

De l'ombre dans la mire

Gilles Cyr
Erica je brise. Hexagone 16,95 $

Diane Cardinal
Murs mouillés d'ombre. Triptyque 13,00 $

Pierre Nepveu
Lignes aériennes. Noroît 16,95 $

Compte rendu par Laurent Poliquin

L'attention portée au mouvement de la nature nous est donnée à voir dans *Erica je brise* du poète et traducteur Gilles Cyr, qui nous revient après la publication en 1999 de *Pourquoi ça gondole* chez le même éditeur. Dans ce nouvel opus, Cyr nous convie à une promenade sans frontière au pays de l'affirmation du visible où l'arbre est l'ami. Dans les pas du marcheur, carnet de notes en main, le poète emprunte une variété de chemins—de l'Italie à la Grèce en passant par la Turquie—et porte un regard observateur sur différents éléments de la nature qui se succèdent dans une nomenclature plus près de l'herbier que du poème.

Dans une langue dépouillée, où intervient une voix de l'émerveillement, Cyr guide son lecteur dans l'engrenage de la nature, s'efforçant du même coup de permettre l'accès à la subtilité cachée contenue dans la totalité fuyante des choses:

voulez-vous traverser avec moi
la forêt de Vallombrosa

Arezzo vers quinze heures
La belle piazza

Cyr utilise également un procédé moins accessible et pourtant si simple, que j'appellerais un « prosaïsme de la banalité ». Il force la stabilité de la lecture à s'écrouler et à reprendre son magnétisme dans la fragilité d'une image. Ainsi en est-il du poulet, que le poète « met au four // dans du papier alu / avec des oignons » afin qu'il s'envole, aussitôt déposé sur la table.

Dans un tout autre registre, Diane Cardinal donne le ton dès le premier poème de son recueil *Murs mouillés d'ombre*; le lecteur se retrouve acteur d'un entrelacement amoureux où planent l'olfaction sexuelle et l'effleurement des corps, tout aussi prisonnier du « fourreau noir incandescent d'étoiles » que le « je » protagoniste. Un délice pour les sens, pour cet auteur qui nous avait donné une célébration érotique du même acabit en 1989 dans *L'Amoureuse* chez le même éditeur. Baignée dans une vaste lumière blanche, l'image du corps se déploie avec la sérénité que confère l'espace naturel :

Nuit inuit et sonore
gorges chaudes
souffle ténu
traverse intime des âmes
toile cousue de peau
flagellée par le vent
rafales d'eaux de neige arctique
ta fourrure de louve fulmine
déluge blanc

Malgré une certaine intimité dans le propos, le poème se déploie avec aise; le mot danse parmi les nombreuses allitérations, sans pour autant que le poème fléchisse vers un moralisme de « midinette », pour reprendre l'expression audacieuse du critique et poète québécois Hugues Corriveau. Cardinal accorde une place importante à l'ombre—être ténu et fragile de la beauté vertigineuse—qui s'impose comme le chemin de la connaissance du corps et de la communion de l'âme. De cette multiplication des hanches, Diane Cardinal nous convie à une poésie de l'étreinte où gisent ici et là quelques clichés de « lumière vive » qui laissent parfois un goût de déjà vu.

Quant au professeur Nepveu—Pierre de son petit nom—lauréat *justifié* du Prix du Gouverneur général du Canada à trois reprises, il nous offre avec *Lignes aériennes* (Grand Prix du livre de la Ville de Montréal, Grand Prix du Festival international de la poésie et Prix du GG) une exploration poétique bien audacieuse dans le propos, puisque celui-ci est intimement engagé dans la communauté de sa jeunesse, celle qui a vu éclore, à la manière d'une mauvaise herbe faussement jaune, un aéroport au joli nom fruité : Mirabel. Récit d'un chambardement annoncé donc, dont les modalités de présentation du livre, d'une blancheur plutôt terne, pourraient laisser douter de la pertinence du recueil qui s'annonce. Or il en est tout autrement; tant et tant que l'on se refuse à lire en entier—on le voudrait sans fin—cet espace vital où il fait bon respirer la ferme et les rêves évaporés des récoltes consumées par de « grands dérangements ». Un recueil comme il ne s'en fait plus, qui par le renouement avec une poésie renouvelée du terroir, rappelle Alphonse Piché, bien que les ballades ici proposées ne soient pas aussi chantantes que celles du poète trifluvien… quoique.

Nepveu choisit plutôt un mélange de poèmes purs et de prose poétique pour nous faire cheminer avec lui au cœur du destin de ces familles qui ont vu le saccage de leur terre fertile au profit d'un éléphant plus blanc que neige. Avec le souffle d'une parole remplie de sagesse, à « l'heure du loup » quand il est temps de « creuser [sa] vie », le poème s'anime sous une force spirituelle peu commune. Nepveu donne une belle leçon de poésie en rappelant que l'existence n'est pas un enracinement dans le quotidien, mais avant tout un envol, un

émoi, un don pour la « palpite » (*Cf.* Céline), qui doit se nourrir d'égarement afin de redonner à l'homme « le sens du soleil ». Un peu de pain pour une autre année de littérature. Merci.

The Bible Fryed

Jeffery Donaldson and Alan Mendelson, eds.
Frye and the Word: Religious Contexts in the Writing of Northrop Frye. U Toronto P $75.00

Reviewed by Barbara Pell

This volume is the edited product of a McMaster University conference held in the year 2000 with (almost) the same title. It contains papers by a "who's who" of international Frye scholars (those associated with *The Collected Works of Northrop Frye*, plus some prestigious outsiders/critics, such as Robert Alter) and generally justifies the cover blurb that it "provides the first full account and evaluation of the legacy of Frye's works on the Bible and literature in relation to his work as a whole and to current trends in literary criticism and religious studies." Donaldson's Introduction addresses Frye's now-marginalized position in both literary studies (where he is considered too spiritual) and biblical studies (where he is considered too secular); this book attempts to remedy the problem within a wide range of "contexts" from biblical typology and United Church politics to linguistic analysis and neo-Marxist literary theory. It particularly concentrates on Frye's late notebooks and his last three Bible books: *The Great Code, Words with Power,* and *The Double Vision*.

The volume is divided into six sections. In "A Spiral Curriculum," Alvin Lee surveys the relation between secular and sacred in Frye's writings, and Imre Salusinszky defines Frye as a "circumambulatory alchemist" in his attempt to replace Nature's brazen world with Sidney's golden one. In Part 2, "Metaphor and Spirit," Garry Sherbert compares Frye's theory of metaphor to those of Longinus, Deguy, Derrida, and Ricoeur; Michael Happy parallels "Frye's recreation and Derrida's deconstruction" according to the "principle of play"; Nicholas Halmi examines Frye's use of synecdoche and Leah Knight his use of the word "something." In the third section "Myth and Typology," Glen Gill defends and Robert Alter criticizes Frye's biblical typology, his theory of archetypes that constructs an apocalyptic history ("*Heilsgeschichte*") to counter our world history ("*Weltgeschichte*"). Linda Monk praises Frye's typological connection of Judaism and Christianity to counter neo-Gnostic Nazism, and Johannes van Nie approves his emphasis on spiritual revelation in a secular age as comparable to Philo of Alexandria's.

After these "centripetal" sections, the next two "centrifugal" ones examine Frye's biographical, literary, and historical influences. "The Church" section provides some new contexts for Frye's thought in Jean O'Grady's analysis of his relation to the United Church of Canada and J. Russell Perkin's delineation of his paradoxical prejudice against Catholicism. "Applications" applies Frye's "lumber room" of theories to practical literary readings in André Breton (Joe Adamson); Toni Morrison (Jean Wilson); Dante, Langland, and Milton (James M. Kee); Oscar Wilde (Peter G. Christensen); and the archetype of the tricky servant (Graham Forst). The final, antitype section, "Spiral Curricula," extends into the religious dimension as Ian Singer speculates on Frye's "writing as an act of faith," Michael Dolzani shows the later Frye "wrestling with a trickster god," and Robert Denham outlines Frye's evolving "esoteric spirituality" especially in his "kook books." The volume concludes with three excellent indexes (so often missing from critical anthologies and conference collections).

This book is an admirable addition to the huge Frye Project of reclamation and veneration (to which, as a former Frye student,

I am generally sympathetic). I must admit, however, that I don't quite believe the "isn't-he-really-postmodern" parallels between Frye and Derrida (whose theories Frye dismissed as "complete bullshit"). And I very much appreciated Alter's cogent criticism of the major weakness of Frye's system, which "is interested in the individual literary text chiefly as a confirmation of the general pattern, and hence has no adequate instruments of attention for the compelling or surprising peculiarities of the individual text." Alter acknowledges that this perennial but, in view of Frye's many excellent close-readings, often unjust criticism is overstated when "the work under inspection—say, Shakespeare or Milton—is closer" to Frye in language and cultural contexts. However, he convincingly argues that "applying this strategy of reading to a body of literature largely composed more than two and half millennia ago in a Semitic language structurally and semantically unlike our own leads to some very odd claims about what the texts mean." Ultimately, the definitive comment on Frye and the Bible (or the Bible Fryed) may be Perkin's assessment: "*The Great Code* is really an account of the relationship between Blake's reading of the Bible and Frye's understanding of literature. . . . It is best read as the deeply personal statement that Frye acknowledged it to be in his introduction."

The Long Day Wanes

Hans Bertens and Joseph Natoli, eds.
Postmodernism: The Key Figures. Blackwell $29.95

Reviewed by Charles Barbour

Today, whenever I hear the word "postmodern," I cringe a little. Whenever I use the word (say, in the classroom), I feel as though I have failed somehow. I don't think it is particularly useful to debate the temporal dynamics of claiming that postmodernism is "over." Let's put it this way: most of the language games in which the term "postmodern" once operated aren't all that fun to play anymore. This must be how the professional athlete feels. Skate-pass-shoot. Throw-catch-hit. Contingent-situated-multiple. It is not just that the word has been overused. Rather, "postmodernism" has become a spongelike signifier, absorbing the very antagonisms it once ignited, rendering specific differences synecdoches for difference as such.

Bertens and Natoli acknowledge all of this and more in their Introduction to *Postmodernism: The Key Figures*, which begins with the claim that postmodern "politics" has been the first "victim" of its own revolutionary success, and continues to schematize the artistic, philosophical, and cultural uses of the word. What follows is an assembly line of essays on names, most interesting for those it struggles to fit within the postmodern frame. OK, Don DeLillo. Sure, Richard Rorty. But Antonio Gramsci is postmodern? Thomas Kuhn? Jacques Lacan? Louis Althusser! Otherwise decent essays on important thinkers are rendered a little suspicious when, for no reason other than the need to address the title of the book in which they have been published, the word "postmodern" is interpolated here and there. The positive thing is that these are all more than competent articles written by recognized experts, and not, as in so many books of this nature, the labour of graduate students or research assistants. I want to read what Kellner says about Baudrillard, what Atterton says about Levinas, what Bernasconi says about Fanon (and yes, it appears that Fanon is "postmodern" as well). Nothing outrageous is revealed, but if you need a quick reference, this will give you the gist. Now here is the negative thing, or at least the key question that opens up the negative: what does this book tell us about the state of academic publishing? As everyone knows, there has been a concerted effort among academic publishers to produce books for "the market,"

which means primarily undergraduate students and culture industry professionals. So, now Blackwell has a decent book competing with all the other "introductions to" and "encyclopedias of" this waning cultural moment called "postmodernism." You can't help but wonder what monograph didn't get published as a result, or, to use the language that already feels more than a little overused, what "local knowledge" has been silenced by this "grand narrative."

But you can't really criticize a book for belonging to its genre. Bertens and Natoli take what they call an "eclectic approach" to postmodernism's key figures. But they also acknowledge the necessity of selection. "[A]re those who are absent more significant than those who are represented?" they ask in a self-critical moment. "And can't we approach postmodernism from various but ultimately equivalent angles?" Well, they conclude, "selectivity is not necessarily a disadvantage: it may well serve as a shortcut to what is really at stake." And finally, they say they "hope and expect that the selection of key figures that [they] have made is as representative of the postmodern as any other." The concern I have here is the same concern I have about "postmodernism" in general—the emergence of a logic of pluralism without antagonism, or difference without struggle. Because selection is the unavoidable condition of all discourse, we are to conclude that any given selection is going to be "as representative as any other." But if that is the case, why say anything at all?

Repositioning Diasporic Identities

Eleanor Ty and Donald Goellnicht, eds. *Asian North American Identities.* Indiana UP $27.62

Reviewed by Christine Kim

Literature produced by Asian North American writers has begun to receive an increasing amount of critical attention by the Canadian academy. Unlike its more established US counterpart, Asian Canadian literature is still a relatively new disciplinary object and critical discourses about these texts have yet to be firmly established. Asian American studies, on the other hand, is a field with a longer institutional history, but one that is currently being reconceptualized to accommodate shifts that have occurred in the field over the past 40 years. What both of these fields share, however, is an increasing awareness of how global migration and consumption influence local and national landscapes. Given this commonality and the direction that both Asian Canadian and American studies seem to be taking, it is evident why the editors have chosen to reposition the output of Canadian and American cultural workers under the larger heading of "Asian North American." The introduction to *Asian North American Identities* justifies its use of this category by stating that "Asian subjects who reside in the United States and in Canada face many of the same issues regarding identity, multiple cultural allegiances, marginalization vis-à-vis mainstream society, historical exclusion, and postcolonial and/or diasporic and/or transnational subjectivity." At the same time, the editors note that they still realize the importance of discussing specific differences between Canada and the US, a gesture that calls for multiple reading practices to be undertaken simultaneously. It must, however, be noted that the bulk of the collection's essays focus on Asian American rather than Asian Canadian subjects.

The collection is composed of a densely informative introduction that historicizes both Asian Canadian and American studies over the last half century and reviews a number of the major critical debates in both fields, and nine critical essays that cover a broad range of literary genres and artistic forms. Included are examinations of popular film, photography, avant-garde

poetry, novels, life writing, and the Yellow Peril project. These essays share a strong interest in investigating the movement between national and transnational sites. By exploring these aesthetic objects, the essays interrogate the ways in which individual and collective Asian North American experiences are represented. The texts examined are striking because they each contradict dominant perceptions of this social group. For instance, Josephine Lee's discussion focuses on two plays, *The Walleye Kid* and *Mask Dance*, produced by Theater Mu in the 1990s that depict the mass adoption of Korean children by American families in the Midwest. The plays comment on the performance of ethnicity in the US, American race relations, and social and economic disparities between developed and developing nations. The characters grapple with the tension between racial difference, ethnic heritage, and American identity, as well as the difficulties of living in a well-intentioned but fraught liberal space that "both simultaneously recognize[s] racial difference and den[ies] its real effects."

Some of the other essays shift their attention away from Asian-white relations to other kinds of interethnic relations. LeiLani Nishime, for example, uses the mainstream Hollywood film *Rush Hour* to consider the intersection of African American and Asian American communities. That one of its stars, Jackie Chan, is Asian rather than American is suggestive because it points to an absence of Asian American film stars as well as towards the traffic between Hollywood and Hong Kong cinema, thus drawing our attention to the politics of both the national and international cultural imaginary. Patricia Chu's analysis of *The Comfort Woman* also considers cultural conflict within America as well as outside of it. The novel is a fictionalized representation of the forced prostitution of a number of Korean women by the Japanese during World War II. The sexual slavery of Akiko, the story's protagonist, is prolonged once she is "rescued" by American missionaries. Although she is only 14, the missionaries allow an American minister to marry Akiko and take her to his home in Hawaii. This sequence of events clearly suggests that both the Japanese and Americans were destructive and colonial presences in Korea. The novel mediates between the private and the public, gesturing towards "the testimonies of these women, who voice the outcast's need not only for private intersubjective relations, but also for public social acknowledgement, for justice." Caroline Rody's essay on novelist Karen Tei Yamashita also takes up the politics of national and international ethnic communities. Yamashita's novel, *Tropic of Orange*, is significant for its interest in the US-Mexico border, a topic that compels consideration of Asian North and South American cultural production.

This collection of essays is of particular interest because it challenges paradigms often used to consider individual and collective identity, national and global relations, and the overlap between various ethnic communities in North America. The text, with its broad geographical focus and interest in an array of cultural forms, is a useful resource for rethinking the way we approach Asian North American studies.

Hammering in the Sky

Sam Solecki, ed.
Yours, Al: The Collected Letters of Al Purdy.
Harbour $44.95

Reviewed by Paul Denham

In *The Last Canadian Poet: An Essay on Al Purdy* (1999), Sam Solecki argued that Purdy's work represents a phase in Canadian poetry which culminated in the 1960s and has since been in decline: his poetry articulates a "master narrative of Canadian nationalism in Canadian literature, criticism, and politics," a narrative which is at present

no longer seen as central to English-Canadian culture. "Read in chronological sequence," Solecki claims, "the poems reveal an individual discovering himself and his country, and in that act of discovery describing or 'mapping' it in its full complexity." Solecki's edition of Purdy's collected letters extends our understanding of this process of mapping the self and the country. *Yours, Al* is a thick collection of letters beginning in 1947 and ending only a week before Purdy's death in April 2000. It is unusual in that it includes not only letters written by Purdy, but also many letters to him. As a result, we can follow conversations and the development of personal friendships, literary arguments, and ideas about Canadian life and society, sometimes over several decades.

Purdy clearly enjoyed writing and receiving letters; Solecki suggests that he wrote them in part to stay in practice when there were no poems or articles to be written, rather as a musician practises every day even though there may be no performances imminent. Purdy may be the last Canadian poet, as Solecki claims, but he is also one of the last typists, Canadian or otherwise. So along with a disappearing set of poetic and political attitudes, this book implies a lament for a disappearing technology. Poets will continue to write letters, but now that e-mail and word-processing have largely replaced the typewriter, one wonders if it will soon become impossible ever again to assemble such a comprehensive collection of letters of a contemporary Canadian poet—or of anybody else.

Solecki has included brief biographies of all Purdy's correspondents just before their first appearances, and plenty of helpful footnotes identifying people, events, and books referred to in the letters. The effect is a narrative line in which Purdy appears as a central figure not only in his own story but also in the literary history of the period. He did not correspond with absolutely everybody—not Dorothy Livesay, for example, nor Gwendolyn MacEwen nor Margaret Avison—but the list of his regular correspondents over a period of years is pretty impressive: Earle Birney, Irving Layton, Margaret Laurence, Milton Acorn, Margaret Atwood, Dennis Lee, Jack McClelland, and George Woodcock are major players, and George Bowering, Northrop Frye, John Glassco, Pierre Trudeau, and John Newlove make appearances. Solecki comments on the absence of letters to and from Purdy's wife Eurithe, noting that the two did not correspond because they were seldom apart. But there is only one letter—a rather impersonal one—to his son Brian, and no references to him in other letters. The single letter is cordial enough, but one wonders what kind of father-son story is not being told here, and why.

One good reason to read this book is for the comments to and about other literary figures. He admires F.R. Scott but says he was not one of the "great poets." He argues endlessly with Milton Acorn; he likes and admires Irving Layton, but sees his limitations too ("his concern for publicity and mistaking [his poetic] ability"), and supports Elspeth Cameron, Layton's biographer, against Layton's vitriolic attacks on her work. There's a delightfully sarcastic letter to Warren Tallman, noting Tallman's enthusiastic support of American poets reading in BC, and wondering when Tallman might use his US connections and citizenship to organize readings by Canadian poets in the US. And his dislike of the Black Mountain poets, their Canadian disciples ("Davey and his boys"), and their model William Carlos Williams is frequently expressed. He and John Glassco exchanged parodies of Williams, and he seems to have got into some ill-tempered arguments on the subject with Fred Wah and others.

On one occasion Purdy writes to John Newlove: "Reading Livesay is too big a penalty for doing your antho. The only really good woman poet I know is Atwood."

We would like to hear more about Livesay, but are not surprised that Atwood is the only woman poet who makes it into these pages. The letters between her and Purdy are mostly good-humoured and respectful, occasionally testy; Purdy's comments to others about Atwood, however, indicate some reservations about her work: "I think perhaps the worst fault I could find with Atwood's novels is that I think they're written to some kind of formula, a fashionable formula, as it turns out." "But she is a writer more than being a poet. . . . Somebody invented her, and it wasn't her." Likewise, Purdy's long-standing friendships with Birney, Acorn, and Layton do not preclude his expressing opinions about them to which they all probably would have taken exception. We should not be offended by such inconsistencies; they are the product of a man who had a gift for friendship as well as strong literary and political opinions. These letters should be cherished not only as documents of their historical moment, but also as fine letters in themselves. Solecki, as always, has done Purdy proud.

This Much is True

Lisa Appignanesi
The Memory Man: A Novel. McArthur $24.95

Kristjana Gunnars
Any Day But This: Stories. Red Deer $29.95

Reviewed by Lisa Grekul

Knowing that the fictional world of a literary text is often shaped by its author's lived experiences and personal memory, but acknowledging, at the same time, that even the most self-consciously autobiographical writing is mediated by the writer's imagination means that we all understand how futile it is to look for clear-cut lines between what is "true" and what is not; yet few of us, I think, can say that we have never speculated from time to time where such lines might be drawn.

Anyone who is familiar with Appignanesi's impressive oeuvre—which includes eight novels and six works of non-fiction—will recognize immediately that *The Memory Man* revisits the subject matter of her highly-acclaimed family memoir, *Losing the Dead*. The latter is an exploration of her family members'—and especially her parents'—experiences as Polish Jews during World War II. (Appignanesi herself was born in Poland after the war but raised in Paris and Montreal; she now lives in London.) In *Losing the Dead*, as she searches for the "truth" about her family's past, Appignanesi draws upon official histories, family stories, personal memories of her childhood, and her own observations of Poland as an adult —concluding, in the end, that storytelling is as necessary as it is unavoidable in the business of reconstructing the past. "The past," she says, near the beginning of the book, "is always coloured by invention," and she repeats, near the conclusion, that "everything is open to invention."

More overtly "inventive" than *Losing the Dead*, *The Memory Man* narrates the story of Bruno Lind, an aging Polish Jew who struggles to come to terms with his experiences during the war. The novel opens as Lind, an internationally renowned, London-based neuroscientist, arrives in Vienna (the city in which he was born but to which he has not returned in years) for a conference on memory. Considering that he is an expert in the field, Lind's inability to recall details of his childhood and adolescence is ironic, but fragmented recollections of his past begin to come back to him as he re-encounters the landscapes of his formative years with his adopted daughter Amelia (who presses him to talk about the war), one Aleksander Tarski (who has played a darkly mysterious role in Lind's life story), and Irena Davies (a non-Jewish Pole who is, for her own mysterious reasons, masquerading as a journalist). As with *Losing the Dead*, *The Memory Man* is rife with

reflection on the nature of memory—how and why the past haunts those who have experienced intense trauma; the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of forgetting. At once a scientist who objectively studies the brain, and a subjective witness to horrors that are imprinted on his own, Lind comes to realize that his "flashbulb memories" of terror he witnessed (and in some cases only heard about) are not the result of random neurological activity: experiences and stories alike become memory, and memory becomes embodied. He holds the past "[h]ere," he says, "inside. In his brain . . . History wasn't bunk. It was a long trail of flashbulb memories."

On its own, the plotline of *The Memory Man* is interesting, albeit contrived from time to time (especially as the four main characters travel to Poland together and mysteries are unravelled), but what really makes this novel compelling is its relation to *Losing the Dead*. Scholarly readers—especially those who study autobiography and/or theorize trauma—will have much to say, I'm sure, about the elements of Appignanesi's family history that appear in both books. (Lind's anxiety about his circumcised penis reminds us of Appignanesi's father, Aron, who was afraid that his circumcision would betray his Jewishness; Lind's father's brash encounters with SS soldiers are reminiscent of Aron's; and readers will note that, just as *Losing the Dead* concludes with Appignanesi visiting her father's grave, so too does Lind go to his father's grave in the final scene of *The Memory Man*.) Importantly, too, the two narrative strands that emerge in *The Memory Man* (Lind's past-story and present-story) match the narrative structure of *Losing the Dead*. Does Appignanesi's decision to revisit her family history through Bruno Lind's story mean that she has come to terms with her family's past or that she is still grappling with it? Given that neither the author nor her publisher seeks to hide the parallels between *The Memory Man* and *Losing the Dead* (the same wartime photograph of Appignanesi's mother appears on the covers of both and the novel's back cover blurb tells us that, with this book, Appignanesi "returns to the terrain" of her family memoir), how do we read her ostensible movement away from non-fiction and toward fiction?

No stranger to genre-bending herself, Kristjana Gunnars has published—in addition to several collections of poetry (*Exiles Among You*, *Silence of the Country*), short fiction (*The Axe's Edge*, *The Guest House*), and essays (*Stranger at the Door*)—a number of prose books that defy clear-cut generic categorization. (*Zero Hero*, written after her father's death, is perhaps the best example, combining as it does elements of autobiography, biography, elegy, literary theory, and travelogue.) In *Any Day But This*, Gunnars gives us thirteen stories that are loosely connected—the central characters in many stories reappear as minor characters in others—but the book as a whole does not cross generic boundaries as overtly as some of her creative non-fiction, and certainly there is none of the blatant borrowing from "real life" that characterizes Appignanesi's novel. Indeed, the stories in *Any Day But This* can be read for what they transparently are: finely-crafted, fictional snapshots of individuals (most from Alberta and/or the Sunshine Coast) who struggle with the feeling they're not quite where they should be; that they somehow have not made the right series of decisions and choices. Nancy, for example, in "Dancing in the Marketplace," aspires to more than the hand-to-mouth existence she ekes out in Hope with her pantyhose-wearing busker-boyfriend. "I took a wrong turn somewhere in life," she says. In "The Road Between Wind and Water," Joanie, whose mother is dying and whose daughter is a constant source of disappointment, "feel[s] like [she's] losing control." And Carla, in "Pleasure Liberty Cannot Know," suffers from "life-

vertigo," the realization that it takes "less and less for her to feel like [she has] lost her balance." All of Gunnars' characters are touched in some way by personal pathos, if not tragedy: John Henry grieves for his deceased wife in "The Secret Source of Tears"; in "Directions in Which We Move," Arne Ibsen mulls over the reasons for his failed marriage; in "Every Shade of Meaning" Martha deals with an unwanted pregnancy after being raped. And regardless of the specific circumstances that the characters find themselves in, most seem to arrive at the same paralyzing conclusions: as Arne says, you are "safe nowhere as long as you [are] alive"; and, in Carla's words, "[w]hatever your life is, wherever you take yourself, it's still you . . . You're trapped in your life." But I think that Gunnars' final story, "Angels Hide Their Faces" (about a husband and his self-doubting, anxiety-ridden writer-wife) delivers the underlying message of *Any Day But This*—and it is a positive one: "every now and then what you've done makes a big difference to someone. The rest doesn't matter."

Readers who know even a little about Gunnars' background—that she was born in Iceland, that she recently retired from her position as Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Alberta—will catch indications of the author's ethnicity in her stories, and suspect that in many of them she is working through her own ambivalence about the academic institution. There are a great many references to Nordic culture throughout *Any Day But This* and a striking number of academic and/or writerly characters (whose experiences, I hasten to add, are guaranteed to resonate with her academic readers. I certainly saw myself in Elly's office hours, when consulting with students "she subjected them to her counsel" and then "invariably wondered whether she had said the right thing"). In a telling commentary, however, on the differences between Appignanesi's novel and Gunnars' stories, the autobiographical elements of *Any Day But This* have no real bearing on what we take away from the book. The same cannot quite be said of *The Memory Man*, a novel that both requires and restricts us to autobiographical interpretations. Gunnars' writing may be nuanced by her lived experiences, but we ultimately glean more "truth" from the fiction of it.

To Tell the Story

John Beverley
Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth. U of Minnesota P $18.95

Reviewed by Hugh Hazelton

Testimonial writing is a relatively new genre that has had an enormous impact on the definition and meaning of literature in Latin America during the past several decades, and John Beverley is one of its clearest and most succinct proponents. This collection of four essays, the first of which was originally published in 1989 and the last in 2001, works toward a definition of testimonial writing and offers an overview of the genre, searching for its roots in Latin American and other literatures. It also delves into a detailed discussion and analysis of probably the best-known testimonial work to date, *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman of Guatemala*. Together with other specialists in Latin American literature such as Elzbieta Sklodowska and Doris Sommers, Beverley, who teaches Hispanic literature at the University of Pittsburgh, has been one of the leading theorists of testimonial writing and its place in literature.

Beverley defines testimonial writing (or "narrative," as he prefers to call it) as "a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a

'life' or a significant life experience." He is something of a classicist in his definition of the genre: he believes that such writing should most often be associated with a member of a clearly subaltern culture, and—even though narratives may be mediated by an experienced writer who transcribes the text—literary devices should not be allowed to encroach overly much on the "reality" of the text. The testimonial texts that he holds as canonical are those of Rigoberta Menchú, Domitila Barrios, and the interlocutors recorded by Miguel Barnet, as well as Roque Dalton and the Sandinistas, though he also is willing to include works by Reinaldo Arenas and Alexander Solzhenitsyn as part of the genre. Beverley is careful to point out that although testimonial narrative has its roots in the picaresque novels of Spain and the ambiguously historical-personal *crónicas* of the Spanish Conquest, it is ultimately concerned with transmitting a factual description of suffering by a person of a generally disenfranchised subgroup, and "appears therefore as an extraliterary or even antiliterary form of discourse."

The strength of this slender but complex study of testimonial narrative is its unabashed linkage of the genre to political struggle. In the introduction to the essays, Beverley clearly outlines the heritage of testimonial writing within the framework of issues of social justice and revolutionary movements, yet he recognizes the limitations of its debt to Marxism and is intrigued by the innovative connection that has developed between the identity politics of subaltern groups marginalized by monolithic "modern" societies and the genre of testimonial narrative. Within this context Beverley takes a close look at the Rigoberta Menchú narrative, revealing the complexity of its meanings and commenting on the deeper limitations and less overtly politicized motivations behind anthropologist David Stoll's celebrated attack on its veracity.

The four essays overlap somewhat and the more theoretical introductory text might have been better placed as an afterword. But Beverley's study is a step forward in defining an emerging genre that is "by nature a protean and demotic form not yet subject to legislation by a normative literary establishment," and through which an increasingly monocultural society can discover the energy hidden in the voices of the dispossessed.

Of Note

Allen Carlson and Arnold Berleant, eds.
The Aesthetics of Natural Environments.
Broadview $29.95

The always memorable rainbow striations of Tom Thomson's "The Jack Pine" grace this book's cover. But the sixteen essays allude to very few Canadian scenes, or texts (Wiebe in passing; even to the redoubtable Neil Evernden only once), or works of art. Nonetheless, the field of environmental aesthetics—all the writers but one are professors of philosophy—is not obviously capable of division by nation-state boundary. I found valuable potential in the concepts of acentrism, and the "postcardesque." Literature students are likely to find particular interest in the commentary on *listening*, especially in John Andrew Fisher's "What the Hills are Alive With," an exuberant argument, with frequent nods to R. Murray Schafer, for including analysis of non-musical sounds in any aesthetic of nature. Of more immediate literary relevance are several essays on landscape description in literature, and on the power of story as shaper of aesthetic appreciation of environments. — LAURIE RICOU

Robert McGill
The Mysteries. McClelland & Stewart $32.99

Robert McGill's impressive first novel begins with two epigraphs that provide useful hints to the reader about what is to follow. The first is from Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book*, a poem that explores a crime through the dramatic monologues of a number of different characters. McGill follows Browning's method, shifting his point of view in each chapter of the novel, and also moving back and forth in time, as he tells the story of the mysterious disappearance of Alice Pederson. The second epigraph is from Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, and signals that like Leacock and Alice Munro, McGill is giving us a picture of life in a small Ontario town: in the course of the story, its name is changed by plebiscite from Mooney's Dump to Sunshine. There is some comedy in *The Mysteries*, but life in McGill's town is much less gentle than in Leacock's, as the troubled lives of his characters are overshadowed by injustices, mysteries, and secrets.

McGill's narrative technique is complex and ambitious—one of the chapter titles pays homage to Joyce's *Ulysses*—and it has not won universal praise. Certainly the reader must become acquainted with a bewildering number of characters; some of the point of view shifts cause confusion on first reading; and I am not fond of the device of printing one of the levels of narrative in italics. But the justification of the technique is that the novel succeeds in creating a thoroughly believable fictional world. Mooney's Dump sits there in the imagination, as real as the small town you grew up in. The major characters similarly have the kind of imaginative conviction that makes you believe they go on existing after the novel is over. McGill takes many risks; he just about gets away with narrating one of the chapters from the point of view of a tiger. His use of imagery and symbolism is also noteworthy, particularly the recurrent motif of the disposal of bones, whether human or animal.

A number of characters seem to represent aspects of the author in his role as local chronicler. The town bum, a compulsive collector of other people's garbage, shares with the insurance investigator Bronwen Ferry the desire to restore order to the community. People are always trying to leave Mooney's Dump, but usually they return, and one of the returnees is the former hockey star whose yellow notebook is an image for the novel itself (and another connection with Browning, whose *Ring and the Book* is based on a story in an "old yellow book"). This novel has an almost Victorian exuberance of invention, combined with a high degree of literary artifice that for the most part holds everything together. *The Mysteries* is an exceptional literary debut.
— J. RUSSELL PERKIN

J.A. Wainwright, ed.
Every Grain of Sand: Canadian Perspectives on Ecology and Environment. Wilfrid Laurier UP $24.95

It's a little difficult to determine the *Canadian* perspective in this collection of 13 short essays, other than that places (and place names) in Canada (Waterton Lakes National Park, Dryden, Labrador, or Cape Breton) form locus and habitat. But Carolyn Merchant, Rachel Carson, William Cronon, Thoreau, and especially Aldo Leopold are the crucial and regular points of reference. Editor Wainwright recognizes the border-bounding dynamic of ecology by ending his idyll to childhood places (for example Glenwood Pond, near Newmarket) with adult memories of Weymouth, England and an imagined encounter with the drowned Shelley on a visit to Pisa and Viareggio. Generally, the essays combine policy and the personal. Hence, they are neither quite

rigorously analytical nor soaringly lyrical. Where the writing veers toward the touchy-feely, it will then shift back to trenchant critique. As Trish Glazebrook argues in "Toward an Eco-feminist Phenomenology of Nature," when dealing with a phenomenon that "always exceeds interpretation," it is necessary to be "tentative and open to revision." In her openness, Leanne Simpson relies on accumulating quotation to convey Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Readers of this journal will find particular stimulation in the narrative and political implications of her comments on language and the problematics of translation in, or from, indigenous languages. — LAURIE RICOU

Pamela Porter
The Crazy Man. Groundwood $12.95

Although this book is packaged as a young adult's novel, and was honoured with the Governor-General's award for Children's Literature, 2005, it has much to offer an adult reader. It involved me from the opening page, and for all its small-town Saskatchewan and growing-up-on-the-farm mythology, it might almost be said to re-invent the prairie novel. The publisher terms the presentation "free verse," but I would prefer to call the method "measured prose," somewhat reminiscent, perhaps, of Wendy Wickwire's transcriptions of Harry Robinson, where the speaking rhythms and rhythmic repetitions are foregrounded. Among the pleasures of this novel are the muted longing in the young girl's expression, the explications of the 1960s definitions of "crazy"—and, perhaps most impressively, Porter's play with a verbal colour palette that tempts us to read this initiation narrative as impressionism, studied in its composite detail, and intelligently sentimental. — LAURIE RICOU

Stephen Hume
Off the Map: Western Travels on Roads Less Taken. Harbour $32.95

Among these thirty gracefully burnished essays, mainly on aspects of British Columbia history and geography, perhaps the most important for readers of this journal, is "Rain Language." Hume ponders the disappearance of North America's indigenous languages: of more than fifty aboriginal languages spoken in Canada, seventeen are extinct or nearly so; all but three of the rest "are in profound retreat." Every time we lose one of these languages, we lose an *entire literature*, which may just mean losing some species of understanding and knowing crucial to the survival of humankind. Hume's journalism—many of the essays first appeared in *The Vancouver Sun*—compels attention because it reaches toward a study of language: often he is asking us to pay attention to another Canadian language, asking us to teach ourselves, whatever our limitations, to read and imagine and speak aloud some elements of those languages. — LAURIE RICOU

France Daigle. À propos des jeux de l'art et du hasard

Cécilia W. Francis

Dans deux de ses romans récents, *Un fin passage* et *Petites difficultés de l'existence*, France Daigle propose une réflexion subtile sur la fonction de l'art et du geste créateur, qu'ils se manifestent au plan individuel ou en lien avec la vie de la cité. On décèle là un désir chez la romancière acadienne d'approfondir un filon important exploré dans *Pas pire* (1998), autofiction éclatée, qui lui a permis de s'examiner en tant que femme sujet créateur, souffrant de délires aliénants (l'agoraphobie), mais en mesure d'accéder à un dépassement de soi qui culmine dans une mise en scène de sa propre consécration en tant qu'écrivaine. La séquence en question, à la fois loufoque et grave, où une France Daigle fictive passe une entrevue médiatique sur le plateau de Bernard Pivot lors de la prestigieuse émission télévisuelle, *Bouillon de culture*, représente un moment fort où la scriptrice s'explique, précise la dimension éthique de sa démarche esthétique. On découvre que l'apaisement de la maladie a nécessité un travail d'intériorisation considérable, rendant la protagoniste sensible à elle-même, aux autres, à ses appartenances culturelles et surtout capable de se réconcilier avec un legs ancestral victimaire dont elle est héritière. Le travail de guérison l'a poussée à cultiver un regard tout personnel, à adopter une vision de la réalité qui échappe aux normes en vogue, aux stéréotypes courants.[1] L'artiste, d'insister France Daigle, a « le devoir de transcender la réalité par fabulation pour brasser les fausses certitudes que l'on a et qui nous enferment ».[2]

Dans les deux romans suivants, situés bien à l'écart du récit historique ou du traité folklorique, au style léger mais dense, il ne s'agit jamais de drame à grands éclats, ni de péripéties à rebondissements spectaculaires. On dépeint plutôt les tensions et les moments de détente qui scandent la vie de tous les jours à laquelle participent des personnages relevant plutôt de l'ordinaire, qui cherchent à se comprendre au plan existentiel (*Un fin passage*), ou bien, se trouvent impliqués dans la réalisation d'un projet communautaire commun (*Petites difficultés d'existence*). Si le thème de la créativité qui sous-tend et propulse l'action s'inscrit ainsi au plan du quotidien, s'assimilant aux menus gestes, dialogues, interactions, sentiments, perceptions, lubies et rêves qui caractérisent le vécu des personnages, sa présence est tout aussi palpable au niveau de la diégèse qui commande la structuration foncièrement ludique de chaque texte.

Un fin passage ou la fonction salvatrice de l'art et ses avatars

Un fin passage regroupe une galerie de personnages qui se retrouvent pour la plupart à un moment de transition, non seulement littéral, occupés qu'ils sont à se déplacer en avion, en autocar, en train ou à pied, mais

également au plan figuré, puisqu'ils sont tous confrontés à une transformation progressive. Celle-ci est implicitement infléchie par des considérations qui relèvent du domaine artistique. Hans, le voyageur hollandais de *Pas pire*, continue ses pérégrinations; on le retrouve d'abord à San Francisco, où il entreprend une thérapie à mesure qu'il se défait de ses possessions, mais il semble découvrir bien davantage à propos de lui-même à l'aide d'une activité à laquelle il s'adonne avec passion, soit la réalisation d'un casse-tête reproduisant une scène hivernale, toile attribuée à Jan Bruegel, *Paysage d'hiver*.[3] Hans vivra, en effet, un véritable moment *esthésique*, sorte de fracture inattendue du cours banal de sa vie débouchant sur le sublime,[4] lorsqu'un détail du casse-tête surgit et happe « son regard », à savoir « le moulin à vent quelque peu délabré situé à mi-hauteur du tableau, légèrement à gauche » (35). Cet événement est d'autant plus inoubliable qu'il lui révèle, à la manière d'un véritable chef-d'œuvre, des aspects inusités d'une réalité qu'il connaît pourtant bien : « Curieusement, c'était comme si Hans voyait ce paysage pour la première fois. Comme s'il n'avait pas vécu toute sa vie aux Pays-Bas. » (35).[5] Plus tard, il traversera le continent pour aboutir à Baltimore, où dans un ultime geste d'authenticité il se défait de toutes ses possessions, y compris la toile prisée (127), clé ésotérique de son bonheur.

Jeune couple monctonien, Terry et Carmen (re)font également leur apparition; on les rencontre dans l'avion qui les amène en France où ils désirent non seulement renouer avec le pays de leurs ancêtres, mais aussi découvrir le delta qui les avait intrigués dans *Pas pire*. Ils se dirigent d'abord vers Paris et ensuite vers le delta du Rhône, soudés dans une intimité amoureuse ponctuée de sentiments d'angoisse et d'euphorie accompagnant leur attente d'un enfant à naître. De plus, ils transportent avec eux une saveur régionaliste typique du sud-est du Nouveau-Brunswick en vertu de leur langue parlée, le *chiac*, et par leurs descriptions colorées de la ville de Moncton, dépeinte comme métropole d'accueil aux peintres et aux artistes visuels, foisonnant de *happenings* artistiques (101-104).

Dans ce même avion, on fait la connaissance d'une adolescente, Claudia, collégienne qui voyage de Philadelphie en Israël pour retrouver ses parents engagés dans des causes, vivant dans un kibboutz, et qui, à mesure que progressent les événements, apprendra à assumer une nouvelle indépendance vis-à-vis de sa famille, exprimée par l'affirmation du besoin de « ses propres secrets » (93), de « son propre regard » (93). C'est à travers celle-ci et notamment par le biais de ses conversations d'allure philosophico-spirituelle, lors de son voyage, avec une sorte de prêtre générique, « un pope grec ayant quelque chose d'un rabbin » (9), qu'on rencontre le personnage central, « l'homme qui n'a pas l'air de lire » (18). Se passant de toute description physique, ce dernier dont le patronyme n'est jamais divulgué afin qu'on puisse le découvrir de l'intérieur, à partir de ses paroles, son monologue intérieur, ses émotions et ses gestes,[6] est un peintre en panne d'inspiration (je le dénomme l'homme-peintre)[7] qui, dans *Petites difficultés*, réapparaîtra sous le nom d'Étienne Zablonski. Si, comme on le dit, il a l'air d'être « trop aérien » (76), de voyager « sans but précis » (91), cet homme provenant de Baltimore connaîtra une métamorphose, grâce principalement à ses rencontres et échanges avec Claudia, avec Terry et Carmen, et enfin avec Hans, qui le ramèneront à sa compagne délaissée (nommée « la femme qui ne fume qu'en public », 33) et vers un nouveau départ dans la création artistique.

Enfin si ces protagonistes se trouvent du côté de la vie, du « souffle » (11), et bénéficient ainsi d'énergies passionnelles et créatrices, leur existence entre en contraste frappant avec un personnage énigmatique,

un « suicidé inexact » (22), retenu par erreur dans « l'aile des suicidés exacts » (31), sorte de narrateur intradiégétique parlant d'outre-tombe; on ressent tout son déchirement d'avoir laissé trop tôt son épouse et son jeune fils, et il regrette surtout de sa vie le manque d'un regard, « un regard qui m'aurait permis de sortir de moi-même, d'échapper à mes limites » (22). Cette insistance sur le *regard* qui renvoie en l'occurrence au regard de l'autre, que ce soit celui d'un parent proche, d'un ami ou de soi-même en tant que double, sous-entend une présence affective, vitale pour l'épanouissement de l'humain. Mais en même temps cette importance du regard, en tant qu'acte perceptif permettant d'interagir avec le monde, recèle l'idée de regard esthétique et de geste créateur, producteurs d'univers capables de transcender le banal. Bien qu'on en sache peu au sujet de sa vie, le « suicidé inexact » est lui-même identifié au monde créateur, notamment à celui de la musique classique. Mélomane, c'est en fouillant dans le coffre à gants de sa voiture pour trouver une cassette de *Notes orphelines* de Barencourt qu'il dérape et que son accident de voiture se produit. Son geste esquissé, laissé en quelque sorte en suspens, trouvera une résolution dans « la dernière parcelle de l'infime énergie » (129) que le mort parvient à diriger vers la terre, en faisant glisser ces *Notes orphelines* entre les mains de Claudia qui, retrouvée dans une boutique à Philadelphie, décide spontanément d'acheter le disque.

Cet exemple témoigne de l'aspect fluide et volatile de l'intrigue qui s'organise à partir de jeux du hasard et e croisements inusités. Car lors des premiers propos échangés entre Claudia et l'homme-peintre, durant une longue escale, celui-ci lui pose la question: « Vous n'êtes pas musicienne, par hasard? » (38), comme quoi cette présomption, se reproduisant ailleurs,[8] impliquait que le destin est une question de hasards, de choix impulsifs ou de moments charnières, qui auraient pu dicter autrement le cours d'une vie. Il y a néanmoins dans *Un fin passage* une orientation de ce destin vers un processus d'autodécouverte à l'aide du geste artistique, car à un autre moment où Claudia accepte de poster, à partir d'Israël, une lettre adressée à la compagne de l'homme-peintre, celui-ci donne à la jeune femme sa plume en guise d'offrande: « Claudia avait pris la plume que l'homme lui tendait, l'avait examinée. Elle était plus lourde qu'elle en avait l'air (60). » Elle inscrit ensuite le nom et l'adresse de la femme de l'enveloppe dans son carnet.

Ce genre d'autoréflexion de la fonction scriptrice a son corollaire au niveau des couches plus ténues d'*Un fin passage* qui donnent de l'épaisseur au discours largement submergé et immanent autour de l'art. On découvre, par exemple, que « la femme qui ne fume qu'en public », qui réapparaît sous les traits de Ludmilla dans *Petites difficultés*, travaille dans le monde de l'édition, et qu'elle est une lectrice avide qui ne se gêne pas pour émettre son verdict sur les tendances esthétiques en matière d'écriture romanesque: « - Et au travail, ça va? - Bof. Ils ont cru que les gens voulaient relire Balzac, alors on refait du Balzac. Mais ça achève. » (28) Ayant des résonances importantes du coté de l'évolution de la forme romanesque, notamment au cours de la seconde moitié du vingtième siècle,[9] cette critique allusive du réalisme, aux échos ironiques, fournit une clé de décodage des enjeux de l'autodécouverte. D'abord, le jeu créateur qui commande la structure d'*Un fin passage* produit pour l'ensemble du roman une impression de glissement, de flottement, recréant ainsi un univers onirique où s'opère une sorte de dilution des repères spatio-temporels. Ceux-ci sont commandés en fonction d'un cycle hebdomadaire, impliquant pour chaque chapitre un jour particulier de la semaine ayant sa signification symbolique, mais où les jours échappent à leur séquence chronologique.

D'un côté, on rassemble ainsi dans un tout interstellaire plusieurs microcosmes séparés par la distance, réunis en vertu d'un semblable cadre d'organisation sociale, à teneur biblique et mythique. Mais de l'autre, en raison de la dislocation des jours, on insiste plutôt sur une approche irréductiblement phénoménologique de la mise en forme des séquences temporelles, de la temporalisation de l'espace—renforcée par la présence de l'avion, du vent, des instruments à vent—qui acquiert de cette manière une fluidité, une capacité de refiguration, d'imbrication et de superposition (idée faisant écho aux multiples échanges et trocs d'objets reliés au geste créateur) mimant parfaitement la notion d'imprévu, de coïncidence et de chance, forces mystérieuses à l'œuvre dans toute démarche artistique.

La recréation d'une nouvelle réalité romanesque,[10] à la fois plus éthérée et utopique, par le biais de l'importance accordée aux sens et aux voies perceptives d'une observatrice-narratrice au plan énonciatif, accuse un prolongement du côté de l'homme-peintre, dont la disposition artistique, qu'il croit tarie, se divulgue au moyen d'une panoplie de modalités perceptives. Cet artiste dont l'inspiration s'estompe continue à s'engager dans des champs de présence perceptifs[11] très riches, à mesure qu'il se déplace d'un espace à l'autre, capte des aspects insolites de son environnement et entre en communication avec d'autres interlocuteurs. Ses sens, sensoriels et physiques, sont les vecteurs de son ouverture constante à diverses formes d'altérité qui, finalement, le ramèneront au métier délaissé. À s'attarder seulement sur la vue,[12] nécessaire à la fabrication d'œuvres iconiques, on retient la fascination de l'homme-peintre devant une partition découverte de Gabriel Pierné, *Prélude et Fughetta pour septuor à vent*, notamment à l'égard de « la graphie de la partition » (18); cette attention lui permet, fort de sa perception de multiples signes musicaux, d'entendre au plan imaginaire les sonorités entremêlées de « deux flûtes, un hautbois, une clarinette, un cor et deux bassons » (18). Cette capacité de réception synesthésique du monde, engageant souvent deux sens simultanément, il l'actualise constamment, puisque c'est par des « effets de couleur » (20) lui venant à l'esprit qu'il peut envisager des concepts « abstraits ou carrément insaisissables. » (20) On remarque également que la saisie visuelle chez l'homme-peintre est souvent accompagnée d'un état de mobilité, comme lors de la première rencontre avec Claudia, précédée par une « errance » (36) dans l'aile détente d'une aérogare, état déambulatoire qui ouvre l'espace et débouche sur une sorte d'appréhension plastique de la jeune femme, comme si elle-même ressortissait d'un tableau qui émerge du hasard: « . . . il aperçoit Claudia, assise face à un mur de fenêtres donnant sur les pistes d'envol, le dos tourné à un tableau de bleus et de verts entremêlés . . . Claudia tourne la tête à ce moment précis, et leurs regards se croisent. » (36)

L'influence que tous deux exercent l'un sur l'autre dans leurs réorientations respectives est déterminante, d'autant plus que c'est par la présence de Claudia que le roman s'ouvre et s'achève. À cet égard, l'*incipit* est particulièrement éclairant. On assiste à une séquence de perception visuelle au moment où la jeune femme, à bord de l'avion, fixe à travers son hublot un amas de nuages blancs, comme si elle examinait une toile.

> Claudia regarde par le hublot de l'avion qui survole l'étendue ondulée de nuages blancs. Toute la mécanique du monde lui semble lisse en ce moment. Le soleil brille sans entraves au-dessus de cette mer blanche éclatante, et le ciel n'exprime rien d'autre que son immensité essentielle. (9)

Capté en nuances de blancheur, ce tableau exempt de représentation figurative décelable

ne fait que rehausser l'importance de l'acte perceptif visuel qui préside à son appréhension, cet acte étant accompagné d'une sensation de bien-être, d'émerveillement. Participant d'une « immensité essentielle » traversée de luminosité, l'événement perceptif inaugural, en raison de sa position stratégique, qui engendre la suite du récit, désigne effectivement un instant inchoatif à partir duquel se propulsera un nouveau projet de vie, dont les contours se préciseront plus clairement après la rencontre de l'homme-peintre. Claudia incarne ainsi la *virtualisation* d'un faire artistique: elle endosse implicitement le geste créateur, profère par anticipation un appel à l'homme-peintre, l'enjoignant de saturer cette immense blancheur en attente de formes et de couleurs. Grâce à sa mise en relation avec Claudia, ce dernier connaîtra bel et bien un nouvel éveil à la création, dépourvue cette fois des anciennes contraintes tant soit peu canoniques, car au lieu de chercher à tout prix à retenir la lumière, il comprend que « nous n'avons pas à la retenir, elle se fait. Oui, c'est ça. Elle se fait. Comme maintenant. » (125) Et l'annonce de ce renouveau créateur se confirme doublement dans un geste significatif posé par Terry et Carmen. Certes, ils font la promotion de Moncton en tant que ville qui déborde de dynamisme artistique auprès de leur nouveau compagnon qui en est impressionné. Mais la promotion de l'art se circonscrit davantage autour de ce dernier lorsque le jeune couple, après un moment d'hésitation, décide à Arles, ville empreinte des traces de Van Gogh, de vendre le précieux cadeau qu'il avait offert à Carmen « pour le voyage, pour le bébé », (110) soit une épinglette sertie de diamants. Avec l'argent de la vente du bijou, le couple décide, une fois de retour à Moncton, de se procurer une toile de provenance acadienne, peut-être « une grande d'Yvon Gallant » (129), et que cette toile, on l'admirera en souvenir de l'homme-peintre. « Ben, y peinturait lui-même. Ça pourrait être comme un honneur pour lui, tant qu'à moi. » (129)

Petites difficultés de l'existence
L'art et ses dimensions esthétique, prosaïque et spirituelle

Quelle est la signification de ces jeux du hasard d'où ressort la fonction salvatrice de l'art? Essentiellement celui-ci est le véhicule d'une quête de bonheur et de rêve, comme l'affirme Claudia, après avoir témoigné secrètement du retour de l'homme-peintre à sa compagne, qu'il lui a ainsi « créé du rêve », (128) c'est-à-dire munie d'une capacité d'engendrer, ne serait-ce qu'au plan imaginaire, de nouveaux *mondes possibles*. Ce dénouement anticipe sur *Petites difficultés d'existence* où l'on dénote cependant des métamorphoses. Autant *Un fin passage* se veut une radioscopie de l'âme dans toute sa profondeur universelle et unanimiste, autant *Petites difficultés* représente une manifestation plus concrète de la vie, puisque les drames dépeints adoptent comme cadre socioculturel la ville de Moncton, où la recherche du rêve se transpose aux diverses manières que les acteurs trouvent de sortir de leurs *petites difficultés*, notamment en poursuivant le chemin de l'art qui y adopte essentiellement trois formes.

La première, esthétique, redevable à la présence d'Étienne Zablonski, participe de l'art pour ainsi dire institutionnalisé. Toute la lumière se fait alors autour du mystérieux homme-peintre qui finit par déménager à Moncton, où lui et sa conjointe Ludmilla participent à une seconde forme d'art, plus prosaïque: le réaménagement d'un entrepôt délabré en lofts, en résidences pour artistes (169). Si Zablonski met à contribution ses talents de concepteur artistique dans la réfection du vieux bâtiment (143), sa présence est encore plus significative du fait qu'il est identifié à un mouvement d'avant-garde par lequel le projet collectif de

rénovation acquiert non seulement du prestige, mais s'inscrit dans une mouvance d'innovation.

Connu pour avoir fait démarrer un mouvement esthétique dénommé « Prizon art » (138),[13] grâce auquel des détenus sont réhabilités, le peintre accède à la renommée malgré lui. Victime d'un incendie qui détruit sa maison et ses toiles, Zablonski est étrangement reconnaissant au pyromane de l'avoir obligé à se renouveler. En signe d'appréciation, il envoie au coupable interné l'une de ses toiles célèbres (d'une valeur de près de dix mille dollars), conservée dans un musée américain. « [U]n mélange assourdissant de couleurs et d'élans brisés, mesur[ant] six pieds de largeur sur quatre pieds de hauteur » (79), la toile en question décore la cellule du détenu, partagée avec trois autres prisonniers. La portée humanisante de l'art dans le contexte particulier de l'incarcération se matérialise lorsqu' « après exposition intense » (139) les détenus décrochent la toile et se trouvent confrontés à la nudité du mur qu'ils ne peuvent percevoir autrement que par le prisme de l'œuvre de Zablonski. Voilà pourquoi ils ne sauraient résister à une sorte de sollicitation subliminale qui s'est opérée, par « leur découverte de l'épaisseur de l'art » (81), ce qui les pousse à entreprendre la création de leurs propres tableaux. Le renouvellement esthétique que connaîtra Zablonski à Moncton présuppose une semblable épiphanie artistique, précédée également par son passage (symbolique) par une vacuité indissociable de l'espace blanc. Rappelons que l'incendie qui fut le catalyseur du déménagement du couple Zablonski à New York n'a pas donné les résultats escomptés, ce qui incite Étienne et Ludmilla à chercher du ressourcement dans le sud-est du Nouveau-Brunswick où ils renouent avec Terry et Carmen. C'est lors de ce trajet en voiture que l'on remarque chez le peintre la mise en marche d'un processus graduel d'illumination esthétique qui commence par la traversée d'une immense zone de blancheur coextensive à la tempête de neige qui assaille le couple dans l'état du Maine. Dans sa blanche et imprévisible furie l'englobant physiquement (faisant écho à l'*incipit* d'*Un fin passage*), ce « blizzard » (110) renvoie aux notions de destin, d'attente et de mouvement, reprises dans le poème intitulé « Décembre » de Gérald Leblanc,[14] lu par Carmen le soir de la tempête :

> *Décembre. Sous l'effet du mois de décembre/ au rythme plus lent en face du blanc/l'attente enclenche l'attente/ une toupie karmique/ débobine sur le lieu/ je rapaille tous les décembres de ma vie/ et je tourne autour lentement. (107)*

Si ce poème célèbre la circularité de la blancheur hivernale, on observe relativement à la fonction esthétique une légère variante. Certes la blancheur connote, comme on l'a vu, une sorte de point *ab quo* de l'œuvre invitant à l'inauguration d'un processus créateur; mais ici, on assiste à l'ouverture de la circularité dans la mesure où Étienne Zablonski, une fois installé à Moncton, dans un loft consacré aux créateurs et à la production d'une multitude d'œuvres de tous genres, se remet à produire: « Étienne dessine . . . [d]es lignes s'ajoutent, partent dans tous les sens, mais un certain ordre règne, malgré tout. Cela danse. » (186) C'est-à-dire, d'après les paroles de Ludmilla, prononcées le soir même de la tempête de neige, il recommence à cultiver « un point de vue » (110) propre à lui, à expérimenter avec des formes et des couleurs, rebondissement éclatant de l'artiste après la destruction par le feu, susceptible de marquer « un virage important dans le parcours artistique du peintre (77). » Le retour à l'art se nourrit largement grâce à son contact stimulant avec une communauté artistique, que France Daigle recrée sous sa plume, pour ainsi dire neuve, encore largement inexplorée, empreinte effectivement de *blancheur* aussi hivernale qu'emblématique, située en pleine effervescence cuturelle et orientée vers l'avenir.

La régénération esthétique que vit Zablonski doit d'être mise en parallèle avec la réflexion presque philosophique sur l'art entreprise par le personnage de Pomme (169, 172-173). Les deux protagonistes décident de collaborer dans la mise sur pied d'une galerie d'art, abritée par l'édifice qu'on rénove. Pomme explique toutefois que le projet de galerie « c'est minime dans tout' l'affaire » (182), puisqu'il ne s'agit pas simplement de montrer et de vendre des objets d'art, soit « un premier niveau » (182). Le but ce n'est pas non plus de « refaire Duchamp, pis encore moins Warhol » (182) (le deuxième niveau). Au fond, l'artiste et l'amateur d'art visent à susciter la création de nouvelles formes artistiques—« Nous autres on cherche le troisième, peut-être même le quatrième niveau » (182)—qu'ils sont confiants de trouver de ce côté de l'Atlantique: « Y est dans l'air. On peut pas encore le voir, ben y va se montrer avant longtemps. Ça peut pas faire autre. » (182) Pomme laisse sous-entendre d'ailleurs que ce renouveau viendra de Zablonski lui-même, qui, depuis son installation dans la métropole acadienne, « travaille sus des nouvelles affaires » (183).

Étienne Zablonski se pose en adjuvant clé de la revitalisation culturelle de Moncton, vu que sa nouvelle inspiration répond effectivement à « l'espèce de sollicitation naturelle qui se dégageait de cette ville et de ses habitants » (143). Son geste créateur se rapproche ainsi d'une forme d'art plus prosaïque et utilitaire qui consiste à recycler un vieux bâtiment en appartements pour artistes. Ce projet mené de front par un jeune acadien du nom de Zed est d'autant plus inscrit dans la thématique de l'art que la séquence relatant l'inspection du vieil entrepôt par trois charpentiers et un entrepreneur en construction (81) s'emboîte textuellement dans le récit de la transformation vécue par les quatre détenus en prison, à la suite de leur longue contemplation du tableau de Zablonski.

> Le mur mis à nu les troubla aussi, car ils le regardaient maintenant comme une toile . . . Là où, auparavant, ils ne voyaient rien, il leur était aujourd'hui impossible de ne rien voir. Cette histoire de surface—ou d'œuvre totale, comme une coquille d'œuf vue de l'intérieur—finit par les remuer en profondeur. Leur découverte de l'épaisseur de l'art . . . faillit les rendre fous. Et c'est pour rompre cette espèce d'ensorcellement qu'ils s'attaquèrent aux murs de la cellule . . . jusqu'à faire suinter quelque intelligence de toutes ces perspectives déformantes. (81)

L'évaluation de l'édifice délabré de la rue Church adopte un vocabulaire similaire, car les charpentiers inspectent les « murs » de la construction, discutent de ses « surfaces » et de ses « perspectives ». Ils notent que le projet de rénovation impliquant le mélange « du neuf avec du vieux » (79) n'est pas « si aisé que ça paraît » (79) et que « ça va prendre pas mal d'invention » (80). Mais le verdict final, somme toute positif, réitère l'importance accordée à l'idée de reconversion et de recyclage observée du côté de l'art esthétique[15] :

> Moi j'aime l'idée. Ça ferait de quoi différent à travailler dessus. Pis j'aime comment c' qu'y voulont faire ça. Y'a assez de bonne trash alentour, c'est terrible des fois ça qu'y jetont, ça qu'est laissé là à ruine. (82)

Le projet de rescaper l'entrepôt en ruine pour en faire un lieu destiné à accueillir et à « aider les artistes » (169), ayant « besoin de place pour faire leurs peintures pis d'autres affaires de même » (33),[16] possède un héritage qui remonte dans le temps, ayant ses origines, de préciser Zed, à Paris où des artistes, à la recherche de luminosité et d'espace, vivaient « dans les attiques au siècle passé » (33). Transposé dans une image littéraire du Moncton d'aujourd'hui, le projet de lofts acquiert des résonances plus socio-politiques, renvoyant à l'affirmation

d'une identité acadienne renouvelée, puisqu'il constitue une métaphore du centre culturel Aberdeen (50) qui, comme l'entrepôt vétuste fictif, fut investi au commencement par un groupe d'artistes qui a assuré sa transformation graduelle en « un haut lieu de la culture sous toutes ses formes ».[17] Cette notion de projet collectif à retentissement élargi est au cœur de la vision de Zed qui, dès le départ, désire en faire une habitation coopérative qui abriterait un marché de fermiers, une librairie, un restaurant, des boutiques, un bar et une galerie d'art, réaménagement qui nécessite un engagement de la part de ses pairs. Dans l'exécution du plan ambitieux, il « oblig[e] les gens à se côtoyer, à se parler » (34). Et c'est en vertu de leur implication à diverses étapes du projet et de leurs contributions d'ordre très personnel et créateur que les collaborateurs et les collaboratrices vivent des métamorphoses, connaissent une évolution sereine et heureuse au plan existentiel, grâce notamment à leur contact positif avec le monde de l'art[18] qui, dans cette communauté culturelle de la périphérie, « fray[e] son chemin par détrempe . . . par frottement . . . » (23)

L'état de bien-être directement redevable au projet communautaire se manifeste surtout chez Terry qui pratique dans *Petites difficultés* une troisième forme d'art dite spirituelle. Proche collaborateur de Zed, Terry mène sa vie sous la dictée des voix de l'oracle, issu d'un ancien art divinatoire oriental, le Yi-King. Les prophéties se rapportant aux événements à venir, tout comme les règles de conduite à adopter, issues d'une combinaison de forces en puissance, à chaque fois différente, servent à lui « indiquer la Voie » (12). Le jeune homme se tourne vers la sagesse de l'oracle pour ordonner le côté pragmatique de la vie, pour gérer des états émotifs reliés à sa vie professionnelle, familiale et amoureuse.[19] Loin d'être fortuit, ce concept d'encadrement possède une fonction plus abstraite, étant donné qu'il fournit au roman sa structuration, chaque chapitre adoptant le titre de l'oracle consulté au cours de son déroulement, mettant ainsi au jour les influences métaphysiques qui interagissent et commandent l'existence. On note toutefois que la pratique divinatoire, comme le troisième niveau d'art loué par Pomme, présuppose son propre dépassement. Cela s'observe chez Terry non seulement dans les efforts déployés pour être un père modèle, mais aussi, avant tout, dans le désir d'améliorer son français parlé, à l'aide notamment de la consultation de dictionnaires. C'est aussi lui, secondé par Ludmilla, qui s'occupera de la librairie rattachée aux lofts. L'affirmation de soi chez Terry, assimilable au projet d'édification qui sous-tend le roman en entier (édification d'un bâtiment, d'une œuvre esthétique, d'une identité), se traduit plus visiblement au plan spirituel, en raison de son émancipation—non préméditée—de l'oracle: un jour, il découvre que la méthode des billes dont il se sert pour déduire le chiffre associé à l'oracle est truquée, qu'il s'exerce avec une bille toujours en trop (184). Ironiquement, cette découverte déconcertante s'avère être la concrétisation même de son dernier oracle qui lui prédit l'imminence d'une « délivrance miraculeuse » (184). Terry constate, en effet, qu'il n'a pas besoin du jeu divinatoire pour se conduire, car son humeur ne dépend pas d'enseignements provenant de l'extérieur, elle « dépend surtout de [soi] » (188). Ce retour à l'individu et à ses propres forces intellectuelles, créatrices et spirituelles, l'incite à s'accepter, et surtout à se complaire dans un nouvel état d'équilibre, où l'on n'est « ni en quête, ni en fuite . . . [s]ans que ce soit statique pour autant » (122). Ainsi le Yi-King se fond dans le projet communautaire indissociable de l'art, en vertu du dépassement dont il s'imprègne, rejoignant ainsi parfaitement le « troisième niveau » d'expression dont la manifestation reste encore à venir.

Pour clore cette brève mise au point du statut de la fonction artistique, on peut affirmer, en guise de synthèse, que le matériau artistique, avec ses multiples ressorts, constitue pour France Daigle une source d'inspiration intarissable. On retient surtout dans son diptyque romanesque le plus récent la prégnance de la blancheur en tant que figure de mise en abyme, renvoyant à la régénération, au renouveau, aux créations à venir, autant de leitmotivs mis en rapport directement avec une culture acadienne postmoderne. Pour ma part, cette récurrence de l'espace du blanc, examiné dans le contexte de l'art, entre en connivence intertextuelle avec une œuvre célèbre de Kazimir Malevitch, à savoir *Un carré blanc sur fond blanc* (1919-1920), par laquelle le peintre mystique en quête d'absolu entreprend une interrogation métaphysique du « point suprême » de l'art, soit « le rien devenu question ».[20] En effet, si cette toile subversive constitue « un défi et l'aboutissement d'une réflexion portant sur les principes mêmes de la peinture »[21] (notions du rapport forme-fond, du contraste couleur-non-couleur, forme-non-forme et de la variation blanc sur blanc), en tant qu'exemple d'abstraction *suprématiste* (nouveau mouvement d'art inauguré par Malevitch), elle est non moins proche de l'utopie, dans la mesure où « elle s'éloigne de toute imitation du monde, où elle bouscule la figuration du donné sensible pour laisser surgir des formes nouvelles venues de nulle part et laisser espérer un monde à construire ».[22] Dans les derniers romans daigliens, l'inscription textuelle du blanc avec toutes ses répercussions artistiques et existentielles me semble participer d'un appel similaire à la créativité. La valeur de l'art mis en fiction réside dans le fait qu'il est catalyseur motivationnel et relié à la transcendance par laquelle le rêve du beau et du bien-être devient *réalité littéraire*.

NOTES

1 Voir les études de Jeanette Den Toonder et de Cécilia W. Francis.
2 Voir les études de Jeanette Den Toonder et de Cécilia W. Francis.
3 Propos recueillis par François Giroux.
4 On précise dans le roman qu'il s'agit de Jan Bruegel, « dit Bruegel de Velours, second fils de Bruegel l'Ancien » (29).
5 Voir Greimas, Algirdas J.
6 L'euphorie à laquelle goûte Hans se relie aux attributs de la luminosité et aux couleurs : « C'était vrai que dans la lumière de sa nouvelle chambre dans Telegraph Hill, Hans avait découvert le gris-vert de la glace au pied du moulin de son casse-tête. Cette couleur lui avait paru tout à fait juste et délicieuse, et il avait réussi à en rassembler tous les morceaux. Le casse-tête avance, et cela aussi rend Hans joyeux. » (71)
7 On décrit ce personnage de même que les autres souvent au moyen de traits assimilables à un dessin pourvu d'une capacité suggestive. Par exemple, dans une séquence où il s'agit d'un geste banal, donné comme arrière-fond à une conversation—« L'homme brasse inutilement son café avec sa cuillère. . . . Il retire la cuillère de la tasse et la pose dans la soucoupe, hausse les épaules. » (49)—le lecteur est invité à combler les lacunes descriptives, à méditer sur l'état d'ennui, de lassitude ou de désintérêt qui habite à ce moment le personnage.
8 Son identité se réclame encore largement de ses activités de peintre; il a « encore des tableaux sur le marché » (46), considérés comme « sa progéniture » (49).
9 On peut évoquer à cet égard un autre épisode qui éclaire en partie le titre du roman : «—Vous êtes musicienne? —Non, pas du tout.—C'est drôle. On pourrait le croire. . . . —Vous êtes la deuxième personne à me le demander depuis quelque temps.—Vos épaules, votre cou donnent cette impression. Peut-être davantage votre cou. On dirait que la musique y passe. C'est un fin passage ». (105)
10 Voir notamment Nathalie Sarraute.
11 L'expression fait écho à l'idée de « réalité nouvelle » (*ibid.*, 92) que le romancier moderne et postmoderne s'efforce de découvrir, tel le peintre moderne qui « arrache l'objet à

l'univers du spectateur et le déforme pour en dégager l'élément pictural ». (*ibid.*)

12 Pour un approfondissement de la notion de champ de présence et son lien avec la perception, voir Jacques Fontanille.

13 L'homme-peintre se distingue également par son sens exceptionnel de l'ouïe, relié à sa voix impressionnante. Plusieurs fois au cours du roman, il surprend les paroles d'autrui (21, 65, 73); ce don sensoriel se conjugue avec la force « indéchiffrable » (68) de sa voix, « une voix d'extinction » (68), « un peu jetée dans le vide » (68).

14 L'ouvrage de Phyllis Kornfeld donne un aperçu général du mouvement artistique, mais le terme de « prizon art » et son association à Étienne Zablonski relèvent, d'après France Daigle, de la fiction. Intervention publique de France Daigle, le 1er octobre 2004, Université Saint-Thomas, Fredericton, Nouveau-Brunswick

15 Voir Gérald Leblanc.

16 Du côté esthétique, cette notion est à comprendre comme une forme de fécondation à l'œuvre entre le vieux et le neuf, processus illustré par le visionnement du tableau de Zablonski par les détenus, le mur blanc mis à nu, là où se situait la toile, et la création du « prizon » art.

1 L'entrepôt centenaire mis en fiction par France Daigle a bel et bien existé à Moncton, mais il n'a pas échappé à la démolition. Voir Steve Hachey. Ces précisions sont tirées de l'étude de Benoît Doyon-Gosselin et Jean Morency.

17 Voir www.centreculturelaberdeen.ca.

18 A titre d'exemple, Lionel Arsenault, homme d'affaires qui subventionne tout le projet, se met à rêver et à savourer la compagnie de Sylvia, son épouse; celle-ci décide d'entreprendre l'étude de la photographie; Pomme se passionne pour l'art d'avant-garde et Lisa - Mélanie s'exécute en danse improvisée.

19 Pour des commentaires supplémentaires à ce sujet, voir Michel Biron.

20 Voir Paul Robert.

21 Voir Paul Robert.

22 Voir le site électronique: http://expositions.bnf.fr/utopie/cabinets/rep/bio/11.htm.

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The Line Fence

Ernest Buckler

Gil Roach was one of those men who never sense when there's something about what you happen on a neighbour doing which calls for keeping your mouth shut and passing along on the other side of the road. Steve Elliot and Ed Lawson were pacing off the line between their adjoining farms that day. Rolls of barbed wire were lying nearby.

"What're ya up to, fuhllas?" he called to them from the road. "Gonna fall pasture them fields?"

Steve nodded, but without pause in his pacing alongside Ed. Neither man replied.

Gil was about to jump the ditch when the two men spoke to each other. Something in their voices tipped him off at last. Ed stopped and dug his heel into the ground. "Fifty-six," he said. "Are you satisfied that's half?"

"Let's see," Steve said. "Hundred and twelve—fifty-six. Yes, that's half. I'll put up the far end if you like, and you can have the end handy from the road."

"I'll take the far end," Ed said. They paid no attention whatever to Gil, although ordinarily each was, in his own way, the friendliest of men.

Gil walked along the road, pondering to himself. They must have had some trouble: that line fence wasn't for pasture purposes at all. But what could it be? Why, Steve and Ed had never had a word in their lives. There hadn't been a line fence there since he could remember. Steve must've said something, or done something, to touch Ed. Ed Lawson was no fighter, and there wasn't anyone in the whole place you'd sooner ask a favor of ... but if something touched him just right he could be as stubborn as a mule.

That Monday afternoon, Steve Elliot had seen Ed digging a deep hole about where the line between them went. He joined him, in the neighbourly curiosity they always showed about each other's work.

"What's the hole fer, Ed?" he said. "Buryin' yer money?"

Ed smiled. "I'm settin' a pole," he said, "fer my barn lights."

"Well, lights in the barn's a great thing," Steve said. "I wish I could afford 'em." Then he put sort of a joking little grimace on his face. "You're over on me a little, Ed," he said, "but... "

The moment he spoke, though he hadn't thought of smoking all afternoon, Steve felt the instant need to get out his pipe and light it.

Ed's face suddenly set. "What makes you think I'm over on you?" he said.

"Now, Ed," Steve said, "I didn't mean it that way. But I always heard Father say the line went from that peaked rock there ... up to the corner post on the pasture. Jist come back here and line her up."

Ed didn't budge. "That ain't the rock," he said. "It's that one." He pointed with his shovel to another rock just behind him.

"I don't think so, Ed," Steve said. His voice was firmer, but he was still half-smiling. "I think you'll find that... "

"All right," Ed said. "We'll git the surveyor."

"Now, jist a minute, Ed," Steve said. "You know I didn't mean to start nothin' like that." He paused. "Jist come here a second, jist fer the fun of it ... jist line her up with the rock."

"Then there'll be no damn question about it," Ed said, as if Steve hadn't spoken at all. He put his shovel over his shoulder and started for the house. "If that hole's on you," he said, "I'll fill it up."

The surveyor put the line exactly where Ed had said it went. Ed didn't crow, and Steve accepted the ruling. But when Ed mentioned a fence, he bridled a little.

"A fence?" he said. "What do we need of a fence? Gets in the way of everything ... and the price barbed wire is now ... You got your two corner posts there. What more do you want?"

"We might as well have the whole fence," Ed said. "Then there won't be no damn question about nothin'. You stay on your side of it and I'll stay on mine."

"All right," Steve said. "All *right*." His dander was up now too. "That suits me. That'll suit me fine."

It really didn't, though, he found out. Being bad friends with a next door neighbour was like having a sore thumb: you'd never realized how much a part of you the thumb was until the throbbing, each time you struck it, reminded you.

But the situation didn't seem to trouble Ed or embarrass him. And the thing that ground Steve, it seemed so easy for Ed to stay on his own side of the fence. You'd think that just once it would be *his* hens that would wander over into Steve's oats, so he'd have to come over and chase them back. Or something like that.

But nothing like that ever happened. It was always the other way round. When they did pasture the fields after haying, it was *Steve's* cows, never Ed's, that kept getting through the fence into Ed's field, and always through Steve's section (though perhaps that was because Steve had only put up three strands of wire to Ed's five). So that when Steve went to chase them back he'd feel sheepish and *exposed*, somehow. And it was Steve's trash fire that crept off while he wasn't watching it and found its way across the line to the heavy mulching of straw around Ed's pear orchard. He had to leap the fence and thresh at the straw for fifteen minutes with a wet bag to keep the flames from the bark of the trees, feeling like a fool.

The last time he crossed the line that fall it was again because of fire. But this time it was different.

He'd kept an eye on the flame from Ed's chimney fire since the minute it broke out. He knew Ed was in town. It would probably do no damage, but he'd seen Ed's wife, Millie, outside, watching it anxiously. He wanted to go over and tell her to put some coarse salt in the stove. But he hesitated. Ed's flues were always in good shape, there probably wasn't any danger at all. When the flames died down he was glad he hadn't gone. He went back into the house.

And then when he glanced out the kitchen window not fifteen minutes later, he saw this little blaze on the wagon shed roof. A flying cinder must have lodged there and been smoldering all along. He didn't hesitate a second now. He shouted to his wife Ethel to alarm the other men, on the phone, and then he ran to the fence and leapt it in one bound. But this time he leapt it almost with jubilance. If he saved Ed's shed, surely...

They couldn't save the shed. It burned flat. But Steve got the wagons out, and the harrow, and the plow. He went home when the embers were wetted safe enough to leave. He hadn't gone over right at the first, but what he'd done must surely wipe out any hard feelings there'd been between him and Ed.

Millie had got hold of Ed somewhere in town. Steve waited for him to come home. When he saw Ed's horse team coming along on the road, he walked down to the gate. Ed didn't rein the horses down to a walk until he came right opposite.

"I'm sorry about yer buildin', Ed" he said contritely. "We couldn't save it. The fire had such a start down under. But you want a place to store your stuff, why there's lots o' room in my shed there."

"There's lots o' room in the barn floor," Ed said. He didn't even draw the horse up to a full halt.

And walking back to the house *then*, Steve swore to himself: That's the last time I'll ever go near him, if he breaks both legs!

It wasn't Ed's limbs that got broken, though. It was Steve's.

Steve didn't go over his ladders for weak rungs each fall as Ed did, before he started to pick apples. He didn't put them under cover from one season to the next. And the very first tree he started to pick that year he fell from. Fifteen feet, down into the pile of rocks he'd always intended to sink but never had. He broke two fingers of his right hand, and the bone of his right arm, once below the elbow and once above. The doctor put him in a cast from the tip of his hand to his shoulder.

Steve's house was aswarm with neighbours that night, flushed with the generosity a communal excitement breeds, and all echoing with the same queries: "What kin we do?" "Where's yer milk pail?" (Two reaching for it at once.) "How much grain do ya give the mare, Steve?" "Now, don't you worry about *chores*, man!"

But Ed was not among them. That night. Nor the next day. Not the day after that.

And after the first week the others' visits thinned out too. Until there came the night when no one at all showed up at chore time and Ethel had to do it all herself. Things came to a head the Sunday night Cliff Ryan started his turn milking for the coming week. He looked a little uncomfortable when he brought in the pail. "Look, Steve," he said, "do you suppose you could git someone else to milk tomorrow night?"

"Well," Steve said, "I guess... "

"I tell ya, Steve," Cliff said, "Alice's never bin out to the Lancaster Exhibition, and she kinda thought she'd like to go out and stay overnight to her sister's there. We'd like to git an early start so we wouldn't miss the evenin' show."

"Sure," Steve said, "sure." He hesitated. "I bin thinkin', anyway ... I think maybe I'll *advertise* the damn stock and apples."

"Well... " Cliff said. He didn't contradict the idea.

The next day Steve advertised his stock and apples in the town's weekly paper. The ad read: "For Sale: Four Good Jersey Cows—Two Just Freshened. Quantity of Apples, on Trees. Reason for Selling: Owner Laid Up."

The ad appeared on Wednesday. Thursday, half the men in the place dropped in to banter. As they were going out the door, they'd stand with a hand on the knob, as if with second thought, and say: "What price ya got on yer cows and apples, Steve?"

"Oh, I don't know. Whatever things goin' at."

"Yeah, well, cows is way *down,* y'know, Steve, and some says apples ain't worth pickin' this year—but what would ya take fer the whole lot? I suppose if anyone could git 'em *right...* "

But Ed wasn't among that group either. Ed came the next morning.

Steve saw the cattle, first. He looked out the window while he was eating breakfast, and there they were: all five of Ed's cows. Through the fence and into his field. Even the Holstein with the poke on her was there. They must have torn the fence down flat.

"Ahhhh?" he said. "Oho!" This was the moment he'd been waiting for!

"What is it?" Ethel said. She followed his glance. "Oh. Why, those are *Ed's* cows, aren't they? Will I call him?"

"Call him, nothin'," Steve said. "He'll see 'em. He'll be over."

"I could go out and drive 'em back," Ethel said.

"You stay right where y'are," Steve said. "Let him come and git 'em himself."

"But if Ed comes over here, I'm afraid you two'll get into a... "

"That's all right."

"Oh, Steve!"

"Oh. Steve be damned! We'll jist see how *he* likes to knuckle. We'll jist see."

It wasn't five minutes before Steve saw Ed coming. He didn't drive his cows home first. He came straight to the back door. When his shape passed the kitchen window, Ethel drew a long deep breath.

Ed didn't knock. He opened the door and closed it behind him. He stood there with one hand on the knob.

"Steve. Ethel," he said.

Steve nodded. He didn't speak.

"Ed," Ethel said, "Have a chair." She put a chair beside him, in a little flutter of hospitality.

Ed put one hand on the top of the chair, but he didn't sit down. When Ethel went back to picking up the breakfast dishes, she kept her back to Ed, grimacing caution at Steve. But Steve paid no attention to her. He just sat there silent. It was perhaps half a minute before Ed spoke.

"I see my cattle's over in your field," he said.

"Yeah, I see," Steve said. Not a word more than that. He didn't ask Ed to sit down.

"What's the damage?" Ed said.

Steve got up to put a stick of wood in the fire. "There's no damage, I guess," he said very deliberately. He lifted the cover. "You jist drive 'em home and... " he put the cover back on the stove " ... and then you stay on your side of the fence and I'll stay on mine."

Ah! Those were the words he'd been waiting to get out. They'd lain inside him like grating stones ever since Ed had first pronounced them. He felt lightened, delivered. Now let *Ed* carry 'em around for awhile. He turned and looked at Ed's face. Really looked at it for the first time that morning.

But what had misfired? Ed's didn't look like a proud face having to swallow a bitter pill. It didn't have that cold "letter of agreement" look at all. It was half bent. Confused. Unsure of itself in every way. It didn't even look angry.

"No, Ed insisted, "what's the damage? I'm willin' to pay." It wasn't his "letter of the agreement" voice, either. He hesitated. "I'll pick yer apples for ya," he said. "Would that square things?"

It was never any good for Steve to *try* to stay angry at anyone. The minute his anger came unhooked from whatever held it up, it fell flat to the ground, limp as an old dishrag. He looked at Ed, and, as if some subtle distortion of shadow had been erased by the sun, the old Ed stood there. His own face bent, went confused.

"Hell, there's no damage, Ed," he said awkwardly. "Likely they got through my part o' the fence, anyway. Set down, man."

"How's Millie's cold?" Ethel put in suddenly. "I heard she had a bad cold." The dishes she'd been handling as if they were assertively inanimate she now touched as if they were suddenly living things.

"It's better," Ed said, "a little." He turned to Steve. "No," he said stubbornly, "I see where they got through. It was my part."

"Well, what if it was?" Steve said. "Might as well let 'em run there. I got nothin' to pasture. I'm gonna git rid o' mine. Let them run there."

Ed sat down. He kept turning his cap around and around in his hands, but his face took on the sudden sureness of a man's who sees the conversation turn to where he hoped it would go...

"I see that ad day afore yistiddy," he said slowly. "Steve, you don't wanta sell them cattle now! You'd take an awful beatin' on 'em. Beef's down a little and lotsa people'd jist use that fer an excuse to fleece ya." He hesitated. "I ... I'd look after 'em till"—he glanced at Steve's arm,—"till ya got around."

"You will not!" Steve said. "I wouldn't listen to it! You got yer own work, man... "

"I got my work pretty well caught up," Ed said.

"If Ed wants to do it for you, why don't you let him do it?" Ethel said. She spoke gently, but eagerly. Ed looked at her as if she was a sudden ally.

"I know he wants to do it," Steve said. "but the man's got work of his own, he can't... "

But he was thinking: Ed lookin' after things, it wouldn't be a bit like the chancy favors of the others. There wouldn't be a minute's neglect. He'd strip the cows down to the last drop, no matter what work of his own was waitin' ... he'd see all the little things it would seem finicky to ask anyone else to take care of. And he wouldn't put out a single reminder that you were beholden to him—would never even have the thought. Ed lookin' after things, it would be as if a big firm rock had been rolled up against this wobbly makeshift now. He felt that sudden urge to get out his pipe and light it. He drew a deep breath. "And ... after anyone's acted like I ... what I jist said... " he began.

Ed looked warped with embarrassment. "Oh. I guess we all ... sometimes... " He sprang up from the chair. "Yer cows ain't bin milked yit, have they? Where's yer pail?"

He hadn't once referred point blank to Steve's accident, nor ever did. But just as he was going out the door, he turned. "When you ... git haulin' wood agin," he said, "you want that mare o' mine to put with your black, she's jist standin' in the barn there."

The kitchen was silent for a minute. Steve glanced at Ed's cows. By God, he thought, if anyone'd ever told me I'd feel like givin' my best turnips to a bunch o' creeters that'd jist tore down a fence! Then he glanced at Ed, walking towards the barn. He drew himself up straight. No, now! It couldn't be! It must be his nose he was brushin' with his hand—this was a raw mornin'. But no, by God, there he was doing it agin. The other eye. Then Steve couldn't see the barn too clear himself.

He glanced at Ethel. A little sheepishly. But Ethel knew enough not to hash things over too much. All she said was, "I think I'll give Millie a ring, and tell her Ed's staying over to milk. She might wonder. And I hope the rest of 'em's listening!"

Gil Roach's wife must have been listening. Or maybe it was once again just Gil's talent for turning up wherever anything unusual was going on. Ed Lawson chasin' his own cows out of Steve Elliot's field! That'd be worth lookin' into! He hurried up to help Ed.

"Never mind! Never mind!" Ed shouted, when he saw him coming. "I kin round 'em up. I got 'em now." He seemed to object almost violently to Gil's help. But Gil ran over and stood by the gap in the fence, to head the cows off if they tried to go past it. He picked up a strand of the broken wire, absently. And then he started. He let out a soft exclamation. Cows hadn't broken *that* wire. It had been cut! He started to call to Ed, and then he saw the pliers lying by the post. With Ed's own initials on them. Well, I'll be damned! Why, he must have ... himself ... in the night and dropped them there ... Well, I'll be ...

But for once, even he knew enough to keep his mouth shut.

This is the original full version of the cut, rewritten piece that Ernest Buckler subsequently published in the magazine Country Gentleman *(February 1955: 32-33 ff). Light editing by Marta Dvorak incorporates some of the holograph corrections made on the typescript in Buckler's hand, but retains, notably, the original ending, and Buckler's ellipses. (Ernest Buckler Collection, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.) Published with permission of Wayne A. Rice, Executor of Ernest Buckler's Estate.*

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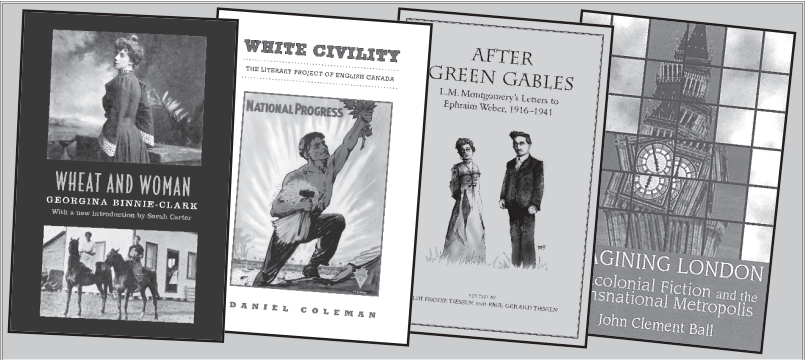

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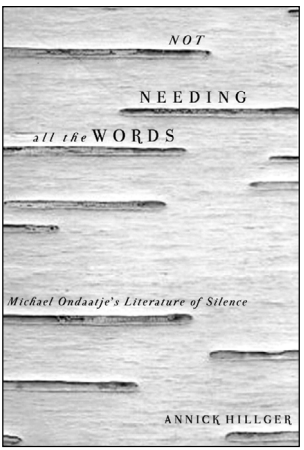

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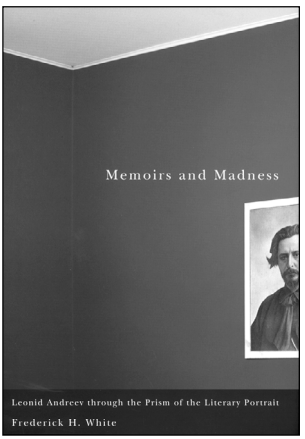

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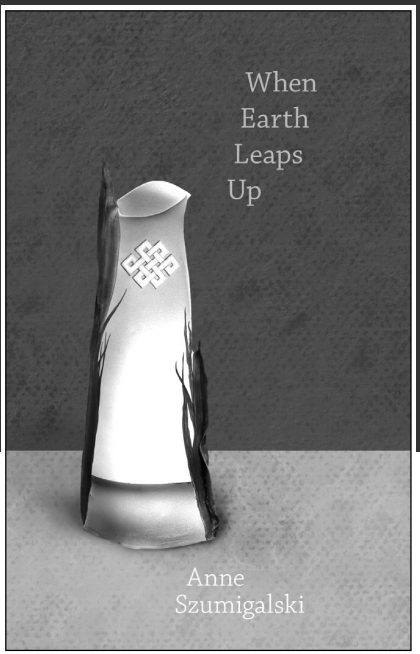

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