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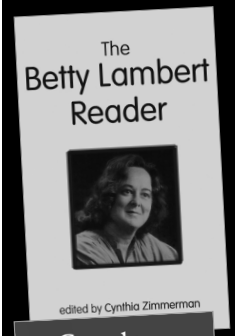

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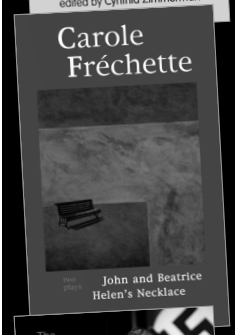

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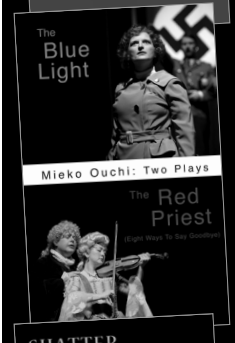

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In 2007, we overhauled the design and functionality of the Web site to improve accessibility and provide more resources on Canadian literature. The navigation menu has been completely reworked, our search engine is faster and more useful, pages are accessible to the visually impaired via screen readers, and French translations are available for all static pages. Additionally, new book reviews appear randomly on each page, our list of Canadian literary journals/magazines has been updated, and we have added an ever-growing list of Canadian publishers.

We hope you will enjoy the new site and welcome any feedback you might have.

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Editorial

Predators and Gardens

Margery Fee

One of the books analyzed in this issue, Margaret Horsfield's *Cougar Annie's Garden,* inspires the title, as the realization dawned on me that all of the papers collected here deal with gardens or predators. Admittedly, the bear in Alice Munro's short story title, "The Bear Came over the Mountain," is epigraphic rather than real and the bear in Marian Engel's eponymous novel is for the most part quite tame. Indeed, black bears, unlike cougars, are only occasional predators, much preferring berries and insects. It is usually men who are the predators here: for example, George Elliott Clarke's George and Rue in *Execution Poems* and Michael Ondaatje's Billy the Kid and Pat Garrett in *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid.* And Cougar Annie, named after the animals she shot for a bounty.

Having a bear in one's garden, rather than a snake, changes the allusion to the original human home place on the verge of total loss to something else. Gardens, after all, encroach on the bears' territory. Visiting a friend in Sooke on Vancouver Island, whose vegetable garden has the usual "deer fence," we found a huge and beautiful bear sitting under her nearby pear tree, legs splayed, happily eating the fallen fruit. Another friend in North Vancouver told of a bear who worked its way along a row of backyards, leaning on the small fruit trees until they broke to make it easier to harvest the fruit. These bears are at the fringe of "development"; in a few years, they will have been pushed back until bears and deer and cougars in these gardens are no longer even thought of. So who is the predator—fruit-eating bears, or we who refuse to see that we are in their territory?

Different ways of thinking about gardens, landscape, nature, and the wilderness are connected with different philosophical or cultural traditions,

as Karen Charleson's paper makes clear. That of the Western Enlightenment sees bears and humans as falling into different categories, and gardens as clearly demarcated from wilderness: these demarcations are as real to most of us as the electric fence my friend installed after a few more visits from the bear. And the gardens, in this tradition, belong to the settlers. John Locke, in *The Second Treatise of Government* (1690), states that "as much land as a man tills, plants, improves, cultivates, and can use the product of, so much is his property. He by his labour does, as it were, enclose it from the common" (14). Private property begins with agricultural cultivation, and not just any sort, but one that accords with European methods. America was filled with "wild woods and uncultivated waste," Locke asserts (17). Because of such assertions, early explorers could not grasp that what they saw as wilderness in fact had been profoundly altered by human activities, primarily by burning to encourage berry growth and make hunting easier. And they did not believe their eyes when they saw actual gardens. Douglas Deur and Nancy J. Turner note that during a fur-trading voyage in 1789, "members of John Meare's crew saw evidence of cultivated plots—probably of tobacco—within Haida villages. In his official log, Meare's assistant, William Douglas . . . would assert that 'in all probability Captain Gray, in the Sloop Washington, had fallen in with this tribe, and employed his considerable friendship in forming this garden,'" although "Gray does not appear to have visited the village in question, and Meares was probably the first European to pull ashore there." In fact, "the precontact antiquity of Haida tobacco cultivation is widely accepted" (4). Despite the Enlightenment, Aboriginal peoples did not have to be taught how to garden, although their methods differed from Locke's stereotype of plough and enclosure.

For those in the field of Canadian literature, Northrop Frye's use of Margaret Atwood's phrase "the bush garden" from *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* as both a title for his first collection of critical essays about Canadian literature and a reference to "the Canadian sensibility" is highly resonant (xx). If read one way, it places Canadians between forest and city, ascribing to them a special relationship to the wilderness despite Canada's high level of urbanization. And, as does Locke, it connects garden, settler, and property rights. This is a colonial move, in a tradition that is only now becoming visible to its makers, mainly because of the work of Aboriginal scholars who see things differently. Linda Hutcheon reads Frye as seeing "the colonial mentality that had exploited the Native peoples of Canada" as "also responsible for exploiting the land upon which they had first lived" (xvii). However, he also

pointed out that "the creative instinct has a great deal to do with the assertion of territorial rights. . . . there is always something vegetable about the imagination, something sharply limited in range" (xxi). The question about what to do about colonial exploitation and the relations of literature to land is left hanging. As Cinda Gault points out, what to do about the bear in the Canadian bush garden is also left hanging at the end of Marian Engel's *Bear*, a problem both for the woman who sought non-human and non-patriarchal love from the bear and for the nation that grounds itself on a "special" relationship with nature that in the end has been mostly a hollow betrayal. The degree to which women and Aboriginal people are seen as part of nature rather than as part of the *polis*, of course, enters this discussion.

Several papers in this issue connect particular characters to divergent views of nature. Anne of Green Gables lives in Prince Edward Island, also called "the garden province"—where she delightedly projects herself into nature: "I wouldn't want to be picked if I were an apple blossom" (Montgomery 108). Where Marilla sees mess, Anne sees beauty: "You clutter your room up entirely too much with out-of-doors stuff, Anne. Bedrooms were made to sleep in" (Montgomery 177). Anne's outlook—as Sean Somers shows—adapts easily to Japanese traditional ways of seeing the world. Perhaps that is why L.M. Montgomery characterized her as an orphan with unusual red hair—to highlight her different perspective. Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* deploys Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid to represent oppositional viewpoints and different forms of violence. Pat Garrett, as he trains himself to be an "ideal assassin," develops a terror of flowers because, as Lee Spinks puts it, "they make no distinction between the primal force of life and its idea or representation" (73). Billy the Kid, in this account, appears to sense the primal force of life at times without even the initial separation required by projection. This frees him and the reader—however sporadically—from dominant ideas. A useful move, since Charleson explains how dominant ideas about even such apparently beautiful and harmless places as gardens are connected to a history of colonial violence.

Opening up to other philosophies, ways of seeing, sexualities, and aesthetics might allow us to live in a world where bears and people can move out of dominant and dominating conceptual frameworks. And not just bears and people, but people of differing outlooks, epistemologies, and dispositions. This is a point made in several of these papers. Jordana Greenblatt finds differing conceptual frameworks—and aesthetics—in Dionne Brand's *Thirsty* and George Elliott Clarke's *Execution Poems* that enact different

forms of violence and that have different effects on readerly hope. Robert McGill shows how adaptation can be negotiated through the assumption of a variety of personae—the daughter, the student-apprentice, the colleague, the legatee, the lover. He also shows how something as beautiful and harmless as children can foreclose on the future if they are used to represent a coercive hetero-normative reproduction.

Literature and the arts are vital locations for the analysis and construction of thought-worlds, as the critical papers included here make clear. The ways of being and acting enabled or required by these various thought-worlds allow us to reflect about our "real" world—another thought-world constructed for us, not necessarily by forces that love us. Although it is a world created by thought, it has real effects—and can underpin hope, violence or exclusion—a range of private responses and public acts. Hitherto, to paraphrase Marianne Moore, genuine poetry could be defined as imaginary gardens with real bears in them in a world that wanted real gardens and imaginary bears. Perhaps now we need to break this down, to include engardened bears, gardening for bears, bearish gardens or bears' gardens—or perhaps non-bears in non-gardens. Who and where would that be? To put it in another way: "We are not in the world, we become with the world; we become by contemplating it. Everything is vision, becoming. We become universes. Becoming animal, plant, molecular, zero" (Deleuze and Guattari 169).

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Laurie Kruk

In the Web

But superstition, like belief, must die,
And what remains when disbelief has gone?
—Philip Larkin, "Church Going"

Under towering November clouds
Angevin atheists
talk over the still small voice,
weaving conversations
on mobile-wearing walks
from boulangerie to bookstore, bank to café
under empty eyes of their fourteenth-century Virgin.

Stumbling towards the Chateau
and closing time, I push through
multilingual nets of intention, racing traffic signals:
stone leviathan, centuries-old fortress
earth-mantled by moss and pigeon nests,
guards the empty moat
that once housed Duke of Anjou's deer and antelope,
ancient paths tracing this spot
now dedicated to daily auto-pilgrimage.
Dusk comes down like a portcullis
as I cross the stone bridge
to slip seven Euros in a hand
wander the graveled walks, glimpse the river's ways
and follow the signs
to the Tapestry of the Apocalypse. Lost
in the Revolution, later found warming
haunches of royal horses, or shielding
orange trees from frost,
now hung in air-conditioned shadow
for our blind gazes to slide over

minus Kodak's crutch: flash photography
forbidden, in deference to aged dyes.
Product of seven years' labour
by Bataille and de Bruges*
and an army of monks
transcendent in anonymity
who wove their faith
into stitched images of the final Uncovering,
and magnified the city of God.

Sixty-seven panels, woven witness of an era
almost as hugely absurd as the dinosaurs',
in thousands of threads, silk and wool, spinning a story
we can barely remember remembering—
instead, silicon-chip knitting of computers
to modems, to cell phones, to cameras, to the web
of videoclips or soundbytes
from sages on happiness,
prophets of global warming,
the latest televised crusades
for oil and bombs, monuments and votes.
Not this Seven-headed Beast—
Not this destruction of the City—
Not this breaking
of the Seventh Seal—

Accused by the Saint's recording quill and scroll
I buy a souvenir postcard
I cannot translate in either language,
wondering how to fill it
as I walk out into clouds of car-exhaust
today's breaths, hung on cobblestone walks
like the invisible nets of spiders
draped on moss which nibbles at the towers.
Catching the unseen drops of another day,
only these weavings will endure,
loyal not to stone, but only air

* Nicholas Bataille, master weaver. Hennequin de Bruges, painter.

Karen Charleson

Re-considering Margaret Horsfield's *Cougar Annie's Garden*

It is within the context of living in Hesquiaht traditional territories, of being a part of the House of Kinquashtacumlth and a member of the Hesquiaht First Nation, that I analyze Margaret Horsfield's book *Cougar Annie's Garden.* It is from this context that I view the people, events, and places that this book describes. While Horsfield writes of Western/Canadian settlement of Hesquiaht Harbour, and in so doing creates a settler history of the area, I cannot help but notice her many gaps, silences, and inaccuracies. I know a very different history of this area, one that places far less emphasis and importance on the small section of Hesquiaht traditional territory and relatively short time period that Horsfield describes.

Cougar Annie's Garden is written from the perspective of the pioneer settlers, those who in relatively recent times actively colonized Hesquiaht lands. Horsfield effectively writes to a settler audience in search of its own history. It is this audience of "us" that today dominates and holds power in Canada. I read this settler account, however, as one of "them"; that is, as one of those who were/are colonized and pushed aside in favour of the modern settler/developer. Digesting Horsfield's words, I find myself relegated to the margins of a Hesquiaht that is still central to my reality. Horsfield's story of the longest lasting white homesteaders in Hesquiaht Harbour serves as a reinforcement of the North American history/myth of the great white "man" outworking, outliving, outdo-ing (in almost everything) and overtaking dying native America. The arrogance with which she tells her story is the same arrogance that has implicitly fostered racism across the Americas for centuries.

In a Foucaultian view, discourse, rather than being merely language or speech, is a primary way that the power relations and ideologies of dominant society are maintained, shaped, and revealed (van Dijk 118; Tonkiss 373-74; Connell 1). A careful reading of *Cougar Annie's Garden* reveals the ways that white settler culture and knowledge comes to dominate the intellectual and physical landscape of Hesquiaht. The land itself is renamed, individual indigenous people go unrecognized, Christian myths and symbols are applied, Western capitalist concepts of ownership and productivity are imposed, and Hesquiaht Harbour is transformed from an indigenous to a settler world. From an indigenous perspective, and utilizing methods of critical discourse analysis, I read *Cougar Annie's Garden* and ask: How does a Western form of knowledge come to be offered as the dominant perspective in a still largely indigenous landscape? How do Western locations and perspectives move into the centre here and become the norm? How is the Hesquiaht voice excluded in Hesquiaht territories? How is history being created here and who is it being created for?

Invisibility and Displacement

Cougar Annie's Garden begins with a foreword by well-known Canadian journalist/author Peter Newman. From his position of established male authority, he authenticates Horsfield's words to come. Horsfield then provides a short introduction, sixteen chapters accompanied by a collection of "historical" and more recent photographs, acknowledgements, photo credits, and notes on sources. Of the sixteen chapters, only one is devoted to the history of the Hesquiaht people who have lived in the area described since time immemorial. A second chapter is devoted to a history of the Roman Catholic Church at Hesquiaht, which "served" the Hesquiaht people from the later 1800s until the mid-1900s.

On the surface, *Cougar Annie's Garden* is the historical account of Ada Annie Rae-Arthur, the homestead/farm/garden she lived on in Hesquiaht Harbour from 1915 until 1983, and Peter Buckland, the subsequent owner of this property. Because this garden has "endured for over 80 years" (3), Horsfield tells us in her first sentence, it is historically significant. Other history here, according to Horsfield, is "elusive" and "obscured" (3): too mysterious to document. The garden, however, is a "sentinel, a symbol of hope and continuity in an ever-changing landscape" (5). Alone amongst all of the people and places that could be seen as historically significant in Hesquiaht traditional territories, the garden is the "dauntless survivor" (5). It alone is presented as timeless.

While numerous settler people are identified and detailed in *Cougar Annie's Garden*, Hesquiaht people go mostly nameless and undescribed. The Wheeler family, for example, who attempted to homestead in Hesquiaht Harbour for a very brief period in the early twentieth century, is given more attention than all individual Hesquiaht people combined. In photographs, though even a modest amount of local research could have provided names, Hesquiaht people go unidentified. The author describes at some length the first two priests and an early white trader at Hesquiaht Village before she ever specifically mentions a single Hesquiaht person. In fact, only four Hesquiaht individuals are mentioned in the entire book. In Horsfield's account, events such as the supplying of the Estevan Point lighthouse, the building of local road and rail links, and the creation of traplines and telephone lines, happen without the involvement of Hesquiaht people. If I did not know better, if I had not heard countless local histories to the contrary, I would assume that the Hesquiaht played no role whatsoever in these undertakings.

Horsfield calls Hesquiaht Village "virtually abandoned" (112) when only six families remain there in the late 1930s. Cougar Annie's, in contrast, where only one family lives, is presented as alive with activity. Horsfield calls the Harbour empty, yet admits the presence of "Indian shacks" (136) along the shore, and writes of Annie's children visiting and eating with (nameless) Hesquiaht families. Today, the main village of the Hesquiaht people is at Hot Springs Cove, less than ten miles from Hesquiaht Harbour. This move is described by the author as Hesquiaht Village being "abandoned by its own people" (170). Horsfield notes the seasonal and cyclical movement of Hesquiaht people in the Harbour, but does not apply this pattern to the move to Hot Springs. The Hesquiaht family who lives year-round at Hesquiaht Village is described in this way: "If there is a light, it shines from only one house. Dave Ignace and his family are the only ones living here now" (143). Instead of celebrating the Ignace family living at Hesquiaht, as she celebrates Annie, and later Peter Buckland, the author uses a tentative "if," as though the Ignace family—having lived at Hesquiaht for many generations—is on the verge of disappearing.

While we are asked to remember Annie in concrete terms—her bed, her walkway, her setting traps, her cleaning chickens—the artifacts and activities of indigenous people are presented vaguely, if at all. We consequently get no sense of how they lived their lives over the same period that Annie was making her farm/garden. Hesquiaht ways of life, when they are presented,

are from the distant past. Horsfield writes of herring roe, for example, saying it "was harvested by Hesquiaht people for years beyond number" (200). Yet that Hesquiaht people continue to harvest and eat herring roe today goes unmentioned. When the author talks of Hesquiaht people's use of the forest, she goes back to the memoirs of Father Brabant from over a century ago to describe culturally modified trees, and makes no note of modern Hesquiaht usages such as cedar bark stripping. Reading the author's descriptions, we assume that Hesquiaht activities are over.

Cougar Annie's Garden includes two colour maps of Hesquiaht Harbour, both highlighting the garden. On the introductory two-page map, neither Hesquiaht Village nor Hot Springs Cove is even labelled. In Horsfield's telling, Hesquiaht territory, almost from the moment Annie arrives, revolves around her. The new logging road, for example, brings concerns about Annie being "outmaneuvered" in her "own territory" (188). The Post Office gradually becomes "Cougar Annie's post office" (108). As Annie's homestead is presented as the sole survivor on the west coast of Vancouver Island, the hyperbole mounts. Her garden becomes the most unique, the most diverse, the only hope for the future. The whole of Hesquiaht territories come within its purview. Ultimately, the Boat Basin Foundation—the present owner/manager of the garden property—becomes a means to study the botanical diversity of the whole west coast (245). The name Boat Basin, though Annie's homestead is outside of the actual boat basin once charted on maps, replaces the name Hesquiaht. Cheryl McEwan argues that it is not by innocent accident that English settler names supplant indigenous names (95). Names are symbols of ownership and control. In the Harbour, Annie predominates as the Hesquiaht people fade.

The great majority of the author's sources are non-Hesquiaht. History is delivered through the voices of anthropologists, archaeologists, settler historians, fisheries officers, and other white "experts," speaking about the Hesquiaht. The author relies heavily on memoirs of the first two priests at Hesquiaht and associated church records, acknowledging no possible bias. In one well-known event from Hesquiaht history, for example, Horsfield bases her research solely on Father Brabant's memoirs, and concludes that the case of Hesquiaht men accused of murdering victims of a shipwreck left "many unanswered questions. . . . Perhaps they cannot ever be answered" (154). The possibility of finding information amongst the Hesquiaht themselves does not seem to occur to her. The possibility of questioning the use/misuse of Canadian law against Aboriginal peoples in the early days of settler-Aboriginal

contact similarly does not occur to her. When her limited evidence falls short, Horsfield quickly assumes that no answers are possible.

Cougar Annie's Garden treats Hesquiaht people differently than it treats white/settler people. Settlers are named individuals. The Hesquiahts are a vague, homogenous mass. Annie and her family live and work on their farm/garden. The Hesquiaht have "seasonal patterns of occupation" (147). For white people, there is "the intense bustle of industry" (177). For Hesquiaht people, there is a "now silent landscape" (177). When Horsfield describes the 1942 shelling of Estevan Point, she tells of the white light-keeper conscientiously, thoughtfully extinguishing the light. The Hesquiaht villagers meanwhile, she describes as acting in "pandemonium" (115). No interviews or first-hand accounts of Hesquiaht people who lived through this actual event are provided. Through such omissions, Horsfield seems to be telling us that only white/settler accounts are trustworthy enough to be noted.

Trinh Minh-ha argues that "them" is only recognized in relation to "us." In *Cougar Annie's Garden*, the Hesquiaht—the "them"—are invisible on their own; they are present only as they affect or interact with whites—the "us." Hesquiaht reality appears as a wholly dependent subset of the greater reality created by the priest and settlers. Marie Battiste calls this cognitive imperialism, a form of "cognitive manipulation used to disclaim other knowledge bases and values" (198). As Horsfield maintains the sole legitimacy of Western knowledge and values, the Hesquiaht people, falling outside that frame of reference, become virtually non-existent.

The Pioneer Settler Story

J.E. Chamberlin writes of North American settlers quickly inventing a "myth of entitlement," to follow their "myth of discovery" (28). Such a myth not only justified their claim to the land, but it also proved them deserving. Chamberlin argues that from a Western perspective, land not used for agricultural purposes is deemed idle and therefore open for colonial ventures such as homesteading. This basic justification, used across North America, is also used in Hesquiaht Harbour. Annie, like countless other settlers, takes up land that local populations are seen as not using productively. Horsfield goes to considerable lengths throughout her book to describe Hesquiaht Harbour as the "middle of nowhere" (3, 243). In such a void, Annie can blamelessly pre-empt her homestead. That this same area is the middle of everywhere for the Hesquiaht is not a fact worthy of recognition.

Cougar Annie's Garden is the story of colonial entitlement to Hesquiaht Harbour. Annie is the ideal Canadian pioneer/settler. Through sheer determination, willpower, and hard work, she conquers a wild land and replaces it with an orderly garden. Horsfield writes: "To establish such a garden was a guiding ambition in the lives of countless settlers hoping to create a private Eden. . . . This dream drove thousands" (243). The theme of survival "against impossible odds" (Newman, Foreword) and of creating order out of disorder runs through *Cougar Annie's Garden*. All that Annie suffers and sacrifices is out of her will to make and keep her homestead, to assert and maintain her claim and entitlement.

Horsfield introduces a long line of white people, each worthy of her praise in specific instances. John Hibberson takes credit for having "found" a rare dwarf trillium beside Hesquiaht Lake (111). Robert Culver, a prospective fourth husband for Annie, is described as "valiant" (122) and a "good and gentle man" (216). Prospector Bus Hansen is described as "A huge man, a great storyteller, a true prospector" (176). A larger hero among this secondary cast is Father Brabant, the first priest at Hesquiaht Village. Horsfield describes him as a "one-man show" who with "extraordinary force of personality, imposed his will and his ways upon the village and its surroundings" (165). "None of his successors were cut from the same cloth" (165), claims Horsfield, adding that "[a]rrogant and dictatorial and insensitive as he was he stayed put, exuding confidence and authority in a world seeming, to the native people of the coast, to be increasingly chaotic and out of control" (165). Horsfield implies that the settler and the priest actually assisted Hesquiaht people. The priest ordered a chaotic world; the settler productively used their land.

Ultimately, however, only Annie is a "living legend" (20). Because she survives and endures, even the "bare outline of her life at Boat Basin is extraordinary" (20). That her first husband is presented as "completely unsuited to being a pioneer" (63) is only proof that success of the homestead was completely due to her. Even her children who row "valiantly" (91) out to the freight boat, are mere accessories. In Annie's dominating presence, all others fade. Only one hero comes close to equaling Annie. Peter Buckland, the man who purchased the property from her and came to live there after her death, is presented as Annie's true kindred spirit. It is Buckland, not Annie's children, not a priest or other settler, certainly no Hesquiaht person, who stays and sacrifices and works endlessly in the garden. In Horsfield's rendition, only he is deserving enough to be Annie's true heir.

Stories abound in Western literature about the pioneer quest to survive in the wilderness, to build monuments and futures in the face of great challenges. *Cougar Annie's Garden* can stand as a classic of the settler-hero genre. Indeed, Horsfield mentions the pioneer spirit and story of "us" against the wilderness twice in her first three pages of text. The determination and courage of settler pioneers, how they "faced the harsh realities of being strangers in a strange and unwelcoming land" (18), is a recurrent theme. Occasionally, Horsfield tries to downplay the "romantic Canadian myth of roughing it in the bush" (4), and suggests that Annie more accurately fits into a "pattern of land settlement and blind hope" (5) that shaped coastal history. In using this argument, Horsfield attempts perhaps to lend her story greater authenticity, to nudge it from the realm of tales into the realm of history. Whether she calls it myth or history however, *Cougar Annie's Garden* is a story to capture the imagination of a particular Western audience. Such an audience can readily imagine itself as settlers/pioneers like Annie or Buckland, but has difficulty conceiving of a non-Western alternative.

The Good

Horsfield gives us a version of Annie that presents all that she did in a positive light. The ways Annie found to make money, many of them illegal, are referred to as "many small-scale enterprises" and "creative wheeling and dealing" (77). The author suggests that Annie was a fair businesswoman, though her own evidence contradicts that conclusion. That Hesquiaht people were charged more in Annie's store than others, for example, is lightly described: "service in the store was always idiosyncratic and prices tended to reflect Cougar Annie's whims and prejudices" (88). The author writes of Annie selling rotten eggs and merrily notes that "customers accepted this dubious egg trade good naturedly" (86). Annie, her son Tommy, and Peter Buckland, hang onto the Boat Basin post office, what the author calls "Cougar Annie's most ingenious operation" (106) and her most reliable source of income (103) through "highly creative accounting" (106) and "noble" (106) efforts, which in reality were lying and manipulation. As cougar troubleshooter for her area, Horsfield tells us, Annie was paid double the normal bounty.

All of Annie's dishonest doings, however, pale in comparison to the mysterious death of her second husband, who died from a gunshot wound in 1944. Horsfield describes him as "the husband Cougar Annie is rumoured to have killed" (114). Rumours are reported in short, vague detail, and the author

concludes: "Yet there were no witnesses, there was no evidence, certainly no charges were laid" (114). She plants the idea that this husband may have beaten and terrorized Annie. George Campbell marries Annie and is killed in two short paragraphs.

Most of Horsfield's descriptions of Annie should make us think negatively about her. She may have killed a husband; most of her children fled from her as soon as they were able; she worked her husbands and children unmercifully; she lied, cheated, and committed fraud with no apparent reluctance. Instead, we are encouraged to admire her because she established and maintained white settlement in Hesquiaht Harbour. According to the values that Horsfield espouses, all of Annie's doings were geared towards the greater good, a colonial mission beyond reproach. Through her unfaltering positive description and glorification, the author tells us that this settler/homesteader is above ordinary human ethics and rules. In Horsfield's hands, Annie—conveniently devoid of feminine characteristics—becomes a settler hero in the tradition of North American, predominantly male, settler heroes. Like the lead cowboys of old Western tales, Annie can also be an outlaw, a law-breaker, because ultimately her goals are justifiable and good.

Buckland is viewed similarly. Horsfield writes of him "genially" including extra names in the "noble tradition of fudging the figures of the population of Boat Basin" (106). Settler needs supersede legalities. Horsfield's version of Buckland's acquisition of the property is presented in the most altruistic terms. He acquires the garden and property out of sheer generosity and the desire to continue Annie's legacy. However true this may or may not be, the author is so coloured in her praise of Buckland and Annie that any critical reader will surely question the motives and circumstances of the sale.

Perhaps most telling in Horsfield's positive presentations of Annie and Buckland are her words about the future. Of all the Hesquiaht area, it is Cougar Annie's garden that has "a vantage point looking to the future" (5). Here are the "fresh plans and ideas . . . emerging with the new millennium" (5). Though the author, in a rare moment of generosity, creates a list of interests that will play a role in the future of the Hesquiaht area (the list includes First Nations land claims, land use studies, etc.) these interests remain unarticulated. According to *Cougar Annie's Garden* all other dreams have failed or been lost in Hesquiaht Harbour. This leaves Buckland and the Boat Basin Foundation to become the sole caretakers/custodians of Hesquiaht Harbour, the only ones in a position to "go from strength to strength and, with obstinate beauty, continue to bloom in the wilderness" (246).

Western Worldviews

Cougar Annie's Garden is a presentation of Western beliefs and values. When Newman declares that it is "essential" that Cougar Annie's garden be preserved, when Horsfield pronounces that "[t]he bush garden is a powerful symbol in the Canadian imagination" (43), at least a part of the book's audience believes these statements, not because of any evidence presented, but because of the values and associated emotions that they share with Newman and Horsfield. Against this norm, systems of Hesquiaht knowledge and values appear abnormal. Reading *Cougar Annie's Garden* from outside a Western perspective, countering that perhaps gardens are not inherently worth saving, for example, puts one in direct opposition to the author's premises.

Paramount in *Cougar Annie's Garden* is the value of hard work. The garden, Horsfield reminds us "has been created and maintained not by magic, not by imagination, but by unremitting hard work, by bloody-minded perseverance, at times by a desperation to survive" (17). Life is a constant struggle. Sacrifice is noble. Annie's and Peter's hard work, the author implies, has earned them places in Hesquiaht Harbour. I wonder about the unmentioned Hesquiaht people, the ones who according to the author have abandoned their place and, by extension, done no work. What is Horsfield suggesting about their entitlement?

Annie is presented as hyper-protective of her garden and domestic animals. Against the dangerous wild (which includes the Hesquiaht), her farm and flock are in constant need of her protection. As a person who lives in this area, it strikes me that there is no mention of salmon in the book. When and where, and in what numbers, salmon return to streams in Hesquiaht Harbour is vitally important to us. Annie, however, had domesticated animals and domestic plants to depend upon instead. She did not need, nor notice, wild salmon. Two very different worlds with different priorities, different ways of doing things, and very different values collided (and continue to collide) here in Hesquiaht Harbour. One is based on a domesticated agricultural lifestyle; the other is based on the cycles of the natural world. Horsfield describes only one of these worlds. The other world, when she happens to notice it at all, she judges by the standards of the first.

To critically analyze *Cougar Annie's Garden,* a reader needs to look beyond the only reality presented in the book. Examining the oppositions Horsfield inadvertently presents such as the garden-wilderness contrast, not only reveals the author's biases, but also reveals the potential presence of a knowledge and value system that the author does not mention. The garden

with all of its connotations of civilization and Christian ideals, is contrasted with the wilderness and its implied connection to a lack of civilization and anti-Christian belief. The tamed/domesticated stands in opposition to the untamed/chaotic/wild. Horsfield's words carry with them a weight of implied baggage. The term "garden," for example, is associated with safety and order, while the term "wilderness" is associated with chaotic disorder and danger. "Garden" is associated with light; "wilderness" with darkness. In the garden is Christian order and virtue; in the wilderness is the raw sexuality of fecund growth. In Horsfield's own words, the garden is "charmed," "powerful," a "shelter," (3) and a "sentinel" (5) while the forest/wilderness is "rampant growth" (4) and "running rampant" (222). The reality, the Western settler worldview, promoted in *Cougar Annie's Garden,* assumes that Western values are universal. Order is preferable to disorder; control is better than acceptance; hard work is supremely valuable; the tamed has priority over the wild. By turning these supposed universal truths upside down, however, we can gain an inkling of another way(s) to view the world. Perhaps disorder is sometimes preferable, acceptance of the natural world is preferable to anthropocentric manipulation, hard work is only one of many important values, and the "wild" is as vital to our world as the "tame."

The Christian Parallel and Myth Creation

Most Western literature, however complex or sophisticated, is at its foundation a form of very basic myths or stories. M.H. Abrams defines the term archetype as the narrative designs, character types, or images that recur in a wide variety of literary works as well as in myths, dreams, and modes of social behaviour (201). According to Abrams, archetypes reflect the "collective unconscious, the core or primordial images that have shaped our thoughts, values and beliefs" (201). He calls the birth-rebirth theme the "archetype of archetypes" (202) and suggests that examples of such a story or myth include the Bible and Dante's *Divine Comedy* (202).

Cougar Annie's Garden is modeled—whether consciously or unconsciously—on this basic story of birth and rebirth. Horsfield's tale, with its multiple references to the garden's growth and near demise followed by its amazing rebirth, provide for a very Christian story. The author repeatedly associates Annie's garden with Eden, the first garden of the Bible. The wilderness, in contrast, stands in pagan opposition, threatening always (like the devil) to overtake the goodness and light of the garden. In the last chapter of the book, entitled "Back to the Garden," Horsfield writes that Cougar

Annie's garden is "like every garden before, all the way back to Eden" (246). She implies that gardens are somehow godly or god's salvation for the earth, and tells her readers that "[w]e can still find our way back into this garden" (246). Is she talking about Cougar Annie's garden or is she talking about the Garden of Eden? The lines become blurred. Cougar Annie's garden is called a sentinel, a symbol of hope and continuity (5). There is a photo of a picture hanging in Annie's house of a lighthouse shining over a storm-tossed sea; the words on the picture read "Jesus the Light of the World" (158). The sentinel garden is like the sentinel/lighthouse representing Jesus to the stormy world. The Christian references, the implied parallels, could hardly be any more obvious in Horsfield's work.

If we parallel the Christian story with the Cougar Annie story, we see that Annie, in her ability to do no wrong, is a god-like figure, and Peter Buckland, her heir, is the Christ. Without Peter's sacrifice—like Jesus'—the garden would not have lived. Horsfield writes "the fate of her garden appeared to be sealed. Unless someone intervened, it would die with her" (222). Once Peter settles permanently on the homestead, he reclaims the area when only "the bones of the garden remained" (226). Like Jesus, he raises the dead. The author quotes him: "All I knew was that I had to let it breathe again" (226). Like Annie/God, Peter/Jesus makes sacrifices. Horsfield says he is obsessed by the garden and writes of him working on it every day, all year round. She calls his work "liberating Cougar Annie's garden" (231). "No bush garden is ever achieved without human sacrifice" (243), Horsfield proclaims, though there is absolutely no basis for such a statement. In the biblical parallel world Horsfield has created, however, the garden represents Christian salvation. In a sort of Calvinistic view only through hard work and suffering is that salvation attained.

Horsfield encourages emotional attachment to the garden by invoking feelings of sentimentality, romance, and nostalgia. The book is loaded with beautiful photographs; readers are repeatedly asked to imagine scenes in the garden and in the past. The author shares a genuine sense of sorrow and loss in her descriptions of old, rotting buildings. The conquest of nature is romanticized. The violence of hacking a garden out of the coastal rainforest is presented as a caring and nurturing act. Trinh Minh-ha speaks of how "transformation, manipulations, or redistributions inherent in the collecting of events are overlooked" (120). She contends that story-making becomes history-making, that the fiction implied in story becomes the fact associated with history. Using a number of methods such as an appeal to Western

values, our familiarity and comfort with the North American pioneer story, and our emotions, Horsfield urges us to accept what is really a fictitious story with strong biblical/Christian parallels as a history of Hesquiaht Harbour.

Stephen Bonnycastle comments that "there is a great difference between the myths promulgated by the dominant group in society and those put forward by minority groups. The dominant group's myths have power on their side. They are repeated from every corner of the world, or so it seems, and they may become especially immune to criticism" (151). *Cougar Annie's Garden* is such an empowered myth. For those outside the dominant group like the Hesquiaht people, the myth of Cougar Annie is not a positive story of pioneer settlement alive with optimism, hope, and Christian values; it is a story heavy with oppressive attitudes and stifling foreign norms.

Contradictions

Cougar Annie's Garden contains numerous contradictions and inaccuracies. Hesquiaht Harbour is alternatively referred to as remote (3, 173), and abandoned (112, 138, 170) with a "negligible" (174) population, or as a hub of activity with freight boats, mail service, store customers, and shacks along the shoreline. Horsfield's conclusions often don't match up with the facts she presents. Horsfield praises Annie for her stubborn independence and self-sufficiency, for example, yet her descriptions of Annie show her depending upon income from the post office, deliveries from the freight and passenger ship *Princess Maquinna* that came to Hesquiaht Harbour about every ten days from 1913 to 1952, and help from loggers who frequented the area in the 1970s and 1980s. While portraying Annie as a lone survivor, Horsfield admits that "without the *Princess Maquinna*, Cougar Annie would have been at a complete loss" (90).

Though the author states that Annie's life was largely undocumented—"no record exists of the thoughts going through Ada Annie's mind" (62)—she claims to know Annie's dreams and schemes from things Annie left behind like the garden, buildings, and household furnishings (4). With little evidence beyond her own imaginings, the author presents Annie's love of gardening, her ambition for her bulb nursery, and her hopes for the future. Thomas King talks about how imaginative fancies "help us get from the beginning of an idea to the end" (241). Horsfield repeatedly asks us to imagine along with her and to accept the idea that "history is elusive, obscured in a fog of coastal mythologies" (3) as a substitute for substantiated evidence. In short, she encourages us to accept her fantasies of what might have been.

Because I am a long-time resident of the area that Horsfield describes, and because I am married to someone who has lived his entire life in this area, I know something about Hesquiaht Harbour. I cannot be fooled as easily perhaps as those who have never been here or have only briefly visited. When Horsfield makes a statement like "this garden has become a valuable link within the local scene" (3), I am astounded at her ability to fabricate. When she calls native trees and plants "invasive growth" (224) and treats the imported garden species as the ones that belong here, I am amazed at her abilities to twist truth and reality. When she states that Peter Buckland's Hesquiaht projects are made possible by the logs that "keep showing up on the shore" (240), I know this to be unlikely, given the number of buildings he has constructed.

For someone making a record of the Hesquiaht area, Horsfield displays an alarming lack of knowledge about the political, social, and natural environments here. Fisheries and marine resources, for example, are described simplistically. Horsfield seems blissfully unaware of the huge and rapid declines in once plentiful Hesquiaht Harbour species like herring, clams, and crabs (Charleson, personal communication). She talks of BC Parks abandoning any hope for the area in the 1970s, yet fails to note that much of the Hesquiaht Harbour shoreline became a provincial park in the early 1990s. No information about recent political developments such as the Clayoquot Sound Interim Measures Agreement is given. Horsfield's priorities lie with the promotion of the garden. All else is treated with an often casual disregard.

Though Horsfield claims that *Cougar Annie's Garden* is largely based on primary sources such as interviews and private papers, large portions of the book are based on already published material. Horsfield, however, uses no citations in her text. Instead, she provides five pages of "Notes on Sources" and a list of acknowledgements. Her sources and list are telling. The most heartfelt thank yous are reserved for Peter Buckland. Annie's daughters and son Tommy are listed, as is her devoted friend Robert Culver, and people "who shared memories and local knowledge" (249). Of over forty names, only three belong to Hesquiaht people.

Conclusion

If one were to take the time to explore Hesquiaht Harbour, one would surely notice Cougar Annie's garden. It is not more beautiful, or somehow more interesting or amazing than other parts of Hesquiaht Harbour. It stands out because, like the clearcut mountains above, it is an anomaly. It is a

Western-style garden in the midst of a seemingly natural landscape. If the garden existed in an urban area, it might scarcely even be noticed. Here in Hesquiaht Harbour though, where the natural environment still dominates, the garden is noticeable because of its difference. What is unfortunate, from an indigenous perspective, is that gardens (and farms, ranches, etc.) are viewed by Westerners as progress, as signs of man's making good use of the land. Ironically, to those same Western eyes, indigenous use of the land is not even noticed. In Hesquiaht Harbour, where thousands upon thousands of trees living within the forest show evidence of past usage, Aboriginal use and management of the lands and waters is so integrated within the landscape, it is virtually invisible.

Invisibility of Hesquiaht use, and indeed of Hesquiaht people themselves, is a hallmark of *Cougar Annie's Garden.* As a member of a large Hesquiaht family, I cannot help but be amazed at the importance attached to a single white settler (albeit someone with husbands and children) who happened to live in what was—and continues to be—a predominantly Hesquiaht landscape. Horsfield's failure to notice Hesquiaht presence is the same failure to notice that has afflicted Westerners in North America for centuries. In order for the settler way of life to quickly predominate, traditional territories are viewed as wilderness, as devoid of humanity and culture (Braun 88). A dehumanized landscape almost invites settler conquest.

Cougar Annie's Garden reassures settler people that they belong here, that through their hard work, perseverance, and determination, they are entitled to the land. In sad contrast, indigenous people—through abandonment and a lack of dedication to settler ideals like farm labour—seem to have lost that right. In Horsfield's hands, *Cougar Annie's Garden* is the story of whites/settler people moving into the future, and of the indigenous Hesquiaht people receding into the past. It is the story of Western values and ways of interacting with the land and its people overtaking and displacing Hesquiaht connections and knowledges here. In Horsfield's "history," Hesquiaht traditional territories are transformed into Boat Basin, a Western pioneer settlement/development, that has come to assert the power to act, name, represent, and speak for Hesquiaht Harbour. McEwan argues that texts of development are often "imagined worlds bearing little resemblance to the real world. Development writing often produces and reproduces misrepresentation" (96). *Cougar Annie's Garden* is an example of development writing creating a history and myth, and in the process, pushing aside the histories and myths that have previously prevailed.

Hesquiaht people are clearly not human beings. In the simplest of terms, that is the message that *Cougar Annie's Garden* presents. In Horsfield's account, the Hesquiaht are depersonalized, vague, mostly silent presences in the background. Certainly, they are not acting and thinking individuals like ambitious settler characters. While books are written and praises sung to the survival of white settlers, the survival of Hesquiaht individuals over the same timespan and for centuries before, is worthy of meager mention. This book would not bother me if it were relegated to some obscure scrapheap. Instead, the tale of *Cougar Annie's Garden* is upheld by Peter Newman, an undisputed popularizer of Canadian history; it is awarded the Haig-Brown Prize in 2000—an award presented annually to a book that "contributes most to the enjoyment and understanding of British Columbia" (BC Book Prizes). The book's sale is actively promoted by the current managers/developers of the garden (Boat Basin Foundation). A Western perspective is being sold as *the* history of Hesquiaht Harbour, with the merest of acknowledgements of far older, more complex, and sophisticated indigenous histories. Horsfield's poorly recorded sources, her embellishments, exaggerations, contradictions, and imaginings serve to legitimate the settler story. As Newman and the Haig-Brown Prize validate her story, so does her growing reader audience. *Cougar Annie's Garden* is as an example of continuing colonial domination, a continuing negation and denial of indigenous reality.

Horsfield credits Buckland with the wisdom to see that a select few native species in the garden "make the whole scene work" (235). I cannot help but see this inclusion of native species—after years of keeping them out—as a metaphor for the way Hesquiaht people are being treated. After years of exclusion, a few select Hesquiaht people are being recruited to join in the development of the garden. In secondary roles, they serve as enhancements, as little bits of local colour like the inclusion of a yellow cedar tree in the garden. To serve the overriding interests of development, the Hesquiaht—having somehow not completely disappeared—are rehabilitated to semi-human guest status in their own home.

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Gillian Jerome

Midsummer

Out at Trout Lake the kids are splayed in the umbra of the sun
feeding gold fish with plankton. There's a glut
as it happens, along the coast so the fish are smallish

and demented. But the parrots have been welcomed
into the noses, ears, armpits, hearts of the children
where they never hasten to repeat

the dirty words they teach them. Nobody hears
their curses but me and so I say them softly back to myself—
Fuckhead, Shitballs, Gaylord.

The sun is a soothsayer with a parched tongue
with lips the colour of iron. Under the Tattletree
I try to glean my thoughts from myself

wondering with all these children at my feet
where the peace went. What it wants to say
to the rank-and-file creatures out for a stroll, of the tamed pigeons breeding

above me in the dovecote. So remote is the island
of myself from my self, even the circuitous circus
of the heart has found in the grass bits

slumber to shut itself up.

Cinda Gault

Marian Engel's *Bear*
Romance or Realism?

> The historical life of a literary work is unthinkable without the active participation of its addressees.
> —Hans Robert Jauss

Marian Engel's novel *Bear* is compelling both in its own right and for the reaction it has elicited from critics over time. Before and after this novel was published, Engel's work was generally regarded as disappointing—flashes of brilliance with fine writing, but disappointing as stories. *Bear* was different: "In fact, *Bear* is a delicious, readable triumph, certainly complex but far wiser and more mature than Engel's *No Clouds of Glory* or *The Honeyman Festival*; finally pulling together the angry, unanswered escapisms of *Monodromos*" (Montagnes 71). In 1987, Elizabeth Brady noted that "[of] the more than fifty reviews I have tracked down, those that overwhelmingly praise *Bear* outnumber its detractors on a three-to-one ratio. Generally speaking, two aspects of the novel were singled out for distinction: the masterful cross-genre blending of realism and myth, and its singularly appropriate, spartan prose style" (13). Doris Cowan put into perspective the high water mark that *Bear* reached by pointing to the signal change it made in Engel's career:

> Since [*No Clouds of Glory*] her output has been steady, and consistently fine: five novels now, as well as a collection of short stories and some fiction for children. She has earned the respect of other writers, and the admiration of a large number of devoted readers, but she was not sensationally successful—that is, not until the publication of *Bear*. It is a brilliantly crafted, sad, odd story of a woman who is so lonely she falls in love—romantically, erotically in love—with a bear. Almost without exception, reviewers across the country were amazed and delighted. *Bear* won the Governor General's Award for Fiction in 1976, and Marian Engel became a literary star. (7)

What Hans Robert Jauss would call the first horizon of readers, or those who received a work at the time of its publication, most often understood *Bear* as a romance, with critical focus trained on the trajectory towards consolidation, self-understanding, salvation, and success. First, I will demonstrate how the romantic quest of the novel was understood primarily as a search for female or national identity, the holy grails of the dominant second-wave feminist and Canadian nationalist social movements of the era.

Then, taking this first horizon interpretation as a point of departure, I offer a second horizon of interpretation that began to develop with the waning of the aforementioned dominant identity movements. In these more contemporary times, the idea of identity no longer elicits optimism or expectation of successful achievement among critics and readers, but rather intense skepticism. When understood as romance, this novel seems to offer a triumphant self-discovery of the protagonist as a woman and a Canadian. By contrast, when understood according to conventions of realism, *Bear* becomes an engagement with the historical and gendered circumstances that make the story seem strategically non-triumphant. While the novel clearly supports different kinds of readings, the discovery of parallel female and national identities becomes subtler and more realistic if they are viewed as in conflict with each other.

Bear as romance

In 1976, a critical consensus that identity was successfully achieved in *Bear* was clear: "[Lou] returns cleansed and renewed, and brings with her hope for the possibility of renewal and reconciliation to us all" (Wiseman 8). To such critics, *Bear* offered a transformation of reality: "The novel opens quietly and ends in the same way, Lou in the intervening pages having experienced a sort of redemption" (Baker 125). Sometimes the novel was seen as offering atonement and at other times a blessing, but either way, most critics in 1976 liked what they saw as a happy ending: "There is a kind of benediction, however, as Lou is able at the end of her stay on the island to re-establish a relationship which seems very like one of mutual respect and even tenderness with the bear" (Laurence 15). In keeping with this critical orientation, the quest motif was defined as ultimately successful and uplifting:

> The journey that draws her forth from her burrow this particular spring is undertaken ostensibly on behalf of the Institute, which has inherited an estate in the lake and bush country of Northern Ontario. But we very quickly recognize in it the classical pattern of the journey in search of self, of roots, of meaning, of reconciliation within the immanent unknown. (Wiseman 6)

Most critics felt that "[b]y the end of the book she has undergone a complete rebirth" (Moss 31). The attraction of this redemption and reconciliation was that "[o]ne emerges from the experience [of reading *Bear*] with a chilly yet marvelous sense of well-being—a feeling that in some deep and indefinable way, things really *are* all right" (Mattison 36).

The reconciliation of identity often reached mythic proportions, as is evident in the contention that Lou had "perhaps achieved that great romantic ideal, to be in harmony with nature. . . . *Bear*, then, is a book about Canadian history and mythology and its form is representational rather than psychologically realistic" (Thompson 32). In 1976, Michael Taylor argued that this novel "is so powerful both as story and myth, simply because it renders with a very fine economy and concentration particular people in a uniquely strange and interesting situation" (Taylor 127). Margaret Laurence further pointed out that *Bear* conveyed

> a sense of connectedness with all of life, and it has a strongly mythic quality, a quality which is reinforced by the bear lore and legend, from the ancient European world and from the North American Indian life-view, things which Lou learns both from the Pennarth library . . . and from Lucy, an old Indian woman who sometimes visits the island and who is herself a mythic earth-mother figure. (15)

Critical assessments of *Bear* often themselves employed the inflated rhetoric of romance. In 1976 Lou was called a "synthesis of British and Canadian culture, and the bear is a synthesis of North American culture: The point seems to be that just as European culture flowered after a primitive era, so there is hope for ours" (French 38).

The fully developed treatment of both female and national identity issues was a focus of admiration. This novel was often compared to Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*, since both sent female protagonists into the Canadian wilderness and brought them back to the city, and both were interpreted according to the romance structure that so many critics felt they had found in the novel: "The wilderness is *within* Atwood's narrator; it is a matter of coming to terms with oneself and hence with the natural world. In *Bear* it is different—a matter of coming to terms with the natural world and hence with oneself" (Appenzell 107). In both cases, the expectation is that something important about identity is being resolved, and that such resolution marries self-understanding to, at the very least, harmony with the protagonists' environments. Even the relatively few critics who did not like the novel acknowledged the existence of what were often perceived as parallel female and national identities: "The novel is a multi-layered exploration into Lou's personal, Canada's historical,

and man's generic pasts, and the bear is intended to be the symbolic manifestation of aspects of all three" (Solecki 345). Coral Ann Howells observed in 1986 that "*Bear* emerges as a feminized version of the Canadian wilderness myth, a quest for unity of being through loving connection between the human and the natural worlds" ("Marian Engel's *Bear*" 113).

The persistence of this view of parallel interests supports the claim that critics were invested in particular understandings of the novel. In 1976, for example, French saw Engel as having written *Bear* as a novel about "women's fear of being dominated" and the vulnerability communities feel when they are marginalized on the basis of either national or gendered identity because "[a]t its most elemental level . . . the bear represents the primitive society of Canada" (38). The suggestion that Lou's fear of the bear could emanate from either her female or national position in the web of human relations makes those identities seem almost interchangeable. Such reasoning suggests that, whether the protagonist's search is for female or for national identity, one assumes that a quest can result in discoveries of both and, additionally, that their coexistence would not likely pose problems. Critical response to Engel's work was so marked in its search for female and national identity quests—and the implied harmony between the two—that critics have pointed to their own responses as a source of interest:

> [t]oo often, appraisals of her novels are contingent upon the reviewer's or critic's sense of accord with their ideas and implied values. Increasingly these ideas and values have been squeezed to fit into two narrow criteria: the degree to which a book is idiosyncratically "Canadian" (the Survival Theme); and the degree of its adherence to, or deflection from, feminist ideological "correctness" (the Liberated Heroine Theme). (Brady 10-11)

In addition to finding evidence of identity in Engel's work, critics of the day tended to downplay tensions that might emerge if female and national identities were pursued at the same time. Woodcock broached a potential conflict between the two quests when he argued that

> at no point does Engel suggest that any human being is exempt from that search [for authentic identity] or from the self-examination it necessitates; at the same time she is honest enough to recognize she must embark on the quest admitting the particular limitations of viewpoint that being a woman imposes on her. (18)

His acknowledgement that a consideration of gender might have limiting effects on identity quests does not go so far as to admit that gendered and national paths toward self-discovery might actually pose problems for each other. Nor does the conviction that an individual psyche can incorporate characteristics arising simultaneously from both a natural Canadian

wilderness and a natural female anatomy anticipate trouble between the two. Instead, this idea of naturalness was seen as harmonious because such a wilderness can bring "into relief what it means, in turn, to be human and what, particularly, it means to be female. Canadian literature is well stocked with wilderness women" (Baker 127).

During the era of first horizon critical responses, and of those critics in the minority who did not like the novel, Val Clery, in 1978, was bothered by what he saw as Engel's betrayal of her own realist ethic; to him, *Bear* was "informed by sentiment only and not by astringent objectivity" (14). Clery was disappointed that Engel would betray her hard-nosed objectivity, thus suggesting that romance was not what this critic would expect from Engel: "If it had not been consumed, my heart would be broken by having to criticize so rudely a Canadian writer whom I consider the imaginative superior of Laurence and Atwood" (14). Other critics in 1976 were decidedly disappointed because, significantly, they felt that the novel did not live up to romance: "[t]here is nothing in the bear that transcends the reality created in the book. The bear is not a symbol of the wild, fierce and untameable. He is just a tired, old bear, fallen into the clutches of a crazy, lustful woman. The drawing of Lou's character is shallow, unconvincing" (Fish 42). In this vein, the "trouble" with the novel was seen by Margaret Osachoff in 1979-80 as stemming from Engel's commitment to realism: "the trouble seems to be that Lou's relationship with the bear is not presented in symbolic terms but realistically, and Lou is not mad like the narrator in *Surfacing*; so we are more likely to accept her ideas at face value" (18). Thus, among the critical readers who saw the book as romance, some were disappointed because it was too much a romance, and others were disappointed it wasn't romance enough.

This disappointment that springs from a reading of the novel as realism opens the door to a second horizon of interpretation that challenges romantic readerly wishes for Lou to be symbolically integrated by the end of the novel, as both a woman and a Canadian. The question of how to read this novel, in other words, depends on where along the scale between romance and realism one derives one's reading strategy. Does a mythic pattern of renewed identity dominate, or does the novel modulate more closely to a realist examination of the historical forces that have placed this individual protagonist in an ultimately untenable position? Reading *Bear* as a romance containing a successful search for parallel female and national identities was clearly tempting for many critics, but aspects of the novel have always challenged such an interpretation.

Bear as realism

One compelling argument against reading the novel as romance is the tension evident in issues that pit female and national identities against each other. As in Engel's other novels, national identity issues present problems for women. The image of a sleeping giant animal raises historical correspondences between Lou's love story and the political world. The story of an unwittingly dangerous beast trades on a famous 1969 speech to the National Press Club in Washington, DC, by Pierre Trudeau, then Prime Minister of Canada, in which he explained Canadian identity, using the metaphor of sleeping with a large animal capable of destruction:

> Living next to [America] is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant: No matter how friendly and even-tempered is the beast, one is affected by every twitch and grunt. . . . Americans should never underestimate the constant pressure on Canada which the mere presence of the United States has produced. We are a different people from you. We are a different people partly because of you. (174-75)

While Engel's friendly beast is a bear instead of an elephant, he is similarly even-tempered, even generously accommodating, and unwittingly dangerous. This idea of living in a space threatened by external national cultural forces is developed through Lou's summer place, an American structure designed by Fowler, the "sort of American we are all warned about" (37). This American structure further contains British Victorian culture in the form of the library, which, in turn, contains Lou in her capacity as a historian assigned the task of documenting Canadian uniqueness, past and present. The bear occupies this complex space with Lou, but his meaning vacillates between American-sharing-the-continent-but-posing-a-threat and Canadian primitivism.

While the reader is tempted to understand the bear as Lou's personal integration of Canadian nature and history, the histories do not integrate because of the tensions suggested when they operate together in the same imaginary world. Whether the bear represents Canadian nature, an intrusion of British Victorian views of the world, or an American beast likely to inadvertently crush his Canadian playmate while swimming or sleeping, these histories cannot be braided together in a way that avoids tangible danger to Lou. In fact, exactly such a confrontation constitutes the climax of the novel. When the bear finally becomes aggressive, Lou fights back with a swift self-protective reaction, despite the danger: "'Get out.' She drew a stick out of the fire and waved it at him. . . . 'Go,' she screamed. He went out through the back door, scuttling. She walked as erectly as possible to the door, bolted it,

and fell shaking into bed" (132). Lou's combat produces two different histories, since at one and the same time she can be seen as a Canadian fighting (American) imperial influences and a woman fighting a libidinally aggressive male. Trudeau's sleeping-with-an-elephant metaphor points to the political, economic, and cultural vulnerabilities of a nation, while Engel's treatment invests Lou with the sexual vulnerabilities of a woman. Parallels break down because, no matter how well she defends herself from threats of colonialism, imperialism, and patriarchy, the threat itself is contradictory. Canadian men might be made vulnerable by American influence, but Canadian women can be made vulnerable by men of any nationality, including Canadian men. Female and national identities are both implicated in the dangers experienced by women (and Canadians) in bed with big dangerous beasts.

This novel also modulates away from romance through the strong anti-fairytale trajectory of the novel. In 1991 Howells suggested that Engel's method in *Bear* is a disruption of expected narratives, specifically "its breaking down of genre boundaries between pastoral, pornography and myth" ("On Gender" 72). I suggest that Engel disrupts narrative expectation not only by playing with these genres, but also by deploying the fairy tale form ironically, first to support and then to undermine Lou's romantic view of the bear. Indeed, Christl Verduyn supports the relevance of fairy tales to Engel's writing at this time by reporting that "the discussions about writing that Engel had with therapist John Rich had strong literary overtones and numerous references to fairy tales" (121). In the novel, Lou's initial and potentially repulsive sexual interaction with the bear is related in terms of true and unstoppable love:

> She knew now that she loved [bear], loved him with a clean passion she had never felt before. . . . There was a depth in him she could not reach, could not probe and with her intellectual fingers destroy. She lay on his belly, he batted her gently with his claws; she touched his tongue with hers and felt its fatness. She explored his gums, his teeth that were almost fangs. She turned back his black lips with her fingers and ran her tongue along the ridge of his gums. (118-19)

The ruse of true love is developed when Lou happily engages in conventional women's work because, based on her enjoyment of her sexual difference as a woman, she feels free. Further, humour arises from the suggestion that a bear can understand more about women than can men:

> [W]hat she disliked in men was not their eroticism, but their assumption that women had none. Which left women with nothing to be but housemaids. . . . She cleaned the house and made it shine. Not for the Director, but because she and

> her lover [bear] needed peace and decency. Bear, take me to the bottom of the ocean with you, bear, swim with me, bear, put your arms around me, enclose me, swim, down, down, down with me. (112)

Lou's rapturous hope that love will win out parodies sentimental representations that lead to either a happy or tragic ending. Fairy tale expectations that lovers are irresistibly drawn to each other despite social disapproval are undermined by Lou's unsuccessful efforts throughout most of the text to entice the bear sexually. Then, when she achieves success, such as it is, it is a dangerous rather than triumphant moment. All tenets of romance are rendered ironic when hero and heroine do not end up together at the end, whether in death or marriage; here, their break-up is precipitated by a violent act associated with sexuality that bear could not "help" because of his masculine/animal nature; and the expectation overturned is her successful domestication of him through love. Romance has not provided the mechanism necessary to transcend dangerous biological differences. Although the bear demonstrates a certain amount of co-operation with Lou's libidinal will, his own sexuality erupts, eludes her grasp, and becomes dangerous. The effect is an eruption of reality that accentuates the dangers posed to this female by whatever the bear represents (imperialism or maleness).

The absence of an idealized female portrait also undermines the structure of romance. Colonel Cary, for example, does not function as a solution in the text. The Cary will stipulates the estate must be passed on to another Colonel Cary: her parents subvert the sexist intention of the will by giving her the Christian name "Colonel," thereby passing her off as a man. Unfortunately, the legal trick has not fundamentally challenged patriarchal social structures that are inevitably based on inequalities. Thus Colonel Cary's story is problematic as one of self-actualization of a woman in a Canadian setting. In this national setting, according to Margery Fee, "the only social models [Lou] can discover or imagine for identity are male. Although she aspires to the condition of the dominant male subject, she cannot finally adopt it, because it requires that she become dominant, a repudiation, for her, of her female experience" (22). The implicit tensions between Cary's gender and nationality render her female identity contradictory. The moral strain of subservience when one has rebelled against it invites an understanding of identity as contradictory to the point that the power to change becomes indistinguishable from the power to oppress.

As with the endings in Engel's other novels, *Bear* can be seen as presenting a woman who is alone and incapable of resolving the conflicts that interfere

with an integrated sense of herself. As an individual, Lou is unable to attain an integrated or renewed sense of identity because of the contradictory tensions that interfere with her understanding of herself as a Canadian or a woman. While Lou's individual consciousness is portrayed as subject to historical causation, critic Fee made the argument in 1988 that there is tension additionally apparent in Engel's representation of collective identity in this novel. The protagonist's individual tensions are portrayed as resonating on the level of larger social and historical possibilities because, according to Fee, Engel is able to deal more successfully with national than female identity problems: "[Engel] manages to debunk the colonial mentality, the male, literary tradition and even that representative of the wilderness, Noble Savage, Demon Lover and fairy tale Prince, the bear, but she cannot finally debunk the patriarchy" (20). Engel's definition of female subjectivity (how one fits into a place in society) fails, according to Fee, because "subjectivity is constituted collectively, and from a position of power" (20). As part of a collective, Lou cannot know herself as a woman because the requisite power for self-definition is institutionalized in society as male. If that society is also institutionalized on the basis of a patriarchal nationality, then women risk becoming puppets who speak to each other only through patriarchy when they articulate national values. Ironically, women who cannot think of themselves apart from their national identities disrupt attempts to create a communal sense of self-defined female identity. In *Bear*, female autonomy would require constitution outside institutional constructs (like nation) that are always already implicitly male:

> What ultimately prohibits [*Bear*'s] attempts at resolution is not just male power, but the equation of sexuality, voice, and power, and the rejection of them all as male. This reluctance to take power is perhaps sensible; power seems to corrupt women by first turning them into men. To reject power is to be forced into Lou's untenable position, cut off from both sexuality and a voice. (Fee 26)

According to this view, Lou's very isolation makes her identity resistant to integration, since a collective female identity results from banding together. A collective sense of identity might have constituted political strategy for the Women's Liberation Movement of the social world, but Engel's privileging of isolation keeps conflict and contradiction in focus, as though to insist on positioning patriarchy as an ongoing threat that is best seen in confrontational terms.

Emphasis on the realist elements of the novel highlights tensions within and between female and national identities, suggesting such tension is

the point of the text. While Sarah of *No Clouds of Glory* retreats alone to Montreal, and Audrey of *Monodromos* retreats alone to England, Lou in *Bear* stays in English Canada to retreat alone to the city. Lou has coped with the same issues that occupied her fellow protagonists, and has been equally unsuccessful, but she appears happier about her experience, thereby making her story more amenable to those who wished to interpret it as romance. Nevertheless, attention to the moments when female and national aspects of character actually work against each other makes sense of this novel as extending one of Engel's ongoing themes: Lou is yet another female protagonist who is understandable according to social and historical forces that render her incapable of integrating her understanding of herself and that leave her alone at the end. Atwood's unnamed protagonist in *Surfacing*, at novel's end, was reaching toward a life with her boyfriend, no matter how doomed their relationship might be. Engel's Lou returns to no one. The Director is no longer possible as a diversion, and the bear, despite the promise he offered as a tool for self-examination, does not provide any sense of community.

So how are we to read this novel in the end? Engel herself noted its Rorschach flavour: "I'm interested in your reaction to Bear because it's almost an empty book, in some ways. People bring their own content to it. And they make it what they want it to be" (qtd. in Klein 27). Verduyn offers one way to read the novel from a contemporary vantage point with her contention that Engel explores dualisms in women's experience: "Marian Engel's protagonists endeavour to fuse oppositional forces in their lives, in an effort to avoid a dichotomized, alienated existence" (9). Engel's vision is thus a world in which dualism is not so much resolved as transformed through strategic deployment of contradictory narrative strategies. In this vein, romance extravagantly shot through with realism can be seen as romance hung out to dry, undercutting any sense of stable identity, whether female or national. Engel's attempt to fuse rather than choose opposite worlds leaves room for a certain amount of anti-patriarchal chaos.

For example, the ending of the novel has been interpreted as similar to that of Atwood's *Surfacing*, although the occasional critic in 1976 disagreed: "[t]o read *Bear* as yet another story of the need for us (Canadians) to get into touch with the wilderness is quickly to place it as nothing more than a neat (and sexier) version of, or footnote to *Surfacing*" (Kennedy 390). The suggestion that *Bear* meant something different from *Surfacing* was explained in terms of the writing itself: "Despite the potentially trivializing qualities of

Bear, one is struck with the quality of the writing. . . . Throughout the book, one feels the quiet authenticity of Engel's writing, as if that is what she were writing the book about" (Kennedy 390-91). Or as was suggested in 1977, "*Bear*, to a certain extent, proffers that we should be more concerned with making history than with uncovering it" (Labonte 188). Verduyn extends this line of reasoning by suggesting that, for Engel, writing is the "means of living and working on one's own terms and as a woman" (10). Instead of making claims of resolution, one can ask how the writing itself makes a portrait of identity possible without integration or resolution.

Perhaps the interpenetration of realism and romance underscores the conviction that contradictions at work in female experience are more important in and of themselves than the possibility of their integration. Realism as a reading strategy for this story can be seen as providing an ironic wink at misguided efforts to invest in the possibility of integrated identity. The reading of this "empty book" continues to fascinate, not only because of the nature of the novel itself, but also for what critics are willing to read into it.

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Allan Brown

Three Epigrams

CREATION 101

D'you hear the one about old Adonai?

Took him six days, even and morn, to make
a world and then on the seventh he fell
asleep, and ol' Snake Eyes rolled it away!

SOMEWHAT HORATIAN

—Do not double tempt, kid,
with your Persiantype niceties;
from science to park
I am established already;
and thence to start in a word
or three of "Here is Where?"
and yes enough
—For
I have know it all and ready,
known it all, and then a pen
from springaling to summer,
full to winter, parts my fall.

THE FAUSTIAN DILEMMA

How life is everyfull and then
it isn't as it says in Faust,
which I don't understand, so
I consult my friend the good angel
who consults his parallel text edition
(with critical apparatus) of both
the play and the (other) angel, of course,
but they don't understand it either.

Sean Somers

Anne of Green Gables/ Akage no An
The Flowers of Quiet Happiness

Critics often identify the remarkable popularity of *Anne of Green Gables* in Japan by the abundant outcrop of related commercial products that circulate in Japanese pop culture. Anne as emblem, it seems, has enabled romantic infatuations through a fantasy performance of Canadianness. Such investigative perspectives—as from Yoshiko Akamatsu, Douglas Baldwin, and Judy Stoffman—find in *Akage no An* (Red-Haired Anne) forms of Occidentalist nostalgia for a Victorian ideal. The Anne character has become commodified as exotic souvenir, ethnic roleplay, or adventure tourism. But why has Japan, of all nations, so strongly evidenced this tendency to turn Anne into apparatus? Is Anne in Japan only a phenomenon of token appearances? These expressions of *An*, after all, are recent developments of a text that has enjoyed decades of respect. These later social expressions, however understood, derive their effects from initial sympathies previously registered through an imported text. Indeed, the methodology of the translation, intercultural in practice, may hold the clues to the enormous popularity of Anne in Japan. Yuri Lotman and Boris Uspensky have claimed that lexical choices in interlingual renditions are transformative mechanisms. These devices mark the translation as exhibiting interstices of culture and linguistics. The major translations of *Akage no An* are examples of such inflections, exhibiting deliberate usage of classical allusion, substitutive vocabularies, and other Japanese cultural referents. Translation has thus reframed Anne, and her environs, into a blended version of Canadian and Japanese identities. Why do Japanese readers seemingly feel such an attachment to *Anne of Green Gables*? Perhaps it is because Green Gables is not so foreign in expression or environment after all. Muraoka Hanako and

Kakegawa Yasuko, the renowned translators of *Akage no An*, both engaged in a purposeful intertwining of Japanese poetic classicism with the characterization of *Anne* as an intertexual *An*. Avonlea thus exists as a Canadian landscape, but one framed by, and interpreted through, such things as traditional *haiku* stylistics. Anne now occupies, and speaks out of, a uniquely hybridized space, a composite of elements from Japanese poetry and Canadian geography.

As I will explain, translators employ various conventions and phrases from Japanese classical literature that institute uncanny resemblances between Anne and Japanese poetic paradigms. Such techniques add layers of *koten* (Japanese classics) as referents that orient the nuances of her personhood with Japanese culture. She becomes, as such, placeable and recognizable to a Japanese reader. Thus, I wish to expand the discussion by investigating how *Akage no An* conjures up an intercultural aesthetic milieu by interpolating conventions from Japanese classical literary heritage. Rather than relying on calque, or loanblends, Muraoka and Kakegawa prefer to insert words derived from an established vocabulary based on Japanese poetic classics. This *wafû* (Japanese-esque) style engages the sensitivity of the reader's background, viewing the original text through a lens pre-established within Japanese classical poetry. To emphasize this approach, Muraoka and Kakegawa use techniques of *shiki no irodori* (seasonal colourings) that derive from the conventions of Japanese poetry. Such a translational strategy exemplifies Hiraga Masako's sense of *iconicity* as a formative practice in the continuous tradition of Japanese poetry. The repetition of conventional words and forms as environmental referents can generate inferred meaning in *haiku* or *waka*. When *haiku* iconicity becomes integrated with Anne, an enormous impact can be made on a Japanese readership. Anne, likewise, is re-constellated according to Japanese poetic sensibilities, conventional moods such as *myô* (wonder), and *shizen to hitotsu* (nature and people in harmony). So, working with these principles, something as everyday as *the flowers of quiet happiness* (Montgomery *Anne* 396)—*shizuka-na kôfuku no hana* (Muraoka 421)/ *shizuka-na shiawase no hana* (Kakegawa 312)—emerge through tempering translation into a *haiku no sekai* (the *haiku* world, or mindset). The paradigms of *shiki no irodori* as a mechanism for colouring Avonlea with a *haiku* palette thus remind the reader of a shared vision of a poeticized nature, one that resembles Avonlea as well as classical Japanese ambiences (*kotenteki*).

Sonja Arntzen, translator of the poet Ikkyû and the *Kagerô nikki* (*The Gossamer Years*) has argued that Japanese-Canadian relationships, based

on *Anne of Green Gable* (*Akage no An*), must have a deeper correspondence than trivial tokens, such as red-haired wigs:

> We cannot say that the respect for Japanese poetry in Canada now is directly related to the Japanese enthusiasm for *Anne of Green Gables,* but it may be related to qualities in the work itself that resonate with Japanese culture. It suggests the existence of points of common ground between Japanese and Canadian culture (if indeed we take *Anne of Green Gables* as representative of Canadian culture) that may be unconscious to both the Japanese and the Canadians.[1]

Danièle Allard has, in likewise trying to identify a common ground or shared resonance, described the emphasis on natural imagery in the original novel as echoing a quality that "corresponds to the practices of classical Japanese literature" (*Popularity* 148). Translators certainly had this echo in mind in terms of Japanese literary heritage. Indeed, they heightened the effect through deliberate uses of allusion, replacement vocabularies based on *kigo* (season words used in *haiku*), and other devices. The *Akage no An* translators thus merge a text in translation according to pre-arranged templates of classical Japanese literature (*koten*). These connotations engage the Japanese reader in a multivalent fashion: their own literary canon is reflected in a Canadian habitation. *Akage no An* thus acts, through intercultural sharing, as an appealing correction to certain entrenched prejudices on both sides of the Pacific. As a hybridized ground between Canada and Japan, this novel, now culturally diversified, challenges prevalent clichés and dichotomies: that *Westerners* are anthropocentric, or that the Japanese have a unique appreciation for nature. *Akage no An* realizes an intermixing of cultural ethos through the allusive procedures of translation, gaining, and sharing cultural ground.

When directly compared, many passages from *Akage no An* read similarly, in spirit and also in phrasing, to some of the Japanese poetic classics. Muraoka and Kakegawa heighten this effect of a dually registered Anne, one seemingly attuned to both Japanese and Canadian environments, by instilling in the text frequent allusions to Japanese classical literature, arts, and culture. Thus, an assessment of Japanese *readings* of this work, as particularly realized patterns, could be informed by identifying those indigenous contexts that influenced the translation and reception of *Anne of Green Gables*. Montgomery most likely did not study *haiku*, although she seems to have had a fondness for the *japonisme* of her time.[2] Likewise, the Japanese reception of Anne evidences a fancy for the trappings of Victorian rurality. *Akage no An* continues to be a striking contrast to the cyborgs, robot *anime*, and video game performances of Tokyo digital virtuality. When translators adopt Anne through a model of classical Japanese poetry and vocabulary, as well as

style, they develop a transcultural textual locus in which to characterize the functions of an Anne who speaks both Shakespeare and Issa.

Anne's identity, as a global export, has been hugely popular in the world's imagination. But why her particular appeal has been to the Japanese has been a perennial question.[3] *Akage no An* has been the subject of diverse range of publications in Japanese: several *manga*—including a multi-volume series published by Kumon, a televised *anime* series directed by Takahata Isao (1979), as well as costume museums and cookbooks. Anne has cachet for tourism: a couple might have a traditional Shintô ceremony in Japan and then travel to Prince Edward Island for a more relaxed, fanciful event. On this account, Okuda Miki has written a sensitive travelogue concerning such an experience, giving her impressions of contemporary Canadian life. During Expo 2005, in Aichi, Japan, the Canada Pavilion prominently enshrined a section dedicated to Anne. That summer, Princess Takamado, who also holds the title of *International Patron of the L.M. Montgomery Institute*, paid a formal visit. Certainly, *Akage no An* has been indexed as a commodity of wide commercial appeal, playing to sentiment and cultural curiosity. As scholars have noted, these tokens and public monuments indicate social popularity. But do these resultant fanfare forms, in fact, explain why such an enduring esteem for Anne had been established in the first place? Why has her appeal, especially so in Japan, persisted increasingly until 2008, the centenary anniversary of the English edition's publication?

In describing the prevalence of *Akage no An*, its position and orientation in Japanese literary and popular imaginations, critics have a responsibility to avoid ethnic generalizations: *Japanese people appreciate Anne because of . . .* or other such broad formulae. At the same time, Japan's particular forms of attraction to Anne, the degree and diversity of enthusiasm, is uniquely realized and without comparison when compared to other nations. But identifying what constitutes the experience of the *Japanese reader*, as a social entity, is tricky. Allard hints at ways the text is "Striking Japanese Chords" (*Popularity* 147), or becomes a part of the "Japanese psyche" (51). Likewise, Baldwin has a sense of "The Japanese Conception" as an essential claim to Anne-ness.[4] But what are the forces causing these echoes and resonances? Is it something entirely driven by popular psychologies of idealizing the West? Kajihara argues for a social sympathy. Anne shows devotion to the elderly, particularly in her loyalty to Matthew and Marilla as her caretakers. Such a virtue is complementary to the Confucian ethos of ancestral relations and has a sympathetic parallel for the Japanese. Correspondences seem to exist

between the ways that gender roles in Victorian Canada and the prescribed femininity defined and encouraged by Japanese society. Certainly, Japanese critics have evaluated *Anne of Green Gables* as an emotionally complex novel, exhibiting the four principal human feelings (*kidoairaku*) of joy, anger, pathos, and humour. In this way, Anne-in-Japan also upholds a defence of *kokoro*—heart, spirit, customs—in the hyper-technological twenty-first century.

Akage no An considered solely as an enactment of Occidentalist fantasy does not justify the depth and complexity of its relationship to Japanese reader-response. The text, rather than the visual apparatus that developed out of it, still receives the most attention. In terms of translations, there have been many, in all kinds of formats, including ones designed for early readers. Two complete renditions of the entire *Anne of Green Gables* series now exist: the first by Muraoka Hanako (Mikasa-shobô, 1952), still the most influential and highly regarded; and more recently by Kakegawa Yasuko (Kôdan-sha, 1999).[5] Academic scholarship includes such examples as Matsumoto Yûko's extensive study of Montgomery's use of Shakespearean references. As a kind of intercultural pedagogy for the classroom, Shimamoto Kaoru has written an ESL workbook, using the English of *Anne of Green Gables* for stylistic examples. Shimamoto analyzes dialogue from the novel as models of elegant English usage. Documenting the influence of *Anne of Green Gables* on Japanese authors, Kajihara Yuka lists many contemporary writers and artisans in Japan who have described their debt to Montgomery's particular vision. These include a diverse range of authors, such as the children's writer Tachihara Erika and the novelist Takada Hiroshi. What such studies in Japanese begin to indicate is that the *Akage no An* phenomenon owes its origin first to textuality, the process of incorporation in which *Anne* becomes *An*.

When Anne speaks in Japanese as *An*, she sounds antiquated, but not necessarily marked as Western or Victorian. Translators create a voice for Anne by implementing distinctively Japanese stylistics, rather than replicating the Queen's English. Both Muraoka and Kakegawa prefer to use verbal registers associated with old-fashioned modes of Japanese speech. Examples of the archaically feminine (*o-jôhin*) project onto Anne the socio-cultural connotations of *yamato nadeshiko* (old-fashioned femininity). In becoming *An*, Anne takes on the enunciation associated with antiquated Japanese discourse. For example, Muraoka creates qualities of indirectness and archaic in Anne's speech inflections:

Atashi ni wa pinku to kiiroga niawanai koto wa wakatteru no. (121)
"Oh, I know pink and yellow aren't becoming to me . . ." (Montgomery *Anne* 135)

Such translational choices create a distinctively female register: the use of *atashi*—the feminine first person singular—or, elsewhere, the interjection *ara*, as well as sentence tags such as *no* are used repeatedly by Muraoka. The passage above, taken from the start of chapter 12, depicts a form of *sahô* (education in manners) between Marilla and Anne, the relative status of each speaker defined by the format of language that they use. Although properly humble in this example, *An*'s dialogue also reveals an incongruity between her low social position and the highly elegant diction she employs. This *kihin ga aru* mode of speech demonstrates refinement, regardless of her lack of personal wealth or formal education. Unlike several Japanese versions of *Alice in Wonderland* (*Fushigi no kuni no Arisu*), Muraoka and Kakegawa strive not to modernize Anne's speech in a raucous or trendy manner. *Akage no An* establishes a Canadian backdrop, but one whose citizens are conversant in the etiquette norms of Japan. Thus, based on this situation, *haiku* or other cultural allusions are incorporated into the Japanese narrative without appearing as some poorly done ventriloquism. Anne must dually have a *haiku* voice combined with her original Canadian context. Translational patterns in oral communication thus can establish a cohesive base so that neither Japanese nor Canadian referents seem foreign.

Anne's Canadian context can be maintained, but with an additional layering of Japanese materialia that effect a multicultural common ground. Muraoka will, occasionally, use loanwords for rendering the book's trappings of Western culture. However, she will more likely substitute elements reflective of Japanese lifestyles. Thus, as Lotman and Uspensky describe, culturally specific lexical referents rework the textual space for the reader's imagination. For example, during Anne's first night at Green Gables, Muraoka has her sleep in a *momen no sashiko no futon* (6), a traditional kind of Japanese bed with indigo handstitching. This culturally specific term replaces the English word, and concept, *bed*. Anne sleeping in such a Japanese manner, of course, is improbable. But Muraoka intentionally positions a Japanese milieu, rather than faithfully replicating the original. This traditional craft of *sashiko*, indicative of Japanese tradition and handicraft (*dentô*), deliberately inspires a more Nipponophilic mood. Likewise, Muraoka can achieve a heightened atmospheric which hearkens to Japaneseness by using ethnically encoded words such as *chôchin*, a paper lantern often associated with *o-bon*, the summer lantern festival and time for ancestral visitations (363). Matthew, in fact, carries such a lantern—not a *lamp*—when he searches for Anne on a lonely, wintry twilight (Montgomery *Anne* 331). Seasonally, *chôchin*,

a summer object, does not match this scene. *Chôchin* and snow do not go together, according to cultural conventions. However, the sense of the older generation seeking out the younger, part of the theme of *o-bon*, is produced in Matthew's search for Anne. Such cultural miscegenations deliberately fuse disparate ethnic elements for multicultural effect. Another example of such is the *kinran* cloth, which is available in the Avonlea store while Matthew is dress shopping. *Kinran* refers to a kind of gold brocade whose patterns were imported from China during the Kamakura period, more suitable for a *kimono* or a monk's habit than puffy sleeves. Muraoka also notes the usual Western textiles, but also *kinran*, can be found in the furnishings of Green Gables. Likewise, one would not expect to find in the Maritimes, in that era, Buddhist institutions. None the less, Muraoka uses Japanese architectural terms in place of the original Christian landmarks: *ji'in*, a kind of temple, takes the place of "cathedral" (30).

Another issue for the translator involves the rendering of the extensive plant, flower, and tree names. A translator can preserve imagery as is, but at the expense of taxonomy. For example, in regards to the reoccurring mayflowers, Muraoka uses *sanzashi* (Japanese Hawthorn—*raphiolepis*) (234). *Sanzashi* is a *kigo* for early spring. In the same passage, brown is *cha-iro* (tea-coloured). In another passage in which spring arrives with peeping mayflowers, Muraoka inserts the highly classical *harugasumi* (the emergence of spring colour) instead of using *sanzashi* (404). *Harugasumi* is a key phrase prevalent throughout *koten*, including prominence in such standard texts as the *Kokinwakashû*, and is also the name of a song popular in the *shakuhachi* repertoire. Muraoka links Avonlea to the landscape of classical *waka* in such a way. Noticeably, Kakegawa does tend to prefer contemporary loanwords for flower names—Mayflower is *meifurawâ* (164)—even if generally her characters' diction and syntax remain antiquated. However, like Muraoka, she will use antiquated words such as *hakka* (mint) rather than the currently preferred *minto*. A further issue is the extent that the translation should retain climate-specific botanical terms. Arboreal references are crucial to the atmospheric referents of Montgomery's original. Thus, Muraoka will often find a close approximation to those species which are indigenous to the Canadian ecosystem. Japanese authors could keep a climatologically accurate translation for the Canadian original. For Muraoka, maples are always called *kaede*, the quintessential Canadian maple leaf, a sort which is different from the Japanese variety *momiji* (Acer palmatum). But, on occasion, she will use *botan* (Paeonia suffruticosa), the Japanese tree peony, rather than a loanword

(*shaku*), which would be appropriate for the Canadian original. In these ways, nature, in the Japanese text, mixes different species of plants, sometimes faithful to geographic realism, and other times invoking the scenery of Japanese classical literature.

An understanding of climate and nature as primary elements in *haiku* and *Anne of Green Gables* has been a recurring topic for Japanese critics and translators. Their perspective, however, often differs from that of Western counterparts. For example, Margaret Anne Doody's introduction to *The Annotated Anne of Green Gables* allegorizes nature as being a manifestation of the characters' archetypal identities. Anne is a Persephone (32), a vegetation deity (29), and an inverted mother to the Madonna figure, Marilla (26). These mythic equations orient the ecological content of this novel to the abstractions of thematic legend. Canadian folklore, which is one of Anne's scholarly interests, can be expanded through possible Japanese equivalents from folk studies (*minzoku*). The effect is subtle: no *tengu* appear or other goblin creatures appear in Avonlea. However, for Muraoka, the Grecian *dryad* becomes the more authentically Japanese *mori no yôsei* (234), or forest fairy. Ghosts do not have to be culturally exclusive. Anne and Diana's search for the spectral would also remind a reader of the children's ghost-hunting games of summer (*kimodameshi*). Certainly, that Anne composes *kaidan* (ghost stories), based on her locale, would remind a reader of Lafcadio Hearn's work, or Ueda Akinari's collection, *Ugetsu monogatari*—a film version of which appeared in 1953. Japanese translations maintain Western mythology, when it is obviously apparent, but supplement native poetic practices that situate nature as a kind of experiential performance.

The episodic flow of the narrative follows a calendar of seasonal progression. From this quality, the customs of Japanese poetics find their clearest correspondences in Montgomery. From the moment of Anne's arrival at Avonlea, the novel's rotational energy develops firmly upon the revolving palettes of the seasons. An empowering potential for deep ecological sensitivity must come from a concentration of poetic attitude. Attention to the changes and natural revelations in the elemental world, intermixed with human affairs, constitute much of the growth and self-development in Anne's poetic imagination:

Every year
Thinking of the chrysanthemums,
Being thought of by them.
(Shiki/Blyth 4: 1126)[6]

as she talked . . .
    wind and stars and fireflies
were all tangled up together . . .
(Montgomery 243)

Spring, independently so, comes to Avonlea regardless of whether Anne is there or not: the floral indicator of a season "blooms as if it meant it" (76). Poetic stylization describes what *sort* of season comes, as filtered through the scopes of literary convention as well as a creative imagination. This is the aforementioned potency of *haiku* iconicity, one that helps to pattern the translation according to established paradigms. Thus, seasonality-in-itself in *Anne of Green Gables* produces many similarities to the panorama of the *haiku* world:

Every night from now
Will dawn
From the white plum-tree.
(Buson/Blyth 2:583)

Here and there a wild plum leaned out from the bank like a white-clad girl tiptoeing to her own reflection. (Montgomery *Anne* 61)

Or, consider these shared sympathies, which both describe the commonality of the organic condition:

Looking again at the chrysanthemums
That lost. (Issa/Blyth 4: 1125)

They just looked
like orphans themselves,
those trees did.
(56)

Anne's emotive identification with natural elements can resemble, in mode and expression, Kobayashi Issa's and the customs of other poets. Nature and author share a mutual existence, realized through interpersonal interjections, demonstrating the cherished concept of *shinra banshô* (people and nature in harmony): "I shouldn't shorten their lovely lives by picking them—I wouldn't want to be picked if I were an apple blossom" (108). Anne's short, enthusiastic musings thus are likened to bits of *haiku* verse, producing a poetics of cultural impact.

A Japanese translator can further foster similarities between Anne and *koten* through the supplementation of classical syntax, allusion, stylistics, and vocabulary. On this point, Kôno Mariko's book *<Akage no An> hon'yaku ressun* describes the textual play of nature in the novel as hearkening back to pre-modern poetry collections. Kôno is also comparing *Anne of Green Gables* to a *saijiki*, or *haiku* almanac, through its customs in using season words. Allard finds that Muraoka's translation often uses phrases developed on the standard syllabic patterns (5-7-5) of *tanka* and *haiku* (*Popularity* 80). The rhythmic quality of short passages thus can beat out along a traditional meter; and the use of specific poetic vocabulary accentuates a *koten* aura for Avonlea. Anne can be seen as having a *haiku*-like voice in how she views nature's charm as immanent and experiential. This quality is also apparent by comparing English translations with Montgomery:

Coming along the mountain path. There is something touching About these violets. (Bashô/Blyth 2: 638)	a fascination of its own, that bend, I wonder how the road beyond it goes (Montgomery *Anne* 390)

The interpolation of iconic phrases, from *koten*, within Avonlea confirms the supposition of a trans-national milieu, as interstices between culture and linguistics. Muraoka and Kakegawa's writings implement *kigo* conventions into the translation.[7] Avonlea now references specifically Japanese landscape features and their cultural connotations, through the season word. Such additions recast the original English with the nuances of a *koten* poetic palette. Such a pronounced effect immediately draws in the Japanese language reader into an augmented text that strikes a chord with previously known literary examples. The *resonances* of these phrases have power because of their culturally denotative implications, even though here transferred onto the context of a Canadian novel. Japanese and Canadian linguistic and environmental features intermingle, imaginatively, through lexical choices. Thus, *Akage no An*, received as something foreign, can simultaneously be marked as something indigenous. This careful hybridization, revealed as a quality of Anne speaking in the mode of Japanese classics, enhances a process of self-identification for a readership. For example, when Anne sets out to fetch the ipecac bottle, Muraoka describes the cold outdoors with an evocative *kigo*, *yukigeshiki* (213)—*snowy landscape*—instead of "snowy places" (208). *Yukigeshiki* has iconic power because of its repetitious use historically as a poetic idiom. It can correspond with quintessential images of Canada as the snow-country, but the term also summons an established vocabulary for the feelings associated with a frosty climate.[8] In such instances, the *saijiki,* as a common catalogue of such entrenched season words in Japanese poetics, provides Muraoka and Kakegawa with an affective set of phrases that serve as contextualizing feature for translation. Avonlea as an imaginative domain is re-oriented through drawn parallels to *haiku* perspectives.

One of the strongest examples of *kigo*, as a replacement for the English original, is Muraoka's substitution of *yamazakura* (23) for "wild-cherry trees" (Montgomery *Anne* 13).[9] At face value, this is perfectly acceptable, as *yamazakura* (mountain cherry) grow uncultivated in raw, natural environs, and thus are "wild-cherry trees." However, considered as an extension of Japanese tradition, this spring *kigo* has vivid connotations. Visually, the word calls to mind widely known examples, such as the *Yoshitaka no ôzakura*, in Chiba prefecture, a magnificent specimen that is a national treasure as

well as a local landmark. *Yamazakura* is the title of a folk song (*min'yô*), often learned by beginners on folk instruments. *Yamazakura* have extensive allusive value in Japanese poetics. The *Man'yôshû* and *Genji monogatari* both include several references to it and its particular features (untamed prettiness, spontaneity). As a sign of natural regeneration compared to the decay of urban marketplaces, one poet famously wrote in the *Senzaishû*:

> sazanami ya/shiga no miyako wa arenishi wo
> mukashi nagara no/yamazakura kana
>
> Shiga, the capital, near the rippling waves, left now to ruins:
> the mountain cherries remain unchanged.

Rather reminiscent of Anne, the following verse by Issa describes the mountain cherries as companion, caregiver, and comforter to the wanderer:

> yamazakura kami naki hito ni kazasaruru (*Issa zenshû* 2:429)
>
> Mountain cherry blossoms: an embellishment of hair to a bald man.

Also, in the *Hyakunin isshu*, a famous poem describes the *yamazakura* as true friendship, realized in the lonely isolation of the hillsides:

> Morotomo ni ahareto omoe yamazakura hanayori hoka ni shiruhitomo nashi. (#66)
>
> Mountain slope cherry tree: solitary and friendless—
> it is you alone who knows me.

Written by Gyoson, a *shugendô* ascetic, the poem above describes the *yamazakura* as possessing the generosity of spirit truly capable of understanding the monk's *kokoro*. And Anne expresses this kind of sentiment on many occasions: "Can I take the apple blossoms with me for company?" (108).

The above examples of *kigo* in Muraoka are embedded patterns within broader frameworks of translation and cross-representation. Muraoka's deliberate placing of such words at critical points in the novel places a subtext of *koten* as an appurtenant dimension to Anne's identity in translation. These references, combined with renderings that draw attention to traditional aesthetic values in Japanese poetry, have an acclimatizing effect on the reader. *Kigo* such as *yamazakura* carry intensive value as a distinct characteristic of Japan, with centuries of poetic embellishment and perspectives. Muraoka has brought forth a kind of *haibun*, passages of prose containing *haiku* interpolations. Even if the atmospheric setting is clearly the geography of PEI, inserting a vocabulary connotative of Japanese *furusato* (hometown) identities connects *An* to an intercultural common space. This translational practice of blending enhances a textual atmosphere of shared heritages, communities, and poetics. The translator superimposes a Japanese poetic

vernacular onto the foreign landscape. Japanese topical colourings derive their connotations as iconic tradition. Thus, *kigo* or other cultural allusions act as supplementary referents to the original Avonlea landscape.

Will Ferguson's travelogue about Japan, *Hitching Rides with Buddha*, exposed Western audiences to Japan's national obsession for cherry blossoms, as the cascading arrival of spring. Newsreaders announce the expanding *sakura zensen*—the cherry-blossom front—with meteorological precision. *O-hanami*, the festive activity of blossom appreciation, involves socializing and not just passive viewing. Picnics, complete with music and drink, lure entire communities into the outdoors. This enjoyable activity has spread across the Pacific, and now both Vancouver and Washington include *o-hanami* events as part of the public calendar. Contests for composing *haiku* in English, dedicated to these imported trees, feature prominently on these occasions. Canada has imported Japanese festivals and their customs, just as Muraoka and Kakegawa overlaid a thematic of Japanese nature onto Montgomery. *Anne of Green Gables* keenly feels the distinctive presence of the cherry blossom. In a novel that showcases the richness of the local flora, cherry blossoms receive particular consideration. Cherry trees are amongst the first arboreal features identified:

> a glimpse of the bloom white cherry-trees in the left orchard . . . (43)
> shiroi sakura no hana ga massakari dashi (Muraoka 9)

Such original references had been expanded and augmented through the more complex poetic argot of Japanese for describing the variety of cherry blossoms. And, to increase this emphasis on something iconically Japanese, Kakegawa will have Anne referring *specifically* to a cherry tree (*sakura*), even if the original reference is generic: "*Ara, sakura no ki no koto dake ittanjanai wa*" (38). *Sakura* here is substitutive for the nameless tree in the original: "Oh, I don't mean just the tree" (Montgomery *Anne* 78). The *sakura*, as a predominant feature of both Japan and Prince Edward Island, balances with the nationalist tenor of the emblematic Canadian maple leaf. Asai Ryôi's classic *Ukiyo monogatari* (*Tales of the Floating World*, 1661) affirms that personal delight in the pleasures of maple and cherry trees is a practical form of spirituality. According to Asai, if we give our full attention to the chromatic and emotional changes that accompany the turning of the seasons, then the beauty of nature's evanescence becomes ours to behold. In *Akage no An*, the *yamazakura* of the Japanese classics coexists peacefully with the maple leaf in the landscape.

As another strategy for adding a dimension of *koten*, Muraoka and Kakegawa portray Anne as exhibiting the aesthetic ethos found in those

poetic classics. For example, *sabi*—often translated as spareness or simplicity—was a virtue espoused by many poets, including Ikkyû, Ryôkan, Saigyô, Santôka. *Sabi* can amusingly be reflected in Anne's homely flower-arranging habits, rather like *ikebana*, that annoy Marilla:

> "Look at these maple branches. Don't they give you a thrill—several thrills? I'm going to decorate my room with them."[10]
> "Messy things," said Marilla . . . "You clutter your room up entirely too much with out-of-doors stuff, Anne. Bedrooms were made to sleep in."
> "Oh, and dream in too, Marilla . . ." (177)
> *Ara, sorekara yume o mirutamedemo aru wa.* (Muraoka 175)

Dreams, to Marilla, concern themselves with conceit and self-indulgence. Marilla is inclined towards proselytizing rather than poetry. Muraoka replicates Marilla's tendencies by putting didactic proverbs into her mouth, such as *zenrei-zenshin* (all of one's soul and heart) (277).

But, for Anne, poetry and nature must coincide. Thus, overextended intellectual analysis ruins the pleasure of the text: "They had analyzed it [a poem] and parsed it and torn it to pieces until it was a wonder there was any meaning at all left in it for them . . ." (295). This passage is made to parallel a nearby act of environmental destruction: "Idlewild was a thing of the past, Mr. Bell having ruthlessly cut down the little circle of trees in his back pasture in the spring" (294). Anne delights in the flowers of quiet happiness, the simplicity of everyday beauty as she discovers its expression. Anne appears like the model of the wandering monk-poet Santôka, her red carpet-bag in tow, her clothes patched and well-worn. Anne is fond of elaborate attire and cotillions as well, but a fundamental attribute of her character is the direct appreciation of the sensual, dramatic beauty of nature.

The novel's narrative unfolds according to such observations of seasonal signs, which are temporal indicators and environmental habitats. *Anne of Green Gables*' observations then become augmented through *kigo*. Intentional allusion can be made by choosing translations that echo, for example, a well-known Japanese melody: for example, "Spring had come . . . in a succession of sweet, fresh, chilly days, with pink sunsets and miracles of resurrection and growth" (224). Kakegawa renders his phrase, at the start of chapter 20, as *Haru ga yatte kita* (165), which closely resembles the title of the famous *min'yô* (folk song) *Haru ga kita*. Thus, an original text which had been rather Chaucerian now sings to a Japanese classical melody.

In expression, as well as allusion, poetic interjections in the narrative seem like intimate parallels with *haiku*, in translated versions into English or Japanese:

Deep autumn;
My neighbour,
How does he live?
(Bashô/Blyth 3:896)

Maples are such social trees . . .
they're always rustling
and whispering to you.
(Montgomery *Anne* 160)[11]

Anne understands time's passing in a *saijiki*-like manner by examining a season topic (*kidai*) through its representative natural phenomena: "I'm so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers. It would be so terrible if we just skipped from September to November" (177). By using literary templates, as lexical phrases or thematic materials, Anne poetically engages the environment, as a drama of identification:

> Listen to the trees talking in their sleep . . .
> What nice dreams they must have! (64)
> *Kigi ga nemurinagara o-hanashishiteiru no o, kiitegorannasai.* (Muraoka 37)

> Have you ever noticed what cheerful things brooks are?
> They're always laughing. Even in winter-time
> I've heard them under the ice. (77)
> *Ogawa no warai koe ga, koko made kikoetekuru wa.* (Kakegawa 38-39)[12]

These passages move beyond personification and into an ecological sensitivity that erases the usual human selfishness. As *haiku* tends to do, psychical barriers between environment and self-consciousness are blurred through poetic cross-identification. Thus, Anne has used poetry, rather than the abstract theology of Marilla's prayerbook, to expose the earthy connotations of *kokoro*:

And that tea-rose—
why, it's a song and a hope
and a prayer all in one.
(*Hitori tagayaseba utau nari*) (Santôka 76)

Alone tilling the fields,
a song will come.
(Montgomery *Anne* 375)

Although a more dazzling portrait than Bashô's *furu ike* (the old pond), Anne's attention to natural habitats, as a source of poetic instigation, resembles this *haiku* master:

> Now I'll look back. Good night, dear Lake of Shining Waters. I always say good night to the things I love just as I would to people. I think they like it. The water looks as if it was smiling at me. (62)

The ripples return the gaze physically, not metaphorically: neither the pond nor Anne confuse or lose one another in the simplicity of experiential moment. This displays the poetic virtue of *myô* (wonder)—the original *kanji* incorporates the radical for *woman* with *small* or *young*. *Myô* is Anne's endearing impetuousness, her crisp freshness that comes from the quickness of uninhibited inspiration. Bashô's famous *old-pond* poem, according to

apocryphal tradition, was a sudden expression of *satori*, or comprehension: "Something just flashes into your mind, so exciting, and you must out with it. If you stop to think it over you spoil it all" (220). *Myô* is, then, not only a quality of the original English, but a mechanism for demonstrating Anne's fundamental ability to absorb the nuances of her surroundings, part Avonlea and part Japanese landscapes. Translators create a *haiku* phraseology for Anne: she acts as an *objet trouvé* of already understood *koten* sensibilities to a Japanese reader.[13]

Anne resembles *haiku* not only in lexical inflections, but also in attitude and perspective. Japanese readers are drawn to the aesthetic of *ninjô* in the novel, a term that describes human kindness, enhanced by the beauty of nature. *Ninjô* is when Anne and Matthew connect to one another through the common ground of the "little white Scotch rose-bush," the one that his mother brought out from Scotland long ago: "Matthew always liked those roses the best . . ." (383). *Ninjô* coexists with *shizen* (nature), and this inter-relationship has been the sensibility of unity between nature and humanity: known as *shizen to hitotsu*, this has been a prominent feature the *haiku* poetess Chiyo-ni, whom Anne resembles in spirit and also in letter:

I was down to the graveyard
to plant a rose-bush on Matthew's grave
this afternoon . . .
(Montgomery *Anne* 383)

In our parting,
Between boat and shore
Comes the willow-tree.
(Shiki /Blyth 2: 563)

As the rose bush's roots had connected Matthew to his mother, now Matthew and Anne co-exist through the *kigo* of springtime. This human sharing of *ninjô* proceeds from the novel's first accident, suggesting strongly the concept of *en*, or destined chance, a word readily used in modes of Buddhist thought. This novel's message of a cyclic sense, in phrases similar to Ikkyû's, that "All things great are wound up with all things little" (Montgomery *Anne* 199). Anne acts like a *haiku* poet, receiving the energy of life, which is made of *ninjô* greetings and goodbyes. The mood of *ichi-go ichi-e* runs throughout Muraoka and Kakegawa. And, importantly, these experiences open up the promissory emergence of "new landscapes" (391) and new relationships. On this theme, Matsumoto finds the most compelling feature of the novel: optimism is empowering to women, in any culture or time.

Anne Of Green Gables has a Japanese counterpart in Tsuboi Sakae's *Ni-jû-shi no hitomi* (*Twenty-four Eyes*), one of the first anti-war novels to appear in the early 1950s, around the same time as Muraoka's translation. Tsuboi's novel depicts how a new, unorthodox teacher—a strange arrival to a rural

island—slowly wins over village distrust through persistence and energy. Decidedly pacifist in tone, the pastoral provinciality of the island is torn open by *kamikaze* conscription, as the Pacific War turned villagers into human bombs. In a similar way, the Anne series concludes with Walter's death in the European trenches and the senseless murder of millions. In the post-war situation of Japanese-Canadian relations, *Anne Of Green Gables* has been a common ground of reconciliation. Muraoka Mie, grand-daughter of the translator, has ardently described Anne as a humanitarian voice:

> It is not exaggerating to say that even though Japan and Canada have had over hundred years of contact, the translation of *Anne of Green Gables* lead to a closer understanding and friendship between two countries. (http://club.pep.ne.jp/~r.miki/speech_j.htm)

Muraoka Mie rightly points out that the *translation*, long before tourism and tokenism, initiated a common ground of intertextuality, one that had led to social good will and understanding. Thus, the literary act deserves most of the credit for introducing Anne's sense of "the beautiful world of blossom and love and friendship" (382) to Japanese readers. Kindred Spirit in Japanese, *fukushin no tomo*, contains the lexical element *kokoro* combined with the word for friendship. This, after all, describes both the translational and multicultural spirit of Kakegawa and Muraoka. They open up, through *Anne of Green Gables*, an emergent space for transnational friendships: "Kindred spirits are not so scarce as I used to think. It's splendid to find out there are so many of them in the world" (224).

In *Akage no An*, the particulars of the Canadian environment has been sympathetically re-configured through iconic terminology, ones that invoke an aesthetic tradition. Comparatively, a recent work entitled *In L.M.'s Garden*, edited by Becky D. Alexander, exhibited a large selection of *haiga* (a painting by a *haiku* author, usually accompanied by a poem) in English, inspired by the L.M. Montgomery gardens in Norval, Ontario, where Montgomery lived with her husband and sons for ten years. Westerners are using *shiki no irodori* to likewise appreciate Montgomery. The forms and patterns of *haiku* and *waka* foreground Anne against a poetic legacy:

> This dewdrop world—
> It may be a dewdrop,
> And yet—and yet— (Issa/Blyth 3: 968)

> "Dear old world," she murmured,
> "you are lovely and
> I am glad to be alive in you." (394)

Alexander shows that the sharing of conventions between Japanese and Canadian literature is coming full circle. English-language *haiga* is confirming Muraoka and Kakegawa's fundamental strategy. Classical

Japanese poetry, as a stylistic template, enables translators to integrate Anne with the aura of *koten*. *An no kokoro* thus reveals an intercultural space of kindred connections across societies and geographies.

NOTES

All Japanese names are given in their traditional format: surname followed by given name. I am grateful to Danièle Allard and Sonja Arntzen for our conversations, and for permission to quote from their works. I would like to thank the anonymous reader, whose suggestions and advice were of great value.

1 The City University of Hong Kong invited Arntzen to compose this article, on Anne's relation to multiculturalism in Japan, for its newsletter.
2 The website for a Montgomery conference (University of PEI in 2002) featured a self-portrait of the author. In this picture, she has posed herself in chiaroscuro light, a net veil over her face, and a golden Japanese fan displayed on a nearby bookshelf. There is nothing in Montgomery's collected letters or journals that evidences any longstanding interest in Japanese poetry.
3 This phenomenon is well-documented. For PEI as a Japanese tourist destination, see Baldwin and Stoffman. For a wry description of a Canadian working as a costumed Anne in a Japanese-owned theme park, see Harvey.
4 Definitions of what or whom might constitute a *Japanese readership*, in relation to this novel, can also be found in Akamatsu and Katsuro. For a compelling discussion of Anne, gender, and Japanese society, see Ogura. She explores how Montgomery's personal life, reflected in Muraoka, had a compelling meaning to Japanese women in the post-war generation.
5 With Muraoka's death, copyright first passed on to her daughter Midori, who has licensed all subsequent printings (which we now read) according to the corrected 1954 edition that appeared with Shinchô-sha, a far larger publisher. This year, Muraoka's grand-daughter, Mie, has released a third version of the text, which includes a large number of emendations, corrections, and additionally translated passages omitted from Muraoka Hanako's original version.
6 Unless otherwise noted as Blyth, translations of Japanese texts are my own.
7 *Kigo*, or season words, are prominent features of *haiku*. Briefly described, they are set terms, refined through convention and usage, that indicate the seasonal setting of a poem through environmental associations, climate conditions, or cultural allusivity.
8 The *Shin nihon dai-saijiki (fuyu)* lists multiple examples of this *kigo* (71). Further examples can be found in *Haiku saijiki*, including,
Enpitsu no sende egakishi yukigeshiki (334)
I can draw only a pencil's line for the snowy landscape (Setsuga Kyôryû)
9 For comparison, consider Kakegawa, who uses a more generic *sakura no ki* (19). *Sakura* is the umbrella term for many different species of cherry trees. Although a legitimate *kanji* exists, Kakegawa writes *sakura* phonetically in *katakana*, thus giving this Canadian cherry tree a non-Japanese accent. *Katakana* is generally reserved for rendering vocabulary from foreign languages.
10 The modern *Sogetsu* school especially values arrangements culled from windfallen branches and scattered flowers, displayed simply and without contraptions.

11 Kakegawa uses *katakana* again for *kaede*, but translates this section using poetic onomatopoeia, using the auditory effects found in *haiku*: "*Itsumo sarasara edo o yusutte, sasayakikakete kureru no*" (110).

12 *Haru no ogawa* (The Spring Brook) is an exceptionally famous folk song.

13 The English language debate as to what constitutes *haiku* is varied and complex. R.H. Blyth disseminated a notion that *haiku* exhibit realizations and epiphanies expressive of Zen belief. Blyth's views are not without their detractors, but I have used his editions because of their comprehensiveness and dual-language format.

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Meredith Quartermain

New Albion

Considering ourselves now on the point of commencing an entirely new region, I cannot take leave of the coast already known.
—George Vancouver

The ship rode all night by the wind, anchored in thick rainy weather. He was looking for white land, or chalk cliffs. He found Destruction Island and Lookout Point. *The country had the appearance of a continued forest as far north as the eye could reach*. He saw a sail to the west, the first vessel in eight months. He saw thousands of rocks, conical, flat-sided, flat-topped and every other shape of the imagination. A shallow bay, the feet of inland mountains, a point, an island-dot lying off it. Was it Cape Flattery? That flattered Cook's hopes for a harbour. Or was it a sandy beach. Of a bay Cook's Discovery and Resolution stood into. Cook seeking a pretended strait of Juan de Fuca, but saw *nothing like it, nor is there the least probability that iver any such thing ever exhisted*. On the long lost coast Drake named New Albion. Albino. Albumen—not white to the egg—only white to humans. Alba almost palindromic. Able was I ere I saw Elba. Not Alba. But in imagination's geography. A projecting point at Cape Disappointment—immediately within the point, the gist, the purpose, the country more elevated—the point answering to Mr. Meare's Cape Shoalwater but from the adjacent country rather appearing to be his Low Point. Our voyage irksome for want of wind, our curiosity much excited to explore the promised expansive mediterranean ocean. Though other explorers' large rivers and capacious inlets are reduced to brooks insufficient for our vessels. Except one at latitude 47° 45′, the ancient relation of John De Fuca, the Greek pilot in 1592, where Spaniards found an entrance that in 27 days brought them to Hudson's Bay.

Lee Spinks

Sense and Singularity
Reading Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*

The publication of Michael Ondaatje's long poem *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* in 1970 marked a decisive moment in his writing career. The volume received the Governor General's Award that year, bringing Ondaatje's name to a wealth of new readers and establishing him as one of the rising stars of the new generation of Canadian writers who would come to prominence in the ensuing decade. In the remarks that follow I want to broaden the critical discussion about Ondaatje's early poetry by claiming that the novelty and force of *Billy the Kid* inheres in the poet's ability to create a form of *minor* literature through the event of *singularity*. The phrase "minor literature" is being employed here in accordance with the sense given to the term by Deleuze and Guattari for whom it no longer describes the representation of a recognized minority or social fraction, but instead opens a space within representation for a "people to come" (218). In *Billy the Kid*, this modulation to minor literature is achieved through what Deleuze and Guattari call the "stuttering of language."[1] What is remarkable about the poem is the way it both fashions a historical narrative of the last great phase of the American West and produces singular points of intensity or perception that prevent that narrative from achieving structural coherence. In the reading of *Billy the Kid* that I will shortly develop, I will attempt to trace the continuing relation between historical sense and singularity by exploring the way Ondaatje's commitment to singular moments, perceptions, and events simultaneously composes and discomposes the field of historical representations that his poem presents.

Ondaatje's preoccupation with the relationship between historical narrative and singular points of perception informs his idiosyncratic revision of his source materials.[2] Freely mixing the sketchily known historical facts of Billy the Kid's life and crimes with an imaginative reconstruction of his biography and legend, his poem focuses upon Billy's final outlaw year on the New Mexico frontier and his doomed attempt to evade capture by Sheriff Pat Garrett, his onetime companion and ultimate nemesis. Moving from the concentrated lyric focus of Ondaatje's early poems to an "open form" created from a collage of textual fragments, *Billy the Kid* combines a range of different registers: "biographical" writing, oral anecdote, historical romance and singular moments of intense lyrical reflection. Simultaneously inhabiting Billy's consciousness while maintaining throughout an impersonal and omniscient "historical" point of view, the poem isolates key moments in the story of Billy's downfall. Beginning with Garrett's systematic destruction of Billy's dwindling band of outlaws, Ondaatje's decentred and synoptic narrative recounts Garrett's relentless pursuit of his retreating quarry, Billy's temporary retreat to the Chisum ranch, his arrest, ride to trial and escape from prison, and the final fateful encounter between lawman and outlaw at Pete Maxwell's ranch in Texas.

To recapitulate the poem's narrative in these bald terms, however, conveys little of the strangeness and visionary power of its rewriting of Billy's history and legend. The volume is entitled the "collected works," not the "life" or "history" of Billy the Kid, and from its opening pages on, Ondaatje's recasting of Billy's story makes little concession to the linear form of historiographical narrative. Instead, Ondaatje's playful rewriting of the fateful struggle between Billy and Pat Garrett reverses the assumed relation between cause and effect, collocates inconsistent and occasionally contradictory evidence, interpolates apocryphal testimony and "impossible" points of view, refuses to respect the distinction between "historical" and "non-historical" modes of representation, and repeatedly collapses the distance between narrator and the subject of narration. Dead before the narrative even begins, Billy is resurrected by the reader through the act of recomposing the textual traces of him that American history has bequeathed us; meanwhile Ondaatje's ludic superimposition of myth and fantasy upon historical memory underlines our collective responsibility for the present uses to which Billy's image is put.[3] One consequence of the poem's self-conscious fascination with the way memory becomes "history" and history blurs into myth is to open up the phrase "collected works" to a multiplicity of possible readings: it comes simultaneously to

represent Billy's legacy of murder, the poems that constitute Ondaatje's entire sequence, and the continually renewed labour of interpretation by which each succeeding generation brings a new image of Billy into focus.[4]

Ondaatje's flamboyantly intertextual version of Billy's legend plays upon our assumed familiarity with the story—a familiarity compounded only three years after the poem's appearance by the release of Sam Peckinpah's movie *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*. Although Ondaatje reworks a variety of narrative sources, two intertexts achieve particular prominence. Throughout the poem Ondaatje draws heavily upon Walter Noble Burns' early bestselling historical account of Billy's life, *The Saga of Billy the Kid* (1926). Burns' book, itself a curious amalgam of history, myth-making and oral anecdote, came to exert a considerable influence upon *Billy the Kid*, and Ondaatje's complex rewriting of Burns' narrative is crucial to the poem's development. As we might expect, the genre of Western movies also had a substantial impact upon the text. In the years when Ondaatje was growing up, films like Ray Taylor's *The Son of Billy the Kid* (1949) and Kurt Neumann's *The Kid from Texas* (1950) popularized and reconfigured key elements of Billy's legend; a more direct influence upon Ondaatje's imagination, given the poem's subtitle "Left Handed Poems," may well have been Arthur Penn's *The Left Handed Gun* (1958), a cinematic version of Gore Vidal's teleplay *The Death of Billy the Kid* (1955).

The acute textual self-consciousness of *Billy the Kid* has done much to establish Ondaatje's reputation as a "postmodern" writer. Certainly Ondaatje's poem has much in common with that vibrant strand of postmodern writing Linda Hutcheon has termed "historiographic metafiction." Hutcheon demarcates by this term those radically self-questioning "historical" texts, such as the novels of Salman Rushdie, E.L. Doctorow, and Umberto Eco, which challenge the impersonal and potentially homogenising perspective of traditional historiography by asserting instead the plurality, provisionality, and historically constituted character of historical points of view (116).

The similarities between the concerns of historiographic metafiction and the style and form of *Billy the Kid* are striking. Thus the radical transitivity of Ondaatje's poetics presents a poem groping continually towards an understanding of its historical subject while reproducing, in the elliptical relation between its constituent elements, the hermeneutic problems implicit in every historical judgment. The contingency of historical knowledge is further underscored by Ondaatje's decision to recreate the life of a figure as overdetermined as Billy the Kid: a figure who is simultaneously historical and mythic, provincial and international, subaltern and authoritarian, the

ceaselessly reconstituted object of myriad discursive practices. Our problems in understanding Billy's character and motivations, the poem suggests, are partly empirical problems concerning the lack of reliable and incontrovertible historical evidence—a fact Ondaatje emphasizes by taking Burns' popular history as his primary source-text—and partly the inevitable consequence of the mediation of the past by multiple layers of historical narrative. *Billy the Kid* explores these questions by recasting the relationship between historicity and history in terms of a distinction between *events*, which Hutcheon reminds us, have no intrinsic meaning in themselves, and *facts*, which constitute the explanatory ground of a potentially universal history.

The formidable artfulness of *Billy the Kid* is to acknowledge that events, to become facts, must be embedded within the conceptual matrix of a narrative history. One problem, of course, with acknowledging the *constructedness* of historical facts is the responsibility one bears to the layers of historical experience from which these facts have been constructed. Ondaatje's response to this problem is *not*, like Hutcheon, to insist upon the irreducibly ethical dimension of an avowedly constructed history. Rather than explain away the risk of historiographic metafiction's relation to the events and durations beyond narration, Ondaatje's work instead embraces the problem of the *singular*: those forces that trouble the accepted generalities and narrative consistency of historical discourse. We might refer to this "problem" as the problem of the *event*, an occurrence "in" time that calls for a refigured understanding of the very sequence of time or narration. Ondaatje's poetry, that is, reflects upon what is lost in the movements of assimilation that constitute collective historical memories, and does this by seeking to establish a point of indiscernibility between the event and a mode of historiography that effaces the specificity of the event in the act of representing it. This subaltern gesture manifests itself in a poetic syntax that explodes linearity into multiple points of perception, which disperses causality into a temporal rhythm with neither beginning nor end, which dissolves the impersonal voice of history into the discordant registers of the subjects for which it claims to speak, which makes no evaluative distinction between wholly incommensurable modes of historical inscription, and obsessively foregrounds the partiality and interestedness of certain historicizing judgments. Poetry imagined in these terms, we might say, is not just a way of interpreting or explaining historical experience; it rips a hole in representation by breaking experience down into the singular processes from which it is composed in order to explore the way events become facts and a self comes to conceive of its world.

For all the formal and thematic similarities between *Billy the Kid* and the genre of "historiographic metafiction," then, Ondaatje's stubborn emphasis upon the *singularity* of perception also suggests ways in which his work resists the paradigm of an avowedly postmodern poetics. For at work in Hutcheon's idea of the metafictive is an ethics of recuperation: the entire question of apprehending the lost or occluded subject of historical discourse is, for her, always already constituted as a problem of *historical* representation. In these terms, the factors that produce and reconfigure our historical sense—the multiplication of analytical contexts, the imposition of hegemonic narratives, or the marginalization of subaltern voices—are always already historical in their essence. Whilst acknowledging the historically conditioned character of historical knowledge, *Billy the Kid* also asks: what are we to make of the singularity of experience *before* it is assimilated into a "subjective" or "historical" framework? How, indeed, do we open up a world of sense to ourselves and others before we take our place within the historical horizon of discourse? By neglecting these questions and rushing intemperately to a postmodern reading of the poem, we risk effacing its most enigmatic and troubling feature: the sheer *unreadability* of the figure of Billy himself.

The tension the poem creates between a metafictive history and the singularity of the event is evident from its opening pages. The entire question of the construction of the past by the historical context of its reception is typographically focused upon the opening page by Ondaatje's reproduction of an empty photographic frame. The interplay between the frame's black borders and the dazzling whiteness of a space still awaiting its defining image lays stress upon the role representations play in shaping our perception of historical truth. The empty frame is both a provocation and a challenge: make what you will, it invites us, of the fragments that will follow, but accept your responsibility for the version of the past that your interpretation yields. One hundred pages later the poem will conclude by reasserting the abrupt challenge of this empty frame, albeit with one small but highly significant difference: in the bottom right-hand corner of the frame Ondaatje has inserted a tiny photograph of himself as a child dressed in cowboy garb. Playful though this insertion is, it is also a form of confession: Ondaatje will, after all, establish his poetic reputation by inhabiting the voice and persona of Billy the Kid. Beneath the empty frame on the poem's opening page is a terse accompanying note ("I send you a picture of Billy made with the Perry shutter as quick as it can be worked—Pyro and soda developer" 5).

The brief passage that these words introduce provokes more questions than it answers. How, exactly, is this empty frame a "picture of Billy" and who is the subject of the explanatory text (5)? Recourse to Ondaatje's acknowledgements reveals the note to have been written by "the great Western photographer L.A. Huffman," a celebrated exponent of frontier photography during Billy's own lifetime. But by detaching Huffman's note from its immediate context and suppressing the identity of its recipient, Ondaatje suspends the text indefinitely between an immediate and a general relevance. It is impossible, from this perspective, to be certain whether the "I" denoted by the passage is Huffman, Ondaatje or even the impersonal voice of history itself, while the unspecified use of the second-person plural propels these lines beyond their immediate addressee and out towards the historical community of readers. The uncertain relationship established here between text and context is further underscored by the enigmatic phrase "daily experiments," which extends almost imperceptibly beyond the immediate subject of Huffman's photographs to encompass both Ondaatje's lyrics and our own attempt to make sense of these scattered words and images. Our only path back to the frontier terrain of the nineteenth century, this interplay of frame and commentary implies, lies through this shadowy "blur" of representations.

These problems of narrative context and address are compounded when we turn the page to read the haunting first poem in the sequence that begins "These are the killed / (By me)—" (6). Briefly sketching the primary details of Billy the Kid's criminal biography, this lyric introduces us to the curiously hybrid voice of Billy himself. Certainly the emphasis here upon crime outweighs the attention given to biography; with its blunt, affectless air, the poem has the air of a police confession. Legal responsibility for the dead is scrupulously adjudicated, while moral responsibility for their deaths is left wholly unexamined, as if somehow beyond the comprehension of the memorializing consciousness. But as the poem steadily accumulates its burden of detail, a nagging doubt makes itself felt concerning the entire question of "voice" until we are led to the overwhelming question: who is actually speaking these words? The imbrication of the first person pronoun ("These are the killed. / (By me)") with a list containing many of Billy's actual historical victims suggests that these lines represent the authentic speech of Billy the Kid; yet Billy will himself be included within the list of the killed ("and Pat Garrett / sliced off my head"), rendering it impossible for him to be the sole narrator of this account. Instead, the voice of an exterior and impersonal

"history" speaks *through* Billy at this point; here we receive the first intimation that singular and plural points of view are to be seamlessly interwoven throughout the poem. The poetic "I" that designates Billy's historical identity, we might say, is always also the "we" of a collective historical judgment that recomposes Billy's identity from the scant textual traces he left behind. Ondaatje's Billy the Kid is, in this sense, alive and dead, singular and plural, speaker and spoken, visible symbol in the eyes of his contemporary onlookers of the American frontier and metaphorically suggestive of the residue of contemporary sensibility within every act of historical evaluation.[5]

The poem's continual oscillation between first and third person perspectives becomes the subject of one of its most important early fragments. In this passage, which begins "Not a story about me through their eyes then," the broader problems of attribution and context that confront us are concentrated within a passage that counsels us, ironically enough, upon the ways in which to read Billy's story (20). Its first sentence, apparently spoken by Billy, bespeaks his determination to preserve the integrity of his biography from the interference of external forces, although it is not immediately clear whether the phrase "through their eyes" refers to Garrett and his cohorts or the ranks of commentators who span the hundred years from Billy's time to Ondaatje's own. The two subsequent sentences, however, narrow the distance between Billy and Ondaatje to a point of imperceptibility: "Find the beginning, the slight silver key to unlock it, to dig it out. / Here then is a maze to begin, be in" (20). While both restate Billy's desire for control of his own narrative, the lexical play between "begin" and "be in" indicates the presence of the poetic intelligence that devised the "maze" of these "collected works." The remainder of the fragment plays off Billy's concern to find a "way in" or productive point of departure for the story of his own life against Ondaatje's ironic awareness that any "beginning" will inevitably return us to the labyrinth of existing historical accounts of the outlaw's life and times. There is, these sentences imply, no interpretative position exterior to these narratives: they have already flattened Billy's image upon the plane of frontier history, draining it in the process of substantial "depth" and leaving it devoid of any "significant accuracy" to his own lived experience: "That there is nothing of depth, of significant accuracy, of wealth in the image, I know" (20). That Billy's quest for a new beginning is destined to be outflanked by Ondaatje's poetic irony is already apparent to us; the entire sequence begins, after all, by reinscribing the force of the narrative frames that mediate and produce Billy's historical image. Billy's story will, in this sense, always be a story

"through their eyes"; this dissident fragment, which articulates momentarily "Billy's" resistance to such discursive enclosure, is merely one further confirmation of his unavoidable defeat.

Billy's nervousness about the selective rewriting of his own biography would be compounded, rather than allayed, by the "maze" of Ondaatje's poetics. Ondaatje initially discovered a "key" to "dig out" the buried details of Billy the Kid's life in Burns' *The Saga of Billy the Kid*. However, this summary acknowledgement of Ondaatje's literary indebtedness provides few clues to the extent of his radical rewriting of his source material, rewriting which fundamentally reshapes the historical context within which the climactic events of Billy's life unfold. The impression that Ondaatje maintained only the slenderest interest in historical verisimilitude is reinforced by his selection of Burns' book as his narrative template; conceived for an audience brought up on the mythical "Outlaw West" of dime novels, Burns' biography cheerfully transforms narrative history into the stuff of popular historical drama.

Although cleaving to Burns' account for a number of its key narrative details, Ondaatje's version substantially revises the historical context that informs the earlier work. Perhaps Ondaatje's most important revision lies in his suppression of significant reference to the Lincoln County War. This brutal local conflict, in which, as Billy points out in his apocryphal jailhouse "interview" near the end of the poem, "EVERYBODY" was shooting at everyone else, forms one of the main narrative strands of Burns' biography; however, the only allusions Ondaatje includes to these events are a few stray hints unlikely to be recognized by a reader unfamiliar with the local history of the New Mexico frontier. The deletion of this episode has a crucial bearing upon the story: by excising this history from his poetic narrative Ondaatje is able to relegate to the background numerous examples of Billy's own murderous exploits. Besides dispensing with the determining context of the Lincoln County War, Ondaatje also diminishes the force of one of Burns' central historical themes: the escalating struggle in 1880s New Mexico between the expansionary economic force of large landed interests and the essentially nomadic and lawless existence of social outsiders like Billy the Kid and his band of followers. Both the landowners' realization that Billy's erratic activities now posed a significant threat to their economic and social authority and their decision to hire Pat Garrett to hunt him down constitute, for Burns, defining moments in Billy's story; the fight to the death between Billy and Garrett becomes for him emblematic of the climactic struggle between the "Old" and the "New" West during which the nature of frontier

law and society underwent a rapid and irreversible transformation. Despite permitting himself a cursory glance towards "cattle politicians like Chisum," Ondaatje almost completely effaces from his poem the decisive role of the new mercantile forces represented by these expansionist landowners (7). His indifference to the social and economic factors behind Garrett's remorseless pursuit of Billy may be gauged by an aside made halfway through the sequence. In response to the question whether there might have been "A motive, some reason we can give to explain all this violence" comes the laconic reply "yup" followed by a slab of Burns' narrative recounting the murder of the outlaw Tunstall (54).

Ondaatje's strategic revision of the biography of Billy the Kid, then, establishes his poem as both a critique and an example of the historical constitution of cultural memory. But the recognition of Ondaatje's historical self-consciousness cannot account for the full aesthetic force of *Billy the Kid* because the poem repeatedly retreats from the historical horizon of experience to meditate upon the phenomenological plane of life and consciousness. The persistent tension at the core of *Billy the Kid* between phenomenological and historical levels of experience offers a clue to the profound originality of Ondaatje's version of the story: where the struggle between Billy and Garrett has historically been represented as a conflict between the forces of law and social disorder, Ondaatje's poem also portrays it as a struggle between two styles of being and two modes of perception.[6] This emphasis upon the phenomenology of perception leads Ondaatje to couple his representation of character with an examination of the way subjects come to conceive of their worlds. The literary exploration of consciousness, sensation, and intuition provides the ground for many of Ondaatje's most striking poetic effects; it is also the aspect of the poem that most stubbornly frustrates our conventional habits of reading.

It is immediately clear from the poem's first pages that to speak of different interpretations of the "character" of Billy the Kid is already to impose a particular style of thought upon a text that persistently questions how we come to conceive of life in terms of characters, interests, and ideologies. The difficulty we often feel in understanding the various images of Billy that the poem circulates arises because Ondaatje frequently presents a micropolitical, rather than "historical" or "ideological," vision of the outlaw's life and times.[7] Instead of portraying Billy as a particular type of personality who represents a particular set of beliefs and values, Ondaatje focuses upon the way Billy's subjectivity is composed from a series of investments, desires, and affects.

This poetic vision of Billy the Kid embodies what Deleuze and Guattari have called a "molecular" perception of life: a vision that remains resolutely at the level of singularities and pre-personal attachments before they are organized and extended into collective or "molar" formations such as law, ideology, history, and subjectivity. To begin from the perspective of molecular experience is to think of life in terms of the singular and partial investments from which individual ways of being are composed. Certainly conceiving of Ondaatje's poem in this way helps to illuminate otherwise impenetrable aspects of Billy's world, which, created as it is from a network of partial and incomplete memories, unfocused perceptions and seemingly random affections, is apt to appear simply chaotic and inexplicable when discussed in conventional terms.

The importance of reading Billy's image in molecular rather than molar terms is underscored in a number of early scenes. It is glimpsed first in the curious lyric ("When I caught Charlie Bowdre dying") that relates the death of one of Billy's foremost outlaw companions (12). The inadequacy of applying conventional notions of "subject" and "character" to the style of life Billy embodies is immediately apparent from these lines. Here, in the poem's first explicit act of violence, a man is ripped apart before his eyes; but what is striking about Billy's response is the absence of shock or emotional empathy with the victim. His response, such as it is, is unsympathetic in the fullest sense because sympathy involves an imaginative relation to another quality or condition of being. However, Billy is unable to maintain the distinction between subject and object or self and world upon which such sympathy depends; instead he projects himself *into* the bodies and objects he perceives all around him. At no point in this scene can Billy be said to occupy a position "outside" the event of Bowdre's killing from which he might supply an emotional or moral context for the action he witnesses; his perspective is, in fact, already immanent to the event itself, an "eye" that grows all over Bowdre's body and becomes inseparable from the man who is dying. Ondaatje's syntax and diction underline the affective, rather than emotional or moral, quality of Billy's reaction by preserving the shock of this murderous experience before it can be ordered into sense: the shuttling passage between the phrases "giggling at me" and "face tossed in a gaggle" deletes the temporal delay between event and consequence within which empathy might be engendered, capturing instead the raw force of the shooting in a blank instant of perception. Beneath Billy's pitiless and barely comprehending gaze Bowdre's body is stripped of any recognizable identity; it simply

dissolves into the repertoire of body parts, reflexes, and gestures from which his image of Bowdre is assembled.

Some sense of Billy's attentiveness to the singularity and intensity of affects rather than the broader system of social values and judgments that they come to constitute is required to illuminate passages of writing that otherwise appear almost wholly unfocused. One such passage is the description of Billy's earlier behaviour at Bowdre's place presented in the uncanny little lyric "With the Bowdres." What is unsettling about this poetic style is once more its dissolution of subjectivity into singular, partial, and affective experience. This mode of dissolution is reflected in the gradual disintegration of poetic syntax, which collapses from the grammatical propriety of "she is boiling us black coffee" to the aphasic conjunction "and with a bit the edge of my eye." The point of this syntactical disarray is to express an impersonal flow of desire and affect that moves across and between bodies before it is recomposed into fixed images of subjectivity and sexuality. What appears in the second stanza is the obliteration of relations between discrete subjectivities and the reassertion of the singular and affective force of life. Billy does not feel people close to him ("Strange that how I feel people / not close to me") because proximity is still a mode of *relation* between individuated and autonomous bodies. His perception of this scene remains instead at the molecular level: the singularities of texture ("their dress against my shoulder"), smell ("the strange smell of their breath / moving against my face"), and light ("or my eyes / magnifying the bones across a room / shifting in a wrist") (39). This rupture with the logic of representation and the return to a deterritorialized flow of desire and affect becomes unavoidable for Billy whenever he passes from the codified spaces of frontier culture to the empty and unwritten Western landscape.

This process is explicitly the subject of one of the strangest and most puzzling poems in the entire sequence: "To be near flowers in the rain." Although this short lyric begins in a mood almost of bucolic reverie ("To be near flowers in the rain"), it quickly charts the movement we have already seen from relation and contemplation to an immersion in singularities and intensities. The passage from representation to singularity occurs once more at an affective level: the "smell of things dying flamboyant" casts us adrift in the stream of pre-personal singularities before they are subsumed into the symbolic order of concepts, identities, and values. By gradually opening these words up to the intensities they conceal, Ondaatje pushes language beyond representation towards its extremities or limits. Lyric rhetoric is brought here

to the pitch of an a-signifying intensity by several stylistic features: the recoil from narrative sense into the internal discordance of consonant and vowel ("All that pollen stink buds / bloated split"), the calculated indistinction between adjective and noun ("bursting the white drop of spend") and the multiplication of these figures beyond the local demands of reference ("pollen stink buds / bloated split / leaves"). Through the affective intensity of this language, Ondaatje describes how Billy becomes a part of what he perceives; what we experience by the poem's climax is the disintegration of subjectivity into the singularities that compose it, culminating in a symbolic death of the self ("can hardly breathe nothing / nothing thick sugar death") and a transformed relation between human and inhuman life (55).

The conflict between molecular and molar life in *Billy the Kid* is also represented at a thematic level by the struggle between Billy and Pat Garrett.[8] As well as a battle of roles and personalities, this struggle also involves a conflict of ideas about life: where Billy expresses a commitment to molecular experience, Garrett stands for the imaginative transcendence of corporeal life and the molar structures of law and social order. Garrett's character is introduced in two long passages, beginning "Pat Garrett, ideal assassin," that establish his conformity to an idealized self-image (28). Garrett is an "ideal assassin," the sardonic narrative voice implies, because he can turn killing into a pure idea: his mind is "unwarped," precisely because his gaze never deflects itself from the social forces that legitimate public acts of violence. His remorseless subordination of private feeling to public action makes a social virtue out of the most pathological behaviour: the behaviour of the "genial" man who had "the ability to kill someone on the street walk back and finish a joke" (23). In one of the pivotal scenes describing the emergence of Garrett's "ideal" public self, he wakes up in a hotel room and sets himself the task of breaking down his body's dependence upon instinct and reflex. Steadily drinking himself into a stupor for two years, Garrett transforms his body into a machine whose response he can program and predict. His obsessive need to transcend molecular modes of becoming is tellingly illuminated halfway though his ordeal when he begins to evince a strange terror of flowers. Garrett is terrified by natural organisms because they simply are what they do; they make no distinction between the primal force of life and its idea or representation.

Unlike Billy, whose life is increasingly suffused with a chaotic and inhuman vitality, Garrett comes to embody the social function he represents. The crucial difference between Billy and Garrett's perception of the world is rendered vividly in a key early lyric which begins with the arresting couplet

"MMMMMMMM mm thinking / moving across the world on horses" (11). Much of Billy's personality is captured in the curious opening line, which enforces a momentary disjunction between a pre-personal mode of bodily plenitude ("mmm") and the mental representations ("thinking") that we use to organize these singular flows. The impression that the poem is narrated primarily from Billy's point of view is bolstered by its repeated use of verb phrases and participles: Billy, after all, is always in transit, continually being changed by the landscape that he changes; and it is Billy who decomposes forms and functions into their vital "living" forces. However, Ondaatje's elliptical syntax and his unsettling of pronominal reference challenge the assumption that the poem is wholly focalized by Billy's consciousness; the poem approximates a field of force within which competing expressions of human responsiveness share a common space.[9] Only when the poem's angle of vision is widened beyond Billy's immediate point of view does its rhetorical structure become clear. As the break between the first and second line implies, the crucial dichotomy in the poem is between "thinking" (a facility usually associated with Garrett) and "moving" (a participle attuned to the erratic and unstable figure of Billy). These opening lines momentarily superimpose the image of each protagonist upon his rival; both men, like their horses, have their bodies "split at the edge of their necks" (11). This insistent doubling of perspective reaches its apogee in the poem's middle section: both outlaw and lawman are prepared to "eliminate much" in order to secure their reputations in the world of men, while the more general observation that "one must eliminate much / that is one turns when the bullet leaves you / walk off see none off the thrashing" (11) anticipates the later image of Garrett who "[h]ad the ability to kill someone on the street walk back and finish a drink" (28). These lines also possess a stark premonitory quality: here Billy imaginatively projects himself into Garrett's consciousness and confronts for the first time the retributive force that will kill him. This act of projection is suggested by the poem's sudden shift into the conditional mode: if Billy, like Garrett, possessed the blithe moral certainty of a "newsman's brain," he would be able to discern a transparent design at the heart of human "morals" and reconcile his fundamental beliefs with the imperatives of the social machine (11). Only someone who perceives no connection between the mind that judges and the body that suffers could believe so absolutely in the "morals of newspaper or gun" and perceive no ethical distinction between the two (11).

As if in anticipation of the historical fate that will befall him, Billy is gradually pushed to the margins of his own narrative. Increasingly it is Garrett

who occupies the centre of the stage while Billy is relegated to a shadowy background presence. Crucially, Billy's murder at the Maxwell Ranch is presented as an existential limit and a symbolic metamorphosis. Made "manic" by Garrett's climactic intervention, Billy's stricken body breaks through the frame of the window, symbolically shattering the mode of mimesis that underpins historiographical narrative (94). At this point Billy the Kid becomes precisely what can no longer be represented within the historical horizon of Ondaatje's poem. Throughout his death scene we watch as Billy's image disintegrates into the intensities that compose it. What we glimpse through Billy's eyes is a vision of pure singularity as the room dissolves into the heat and light of "thousands / of perfect sun balls" and perception splinters into waves of colour and affect: "oranges reeling across the room AND I KNOW I KNOW / it is my brain coming out like red grass / this breaking where red things wade" (95).

Even as the poem narrates the "breaking" of Billy's image it slips away from its historical moment to assume the vantage point of Ondaatje's own time. What would we find, Ondaatje ponders, if we exhumed Billy's leavings and exposed them to our contemporary gaze: buck teeth, Garrett's solitary bullet, a pair of handcuffs "holding ridiculously the fine ankle bones" (97)? All that remains of Billy the Kid is a scattering of historical traces bereft of a narrative that might establish their value and significance. Yet if the abrupt juxtaposition of historical epochs serves to underline the radical incommensurability of different forms of historical consciousness, the sequence also identifies an implicit connection between past and present in the mode of perception common to outlaw and poet. The superimposition of Ondaatje's image onto Billy's own recurs at several points in the sequence.

One of its most suggestive instances appears in the lyric of quiet meditative introspection in which a figure we assume to be Billy reflects upon a landscape of "slow moving animals" and the "acute nerves" that stretch between different kinds of life. Here the figure of the outlaw alone "with the range for everything" is displaced almost imperceptibly into the image of the writer tracing a pencil across a "soft blue paper notebook" (72). This conflation of images is repeated in the passage that concludes the poem where an ambiguous reference to "smoke"—is this cigarette or gunsmoke?—elides the two figures once again:

> It is now early morning, as a bad night. The hotel room seems large. The morning sun has concentrated all the cigarette smoke so no one can see it hanging in pillars or sliding along the roof like amoeba. In the bathroom, I wash the loose nicotine out of my mouth. I smell the smoke still in my shirt (105).

The insistent rhyming of Ondaatje and Billy the Kid expresses, at one level, the writer's wry insight into the status of all our historical knowledge: the meaning of a historical event arrives from the future and the contexts in which it is read and reconfigured. The connection between the two figures is further reinforced by the implicit punning correspondence between "corpse" and "corpus" that underlies the sequence. But although some commentators have taken Ondaatje's coupling of poet and outlaw as evidence of his desire to establish a romantic portrait of the artist as a social outsider, his real interest in Billy the Kid lay, as I have argued, in the evocation of a molecular vision unconstrained by social norms or a moral image of life. For it was here, in his untimely recreation of outlaw consciousness, that Ondaatje developed for the first time a singular conception of the aesthetic as a force with the potential to free us from the habitual, in order that we might rethink the genesis of the real.[10]

NOTES

1 By this term the "stuttering of language" Deleuze evokes what Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco describe as "the becoming minor of language itself" in which a writer "introduces into language a stuttering, which is not simply a stuttering in speech, but a stuttering of the language itself" (xlvi). Or as Deleuze himself puts it later in the same volume: "It is no longer the character who stutters in speech; it is the writer who becomes *a stutterer in language.* He makes the language as such stutter: an affective and intensive language, and no longer an affectation of the one who speaks" (107).

2 My review of the various images and stories that compose the main outlines of the legend of Billy the Kid is indebted to Stephen Tatum's comprehensive study.

3 In this sense Ondaatje's version of Billy's narrative extends the exquisite ambivalence of bpNichol's "true eventual story" of Billy the Kid in which the adjective "besides" (connoting at once "apart from" and "along with") beautifully suggests the imbrication of truth with falsehood that characterizes every version of Billy's outlaw myth: "this is the true eventual story of the place in which billy died. dead, he let others write his story, the untrue one. this is the true story of billy & the town in which he died & why he was called a kid and why he died. eventually all the other stories will appear true beside this one" (np).

4 This process enables us to postulate in turn a particular correspondence between singularity, history, and historical relations. According to Deleuze, the actual world in which we live is the expression of a temporal movement in which a virtual plane of potential takes a determined form. Singular points—such as revolutions, invasions, and assassinations—mark moments in history where certain paths of actualization are taken over others. By composing a poem from singularities Ondaatje shows not only how history might have been *narrated* otherwise but also how certain singular points might have opened different historical trajectories.

5 Douglas Barbour captures crucial aspects of the instability of Billy's image throughout the

poem in his observation that "Billy is a site of continuing flux and a body of sense impressions" (60).

6 Any discussion of *Billy the Kid* that discusses the text in terms of a struggle between two styles of being and two modes of perception is inevitably indebted to Dennis Lee's path-breaking study. Lee's argument that Ondaatje's poem "makes most sense as a picture of civilization and instinct at war" is persuasive and his description of the ceaseless antagonism it depicts between what he calls "world" (an ensemble of beings either conscious or manipulated by consciousness) and "earth" (an ensemble of beings powered by un-self-conscious instinct) has informed my reading of the text (27). However, the weakness of Lee's account, in my view, is its continual reduction of the origins of this antagonism to the "mode of consciousness" of technocratic modernity, a view that fails to acknowledge the way's Billy's style of being may be thought of as a becoming-imperceptible: a mode of perception of life that unhouses perception from its human home (43).

7 I draw the term "micropolitical" from Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*. Micropolitical forces are those forces that *compose* characters and persons; they name the singular images, investments and desires from which general identities such as "man" are extrapolated.

8 Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between molecular and molar life, it should be noted, is different from the liberal humanist conception of a private individual who then enters in to a public and political sphere. The realm of the "private," they argue, is already a political space that is formed when *molar* representations of "man" (as rational, competitive, acquisitive, violent, and dominant life) are used to code and organize feelings, affects, and perceptions that are *not yet* coded into regular and stable images.

9 My reading therefore takes a certain distance from Dennis Lee's assertion that the poem simply presents Billy's self-conscious reflection upon "the ideology of self-mechanization." Lee's difficulty in maintaining the integrity of Billy's point-of-view here betrays itself in his acknowledgement that even in his hands this remains a "rather elliptical" passage. It is "elliptical," in fact, precisely because the lyric's point-of-view flickers back and forth between the implied perspectives of the poem's two main protagonists (19).

10 We might expand this conclusion by arguing that Ondaatje's poem is, in fact, Leibnizian, if we take Deleuze's reading of Leibniz into account. According to this reading the universe is not given as a whole that expresses one coherent system of relations. Instead each point of view, each perception (each "monad" in Leibniz's terminology) perceives the whole of the world from its own singular point. In this schema "we" are nothing more than our localized perceptions while the whole is always open by virtue of the divergence of perceptions. A poem or work of literature that strives to write of that whole can only be a *minor* literature: not only can the unity of a *world* never be given; there is no world above and beyond the multiple voices and affections of which we are composed. Deleuze develops these ideas at some length in *The Fold.*

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Meredith Quartermain

Big News Cafe

Corner of Granville Street and Broadway with Kaplan Business College brick parapet, white neon letters scrawled on blue revolving sign. Sand brick with stone moulding and blue accents. Row of churchy pointed windows and brick piers modernism condemned. Not structural, so no right to appear with their peaked gables. Two enormous churchy-pointed arches over main entrance. Stone crests on either side, narrow twisted columns with scroll-top capitals dreaming of quadrangles at Oxford. QAT, DAT, SAT, PCAT, GMAT window signs. To Idle Ant in Big News Cafe. Horoscope: *by all means help someone in dire need. Rush in like the knight in shining armour you've always wanted to be. But don't promise to bail them out unless you want them ringing you up morning, noon and night.*

Shining-armour Don Quixote Ant stares through cafe glass for big news—some Polaris or Cassiopeia for dead reckoning—haut shops on Lord Large-village street, Blenz Coffee under Business College. All merged in a big dream. Northeast corner, Royal Bank. Southwest corner, Chapters Books. Big boxes selling little cartons of fancy. *RSPs make all your retirement dreams come true*. The bank's yellow letters, black marble facing on concrete slabs and rows of aluminum windows.

City's a lot of going into—rooms—wombs. Non-city's one big space. In Shining-armour Ant-mind.

Jordana Greenblatt

Something Sadistic, Something Complicit

Text and Violence in *Execution Poems* and *Thirsty*

> " . . . [W]e want poems that kill."
> Assassin poems, Poems that shoot
> guns. Poems that wrestle cops into alleys
> and take their weapons leaving them dead
> with tongues pulled out and sent to Ireland.
> —Amiri Baraka, "Black Art" 223-24
>
> This is a theatre of assault.
> —Amiri Baraka, "The Revolutionary Theatre" 215

As Amiri Baraka implies above, the violent history of racism emerges and is enacted through the literary, but not necessarily in mimetic ways. Two Canadian poets, George Elliott Clarke, in *Execution Poems*, and Dionne Brand, in *Thirsty*, write stories of violence, of killing, which engage this potential violence of text that exceeds the level of that in the events they describe. Each book is a series of distinct but linked poems telling tales of execution—in Brand's case, the shooting of an unarmed man in his own home. Some differences between them play out at the level of story: Brand's poems are only loosely based on a historical event, while Clarke's stay much closer to the events from which they are derived. Brand's poems describe the relatively recent and largely unprovoked killing of an unarmed black man by a white police officer, while Clarke's detail the trial and execution for murder of two of his extended family members, George and Rufus (Rue) Hamilton, in the 1940s. Nevertheless, both Brand and Clarke relate these stories—and their poem cycles—to ongoing cycles of violence. Yet their texts treat the nature and outcome of this narratively similar violence in divergent ways. Both suggest a communitarian framework; however, in Clarke's text, violence begets violence between and within

communities, in a process of filiation that seems to be without consent, without hope, and without conceivable end. Brand's work, which is sometimes questioned for posing insufficient models of community and, tellingly, for its emphasis on aesthetics (which is tied, in these criticisms, to individualism), enacts a less relentlessly hopeless version of the implicit violences of text and interpretation. The reparative possibility of Brand's work, the area in which it, though clearly criticizing historical and contemporary cycles of violence, breaks from the inevitability of Clarke's filiation, is in an aesthetics tied to a different notion of community. For her, every person's complicity in our interpretive communities presents the possibility, the hope, for active—connected but individuated—changes to the interpretive acts which propagate violence. In imbuing her aesthetics with a resistance to origin—what Marlene Goldman calls "drifting" in "Mapping the Door of No Return"—Brand suggests that the unknown contingency of the reader raises the possibility for agency within the violence of text, within refusing the safety of locationality. This resonates with Roland Barthes' image of the text that cruises for *its* reader.

In "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading," Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, a central figure in the genesis of queer theory, questions its disciplinary preoccupations—preoccupations shared more generally throughout progressive and anti-oppressive circles. She defines as paranoid the consensus in writing and criticism whereby the default practise faithfully executes the continual exposure of oppressive systems, examples of which reproduce themselves, appearing everywhere, leaving the critic without hope of finding something different. Like Clarke's poems, paranoid theory addresses real and important wrongs; however, the strength of this outlook serves to occlude any other affective framework. Reparative theories (and, in this case, poetics) are much more difficult to find, according to Sedgwick, as they are not only overshadowed by the paranoid faith in exposure, but their motives are suspect—"because they are about pleasure ('merely aesthetic') and because they are frankly ameliorative ('merely reformist')" (144). In neither Clarke's nor Brand's texts does violence restrict itself to the level of narrative. Rather, both Brand and Clarke relate text and violence, and they involve the reader, both implicitly and explicitly. They make us complicit in the violence as it is both textually and physically enacted. Clarke both performs and represents textual violence, materialized through poetry and through legal code. While text—particularly literature—is posed as a potential shelter or salvation from the unending violence of *Execution Poems* as a whole, language and letters

are consistently reincorporated into the historical narrative of pain and death. Clarke's text, along with his characters, seeks out beauty as a potential shelter, but ultimately the text cannot escape the historic imperative to hurt. *Execution Poems* is relentlessly overshadowed by the impossibility of positive affect. Brand's text offers more hope. In *Thirsty*, the violence and our complicity lie largely in our interpretive choices—implying the possibility for making different choices through an aesthetically engaged process of non-filiative, resolutely consensual readerly enticement.

Something Sadistic

Clarke initially poses the saving potential of linguistic beauty that he undermines throughout *Execution Poems* in his epigraph, when he quotes Marcuse: "Beauty has the power to check aggression: / it forbids and immobilizes the aggressor" (5). Beauty occasionally rises in *Execution Poems* as a longed-for escape, but rather than immobilizing the aggression of the text, it is incorporated and implicated in the destruction, violence, and death that Clarke posits as inevitable. Poetry becomes testimony at a murder trial, teeth are typewriters as they clack against the brutal narrative, and ripe fruit turns into violent sexuality, planted and harvested by canonical authors. Clarke folds the imagery of writing, which Rue often represents as a desired shelter, back into the inevitable physical and textual harm of the narrative, which is itself scored and divided in ways that jar and alienate the reader, and do violence to the reading experience. And yet, Clarke's text knows us as readers, and knows us as violent, even as it enacts the very violence it represents as ceaseless. In *S/Z*, Roland Barthes discusses the notion of reading in a writerly manner, a manner in which the reader is an active participant in the production of meaning, in terms of a practice of disassembling the text, a process which unmakes the "naturalness" of language. He proposes a system of reading whereby we

> star the text, separating, in the manner of a minor earthquake, the blocks of signification of which reading grasps only the smooth surface, imperceptibly soldered by the movement of sentences, the flowing discourse of narration, the "naturalness" of ordinary language. The tutor signifier will be cut up into a series of brief, contiguous fragments, which we shall call *lexias*, since they are units of reading. (13)

This process could be considered sadistic, since the reader does violence to the text—cuts it, divides it, in a manner that is unsettling like an earthquake, that tears apart the soldered seams of the narrative. Clarke enacts this kind of aggressive rending on his own text in a way that implicates the

reader, but disallows agency in opening *Execution Poems* with an act of linguistic violence: through sound and formatting, he punishes our desire for internal rhyme. The first line of "Negation," "*Le nègre* negated, meager, *c'est moi,*" given the combination of French and English words and our rhythmic expectations, tempts us to read "meager" as "mègre" (Clarke 11). Just as "*le nègre*" is negated, Clarke negates our expectations of the first line, and sets the tone of a collection where the anticipated aesthetic is present to be undermined, and we are violently jolted out of our textual complacency from the outset. Barthes continues his explanation of lexias by stating that "this cutting up . . . will be arbitrary in the extreme . . . " (*S/Z* 13). Clarke's immediate violence, our immediate ejection from the text, seems arbitrary—the moments of refusal throughout *Execution Poems* are all the more unsettling because they follow no regular pattern. While, in the manner of Sedgwick's concept of paranoia, violence is always expected in *Execution Poems*, it is also always unexpected, its timing always a surprise. Instead of, or along with, beauty, Clarke's mouth "spit[s] lies, vomit-lyrics, musty, / Masticated scripture" (11). Words are not created, but rather uneasily swallowed, spit back, chewed, musty—old. They are tainted by an unpleasant smell, aggressively regurgitated. Clarke's goal, then, is "to take poetry apart like a heart" (11). He performs an autopsy on beauty, rending it, exploring its failure to check aggression, to immobilize the omnipresent violence of his narrative.

While the textual experience that Barthes describes as bliss in *The Pleasure of the Text* includes experiences like pain and boredom, and stems from the tearing apart of language, it is an experience that is shared by the author and reader, that unsettles their knowledge of each other and themselves. The textual relationship is enacted through a process of cruising, based on chance erotic encounters that do not allow for filiative or fixedly locational models. A text of bliss must be written in bliss—author and reader both experience pain, pleasure, boredom, the dissolve while interacting with the text in question. So there is also masochistic potential in each of these relationships. In "Coldness and Cruelty," Gilles Deleuze calls into question the psychoanalytic fusing of sadomasochism, rigidly differentiating between sadism (the relational economy of the Marquis de Sade's writing) and masochism (the relational economy of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's writing). One of the primary distinctions that he draws is the necessity for consent. According to Deleuze, masochism is predicated on contract—even the active role of the masochist in convincing their torturer to torture. Conversely, the sadistic economy cannot countenance consent—the willing victim inherently

undermines the sadistic act. So, according to Deleuze, the torturer of a masochist is not a sadist, and the victim of a sadist is not a masochist. Thus, within this framework, the tormentor in a blissful reading of text would not likely be a sadist—even a lexical reading of text does not *necessarily* imply sadism. However, the way in which the violence of Clarke's text is both narratively and textually arbitrary seems to imply compulsion and mutuality, but not a contract—it implies a lack of consent. We do not consent to the way in which the text resolutely cuts us, ejects us. But then, the poet does not necessarily consent to the inherent violence of the text either. Something is sadistic, and we are all somehow complicit, but no one seems to consent.

In his acknowledgements, which he refers to as a disclaimer, Clarke writes that "[t]he crime of this poetry could not have been committed without the aid of [those people he acknowledges]. However, they bear no responsibility for its harms. Only the author deserves hanging" (np). While this seems to imply that Clarke presents himself as having consensual agency in creating violent text, the representation of language throughout the poem cycle implies that creating nonviolent or consensually violent text may never be possible. When Clarke tells us that his "black face must preface murder for [us]," he plays not only with the ambiguity of "must" (does he mean that *we* must relate it to murder? Or that it must *be* related to murder?), but also the ambiguity of "face" (11). "Face" could be Clarke's face, but it could also be typeface, in which case it is the very shapes of the letters that preface murder. He continues to implicate the foundational elements of text in the violence of his poetry in the poem "Avowals," in which the shape of each vowel is associated with a negative image, including a guillotine and a two-pronged gallows. Reproduction is incorporated back into ideas of contagion, as "U is a fetus—or crab lice" (Clarke 40). Each letter, each foundational fragment of text, is, according to Clarke, disease, pain, or death, a theme which he continues from the previous page, as the crown attorney accuses George and Rue of transforming "that sturdy 'H'" that begins their surname into a gallows (39). The very foundations of language participate in a compulsorily reproductive system of filiation where our father's name is execution, and fetuses are indistinguishable from venereal disease. As "Avowal" seems to indicate, there is little possibility for letters to be anything other than gallows, language to be anything other than emetic. Rufus claims that he "would like very much to sing," and his desired song is presented as pastoral, idyllic, and sweet, "but blood must expunge, sponge up, blood" (Clarke 37). While in *Whylah Falls*, Clarke explicitly undermines the pastoral tradition

through juxtaposing pastoral elements with the story of the murder of an unarmed black man and the acquittal of his killer, the ironic return to more traditionally pastoral poetry towards the collection's conclusion still serves to soften the violence and despair of the text. In *Execution Poems*, we lose this final mercy, as Rufus' poetry can only be murder and testimony, and he says of Silver, the man he has murdered, that "a rhymeless poetry scrawled his obituary"—rhymeless, like Clarke's early refusal of internal rhyme (34). His "teeth clack . . . like typewriters" only when his "words collide with walls of fists, / Collapse," and his final sentence is the absence of sentences—he says, "we will fall into our sentence: silence" (19, 41). As in "Negation," English is emetic—Rufus argues with the judge at his trial over whether he speaks "almost perfect" English (38). Rufus claims that both English and the laws that it encodes are "pitted and cankered"—that they are not his (38). Instead, he throws daggers at it, but compares this to throwing daggers at a statue (or a statute?)—something impenetrable. This is a violence that seems to deny agency, even as it is enacted—sadism without even a consenting sadist.

Something Complicit

While the complicity of Clarke's text seems to involve everyone—George and Rue, historical imperative, the reader, language, text, and author—yet deny anyone agency, Brand's text implies a more active complicity. The fissures in *Thirsty* present the reader with an unsoldered break where interpretive choices must be made, without the violent ejection and return to an inevitable violent origin enacted by Clarke's text. Author and reader collaborate in negotiating lexias. We have the responsibility for nuance thrust upon us through the vagueness of Brand's punctuation and sentence construction, leaving us complicit in determining the movement, possibility, and limitation of her characters and the language itself. As Brand's text cruises us, we have the responsibility to accept or deny it, in all the myriad forms this consent or rejection might take. She makes explicit the interpretive choices we impose on every text, and through forcing an awareness of our constant participation in textual production, grants us the choice to interpret in unfixed ways. Barthes suggests that the text of bliss inflicts "a deep laceration . . . upon language itself" (*Pleasure* 12), and that the most erotic portion of the body (or the text for that matter) is where the text or "*the garment gapes*" (*Pleasure* 9). He elaborates that:

> [I]t is intermittence, as psychoanalysis has so rightly stated, which is erotic: the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing (trousers and

> sweater), between two edges (the open necked shirt, the glove and the sleeve); it is this flash itself which seduces, or rather: the staging of appearance-as-disappearance. (*Pleasure* 10)

The deep lacerations, the places where Brand's text gapes, seduce us, but they also compel us. Brand, for example, begins "XXIII" by stating her intention to inform us—to explain to us what she has perceived. And yet, she immediately reneges on her promise. We are told: "I'll tell you what I see here at Yonge and Bloor" (42). However, Brand does not so much tell us what she sees (except insofar as what she sees is open to interpretation) as position us in a site of possibility—offer us a collection of associated words to which we must assign meaning. Brand explicitly posits this location as a crossroads, a place where meaning is determined by our choice of direction—whether we choose to turn between words, or continue straight. She stages her poetry as appearance-as-disappearance from the outset, as this beginning echoes the beginning of the first poem of *Thirsty*, "I," where:

> This city is beauty
> unbreakable and amorous as eyelids,
> in the streets, pressed with fierce departures,
> submerged landings,
> I am innocent as thresholds
> and smashed night birds, lovesick,
> as empty as elevators (1)

An eyelid is a place where the body gapes—where the eye appears and disappears, its cover "fiercely departing" upon awakening, the lids touching in "submerged landing." The writing and reading of this amorous text is not innocent. Thresholds are not innocent. Eyelids are by their very nature breakable, divisible, a site for departure, for choice—as are the thresholds that Brand delineates for us between words. These are spaces of possibility—the emptiness of elevators, where blockage results in the death of night birds trying to fly through glass.

In "XXIII," without telling us what she has seen, Brand moves the site of possibility from land to air, which is "elegiac with it / whiffs and cirri of all emotion, need and vanity/desire, brazen as killing" (42). Our mode of perception moves from sight to smell, and we are offered the opportunity to inhale all emotion, although Brand quickly contracts our focus to need and vanity, to desire, to brazenness that is like killing. The brazenness is not only of the desires Brand offers us, but also of our own audacity as we apply meaning, as we make a choice at each intersection of word and word. And we become complicit in the immobilization of language, the plate glass that

smashes birds. The eyelids touch so that we might experience, *determine* what we experience, through breath. Each desire that Brand presents us with is concrete, yet mobile. The spaces between each word are potential breaths, yet, robbed of the commas that we depend on to separate thing and thing, we must choose where to breathe, and thus select the borders of each desire. Unless we choose to breathe both everywhere and nowhere, this is a brazen, complicit act—an act of killing off meanings as we choose the limitations of our writing of Brand's text. This is a form of limiting that Brand leads us to, slowly exposing the extent of our complicity. At first, the breaths seem obvious. When we read: "a burger a leather jacket a pair of shoes a smoke," it seems clear that the absent commas must lie between each set of a noun and the article that follows it (Brand 42). And yet, in the next line, this automatic demarcation becomes less obvious. We are unsure as to whether "to find a job to get drunk at the Zanzibar" means "to find a job, to get drunk at the Zanzibar," or "to find a job to get drunk at the Zanzibar" (Brand 42). Brand makes us explicitly aware of our interpretive choices as we read her list. Our choices affect our judgment, as we are likely to value "to find a job" much differently than we would "to find a job to get drunk at the Zanzibar." This continues in the next stanza, as the subject of our readerly writing shifts from the job to the drink. We must choose whether " . . . to get drunk to get fucked to get high" means "to get drunk, to get fucked, to get high" or "to get drunk to get fucked, to get high" or "to get drunk to get fucked to get high" or, finally, "to get drunk, to get fucked to get high," each item valued slightly differently, inscribed as a different sort of desire, depending on how we choose to breathe, on where we place the comma (42).

This explicit complicity in textual production fulfills Brand's promise in "I," where she asks:

> let me declare doorways,
> corners, pursuit, let me say
> standing here in eyelashes, in
> invisible breasts, in the shrinking lake
> in the tiny shops of untrue recollections,
> in the brittle gnawed life we live,
> I am held, and held (1)

In leaving spaces, gaps that she fails to solder with commas, Brand reveals the doorways and corners we navigate as we pursue meaning in her text. Like the thresholds that we traverse, our courses are not innocent. We choose the spaces in which we cruise and how we navigate them. These spaces are brittle, but the (troubling) violence we do to them lies in the

ways in which we might choose to solder them. Our complicity continues in "XXIII," as the desires Brand describes (our desires?) become explicitly violent. We make several choices when we decide how to breathe, how to punctuate " . . . men wanting to be beaten to be touched / and all the anonymous things that may happen / on a corner like this for instance murder" (42). Do the men want to be beaten to be touched, or is there a comma? Do the men want all the anonymous things that may happen on a corner like this, or is that another item in the list, not necessarily attributed to them? The site of violence in this series of interpretations is not as fixed as we might assume, as we might dictate without acknowledging our agency. It does not necessarily lie in the desire of the men to be beaten, but in our desire—how we try to touch the terms in Brand's list, and how this touch inherently edits them, tends to fix them. Hold them. All the anonymous things that may happen on a corner like this are also the unacknowledged textual choices we make at these corners, at the gaps between words, reflecting the anonymous sexuality of Barthes' cruising text—and these choices can spell murder. Only after we are brought up against our repeated complicity, the active way in which not "someone," but *we* do the things that happen at these corners, do we return to sight. After we breathe, we read. Brand comments that, at this corner, "if you look into any face here you might fall / into its particular need" (42). However, our mode of looking is constantly coloured by the places we take our breaths—the particularity of need is read through the particularity of our own need, the desires that we desire to see.

Nevertheless, Brand's text also holds the possibility for reciprocity. She presents breathing as a relational act, claiming in "VIII" that:

> breathing, you can breathe if you find air,
> this roiling, this weight of bodies,
> as if we need each other to breathe, to bring
> it into sense, and well, in that we are merciless (11)

We bear the weight of each other, we bear the weight of the text, and we contribute to it. Our search for sense may be merciless, but Brand implies that it does not have to be unkind. At Alan's funeral, Brand does not describe his wife Julia as she is, but how we might interpret her through newsprint, through image and text, claiming "readers would seek grief there, they would / not be prepared for emptiness such as hers" (26). While she implies that it is likely that we would read Julia as hard, this is something that we would read through the particularity of our desire. Conscious of this, we might choose to read otherwise, to read mobility instead of the fixity of the

newspaper photograph Brand describes. As Brand suggests, "a woman I've seen her / Julia perhaps"—is not so easily read (42). Her need is not apparent through our need. Brand writes that, "I can't quite make her out," (42). Julia is described in "XXIII" as a surface for inscription, "she is a mixture of twigs and ink she's like paper" (42). But she is a page that is too far away from us for a fixed interpretation, and, for Brand, this fixity should not be something we seek. Similarly, the police officer leaving the courthouse after being acquitted of killing Alan is described not as he is, but as he would be—

> he would strike
> a match on the bottom of his shoes,
> light a cigar in victory of being acquitted
> of such a killing, and why not (48)

However, conscious modification of our practices of reading seems to be posited as something that could be this "why not." Alan is shot, after all, because of interpretation, smashed against the static reading practice of the man who shoots him. Reading differently, as a consensual, collaborative process, might make it possible for *this* reading, this "would" to change. Barthes suggests that in a text of bliss "[e]verything comes about; indeed in every sense everything *comes—at first glance*" (*Pleasure* 53). The problematic of Brand's text has to with first glance—the first glance of the police officer at Alan, our first glance at the faces where we read our desire, but this is not a first glace that involves coming, it is a first glace that involved stopping. A first glance that could begin to involve the motion it lacks. The text of bliss rises out of history, but it does so "like a scandal (an irregularity), that is always the trace of a cut, of an assertion . . . and . . . the subject of history . . . this subject is never anything but a 'living contradiction': a split subject, who simultaneously enjoys, through the text, the consistency of his selfhood and its collapse, its fall" (Barthes, *Pleasure* 21). Instead of consistency, of the self through which we read an other, we are given the opportunity in the gaps and cuts of Brand's texts to split, to overflow back and forth between words, meanings, interpretations.

Becoming Change, Unbecoming Irony

The openings in Brand's text, the seams which she refuses to solder and which she challenges us equally to refuse to solder, are potential sites for the meeting and cleavage of the traditional and subversive edges of language, interpretation, thought. It is at this meeting point that we find the possibility for a complicity that involves exchange, *dépense*—a complicity that

involves the contractual seduction of Deleuze's masochist, rather than the impossibility for consent of his sadist or of Clarke's relentlessness. Barthes warns us that "the subversive edge may seem privileged because it is the edge of violence; but it is not violence which affects pleasure, nor is it destruction which interests it; what pleasure wants is the site of loss, the seam, the cut, the deflation, the *dissolve* which seizes the subject in the midst of bliss" (*Pleasure* 7). Interpretive acts in *Thirsty* are violent—both acts of traditional interpretation, which replicate the cycle of killing, and acts of interpretation that may reject this, but reject this through freezing, through immobility. The potential for restitution in Brand's text lies in interpretive interplay—the acknowledgement that our movement around corners and across thresholds is not innocent, but movement all the same, a reciprocal movement through which we achieve a different violence, the splitting of the subject enacted by the cut, the dissolve. Barthes claims that he is "interested in language because it wounds or seduces me" (*Pleasure* 38). We can show a productive interest in Brand's language through accepting its seductive wounds, accepting her invitation to play back and forth across the gaps in her text in mutually consensual interpenetration. If we engage in this mutual wound, this mutual pleasure—this joint refusal of static violence—"the opposing forces are no longer repressed but in a state of becoming: nothing is really antagonistic, everything is plural" (Barthes, *Pleasure* 31).

The *dépense* across thresholds that splits the subject and produces mutually contaminated interpretation involves an act of becoming that echoes Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of becoming in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Becoming, here, is not a process with destination, a final state, nor is it one with a fixed origin. Rather, it is a state of continual change and exchange, a deterritorialization—in effect, it is corners and thresholds, the place where "a new road is cut, a sound escapes, a touch / lasts" (Brand 37). In "Picking the Deadlock of Legitimacy," Ellen Quigley both relates and opposes Brand's writing to Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome theory. While she suggests that Brand incorporates the idea of nodal points in coalition into her work, Quigley also asserts that Brand's "attack on the intending subject, the object, and authority suggests theories of legitimacy restrain revolutionary thought and subjectivity, but Deleuze and Guattari's motifs of self-flagellating masochism . . . and of a desire to move beyond all 'molar' political alignments reflect a privileged, socially legitimate subject" (49-50). While Deleuze and Guattari's theories are undeniably written from a position of privilege, this acknowledgement of the potential to move on the

part of such a position is necessary to the kind of reparative communal interpretive acts proposed by Brand. While it is certainly valuable to recognize the cultural specificity of the perspectives of Brand's characters, this cultural specificity is not, as Quigley suggests, defined by a "specificity that resists global assimilation by the abstract rhizome" and, therefore, "Brand's deconstruction of identity is not politically deadening" (56). Rather, Brand's deconstruction of identity and interpretation, and the poetics of her text, are not politically deadening and, indeed, propose a radically reparative space, *because* they emphasize the spaces between words, where both the traditional and subversive edges participate in a deadening of language, but where there is the possibility for each to do otherwise. The possibility for a contractual, reparative complicity in Brand's texts follows a model of mixed pleasure and violence, of masochism that, rather than inevitably stemming from the self-flagellating throes of privilege, provides the space for agency in its undoing.

It is not enough to delineate a subversive edge, no matter how culturally specific, without acknowledging that the traditional edge, always present, also borders the cut, the edges of language, and also has the potential to move, in communication and collaboration with the subversive edge. Deleuze and Guattari's fifth theorem of becoming is that:

> [D]eterritorialization is always double, because it implies the coexistence of a major variable and a minor variable in simultaneous becoming (the two terms of a becoming do not exchange places, there is no identification between them, they are instead drawn into an asymmetrical block in which both change to the same extent, and which constitutes their zone of proximity. (306)

For Deleuze, the masochist must convince, must incite his or her tormentor into the contractual relationship that enables both desired violence and acknowledged consent. In Brand's writing, our kinship with and complicity in producing text enables this simultaneous, continuous changing implicated by Barthes' cruising, Deleuze and Guattari's deterritorialization, and Deleuze's masochism. If Julia does not have to be read as hard, then perhaps the "would" in the police officer's description can change too. This block can change because of its proximity, and because of its textuality, "becoming / transparent as veins and letters and children / fugitive / as crossroads and windowpanes and bread"—a becoming which Julia, at least, in "XXIV," explicitly longs for (Brand 45).

Clarke's text, however, does not share this site of potential mutuality. Mutuality in Clarke's text is almost always violent and so is the text. Yet this

is all the more painful, because Clarke clearly presents us with a continual longing that it might be otherwise, expressing hope for language as shelter and beauty. In "Negation," he associates his autopsy of the poetic heart with going "out shining instead of tarnished"—an association that seems to pose the possibility for regurgitating English as something renewed instead of simply masticated and musty. However, the rest of *Execution Poems* consistently reincorporates moments of textual beauty into violence. In "Childhood II," Rufus represents books as potential shelter, claiming that he wanted:

> jackets sewn from the torn-off, leather covers of books. [He] wanted to don jackets emblazoned with Eugene Onegin, *Claudine at School*, *Sonnets From the Portuguese*, *The Three Musketeers*—all the works of Pushkin, Colette, E. B. Browning, and Alexandre Dumas—all those secretly Negro authors. (17)

The "secretly Negro author" represents a potential avenue for reclaiming English and literary text as "mine"—as something that Rufus can use and reappropriate in a way that is shining rather than tarnished, in the shape of a patchwork jacket, an interplay of seams. And yet, the very next line begins with the word "instead." And the instead of this poem is violence, from which Rufus' jacket of literature offers no protection. One of the violent vignettes he describes is "a poet axed in the back of neck," as poetry does nothing to protect the poet (17). The only textual protection here is the newsprint that is used to blind the windows and start the stove, as "yellow terror eat[s] / yesterday's bad news" (17). Text may offer some protection, but only protection from the cold, and through destruction and the closing off of rifts. School, though an improvement, is "violent improvement," as the classics offer only vengeance and "language cometh volatile" (Clarke 25). Beauty does not still aggression, but channels it. And, indeed, Rufus concludes, "my pages blaze, my lines pall, crying fratricidal damnation" (25). Literature is simply violence reenscribed, caught between ineffective religion and violent sexuality. In "Haligonian Market Cry," literature is an irrepressibly violent harvest, "planted by Big-Mouth Chaucer and picked by Evil Shakespeare" (18). Literature offers no protection, it plants, feeds, and harvests aggression out of beauty.

This cruelty, the impossibility of textual solace as "blood must expunge . . . blood," is the irony of Clarke's text. He poses beauty as checking aggression, but the only poem Rue produces is death, his only text his testimony. His relationship with language is only recognized as significant as it leads to the brothers' final sentence of silence. In "Coldness and Cruelty," Deleuze positions irony as characteristic of sadism, and the irony of Clarke's text

seems particularly sadistic, as language and text offer the hope for a grace that never appears, leading instead to a violence for which we are all somehow responsible, but also somehow unconsenting. While the "masochist is insolent in his obsequiousness, rebellious in his submission," Sade's characters speak the "counter-language of tyranny" even as they enact violence that must not involve consent (Deleuze 89, 87). Brand's text is insolent—it submits to our interpretation in a way that draws attention to the specificity of each textual choice, to our complicity in producing meaning. It asserts the productive potential and desirability of informed consent. Clarke's text, in its relentless exposure of relentless violence, echoes Deleuze's language of sadism, and his irony drives home the connection drawn by Northrop Frye, in "On the Nature of Satire," between irony and nihilism—irony is a potent weapon, destroying everything in its path. Brand's text, with its seductive wounds, its insolence, uses insolence as a conduit towards productive bliss—if we agree to cooperate in enacting it. She raises the possibility of the complex variety of affects that Sedgwick calls for, not to deny violence, but to complicate it—to draw the violence of interpretation into a reparative contract. In Clarke's text, we are all complicit, but we are trapped in the irony of a complicity that we somehow can never control, choose, or deny. According to Deleuze, both de Sade and Sacher-Masoch ask "what if the higher principle no longer exists, and if the Good can no longer provide a basis for the law or a justification of its power?" (86). De Sade's answer is that law is the ultimate irony—

> It is irrelevant whether we see the law as the expression of the strongest or as the product of self-protective union of the weak . . . the union of the weak merely favors the emergence of the tyrant; his existence depends on it. In every case the law is a mystification; it is not a delegated but a usurped power that depends on the infamous complicity of slaves and masters. (Deleuze 86)

For Brand, textual complicity can also result in the wound that seduces, in mutual becoming. For Clarke, law is tyranny, but overthrowing the law is also violence that can only ever reproduce itself. Text is beauty, but a beauty that is inevitably drawn back into undesired and undesirable violence. We are all complicit, but this complicity, instead of offering the potential for exchange, is simply inevitable.

The inevitable violence of Clarke's text comes from a notion of community inextricably bound to begetting. From surname to fetus, filiation reproduces violence in a manner that is compulsive—it excludes other possibility. The reproductive nature of violence and murder, in history and in

text, contributes to a paranoid methodology that, in exposing the rampant oppression that is always already present, always there to be rediscovered, excludes the possibility of hope. Clarke's text draws in and involves his readers, but we are merely children and parents in the familial continuity of continuously self-reproducing violence. Clarke's text rejects the nostalgia of origin in some ways, but maintains a notion of continuity that, while intensely political, also serves the politically deadening function of denying any potential for agency or change. The text already knows itself, and where it is from, and it already knows us, and where we are from, and so it knows what must come of any meeting. For Clarke, there is no such thing as the pleasurable, cruisy chance encounter. Violence is everywhere, so if we do not know its precise origin, it is only because it is omnipresent—it cannot be reduced to only one moment, one family line. Brand's writing, as both Quigley and Goldman point out, rejects origin more consistently. *Thirsty*, however, in positing the potential for resistance against compulsory filiation, also posits the potential for hope. While validating Brand's emphasis on deterritorialization (which she does not relate to Deleuze and Guattari), Goldman also questions "the politics of drifting, particularly, the valorization of drifting as a strategy to counter what Brand views as the unsavoury politics of belonging" (24). Brand's emphasis on aesthetics and pleasure seems to Goldman politically suspect, as "advocating the pursuit of pleasure and drifting as political strategies strikes me as somewhat limited, representing a compromised reaction to both slavery and sexism" (24). However, just as Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, rather than being irredeemably privileged, functions as the potential for movement within a traditional edge that can work with the subversive edge to acknowledge and shake our communal complicity in fixing meaning, the potential that Brand advocates for pleasure and aesthetically catalyzed political change is neither utopian nor negligent. As Sedgwick argues, "[h]ope, often a fracturing, even a traumatic thing to experience, is among the energies by which the reparatively positioned reader tries to organize the fragments and part-objects she encounters or creates" (146). It is through her avoidance of filiative notions of family and community that Brand succeeds in positing this hope, however traumatic it may be. While Goldman suggests that, especially given the explicit policies of slavery and sexism to break down family and communitarian ties among slaves, Brand's representation of an alternative is too stereotypically promiscuous, it is through a promiscuous style of interpretive relationships that we find another possibility for building ties and communities (24-5). As Barthes

claims, "I must seek out this reader (must 'cruise' him) *without knowing where he is* . . . the bets are not placed, there can still be a game" (*Pleasure* 4, Barthes' italics). While Clarke knows exactly where we all are, as readers, as writers, as people, this location, this inherited identity, is that of criminals and murderers. Brand's emphasis on the spaces between words, the mediation between people, and the interpretive choices we are all complicit in, makes visible a space where the bets need not already be placed. Drift is not acommunitarian; rather, through cruising each other, through not knowing where we each are, she proposes a model of community wherein our complicity involves agency, and thus the agency and the hope, through our meetings around corners, to construct a different kind of space.

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Wangshu Dai

Alley in the Rain

translated by Wenting Liao and Michael Bullock

Carrying an oil-paper umbrella
wandering alone in the deep, deep
and desolate rain-filled alley
I expect to meet
a girl steeped in the sadness of lilac

She will be steeped in the colors of lilac
sad in the rain
sad and wandering

She will be wandering in this lonely alley
carrying an oil-paper umbrella
like me
just like me
walking in silence
solitary and sad

She will approach in silence
draw close and gaze deep, deep into my eyes
she will drift past
like a figure in a dream

Like lilac
drifting in a dream
the girl will drift away from me
the girl will drift away from me
further and further, still in silence
she will pass a broken-down fence
and out of the rain-filled alley

Amid the melancholy music of the rain
her color will fade
her fragrance will fade
fade away like her deep, deep gaze
and lilac sadness

I expect that as I wander alone
in the deep, deep and desolate rain-filled alley
carrying an oil-paper umbrella
I shall see a girl drift past
steeped in the sadness of lilac

Wangshu Dai (1905-50), the writer of the poem *Alley in the Rain*, was a renowned poet of his time in China. He also translated many European works of literature into Chinese, including the French poet Charles Pierre Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal. Alley in the Rain* is his most distinguished poem, for which he was given a unique epithet, "Poet of Rainy Alley."

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Michael Bullock, Professor Emeritus of Creative Writing, University of British Columbia, is the author of numerous books of poetry and fiction. He is now living at a four-hundred-year-old cottage in Harrow-on-the-Hill, surrounded by the garden that inspired his latest collection, *The Enchanted Garden*.

Robert McGill

No Nation but Adaptation

"The Bear Came over the Mountain," *Away from Her*, and What It Means to Be Faithful

How would Canadian literary criticism have developed differently if Margaret Atwood had titled her 1972 study of Canadian literature not *Survival* but *Adaptation*? It seems easy enough to imagine a tweaking of her premises to accommodate such a shift. One might even see adaptation as already implicitly valued in her description of the fourth, most successful "victim position" she identifies in the nation's writing: namely, that of the "creative non-victim," someone who does not merely fall prey to her or his surroundings but responds to them in positive ways (38). If Atwood had undertaken her survey of Canadian literature with adaptation in mind, she might have found it to be just as pervasive a theme as survival. Given how recently she had produced her own adaptive text, *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, it is tempting to think that adaptation was just too close to her nose for her to see it.

Rather than conducting an overview of Canadian literature from the perspective of adaptation, I wish to address two texts, Alice Munro's story "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" and its filmic adaptation *Away from Her*, which provide rich material for an initial attempt. The story, first published in *The New Yorker* in 1999 and then collected in Munro's 2001 book *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*, follows an Ontarian married couple, Fiona and Grant, as they deal first with Fiona's development of what appears to be Alzheimer's disease and then with her entrance into the assisted living centre Meadowlake. Concomitantly, they confront the mutually remembered but seldom discussed matter of Grant's past adulteries. As a result, in this text there is a relationship between memory, fidelity,

and adaptation, and it is a complex one. Taken as a story about an intimate relationship between two people, "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" offers insights into how notions of fidelity can adapt to changing conditions.

Meanwhile, these insights have only grown more complicated in the course of being filmed as *Away from Her* by the Canadian actor Sarah Polley. The motion picture was Polley's feature debut as screenwriter and director, and it has been an international success, earning Oscar nominations for lead female actor Julie Christie and for Polley's adapted screenplay. But if *Away from Her* is an acclaimed adaptation, it is also a text *about* adaptation and, by extension, about artistic adaptation. Taking up the themes of Munro's story, the film cannot help but draw the audience's attention to the similar role of memory and fidelity in the process of cinematic adaptation. Not least, in its departures from Munro's story, *Away from Her* demonstrates that an adapter such as Polley might feel an unease around issues of faithfulness. Harold Bloom identifies in poets an "anxiety of influence" as they attempt to join a tradition of poetry by departing from their predecessors' work. In the case of adaptation, this anxiety is perhaps even more vexed, given that the line of influence is unavoidably clear and some manner of fidelity seems to be expected. Accordingly, if one considers *Away from Her* in conjunction with Polley's paratextual comments about her relationship to Munro's story, it becomes evident that an anxiety can emerge from an artist's ambivalence about the possible symbolic roles—as genealogical legatee or as erotic partner—that an adaptation might occupy in relation to its source text. At the same time, *Away from Her* demonstrates further that this ambivalence is imbricated with adaptation's place in the formation and understanding of national culture. Discussing fidelity's place in adaptation studies, Thomas Leitch asserts that instead of worrying about why adaptations always seem so unfaithful, critics would do better asking: "Why does this particular adaptation aim to be faithful?" (127). With regard to *Away from Her*, one answer lies in the phantasmatic interpersonal ties that exist between artists; another, related response involves a communal endeavour to consolidate a Canadian artistic tradition.

Fidelity and Meta-Adaptation

"Fidelity" has been a fraught term in adaptation studies. Critics such as Robert Stam (56) and Linda Hutcheon (7) have argued that its use hinders critical discourse by placing adaptations in a subservient relation to the texts they adapt. While I share Stam's and Hutcheon's scepticism about the

usefulness of fidelity as an aesthetic value, I wish to consider its place as a felt imperative in the processes of artistic production and reception. In doing so I take my cue from Munro's and Polley's texts, which explore the very question of what it means to be faithful. One might think it mere coincidence that issues of fidelity similar to those besetting Fiona and Grant in "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" also arise for adaptive artists such as Polley, and certainly it would be implausible to treat Munro's story as an intentionally proleptic allegory about the process of the text's own transformation on screen. What is more, Polley's film is hardly so explicit in its meta-adaptive aspects as, say, Spike Jonze's highly self-reflexive 2002 movie *Adaptation*. Nevertheless, among the departures that *Away from Her* makes from Munro's story are ones that speak to their own adaptive infidelities and to the challenges of artistic adaptation more broadly. In particular, the relationship between Fiona and Grant provides a model for the relationship that an adapter such as Polley has with her source text, so that whether intentionally meta-adaptive or not, the treatment of the couple in *Away from Her* might be taken to express something about an adapter's own desires and anxieties.

"The Bear Came Over the Mountain" prepares the way for thinking about such a possibility by problematizing the notion of fidelity. The complications begin when Fiona enters Meadowlake and Grant must abide by the institution's policy prohibiting visitors for the first month so that new residents can adapt to their surroundings. During that month, Fiona adapts all too well for Grant's comfort. She forgets her attachment to him and develops a fondness for another resident, Aubrey, who has been stricken by a virus that left him mostly mute and in a wheelchair. Without any memory of her relationship to Grant, Fiona has lost her faithfulness. Although Grant is jealous and persistently watchful over her and Aubrey, he seems to adapt to this change and does not chastise her for her changed allegiance. His own loyalty undergoes a further test when Aubrey is removed from Meadowlake by his wife Marian, leaving Fiona heartbroken. In response, Grant seeks out Marian and implores her to allow Aubrey to visit Fiona, thus proving his own fidelity to Fiona by facilitating her "infidelity" to him. His ability to transform from jealous husband to procurer of romance for Fiona aligns adaptation with love and sets the ground for the affect-laden conception of artistic adaptation that Polley presents in discussing *Away from Her*. Meanwhile, the notion that fidelity and romantic non-monogamy need not always be opposed is further underscored when, having initially failed to convince Marian of his case, Grant unintentionally draws her sexual interest and an invitation to a dance.

Munro's story leaves a lacuna before its final scene in which Grant presents Aubrey to Fiona, but readers are not discouraged from presuming that at the very least Grant has played on Marian's attraction in order to gain her permission with regard to Aubrey's visit.

In that light, Grant's own possible adultery is folded into the project of seeking Fiona's well-being, so that in the story, adaptation and infidelity seem to go hand in hand as activities necessary for happiness. As a matter of fact, Grant contrasts adaptation with survival in particular, deciding that although Marian is "[g]ood at survival" (317), it is her focus on preserving her own material welfare that makes her slow to appreciate and cooperate with his "fine, generous schemes" (*Hateship* 316). In "The Bear Came Over the Mountain," then, survival is linked to self-interest, adaptation to altruism and affection. At the same time, though, Munro tinges Grant's generosity with a whiff of egoism, as when he privately enters into a

> not-entirely-indifferent appraisal of Marian's physical attributes. Consequently, his claim to be pursuing "fine, generous schemes" carries a certain irony. Indeed, the phrase echoes another story by Munro, "Material," in which a writer uses his former neighbour as the model for a character in a story, exhibiting what his ex-wife calls, with both praise and disdain, a "fine and lucky benevolence." (*Something* 35)

In contrast, *Away from Her* downplays any initial attraction to Marian on Grant's part. Concurrently, Polley fills in Munro's lacuna with a sequence in which Grant and Marian enter a sexual relationship. At first he appears to be accepting it merely for the sake of winning her acquiescence to Aubrey visiting Fiona, which Marian herself suggests by saying to Grant: "It would be easier for me if you could pretend a little." In the next scene, though, the two of them lie in bed in a post-coital euphoria. It would seem Grant has accepted not just the necessity of sexual infidelity, but the fact that he may enjoy sex with Marian free of guilt. Indeed, the final scene of *Away from Her*, in which Fiona and Grant express their devotion to one another, implies that their relationship has been anything but compromised by his relations with Marian. The film thus presents the idea that in certain circumstances, marital fidelity may *require* sexual non-monogamy. Polley's choice to depart from Munro's story in order to explore this dramatic and moral territory is striking, especially given the lack of an obvious narratological necessity for her to have filled in the gap. However, if the sequence is approached as self-reflexive and meta-adaptive, then it could be construed as an attempt allegorically to legitimize the film's own potential "infidelities" to Munro's text, even while the sequence is itself a departure from Munro's text and thus a further

infidelity. Read in this way, the meta-adaptive upshot of Grant's satisfying sex with Marian is that artists such as Polley can also—and perhaps must—depart from conventional notions of fidelity when adapting texts, not merely for their own pleasure, but for the sake of honouring the source texts by attempting to match their aesthetic standards. Moreover, if it is true, as René Girard argues, that fictional narratives work in part by presenting the desires of characters whom the audience seeks to emulate, then for viewers of *Away from Her* who have also read "The Bear Came Over the Mountain," this sequence in the film provides a model by which they might liberate themselves from their own strict loyalty to Munro's text (5).

Those audience members familiar with Munro's story may see themselves reflected especially in Grant, whose shift from a dyadic intimacy with Fiona to the observation of her life at Meadowlake parallels their own move from the private, individual intimacy of reading to spectatorship in the communal setting of the cinema. In that light, another of the film's scenes not found in Munro's text also seems meta-adaptive: namely, when Grant lingers downstairs at Meadowlake after saying goodbye to Fiona on the day of her admission and is handed a note from her via the supervisor that reads "GO NOW. I LOVE YOU. GO NOW." At this moment of paired departures—Grant's from Fiona, the film's from Munro's story—Polley introduces a text written on paper, as though to remind viewers that *Away from Her* has its roots in words, and in words written by a woman not so different in age from Fiona. Meta-adaptively, then, one might read Fiona's adjuration and declaration of affection as also imputed to Munro's text, if not to Alice Munro herself, telling viewers and filmmaker alike not to feel beholden to the story. Through the proxy of Fiona, the film stages a phantasmatic moment of authorial blessing, one that hearkens back to an actual, pre-cinematic moment in which Munro signed away the film rights to her text. By positioning viewers with Grant as licensed leavers and justified adulterers, *Away from Her* encourages them not just to accept adaptation's infidelities, but to embrace the notion of the necessity certain infidelities within the parameters of a broader loyalty to the original text. Indeed, this concomitant fidelity and infidelity is encapsulated performatively by the film's title, which replaces Munro's with a phrase that appears in her story, thus both suggesting loyalty and enacting another movement "away from her." Similarly, in a preface Polley wrote for a movie tie-in edition of Munro's story, she acknowledges that she will not escape accusations of transgressive infidelity, even though she declares: "I painstakingly honored the story that I loved" (xiii). At this juncture Polley almost

explicitly draws a parallel between marital and adaptive fidelity, given that on the previous page she also describes Fiona and Grant as "two people who have and are in various ways failing each other and simultaneously doing everything they can" (xii). By depicting herself as similarly striving and possibly failing in the eyes of some, Polley aligns herself with Munro's characters, as though to caution her audience once more that inevitably the most faithful adaptations commit adultery.

Lover or Legatee

Sarah Polley was twenty-seven-years-old when *Away from Her* premiered at the 2006 Toronto International Film Festival, and so she was adapting not only across media but across generations, retelling the story of a retired couple that had first been published when Munro was sixty-eight. Insofar as the process of artistic adaptation can be phantasmatically interpersonal—that is, the adapter's sense of fidelity may extend to the source text's author as well as to the text—and in view of the difference between Polley's and Munro's ages, it would not be surprising if Polley, writing and directing her first feature film, were to position herself not as the equal of such a celebrated author but as a kind of apprentice. One might even expect in *Away from Her* to find Polley aligning herself with the story's younger characters and with her audience as the legatee and beneficiary of Munro's text. In that case, *Away from Her* would be a film that bridges the space between an older generation—represented by Munro as well as by Fiona and Grant, not to mention by Julie Christie and Gordon Pinsent in the roles of the two characters—and the future of the artistic culture, the hopes for which might seem to be embodied in young artists such as Polley. In order to take up such a position, though, Polley has to work against a story that is remarkably resistant to such a futurist logic. Children are virtually nowhere to be found in "The Bear Came Over the Mountain," and because Fiona and Grant are not parents, the story offers no consolation in the glimpse of a younger generation's possibilities, no catharsis through a child or grandchild coming to grips with Fiona's institutionalization, no redemption through the passing on of memory. Any hope lies in the future of Fiona and Grant themselves.

This aspect of Munro's text has notable ramifications for Polley and her film. For instance, as though responding to a concern that the story's lack of young characters might limit her personal traction in the narrative—not to mention younger viewers' interest in the film—Polley adds a short scene between Grant and a young woman visiting Meadowlake, a character who

seems to echo the feelings that Polley claims to have experienced while visiting her own grandmother at a care facility. In her preface to Munro's story, Polley says she was worried that she would leave the place "with a depression hanging over me" (xiv); likewise, in *Away from Her* the young woman calls Meadowlake "fucking depressing." In an interview, Polley has acknowledged of the character: "That's sort of me, as someone half the age of these people, looking up to these people: not quite understanding how they got there, being in awe of them, being curious about them" (qtd. in Horn). Her awe in the face of these characters mirrors the admiration for Munro and Christie that she also articulates in the interview, thus cementing the notion that interpersonal affect in "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" is connected to lines of affect involved in adapting the story.

Meanwhile, a deleted scene included on the DVD of *Away from Her* suggests an ambivalence in the film with regard to what Lee Edelman calls "reproductive futurism." This is an ideological position that equates the production of children with hopes for the future. In its choice of scapegoats for society's perceived failings, it points the finger at people who do not have or privilege offspring. It is a position that embraces the following logic: "If . . . there is *no baby* and, in consequence, *no future*, then the blame must fall on the fatal lure of sterile, narcissistic enjoyments understood as inherently destructive of meaning and therefore as responsible for the undoing of social organization, collective reality, and, inevitably, life itself" (13, original emphases). Although the lack of young characters in "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" seems to signal a rejection of reproductive futurism, the story defers to that position for a moment when Grant refers to a long-past "discovery that [Fiona] was not likely to have children. Something about her tubes being blocked, or twisted" (*Hateship* 278). This moment in the narrative conventionalizes the couple, so that Munro's story becomes aligned with numerous other texts—from *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* to W.H. Auden's poem "Miss Gee"—in which a character's childlessness symbolizes, foreshadows, or literally produces psychological and physiological problems. In contrast, Polley's ultimate choice to remove the scene from her film means that in *Away from Her* Grant and Fiona's childlessness is left unexplained. In fact, it is only through the lack of references to any children that viewers can assume the characters are childless in the first place. This indeterminacy opens the door to a less conservative reproductive politics. However, Polley reintroduces reproductive futurism to the film by adding a different scene. In it, Fiona

emerges from a doctor's appointment where her symptoms of Alzheimer's disease have become clear. Seeing a woman with an infant, she comments to Grant: "What an ugly baby!" The moment seems intended to illustrate the intransigence of Alzheimer's by showing Fiona to have forgotten social protocols, a common sign of the disease. But why make the point through an encounter with a baby in particular? On the one hand, the scene threatens to expose reproductive futurism as a collusive, even coercive fantasy, in which one is expected to provide a mother and infant with only admiration and affirmation, even while one recognizes privately that not every baby is really beautiful. On the other hand, the scene verges on endorsing reproductive futurism by associating the pathology of Alzheimer's with the putative "pathology" that would lead someone to talk of an infant with anything but praise.

The anxiety that this scene seems to express around reproductive politics is tied to questions about the sexual symbolics of artistic adaptation. With regard to these questions, the film manifests further ambivalence about its relationship to Munro's text. Is adaptation a passive, filial act of devotion, with the adaptive narrative deferentially taking up the mantle of its textual parent, or is it something active, sexual, and even potentially violent? Insofar as it may be both, it risks being doubly transgressive, breaking both Oedipal taboos by engaging in erotic relations with the parental text and then "killing" it by transforming and supplanting it. Polley's own ambivalent stance is evident in her preface, where in one breath she claims that "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" helped her to deal with her grandmother's aging and death, and then in another she credits the story with helping her to gain the maturity necessary for marrying the editor of *Away from Her*, David Wharnsby. These two interpersonal relationships shade into Polley's relationship with Munro's story. In one moment, Polley takes up the posture of a young person learning from an older one's text, as when she claims that "one day, a while ago now, it held my hand and led me to a place that I am very, very grateful to be" (xvi). In another moment, even while further developing this passive persona, Polley construes her relationship to Munro's story as sexual and violent: she says it "crept right into me, [and] had its way with me" (vii); later she says that the text "seemed to enter like a bullet" (ix). The motif of violence recurs when she asserts that her romantic life had involved "one unstable, destructive relationship after another," allowing readers to associate her relationship to the story with her erotic interpersonal ones (ix).

This oscillation between legatee and lover is not surprising, given an adapter's twin imperatives to be faithful and to stand on her own as an artist,

engaging as an equal with another's work. Because "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" has no young characters and thus limits the models of desire that it offers, it might seem to encourage would-be adapters and other readers to engage with it erotically rather than filially, not as children but as fellow spouses and adulterers. In contrast, the filial model of adaptation allows adapters to propagate the conceit that they are passive and loyal, merely transformed by the text rather than transforming it in turn. In one interview, Polley has in fact granted herself a more active but still filial role, claiming that as she sought to enlist Munro's and Christie's help in bringing "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" to the screen, she felt as though she were acting out a transferential relationship in the wake of losing her own mother. In Polley's words, "I was chasing these maternal figures around the world, begging them to be a part of my life" (qtd. in Horn). Although such a characterization admits Polley as agential, her taking up the symbolic position of a child means that she need not foreground her significant reconstitutions of Munro's text, nor does she need to acknowledge the ways in which she may have affected how the source itself is read and marketed. Nevertheless, the film's effect on the life of Munro's story is evident from the movie tie-in versions of "The Bear Came Over the Mountain." Not least, the Canadian edition retitles the story after the film, moving the newly rechristened "Away from Her" from the back of the collection in which it appeared to the front and re-titling the collection itself *Away from Her*.

The discourse of filial adaptation is unlikely to recognize such reciprocity of influence, substituting for it the trope of a genealogical chain that heads forward, away from the source narrative and the site of infidelity, toward as-yet-unborn future texts of which the current adaptation is merely one, not transgressive but normatively reproductive, contributing to the fecundity of culture as a whole, and authorized to do so by the parental text. In this light, it makes sense that Polley writes about her marriage to Wharnsby as though it were a triumph of Munro's story. This paratextual narrative construes "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" not as troubling to reproductive futurism but in fact as participating in it, functioning as a kind of elder matchmaker that, by bringing together Polley and Wharnsby, ensures the repro-normative future signified by their wedding. By cutting the scene in which Grant reveals Fiona's inability to have children, Polley's text might seem more radical than Munro's, insofar as it unmoors the characters' childlessness from the reassuringly conventional device of an unwanted biological defect. However, the cut also has the effect of leaving Grant and Fiona—and

by extension, "The Bear Came Over the Mountain"—fertile and generative, so that Polley, Wharnsby, and their film can become the story's figurative progeny, and the characters are finally given the children they never had.

Remembering Canada

Insofar as adapters must navigate between the perceived aesthetic trespasses of remaining too faithful to the original text—e.g., as when a film relies heavily on voice-over—and straying too far from it, adaptation has an analogue in discussions of national literary cultures such as Canada's, where by turns artists are excoriated for appearing either incestuously too endogamous (drawing accusations of parochialism, clique formation, and government-funded degeneracy) or traitorously too exogamous (drawing accusations of pandering to bigger markets, abandoning the nation by living abroad, or betraying it by not writing about it at all). As though anticipating just such lines of critique, *Away from Her* attempts to occupy a harmonious space between these hazards. For instance, although it features two international stars in Julie Christie and Olympia Dukakis, *Away from Her* is a film replete with markers of Canadianness not found in Munro's text: references to Canadian Tire and the Ontario hamlet of Tobermory, Brant County road signs, a filing cabinet magnet with the national flag on it, and glimpses of a televised Toronto Maple Leafs game. Polley even displays a concern for accent, accommodating the distinctive voice of the American actor Dukakis in the role of Marian by making the character American, too, and having her draw attention to the fact, telling Grant in a telephone message: "You probably recognized the voice—the accent." Meanwhile, the British actor Christie gamely changes her accent to play Fiona, even pronouncing the word "out" in a recognizably Canadian way. Given that *Away from Her* is a text in a medium that has usually been thought to require the revenues associated with American audiences in order to flourish, the question of why the film should add Canadian content is worth consideration.

In fact, the requirements of the American market are a challenge that Munro herself has faced, perhaps most notoriously in the case of her 1978 story collection, published in Canada as *Who Do You Think You Are?* but as *The Beggar Maid* in the US because the publisher claimed that an American audience would not understand the double meaning of the former title. Judith Thompson remarks of a similar problem in writing for the stage:

> I think that all of us as Canadian playwrights, as we write and hope for productions across the US, we unconsciously or semi-consciously adapt our own work

> and often remove—or have a conversation with ourselves about removing—specific cultural references, Canadian references. . . . And yet I feel I'm betraying where I live, who I am, what this country is becoming, if I do erase those references. (qtd. in Clarke, et al. 51)

Such an observation might prompt an examination of how Munro, who regularly publishes her stories first in *The New Yorker*, might be required to "adapt" her own work for an American audience on an ongoing basis. However, *Away from Her* is a film strikingly bent on *not* betraying Canada. Not only does it retell a Canadian author's story without effacing its Canadian setting or local details, but it is also rife with national literary, cinematic, and musical intertexts, so much so that it effectively names its own Canadian artistic heritage. In that sense, Polley's legatee-lover relationship to Munro's text is mirrored by her legatee-lover relationship to Canadian culture more broadly.

Away from Her posits for itself an ideal artistic commonwealth that aims to be neither too endogamous nor too exogamous, one that emerges through the use of Canadian and international intertexts not found in Munro's story. For example, the nurse Kristy reads to Aubrey from Alistair MacLeod's novel *No Great Mischief*, while Grant reads to Fiona from Michael Ondaatje's poem "The Cinnamon Peeler," and later from W.H. Auden and Louis MacNiece's *Letters from Iceland*. Indeed, a passage he reads aloud from Auden's poem "Death's Echo"—one which urges the reader to "*dance while you can*" (153)—implicitly licenses Grant to dance with Marian both literally and figuratively soon afterwards. The admixture of such literature suggests it is being offered as a cynosure of emotional articulacy and of cultural value. In contrast, Fiona asserts that she and Grant do not watch movies anymore, now that they are confronted by "all those multiplexes showing the same American garbage." The line is assuredly not in Munro's story. Rather, it is a self-reflexive joke by which the film both distinguishes itself from other movies and acknowledges the lesser cultural prestige of film in general when compared to literature; as Stam remarks, there is a common belief in "the axiomatic superiority of literary art to film" (58). Hutcheon points out that because of this perceived hierarchy, cinematic adapters might think that "one way to gain respectability or increase cultural capital is for an adaptation to be upwardly mobile" (91). Insofar as *Away from Her* allows literary intertexts to function periodically as its voice, substituting readings from them for original or adapted dialogue, the film seems to embrace the hierarchy of art forms, attempting to gain credibility for itself by incorporating literature,

even as it subordinates itself to literature in the act of doing so. In that regard the film becomes further identified with the child, the figure who takes up the novitiate's position in the family hierarchy but who gains authority with age even while obeying the imperative to respect its elders.

In this cultural family, Canadian texts are particularly prominent, and they are not exclusively literary: aside from the passages from Ondaatje and MacLeod, the film features music by k.d. lang and Neil Young. The film's use of Canadian settings and intertexts goes far beyond what the content rules of governmental funding bodies might require. Moreover, the film was hardly obliged by promotional interests, the details of Munro's story, or the demands of verisimilitude to be as explicitly Canadian as it is. Instead, the film seems intent on honouring what it declares to be its national cultural context. Atom Egoyan's 1997 film *The Sweet Hereafter*—in which Polley starred—provides arguably the most obvious template for the kind of movie that Polley has made: it also adapts a literary text while using Canadian music, a wintry Canadian landscape, and a predominantly Canadian cast. On the website for *Away from Her*, Egoyan—who served as an executive producer for the film—is quoted as saying: "I was aware, on *The Sweet Hereafter*, that Sarah was watching everything very closely." In that sense, Polley is not merely adapting Munro's text but adapting Egoyan's approach to Canadian filmmaking. Meanwhile, near the end of *Away from Her* there is a shot in which the camera circles Fiona and Grant while they embrace. Here Polley offers another Canadian filmic intertext. Don McKellar's 1998 film *Last Night*, which was also set in Canada and in which Polley also acted, concludes with a similar shot that spins around two characters as they kiss. By paying homage to and by incorporating into itself the work of established Canadian artists who personally have participated in Polley's artistic coming of age, *Away from Her* does its part in building the artistic prestige and commercial viability of a still-developing tradition of mainstream films by and about Canadians.

The promotional tagline for *Away from Her* was "It's never too late to become what you might have been," a line that in the film Kristy claims to have seen on a billboard outside a United Church in Brantford. In the context of the narrative, the line's exhortation for people to undertake a process of transformation seems to allude to Grant's development into a properly faithful husband. At the same time, the line may be read as a celebration of adaptation in general. What is more, given Polley's choice to associate the line with such a specifically Canadian site as a United Church in Brantford,

it might be taken as speaking not least about the importance of Canadian adaptation. This importance has not been lost on other commentators. For instance, the political scientist Jennifer Welsh answers the question "What is a Canadian?" with a single word, "adaptable," and she goes on to note a range of national adaptive practices, from the pioneers' process of adjustment and the range of clothing Canadians must wear in facing the variable climate, to the country's development of "middle power" status during the Cold War (251-54). Meanwhile, the relevance of adaptation to Canadian literature in particular might be read into Hutcheon's recent book, *A Theory of Adaptation*. Hutcheon does not focus primarily on Canadian texts, but she does adapt her own previous work on parody by defining adaptation in the same way as "repetition with variation" (4), and by calling parody "an ironic subset of adaptation" (170). In that light, if one were to revisit—and adapt—her earlier thesis in *The Canadian Postmodern* (1988) that Canadian art has a particularly ironic, parodic character, one might say that the nation's art is also characterized by adaptation.

As it stands, though, adaptation remains an under-explored topos of Canadian literature, both as a theme and as a practice. In this essay, I have suggested various ways in which it might gain a more prominent place in the discussion of Canadian literature, ways suggested by the meta-adaptive aspects of "The Bear Came over the Mountain" and *Away from Her*. In particular, the case of Polley's film speaks to the significance of adaptation for a country in which many artists and critics have been preoccupied with building a sense of a national cultural heritage. If I have also paid close attention to the psychodynamics of adaptation, I have done so to encourage further discussion about how the interpersonal character of adaptive creation can become manifest, and how it might be connected to nationalist artistic undertakings: how, for instance, an adaptive artist might consider herself to be both a text's and a country's legatee. From that perspective, one might view Canadian literature as an ongoing process not merely of survival, but of adaptation in order to find and maintain a voice in evolving North American and global literary contexts. To adapt the words of Derek Walcott, one might even say that Canadian literature has no nation but adaptation.[1] Indeed, *pace* those such as George Grant or more recent commentators who have declared or forecast the death of Canada, the study of adaptation in Canadian literature might help to change the terms of debate, asking not whether the country will survive but how it continues to do so.[2]

NOTES

1 In Walcott's poem "The Schooner *Flight*" his speaker Shabine declares: "I had no nation now but the imagination" (350).

2 For example, see Lansing Lamont's *The Coming End of Canada and the Stakes for America* (New York: Norton, 1994) or Mel Hurtig's *The Vanishing Country: Is It Too Late to Save Canada?* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2003).

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Search for Embodiment

Angie Abdou
The Bone Cage. NeWest $22.95
Reviewed by Claire Duncan

In her first novel, *The Bone Cage*, Angie Abdou writes a fascinating and topical story about two athletes training for the Olympics. However, as the novel deftly demonstrates, these two characters, Sadie and Digger, must struggle against being identified simply by their sport. By using two extremely gruelling and demanding sports, Abdou shows how the sport itself demands the complete sacrifice of not only the physical body (which as she describes it would certainly be enough), but also any sort of outside identity. Sadie is a swimmer: she cannot even recognize herself when she does not sweat chlorine. With the high demands both characters make on themselves, and the perseverance and determination involved in their triumphant performances, Abdou easily could have slipped into the clichéd sports story. However, by creating multifaceted characters who can on the one hand block out everything to give the performance of a lifetime, but who on the other hand are also human enough to question the basis of their identities, Abdou creates a new kind of sports story.

Though the whole of the novel is smoothly narrated, Abdou's writing reaches its pinnacle in the beautifully conveyed scenes in which Sadie and Digger swim or wrestle. With a background in competitive swimming, Abdou's grasp of a prose that captures the merging of the body and the water seems perfectly natural. Remarkably, Digger's wrestling scenes do not suffer from Abdou's lack of personal experience. Once more, she shows us the narrowing of an athlete's world in which the precisely trained body must either ignore the pain that begs it to stop, or lose.

Alongside the flawed characters and their struggles with life as athletes, Abdou gives a piercing look at national attitudes to sport. Especially pertinent to the upcoming 2010 Olympics in Vancouver is Abdou's presentation of characters who begin to doubt the value of their lifelong pursuit of Olympic glory. At moments, the novel teeters close to becoming a commonplace inspirational sports story, but Abdou constantly pulls it back by giving an unflinching look at the pain and the doubt involved in being a successful athlete. The Olympics are the centre of Sadie's and Digger's lives because as athletes who toil in sports that are all but ignored in Canada, the Games represent their one chance for recognition.

The Bone Cage gives us a stirring portrait of people who are seemingly destined to excel in their sport from a young age, but who as they near the end of their careers struggling in anonymity, living off the pennies of their monthly carding allowance, and training six hours a day, grasp onto the Olympics as their last hope. Striving for that Olympic gold medal is Sadie's only way to preserve her identity as swimmer. If she

wins, Sadie can always have that tangible result of years of swimming to proclaim her identity. She can always be Sadie Jorgenson, 2000 Olympic Gold Medalist in 800m free. Without that medal, though, she will be forced to redefine herself outside the tiny, familiar parameters of sport. Though it seems impossibly grim at times, with each other's help, Sadie and Digger may just be able to live with their beat-up bodies, injured through years of abuse, and begin the difficult search for some new identity.

For anyone who has an intimate knowledge of either sport, Abdou's vocabulary can sometimes feel clumsy, as she avoids the narrow jargon of the sport. Although her paraphrases are cumbersome, they reinforce for the tiny fraction of readership that is involved in wrestling or swimming how unknown their sport is to anyone else. Abdou stumbles slightly in her all-too-overt inclusion of various literary quotations. As a former English literature student, Sadie is inclined to remember bits of her favourite poems. However, instead of introducing these quotes naturally, as they would come into Sadie's mind, Abdou finds it necessary to slow down her own lovely prose and shout to her reader that she is quoting Browning or Yeats. As shown by the final scene of the novel, these words can speak powerfully for themselves, whether or not the reader recognizes that they are written by Browning.

The Bone Cage extends past sport, exploring the tentative relationship between people and their bodies. Are we simply prisoners of our own "bone cage," predestined by the body, or can we overcome its limits? Do we even want to overcome the body, or is it simply inseparable from ourselves? *The Bone Cage*'s questioning of an inherent self-body dichotomy reaches out universally, involving not only sport, but also illness and death. Ultimately, because Abdou does not offer concrete answers for these questions, she shows that though the specific relationship between body and self is individualized, our struggle to reconcile them is universal.

At the Water's Edge

Alison Acheson
Mud Girl. Coteau $12.95

Roger Maunder
Mundy Pond. Tuckamore $17.95

Reviewed by Elizabeth A. Galway

These two titles for young adults detail some of the real and very complex experiences of children coming of age in Canada from coast to coast. Set in BC and Newfoundland respectively, these novels explore the difficult challenges faced by protagonists moving from childhood to adulthood.

Alison Acheson's *Mud Girl* is the story of a sixteen-year-old girl living on the shore of the Fraser River. The ramshackle house that Abi shares with her father overhangs the river, its precarious position mirroring the lives of those within. The novel opens at the start of the summer holidays, which Abi greets not with excitement, but with the fear that "now the days are going to be long, and they're going to be spent with a man who used to be her father, but is now a stranger." The story unfolds at a pace that reflects the feeling that the "summer is long when you're sixteen." Without the distraction of school, the days drag for Abi, whose parents have recently abandoned her in different, but equally damaging, ways. While Abi's mother has left altogether, without explanation, her father has abandoned her emotionally. Unable to cope with his wife's departure, he retreats into himself and becomes, for his daughter, a "dead person."

Like her house at the river's edge, the protagonist herself is poised on a brink—that between adolescence and adulthood. When she meets the slightly older but much more experienced Jude, she must negotiate

the murky waters of love and sexuality, which Acheson explores with frankness and a keen sense of realism. In her own home, Abi becomes both the breadwinner and the housekeeper, and after she meets Jude's young son Dyl, whose neglectful parents in many ways resemble her own, she makes a choice that changes life for them all. The teenager at the heart of the novel is a girl full of "many questions," many of which remain unanswered, but Abi "knows a few things" and increasingly relies on her own innate intelligence and judgment to answer these questions, and to evaluate her relationship with the attractive but self-centred Jude.

Acheson's novel explores what happens when a child must assume the role of the responsible adult. The author successfully captures some defining aspects of adolescent experience, but the novel also has a dreamlike quality to it, including the somewhat surreal nature of the odd house that Abi lives in, and the adult characters of Ernestine and Horace that she befriends along the way. The novel's conclusion may seem too sudden for some readers, but this remains a work that will be of interest to those concerned with questions of teenage sexuality, independence, and the shifting boundaries between adulthood and adolescence.

Like Acheson's novel, Roger Maunder's novel is set during the summer holidays, but the story unfolds at a faster pace. Set in the community of Mundy Pond, Newfoundland, in 1978, this is a grittier novel that also creates sympathetic characters for young readers to engage with. At its heart are eleven-year-old Gordie McAllister and his twelve-year-old friend Jimmy Birmingham. The novel highlights both the simple childhood interests of these friends, and the stern realities that each must face. Against a summer backdrop of baseball, bike-riding, and games of hide-and-seek, the boys face serious struggles. This is not an idyllic depiction of childhood, and Maunder captures with terrifying reality the very genuine fears some children must face. Gordie has a comfortable home and two loving parents, but must deal with the impact of his father's infidelity on the family, and the uncertainty of whether his parents will be able to put their marriage back together.

Jimmy, a boy who has developed a tough exterior in response to his extremely abusive father, has an even more heart-wrenching story. Although Jimmy is fearless in the face of his peers, he must stand by helpless as he repeatedly witnesses his father abuse his mother. Although he can tackle any bully his own age, Jimmy is powerless against his father Randal, who "was familiar to all the kids that played on the street. Everyone knew who he was and they were all frightened to death of him. . . . They all knew Randal Birmingham was nasty. And they all knew he was Jimmy's dad." Disturbingly, the reader begins to witness a growing similarity between father and son. As one character observes, "'Little Jimmy's got more of his mother in him, though there are times I can spot the father. Just a glimpse but I see it.'"

Jimmy's story moves toward a dramatic climax that raises some complex questions about justice and morality. The conclusion of Maunder's novel is sure to provoke debate, and will be of interest to those concerned with the ways in which children's literature grapples with issues of power, authority, victimization, and revenge. From Jimmy's abuse by his father, to Gordie's first kiss from a girl, Maunder writes a compelling novel about two boys growing up quickly, and explores the ways in which childhood experience can help determine the kind of adult that one becomes. Neither *Mud Girl* nor *Mundy Pond* idealizes adolescence, but each depicts the ways in which sympathetic young characters attempt to gain some measure of control over the world around them.

Tatologie

François Barcelo
Bossalo. XYZ 25,00 $

François Barcelo
Bonheur Tatol. XYZ 26,00 $

Compte rendu par Martin Jalbert

François Barcelo appartient sans conteste à la catégorie des écrivains dont la désinvolture laisse penser qu'ils ne souffrent pas trop d'être des écrivains mineurs. Il reconnaît sans difficulté qu'il produit de mauvais romans (« une fois sur deux », admet-il dans *Écrire en toute liberté*) écrits « sans réfléchir » et sans « ajouter » de profondeur, attendu qu'il s'agit d'« une littérature plus plaisante que profonde ». Cette désinvolture ne se transmet pas seulement aux personnages d'écrivains, comme Roger Lorange dans *Bonheur Tatol*, mais à la plupart des narrateurs de Barcelo : ils sont cyniques, se pensent plus fins que les autres et ne paraissent jamais bouleversés par les malheurs qui leur arrivent. En somme, par leur détachement, ils sont au-delà de l'opposition entre perdre et gagner. Leur discours, leur ton, leur superficialité les apparentent à ces gens qui gagnent à tout coup par la revanche qu'ils prennent à raconter à leurs amis et sur un ton badin leurs aventures et leurs mésaventures.

Délaissant le métier d'écrivain, Roger Lorange, dans *Bonheur Tatol*, revient en publicité pour devenir, en moins de dix jours et après avoir fait la démonstration de son « incontestable supériorité créative » dans l'affaire Tatol, président de la compagnie. Que cette réussite fulgurante s'avère manigancée par une petite équipe de fraudeurs ne change rien à l'affaire : il a beau jeu ensuite de revenir à l'écriture, sous la tutelle d'une femme riche qu'il baise et qui le baise. Le narrateur de *Bossalo*, quant à lui, couche avec une femme qui se fait assassiner pendant leur relation sexuelle. Elle lui transmet une blennorragie qu'il transmet aussitôt à sa femme qui la transmet à leur nouveau-née. Il se fait congédier, puis chasser de chez lui. À la suite de sa blennorragie, il devient aveugle, mais retrouve la vue, joue l'aveugle le temps de déjouer les manigances des responsables de l'institut et meurt enfin en baisant (sinon en violant) la jeune cuisinière dont il dit être amoureux. On l'aura compris, Victor Bossalo est censé être un *beau salaud*. Mais comme il n'est pas seul à l'être, il n'y a plus tellement de différence entre être ou ne pas être salaud.

Bossalo a ceci de caractéristique qu'il est un personnage de roman qui le sait et qui se dit soumis au libre jeu de la faculté fabulatrice d'un Auteur tout-puissant. Le procédé de fictionnalisation de l'instance narratrice—employé par Sterne, par Jean-Paul et avant eux par Cervantes—paraît procéder ici de la négligence qui caractérise les écrivains de Barcelo qui affirment, comme lui, ne pas réfléchir, ne rien planifier, ne rien connaître de leur sujet ni de leurs personnages. Ce gadget vaguement démystificateur n'est toutefois pas étranger à cet univers de manipulations et de tromperies où chacun est à la fois baisé et baiseur. Tantôt le narrateur est le pantin de l'Auteur, tantôt il se mutine, tantôt il agit librement. Ainsi ignore-t-on lequel gagne, lequel perd au jeu : il n'est pas certain que, dans ce dispositif déresponsabilisant, le narrateur ne gagne pas plus qu'il semble perdre. Cet usage particulier du schème manipulateur-manipulé ne sert pas à rétablir quelque justice. L'incapacité à déterminer lequel est le maître de l'autre participe de cette réversibilité des places, de cette indifférenciation entre domination et soumission, entre faire ce qu'on veut et faire ce qu'on nous dit de faire, en somme : entre liberté et résignation à l'ordre normal des choses.

Cette quasi-identité entre absolue contingence et inévitable soumission traverse les romans de Barcelo. Elle explique certaines affirmations de l'écrivain, sur le double plaisir que procurent ses livres notamment :

le plaisir de « changer de vie le temps de lire un livre » et, une fois la lecture terminée, celui de redevenir soi-même—« content d'être l'individu que vous êtes ». Sans doute est-il permis ici de parler de littérature du consensus : une littérature qui, en rendant indifférents les antagonismes, annule la liberté et la contingence en les identifiant à la soumission et à la nécessité, cette nécessité en vertu de laquelle les choses arrivent parce que *ce sont des choses qui arrivent* et qui confirme que nous sommes bien ce que nous sommes. Appelons cela la tatologie.

Robin Blaser's Summa

Robin Blaser; Miriam Nichols, ed.
The Fire: Collected Essays of Robin Blaser. U of California P US $29.95

Robin Blaser; Miriam Nichols, ed.
The Holy Forest: Collected Poems of Robin Blaser. U of California P US $45.00

Reviewed by Douglas Barbour

Readers who have followed Robin Blaser's work over the past sixty years have been waiting a long time for these two books, although a 1993 edition of *The Holy Forest* (from Coach House Press) offered satisfaction at the time about his poetry. So we owe Miriam Nichols, who edited both these new editions, with a lengthy commentary on Blaser's essays in *The Fire*, a huge debt of gratitude. As a member, with Robert Duncan and Jack Spicer, of the early San Francisco renaissance in the 1940s and 1950s, Blaser is certainly a part of US poetic history, so this publication by the University of California Press is perhaps fitting, even if he has also been a powerful mentoring figure in Canadian poetry since he immigrated in the 1960s. Let us simply celebrate the existence of these two books.

The Fire is an amazing testament to Blaser's long-held ideas about poetry and the public world that too often ignores poetry yet desperately needs it. From the title essay, in which he first attempts to articulate his poetics, to the final one, "Bach's Belief," in which he continues to argue the value of openness in form and philosophy (from personal feeling to cosmology), the essays reveal a mind always thinking, always expanding its resources (the breadth of references in these essays is but one of the many astonishments they provide), and always in touch with what Margaret Avison calls the venturing heart. Divided into two sections, "Poetics" and "Commentaries," the essays cover a lot of ground, yet they are always grounded in Blaser's practice, which is best seen in the lifelong poem (or poetic practice) which is *The Holy Forest*.

These essays are, precisely, essayings in thinking questions through, and those questions are not simply about poetry as an act outside of the public realm, but rather as an action utterly committed to (and in) the public world. As he says in "The Recovery of the Public World," "I look back over this notion of *humanitas* in order to find something—what was meant by the word. The forgetfulness of our cultural condition destroys our ability to think." Blaser's essays stand as a lifelong attempt to overcome that forgetfulness through reading as widely as possible and thinking through all he has read. As in his poems, in his essays Blaser communes with "companions," writers (thinkers) whose work feeds his own continually maturing thinking about poetry and its encounter with the real world. They are too many to name here, but one of the most important "companions of [his] concern," from at least the 1950s to the present day is Hannah Arendt, whose work he returns to, over and over again, in both the essays on the larger subject of poetics (and the public world) and the commentaries on specific artists. Always concerned with the debasement of language, and the need for poetry to battle that debasement, he has found Arendt's thinking on totalitarianism, history, and the people who have brought

some light into dark times continually useful to his thinking.

The Commentaries begin with another early and famous essay, "The Practice of Outside," his long introduction to *The Collected Books of Jack Spicer*. As he begins, he lays out the practice he will follow in most of the essays to follow: "My essay then became watchful of the context of the poetry and of the composing 'real' that is Jack's concern." Here, in a nutshell, we discover the "how" of Blaser's critical strategy, and whether he is writing of Charles Olson and his debt to Alfred North Whitehead, the odd spirituality of Mary Butts, or the early and late modernism of Louis Dudek and George Bowering, he is ever watchful of each poet's context and the composing "real" world their poetry engages. That "real" is public, it is historic, and it is a continuing, modern awareness of a crisis: "The arts have long worked with the crisis of meaning in the Western tradition, only now and again at ease with idealism or its materialism. If anything identifies twentieth-century art as set apart from the past, it is a full consciousness—sometimes regretful and nostalgic—of this crisis."

There is so much one could say of these essays, and, indeed, in her own long commentary, Miriam Nichols has done just that: as an introduction to Blaser's thought it would be hard to better "Love Will Eat the Empire: A Commentary on the Essays of Robin Blaser." I would just mention the personal stake he registers in each essay, with sentences like this: "I am, happily, never sure, as I read, whether the real of imagination is our necessary fiction or a wondrous quality of mind in the nature of things." Everywhere he insists that he is the writer thinking and writing his thinking down for us to follow, his rhetoric ranging from the most hieratic to the delightfully demotic.

The Holy Forest is a lifetime's work offered as a single continuing project, a working out of a deeply felt postmodern poetics from Blaser's time in San Francisco to the present in Vancouver. Like any forest, The Holy Forest continues to grow. It gathers together all the poetry he desires to preserve, now entered into a temporal narrative of various "books," some of which were published separately, some of which are only presented, now, in this volume. Readers lucky enough to have found any of the early chapbooks, like *Cups*, *The Moth Poem*, or *Image-Nations 1-12*, will have some sense of the stretch of Blaser's imagination, but *The Holy Forest* also contains the later, larger volumes, *Syntax* (a highly ironic title: "Olson said, 'I'd trust you / anywhere with image, but / you've got no syntax'" [1958]) and *Pell Mell*, as well as the poetry Blaser has written over the past decade and a half. He has not slowed down, as the two hundred pages of new poems reveal; they include his third "Great Companion" poem, "Dante Alighiere," and the delightful "Wanders."

The very first "Image-Nation," addressing, as so many of Blaser's poems do, the fact and the problem of language, tells us that in such sites as these poems and "in such / times, the I consumes itself." In contrast to the highly personalized "I" of so much conventional contemporary poetry, whose moods may shift but whose character is singular and solid, the "I" of Blaser's poetry is a highly shifty pronoun (albeit one that can represent the poet), a place from which many voices may speak. And since Blaser is a highly learned poet, the voices range through time and space, joining together in these poems to create a colloquium for the heart and soul.

Blaser's poetry does not offer the usual personal expression, especially "confession," but neither does it lack emotion; it does demand an active reading that engages not just the poet's imagination, but imagination itself. *The Holy Forest* asks to be read whole, for the more you read of it the more it all begins to make poetic sense. Like the poems of Blaser's "Great Companions," the

artists who have spoken to him across the ages, *The Holy Forest* teaches us how to read the work in the act of reading.

The early poems serially engage the image as such, with a stunning delicacy of tone and rhythm. Later poems distend the notion of image (for image is the means that forms the narrative of the writing) to include all manner of other discourse—or the discourse of others, for this is a poetry of sly and complex quotation. But there is a wonderful laughter in these poems too, and a celebration of our capacity for joy in this given world, and Blaser's humour comes more and more into the foreground in the later poetry. And other emotions too: his elegy, "Great Companion: Robert Duncan," will take its place with others in that great tradition.

The Holy Forest is a challenge—to readers to actively engage it, to the kind of poetic that assumes personal expression is everything, to a materialism that refuses to admit the human need and desire for something more than a commerce degree and uncontrolled consumerism. I hope its imaginative reach, and that of its companion volume, will be noticed in the midst of all the commercial noise that surrounds us, for it offers readers a broad, loving, and highly intelligent human vision.

A Bone to Pick

Tim Bowling

The Bone Sharps. Gaspereau $27.95

Reviewed by Samuel Pane

Tim Bowling is no greenhorn to the badlands. He has prospected there before and prepared fine specimens, startling as fossil teeth amidst ironstone. Not only does he go with Al Purdy into the restricted area of Dinosaur Provincial Park, but also with the collectors who went before. Even they succumbed to the occasional temptation, and scrawled rhyming couplets in notebooks alongside section diagrams and squashed mosquitoes. From the poems in *Darkness and Silence* and *The Memory Orchard*, Bowling has moved on to new fields in search of those terrible lizards that once roamed the shores of the Bearpaw Sea.

Bowling's new novel, *The Bone Sharps*, follows the Sternberg family, canonical figures of North American paleontology, not only on a fictionalized expedition to Alberta's Red Deer River, but also through memory and the archive. He isn't the first author to make the trip. Robert Kroetsch sent William Dawe on a similar voyage in *Badlands*. Bowling elects to call his chief bone hunter by his Christian name, Charles Hazelius. Aside from rooting the novel in the documentary tradition of Canadian letters, this gesture gives Bowling occasion to explore the vocational aspect of Sternberg's toils. He shows the reader how hunting the vanished lords of the Mesozoic was for Sternberg a spiritual quest, how the delicate skull of *troodon* can be a kind of grail too.

Bowling has done his homework. In one of several subplots, Scott Cameron, volunteer soldier, former assistant to the Sternbergs, and correspondent to Lily, the blacksmith's daughter, secures a specimen while stationed on the western front. The episode has historical precedent. Rumours abound about a female bone sharp who may have scoured the ground around Steveville. However, a British tunnelling company formally reported the discovery of an Ice Age mammoth while excavating a strategic gallery in the French chalk. Scientists later collected it after the Great War.

Cameron carries a copy of Sternberg's first autobiography from 1909. The novel's flashbacks involving Edward Drinker Cope, principal antagonist in the American "Bone Wars," are indebted to *The Life of a Fossil Hunter*. It details the early phase of Sternberg's career before he was engaged by the Geological Survey of Canada to participate in the "Canadian Dinosaur Rush"—a

gentlemanly contest against Barnum Brown who would send Albertan dinosaurs by the boxcar to New York's American Museum. However, *The Bone Sharps* owes much of its psychological thrust, mainly focused on Sternberg's crisis of faith, to *Hunting Dinosaurs in the Badlands of Alberta*, Sternberg's second autobiography, published a full year after the action described in the novel. Of particular significance is a peculiar chapter in which Sternberg imagines a reunion with his deceased daughter on the shores of a Cretaceous ocean!

A reader with a nose for anachronism might take Bowling to task for gathering all the Sternbergs together for one final hurrah. Historical documentation for the 1916 field season is conspicuously slim—no mean convenience for Bowling and Kroetsch before him. The Rush had concluded. Urgency had waned. War had shrivelled resources. Only two Sternbergs remained in GSC service. Charles Mortram likely prepared specimens in Ottawa while George continued to collect. Their brother Levi, and father Charles Hazelius, returned to the field too, but as independents for the British Museum. Only a humbug would deny the poet his due license. And who could blame a novelist for rescuing gems like "vandal hand of man" and "vivarium" from old dusty volumes? Gaspereau shares this antiquarian eye with book craft as elegant as an ammonite. Bowling succeeds because he takes Sternberg at his word and "breathes life into the valley of the dry bones."

Di Brandt's World

Di Brandt
So This Is the World & Here I Am in It. NeWest $24.95

Reviewed by Barbara Pell

So This Is the World & Here I Am in It is volume ten in "The Writer as Critic" Series, edited by Smaro Kamboureli. Fittingly, Di Brandt now joins in this series other illustrious, outspoken, and often academic Canadian writers, such as Aritha Van Herk, Frank Davey, and Stephen Scobie, with a well-edited collection of her personal and literary essays. Brandt, an award-winning poet, now holds a Canada Research Chair in Creative Writing at Brandon University in her native Manitoba. These twelve essays, written over a period of ten years, reflect on her beloved prairie landscape and sojourns in Winnipeg, her personal and ecological exile for a decade in Windsor, her ethnic and spiritual homecoming on a sabbatical in Berlin, and her personal struggles with the Mennonite community that shaped and inspired her, alienated and appalled her, and finally shunned her for her betrayal of it. Half of the essays are personally informed, literary analyses of other Canadian writers' texts by Mavis Gallant, Adele Wiseman, Dorothy Livesay, David Arnason, James Reaney, and the installation artist Aganetha Dyck, whose "Lady in Waiting" is the cover image for this book.

Brandt's recurrent themes are feminist and ecological. She celebrates the heroines of Gallant's *The Pegnitz Junction*, Wiseman's *Crackpot*, and *The Husband* (before Livesay's editors' censorship), and affirms Arnason's delightful "disarm[ing]" of "the gender war." She reviles the industrial pollution of Southwestern Ontario and mourns the environmental poisoning of prairie farms by multinational agribusiness. She barely forgives "Reaney's acerbic *Message to Winnipeg*, relayed over his shoulder in a huff, so to speak, as he exited the prairies

to take up adult abode in his childhood Souwesto." And she constantly returns to her Anabaptist history, Mennonite heritage, and the irreconcilable (to her) paradoxes: of strong, capable, active women supportive of yet silenced by the patriarchy; of a people so gifted as farmers that countries welcomed them as immigrants all over the world, who "have managed to poison the land and our food sources and our own bodies so drastically as to jeopardize the future of all life in this country"; of religious people who repeatedly sacrificed safety, comfort, and home for their beliefs and independence but would not respect and allow hers. Brandt's personal reflections are supported and strengthened by an array of academic sources that she deftly weaves into her arguments (and documents fully in Endnotes and Bibliography); fourteen illustrations supplement the text.

I found many of Brandt's ideological criticisms and readings to be predictable and shallow. However, her personal reminiscences and reflections are interesting, insightful, and, often, deeply moving. She honestly articulates her deep love and grief for "This land that I love, this wide, wide prairie" (chapter 1), her painful struggles "to adapt from my peasant prairie village farm upbringing to the life of the modern city" (chapter 6), her surprising "homecoming" to Berlin whose *Plautdietsch* dialect recalls "her lost mother tongue" (chapter 7), and, finally, in the last eponymous chapter, her life story that "took me, unwaveringly, as far away as possible from the world of my childhood, my people, my homeland, though I have spent much of [my exile] mourning for the deep loss of them." She heartbreakingly concludes that, like Joyce, "I've been faithful, are you listening, daddy, grandma . . . I've been true, trying as hard as I can to understand what that idealistic, crazy, stubborn, ecstatic, beautiful, terrible heritage was about, and what it means to me . . . *So this is the world, and here I am in it . . . and I think I can say this from so far away, that I love you, I love you*." This love letter is its own redemption.

Hiking Historic Trails

Nicky Brink and Stephen R. Bown
Forgotten Highways: Wilderness Journeys Down the Historic Trails of the Canadian Rockies.
Brindle & Glass $24.95

Reviewed by Jane Lytton Gooch

This fascinating account of early exploration in the Canadian Rockies comes to life through the adventures of Nicky Brink and Stephen Bown, a husband and wife team, as they follow the historic trails. Standing on their skis and looking down on the Howse River one January day, they wondered about exploring to the end of the valley but decided they needed more knowledge. Their research over the winter led to an awareness not only of Howse Pass, the first passage through the mountain barrier used by Native traders and David Thompson, but also several other passes with historic appeal: Athabasca Pass, an alternate route for David Thompson when hostile Peigan closed Howse Pass; Simpson Pass, named after Sir George Simpson; and the passes in the Kananaskis probably used by Captain John Palliser. Along with these early explorers who were motivated by trade and nationalism, the authors were inspired by Mary Schäffer, the first surveyor of Maligne Lake, who travelled in the wilderness to enjoy its beauty and serenity. Using the journals of these four individuals and consulting numerous maps, the authors carefully planned a series of wilderness adventures for the following summer. Their purpose was to gain an appreciation of the accomplishments of these early explorers by following in their footsteps, and, fortunately, the trails, for the most part, still exist within park boundaries.

This book is a compelling account of adventures in the past and present. Each

journey has two complementary narratives; the historical perspective with quotations from the early explorers is followed by the immediate impressions of the authors on the same trails, all recorded on a dictaphone. One quickly realizes that the contemporary journey is remarkably like the past; the modern hiker still has to cope with mountain weather, treacherous river fords, and tedious bushwhacking in fallen timber and devil's club. Athabasca Pass, for example, is still a formidable place, guarded by high mountains and seemingly haunted by the spirits of past travellers. To honour the fur traders' accomplishments, the authors and their companions had planned to propose the traditional toast at the Committee's Punch Bowl, a small lake at the summit of the pass, but, sadly, driving rain forced them to retreat to a lower elevation. Tribulations were, nevertheless, balanced by the joy of backcountry travel—by seeing a grizzly bear at Elizabeth Lake after crossing Ferro Pass and by experiencing a happiness similar to Mary Schäffer's in Maligne Valley. The authors' attitude to their wilderness expeditions is an inspiration for those who might be inclined to make the same journeys. Despite the trials of wet weather and overgrown trails, they maintained their sense of humour and an appreciation for their good fortune in being able to explore these wilderness highways which played such a significant role in shaping Canada. Their book beckons us to follow.

Recueil de nouvelles

Jean-Claude Castex
C'est arrivé un jour! Interligne 13,95 $

Compte rendu par Guy Poirier

Après le *Gros lot* et *le fantôme et autres histoires vraies*, Jean-Claude Castex vient de publier un autre recueil de nouvelles qui surprend par son style dépouillé et la pureté de son esthétique. La quatrième de couverture présentant cet ouvrage comme une suite de neuf récits autobiographiques tirés de la vie de l'auteur et la page de couverture précisant qu'il s'agit bien de « nouvelles », nous pourrions en déduire que Jean-Claude Castex flirte avec un genre qui se rapproche de l'autofiction. Il est vrai que le narrateur adopte au moins à une reprise les modalités du récit autodiégétique, dans la nouvelle « La tache d'encre », et qu'il insiste à d'autres moments sur la véracité des récits mis en abyme (notamment au début de « L'évaluation » et dans « La contravention »). Dans la nouvelle « Jonas », qui raconte l'histoire d'un chat abandonné dans l'île de Vancouver dont on essaie, rongés de remords, de retrouver la trace, le narrateur cède littéralement sa plume à une vieille dame de Vancouver . . . qui lui raconta un jour cette histoire.

Si l'on s'intéresse aux questions d'esthétique de la nouvelle, précisons que ces récits correspondent parfaitement aux caractéristiques habituellement associées au genre bref : nombre limité de personnages, cadre géographique restreint, unité de l'intrigue. La durée de l'histoire peut parfois nous paraître exagérée (pensons aux nouvelles « Christine » et « L'homme à la barbe rousse » qui se déroulent sur plusieurs années). Résumés, ellipses, mais surtout une trame narrative sobre et bien contenue permettent d'éviter la dispersion. Dans huit nouvelles, le dénouement, inattendu, provoque le plus souvent la surprise, parfois l'horreur; cette fin typique du genre est

parfois suivie du couperet, de l'arrêt brutal de la narration.

Pour les lecteurs de l'Ouest, ce recueil permettra d'ajouter quelques textes courts, bien ciselés, à notre topographie littéraire : un village de la région de Kamloops, White Rock, l'île de Vancouver, l'école Princess Margaret (de Surrey) et Vancouver.

Sexual Sources and Influential Erotics

Richard Cavell and Peter Dickinson, eds. *Sexing the Maple: A Canadian Sourcebook.* Broadview $39.95

John Barton and Billeh Nickerson, eds. *Seminal: The Anthology of Canada's Gay Male Poets.* Arsenal Pulp $24.95

Stephen Guy-Bray *Loving in Verse: Poetic Influence as Erotic.* U of Toronto P $45.00

Reviewed by Andrew Lesk

Cavell and Dickinson begin their very fine anthology with a quote from Steven Maynard, who asserts that "nations require particular sentiments of attachment, ones that often rest at least in part on the erotic." The discourse of nationalism depends on constructions of identity, the editors add, and that identity itself is deeply fraught with (often unresolved or unexplored) questions about sexuality.

Because sexuality has often had its norms, people in Canada often find their identity through adhering to or eschewing them. National institutions, tightly woven into the fabric of normative identities, regulate, explicitly or otherwise, all sorts of behaviours that, in the end, lead to an overarching and often overweening vision of what the Canadian state should look like.

In closely examining such machinations, Cavell and Dickinson use the lenses of family, media, medicine, gender, race, religion, and law to map out how categories of sexual identity have shifted over the years, and how such shifts do not necessarily neatly parallel changes in the arenas of socio-political awareness or national policy (to name a few). Rather than present ostensibly representative selections that may play to those very norms being interrogated, the editors instead attempt to offer suggestive directions that students of Canadian cultural productions may wish to further investigate.

Aside from the book's compelling introductory essay, each section is further prefaced with a brief contextualization of the materials contained therein. The literature selections range from authors otherwise considered mainstream—Alice Munro, Timothy Findley, Margaret Atwood—to deliciously contrary voices—Trish Salah, Derek McCormack, Ivan E. Coyote. Sociological, historical, and political entries are as diverse as the authors: Michael Bliss, Mariana Valverde, Martin Cannon, Gary Kinsman, Stan Persky, to name but a few. The book, then, is not aimed at engaging any one discipline; it would be equally at home in any university classroom (or home, for that matter).

The success of the project is all too evident; the editors have clearly made very judicious and thoughtful choices, and the care shows. What happens, inadvertently perhaps, with anthologies, is that the limits imposed by publishers (usually in the form of book length) mean abbreviated discussions. "Sex and Race" is wonderfully representative, though it, in contrast with the subsequent "Sex and Religion" section, looks like a ghetto; that is to say, the selections for "Sex and Religion" appear to embrace white Christianity and nothing else, while the social makeup of the authors in "Sex and Race" doesn't really appear elsewhere at all. For example, could SKY Lee's excerpt from *Disappearing Moon Café* have appeared in "Sex and the Family"? Why is there nothing thoroughgoing on HIV/AIDS in "Sex and Medicine"? And so on. Yet perhaps this is part of the exercise that

any reader, presented with another's ideas, inevitably faces. Cavell and Dickinson have, at the very least, restarted a sadly neglected conversation, and their work here presents a challenge for us to think and rethink the ease of categories, in addition to the elusiveness of identity.

John Barton and Billeh Nickerson, also editors, provoke not necessarily with the content of their anthology but with its title: it is *the*, not *an*, anthology of Canadian gay male poets. Yet insofar as no other such anthology exists, the editors are quite right to state that *Seminal* is "the first historically comprehensive compendium of gay male poetry written by Canadians."

Barton's introduction is, simply, brilliant; the work would be the poorer without it. He contextualizes the volume at hand by giving an overview of what has been accomplished by others, stating that "it is very difficult not to be affected by, respond to, or work against the assumptions of anyone previously, or even currently, working in the area not to be influenced by the attitudes of the poets under consideration." Barton goes on to state that the category of "gay poet," while definitive in some ways, does not mean restrictive. He then provides a thoughtful gloss on the poets at hand, arranged in the volume by year of birth.

This brief history of early poets, such as Émile Nelligan, John Glassco, Douglas LePan, Patrick Anderson, E.A. Lacey, and Daryl Hine, is a note-perfect initiation into an often disregarded coterie. Barton continues the discussion to include poets up to the present day, and of the fifty-seven comprising the work, I cannot think of one he has missed. From bill bissett, Ian Young, Jean-Paul Daoust, Daniel David Moses, Ian Iqbal Rashid, Gregory Scofield, Andy Quan, and Orville Lloyd Douglas, to the editors themselves, this anthology deserves the qualifier "the."

Barton admits, though, that there are poets who declined (or whose estates declined) to be included; it is unfortunate that he did not list them. Nevertheless, Barton gestures to the ongoing political nature of being gay in a society that in many subtle and overt ways still punishes those labelled as "other." He writes that for the gay male poet, "the range, parameters, and depth of potential themes at last are limitless." The book closes with a generous twenty-eight-page description of contributors; credits; and—wow!—an index (something *Sexing the Maple* lacks). The editors have clearly done their homework. What a fine gift for us all.

Stephen Guy-Bray's slim volume, *Loving in Verse: Poetic Influence as Erotic*, states its premise clearly in its title. Guy-Bray is interested in how declarations that inspire love as well as poetry are "paradigmatic representations of poetic influence" that conspire to become "a form of loving in verse." Eve Sedgwick's well-known account of homosociality looms over the book, insofar as heterosexual and homosexual relationships evince both the romantic and erotic conflicts, struggles, and "happiness" of which Guy-Bray writes.

That aside, what Guy-Bray uses—and very effectively so—is the critical paradigm of Julia Kristeva's "intertextuality," that is, a transposition of signifying systems. Transposition, expanding beyond the poetic value of allusion, also comes to suggest sexual *position*, more figurative than literal. The various couplings essayed are, to begin, not simply Dante and Virgil, but also Dante/Statius, and Virgil/Statius, since Statius' *Thebiad*, an epic on male couples, is introduced; then, Guy-Bray examines how Spenser uses Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, in recasting the *Thebiad*-influenced *Squire's Tale*. Hart Crane, who used Marlowe, Wilde, and Melville to explore poetic influence, celebrates Whitman's role in "Cape Hatteras," according to Guy-Bray, who, in scrutinizing "the romantic implications of the poetic male couple," finds parallels to

Virgil/Statius. T.S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Poet" and Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* are tabled, as the two authors are "simultaneously aware of the erotic implications of poetic relations and [are] uncomfortable with those implications." And finally, Roland Barthes' *The Pleasure of the Text* and Frank O'Hara's "Personism: A Manifesto" help Guy-Bray explicate the erotics of poetic influence.

Guy-Bray's premise, that the "textual and the sexual do not merely intersect but in fact are identical," arises from the notion that homoeroticism is "something that resides in textuality itself." This is a large claim to make about narratives (and one that is derived largely from Barthes); it is perhaps better explained, I think, by the aforementioned concept of homosociality, which Guy-Bray briefly mentions but never otherwise develops (let alone acknowledging Sedgwick's name or very influential work in the field). Nevertheless, *Loving in Verse* is a startling and welcome intervention into the discussion of poetic influence.

A Good Story about Women's Films

Hoi F. Cheu

Cinematic Howling: Women's Films, Women's Film Theories. U of British Columbia P $29.95

Reviewed by Judith Plessis

I love to read, but I usually have to distinguish between the discipline of academic research and the self-indulgent love of "a good story." What a pleasant surprise that *Cinematic Howling: Women's Films, Women's Film Theories*, a new book of film and cultural studies, has all the elements of a good story with its unconventional title, engaging first person narrative and refreshing writing style! Yet *Cinematic Howling* is much more than a story about women's films and feminist theory—it is an innovative theoretical work about gender identity and transnational culture with close readings that focus on the importance of storytelling in selected films by women filmmakers.

Hoi F. Cheu's book focuses on the post-feminist context of the twenty-first century at the very beginning of the narrative with a thought-provoking explanation of the feature animated film, *Mulan*. Cheu personalizes his analysis of the Disney adaptation (or rewriting) of a classic Chinese poem by explaining relevant Chinese culture and his six-year-old daughter's spectatorship. Cheu's many references to his own heritage help us understand the plurality of readings and the heterogeneity of the filmic texts that he has chosen for each chapter. This unconventional work about women filmmakers can be read in any order, allowing readers to choose individual chapters based on personal cinematic interests. Each section features an important film by a woman director and introduces aspects of post-structuralist theory carefully presented through a remarkably clear synthesis of ideas by icons of theory such as Roland Barthes, Laura Mulvey, and Hélène Cixous.

It is obvious that Cheu has developed *Cinematic Howling* in response to students' needs, needs he encountered in his own classroom at Laurentian University, where he teaches film theory and applied media aesthetics. A trained psychologist and therapist as well as a university professor, the author claims that while there is an abundance of critical theory and analysis about the *representation* of women in mainstream cinema, there is a severe lack of critical analysis on films *by* women.

Although I agree that there are definitely too few books about women's cinema, other significant feminist works based on the study of women's films do exist (some titles such as *Women Filmmakers: Refocusing* are listed in the bibliography but not considered at great length within Cheu's text).

Moreover, the author's arguments might be complemented by other recent anthologies on women's films such as E. Ann Kaplan's *Feminism and Film*, which features significant articles about women's films by over twenty noted feminist film theorists including Mary Ann Doane, Teresa de Lauretis, Linda Williams, and Pratibha Parmar.

In addition to putting the "film back into theory," Cheu emphasizes the importance of narrative systems therapy to transform spectators from passive observers of familiar paradigms to active participants who challenge binary oppositions such as male domination and the struggle against patriarchy. This progression from passive to active involvement can be traced as well in the succession of chapters and the films that they feature. For example, in the final chapter on Marlene Gorris' *Antonia*, Cheu emphasizes that the filmmaker uses storytelling as a positive cultural force that draws on viewers' personal experiences and creativity in imagining an "alternate social order based on the positive metaphors of power, friendship, and support."

The individual films presented in the nine chapters of *Cinematic Howling* are well-known works such as *Hiroshima mon amour* by Marguerite Duras and *Sans toit ni loi* by Agnès Varda. Cheu effectively takes us through a theoretical analysis and close reading of each film. I find the chapters entitled "Howling for Multitudes: Angela Carter's *The Company of Wolves*" and "Diasporic Imagination and Transcultural Identity: Clara Law's *The Goddess of 1967*" especially noteworthy.

Cinematic Howling will prove very useful for feminist film analysis and cultural studies at the undergraduate and graduate levels. While the author of *Cinematic Howling* reminds us that there are many voices involved in the field of women's films, some of these voices might need more room for expression in film studies classes, alongside Cheu's thoughtful book.

Epic Laurence

Paul Comeau

Margaret Laurence's Epic Imagination. U of Alberta P $34.95

Reviewed by Nora Foster Stovel

Margaret Laurence's Epic Imagination by Paul Comeau is the latest in a number of books that have appeared on Margaret Laurence in the last several years, and it forms a valuable addition. Comeau's monograph has all the earmarks of a thesis, and a very good one at that. As such, it has both the advantages and disadvantages of the genre: on the one hand, it is very coherent and closely focused on the epic tradition; on the other hand, it is rather repetitive and restrictive.

Comeau states his thesis clearly at the outset: "I believe that the Manawaka books, from *The Stone Angel* to *The Diviners*, comprise a coherent artistic vision, a *Commedia dell' Anima* of epic depth and proportion." He proceeds to argue this thesis cogently throughout seven chapters. Comeau compares Laurence's oeuvre to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, although he does not claim that Laurence had read Dante's work: rather, he argues, "she instinctively invoked as the defining pattern of the Manawaka cycle the tripartite structure of Dante's spiritual pilgrimage." His comparisons of Laurence's texts to Dante's are frequently insightful and occasionally ingenious. He argues, "Like Dante, Laurence takes the reader on an imaginary odyssey, through an infernal state of self-destructive pride, out of a purgatorial condition of self-doubt, and on to a kind of paradisal fulfilment in self-knowledge." He explains, "I have therefore interpreted the Manawaka novels as a 'Comedy of the Soul,' elaborating on *The Stone Angel* as a vision of hell, *A Jest of God* and *The Fire-Dwellers* together as a perspective on purgatory, and *The Diviners* as an attempt to mitigate the burden of paradise

lost, thus forging whatever redemption may be possible in a postmodern world."

Comeau has chosen to combine Laurence's two Cameron sister novels in one chapter ("*A Jest of God* and *The Fire Dwellers: Purgatorial Progress*"), as Coral Ann Howells and Nora Foster Stovel had done previously. More unusual, he has combined Laurence's collection of Canadian short stories, *A Bird in the House* (1970) with her earlier children's book, *Jason's Quest* (1960), perhaps because the collection of short stories does not fit the epic thesis of the study very well, whereas the children's book does, albeit in a parodic manner. Apart from that, the two texts do not go together nearly as well as do the sister novels. Comeau gets around this difficulty by combining the epic tradition with Bakhtin's theory of dialogism in his discussion of *A Bird in the House*. Nevertheless, this may be the weakest chapter of the study, as the discussion of the stories tends toward summary, until the final story, "Jericho's Brick Battlements."

The strongest chapters are on *The Stone Angel*, a version of which was published previously in journal form, and *The Diviners*. This is not surprising, since not only are these arguably the greatest of Laurence's Manawaka books, but they are also the best suited to Comeau's thesis.

The monograph includes Laurence's major works of fiction, but other relevant works, such as her memoir, are not addressed. Comeau emphasizes Laurence's debt to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, but does not mention that this epic poem plays a major role in Laurence's unfinished novel, *Dance on the Earth*.

If Dante Alighieri, John Milton, and Northrop Frye are Comeau's gods, to employ his own frame of reference, then his devils may be feminist critics with whom he takes issue, such as Evelyn Hinz and Keith Louise Fulton, whose interpretations conflict with his epic thesis.

Interestingly, Comeau explains that Laurence's Manawaka cycle spoke to his own Métis heritage: "Laurence's creation of a Canadian epic served to locate my fragmented awareness of personal ancestry within a more comprehensive framework of cultural achievement and identity." Clearly, Laurence's creation of a Canadian epic has inspired Comeau to compose an illuminating study that provides compelling reading for any student, scholar, or admirer of Laurence's writing.

Canadian Lives

Ramsay Cook, general ed.; Réal Bélanger, dir. général adjoint
Dictionary of Canadian Biography/Dictionnaire biographique du Canada: Volume XV, 1921-1930.
U of Toronto P $125.00

Reviewed by Janice Fiamengo

There must be other "encyclophiliacs" out there—readerly types who, at the end of a tiring day, prefer encyclopedia entries to television sitcoms. Some of the pleasure of such reading is no doubt illusory, the sense of much knowledge gained with little effort, the thrill of learning about a life from a few neat columns of print; but the pleasures of the prose itself—invariably clear, narrative-driven, and jargon-free—are genuine, and are to be found in abundance in the University of Toronto Press' latest volume of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Rich in detail and expansive in its coverage, it is a stimulating and accessible collection.

The breadth of knowledge and high quality of the scholarship testify to the diligence and acumen of general editor Ramsay Cook, who has once again performed a labour of love to bring the book to completion. I was saddened to learn that after sixteen years with the series, Cook is stepping down, perhaps discouraged by the financial difficulties that have dogged the project. It is to be hoped that support

for future volumes is secure, given their importance to scholars of Canada. The volume's organization by death date creates, as Cook notes in his introduction, a somewhat arbitrary selection principle, linking into one group persons who were influential at different times. Very few readers, of course, will take in the volume from beginning to end, as I did. Still, for the browser, these diverse biographical profiles add up to a compelling picture of the period. Whereas the previous volume essentially brought the nineteenth century to a close, this one provides an overview of "the origins of modern Canada"—of its pioneers in technology and ideas, of the mixing of peoples, and of the gradual spread of democracy and egalitarianism. One is struck by the influence of progressive reform in education, prisons, and civic management—with social reformer almost as frequent an appellation as politician—by the continuing importance of religion and religious leaders in public life, and by the increasing impact of science in medicine and psychology. Reading about inventors, missionaries, Aboriginal activists, journalists, and community leaders, one glimpses the contending personalities and social forces that shaped the nation at the turn of the last century.

One cannot begin to do justice to the range of figures gathered here, from politicians to poets and priests, from intellectuals to technological innovators, from convicted murderers to business tycoons, artists, and stage performers. The best known of them include the inventor Alexander Graham Bell, the cartoonist J.W. Bengough, the military historian and "Canada First" promoter George Taylor Denison, the lawyer Clara Brett Martin (the first woman called to the Canadian bar), the Métis leader André Nault, who participated with Riel in the Red River resistance of 1869-70, the Imperialist Sir George Robert Parkin, and the politician and officeholder Sir Clifford Sifton. Major figures in Canadian politics are necessarily a central focus of the volume. But we also meet more obscure persons who nonetheless made a contribution and whose lives reveal something of the social and cultural fabric of the country: such characters as John Gennings Adams, who instituted free dental care for the poor in Toronto at a time when such a concern was nearly unknown; his Methodist "charitable convictions infused his dentistry to an extent that many deemed fanatical." Émilie Barthe, a "woman of the world" whose chief passions were books and the company of learned men, became the lover, confidant, and advisor of Wilfrid Laurier and thus found a central place in the national story. Ellen Cashman, a prospector and businesswoman, was dubbed the Angel of Cassiar for the seventy-seven-day journey she undertook on foot to bring relief to scurvy-ridden gold miners in the Cassiar district of Northern BC. Toy Chang was a successful Vancouver businessman who earned respect from white associates for his sizeable fortune, but was savvy enough about racial realities to purchase a stock of revolvers to arm fellow Chinese merchants during the 1907 anti-Asian riot. Jean Dow was a medical missionary to China who developed a treatment for a sandfly-transmitted disease that regularly killed large numbers of children in northern China. Ralph Horner was a Methodist evangelist whose enthusiastic style of preaching caused uneasiness amongst his Methodist superiors; feeling constrained by their propriety, he founded the Holiness Movement Church for evangelically minded Methodists, Baptists, and others. William Briggs exploited the fledgling market for Canadian books when he published *Songs of a Sourdough* by Robert Service in 1907. Janet Smith was a young nanny whose death by gunshot (alleged, though not proven, to be murder) led to a racial firestorm over "Oriental" men in Vancouver. George Vézina, a goaltender for the Montreal Canadiens, was nicknamed

"the Chicoutimi Cucumber" for his cool netminding composure. Combining the best aspects of the "Great Man" approach to history with an expansive attention to figures of non-traditional significance, this volume presents a robust and representative portrait of the period. It includes a useful Index of Identifications as well as a Geographical Index and a Nominal Index.

The articles are, in general, admirable not only for their clarity and detail but also for the lively generosity they display toward their subjects, Carl Ballstadt's kindly yet judicious assessment of agrarian-philosophical writer and humorist Peter McArthur being a case in point. One usually learns not only about the subjects but also about contemporary and latter-day assessments of their significance. Bits of presentist dogmatism occasionally intrude: presenting the life of Jules Jetté, a Jesuit priest who spent thirty years in Alaska to spread the Christian gospel, covering enormous distances by sled, adapting to the local diet, and learning Koyukon, the regional dialect, the author tells us disapprovingly that, "with the ethnocentrism common to his time," he considered shamanism "full of superstition." Indeed. For the most part, however, the writers evince the historian's rather than the moralist's attention to these lives. With my literary interests, I was particularly impressed by the wit, elegance, and fair-mindedness of the entries by D.M.R. Bentley (on Bliss Carman), Lorraine McMullen (on Lily Dougall), Ruth Compton Brouwer (on Agnes Machar), and Misao Dean (on Sara Jeannette Duncan). These and many more bring their subjects to life through careful scholarship and vivid narration.

Rolling Over the Stone

Mary Dalton
Red Ledger. Signal $16.95

Beth E. Janzen
The Enchanted House. Acorn $15.95

Susan Helwig
Pink Purse Girl. Wolsak & Wynn $17.00

Reviewed by Emily Wall

Mary Dalton, Beth E. Janzen, and Susan Helwig are poets who turn over rocks, who expose the underbelly of life to the light. The poems in these collections tantalize us by exploring the violent alleys of the world and the darker side of the heart.

"[T]ilting away from the sun" ends Mary Dalton's poem "Salt Mounds, St. John's Harbour" in her new collection *Red Ledger* and these poems do exactly that. These dark poems are an album of black-and-white photos that throw life in an unbeautiful city into sharp relief. The most memorable poems are those that contain small narrative moments of life in St. John's. "Mr. O'Brien's Tea" and "The Community Field Worker's Invisibility Reel" both give us a clear, sharp flavour of life there.

The poems, however, don't really move beyond this snapshot look at life. The tone of the poems is vaguely sad or dark, but they lack any discoveries or epiphanies. Dalton doesn't uncover any real truths about the human condition, nor does she challenge us to look at the world in a fresh way. Many of her images are ones we recognize, and that recognition has its own pleasure, but there's little in the way of surprise for the reader. Many of the poems' themes are ones we've heard before: indignation at mistreatment of women, the wish for and enjoyment of sex, the admiration for hard-working parents. Her "Sestina for Frogmarsh" is emblematic of the entire book: a circling around of language, but no real forward movement, no surprise, no change. Many of her poems use salt as the

central image, and as readers we hope for a little more tang and grit in her poems.

In *The Enchanted House*, Beth E. Janzen channels Persephone into our modern world with a cycle of poems in which the speaker takes on the persona of Persephone. "Persephone at 13" starts with the old myth and grows from there, modernizing it, and reminding us what an archetype Persephone is. "Persephone at 30" is wry, funny, and honest. If only all the poems in the book spoke through Persephone. Here is where we feel closest to this speaker. Here the poet finds her voice in re-imagining our mythical women.

Her press release says "Janzen constructs stories of interiority," which is exactly what many of these poems feel like. We enter the "house of the psyche" but it's not our house, and although the language sounds as lovely as any language we don't know, it doesn't become our own. Poems like "Candy," a narrative fragment, don't give us the privileged access we crave as readers. The poem leaves us instead with a series of questions: Who is "she"? Why is she afraid for me? Who is me? While the questions might catch our attention, in the end we're left feeling these poems have been written for someone other than us.

Susan Helwig's new book *Pink Purse Girl* is poetic voyeurism at its best. We sit across the table from her and she gossips with us through the book, sketching character after character: Venus bragging about her son, a frantic teenager with a torn-up family, a hooker who flashes her breasts, a medicine man whose daughters love to drive, a terrorist who works in a bakery, and Dot Huffman, who coughs all the way through church. She uses direct dialogue for many of her characters, and because the dialogue is so good, she doesn't need to enter the poems herself. The characters speak right to us. The poem "the heart is empty so far" is pure monologue: "I'm only twelve you know, I'll be thirteen in September, I got this bracelet from my Gran, I might paste my dad in, he's building me a new bedroom in the basement, my Mom, well not my real mom, my step-mom, she's having a baby soon . . ." At the end of each poem we wake up and shake ourselves, having been transported into another life, just for a moment.

In other poems we get the pleasure of the poet herself, assuming different personae. She takes on new faces throughout the book, and these selves are self-mocking, and often irreverent. In her poem "Personal Ad," she says, "yes, I am married / but only out of cowardice." Helwig's poems are anything but cowardly. The irreverence in many of them is funny, poignant, and refreshing. In a poem about eagles, she tells us if an eagle danced, he "would tango me through all the rhythms of raptor love." This is exactly how a reader feels reading her witty and honest poems.

All three collections tantalize us with speakers who inhabit dark personae, and although all three strive to roll the stone of the heart all the way over, only Helwig manages to invite us to squat alongside her and touch what we find there.

The Discourse of Disappearance

Leslie Dawn

National Visions, National Blindness: Canadian Art and Identities in the 1920s. U of British Columbia P $34.95

Reviewed by Tim Kaposy

In early April of 1927, the Museé du Jeu de Paume in Paris held an exhibition entitled, "L'Exposition d'art canadien." It featured the now famous picturesque landscape paintings of the Group of Seven, along with a smattering of Haida and Tsimshian carvings. Approximately one year earlier, a similar show in Wembley, England was heralded by London's fine-art establishment

for displaying "the beginnings of a truly national flowering of art bearing beneath its soil seeds which may some day be fructified by a wider vision and deeper humanity." The response in France a year or so later was just the opposite. The technique and colour composition of the Group of Seven artists were dismissed by critics, and they were satirized in the popular press for their nationalism, for presenting themselves as adroit modern painters, and for the "outdoorsman" personae that imbued their work. Critics uniformly chastised their "primitive" sensibility—a double entendre labelling them as "naïf" and accusing them of using a rhetoric of their unmediated relation to nature. After seeing the exhibit in Paris, Wyndham Lewis commented that the paintings were "all (no doubt) painted in log shacks by great hairy men with clear-cut bronzed features, keen eyes and open necks."

This event in the history of Canadian art has long been suppressed. One wonders who sought to erase the fact that the exhibit failed miserably and why. *National Visions, National Blindness* gives at least two astute answers. First, the reliance of the National Gallery of Canada (NGC) on the success of the Group of Seven in the world art scene was engineered and anticipated by its affiliated personnel. At stake was a canonical and a commercial future: approval in Parisian circles would serve to consecrate the Group's uniqueness and, by extension, shed a favourable light on the Canadian arts in general. Hoping to bring symbolic value to a largely staid institution, collectors and curators of the NGC sought to frame the Group in epochal terms. The paintings were said to have captured the Canadian landscape in a "distinct, true, and independent" form. Dawn's critique of the Group is rich with archival rarities such as letters between NGC officials, exhibit pamphlets, and critical appraisals from an array of periodicals to unfold a story of how the international "field" of fine art in the 1920s was shaped to an increasing degree by bureaucrats and state coffers, not artists and their audience.

Dawn's second answer to this question develops over the last six chapters of the book. The debacle in Paris is said to be a symptom of a latent conflict shaping Canadian cultural identity—a conflict at the forefront of this country's identity in the eighty years since. He writes: "A broader analysis . . . indicates that the exhibition's failure was the result of more complex and nuanced factors that went far beyond the works and the critics. Much of it had to do with how landscape, far from being 'natural,' was constructed during the period to serve different and competing claims for modernism and nationalism." Although the Group and their handlers sought to supplant the history of Indigenous art by claiming a myth of national origins for themselves, Dawn's narrative shows how the "discourse of Native disappearance" was nonetheless interpreted uneasily and ambiguously by the anthropologist Marius Barbeau, the American artist W. Langdon Kihn, and the artist Emily Carr. The majority of the book traces in prodigious detail how these figures interpret Canadian identity at a time of continuous governmental dispossession of Native populations, and a growing fetishism and homogenization of Native culture. Most valuably, Dawn focuses our attention on the aesthetic and historical particularities of the Gitksan community in BC. The threat to Gitksani has, since the earliest settlements, been a combination of systematic elimination and preservation in the form of mere aesthetic curiosity. This interrelation is examined here with the purpose of changing the conditions of future inquiries into Canadian art. "What," Dawn ponders in the conclusion of his book, "became of the attempt to have Canadian Native art recognized as art, not ethnography?"

L'épopée intime

Joël Des Rosiers et Patricia Léry
Un autre soleil. Triptyque 12,00 $

Joël Des Rosiers
Caïques. Triptyque 22,00 $

Compte rendu par Vincent Charles Lambert

Si le plus grand poète est aussi, selon Joseph Brodsky, le plus endetté d'entre nous, immense est l'oeuvre de Joël Des Rosiers, hanté par les fantômes de la Caraïbe (il est né à Cayes en Haïti) au point que l'écriture est chez lui une façon d'acquitter un devoir de mémoire, la mémoire d'une blessure qui menace toujours de se rouvrir dans le présent. Dans *Un autre soleil*, une nouvelle d'une soixantaine de pages écrite en collaboration avec Patricia Léry, un chauffeur de taxi joue malgré lui ce rôle de dépositaire que Des Rosiers semble concevoir comme la fonction de l'écrivain, avec toute l'indignité qui risque alors de vous envahir : « C'était chaque fois comme ça. Des lieux, des fragments d'histoire, des mémoires malingres, des bouts de tragédie sous la pluie qu'on laissait comme des objets perdus, sans propriétaire, à l'abandon sur le siège arrière du taxi et c'était à moi de me débrouiller avec . . . d'encaisser . . . de nouer les traces dans une interminable circulation de territoires, de regrets, de solitudes, de vertiges. » C'est presque un art poétique, du moins à la lecture des plus récents poèmes de Des Rosiers, *Caïques*, un mot emprunté au turc désignant une petite embarcation légère à voiles ou à rames et, aussi, un archipel désertique au nord de la Caraïbe. Prenons un poème qui n'est pas sans rappeler une scène cruciale d'*Un autre soleil*, ce moment où l'homme s'éveille (après avoir fait l'amour) dans un appartement qui n'est pas le sien et tombe, par hasard, sur plusieurs photographies de son amante accompagnée d'un dictateur faisant « déborder en moi la couleur du sang puisque le sang de ma famille avait coulé sous leur régime » :

> ma fille ma pieuse a tiré
> de tes mains d'homme
> une photographie d'une lumière inconnue
> comme si la détresse de la terre
> se tenait dans tes mains
> vous maîtres anciens
> qui détruisez sans haine ni colère
> l'ombre qui remonte de la peau noire
> un instant sanctifie vos regards

Un poème étonnamment limpide dans un ensemble évoquant davantage un fouillis, où chaque poème peut être envisagé comme la croisée, le nœud de ces territoires, de ces regrets, de ces visages qui ne font que passer sur le siège arrière du taxi, en laissant derrière eux la trace des tragédies anciennes. Ces « maîtres anciens » que l'instant « sanctifie », le poème en est traversé et c'est lui, bien entendu, le grand sanctificateur, le grand dépositaire de la mémoire commune.

C'est pourquoi les poèmes de *Caïques* ont souvent la saveur de l'épique. Plusieurs sont des poèmes de guerre rappelant les grandes figures de la révolution haïtienne, notamment Nicolat Mallet, André Rigaud, et Jean Kina :

> le sang blanc gicla sur la terre
> sur nous les descendants apeurés
> ton nom proféré par notre mémoire
> irréconciliée

Mais c'est une épopée qui sourd des replis les plus obscurs de l'intimité, dont les épisodes et les figures se fondent dans un flux mémoriel qui est aussi celui du sang dans les veines. Les poèmes de Des Rosiers sont issus « de la profondeur du pouls / du chant caverneux de la vie ». Ils sont les messagers maladroits, balafrés, informes, de visages et d'histoires qui ne font que passer . . .

Fractured Families

M.T. Dohaney
The Flannigans. Planker $19.95

Paul Rowe
The Silent Time. Killick $19.95

Sherri Vanderveen
Belle Falls. Penguin $24.00

Reviewed by Jennifer Bowering Delisle

In the small and insular communities imagined by M.T. Dohaney, Paul Rowe, and Sherri Vanderveen, three tight-knit families are devastated by sudden losses. The protagonists left behind soon find that the family ties on which they have relied are not as strong as they thought, and they begin down a path to self-isolation.

Dohaney's novel tells the story of a devastating feud that rips apart a Newfoundland family in the 1940s, in the days leading up to the second referendum to determine whether Newfoundland will join Canada. While division over the Confederation issue at first seems the cause of the rift between brothers Ernest and Anthony and their families, the Confederation debate is merely a catalyst that, when combined with an unexpected death, activates deep-seated resentments, secrets, and jealousies.

The novel taps into a moment in Newfoundland history that remains prominent in collective memory, and that continues to appear, as both central theme and implicit background, in much contemporary Newfoundland literature, most notably Wayne Johnston's 1998 bestseller *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*. The way in which Dohaney intertwines personal relationships and desires with political conflicts, while nothing new, is compelling. Newfoundland's choice was not merely a political decision, but an emotional and passionate argument that divided society and that affected almost every aspect of life. But in *The Flannigans*, the characters' motivations are explicitly described rather than genuinely felt. Ernest Flannigan, the main voice against Confederation in his outport community, is so stubborn in his political beliefs that he renounces members of his close family. But when the very personal source of his anti-confederate drive is revealed, his character does not seem fuller, but rather becomes deflated, less believable.

Dohaney's writing is often stilted and unnatural, and her dialogue sounds forced. Often, she tells us what we already know, using awkward, wordy sentences instead of letting the characters speak for themselves. A quip from Gran that nicely captures her wisdom and patience with her son, is ruined by an unnecessary and awkward transition sentence that jars the reader out of the conversation:

> "That's right, b'y," Gran says without a twitch of a smile on her lips. "No more drinking until the next time."
>
> In the short lull that follows in the wake of Gran's prediction as to the extent of Ernest's ability to leave the beer alone, Julia grabs the opportunity to bring the conversation back to the possibility of her parents leaving Cape Verde for Boston.

The novel is full of such sentences, which expose the seams behind Dohaney's flat paper-doll characters instead of letting them live and move on their own.

Playwright Paul Rowe's first novel achieves what Dohaney's does not. Rowe's dramatic background shines through in the rich characters he has created and the believable relationships he weaves for them. Leona Merrigan is a young woman who endures devastating personal hardships and must cope as the single mother of a deaf child in early twentieth-century outport Newfoundland. She forms an unlikely friendship with William Cantwell, a politician in St. John's, who is also haunted by his past. Together they struggle to provide Dulcie, Leona's deaf daughter, with the education she desperately needs, and in the process find companionship and redemption. The story of growing

up deaf in a remote community in the 1920s is both fascinating and moving. As Leona delivers her daughter to the ship that will finally take her to Halifax for school, I found myself in tears.

Rowe's deft foreshadowing makes the novel not predictable, but compelling and suspenseful. While the main intrigue of the novel is rather benign—the theft of some rare and very valuable stamps—the characters' deep investment in the crime and its consequences is absorbing. And the recurring image of the "dead country"—a country that no longer produces its own stamps—evocatively gestures toward the colony's impending loss of responsible government in 1934, a first step on the road to Confederation and the history through which Dohaney's novel stumbles.

Vanderveen's *Belle Falls* is a darker novel. It takes the unusual perspective of the neighbourhood pariah, the crazy drunk lady called a witch by the community children, and guides us through the memories of her life so that we witness the choices and events that brought a young woman from a loving family to this life. Belle Dearing's methodical self-destruction from her teen years in 1960s Newfoundland and Vermont, through her adult life in small town Ontario, is sensitively written, and even becomes understandable.

Throughout the novel Belle maintains a vexed relationship to place. She moves between five different towns in her lifetime, and claims that being American or Canadian is all the same to her. Yet she carries with her a jar of earth from her father's grave in Newfoundland, so that this remembrance of her father becomes also a remembrance of the place she left after his death, the home from which she has been displaced. Thereafter she fits awkwardly into places, is never at home, and this unhomeliness mirrors her discomfort in her own life. The explosion that eventually destroys the Ontario mining town in which she lives as a young woman perfectly matches the self-destruction that she wreaks upon herself while she lives there.

The first person voice in Vanderveen's novel is inconsistent, however—or rather too consistent. Belle's perspective is surprisingly lucid and self-reflexive, which does not fit with the drunken delusions that cause her ultimate fall. Vanderveen offers us a straightforward, reliable tragic narrator who tells the story of her life. But more inventive narrative techniques that would reflect the fragmentation in Belle's mental health would have brought this competently written novel to another level of sophistication.

Family Matters

Marian Botsford Fraser
Requiem for My Brother. Greystone $22.95

Anna Porter
The Storyteller: A Memoir of Secrets, Magic and Lies. Douglas & McIntyre $24.95

Reviewed by Laurie McNeill

Canadian life writers including Michael Ondaatje and Fred Wah have made particular contributions to one sub-genre of the family memoir in which a family member narrates family history with him or herself at the centre of the tale, writing the family as he or she has known it, and how it has shaped the narrator's identity. Two recent texts follow this tradition: Anna Porter, in *The Storyteller*, reflects on her childhood in Budapest through the heroic figure of her grandfather, Vili Rácz, who embodies not only her nostalgia for her family but also her romantic vision of Hungary. In *Requiem for My Brother*, Marian Botsford Fraser mourns her brother Davey, who died of melanoma while also living with multiple sclerosis. While Porter celebrates the life of a man she clearly idolized, and weaves an enchanting personal and national history that—thanks to Vili's epic storytelling—spans several centuries, Fraser is evidently

still processing her emotions about her brother and family. The resulting product is an uneven and not entirely sympathetic narrative that highlights the ethical issues of writing relational auto/biography (in which the narrator constructs identity and narrative in relation to a key relational other), especially when one of the subjects can no longer speak for himself.

Davey Botsford, as his sister constructs him, was an incredibly proud and private individual, aspects that inspired both pride and fury in his caregivers, and that give Fraser extensive material to demonstrate the costs of being her brother's keeper. These traits, however, may also run counter to the revelatory project of (published) auto/biography, where narrators walk a fine line between respecting their story and respecting their subjects—both themselves and those they represent. Though Fraser's own identity narrative must foreground how she deals with caring for her brother, should that desire trump her brother's wish for privacy? Would Davey, for example, have appreciated the public airing of his difficulties with toileting and incontinence? Such questions attach themselves with particular insistence to narratives in which the relational other, through illness or death, loses the power to control what's said about him or her. In his canonical auto/biography *Patrimony*, Philip Roth chronicles the growing intimacy between his ailing father and himself, and puts his father's "beshatting" incident at the heart of this new relationship; the father's loss of control (and dignity) shapes the son's new relationship to his parent and the resulting change in Roth's relational identity. ("There was my patrimony," Roth concludes, "not the money, not the tefillin, not the shaving mug, but the shit.") Behind such epiphanies, there, and in *Requiem*, however, I hear Roth Sr.'s (ultimately unheeded) plea to his son to never tell anyone about this incident. Roth's and Fraser's decisions to break such promises, whether explicit or implied, call up ethical issues about representation, ones that this text does not address.

In Fraser's case, her choice to tell all also makes for difficult and fairly repetitive reading that, in keeping with the narrative as a whole, comes across as prurient rather than illuminating. *Requiem* struggles throughout with information level, becoming mired in detail, the point of which is not always clear and is often unflattering in its observations. For instance, Fraser devotes two pages on the layout of their childhood home (a place that does not signify largely in the greater narrative), similar coverage of her mother's daily routines, and several paragraphs to the family's weekend meals. A canoe trip Marian and Davey took together marked an important new phase in their adult relationship, but devoting almost ten per cent of the book to this trip seems disproportionate (and dull). Such difficulties with focus and information level indicate related problems of audience and purpose: much of Fraser's narrative will be most interesting to her family and intimates, and her purpose in going public with this wandering elegy isn't always apparent. While she uses her brother's story to critique the medical system and societal attitudes towards people with disabilities, these criticisms are problematic. In some key cases, her anger seems quite justified, and thus medical practitioners, for example, could learn from this narrative. In others, particularly Davey's battle with the cruise line Holland America, Fraser does not make a compelling case that her brother was mistreated, thus further alienating readers.

More successfully, Anna Porter's text elegizes both a person and place, intertwining the story of her grandfather with historical (and sometimes mythical) Hungary. *The Storyteller*, originally published in 2000, has been re-released to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution. It joins a cluster of other recent Canadian narratives, including works by

Lisa Appignanesi, Janice Kulyk Keefer, and Myrna Kostash, that explore immigration from Eastern Europe, and thus contributes to a growing body of Canadian migrant auto/biographies. (Though Porter's family first went to New Zealand, she later immigrated to Canada.)

Porter, publisher of Key Porter Books until her retirement in 2004, has evidently inherited her grandfather's gift of storytelling, crafting an often magical tale that interweaves personal and public history. Rarely sentimental, though certainly nostalgic, *The Storyteller* charts Porter's childhood in Hungary from World War II until the family flees during the Revolution. Through Vili's alchemical mixture of fact and fiction, past and present, the family's hardships during these years become informed by centuries of Hungarians' struggles; Porter suggests that Vili's narratives help her survive the painful months in which Vili is sentenced by the Communists to hard labour, and the experience of going to prison with her mother as a young girl after a failed attempt to cross the border. Certainly scholars of Eastern European history may contest the version of Hungary's past that Vili passes on to his granddaughter, but historical accuracy was not his point, nor, as her subtitle suggests, is it Porter's in sharing his stories. Instead, she pays homage to this central figure in her life and demonstrates how his lessons of heroism, nationalism, and generosity have informed the adult she became. Alert, both as a young girl and an adult auto/biographer, to the blurring of reality and fantasy in Vili's tales, Porter nods to the lies without diminishing the autobiographical truth of her narrative.

Fascinations américaines

Bertrand Gervais
Les Failles de l'Amérique. XYZ 27,00 $

André Pronovost
Bord-de-l'eau. XYZ 28,00 $

Compte rendu par Marilou P.-Lajoie

Les Failles de l'Amérique, imposant roman de quelque 440 pages dont le titre puise sa source à même la métaphore du tremblement de terre, expose les dérapages et les excès de nos voisins du Sud. Construit à la fois sur le mode du roman policier à enquête et du journal intime, le texte met en scène Thomas G. Cusson, aux prises avec sa thèse de doctorat en histoire de la conscience à l'université de Santa Cruz alors que sévit un tueur en série. Dès les premières pages, un puissant tremblement de terre détruit la ville. Miraculeusement, l'ordinateur de Thomas, outil de travail et confessionnal, survit au désastre. Ainsi se déploie, en alternance, la longue anachronie du récit, entrecoupée du journal intime du héros.

Écrire une thèse n'étant pas l'activité la plus aisée qui soit, Thomas répertorie méticuleusement dans son journal toutes les réflexions qui pourraient servir sa rédaction. Les histoires d'horreur qui éclaboussent les chroniques des faits divers des journaux locaux, qu'il intègre également, sont très troublantes, et témoignent de l'état profondément malade de la société américaine. Les descriptions des lieux et des personnages qui défilent dans le journal de Thomas, tenu de façon obsessionnelle, sont fort minutieuses. Le rythme de lecture n'en souffre cependant pas, car l'habileté du narrateur à semer des indices répond de l'attention du lecteur. Le héros, spectateur des meurtres en série, oscille constamment entre le désir et la peur, sans être en mesure de nommer les sentiments qui l'habitent. Résolu à dénouer l'énigme des assassinats, Thomas se détache peu à peu du milieu

universitaire pour se brancher à même le mal qui ronge l'Amérique : la violence et ses ramifications, qui contaminent le héros à un point tel qu'il adopte, peut-être malgré lui, le comportement de l'agresseur.

Traquant le tueur en solitaire en jouant le rôle de la victime, Thomas a besoin, pour se sentir vivant, de frôler la mort. Le roman joue sur deux registres : désir et peur, registres qui se dédoublent sur le personnage, à la fois coupable et victime. Les mots choisis par le héros, pour remplir son journal, laissent brillamment planer le doute sur son implication dans les événements qui terrorisent la Californie. Le récit est très bien ficelé, et les indices, bien disséminés pour mettre en doute l'innocence de Thomas, et les derniers chapitres sont littéralement haletants. Le roman, grâce à l'expertise du sémioticien, fait son oeuvre : Gervais a savamment assemblé les plaques tectoniques de ses personnages et événements, et en a fait un texte fort érudit.

Le lecteur exigeant garde, en refermant le livre, un étrange sentiment de malaise devant l'impossibilité d'établir la frontière entre la fiction et la réalité, entre le journal intime et le fantasme, entre le personnage qu'on croyait connaître, ce qu'il a fait et ce qu'il croit avoir fait. Le texte, souverain au milieu du doute, ne fait qu'ouvrir plus profondément la faille. Pour le plus grand plaisir du lecteur. Ou son désarroi.

Si l'Amérique exerce chez Gervais une aussi sordide fascination, ladite fascination n'est absolument pas du même ordre pour André Pronovost, qui a réuni sous un même volume les deux tomes de la saga du *Bord-de-l'eau*. Publié en 1997, le premier roman portant sur le microcosme du Vieux-Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, *Kimberly, mère de Dieu*, est un récit qui trouve sa source dans l'adoration de la Playmate de *Playboy* de janvier 1982. Le second roman, *Que la lumière soit, et la musique fut*, publié en 2004, poursuit l'histoire de quelques-uns des habitants de la bourgade située près de Laval. Grâce à *Bord-de-l'eau*, le lectorat francophone peut à loisir renouer avec l'humour de Pronovost. Des personnages aux noms loufoques tels Chef, Jack Cadillac, Sentier Lumineux, Boum Boum bonhomme et Innocent animent gaiement la vie du Bord-de-l'eau, véritable cité où le temps ne semble pas avoir d'emprise. Le roman, sorte de conte de fée de fin de vingtième siècle, a tout de même un air de déjà-lu. *Bord-de-l'eau* est composé de très courts chapitres, tous rédigés avec humour, parfois même une certaine ironie, ce qui n'est pas sans déplaire au lecteur. L'intérêt du roman tient aux dialogues, bien maîtrisés. Au Bord-de-l'eau, là où les doubles pages du *Playboy* deviennent des images pieuses—mais d'une façon attendrissante, tout de même—on apprécie, à mesure qu'on connaît mieux le patelin et ses habitants, les incursions de l'auteur, qui mêle le drame au banal d'une coquette façon. Cela dit, le cliché et la caricature ne sont jamais bien loin dans ce récit qu'on aurait aimé un peu plus grinçant. La réunion des deux romans en un seul ne fait qu'appuyer davantage l'impression de déjà-lu.

Fearful Dis-symmetry

Glen Robert Gill

Northrop Frye and the Phenomenology of Myth. U of Toronto P $24.95

Reviewed by Thomas Hodd

The Collected Works of Northrop Frye is an ambitious initiative by the University of Toronto Press. Not only has the project produced important new editions of *Fearful Symmetry* (2004) and *Anatomy of Criticism* (2007), as well as the provocative *Northrop Frye on Canada* (2003), the project has also served as catalyst to scholarly activities such as the recent Frye Symposium at the University of Ottawa and, to some extent, the current book under review, Glen Robert Gill's *Northrop Frye and the Phenomenology of Myth*.

Gill's effort is an interesting artifact in recent Frye studies. He was motivated by two factors: first, Frye's theories "were both more potent and more tenable than those of [Mircea] Eliade, [Carl] Jung, and [Joseph] Campbell," yet these writers became "more influential in twentieth-century mythography." Second, the "branch concerned with archetypal theory and criticism . . . had been exiled from contemporary literary and cultural studies without due process" and as a result "the baby of Frye's *theoria* had been thrown out with the disciplinary bathwater." Thus, Gill set out to write his "doctoral thesis *cum* first book" in an attempt to remedy this critical lapse.

Although I do not disagree with his rationale, I'm not convinced Gill's book has done anything to help resurrect this area of marginalized scholarship. On the one hand, it reflects the intellectual rigour required of any scholar wishing to illuminate Frye's thought. Unfortunately, this book also demonstrates the extent to which academia has pushed the "specialist" agenda too far by promoting studies that are useful only to critics who speak, employ, and articulate the same rhetorical modes of inquiry.

His thesis is sound. He argues that as a young scholar Frye read myth through a phenomenological lens; that is, he interpreted myth as a manifestation of human consciousness rather than something external to it. And Gill demonstrates this approach, somewhat exhaustively, through his reading of *Fearful Symmetry*, Frye's seminal book on William Blake, in which he argues that the poet's vision is a form of "mythic consciousness." Gill suggests further that such a reading makes Frye's theory of myth more expansive than those of his contemporaries, Eliade, Jung, and Campbell, all of whom treat myth as an external notion that acts upon humanity. This radical perspective makes Frye "the unacknowledged visionary fourth of the Eranos group."

Gill's decision to develop a thesis around a single work is a risky intellectual investment that meets with limited success. His extrapolation of Frye's reading of Blake quickly becomes laboured and, dare I say, generates more exposition than is required to prove his point. More frustrating is that in choosing this approach he invariably allocates too much space to defining Frye's phenomenology instead of comparing it to the systems put forward by his contemporaries. The first meaningful comparison between Frye, Jung, and Campbell does not appear until page 149, three-quarters into the book; similarly, his best commentary on the topic does not appear until page 160. This is disappointing because these two pages contain some of the most engaging and provocative ideas about mythological systems explored in the book. In short, there is a major disjuncture between the book Gill envisioned and the one he produced.

Gill obviously knows Frye's work intimately and demonstrates a wealth of knowledge and insight into Frye scholarship that must be commended. Unfortunately, his study is forcibly tipped in Frye's favour by employing a structure that undermines the impartiality of his argument. Divided into two parts, the first half of the book consists of three short discussions about the theories of myth put forward by Eliade, Jung, and Campbell. The second half focuses on Frye and *Fearful Symmetry*, with a short commentary at the end that attempts to link Frye's early mythical work to his last major publication, *Words With Power*. This argument is unduly weighted in Frye's favour, coupled with generous phrases such as "the titanic vision of Frye," "the extraordinary implications of Frye's model," and "Frye . . . unquestionably the superior writer," which leaves one wondering if this is more of an exercise in discipleship than scholarship.

From Flow Charts to Fantasy

François Grave; Sheila Fischman, trans.
The Extraordinary Garden. Cormorant $22.95

Reviewed by Adele Holoch

The first novel of François Gravel's Fillion family saga, *A Good Life*, followed three French Canadian brothers' struggle through the Depression and their subsequent development of a successful furniture business in the mid-twentieth century. In the series' second instalment, *The Extraordinary Garden*, a member of the next generation of Fillion sons begins narrating his own story. The challenges the middle-aged Marc-André Fillion faces aren't economic; with a solid background in management and a stable bureaucratic career, he lives comfortably with his wife, Marie-France, and their two young children in a house abutting a sprawling nature park in Longueuil. The test of Marc-André's strength, and that of his family, comes in the form of his love for a married mother of two, Josée, whose home also borders the park. As he narrates Marc-André's efforts to negotiate friendship and desire, temptation and familial obligation, reality and fantasy, Gravel also creates a compelling, if not always convincing, portrait of everyday family life in late twentieth-century French Canada.

Marc-André is a man who prides himself on his ordinariness and practicality: "In high school I was the kind of pupil who got good grades in every subject but was never a champion, never did anything remarkable . . . Show me procedures and I proceed," he says of himself early in the novel. As a college student, he wins the attention of an intimidatingly beautiful woman one night when he defends the institution of marriage to a group of friends, articulating his dream of one day having a family with two children and a station wagon. The woman, Marie-France, is also a management student, and as their romance progresses, Marc-André and Marie-France decide "to stay together, to marry, have children, set up a partnership whose name would be family." It is in those sensible, managerial terms that Marc-André continues to define his relationship with his wife and their children throughout the novel: "Marie-France and I had set up a family. It was our dream, our project. It became our business," he says simply.

But Marc-André is not all businessman and bureaucrat. Occasionally, an imaginative side seeps through his practical rhetoric, and that side is invigorated in his encounters with his neighbour Josée. Where Marc-André's communication with his wife is the stuff of management classes, the language he shares with Josée is one of songs and childlike fantasies, of ideal stories—"the movie you'd watch over and over, the novel you'd read again and again"—and enchanted expanses of parkland. "We lived in the city but we just had to walk through a forest in order to pay one another a visit. A magical forest. An 'extraordinary garden,' in the words of Trenet's song." He imagines the connection between himself and his neighbour as "something magical . . . something obvious, so obvious that it's palpable," a chemistry entirely apparent and natural not only to himself and Josée, but also to any casual observer nearby. From flow charts with one woman to manifest destiny with another: "It's as if life wanted us to meet before we even knew one another, wanted us to marry despite ourselves, as if the whole world wanted to throw us into one another's arms." Thus begin seven long years of Marc-André's longing for his neighbour and the fantasy world she opens up for him, years punctuated with family events both ordinary and extraordinary.

The demarcation between Marc-André's straightforward existence with Marie-France and the fanciful world he shares

with Josée is too starkly drawn to be entirely convincing; the women and the possibilities each creates for Marc-André teeter on the brink of becoming abstractions of stability and fantasy. The relative lack of insight the novel offers into Josée's and Marie-France's perspectives contributes to this problem. Whereas in his third Fillion family novel, *Adieu, Betty Crocker*, Gravel gives another abstracted woman a third-act opportunity to speak her piece, here he leaves Marc-André's wife and lover mostly mute. What redeems their silence in the story is that Gravel does not seem to be aiming to create a fleshed-out family narrative in this novel, but rather to provide a vision of how a man chooses the life he does.

"Everyone has three families: the one we're subjected to, the one we choose—or think we choose—and the one we dream about while we're strolling the paths of the extraordinary garden," Marc-André says. Ultimately, Marc-André's struggle to decide which life, which love, which side of himself to cultivate makes for an engrossing and insightful tale.

Ghosting the NWT

Elizabeth Hay
Late Nights on Air. McClelland & Stewart $32.99
Reviewed by Sherrill Grace

Hay has written about the NWT before, but in this novel she reaches deeper into the history of the area and creates her most complex characters to date in a wonderfully engaging narrative. As the title suggests, a key setting for this novel is a radio studio, but it is only one gathering place for the people working for CBC Yellowknife in the summer of 1975. Beyond the CBC building lies the city—historic and beautiful—and beyond Yellowknife lies majestic Great Slave Lake. But it is what lies beyond the lake, out on the night airwaves and further still out on the Barrens and the storied Thelon River that seduces both the characters *in* the novel and its readers.

Hay develops the stories of her five main characters slowly, until we feel we know them intimately: they will succeed or fail at work, fall in love, be betrayed or abandoned, and some of them will die, but not until we learn to care. She uses the same gradual circling technique to create her landscape of Yellowknife until its streets, shorelines, and Latham Island feel as familiar to us as home. This is not, and I stress *not*, a novel to hurry through. Others have asked me what it is *about* and where it is going, and my answer is: trust it, let it carry you along, pay attention but relax. The trip will be rewarding, with no danger that you will end up like the most powerful ghost to haunt the narrative: John Hornby.

As northern history buffs know, that eccentric Englishman Hornby starved to death on the shores of the Thelon River in the winter of 1926-27. He also caused the deaths of another adult man and one teenager, Edgar Christian, and it was Edgar's diary, found in the cold ashes of the wood stove, that went on to lead a fascinating posthumous life. Most of the characters in *Late Nights on Air* know about Hornby, whose biography, by George Whalley, was published in 1962, but one of them is especially attracted to his story because of a radio program she heard as a girl. Gwen (who is, I believe, Hay's alter ego) will persuade three of her co-workers and friends to make the trip from the east end of Great Slave Lake up onto the Barrens and down the Thelon River "following in Hornby's footsteps." Hay is not the only writer to have tackled Hornby—Lawrence Jeffery's play *Who Look in Stove* is a stunning recreation of that fatal Thelon adventure—but she has woven his tale of longing, danger, and death into her larger narrative remarkably well. Only one person will die when Hay's characters paddle the Thelon, but there will be other untimely deaths along the narrative way.

Do not ask me to tell you about them or to describe what Hay does with Farley Mowat, Tom Berger (and his pipeline inquiry), Thierry Mallet, and the others who were marked by the Barrens and make brief appearances. This novel is, among other things, a mystery story, and its mysteries must be relished, waited for. For myself, I feel enriched by this complicated, nuanced telling of a time, a place, and a world—on and off air—that lies out there beckoning us to discover it. And that world, in Hay's hands, is a world of northern stories that shape us regardless of how far south we stray.

Seeing Things

James Heneghan
Payback. Groundwood $19.95

Marthe Jocelyn
How It Happened in Peach Hill. Tundra $22.99

Andrew Wedderburn
The Milk Chicken Bomb. Coach House $21.95

Reviewed by Gisèle M. Baxter

The question of whether children naturally prefer reading books about children or those with child narrators is unanswerable. However, it leads to another question about where the line is drawn between stories about children or adolescents actually aimed at a young audience (the examples are legion), those aimed at a general, mostly adult audience (this can include everything from *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* to *A Clockwork Orange*), and those which occupy a blurred middle ground of "crossover" texts, general fiction about children or teens appropriated by young readers (such as *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*), or children's/"young adult" texts enjoying cult status or mainstream popularity among adults (such as the *Dark Materials* trilogy).

None of the novels under consideration here could really be called a crossover text. Though *The Milk Chicken Bomb* might appeal to ambitiously cool postmodern teens in search of something outside the mainstream, it is doubtful readers of its narrator's age would turn to it, and while plot elements of Marthe Jocelyn's *How It Happened in Peach Hill* might catch the attention of older teen readers who have seen the film version of Christopher Priest's *The Prestige*, its treatment of the relationship between illusion and reality is much simpler, and deliberately rendered comically. James Heneghan's *Payback* has a clearly defined, confident sense of its pre-adolescent/early teen readership, and makes no attempt to accommodate an audience beyond this. Yet all have in common the first person narration of an "outsider" child or teen, rendered with immediacy, without the distancing filter of an older framing narrator reflecting on events long past.

One of the ironies of children's/"young adult" fiction, and one far more peculiar to it than to most categories of general fiction, is that despite the popular assumption that young readers prefer to read about characters their own age or slightly older, the texts are almost invariably produced by writers much older than the characters they create. This begs the questions of how children perceive themselves, what they perceive themselves to be, how much of the context of their experience they can accommodate, and why they might relate to the often archetypal, often uncannily resourceful protagonists of this genre. What sets Andrew Wedderburn's novel apart as a novel about childhood rather than a novel for children is that his use of immediate narration does not exclude detail or provide manageable focus, but underlines the sheer difference of the child's perspective, the exhilarating and sometimes scary blurring of the "real" and the "unreal" or perhaps the plausible and the possible.

Payback and *Peach Hill* provide efficient plots, narrated by protagonists who despite

their problems are grounded, realistic, and intelligent. Both involve teens yet are probably of greater appeal to the nine to twelve age range of readers. The former has a more obviously instructive agenda: its thirteen-year-old narrator Charley is an Irish immigrant to Vancouver whose mother has died of cancer and who is bullied at school; his encounters build a laundry list of social problems in a short novel, including domestic violence, agoraphobia, and an attempted child kidnapping. The lessons in tolerance, growth, and the ability to move on somehow seem more important than the development of multi-dimensional characters and a convincing or relevant sense of setting, but the crisp pace of the plot and the unsentimental immediacy of the narration mitigate the impact of so many problems introduced in such short order, and to an extent the threat of overly maudlin didacticism.

Similarly, the economical style and deft humour, and the cleverly realized setting of small-town Ontario in the 1920s, mitigate the implications of the more focused, but potentially as troubling *Peach Hill*, wherein fifteen-year-old Annie relates her quest for a normal life where she can go to school and make friends with the boys she finds increasingly appealing, and her eventual gaining of freedom from her charlatan mother, who has used her as an unwilling if not unwitting assistant in her fortune-telling and faith-healing scams. Annie's discoveries are more specifically personal than Charley's, less generally didactic in effect, and plausibly complicated: despite her mother's abuse of her, she still loves this misguidedly selfish, eccentric woman, and she dwells in a world thirsty for her mother's art, or perhaps just thirsty for an enlarging possibility.

Unlike these novels, the output of seasoned writers, *The Milk Chicken Bomb* is a young man's debut novel, and it is oddly touching for all its deliberate eccentricity. Its plot is virtually irrelevant; its audience undefined. The narrator is an unnamed ten-year-old living by his wits in a very small Prairie town, where he and his best friend try to sort out the mysterious activities of Russian immigrant workers and to eke out a living selling lemonade in winter. The practical joke of the title, often referred to, eventually planned and described, never enacted, sets the tone of this novel, where however awful the life, the child's vision of the world remains engagingly vivid, receptive, open to suggestion. Without context or experience to explain, anything is possible, a chinook as much as a deep-freeze. The sometimes too-obvious cool-quotient of the novel occasionally betrays its debut status (fifteen years ago, this might have aimed at the sort of college-aged audience drawn to films like *The Reflecting Skin*, in which real life horrors are rendered surreal through a child's perspective), but the intensely precise detail, and the consistently dazzling sense of specific perspective and setting make that debut genuinely auspicious.

Slavery's Painful Story

Lawrence Hill
The Book of Negroes. HarperCollins Canada
$34.95

Reviewed by Afra Kavanagh

The title of Lawrence Hill's latest novel invokes the historical "Book of Negroes," pages of which are photographically reproduced on the inside of the book's cover. These archival pages carry the weight of the history they inscribe, the list of the black Loyalists who were evacuated by the British from New York to various ports in Nova Scotia as a result of the American rebellion in the late eighteenth century. But the details of the Negroes thus recorded produce an ironic effect; the names reflect the owners (not the slaves) and the vague descriptions reflect the British government's

inattentiveness to the blacks as people. The novel's historical underpinnings can be found in the sixty-seven works Hill lists for further reading, in the acknowledgements and in "A word about history," and a similar irony emerges here. This is a fictional work about a people who were robbed of their histories, their homes, and identities. *The Book of Negroes* is the story of Aminata Diallo; told feelingly by one, it is a recuperation of the lost history of many.

Aminata embodies the otherness of the blacks who were the victims of the slave trade. She describes her journey as an abducted eleven-year-old from her native Africa to a South Carolina plantation, then to New York, Nova Scotia, Sierra Leone and finally to London where as an old woman she becomes involved, as the "face" of the campaign, in the British movement to abolish the slave trade (though not slavery). Hill breaks up the linear narrative into four parts and introduces each part with a chapter narrated by the older Aminata in London. Aminata's death is imminent at the end of the novel, but she will die having fought for her people's freedom using the tools of the west, public opinion, and the law. She has found her stolen daughter and witnessed the British Parliament pass the bill to abolish the trade in slaves in 1807.

Aminata indicts all Europeans, Africans, and others—Christians, Muslims, or Jews—who played a role in the establishment and perpetuation of the slave trade with her detailed descriptions of the cruelty and inhumanity of slavery. She also reveals how the British failed to keep their promises to freed slaves either in Nova Scotia or in Sierra Leone, and reaffirms the humanity of these people who were tied to a land but not of it. She details how they created a culture and found joy even after losing their language, their will to resist, and in some cases the will to live. She becomes a storyteller, learns to read and write, and tells her story as part of that affirmation, making the place created by the narrative a kind of home. She acknowledges those who came before her and created awareness of the abysmal living conditions of the slaves, figures such as Olaudah Equiano whose diary was published in 1789. Their diaries form a continuum along which stretch stories of dashed hopes, failed resistance, and longing for home. Hill's book also belongs to that continuum as evidenced in his claim that he "would never have written *The Book of Negroes* without the work of the diarists, memoir writers and historians who went before" him, and by the fifty-seven sources he drew from.

As narrator, Aminata dominates, and her voice and spirit drive the narrative; however, her character is not typical of her time or gender. Accomplished and uninhibited, she evokes such respect and loyalty in the people she meets that the reader feels that she leads something of a charmed life despite the horrors she has endured. As well, her motive for abandoning the trip to her birthplace, which signals the beginning of her resistance, is vaguely rendered. And finally, her unlikely discovery of her daughter in a London crowd threatens the integrity of the narrative. But the novel is redeemed by the ironic cast of Aminata's narration of her encounters with historical figures and the hypocrisy of the whites. It is worth noting that some of the awkwardness produced by Hill's departures from historical accuracy is acknowledged by him; he cites artistic reasons for his choices.

The novel brings forward the irony that in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the issues of equality and human rights continue to preoccupy our writers and artists. Indeed, these causes are as urgent today as they were two hundred years ago. Like a number of recent works about slavery and its history, such as Edward O. Jones' *The Known World* and Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*, Hill's novel questions our complacency in the face of the alienation and despair of blacks in America

and mocks our deluded belief in the success of our efforts to secure human rights for all humans.

Making Connections

Polly Horvath
The Corps of the Bare-Boned Plane. Groundwood $12.95

Tim Wynne-Jones
Rex Zero, King of Nothing. Groundwood $12.95

Reviewed by Elizabeth A. Galway

These recent novels depict the importance of children making meaningful connections with peers and adult figures in their lives. These two children's works from Groundwood trace the experiences of their female and male protagonists as they gradually come to connect with, and better understand, those around them.

The events of Horvath's novel take place on an isolated island off the coast of British Columbia that has a strange history. Teenage cousins Meline and Jocelyn are virtual strangers when they go to live with their wealthy, eccentric, and reclusive uncle Marten Knockers after the deaths of their parents. They are soon joined by an elderly housekeeper, Mrs. Mendelbaum, and a mysterious butler called Humdinger. While Marten must cope with the deaths of his brothers, and the loss of his treasured privacy, Mrs. Mendelbaum mourns her deceased husband and children, and Meline and Jocelyn suddenly face life as orphans. The novel depicts the various ways in which these characters all deal (or fail to deal) with loss and change.

Four main characters narrate the story, beginning and ending with Meline, who consequently emerges as the novel's protagonist. Horvath uses this narrative technique to emphasize the sense of isolation each character feels, and to reveal to the reader the ways in which they misunderstand one another. Humdinger's lack of narration may seem puzzling to the reader as he too is a main character, but the only one who never controls the narration. Horvath reveals Humdinger's true identity at the end of the novel, but this does not explain in an entirely satisfactory manner why he never helps tell the story. Marten's character, for example, also has secrets that remain hidden until the novel's conclusion, although he is the primary narrator.

Readers might also find the rapid series of revelations that occur in the last few pages unconvincing. However, when Meline observes, "I was beginning to see that I really hadn't known anything about anyone," it is apparent that these sudden discoveries underscore her need to connect with others. Its strange setting, eccentric characters, and dark mysteries lend a somewhat surreal quality to Horvath's novel, but its quirkiness is tempered with tragedy. Its somewhat fantastical elements are, ultimately, part of Meline's discovery of how to cope with loss and "make new beginnings."

Wynne-Jones' enjoyable novel also contains its share of the sombre, but simultaneously has moments of great humour. Set in Ottawa in 1962, it is more realistic in tone than Horvath's novel, but demonstrates the vivid imagination of eleven-year-old Rex. The two mysteries at the heart of the novel revolve around the owner of a black address book that Rex finds, and around secrets from his father's past. Rex's pursuit of each mystery introduces him to new people and teaches him something about his own family.

In attempting to discover the owner of the lost address book, Rex stumbles into the life of Natasha, a young woman in an abusive marriage. Touching on themes of infidelity and domestic violence, Wynne-Jones tells a poignant story of the important connection made between two strangers, a young boy and the woman he helps to save. While the novel paints both a humorous and touching portrait of Rex's growing relationship with someone who is initially unknown to him, it simultaneously reveals the distance that

can arise between those who should really understand one another. Natasha's husband Larry abuses her, while in Rex's family the inability of children to understand their parents is evident.

The theme of infidelity emerges again in the mystery surrounding Rex's father, a veteran of World War II. When Rex's sister Annie discovers an old photograph of a woman and her young son, it shows them that their father has a past they know nothing about and raises the possibility that there is a woman other than their mother in his life. Rex's failure to comprehend the complexities of his father's emotions and many adult relationships in the novel is made evident through a series of events alternately comic and touching. His inability to fully understand the realities of adulthood leads him to hurt both his tyrannical teacher and his loving father. Realizing his mistakes, Rex fears that he has permanently lost his connection to his father, and he wonders "if I've driven him away forever." Gradually, Rex's attempts to solve the mysteries around him lead him to make meaningful connections with Natasha and his own family. Adulthood remains somewhat bewildering to Rex, who is on the brink of adolescence, but he grows wiser throughout the novel and is "shaky, but learning fast."

These novels will be of interest to those concerned with the question of how Canadian writers negotiate the boundaries between childhood, adolescence, and adulthood through fiction. Each provides an interesting study of the ways in which individuals can be isolated by grief and loss from those around them. Simultaneously, they illustrate the ways in which these characters can make connections, both with complete strangers and familiar faces, which prove to be life-altering.

What Won't Become of Canada and What Became

John Ibbitson
The Polite Revolution: Perfecting the Canadian Dream. McClelland & Stewart $34.99

Michael Byers
Intent For a Nation: What is Canada For? Douglas & McIntyre $32.95

José E. Igartua
The Other Quiet Revolution: National Identities in English Canada, 1945-71. U of British Columbia P $34.95

Reviewed by Gregory Betts

Nations are such ambiguous confabulations, such dynamic cornucopias of difference and competing drives, that we might reserve a special kind of pity for those who write about a country's future as if it followed a predictable and logical path. The value of these projections is less in their accuracy than in the trace they leave of a lost *zeitgeist*: even a short passage of time renders that which once seemed rational and possible inconceivable and astonishing.

Thus, John Ibbitson in his book *The Polite Revolution* predicts a Liberal minority in the 2006 election by reason of the Conservative Party's difference from mainstream Quebec, and the latter party's incompatibility with the rising Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ). And yet in 2007, it was Stephen Harper, the recently elected Conservative Party Prime Minister, who stood onstage with Mario Dumont, the leader of the ADQ, to celebrate their commonality and mutual support. Harper finished the year promising to enshrine the Québécois' new status as "nation" into the Constitution, should he get the chance. On this score and many others, Ibbitson's book offers poor advice to our politicians. Worse than even these blunders, however, is the unelectable spectacle of political causes he proposes that would lead even the bluest of Tories to gawk and guffaw, and do everything possible to distance

themselves from his ideologically radical vision of Canada. According to Ibbitson, Canada should privatize health care and its university system, cut wealth distribution between the rich and poor provinces as between the rich and poor citizens, cancel any national day-care program, and privatize land on Native reserves (which, as demonstrated by similar experiments in the US, without Native-only title would effectively end the reservation system). People, furthermore, should not be discouraged from living outside of cities, and especially from living in the North. The Conservative Party has distanced itself from every one of these goals, and has benefited by doing so.

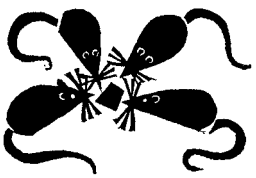
Oddly, given his declaration of nationalism, Ibbitson's vision of Canada's future does not include Canada. He proposes a significant boost to our levels of immigration to bolster our economic bottom line, even if it (by his own prediction) makes Canadian history even more irrelevant than it already is. He proposes that we "strengthen and deepen" ties to the US through total homogenization of regulations: "the Canada-US border should be as invisible as possible." He displays a fascinating degree of detachment from the general Canadian consensus when he questions global climate change without reason, encourages tax cuts for the upper, upper rich, and, most bizarrely, critiques Canada's decision not to produce and maintain nuclear weapons. When one finally encounters his expression of regret over Canada's decision not to join America's misadventures in Iraq, even while he recognizes it as a moral and ethical disaster, the spectacle of a misled political prophet becomes farce. No history, no borders, no control of our military, no control of our economy: it becomes a wonder to imagine that mainstream ("nationalist") conservatives in Canada once thought like this—and as recently as 2006! The problem with the book is that, despite the odd welcome reflection on Canadian history, it never escapes the ephemeral role of the newspaper, riding the ever-shifting wave of political positions and opinions directly into irrelevance. Ibbitson offers voluminous expostulations and opinions on numerous topics that are already off the radar of contemporary political discourse. As an example, even one year later, after a failed referendum, it can be said conclusively that Ontario is not "making rapid strides" towards proportional representation. Ibbitson's ensuing discussion of such developments was already out of date even as the ink dried. A newspaper's relevancy ends the day after it is published: this book did not survive the year.

Similarly, from the opposite end of the political spectrum, Michael Byers' *Intent for a Nation: What is Canada For?* also reads like a poorly researched op-ed article expanded to fill an entire book. He purportedly attempts to bring Canada out of the neo-colonial hold of American domestic and foreign policy, but his primary contribution to that cause is a patronizing tone that flatly demands the country "grow up." Despite the appeal of his prescription, a country is not a child and will not necessarily "mature" over time. Byers offers no insight on how concerned Canadians can wrest power from colonial-minded governments, let alone how public opinion can be shifted to accelerate change (nor why, as someone like Andrew Coyne might point out, colonialism is even bad for Canada). In fact, it becomes strange, especially given his title, how marginal Canada actually is to his discussion. Byers argues that Canada should give decision-making power to international organizations instead of to America—he does not say why this would serve Canada better. The answer, it turns out, has nothing to do with this country.

By his own admission, Byers is one amongst a legion of Canadians who felt personally betrayed by the intransigence of the Bush administration and the shocking fact that

Americans were willing to give Bush a second mandate despite the Iraq war and other policy failures. In 2004, Byers gave up a green card and returned to Canada as a "Bushugee." The partisan nature of his decision to return colours his analysis of Canada's political scene—any point of association between this country and that becomes a mark of failure. In fact, despite his title and his purported ambition to reverse the pessimism of George Grant's landmark *vox clamantis*, Canada plays only a tangential role in his discussion. For instance, and bizarrely, Byers spends a far greater portion of his book worrying about airport runway length in Canada's three northern territories, and the impact of a potentially inconvenient landing for international tourists, than to Canadian domestic politics, let alone Canadian political history. In contrast, most of the book is spent outlining the failures of George Bush's America. Like a blog translation of Noam Chomsky, Byers' work relies on a combination of unscholarly research (he cites a *Globe and Mail* online poll as evidence), unapologetic assertion ("the Harper government was ideologically opposed to playing a constructive role in the Middle East"), and condescending opinion to justify his strong anti-Bush feelings. He does not answer the question his title raises, nor does he give any indication of serious consideration of the interests of this country. As in Ibbitson's book, but for different reasons, Canada disappears.

One should not need to state that books on Canada do not need to deny or denigrate the country. As a welcome contrast, José E. Igartua's *The Other Quiet Revolution* presents an astonishingly careful, thoughtful, and insightful re-imagining of mid-twentieth-century Canadian history that puts the experience and ambitions of people from this country at the heart of the discussion. As a parallel social movement to what was occurring in French Canada at the time, Igartua charts the evolution of English Canada from ethnically British through to its embrace of a new, civic identity. He sets the onset of this radical shift in the years following World War II, when the Canadian government decided it was time to establish a Canadian citizenship and a distinctive national flag. He dedicates significant time to carefully defining important terms, like "nation" and "nationalism" and "citizenship," demonstrating that though his topic may be more narrowly focused than the books discussed above, its approach offers scholarly depth instead of narcissistic whimsy. In tracking the progression of opinions, Igartua follows a consistent and logical methodology to dissect the rhetoric of political discourse in the House of Commons and in all of the major newspapers across the country. He effortlessly frames the debates over such minute topics as the design of the national flag in a way that not only documents the range of opinions, but that highlights the bias and the expression of the bias motivating the various positions—all while clarifying how the range of opinions on small topics connects to the broader trends and diverse agenda. Such an approach proves richly illuminating, especially in a discussion of national symbols and how their meaning changed as Canada changed. Igartua's study, rich in detail and nuance, is precisely the kind of book that contributes to and indeed might even change our sense of the Canadian social contract—especially English Canada's part and place in the country. Given its extensive research and striking interpretation of its findings, it will also remain relevant and influential long after the other two books have been remaindered.



Spies and Romances

Marie Jakober
The Halifax Connection. Random $32.00

Reviewed by Barbara Pell

The Halifax Connection is a popular historical romance with few literary pretensions but definite historical ones. It is the third of Marie Jakober's novels set during the American Civil War (she has written five other novels), and the Alberta writer has established a reputation for expertise in this period; her 2002 novel, *Only Call Us Faithful*, won the Michael Shaara Award for Excellence in Civil War Fiction. The present novel, set in 1863-64, fictionalizes the well-known involvement of prominent Montreal and Halifax sympathizers with Confederate attempts to defeat the Union by drawing England into the War. It also depicts the unofficial but probable counter-intelligence operations sponsored by the Governor General to ensure that British North America (on the eve of Confederation) remained neutral.

Erryn Shaw is the charming, though gawky, son of a British earl, who has been permanently exiled to Halifax for avenging the murder of a gay friend by aristocratic homophobics. His only desire is to run a theatre, but when it burns down, he is persuaded by his "best mate," a brothel bastard who has become the local constable, to work for the Crown as a double agent inside the genteel circles of Southern expatriates and their Canadian collaborators (labelled "Grey Tories" by Jakober in an unnecessary historical invention). Erryn foils a few rebel plots, is unmasked and almost killed, and finally has to decipher and defeat the ultimate, war-winning secret plan. Meanwhile (after all, this is a romance), he meets an orphan servant girl, Sylvie Bowen, who fled the cotton mills of Lancashire with lung disease and a scarred face to find a better life in the New World scrubbing floors in a Halifax boarding house. Boy meets girl and, despite all warnings of class differences, they fall in love, and she helps save his life. However, the complication is that she is passionately anti-Confederacy because she suffered (and her beloved aunt died) after Southern privateers attacked their immigrant ship. So, boy loses girl when she discovers his ostensible employment by the rebels. All is happily resolved, however, when Erryn confesses his secret agent status, Sylvie helps him foil the dastardly plot, and they marry to confound all the snobbish (and racist) discriminations that characterize both the Southern aristocracy and their English and Canadian counterparts.

The historical and political background of this novel is fascinating and convincing (with the exception of the final elaborately sinister plot, foiled by an unbelievable coincidence, which seems anti-climactic and unlikely, despite Jakober's attempts to legitimate it in her Afterword). Halifax and Montreal are depicted in authentic detail, and historical personages mingle convincingly with fictional ones. However, the huge cast of British, Canadian, Union, Confederate, and Grey Tory conspirators becomes very difficult to remember and follow. The novelist's "Cast of Characters" listed on the first pages of the book seems more a concession to desperation than a contribution to characterization. In fact, even the principal characters are not deeply delineated. The courtship of Erryn and Sylvie is a charming romantic stereotype (despite the fact that neither is conventionally attractive), and the reader never doubts that there will be an inevitable happy ending. The plot is rather episodic: literally one (Confederate) plot after another. Nevertheless, undeniable sympathy and suspense are evoked by this "page-turner" that probably bears witness to the power of its archetypal genre.

Within this romance, Jakober invokes some deeper—and predictably virtuous—

themes of Canadian patriotism versus American interference; Confederation unity versus American Civil War; democratic decency and individual heroism versus aristocratic imperialism, classism, and racism. However, there is none of the postmodern interrogation of sources or values that characterizes so many Canadian historiographic metafictions. Jakober's writing is competent and clear, but this history, while undoubtedly knowledgeable, is served up too romantically and simplistically.

Ethel Wilson's Mothers

Verena Klein
Mothering Her Self: Mothers and Daughters in Ethel Wilson's Work. Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier 23.50 €

Ethel Wilson; Li-Ping Geng, ed.
Swamp Angel. Tecumseh $17.95

Reviewed by David Stouck

Ethel Wilson once wrote: "when a far-off review from the *Times of India* recognized the common humanity of one of my books . . . I could not ask for more." With the exception of my 2003 biography, most of the attention paid to Ethel Wilson in the last twenty years has, in fact, come from afar. I am thinking here of the influential essays by American critic, Blanche H. Gelfant, included in her 1995 volume, *Cross-Cultural Reckonings*, Anjali Bhelande's wholly original and compelling *Self Beyond Self: Ethel Wilson and Indian Philosophical Thought* (1996), and the modestly elegant British edition of *Hetty Dorval* (Persephone, 2005). The recent critical edition of *Swamp Angel*, based on the novel's different manuscripts and first editions, was prepared by Li-Ping Geng of Shandong University at Weihai, China. Why Wilson's appeal is so predominantly international is a question beyond the scope of this review, but that fact frames my introduction nonetheless to yet another study of Wilson produced outside Canada, *Mothering Her Self: Mothers and Daughters in Ethel Wilson's Work*, published in Germany in 2006 by Austrian critic, Verena Klein. One thing that can be said about these studies is that they direct the reader away from local issues in Wilson's writing, the question of her Canadian content for example, and address literary and cultural issues that have worldwide engagement and application.

The central issue in Klein's reading of Ethel Wilson is mothering, which she approaches by means of international feminist theory. Klein applies theory sparingly but with an unerring sense of what has relevance and revelation for reading this author's work. The central fact for Klein is that Wilson was an orphan, and she views the different ways Wilson writes about motherless women as strategies of mourning. Some of her motherless characters, writes Klein, are trapped by their unhappy childhoods and extend their misery to those around them. In this light, she is able to argue for a sympathetic reading of Hetty Dorval, a character who does not recognize her mother in disguise and cannot sustain meaningful relations with others. It allows her to describe Topaz Edgeworth's childish irresponsibility in terms of development arrested by a mother's death, and Vera Gunnarsen's jealousy in terms of maternal abandonment.

More successful mourning strategies are accomplished by characters such as Lilly Waller, who first assumes the role of mother and caregiver and eventually learns to care for herself, the most important step, argues Klein, in conquering orphanhood. For her consideration of other female characters in Wilson's writing, Klein takes up the term "othermothers" from Debold, Wilson, and Malave's *Mother Daughter Revolution* to examine how extra-familial role models can provide the developing woman with a foretaste of female power, while simultaneously equipping her with "a sense of agency." Most

striking in this context is Klein's study of Maggie Vardoe in *Swamp Angel*, her crucial relationship to Mrs. Severance, an embodiment of the Great Mother archetype, and her function as the central mothering figure herself for the community at Three Loon Lake. In a body of fiction haunted by origins, this redefinition of female genealogy, writes Klein, "can be read as a courageous step beyond the limits of the core family" and an example of the second-wave feminist concept of othermothering.

The comprehensiveness and depth of Klein's study is owing to more than her reading in feminist theory. Her study draws on details from the Wilson archives at the UBC Library, and is also grounded in conversations she had with Ethel Wilson's niece, Mary White, whose insights on mother-daughter relations and account of Wilson's dependency on her husband confirmed for Klein that her way of reading had substance.

Klein's study is one of those in which Maggie Vardoe/Lloyd grows to be an increasingly potent figure in our literature. Enhancing the stature of *Swamp Angel* as a whole is Li-Ping Geng's Canadian critical edition, which footnotes more than 350 substantive textual variants and an equal number of accidentals existing among the archived manuscript versions of the novel and the differing Canadian and American editions published in 1954. These notes and Geng's exemplary editorial essay titled "The Making of *Swamp Angel*" give us rich insights into Wilson's creative process and suggest further ways of interpreting her work. This edition also contains four new readings of the novel, including a study of region by Burke Cullen, further reflections on self and the word by Anjali Bhelande, and a discourse analysis of Wilson's language by Janet Giltrow.

Klein's study of mothering in Wilson's work and Geng's edition of *Swamp Angel* should be acquired by both academic and public libraries. In fact, a lengthy second chapter of Klein's book titled "Mother-Daughter Theory: From Separation to Connection" will be extremely useful for students and general readers alike for its concise outline of forty years of feminist reasoning. These books represent literary criticism and editing of a very high order. They are excellent additions to the scholarly literature surrounding Ethel Wilson, one of the foremothers of Canadian writing, and are again confirmation from afar that she is a writer with a wide reach.

Promise and Prosperity?

Arthur Kroeger
Hard Passage: A Mennonite Family's Long Journey from Russia to Canada. U of Alberta P $34.95

Aksel Sandemose; Christopher S. Hale, ed. and trans.
Aksel Sandemose and Canada: A Scandinavian Writer's Perception of the Canadian Prairies in the 1920s. Canadian Plains Research Center $24.95

Reviewed by Sue Sorensen

Arthur Kroeger's memoirs of his family's experiences in the Chortiza region of Russia in the early twentieth century and their immigration to southeastern Alberta in 1926 are remarkable for his felicitous details, his even-tempered handling of painful history, and his prudent selection of family memories. As anyone who has ever written (or read) family histories can attest, this is a genre fraught with peril. It is easy to remember only crisis or saintly sacrifice, and the details intriguing to the inner circle may be considerably less thrilling to an outsider. The subcategory of Mennonite personal history is also a tricky one to negotiate. Russian Mennonites are particularly devoted to safeguarding the memory of their Golden Age colonies near the Black Sea, and have carefully and reverently chronicled the memories of those who died in the dark years that followed 1914. These

were years of war, of civil conflict after the Russian Revolution, of typhus in 1920, of famine in the early 1920s. The reasons to lament were many: and *then* came Stalin's oppression. It is true that this era has been preserved by recent Mennonite historians, and one wonders if the story has already been told. But *Hard Passage* is a well-researched and very lucid account that will be a valuable addition to the historical record.

It helps tremendously that Arthur Kroeger knows public policy as well as he knows his family history. This is what gives *Hard Passage* an extra dimension of interest. Kroeger spent many years as a federal civil servant, for example as Deputy Minister of Transport, and his knowledge of immigration issues and Canadian social policy are invaluable here. The book is evenly divided between the Kroeger family's struggles in Russia and in Canada. In some surprising instances, the Canadian situation was possibly more brutal. Kroeger reminds us of the Canadian government's almost complete refusal to be responsible for the poor in the 1930s; even when a 1937 commission found that two-thirds of Saskatchewan farmers were destitute, federal leaders mocked the findings. The Kroeger family wandered between derelict homesteads in the almost unfarmable Palliser Triangle, and it was years before they were finally established on land that they could profitably farm. Kroeger has vivid memories of wind that shook houses off their foundations, of milk made bitter because cattle had only Russian thistle as fodder. He also records pleasant memories. He writes of religious services held in dried-out sloughs, the only green places around, and pays tribute to several key individuals (Mennonite leader David Toews, Colonel John Dennis, and Sir Edward Beatty of the CPR) who worked tirelessly to bring 20,000 of Russia's endangered 100,000 Mennonites to Canada.

One receives from Kroeger's memoir a good understanding of just what a difficult decision it must have been to emigrate. Even with a long heritage of persecution and more recent experiences of betrayal, rape, and murder, the Chortiza Mennonites were hesitant to leave. And the Canadian prairies, when encountered, could be uncompromisingly harsh, the farming unprofitable, the loneliness almost unbearable.

Aksel Sandemose and Canada is a volume of impressions of the prairies written at the same time the Kroegers were immigrating to Alberta. Sandemose (1899-1965), a fairly well-known literary figure in Scandinavia, was sponsored by the CPR to travel around the Canadian West and write about immigration possibilities for his fellow Scandinavians. Sandemose was just starting out as a fiction writer in 1927, and he was a good choice for this sort of adventurous junket. He was hardy enough to walk and ride long distances and, apparently, to hop freight trains, and could make himself agreeable enough to get free food and lodging from friendly Danes who might help him with his research. He wrote a number of journalistic pieces about the prairies as well as short stories and novels. The novels, particularly *Ross Dane* (1928), demonstrate that Sandemose's exploratory few months in Canada were pivotal for his writing life; although he moved back to Denmark, and eventually to Norway, he continued to contemplate his Canadian experience for many years.

Whether his Canadian experience is as helpful for us is another question. Sandemose had a prickly personality, and his articles tend to be overly tendentious and cranky. "Canada's prairie has only recently acquired culture, at least in those places where this has happened at all" is a typical remark. He has no interest in Canada's Native peoples; he is distressed by the "tastelessness" of a locomotive on display in a Winnipeg park; he describes a hellish hotel in Redvers, Saskatchewan as

if it were part of a scene out of Dante. The editor of this journalism and short-fiction collection, Christopher Hale, admits that Sandemose freely embroidered and exaggerated his impressions of Canada, and recycled his articles, often publishing them in slightly different forms three or four times. Sandemose was in Canada to make money as a writer, and to size up Canada's moneymaking potential for his fellow Scandinavians. In the end, his conclusion was that you had to be almost ridiculously hardy to survive in Canada, and that immigrants should think very carefully before making the trip. His journalism should be approached with caution, although it does have some delightful, colourful anecdotes. His fiction has more interest. His voice is quirky and memorable, his women in particular eccentric and powerful, but ultimately these pieces are rather slight.

Beauté patibulaire

Robert Laliberté
Inventaire de succession. Hexagone 14,95 $

Hélène Leclerc
Lueurs de l'aube. David 10,00 $

Christian Milat
Douleureuse aurore. David 15,00 $

Pierre Raphaël Pelletier
Pour ce qui reste de la beauté du monde. Interligne 16,95 $

Joël Pourbaix
Les Morts de l'infini. Noroît 18,95 $

Compte rendu par Laurent Poliquin

S'il y a quelque chose que les poètes ont longuement ressassé à travers les siècles, c'est bien la beauté, et son penchant, le blason du corps féminin. Mais comme le périlleux a quelque chose de charmant, le défi d'inscrire sa marque et « de faire original » reste entier, même pour le poète contemporain. Parmi les ouvrages dont il sera ici rendu compte, la beauté sera tantôt silencieuse, tantôt évanescente, tantôt elle souffrira de l'amorphisme de la conscience contemporaine. Décidément, le défi est grand d'éviter la redite.

L'artiste et écrivain franco-ontarien Pierre Raphaël Pelletier nous offre un excellent point de départ à une quête de beauté, pour contrer, en quelque sorte, l'apathie ambiante qui décolore le paysage urbain. La solitude du poète sert d'assise à une réflexion sur l'éblouissement de la beauté toute simple. Le poème qui ouvre le recueil *Pour ce qui reste de la beauté du monde* offre un bel exemple de simplicité : « Hier, c'était en mai / je t'aime / comme le printemps / la terre ». Les gravures d'Hélène Lefebvre contribuent à projeter le lecteur hors du quotidien et favorisent la tournoyante rencontre des amants, ce que Pelletier traduit par le « clonage de l'instant » et par cette marche du poète qui cherche fortune dans la solitude de l'autre. Le résultat révèle la sérénité du narrateur qui accepte de mener le lecteur, sans gloire ni trompette, à ce qui reste à créer, afin d'atteindre le principe salvateur que permet la beauté.

Les aspirations ontologiques de Christian Milat, telles qu'elles apparaissent dans *Douleureuse aurore*—premier opus du genre pour ce vingtiémiste français, professeur à l'Université d'Ottawa—s'affirment avec une ferveur digne de l'astronaute qui essaie de comprendre le mouvement premier d'où a pu surgir la beauté du monde. Milat nous plonge donc dans un recueil qui se donne pour mission de poétiser la formation de l'univers. *Douleureuse aurore* se décline en quatre sections comme autant de périodes géologiques et paléontologiques. Il n'est donc pas surprenant que le poète s'insère dans l'écho du néant et nous mène vers la fabuleuse éruption de l'être, de sa souveraineté, pour enfin s'ébahir devant ce grand voyage de l'existence qui a permis *l'heureuse douleur de l'aurore du monde*.

Avec *Les Morts de l'infini* de Joël Pourbaix, la déambulation se fait plus champêtre. « Partout » et « incomprise », la beauté est le

prélude à plusieurs épanchements métaphysiques. Ici le narrateur s'infiltre dans « la chair des choses » et en tire des conséquences bienheureuses. L'interpénétration de l'espace entre le monde et le poète permet de réhabiliter la présence des morts dans la vie du vivant, comme il permet aux éléments de la nature de trouver refuge dans l'antre intime du narrateur. Cette traversée poétique, qui accorde à la flânerie le rôle de traquer « l'impératif d'exister », débouche sur des imprécations en matière d'éternité qu'on aurait souhaité recevoir avec moins d'ardeur. Elles s'énoncent parfois sous forme d'aphorismes : « Ce dont je suis fait me fait encore », parfois d'impératifs : « Rêvons la réalité », « Ne soyons pas des gestes muets », « Retrouvons la vélocité de notre noire mémoire », parfois encore, par des constats passéistes qui concluent, comme l'aurait fait le traditionaliste René Guénon à une autre époque, à une « dégénérescence individuelle » ou encore à un « délabrement avancé de notre conscience ». Servie dans un magma usé où gisent les alter ego de la transcendance prénommée Éternité, Infini et Miracle, la poésie de Pourbaix, fière de ses vingt-cinq années d'écriture, pontifie quelque peu, ce qui aurait pu être servi avec une moindre dose de prétention, surtout quand le lecteur est déjà convaincu.

Dans *Inventaire de succession* de Robert Laliberté, la beauté émerge des impressions nostalgiques d'un narrateur baby-boomer qui a jadis cultivé son ennui à une époque où l'épiscopat régnait sur ses ouailles. Divisé en trois parties, l'inventaire dont il est question est surtout celui d'un prétexte à la publication de trois textes disparates, auxquels on évitera de s'attarder trop longuement. De la liste précise d'objets posés sur une tablette aux épanchements autobiographiques d'un hippie québécois en terre française, il ne reste somme toute de cette plaquette de quarante-sept pages, qu'un livre décevant.

Lueurs de l'aube d'Hélène Leclerc débute par la présence d'une préfacière de renom, Abigail Friedman, poète et diplomate américaine en poste au Québec, dont le rôle semble être de nous convaincre de la pertinence du livre qu'on s'apprête à lire. Comme pour désavouer les détracteurs du haïku, souvent perçu comme une poésie aux règles formelles contraignantes, la présence même de la préface pose un doute sur les qualités littéraires de l'auteur. Somme toute, il n'en est rien, même si, au demeurant, tout n'est pas égal aux pays du haïku. Par définition, cette forme de poésie s'attarde aux détails de la vie courante et aux petites splendeurs qui émerveillent la nature. En cela, Hélène Leclerc réussit avec assurance à nous faire partager les escales de ses observations. À titre d'exemple, retenons :

une usine
au bord du fleuve
fabrique des nuages

Thème récurrent par excellence, la beauté se laisse exprimer là où l'œil est vaillant et où l'esprit ouvert n'est pas une facture du crâne, pour reprenne la jolie métaphore d'Ariane Moffatt. Porteuse d'univers comme chez Milat, elle s'insère dans le « voir » du poète, parfois dans de vieux « cossins » comme chez Laliberté, parfois dans les lueurs de l'aube (Leclerc), parfois dans des soupçons de présence, celle des morts (Pourbaix) ou celle encore qui reste à découvrir (Pelletier).

Hot War to Cold War

Shaena Lambert
Radiance. Random $32.95

Reviewed by Donna Coates

In 1952, seven years after the Americans brought an end to the Second World War by dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a dozen "Hiroshima Maidens" (also known as "atomic-bomb victims," or *hibakusha*) travelled to Tokyo and Osaka, where Hiroshima doctors administered check-ups and treated keloids. Three years later, the Americans invited twenty-five "Hiroshima Maidens" to the US for reconstructive surgery. In *Radiance*, Vancouver writer Shaena Lambert blurs these dates and events by bringing only one "maiden," the eighteen-year-old Keiko Kitigawa, to New York City in 1952 to have a disfiguring facial scar and keloid removed. Lambert presumably alters the time frame to emphasize that the two superpowers—the Americans and the Soviets—were both developing super bombs hundreds of times more destructive than the atomic bomb, and that the Americans were preparing to detonate their first "h-bomb" in 1952. At the same time, the American public was becoming increasingly concerned about the Soviet espionage network's penetration of the US government, and the House Committee on Un-American Activities was conducting witch hunts against alleged spies such as Alger Hiss and Ethel Rosenberg (whose guilt even today remains unsubstantiated). Conservatism also existed in the mass suburban developments which had sprung up after the war. In Riverside Meadows, the suburb constructed in 1946 where Lambert's central characters Daisy and Walter Lawrence live, the local Residents' Committee operates its own "spy ring" which attempts to ensure that conformity and "normality" prevail among the predominantly nuclear families. It overlooks the traumatized war veterans who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and the miserable stay-at-home mothers succumbing to nervous breakdowns or suicide.

On the surface, the members of the (fictional) Hiroshima Project appear to have invited Keiko to New York out of a desire for atonement, but there are strings attached to their goodwill gesture. They require Keiko to sign a contract which commits her to speaking publicly about what happened to her on August 6, 1945, and assure her that her harrowing tale will raise funds to bring more "maidens" to New York. They also request that she advocate nuclear test bans. But in actuality, they are using Keiko, one of their former "sworn enemies," to combat their new enemies, the Soviets. The plastic surgeon, who works for both the Hiroshima Project and the Atomic Bomb Commission, is less concerned about fixing Keiko's face than he is about exploring the "effect of the atomic bomb on the human psyche," because "understanding the psychological responses in a civilian population is vital to national security."

The doctor also operates under another hidden agenda: a minor radio personality, he intends that his "groundbreaking" surgical methods will make him a celebrity on the new, revolutionary 1950s form of entertainment—television; and the writer of the "Women's Circle" column in the *Sunday Review* uses Keiko to shore up her fading affair with the surgeon. The journalist also recruits Daisy, a former university friend, to be Keiko's home-stay mother because she believes Daisy's goodness will draw Keiko out. In turn, Daisy is flattered to be a "part of history" which involves prominent figures like Albert Schweitzer, Albert Einstein, and Bertrand Russell, but she has also had several miscarriages and is desperate to be a mother, even a short-term, surrogate one. The project members assume that because Keiko has undergone so much suffering—her mother and grandfather were killed

by the bomb, her soldier-father died in Manchuria—she will have developed "fairy-tale virtues" such as "purity" or "maidenly goodness," and will thus be grateful for their help. But Keiko, as cunning and sly as a fox (foxes are important throughout the novel), is neither virtuous nor appreciative. She lies, steals, betrays her benefactors, and demands money from the project for speaking engagements. The organizers are furious when they realize she has been using them to get what she wants—an unblemished face and money to reinvent herself.

Although *Radiance* is set entirely in New York, with only one brief reference to the wounding and torture of Canadian (and American) soldiers in the Japanese POW camp Shampuito, Canadian writers such as Dennis Bock, whose novel *The Ash Garden* features another fascinating "Hiroshima Maiden," and Marie Clements, whose play *Burning Vision* documents the catastrophic effects of the atomic bomb on the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, have also made valuable contributions to this growing and vital body of literature.

All-Canadian Drama

Harry Lane, ed.
George F. Walker. Playwrights Canada $25.00

Louise H. Forsyth, ed.
Anthology of Québec Women's Plays: Volume I (1966-1986). Playwrights Canada $55.00

Reviewed by Sabine Schlüter

Canadian drama does not look back on a long tradition, but it has expanded rapidly since the late 1960s. Especially in the 1970s, it underwent a "self-conscious evolution," as Harry Lane puts it, and not only has it produced a number of prolific playwrights as well as an enhanced sense of a national character, but it also became more experimental. It is in this context these two books find their common ground. George F. Walker started writing in the early 1970s and employed theatrical techniques hitherto unknown to a Canadian audience. This holds true for the Quebec women's plays, too, since the playwrights used unconventional techniques in order to shock their audiences and thereby stress the importance of changing society.

Yet while the French Canadian plays in Louise H. Forsyth's anthology are restricted to the period from 1966-86 and can be seen as representative of a particular period of feminist drama, George F. Walker cannot be associated with a particular style or period. Both anthologies, however, give proof of the great activity in Canadian drama across different provinces in the last forty years.

Harry Lane's book is the first anthology to collect representative academic writing on George F. Walker, adding three interviews with the playwright. This is particularly useful for scholars outside Canada since some of the material is available in only a few Canadian libraries.

As Lane rightly points out, most of the critical commentary and argument inspired by Walker's work appeared in the form of newspaper reviews, but does include "a substantial stream of articles in scholarly journals and a small number of theses and dissertations." What Lane fails to mention, though, is Chris Johnson's semi-academic book from 1999 which gives an inclusive outline of important aspects of Walker's work and covers most of his plays.

Nonetheless, the anthology offers a broad variety of different academic approaches and reflects Lane's argument that "Walker's work presented significant challenges to critics and audiences" in avoiding the "national . . . trend towards naturalism" which made it difficult to categorize. The lines of argument in the various articles range from the problem of genre(s) to the discussion of liberal attitudes to postmodernist and postcolonial analyses, thereby covering a multiplicity of possible readings of Walker's work. The interviews with the

playwright himself add even more perspectives to the various academic positions.

In his endeavour to render his collection representative, Lane has included an excerpt from M.P. Mombourquette's M.A. thesis, "Walker's Women in the East End." This choice, however, seems slightly unfortunate because Mombourquette's psychologically inspired approach to literary analysis is not as convincing as several others on Walker's plays.

Lane presents the collected material in a chronological order from 1978 to 2006; he might have included at least one of the few scholarly essays to provide evidence of academic writing also from the first years of Walker's theatrical work.

On the whole, Lane's collection of essays and interviews manages to give a wide-ranging overview of critical approaches to one of Canada's most prolific playwrights and must be regarded as an essential book for academics working on Walker's plays.

Louise H. Forsyth's anthology, the first volume of three, is a representative compilation of Quebec women's plays from the first two decades of a progressive feminist theatre movement. The translation of the plays makes French-Canadian drama accessible to an anglophone audience and thus promotes an all-Canadian theatre culture, while not ignoring the fact that Québec culture differs in many aspects from that in the English-speaking provinces. Moreover, along with a comprehensive introduction, Forsyth and other critics offer informative prefaces for every play in this collection, including information about the playwrights.

Forsyth's anthology, like Lane's, follows a chronological order which gives evidence of the development of feminist theatre, both with regard to the writing process and the methods of performance. Most of the plays have to be read in the context of their time since language and symbolism are deeply rooted in an early feminist discourse. The plays are undoubtedly worthy of note, yet as sociological documents rather than timeless plays. More often than not, their level of literary quality can only be described as debatable. The same holds true for the theatrical methods employed, which were certainly perceived as innovative eye-openers in the 1960s and 1970s, but which seem somewhat dated today. The most striking attribute which many of these plays have in common is the notion of a feminine identity based on sexual characteristics. The playwrights attempt to deconstruct the patriarchal perception of women as sexual objects. The endeavour to reinterpret this view by emphasizing feminine experiences with the female body, however, follows the same path and reduces women yet again to their physicality.

Nonetheless, Louise H. Forsyth's anthology is an important one in that it highlights the notable number of women playwrights in Quebec and their attempts to change an oppressive society, dominated by religious restriction and male power. It will be most interesting to read the second and third volumes of this anthology and to witness further changes in feminist approaches to drama.

Both anthologies are important contributions to Canadian drama studies.

À la recherche du poème

Jean-Marc Lefebvre
Les Ombres lasses. Noroît 16,95 $

Mona Latif-Ghattas
Ambre et lumière. Noroît 24,95 $

Yves Laroche
L'Alcool des jours et des feuilles. Noroît 17,95 $

Robert Giroux
L'Hiver qui court suivi de *La Banlieue du coeur des villes.* Triptyque 17,00 $

Compte rendu par Sylvain Marois

L'ombre rassurée n'interroge plus le monde.
—Jean-Marc Lefebvre, *Les Ombres lasses*

Le Noroît « souffle où il veut » depuis plus de trente-cinq ans et, malgré les petits tirages, les lancements parfois discrets, l'œuvre, le travail se poursuit. La qualité des textes, le lyrisme et la profondeur de la réflexion, particulièrement dans le cas de Mona Latif-Ghattas, sont exceptionnels. Y aurait-il donc, dans notre ère électronique, numérisée, une place pour la lenteur des mots, pour la subjectivité évocatrice du discours poétique?

Le recueil de Jean-Marc Lefebvre s'ouvre sur une citation de Denys Néron : « le poète ne matraque pas la réalité, / il lui donne sa chance ». Et, pourtant, il y aura matraquage d'un certain réel, un réel lent, empreint de questionnements, d'hésitations et d'une belle lassitude donnant rythme et vie aux mots du poète. Matraquage, dans le sens de répétition, de martelage. Un martelage qui ose s'interroger sur la poésie, sur les mots : « Les mots sont des cailloux / que l'on pousse / petits éclats de solitudes / qu'une lumière tardive / éparpille ». Et Lefebvre y revient encore et encore : « Je sais bien qu'écrire est impossible / —une traînée de silence / que le jour exalte »; « Ce que j'écris / est cette quête d'un homme / qu'aucun oiseau ne peut porter »; « La poésie est un fracas / marée jetée / sur les pierres du temps ». C'est ce questionnement qui fait de ces *Ombres lasses* un univers engageant.

Publié au Noroît, le recueil est fait de la maturité du poète qui cherche, qui fouille, qui creuse la « fosse commune / où s'ébattent nos souvenirs ». L'ouvrage de Lefebvre, dans une langue ni alambiquée ni prétentieusement hermétique, entraîne le lecteur dans des incertitudes impressionnistes dont « la beauté » s'affirme comme « une posture devant l'éphémère ».

Poète, dramaturge, chorégraphe, metteure en scène, traductrice . . . , Mona Latif-Ghattas écrit, inlassablement, crée, irréductiblement, depuis de nombreuses années une oeuvre imprégnée de ses racines égyptiennes et montréalaises. *Ambre et lumière* nous est livré dans une impeccable édition. La facture même de l'objet-livre est exceptionnelle et contient le disque compact du récital que Ghattas a promené, entre autres, à Paris et en Roumanie. En effet, l'auteure, accompagnée de Paul Antaki et Chérif Cotta, propose ici l'entièreté du recueil lu, lentement, sans artifices qui dilueraient honteusement les beaux mots de la poète. L'écoute et la lecture des textes sont une expérience sensible hors de l'ordinaire, une véritable *invitation au voyage*, une initiation à l'exotisme.

Le Nil, Ramsès, Horus réfèrent à un monde qui n'est plus, mais dont l'humanité est sans âge. Malgré la souffrance et la défaite, l'espoir existe dans le « jardin de l'âme [où] Fleurit la tolérance / La défaite est consommée / On guérira / L'humain en nous se tasse / Ne reste que le divin / Ambre et lumière confondus ». Latif-Ghattas propose un univers lumineux, un « poème vivant, plus réel que la terre », dans lequel elle « bénit celui qui [l]'a formée cœur et souffrance ».

Dans *L'Alcool des jours et des feuilles*, Yves Laroche, offre des collages inspirés du surréalisme et tirés des titres du quotidien *Le Devoir*. Sans commenter l'actualité, Laroche est dans « l'association libre pour créer de l'insolite ». Il s'agit d'un travail

très personnel, créateur, qui pousse les cadres de références usuels à l'explosion : « peu à peu, / inexorablement / comme une rose calcaire / à saveur de réel / l'île aux herbes de peine / se couvre d'or sombre . . . »; « L'île déchirée / Par la route des abeilles / ne dit pas tout ». Cela dit, on sent parfois le travail (conscient ou non) de l'auteur. Ainsi, une étude détaillée confirmerait que certains mots réapparaissent tout au long du recueil (or, île, œil, eau, etc.) et que, de même, des images reviennent hanter le texte. Sans être une faiblesse ou un défaut quelconque, le travail de l'auteur, parfois trop ressenti lors de la lecture, affecte la qualité quintessenciée d'un tel exercice de poésie automatique.

L'Hiver qui court suivi de *La Banlieue du cœur des villes* est l'oeuvre d'un spécialiste. En effet, Robert Giroux dirige les Éditions Triptyque et la revue *Mœbius* depuis 1980, en plus d'être l'auteur de plus d'une vingtaine d'ouvrages portant tous sur la littérature, particulièrement sur la chanson. Les textes sont raffinés, ciselés et portent, avec légèreté, l'amplitude d'une subjectivité de virtuose : « les hoquets orange nous envahissent / comme des fanfares d'orage / . . . derrière les cris étouffés des klaxons rôdent les loups en cercle / et j'ai dû me replier sur les visages barbouillés de pluie »; « fleurs de neige agrippées en épis sur le bout des tiges / pointées haut sur l'azur indigo / par la fenêtre j'épie le grand pin des neiges ». *La Banlieue du cœur des villes* est « une poétique de l'apprentissage » (quatrième de couverture) dans lequel l'auteur glisse vers un monde qui n'est plus, un monde passé, rédigé à l'imparfait. Giroux raconte, sobrement, ses années d'étude en France au tournant des années 1960-70. La prose se fait ici plus présente et le vers plus discret. À mi-chemin entre le journal personnel, le récit intimiste et l'autobiographie, la deuxième partie du recueil sera plus exigeante à celui qui ne connaît ni Giroux ni Paris.

Canadian Historical Amnesia and the Métis People

Ute Lischke and David T. McNab, eds. *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities and Family Histories.* Wilfrid Laurier UP $34.95

Reviewed by Michelle La Flamme

"We are still here" is the first line in the introduction to this volume of essays that captures and celebrates the continuous presence of Métis people in Canada. The volume is arranged to provide a breadth of perspectives on the fluctuating personal, familial, and national identities of the Métis, defined here as "those people of mixed ancestry, largely Indian, French and British." This extensive coverage challenges previous historical accounts of Métis communities by bringing into focus archival sources, recently acquired manuscripts, diaries, journals, and oral and autobiographical accounts of the variously constituted Métis communities in Canada. One of the most striking aspects of this volume is that each of the Métis contributors addresses the distinctiveness of these communities and expertly traces their historical significance. The essays are suitably framed in three distinct parts: "Reflections on Métis Identities," "Historical Perspectives," and "Métis Families and Communities."

The succinct preface and introduction outline the engaging selection that follows in this, the fourth volume published in Wilfrid Laurier's Aboriginal Studies Series. The essays resulted from a Métis symposium entitled "The Métis, Canada's Forgotten People: The Years of Achievement?" Ironically, this symposium was funded by the Hudson's Bay Company—one of several ironic relationships that exist between the settler and Aboriginal communities, including the Métis. The inclusion of the Métis people as

Aboriginal is based on the recognition of Métis people in Canada's Constitution, as one of Canada's Aboriginal peoples along with "Indians" and "Inuit." The symposium and, by extension, the essays in this volume, move beyond this legal designation to address other issues that stem from this ideological shift. The symposium was based on a few key concerns—"What has this [legal] recognition meant in a practical way for the Métis? What needs to be done in the future since there is still 'no place to which the Métis can retreat?'"—and these questions are at the centre of each essay. Métis historian and educator Olive Patricia Dickason opens the first chapter with a reflection on her own journey through academia, the completion of a Ph.D. in Aboriginal history, her years teaching, and her current prolific publishing career. David T. McNab, a Métis historian, also uses autobiographical sources but frames his contribution in the form of seven stories interweaving his own narrative with those of the ancestors on both sides of his Métis heritage. The third chapter is of particular significance for literary critics as editor Ute Lischke analyzes several of Louise Erdrich's writings (both autobiographical and fictional sources) and traces the significance of the Métis and mixed characters in her oeuvre. The next chapter is penned by contributor Jean Teillet, a great-grand-niece of Louis Riel, who argued the *Powley* case before the Supreme Court. Teillet summarizes the significance of this legal case for Métis identities, family histories, and communities and ultimately suggests that the presence of many Métis communities in Canada needs to be acknowledged. This admirable goal is the objective behind this comprehensive volume.

Part II opens with Sandy Campbell, a Métis historian, documenting eighteenth-century military personnel and their Aboriginal wives. His essay includes his own autobiographical link to these descendants and inquires into the tendency of these military men to remain with their wives after their tour of duty in what is now eastern Ontario was over. The next essay, by Nicole St. Onge, also traces a similar interracial marriage phenomenon in Athabasca St. Onge. The editors rightly suggest that these two essays show the "ubiquity of Métis communities in Canada," and they implicitly insist on a wider, more historically accurate paradigm shift to accommodate these communities within the rubric of Métis communities in Canada. Again, government documents are used to address the Métis at Sault St. Marie and the impact that colonial intervention and, specifically, the mid-nineteenth-century Robinson treaties, have had on these communities. Heather Devine, a Métis historian, also weaves her own search for identity with an analysis of a lost manuscript that may have significance in outlining some of the missing history pertaining to Louis Riel's resistance movement. The "Keenan manuscript" is a transcription of a diary by an anonymous traveller Devine describes as "a young British nobleman who had spent the larger portion of a year on the plains with a party of Métis buffalo hunters originating in Pembina, North Dakota, around 1871." Devine uses several archival and oral sources to substantiate the legitimacy of this diary and offers her analysis of it to scholars seeking to reconstruct the events surrounding Métis and European involvement in these buffalo hunts. Yet another Métis community is historically documented by Karen J. Travers, who addresses significant families and communities of Drummond Island and Penetanguishene, whose ancestral ties go back to the eighteenth-century.

In the third section, autobiographical sources are used by Virginia Parker, Donna G. Sutherland, and again by Patsy McArthur and Jaime Koebel to document each writer's journey to discover her own Canadian Métis roots. Their contributions

both establish and celebrate these multiple community affiliations and document, in personal ways, the consistent denial and shame that resulted in the fragmentation of Métis community ties for many families seeking to assimilate. Personal memoir, anecdotal evidence, national records, and statistical data authenticate the complexities of Métis communities and the semantic debates around who constitutes the Métis. Jean Teillet asserts that Canada is the only country in the world which has "constitutionally recognized a mixed-blood people as 'Aboriginal.' The inclusion of the Métis, as one of the Aboriginal 'peoples' of Canada and not just as individuals, was intended to settle for once and for all that Métis, as Aboriginal peoples, were included in Canadian Aboriginal policy and law." However, Teillet argues that this constitutional recognition was undermined at the provincial level, and she reminds readers of the need for substantive change in the litigation of Métis rights and disputes.

The sources for these essays include detailed accounts of the intermarriage between British company men and voyageurs from ledger lists, HBC and NWC and other contracts, bible records, death and baptism records, photos, archival sources, personal family records, national archives, letters, gravestones, newspaper archives, booklets, correspondence, Hudson's Bay archives, genealogies, biographies, oral histories and the important autobiographical anecdotes by Métis historians, and individual family stories. The volume, with these diverse sources, substantiates the historical existence of Canadian Métis people in ways that will enable historians, educators, and politicians to address these communities in a more realistic way and, taken as a whole, these essays undermine the simple reductive notion that the Red River Métis are the only Métis. As a Métis woman and educator, I was personally thrilled to review this volume of essays, and I expect they will provide a very significant contribution to the increasing knowledge of who we are, and have been, as Canadian Métis communities.

First Contacts

John Sutton Lutz, ed.
Myth and Memory: Stories of Indigenous-European Contact. U of British Columbia P $32.95

Reviewed by Sophie McCall

"First contact. The words leap off the page into the imagination. Between who? What happened? How do we know what happened?" This collection, while exploring the deep curiosity that "first contact" provokes, productively troubles the notion of contact as a singular event, mapping instead "a moving wave of first contacts" in Indigenous-European stories of encounter. The essays provide a fascinating surf of "first contacts" from New Zealand, England, southern Africa, and the Pacific Northwest, from the eighteenth century to today, giving weight to editor John Sutton Lutz's claim that "we are still in that contact zone." This challenge to the notion of contact as a distinct moment in a chronological history, situated in a singular place, is qualified further by sustained attention to the theatrical and ambiguous effects of performance in cross-cultural interactions. A plentiful range of new approaches to the genre of the contact narrative distinguishes this impressively interdisciplinary collection, with contributions from historians, anthropologists, linguists, and literary critics.

Several papers analyze what one might immediately think of as stories of first contact, such as Lutz's discussion of the meeting between the Haida and the Spaniards on the northeastern Pacific shores in 1774, but most broaden the temporal and thematic scope of the concept to show how its repetition is deeply embedded in many cultural

myths and fantasies about the Other. Some examples will give an idea of the range of first contacts explored in this collection: J.E. Chamberlin and Keith Thor Carlson discuss the vicissitudes of performing oral traditions as evidence of Aboriginal rights and title in courts of law; I.S. MacLaren tracks the many variations (and inventions) of Paul Kane's "eye-witness accounts" of life on the frontier in travel books published in the mid-nineteenth century in a London book market ravenous for stories of Native North America; Wendy Wickwire argues that Okanagan storyteller Harry Robinson told her contact narratives between "Indian" and "White" characters partly as a way to self-reflexively comment on their interaction as ethnographer and storyteller; and Richard Dauenhauer and Nora Marks Dauenhauer describe the volatile role assigned to Tlingit translators who were hired to facilitate discussion (though more often were implicated in tense relations) between the Tlingit nation and the Russian-American Company in Alaska from 1821 to 1855.

Conceptualizing stories of encounter as a "contact zone" that cannot be said to be either "European" or "Indigenous" in a simplistic way sets the stage for much debate in the collection about how to tell the Indigenous side of the story of contact while recognizing the difficulties of retrieving or interpreting this perspective. The contributors struggle to read between the lines of colonial archives, governmental memos, court documents, and recorded interviews, while taking into consideration the intervention of translators, editors, and ghostwriters working in both Indigenous and European languages. Carlson, who worked for the Stó:lo Tribal Council for eight years as historian and research coordinator, and Patrick Moore, an anthropologist who has worked extensively with the Kaska First Nation, make strong arguments for the necessity of researching and interacting with a particular Indigenous group over a long period of time in order to begin to understand how culturally specific genres and scripts frame a variety of contact narratives. For Carlson, there is an urgent need to discover more nuanced ways of representing cultural difference in order to convincingly present evidence of Stó:lo rights and title in a court of law. Chamberlin also considers (among many other things) how to represent oral traditions in courtrooms. However, he draws upon examples from many places and times, from ethnographic writings, novels, and cultural criticism, from jokes, anecdotes, and empirical data. He dramatizes the incommensurability of cultural systems of thought and languages, refusing to explain (away) that which is strange, different, or contradictory in stories of contact. He argues that acknowledging what we don't know is more ethically responsible than pretending to understand. "Belligerent conservatives ask better questions than sympathetic liberals," he says, in reference to Chief Justice Allan McEachern's caustic comment, during the 1991 *Delgamuukw* land claims case in the Supreme Court of BC, that he had a "tin ear" and could not "hear" the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en performances of oral traditions. This and other cautionary tales of cross-cultural unintelligibility act as a warning in Chamberlin's chapter that there is nothing "natural" about the acts of listening and reading.

In the Introduction, Lutz draws the reader's attention to Chamberlin's phrase, "ceremonies of belief," as a way to make the point that for the most part, what visitors "found" in Native North America is what they expected to find, and what they narrated as "chronicles of events" were framed by their presuppositions. Steeped in their own belief systems, influenced by stereotypes about "primitive" peoples, shaped by discourses of race, nature, and culture, outsiders sought to comprehend Aboriginal peoples on their own terms. For

example, Michael Harkin analyzes how the disappearance of the Roanoke Colony on the eastern seaboard of the US nevertheless justified the presence of a subsequent settler community. He argues that through sheer repetition, even stories about the absence of a settler community can powerfully assert a myth of origins for the settler nation. Nevertheless, while not denying dominant discourses of dispossession, many contributors argue that assimilation is a two-way process: both sides negotiate and engage in power plays. In moments of first contact, something is always exchanged: both sides use the means available to them to assert their authority. Hearing both sides depends upon careful listening, as well as a sense of humility to recognize the limitations of our varying degrees of "tin ears." In the words of Harry Robinson, urging his listener, Wendy Wickwire, to attend carefully to his stories: "Take a listen to these [tapes] a few times and think about it. Compare them. See if you can see something more about it. Kind of plain, but it's pretty hard to tell you for you to know right now."

Theory and Practice

Michael McKinnie, ed.
Space and the Geographies of Theatre. Playwrights Canada $25.00

Andrew Houston, ed.
Environmental and Site-Specific Theatre. Playwrights Canada $25.00

Reviewed by Malcolm Page

Theatre studies used to be about what, when, and where, with some attention to who. Now queries have replaced calendars of events, with the asking of why and a more searching what. This is shown by the welcome volumes of this series: two books on dramatists, two based on race, one on a province, one on sexual orientation, and one essentially theoretical, on feminism. Of the two latest, one ambitiously presents varied approaches to space, and the other examines a type of performance. Both present a sample of relevant material, largely leaving the reader to create connections and coherence.

Michael McKinnie writes in his Introduction to *Space and the Geographies of Theatre* that "the purchase of geographical research within theatre studies has never been greater." No professional geographers, however, write in the book. McKinnie sees this collection as dividing into three sections about three geographies, environmental, political, and cultural. His bibliography, on the other hand, divides into two parts, "Canadian Theatre Criticism" and "Spatial Criticism." Of the forty books and articles in the second half, most have such titles such as *The Fall of Public Man* and *Cities in a World Economy*, by sociologists and urban planners. At most, ten of the citations relate to theatre.

Six of the essays locate the reader comfortably in Canadian theatre: Diane Bessai's seminal 1980 description of regionalism; Alexander Leggatt on rural Ontario in theatre; Sherrill Grace's deep scrutiny of "the North" in Canadian work; Anton Wagner on Herman Voaden and landscape; Guillermo Verdecchia on what should be written for the MT Space in Kitchener, and Rob Appleford on Floyd Favel Star's rewriting of *Uncle Vanya* as *House of Sonya*, to demonstrate the spatial shift from Russia to Aboriginal Canada.

The remainder pressures the reader to make connections, to look in new and different ways at theatre and space. Alan Filewod engages with Canada seeking definition separate from Britain and the US, and Erin Hurley looks at the effect of globalization on national culture. Mayte Gomez shows Verdecchia in *Fronteras Americanas* reproducing and subverting "the ideology of multiculturalism." The others are about Toronto. McKinnie contrasts the reasons for building the St

Lawrence Centre in the 1960s and the reasons for putting up the Ford Centre in North York in the 1990s. Robert Wallace places Buddies in Bad Times in their two theatres but also in "the strategy of 'positionality,'" and Laura Levin, in the only new essay, considers the origins and possibilities of new forms for the city. Ric Knowles explains effectively how the impact of a production can be changed, even neutralized, by buildings and their ambiance. I found this collection somewhere between a misfired brainwave and imaginative ways of looking and thinking. Coincidentally, Gay McAuley has just edited *Unstable Ground: Performance and the Politics of Place*, a similar study of Australia theatre.

The subject of *Environmental and Site-Specific Theatre* is what happens when actors leave a theatre to perform elsewhere, whether indoors or out, a situation which provides "engaging and affirming challenges." Though the distinction between "environmental" and "site-specific" is never clear, the focus is on shows and sometimes on what might be labelled "performance art," rather than on plays and scripts. The thirteen individuals and groups examined—mainly by the creators, though from assorted perspectives—range from coast to coast: Theatre Skam, Victoria; Radix, Vancouver; Murray Schafer near Banff and in Peterborough; Shawn Dempsey and Lorri Millan in Banff; Rachael van Fossen's community plays in Saskatchewan; *The Bus Project* in Regina; *The Weyburn Project* in Saskatchewan; Krizanc's *Tamara*, the work of Hillar Liitoja, Necessary Angel's *Newhouse*, and bluemouth, all in Toronto; Hildegard Westerkamp's sound piece in Peterborough; and the Mummers' *Gros Mourn* in Newfoundland.

Most of the essays find it necessary not only to discuss the intentions behind the productions but to offer a theoretical basis for these. Keren Zainotz, to take an example, almost writes that bluemouth operates as it does because Michel de Certeau told it to. Some may find it easy to decipher a line like Houston's "A key insight into the use of Soja's trialectics of being as a frame of analysis comes from understanding that none of the elements of the trialectic have a *priori* privilege." Much of both texts is demanding, requiring a second reading.

The problems and rewards of these kinds of theatre are covered, with a section of bluemouth entitled "Please dress warmly and wear sensible shoes." The book leaves the impression that all began with the Mummers at Gros Mourn in 1973, while also leaving the reader wondering what Liitoja, Krizanc, and Necessary Angel have done in the last twenty years.

I know a special quality enters as I follow actors through Stanley Park or watch performers in a swimming pool. But was Radix's show baffling to shoppers in IKEA, and what did passengers in Regina make of *The Bus Project*? Comments on this are sketchy. Van Fossen asserts: "It's vitally important, I believe, that a community play is written with the audience of the community in mind." Liitoja remarks, "I love to see the audience figuring things out—in vain!" While D.D. Kugler says of *Newhouse*: "Lots of times I heard people say 'I didn't like it.' I asked them, 'Did you move around, try to follow it?' 'No.'"

Two final comments. Photographs would have helped: I would like to see how the set of *Newhouse* "evoked the layout of the medieval cathedrals." Both editors might have found useful, less accessible, journalistic material, including reviews. In *Space* all essays are by academics, except for Verdecchia's, while Houston has looked little further than *Canadian Theatre Review*, where eleven of his twenty appeared.

Achieving Greatness

George Melnyk, ed.
Great Canadian Film Directors. U of Alberta P $34.95

Reviewed by Brian McIlroy

George Melnyk runs the risk of being cast as a modern-day Malvolio, apparently believing that some Canadian filmmakers achieve greatness, and, failing that, should have greatness thrust upon them. The boosterism of his title is somewhat off-putting to the cautiously minded academic, even if one is glad to see a western-Canadian university press promote the study of Canadian cinema. Teaching Canadian cinema was once a difficult task. In the 1970s, 1980s, and even 1990s, access to films and good textbooks was difficult. Questions were always raised around the quality of Canadian cinema, as if one were teaching the subject only out of some misplaced residual guilt. True cinema, it was easily assumed, was elsewhere in Hollywood, Europe, and Japan. Thankfully, those days are mostly gone, and the more than one hundred students who regularly sign up for Canadian cinema courses at UBC, for example, clearly think so too.

One of the ways one can track this increased interest is the number of single-authored books and edited anthologies of critical essays on the subject that have appeared in the first years of the twenty-first century. These texts include Gene Walz's *Canada's Best Features* (2002), Katherine Monk's *Weird Sex and Snowshoes* (2001), Andre Loiselle and Tom McSorley's *Self-Portraits: The Cinemas of Canada* (2006), Christopher Gittings' *Canadian National Cinema* (2002), Bill Beard and Jerry White's *North of Everything* (2002), and Jerry White's *The Cinema of Canada* (2006). We now have even a first- or second-year university-level introductory text, *Film in Canada* (2006), courtesy of Jim Leach. *The Canadian Journal of Film Studies* (est. 1990) has also been a leading light in this resurgence.

Unfortunately, Melnyk's brief introduction makes no mention of these recent works, and leaves the informed reader wondering if there is an assured rationale for those directors chosen and those omitted. At a more general level, Melnyk is correct to observe that making universal critical statements about Canadian cinema is a challenge, an uncertainty created by strong regional interests, state dependence for funding, a powerful documentary tradition, and the absence of a central studio system. Little wonder he argues that a director-driven Canadian cinema has resulted.

The book comprises nineteen essays on Canadian and Quebec filmmakers, organized as "Late Greats" (Kay Armatage on Joyce Wieland and Nell Shipman; David Clandfield on Claude Jutra; Jim Leach on Jean-Claude Lauzon); "Contemporary Greats" (Pierre Veronneau on Denys Arcand; George Melnyk on David Cronenberg; Bill Beard on Atom Egoyan; Christopher Gittings on John Greyson; Bart Testa on Norman Jewison; Peter Dickinson on Robert Lepage; Aaron Taylor on Bruce McDonald; Jennifer Gauthier on Lea Pool; Brenda Austin-Smith on Patricia Rozema; and Jacqueline Levitin on Mina Shum); and "Future Greats" (Patricia Gruben on Gary Burns; Bart Beaty on Michael Dowse; Sally Chivers and Nicole Markotic on Thom Fitzgerald; Jerry White on Zach Kunuk; Paul Salmon on Don McKellar; and Kaali Paakspuu on Lynne Stopkewich). Melnyk's taxonomy is arbitrary and untheorized. One is reminded of Jean-Luc Godard in 1984 wondering if there was a difference between himself, as a living person, and François Truffaut, who was then just recently deceased. While he bore the brunt of mostly anglophone derision, he was probably pointing to the fact that whether a filmmaker is alive or dead should not determine our critical view of the work produced. Surely, a better framework for the book could have been attempted? It is also odd to see the living filmmakers further

divided between "contemporary" and "future," for this leads to the faintly absurd situation of Mina Shum "promoted" above Lynne Stopkewich, absurd given that Mina Shum actually learned her art on a film that Lynne Stopkewich worked on as a major participant (*The Grocer's Wife* directed by John Pozer). Is it because Shum has directed three feature films and Stopkewich just two? And yet, it appears that the moniker "great" is applied to any Canadian who has made at least two feature films.

Such quibbles aside, we should be grateful that Melnyk has been the facilitator for some excellent essays. The most original pieces include those of Jerry White on Zach Kunuk's career and artistic perspective; Jacqueline Levitin on Mina Shum's difficult but fruitful creative negotiation of her Chinese Canadian status; Patricia Gruben's thoughtful analysis of Gary Burns' work; and Bart Testa's valiant and exceedingly well informed attempt to cut through the misconceptions about Norman Jewison and his films. Students grappling with Canadian cinema for the first time will be grateful for Bill Beard's views on Atom Egoyan; Kay Armatage's feminist take on Nell Shipman and Joyce Wieland's curtailed careers; Pierre Veronneau's masterly overview of Denys Arcand's themes; Brenda Austin-Smith's astute treatment of Patricia Rozema's cinema; and Peter Dickinson's critique of Robert Lepage's oeuvre. It is also good to see attention given to Lea Pool, whose European sensibilities have tended to bracket her out of many Canadian and Quebec critical contexts. A few of the essays lack, to my mind, a compelling argument, but all of them provide useful information for undergraduate students to grapple with; and one assumes from the level of writing and from the absence of theory, for the most part, that they are the intended audience.

The sins of omission are endless in any anthology, and I'm sure Melnyk would be the first to admit that another book could be published on a slew of other directors—Guy Maddin, Bruce Sweeney, John Paizs, Sandy Wilson, Anne Wheeler, François Girard, Andre Forcier, to name only a few. As it stands, the collection contains some original work, many solid introductions, and only a few missed opportunities. The book enters an increasingly crowded field of general anthologies, however, and while it cannot match the depth and reach of William Beard and Jerry White's *North of Everything*, it does modestly succeed (and provides a choice for instructors) by incorporating Quebec directors and films for the consideration of an English-speaking reading public.

Writing Across the Borders

Nega Mezlekia
The Unfortunate Marriage of Azeb Yitades. Penguin Canada $24.00

David Chariandy
Soucouyant. Arsenal Pulp $19.95

M.G. Vassanji
The Assassin's Song. Doubleday Canada $34.95

Reviewed by Kit Dobson

Nega Mezlekia is an immigrant to Canada from Ethiopia, and a professional engineer by training. This leads to writing that tends towards short, declarative sentences, sometimes mechanical, sometimes repetitive (I wondered if this wasn't written more as a series of short stories than as a novel), but nevertheless effective. *The Unfortunate Marriage of Azeb Yitades* describes life in a small village in Ethiopia that is on the verge of rapid modernization in the 1960s. Cut off from the rest of the country and the world, the village of Mechara continues with its particular brand of Christian fervour, one that struggles, over the course of the book, to adapt to change. The eponymous protagonist, Azeb Yitades, is the daughter of the village priest Aba Yitades, who naively believes that he can continue

to wield control over life in the village as a highway is built that connects it to other places. Azeb's eventual marriage is indeed unfortunate, as she chooses a liaison with the village's most abusive but attractive man, one who is supposed to have killed his first wife. The novel describes the changes in the village over the course of Azeb's life, from her birth to the tragic downfall that is connected to her relationship with her husband. Azeb's young willfulness is intertwined with the changing world of the village, with the coming of American missionaries, and with the perils of an unreflexive push towards the new. The old ways of life crumble. Change promises excitement, and possibly a more equitable world, but is not for everyone.

The progress of modernity is consistently presented as inevitable in this novel, change which the villagers must all adapt to. The failure of the villagers to adapt leaves them seeming, at times, like caricatures. Aba Yitades, in particular, is completely unable to understand the changes that are taking place in his world. The traditions for which he stands are depicted in ethnographic terms that render them quaint and easily disregarded. Mezlekia states in his introduction, addressed towards his Western audience, that his is a "memory undermined by twenty-year-old nostalgia." It is unfortunate that this nostalgia does not allow his characters to engage us as sympathetically as they might.

The characters of David Chariandy's novel, however, are highly sympathetic. As far as I'm concerned, *Soucouyant* is the best novel of 2007. I need to be forthright here and state my biases. I know Chariandy, who is an academic who works at Simon Fraser University, and we met, in large part, through discussions of his novel and our mutual recent experiences of fatherhood. He was gracious enough to conduct an interview with me for the journal *Callaloo* about his novel (issue 30.3, 2007). You needn't take my word for how good this novel is, however, as it has been garnering rave reviews. It was longlisted for the Giller Prize and shortlisted for the Governor General's Award. *Soucouyant* is a crisp, short, tightly written novel, one that presents its narrative with a careful ear toward perfection. Chariandy makes sure that every note sounds right. It is a very readable, teachable novel, and we should expect great things from him in years to come.

Soucouyant tells the story of a young, mixed-race man growing up in Scarborough, Ontario, shortly before Scarborough's transformation from a white suburb of Toronto to a racialized neighbourhood of the amalgamated mega-city. The protagonist's parents, Roger and Adele, come to Canada through Trinidad; he is of South Asian origin and she is Black. The family lives an uncomfortable life in Scarborough, in the fictionalized neighbourhood of Port Junction. Roger dies in a workplace accident and Adele suffers from a creeping dementia. This dementia leads to loss, but it also brings back elements of her life in the Caribbean that she has tried to forget, most notably the mythical figure of the soucouyant, whose vampiric qualities are palimpsestically evoked throughout the book. Her son, the protagonist, is abandoned by his brother, and in turn abandons his mother for the heart of the city. He returns, however, to find her memories opening up as she loses her hold on the present. The subtitle of *Soucouyant* is "a novel of forgetting," and it is in the interplay between memory and loss, remembering and forgetting, that Chariandy weaves stories of struggle and oppression into a border-crossing narrative that stretches the imagination. This novel marks a very strong debut.

M.G. Vassanji writes long books, epic in conception, and spanning, in this case, India and North America, from circa 1260 to the present. *The Assassin's Song* was shortlisted for the Giller Prize, but everybody said that he couldn't possibly win it for a

third time (he won it in 1994 and 2003). The award went to Elizabeth Hay. This is a good book, intelligent and thoughtful, though its trajectory moves from very interesting to less interesting—with a twist back towards the interesting at the end.

Karsan Dargawalla, the novel's protagonist, grows up in the fictional Gujarati village of Haripir as the inheritor of the shrine of Pirbaag. His father, the current Saheb of the shrine, expects that his son will become the new Saheb upon his death, and teaches him about the Sufi mystic Nur Fazal—for whom the shrine was established, and whose thirteenth-century life is described in a parallel narrative—so that he might one day take his place. Karsan, however, wishes for nothing more than to become a "normal" person. He wants to play cricket competitively, an ambition quashed by his father. When, as a young adult, he is given the opportunity to go to North America to pursue a post-secondary education, he flees India, defying his father and renouncing his inheritance. He lands at Harvard during the Vietnam era and eventually becomes an English instructor at a college in Burnaby, BC. The narrative, as a result, moves towards what the author seems to feel is the mundane, and is told in less and less detail. In the meantime, however, history intervenes, and the state of Gujarat is embroiled in clashes between Muslim and Hindu extremists. Although the shrine of Pirbaag has played host to both sides, it cannot escape from the current tensions, and Karsan is returned to the world from which he fled after his life in BC turns, similarly, for the worse. He returns to find his brother, Mansoor, taking up the Muslim cause, amid many other changes. Karsan's home is not what it once was, and he discovers that he cannot escape it either. This novel takes readers to a space that tries to heal old wounds and reconcile differences, imagining a time in the future that this might be possible. For now, however, the wounds remain.

Suspended Animation

Rutu Modan

Exit Wounds. Drawn & Quarterly $19.95

Reviewed by Janice Morris

"Another suicide bombing?" Such questions are mundane in Rutu Modan's recent graphic novel, *Exit Wounds*, an unapologetically sobering look at modern-day Israel. As an accomplished writer, illustrator, and co-founder of Actus Tragicus, Israel's comics collective, Modan's interest in representing Israel to the outside world is well-known. Yet, rather than a wrenching display of Israel's violent history or an overtly political challenge, *Exit Wounds* largely presents the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict as backdrop, eschewing public outrage and hysteria and privileging instead the private, quotidian existences of its characters. In so doing, the novel examines the emotional brutality and human detachment that roots itself and takes hold amidst everyday fear and violence.

An unlikely alliance forms between Koby Franco, an aimless taxi driver estranged from Gabriel, the father he has seen only five times in three years, and Numi, an Israeli soldier and Gabriel's most recent lover, as they search for clues surrounding Gabriel's assumed death in a recent bus station bombing. While Koby, alienated and shiftless, remains content to coast through life and clings to well-worn stories of fatherly abandonment, Numi, socially awkward and unable to accept Gabriel's rejection, doggedly insists on Gabriel's death. Their often testy union—Numi's rebellious disregard for her family's wealth grates against Koby's blue-collar subsistence—transports them through marketplaces, morgues, apartments, graveyards, and countrysides, as they zigzag their way across not only brimming cities and deserted seasides, but also conspicuous social strata and class divisions. That

Gabriel is ultimately revealed to be a multitude of complex, conflicting identities—at once a potentially unclaimed body, father, (ex-)husband, lover, soldier, and man of faith—forces both Koby and Numi to question not only all that they thought they knew, but also their own hand in constructing the past.

Modan's narrative style—linear, coherent, and devoid of melodrama—is matched by her visual technique and stylistic choices. She employs an economical, "clear line" style and uniform paneling, with little variance in shading, shadow, and texture. Similarly, her palette is for the most part solid and evenly applied, but notably subdued. While her characters appear simple and undemanding—including often only dots for eyes—there remains an undeniable precision and expressiveness, so that body language, tone, and mood, although subtle, are everywhere. While Modan's countrysides and waterscapes are occasionally rendered in brilliant blues and greens, these picturesque departures from the browns and yellows of Tel Aviv's urban sprawl draw less attention to Modan's artistic flair than the omnipresence of death. Moreover, whatever visual ordinariness Modan's characters and settings exude in reflecting what has become a commonplace acceptance of death serves to amplify the urgency found more in the dialogue—the novel's most unmuted, textured feature.

Exit Wounds is less interested in direct commentary on war than in the *spectre* of war and how it shapes political consciousness, social stratification, and the emotional violence inflicted on and between people—but not in the context of epic scenes, or even material evidence. Rather, the novel scrutinizes the small, but equally brutal, moments between individuals. In the absence of large-scale, political movements, transcending that cruelty *within* the potentiality of intimate relationships becomes, then, the novel's central hope. So, what begins as a mystery to be solved evolves into a buoyant contemplation of the reconstructive capacity inherent in reliving and retelling memories, whereby the traumatic past might be generatively revisioned and refashioned. For Koby, who has become knee-jerkingly reliant on Gabriel's desertion as a means of framing his own past, this means understanding and coming to grips with his own transient existence: as a taxi driver, whatever working-class aspirations he possesses (or, more to the point, lacks altogether) are undercut by the fact that he is himself without a defined journey or central narrative, confined instead to shuttling others around. As for Numi, while her abiding energy and enthusiasm can be infectious, she too has spent much of her life running, preferring to clutch at the possibility of death rather than acknowledge the likelihood of abandonment. The novel's conclusion, devoid of tidy resolutions, nonetheless paints an optimistic picture: its final panels, with both its characters and readers suspended—literally and figuratively—are at once surprisingly tender and indelibly hopeful.

Persistent and Challenging Enigmas

Susanna Moodie; Michael Peterman, ed.
Roughing It in the Bush. Norton $18.95

L.M. Montgomery; Mary Henley Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston, eds.
Anne of Green Gables. Norton $14.50

Reviewed by Jennifer Scott

Norton's new critical editions of Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* and L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* serve as a timely reminder of the endurance of these "classic" texts in Canadian literature. The question of "classic" is the focus of the L.M. Montgomery Institute's 2008 conference, and it seems fitting to revisit these two Canadian classics on the occasion of the centennial anniversary of *Anne of Green*

Gables. Like *Anne*, Moodie's *Roughing It* has permeated academic as well as literary reading communities since its publication in 1852. Moodie, who accompanied her husband John (a sporadic contributor to *Roughing It*) to Upper Canada in 1832, outlines the "real" experience of Upper Canada for potential emigrants looking to make a fortune in the newly settled colony. For Moodie, the reality of Upper Canada is one of hardship and toil. Although she lives the rest of her life in Upper Canada, she always considers England as "home."

The question of home is a central one for Moodie as well as for Montgomery's protagonist, Anne. Both texts take up the question of belonging—whether within a new nation, as is the case for Moodie, or within a new province and new family, as is the case for Anne. Importantly, these texts have had difficulty finding a permanent "home" among scholarly critics. It is their ability to move between genres and critical frameworks that has allowed them to remain salient through generations of scholarship, and it comes as no surprise that the field will welcome new critical editions of these Canadian "classics."

The question of feeling "at home" is never fully answered for Moodie. Editor Michael Peterman categorizes Moodie's text as a "persistent and challenging enigma," a designation supported by the ongoing critical curiosity surrounding *Roughing It.* Moodie doesn't fit into a neat category, and Peterman's extensive historical and geographical research emphasizes Moodie's enigmatic qualities as an author and an emigrant settler. Peterman provides a wealth of supplementary information to Moodie's text, which can be overwhelming at times, but will be most useful for any critic looking for historical, geographic, literary, and cultural contexts of the text. The "Backgrounds" section includes contemporaneous reviews, advertisements, chapters that arrived too late at the publisher's for inclusion in the first edition, and other paratextual elements. This secondary criticism highlights Moodie's ongoing literary success through generations of Canadian scholarship. Margaret Atwood, David Stouck, D.M.R. Bentley, and John Thurston provide an early critical context. The possibilities for the feminist, the cultural materialist, and the postcolonialist are all made visible though the later critical material. Moodie's prowess as a storyteller is never far from the reader's mind; this prowess persistently troubles the fluid generic boundaries between autobiography, settler's guide, and fiction, and it is the impossibility of categorizing Moodie that allows her text to remain enigmatic and intriguing 155 years after its publication.

Whereas Moodie's text is difficult to categorize generically, Montgomery's "classic" *Anne of Green Gables* embodies the quintessential *bildungsroman* for the young Canadian girl while remaining critically enigmatic: readers know what to do with *Anne,* but this categorization has been more difficult for scholarly critics. As editors Mary Henley Waterston and Elizabeth Rubio suggest, "surprise has always been a keynote with *Anne of Green Gables*." Surprise acts then as a thematic within *Anne* but also as a reaction to the overwhelming and unwavering popularity and success of Montgomery's most famous novel. As Rubio and Waterston explain in their Preface, writers like Joyce and Faulkner critically overshadowed *Anne* in the pre-war period. Nevertheless, *Anne* remained a favourite among readers. Following the publication and release of Montgomery's journals in 1985, *Anne* was revisited by scholars with "new seriousness."

Rubio and Waterston provide literary, cultural, contemporaneous, and modern critical contexts for *Anne*, allowing for new attention to be paid to the complex nature of this seemingly simple text. Rubio and Waterston use the first edition as copy-text, and include reproductions of M.A. and

W.A.J. Claus' illustrations, as did Cecily Devereux in her 2004 Broadview critical edition. The appendices are well-chosen, and provide a holistic critical landscape of *Anne*, drawing attention to the novel's immediate popularity through the inclusion of contemporaneous reviews and to its ongoing critical salience for feminist, genre, and postcolonial scholars alike. The extensive literary and cultural contexts included in the "Backgrounds" section locate *Anne* within a larger framework; in this positioning, Rubio and Waterston offer the suggestion that *Anne* has always been part of a critical literary landscape outside of juvenilia. The secondary criticism is heavily excerpted: on the one hand, the use of excerpts rather than full articles allows Rubio and Waterston to offer a more thorough representation of the body of work surrounding *Anne*, which the reader can then supplement by making use of the extensive bibliography included in the edition. On the other hand, the attempt to distill each article ultimately reduces and excludes much of the textual analysis provided in each full-length piece. The in-text annotation is overwhelming and seems unnecessary much of the time. However, given the international popularity of *Anne*, the extensive footnotes will be most helpful for the avid fan who is unfamiliar with Canadian geography, historical context, and colloquialisms.

These Norton critical editions provide historical and cultural contexts that remind us why these two Canadian texts are considered "classics": both texts continue to prompt questions regarding Canadian identity, personal agency, female independence, and the relationship between the individual and the larger community, whether regional, provincial, national, or colonial.

The Wordy and the Wary

Marina Nemat
Prisoner of Tehran: A Memoir. Viking $34.00

Don Coles
A Dropped Glove in Regent Street: An Autobiography by Other Means. Signal $18.95

Reviewed by Katja Lee

Don Coles' *A Dropped Glove in Regent Street* and Marina Nemat's *Prisoner of Tehran*, when brought together, throw into relief the incredible range of possible styles, structures, and forms that can be used to tell a life story. This range, however, is less surprising when one considers the extraordinarily different stories each writer has to tell. Coles is a Governor General's Award-winning Canadian poet, a connoisseur of literary biography, and a man fortunate enough to have spent an eclectic youth travelling through Europe in an impoverished but, nevertheless, privileged continental tour. His "autobiography by other means" is a collection of stories, book reviews, and personal narrative fragments rendered in prose that is witty and challenging. Nemat is an Iranian-born Christian who, during the Islamic Revolution of the late 1970s, walked out of calculus class in protest against its new religious and political curriculum and found herself, only sixteen-years-old, in Evin, Tehran's notorious political prison. While friends and loved ones disappear, Nemat survives to tell a story that reads like a fairy tale gone horribly wrong. Just moments before she is to be executed, she is rescued by a senior-level interrogator. But there is a hefty price to pay for his intervention: compelled to convert and marry her rescuer, Nemat must exchange a cell in Evin for the cold confines of domestic and sexual servitude. A narrative of growth, terror, loss, alienation, and the sacrifices made to survive, *Prisoner of Tehran* is a stark and simple telling of a life that was anything but simple.

Nemat's memoir joins a growing body of autobiographical narratives that bear witness to women's experiences of the Islamic Revolution. Yet unlike Marjane Satrapi's popular *Persepolis* texts, *Prisoner of Tehran* unveils the struggle not just to survive but to speak of survival. Her prison interrogators had often told her, "You can avoid the pain if you tell the truth," but Nemat's narrative reminds us that remembering and speaking are not easy and never painless. Memory, truth-telling, and pain are continually linked throughout the text while silence and willful forgetfulness often figure as tactics of temporary self-preservation. However, after twenty years of silence for "everyone's sake," Nemat forces herself to remember and rediscover those "words lost deep inside." The story of Sarah most poignantly literalizes the necessity for women to bring words to the surface: a friend and fellow inmate in Evin, Sarah, seems less able to cope with her experiences. Unwilling or unable to seek refuge in forgetting, she writes her memories all over her body and refuses to bathe until more pens are found. Only now, as Nemat begins her own surfacing and inscribing project, does she understand "The Book of Sarah. Alive, breathing, feeling, hurting, remembering."

In light of Nemat's cautious and considered approach to language, it is no easy task to transition to Coles' confident yet rambling meditations on the art of responding to art. In the first section of the text, there is a wonderful narrative that recalls a "grotesque" and "staggering" failure to respond to a vision of great beauty—a woman whose worth Coles might have measured in thousands of ships. Yet it is not the woman who has a profound and lasting effect on him, but the memory of his artless abandonment of living, breathing Art. Thus Coles, like Nemat, uses the autobiographical form to revisit and redress a lingering dis-ease with the past. This "autobiography by other means" is, in fact, a collection of his responses to beauty and includes a meditation "On Translations," an essay on "Literary Biographies," twenty-two book reviews, and memory fragments of his travels. A discussion of Art grounds nearly every self-conscious autobiographical impulse, perhaps because the Art and his responses to it are still accessible in ways that his memory and the Europe of his past no longer are. We are meant to know that Coles does not fail to respond to beauty, but is acutely and painfully aware of both its presence and its absence.

Coles' focus on capital "A" Art rather than Self implies not that the Self is insufficient but, rather, that the Self is inseparable from Art: the Art we love and our responses to it is not an insight into Self, but an expression of Self. This philosophy thus seems to pave the way for the significant number of book reviews in the text. That Coles' taste in books and his written responses to them say something about his Self has more interesting implications than what we might learn about Coles in particular. It speaks to broader considerations of the autobiographical performances housed in all of our written responses to culture, including reviews and, potentially, more formal academic work as well. But while this text raises all sorts of interesting questions about the "other means" of rendering the Self, it doggedly pursues only a handful of the possibilities. Of his study and travel in Europe we hear much, but that they were part of a developing career in writing, we hear only that "I was there to write, writing was getting itself done, much too tortuous to be of interest, ultimately, to anyone but myself. . . . " His own meandering prose is, at times, delightful and, elsewhere, indulgent. One senses he is not just speaking of Adorno when he remarks "how writers and artists of all kinds often, in their late years, achieve a sort of ease which resembles carelessness, resembles a deliberate breaking-of-rules, as if there was

nothing left to prove and so one was free to, for example, write "badly," but badly from that beyond-confidence place one had reached, and so, in fact, write repetitively, if that's how the words came, or brusquely, or awkwardly, or superlatively fluently if that was what arrived on the page. . . . " Yet, it is difficult to resist his delight in language. *A Dropped Glove* clearly captures Coles' genuine passion for Language, Literature, and Art, and, despite how narrowly (or, perhaps, conservatively) he construes those categories, they interestingly do not seem at odds with his experimentation with auto-biographical forms.

Both texts have considerable potential to contribute to current scholarship: the *Prisoner of Tehran* will be useful to those working in memory and trauma, women's speech acts, prison life writing, and women in Islam, and *A Dropped Glove*'s play with form offers us interesting directions in auto-biographical performances. Nonetheless, in the spirit of Orwell's frank approach to criticism that Coles admires so much, it must be said that only the former is interesting to read while the latter is interesting to write about: it is no secret that, while Nemat speaks to testify, Coles speaks to fill a gap in his oeuvre.

Alpha Beta Gammas

bpNichol; Darren Wershler-Henry and Lori Emerson, eds.
The Alphabet Game: A bpNichol Reader. Coach House $21.95

Reviewed by Kit Dobson

Those who have lamented the passing of the previous bpNichol reader, *An H in the Heart*, rejoice! *The Alphabet Game* is here to introduce a new generation of readers to the work of one of Canada's most eclectic and exciting poets. *An H in the Heart*, Michael Ondaatje and George Bowering's assemblage (McClelland & Stewart, 1994), was the staple introductory text—but it went out of print. *The Alphabet Game*, edited by Darren Wershler-Henry and Lori Emerson, steps into the game as an accessible, intelligent, and deeply felt compendium of Nichol's work, from his ephemera to *The Martyrology* and more. At three-hundred-plus pages, it is heftier than the earlier reader, and published by Coach House Books, which is a better home for Nichol's work, since they publish much of his other writing.

There are notable differences. *An H in the Heart* was edited by two of Nichol's friends, and their admiration and personal connection is displayed in the way that they produced that work. Wershler-Henry and Emerson, however, are part of a new generation of scholars working on Nichol, and they produce their reader with a mix of academic rigour and care. It demonstrates a respect for Nichol that is both intellectual and emotional. They are not without prior connection to Nichol's work, either. Wershler-Henry published, in 1997, one of the first books from the revamped Coach House Books (previously Coach House Press). Entitled *Nicholodeon*, it is a clever book of what he calls "lower-glyphs," poems and concrete pieces that pay homage to Nichol and others. Emerson, currently a post-doctoral fellow in Georgia, has published on poetics and media and technology, and has worked on Nichol online, archiving his sound poems. Both are well-suited to compile this publication, as well as to the companion web site (<http://bpnichol.ca>).

The Alphabet Game is well-produced, and a pleasure to read. It includes bp favourites—excerpts of *Selected Organs* and "Blues," for example—alongside well-chosen passages from longer works, and many lesser-known pieces. Notes at the back and footers indicating the source of texts keep readers grounded and aware of what's at stake in both reading and

editing Nichol. I don't agree with all of the choices—I would have chosen the part from book two of *The Martyrology* about the dog Terry, for instance—but this sampling is both representative and excellent. Poet jwcurry has spent many years assembling what he calls a *Beepliographic Cyclopoedia*, which covers all of Nichol's works and works about Nichol. It will clock in at three-thousand-plus pages in eight volumes, and is still in progress. Assembling the absolutely prolific bpNichol into a single package is a gargantuan effort, and Wershler-Henry and Emerson should be applauded for this work. Distilling Nichol is impossible, but *The Alphabet Game* does just that, and brilliantly.

Dispersed Geographies

Michael Ondaatje
Divisadero. McClelland & Stewart $34.99

Madeleine Thien
Certainty. McClelland & Stewart $21.00

Reviewed by Gillian Roberts

Seven years after the publication of *Anil's Ghost*, Ondaatje's new novel arrives accompanied by a weight of expectation. Like *The English Patient* and *Anil's Ghost*, *Divisadero* offers a narrative wide-ranging in its geography. We begin with the story of two California sisters, Anna and Claire, their father, and his hired hand, Coop. The father's discovery of Anna and Coop's sexual relationship destroys the family, and we follow the separate stories of Anna, Coop, and Claire in the wake of the father's violent retribution. While Coop's story is one of card games in the desert, Anna, who intermittently narrates, surfaces in France, where she researches the writer Lucien Segura, whose own, early twentieth-century narrative focuses on his befriending Marie-Neige, a young, poor, and illiterate woman who rents a nearby farmhouse with her husband. Though Anna teaches French at a San Francisco university, she remains lost to her sister, who works for a defence lawyer in the city.

Many of *Divisadero*'s characters resemble those from earlier works in Ondaatje's corpus. Coop is a kind of cousin to *In the Skin of a Lion*'s Patrick Lewis, quiet, almost passive, exuding innocence of a sort, his character expressed through physicality: "Coop, who with his confidence would sweep a hay bale over his shoulder and walk to the barn lighting a cigarette with his free hand." Anna, like Anil, ambivalent about her own history, tries to lose herself in her research. The setting and atmosphere of *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* also resonate through Coop's narrative in the American desert as Ondaatje revisits a kind of Wild West lawlessness.

However, *Divisadero* also departs from earlier Ondaatje works. *In the Skin of a Lion*, *The English Patient*, and *Anil's Ghost* each work to build small groups of affiliation only to shatter them in various ways in the culmination of their narratives. In contrast, *Divisadero* destroys its affiliative group early on, its narrative functioning centrifugally rather than centripetally. Further, Anna's role as narrator, inconsistent throughout the book, presents a major structural and stylistic difference from *Divisadero*'s precursors. Ondaatje leaves open the possibility that Anna not only narrates her own story but constructs the others' stories as well—"I find the lives of Coop and my sister and my father everywhere (I draw portraits of them everywhere)"—just as she is writing a book about Segura and, potentially, his personal narrative.

Like the earlier novels, *Divisadero* pits individuals' histories against accepted history, the forgotten and neglected against the machinations of the powerful. One of Ondaatje's most significant strengths has been his ability to illustrate the unavoidable impact of historical events on "unhistorical" lives. In *Divisadero*, however, the violence of history threatens

to become a backdrop. The novel makes reference to wars throughout the twentieth century—Segura's narrative of World War I; Claire's employer's post-Vietnam trauma; news coverage of both the Gulf and Iraq Wars—but it is difficult to ascertain how this history of war functions in the text. Are we to understand that such exertions of violence and power occur in unavoidable cycles, or rather that, particularly in the case of the wars in the Gulf, we have failed to acknowledge them properly by allowing the details of daily life to dominate our concerns? Nonetheless, *Divisadero* is unwavering about power, where it lies, and how representation and aesthetics usually treat the "unhistorical," as Marie-Neige knows only too well: "She saw her life then for what it was. There would always be this pointless and impotent dreaming on farms, and there would always be a rich man on horseback who galloped across the world, riding into a forest just to inhale its wet birch leaves after a storm."

Madeleine Thien's debut novel, *Certainty*, spans an even larger geographical range, encompassing Sandakan in British North Borneo, Jakarta, Hong Kong, Melbourne, Vancouver, and Amsterdam. *Certainty* unfolds in the aftermath of the death of Gail Lim, a Vancouver radio journalist, mourned by her partner Ansel and her parents. Concerned with the workings of time and memory, the novel slips into and out of the past, at times in a single paragraph. Past events consist largely of the memories of Gail's father, Matthew, in Sandakan at the close of World War II onward, and his relationship with his childhood friend Ani who later, initially unbeknownst to him, gives birth to their son. At the time of her death, Gail is working on a documentary about a Canadian prisoner of war who kept an encrypted diary and later forgot his own code. Matthew's history, his secret child, and the mystery of his depression during Gail's upbringing run parallel to the decryption narrative. In this way, *Certainty* traces various kinds of fallout—political, personal, and traumatic—beginning with World War II and Matthew's father's collaboration with Japanese officers but also including the personal betrayal of Ansel's affair.

Sophisticated in its structure and well written, *Certainty* does not quite match the poetic precision and affective power of Ondaatje's language; however, it demonstrates an understated, nuanced, and politicized logic to its geography that *Divisadero* falls short of attaining. Without explicitly saying so, *Certainty* tracks its global narrative through histories of colonization that bridge such locations as Vancouver and Amsterdam, tracing roots and routes via stories underpinned by British and Dutch power overseas. Thien thereby develops her concern with migration and displacement, first articulated in her short story collection, *Simple Recipes*. *Certainty* crosses borders of both time and space, bringing its dispersed narratives to an intersection in Gail, its dead protagonist.

Certainty focuses on how people seek out order and meaning, introducing a variety of scientific, philosophical, and ethical discussions facilitated by Gail's investigative work and the intellectual company she keeps: How do birds fly in formation? What causes the optical illusion of the changing size of the moon? What is the responsibility of war photographers? Unafraid to entertain such questions, *Certainty* is an intelligent novel, a novel about intelligence as well as its limits when life intervenes.

Icare et la poésie

Fernand Ouellette
L'Inoubliable : chronique III. Hexagone 25,95 $

Jean Chapdelaine Gagnon; Andrea Moorhead, dir.
La Déchirure des mots. Noroît 18,95 $

Michel Leclerc
La Fatigue et la cendre. Noroît 17,95 $

Compte rendu Jean-Sébastien Trudel

L'Inoubliable de Fernand Ouellette s'affiche d'emblée comme le résultat d'une aventure ambitieuse : tenter « une véritable odyssée [quotidienne] dans le vertical » tout en maintenant « une poétique . . . enracin[ée] dans la matière du monde ». La poésie de Ouellette décrit effectivement une quête qui vise à maintenir ouvert l'espace de « l'Esprit », pour que la communion originelle avec Dieu soit de nouveau possible. Elle travaille « Pour que le monde soit animé, / Maintienne un large accord, / Même précaire », et trouve à travers cela une cohérence certaine. Malheureusement, pour ouvrir l'espace de la transcendance, il ne suffit pas de répéter qu'on l'ouvre. Ainsi, le lecteur, du moins celui qui n'est pas en extase devant un Dieu « consolant », reste étranger à cette odyssée du poète. Pour le lecteur, le spectacle qui s'offre est celui d'un Icare, héros auquel le poète se compare d'ailleurs explicitement, mais d'un Icare qui serait resté dans le labyrinthe, alors qu'il croit voler, qu'il chante qu'il vole, qu'il a peur de tomber, celui d'un Icare pensant brûler ses ailes de cire à la lumière de la vérité, alors que personne d'autre n'a chaud, que personne n'est aveuglé. Pourquoi ne pas simplement en rire, si ce n'est que ce spectacle est celui que chacun offre aux autres, alors même que chacun pense réaliser sa quête?

Avec *La Déchirure des mots*, poèmes de Jean Chapdelaine Gagnon choisis par Andrea Moorhead, point de prétention au chant, mais plutôt une sorte de deuil du chant : « un entrefilet de voix prise à son jeu, prête à s'entendre, croyant pourtant atteindre à quelque chant, mais vite déçue ». Ici, Icare se rend compte qu'il n'a jamais volé, qu'il est encore sur terre. Les poèmes témoignent donc d'une incarnation, mais par la voix, plutôt que de chercher l'élévation par le chant : « J'irai en élaguant ma voix à coups de langues et de dents, à coups de corps parlant. » Parfois le poète fait valoir cette humilité de la voix (« ce langage sans lames / Sans bris de verre sans éclats »), pour se justifier d'écrire et de vouloir être lu. Ailleurs, il utilise plutôt l'ingénieux artifice de la prétérition pour continuer à dire sans prétendre dire, pour avoir une voix sans prétendre au chant (et sans risque, donc). Ces poèmes présentent ainsi une sorte de lutte entre le poète et ce qui le fait écrire. Contrairement à ce que l'on pourrait penser, le combat évoqué ne concerne pas que les poètes. En fait, Chapdelaine Gagnon sait si bien manier l'art de l'indistinct (en utilisant des pronoms personnels sans mentionner de qui ou de quoi il est question exactement), que ce qu'il figure avec ses textes rejoint un certain universel. En fin de compte, ne sommes-nous pas tous livrés à des choses indistinctes qui parlent à travers nous? La poésie de Chapdelaine Gagnon témoigne en cela du combat de tout humain avec ce qui le fonde, soit une espèce de trou, de vide. Mais plutôt que de donner d'emblée une solution au problème humain, elle nous laisse aux prises avec le « mystère de l'homme ».

La Fatigue et la cendre, de Michel Leclerc, retrouve l'ambition du chant, mais après le deuil. Il faut imaginer un Icare qui n'a jamais décollé, mais qui a tout de même brûlé ses ailes et qui, tel un phénix, renaît de ses cendres. En fait, le chant, c'est celui des cendres elles-mêmes, qui restent cendres, celui du deuil de la lumière (mais « L'ombre est par essence, / toujours, / une autre lumière »), du deuil d'une transcendance qui pourrait sauver, consoler (« et je n'attends rien de nouveau, / qui éclairerait moins que ma propre voix / si seulement

j'en possédais la clé ») . . . jusqu'à ce que le deuil devienne lumière. Après tout, « chacun n'effleure d'un mot / qu'un pas de l'univers ».

Test, Quest, Conquest

Michael Peterman; Hugh Brewster, ed.
Sisters in Two Worlds: A Visual Biography of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill. Doubleday Canada $45.00

Heather Robertson
Measuring Mother Earth: How Joe the Kid Became Tyrrell of the North. McClelland & Stewart $34.99

Greg Gillespie
Hunting for Empire: Narratives of Sport in Rupert's Land, 1840-70. U of British Columbia P $32.95

Reviewed by Cheryl Cundell

An interesting and attractive biography, *Sisters in Two Worlds* focuses on the Strickland sisters, the early Canadian writers, Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie. Marking the milestones and entering the milieus of the sisters' lives, Michael Peterman's work is a detailed and feeling narration augmented by visuals that are part evocation of place and past and part portrait gallery. The first chapter depicting the comfort, education, and inspiration of the sisters' family life in rural Suffolk, England, ends with their father's death and, thus, brings the formative years together with the economic necessity that propelled the sisters to write "as a possible source of income." Although Susanna's path takes her to London while Catharine remains at the family home, with marriages that seem to reflect their characters (Susanna's passionate one with John Dunbar Moodie and Catharine's pragmatic one with Thomas Traill), the scene is set for their paths to join again in immigration, "The Voyage Out," across the Atlantic, into the St. Lawrence, and on to Upper Canada, where life history turns into a story of struggle. Illness, misfortune, and poverty act as counterpoint to the sisters' sometimes successful writing ventures. Offering glimpses of the other Strickland family members, Peterman's work both recreates family relations and broadens the view of the immigrant experience by providing, in Samuel Strickland, the figure of "The Successful Pioneer," a foil to his sisters and, in Agnes and Eliza, writers of royal biographies, reminders of the genteel world that Catharine and Susanna left behind. Although writing unifies the sisters' comfortable Suffolk beginnings with their struggles in Upper Canada, the contrast of these circumstances makes the idea that, in their mature years, Catharine and Susanna became "well-known figures in the literary life of the developing colony" all the more remarkable, for immigration was not an opportunity but a test for these two sisters who, as just-married women, departed from England in 1832.

As engaging a biography as its central figure was far-ranging, *Measuring Mother Earth* is both a depiction of the adventures and personas of Joseph Burr Tyrrell and a delicious sampling of Canada past. Less conventional than a strictly chronological account of the subject's life, Heather Robertson's work is, at times, travel writing as much as biography, and both imaginatively recreate and quote excerpts from Tyrrell's field notes and the writing of previous explorers, most notably David Thompson, whose manuscript Tyrrell brought to print. Beginning her work with Martin Frobisher's sixteenth-century search for a Northwest Passage and gold, Robertson not only situates Tyrrell firmly within the tradition of British exploration but also hints at the other thing that structured Tyrrell's life-story: speculation. An evocation of the time when geology was "a controversial new field of exploration," the biography follows Tyrrell from his first survey in the North-West Territories in 1883, under the supervision of Dr. George Dawson, through his own surveys, during which he discovered the fossilized skeleton

of *Albertosaurus sarcophagus* and the Keewatin glacier. Although exploration is the focus of the biography as of the life, exploration is momentarily interrupted for a brief dalliance with romance, which, after more exploration, leads Tyrrell into a marriage, largely an epistolary one, with Mary Edith "Dollie" Carey. Then, after fifteen years with the Geological Survey of Canada, Tyrrell is geologist-turned-prospector and runaway husband in the feverish atmosphere of the Klondike gold rush. While Tyrrell's Dawson City years are disastrously debt-ridden, speculating in Northern Ontario mines pays off in his later life. Achieving a fine balance of documentation and imagination, Robertson portrays Tyrrell as a man who, although he is able to change personas to suit circumstances, is never able to develop as a person and, therefore, traipses from one unfulfilled quest to another until the accumulated experience of his misadventures bequeaths him a kind of stature. The portrayal is an antidote for the much-too-celebratory nationalist view and proof that great men are, indeed, made—if not fabricated.

Much in contrast with the elegiac or celebratory narratives of immigration and exploration is *Hunting for Empire*, Greg Gillespie's scrutiny of the British imperial venture in the now Canadian northwest. Although Gillespie does not name Mary Louise Pratt in his introduction, his study of "the narratives of upper-class British men who travelled across the western interior of Rupert's Land for sport and exploration between the 1840s and the early 1870s" is a study of ideology as discourse modelled on and informed by Pratt's *Imperial Eyes*. While it addresses an interesting topic in the study of imperial ideology, the text, despite its frequent use of "specific," lacks specificity and would benefit from less repitition and a more detailed discussion of the narratives under scrutiny. Supplemented with figures from the "hunting and exploration" narratives, the text is divided into six chapters, five that address how these narratives function as messages of empire from the authors to their audiences, and a sixth that shows how these messages are transformed for "corporate advertising brochures" for the Canadian Pacific Railway. In beginning and ending his study with the framing device of his childhood memory of the hunting paraphernalia of the "Sportsman's Barbershop" in Grimsby, Ontario, Gillespie provides an explanation for his interest in hunting and suggests that the ideology that he scrutinizes can be traced to the present. Beside the difference in period and modification of topic, Gillespie's argument may be distinguished from Pratt's because he sees cartography and natural history working in tandem to naturalize imperial expansion and because he addresses what he calls "the prefatory paradox," or the ways by which big-game hunters both establish and undermine their scientific authority in the introductory messages of their narratives. Nonetheless, Gillespie asserts that, although the hunter of big game might have undermined his authority as narrator, as protagonist, he participated in an elitist exercise that demonstrated both the physical and moral superiority of the British gentleman and depicted Rupert's Land as a simultaneously exotic and familiar space calling for conquest.

Pour une parole émergente

Guy Poirier, dir.
Culture et littérature francophones de la Colombie-Britannique : du rêve à la réalité. Espaces culturels francophones II. David 32,00 $

Compte rendu par Jimmy Thibeault

Bien qu'on oublie parfois l'importance qu'ils ont pu jouer dès la naissance de la Colombie-Britannique, les francophones qui se sont établis sur la côte du Pacifique ont toujours su conserver leur vitalité tant dans l'espace social que culturel. Si cette vitalité a souvent été passée sous silence dans le récit officiel d'une mémoire qui peine parfois à se souvenir, il n'en demeure pas moins que la Colombie-Britannique, souligne Guy Poirier, « a su faire rêver le monde francophone ». Aussi, les auteurs de *Culture et littérature francophones de la Colombie-Britannique* explorent le parcours d'une culture francophone en pleine effervescence.

Parmi les articles de ce recueil, on retrouve quelques textes qui analysent le regard de voyageurs qui, au début du siècle, ont visité la Colombie-Britannique. Le discours des voyageurs qu'étudient Carla Zecher et Lise Gauvin, rappelle que, si la Colombie-Britannique fait déjà partie, au XIX^{e} siècle, du réseau touristique de l'Amérique du Nord, c'est davantage pour ses paysages et son développement économique que pour la vie culturelle des francophones qu'on s'y rend. En fait, seul l'ethnologue Marius Barbeau, comme le démontrent les articles de Réjean Beaudoin et de Guy Poirier, semble véritablement s'intéresser au parcours des premiers francophones, coureurs des bois, et à la problématique culturelle des nations autochtones vivant sur la côte ouest.

Les véritables enjeux de la francophonie se vivent donc de l'intérieur et s'expriment à travers la création d'un espace culturel d'expression française. Aussi, plusieurs articles portent sur le rôle qu'ont pu jouer les différents médias dans l'éclosion d'une vie communautaire dynamique. Les textes de Micheline Cambron et de Jacqueline Viswanathan offrent des analyses intéressantes de la presse écrite, alors que Grazia Merler propose une étude des archives de la radio française, où sont conservées les traces de la mémoire et du dynamisme culturel de la communauté francophone du Pacifique.

Sur le plan littéraire, Kathleen Kellet-Betsos s'intéresse au genre de la nouvelle qui représente un espace d'expression culturelle qui contribue à la reconnaissance de la réalité que vit la minorité francophone. C'est d'ailleurs en référence à cette réalité que le collectif se termine par le double témoignage de Paméla Sing et de Ying Chen. Les deux femmes racontent, dans un dialogue qui ressemble davantage à un double monologue entrecroisé, leur rapport à l'espace culturel de la Colombie-Britannique.

À la lecture de ces articles, on comprend mieux la conclusion que propose Christian Guilbault lorsqu'il affirme que la culture francophone, grâce à l'implication des institutions, promet non seulement de survivre, mais de poursuivre son développement. Avec cette deuxième publication, le groupe de recherche « Espaces culturels francophones de Colombie-Britannique » proposait de faire vivre au lecteur le passage du rêve d'une francophonie bien vivante à sa réalisation, mais il me semble qu'il fait bien plus en participant lui-même à maintenir à la fois le rêve et la réalité.

BC Theatre at the Edge?

Ginny Ratsoy, ed.
Theatre in British Columbia. Playwrights Canada $25.00

Reviewed by Rosalind Kerr

A valuable overview of BC's theatrical history highlighting the various contributions of the playwrights, artists, companies, and movements located there, Ginny Ratsoy's introduction to *Theatre in British Columbia* argues that her collection of eighteen articles adds up to a complex, off-centred celebratory vision of Canada's "edge" province and its proclaimed trademark flouting of arbitrary restrictions. While readers may form differing opinions of its degree of subversiveness, they can find a wealth of information in this rich depiction of BC's theatrical landscape.

My review follows Ratsoy's helpful groupings of the chronologically arranged articles as she attempts to note their BC specificity. Broad views expressed in Malcolm Page's "Fourteen Propositions about Theatre in British Colombia" (1990) and Denis Johnston's "Drama in British Columbia: A Special Place" (1995) provide historical surveys of professional and amateur theatre developments reflective of BC's cultural growth. More recent articles by Richard J. Lane, "Performing History: The Reconstruction of Gender and Race in British Columbia Drama" (2003), and James Hoffmann, "Political Theatre in a Small City: The Staging of the Laurier Memorial in Kamloops" (2005), counter an earlier observation by Page about the lack of interest in BC issues shown by BC playwrights. Lane references several landmark BC plays for their foregrounding of sexual and racial oppression modelled in the anti-potlatch legislation in postcolonial BC; Hoffmann relates how *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout* performed in Kamloops in 2004 re-enacted the same powerful expression of Native resistance as the original Laurier Memorial performance of 1910.

Articles on theatre companies, such as Renate Usmiani's "Western Magic: Tamahnous Theatre and Savage God" (1983); Richard Bruce Kirkley's "Caravan Farm Theatre: Orchestrated Anarchy and the Creative Process" (2000); and David Diamond's "In This Moment: The Evolution of 'Theatre for Living': A Historical Overview of the Work of Headlines Theatre" (2004), foreground the unique relationships of four alternative theatres to the communities they serve(d) and hence offer important local BC histories.

Playwrights' artistic visions are profiled in Don Rubin's "George Ryga: The Poetics of Engagement" (1996); Reid Gilbert's "Panych and Gorling: 'Sheer' Texts 'Written' in(to) Perception" (2002); Marlene Moser's "Reconfiguring Home: Geopathology and Heterotopia in Margaret Hollingsworth's *The House that Jack Built* and *It's Only Hot for Two Months in Kapuskasing*" (2002); and Jerry Wasserman's "Joan MacLeod and the Geography of the Imagination" (2003). While MacLeod's BC connection is the most strongly emphasized, Ratsoy points out ways that the others are boundary-breaking in the BC tradition. Similarly, specific plays treated in Margo Kane's "From the Centre of the Circle the Story Emerges" (on *Moonlodge*) (1991); Sherrill Grace and Gabriele Helms' "Documenting Racism: Sharon Pollock's *The Komagata Maru Incident*" (1998); and Jennifer Read's "Marie Clements's Monstrous Visions" (on *Burning Vision*) (2004), although not particularly connected to BC, are concerned with undoing national mythologies.

Finally, four articles on specific theatrical communities—from R.A. Shiomi's "Voice, Community, Culture, Responsibility and Visible Minority Playwrights: Visible Means of Support" (1990); Uma Parameswaran's "Protest for a Better Future: South Asian Canadian Theatre's March to the Centre"

(1995); Siobhan R.K. Barker's "Reigning Words: Black Playwrights in BC Theatre" (2004) to Peter Dickinson's "Going West: Queer Theatre in British Columbia" (2006)—introduce facets of Asian Canadian, African Canadian, and Queer alternative performance histories that challenge the mainstream.

All in all, *Theatre in British Columbia* is an important collection which encourages further investigation into the ways in which its theatre offers complex reflections of the province's elusive "BCness."

Écrire le quotidien

Aurélie Resch
Obsessions. Interligne 13,95 $

Donald Alarie
Au café ou ailleurs. XYZ 17,00 $

Donald Alarie
Au jour le jour. XYZ 20,00 $

Pierre Gobeil
La Cloche de verre. Triptyque 18,00 $

Compte rendu par Carlo Lavoie

Écrire le quotidien peut sembler en soi un véritable défi. Comment en effet éviter de sombrer dans l'obsessif, l'indiscrétion, les jugements de valeur ou même le récit auto-fictif? Est-il possible de demeurer impassible face aux drames humains qui se jouent tous les jours et qui changent la vie des différents protagonistes? L'écriture de la nouvelle semble pouvoir se prêter au jeu comme le prouvent Aurélie Resch, Donald Alarie et Pierre Gobeil.

Obsessions d'Aurélie Resch est un recueil contenant dix nouvelles axées sur les angoisses du quotidien. Cette finaliste du Prix des Lecteurs de Radio-Canada en 2006 convie le lecteur à assister à des jeux de manies qui influencent la vie de tous les jours, tant du point de vue de l'obsédé que de celui qui subit les conséquences de l'obsession. Alliant différents styles d'écriture, allant de la description à l'introspection, en passant par l'anecdote, l'auteure transforme ce qui semble banal dans la vie en quelque chose de vivant. Mais ce banal peut également se voir dépasser par une rupture atroce pour la personne qui la subit. Ainsi, les angoisses ressenties jour après jour par divers narrateurs prennent différents visages. Elles peuvent se manifester lors d'une fête de famille ou en vacances en France ainsi que devenir prégnantes chez une jeune fille victime de viol ou chez une personne âgée sur le point de se faire placer dans une maison de retraite. Peu importe le thème de la nouvelle, le style de l'auteure sait rendre compte du climat afin de bien faire sentir l'instant précis de la hantise dans un registre réaliste.

C'est également par ce registre réaliste que Donald Alarie tente de décrire la vie des gens ordinaires dans *Au café ou ailleurs*. Dans ces trente-deux courtes nouvelles, rien de théâtral, aucun artifice. L'auteur veut plutôt dresser un tableau intime de la vie des gens ordinaires en s'attardant à des détails précis. Ces détails n'ont rien de particulier mais ils expriment une certaine souffrance chez les gens qui les vivent. Que ce soit « Au café », « À la quincaillerie » ou au « Cimetière », le lecteur est invité, par la confidence, « à [s]e faire [s]a propre idée sur cette vie qu['il a] à peine connue ».

Alarie change toutefois de ton dans le recueil *Au jour le jour*. Dans ces vingt-et-une nouvelles, il ne s'agit pas seulement de rendre compte de la vie des gens ordinaires, mais plutôt de révéler leur face cachée. Ainsi, un vieil homme qui se sent abandonné par son fils sera le témoin d'une tentative de meurtre d'un enfant qui jouait au cow-boy. Le vieil homme n'interviendra pas en voyant le jeune garçon pendu au balcon ni lors du sauvetage. Prétendant ne rien connaître aux jeux d'enfants, il restera paralysé devant le drame, avant de s'endormir pour ne plus se réveiller. Alors qu'un autre personnage est le témoin d'un vol à main armée perpétré par son frère cadet et qu'un autre bien respecté dans la

société a, plus jeune, violé son frère, il ne s'agit pas de dénoncer ce qui pourrait être vu comme une faute impardonnable. En fait, aucune sentence, aucun jugement de valeur n'est prononcé, ni contre la victime, ni contre le bourreau. Les drames de la vie de tous les jours sont ainsi dévoilés, l'auteur laissant aux protagonistes la discrétion de leur accommodement.

Pour Pierre Gobeil, la vie se ressemble tous les jours et rien ne change: tout se passe sous une *Cloche de verre*, imperméable aux effets du temps. Cependant, si la répétition des gestes ou des paroles est palpable dans les quatre nouvelles qui constituent ce recueil, quelques différences viennent se faire remarquer. Les effets de la mémoire mais aussi des humeurs se laissent déceler, surtout dans « Une phrase », au départ banale, très longue, qui n'en finit plus, afin de dire ce qui ne se dit pas. En écrivant le quotidien, en le répétant, l'auteur trouve une façon de le changer. Le temps permet une meilleure emprise sur les détails sans lesquels la vie pourrait devenir un cauchemar.

Ces quatre recueils de nouvelles proposent une façon de dire l'indicible. Les narrateurs placent le lecteur, certes, devant des faits accomplis puisqu'ils en parlent au passé, mais aussi devant les frontières séparant les humains. Souvent floues et vaporeuses, ces frontières, pour Alarie, paraissent autant de fantômes qu'il faut laisser faire sans intervenir. Pour Resch et Gobeil, la question est plutôt de mieux les comprendre afin de pouvoir, un jour, les transformer et ainsi changer le monde.

Drames en série

Martine Richard
Les Sept Vies de François Olivier. David 17,00 $

Hélène Lépine
Le vent déporte les enfants austères. Triptyque 17,00 $

Compte rendu par Farah Leplat

Martine Richard et Hélène Lépine font partie de cette nouvelle génération d'écrivains québécois qui a repris le flambeau de leurs prédécesseurs pour nous fait découvrir une autre littérature québécoise, une littérature qui s'élargit, se diversifie, se veut originale. Ici, on est bien loin des romans de la terre, le genre littéraire québécois par excellence, qui, pendant plus d'un siècle, a fait l'apologie de la vie à la campagne. Richard et Lépine ont toutes deux misé sur une approche stylistique qui sort de l'ordinaire et privilégient l'écriture plutôt que l'histoire. Dans *Le vent déporte les enfants austères*, on nous relate les états d'âmes de Persée, une enseignante en mal de vivre qui essaie tant bien que mal d'aider des amis dont la situation est pire que la sienne. Dans *Les Sept Vies de François Olivier*, Richard nous fait voyager dans le temps avec son protagoniste, un octogénaire hanté par son passé qui retourne sur le lieu de sa naissance pour connaître la vérité sur son adoption. Dans cet ouvrage, le narrateur fait la chronologie, inversée, des événements qui ont marqués la vie du vieil homme. Le livre contient sept chapitres et chaque chapitre relate une partie de la vie de ce dernier. On fait tout d'abord la connaissance de l'octogénaire, celui qui rend visite à sa femme Rita au Foyer Sainte-Thérèse où elle est internée depuis une mauvaise chute qui lui a fait perdre la mémoire. Puis, on nous présente le jeune homme, le père de famille aux côtés d'Henriette, sa première femme, et enfin on nous décrit l'enfant qu'il a été et sa vie à l'orphelinat Saint-Hyacinthe. Au fur et à mesure que défilent les pages, le lecteur découvre, avec horreur, la tragédie qui a changé à tout jamais le destin de

François Olivier. Dans son livre, Martine Richard réunit le présent avec le passé de façon très naturelle. Le texte est poétique et fluide malgré ces nombreux aller-retours dans le temps, et l'auteure sait nous tenir en haleine du début à la fin.

Le livre de Lépine est également d'une grande poésie mais peut-être un peu trop audacieux, car l'histoire est assez floue et le format peu conventionnel, ce qui peut confondre plus d'un lecteur. En effet, bien que *Le vent déporte les enfants austères* soit un roman, il ressemble beaucoup plus à un recueil de poèmes dont la discontinuité des événements relatés et le grand nombre de personnages rendent la lecture malaisée. Le récit est certes chaotique mais c'est peut-être un choix délibéré de l'auteure qui aurait voulu nous faire ressentir le désordre moral dans lequel se trouvent ses protagonistes. Quoiqu'il en soit, la fin du livre est un peu décevante car elle n'apporte pas le dénouement, tant attendu, qui satisferait la curiosité du lecteur. Ce roman poétique est esthétiquement beau mais peut-être trop énigmatique pour être apprécié à sa juste valeur.

Ces deux textes ne laissent pas insensible. Ils expriment des émotions profondes à travers des mots soigneusement choisis. Lépine et Richard ont le souci du mot juste. Elles aiment faire deviner, décripter la trame sous une montagne de mots qu'elles manient avec beaucoup d'adresse. En voici un exemple tiré du livre de Richard : « La joue de François *Frankfurt* Olivier est collée à celle de Rita. . . . L'épouse rit. Sa petite main tapote celle de François. Sur leurs doigts, des tas de veines se précipitent aussitôt comme des nonnes affairées. Elles tremblotent, menacent de disparaître, mais résistent le plus possible . . . Leurs joues se décollent, se défroissent sans bruit. » Quelle belle image pour décrire l'amour qui unit le vieux protagoniste à sa femme. Ce moment intime et chargé d'émotions nous va droit au coeur comme ces deux romans.

Affectionate Biography of a West Coast Evergreen Shrub

Laurie Ricou

Salal: Listening for the Northwest Understory. NeWest $34.95

Reviewed by Nancy J. Turner

This is a thoroughly enjoyable book. It tells the story of one writer's journey to befriend a West Coast native plant. Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*) is a striking yet characteristic evergreen shrub, dominating the understory of our coastal temperate rainforests. Paradoxically, it is often overlooked on account of its very commonness. Worse still, this attractive plant, which typically grows in dense, virtually impenetrable patches, is maligned by some as an undesirable "invasive" weed, blamed for suppressing the growth of Douglas fir and other coniferous trees that are the mainstay of BC's timber production. Yet, David Douglas himself, the botanist after whom Douglas fir is named, had no such prejudice. He summarized his impression of salal, which he first encountered on the Columbia River in 1825, as follows: "On stepping on the shore *Gaultheria shallon* was the first plant I took in my hands. So pleased was I that I could scarcely see anything but it." He concurred with the assessment of naturalist Archibald Menzies, that salal would be "a valuable addition to our gardens." They did, indeed, introduce salal to European horticulture, where it was embraced as an attractive ornamental, still to be seen in gardens around Scotland, England, and elsewhere.

I was pleased to see that the author grounds his book, aptly, in the significance of this plant to First Nations of the Coast, for example in how salal is named in the diverse languages of First Peoples. He personalizes this section with quotations from leading Indigenous writers like Jeannette Armstrong and Kevin

Paul. For First Peoples, salal is huge in its importance—far more than just an understory shrub or a decorative delight. Its dark, purple-juiced berries, borne along the fruiting stalks in one-sided hanging rows, were probably the most important of all the traditional fruits, still relished by many families up and down the coast. It is mostly women and children who pick these berries, from August to early September. In the past, they filled enormous baskets with them, cleaning them, then mashed and cooked them in bentwood cedar boxes. (These utility boxes were made of planks, steamed or soaked until soft, then bent at right-angles along grooves to make the sides, sewn or pegged at the fourth corner and fitted with a wooden bottom and lid.) Mashed salal berries, and other berries too, were cooked in these boxes using rocks heated red-hot and dropped into the berry mix one after another, until boiling point was reached. The resulting jam-like mixture was poured out onto a bed of overlapping skunk-cabbage or other wide leaves and dried, first on one side and then the other, on a rack set over a fire, or in the sun: the original fruit leather. The dried cakes were rolled up and stored in boxes or openwork baskets. Pieces taken off and soaked overnight in water were eaten at feasts or family meals throughout the winter. Salalberries are sweet and juicy, though rendered somewhat gritty by numerous small seeds. They vary in quality depending on the locality and ripening conditions: full sunshine and moist soil yield the best and largest berries. Today, First Peoples and other coastal residents preserve salalberries by making jam, jelly, syrup, and by jarring and freezing. Salalberries remain a significant wild food, also served as a gourmet treat at bioregional restaurants such as the world-famous Sooke Harbour House.

Salal greens, emphasized in many chapters of this book, have taken on immense prominence and economic value in the global landscaping and floral industries. As Laurie Ricou examines in his thoughtful investigative journalist's approach, through these venues salal touches the lives of an entire range of people, many of whom may not even be aware of the its immense value as a human and wildlife food. In his quest to understand the bonds that link humans and salal together, Ricou records personal interviews in charming detail, such as one with Rod Nataros, the owner of a Surrey nursery, whose company plants 350,000 salal seedlings a year to grow out for the landscaping industry. We are introduced to Vanessa Adams and Angela Anderson, the women who actually undertake the propagation, and to John Mills, who cleans salal seed, and his brother, who collects the seed. The particulars of soils, pests, fertilizers, humidity, and temperature required for optimal growing of salal, and the details about other nursery-grown plants like salal's relative, the eastern wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*), are woven seamlessly into these interviews. Without even trying, we come away with a deeper, richer knowledge of this plant and the people who depend upon it. The same level of detail is given to salal in the floral industry, from picking the "hands" of leafy branches, to storing, shipping and marketing the "product": salal as a commodity, both loved and hated by those who work with it.

Salal's critically important role in forest ecosystems is featured in the chapter "Depending." (The chapter headings, each only one or two words, are evocative, encapsulating an entire body of thought and impression on any given topic in the wide world of salal.) In this truly remarkable treatment of a plant by one who sought to know it truly, the subtopics span painting, poetry, language, ecology, sociology, economics, and business development. It captures the thoughts and ideas of people who live within an arm's length of the salal patch, and of urban dwellers who are more

attached to the Internet than to the mycorrhizal net of salal in the forest floor.

After my first perusal of a new book, I like to check out two things: the bibliography and the index. These are both indicators of an author's commitment to quality. I was not disappointed in either case. With well over three hundred references and a seven-page index, not to mention a detailed acknowledgements section, this book is obviously not only well written, but well researched, giving me confidence in its accuracy and thoroughness. I hope Ricou is working on more plant biographies!

Animate Perceptions

Robyn Sarah, ed.
The Essential George Johnston. Porcupine's Quill $10.95

Monica Kidd
Actualities. Gaspereau $16.95

Eric Ormsby
Time's Covenant: Selected Poems. Biblioasis $28.95

Reviewed by Monika Lee

Robyn Sarah's *The Essential George Johnston* offers a first-rate introduction to Johnston's poems through a condensed and careful collection of those with finely honed rhythms and images. These poems are traditional and original, crafted and self-consciously unstable. Expressing an epistemology of post-Einsteinian timelessness, the formal lines are subtle, truthful, and profound. They lack entirely the ego and ostentation which creep into much contemporary poetry. The opening poem, "Pool," with its rhyming iambic tetrameter quatrains, establishes key themes of the volume: the interplay of subjectivity and perception, and the subject's existential experience of the world. As in Jay Macpherson's *The Boatman* and James Reaney's *A Suit of Nettles*, Johnston's attention to craft mirrors a sense of visionary possibility, one exciting legacy of a Frye-influenced generation of poets. The potential of the unsaid whispers its poetics: "Put your ear to the hole. / Between gusts you can hear them, / a bunched hum." The voice is understated and ambivalent, questioningly engaged with itself. Johnston's "anagogic man" is an ice skater named Mr. Murple, whose humorous Eliotic name belies his consciousness at the world's centre. These poems, with fear of death and love of life striving compatibly together, strike a fine balance between the darkly ironic and that irony's inherent cosmic possibilities. As "Mr. Murple, / Centripetal, / Turns on his pivot skates the captive sky," the clarity of Johnston's poetic voice is likewise the pivot which grounds human subjectivity in an uncertain and chaotic world. Local and specific, the poems are tempered by death and the failures of human history, yet they possess a clear-headed optimism, not escapist but defiant of reality. The volume's last poem, "Brigid Newly Arrived," offers a benediction to a newborn which can also be read as the methodology and purpose for Johnston's own gracious and generous poetic oeuvre: "Choose wisely as you grow / into your wording age / among their worn meanings / some you will surely need / and we bleed to give you: / luck, charity, courage": a coda to his lifetime of writing.

Monica Kidd's *Actualities* is a slim volume of minimalist poems based, as the book's title suggests, on the particular, the local, the regional, and the historical. Divided into five sections, "Actualities" addresses specific events filled with local colour: "Found" presents commentaries on photos from Kidd's past; "Body" evokes illness, death and childbirth; "Bawdy" is a sequence of personal poems about self and lover (and moths); and "Field Notes" offers perception as a kind of love. Kidd has a pronounced sense of understated pathos, and her book's opening poems are littered with surprising and iconic corpses. Her lyrics are dialogical, often presenting two interrelated but different perspectives, as in "Chasing Zero"

which intersperses a "Hail Mary" with ambiguities born of doubt ("The doubt / It follows me everywhere"). Hardships in the tales of Newfoundland's poverty are nostalgically re-envisioned as magic: "He turned coal into babies / while she made supper from air." Kidd's sense of the world as vital and rich with meaning leads to numerous personifications of the natural landscape: "these woods are a wealthy uncle," "milkweed husks" are "like old senators," "the trees stand with their pants rolled up," "islands stare like naked children," "stones dance elegies to light," and "sweet juniper, patient sage / lie down." The poetic voice is often a communal "we" and sometimes a personified nation (Newfoundland) as in "Letter to Sir John Hope Simpson, December 1974." Her poems are aphoristic and at times enigmatic with a quality of portraiture similar to Atwood's in *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*. The oracular poet reads and interprets the world as a clairvoyant reads tea leaves: "you can tell who held out by their clothesline." Throughout *Actualities*, the poems tease us with a sense of knowing more than they tell of life's exquisite mixture of pain and beauty.

Eric Ormsby's *Time's Covenant: Selected Poems* is a lengthy compilation (281 pages spanning from 1958 to 2006) of this remarkably cosmopolitan poet's best writing. The lyrics, as great poems are apt to be, are so rich and complex as to defy summation. Simultaneously concrete and abstract, optimistic and pessimistic, prayerful and irreverent, truthful and deceiving, Ormsby's creations are singular, layered, and exciting. His poet persona Jaham says, "I drive the syllables before me" and "The colts of my sinuous vowels tug against the leather of my consonants"; Ormsby's identifications with Islam and his poetic negative capability have particular contemporary force in the post-9/11 world on which parts of this volume provide a courageous commentary. These poems are, above all, earthy, and they celebrate milkweed, moths, pigs, lichen, moss, a potato, spiders, shells, a big toe, skunk cabbage, a dachshund, and all the other wonders of the natural world through intensely metaphorical language revealing meaning in every specific detail. The sheer density of the language and imagery is sometimes reminiscent of Keats or Spenser, but the humour and the irony are thoroughly modern and postmodern. The imagistic force of many lines rivals Ezra Pound's; there is an obvious painterly (and sculptural) pleasure in studies such as "Wood Fungus": "Jawbone-shaped, inert as moons, neutral entablatures, they apron bark and pool rain." The poetic voice is unsentimentally committed to a semantics of the terrestrial, and the implicit personifications of nature are subliminal and latent. There is something of a Renaissance cosmology in Ormsby's contemplative perspective on the relation between microcosm and macrocosm, but he inverts the traditional hierarchy by valorizing the microcosm: "I love everything that perishes. Everything that perishes entrances me." Hence "Lazurus" poems open the volume with the beauty of the reduction we call death: "Death, here, / Means curling back into that / Simplicity of shape." The book's title poem, "Time's Covenant," second from last, frames a community of fear in which Ormsby is a participant after 9/11. He wears a beaded Muslim cap, symbolic of the Islamic traditions he weaves into poems, in order to keep his "brains together." *Time's Covenant* brings us into community with things with which we do not normally identify. Ormsby's poems, "calligraphic patterns of decay," witness the paradoxical liveliness of the inanimate as they work a tactile magic to animate the dead: "cessation itself is a fragrance of time."

Theatre & the "Real World"

Shelley Scott
The Violent Woman as a New Theatrical Character Type: Cases from Canadian Drama. Mellen US $99.95

Michael McKinnie
City Stages: Theatre and Urban Space in a Global City. U of Toronto P $45.00

Reviewed by Emily Carr

The fundamental question of Shelley Scott's *The Violent Woman as a New Theatrical Character Type* is thought-provoking: what does the violent woman signify? Through a close reading of contemporary Canadian plays based on real-life acts of violence, Scott attempts to answer this question within the framework of feminist theory. Her readings are based on three central arguments: that plays about real-life incidents function as a form of media response, that violent women challenge notions of gender, and that violent women fall along a wide social spectrum.

Scott's book is organized according to the type of violent woman: abused, bullied, avenging, and heroic. The first two chapters, "Critical Hysteria" and "Hell is Other Girls," focus on the sidekick or "witness" figure whose passive participation in another woman's violent act underscores Scott's argument that violence is a consequence of feminine stereotyping. According to Scott, the image of the passive, non-aggressive female results in Carol Bolt's *Famous* in a miscarriage of justice and in Joan Macleod's *The Shape of a Girl* in teenage bullying.

Chapter 3, "The Tragedy of Revenge," focuses on the representation of the avenging women in The Anna Project's *This is For You, Anna*, Lorena Gale's *Angelique*, and Marie Clements' *The Unnatural and Accidental Woman*. This chapter exemplifies the weaknesses of Scott's book: Scott assumes that collaboration is inherently *feminine*, fails to explain what she means by such politically charged phrases as the "traditional objectification as female bodies," and never fully develops the relationship she claims exists between Renaissance revenge tragedy and the gender-defiant character of the violent female.

The final chapter, "The Making of Warriors," argues that the female action heroes in Sharon Pollock's *The Making of the Warriors*, Sally Clark's *Jehanne of the Witches*, and Sonja Mills' *The Danish Play* are positive representations of the violent woman. Though paradoxically unfeminine, these characters offer both actresses and female spectators an opportunity to challenge the vulnerability typically associated with the feminine body.

Scott's treatment of her subject material is sincere and enthusiastic, and her text is a timely survey of contemporary Canadian literature about violent women. However, Scott's utopian belief in theatre as social critique dulls her critical acumen, and ultimately she fails to answer her fundamental question: what is the meaning of a violent woman?

In *City Stages: Theatre and Urban Space in a Global City*, Michael McKinnie is more successful in addressing his fundamental question: how has theatre functioned as part of Toronto's urban geography since 1967? Within the framework of cultural materialist and interdisciplinary studies, McKinnie's text charts the changing relationship between theatre companies, the local real estate market, and the built environment. Through a wide range of case studies, McKinnie argues that as a market activity, theatre has both economic and sentimental value, and that these values have worked to affirm Toronto's transition from a Fordist national economy to a post-Fordist transnational economy.

McKinnie's text is divided into two sections. In the first section, "Civic Development," McKinnie focuses on the relationship of urban performance networks

to civic ideals. The two chapters in this section address the role that the physical space of theatre plays in transforming city space from working class/manufacturing to affluent/leisure. In the second section, "The Edifice Complex," McKinnie inverts his focus from the influence of theatre on city space to the effect of city space on theatre. The three chapters in this section interrogate the relationship between the built environment and regional theatre companies' struggle for legitimacy.

In the first two chapters, "Urban Nation, Suburban Transnational" and "Good Times, Inc.," McKinnie argues that large theatrical sites are markers of urban affluence: a fusion of commodity consumption and civic aspiration. Buildings such as the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts in downtown Toronto, the Ford Center in suburban North York, and Festival Hall in Toronto's Entertainment District not only transform the physical geography of the city but also function as an index of the city's attempts to adapt ideologically to flexible-accumulation capitalism. Additionally, these theatrical spaces—whether or not they are actually downtown—contribute to the civic ideal of "downtown": a safe, urban space dedicated to "manufactured fun," "affluent, individual consumption," and "imaginative self-pleasuring."

In the next two chapters, "Space Administration" and "A Troubled Home," McKinnie focuses on how two regional theatre companies, Passe Muraille and Toronto Workshop Production (TWP), attempted to secure legitimacy through ownership of physical performance space. In both of these chapters, permanent performance space contributes to the ideal of theatre as "home": a meeting place of like-minded men and women marked off from the everyday life of the city. McKinnie outlines Passe Muraille's successful transformation from itinerant to permanent, and argues that, as a permanent "home," 16 Ryerson Avenue functions as an administrative, institutional, and financial instrument of the company's theatrical labour. In contrast, McKinnie focuses on how TWP's artistic vision and financial success were compromised by artistic director George Luscombe's over-emphasis of the ideal of "home" and subsequent exploitation of the market value of the company's 12 Alexander Street property.

In chapter 5, "Movin' On Up," McKinnie argues that, in contrast to Passe Muraille and TWP, the not-for-profit companies Necessary Angel and Buddies in Bad Times were successful in gaining cultural equity and securing theatrical legitimacy through the built environment without the privilege of private property ownership. For example, by staging environmental productions in non-theatrical spaces such as a former bishop's residence and a hockey arena, Necessary Angel not only established itself as innovative and avant-garde but also "practically and symbolically produced new theatre spaces where none had existed before."

McKinnie's survey of Toronto's theatrical landscape is comprehensive and convincing, and will appeal to a wide range of readers from economists to theatre scholars to urban planners. The scope of his investigation is both ambitious and necessary. At a time when the relevance of the arts is increasingly called into question, McKinnie's work is concrete proof that real life and art intersect in productive and necessary ways.

Time out of Joint?

Peter Seixas, ed.
Theorizing Historical Consciousness. U of Toronto P $27.50

Reviewed by Liane Tanguay

On 22 August 2007, George W. Bush appeared before a gathering of veterans to "provide some historical perspective" on the situation in Iraq. Seeking to validate the "hard and necessary work we're doing" by evoking a historical precedent, Bush embarked upon a rhetorical journey spanning several wars and some seventy years of American foreign policy. "The names and places have changed," he asserted, but history nonetheless "reminds us that there are lessons applicable to our time"—all of which, predictably, point to persistence and ultimate victory in Iraq.

For an age that, as Fredric Jameson once said, has "forgotten to think historically," Bush's abuse of history should come as no surprise. It is testament to the political significance of what is defined in this (timely) volume as "historical consciousness" that such abuse is now a matter of routine. History, writes editor Peter Seixas, is everywhere "invoked to provide context, meaning, and continuity," reflecting a "popular, market-oriented quest for the past" that parallels a surge of interest within the academy. It is against this backdrop that, in 2001, a symposium was held at UBC to attempt to define, refine, account for, and, yes, theorize "historical consciousness," a yet rough-hewn but richly suggestive field comprising historiography, collective memory, and history education. This book is the result.

Its first section proffers a conceptual "toolbox" for the theoretical task at hand. To the literary or cultural theorist, many of these tools—distance, narrative, identity—may seem worn, but their application to a relatively new field of inquiry is nonetheless apt. Chris Lorenz advances the centrality of "historical identity," studied comparatively, as a "bridge between historiography and society," or between professional and popular history. James Wertsch adapts a Proppian narratology to his analysis, distinguishing between "specific narratives" and "schematic narrative templates" in a way that is fully applicable, for instance, to the abuse of history cited above. This latter, indeed, ranks low in Jörn Rüsen's proposed typology, which delineates four possible stances towards the past, each bearing specific cognitive and moral implications. If the resulting developmental hierarchy seems perilously Eurocentric, it is nonetheless unavoidable in light of the book's stated imperative, and as such it resurfaces, explicitly or by interpolation, elsewhere (notably, in a dialogue with Roger Simon). Finally, Mark Phillips addresses the concept of "distance," defamiliarizing one of professional history's central yet tacit assumptions as a construct in itself.

The articles concerning history education bring the ethical imperative more explicitly into play. Jocelyn Létourneau and Sabrina Moisan acknowledge the role of non-curricular factors in the development of historical consciousness, explaining young Quebeckers' investment in the "victimhood" narrative, despite a modernized Quebec historiography, in light of both this broader cultural context and the pressures facing overburdened instructors. British scholar Peter Lee makes a case for the tools of disciplinary history as a means of bringing students to a more empowered standpoint vis-à-vis both public and academic history. Christian Laville takes up this question in a skeptical analysis of the "historical consciousness trend" itself, questioning whether its influence in education would really generate the "independent-minded, rational citizens" that is its stated pedagogical aim. Roger Simon addresses the ethical demands made upon the present by

records of the past, seeking in these a "historiographic poetics" whose pedagogical value hinges on the reorientation of the citizen within a "politics of relationality." If it is not entirely clear how such a "poetics" might be implemented at the curricular level, Simon nonetheless raises some compelling theoretical points. The implied centrality of formal education in the shaping of historical sensibilities (as opposed to non-curricular factors alluded to by a number of the contributors) can seem overestimated in this section, at least to one unfamiliar with the discipline. Indeed, issues such as the difference between formal and informal education, though often acknowledged, remain largely unexplored. This is one of only two areas in which I felt the book came up short.

The other is that the concluding section, "The Politics of Historical Consciousness," consists of only two essays. Tony Taylor ties the education issue in Australia both to conservative interests and to the politics of academia, while John Torpey fulfills the book's "self-historicizing" imperative by offering the broadest perspective on the "pursuit of the past," attributing this to the demise of social ideals under a totalizing global capitalism. While Torpey's article is perhaps the most suggestive piece, it is also unfortunately the shortest, and its claims would undoubtedly have benefited from a more extensive analysis. I would have liked to see more of this sort of inquiry.

Nonetheless, as a wide-ranging survey of a terrain that is still being mapped, this volume is sure to contain at least one piece of interest to a reader in a related discipline. George Bush, for his part, is better off without it.

Suzuki on Suzuki

David Suzuki

David Suzuki: The Autiobiography. Greystone $34.95

Reviewed by Graham Huggan

Accolade on accolade has been heaped upon the scientist-broadcaster-activist David Suzuki, one of Canada's most familiar public figures and sometimes heralded as "the greatest environmentalist of our age." Suzuki's autobiography should therefore be further cause for celebration or—as he himself would probably prefer it—contemplation, since *The Autobiography*, part-styled as memoir, is a conscious attempt to reflect on a life and to persuade readers to reflect similarly on their own.

Like much of Suzuki's work, the autobiography has a morally exemplary quality. As he makes clear from the outset, his experiences are metonymic for the Japanese Canadian story: poverty-induced emigration, family solidarity, and work ethic in the face of continual displacement and racial hostility, the need for acceptance measured against the persistent feeling of being marginalized and oppressed. "All my life as an adult," he says in the opening chapter, provocatively entitled "My Happy Childhood in Racist British Columbia," "my drive to do well has been motivated by my desire to show my fellow Canadians that my family and I had not deserved to be treated as we were."

Subsequent chapters follow Suzuki's fluctuating fortunes through college in the US, a highly successful university career as a geneticist in Canada, and an equally successful "parallel life" as a media celebrity and high-profile campaigner for social justice and environmental rights. Suzuki is well aware of his celebrity status if not always welcoming of it, and conscious of the levelling-down tendencies of celebrity to equate the opinions of a "scientist, doctor or other expert" with those of a "lightweight or a fool." He is also aware of both

the advantages and disadvantages of his primary chosen medium, television, which has the potential to reach out to millions but also to simplify, even distort, public understandings of, for example, the natural world. The chapters on Suzuki's TV work are thus torn between the ongoing desire to impart information with the honesty and integrity that have become his trademarks and the persistent temptation to sensationalize material as a means of engaging public concern.

As in Suzuki's other books, there is no doubting the force of his personality and opinions, both of which are embodied in the eco-activist work of the David Suzuki Foundation, founded in the early 1990s to promote the ideals of civic responsibility and global sustainability at a time of acknowledged environmental crisis. All of Suzuki's work is infused, in fact, with an environmental ethic, sometimes aggressively anti-capitalist, sometimes more contemplative and mystical in form. Environmentally speaking, Suzuki might be described (though does not necessarily describe himself) as a deep ecologist: not anti-humanist, but certainly anti-anthropocentric; not anti-technology, but certainly anti-technological supremacism; not anti-development, but certainly anti-development as unfettered economic growth. There are deep ecological strains, as well, in his flirtation with Asian and Aboriginal religions, and in his apparent espousal of a version of philosophical holism that acknowledges the salvific role of modern science while remaining critical of science's tendency to compartmentalize, thereby losing sight of the whole.

Suzuki's autobiography will likely consolidate his status as both global celebrity and national icon, although its at times rather leaden prose style may not necessarily attract new readers to his work. However, *The Autobiography* affords another reminder that Suzuki is as likely to be critical of Canada as celebratory of it, and, unlike other celebrity conservationists, the late Steve Irwin for instance, he has never allowed himself to be co-opted for a cultural-nationalist cause. A more troubling aspect is the extent to which Suzuki's status as a Canadian hero depends on a form of honorary whiteness. Certainly, his life and work mobilizes a set of discourses around "Asianness" and "Asianization" in relation to white normativity. Thus, while for Suzuki himself, his status as a Japanese Canadian marks him out as an outsider and an adversarialist, and while his perceived experience of marginalization has provided him with cultural capital (e.g. with Aboriginal people) in his work, his name continues to function within the context of the strategic de-racialization of environmentalist discourses, suggesting that environmentalism and its literary wing, ecocriticism, are still—despite their loud protestations to the contrary—a predominantly "white" field.

Que reste-t-il du Canada français?

Joseph Yvon Thériault

Faire société : société civile et espaces francophones. Prise de parole 30,00 $

Compte rendu par Pamela V. Sing

Tandis que le Canada français était un espace sociopolitique commun doté d'une réalité historique, l'ère de la modernité a signifié son morcellement et la création d'îlots francophones obligés de s'engager dans un processus d'étatisation ou de provincialisation. On connaît le succès de l'entreprise au Québec et ce, sous plusieurs angles, mais jusqu'à la fin des années 1970, la recherche sur les autres francophonies s'est intéressée principalement à leur histoire, à leur littérature et à leur situation sur le plan linguistique.

Depuis lors, elle en est venue à des préoccupations d'ordre sociétal. Le sociologue

Joseph Yvon Thériault, notamment, a rédigé, entre 1980 et 1995, douze articles visant à saisir la dynamique identitaire à l'oeuvre au sein des francophonies « hors Québec » : l'Acadie, principalement, mais aussi l'Ontario et, dans une bien moindre mesure, l'Ouest, textes qu'il a publiés dans un volume intitulé *L'Identité à l'épreuve de la modernité : écrits politiques sur l'Acadie et les francophonies canadiennes minoritaires*. Le prix France-Acadie attribué à Thériault pour cet ouvrage témoigne de la pertinence de ses propos ainsi que de la clarté avec laquelle l'auteur expose ses arguments.

Et le sociologue de poursuivre sa réflexion, particulièrement dans les vingt-quatre textes qui, produits entre 1995 et 2005 et organisés en sept sections thématiques et accompagnés d'une mise en contexte sous forme d'introduction et d'une bibliographie, constituent le livre ici recensé. Il traite toujours du rapport complexe entre identité, politique et droit, mais étant donnée « l'acceptation sans gêne de tendances a-politiques » caractéristique des années deux mille—dans la francophonie comme ailleurs—, il pense les espaces éponymes comme société civile, c'est-à-dire comme « lieu de gouvernance caractérisé par les liens volontairement tissés entre gens d'un regroupement ». Produisant de l'influence à travers une opinion publique, elle s'avère « capable d'agir collectivement et d'orienter le développement de ses membres ».

L'un des thèmes communs aux deux recueils se rapporte au caractère entre-deux des communautés étudiées. En 1995, leur considération sous l'angle de leur tension constitutive, que ce soit entre nation et ethnie ou entre le cosmopolitisme et le communautarisme, pour ne nommer que ces concepts-là, conduisait Thériault à affirmer qu'elles se devaient de toujours confronter le culturalisme ou les dimensions particularisantes à l'idée de l'universel afin d'éviter l'écueil d'une humanité « tellement particulière qu'elle ne [serait] pas partageable ». Une décennie plus tard, l'auteur constate non seulement qu'une constante dans l'aventure des francophonies d'Amérique du Nord est « celle de vouloir faire oeuvre de civilisation en français dans le continent anglo-américain », mais aussi que c'est dans le fragment particularisant de leur nature complexe, sous la forme nationale ou communautaire, que se trouve le désir de faire société, voire qu'il s'agit là de l'élément le plus original de leur dynamique. Le titre du onzième texte demande : « Est-ce progressiste, aujourd'hui, d'être traditionaliste? », mais l'ouvrage entier vise à rendre compte de cette trace, cette « mémoire vivante » du Canada français.

Ce faisant, il aborde des questions incontournables, telles la diversité culturelle, la mondialisation, l'hégémonie de la langue anglaise et, certes, les rapports avec le Québec. À ce propos, soulignons que si seul le dix-septième texte du recueil est consacré au sujet du possible rapprochement entre les francophonies québécoise et canadienne, il est clair que pour Thériault, le projet de « faire société » tiendra compte de la québécitude ou ne sera pas.

The Performance Anxiety of L.M. Montgomery

Hildi Froese Tiessen and Paul Gerard Tiessen, eds.
After Green Gables: L.M. Montgomery's Letters to Ephraim Weber, 1916-1941. U of Toronto P $34.95

Reviewed by Benjamin Lefebvre

This edition of Montgomery's letters to one of her two long-standing correspondents is a major contribution to Montgomery studies, a book that complements and complicates the poetics of self-representation established in her published journals. The editors have painstakingly transcribed, edited, annotated, and introduced twenty-four letters and notes covering a twenty-five-year period. Their volume becomes a sequel to

The Green Gables Letters (1960), a collection of fifteen letters from the period surrounding the composition, submission, publication, and reception of her best-known novel (their remaining correspondence, including Weber's side, appears to be lost). The introduction and the notes address readers familiar with the scholarly debates surrounding Montgomery's fiction and life writing, but the volume will also appeal to those academic and non-academic readers interested in narratives of Montgomery's everyday life more broadly.

These letters give voice to a highly literate person who knew how to articulate her anxieties about social change. By 1916, Montgomery was juggling pressures and responsibilities of a mother, a minister's wife, and a popular writer, all under the shadow of the Great War. As the war's aftermath led to a period of change and growth throughout the 1920s, Montgomery frequently expressed her nostalgia for the relative leisure of their relationship's earlier days instead of having to write letters in fits and starts: "It is 'here a little and there a little' with me." They discuss modern fiction (most of which she hated), the evils of free verse, the gradual irrelevance of organized religion, changes in fashion and technology, universal education (which she opposed on the grounds that those who did not want an education were wasting their time), and the "melting pot"—the model of Canadianness that she preferred. The letters reveal some of the blind spots of her time, such as when she unselfconsciously referred to a hotel employee in Kentucky as "a delightful darky." One topic on which they staunchly disagreed was the war itself: Montgomery, who supported "the war to end all wars," could hardly tolerate Weber's pacifism, and got even with him by paraphrasing a sentence she found particularly vexing—"it is a commercial war and utterly unworthy of one drop of Canadian blood being spilt for it"—and attributing it to "a stranger from the shore hotel" in her novel *Rilla of Ingleside*.

The editors' lively introduction provides a generous portrait of the obscure Weber, tying these two figures together by discussing the ways that Montgomery shaped her narrative voice to fit a person she would not meet in the flesh until 1928. Whereas Montgomery revised her journals for posthumous publication, her uncensored letters to Weber contain a distinctive narrative voice, even when she self-consciously mined her journal for anecdotes. The editors suggest that the "complicated performance" found in these narratives pertains to the ways in which Montgomery simultaneously wrote *for* and *against* Weber. And as the letters keep showing, Montgomery felt a certain amount of performance anxiety in her attempts to maintain the safe boundaries of their dialogue.

In their notes, the editors identify overlaps with Montgomery's autobiography, published journals, as well as published and unpublished portions of Montgomery's correspondence with G.B. MacMillan, all of which reveal moments when she sacrificed chronology and continuity to maintain a cohesive narrative. The notes also identify literary allusions, historical personages, cultural practices, and ephemera that may not be readily obvious to a reader of the twenty-first century. There are a few omissions, such as quotations from Robert Loveman, Arthur Stringer, E.O. Laughlin, and Albert Einstein that are unidentified. The quotation "here a little and there a little," cited above, is from Isaiah 28:10. Montgomery's poem "I Wish You" is identified as the source of the stanza quoted in April 1929, but this stanza does not appear in the poem itself. The book refers frequently to the final volume of Montgomery's journals as still forthcoming, although it appeared a year and a half before this volume's release.

These few quibbles should hardly take away from the impressive scope of the

critical apparatus surrounding the letters; the detailed introduction and notes are as highly readable as the letters themselves. Thanks to the editors' careful work, this edition saves Weber from obscurity and restores his long-overlooked involvement in the shaping of Montgomery's distinctive narrative voice.

The Arc of Human Life

Eleanor Wachtel

Random Illuminations: Conversations with Carol Shields. Goose Lane $19.95

Reviewed by Leslie-Ann Hales

Eleanor Wachtel's thoughtful and moving book, *Random Illuminations*, places conversations between Wachtel and Carol Shields (from 1987 to 2002) beside onstage interviews and published profiles of the author. From Toronto to Italy to Victoria, and in dialogues and letters from many holiday locations in between, Wachtel records the conversations she had with Shields—the student, the beginning writer, the mother, the always changing author. Wachtel and Shields clearly shared a love of writers and of writing. In this collection of interviews and in the letters the two exchanged over sixteen years, Wachtel captures with faithful authenticity Shields' sense of herself as a novelist, from her high school days of writing what Shields calls "really embarrassing" sonnets, to her last published novel, *Unless*. What strikes the reader about these conversations is the wide ranging generosity of the questions Wachtel raises with Shields, from Wachtel's probing of Shields' favorite novelistic plot, "the arc of human life," to her belief that one needs to find one's true home, which Shields describes as "where you belong, where you understand the signs, the place where, in fact, you have always been destined to be." There is a sense of a professional and personal bond between interviewer and writer in this book as Wachtel explores, in surprising detail for this relatively small volume, details about what Shields wanted to accomplish in her early books of poetry, her ten novels, collections of short stories and two books of criticism—*Susanna Moodie: Voice and Vision* and *Jane Austen*. Wachtel says of Shields in the Preface to *Random Illuminations* that she "loved how her mind worked—her curiosity, astuteness and compassion" and that she wanted "to honour Carol's memory and to celebrate how alive her voice is in today's world."

In response to Wachtel's questions and observations about her writing, Shields exhibits a lovely honesty, a lack of guile and ego. She is delightfully open and sincere about how, in her late twenties, she began to realize what would become a hallmark of her characters, especially the women:

> Around this time, I became conscious that the women in the fiction I read were nothing like the women I knew. They weren't as intelligent. There was a real gap. And they weren't as kind. I was reading fiction where women were bitches or bubbleheads.

Mary Swann, Daisy Goodwill, Reta Winters, to name just a few of her protagonists, all affirm her creation of protagonists who, in all their complexity, are certainly not "bubbleheads." As Wachtel comments, "the foundation of her commitment to writing as a form of redemption, redeeming the lives of lost or vanished women" is what draws readers to women we don't often meet in fiction.

Wachtel's approach to her discussion with Shields about her breast cancer diagnosis in 1997 is both direct and compassionate. Asked whether she is able to talk about it, Shields responds with characteristic courage that she can:

> Of course it was a great surprise. . . . It took me a good month, maybe a little longer, to actually accept that this was the reality, that this was happening. I couldn't turn it back, I couldn't dismiss what had

> invaded my body. Then I did accept it because there's really nothing else to do.

For admirers of Shields' work and life, this is a difficult part of the book and, obviously, much more so for Wachtel, who admits to struggling with her own desire of wanting more time with her friend when more medical intervention was not necessarily warranted: "I remembered her having recently asked me about whether she should have more treatment. And how I knew I was giving her the wrong answer when I said yes. But I wanted more. (I still do)."

The fine balance of professional interviewer and friend with novelist and friend makes *Random Illuminations* both an introduction to Carols Shields' work and a touching remembrance to long-time readers.

Globality in Comics

Chris Ware
Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth. Pantheon $18.95

Guy Delisle
Shenzhen: A Travelogue from China. Drawn & Quarterly $24.95

Reviewed by Andrew Yang

Although the subtitle of *Jimmy Corrigan* implies a global perspective, one may initially wonder whether Chris Ware's intentions were ironic. The text takes place almost solely in two cities—Waukosha, Michigan and Chicago, Illinois—and focuses intensely on the experiences and histories of one family alone. Between these experiences, however, there are subtle moments that reveal intended audiences across the world. As one example, the opening panels begin in outer space, focusing rapidly on the planet, then the coastline, then finally on Jimmy's house itself. As another, the narrative of his grandfather's childhood takes place during the construction of the World's Columbian Exposition, an expression of America's optimism and global visions.

Such moments, however, are incidental compared to other themes more subtly revealed throughout the text. Arjun Appadurai mentions globalization as an ironically localizing process, with technology, ethnicity, media, finance, and ideology as concerns linking cultures across the globe with one another. Each of these, particularly the first two, is present in *Jimmy Corrigan*, in the dialogic aspects of Jimmy's childhood and his grandfather's childhood. Technology is relevant in both the massive structures of the World's Fair, the mother's recurrent presence on the phone, and even the paper models and building instructions inserted between episodes. Ethnicity is apparent in the immigrant Italian child who befriends and then bullies Jimmy senior, and in the family history surrounding James Corrigan's adopted daughter. History and memory continually intertwine. One particular example occurs in the mock postcards inserted in the middle of the text; one of them depicts a local diner called "Pam's Wagon Wheel," narrating, on its back, the story behind the gum on the bottom of one of its tables and other anecdotes about its patrons.

Shenzhen is a narrative less about individuals than place. Full-page illustrations of various scenes, from a skyscraper under construction, to a bustling city street, and tarpaulin-covered balconies, emphasize the narrative's atmosphere. The plot features Delisle, under a three-month contract from Dupuis to supervise a project outsourced to an animation studio in Shenzhen, China.

The subject matter of this work holds obvious dangers of Orientalism—of gazing upon Eastern cultures with the assumption of ontological authority, without accommodating for dialogue or reciprocation. Though Edward Said first diagnosed it in discussions concerning the Middle East, others have later revealed it applied to East Asian countries and cultures as well. With this in mind, Delisle's attitude

towards the Chinese may arouse suspicion at first, but remains acceptable by the end; Delisle's accounts are neither expert nor do they make any claims to be expert. They are, however, the most honest account of a single perspective. Delisle explicitly acknowledges his "colonial reflexes," and in one bout compares Dante's descent to Hell to a journey through China, experiencing no wonder over the fact that Shenzhen is one of the fastest growing cities in the world since 1970 and a forerunner of the country's economic revival. By the end of the book, however, he also warms to his co-workers, enjoying one lonely Christmas with a fellow animator, and the jokes of the company manager over dinner at the end of his stay.

The fundamental question driving Delisle's narrative, then, is not whether he will "survive" the China he and the previous supervisor find hellish, but precisely what kinds of forces drive him there in the first place. Travelogues, according to their old French root *travail*, are not just about journeys, but also about acts of labour. Delisle is in China under contract from Dupuis, the largest publishing firm of comics in France. *Shenzhen*, for all its journeys, says extraordinarily little about the corporation catalyzing them, which is somewhat disturbing since, by definition, only the most peripheral operations of a company are ever exported to foreign firms. How aware is Delisle of his marginal status, not only amidst the Chinese but within the very French corporation that employs him? His final attitude implies, disturbingly, unqualified obedience: "There!" he says in the text's last few panels. "Three months of good and faithful service."

Both these graphic novels are about place, and how that particular place holds significance on a global scale. *Corrigan* shows that significance through its profound mundanity, while *Shenzhen* explicitly reveals that significance but misdirects its attentions in the end. The former shows globality through individualism, the latter globality's effects on individualism. Both use their media to create complex environments that should provide fruitful discussion in multiple fields of study.

the edge of knowing

Terry Watada
Obon: The Festival of the Dead. Thistledown $15.95

Christine Smart
Decked and Dancing. Hedgerow $16.95

Laurie Kruk
Loving the Alien. Your Scrivener $14.00

Reviewed by Anne F. Walker

Terry Watada's *Obon: The Festival of the Dead* employs the short line and space on the page throughout. This works most successfully where the music emerges from the language and the message becomes secondary to sound. The repetition of "r" and "t" sounds, which emanate from similar positions of tongue in mouth, illuminates this passage from the section "The Emerald *Sutra*":

white ghosts still
hate her
label her brand her:
this liar
this cheat
this traitor to her own
but never accepted as their own

The "r" and "t" resonance of "cheat" and "traitor to her" chimes a high note before moving to the deeper sound of "own." That repetition of "own" at the end of the last two lines, transitioning "her own" to "their own," again uses simple sounds to create melody. The collection articulates a fragmented geography where names of cities or streets are dropped into poems in isolation and left there. This use of partial markers that are then shifted accentuates the ideal of the collection, to create a "tribute to the thin veil between worlds where sorrow is as transient as happiness."

In addition to the poetry, *Obon: The Festival of the Dead* contains an "Afterword" which gives some background explanation for the Buddhist religious ceremony that is the concern of this book's narrative. It also contains a glossary for the non-English words used. Another helpful addition to this book would have been a table of contents. While the absence of it may be a conscious decision to blur the reader's experience into something more holistic and less fragmented, such an outline would be helpful.

Decked and Dancing by Christine Smart is more traditional in its layout, lines, and sound. The lines are tight and rhythmic. Poem after poem exhibits a pleasing tone nuanced by specific details. This is not raw or ragged poetry in its images, syntax, or music. The edges exist in an emotional push from within. For example, "Bass Chords" begins by introducing a particularly refined world: "It begins with a feeling lost in the morning / not knowing what's going on inside." It then moves toward the pulse of the poem, which is the articulation of a raw internal feeling: "sometimes / a dream revives itself in full colour / and I know."

Similarly in the poem "Invisible," external actions and the voice describing them have some steadiness that is in contrast to the emotional impulse of the poem, the "river of warm water flushing / me into life."

The language in Laurie Kruk's *Loving the Alien* is less contained and more conversational. In "English as a Second Language," the narrator reads from a love letter: "*luv i wont to tel you how i fil abut you. you are / pachinit an intins. I injoy our cunversations verry / much*" *and "am proud to cal you my gerl*." In introducing this text into the poem the author contrasts different relationships to language:

> I am blinded by
> his eager blue headlights, waiting.
> I am the Ph.D.,
> he is the one comfortable
> in his words.

The thought here is more complex than it first appears. We might assume that a Ph.D. would likely possess an ease with words, yet in this case the barely literate person is "the one comfortable." This is an interesting negotiation between lines of expectation, presentation, and intimate knowledge.

Dwelling

A.S. Woudstra
The Green Heart of the Tree: Essays and Notes on a Time in Africa. U of Alberta P $24.95

Harry Thurston
Broken Vessel: Thirty-five Days in the Desert. Gaspereau $15.95

Reviewed by Lisa S. Szabo

After living seven years in Somalia and Ghana, Margaret Laurence produced her travel memoir *The Prophet's Camel Bell.* She observed that travel writing aims to seduce you with strangeness of a seeming "vast and elusive" foreign place. In *The Green Heart of the Tree: Essays and Notes on a Time in Africa*, Annette S. Woudstra similarly contemplates her time spent living in Rwanda and Gabon. When Woudstra first arrives on the west coast of Africa, she is "still new enough and Canadian enough," yet when she returns to Canada a few years later, "Canadian" slips away, replaced by migrant, refugee, and "a dweller in uncertain times." As an outsider "from the edges peering in," she grapples with inhabiting a foreign place; her sense of rootlessness provides scope for greater possibilities: humility, compassion, and awareness of interconnectivity. Attentive to ecologies, politics, and culture, Woudstra questions and challenges the creation and displacement of "home." Though she sets out "not to name or subdue, but to dwell" in Africa, different cultures, landscapes, and biota come to inhabit her in disorienting and profound ways.

Woudstra's poetic prose is tenacious and mesmerizing, and her subject matter is

moving. Photographs of family, artifacts, and landscape accompany a collection of nine essays interposed with five brief journal entries. Always attending to the wordlessness and complexity of language and sensitive to cultural differences, she reflects on such diverse topics as Rwanda's civil war, Gabon culture, sea turtles, and forests. The journal writings ground her contemplations of unfamiliar and often troubled experiences in material moments and further illuminate her struggles with inhabiting place. However uncertain, resistant, or unable to place home she may be, her journal meditations on birds and insects become tangible reminders that home is both material and intangible, a space that dwells as much within as outside you.

Harry Thurston's *Broken Vessel: Thirty-five Days in the Desert* arises also from travels in Africa. While residing with archaeologists at the Dakhleh Oasis in Egypt, Thurston composed a series of short, lyrical poems over a period of thirty-five nights. He layers his poems with a temporal attunement to ecology and environment, Western Desert history, and archaeological findings. Anticipating how the desert will unfold, will reveal its unknowns and uncertainties, he begins the first night "with a promise / of clarity." As the nights elapse, however, Thurston's meditations trouble the longing for and underscore the elusiveness of clarity. An outsider's reflection on and attempt to grasp place emphasize immensity and unfamiliar territory which, in the end, can only ever be translations, albeit mystifying and compelling reflections of the poet's relation to place and time. And, so aptly, the title *Broken Vessel* presents these poems as poetic shards that leave open to speculation the missing pieces, the cracks, and precariousness of desert life, animating "the hard borders between the living and the non-living." Remnants of civilizations, architecture, and flora and fauna both dissolve and refortify the divide between nature and human in a seemingly endless interchange between living and non-living, between human activity and environmental forces.

But what about the silence "that does not sound / like the decrepit patter / of broken pots / underfoot," the other-than-human presences that surround the oasis? Thurston fills these silences with the songs and traces of living creatures: the sparrow sings "*zerzura*, *zerzura*, *zerzura*," "incendiary" smells seep into skin, and hawk, snake, scarab and Dorcas gazelle appear and "disappear into empty / mysteries." In the "foreign" song of the sparrow and the distant glimpses of desert wildlife as the histories subsumed by "empty / mystery," Thurston depicts an environment that resists clarity. Much shifts. "When you thought, at last, / you could see what was in the desert," the *khamsim*, the Fifty Days' Wind, whips up the sand, blocking the light, and what remains is "your tongue thickened with earth."

Thurston and Woudstra evoke the complexities of dwelling in foreign lands, yet, as Margaret Laurence observes, "the strangest glimpses you may have of any creature in the distant lands will be those you catch of yourself." As such, *Broken Vessel* and *The Green Heart of the Tree* offer self-reflexive glimpses that thicken your tongue with the tastes of dwelling in your own land.

Questioning the Past

Herb Wyile
Speaking in the Past Tense: Canadian Novelists on Writing Historical Fiction. Wilfrid Laurier UP $26.95

Reviewed by Gordon Bölling

In recent years Herb Wyile has made a name for himself as a leading scholar of Canadian historical fiction through several articles and a co-edited special issue of *Studies in Canadian Literature.* His monograph *Speculative Fictions: Contemporary Canadian Novelists and the Writing of History* (McGill-Queen's UP, 2002) is probably the most comprehensive study of a genre that is very much at the heart of contemporary Canadian literature. Wyile's latest publication in this area is a collection of interviews with eleven writers of historical fiction. *Speaking in the Past Tense* offers a healthy mixture of conversations with long-time practitioners of the genre, well-known authors who have only recently turned to the historical novel, and younger Canadian writers. Thus the reader encounters the views of such diverse novelists as Rudy Wiebe, Guy Vanderhaeghe, Heather Robertson, Jane Urquhart, Wayne Johnston, Margaret Sweatman, Fred Stenson, Thomas Wharton, George Elliott Clarke, Michael Crummey, and Joseph Boyden. Only two of these interviews, those with Wharton and Urquhart, have previously appeared elsewhere. In a perfect world, *Speaking in the Past Tense* would also contain interviews with authors like Margaret Atwood, George Bowering, Michael Ondaatje, and others who have decisively shaped the development of Canadian historical fiction in the last few decades. But, of course, this world is far from perfect and the present collection is very likely as close as you can get to representing the astonishing breadth of the contemporary English-Canadian historical novel.

Speaking in the Past Tense opens with a long essay in which Wyile competently charts the current preoccupation with history in Canadian literature: "Canadian readers are increasingly eager to delve into the country's past, and Canadian writers have played a huge role in cultivating and feeding that interest." Wyile goes on to outline the changes the genre has undergone since the publication of such influential books as Rudy Wiebe's *The Temptations of Big Bear* and Timothy Findley's *The Wars* in the 1970s and places special emphasis on the revisionist and postcolonial sensibilities of most historical novels. Much of what Wyile writes here is but a shortened version of the findings he put forth in his previous publications. The introductory essay, however, fulfills its purpose of providing the readers of *Speaking in the Past Tense* with a succinct overview of the recent history as well as the current state of Canadian historical fiction. In addition to this more general introduction, *Speaking in the Past Tense* includes brief headnotes on the work of each author interviewed. The book also comes with thirty-three archive photographs of such historical figures as Gabriel Dumont, George and Rufus Hamilton, Francis Pegahmagabow, Joseph Smallwood, and others. A selected bibliography for each writer rounds off the volume.

All of the eleven interviews circle around a set of recurring issues. For example, Wyile is especially interested in matters of historical accuracy. Thus, he repeatedly asks writers to elucidate their treatment of the historical record. In addition, a number of the conversations touch upon the narrative strategies employed. Joseph Boyden, for instance, points out that his debut novel, *Three Day Road*, only very gradually reached its final circular shape. Wyile is also much interested in the understanding of history that informs the work of a given writer. Fred Stenson, author of the highly acclaimed *The Trade*, provides him

with a particularly innovative conception of history. Conceiving of the past as a kind of matrix, Stenson maintains that there "are all sorts of things causing all sorts of other things to occur, until what you get is this incredibly dense, interconnected kind of matrix. I am very superstitious about changing any facts that are well corroborated, because I feel that if you were to mess with anything that is actually in its place in that matrix, that was well substantiated, you may feel that you are only changing something at that point, but in fact you are changing everything at every point." Despite this pattern of recurring themes the conversations in *Speaking in the Past Tense* are never rigidly structured. Instead, Wyile does well in each single instance to adapt his line of questioning to the works under discussion. A good example of this is the interview with George Elliott Clarke in which questions of class and race are given ample room.

Speaking in the Past Tense is much more than a mere supplement to Herb Wyile's previous publications. Coming straight from the horse's mouth, the collection provides valuable insights into the works of Canadian historical novelists and their abiding interest in things past. Reading these conversations makes you want to return to the novels at hand. And what more can possibly be said for the merits of a work of literary criticism?

Naming the Fame Game

Lorraine York

Literary Celebrity in Canada. U of Toronto P $35.00

Reviewed by Owen Percy

Analyzing an amalgam of journalism, promotional material, interviews, and websites alongside examples from select canonical CanLit texts, Lorraine York's brief study of Canadian literary celebrity joins the growing pantheon of theory and criticism urging its readers to re-evaluate their assumptions about the modern cultural field. Like several CanLit scholars before her—most obviously Robert Lecker, Frank Davey, and Lynette Hunter—York's interest lies in interrogating the relationship between the extra-literary and the literary, and in expanding the scope of what we talk about when we talk CanLit. While appreciating this book and its value to the field requires certain cultural capital (particularly a familiarity with Bourdieu's *The Field of Cultural Production*) to reveal the complexities behind York's theorization of literary stardom, it remains accessible as a shot across the bow of staid academic considerations of Canadian literature. The book does, however, risk falling prey to the very assumption that troubles York about celebrity itself: that it is straightforward, unambiguous, and, ultimately, theorizable under a formulaic rubric. It is not concerned with "the who and why, but rather the how of literary celebrity," and ultimately cycles back on these questions: "in what way do authors in Canada today perform their writing selves? And what are the implications of their increasingly public performances?"

Shirking any suggestion that celebrity is predictable or concrete, York simultaneously contends—against much cultural criticism—that celebrity is not itself vacuous or necessarily negative and that it can "operate and signify variously within culture." She explores several ways in which celebrity can be read as an inevitable by-product of literary culture worthy of academic attention. Setting the stage for a sustained collision of cultural and economic spheres in her introduction, York investigates the potential spaces that celebrity might occupy in and around what American critic Joe Moran determines as literary celebrity's "middlebrow" cultural position. Her lengthy first chapter explores the literary fame of Pauline Johnson, Stephen Leacock, Mazo de la Roche, and L.M. Montgomery. The sketch

of de la Roche offers the most fascinating analysis of celebrity, as it prefigures Michael Ondaatje's problematic obsession with privacy and Margaret Atwood's manipulation of her own fame discussed in later chapters. Similarly, York's investigation of Montgomery's international yet localized fame echoes her discussion of Carol Shields in the study's last chapter. Conceding that issues of celebrity are always bound up with issues of power, this first chapter begins to explore how literary fame fosters tension between public and private, citizen and citizenry.

Atwood, York later suggests, is unique in her "self-conscious awareness of the terms of her own celebrity," as she "intervenes in" and "co-opts" her own image through her various public performances. When turning to Ondaatje, York cites the exoticization and eroticization of his persona as the fulcrum of his peculiar relationship to his "contrary, hybrid" fame. Often depicted as "unaffected by fame," Carol Shields' late fame, her nationalities, and her publicly flaunted domesticity trouble several myths around literary celebrity and grant her a unique position in the study's last chapter. In her conclusion, York investigates the rhetoric surrounding Canada's Walk of Fame and its particular consecrations of cultural (though rarely literary) celebrity.

Fame, the author takes pains to remind us, is like so much else in CanLit: riddled with irony, ambiguity, paradox, and contradiction. If Kroetsch calls the Canadian literary ethos "disunity as unity," then York calls Canadian literary celebrity the "juggling act" between fixed positions of positive, negative, appropriative, dismissive, and reluctant approaches to fame and the cultural capital it brings with it. York reclaims literary celebrity from its reductively "middlebrow" location and uncovers in it an active field of power, which includes significant components of elite and mass culture. Graham Huggan's "Margaret Atwood, Inc." in *The Postcolonial Exotic* and Smaro Kamboureli's 2004 chapter "The Culture of Celebrity and National Pedagogy" come about as close to establishing what we might cite as a precedent to York's book in Canada (aside from York's own articles dating back to 2001), though several similar American studies have been recently published. Echoing much of the politics and language of Kamboureli and Roy Miki's TransCanada project, York's study ultimately posits that issues surrounding literary celebrity in Canada are "crucially caught up in determinations and negotiations about citizenship." If we come to accept this as a means instead of as an end, we will find York's work to be a valuable foundational interrogation of both the field and the industry of CanLit in the twenty-first century.

Contributors

Articles

Karen **Charleson** is part of the House of Kinquashtacumlth, a member of the Hesquiaht First Nation, and a resident of traditional Hesquiaht territories. She will complete her Master of Arts Integrated Studies degree through Athabasca University in the summer of 2008.

Cinda **Gault** teaches at the University of Guelph. Her doctoral dissertation, *Female and National Identities: Laurence, Atwood, and Engel, 1965-1980*, focused on Canadian women writers who came to publishing prominence during the Canadian nationalist and second-wave feminist movements. Recent work compares the representation of maternity and language in Alice Munro and William Faulkner.

Jordana **Greenblatt** is a doctoral candidate at York University. Her research interests include broadly ranging areas of literary and critical theory, sexuality and textuality, contemporary literature, and the sublime.

Robert **McGill** is a junior fellow with the Harvard Society of Fellows. His other articles on Alice Munro's fiction have appeared in *University of Toronto Quarterly* (76.3), *Mosaic* (35.4), and *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (27.1). He has also published a novel, *The Mysteries* (McClelland & Stewart, 2004).

Sean **Somers** recently completed his Ph.D. at the University of British Columbia. His dissertation examined Irish Japanese literary networks as developed in the modernist period. He currently teaches in the English Department at UBC, when not playing shakuhachi or watching baseball.

Lee **Spinks** is Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Edinburgh. He is the author of *Friedrich Nietzsche* (Routledge, 2003), *James Joyce: A Critical Guide* (Edinburgh UP, 2009), *Michael Ondaatje* (Manchester UP, 2009), and numerous critical articles on postcolonial writing, American literature, and postmodern culture and theory.

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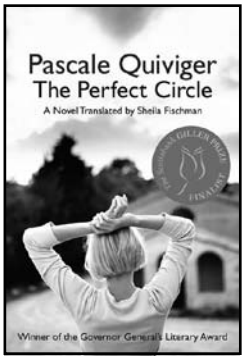
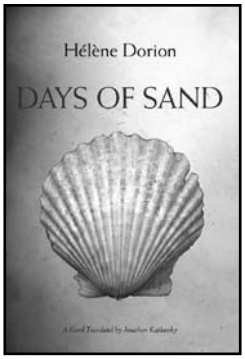


PASCALE QUIVIGER
TRANSLATED BY SHEILA FISCHMAN

The Perfect Circle

Finalist for the 2006 Scotiabank Giller Prize • Winner of the 2004 Governor General's Literary Award for French-Language Fiction



HÉLÈNE DORION
TRANSLATED BY JONATHAN KAPLANSKY

Days of Sand

Winner of the Prix Anne-Hébert

CHRISTIANE FRENETTE
TRANSLATED BY SHEILA FISCHMAN

Terra Firma

Winner of the 1998 Governor General's Literary Award for French-Language Fiction

ÉLISE TURCOTTE
TRANSLATED BY SHEILA FISCHMAN

The Alien House

Finalist for the 2004 Governor General's Literary Award for Translation • Winner of the 2003 Governor General's Literary Award for French-Language Fiction

CORMORANT WINNING AUTHORS. WINNING TRANSLATIONS.