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A NINETIES QUIZ

FIRST, THE TEXT. TWO thirds of the way through Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories,* the title character discovers a simple truth about some other creatures — those who have heretofore seemed a fearsome opposition. They have seemed fearsome because they have seemed able to stifle imagination, stop the flow of storytelling, usurp power in the world, and control the future. It's a combination that might have given anyone pause. But when Haroun looks closely at those who labour to curtail others' freedom of enquiry and, well, their joy of using words, he

> kept being struck by how ordinary they were, and how monotonous was the work they had been given. There were hundreds of them in their Zipped Lips cloaks and hoods, attending to the tanks and cranes on the deck, performing a series of mindless, routine jobs: checking dials, tightening joints, switching the tanks' stirring mechanisms on and off again, swabbing the decks. It was all as boring as could be; and yet — as Haroun kept having to remind himself — what these scurrying, cloaked weaselly, scrawny, snivelling clerical types were actually up to was nothing less than the destruction of the Ocean of the Streams of Story itself! 'How weird,' Haroun said to Iff, 'that the worst things of all can look so *normal* and, well, *dull.'*

It's an allegory, of course, about modern life — about the way many people seem passively to accept current fashion as though it were an ethical absolute, and the way a few people seem only to thrive when they actively impose restrictions on others' dreams of possibility. Now the quiz.

1. Are language and beauty incompatible notions?

2. Is it possible for an English-language writer to use any word in the language, or are certain words restricted because they offend? If some offend, who decides what is and is not offensive, and why are such people worth listening to? Are there fashions in offensiveness, as there are fashions in enthusiasms? Does *time* neces sarily stale words, or make them better? Just because certain English-language words, word combinations, and sentence patterns have been around for many decades, does this mean that they are therefore ugly, restrictive, politically heinous, and evil to use?

3. Are openly political statements necessarily more beautiful, more purposeful, or more utilitarian than other statements? Is dense prose naturally more beautiful, more intellectually profound, or more politically responsible than lucid prose? Is clarity a virtue — or is "virtue" not an acceptable category of aesthetic response? Who says?
4. If a critic recognizes the artifice of literature, must it follow from this categoriza tion that literature is unrelated to the physical, emotional, and intellectual world in which, for better or worse, readers live? Do those who enthuse about, say, post modernism think that postmodernism is intrinsically better than, say, realism (or more beautiful, more virtuous, more intellectually profound)? Or do they recog nize that, like realism, postmodernism is a fashion, and that, like realism, it can be inventive, exciting, cultish, or stale?
5. Do majorities set fashion — or do minorities? If it follows that majorities are not necessarily benevolent, thoughtful, or worthy of respect, and that they can always benefit from constructive criticism, does it also follow that minorities are necessarily without blemish and cannot benefit from constructive criticism? Who, then, is the "constructive critic"? If, in an open society, it's always worth listening to the voices of those on the margins, who defines the margins? And do those on the margins necessarily have more insight into literature and society than those not on the margins? Are they somehow, *a priori,* more worth listening to on all subjects and for all determinations of value?
6. If "nationality" is not a literary virtue, why is "region," "margin," "gender," "class," or "race" considered to be one?
7. Why is it that so many people who (with justification) criticize the restrictive- ness of a given "convention" fallaciously assume that all orthographic and syntactic and social "conventions" must also be bad?
8. Why is it that so many people who claim not to despise others find it so easy to despise the past?
9. What happens when dullness becomes the discourse model of contemporary choice? Isn't some political agenda served? Whose? Doesn't dullness do the work of those who would circumvent the open exchange of ideas? Aren't those who would limit speech, by claiming how offensive "conventional" words are, using a technique that would silence opposition rather than liberate the imagination and society? Isn't critical safety — which joins in the attack on the current scapegoat, whatever it happens to be — as dangerous as dullness, in that it pretends that the self-serving absolutes of a received tyranny are preferable to the liberal uncertainties of having to make judgments (about aesthetics as well as social ethics) and to choose among options?

W.N.

NAKED CHARM

T. Lane Millet

Quarks should be the name elves give their pets,
some small beast that likes mischief,
has a curled tail, and romps.
Charmed quarks would be pets lost to necromancy.
But charmed quarks and strange quarks,
up and down quarks
belong to science, and what lovely language,
what names for who knows what,
bits of vacuum, little chips of lights, perhaps,
with names and spin to give them meaning.
They have degrees, degrees of strangeness,
they have charm, they are charged with charm
positive and negative, charged with color too.
They spin and join and form larger bits
with grander properties — two charm quarks
can join and form a meson if their charm
is different, but the union has no charm
which is sad, like marriage sometimes.
Mesons can be made from quarks
with other properties — color or strangeness
for example. Mixings can occur
and when a charm quark mingles with a strange one
their mesons exhibit naked charm —
chips with naked charm ! Larger still
are bottom quarks (some call them beauty quarks)
whose mass looms ten times greater than the rest,
and scientists have found them in excited states.
Laws forbid that bottom quarks together
can form mesons that have bottomness or beauty,
and yet a bottom quark with charm
will have bare bottom if only for a moment
(some call it naked beauty) and then diffuse
to smaller chips with naked charm, as we are told
by those who know, the scientists
who call it naked charm.

KLEE WYCK

The Eye of the Other

Hilda L. Thomas

ENOUGH HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT *Klee Wyck,* especially the sketches entitled "Sophie," "D'Sonoqua," and "Kitwancool," to valorize what some have called Emily Carr's feminist outlook. At the conclusion of "Kitwancool" the narrator stubbornly declares, "'Perhaps it is because I am a woman that they were so good to me'" (107), and in a journal entry in 1937 Carr writes, "I am . . . glad that I am showing these men that women can hold up their end. ... I have decided to stop squirming, to throw any honour in with Canada and women" *{Hundreds and Thousands* 287). It is also because she is a women who writes, as she must be read, in a way that affirms womanhood "as another, equally valid paradigm of human existence" (Schweichart 36) that Carr has been acclaimed by feminist critics such as Roxanne Rimstead and Catherine Sheldrick Ross. There is a real danger, however, of romanticizing Carr's attitude towards both the native peoples and women, of appropriating her text by means of insufficiently grounded notions of "the goddess," or unsubstantiated dreams of matriarchal power. If feminist criticism is to be taken seriously, it must also hew to what Annette Kolodny insists is "a principle of feminist criticism: a literary work cannot be understood apart from the social, historical, and cultural context within which it was written" (31). It needs, then, to be emphasized that Carr, while she frequently expressed her irritation at the arrogance and egotism of men, did not question the basic assumptions of patriarchy, and she often turned to male authority figures for validation in both her painting and her writing. Had she lived to see it, Carr would probably have been neither surprised nor offended by Chief Justice Allan McEachern's *Reasons for Judgement* in *Delgam Uukw et al v. The Queen* (March 8, 1991) in which he characterizes life in a native village as "nasty, brutish and short," and suggests that the Gitksan-Wet'Suwet'en (the Northwest people with whom Mrs. Douse is identified) have no legal claim to their lands. Like most of her contemporaries, Carr undoubtedly believed that native culture was doomed to extinction, and that the aboriginal peoples must either adapt to modern ways or die out entirely. In a public lecture which she gave in Vancouver in 1913, Carr spoke of "the move of the Songhees from Victoria Harbour and of one small

canvas of the former reserve that showed 'a phase of Indian life which has now passed into history.'" In a letter from the same period she refers to the totems as "'real art treasures of a passing race'" (Tippett 114).

Nonetheless, although she regards them as 'last peoples,' Carr draws the reader into the world of these first peoples, and she does so by means of techniques that are today singled out as characteristic of feminist writing. *Klee Wyck* resists what Christa Wolf calls the "blood-red thread" of narrative — "the narrative of the struggle and victory of the heroes, or their doom" (Kuhn 190). Carr calls this simply her "rebellion against mechanics" *[Hundreds and Thousands* 171). In "Kitwancool," for example, the "hero" and his deeds are not identified until the very end of the story. In "Sophie," on the other hand, the whole 'story' is told in a few paragraphs at the outset, "By the time she was in her early fifties every child was dead and Sophie had cried her eyes dry. Then she took to drink" (23). End of story, but the beginning of Carr's empathetic study of Sophie. In style, too, Carr's writing is marked by what have been called "female metaphors": "Male metaphors intensify difference and collision, while female metaphors enhance sameness and collusion" (Friedman 93) ; or to put it another way, "men define themselves through individuation and separation," while women "define and experience themselves in terms of their affiliation and relationships with others" (Schweickart 38). What I am referring to as "female metaphors" in Carr are not the frequent similes such as the comparison of Sophie's twins to "potatoes baked in their jackets" (25) or the young pine trees at Cha-atl to "multitudes of little ladies in crinolines" (63), but rather those submerged metaphors of engulf ment, absorption, assimilation in which the boundaries between inside and outside are nearly obliterated. The third encounter with D'Sonoqua, for example, occurs after a dark journey by land and sea: "Black pine-covered mountains jagged up on both sides of the inlet like teeth. . . . the edge of the boat lay level with the black slithering horror below. It was like being swallowed again and again by some terrible monster, but never going down" (37).

Closely linked to a certain feminist reading of *Klee Wyck,* and in fact inseparable from it, is the tendency to find homologies between women and nature, and to rewrite aboriginal culture in terms of newly constructed codes. In such readings, words like "wilderness," "primitive," "pantheist," "natural" (or, in Rimstead, "naturist"), and "innocent" proliferate. Unfortunately, they are frequently used in a way that lacks conceptual clarity. Carr was undoubtedly drawn to aboriginal culture because of her own strong love of nature and her belief that the Indians had a "special relationship" with it. "She thought that Indians imbued the forest with spiritual significance and drew virtues from it, believing themselves to be part of nature under one supernatural being" (Tippett 167). While this was, as Tippett adds, "both an oversimplification and an exaggeration" (167), Carr rightly sensed in aboriginal art and culture the presence of what Bateson calls a

"pattern that connects all living things" (8). Carr herself refers to it as "that connect-up that unifies all things" *(Hundreds and Thousands* 190).

But *Klee Wyck* is not the record of an encounter with an 'innocent' or 'primitive' people, nor do her journeys take Klee Wyck into the wilderness. Moreover, such readings can lead to what are mere reversals of the habitual ethical categories in which western civilization is perceived as "good" and aboriginal cultures as "bad" or inferior. The historically privileged master code of patriarchy or capitalism is then replaced with an equally undialectical one marked "feminism" or "pantheism." In fact, as Rimstead affirms in her quotation of Chief Luther Standing Bear, "Only to the white man was nature a 'wilderness'" (39) : and, it must be added, only to ethnocentric Europeans could the complex, sophisticated, and varied social organizations of the aboriginal peoples of the Northwest appear uncivilized, primitive, or natural.

In fact, from the outset Carr is at pains to show the relationship between whites and "Indians" as a clash between two different cultures—two "integrated patterns of human knowledge, belief, and behaviour that depend upon man's [sic] capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations" (Merriam-Webster). The conflict is fully elaborated in the first scene of *Klee Wyck*. In Ucluelet there are three separate sites — the Mission House, the schoolhouse *cum* church, and the village. As in most Northwest Coast villages, everything is oriented to the sea, "pinched between sea and forest" (4), for the forest is a dangerous place. But the Mission House and the village are "a mile apart" (4) both physically and culturally. The Mission House stands "above hightide water," its windows "stuffed with black" (3). With extraordinary economy, Carr conveys the assumption of the exotic missionaries that culture stands above and apart from nature, and that the function of dwellings is to separate and protect people from nature and from human intruders. The "Greater Missionary" and the "Lesser Missionary" can be viewed as comic figures, hiking up their skirts as they make their way over the slug-infested trail between the mission and the school, the Greater Missionary blowing loud blasts on her cow horn to call the children. But comedy rapidly gives way to irony once the missionaries reach the school. In this "half-way" house (4) which is meant to mediate between mission and village, the "hand-picked" children are exposed to the doctrines of empire and the values of a literate, as opposed to an oral culture, just as the people were earlier exposed to the virulent diseases of the first European intruders.

Escaping to the village, Klee Wyck has her first encounter with a world profoundly different from her own, collective in organization, and imbued with an animistic spirit which assumes a close connection between nature and human society. Here "Houses and people were alike. Wind, rain, forest and sea had done the same things to both — both were soaked through and through with sunshine" (6). Here, too, she learns what can happen as a result of misunderstanding and

miscommunication. The village house is open to her ("Indians did not knock before entering" [6]), but her failure to understand that sketching the old people might be offensive or even threatening to them leads to her being ejected by the old man, who "thought the spirit of a person got caught in a picture of him, trapped there so that, after the person died, it had to stay in the picture" (8). In Klee Wyck's response to this explanation, Carr defines the role that her narrator will continue to play throughout *Klee Wyck*—the role of sensitive observer. Klee Wyck does not *identify* with aboriginal people, but she does empathize with them, and through her Carr is able to convey with subtlety and clarity the impasse which results when one group appropriates to itself the very concept of culture.

At the end of "Ucluelet" when Tanook, clad only in his shirt, enters the room and strides to the front, he is aggressively asserting his own customs in opposition to the Christian code of the Missionaries. Far from posing this as a "liberating gesture," as Rimstead suggests, Carr uses it to display the crux of the problem. In order to show respect for the Christian mores which are proper to the church, Tanook's wife removes her shawl and passes it back to him. In doing so, she violates the code of her own culture in which it "is considered more indecent for a woman to go shawl-less than for an Indian man to go bare-legged. The woman's heroic gesture had saved her husband's dignity before the Missionaries but had shamed her before her own people" (10). Tanook's wife is placed in an insoluble contradiction — what might be described as a cultural chiasmus. Only at the end of "Ucluelet," when Klee Wyck and the semi-nude "old man" converse without words in a "place belonging neither to sea nor to land" (10), a "nowhere place" claimed by neither culture, where sea and forest play a wordless game of see-saw with the "purr of the saw" (10) is communication possible. In this space before Babel, before the fall into language and cultural difference, a possible resolution is suggested, but as the final words of "Ucluelet" suggest, a precondition must be the recognition of the right of the native peoples to speak with authority in their own world.

To read "Ucluelet" in this way is by no means to devalue a feminist interpretation. On the contrary, by exploring the relationship between gender and genre, between the 'form of the content and the content of the form' (Jameson 242), a feminist perspective can help to locate the work in its social and historical context, and contribute to a dialectical analysis of the text. What follows will be an attempt at such a reading, taking full account of the multiple layers of perception that give *Klee Wyck* its enduring power.

KLEE WYCK" has been variously described as autobiography, documentary and as a series of unconnected stories or sketches. None of these descriptions is adequate. Only when the double vision of the text is read dialecti-

cally, its interweaving of the themes of cultural transformation and personal growth seen as interlocking strands in a closely woven fabric, can the generic discontinuities of the work be understood. "To think dialectically," writes Jameson, "is to invent a space from which to think . . . two identical yet antagonistic features together all at once" *(The Political Unconscious* 235). Moreover, it may also be the case that "The subject [the writer] inhabits one psychic space consciously, but another unconsciously. The division between those spaces permits the subject to enter into two discourses which are often in startling opposition to each other" (Silverman 51). Both the production and the reading of the text involve a process of translation in the sense used by Vance; he asks, "Isn't the colonization of the New World basically a form of translation?" — adding that "Through translation, one lived experience is translated into another" (Derrida 137-38). In *Klee Wyck* Carr is translating aboriginal culture into a language diat can be understood by the colonizer. At the same time, she is translating her own search for integration into expressive form, seeking in the old Indian villages and their people a "life space" that can offer "a Utopian compensation for everything lost" in an "increasingly quantified world" (Jameson 237).

If the first of these villages, Ucluelet, is 'a mile apart' from the white settlement, Tanoo, Skedans, and Cumshewa are a century apart. These abandoned settlements are gradually vanishing, covered by the "Bursting growth" of the forest, "smothered now under a green tangle" (21, 18) :

> Above the beach it was all luxuriant growth; the earth was so full of vitality that every seed which blew across her surface germinated and burst. The growing things jumbled themselves together into a dense thicket; so tensely earnest were things about growing in Skedans that everything linked with everything else, hurrying to grow to the limit of its own capacity." (17-18)

Still, in these silent and lonesome places the trace of Haida civilization unchanged by European contact remains. In Tanoo, Jimmie and Louisa speak in the Haida language — "pure Indian words" (9), not Chinook (the trade language which is the *lingua franca* of Ucluelet), and Louisa tells the story of her grandmother's pole — a flood story — albeit "in a loose sort of way as if she had half forgotten it" (13). Here, through Klee Wyck's 'fresh seeing,' Carr explores the aesthetic that informs both the art of the Northwest peoples and her own painting — an aesthetic denned by *"recognition"* and *"empathy,"* and "responsive to the pattern which connects all living creatures" (Bateson 8). Through the poles of the Haida villages with their stylized, repetitive forms and their bilateral symmetry Klee Wyck penetrates to the heart of totemism, "the sense of parallelism between man's [sic] organization and that of the animals and plants" (Bateson 19). Here too, Carr displays the sensibility behind both her writing and her painting, what Bateson describes as "a sense of unity of biosphere and humanity which could bind

and reassure us all with an affirmation of beauty" (19), or in Carr's own words, "a recognition of the oneness of all things *(Hundreds and Thousands* 215).

In Carr's journal this apprehension is expressed in the language of a Wordsworthian and Christian pantheism. *Klee Wyck* is more subtle; through both form and imagery it affirms Bateson's claim that "it is the context that fixes meaning" (17). Thus in their originary settings, the old village sites of the Charlottes and the Nass, the undiminished expressive power of the totems is recognised by Klee Wyck:

> Once they, too, had been forest trees, till the Indian mutilated and turned them into bare poles. Then he enriched the shorn things with carvings. He wanted some way of showing people things that were in his mind, things about the creatures and about himself and their relation to each other. He cut forms to fit the thoughts that the birds and animals and fish suggested to him, and to these he added something of himself. When they were all linked together they made very strong talk for the people. He grafted this new language on to the great cedar trunks and called diem totem poles and stuck them up in the villages with great ceremony. Then the cedar and the creatures and the man all talked together through the totem poles to the people. (51)

The aboriginal aesthetic is neither "naturist" (Rimstead) nor pantheist: it is animistic. Before the trees can be "enriched" by the thoughts of the carver, and thus made to speak of the relationship between human and natural worlds, they must be "mutilated," "shorn" ; a "new language" — the language of a particular culture — is then "grafted" on to the cedar trunk. The process is one of imaginative transformation, the poles deriving their strength not from nature, but from culture. Removed from their context, however, the poles can no longer speak:

> Then the missionaries came and took the Indians away from their old villages and the totem poles and put them into new places where life was easier, where they bought things from a store instead of taking them from nature. . . . the poles were left standing in the old places. But now there was no one to listen to their talk any more. By and by they would rot and topple to the earth, unless white men came and carried them away to museums. There they would be labelled as exhibits, dumb before the crowds who gaped and laughed and said, "This is the distorted foolishness of an uncivilized people." And the poor poles could not talk back because the white man did not understand their language. (52-53)

At the time of her visit to Greenville, Carr "was witnessing a more advanced stage of the acculturation of the Indian she had noted in 1912. ... The Indians were absorbing the white man's way of life, partly out of emulation, partly for survival" (Tippett 158). After "Greenville" there are only two moments in *Klee Wyck* in which the art of the Northwest is pictured in its own space, uncontaminated by modern influences. One is "Cha-atl," but here the predominant impression is of the terrific roar of the ocean: "It was as if you were coming into the jaws of something too big and awful even to have a name" (64). This name-

less something is nature in its most elemental form; it is the "crashing, pounding sea" *{Hundreds and Thousands* 200), beyond any human power to shape or control. In "Salt Water" Klee Wyck sets out to revisit the three abandoned villages, Skedans, Tanoo, and Cumshewa, but the trip is a failure. It is as if the elements, the sea especially, are determined to reclaim these sites for themselves, or to seal them away from human contact. They are "like something that had not quite happened" (21).

What does happen is the inevitable result of the collision between the archaic indigenous societies and a technically advanced culture insensitive to all values but its own ; the greater part of *Klee Wyck* is devoted to showing the devastating effect of modernism on native life. At the end of "Greenville," Klee Wyck leaves the old man and his wife "leisurely busy" : "I let the clock run down. Flapped the leaves of the calendar back, and shut the Greenville school house tight" (53). Here, as in the Indian cemetery, Carr shows her understanding that for the indigenous people, time is "marked by centuries"; hence, "IPOO." The modern world, in contrast, demands not tides and seasons, but clocks and calendars, and aboriginal culture cannot withstand the impact.

EMILY CARR WAS NO INTELLECTUAL. She turned her back on theosophy, even though it meant (or so she believed) the end of her close friendship with La wren Harris :

> This morning's mail brought an envelope full of theosophical literature. Once it interested me, now it sends me into a rage of revolt. I burnt the whole thing. I thought they had something, . . . something I wanted. I tried to see things in their light, . . . [but] all the time, in the back of my soul, I was sore at their attitude to Christ, their jeering at some parts of the Bible. ... I hurled H. P. Blavatsky across the room. ... I wrote to those in the East, told them I'd gone back to the beliefs of childhood. . . . Now there is a great yawn — unbridgeable ... ; the gap is filled with silence. *{Hundreds and Thousands* 208-09)

Carr's grasp of the culture and the feelings of aboriginal peoples was not analytical ; it rose from her own lived experience. In her painting she translated that understanding into a form appropriate to her own time, pursuing in her work what Jameson styles the "vocation of the perceptual" (237). Jameson's definition of modernism is worth quoting at some length, for it sheds light not only on Carr's painting, but on her extraordinary insights into the richness and the pathos of figures like Sophie and Mrs. Green :

> modernism can be seen ... as a final and extremely specialized phase of that immense process of superstructural transformation whereby the inhabitants of older social formations are culturally and psychologically retrained for life in the market system.

> Yet modernism can at one and the same time be read as a Utopian compensation for everything reification brings with it ... the semi-autonomy of the fragmented senses, the new autonomy and intrinsic logic of their henceforth abstract objects such as color or pure sound ; ... this new semi-autonomy [of the senses] . . . open[s] up a life space in which the opposite and the negation of such rationalizations can be, at least imaginatively, experienced. The increasing abstraction of visual art thus proves not only to express the abstraction of daily life and to presuppose fragmentation and reification ; it also constitutes a Utopian compensation for everything lost in the process of the development of capitalism — the place of quality in an increasingly quantified world, the place of the archaic, and of feeling amid the desiccation of the market system, the place of sheer color and intensity within the grayness of measurable extension and geometrical abstraction. (236-37)

Parts four and five of *Klee Wyck* — "Sophie" and "D'Sonoqua" — juxtapose two figures who can be taken as illustrations of Jameson's thesis, and of Carr's intuitive understanding that through her art she could find a symbolic resolution to the contradictions of modern life.

Sophie is one of the 'inhabitants of an older social formation' who is being 'retrained for life in the market system.' In accordance with her own customs, Sophie "always wore her great shawl," but "wore her shoes ... if she remembered" (24). She is cheated by the coffin-maker, kept waiting by the priest, and exploited by the stone carver, who gives her a special price for grave stones because she buys so many of them. Unlike Mrs. Johnson, the "Indian widow of a white man" (29), Sophie cannot adjust to the customs of an alien culture. In her house, the floor is "chair, table and bed for the family," while the coal oil lamp 'sits' on the one chair (23). In the clean white hospital bed she is unhappy : " 'Bad bed . . . Move, move, all time shake'" (31). Her ideal is to be "nice," but in her conception of what "nice ladies" do, she is caught between two incompatible conventions. The Indian way accepts, even requires, the violent expression of deep emotion. The mourning for Sophie's twentieth child goes on for three days because "'Nobody sleep in Injun house till dead people go to cemet'ry'" (27) ; although she is "worn out," Sophie cannot rest because the "pliest" is not there to perform the burial. At the sight of Mrs. Dingle's "thriving white babies" (31), however, she refrains from touching the babies, the thing she most longs to do, because "'Nice ladies don't touch'" (31).

As has already been noted, Carr structures Sophie's story in a way that de-emphasizes the stereotype of the drunken Indian. Nonetheless, there is no denying that Sophie is a pathetic victim, unable to survive the 'immense process of transformation' that results from "the wholesale dissolution of traditional institutions and social relations . . . extending to the last vestiges of precapitalist social relations in the most seemingly insignificant backwaters of the globe" (Jameson 227).

Sophie was a lifetime friend of Emily Carr. As early as 1931, Carr had begun writing Sophie's story: "I have started to write 'The Nineteenth Tombstone' again"

{Hundreds and Thousands 27). This is undoubtedly the piece that was published ten years later in *Klee Wyck* under the title "Sophie." In June, 1933, Carr writes in her journal of "finding to my great joy that Sophie was in Brackendale" (where Carr was visiting) . . . "Sophie so much to me and I so much to Sophie" *[Hundreds and Thousands* 35). But Sophie epitomizes the "corrosive and tradition-annihilating effects of the spread of a money and market economy" (Jameson 79). In real life an alcoholic and perhaps a prostitute, Sophie offers a sad affirmation of the fact that traditional values cannot survive in the modern world. A dream recorded by Carr in her journal (Dec. 1930) illustrates how deeply Carr understood and identified with Sophie's dilemma: "Last night I dreamed of Sophie. She had a motor [car ... or is it Carr?] and was quite a swell in a chiffon dress. I looked at her wondering but somehow I knew she was the same old Sophie underneath and I loved her still *[Hundreds and Thousands* 23). "Motor" was, of course, the nickname given to Carr by her fellow students at Westminster School of Art in London. Like Sophie, and like the Indian woman in "Ucluelet," Carr is faced with an impossible choice: should she behave like a 'nice lady,' or should she remain true to her own values. It is not possible to do both.

The placing of "D'Sonoqua" immediately after "Sophie" in the text creates a resonance between Sophie's impoverished world and the rich mythic past. Through D'Sonoqua, Carr is 'telling herself her own story' (Derrida 49). In this sense, but only in this sense, *Klee Wyck* can be considered autobiographical :

> the biographical . . . cuts across both the fields in question: the body of the work and the body of the real subject. The biographical is thus the internal border of work and life, a border on which texts are engendered. The status of the text — if it has one — is such that it derives from neither one nor the other, from neither the inside nor the outside. (Gasche in Derrida 41)

It is something of an oversimplification to say that Sophie is on one side (the 'out' side) of the border, D'Sonoqua on the 'in' side; the border is not a dividing line, but a creative space in which the significance of these two figures — one historic, one mythic — can be explored in a way that illuminates both the clash of cultures and Carr's own inner conflicts. D'Sonoqua was for Carr a powerful personal image: "The story and the picture were special things experienced by me" *[Hundreds and Thousands* 177). In 1931 Carr made one of her first attempts to portray D'Sonoqua:

> I worked all afternoon ... on ... "Strangled Growth" ... It is D'Sonoqua on the housepost up in the burnt part, strangled round by undergrowth. ... I want the ferocious, strangled lonesomeness of that place, creepy, nervy, forsaken, dank, dirty, dilapidated, the rank smell of nettles and rotting wood, the lush green of the rank sea grass and overgrown bushes, and the great dense forest behind full of unseen things and great silence, and on the sea the sun beating down, and on the sand, everywhere, circling me, that army of cats, purring and rubbing, following my

every footstep. That was some place! There was a power behind it all, and stark reality. *[Hundreds and Thousands* 26)

In *Klee Wyck* Carr conveys both the power and the import of D'Sonoqua in words.

KLEE WYGK'S FIRST ENCOUNTER with D'Sonoqua emphasizes the unapproachable *otherness* of the towering wooden image — fierce, terrifying, inhuman. This D'Sonoqua is emblematic of the aphanasis of aboriginal culture; she is seen "gradually paling . . . back into the forest. . . as if she belonged there, and the mist was carrying her home" (33). The second image expresses "power, weight, domination, rather than ferocity" (35). She is, also, an expression of native *ressentiment* at the white's appropriation of their culture:

I saw Indian Tom on the beach and went to him.
"Who is she?"
. . . Resentment showed in his face . . . — resentment that white folks should pry into matters wholly Indian.

This was D'Sonoqua, and she was a supernatural being, who belonged to these Indians. (35-36)

It is only with the third encounter (ironically with a figure which Carr misidentified as D'Sonoqua, but which was actually the figure of a male chief [Rimstead 50]) that D'Sonoqua becomes a "singing spirit," "neither wooden nor stationary" but "graciously feminine" (39-40), the very symbol of the living mother.

In this final image of D'Sonoqua the impossibility of combining power, authority, womanliness, and "Indianness" (which in Carr means unity with nature, the "connect-up that unifies all things" *{Hundreds and Thousands* 190)) is overcome, and D'Sonoqua emerges as a figure of psychic wholeness, of at-home-ness in the world. She stands, in fact, for the end of alienation, "that unity of outside and inside which Utopia will establish in all the dimensions of existence" (Jameson, *Marxism and Form* 143).

Obviously this experience of plenitude can be achieved only symbolically, at the level of psychological affect. The contradictions of modern life are not so easily resolved in everyday life. Nonetheless, in D'Sonoqua, not Klee Wyck, Carr might be said to have found her proper name:

Let's suppose I have a secret proper name that has nothing to do with my public proper name or with what anyone may know about me. Suppose also that from time to time some other may call me by this secret proper name, either by uttering certain words or syllables or by making certain gestures or signs . . . not necessarily on the order of language in the phonic sense, . . . but on the order of a gesture, a physical association, *a sense of some sort,* a taste, a smell. . . . This, then, could be the secret name. (Derrida 106, emphasis added)

Lest this should seem to invest too much significance in D'Sonoqua, it is clear from Carr's journal that D'Sonoqua represented something very special to her. In April 1933 she writes, "I think perhaps it's this way in art. The spirit of the thing calls to your soul. First it hails it in passing and your soul pauses and shouts back, 'Coming' " (113). While working on an early version of "D'Sonoqua," Carr refers to "The spirit of D'Sonoqua over it all and what she did to me" *{Hundreds and Thousands* 155), and later she laments that although "the story and the picture were special things experienced by me … I don't know anybody I can talk it out with. Perhaps I could have once with Lawren, but I am not sure he would have understood, and now that intimacy of our life work is all gone too" (177). Given Carr's reticence even in her journal about her most intimate experiences, these entries seem to confirm the special importance of D'Sonoqua in Carr's artistic life. It is certainly true that after 1930 Carr gradually relinquished her romantic notion of Indian culture, and that she turned more and more to the forest, finding in the "heightened and autonomous language of color" a compensation for the reification and fragmentation of modern life (Jameson, 237). In 1930, after a final visit to the "cat village,"

> She returned to her sketches of Indian totem poles and worked several into canvases. But the forest dominated; it was omnipotent. In *Strangled by Growth,* a Koskimo pole — representing D'Sonoqua, the Wild Woman of the Woods — is smothered by twisted ribbons of green and yellow foliage. Up until 1929 her totem poles had always dominated the underbrush and the trees; now the converse was often true. (Tippett 179)

At Goldstream Flats she sat in the woods, "staring, staring, staring — half lost, learning a new language, or rather the same language in a different dialect" *{Growing Pains* 238). To put this another way, Carr translated her experience of aboriginal culture, in which she saw an affirmation of beauty and a sense of the "connect-up" of things, into a direct experience of nature.

It should also, of course, be reiterated that while *Klee Wyck* may be auto-biographical, it is not autobiography :

> Though Emily attempted to be as true to places and people as she could, and did not choose to write about anything that was not drawn from her own experience, her stories are not accurate accounts of her past. They are a mere reflection, altered and coloured by literary instinct. (Tippett 249)

It does not need to be added that Carr's writing as well as her painting is equally coloured by what Benveniste terms "unconscious motivation" :

> Beyond the innate symbolism of language [the reader] will perceive a specific symbolism which will be formed, without the subject [the writer] being aware of it, as much from what is omitted as from what is stated. And within the history . . . the analyst will provoke the emergence of another history, which will explain the motivation. He [sic] will thus take the discourse as the translation of another

> "language" which has its own rules, symbols, and "syntax," and which goes back to the deepest structures of the psyche, (in Silverman 507)

With the exception of "Greenville," "Salt Water," and "Kitwancool," the sketches that follow "D'Sonoqua" are very short. Each one foregrounds a detail from the larger picture, showing the effect of cultural disintegration on individual lives. Their very brevity calls attention to what Levi-Strauss in his discussion of mythical thought calls a "limiting situation":

> When a mythical schema is transmitted from one population to another, and there exist differences of language, social organization, or way of life that make the myth difficult to communicate, it begins to become impoverished and confused. But one can find a limiting situation in which, instead of being finally obliterated by losing all of its outlines, the myth is inverted and regains part of its precision. Similar inversions occur in optics. An image can be seen in full detail when observed through any adequately large aperture. But as the aperture is narrowed, the image becomes blurred and difficult to see. When, however, the aperture is further reduced to a pinpoint, that is to say, when *communication* is about to vanish, the image is inverted and becomes clear again. (184)

The "limiting situation" which informs the fragmented, non-linear snapshots of *Klee Wyck* is the historical conjuncture of two entirely different modes of life. In a few sharp images, Carr fixes the "transitional moment," showing "an organic social order in the process of penetration and subversion, reorganization and naturalization by nascent capitalism, yet still, for another long moment, coexisting with the latter" (Jameson 148). For the most part these scenes focus on individuals, picturing them as isolated figures imperfectly adapted to a commodified market economy, and even going so far as to single out particular *senses* in a complete negation of the organic and collective mode of aboriginal society. In "Juice," for example, the sensation of taste is highlighted; in "The Stare" it is sight, and in "The Blouse," touch. In "Chaatl," at first hearing is drowned out by the "awful boom, boom" — the drumlike sound — of the ocean (64), but in the end "the roar got fainter and fainter and the silence stronger. . . . the silence had swallowed up the roar" (66).

"Sailing to Yan" highlights the old values, but "Nobody lived in Yan. Yan's people had moved to the newer village of Masset, where there was a store, an Indian agent and a church" (60), and as Klee Wyck works on her painting, the village is gradually blotted out by a creeping mist, "as if it were suddenly aware that you had been allowed to see too much" (61). "Sleep" describes an aboriginal family still whole and secure, entirely at home in the natural world. These are Salish people of the Songhees Reserve which in Carr's childhood housed 2,000 natives who lived side-by-side with the 3,000 non-native citizens of Victoria. In 1835 [trie] Salish numbered over 12,000; by 1915 that population was reduced by two-thirds, and the Songhees were "removed" from Victoria Harbour, as were the

Kitsilano from the shores of Burrard Inlet (Tippett 114). The Haida were devastated, their numbers reduced from roughly 6,000 to 600, as were the Bella Coola people. The Kwakiutl fared little better. Tommy and Jenny Two-Bits are pathetic survivors of the population collapse that hastened the effects of cultural imperialism, stripping the natives of their possessions as well as their traditions. Mary in "The Blouse" covets Klee Wyck's blouse as an addition to "the few hoarded trifles of her strong days," for "Mary had not many things now but she had been important once" (42). In "Juice" an elderly Indian responds to an act of simple kindness — the gift of a partly eaten pear — in a way wholly incommensurate with the action, a pathetic indication of the rarity of such gestures. Klee Wyck comments ironically, "I … decided that honour for conspicuous bravery was something very easily won" (72).

In all these short pieces the compressed form combines with the privileging of individual senses to emphasize the oppressive and impoverished reality of native people who must attempt to find a niche among the "broken data and reified fragments of a quantified world." In "Salt Water," "the senses become foregrounded as a theme in their own right, as content rather than as form" (Jameson 239). In the opening paragraphs of "Salt Water," sensations are subdued, distinctions nearly obliterated. The text repeatedly refers to the *absence* of sensation, the blurring of the boundaries between external and internal: "There was neither horizon, cloud, nor sound; of that pink, spread silence even I had become part, belonging as much to sky as to earth, as much to sleeping as to waking" (78). The "great round 'O' on the glassy water" contains a soundless echo of the "terrible OO-00-oo-oeo" of D'Sonoqua — an unspoken reminder of the sea's power to annul all human feeling. Within an hour, the boat is "dipping into green valleys, and tearing up erupting hills. … It seemed as if my veins were filled with sea water rather than blood, and that my head was full of emptiness" (79). At Skedans Bay the land has been bitten and scarred as if by some terrible monster, and the silence is "pinched" out of the village by the "bedlam of waves pounding on the shores" (80). The contest between the sea and the boat that follows — a contest in which "The long dogged pull of the oars challenged death inch by inch, wave by wave" (81) —is punctuated by "screams," "shrieks," "screeches," and "sobs," as if language itself had lost its signifying power.

After the rescue, when Klee Wyck has been "seized like a bale of goods and hurled into the boat," she lies on the deck "among the turmoil with everything rattling and smashing around and in my head no more sense than a jelly fish" (83-84). In the scenes which follow, the bedlam of the sea gives place to a different sort of bedlam: "It was nearly noon when I awoke. I could not place myself underneath the hat. The cabin was bedlam" (87). The roar of the storm has ceased. Now there is "No cloud, no sound, save only the deep thunderous snores coming from the cabin" (88). In this realm of fish boat and packer, human

communication is still minimal. When Klee Wyck is finally stuffed under the hatch to sleep, she is menaced on one side by the deceptively seductive sea, (the engulfing power of undifferentiated nature) which she feels "kissing, kissing the boat" and on the other by the "mechanics of the boat" (91) (emblematic of the "cruel hardness of the machine . . . as if man had ceased to be human, all his flesh and blood and feelings gone" *[Hundreds and Thousands* 231]) which threaten to become part of her.

Sensation returns with a vengeance when she is set down at the Cannery, but it is blind sensation, full of "Breaths cold and deathly . . . from the inky velvet under the wharf," "mud sucking, . . . the click of mussels and barnacles, the hiss and squirt of clams" (92). The only human sound is the sneezing of her fellow passenger, "a bad-tempered Englishman with a cold in his head" (90). From the landing Klee Wyck climbs the perpendicular fish ladder in "a vague black ascent into . . . nothingness" (92) : "Empty nothingness, behind, around; hanging in the void, clinging to slipperiness, was horrible — horrible beyond words! ..." (93). This ascent into nothingness leaves her alone in the dark, "T-squared against wharf and shed" (93). The unusual verb suggests an aporia — an undefined, or perhaps, undefinable, space between two parallel and equally dehumanizing lines of experience: on the one hand there is raw nature, on the other a reified and fragmented mechanized culture. Throughout her life Carr strove in her art to open up a human space between these two — a space in which beauty and feeling could be "at least imaginatively experienced" (Jameson 237). That struggle can be read as a sub-text of "Salt Water."

In "Greenville" and "Kitwancool" Klee Wyck is once more simply an observer, but now she herself is the marginalized outsider — the Other — and at first she is merely tolerated in her role as recorder of a rapidly disappearing culture. Its eventual disappearance is presaged by the fact that even though the most powerful women in *Klee Wyck,* Mrs. Green and Mrs. Douse, cling "vigorously to the old Indian ways" (74), their children either do not survive, or they adapt, albeit sometimes reluctantly, to the market system. Mrs. Green's "triples" which, had they lived, "could have rocked the Queen Charlotte Islands" (77) "had determined never to open their eyes" (76). Mrs. Douse is a powerful matriarchal figure who reverses the established norms for relationships between white and Indian people, but even she is sufficiently removed from the old cultural assumptions that she wants to have paintings of the "two best poles in the village" (107) — her own poles. Mrs. Douse still speaks with authority, but like the totems, her power is gradually being eroded: '"The young people do not value the poles as the old ones did. By and by there will be no more poles,'" says Klee Wyck. "'I want to make pictures of them, so that our young people as well as the white people will see how fine your totem pole *used to* be'" (101 emphasis added). In Kitwancool, "The Douses were glad for the children to have the big house and be modern"

(104). Guns, oats, lumber, coal oil, the unappetising jam tin all take their place beside "soperlallie" and wild strawberries in the new village. The old village is "quite dead" (100), the shaman's grave neglected.

In "Canoe" the Indians gradually fade from sight. Klee Wyck's travelling companions are "silhouetted on the landing for one moment" while silver passes from her hand to theirs. Then "One solitary speck and a huddle of specks moved across the beach, crossed the edge of visibility and plunged into immense night." The proud, wolf-headed cedar canoe "Drifted away from the moonlit landing, till, at the end of her rope, she lay an empty thing, floating among the shadows of an inverted forest" (111).

CARR WAS, HAPPILY, mistaken about the disappearance of aboriginal culture. She would have been astonished and gladdened at the resurgence of First Nations art and culture that is taking place throughout B.C., and indeed in the whole of North America today. However, Carr cannot be dismissed as a simple woman who patronized her Indian friends without really understanding their situation. *Klee Wyck* undoubtedly raises questions about the appropriation of the experience of a marginalized people. What sets it apart from works that presume to speak for or about aboriginal people is that Carr is speaking as much for herself as for them, and she does not pretend to objectivity or detachment. She responds as an artist and as a woman to the women who are the controlling figures in *Klee Wyck* — Sophie, Mrs. Green, Mrs. Douse, and above all the singing spirit, D'Sonoqua; through them she is able to get in touch with her own creative spirit, to discover her secret name. In the character of Klee Wyck in her canvas trousers and mosquito netting, clutching her ridiculous griffon dog, Carr creates a comic double of herself, and through her she confronts the contradictions in the lives of the aboriginal people of B.C. and in her own life. A seeker who ventured deeply into the forest, and who was aware that she had sometimes "been allowed to see too much" (61), Carr returned bearing a message of disintegration and loss. Like Gregory Bateson, she lamented the loss of the sense of universal connectedness in the modern world :

> We have lost the core of Christianity. We have lost Shiva, the dancer of Hinduism whose dance at the trivial level is both creation and destruction, but in whole is beauty. . . . We have lost totemism, the sense of parallelism between man's [sic] organization and that of the animals and plants. (Bateson 19)

He goes on to observe, however, that

> there have been, and still are, in the world many different and even contrasting epistemologies which have also stressed the notion that ultimate unity is *aesthetic.*

> The uniformity of these views gives hope that perhaps the great authority of quantitative science may be insufficient to deny an ultimate unifying beauty. (19)

In Bateson's definition, *aesthetic* means "responsive to *the pattern which connects"* (9), a definition which was surely shared by Emily Garr. In her painting Carr strove to capture "not the accidentals of individual surface," but "the universals of basic form, the factor that governs the relationship of part to part, part to whole and of the whole subject to the universal environment of which it forms a part" *{Hundreds and Thousands* 25). It is the genius of Emily Carr that she was able to assimilate the aboriginal aesthetic of ecological awareness and to reclaim it in a form accessible to the modern consciousness. In this sense her painting can be properly described as Utopian — as a message of hope. Readers who look below the simple surface of the text will discover that "the pattern that connects all living things" is also to be found in *Klee Wyck.*

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"PAINTING IS THE LIGHTNING ART"

Bert Almon

— said David Milne
One day in his Thoreauvian hut he
wrote in a Thoreauvian mood to James
Clarke, itemizing his clothing :
Shoes that cost $1.39@ (half-soled twice)
Eatons strong khaki pants, $1.00 a pair
"A writing pad from Eatons
150 sheets for 25 cents
unlimited enjoyment if you make it"

At the exhibition sponsored by American Express I
showed the Card and got in free with my wife
tickets worth $4.50@

*

— said David Milne
who favored black as a colour
mixing a little blue into it
pure black being muddy

*

— said David Milne
who used white as a binding colour
and felt surprised when anyone
looked at a picture and saw snow in it

I remember making soup one night
I diced yellow onion and red chili
with a laser knife that never needs sharpening
Then I chopped the potatoes and kale
Near the end I crushed pieces of potato
against the side of the pot with the ladle
to bind the ingredients together
The raw kale was a misty green
but the soup was a dark green with a tinge of blue

*

— said David Milne
whose pictures used convex perspective
so that the image leaps at you eyeball
to eyeball

*

— said David Milne
who sometimes painted lightning

The bright bolt at Six Mile Lake
made Olga feel doubtful
"You just can't paint lightning"
When we saw "Storm Over the Islands"
(painted in three or four minutes
before the paper dried)
she changed her mind :
the bolt was black with an aura of white
just the image she said
that lingers under the eyelids
when you shut them after the flash

*

— said David Milne
unlimited enjoyment if you make it

THE CLEMATIS SEMINAR

Bert Almon

While my colleagues were listening to Dr. Christopher Norris of the University of Cardiff deflating Derrida's detractors, I was in St. Albert, Alberta, at Hole's Nurseries, sneaking into a nurseryman's workshop with a purloined invitation, listening to Raymond Evison, late of Wales now of Guernsey, talk about clematis.

Clematis can climb a high trellis like a convoluted argument, holding on with tendrils that snap if you try to help them wrap around the wood. Their range is great, from Guernsey in the Gulf Stream to the cold mountains of China. "These would be hardy for you," he kept telling the Alberta nurserymen, "But these would not be hardy for you."

Not being at the deconstruction seminar, I can assure you that Dr. Norris deconstructed Derrida's deconstructors, but I can't tell you how many minuses make a plus.

Mr. Evison showed slides of his trip to Szechuan on a quest for new varieties of clematis. Bad roads and dysentery couldn't stop him, but altitude sickness finally turned him back. Dr. Norris flourishes in the most rarefied atmosphere. Evison took only seeds, leaving the local plants undisturbed. Now his gardeners are growing them under glass in Guernsey.

Typical enemies of the cultivar: wilt, cultural materialism, slugs and snails, the insinuation of speech-acts, mice and rabbits, power brokers and neopragmatists, not to mention winds toppling a top-heavy growth. But the root is very thick and the plant should never be given up for dead. It likes its feet wet and out of the direct sun.

For the literary the varieties include Daniel Deronda and Fair Rosamond. For the French speaker, Etoile de Paris. The empirically British will savour Mrs. Cholmondeley, Sir Garnet Wolseley, and Guernsey Cream. Mr. Evison has named one plant for his daughter. My notes do not contain the name, not even in the margins.

I do not think Dr. Norris will winter-over in Alberta.

JOSÉ CARRERAS

Fred Cogswell

When with Pavarotti and Domingo You sang, your
voice in volume, pitch, and tone Matched theirs,
but I, watching, felt you alone Lacked the full
oneness that the others know. Your face,
contorted with many a throe, Showed the effort
made to complete each round While they, from
deep inside, projected sound With seeming ease in
a full-throated flow.

Later I learned how you fought cancer face To
face for years until, by miracle, Remission. Now I
know by your own choice You join that strength of
struggle to your voice. It adds what others do not
have whose grace Comprises only what is natural.

"WHEN YOU ADMIT YOU'RE A THIEF, THEN YOU CAN BE HONOURABLE"

Native/ Non-Native Collaboration in " The Book of Jessica"

Helen Hoy

A SUBJECT MUCH BRUITED ABOUT JUST NOW in Canadian literary circles is the question of the appropriation of Native materials by non-Native authors.[1] This raises by implication the epistemological and cultural violence which can be done (is necessarily done?) to Native texts by non-Native readings of them. Is teaching and criticism of these texts, by non-Natives, another form of cultural appropriation? In Canadian literature, *The Book of Jessica,* a collaborative effort by Métis writer Maria Campbell and Scottish-Canadian actress/playwright Linda Griffiths excavating the problematics of their earlier collaboration on a script of Campbell's life, provides detailed ground for an investigation of these issues. A vexed and troubling text — from the placement of Griffiths' name first in the attributing of authorship, to the devolvement of ultimate editorial responsibility eventually to her — *The Book of Jessica,* in all its ambivalence, can be read as modelling aspects of the white scholar/Native writer relationship. From its material conditions of production to the implications of Campbell's extra-textual decision to put her energies into Native politics rather than the book, the text both glosses and itself enacts postcolonial problems of gatekeeping, cultural impasse, and imbalances of power, while simultaneously insisting on the mutual imperative to communicate. My article will pair this concrete enactment of the politics of cross-cultural communication with current postcolonial/feminist theory on issues of appropriation and what Gayatri Spivak calls "the epistemic violence of imperialism." It will study how the theory illuminates the practice and how the practice illuminates the theory.

* * *

That's the abstract for this article, an academic take on the project. Let me try another voice.

At the 1991 Learneds in Kingston, I delivered a paper on teaching Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash,* for a joint CWSA/ACUTE panel on Pedagogical Approaches to Minority and Marginal Women's Literature. Although conceived otherwise, the panel consisted entirely of white women. I was acutely sensitive to the charge that the act of teaching *Slash,* the manner of teaching it, but most particularly the presumption and self-aggrandizement of delivering a paper on it were colonizing acts. I had been at two recent feminist conferences[2] in which self-critical, scrupulous — from my perspective — white women scholars had been powerfully challenged by Native women writers. Papers before my own at ACUTE, by Mathur, Srivastava, Goldie, and Varadharajan, continued to probe painfully what had ceased being an academic question for me. By the time of the special session "Woman, Native, Other," with CACLALS and ACQL, my cognitive dissonance was almost paralyzing. To take notes, as my academic training and research interests dictated, during Lenore Keeshig-Tobias' impassioned account of the place of Anishinabe story-telling felt grotesque. Even if Native protocol permitted the quoting of such material, to do so was to impress the comments into the service of a very different, even antithetical project. In Marcia Crosby's account of Haida challenges to Robert Bringhurst, I placed myself. Bringhurst had at least been learning the language and working collaboratively for years with Haida sculptor Bill Reid. Surprised by tears as I was thanking Keeshig-Tobias afterwards, I marked my crisis disconcertingly by weeping publicly under a tree by the lecture-hall door. The best I could do at articulation for a solicitous friend was my conclusion that "anything we do is a violation."

* * *

"There is a false collapsing here of epistemology and appropriation. To know is not always to violate."

Asha Varadharajan, discussion period, Association of Canadian University Teachers of English, May 1991

"Educate yourself that you won't ever ever understand."

Ethel Gardiner, University of British Columbia First Nations' House of Learning, quoted by Aruna Srivastava, ACUTE, May 1991

* * *

"How the theory illuminates the practice and how the practice illuminates the theory." But is *The Book of Jessica* the practice of cross-cultural interaction? Or is it the theory?

* * *

Take I : "The Book of Jessica" as textual appropriation

However well-intentioned, *The Book of Jessica* redeploys the strategies of intellectual colonialism. Originally conceived as a full collaboration, it has by the time of publication fallen back under Griffiths' editorial control. So it replicates the originary Native Informant/Master Discourse model of the play itself. (According to Diane Bessai, early programme notes for *Jessica* credited Campbell with the subject matter, Griffiths and director Paul Thompson with the dialogue and structure respectively [104]). Campbell's decision to run as President of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan and withdraw from the collaborative project, a decision only tersely acknowledged in the introductory "History" — and unglossed — speaks loudly in the vacuum created by her editorial absence. As a final refusal/indifference/signal of divided allegiance, an eloquently silent codicil to the text that resonates with earlier repudiations, it pushes against the reconciliatory drift of the narrative. Unrancorous post-publication interviews by Campbell (see Steed, for example) mute the contestatory impact of her defection, in that arena, but the decision functions as a disruption *textually* at least.

It is Griffiths, then, who provides the framing narrative — tellingly referring to herself three times in the opening line alone — and who selects both her own and Campbell's words, in what nevertheless purports to be a dialogue. Just as the programme credits for *Jessica* shift between 1981 and 1986 from three co-authors to "Written by: Linda Griffiths, in collaboration with Maria Campbell" (116), so the hierarchy of authorship for *The Book of Jessica* — Griffiths followed by Campbell — gives precedence to the one-time final formal setting-down-on-paper, to the value of individually exercised verbal and structural creativity and control. What has happened to Maria's gift of "her life, her philosophy and entry to her deepest self" (48) ? But, in one sense, that arrogation of pre-eminence on the title page speaks true. Given the editorial process, this story can now finally only be read as Griffiths'.

* * *

"[The leftist colonist] will slowly realize that the only thing for him to do is to remain silent."

Albert Memmi (43)

"Silence can be 'oppressive' too."

Margery Fee (179)

or, something I came upon closer to home,

"… silence too — even respectful silence — can become a form of erasure."

Helen Hoy (99)

* * *

Over the course of the conference, I reached my decision. I would not send out my paper on *Slash* for publication. Would I even send a copy to the colleagues who had requested one? I would return to the Graduate School my Grant-in-Aid for further research on Armstrong and other Canadian Native women writers and withdraw my notices of a research assistantship. I would abandon my research plan for a book in the area. Not because such work was fraught with political awkwardness and potential discredit (oh, really?) but because it was imperialist. It rewrote Native stories from the perspective of a cultural outsider. And did so at a time when Native readings of the same texts had much more restricted opportunities for formulation and dissemination. I would find work within my own culture (s) that needed doing—it could still be counter-hegemonic work—rather than contribute another layer to the colonialist in(ter)ventions that subsequent generations of Native readers and scholars would have to undo.

* * *

"No human culture is inaccessible to someone who makes the effort to understand, to learn, to inhabit another world."

Henry Louis Gates (i)

"the tendency to overvalue work by white scholars, coupled with the suggestion that such work constitutes the only relevant discourse, evades the issue of potential inaccessible locations — spaces white theorists cannot occupy."

bell hooks (55)

* * *

Other disturbing evidence of appropriation sprinkles the text of *The Book of Jessica.* Within a few lines of the opening, Griffiths refers to the "familiar arrowhead point in the pit of my stomach" (13). The image illustrates a facile tendency to adorn oneself with metaphors from the appropriate culture, a kind of intellectual souvenir-hunting that bedevils cross-cultural critics.[3] The gesture becomes more serious when Griffiths appropriates the Native ceremony of the give-away, the red cloth Maria has learned so painfully to surrender, as trope for Griffiths' letting go of something she cannot claim ever to have had: "The clearest give-away I have ever been involved in has been *Jessica.* .. . It's my red cloth" (in). The deceptively objective third-person "History" extends this transposition of beneficiary and donor to *The Book of Jessica* itself: "Linda's contribution to [Campbell's] campaign is the editing and structuring of this book .. . the red cloth" (10). Using editorial privilege, Griffiths then author-izes this standpoint by entitling the second section of the book "The Red Cloth." The interpretative reversal here connects with the paradoxical inversion involved in her theatrical technique of 'sibyling.' Ostensibly the ultimate gesture of self-abnegation — acting as pure medium, a

"self-effacing vessel" (49), a blank so absolute that Griffiths feels absent as an emotional being — sibyling becomes the ultimate gesture of ingestion, an imperialist receptivity: "I was taught that you could open yourself to anything, anyone, let the energy pour through you, and something would happen. I was *ravenous* for those moments" (14; emphasis mine). Campbell herself identifies the stance as one of dangerous greediness (49). Are sibyls supposed to end up with copyright, with right of first refusal, with the position of director, with editorial *carte blanche,* with red cloth to give away?

Griffiths' account, moreover, contains disingenuousness — "the thing was already out of [Paul's] domain. It was on paper now, it had passed over to me or maybe you would say I'd taken it" (59) ; pernicious misreckoning — the designating of Campbell's hostility and other Native people's as racist (34, 48) ; evasion of responsibility — "Out of my paranoia and confusion came a little voice: 'Yes,' I said, 'I wouldn't mind having a first refusal on the part of Jessica . . .'" (54) ; unacknowledged perceptual blinkers — "Women appeared *from nowhere* and cooked a Métis feast (52 ; emphasis mine) ; and interruptions of Campbell at critical moments. It is doubtful whether, under Campbell's editorship, the text would have remained so narrowly focused on the *pas de deux* of Campbell and Griffiths, when, as Campbell reminds us, the play was many people. The insistent personalizing of the conflict as a struggle between two well-meaning individuals obscures too the broader social and economic forces at play. But even granting this emphasis, in the absence of editorial reciprocity, *The Book of Jessica* reproduces the inequitable power relations of the original collaboration.

* * *

"it is also necessary to overcome the position of the white editor — or the white critic — as cultural gatekeeper."

Terry Goldie

"Endless second guessing about the latent imperialism of intruding upon other cultures only compounded matters, preventing or excusing these theorists from investigating what black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American artists were actually doing."

Robert Storr (qtd in hooks, 26)

* * *

Towards the end of the Learneds, during one of those lamentable lapses in conference planning when the afternoon session ends with no friends in sight, I joined a stranger in the near-deserted cafeteria. She turned out to be Barbara Riley, Anishinabe elder and Co-ordinator of Native Social Work at Laurentian University. Over burritos, we talked. We sat until midnight, ignoring the discomfort of

our plastic, institutional chairs. Talking about children and grandchildren ; about the politics of Columbus quincentennial grants; about balance between the intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual ; about appropriation of Native culture ; about growing up; about sweat lodges at the 1992 Learneds; about the global crisis; about allegiances to place; about our work. The conversation was personal, not academic. I could feel easy countenancing, even promoting, the intensity and intimacy of our exchange because of the express understanding with myself that I had withdrawn from scholarship on things Native. More accurately, that resolution solidified further on the spot, out of the conviction that Barbara's own candour was predicated on a trust that I would not exploit it. She had spoken unhappily, for example, of some nearby white women social scientists based in Nicaragua, had associated herself with the Nicaraguan women, and insisted that the latter could well solve their own problems. Whatever clarifications I was groping towards, then, were for my own life, not for academic articles.

* * *

"Maria: You were invited into that circle to help you understand, not to write a book about it."

Campbell and Griffiths (27)

* * *

Take 2 : "The Book of Jessica" as postcolonial deposition

With illuminating candour, *The Book of Jessica* self-consciously documents the particularities of one extended cross-cultural endeavour, in all its wrong-headedness as well as accomplishment, precisely so as to scrutinize that practice. Some moments, like Griffiths' classic defense of the Sun Dance photograph as preservation of a dying culture, almost feel concocted to provide the full panoply of colonialist assumptions. (Notions of this text as artless spontaneity meet their most obvious hurdle with the intrusion of the Voice from the Middle of the Room, an absent presence, into the transcribed conversation.) Just as the play *Jessica* set out to create "a woman who was Maria, but not really," (17), so the book about the play intensifies the antithetical *personae* of white naïf — "Where was the exoticism of the books I'd been reading?" (22) — and street-wise Native — "What a bunch of garbage. … It just sounds so … much like a white professor introducing me at a convention of anthropologists" (18) —to throw into relief the postcolonial perplex. Arguments between Campbell and Griffiths, about the (literal) give-and-take of their collaboration, rehearse systematically the sites and tropes of Euro-American/Native contestation : land, treaties, ownership, concepts of time, religion, cultural copyright. Making her claim to *Jessica,* for instance, Griffiths voluntarily takes on metaphors as counterproductive as homesteading and sacred treaties.

Campbell in turn frames her objections in the language of conquest: "[Paul Thompson] came in between, the conqueror with his piece of paper, when we were both exhausted" (104). Even in the text's silences and suppressions — Griffiths' need not to know the deal Campbell struck with Thompson (42), for instance, or her repeated spurning of an undelivered, angry letter from Campbell, in one case at the moment of insisting that she wants everything said (62, 112) — *The Book of Jessica* signals us insistently with traces of its evasions. The final destabilizing of peaceful reconciliation — "Are we going to leave people with the faerie tale of it? Because the truth is, I am wrecked over doing this, I'm still afraid of you, still feel like your servant," says Griffiths (112) —is yet one more invitation to us to continue the anatomizing.

* * *

I am an academic. I work alone. For my research, I work in libraries, with bibliographies, with books, with journals, with archives. Until very recently I had never collaborated on an article. By the time I submit my work to any public scrutiny, it feels finished, and I am not anxious for critiques necessitating extensive revision. Except at conferences, paper stands between me and those I write about, between me and those I write to, between me and those who write about me. Like the barricade of As that Alice Munro's Del Jordan stacks around herself *(Lives* 195). I write for other academics. At least in part, I write because the structures of my job require and reward it. I am comfortable in this world. I enjoy the intellectual autonomy and independence and self-direction. Over this area of my life, I have control. I feel safe. I am an academic.

I am a teacher.

I am a feminist.

I am a parent, and a parent of Native children.

I am a citizen of this badly messed-up world.

* * *

"Why are you poking your white imagination into our culture? You will not learn anything new when that happens."

Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, "Woman, Native, Other"

"I'm surrounded by people saying silly things like 'I can't teach black writers.' . . . It's called 'education' because you learn."

Nikki Giovanni

* * *

The Book of Jessica gives us — in place of a narrative of liberal self-scrutiny on the one hand or anti-colonial resilience on the other, either constructed in comfortable isolation from the other — the less usual and necessarily more nuanced

rendering of *mutual* disputation/negotiation in process. What could be static documentation is repeatedly problematized and transformed, through the dynamic of instant accountability, correction, and challenge. Confronted with an embodied reminder, in Griffiths, of "a society that takes and takes, a society that changes, rearranges, interprets and interprets some more, until there's nothing left but confusion" (91), Campbell must wrestle with her cultural ethic of generosity, of letting go and giving away. Griffiths must confess her determination to write *Jessica* without Campbell's blessing if necessary or her misrepresentations of how far she had gone with that undertaking, not simply to the reader, but, as she says about her sibyling, much more disconcertingly with the "subject" in the room. *Everything* is in the tension. With the ongoing interaction, comes also a greater pressure for mutuality. "[Y]ou have to be able to be honest about yourself too," insists Campbell. "You can't lay something out, and then say, 'Well, I can't do that because it might hurt some people.' . . . Why is it okay to lay my guts all over the table, but you can only take some of yours, and by the way, madam, let's make sure they're the pretty ones" (88).

* * *

A few years ago, I watched the frustration of a white academic friend of mine as she tried to co-edit a collection of essays on aboriginal women. Editorial discus sions were at cross-purposes, members of the collective failed to show up for the meetings or showed up unprepared, other issues edged out discussion of the articles. I was grateful that, for *The Native in Literature,* my co-editors had been fellow-academics and rather like-minded. If these other conference papers were ever to see publication, it seemed to me, those most active needed to take charge, and damn the collective process. I can only guess at the perspective from alternate locations, those of the students, activists, and Indian women : That publication in itself primarily served the academics. That there were more pressing priorities. That the articles aimed more to fit into an academic discourse than to inspire change for Native people. That a collection dominated by white perspectives was worse than no collection at all. That the editorial process was pedantic, intimidat ing, or misguided. That the power to be heard resided with the white academics __ Or, perhaps, that the editing was proceeding exactly as it should. . . . I can only guess.

* * *

Linda: "… the wolverine in me said … 'I have the power to write that play and it will not be written the way I want unless I do it.'"

Maria: "It's easier to go and do it yourself, and face the conflict after .. . the hard words and stuff, but not the actual pain of trying to do it together."

Campbell and Griffiths (79, 98)

* * *

In particular, *The Book of Jessica* re-views the discourse and practice of white scholarship, permitting us to track the disjunctures between what Barbara Smith calls "the pernicious ideology of professionalism" (26) and quite other cultural imperatives of artistic healing, responsibility to community, and personal balance. Griffiths and Campbell display goodwill, shared goals and assumptions including the conviction that the circle of grandmothers has no colour, and considerable personal investment and sacrifice. Griffiths suffers incapacitating back trouble and extended physical collapse; Campbell faces estrangement from her community, internal discord, and eventual temporary loss of self. (An entire poststructuralist/ feminist/psychoanalytic paper on split and shared and overlapping selves, fluid and transgressed ego boundaries, and transposed subject positions, incidentally, is begging to be written on *The Book of Jessica.)* Nevertheless, the differing structures and demands of the communities to which they are answerable impinge divisively on Campbell and Griffiths' joint work. In Griffiths' case, specifically, we can instructively discern at work the inapposite requirements of career advancement, notions of individual creativity and intellectual property, pressures of a print culture, economics and legalities of publication.

In her sense of herself as an interpretive intermediary for Campbell's world — "Make me understand and I'll make an audience understand" (21) — Griffiths has something in common with the literary critic. In comments about her status as watcher and the unsuitability of her linear mental processes at a Native ceremony, she constructs herself self-deprecatingly in the place of the academic outsider. Simultaneously, in her desire not to be one with the other white people at the Native teachers' graduation, she functions as cultural tourist/scholar aspiring to be an insider. When she describes the loneliness of winning approval from no one, the ignominy of prying into the personal life of a stranger, the debilitating conjunction of audacity and ignorance her improvisations entail, the poignance of smuggling spiritual rituals into her life under the guise of research, or her vulnerability to Campbell's veto power, Griffiths' honesty illuminates the pain and risk and presumption of this borderlands position.

* * *

"So the motive of friendship remains as both the only appropriate and understandable motive for white/Anglo feminists engaging in [theory jointly with feminists of colour]. If you enter the task out of friendship with us, then you will be moved to attain the appropriate reciprocity of care for your and our well-beings as whole beings, you will have a stake in us and in our world …"

Elizabeth Spelman and Maria Lugones (581)

"I am automatically on guard whenever the white man enters 'Indian' country. What does he want this time? I ask. What is he looking for — adventure, danger,

material wealth, spiritual wealth (perhaps shamanistic power), a cause, a book, or maybe just a story?"

Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, "White Lies?" (67)

* * *

As I read about White Buffalo Calf Woman in the play *Jessica,* I found myself wishing I had notes from the Anishinabe story-telling session where I had recently heard the same story. But I remembered rejecting note-taking at the time as clearly inappropriate. I remembered, as I had at the time, the reiterated Native injunction, "Listen carefully because you may not hear this again" (Keeshig-Tobias, "Woman"; Armstrong, 38). I remembered the middle-aged white woman at the same story-telling session, surreptitiously turning on and off a tape-recorder hidden in a paper bag, then refusing organizers' requests not to record the story-telling, insisting it was simply for her own personal research. I remembered the scholar scuttling along in a loping crouch beside the feet of a Blackfoot fancy dancer, to record the sound of the ankle-bells for his students back in Germany.

* * *

"The question to ask is 'Whom does it serve?'"

Barbara Riley

* * *

Griffiths' early hankering to hone the unedited transcripts of the improvisations for *Jessica* reveals "the contemplative *ego* of the writer" beginning to impose itself on the collective process (43 ; emphasis mine). In her drive to create (that overrides scruples about consultation), her explicit need as a writer for accomplishment, her pain that she cannot own *Jessica,* her desire not so much not to steal as not to be seen as stealing, her belief that she has singlehandedly kept the book project together, and her faith in the worth of her creation, she exposes the double-edged values that also impel/impale academia. At the same time, through Campbell, the text documents a countervailing ethos. Campbell invokes respect and a sense of the sacred in place of sophistry regarding entitlement to cultural material. She challenges the concept of creative ownership of *Jessica.* She questions the wisdom of rushing to subject powerful Native spiritual symbols to the same artistic exposure in the West that has depleted Western ones.

The legal contract and later the privately crafted script become tinderboxes because they so pointedly signal the shift from the personal contract between the collaborators to the world of white professionalism. Mainstream conditions of cultural production and reception, and the economic structures sustaining and rewarding them, reveal themselves as potent, though largely offstage, agents in this drama. 25th Street House Theatre's financial exigency and suspicion of eastern interests,

the precedence accorded autonomous authorship (played out in the overall trajectory of Griffiths' career from its beginnings in collective, improvisational drama), and "standard" assumptions about literary ownership, presumed audience, textual integrity, royalties, film rights, and first refusal rights play themselves out before us on the bodies and psyches of the two women. When Griffiths accuses Campbell, "But you're not dedicated in the same way, because you would have let *Jessica* die" (78), she equates, in the presence of a self-proclaimed storyteller, the absence of a printed record with extinction. Cultural cross-purposes find a voice here. The two women are indeed not dedicated *in the same way,* and therein lies the conflict they expose.

* * *

As my friend comforted me after the "Woman, Native, Other" panel last year, I was unhappily reminded of reproaches from black feminists about how, after confrontations over racism, white feminists rally to hearten their distressed white colleague, neglecting the pain of the woman of colour. The direction of my friend's reassurance was unsettling also, drawing some of its force from downplaying the import of what I had just heard. I have shown a similar solicitude myself afterwards for an unknown conference speaker, confronted during question period. Connecting through our shared location, I could read her, white, tenured, conference panelist, as beleaguered, in ways I failed to read the Native member of the audience, lone voice of indignation and dissension, hell-raiser in the academic atmosphere of restraint and good manners, where consternation at the breach of decorum could blot out the substance of her objections.

* * *

"I am waiting to learn from [white feminist professors] the path of their resistance, of how it came to be that they were able to surrender the power to act as colonizers."

bell hooks (151)

"So much attention has been paid to analysis of why dominant feminist discourses have been inattentive to women of color that we have yet to see analyses which include these neglected perspectives."

Lynet Uttal (42)

* * *

Take 3 : "The Book of Jessica" as textual resistance

The Book of Jessica is Maria Campbell's book. It is her idea initially. The very substance and format of the book are determined by her ethos of mutual self-disclosure as fundamental to any true collaboration. Provoked by the inconsistency

of Griffiths' fascination exclusively with a Native past, arguing that she and Griffiths can find a meeting place only in an *exchange* of their ancestral histories, and contending that shared personal matters, like Griffiths' shoplifting, give her someone solid to interact with, she ensures that this text both theorizes and models a collaborative process of genuine exchange. Though deletions leave their traces — Griffiths' mother's alcoholism (?) cured through religion, for example — Griffiths is exposed in ways foreign to sibyls and researchers. The textual format of dialogue and interjections, in place of a monologic or synthesized narrative, develops naturally from this insistence on mutuality. The book's forthrightness too reflects Campbell's motive for persisting with a project this painful, the urgency of providing connections and hope in a period of global devastation.

Furthermore, the most eloquent piece of oratory in the book is Campbell's. In its historic concision and controlled passion, it necessarily infuses any reading of the entire collaboration and the book. The speech I mean is her caustic response to Griffiths' contention that the play *Jessica* lives thanks to Griffiths' authorship but requires Campbell's belated modifications and permission :

> Now Wolverine is saying, "I took it. I gave it birth. I gave it life. It was mine and it would have died without me. I salvaged it. I built temples all over the place. I built high-rises all over the place. I put wheat fields out there. I produced it and if it wasn't for me, you would have let this land die. So I came along and I took what you were wasting and I made something productive out of it, because you weren't doing it, but I need you to tell me that I didn't steal anything, that I didn't take anything from you." (80)

Campbell inserts the narrative so forcibly and repeatedly into history, and into a colonial history, that the reader cannot help but read the collaboration as one moment in a centuries-long struggle.

* * *

I have not been entirely honest about my crisis over researching Native literature — nor was I with myself at the time. My tormented sense of the impossibility of such work did not derive entirely from a conviction of an absolute epistemological impasse, an impenetrable barrier between cultural insider and outsider which I could only augment by presuming to breach. Nor from a conviction of the inevitability of a colonizing appropriation. Behind those concerns lurked an appalled glimpse of the momentous personal and methodological changes entailed in counteracting my cultural ignorance and presumption. Hell, I like my library fortress, my scholarly garrison. I don't even go out of my way to interview Alice Munro, when I'm writing on her. The negotiations, the accountability, the loss of control over my time, the necessity to function off my own turf, the depressingly poor prospects of ever getting it right were too daunting. (Yet I had felt dismissive of a colleague who simply dropped the idea of organizing a panel on writers of colour

when advised she should aim for diversity among the panelists.) A Native elder spoke to me about being affronted (admittedly during a contentious period) by an inappropriate request from another Indian — tendered publicly rather than privately beforehand — to open a meeting with a prayer. I could envision hundreds of such unwitting violations of protocol, big and small, hundreds of *public* failures of understanding, hundreds of come-uppances. "Everything we do is a violation," I might have said, "and the cost of changing that is too high."

* * *

"Guilt is *not* a feeling. It is an intellectual mask to a feeling. Fear is a feeling — fear of losing one's power, fear of being accused, fear of a loss of status, control, knowledge. Fear is real. Possibly this is the emotional, non-theoretical place from which serious anti-racist work among white feminists can begin."

Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua (62)

"A non-imperialist feminism . . . requires that you be willing to devote a great part of your life to it and that you be willing to suffer alienation and self-disruption."

Elizabeth Spelman and Maria Lugones (576)

* * *

It is Campbell's contribution too in *The Book of Jessica* which advances the much argued contemporary debate over appropriation of cultural materials beyond the reductive poles of imaginative autonomy on the one hand and retreat on the other. She does so through a deft turn on the trope of artistic theft:

> Today, most art is ugly, because it's not responsible to the people it steals from. Real, honest-to-God true art steals from the people. It's a thief. . . . It comes in, and you don't even notice that it's there, and it walks off with all your stuff, but then it gives it back to you and heals you, empowers you, and it's beautiful. Seventy-five percent of the art that's out there steals, but it doesn't give anything back. It doesn't bring you joy. It doesn't heal you. It doesn't make you ask questions. . . . It takes your stuff and it hangs it up on the wall and it says, "Look what I've done. Isn't that wonderful. I'm an artist." (83-84)

By arguing that "you have to first admit you are a thief" and that thereafter "if you're an artist and you're not a healer, then you're not an artist" (82, 84), she shifts the focus, for the white writer, from a project of moral self-purification — demonstrating cultural sensitivity or entitlement — to one of political effectiveness. A presumed position of transgression, as a given, becomes, not grounds for profitless apology, but a responsibility incurred, the springboard for socially accountable art — or scholarship. In addition, Campbell's response to the Native ceremony which Griffiths keeps verging on violating through indiscretion points to a *modus vivendi*. To Griffiths' thwarted cry, "Alright, I'll cut it all out,"

Campbell replies, "No, not your experience. You're an artist, find a way to do it" (28). *The Book of Jessica* models that kind of art.

* * *

In my own narrative, I have not named the scholar taping the fancy dancers, the particular conference speakers confronted by Native women, the colleague counteracting Keeshig-Tobias' disturbing impact, the editor of the conference papers, the friend forswearing the panel on writers of colour. I have even omitted a revealing instance of neo-colonial defensiveness because, respecting the friend involved, I can find more sympathetic ways of explicating the comment and because I don't want to be seen as betraying personal conversations. I *have* named Lenore Keeshig-Tobias and Barbara Riley, and reported my conversation with Riley. The academics sit on panels with me, they provide me with citations and readings, they critique my work ; they are my colleagues and friends. From my academic aerie I am unlikely to cross paths with Keeshig-Tobias or Riley. Only at the moment of offering to send her a copy of this paper, did I become convinced that naming the elder offended by the invitation to pray would be indiscreet.

* * *

The Book of Jessica vindicates Campbell's conviction that the Métis role of interpreter between cultures can be, for her, something other than a betrayal. Through her voice and presence, it both contests imperialist practices — "Don't do it," she warns Griffiths (29) —and affirms alternatives—"How about that, she finally heard me" (30).

* * *

"You do not have to be me in order for us to fight alongside each other."

Audre Lorde (142)

"We will do it ourselves. In our own way. In our own time."

Barbara Riley

NOTES

[1] See, for example, Cameron; Gray; Keeshig-Tobias, "The Magic of Others"; Maracle; Nadler; Philip; Scheier, "Phrase Fraud?"; and "Whose Voice Is It Anyway?" A related debate is underway in Australia; see Bell, 15-16.

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[2] National Symposium on Aboriginal Women of Canada: Past, Present and Future, University of Lethbridge, Alberta, October 1989 and Im(ag)ining Women, Univer sity of Edmonton, Alberta, April 1990.

[3] Reviewers demonstrate a particular propensity for this costume imagery. See, for example, the comment that "[Thomas] King breaks down stereotypes about Indians as rhythmically as the drumbeat at a ceremonial gathering" (Bencivenga 13).

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SLUMBER MUSIC

Paddy McCallum

Love shall be our Lasting Theme
Love shall Every Soul Inflame
Always Now in Realms Above Ah,
Amen Redeeming Love

Henry Alline (1748-1784)

I

Fallen Nature interposed. Edwards and
Whitefield on comprehending knees. Days
blown from calendars to cannonaded
trees. Shields of waves, black fire on the
wheeling western plains. Children
wandering deeper into untended streams.
Why, Alline,
have you come again?

To urge the Sparks back into Flame.

II

All day the river-mouth breathes
brown silt. Jets fall on twenty
centuries of upland spit. Crows
chatter the Arctic wind.

I hear a thump-bash of stump,
turn and find you,
woodpecker,
feasting on carpenter ants.

A black frock-coat, a cap of red, and talk so
long I fall from flight to drift for flies
through honey-combed continents, caught,
gutted, high on the dock.

Ill

At large over centuries, criminal gnostic,
you claim some vision of the land
of Confluence — the sea off Yarmouth N.S.,
port of God's great salutation,
stigmata of barrel splinters, rope burn,
backs bared to reflected sun,
salt fingers moving down your spine

and come at intervals, like exultation, like
history, burning up the airwaves where your
sure-fire God of Love shatters monitors in
the chill despair of a once and tall
November dawn.

IV

Love, you said, Love? But it died kneeling in
the wheeling Rivers of Arcadie where the
bone-chilled Penitents bathed against the
Flood against their Heat against the Sea
While their Hearts broke and the Land
Stayed, stupefying, strong.
Go on,
the Dead arise the Quick erupt

Volcanic, spreading Red Dreams
of Judgement into that broken Moment
we call — you lead, go on, shout it —

Prayer.

V

Musket-breath from Tongueless Redcoats
staked to the trees of Monongahela.
Braddock weeping in his tent at night for
the New World awash in New Light.

Divines tending the unsought call
of William Law in his ear.
A Breeze.
A million Bibles hard as Lead loosening his
grip, his Horse, riderless.

Catalogues and Hymnals. Gulls
feeding fleeing Ships, Flags
caulking the Hold.

VI

I enter wars repeatedly : Dawn of a
thick wet field. So, so many are
crying out behind, in, thickets.

Trees russet with the stench of men.

Jesus God am I the battle

or in the battle
can
anyone speak
here

singing twenty years away the Mist and Shadow.

VII

Neither the dead nor the living dead.

You praise wakefulness but not the dawn.

Tombs and kingfishers
hunt the shores of mountain lakes.

They are the Missions.

Their doors and windows take to the wind

rising and crying to Heaven.

VIII

Noon, after a thunderstorm.

All the insects of the fallen world
outcast: low and lonely, gasping
from their contest with Sacred Air,
drought, predators everywhere.

I called to them along the beaches
weeping for fear, "Rise up you Armies
and blot out Heaven. The Sun
is but a fellow Victim," for here was pain,
a multitude screaming,
every stone a breathing Shadow,
every electric limb aswarm.

Empires flooded my face
as the Drowned swept from my Wandering Footwork
back to Shore.

I drank of them till I could drink no more.

And sank there, bloated,
my stomach a hive for the Damned,
and their Generations thrive.

IX

Dawn. Love's music slumbers
on her instrument.

You quote Ephesians. I rummage my closet for
armor as your troops move past my window in
neat eternal file. It's been so long since I killed
anyone. My brain failed your experiments in
chemistry. Forgive me.

Forgive me, Scientific God, whose breath reeks
of Nitre. Bytes of Diogenes fall at the feet of
your Prophets. They are idle. They never left
the steps of your Temple. Their days arrange
small accidents of History.

Like preachers.

Like poetry.

X

Ineffable Virus, succulent Witch, haunting
benches, toilets, alleyways.
When You sleep on steam grates
I remain unmoved. When You molest Children
I choke, but it passes.
I resist You, yes, and am troubled for it.

Cloud Your Voice and come as Rain.
Pierce Your Ears, blazen Your hair, enter
my Veins through a thousand shades of
lipstick. Though You undulate earth, stone,
the latest City, You move this itching part
of me elsewhere only, covered in Legend.

. . . spoken from salt-marshes at our wet feet
through sweet-loam deltas of sleep.

MISS HARKINS

Patricia Young

Her favourite hymn's on page 144 —
Hy Heart is Steadfast, O God. She has
no children

and says my eyes are the colour of
appleseeds. She builds my sisters and
me a red table with four

small chairs. She carves the backs
of the chairs into rabbit
shapes. We sit down to miniature

blue willow and bunny ears spring from
our shoulders, jut like wings on each

side of our heads. She invites me to
her house for dinner; there's a
piano but no

husband. She wears a yellow
pantsuit and serves food I've
never tasted. I like eating

in the dining room, the spaghetti
more than the meatballs. After
dinner I pound

the white keys with tomato sauce
fingers. I don't want to go home, I
ask to come

back. Sundays I stand beside her
at church and she doesn't
give me the look, the one that says —

for chrissakes can't you
sing softer? She says
my eyes are the colour

of appleseeds, *O God*
is my soul waiting in silence.
I sing as loud as I can.

STRUCTURAL PATTERNS OF ALIENATION & DISJUNCTION

Mavis Gallant's Firmly-Structured Stories

Danielle Schaub

GALLANT ONCE REMARKED THAT "style is inseparable from structure" ("What is Style?" 6), so that both the expression and presentation of events, feelings, thoughts and conversations convey the message of fictional pieces. The correlation between presentation and message would seem to imply that firm textual strategies accompany accounts of well-structured lives. Yet, in Mavis Gallant's fiction, firm structural patterns frame disjunction. The main characters of her firmly-structured stories turn out to be totally alienated from their human environment where they lead marginal lives. Their marginality confirms O'Connor's observation that "in the short story, there is this sense of outlawed figures wandering about the fringes of society . . . [The] intense awareness of human loneliness" (19) that emerges from short stories in fact results from the organisation of materials, at least in Gallant's case. Indeed, a number of her stories firmly mark out a route to discover human isolation. Thus, an analysis of several firmly-structured stories brings one reality to the fore: their apparent "firmness" conveys patterns of fragmentation, disconnection or alienation. The following discussion of three stories[1] with different structural patterns — ranging from a variety of sections with shifting focus through a linear development with temporal and geographical stages to a triangular design — reveals that even within a solid frame, within a chronological narrative, disconnectedness may prevail. Representatives of respectively childhood, adolescence and early adulthood, the protagonist(s) of each story move about haphazardly, evolve without a goal, and end up being totally estranged from one another and/or from the other characters.

Theories on the creation of stories abound. But most writers have their own approach and their views on the process of writing vary considerably. In one of her scarce comments, Mavis Gallant suggests how her stories come to existence:

> I wouldn't choose a theme and write about it. A story usually begins, for me, with people in a situation, like that. (Locks ringers together). The knot either relaxes or becomes locked in another way . . . The situation has a beginning and as much ending as any situation in life.[2]

One may doubt, however, that her selection and arrangement of details is genuinely spontaneous. Indeed, some of her stories give indications as to how they are built: more often than not, they include comments that can be read on two levels — the purely fictional relation of events and the metafictional interest in the process of creation. Of course, such double reading does not suffice to determine how her stories function. But an understanding can be gained from the temporal succession and causality, the *story's* (Bal, 5) points of departure and arrival together with the intervening sequences of action, their relations to one another, their locale, and their suggestive significance. Silences, and information held back, too, should be detected: unmentioned relations are often more significant than explicit, and thus less subtle, revelations. Once taken into account, these considerations contribute to the deeper meaning of each story; for it goes without saying that the principles of organisation underlying Gallant's texts and their ways of conveying meaning are interdependent.

"About Geneva" *(The Other Paris,* 190-198),[3] for instance, illustrates how a story built on a firm pattern can nevertheless reflect the characters' disconnectedness: detachment characterises the structure of both the story and the family depicted, though the narration is strictly chronological.[4] True, the external retroversions — "about Geneva" as the title indicates — could be said to disrupt the chronology, but in fact the story is based on those very rétroversions: the story would not be if it were not for them. The story basically recounts how two grown-ups are fishing for information about two children's first stay at their father's in Geneva. Still in their innocent childhood days, Ursula and Colin go back to their meublé in Nice where their mother and grandmother welcome them. Immediately, the adults start cross-examining the children for facts "about Geneva." The shifting focus of their enquiry contributes to the increasing detachment between the children and the adults while the implicit tension between the set-ups in Nice and Geneva adds to the chaotic relationships within the family. In its exposition of the struggle for power taking place between the father and the grandmother/mother pair over the two children, the story lays bare, through the text's structure, the fortress of the children's minds and their resistance to infiltration even from close relatives.

The story's tripartite organisation with flashbacks discloses the children's unwillingness to communicate, asserting their determination to rule their lives alone. Divided into three parts of unequal length, the narration discloses an episode in the family confrontation while reproducing the order of the *fabula* (Bal, 5). Each part focuses on one character at a time, thus emphasizing how divided the family is. The first part gives precedence to the overbearing grandmother: "Granny" not only presides over the opening but also manipulates each character so as to hear just what she wants to. In about four pages (OP 190-beginning 195), she manages to exert her control over the entire family and go against her daughter's express

request not to be inquisitive openly nor to formulate criticism. By starting the first line with her name — that of a function, not an emotional relation[5] — the story immediately establishes her power over the family: from the very first minute, she causes the children and her daughter to have feelings of guilt. The family network is immediately highlighted as the children conceal their uneasiness and discontent through misbehaviour, while their mother fakes cheerfulness. The theatrical reception lasts a page and a half before they are allowed in, as if to signify its unwelcoming quality. The selection of minute details makes this explicit :

> She (the mother) came in *at last,* drew off her gloves, looked around *as if she,* and not the children, *had been away,* (OP 191, my italics).

In the lapse of time between their arrival and their entrance, the grandmother hardly allows her daughter to speak. Then suspicion and contempt alternate in a concert of voices whose soloist, the grandmother, sets the tone. She elicits information from the children with her insidious questions and comments and keeps the conversation going, in spite of the children's unwillingness to cooperate.

Unexpectedly the spotlight is then turned on Ursula whose revelations make up the second part of the story (OP 194-beginning 196). But her revelations say less "about Geneva" than about herself. What she has gained from her stay abroad is her newly-acquired literary inclination. Like her father, she has developed a genuine enthusiasm for what she is writing — her play "The Grand Duke." She has even already suppressed her memories of Geneva and replaced them with her fantasies: "everything about the trip, in the end, (crystallizes) around Tatiana and the Grand Duke. Already, Ursula (is) Tatiana" (OP 196). Whatever she says is waved aside for she takes after her father, the other. "By the simple act of creating Tatiana and the Grand Duke, she (has) removed herself from the ranks of reliable witnesses" (OP 197). And so she ceases to be the focus of attention in favour of Colin whose memories are recorded in the third and final part (OP 196-198). However, he too has already started erasing Geneva from his memories:

> "I fed the swans," Colin suddenly shouted.
> There, he had told about Geneva. He sat up and kicked his heels on the carpet as if the noise would drown out the consequence of what he had revealed. As he said it, the image became static : a grey sky, a gray lake, and a swan wonderfully turning upside down with the black rubber feet showing above the water. His father was not in the picture at all ; neither was *she.* But Geneva was fixed for the rest of his life: gray, lake, swan, (OP 196)

What his subconscious retains is a static image without human figures: his grey picture of the place is indicative of his indifference to people. "Having delivered his secret, he [has] nothing more to tell" (OP 196). The revelations "about Geneva" thus reach an end, for Ursula is not a reliable witness and Colin starts inventing. The focus slowly shifts to the children's mother who, now alone with Colin, tries

to figure out "why her husband [has] left her" (OP 198). The incursions into her mind show how she has combined the various images of Geneva that her mother, daughter and son have evoked in turn. Totally fixed, the picture nevertheless arouses her envy and resentfulness at being left behind. Her eagerness to know more might lead to another, though unlikely, revealing discussion with Colin. Her final doubts, just before the end, leave a bitter taste of disillusionment, corresponding to her relegation to a position of less than secondary importance :

> nothing had come back from the trip but her own feelings of longing and envy, the longing and envy she felt at night, seeing, at a crossroad or over a bridge, the lighted windows of a train sweep by. Her children had nothing to tell her. Perhaps, as she had said, one day Colin would say something, produce the image of Geneva, tell her about the lake, the boats, the swans, and why her husband had left her. Perhaps he could tell her, but, really, she doubted it. And, already, so did he. (OP 198)

Thus the purpose of the trip is disclosed in a final interior monologue that mirrors the utter dissolution of a family whose members cannot and will not communicate. The final sentence ("And, already, so did he") gives the story a circular character: Colin is about to close the door to communication, which has led the children to be sent to Geneva. Cut off from the others, he reproduces his father's pattern of isolation and transfers the process of alienation into the next generation : an alien to his mother, he is not any closer to his father whom he "kills" in a Freudian sense by erasing him from all his memories. Slowly but surely, the revelation "about Geneva" disclose the vicious circle of the family estrangement. The seemingly linear narration ends up closing in with its external rétroversions that emphasize the repeated patterns of alienation.[6] The recurrence of short-lived attempts at communicating offers a frame clearly corresponding to the characters' role in the family: authoritative, the grandmother holds the floor before Ursula opposes her in the name of her father whose literary talents she has inherited. Rejected for its literariness, her response is further counteracted by Colin's, which is invented, as is the mother's picture of things. Like a whirlpool, the subsequent round of dialogues of the deaf awaits its turn to end up in the same awareness of the characters' disconnectedness.

Solid structure, it appears, does in no way exclude patterns of alienation. Built on a number of sections with shifting focus allowing the characters to voice their views, the story evidently conveys fragmentation.

STORIES BASED ON A CHRONOLOGICAL SUCCESSION of sections devoted each to a different character[7] enable dissolution to emerge. Linear stories emphasizing various stages in the slow loss of identity of the characters considered together also offer such a possibility. In spite of the various parts announced by

temporal and/or spatial references, such stories have a smooth relation for their one and only narrative thread. "Orphans' Progress" *{Home Truths,* 56-62),[8] for instance, follows a linear progression that nevertheless evidences dislocation.[9] In fact, bar a long flashback, the linear structure accompanies the slow psychic disintegration of two young girls after their widowed mother has been refused custody for inadequate care. Marking stages in their progress to total dissolution of ties, temporal and geographical references disclose the linearity of the story. Carried out in stages, the disjunction implies the degradation of blood ties resulting from social restraint. The *text* (Rimmon-Kenan, 3) seems to suggest that emotional misery comes with affluence. Although every new roof provides the girls with better material circumstances, every move engenders a further estrangement from each other and the past. Prior to the time span covered by the plot, the sisters felt their mother's warmth and loved her, slovenly though she might have been. They were then part of a nucleus and shared everything with her : her presence, her moods, her bed and dirty sheets, her language and even the lack of food. Separation engenders an irrevocable, alienating process. From their filthy food. Separation engenders an irrevocable, alienating process. From their filthy these underfed children, and [makes] them drink goat's milk" (HT 56). But the place is not heated evenly: the grandmother saves money by not heating all the rooms. At their grandmother's, their past is negated. Defamatory rumours make them look back on it in a different light: their mother was not up to standard, "they were living under . . . unsheltered conditions" (HT 57). Yet they never resented them and have retained the memory of a warm and close relationship (so that the elder objects). On the other hand, "what they [remember] afterwards of their grandmother [is] goat's milk, goat eyes, and the frightened man" (HT 56), that is, scrupulous nutrition, no contact, and fear — definitely not loving kindness. Back in Montreal, they are not give any chance to identify with the place nor to feel at home, for the atmosphere and the surroundings are totally different. Their relatives' exhibited wealth and resentment cause fear and darkness to prevail in the girls' lives (HT 59). And they themselves now even resent each other's company : they fight over the blanket on their bed. After this, disconnection is then carried on one step further at the convent school where expressing feelings and making references to one's family ties are offences. Humiliated for mentioning her mother to a fellow boarder and confusing her whereabouts, Mildred no longer relates to her mother: the term "'Mummy' had meaning" (HT 61) only until she got punished. Similarly, the bond of sisterhood is broken: no longer sharing a room, let alone a bed, the sisters stop being on the same wavelength. The school system parts them: during breaks, Mildred can only catch glimpses of Cathie, whose age is more appropriate to serious walks. Furthermore, Cathie, who prays for almost unknown relatives and outsiders, "[forgets] Mildred in her prayers" (HT 61). After a seven years' separation, the girls no longer get through to each

other (HT 62). Restraining social norms have erased their deviant, yet warm, past life. "Natural," that is, instinctive and spontaneous sisterly feelings cease to be part of their experience. Their identity is lost. The slow disconnecting process has reached its peak.

The linguistic environment, too, contributes to the girls' gradual loss of affective response and identity. Each stage in their peregrination means rejection of their previous command of language and shows that the process of unlearning coincides with further estrangement from their mother's influence.[10] After their easy-going bilingual upbringing with their French-Canadian mother, they become repeatedly aware of one linguistic intolerance after the other. Their silent appraisal of the status of language is first made clear at their grandmother's.

> They understood, from their grandmother, and their grandmother's maid, and the social worker who came to see their grandmother but had little to say to them, that French was an inferior kind of speech. (HT 57)

Although they have now become familiar with the linguistic code prevalent in Ontario, their natural language remains French; so spontaneous expressions of discomfort, for example, will come out in French until they recover enough self-control to switch over to English (HT 57). That a foreign language can exclude affectivity appears in the combined announcement of the grandmother's death and of the girls' newly acquired ability to speak with an Ontario accent (HT 56-57). The statement does not make any room for emotions : it denies their existence. Back in Montreal they go through the same linguistic ordeal. The prevailing darkness adequately renders the devastating psychological impact of such narrowmindedness, so contrary to their original bilingual upbringing. Finally, the punishment inflicted upon Mildred at the convent school for uttering three words in English, not in French, also contributes to her detachment from her mother. This only paves the way for her accepting to be swallowed up in her new French-speaking family. As she is referred to as "Mildred's mother" (HT 62), the new mother soon supplants the real mother. Mildred may well be back in a French-speaking environment akin to her mother's, but the pressures endured to adjust split her from her natural background and true origins.

Similarly, through the story, words referring to ignorance and revelations mark the process alienating both Mildred and Cathie from their mother.[11] Before being taken away from her, "they loved [their mother] *without knowing* what the word implied" (HT 56).[12] But soon, they are made to consider her in a new light, by virtue of social criteria.

> They *never knew, until told,* that they were uneducated and dirty and in danger. *Now they learned* that their mother never washed her own neck and that she dressed in layers of woollen stuff, covered with grease, and wore men's shoes because some man had left them behind and she liked the shape and comfort of them. *They did not know, until they were told,* that they had never been fed properly. (HT 57-58)

At this stage they still contradict rumours (HT 57). Objecting to the denigration of their lodgings, Cathie reveals other particulars of importance to them (such as their two cats, their mother's pictures and their own drawings on the wall). Some affectional space was given everyone in spite of the material scarcity. But already the little girl does *"not remember* having screamed or anything at all except the trip from Montreal by train" (HT 58). Once they have moved to their cousins in Montreal "they [do] not see *anything that [reminds]* them of Montreal, and *[do] not recall their mother"* (HT 59). The children do not talk about her until their cousins try to frighten them: only then does Cathie speak about her; "Our mother wouldn't try to frighten us" (HT 59), she says still remembering their past feeling of security. A reverse feeling marks the ignorance and revelation of the meaning attached to the shears with which Mildred is "made to promenade through the classrooms" (HT 60) as a punishment for having told a lie.

> She *did not know* the significance of the shears, nor, it seemed, did the nun who organised the punishment. It had always been associated with lying, and *(the nun suddenly remembered)* had something to do with cutting the liar's tongue.
> (HT 60-61)

As to Cathie, she is so worried "about forgetting Mildred in her prayers" that she invents "a formula" (HT 61) :

> Everyone I have *ever known* who is dead or alive, anyone / *know now* who is alive but might die, and anyone I *shall ever know* in the future, (HT 61)

In other words, the girls go from carefree and happy ignorance to the awareness of their mother's inadequate handling of their upbringing before becoming conscious of their own shortcomings and inability to have any meaningful exchange. Theirs is a story of initiation : brought about by knowledge, their initiation coincides with a kind of fall. As Christian theology has it, ignorance and innocence yield happiness while knowledge and experience provoke unhappiness and evil. On the stylistic level, abrupt transitions reinforce the existing disjunction. Take for instance the following passage :

> "To the day I die," said the social worker from Montreal to her colleague in Ontario, "I won't forget the screams of Mildred when she was dragged out of that pigsty." This was said in the grandmother's parlor, where the three women — the two social workers, and the grandmother — sat with their feet freezing on the linoleum floor. The maid heard, and told. She had been in and out, serving coffee, coconut biscuits, and damson preserves in custard made of goat's milk. The room was heated once or twice a year: even the maid said her feet were cold. But "To the day I die" was a phrase worth hearing. She liked the sound of that, and said it to the children. The maid was from a place called Waterloo, where, to hear her tell it, no one behaved strangely and all the rooms heated. (HT 58)

If the first sentence records Mildred's misery upon parting from her mother, it also insists on the shabby lodgings as opposed to the cosier, yet unheated, parlour

where Mildred's feelings are considered. After the comment on the locale where the conversation takes place, the maid abruptly comes in, very much as she has come in and out of the room during the meeting. The narration then reverts to, and elaborates on, the temperature of the room, an annoyance which is however more than compensated for by the maid's overhearing an interesting phrase worth repeating. No sooner has she used the expression than another comment on the heating habits at the maid's original home base are voiced. The passage, with its almost exclusive use of the narrative present for loosely reported actions, has a striking impact. It reveals to the reader, as it must have to the girls, that as much importance is attached — if not more — to the temperature of a room and to the use of a new phrase as to the marks of a child's despair. There is simply no trace of compassion. The girls are made to understand that feelings are worth nothing compared with physical comfort and minor intellectual satisfactions. Likewise, events are often announced and followed straight away by asides or retrospective explanations that come in to disrupt the chronology, reducing the impact of emotions. In this way the death of the girls' grandmother is broken to them two pages before they actually witness it: expressions of suffering have no room owing to the interruption. Anachronies take the reader back to the period prior to the Ontario experience, then back to the Ontario period, before combining the recent and less recent past in revelatory speech presentation concerning the girls' acquisition of knowledge at the time. Insidiously, the effect is neglected in favour of external judgements based on material considerations. A similar distance is effected in the passage about Mildred's adoption.

> Mildred was suddenly taken out of school and adopted. Their mother's sister, one of the aunts they had seldom seen, had lost a daughter by drowning. She said she would treat Mildred as she did her own small son, and Mildred, who wished to leave the convent school, but did not know if she cared to go and live in a place called Chicoutimi, did not decide. She made them decide, and made them take her away, (HT 62)

The reader is not allowed to rejoice over Mildred's new life. Immediately, an anachrony makes it clear that the adoption is meant as a balm for the aunt and adoptive mother, not for Mildred : the latter is only to replace her lost cousin. The following statement marks the lack of feeling involved in the transaction. And finally, the last step before the actual departure, Mildred shows she has become a master in the art of social interaction : for the sake of restraint, she remains aloof in a decision that involves her future — or rather the extension of her cousin's life. That she is only a substitute for her cousin is emphasized by her denial of her past when confronted with her original "dwelling." Restraint has first blurred her memories;[13] it ends up annihilating the past altogether. The abrupt ending closing in on her past like darkness on the world leaves no hope for the future. The disrupted organisation of the superficially linear third-person narration wipes off

affective responses, so much so that it negates the existence of the self. Based on a linear progression and punctuated by temporal or spatial stages, the story thus unfolds the characters' slow disintegration.

YET ANOTHER PATTERN EMERGES — triangular this time — from Gallant's short fiction. That type of story at first consists of general comments on experiences hardly related to the knot of the intrigue. The latter is only revealed in the story's midst before unfolding minor aspects whose impact on the characters is almost nought for want of understanding. This form of structural organisation comes to the fore in "My Heart is Broken" *(My Heart is Broken,* 194-202)." The protagonist, Jeannie, sees her own experience reduced to a trivial event in the story's triangular presentation. Raped in the immediate narrative past, Jeannie is first subjected to the endless platitudes of an elderly woman who lives in the same road construction camp. When Jeannie's interlocutor, Mrs. Thompson, opens the dialogue by mentioning the effect the news of Jean Harlow's death had on her when she was about Jeannie's age, she probably unconsciously intends to neutralize the effects of the rape. She virtually puts her own experience and Jeannie's on a par in spite of the drastic emotional differences. Once the rape has been hinted at, Mrs. Thompson carries on lecturing Jeannie about her responsibilities in the crime. The emotional impact of the experience is thus nullified as total lack of understanding separates the two characters on stage.[15]

The internal organisation of paragraphs also echoes the indifference with which the rape is being met. The initial disclosure of Mrs. Thompson's reception of the actress's death mirrors the lack of continuity in her discourse and the irrelevance of her revelations.

> "When that Jean Harlow died," Mrs. Thompson said to Jeannie, "I was on the 83 streetcar with a big, heavy paper parcel in my arms. I hadn't been married for very long, and when I used to visit my mother she'd give me a lot of canned stuff and preserves. I was standing up in the streetcar because nobody's given me a seat. All the men were unemployed in those days, and they just sat down wherever they happened to be. You wouldn't remember what Montreal was like then. *You* weren't even on earth. To resume what I was saying to you, one of these men sitting down had an American paper — the *Daily News,* I guess it was — and I was sort of leaning over him, and I saw in big print 'JEAN HARLOW DEAD.' You can believe it or not, just as you want to, but that was the most terrible shock I ever had in my life. I never got over it. (MHB 194-95)

The opening line gives the impression that the matter at stake is the death of Jean Harlow. Yet halfway through the story, the actual reason for the two women's conversation — or rather Mrs. Thompson's monologue — establishes a drastic contrast: Mrs. Thompson's shock is sentimental and even mawkish; Jeannie's is physical and emotional, though suppressed. The former's sterile and incoherent

comments are matched by the "canned stuff and preserves" her mother used to give her. Like processed food, Mrs. Thompson's commonplaces should be swallowed without much chewing, for they are insubstantial.[16] The reference to her new marital status at the time, more or less comparable to Jeannie's situation in the narrative present, might seem to imply that she finds her feelings equivalent to Jeannie's. In fact, it establishes a close connection between the latter and the famous sex symbol. This parallel amounts to negating Jeannie's severe and traumatic experience. And the allusion to the interwar years in Canada add to the gap between their perceptions. Her transitional phrase taking her back to the issue of their conversation increases the awareness of her comments' *non sequitur* while her "most terrible shock" provokes a derisive smile in the readers.

Such long soliloquies silence Jeannie whose minimal retorts and careful handling of the nail polish bottle[17] confirm her will to distance herself from her unpleasant memories and from the nonsense Mrs. Thompson is talking. The descriptive passages that interrupt the latter's self-centred discourse not only give panoramic information that clarifies the situation but also reinforce the gap between the two women. Where Jeannie is pretty and appealing, Mrs. Thompson is a "plain, fat, consoling sort of person, with varcosed legs, shoes unlaced and slit for comfort, blue dressing gown worn at all hours, pudding-bowl haircut, and coarse gray hair" (MHB 195). Their friendship only results from their being together in a place cut off from civilisation. The description of the Thompsons' interior is also significant of their superficial orderliness contrasting Jeannie's messy and slovenly approach. In short, the descriptive passages reinforce the clash between their outlooks.

Further contrasts are evoked through the attempt at discussing Jeannie's rape and its causes, offered in part two after the climatic revelation. The exchange of ideas is very much like a pingpong match in which Mrs. Thompson's weighty attacks force Jeannie to be on the defensive.[18] This prevents Jeannie from scoring any points as, whenever she attempts to strengthen her position, her adversary smashes back. Either aggressive or inquisitive, the latter is anything but comforting contrary to her announced purpose ["I came over here, Jeannie, because I thought you might be needing me" (MHB 198)]. In fact, her aggressiveness and inquisitiveness both correspond to her fear of hearing who the victimiser is, lest it should be her husband whose delight at listening to bawdy songs makes him likely to be lecherous.

Were it not for Mrs. Thompson's report of a conversation overheard just before the narrative present, the story might not be triangular in its structure. Starting on a low with Mrs. Thompson's remembered shock over the death of a Hollywood star, the story reaches its peak with the allusion to Jeannie's rape and then proceeds downwards with Mrs. Thompson's reprimands until Jeannie manages to express her despair. The base of the triangle is then drawn when Mrs. Thompson thinks of her own youth, "Wondering if her heart had ever been broken, too" (MHB 202).

The final consideration of her own past ironically takes the reader back to the laughable, "most terrible shock [she] ever had in [her] life" (MHB 194). As throughout the story physical descriptions enhance the similarity between the two Jeans, her friendliness towards Jeannie is made even more blatantly dubious. Punctuated by the motion of her rocking chair, her own life's meaninglessness is perceived in her incapacity to understand and comfort Jeannie. The latter can barely cry out of her despair over her utter isolation because social conventions muffle her own voice. The story opens with the news of a sex symbol's death — whose voice cannot be heard either — and ends with Jean's spiritual death. The two women die victims to the high-heeled peroxided image imposed on them by a heartless and macho society. The image of the canned stuff holds for both. As Jeannie's response to the rape is not what one would expect, she is not presented as a tragic or even pathetic character. But total desolation emerges from the mixture of trifles neutralising the effect of utter misery and from dialogues made of a minor character's long soliloquies barely answered by the protagonist's short and indifferent repartees. Thanks to the triangular development, the latter is aptly compared to a symbol whose reality shatters all hope.

THE PRECEDING CONSIDERATION of structural patterns found has established a close link between organisation of materials and cumulative effect. In the above examples, the frame corresponds to a structured pattern of disintegration in the characters' experiences. The ultimate significance of their lives is thus reflected in the narrative pattern of the stories. To put it differently, the final effect gained by using a firm structure together with other specific devices is to enhance the general estrangement of the characters. Most of Gallant's stories have a circular twist to them — looping the loop —, a circularity which only reinforces the isolation the characters are trapped in. Like lions in a cage, they are seen going round in circles with no hope of ever escaping. Thus, through the very construction of her stories, Mavis Gallant conveys her theme.

It therefore seems that Mavis Gallant implicitly subscribes to Lotman's views that the structure of any given text shows "how the artistic text becomes a medium of a particular thought or idea, and how the structure of [the] text is related to the structure of this idea" (Lotman, 6). Edgar Allan Poe's assertion that the short story should contain "no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design" (108)[19] can easily be applied to the structure of Gallant's short fiction. The message conveyed through structural patterns is, in her case, pretty grim : nothing can be shared, life is to be lived alone, no hope remains. The general oppressive atmosphere that ensues gives rise to two diverging images. On the one hand, the unconnected episodes of the characters' biographies are like sketches of empty bottles hanging on a wall, purposeless and

indifferent, so that if one falls no one notices it. On the other hand, the progressive development of a given pattern paves the way for a vanishing sense of self, so that asked who they are, the characters only visualise a black pit for an answer. As the fictional world crumbles down, the reader is left with the disheartening picture of a person whose broken image in the mirror he/she cannot restore.

NOTES

[1] Originally published in *The New Yorker* respectively in 1955, ^65 and 1969, these stories were subsequently incorporated into different collections.

[2] Views expounded in her interview with Geoff Hancock (45).

[3] Further references to this collection will be incorporated into the text, using the abbreviation OP.

[4] "Thank you for the Lovely Tea" *{Home Truths,* 2-16) could also have served for the study of his structural pattern.

[5] The adults are all referred to as functions, not as individuals with essential char acteristics. Their names evoke "their relations to each other within the family hierarchy" (Besner, 23).

[6] Winfried Siemerling finds that "the story offers a carefully constructed picture of a maze" (146).

[7] To put it differently, such stories present various narrative threads resulting from a shifting focus.

[8] Further references to this collection will be incorporated into the text, using the abbreviation HT.

[9] In the same vein, "Bernadette" *{My Heart is Broken,* 14-41) unfolds smoothly as the title character anxiously counts the days she has not menstruated. Parallel to her concern, he employers' attitudes are seen to evolve as the wife decides to interfere with Bernadette's life. Her interference is such that the latter's pregnancy becomes a family affair.

[10] As Janice Kulyk Keefer remarks, their "emotional dislocation" is attributed to the "symbiosis of language and memory" (15).

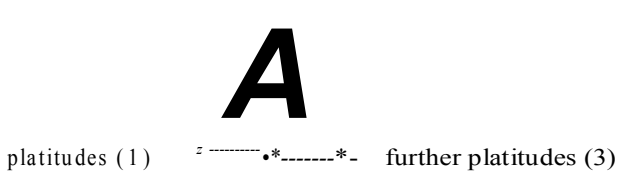
[11] For an enlightening interpretation of the voices heard in an earlier version of "Orphans' Progress," see Michel Fabre (150-160).

[12] Italics mine. The same holds for the subsequent quotations.

[13] As Grazia Merler puts it, she has "[learned] to blot out all memory as a way of protecting" (28) herself.

[14] Further references to this collection will be incorporated into the text, using the abbreviation MHB.

[15] At this stage a graph with the essential components of the narrative might be useful to claify the triangular pattern :



[6] Mrs. Thompson is indeed "an emotional and intellectual pauper" (Schrank, 68).

[7] The references to the nail polish indeed punctuate Mrs. Thompson's gibberish in the first part before the allusion to the rape as if to brighten things and suppress retrospective considerations of the crude act.

[8] Most of Mrs. Thompson's harangues are substantially longer than Jeannie's replies.

[9] Views expounded as part of a review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales.*

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FEBRUARY WALK
NEAR FALSE CREEK MOUTH

Bert Almon

> *in the last of warmth and the jading of*
> *brightness on the sliding edge of the*
> *beating sea* — Earle Birney

It is the start of warmth with cherry trees and
crocuses on the edge of the quiet sea and I
have come here near sunset with Ted and his
children James and Erin through the sloping
streets of Kitsilano where the old houses give
way to duplexes in a familiar process of
gentrification

The big willows have turned golden
The dog we meet along the path
has a funnel of plastic on his neck a comic ruff
that keeps him from worrying at his stitches

James and Erin talk about their futures
and we're pleased that they do
Some of us grew up with civil defense drills
and a guilty thrill that our cities
were marked in red on the prime target maps
I used to read a comic book series
called *World War III*
though my favorite was *The Blackhawks*
a band of vigilante fighter pilots
who settled the Third World's problems
with bombs and rockets
I can almost remember the name
of their jolly Chinese cook

An old man with a white beard
supports himself with his cane
as he leans over to the grass
and picks up a dime
making it clear what "painstaking" means
He walks on smiling to himself

The snowy beard and the cane
remind me of Earle Birney who walked here
prophesying *the final flash and the night*
of thermonuclear war
as he contemplated the new highrises

The glass of the penthouses still
flashes in the setting sun and we all
like to complain gnawing at our
collective wounds

Birney with all his wrath and grievances
sent me a kindly postcard once
The reverse had a view of Stanley Park
with the stardard-issue mountie in the foreground
He'd circled the figure and written in "Mounted Pig"
With all his kindness
he had grievances and wrath
My first walk along this beach in 1969
I heard a Chinese man
bawling out two white teenagers
who'd spoken to his son
"You called him a little Chinaman
You said that just to make him feel bad"
I think Birney could balance
the beauty of a father's anger
against the ugliness of hate
We can admire the old man's tottering skill
at retrieving a dime
and wish more money in his pocket

As for the sunset
we're tired and the benches are too wet for sitting
so we'll have to enjoy it somewhere else

"A LITTLE ACID IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY"

Narrative as Coquette in Frances Brooke's "The History of Emily Montague"

Jane Sellwood

> Can I play with the anxiety of a tender heart? Certainly, or I should not be what I am, a coquette of the first order. Setting aside the pleasure of the thing, and I know few pleasanter amusements, policy dictates this conduct; for there is no possibility of keeping any of you without throwing the charms of dear variety into one's treatment of you : nothing cloys like continued sweets; a little acid is absolutely necessary.
>
> Anne Wilmot in Frances Brooke's
> *The History of Julia Mandeville* (1762), (119)

As "COQUETTE OF THE FIRST ORDER," Anne Wilmot in Frances Brooke's *The History of Julia Mandeville* (1762) prefigures the central female character in *The History of Emily Montague* (1769). Both characters recognize the emphasis placed on sensibility in the feminine nature; both, however, realize the necessity of manipulating this conventionally feminine attribute in order to empower the position of the female within male-ordered realms of their eighteenth-century societies. Although Brooke's later epistolary novel, *Emily Montague,* is set mainly in the New World of post-conquest Quebec, its central letter-writer, Arabella Fermor, like the earlier Anne Wilmot, is concerned with tempering the "sweets" of excessive emotion with the "acid" of moderating reason necessary not only for variety in conduct but also for the potentially dangerous position that attitudes towards sensibility held for the female in that society. As coquette, Arabella's voice in the epistolary narrative effects a degree of control parallel to that of the female who enjoys the hiatus of relative independence in subservience to father and to husband. This feminine space engenders the effect of a continuous present in which the coquette, who in the role of central letter writer, is also a

paradigm of the short-lived power accorded to females during courtship. In this first Canadian novel, the New World of Quebec represents an edenic space of possibilities of both female empowerment and balanced relations between women and men.

By both building on and departing from previous criticism on *The History of Emily Montague,*[1] this essay shows that Brooke's epistolary narrative itself functions as coquette in its treatment of "dear variety" in the sensibilities of its main characters. Under the guise of respectable independence, the narrative uses the coquette figure, the Old World cult of sensibility and the New World setting to empower the voice of the female position, or to use feminist theorist Margaret Homans' term, to "literalize" the feminine absent in patriarchal structures of eighteenth-century literature and society. As narrative coquette, epistolary form in *Emily Montague* effects protest against eighteenth-century codes of sensibility and conventions of courtship and marriage.

BROOKE'S NOVEL FOREGROUNDS what is absent in the patriarchal structures of eighteenth-century society — values based on female experience — and thus effects what Margaret Homans calls "bearing the word," a designation which articulates the "special relation to language" of women writers:

> Articulations of myths of language, and specifically of their relation to the literal and literalization appear generally in the form of four recurrent literary practices, which I designate as "bearing the word." Each instance of bearing the word brings together the thematics of female experience and some aspect of women's special relation to language. (Homans 29)

According to Homans, in the same way that myths of culture identify the female subject with nature and matter, placing it on the negative side of the subject-object dyad of male and female, myths of language position the feminine negatively as that which is referred to, in other words, as the absent referent in the androcentric symbolic order. Reminding us that because "the literal meaning in a text is always elsewhere" (4), language is therefore figurai in its representation of the absent referent, that is, of the literal. And yet, paradoxically, the female thinks and the female writes within the structures of the symbolic order.[2] Homans' concept of the literalization of the feminine in language identifies a thematics of female experience especially problematic for women writers.

In her analysis of the thematics of female experience and women's special relation to language, the "four recurrent literary situations or practices" she posits as instances of "bearing the word" are: one, the "literalization," or translation into actual event of "overtly figurative language" ; two, the figure of a woman bearing a child who represents language; three, the theme of women bearing language itself, that is, women who perform linguistic translations, or "carry messages or

letters" (Homans 29-31). The fourth instance is relevant for the female-authored epistolary novel in general and Brooke's *Emily Montague* in particular:

> Moments when the text itself performs any of these linguistic operations — translation, transmission, copying, and so on … when the writer as woman replicates, in her own relation to literary language and literary history, what her women characters do with language within the thematic frame of the novel. (31)

With its thematic frame of courtship and marriage and its structure of the letter, Brooke's epistolary narrative provides an empowering vehicle for replication of what her coquette character, Arabella Fermor, does with the conventions of letter-writing. The corresponding voices are representations of valuations of female experience; while Emily's voice is nearly silent, Arabella speaks for what is made absent in conventional views of feminine sensibility. The epistolary form of the narrative achieves what its author and main character do with language, thus effecting literalization of the feminine while appearing to embrace the conventions of the novel of sensibility.[3]

While literalization refers to the empowerment of the feminine in forms which bear the word of female characters in a text, Janet Altman's term "epistolarity" similarly defines the "use of the letter's formal properties to create meaning" (Altman 4). According to Altman, the use of the letter form to create meaning establishes the epistolarity of a narrative by creating an "illusion of reality and authenticity" for the reader (Altman). The letter form, by this definition, is a representation signifying as much as thematic content does the ideological concerns of the narrative. The link between Homans' concept of making present the feminine absent and Altman's definition of epistolarity becomes apparent in the analysis of epistolary narratives by women, which, like Brooke's novel, manifest their feminist concerns. The epistolarity of *Emily Montague,* it then may be said, lies in the problematization of sensibility by its replication of the transactions of letter correspondence.

Reaching an apex of development in the eighteenth century,[4] the epistolary form originates in earlier classical letter forms such as Ovid's *Heroides,* which positions the female in terms of victimization and suffering (Altman 3-4; Kauffmann 29-62)[5] in a dyadic opposition of female/male and love/war. Eighteenth-century women writers of the epistolary novel such as Brooke used the conventions of the epistle form to represent female experience suppressed by most male writers of the form (Jackson 154-55) such as Choderlos de Laclos, whose *Dangerous Liasons* (1782) silences an authentic female voice by the "consummate ventriloquism" of its author (Jackson 156). In her analysis of Laclos's self-proclaimed preference for the female voice, Jackson argues that his coveting of "feminine" writing is based in his desire for appropriation of the "precious sensibility" of the feminine which was viewed as an essential part of female nature (167). Feminine writing, according to Laclos, was a natural expression of female sensibility, and

therefore more authentic than masculine writing, which could only imitate it. However, Laclos's reverence for the essentiality of feminine sensibility idealizes it; in placing women's writing on the pedestal of a higher moral plane, he effectively figuralizes it, silencing an authentic female voice (166-67) [6]

Writers such as Brooke, on the other hand, use female characters to voice concerns about the power of the female to effect control of her experience within society, the position of the female regarding the problem of sensibility, and the act of writing as a self-reflexive means of action, of "doing" in a society whose vision of the female relegated her to the elevated realm of "feeling."[7]

BROOKE'S COQUETTE, Arabella Fermor, represents the "special relation to language" of women writers in Homans' theory of literalization. Arabella's self-reflexive references to writing address the possibilities of supplanting existing systems of "ethics" by inserting pragmatic versions of sensibility, which ironically still must depend on ideals of female virtue. She writes to Emily commenting on the latter's pending arranged marriage to the wealthy but uninteresting Sir George Clayton. Emily, according to Arabella, has a surfeit of sensibility and therefore would never be happy in an advantageous marriage which, however, lacked "ideal passion" :

> To be happy in this world, it is necessary not to raise one's ideas too high. . . . 'Tis, I am afraid, my dear, your misfortune to have too much sensibility to be happy.
>
> ... I think all the moral writers, who have set off with promising to shew us the road to happiness, have obligingly ended with telling us there is no such thing; a conclusion extremely consoling, and which if they had drawn before they set pen to paper, would have saved both themselves and their readers an infinity of trouble. ... I wish people would either write to some purpose, or be so good as not to write at all.
>
> I believe I shall set about writing a system of ethics myself.. .. rural, refined, and sentimental; rural by all means; for who does not know that virtue is a country gentlewoman? (EM Letter 15:46)

The same letter to Emily reveals Arabella's awareness of the inauthentic posture of the "rural, refined and sentimental" feminine ideal which she extends to her own role as coquette :

> The men here, as I said before, are all dying for me; there are many handsomer women, but I flatter them, and the dear creatures cannot resist it. I am a very good girl to women, but naturally artful (if you will allow the expression) to the other sex; I can blush, look down, stifle a sigh, flutter my fan, and seem so agreeably confused — you have no notion, my dear, what fools men are. . . . Adieu, I am going to ramble in the woods, and pick berries, with a little smiling civil captain, who is enamoured of me: a pretty rural amusement for lovers, (EM 15:47)

Arabella's letter to Emily, with its references to her own "system of ethics" and its ironic references to artful female behaviour, points both to a deliberate play on conventions of feminine sensibility and subversion of them. Arabella's role as coquette resembles her view of writing : both must have serious purpose. And in Brooke's narrative, as in eighteenth-century society, the coquette's purpose is to extend the period of female empowerment as long as possible.

Accordingly, Arabella specifies that her central concern is not with the politics of imperial-colonial relations regarding the English presence in post-Conquest Quebec, but with female experience within this military and patriarchal order:

> They are squabbling at Quebec, I hear, about I cannot tell what, therefore shall not attempt to explain : some dregs of old disputes, it seems, which have had not time to settle: . . . My father says, the politics of Canada are as complex and as difficult to understand as those of the Germanic system.
>
> For my part, I think no politics worth attending to but those of the little commonwealth of woman : if I can maintain my empire over hearts, I leave the men to quarrel for everything else.
>
> I observe a strict neutrality, that I may have a chance for admirers amongst both parties, (EM 45:98)

Despite Arabella's disdain of men's political "squabbling," the novel makes abundant geo-political commentary on Quebec, mainly in the letters of her father William Fermor, and her young friend Ed. Rivers, the admirer of Emily Montague. However, Arabella's letters voice a central position in the novel's main concern with affairs of the "commonwealth of woman," and female experience in the male world of politics. The "empire of hearts" Arabella posits lies outside the ideologies of male political and military structures. Indeed, non-alignment with these existing "parties" would appear necessary for this seemingly apolitical empire of the feminine to hold power. Notice, however, that the choice of metaphor here is a military and political one, the effect of which is a subversive challenge to the patriarchal order. Brooke's coquette implies that female power within a so-called neutral realm resides in non-alignment with the male world of "doing." Although the empire of hearts is posited as the territory of "feeling," the metaphor insinuates strategies of female non-alignment requiring not passive withdrawal from, but active resistance to, patriarchal ideological structures, and by extension, the literary forms with which the female coquette would appear to collude.

The problematic discussed by Homans regarding the special relation of women writers to language — writing within the figuralizing conventions of the symbolic order from a position which seeks to literalize the feminine absent from it — is evident not only in Brooke's coquette Arabella Fermor, who is conscious of the female position within the dominant "empire" of men, but also in her male hero, Ed. Rivers, who advocates the assimilation of feminine sensibility in male behaviour and the accommodation of female experience in society. In the guise of

commenting on Indian customs, for example, Ed. voices a feminist concern for the exclusion of women from public life in England :

> The sex we have so unjustly exiled from power in Europe have a great share in the Huron government; the chief is chose by matrons from amongst the nearest male relations, by the female line, of him he is to succeed ;… They have a supreme council of ancients, into which every man enters of course at an age fixed, and another of assistants to the chief on common occasions, the members of which are like him elected by the matrons : I am pleased with this last regulation, as women are, beyond all doubt, the best judges of the merit of men ... I am sure the ladies would give their votes on much more generous principles than we do. In the true sense of the word, *we* are the savages, who so impolitely deprive you of the common rights of citizenship, and leave you no power but that of which we cannot deprive you, the resistless power of your charms, (EM I I : 34)

Ed.'s view on women's superior judgement of merit are based on eighteenth-century cultural assumptions about feminine sensibility. According to Jane Spencer, in the eighteenth century the growing middle class of women in English society had become more dependent than ever on marriage for their "livelihood and dignity" (Spencer 15). In the rising "bourgeois ideology of femininity," female sensibility was suited to the private sphere of the "home of emotional values" (Spencer). Ideals of feminine sensibility stressed the equation of virtue and emotion which, although prized in female behaviour, necessitated the repression of female independence and activity outside the domestic sphere. Arabella's respectable independence and Ed.'s feminised sensibility both posit freer roles for women in eighteenth-century society.

On the other hand, the feminine sensibility voiced by Ed. Rivers is invariably more idealistic than that voiced by Arabella. He writes to his sister Lucy in England about Emily Montague, whom he has just met :

> she has an exalted understanding, improved by all the knowledge which is becoming in your sex ; a soul awake to all the finer sensations of the heart, checked and adorned by the native gentleness of women : she is extremely handsome, but she would please every feeling heart if she was not; she has the soul of beauty; without feminine softness and delicate sensibility, no features can give gentleness; with them, very indifferent ones can charm: that sensibility, that softness, never were so lovely as in my Emily. (EM 42:93)

River's definition of feminine sensibility as an effect of "feeling" is a virtue he extends to himself. Later, he writes again to his sister, convinced "there is no happiness for me without this lovely woman" :

> The same dear affections, the same tender sensibility, the most precious gift of Heaven, inform our minds, and make us peculiarly capable of exquisite happiness or misery, (EM 71:138)

Arabella, however, although also advocating the idea of feminine sensibility in

males, is careful to temper her views of sensibility in females with sense. She goes on to emphasize the difference between Emily's sensibility and hers :

> *A propos* to women, the estimable part of us are divided into two classes only, the tender and the lively.
>
> The former, at the head of which I place Emily, are infinitely more capable of happiness; but, to counter-balance this advantage, they are also capable of misery in the same degree. We of the other class, who feel less keenly, are perhaps upon the whole as happy, at least I would fain think so.
>
> For example, if Emily and I marry our present lovers, she will certainly be more exquisitely happy than I shall ; but if they should change their minds, or any accident prevent our coming together, I am inclined to fancy my situation would be much the most agréable. (EM 114: 199)

The distinctions in sensibility between Arabella and Emily underline the epistolarity of Brooke's narrative. Arabella, as the central letter-writer, is in a position to not only effect control over the exchanges in which she plays a central part, but also to emphasize the pragmatic features of respectable independence in contrast to the idealized feminine sensibility represented by Emily. The effect of the female "double image," a device used in Brooke's other novels, Lorraine McMullen observes, is "an adroit manipulation of opposing yet complementary women characters, which provides the author with the opportunity both to endorse and to question the values of her age" ("Double Image" 357) ,[8] Representative of "adroit manipulation," Arabella governs as the predominant voice while Emily as the figure of ideal feminine sensibility is relatively silent. The force of Brooke's coquette indicates that rather than yielding to an ambiguous stance on the issue of sensibility, the novel presents a vigorous challenge to an ideology potentially dangerous to the female position. As McMullen asserts, in *Emily Montague* as in all four of Brooke's novels, the female characters are contrasted in terms of the "conventional, sentimental, decorous eighteenth-century heroine, and the astute, witty, articulate feminist" (361) quite unlike the traditional moral opposition of female characters by male authors: "the blond and the dark, the good and the bad, virgin and seductress" (361). The text diverts these traditional moral oppositions which reflect Western culture's phallologocentric view of the female, and emphasizes instead a co-mingling of qualities of sensibility and feeling, sense and self-interest. By literalizing the female voice, Brooke's "double image" advances the representation of the feminine towards a realistic view that posits a necessary balance between "tender" feeling and "lively" action, and equity of this balance in both females and males.

In contrast to Rivers's idealized view of sensibility, Arabella criticizes the cultivation of softness in women and hardness in men, advocating the balance between the two extremes exhibited in Rivers. In a letter to his sister Lucy, now married to John Temple, the rakish friend of Rivers, Arabella writes :

> Every possible means is used, even from infancy, to soften the minds of women, and to harden those of men ; the contrary endeavour might be of use, for the men creatures are unfeeling enough by nature, and we are born too tremblingly alive to love, and indeed to every soft affection.
>
> Your brother is almost the only one of his sex I know, who has the tenderness of woman with the spirit and firmness of man. (EM I 14:198)

Arabella's comments on sensibility, like her thoughts on happiness, are grounded in female experiences in which the "firmness and spirit of a man" seem desirable qualities to cultivate in women, given the powerlessness of the female in patriarchal institution of marriage, where the "hardness" of men's minds is the dominant term. Ed.'s advice to his newly-married sister reiterates the ideal of equality between male and female sensibilities that he also expresses in his earlier letters. In this letter he differs with the advice of Mme de Maintenon on marriage, whose "letters were frequently published in the eighteenth century" (EM "Explanatory Notes" 424). Ed. quotes from de Maintenon:

> [Men] are naturally tyranical; they will have pleasures and liberty, yet insist that women renounce both : do not examine whether their rights are well founded ; let it suffice to you, that they are established ; they are masters, we have only to suffer and obey with a good grace, (EM 116:204)

Then he counters with his own advice :

> Do not . . . my dear, be alarmed at the picture she has drawn of marriage; nor fancy with her, that women are only born to suffer and obey. . . .
>
> Equality is the soul of friendship : marriage, to give deight, must join two minds, not devote a slave to the will of an imperious lord; whatever conveys the idea of subjection necessarily destroys that of love, of which I am so convinced, that I have always wished the word OBEY expunged from the marriage ceremony.
>
> (EM 116:205)

Significantly, these egalitarian ideas about marriage, radical in the eighteenth-century context, are placed by Brooke in the male consciousness of Rivers, and contrast with the "sense" of Arabella's female consciousness in not expecting too much happiness in male-female relations. The idea of equality in marriage represented by Rivers implies not only criticism of the existing relegation of sensibility to the female but also protest against gender roles of domination and submission in the institution of marriage.

However, as central letter-writer of the novel, Arabella effects a degree of control in the text similar to that of the relatively independent female who occupies the space of freedom between domination by father and by husband. Arabella resembles the "paradigm of the central female tradition in the eighteenth-century novel, the reformed heroine" (Spencer 141) who makes the most of her independence and position of power in courtship:

> For a woman destined to be subject first to her father and then to her husband, the

> period of courtship, when the man was supposed to be subordinate to her, was one of power . . . The coquette, often defying propriety, tried to extend the time of her power and postpone or avoid her subjection. (142)

THE COURTSHIP OF THREE COUPLES continues for most of the four volumes of *Emily Montague,* extending the female hiatus in the dominance of father and that of husband. This female space engenders a continuous present in the novel's structure, which reflects the control of the coquette, who in her role as central letter writer, manipulates the postponement of marriage as long as possible. The formal pairing of couples in conventional marriage not only resolves the coquette's intrigues of courtship but also concludes the narrative's delay of conventional closure, effecting, as Ruth Perry notes, a continuous present that letters, as "events of consciousness" construct in epistolary fiction:

> One effect of telling stories about the consciousness of characters is that it gives a continuous sense of time even where there is no formal unity of time or place in this genre. The reader soon disregards the formal dislocations and paces himself instead to the inward rhythms of the epistolary characters who are always reacting to the present. (Perry 120)

Time as a formal consideration in Brooke's epistolary narrative is eclipsed by its continuous relation to the present. Moreover, the New World setting of Quebec is an edenic space in which the extended present of the female space of courtship presided over by the coquette Arabella Fermor, holds sway at remove from the patriarchal structures of the Old World.

The edenic parallel is established immediately with Rivers' opening letter, which identifies his sensitivity to the sublime in the natural environment of Quebec, particularly with the St. Lawrence River, one of the "noblest in the world":

> On approaching the coast of America, I felt a kind of religious veneration, on seeing rocks that almost touched the clouds, cover'd with tall groves of pines that seemed coeval with the world itself: to which veneration the solemn silence not a little contributed; from Cape Rosières, up the river St. Lawrence, during a course of more than two hundred miles, there is not the least appearance of a human footstep ; no objects meet the eye but mountains, woods and numerous rivers, which seem to roll their waters in vain, (EM 2:6)

However, at the end of the courtship period in the novel, when the couples have married, and Ed. and Emily have returned to England, Arabella declares her intention to leave this edenic space behind :

> I had no motive for wishing a settlement here, but to form a little society of friends, of which they made the principal part. . . . [If we had stayed] Emily and I should ... have formed the woods and rocks into the most pleasing meanders ; have brought into view the greatest number and variety of those lovely little falls of water with which this fairy land abounds; and shewed nature in the fairest form, (EM 151:26g)

Arabella's eighteenth-century vision of landscaping the natural "fairy land" of Quebec never materializes. With no personal motive of colonisation, and no cultural underpinning of "a little society," she and her choice of husband, Fitzgerald, also return to England to begin married life there, thus reifying the conventions of the Old World.[9]

W. H. New contends that problematic at the heart of the novel is the "tension established between nature and society that is never wholly resolved" ("Checquered Gardens" 25). On this view, Brooke's characters can no longer stay in Quebec because its environment challenges the conventional neo-classical view of nature as sublime, an unsullied eden.[10] Indeed, attitudes in the novel towards natives and Canadians shift from admiration of their forms of government and inclusion of women in public life (EM 11) to repulsion at the mutual influence of the Canadians and the natives in alcohol consumption and savagery (EM 152:271-272). Rousseau's concept of the uncivilized noble savage has not been borne out in the experience of the coterie of the English in Brooke's novel. On the contrary, Arabella's father, William Fermor, asserts, "the most civilized Indian nations are the most virtuous; a fact which makes directly against Rousseau's ideal system" (EM 152:272). According to New, the inability to accommodate discrepancy between neo-classical ideals of the New World and its actuality necessitates the novel's ending with the return to England of the married couples. In effect, as New puts it, the incursion of "descriptive realism meant the death of paradise" (37).

Given the present study's focus on issues surrounding feminine sensibility as central to both constantive and performative features of *Emily Montague,* the return to England may be read as a bringing home to Brooke's eighteenth-century readers the seriousness of these issues for the female position in society, issues which not only, as New acknowledges, involve questions of "women's freedom and moral virtue" (32), but also involve the restriction of women to gender positions by the attribution of idealized qualities that disadvantage them in their relations with men. The guise of coquette, as New points out, offers the opportunity for Arabella's realistic criticism of existing structures, conveying the novel's "strong sense of change and empirical truth which forces her into her ironic role and gives the novel its increased dimension" (38).

Nevertheless, an identification of the New World as an extended present in which the paradigm of coquette predominates is significant for Brooke's literalization of female experience in her novel. Back in England, within the patriarchal structures of the Old World, Arabella hears of Mme Des Roches, a French-Canadian widow admired by Rivers before his declaration of love for Emily. Arabella Fitzgerald writes :

> I have had a letter from an old lover of mine at Quebec, who tells me, Madame Des Roches had just refused one of the best matches in the country, and vows she will live and die a batchelor.

'Tis a mighty foolish resolution, and yet I cannot help liking her the better for making it. (EM 2 2 7:405)

The identification of Quebec as a space of extended female power underlies Arabella's wistful comment on Mme Des Roche's determined independence. The edenic space of the New World in Brooke's text works to literalize and empower female experience, from which the now married and "reformed" coquette Arabella is absent.

Paradoxically, Arabella's sense and independent spirit persist after her marriage to the charming Capt. Fitzgerald. Back in England, the now-married couples — Ed. and Emily, Arabella and Fitzgerald, Lucy Rivers and John Temple—continue their correspondence with one another. Ed. maintains his ideals of love, sensibility and marriage :

Upon the whole, people who have the spirit to act as we have done, to dare to chuse their own companions for life will generally be happy.

The affections are the true sources of enjoyment : love, friendship, paternal tenderness, all the domestic attachments are sweet beyond words. (EM 228 408)

However, as Arabella confides to Emily that, in her view, marriage is not as sweet as are the "romatnic adventures" of courtship:

Our romantic adventures being at an end, my dear; and we being all degenerated into sober people, who marry and *settle;* we seem to be in great danger of sinking into vegetation: on which subject I desire Rivers's opinion, being, I know, a most exquisite enquirer into the laws of nature.

Love is a pretty invention, but, I am told, is apt to *mellow* into friendship; a degree of perfection at which I by no means desire Fitzgerald's attachment for me to arrive on this side seventy.

What must we do, my dear, to vary our days? … I am interrupted by a divine colonel of guards. Adieu! (EM 227:406)

Her marriage notwithstanding, Arabella's "romantic adventures," it seems, are not "at an end." Another divine colonel waits on the doorstep; the mellowness of friendship in marriage brings with it supplication to its conventions. As coquette, Arabella determines to extend her self-empowerment indefinitely. This refusal of resolution in the novel's central character reflects what MacArthur identifies as the non-closure of epistolary fiction, in which "epistolary characters describe events with no [narrator's] knowledge of the larger story in which these events may ultimately play a role" (8). The interpretation of events does not culminate at the end of the narrative, but occurs as it goes along, in a "series of enlightened present moments" (9). The final letter of *Emily Montague* does not in fact offer an interpretive culmination of its epistolary narrative as a whole, but instead offers its own "enlightened moment," leaving open the possibility of series:

The beneficent Author of nature, who gave us these affections for the wisest purposes —

"Cela est bien dit, mon cher Rivers; mais il faut cultiver notre jardin."
You are right, my dear Bell, and I am a prating coxcomb.
Lucy's post-coach is just setting off, to wait your commands.
I send this by Temple's servant. On Thursday I hope to see our dear groupe of friends re-united, and to have nothing to wish, but a continuance of our present happiness, (EM 288:408)

Brooke, who plays the self-reflexive role of "coquette of the first order," places the last letter of Emily Montague in the voice of Ed. Rivers. But he attributes the words to Arabella; furthermore, they are quoted from Voltaire (Edwards "Explanatory Notes" 439). The cultivation of the garden of the Old World conventions of feminine sensibility and companionate marriage does not speak to resolution of the problem set forth by Brooke's narrative, but to the non-closure of its continuence in an extended series of present moments.[11]

Despite the feminised sensibility of Brooke's male hero, the epistolary events of his consciousness would appear to idealize male-female relations. Although Ed. advocates equality in marriage, the consciousness voiced in his letters configures the feminine with essentialist assumptions about the higher nature of female sensibility. Arabella, by contrast, continues to insist on the actuality of female experience — its empowerment in courtship, and its suppression in marriage. The consciousness of Brooke's coquette literalizes the absence of the feminine in conventions of marriage and the epistolary form, both of which continue to be constrained by patriarchal codes of social and literary decorum.

THE SOPHIA NARRATIVE, embedded in the latter section of Brooke's epistolary novel, constitutes an unexpected event, and, with its powerful theme of seduction and abandonment, puts into critical perspective both Arabella's New World idyll of female empowerment and Rivers' egalitarian vision of companionate marriage based on feminised sensibility shared between the sexes. The "melancholy events" (EM 207, 208:359-68) concern the story of a young woman and a child Ed. and Emily discover living in a cottage near their own unimposing but undoubtedly grander country house. The demeanour of the woman, Fanny Williams, bespeaks better breeding than her humble surroundings would indicate. Fanny discloses her circumstances in a letter to Emily, and Ed. encloses the letter in his own missive to Capt. Fitzgerald. The text of this letter about Sophia's seduction and abandonment, presumably too delicate a matter for Emily to relate, is thus embedded within the "event of consciousness" pertaining to the two males, Ed. and Fitzgerald. The reader thus receives the Sophia narrative through the controlling frame of male epistolary consciousness.

Fanny's letter discloses that the child in her care is the offspring of her deceased friend Sophia, who was seduced and abandoned by a "young baronet, whose form

was as lovely as his soul was dark" (EM 207:360). Fanny describes the young Sophia as "elegant and feminine, and she had an air of youth, of softness, of sensibility, of blushing innocence, which seemed intended to inspire delicate passions alone, and which would have disarmed any mind less depraved than that of the man, who only admired to destroy" (EM 207:360). Fanny stresses that Sophia's ruin was "brought on by a sensibility of which the best minds alone are susceptible, by that noble integrity of soul which made it impossible for her to suspect another" (EM 207:365).

Interestingly, although Arabella's letters have advised against sentimental excess throughout the novel in favour of "sense," her voice is silent here about the issue of male authority raised by the Sophia narrative and the dangers in female experience of a cult of feminine sensibility. Fanny's letter, embedded in Rivers's consciousness, is responded to by Fitzgerald's voice which similarly encloses Arabella's reaction to the matter :

> The story you have told me has equally shocked and astonished me : my sweet Bell has dropped a pitying tear on poor Sophia's grave. (EM 208:368)

Previous critical comment on the Sophia narrative in *Emily Montague* has passed it off as a "light untroubled little tale, an amusing period piece [bearing] as much resemblance to life as a flower pressed within its pages two hundred years ago would bear to the real article today" (MacKenzie 74). While Ann Messenger treats the Sophia narrative as an object lesson in the overabundance of sensibility in females (169), her emphasis minimizes the role of the male in the seduction. Blaming the "heartlessness" of the "fashionable world" as the milieu of the dark seducer, Messenger's criticism overlooks the patriarchal social structures which paradoxically both condemn and perpetuate libertine behaviour. Lorraine McMullen hurries over the episode, faulting it for slowing "the rhythm of the novel and contributing "little to the advancement of the plot" *(Odd Attempt* 102).

The melancholy event of the Sophia narrative links with the libertinism implied in the rakish Temple, before his reforming marriage to Lucy, and to the issue of forced marriage through which patriarchal economic and social structures were maintained. Brooke's text masks its protest against the position of the female vis a vis these issues of permissive male authority and arranged marriage.

According to Jane Spencer, in eighteenth-century fiction,

> Established marriage customs were most persistently questioned in novels of seduction. The seduction theme, the story of the woman whose forbidden feelings overrode her chaste duty, with unusually tragic effects, fascinated eighteenth-century readers, and seduction or its threat figured largely in the novel. (Spencer 112)

Placed near the end of Brooke's novel, the seduction tale is an embedded signal of feminist protest against the idealization of the feminine voiced in Rivers' views of sensibility and marriage. Ironically, in a slightly earlier letter to Rivers, Arabella's

voice foreshadows the Sophia narrative's critique of male appropriation of the female experience:

> You men are horrid rapacious animals, with your spirit of enterprise, and your nonsense : ever wanting more land than you can cultivate, and more money than you can spend. . . .
>
> I should not, however, make so free with the sex, if you and my *cam sposo* were not exceptions.
>
> You two really have something of the generosity and sensibility of women.
>
> (EM 202:347)

The exceptions made of Rivers and Fitzgerald make an ironic bow to convention, a gesture of politesse to mask the text's strong observations on the "rapacious" nature of men. Arabella's voice here gives a veiled introduction to the embedded seduction tale to come and signals that the edenic space of courtship and female empowerment is enclosed by patriarchal structures of marriage and male authority. The Sophia narrative and its implications are reflected also in Brooke's naming of her coquette: "Arabella Fermor" alludes to Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1714) published a half-century earlier.[12] The mock-heroic poem both exaggerates and trivializes the importance of the personal violation of the actual "Mrs. Arabella Fermor" (Tillotson 567) in which a lock of hair was stolen by a suitor. Figuralised as "Belinda," the coquette in Pope's poem is exhorted to forget about the incident. Offence taken at the appropriation of the lock of hair, which itself has disappeared, is a consideration of the merely physical. The real nature of virtue is in the female "soul" :

> Unless good Sense preserve what Beauty gains :
>
> Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll ; Charms
> strike the sight, but Merit wins the Soul.
>
> (Tillotson 576)

The eighteenth-century equation of merit and soul with "good sense" also is expressed in Brooke's use of the cult of sensibility in *Emily Montague.* However, while Brooke's Arabella voices the independence of thought which tends to literalize female experience, Pope's Belinda tropes the experience of the "rape" and trivializes the important issue of female honour.[13] The conceit that female virtue is an abstraction and therefore that both the rape and the violation of Mrs. Arabella Fermor are invalid ensures a double troping of female experience. Protesting against this process, the Sophia narrative in Brooke's text literalizes the danger of following too closely the patriarchal equation of "Virtue" and feeling. Sophia's sensibility, her "noble integrity of soul," renders her defenceless against the male authority of the dark-souled baronet, who "only admired to destroy."

The juxtaposition of the seduction tale with that of the reformed coquette in Brooke's *Emily Montague* reveals the seam of protest underlying its conventional

surface elegance. Framed by the same epistolary narrative, the themes of the reformed coquette and the seduced maid seem to contradict one another. As Spencer points out,

> A novel written about the reformation of a coquette, who learns to give up her power and become a dutiful wife, has very different ideological implications from the story of the seduced and abandoned heroine, with its usual message of protest against the treatment of women. (143)

Although Arabella dutifully marries, her consciousness in the epistolary narrative does not reform; she asserts her coquettishness within the confines of marriage. In Letter 227, she states her refusal to "settle," signifying her intention to maintain her independent spirit: there is another "divine colonel" waiting on her doorstep. Moreover, in the same letter — the last except for Rivers' closing one — Arabella reveals to Emily her knowledge from the first of "her father's proposal to Rivers," and her role in manipulating Emily's marriage to him. Brooke's coquette, it seems, resembles the role of the writer herself in engineering the epistolary form of the text. Brooke, empowered by her "special relation to language," replicates with conventional epistolary form what her coquette does within the thematic frame of *Emily Montague.*

Although Arabella's voice does not comment on the seduction tale of the Sophia narrative, its otherwise ubiquitous presence in Brooke's novel exerts the pressure of literalization of female experience within the symbolic order exemplified in Rivers' idealisation of feminine sensibility. Homans' theory of literalization, based on the Lacanian entry of the male child into the symbolic order of language, may be extended to regard the position of the female in relation to participation within the symbolic order as one which follows the paradigm of seduction and abandonment. In this position, the female is seduced by the symbolic order, and then abandoned for asserting her presence within it.[14] Brooke's enclosure of the seduction tale within male consciousness may be seen both as a protest against male authority in eighteenth-century society and as a paradigm of the appropriative seduction of the feminine literal in the androcentric conventions of language and literature.

The conventional epistolary form of Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* conceals a protest against the female experience of eighteenth-century conventions of sensibility, courtship, and marriage. The novel's New World setting creates an extended present of the coquette where female empowerment holds sway. In effect, Brooke's text literalizes the absence of female power in social and literary conventions and in the symbolic order of language. While Brooke's coquette literalizes feminine absence, her male hero tropes it. His consciousness, though "femininised," contains the feminine within a patriarchal cult of sensibility. This restraint of the female literal is further implied in the embedding of the Sophia narrative in the male "event of consciousness" of Rivers and Fitzgerald, and may

be viewed simultaneously as Frances Brooke's criticism of male authority and her advocation of male responsibility in the dangerous matter of seduction in female experience. Eschewing the propagation of conventions in the New World eden, Brooke's epistolary narrative challenges patriarchal literary and social structures with its closing criticism that "il faut cultiver notre jardin" of the Old World symbolic order.

NOTES

[1] Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* (1769) has received critical attention to its nature description, political and social comment, and feminist con cerns in post-Conquest Quebec. Pacey places Brooke's epistolary novel within an eighteenth-century literary tradition of a "cult of sensibility" (Pacey 145). New, on the other hand, stresses the novel's unresolved tension between nature and society in the inability of its characters to accommodate European neo-classical ideals of decorum to New World experience, an epistemological gap which parallels the shift towards nineteenth-century scientific positivism and literary realism (New, "Gar dens," 37-38). McMullen's body of criticism on the novel includes both a focus on Brooke's use of a "double image" of her female characters to voice her feminist views, and a view of the novel as an important stage in the direction of the realism of Jane Austen's balance between sense and sensibility ("Double Image," *Brooke and Her Works* np). According to both McMullen and Messenger, *Emily Montague* also looks back to *The Rape of the Lock* for the literary antecedent of Arabella Fermor, the model for Pope's Belinda (McMullen, *Odd Attempt* 108; Messenger 167). As the first Canadian novel *Emily Montague* not only marks a relevant step in feminist writing and in the direction of the eighteenth-century epistolary novel towards realism but also anticipates the thematic concern with the juxtaposition of society and nature salient in Canadian literature.

[2] Homans' theory is based on the Lacanian concept that entry into the symbolic order (to which the world of words belongs) occurs when the infant realizes it is not integral with the mother. The "wordless" bond with the feminine is thus broken. However, as Homans is careful to point out in her attempt to draw on both French and Anglo-American feminist views of language, Lacanian psychoanalytic theory assumes that the infant, in this model of the formation of the human subject, is male. The primary reason the infant breaks from the wordless bond with the mother and enters the symbolic order is that he realizes that, like his father, he has a penis. Since he cannot compete for the mother against the father, he enters the world of the father through the symbolic order of language. Homans argues, however, that although they too must sever the wordless bond with the mother, females do not contend with the penis in the same way as do males and thus will not break associa tion with the feminine, that is, with the absence of the feminine in the symbolic order.

For explication of Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of the formation of the subject and excerpts of his writings and seminars see Mitchell and Rose.

[3] The term "sensibility" might be problematic for the contemporary reader. In the eighteenth century, according to Walter Francis Wright, "Between the time of Richardson and 1780, sensibility was to most authors susceptibility to the gentler affections, pity, sympathy, and the other humanitarian feelings." (44) Novels dominated by feelings were diverse "among themselves," but "utterly unlike those of the realists" (45). Furthermore, novels of sensibility were considered to be of feminine character, that is, the predominance of feeling indicated the influence of the instinctual and the ideal rather than the intellectual and the ideal.

[4] According to Altman, the past decade has seen a revived critical and creative interest in the epistolary form (3). Since the eighteenth century, the letter form, along with other serial forms such as the travel sketch and the journal have continued to occupy lower echelons on the taxonomic ladder of genre hierarchy. Recent theoretical interest in the deconstruction of taxonomic structures of genre classification (for example, Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre") is reiterated in reassessments of both written and visual representation. For example, the art theorist Norman Bryson makes a point about still life that is similar to Altaian's observations of the letter genre. According to Bryson, because of its preoccupation with creaturality, that is, the realm of the domestic, of appetite, of bodily function, still life has been relegated to the lower taxonomic orders of visual art. In his collection of essays on still life, *Looking At the Over Overlooked,* Bryson argues that the devaluation of still life parallels the devaluation of feminine space in painting. Both realms of creaturality and of the feminine have been constructed by and submerged in the representation of "higher" social, political and masculine material forms. Bryson contends that the still life is not an isolated "domestic" performance but is highly inflected and inflecting, that is, part of a series, repeating since classical times similar forms of creaturality and the domestic.

[5] Linda Kauffman sees a female tradition of desire in epistolary fiction extending from Ovid's debt to Sappho in his valorization of the feminine in the classical opposition of love and war, thus challenging the values of "Augustan Rome by rejecting the officially endorsed genre of epic, experimenting instead with one that is by definition transgressive, for to write like a woman is to challenge conventional notions of tradition, of origins, of fathers, of paternity, of authority, of identity" (61). Nevertheless, Ovid's transgression of the epic genre with the *Heroides* maintains the position of the female 'done wrong,' victimized by the sweep of male epic action.

[6] Jackson's analysis of Laclos's *Dangerous Liaisons* as a master epistolary narrative points to the Preface of its 1857 edition, which contains an exchange of letters between the author and Mme Riccoboni, whose epistolary novel *Letters from Juliet, Lady Catesby, to Her Friend, Lady Henrietta Campley* Frances Brooke translated and published in 1764 (see McMullen, "Early Fiction"). Jackson's analysis emphasizes that the eighteenth-century view of sensibility of women writers saw it as essentially different than that of male writers. Feminine sensibility issued from nature, from the inner soul of the woman, while masculine sensibility resided the intellect, and was difficult to cultivate. This distinction aligns with the male/female, subject/object, culture/nature hierarchical opposition which has privileged the positive term, and positioned the negative term so that it has been both exalted and exploited by the agency of the dominant term. As the negative term in the eighteenth-century opposition of thought and feeling, sensibility is particularized as the feminine sphere.

[7] In her article on Jane Austen's nineteenth-century epistolary novel, *Lady Susan* (1805), Spacks argues that "by playing with epistolary convention.... Austen placed herself in a female tradition, then demonstrated the subversive possibilities of a form that in previous use by Englishwomen had reinforced literary and social restrictions on female enterprise" (64). Although Spacks asserts that earlier epistolary novels accept the restricted female position as necessary, existing criticism on Brooke and the present discussion show that in the hands of Brooke, the letter form is a ground-breaking self-reflexive vehicle for challenging attitudes towards female experience and feminine sensibility.

[8] In her article on Brooke's *Old Maid,* McMullen notes that, in this innovative weekly periodical, which Brooke published from 15 November 1755 to 4 July 1756,

"two facets of her personality are apparent" : that of her "strong sense of morality and decorum, "and the provocative voice of her persona, Mary Singleton, which adds an underlying feminist tone" (670). With the *Old Maid* as her vehicle, Brooke introduced "progressive ideas through letters from mythical correspondents" (670). The subversive possibilities of the letter form taken advantage of by Brooke in her periodical were, as McMullen demonstrates, incorporated both technically and thematically in her succeeding novels.

For additional material on Brooke's feminism, see Berland, Rogers, McMullen *(Odd Attempt),* Boutelle, and New ("The Old Maid").

[9] See Murphy, who asserts that Brooke's *Emily Montague* anticipates Canadian anglophone fiction of the nineteenth century in the expectations of its characters regarding the New World, and in its "preoccupation with marriage" (18). Choices of partners, Murphy asserts, stand for attitudes towards and relations between anglophone, francophone and native in nineteenth-century English and French Canada.

[10] See also McMullen, *Odd Attempt* 96-99.

[11] Interestingly, Bryson's thesis of the ideological construction of the still life as a feminine space finds cross-disciplinary support in Janet MacArthur's analysis of the eighteenth-century epistolary form as metonomic rather than metaphoric in its creation of meaning, or, in Altaian's terms, its epistolarity. The letters are a series, inflected by and inflecting the exchange they succeed and precede, effecting a discon tinuous non-plot controlled not by a narrative voice but by the many voices which stand for, metonomically, rather than symbolize, metaphorically (8-9). MacArthur asserts that, as a feminine form, the epistolary novel consists of non-closure (meta phor creates meaning by assuming a closure or resolution of disparate ideas into a single meaning or ending). The epistolary novel consists of non-closure in that it is a series of "touchings" of metonomical exchanges, rather than a metaphorical move ment towards the consummation of closure as in the traditional realist "narrated" novel (31).

A concept of the epistolary form as effecting representation metonomically through series, that is, through inflected and inflecting short linked narrative performances is relevant not only for the present reassessment of "epistolarity" of Brooke's *Emily Montague,* but also for my doctoral dissertation on short linked narratives by Canadian women writers in English, which considers that the seriality of letters, sketches, and stories by representative women writers récuses, that is, challenges, protests, or subverts structures of gender and genre.

[12] Messenger's comparison of Pope's mock-heroic poem and Brooke's epistolary novel insists that the latter's Arabella "shows us what could have lain behind the glittering surface that Pope and others chose to depict. She shows us real character and real intelligence in a woman playing the role of a coquette" (170). McMullen also points to the self-possession of Belinda, noting her adroitness at cards in male com pany *(Odd Attempt* 108-09). Both readings of the poem do not consider the issue of female honour. See note 13 below.

[13] Charles Barber's meticulously documented study shows that female honour became increasingly associated with the preservation of the reputation of chastity rather than with chastity itself (48). The literature evidences that "a man's proper virtue is courage, and a woman's is chastity; they are the things principally demanded of the two sexes by honour" (50). Barber speculates that "one reason for the different treatment of men and women is perhaps the fact that the daughters of rich citizens are regarded as good matches for needy gentlemen" (28), but at the same time male honour is lost through the unchastity of a wife, fiancee or female relative" (45).

The relatives of the victim of the "real" rape, Mrs. Arabella Fermor, would have had good cause to be outraged at the assault on her person and resulting loss of honour all around, especially if it meant her devaluation in the marriage market.

[14] My extension of Homans' theory of literalization aligns with Spencer's discussion of the novel of seduction by eighteenth-century women writers.

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THE RUINS OF PHYLAKOPI

David Solway

stretch before us :

strewn plinths in the shattered hewn Megâron,
chopped-up marble herms,
intricate reticulations
    of lopped stone
    uttered by the cutting Word

— no traction
on these peeled surfaces
    to cling to,
these runic shales and chalks. The
wind brawls untranslatably among
the lettered pediments.

Or these toppling walls terraced in by
chicken wire, razed, rebuilt, erased by
fire and time, by an aimless Cycladic
ferocity yielding to Mycenaean purpose

written on this metal plaque
    as Level IV
    of the abandoned dig (at our feet,
commas of obsidian
    chipped from the core,
cylinders scattered like type).

Now, in the absolute present
    of Phylakopi
with its hard
    code of shards,
    the alphabetic bric-a-brac
we move between, note,

as we do, scrambling
    over grammars
    of littered sediments —
seashells rolling underheel in a
drift of ash (rumors of another
speech) —

how scale abolishes noise.
Leica-clear, no trick
    of the dyslexic sense, a dung beetle
scrawls its dusty track among
strawflowers and saltblast.
    Mica. Pumice. Lime.

Milos, iggo

HOMAGE TO WALT WHITMAN

Francis Sparshott

There was a child went forth every day
and the first things he saw became so much part of him
he was late for school and shoved and shouted at
and kept after class. But he had to
go forth every day until nothing was part of him
but the elementary bell and the rackety kids
and the shifty masters and shirty mistresses
and the last thing he saw every day
was a large face grinning into his own
and he became part of it :
a face like his own, but larger.

NEST BUILDING

Irving Layton

for David Layton

I see that swallow building her nest; it's plain
she's nervous about its progress and
construction, but the instincts in her of eros
and aggression are guilt-free, are one, as she
flutters up and down against the wall, seeming
to play musical scales with her wings.

Unsentimental as a disciple
of Hobbes or Clausewitz she scorns the spoiled goods
of civic men with their bloodstained fingers,
and wrapping her tiny creature self in music
she alone hears tumbles down into space,
then swoops for the topmost branches of the tree.

Molivos, May 25,
igg2

MARTY & ZIEROTH

Nature and Family

Tom Wayman

I. Introduction

I believe that when Canadian literature is critically assessed at present we are omitting excellent writers whose powerful, resonant, and highly crafted work concerns itself with themes vital to a deeper understanding of contemporary existence. I want to focus here on two authors, whose books explore experiences with the natural environment and family life — two subjects currently widely discussed in the media, and hence by the general Canadian population. These writers, Sid Marty (b. 1944) and Dale Zieroth (b. 1946), seem to me apt representatives of the artistic accomplishments and delights that lie largely unnoticed in our literature as currently taught. Both Marty and Zieroth have written extensively and movingly over the years about the landscape and wilderness, and the place of themselves and our species within it. And both have based their responses to the natural world on their insider's experience of years of living and working in the wilderness. Both authors have also written effectively about fatherhood, about the family. The women's movement has justly pointed out the lack in the literary canon of male involvement in parenting. Yet both Marty and Zieroth have tender and striking poems on this topic. Their works are examples of an outstanding talent, able to amaze and inspire and give pleasure to a wide range of Canadian and other readers, should the news of these writers' existence ever reach the current gatekeepers of our literature and pass through.

The theory behind the selection of certain works of literature as worthy of study (and hence subsequently worthy to be taught in our schools and universities and, ideally, incorporated into the daily lives and consciousnesses of our citizens) is that the chosen literature has been judged to be the best writing produced in a given era. Much has happened in the late 20th Century, however, to call into question *who* does this judging, and what biases (hidden or overt) influence the awarding of the label "best" to certain artistic works.

The English art critic John Berger has shown how the social milieu in which a given work of art is produced enormously influences how the work will be received by the first group of responders to that art (critics, patrons, etc.), and hence by the general public who look to these people as experts in evaluating artistic worth. The values that this art endorses or rejects — either in that art's form or content

— are compared to the values held by the power structure of the contemporary society. Berger argues in his *Ways of Seeing,* for instance, that landscape painting first became validated by English society when landholders began to acquire the surplus cash and education to want artistically rendered representations of their property (or of real estate they admired and/or conceivably could later possess). In our own time, we have heard men and women associated with the labour movement, the women's movement, and with the struggles for social justice of native people and people of colour, all suggest that the experts who in Canadian society usually get to award the tag "best" to artistic productions have personal cultural biases that render the term highly suspect. And that the effect of these biases is an artistic canon skewed away from any reasonable representation of Canadian life and thought.

I have my own theories as to why writers as accomplished as Marty and Zieroth should have been shunted aside from serious critical acclaim. At its best, the quality of their writing is at least as fine by any demonstrable measure as that of the canonical Birney, Cohen, Layton, Livesay, Mandel, Page, Purdy, Souster. As presences in the world of Canadian letters, each has achieved as much or more as had Atwood, Lee, Ondaatje when they were first recognized as worthy of ongoing critical attention. To those who argue a Toronto bias permeates critical reception of Canadian imaginative writing, I would point out that both Marty's and Zieroth's books mainly have been issued by major Toronto literary publishers (McClelland & Stewart in Marty's case, House of Anansi [now owned by Stoddart] for Zieroth).

Marty's collections of poems — *Headwaters* (1973) and *Nobady Danced with Miss Rodeo* (1981) — describe and illuminate a life lived in the Rocky Mountains, no less accepted as a symbol of Canada than the southcentral region of Ontario. His autobiographical account of his years as a park warden in the mountain national parks, *Men for the Mountains* (1978), has been uninterruptedly in print since publication, not only in Canada but with U.S. publishers (Vanguard Press, The Mountaineers Press). *Men for the Mountains* has also been published in Germany, Japan, Great Britain, and Scandinavia. Marty enjoys considerable attention in Western Canada as a writer and speaker on environmental subjects and was commissioned by Parks Canada to write the official history of the mountain parks, *A Grand and Fabulous Notion* (1984). He is also an accomplished singer/ songwriter, whose recent cassette, *Let the River Run* (1990), offers subtle and stirring lyrics merging the author's deep commitment to wilderness, rural, and domestic life.

Zieroth's collections of poems are *Clearing* (1973), *Mid-River* (1981), *When the Stones Fly Up* (1985), and *The Weight of My Raggedy Skin* (1991). Zieroth's finely-polished poems have depicted his growing up on a Manitoba farm in a German immigrant community, and his subsequent life in the Rocky Mountain village of Invermere, B.C., and then on the B.C. coast. More recently, much

of Zieroth's writing has centered on contemporary family life, especially fatherhood. On any topic, his poems appear consistently in the major Canadian literary magazines, including *Malahat Review, Poetry Canada Review, Canadian Literature.* He for many years has been the editor of *Event,* itself one of the country's most important literary magazines.

Yet almost no critical articles have appeared on either Marty or Zieroth. For instance, a survey of the *Canadian Periodical Index* for 1989 shows nothing written about Marty or Zieroth. By comparison, five articles about Atwood and three about Ondaatje were indexed that year. Neither Marty nor Zieroth has individual entries in the latest edition of Hurtig's *Canadian Encyclopedia.* Neither appears in such widely-adopted teaching anthologies as Daymond and Monkman's *Literature in Canada* (Gage, 1978) or Weaver and Toye's *Oxford Anthology of Canadian Literature* (1981) or Bennett and Brown's *An Anthology of Canadian Literature in English* (Oxford, 1983). Marty does not appear in Lee's *New Canadian Poets igjo-85* (even though the latter was issued by Marty's Canadian publisher).

Space does not permit me to discuss what I think is the *cause* of the critical neglect of these authors. But brief descriptions follow of some of what I find admirable in Marty's and Zieroth's work. I hope by this means to demonstrate that these writers — among others — are indeed treasures of Canadian literature, and greatly deserve (and handsomely repay) the sort of attention currently focused on those other first-rate authors now recognized as significant by our literary world.

//. *Sid Marty*

Marty's *Men For the Mountains* opens with a supernatural event used to effectively dramatize one important theme of this non-fiction opus : that the history of the warden service is an important means by which to assess current attitudes toward the wilderness on the part of governments, parks employees, and the public. Here, then, is magic used not in an attempt to offer an escape from reality, but rather to dramatically enhance our understanding of it. *Men For the Mountains* begins and closes with an eerie encounter between the narrator and the ghosts of three of the parks' near-legendary former wardens.

Marty's mastery of descriptive detail — employed by him to make tangible both the natural world and these ghostly episodes — is revealed in his portrayal of the mountain cabin where the book starts. He presents the reader with references to the full array of senses. He makes sure we are aware of temperature: "I pulled the sleeping bag closer around my neck. It was the right place to be on a cold night." And also sound :

> I heard the reassuring cling of the bell on Cathy, my white mare. Through my two windows I could see the silver outline of mountains leaning over the cabin. A log crackled in the heater ; my world was in order.

The arrival of the ghosts is heralded by descriptions familiar to readers of suspense yarns or watchers of horror films. The wind blows the door "open with a bang." When the voice of one of the spirits first speaks, we are shown Marty's fright: "My hair stood up and I spun around to stare into the dimly-lit room." This is a standard strategy from horror movies. The sight of someone who is afraid is always more terrifying to an audience than the sight of what frightens that person. Our imaginations respond most strongly to other people's fear; what we imagine is more horrifying than anything Hollywood can come up with. And, in Marty's account, the ghosts make the traditional request that strong light not be shone on them. They are creatures of the dark, or of half-lit places. One of them cautions Marty when they first appear: "'Just leave that contraption alone. No sense in wasting fuel,' he added, stopping me in the act of reaching for the Coleman lantern." And, like the ghosts in many a fairy tale, Marty's spectral wardens feel the constraints of time. A ghost must return to the underworld before dawn. When the wardens become distracted for a moment over some comic business of offering Marty a drink of their awful liquor: "The wind moaned in answer outside, and the three stirred uneasily. 'Better get on with it, George,' Neish said."

At the close of the book, when Marty meets the ghosts for the second and last time, once more various physical senses besides sight are provided to make the unreal seem actual. As Marty opens the warden cabin door in the darkness, he smells "the odour of buckskin and wet wool." He feels "the heat on my face melting the ice out of my moustache" and when he drinks from a bottle of rum he responds to "the sweet, slow burn of the spirits after hard work in the bite of a mountan night."

The effect of this careful effort to make the appearance of the former wardens in the book as real as possible is twofold, in my view. First, the episodes demonstrate the power of strong writing—personally, no matter how many times I have reread these passages I still get a prickling up the back of my neck when the narrator first comes face-to-face with the ghosts. Secondly, after the unsettling introduction of the former wardens in the first chapter, a reader of *Men For the Mountains* never forgets that Marty's personal adventures in the warden service takes place in an historical context. By extension, a reader realizes that wherever she or he places herself or himself on the spectrum of attitudes toward the wilderness — from believing the wilderness should be preserved untouched by humanity, to regarding the wilderness as a potential source of wealth to be developed — there are historical precedents and events that consciously or unconsciously shape our views. This historical perspective applies as well to Marty's job. The work of a warden, like every contemporary job, has a history. Each aspect of a social task — hours of work, conditions, tools, wage structure — is the product of the men and women who came before us at the trade or similar trades. Any work autobiography that omits this awareness suffers from what the spectre of warden George Busby com-

plains to the narrator about during the ghosts' first appearance : "Seems to me this here book of yours has 'eye' trouble. I done this and I done that — what about the rest of us? We figger we should be in there too somewheres." And in fact, through these and other scenes Marty deftly weaves into his account of a contemporary warden's working life a very great deal of historical material, always as a means to explain and evaluate the present.

Marty's command of multi-sensual description also causes his portrayal of his *job* to seem more real to a reader. For example, at the start of Chapter 6 ("Mustahyah") Marty does not just tell the reader that one particular day in the Tonquin Valley he and his wife wake to discover fresh snow and bear tracks around the warden cabin. Instead, the narrator takes time to describe the varied effects of the snowfall, including "a veil of thin icicles that hung from the eaves above the windows." He even depicts the sight and sound of one specific bird: "Outside, a raven, perched on top of a gaunt, dead tree, greeted me with the musical throb of song those buzzards are capable of in their happier moments."

Here, the descriptive technique serves to focus a reader's attention on the natural environment in which Marty's work is carried out. We never become so overwhelmed by the narrative about what happens to Marty, or other humans, that we lose awareness of the significance of the other characters in the story: the wildlife, plants, and terrain — all of which are affected by changes in weather and season as well as by the activities of people. We thus gain perspective on Marty's job. His story is important, but these detailed descriptions of what the plants, animals and landscape are doing or look like continually emphasize that human beings are only one component in the natural order.

Of course, it is unlikely that when Marty sat down to write his work autobiography he recalled how on a certain morning in the Tonquin Valley there was a specific raven on a dead tree that gave a call. At the end of the book, Marty tells the ghostly wardens that what he has learned by composing *Men For the Mountains* is that : "To tell the whole truth you have to write fiction." At the start of Chapter 6, the author's intent is to describe bird life as one part of the mountain landscape altered by the fresh snowfall, the arrival of winter. So Marty describes what *could* have been present in that scene, based on his personal experiences of such moments. Depictions like this may not be literally true, but the effect of these sensuously-rich descriptions gives a reader the *essential* truth of what Marty intends to portray.

Marty's sure hand at selecting and rearranging material becomes evident, too, in comparing how incidents that appear in *Men For the Mountains* are also examined in his poems. In *Headwaters,* Marty's first book of poems (published five years before his work autobiography), "Shawn" covers some of the same events developed in Chapter 2 of *Men For The Mountains* ("Euclid Never Threw the Diamond"). The setting of the poem and the most exciting event in the chapter

are identical: in the words of the poem, "packing the trail crew's food and tents / down from Twin Falls in the rain" during a nighttime mountain lightning storm. The poem, though, restricts its focus to the narrator's attitude toward Shawn, the "old horse / furiously willing yourself to die." He praises the horse for "saving my skin" on the terrifying

> black, two foot wide trail
> switchbacking down the sidehills,
> the two mares biting your flanks
> to push us to death or home

Given that the poem is much shorter than the prose version, naturally a lot of detail has to be omitted in the poem. Some *central* aspects of the incident are missing in the poem, however; warden Bernie Engstrom disappears entirely, so the ride down the mountain in the night is described as involving only the speaker in the poem and horses. The sheer horror of the narrator's predicament is also not developed as fully as in the prose version :

> A bolt of lightning tore through the night in a brilliant flare that made the horses crowd together. At the shattering roar of the thunder, which followed immediately, they lunged back hard on the halters, pulling my arm back in one fierce twist of pain. The bolt was close enough to make my head spin, with the same jolt one gets from jumping off a four-foot-high fence and landing stiff-legged on the soles of the feet. An ozone and brimstone smell drifted up from the strike that had hit below us, which shattered the rocks like a shellburst. … I didn't want any more illumination after that brief glimpse of a mountain dropping away from under my left stirrup. The light had gleamed down the wet-streaked walls of rock to the water below in a terrible, beckoning vertigo that made my feet tighten convulsively in the stirrups.

Also absent from the poem is Marty's near tumble over the mountain's edge when he slips off a wet log at the edge of the trail.

On the other hand, the danger to the narrator when he has to cut the mare June's halter rope, wrapped around her back legs, is not mentioned in the prose version — although the poem refers to "me with a jacknife sliding / among flying hooves." And at the end of the poem, Shawn rears up when he and the narrator finally arrive at the trail crew's camp. Apparently startled by "the lantern's flame," the horse cuts his mouth on the bit as he attempts to flee from the light. The speaker in the poem says the crew "grieves" at the horses's reaction after such a valiant effort carrying their belongings down the dangerous trail through the storm and darkness. None of this — the attempt of the horse to pull back into the dark, injuring itself, and the crew's sympathetic response to the horse's pain — is found in the prose version.

Overall, the effect of Marty's choice of detail is to create both a tensely dramatic episode in his prose account, and a powerful poem that centres attention on the horse's life. Two other examples of an overlapping of material in *Men For the*

Mountains and *Headwaters* are the search for the drowned man in Chapter 3 ("The Trap"), also portrayed in the poem "Drowning," and the forest fire-fighting episodes in Chapter 4 ("Something's Burning") that are depicted as well in the poem "The Chaba Fire." As with the poem "Shawn" and the descriptions in Chapter 2, however, each version of these occurrences highlights different facets. Neither the prose nor the poem tells the *entire* story, nor gives the only possible interpretation of the *significance* of these events to the narrator. I believe it is a worthy feat to consider in two different genres the same material, and to have each treatment be fresh and novel. Everything Marty writes shows his keen and accurate eye for detail, detail that often only an insider to the experiences he presents could know. But Marty as well is in full command of what he wants to do with the raw data of events and locales — he can impressively ring the changes in two different genres, each fascinating to read.

Besides depicting the danger and beauty of outdoor life and work, Marty utilizes humour not only in *Men For the Mountains,* but also in his two books of poems. In "Too Hot to Sleep" in *Headwaters,* for instance, he relates how the narrator and "my friend Birnie" doze off, perhaps while doing trail repair work, on "a hot June morning / above Wapta Lake, the Kicking Horse Pass." A bear shows up and proceeds to investigate the sleeping Birnie. The animal "sniffed at Birnie's collar / at his ear, which he licked tentatively / causing Birnie to moan softly." After a conversation between the bear and the nervous narrator, the bear sniffs "at Birnie's armpit," snorts,

> and turned away, clattered down the creek
> popping his teeth, his hackles up Went out
> of sight around the shoulder of Mount
> Hector
>
> as Birnie woke up rubbing his eyes
> "Too hot to sleep" he said. Yeah.

In this poem among others, Marty uses some idiosyncratic punctuation, as many contemporary poets do, to keep the reader from simply reading the piece as prose. Here, statements uttered by the bear, or that take place in the mind of the narrator, are not set off by quotation marks. This serves to distinguish what gets said orally from what is a mental conversation between the bear and the narrator.

> "We were just going bear," I said quietly
> edging backwards
>
> Don't move too quickly will you, said Bear
> when you move, or better still don't move at
> all

Similarly, the poet's omission of the comma between "going" and "bear" in the first line of this quotation serves a poetic purpose. Here, the absence of the comma

helps emphasize the rapid, frightened speech of the narrator when suddenly confronted by the bear.

In Marty's second collection, *Nobody Danced With Miss Rodeo,* the final section of the book gathers together many of his poems on family and fatherhood. Earlier in this volume, the narrator of the poem "In the Arms of the Family" speaks of other dangers of his mountain occupation besides potentially-threatening bears: "The tools of the territory include / climbing ropes and helicopters / guns and dynamite." The narrator admits that "danger was my fix," and yet acknowledges that it is his family, "my woman and son," who can restore him to the "human moment":

> But he who was lost
> will wake up found, and right
>
> In the arms of the family
> that binds him again, to his life

The poems of the closing section, "The Knife of Love," explore a number of dimensions of such life "in the arms of the family." "The Colours" is a moving look at varieties of premature death — a young climber drowned in a mountain creek, whose body the narrator helps pull out of the water, and the loss of the narrator's and his wife's baby through miscarriage. The poem juxtaposes colors associated with the drowned climber ("On the gravel bar / his shirt was scarlet / his limbs dead white") and the colors associated with the lost fetus: the "blue wells" of the wife's eyes, her "faded" garden roses, "and the bright clothes / unused in her nursery." Relief comes with "the healing snow" of winter: "She and I / we'd had quite enough / of the flowers."

Marty's sense of humour extends to family life. In "There Just Ain't No Respect," the narrator describes a disagreement between himself and his wife over the responsibility to move a vacuum cleaner left in a hallway. In the night the narrator gets up to stretch a leg, broken on the job, and his wife "sleepily" requests that he "check the kids' blankets." On the way to do so, he stumbles over the vacuum cleaner and cuts his toe, so that

> I'm tracking blood on the cold floor
> but I don't cry out, being
> a hardened husband
> Just
> cover the babies
> my teeth clenched
> and limp back to bed

Marty employs humour for poignant effect, too. In "Revelation," quoted here in its entirety, he presents what for me is the funniest, most succinct glimpse possible of the uselessness of males in connection with some facets of childrearing :

I held our new baby against
my bare chest and his four-day-
old mouth explored my tingling
skin

Until he found a nipple
my milkless, small and
hairy nipple

He battened on

It was a major disappointment
for both of us

In other poems in "The Knife of Love," however, Marty returns more directly to aspects of the theme outlined in "In the Arms of the Family" — family as a humanizing, saving grace in the narrator's life. In "Turning to Meet the World," the speaker in the poem speaks of how he has "dodged the world" through his life in nature up to the present: "I've made a world of my own / in the palm of a mountain." Now, he sees another potential existence for himself inside the family, one that seems to provide all the challenges of his former life and more:

If this is the last mountain
I ever climb what of it?

There are other ranges, shining
blue and bright in a boy's eye

"The Knife of Love" and *Nobody Danced With Miss Rodeo* itself end with "The Fording" where the narrator embraces the possibilities of both family life and the natural world he loves. He watches his wife and son on horseback sitting in the middle of a creek in the mountains, talking

of the things that beautiful women and small boys
talk of, there where the wind blows the first buds of
the cinquefoil, and trout skip forward from the
billowing mud under a horse's foot to glitter in the
clear again

I would be like those quick gleams
to be always shining for their eyes and hearts.

Out of his wish to be connected with this vision of his family, the narrator lights a fire where he stands in a nearby clearing. In response, with "a whoop, with a shout" his family rides through the beauty of the wilderness ("over a plain of trembling orange flowers") toward him. The speaker, in an active gesture of acceptance of who he calls "my living lights, the fire of my days," feels himself "cry aloud at their fatal beauty." At the close of the poem he is "running forward

to meet them, and surrender." I know of few other contemporary male poets besides Marty who have spoken with such clarity of the life choices that tug at a North American man, nor who have so completely spelled out their acceptance of family joy and responsibility, of the dimensions of fatherhood.

///. *Dale Zieroth*

Love of family and of the wild places of the world, however, are also probed in the poetry of Dale Zieroth. Like Marty, Zieroth takes an unflinching look at the tensions implicit in all life decisions, and especially those connected with marriage and parenting, employment, and the natural environment.

Zieroth's poetic evaluation of the family includes, unlike Marty's, a grappling with his family of origin. In "Father," published in Zieroth's first collection, *Clearing,* the poem begins with a moment of intense anger. The father physically shakes the narrator-as-child as if the child were an object ("a sheaf of wheat") or as though one animal is killing another ("the way a dog shakes / a snake"). This sense of overpowering, violent force establishes in a reader a feeling of the awesome power of the father as seen by the young narrator. This feeling is reinforced as "for seven more years" the speaker in the poem watches his father "with his great hands rising and falling / with every laugh, smashing down on his knees." In the poem, too, the speaker *observes,* but the father *acts.* The father's actions are part of a rough, violent world, where the farmer-father is observed trimming his fingernails with a knife, "castrating pigs and / skinning deer," and working outdoors for long hours through sun and bitter cold.

In the last stanza, however, we see the father, now grown old, in a different light. He is less active, and less competent. We learn he has given Christmas presents "for the first time," but they are "unwrapped." The father is living on a pension, with the hardness gone from him now that he is no longer involved with heavy physical labour. The "great hands" that once could shake the child or crash down on his knees or work so hard, are now "white, soft, / unused hands." Yet the poet indicates that the anger the reader is shown in the first stanza has changed its form, not disappeared. The narrator says the father is "no longer afraid to call his children fools / for finding different answers, different lives." The father as previously described, however, does not seem to be the sort of man who is "afraid" to point out the shortcomings he sees in his children. Hence there is a mystery to the poem that adds depth to this otherwise straightforward, though gripping, account of an aging parent. In the final stanza the narrator describes the father "sleeping in the middle / of the afternoon with his mouth open as if there / is no further need for secrets." Perhaps one of these secrets is that the instances of violent behaviour by the father masked an insecurity of some sort when the father was faced with children, or with others of a different temperament or set of beliefs than himself. Or perhaps

the father in his active years had some sort of doubts about his life (suggested by the reference to the father's talk with his companions about "the / old times" and their "dead friends"). Whatever the exact nature of these hidden aspects to the father, the portrait depicted is a distressing one of a harsh, primitive power not tamed or civilized but defeated by toil and age.

Zieroth's skills as a craftsman, working and reworking his poems slowly until he obtains precisely the effects he wants, are evident in this poem as in others. For example, to convey how the father's hard work slowly but inexorably wears him out, the poet in the last line of the second stanza uses mostly single-stress words. The strong, monotonous rhythm thus created helps emphasize the forces steadily hammering at the father :

> the work that bent his back a little more
> I ! ! w / v /
> each day down toward the ground.

And the apparently-random line breaks Zieroth uses in "Father" ("chokecherry / wine"; "their / youth"; "the same / knife") serve to introduce a tentative, halting effect to the poem's flow. It is as if the narrator is still attempting to come to an understanding about his father, and he relates the events he wishes to describe in a hesitant, uncertain manner. This uncertainty is also underlined in the choice of diction of the poem's concluding stanza. The father's present attitudes are described with qualifiers: "seems," "as if," and again "as if" :

> Still, he seems content
> to be this old, to be sleeping in the middle
> of the afternoon with his mouth open as if there
> is no further need for secrets, as if he is
> no longer afraid to call his children fools
> for finding different answer, different lives.

The female side of Zieroth's family of origin is probed in some detail in the poet's third collection, *When the Stones Fly Up*. In "His Mother Laments," the female speaker in the poem — probably the poet's mother — tells of her life after marriage, of leaving her own family behind to come to the new husband's "farm / . . . riddled with his mother, his / knowledge." She speaks of her four children "forming a circle / from out of a circle" and then eventually leaving:

> and they drift past me,
> breaking all the dream I ever had
> and even now I am still
> dreaming them, how they were
> first touched by the midwife's hand, his mother
> pushing gently down, then
> putting a light in the window

The speaker mentions that the last child was, instead, a hospital birth. She feels this experience "made him different, / made him think he can speak for me / (for us, for any of us)." In a nod toward the impossibility of anyone ever knowing fully about the people who are our family of origin, Zieroth concludes the poem by having the speaker question "where in me is he now."

And yet these ancestors are part of who we are, and so the search to understand them is part of understanding ourselves. In *When the Stones Fly Up,* Zieroth continues his exploration of the feminine side of his family tree in poems such as "Grandmother's Spring," a consideration of that midwife-grandmother mentioned in "His Mother Laments." "Grandmother's Spring" presents the "sleepy grandchildren" hearing the grandmother summoned in the night when neighbors' wives had complications in birthing. The grandmother is a success at this work: "Babies were her best crop." Yet the world the children enter is that of the fathers: the children "are part of / their father's dream" when they are alive, and even in the act of being born the babies are "shoved and pulled from the darkness and into / their father's bright light." As we have seen from earlier poems like "Father," the patriarchal world of this farming community is one of rigid attempts to control the natural world. Here, in the "father's dream" the wildness in nature is seemingly pacified, regulated :

> green fields bending back to take his work,
> none of the wild oats that stick scattered
> heads above the wheat and never follow
> rows

Also in the dream are "no bloated cows / no young-eating sows / no problems with bulls jumping fences."

Despite the fathers' attempts to impose a human restructuring of nature, though, the natural world seems to belong to the young and the feminine. It is the children who savor the sights of spring: "the first crow," "new grass," "the fields . .. putting on their black robes again," new kittens that appear "out of the barn." Natural growth, rebirth of every sort is identified with the grandmother: "as she falls, day by day, / her greenness pushes up."

These polarities haunt Zieroth's view of the family. In the background is a male struggle to wrest a living for the family from a natural order identified with feminine strengths of a different sort than rigid control. Domestic life also encompasses tension between conflicting attitudes, emotions, needs, wants. Love of spouse and children is a more intense variant of love of farming, of the land that simultaneously feeds and breaks us. "Beautiful Woman" in *Clearing* sets forth with absolute clarity the love, hate, and resolution that are the characteristics of most intimate and meaningful relationships in the poet's world.

In the poem's first stanza the sensual, sexual joys of love are celebrated. The world of the bedroom is fecund and magical: "Fish / swim past the edges of our

bed, oceans / in their mouths." The speaker in the poem talks of "this fever to be mad in each other's / warm white skin." There is something primal in this state of being:

> We go down
> like children, we go down into a great moaning
> with silence forgotten and floating through the
> ceiling
> like balloons. . . .
> See again the sun and bed wet with warm rain.
> Wave after wave it comes, wave
> after wave stones
> break open at our touch, small bones break free and drift
> out of you into me.

But in the second stanza the opposite polarity appears, anger. The loved one has her list of grievances:

> You tell me
> what it means to wait and work afternoons
> with dishes and floors. You tell me
> my friends who pace and strut ignore you, or notice
> only your sex. How you hate them !

The loved one's rage, however, hurts only the narrator. And he responds in kind : "you will hear me cursing, you will hear me / roaring." In one of the most blistering couplets on spousal hate anywhere in literature, Zieroth's narrator denounces his partner for all time: "The mirror / will fall, history will vomit at your name."

Yet the poem's third stanza provides a synthesis between these two states of exalted passion and deep rage. This synthesis is real life, the speaker in the poem argues: "In the kitchen / the dishes wait." Ultimately, the couple's life together will not depend on extremes of feeling, but on acknowledging these and yet reaching an accommodation :

> Tonight
> we will go deep into our powerful
> bodies again. Or we will do nothing
> and survive just the same.

In this synthesis "both the music and the bruises have gone," and the poem ends with an image of the two-edged nature of ordinary daily life: light that "stains the bed / like wine." The clarity, the enlightenment, that the synthesis provides affects the core of the marriage ("the bed"). Like wine, such a synthesis is acknowledged to contain the potential for both a pleasurable high and destructive behaviors. Inebriation is by definition a state of being out of control, with the resultant possibilities for both ecstasy and harm. The light the couple finds to live by marks their

lives together with knowledge of such extremes, the way a wine stain can serve as a memento of intensely good times and/or hurtful ones, too.

As with marriage, the arrival of children is an occasion for the poet to wrestle with poles of emotional response, followed by acceptance of a synthesis. In "Birth," from the poet's second collection, *Mid-River,* the speaker speaks of the "resentment and then the guilt" the baby generates in the couple. All has happened as more experienced parents ("they") predict:

> my wife would not love the child instantly
> and both of us would run
> I would be hemmed in like a
> fighter going down for the last time
> I would long for
> a single night's sleep
> the undisturbed dawn a day away from
> the stink of things that much time
> without the guilt
> knowing exactly how long
> I'd been away from home how much
> she needed me

In the second stanza, the narrator responds to a more positive part of the prediction: "they said it gets better." The new father responds to "a smile" from the baby, and realizes that he has an important place in his daughter's life. Such a realization frees him to move beyond the darker aspects of parenting:

> After her bottle and her blanket after
> her mother there is me
> big old man no longer afraid to tell a stranger
> the tiny words of love love and the need to
> be charged again by something human like
> the morning when her arms go up to me

The third stanza describes the resolution of these extremes when the child is "almost a year." Looking back, the narrator recalls the struggle to accept parenthood, and the wife's primary role in this: "I did not know / there were babies everywhere and mothers who can / hold us all together." Overall, he concludes, he has grown through the experience of working to resolve his divergent feelings ; having a family, he says, "makes me big." And the poem ends with praise for how the arrival of the child has renewed the speaker's sense of what is rewarding about human existence. He talks of how he was present at the instant of her birth, a birth that he realizes now was the beginning of something welcome in his life : "look god she is / alive like her father who stands up inside his eyes and is / delivered to the good world again."

The joys and negative aspects of *childrearing* are explored by Zieroth in separate poems, rather than by striving for a synthesis in one. "The Eyes of the Body Are

Not the Eyes of the Mind," from *Mid-River,* is about the pleasure found in showing a child the world. The child asks to be lifted up to see out the window. It is a moment of happiness for the speaker :

> my arms
> fold and lift and hold and now I know
> what they have been made for, why they
> lead out from beside the heart.

The speaker is responding to the way the child is totally absorbed by the world that is so new to her. The ordinary rural sights of horses and ravens the father lifts her up to view "make you stop as if I have shown you a / miracle." Perhaps fueled by the success of this activity, the narrator at the close of the poem appears to regard the responsibility of parenting, the attempt to introduce the child not only to the wonders of existence but also to its dangers, as within his and his wife's abilities :

> You'll do all right and all we ever do is
> point things out, show you what it's like
> above the crowds, all we can ever do is
> hold you, little spy face, keep the world safe
> another dozen years.

But showing things to the child is a much less successful venture in "Fear of Failure," from the same collection. In this poem the child is five, and the father in the poem is trying to teach her to ski for the first time. The event is frustrating for both father and child :

> she whacks me on the knee
> ski pole on cold bone
> and I grab her and she cries
> and I'm mad now cause I've done that wrong
> and my record for being the kind of father I want to be
> is still too few days.

Even the father's attempts to rationally sort out what has happened fail here:

> later I try to
> explain but I must hold too tightly cause she
> spins away and it's finished for her anyway, she
> decides to take up skating while I
> go over the words again : Look
> Nobody's Good Right Away
> At Anything

The speaker's comment is of course ironic, in that his advice applies as much to his own efforts at fathering as to his child's at skiing. But the poem's overall tone reflects the speaker's depression at his failure :

I lack the drive
I slide down past the handholds of home
and I manage and scarcely care today
where the melting snow goes or takes me or ends.

Besides responding to the family, and fatherhood, Zieroth has written equally honestly about his interactions with nature, including working in the outdoors. Nature to Zieroth can be a force that men try to bend to their purposes — as in farming, for example. But even when nature is appreciated for its own beauty, or for how it provides a sense of historical or geologic time, the power of natural forces always includes a potential threat.

Yet where people try to make a living from nature, respect for this power often is ignored. In "Father" Zieroth writes of a farmer eventually worn down by the ceaseless effort to control the natural world. The tourism industry, too, represents a clash between humanity's drive to adapt the natural world to our uses and the wilderness' own processes. In "Coyote Pup Meets the Crazy People in Kootenay National Park," also from *Mid-River,* four employees of the Park watch an injured coyote pup die in the back of a warden's vehicle. Though never stated in the poem, it is likely the pup was hit by a car and found by the side of the road (since otherwise it is not clear how the warden would have picked up the injured animal). Tourists have come to the Park to appreciate nature, and ironically their presence leads to the destruction of at least part of what they presumably value. Similarly, the men employed by the Park are expected to simultaneously protect the natural world while easing (and hence increasing) tourists' destructive access to it. The Park employees observing the dying pup seem genuinely sorry at his death, "we / wanted him to run like the wind for the bush." But they are caught up in the contradictions of their own work world. After the death, on their coffee break they talk shop, "talking / park in the jargon of the civil servant man." Although the ostensible subject of their conversation, their consideration, is nature (the Park), the wilderness is spoken of in industrial (i.e., human) terms : "the talk goes wildlife and telex and / choppers it goes numbers and man-years and / stats." The narrator calls this "nuts" and calls himself and the other employees "crazy people" because of this gap between the reality of the wilderness and their attempts to quantify and control as a means of carrying out their impossible task of preserving both wildness and the comfort of tourists :

And someone tries to tell me
what this park really needs
what this park is really like, but I know already
it's like a dead coyote pup
lying out in the back of a warden's truck
waiting for the plastic bag we're
going to stuff him in and then we're going to
shove him in the freezer along with

the lamb that got it from the logging truck
along with a half dozen favourite birds
wiped out by cars, specimens now

The narrator expresses his moral revulsion to what people are doing to the wilderness :

it was the wrong way to die in the back of
a warden's truck looking at steel
watched by humans handled and pitied and
down on your side in the muck
a pup seven months out of the den.

The narrator sees what is beautiful in the world as bound up with the natural ; he speaks of "the cold sweet air that comes from the breath / of the animals." But as a person needing to survive economically, to provide for those dependent on him, he has accepted a job as one of "the crazy people." Coffee break is over and "we hurry to our places / the crazy people and me, we gotta get back to our / paper work."

For both Zieroth and Marty, an active, work-based relation to the wilderness, to the natural world, is often paired or merged with the family. I believe this is because both writers view their responses to these aspects of existence as a major part of a struggle to be at home. In order to be at home on this planet, these writers imply, we need to understand its natural processes. And this is not an understanding we will get by merely *looking* at nature, as though examining some object foreign to our being. The natural world is not static : everything wild contributes to change in nature. But humans alone have the ability to devastate or diminish the natural environment. We must learn to live, and hence work, in nature in a way that respects the natural processes. For unless we can feel at home in our work in this world, we will never feel at home off the job. The family, too, involves work, of a different kind : nurturing a relationship between a man and a woman, child-rearing, the i ,001 domestic tasks. How to feel at ease, at home, amidst the choices these challenges steadily present us with, is a preoccupation of both writers.

I believe the writing of both Sid Marty and Dale Zieroth reflects these authors' efforts to be at ease in the actual here and now. And I am convinced that, whether granted official recognition as culturally significant or not, what Marty and Zieroth have to say about their struggles has much to teach about a better way to be a human being.

POEMS OF W. A. SHAHEEN

Translated from the original Urdu by

Baidar Bakht and Leslie Lavigne

The Sound of Grief

Leave the town
And banish grief.
Go and live in a far away town,
A town with both
The warmth of life
And the cool of tears

And if possible,
Bury the sound of this grief
In the rubble of the ruin of your eyes.

If the sound of grief
Still persists
Close your troubled eyes
And disappear from the face of the earth.

(!963)

Black Letters of Insensitivity

The same old thing:
Wounded stars,
Flowers scorching
On crosses smitten with gunpowder,
The desolate tide of barren fields
Held in the cups of the eyes.

The same old thing :
An arbitration accord or a statement,
Five or six joint meetings
Of all the nation's municipalities,
A new scheme to name some roads
In the pious memory of a few martyrs.
Newspaper headlines
(A few black letters
Infusing the column of life in blue veins),
A long drawn-out sigh of insensitivity.
A long drawn-out sigh
And profound inertness.

I'm Mad Because of You

April has stamped its seal on the wet air.

Maple leaves that flew far and wide
Last autumn
Are now wrapped by the melting snow
Like a gift
For the season to come.

O seductive spring
The shadow of the fear of tomorrow
Dances in your mirror.
Stop it from becoming
A burden on your life.
I'm mad because of you
Don't ask me
About what's in my cup.

DUDEK ON FRYE

or,

Not a Poet's Poetics

Nicola Vulpe

PERHAPS NOTHING WRITTEN during the three decades that Northrop Frye reigned as Canada's most eminent literary figure expresses the spirit of his work so neatly as the title of an article published in *The Globe and Mail* shortly after his death. In the title of the essay, "Frye's soaring cathedral of thought," the author, Robert Fulford — or the editors — managed to neatly sketch Frye's chief preoccupations and the premises underlying his approach to literature and culture: 'soaring' for the great, hopeful schemes he drew up, 'cathedral' for his underlying religious nostalgia, and 'thought' for the essentially idealist nature of his theories, all these part of and tributary to his great encyclopedic intellect. Whatever the difficulties with Frye's work, as the image of a soaring cathedral of thought implies, it was certainly ambitious, grand, and impressive; and like the great Gothic monuments of centuries ago it will continue long after its creator to inspire and trouble, to intimidate and intrigue.

In Canada, Northrop Frye was a monument during his own lifetime and, despite his international renown, a typically Canadian monument at that. For while most countries have as their greatest literary figures poets, novelists, and playwrights (Dante, Cervantes, Shakespeare), Canada has a critic and theorist, confirming by analogy Frye's own comment that Canadians are more capable administrators than businessmen: they are better at taking care of money than making it; and that in no other country are accountants held in such high esteem. Similarly, the man who became the most renowned figure in Canadian letters was not one who created in the traditional sense, but a critic, one who explains and explicates, and particularly so in Frye's case one who rationalizes what others have done — a literary accountant. Yet this designation should in no manner be taken as a slight; for unquestionably, as a man of letters Frye rendered an important service to Canadian culture. He holds the (not to be undervalued) distinction of having resisted tempting offers from prestigious universities such as Princeton, and of having stayed home to carve out a place for himself and his new discipline at Victoria College (University of Toronto), a conservative institution in an eminently conservative context. Northrop Frye, it should be remembered, became the

University of Toronto's first Professor of English — in 1967, almost a half-century after scholars like F. R. Leavis and I. A. Richards had established the legitimacy of English studies in Britain, and a generation after the New Critics had done the same in the United States. Frye's influence outside the universities as a public critic was equally important : he wrote regularly as a reviewer for many journals, including *The Hudson Review* and, more significantly for Canada, *The Canadian Forum,* where as editor he encouraged (and sometimes discouraged) new poets throughout the 1960s. His importance was such that George Woodcock, in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature,* writes that with his annual surveys of Canadian writing "Frye contributed more than any other critic to establishing the criteria by which Canadian writing might be judged."

That Frye became Canada's most famous man of letters is perhaps a typically Canadian irony. Yet an irony it is ; for in a country where searching for a national identity, where defining ourselves as distinct from Americans is almost a national neurosis, the international symbol of Canadian letters is a critic whose theories imply that if a Canadian writer has made great art, it is ultimately not because he or she has captured the essence and particularity of Canada, but because his work successfully manifests archetypes or myths for which such notions as a national identity are absolutely inconsequential. This position, that literature is not about the immediate, particular world we live in, but first of all about a great mythological system, has often been criticized, in particular (since the publication of the *Anatomy of Criticism)* by Frye's fellow Canadian, the poet Louis Dudek.

Though Dudek has never enjoyed Frye's international renown, he is indubitably one of the finest poets Canada has produced, and a critic in his own right whose work since the 1940s remains today a major influence in the development of Canadian poetry. Born in 1918, only six years after Frye, Dudek is one of those many writers who in this century contributed to making Montréal, a francophone city, the literary capital of anglophone Canada, a title it has not quite relinquished despite having been surpassed in size and economic importance by Toronto some twenty years ago. In the 1940s and 1950s, when Frye was working on his seminal study of Blake and on his *Anatomy of Criticism,* Dudek was associated with writers such as Irving Layton, Raymond Souster, F. R. Scott, and P. K. Page, publishing his own poetry and giving a voice to new poets in magazines such as *First Statement, Contact,* and *Delta,* and with publishing houses such as Contact Press and DC Books. Through the McGill Poetry Series he published, for example, Leonard Cohen's first book, *Let us compare mythologies.* Until his retirement in 1984, Dudek lectured on Canadian and European literature at McGill University; as a teacher and as a poet his contribution to Canadian letters has been quite different from Frye's more strictly scholarly influence, but it has been no less profound. His polemic against Frye is of interest, though, not only because Dudek is an important Canadian literary figure, but also because he reveals in Frye's position a remarkable

resemblance to that which Plato adopted almost twenty-five centuries ago when he opened philosophy's quarrel with the poets. And it is of interest especially because it represents a poet's answer to the philosopher's and the critic's charges.

NORTHROP FRYE WAS FAMILIAR with Dudek's poetry, which he reviewed early in his column "Letters in Canada" for the *University of Toronto Quarterly.* Though he included some of Dudek's poems, notably "East of the City," in his 1956 "Preface to an Uncollected Anthology," (Bush Garden 168), Frye was not overly enthusiastic about the poet's work, and especially not his early, overtly political verse. In a 1952 review of *Cerberus,* which Dudek published in collaboration with Layton and Souster, Frye offered Dudek a rather back-handed compliment, commenting that "it is clear . . . that he is no longer in danger of confusing poetry with popular rhetoric" (BG 20) ; and in his 1955 review of *Europe,* Frye labels Dudek a facile poet, though he nonetheless recognized the value of some of his verse (BG 53).

For his part, Dudek was not overly taken with Frye's critical project. Almost from the start, his criticism focused on four questions, three of which are already noted in his short essay published in 1958, "Julian Huxley, Robert Graves, and the Mythologies" — though as the title of the essay suggests, this critique does not implicate only Frye. First, Dudek censures Robert Graves who, in his opinion, "writes as rationally as an I.B.M. machine" for trying "to review the entire compost of myths, making them all valid, and making myth itself the royal road to poetry." Dudek notes that even T. S. Eliot, who "borrowed his idea of the need for a unifying myth for the modern imagination .. . from nineteenth century non-English literature. . . . avoids the use of the Christian myth directly in his poetry, since this myth, being rationally unacceptable . . . would not work in poetry," adding that "It has not worked since Milton, and even there the case is doubtful," ("Julian Huxley" n.p.). Myths belong to specific historical contexts. Any myth or mythology, be it Greek, Christian, or whatever, is convincing, has a truth-value in a specific context, at a specific moment in history. And because its truth is so bound to a context, a myth cannot be resurrected and transplanted unaltered into another context and still be meaningful or convincing. If it is meaningful, it is because it has been transformed; in "The Kant of Criticism" Dudek writes:

> If the myths are Platonic forms, we may well ask, "Mighty myth, who made thee?" But if, as I think Dr. Frye would answer, man made them, then man can unmake them, and create afresh — and find that none are central. (255)

Like Graves, Frye erroneously attributes the making of poetry to a knowledge of myths, which are, in his view, ahistorical. This is fundamentally incorrect because myths are man-made, hence historical and dynamic, and if they are to have any

meaning at all they must be, not some constant (read eternal) model, but responses to the concrete experience of present life.

Second, Dudek charges — implicitly here, but later more explicitly—that Frye's position is backwards-looking, a futile search for a religious solution that can be no more: "unless there is a present reality which is already vivid and poetic with meaning, there is no myth, new or old, that can give us more poetry than we have now." "To take up the old myths" as the stuff of poetry, Dudek suggests, "is very much like chewing fossils in a museum because there is a shortage of meat and fish on the market," ("Julian Huxley" n.p.). More than thirty years later, he would uncover again the implicit foundations of Frye's theories and the core of a problem that has haunted innumerable critics and theorists of literature since the demise of a (real or remembered) all-encompassing religious world-view. In "What Do You Have Against Myth?" — a paper Dudek delivered for the F. R. Scott lecture at McGill University in 1991—he writes: "This larger conception of myth," as defined by Northrop Frye, "is entirely a product of modern thought, since the romantic movement, that is, after the Age of Reason had virtually put the quietus on mythical thinking," (ts. p. 2. See also: "The idea of myth is a modern fabrication stuffed with the grandiose effects of unfulfilled religious yearnings." Notebook, ts. 21 June 1990). That this search for a substitute for defunct religious perspectives *{Perspective* is used here in the sense Mannheim employs in *Ideology and Utopia* [226, 271], that is, a total ideology: the total complex of quantitative and qualitative factors making up the ways groups of human beings see their world.) was indeed the case for Frye, the author of *Anatomy* had confirmed himself in his introduction to *The Great Code,* writing: "In a sense, all my critical work, beginning with a study of Blake published in 1947, and formulated ten years later in *Anatomy of Criticism,* has revolved around the Bible" (xiv). According to Dudek, with his study of the Bible Frye developed a "highly tolerant or ecumenical theory." But, bringing practice in to criticize theory, Dudek notes the historical intolerance of religions, particularly Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and suggests that if Frye's theory is tolerant, it is in spite of and not because of its (overt or covert) religious orientation; and he adds that Frye's tolerance "may perhaps be understood by seeing it in the context of responses to rationalism — and in fact accommodation to rationalism" ("Bible as Fugue" 131). In short, using the evidence of history and practice, Dudek says that the old myths and the worlds to which they belonged should not be disregarded, but should not necessarily be missed either; and he opposes Frye's backwards-looking religious nostalgia with a forward-looking secular humanism which, further, does not set any opposition between poetry and reason — this despite the fact that, ultimately, Dudek's own sense "that existence in time realizes the creative possibilities of eternity," which is, by his own admission, "a religious position" (Letter to the author, i8Nov. 1991).

Third, again in his 1958 essay, Dudek argues that the opposition between

scientific truth and religious or quasi-religious beliefs, which is "the great axis of modern thinking about poetry and science" and the (paradoxical) foundations of Frye's theories, is not a valid position. He suggests, rather, that poetry implies "the fullest conception of life and reality," a view that in no way excludes — but in fact implicates — scientific and rationalist means of understanding the world as well as religious and mythological approaches, *when these approaches have a truth-value,* that is, when they stand as the best means human beings have for describing and mastering their world. "In deference to Northrop Frye," Dudek concedes that "the imagination tends to fall into .. . patterns (or archetypes) and shapes its materials around them," ("Fallacy" 184). Myths, patterns and models — ideologies — inherited from the past shape the way we understand the world and act in and upon it, but a theory of correspondences with such organizing myths or their structures is no criterion for evaluating a literary work. Unhappily, coupled with a fundamental misunderstanding of the relation of truth and meaning, Frye's tenet (expressed in *The Secular Scripture,* 1976: 45-46) that "as life has no shape and literature has, literature is throwing away its one distinctive quality when it tries to imitate life" (quoted in Graff 52), leads him to propose that literature must imitate a rational pattern — this while denying it any truth-value and rele gating it to the traditional philosophical limbo of belief. In contrast, Dudek posits simply that "Art is the perfect union of the real and the ideal ("Fallacy" 185), which of course includes the rational and the irrational, truth and belief. (For example, even the Renaissance neo-Platonist Sidney proposes a view of literature closer to Dudek's than to Frye's position, when he suggests that poetry, which encompasses both the particular and the general is greater than history, which is limited to the particular, and philosophy, whose domain is the general.)

In this last statement, taken from "The Fallacy of Literalism and the Failing of Symbolic Interpretation" written in 1964, is contained the fourth element of Dudek's critique and a succinct expression of the conflict between his and Frye's positions. Dudek is not simply against mythology, though he is wary of mysticism and religious nostalgia, as he is also equally of reductive science (Letter to the author), of all systems which, because they present themselves as all-encompassing and exclusive are forms of false consciousness. Nor is he simply insulted — as well he might be — by Frye's reiteration of the prejudice of theorists from Plato to Lukâcs against the poet's knowing anything about what he does: "Part of the critic's reason for feeling that poets can be properly assessed only after their death is that they are then unable to tease him with hints of inside knowledge" which is of no use for critical analysis because, in fact, the poet "cannot talk about what he knows" *(Anatomy* 5). Yet it is neither personal animosity nor indignation at being dis qualified to discuss his art that is at the root of Dudek's rejection of Frye's theories. It is his fundamental opposition to Frye's mystico-religious ontology and his naively positivist epistemology.

AS GERALD GRAFF NOTES IN *Literature Against Itself,* Frye "maintains the rigid disjunction between 'is' and 'ought' statements that we associate with early logical positivism" (183; This positivist element in Frye's work is in concordance with his notion of the 'disinterested critic' for which the "Polemic Introduction" of his *Anatomy* is to a large extent an apology.). Literature is about 'ought,' which manifests itself in myth. On the one hand, it has nothing to do with truth, which belongs only to the domain of the 'is' ; but on the other hand, interestingly enough, Frye uses myth or archetypes as criteria upon which literature is absolutely dependent, and against which it is evaluated with an implicit epistemology of correspondence. Though in *The Critical Path* he admits that "The vision of things as they could or should be certainly has to depend on the vision of things as they are" (104), Frye immediately — and unfortunately — backs away from the consequences of this position, stating further along in the same paragraph that

> the notion that our choices are inevitably connected with things as they are, whether through the mind of God or the constitution of nature, always turns out to be an illusion of habit. The mythical and factual or logical attitudes are really connected by analogy. If, for example, such a philosopher as Bergson or Lloyd Morgan bases a metaphysical or religious structure on the conception of evolution, what he is working with is not really the same principle as the biological hypothesis of evolution, but is rather a mythological analogy of that hypothesis. (105)

In the sense that any model we use to describe the world is necessarily not the world, Frye distances himself from naive positivism, and in this he is quite right; but in the radical opposition he posits between "mythical and factual logical attitudes" he reveals himself the inheritor of positivism's inadequacies. (Criticizing such positivism, Bourdieu recalls Borges' map which must be as big as the country it describes; *Distinction,* 2Q,on.) His separation of the qualitative and quantitative aspects of knowledge is remarkable in that it ignores virtually everything that has been said about the problem from Marx to Bloch to Mannheim, for example, and more recently and specifically in relation to art, Panovsky and Bourdieu. (Panovsky's concept of *habitus,* "a system of interiorized schemata that allow all the thoughts, perceptions and actions of a culture, and these only." Bourdieu, Postface to Panovsky, 152.)

In opposition to Frye, Dudek considers poetry as belonging to a twofold reality, encompassing at once and equally "the particulars of experience . . . and the potentiality of psychic life" ("Fallacy" 181). In other words, art is a means to reconcile, to express, and to communicate the discordances (and concordances) between immediate, lived experience, what is, and the lens through which we perceive and understand the world, ideology and Utopia, what ought to be. Frye takes what may be termed an intellectualist position, confining himself to organiz-

ing and rationalizing a system of beliefs, an ideology, without any hint that he is aware that it is an ideology ; in his view what we think and believe is distinct from and more important than what we do. Dudek, however, adopts the natural stance of an artisan, and significantly it is a position that does not radically separate thinking and doing, intellectual and manual labour. Or, to place the question in the larger context of the history of literary theory, Frye's position is similar to that presented by Plato in the *Ion* and in the last book of *The Republic,* while Dudek's is that of the poet who, armed with 2,000 years of philosophical investigation and an acute consciousness of his craft, is — finally — attempting to answer the philosopher.

It is perhaps significant that, like Plato, Frye struggled to have the legitimacy of his discipline recognized by a not overly receptive audience. Plato condemns the poets, and with them the other educators and ideologues of Greek society: sophists, rhetoricians, diviners, soothsayers, thaumaturges, and so on, because they had proven themselves manifestly incapable of reversing what he saw as the decline of Hellenic civilization ; he attempts to place himself and those practicing the new discipline of philosophy as the new consciences and legislators of his society. Similarly, Frye devotes the larger portion of his "Polemic Introduction" in the *Anatomy* to arguing for the legitimacy of literary criticism, and in particular that practiced by his 'disinterested critic' (7). Admittedly, the context in which Frye argues is far narrower than Plato's, his opponents far weaker, and his claims somewhat more modest. Where Plato sought, at least, ostensibly, to cure all the ills of his society (Plato's retraction of his social project at the end of *The Republic* does not contradict the fundamentally social and political nature of his work), Frye only proposes to impose some order on a discipline which he saw as plagued by subjectivity and conscious or unconscious interests : he confines himself to academia and literary circles — here Frye's position is paradoxical and typical of modern critics who would deny that poets or artists know what they are doing; for where Plato simply dismisses all their claims of competence, because he maintains a vestige of Romantic notions of creativity, his position is dependent upon what poets do and he cannot subjugate them unconditionally to the critic's censure — since the poets (if not the critics as well), whom he condemns for not being able to explain what they are doing, long ago either discredited themselves or were for the most part simply relegated to a marginal role in society : especially in Frye's own Canada, replaced as they have been by ad-men and network television. (This comment should be read as a simple statement of the state of things, *not* as a nostalgic lament for 'better' times when men of letters and poets in particular were held in greater esteem than they are today.) Such differences notwithstanding, the similarity of Frye's and Plato's positions in their societies is interesting, and it may help explain Frye's project and its success; but, as Dudek's criticisms suggest, it is not the only nor the most significant connection with Platonic philosophy.

In her essay, "The Prospero Figure : Northrop Frye's Magic Criticism," Maggie Helwig notes the recurring images of the biblical Flood and Leviathan in Frye's work, and their analogy with Plato's cave. There are profound differences separating Frye's and Plato's theories; to deny this would be to deny the historicity of thinking and social practice. But the Flood-Leviathan and cave analogy is particularly significant because it points, from another direction, to the same problem which Dudek suggests is at the heart of Frye's theories : the archaism of his ontology and epistemology.

In short, whatever other transformations Frye has affected, his myths or archetypes neatly replace Plato's forms :

> The anagogic view of criticism thus leads to the conception of literature as existing in its own universe, no longer a commentary on life or reality, but containing life and reality in a system of verbal relationships . . . Similar universes exist for all the arts. . . Pictures as pictures are themselves facts, and exist only in a pictorial universe. *(Anatomy* 122)

With such an ontology, any epistemology is necessarily one of correspondences, or mimesis. Like Plato before him, Frye shifts the matter of art from reflections of lived experience: facts and reality, maintaining always a fundamental separation of the two, to reflections of ideal and unchanging forms or patterns : myths. And like Plato, he establishes himself as the judge of poetry, according to how well it reflects or manifests a pre-existent reality.

At the heart of Plato's condemnation of the poets is not simply his attempt to usurp their traditional position in Greek society, however; more important to modern discussions of the problem is his concept of poetic activity, which he assimilates to the practice of other arts, in the sense of *téchnè.* To understand his (and thereby Frye's) position it is useful to review briefly the ideas concerning the skills of the artisan current in the slavery-based economy of Antiquity, ideas that make a striking contrast to concepts of work developed since the Renaissance. As Jean-Pierre Vernant writes in *Myth and Thought of the Greeks:*

> While for Descartes the artisan knows his craft because he understands the mechanism of his machine, *téchnè* consists of knowing how to use properly and at the proper moment a *dynamis* that is not conceived of differently be it a force of nature or a man-made tool (290-91). [Philosopher and physician aside, the possible exceptions to this conception of the worker is the farmer. In his *Works and Days* Hesiod expounds upon the character-building nature of agricultural work, and Xenophon considers agriculture a good apprenticeship to military discipline ; he recognizes the effect of work on the subject without, however, developing a general concept of work.]

The artisan neither invents new models nor changes old ones. The rules he knows how and when to apply concern the manufacturing process, *poièsis,* but the product, *poièma,* does not belong strictly to the technical domain and surpasses both his existence and his understanding:

> Superior to the worker and his *téchnè,* the Form directs and guides the work to successful completion; it assigns the work its terms and limits, defines its context and its means. In the work of art, just as in the natural processes, it is the ultimate cause which determines and commands the totality of the process of production — the efficient cause; the artisan, his tools, his *téchnè* are nothing more than the instrument thanks to which a pre-existing Form shapes matter. (Vernant 320)

As reported by Plato's student and successor, Xenocrates, "The Idea is the cause that serves as model." The worker's relation to his work is passive; the only contribution the artisan makes beyond a purely physical movement is knowing when to make the movement: his purpose is to realize in matter a pre-existing form; he can in no way transform or create the archetypes which guide and determine the manufacturing process — it is this concept of work that allows Plato to assimilate the rhapsodist and the poet; he does not make the modern distinction between the rhapsodist's repetitive craft and the poet's creative art : both *technè* are in his view repetitive — and the product of his efforts is evaluated according to how closely it imitates these ideal forms in the material world.

The concept of work thus limited to the production of use-value, it is not the maker but the user who knows and understands the product being made. Plato writes:

> 'You always have the three techniques — use, manufacture, and representation . .. And isn't the quality, beauty and fitness of any implement or creature or action judged by reference to the use for which man or nature produced it? … It must follow, then, that the user of a thing has the widest experience of it and must tell the maker how well it has performed its function in the use to which he puts it.
>
> *{Republic,* x, 6oic-d)

On this point, all the arts are identical : it is not the maker who can judge the worth of the object he produces, but the user, which means that as far as literature is concerned the best judge is the philosopher or, in our day, the critic.

The affinity of Frye's theories with this position is remarkable — and, in view of his deeply Christian-Romantic heritage, hardly surprising. Yet when Frye comes close to surpassing the limitations of his ontology, he turns away from it, suggesting that any (dialectical) relation between beliefs, the realm of literature, and facts, the realm of life, is merely "an illusion of habit." (Gerald Graff points out how the fundamental weakness of Frye's world is precisely this failure to locate "a connection between two orders . . . the nature of things as they are, dead, neutral, inhuman, and unavoidable . . ." and "things as they should be as projected by human purpose and 'desire,' the order of art, applied science, religion, culture, and civilization." *[Literature Against Itself,* 182.] Whereas Descartes, Leibnitz and Spinoza recognized the problem and laboured over it, Frye dismisses it offhandedly — when he is not blissfully unaware of its existence.) Ultimately, the problem is that, were Frye to admit such a relation, he would undermine the very foundations of

his newly-won position, of the legitimacy of the 'disinterested critic' In the first place, acknowledging that myths and archetypes and the like are inextricable from real, lived experience would imply that they are inseparable from real, concrete interests; such an admission might well return criticism to the sorry state of prejudice and opinion, slave to all manner of idols, in which Frye found it and from which, beginning with his *Anatomy,* he tried to extricate it. In the second place, admitting a connection in poetry between the actual and the possible, such as Louis Dudek posits, would surrender back to poetry — and thereby the poet — a legitimacy far more secure than that of the critic. For such an admission would not only accept the popular prejudice that critics are parasitical, a view which Frye takes much trouble to denounce, but would also give it a rational foundation. In an ironic reversal of Plato's condemnation of the poets because their work is twice-removed, exponentially, from reality, because the critic studies literature, which is itself developed from experiences and dreams, he could be accused of dealing with matters too far removed from reality and truth to be worth troubling about. This is of course not the case, no more than it is the case, as Dudek has argued since the publication of Frye's *Anatomy,* that criticism is about any sort of myths or archetypes or realms existing independently and apart from the everyday stuff of life. Criticism is about literature, and like literature it is also about life : the lived and the willed, about reason and emotion, experience and ideology and Utopia, and the complex relations of these and more that constitute humanity and civilization.

Yet the question remains : If his theories are indeed so wrong-headed, then how and why did Frye gain his excellent and rarely equalled reputation with all save the poets? Why would a writer in the *Times Literary Supplement* remark that the "only serious rival'" to this critic from a country with no great literary and philosophical traditions "is Aristotle" (quoted in Fulford) ? In fairness to Frye, it should be said that he believed in what he did, and that it was good. And whatever difficulties his theoretical approach presents, like Jan Kott, who produced one of the finest studies of Shakespeare despite trying to turn him into an existentialist, Northrop Frye said much that is important about literature. His writings, from his reviews of thin volumes of poetry to his methodical analyses of the Bible, were often insightful and intelligent, though sometimes perhaps a little blind to the merits of his own compatriots' work. And paradoxically, it is perhaps the greatest shortcomings of Frye's theories that earned him his fame; for in his attempt to make order in the chaos of criticism as he found it, he did not question the dominant world-view, neither religious nor scientific ; instead he tried to adopt for his study of myths and literature the method of the sciences. Whatever its merits or failings, by associating them with the truths of the natural sciences this approach gave both Frye's discipline, *criticism,* and its object of study, *literature,* a legitimacy they had never before (least of all in his own country) enjoyed in the public eye.

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WINDSURFING

David Solway

It rides upon the wrinkled hide of
water, like the upturned hull of a small
canoe or kayak waiting to be righted —
yet its law is opposite to that of boats, it
floats upon its breastbone and brings
whatever spine there is to light. A thin
shaft is slotted into place. Then a
puffed right-angle of wind pushes it
forward, out into the bay, where
suddenly it glitters into speed, tilts,
knifes up, and for the moment's
nothing but a slim projectile of
cambered fibreglass, peeling the crests.

The man's
clamped to the mast, taut as a guywire.
Part of the sleek apparatus he controls,
immaculate nerve of balance, plunge
and curvet, he clinches all component
movements into single motion.
It bucks, stalls, shudders, yaws, and dips
its hissing sides beneath the surface that
sustains it, tensing into muscle that nude
ellipse of lunging appetite and power.

And now the mechanism's wholly
dolphin, springing toward its prey
of spume and beaded sunlight,
tossing spray, and hits the vertex of
the wide, salt glare of distance, and
reverses.

Back it comes through
a screen of particles, scalloped out of
water, shimmer and reflection, the wind
snapping and lashing it homeward,
shearing the curve of the wave, breaking
the spell of the caught breath and
articulate play of sinew, to enter the
haven of the breakwater and settle in a
rush of silence.

Now the crossing drifts
in the husk of its wake
and nothing's the same again
as, gliding elegantly on a film of water,
the man guides
his brash, obedient legend
into shore.

CREATIVITY

Francis Sparshott

Once, I was portly with burnt umber.
You squeezed me dry.
Now from my twisted metal
chubby wee paws in advanced kindergartens
make free-form sculpture. They are expressing themselves.

WHEN THE BODY SPEAKS TO THE HEART IT SAYS

Patricia Young

I am a hunter-gatherer, busy
climbing the high ridge
to watch where birds
will settle. I am flailing
my arms, picking huckleberries
all day long. I don't ask for much —
sex, a piece of cooked meat.
Waist-deep I stop
in salal, I am trying to be
ruffed as a grouse. On my knees
at the edge of the lake
I must fathom
how to pull fish from water. I am
animal, you can't blame me, this
is how I was made — hormones
and glands and ancient
predilections. See,
where I sleep by the fire —
my skull so vulnerable, my skin,
no protection at all.
The way I moan and curl in
on myself I look like a newborn
rat. You may want
love, beauty, the ineffable
things but I am not
interested
in what you want.

HEIDEGGERIAN ELEMENTS IN ROBERT KROETSCH'S "SEED CATALOGUE"

Douglas Reimer

ROBERT KROETSCH'S *Seed Catalogue* is neither phenomenological nor structuralist, to borrow a distinction made by David Carroll in *The Subject in Question* (15). That is, it is neither subject-centered nor language-centered, but belongs, instead, to a third, rare, more sylleptic mode of writing aware of and making use of the conventions of the other two. As David Arnason has shown in "Robert Kroetsch: The Deconstruction of the Metanarrative of the Cowboy," *Seed Catalogue* deconstructs ideologies which have become familiar to us concerning the Western hero and the purpose and function of the poem and the poet on the prairie, and is concerned with language and the way writing is a supplement to speech and experience.[1] Yet the poem seems to some extent at least to have retained the phenomenological subject, the philosophical subject. Furthermore, it appears to be deeply concerned with the problem of truth and, in this light, practices a Heideggerian uninventing and unnaming. It uninvents spring, for instance: the spring season that opens the poem is not renamed but deconstructed much like the dismantling of storm windows (Brown 154) when the weather changes :

> We took the storm windows/off
> the south side of the house
> and put them on the hotbed.
> Then it was spring. Or, no
> then winter was ending. {*Seed Catalogue* 109)

For all its promised warmth and renewal, the spring retains winter and cold and death within it and this metaphor (with its negating "no") appears to reflect what Heidegger thinks about both truth and Being. *Dasein,* authentic Being, is fundamentally aware of its own dying, knows that death is its "ownmost" possibility. Authentic, moral living cannot come about without the newness and the extraordinariness which *angst* and the certainty of death, unmitigated by transcendentalism or spiritualism of any kind, give to *dasein.* Truth and untruth have a similar paradoxical relationship and neither *is* without the other, any more than Being *is* authentic without the knowledge of history (change) at its centre. The

poet in *Seed Catalogue* is a Heideggerian poet who, through his consciousness of Being and his facing up to death, provides for his people and for his prairie community.

The philosophical subject is central to Heidegger, though as William Barrett notes, nowhere in his writings do you find references to either "man" or "consciousness" (218) : the subject is too important a question to name and thus, like the existential humanists or the pre-Romantics (and to an extent the Romantics), to bind and imprison within one, permanent, unchanging and suffocating understanding of his Being — to take history "forever" out of the Being of being. The poet, who falls off his horse in the poem's opening lines, is never named either — he is just the nameless cowboy unhorsed,[2] yet he is also the conventional autobiographical subject, the poet writing a poem about becoming a poet. Not unlike the description of the will-less protagonist which opens Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House* (1941) ,[3] this first picture we have of the subject is self-deprecating :

> Winter was ending.
> This is what happened :
> we were harrowing the garden.
> You've got to understand this :
> I was sitting on the horse.
> The horse was standing still.
> I fell off. (no)

This subject is not the ordinary prairie farm boy who, if he ever fell off a horse, would fall off one that was galloping, or at least in motion. Eventually this incompetence makes sense. The subject is a budding poet — a "sissy" (Arnason 82), not quite a man, someone who, on the prairies, is looked upon with contempt and expected to "hang around the girlies." His father's prohibition against writing, and particularly against writing poetry, makes clear the extent to which the poet is alienated from the prairie community, to the point even of having his sonship implicitly questioned. The father attempts to drive the poetic spirit out of his son with hard work:

> First off I want you to take that
> crowbar and drive 1,156 holes
> in that gumbo.
> And the next time you want to
> write a poem
> we'll start the haying. (119)

But the father doesn't succeed and the rest of the poem continues the fragmented story of the boy's growing consciousness of the world around him and of his development as a poet in the unlikely poetic soil of the Canadian prairies. His memories include the death of his mother, his father's unsuccessful attempts at shooting a badger on the farm and the myth he builds for himself about the event

later, his various experiences with sex as a boy, drinking bouts with friends and their revelries, and his own perceptions of the role of the poet in the community.

You can't escape the fact of the phenomenological subject in *Seed Catalogue* which is a prairie *ku'nstlerroman;* an autobiography; our prairie version of Wordsworth's *The Prelude.* The poem is not, however, at all self-conscious in the sense of Romantic (Hegelian, Kantian) self-consciousness, the sort which Geoffrey Hartman describes in his "Romanticism and 'anti-selfconsciousness'." In fact, its purpose is to re-write or unname exactly that sort of super self-consciousness which makes an idol of individual self-awareness. We do find out a little about the subject: the location of "the home place: N.E. 17-42-16-W4A Meridian," the names of a few relatives, and the fact that he has certain writer friends such as Al Purdy and Rudy Wiebe. Because of the general sparseness of detail, however, and the unconvincing neglect to provide enough biographical information to help the reader locate the subject neatly in time and place, the poem is really not a traditional autobiography. The biographical specificity is more the identity of the home of all prairie small-town people than of the poet himself. *Seed Catalogue's* self-less consciousness is the self under erasure.

If *Seed Catalogue* is erasing the self, finding only traces of the past of self whose Being is no longer recoverable, and who is always-already Being in a future time, then it is writing as supplement, writing that is aware of its own disjunctiveness and dissociation from the "reality" of the thing it has chosen to describe. The subject is "Pinch Me" *{Seed Catalogue* 13 m) who is left at the end of the poem when Adam and Eve both "got drownded" (44). He is the "Pinch Me," of "pinch me to see if I am dreaming," and the ending (all endings which conventional poetry dramatizes are rewritten in this poem) is only the question after which you hope to find an answer or at least a response — some sort of continuation.[4]

Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art," is helpful here. In it, he establishes the "thingly character" (19) of works of art :

> Works of art are shipped like coal from the Ruhr and logs from the Black Forest. During the First World War Holderlin's hymns were packed in the soldier's knapsack together with cleaning gear. Beethoven's quartets lie in the storerooms of the publishing house like potatoes in a cellar. (19)

"Thingness" is the essence of an entity before various traits have gathered around it: "Obviously, a thing is not merely an aggregate of traits, nor an accumulation of properties by which that aggregate arises. A thing, as everyone thinks he knows, is that around which the properties have assembled" (23). Things, for Heidegger, including works of art, are not simply constructs without a reference outside of the "mere" chain of signifiers which describe them. The early Greeks knew about this "rootedness" of things. Things had in them a thereness, a Being of beings: *("hupokeimenon* . . . the core of the thing, something always already there" 23). Not so for the Western world and the interpretation of Being (presence) it standardized

later. There was a rootlessness to its understanding of Being from the Romans on — an inautheticity at the heart of all things that resulted from the falseness of their translation of Greek experience into their language: "Roman thought takes over the Greek words without a corresponding, equally authentic experience of what they say, without the Greek word. The rootlessness of Western thought begins with this translation" (23). There is for Heidegger an original, irreducible, essential quality in things; in this sense he is essentialist.[5]

THIS QUESTION OF THE THINGNESS OF THE WORK OF ART IS important for *Seed Catalogue.* Out of its thingness the work of art derives all its power for it is, like any other work, functional, and productive. It has "reliability" and it describes the reliability of the objects and experiences it focuses on, as, for instance, Van Gogh's painting of the peasant's pair of shoes tells all about the work they do (Shaver 244) ; about the industry of the one who used them, about the particular function they served for the user, as well as about something more original in which these shoes are rooted — a *truth* about shoes: "The art work let's us know what shoes are in truth" (35). So, the object of art is to get us in touch with the original Being of things. Art, itself an original thing before the concept of art, has incredible power to present Being which is by nature hidden from us. In this sense, in his discussion of what it means to be an artist on the prairie, the poet of *Seed Catalogue* is engaged in the question of the truth of his art. How does his work truly represent the prairies? How can a poet be made in an environment which is so unfriendly to poets? In a world in which no cultural things work on the imaginations of the inhabitants nor act out their equipmentness and their reliability, how can you hope to ever begin the poetic project? How can the truth of art and the truth of being a poet originate in a land where such Being has no visible being?

> This dilemma is the very heart of the list of absences in the poem:
> How do you grow a past/ to live in
>
> the absence of silkworms
> the absence of clay and wattles (whatever the hell
> they are)
> the absence of Lord Nelson the absence of kings and
> queens the absence of a bottle opener, and me with a
> vicious
> attack of the 26-ounce flu the
> absence of both Sartre and Heidegger (29)

and so on. Are these merely absences, merely the presence of metaphysical trace as Barbara Godard suggests in "Other Fictions: Robert Kroetsch's Criticism" (17) ?

If they are presences, then what sort of presences are they and how is the poet making us aware of the presence rather than the absence of the thing he is attempting to "set forward" — the prairie and its concealed Being?

Heidegger says about things that we experience their presence by experiencing their absence. We cannot receive a strong impression of a thing's thingness without closing ourselves to its sensations: "In order to hear a *bare* sound we have to listen away from things, divert our ear from them, i.e., listen abstractly" (26). The thing which is the sound cannot be brought near without abstracting it and removing it from its context. The Parthenon, the Cathédrale de Chartres, Sartre and Heidegger become clear to us in the remove of the context of *Seed Catalogue.* We know them better and more fully here than they could be known in their own fully familiar and sensuously cultural homeland. They are objectified here. This is a duplicity which startles the prairie writer/reader who is accustomed to lamenting the absence of culture in his back yard. The thingness of Sartre is closer to us than to the French, thus, but the unknowable Being of Sartre's being is not. We have it more and in purer form than they over there, but the abstraction of Sartre and the other cultural icons onto Canadian soil makes the whole unpalatable and inordinately unlikely :

> In the thing-concept .. . there is not so much an assault upon the thing as rather an inordinate attempt to bring it into the greatest possible proximity to us. But a thing never reaches that position as long as we assign as its thingly feature what is perceived by the senses. Whereas the first interpretation keeps the thing at arm's length from us, as it were, and sets it too far off, the second makes it press too hard upon us. In both interpretations the thing vanishes. (26)

The insertion of the familiar in the midst of the unfamiliar does two things: it heightens our awareness of the thingness (Being) of the prairie objects slipped into the list of cultural absences (a condom dispenser, Louis Riel, *The Western Producer,* the principal's new car, and so on) and it displaces the nearness of the European art/ifacts and either makes them less inordinate and out of context or makes them more "pressing" and so irrelevant to us. This is exactly the poet's role in the process of finding out truth. If this juxtaposition of prairie experience and European art/experience is serviceable to us as a "work" then *Seed Catalogue* is continuing to uncover the truth.

The question of truth in works of art leads to the question of the best truth-teller society can expect to find, and thus ultimately to the role of the poet in the community. Related to the way we try to experience things, as familiar and as unfamiliar, is a third possibility which is to leave the thing in its constancy. The latter is what the poet does best. Kroetsch, in the list of absences, is not analyzing the things themselves, but setting them in such a light, in such a state of *dasein* (startled and startling into sudden emergence into light), and in such a state of opposition that thinking occurs. Not inordinate "philosophical" thinking, and not the splitting

of the object thought about from itself (the subject), but thinking which leaves the thing thought about whole : "We ought to turn toward the being, think about it in regard to its being, but by means of this thinking at the same time let it rest upon itself in its very own being" (31).

The truth of a thing, the Being of a being, is revealed by remaining unrevealed, though thought about. Truth is also untruth. Knowing is also not knowing. Inventing is uninventing :

> But it is not we who presuppose the unconcealedness of beings; rather, the unconcealedness of beings (Being) puts us into such a condition of being that in our representation we always remain installed within and in attendance upon unconcealedness. ("Origin" 52)

The subject of *Seed Catalogue,* the poet, is the thinker, and this is just as much a dichotomy as truth = non-truth, and being = non-being. How can the poet with his unsystematic methods and his dependence on and attendance on the emotional be a thinker in Heidegger's sense of a thoughtful mind which by mediation works at preventing the race of the rest of the world towards technological thoughtlessness?[6] Furthermore, how can a thinker be *grown* on the prairie? You can train and educate an analytic philosopher, the academy can build a scientist, but how can the small town (Heisler/Todtnau) *grow* a poet? How can it grow a poet as indigenous to its place and earth as carrots and turnips and radishes? The paradox of "how do you *grow* a poet?" is precisely, too, how do you grow a thinker? How do you grow a thinker about truth in a land and age (epoch) which resists poetry and thinking — where the best we can come up with is a digger of fenceposts, a writer of huge fiction and a galloper of caribou horses through restaurants?

The good poet is the best thinker, "the precursor of poets in a destitute time" ("What Are Poets For?" 142). He heralds in the future with his work. In fact, the future's presence would not be available to the world without the poet: "The precursor, however, does not go off into a future; rather, he arrives out of that future, in such a way that the future is present only in the arrival of his words" (142). The good poet is not just one manifestation of truth in the world but the very measure or gauge of present Being whose work is the place to look for evidence of the state Being is in, in the world. He has to, then, be more of a thinker, more willing to risk rejection, and more deeply involved in authentic living himself than the philosopher could be. The location of authenticity, *Seed Catalogue* tells us, is in the garden and not in the academy, in the clearing and not in the library. The title of the poem, the narrative voice which tells us that love "is a leaping up and down" (113), the colloquial and humorous voice of the seed catalogue persona imitating, poorly, what it thinks is a refined British voice, the voice with its cowboy concerns which informs the reluctant waitress that Pete Knight, the king of all cowboys is dead (123), all these are authentic, oral voices.[7] The voice of being is

the voice of people who are kin to nature — the farmer and the poet familiar with the farm,[8] the *poet-manqué* in one sense, are the best gauges of authentic living.

THE BEST GAUGE OF HEIDEGGER'S THINKING about the poet is his own poetry. In an appropriate selection called "The Thinker as Poet," Heidegger explains, in verse, the qualities which make the good poet. Good thinking is discursive thinking: "That is the proper hour of discourse. / Discourse cheers us to companionable / Reflection" (6). Prophetic vision, clear sight, "precursive" sight, is poetic sight: "Only image formed keeps the vision. Yet image formed rests in the poem" (6). Poetry is dangerous to thinking, but it is a "good" danger: "The good and thus wholesome / Danger is the nighness of the singing poet" (8) ; but "philosophizing" is a "bad" danger to thinking: "The bad and thus muddled danger / is philosophizing" (8). Good thinking is courageous, slow, patient, and possibly most of all, "playful." The way poetry "plays" with language, philosophy cannot :

> All our heart's courage is the
> echoing response to the first call
> of Being which gathers our
> thinking into the play of the
> world. (9)

The central concern for both Heidegger and Kroetsch about thinking and Being and the event of things (lovers, towns, poets) is their growing: "But poetry that thinks is in truth / the topology of Being" and "Singing and thinking are the stems / neighbor to poetry. / They grow out of Being and reach into truth" (13). In the spirit of this assertion, Kroesch asks, "how do you grow a poet?" (118). As a way of answering his own question, he dramatically, and intellectually, deconstructs the myth of the sterility of the prairie.[9] The winter of the stillness of poetic presence, the presence of thinking, on the prairie is over :

> The end of winter
> seeding/time.
>
> How do you grow a
> poet? (36)

This poem is the beginning of seeding time — the poem about a seed catalogue is a planting in the "ground" of the "oral" prairies (the written word planted in the oral ground to gain or impart fertility), the non-intellectual prairies, the place of farmers, seeders, of poets of a new order (not of the sort Britain produced over the last 700 years, for instance), and the question about growing a poet *is* the seed in the ground of prairie stillness and the invisibility of prairie presence. The poem's

question about the poet is the precursor of future prairie presence, prairie culture becoming, emerging into light. It is the poet nurturing "our" being, the "crackle" of "our" voices as Dennis Cooley says it in *The Vernacular Muse* (182), and in that sense it is a rescuing of prairie from its status as a marginalized and self-deprecating lower class which always already shuts up in the presence of high European culture.

The absences in *Seed Catalogue,* the absence of Aeneas and Heraclitus and the Parthenon are presences of a past which mean little for the present. Kroetsch thinks into being our "dwelling" ("Being, Dwelling, Thinking" *passim).* The absence of Aeneas is replaced by the presence of "the Strauss boy [who] . . . could piss higher on a barn than any of us" (29). The absence of kings and queens is replaced with a story of "bullshitters"[10] unreserved carnival celebration: "the absence of a bottle opener, and me with a vicious attack of the 26-ounce flu (29)." Notice how there is no desire in the imported absences mentioned while the "present" prairie absences are all about the juice and "fire" of living: "the absence of a condom dispenser in the Lethbridge Hotel," "the absence of the girl who said that if the Edmonton / Eskimos won the Grey Cup she'd let me kiss / her nipples in the foyer of the Palliser / Hotel," and being in "love" with "an old Blood whore" (29). Here there is "poetry" we understand.

Kroetsch is "setting back" *Seed Catalogue* into the earth of the prairie, of small town Alberta, in order to let that earth be earth: "That into which the work sets itself back and which it causes to come forth in this setting back of itself we called the earth. Earth is that which comes forth and shelters. . . . The work moves the earth itself into the Open of a world and keeps it there. *The work lets the earth be an earth"* ("Origin" 46). Part of the prairie earth is the indigenous, indestructible, eternal brome grass, for instance :

> Brome Grass (Bromus Inermis) : No amount of cold will kill it. It **withstands** the summer suns. Water may stand on it for several weeks without apparent injury. The roots push through the soil, throwing up new plants continually. It **starts quicker** than other grasses in the spring. **Remains green** longer in the fall. **Flourishes under absolute neglect.**

Brome grass is hardy, of course, but so are prairie people. Another part of this prairie earth is the peculiar mixture of homegrown remedies for physical illness and spiritual "diseases" :

> For appetite : cod-liver
> oil
> For bronchitis: mustard
> plasters
> For pallor and failure to fill
> the woodbox : sulphur
> & molasses.

For self-abuse: ten Our Fathers
and ten Hail Marys For regular
bowels : Sunny Boy Cereal
(119)

And there are also our particular prairie encumbrances to "romance" : always a pair of skates in every story, always ice skating or hockey at the heart of every narrative :

or that
girl in the skating rink
shack who had on so
much underwear you
didn't have enough
prick to get past her/
CCM skates (119)

The prairie world blossoms, grows, emerges in this poem, becomes unhidden and uninvented. This "new" world is, in *Seed Catalogue* and out of it, as particular and complex, as capable of being set forth and of sheltering, as there is will to think about it or time and space for the work to record it. The poet's work cares for this world in a way which does not analyse the earth out of its context and out of significance.

All the questions *Seed Catalogue's* subject asks — "How do you grow a gardener?" (m), "How do you grow a past?" (116), "How do you grow a prairie town?" (117), "How do you grow a lover?" (115), "How do you grow a poet?" (119) — are dramatizations of methods of consciousness : the desire to know, the ache to separate things from their ground and to analyse them as distinct and unattached things, as objects outside of history. Such questioning is usually the mark of a Western philosophical, analytical inquiry. But these particular questions are somehow all wrong, too, for that analytic tradition. They are not questions about justice, Truth, God, Trees, the Sun, and so on, detached from human emotion. They are a poet's questions — a poet's consciousness which is, in this case, not logical but evocative. These questions never get answered ; are dropped as soon as asked. The formula doesn't get completed. There are no certainties. The questions, no more than the imperative, finally, to the poet to "teach us to love our dying" (42), do not provide solutions but answer back with more poetry. In that way they partake of the Heideggerian principle that poetry with its natural duplicity, its trait of being set back in the earth, is the thought of truth.

This last point about dying is, perhaps, the most Heideggerian aspect of *Seed Catalogue*. Here we have Heidegger's notion of the difference between the one undifferentiated, "pre philosophical" self who has not yet encountered the terror of his own non-being and the self who has and whose struggle with angst will eventually lend dignity to existence. The poet of *Seed Catalogue* is an alone and

"anxious" Self, speaking his way toward understanding in the Heideggerian non-abstract sense of "unconcealedness" and "un-hiddenness" :

> In this world that lies before him, open beneath the light, things lie unconcealed (also concealed) ; but unconcealedness, or un-hiddenness, for Heidegger, is truth; and therefore so far as man exists, he exists 'in the truth.' Truth and Being are thus inseparable, given always together, in the simple sense that a world with things in it opens up around man the moment he exists. Most of the time, however, man does not let himself see what really happens in seeing. (Barrett 222)

In the realm of speech and language, death is best represented by silence. Tongue-tiedness. Wordlessness. A fighting for breath. The truth of death is silence, just as death finally leaves each of us speechless. Tongue-tied. Silence is language confronting the absence at the very heart of presence. That is, silence is courage. A standing at the edge of the abyss. A looking at the terror, a looking right at non-being. Silence is an awakening; a being born of understanding. Language without silence is simply chatter, just another one of the ways modern Being avoids facing the silence of its own non-Being.

When Being faces its own non-Being, all the everyday ordinariness of Being and Being's nothingness or nowhereness disappears : Being is brought face to face with death. Angst brings you to a place of something, a not-nothingness. In that sense, *Seed Catalogue* is, in aggregate, a gift to the people of the prairie, the poet's contribution to their survival and his part in "keeping the farmyard in shape." This is important for understanding the duplicity of the poem. That the question of dying is central to *Seed Catalogue* is made clear by the preponderance of deaths in it: the mother in her grave when the poem begins; the magpie and badger, one shot at and killed by the father (112); the husband who has been buried "with his ass sticking out of the ground" (117); the Crées "surprised ... to death" (121) on the Oldman River by the Bloods; Pete Knight, "King / of *All* cowboys" (123 — whose death by falling off a horse, implicates the poet, who also has fallen off his horse, in his own death) j[11] Henry L. Kroetsch, patriarch, whose "last will and testament" (124) are recorded in the poem; Freddie Kroetsch, the best barn builder in the area, dead but "remembered" (124) by the poet; the poet's cousin Kenneth MacDonald whose bomber is shot down over Cologne in 1943 (126) ; and finally Adam and Eve themselves who we are told "got drownded" (127). The powerful request, "Poet, teach us to love our dying" (126) is a cry for help rising out of the community which has not allowed itself to recognize the neurosis which living and dying entail, made all the more unbearable by the suppression inherent in the various simplifying dualities by which people live and think. The poet knows, for instance, that religions tend to make us "love" our dying and to provide easy solutions for the fear of death by proclaiming everlasting and joyous living after this life. Such promises are placebos and solaces which keep life ordinary and "secure" and are illustrated by the priest's facile solution to the poet's and

Germaine's expression of the great body and soul problem. The two young people have discovered the pleasure of each others' bodies and when the boy makes a confession, the priest shows no willingness to acknowledge the complexity of the conflict between culturally-determined codes of behaviour and raging natural desire. He simply calls it "playing dirty" (114) and admonishes him: "keep your peter in your pants for the next thirteen years" (114). Typical of the independent spirit of the poet, he can't and doesn't listen to advice, and he and Germaine choose, instead, to "die" once more: "we decided we could do it / just one more time" (115) ,[12] If the love in "love our dying" means "loving" private *angst,* having the conscience to experience it, and having good faith that drives one to look into the abyss of death and non-being, then such a "work" which can do this is, for the good poet, a worthwhile and moral work. If "love" on the other hand means skirting death and loving death falsely, loving what is really not death at all but an escape from it, then such a work would be unworthy of the good poet. In either case, the concern with the poet's role in 'teaching' the community (presenting Being for the community) and the climactic position of death at the centre of this autobiographical poem shows Heidegger's influence.

THE HISTORY OF BEING (for the West), Heidegger says, begins with the fall of Being. Kroetsch's cowboy/poet falls into an originary site of Being — back into the garden. Paradise Regained. Eve is at the centre of this garden; but she is dead. She has experienced dying; knows it well. She whispers for the poet to bring her the radish seeds while the people about him call to him to be taught about death. She has already (always/already?) learned this and her whisper is seductive and oddly generative :

> This is what happened — at my mother's wake. This is
> a fact — the World Series was in progress. The
> Cincinnati Reds were playing the Detroit Tigers. It
> was raining. The road to the graveyard was barely
> passable. The horse was standing still. Bring me the
> radish seeds, my mother whispered

This poem is not authenticity all done, *fait accompli,* nor the utter relinquishment of power and will and a clear-eyed facing of death. The will to power is still there and it expresses itself in the fact of the poet's words, in his backward-lookingness, in his longing to superimpose the stories of his youth over the problems of today, and in his very love of life, which is a looking at the past. Heideggerian Being is historical, but it is forward-looking history because the primary mood of Being is awareness of the future — of death. The poem ends with that realization and it plays out the sequence of obsession with the past, of the young life of the poet

with his desires — for language, for the garden, for Germaine, for another.[13] But the questions, the "how do you"'s, point him always back to the future.

Seeing is not seeing. Answering is questioning. The clarity of Aristotle is blindness. The questions of the poet are answers. They are desiring sight without seeing. They are supplementing the presence which is all around them in science books, in seed catalogues, in the ir/replaceable objects of the sort Mary Hauck brings with her to Canada, to Alberta, and which burn to the ground in the Heisler Hotel fire. They are the real absences at the centre of *Seed Catalogue.* From expository discourse the poet returns to the interrogative. The interrogative is a paradox — it too has doubleness at its centre. Answered, the interrogative is all of Western philosophy in a nutshell — completion, ending, transcendence above the now of Being into the eternity of knowing, truth without history or change, the end of the matter. Unanswered, it is the orient. Unanswered, it is Openness, only a beginning, a failure in the best sense of the word. Unanswered, it is the failure of completion, the postponement of orgasm[14] and the death of desire. Unanswered, the interrogative is the *angst* of failure, and the call for more.

NOTES

[1] See the essay in general, and specially his discussion of Derrida's notion, in *Of Grammatology 14.1-5J,* of the utter absence of signification outside the text.

[2] See "The Fear of Women in Prairie Fiction." Kroetsch discusses here the tension between house and horse on the Canadian prairie and the perennial struggle for male independence (80).

[3] Kroetsch has often said that Ross's *As For Me and My House* was the most important book in his development as a prairie writer proud of his heritage. See "The Moment of the Discovery of America Continues" 4.

[4] *Seed Catalogue* is thus one side of a dialogue. In this sense, the poem is Derridean in its double, saying what it never yet has said, not answering its own questions, finding the aporias in the Utopian text, laying traps for the logic of this text about Adam and Eve and the poet in the paradisal garden.

[5] The idea of the essential, transcendental, and metaphysical quality of things is the core of Derrida's argument with Heidegger.

[8] In *Discourse on Thinking,* Heidegger distinguishes between calculative thinking and meditative thinking and says that it is the second kind which the modern world needs more of. "[Meditative thinking] is thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is" (46).

[7] For discussions of orality in *Seed Catalogue* see among others Arnason 84, Wood 84, Ricou 116, and Munton 91.

[8] This recalls Wordsworth's famous injunction in the Preface to *The Lyrical Ballads* about rustics being the most fit subjects for poetry.

[9] According to Laurie Ricou in "Prairie Poetry and Metaphors of Plain/s Space," *Seed Catalogue* and other Kroetsch long poems refuse the "abstractions" (112) and "disappearing landscapes" (115) typical of conventional prairie landscape poetry.

[10] "Bullshit artists" are the best poets in an oral tradition according to Kroetsch. See his discussion of Glen Sorestad's poetry, "The Moment of the Discovery of America Continues" (17-18).

[11] The poet's death is further suggested by the fact that he falls into a garden; no one is left in the garden at the end of the poem.

[12] The connection between death and sex is made more explicitly in the "I don't give a damn if I do die do die do die" scene (117) which, as Arnason points out, involves a priest catching a boy in a graveyard in the act of masturbation and warning him that he will die if he carries on with his "self-abuse" (86).

[13] He wishes to be a postman so he could "deliver real words / to real people" (117). The poem begins and ends in a garden, the home garden and the Garden of Eden; the last garden is lush and inviting, a place "where the brome grass was up to [Cindy's] hips" (127). The incident with Germaine is left unfinished and begging for completion or continuation; she seems to be there waiting for him, whisper ing to us. His mother's death, though mesmerizing as a voice speaking from the grave, is not lamented by the poet — even here there is incompletion and powerful, un fulfilled, interrupted desire.

[14] Frank Davey's very important essay on the debate between "delay" and "prolonga tion" takes issue with Kroetsch's assertion that the long poem in Canada is essentially a story of neurotic compulsion and the failure to end the poem out of fear of climax and closure. What Kroetsch discusses as a fear of orgasm, Davey calls instead a celebration of prolonged, continual orgasm ("The Language of the Contemporary Canadian Long Poem" *passim).*

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HERO

Francis Sparshott

Old hero Hemingway
pushed his sharp weapon
valiantly to the extreme end
of the page. He stood rival
to bull-stabbers, buffalo-shooters, snaggers
of waggly fish delicious on long lines. Now
he goes to his chosen reward : two
barrels in the face. He has left for his dear
wife this estate: all round the vestibule
the scatterings of a broken head. Prolix
in brief sentences, he scrawled a memorial
in copious red : if you require
a monument, dear, look at the walls
around you. Remember me.

UKRAINIAN LIFE

OREST SUBTELNY, *Ukrainians in North America. An Illustrated History.* U of Toronto P, $45.00.

THIS PAST YEAR Ukrainians have been celebrating not only the centennial of their settlement in Canada, but Ukraine's dramatic emergence on the world stage as an independent state after hundreds of years of colonial subjugation. Hence, the appearance of Orest Subtelny's illustrated history, *Ukrainians in North America,* is doubly significant. Attractively laid out and generously illustrated with more than 250 black and white photographs, this coffee table history invites the reader to flip through its glossy pages, and to dip into its bite-sized passages of text.

The book marks the first attempt to provide a synthetic account of the Ukrainian experience in North America. In his introduction, Subtelny explains his reasons for taking a continental approach, making the debatable claim (at least from my vantage point as a Canadian) that "today, one can view the Ukrainian communities in the United States and Canada as having far more similarities than differences." While the likenesses may seem obvious at first glance, once one scratches below the surface it is clearly the differences that stand out and ultimately define the *essence* of each community. In fact, they repeatedly come through in the body of Subtelny's book, where the contrasts are many and glaring throughout all three waves of immigration, in contradiction to the author's basic premise.

Not surprisingly, a number of structural problems arise from the parallel telling of the two often asymmetrical histories, and they are not particularly successfully resolved by Subtelny. Thus, after dealing with the pioneer immigrations to Canada and the United States separately in the first section of the book, he shifts to a kind of pastiche approach in the later waves, jumping from one community to the other in his discussion. The end result is a rather chaotic weave of threads.

Subtelny's lumping together of Canadian and American Ukrainians is no doubt largely attributable to the specifics of his background, since his personal roots are in the post-1945 immigration, which has created a North American-wide network among its activist elite. The fact that Subtleny is an American who now lives in Toronto explains much about his perspective, for he seems to take the mostly DP (Displaced Person) community in central Canada and the Eastern seaboard of the United States as somehow being representative of Ukrainian society in North America. Certainly, in the Canadian case, Ukrainians on the prairies — who are overwhelmingly descended from immigrants in the first two waves of settlement — are arguably the chief creators and prime propagators of contemporary Ukrainian Canadian identity, which the DPs have adopted and aggressively promoted, while adding their own regional and generational variation.

One suspects that the real reason for Subtelny's continentalism has more to do with marketing (a desire to make the book saleable on both sides of the border) than any compelling historical argument. Although in principle there is nothing wrong with offering an overview or juxtaposition of the two communities in a single book, it would make more sense once additional research has been done on the major gaps that exist in our knowledge of Ukrainian immigrant history, especially on the American side.

That Subtelny's perspective is obviously skewed is most apparent in his selection of

photographs, for he gives far more space to the scouting organization, Plast, than it statistically or historically merits. The imbalance is especially conspicuous when one considers the superficial treatment that the Canadian Ukrainian Youth Association gets from the author, when it has existed for sixty years, involved far greater numbers of people, and produced many prominent Ukrainian Canadians.

While one does not want to exaggerate these and other flaws in *Ukrainians in North America* (the editing, for instance, is sloppy), they do make the book rather disappointing, even as a popular history.

JARS BALAN

FEMININE FORMS & FUNCTIONS

LESLIE SMITH DOW, *Anna Leonowens: A Life Beyond "The King and I."* Pottersfield, $15-95-

MICHAEL DANAHY, *The Feminization of the Novel.* U of Florida P, $29.95.

LENORE HOFFMAN AND MARGO CULLEY, eds. *Women's Personal Narratives: Essays in Criticism and Pedagogy.* MLA, n.p. LAURIE LANGBAUER, *Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel.* Cornell UP, $10.95.

LESLIE SMITH DOW'S biographical study of Anna Leonowens, Michael Danahy's discussion of *The Feminization of the Novel,* Lenore Hoffman and Margo Culley's collection of *Women's Personal Narratives,* and Laurie Langbauer's exploration of *Women and Romance* all examine the relationship between the notion of "literary" form and that of femininity.

Anna Leonowens, the "real-life heroine" of the story that became the basis for Margaret Landon's popular novel *(Anna and the King of Siam*) — and the Rogers and Hammerstein musical — spent forty years of her life in Canada. Leslie Smith Dow's book professes a rejection of romanticized accounts of the famous governess's life in the Siamese court, and contains extensive footnotes at the end of each chapter in an attempt to substantiate itself as a historical biography. Thus, by linking the remarkable and, indeed, entertaining story of a woman's life to a more reality-based form, Leslie Smith Dow encourages her readers to consider the subject matter in a more serious context than had been possible in its previous, glamourized accounts. Ironically, this well-researched analysis often lapses into precisely the kind of sensationalism and sentimentalism it condemns : Leslie Smith Dow, herself a journalist, claims to have brought to bear in the compilation of this book "some detective work, some psychoanalysis, a good deal of reflection and sometimes, just plain intuition." Had she kept to the first of these strategies and abandoned the latter three, she might well have achieved her objective.

Is writing by — or about — women, then, less serious and academic when it is more "romantic"? Michael Danahy's analysis of "the novel as female" defines the novel as a domestic genre whose function has always been to entertain rather than to enlighten. Nonetheless, the very elements which led to the novel's reputation as a source of "corruption and pollution" constituted its "therapeutic" element for its readers. *The Feminization of the Novel* examines notions of space and freedom, aesthetics and excellence, and the emergence of domestic and maternal role models. Danahy identifies descriptive discourse about the novel with prescriptive discourse about women ; "the images used and the reasons given for subordinating the novel to the other genres were the functional equivalents of those used for subordinating women to men." In his fourth chapter, Danahy presents a Jungian analysis of "The Novel as Anima,"

based on a well-argued claim that men fear anima material, and thus feminize it.

In fact, the strength of Danahy's book is not in its long first section, which attempts to contextualize and justify his interpretation of the process called the "feminization of the novel," but instead in its application of the principles outlined in that argument to works of literature. In Madame de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves,* Flaubert's *Madame Bovary,* and George Sand's *La Petite Fadette,* Danahy finds paradigms of femininity and fictionality. In *Princesse,* there is a metonymic "correspondence between spatial and linguistic expropriation" ; in *Fadette,* the absence of female role models constitutes the "female plot." In *Bovary,* the repression of Emma is apparent at the level of narrative technique, as the "heroine" is "defined by male utterances." Danahy forces his reader to re-examine these and other texts in terms of a "feminization of the novel" that is "not the product of female narrative discourse" but of "androcentric critical strategies."

Laurie Langbauer's *Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel* is an excellent companion piece to Danahy's book, in that it also explores the connection between gender and form in terms of both definition and process. In Langbauer's schema, however, the novel per se is not a marginalized form; the label of "uncanonical genre," for Langbauer, characterizes "romance." Pre-dating and infusing the novel as a literary form, romance is the novel's Other: "As the point of origin for the novel, what comes before and generates it, romance becomes the bedrock against which the novel takes meaning and establishes its identity by establishing its difference." In her first chapter, provocatively if somewhat loosely entitled "The Romance of History, or Ontogeny Recapitulates Phylogeny, Sometimes," Langbauer discusses the evolution of romance from its inceptions in Ancient Greece, seventeenth-century France, and eighteenth-century England.

One of the highlights of Langbauer's book is its chapter on Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote.* The heroine, Arabella, is "a girl so affected by her reading of romances that they seem to have driven her mad" ; here, "romance is excessive fiction, so excessive that it is nonsensical, ultimately mad." Ultimately, the novel cannot escape its own madness, and thus cannot deny its own romantic elements. Yet it is precisely this romantic dimension that may allow for a female "voice." Such a voice also emerges in Mary Wollstonecraft's writing, Langbauer argues, particularly in the relation of motherhood to women's writing: the mother is a "double" figure existing "inside and outside of romance, simultaneously commanding and subverting language." Elsewhere, Langbauer critiques Dickens's use of woman as an "emblem for the restlessness of romance," although neither the novel nor the "male order" can evade the constraints they force upon women and romance. Looking to a time "when our forms are different and our history has changed," Langbauer concludes with critical self-awareness of an evolving sense of the relationship between form and history.

Lenore Hoffman's introduction to the collection of essays entitled *Women's Personal Narratives* argues for the inclusion into university English courses of radically "non-traditional" materials, defined as such because they have been excluded from the literary canon. In a subsequent chapter, Margo Culley argues for the study of "women's vernacular literature," and advocates the challenging project of getting away from canonicity itself. Oral (derived from interviews) and written (derived from letters and diaries) testimonies provide the bases for a unique understanding of "real" women's history;

this (American) collection of original materials and its appendices provide examples of women's "stories" that have been successful in providing alternative literary forms in university lectures, workshops, and seminars.

The collection includes — along with chapters by Elizabeth Meese, Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, Susan S. Kissel, and others, an essay by Annette Kolodny on "Captives in Paradise: Women on the Early American Frontier." Kolodny is interested in paradigms of the "frontier reality" endured by "women forced westward against their will"; other essays in this collection encourage different avenues of exploration. Ultimately, our questioning of "noncanonical" writing need not preclude what Elouise M. Bell in the final chapter of *Women's Personal Narratives* calls our "imaginative, invigorating use" of the various discourses that inform our notions of femininity.

DEBORAH BLENKHORN

NARRATIVE VALLEY

SHEILA WATSON, *Deep Hollow Creek.* McClelland & Stewart, $14.99.

AFTER HAVING written one very short but just about perfect novel, Sheila Watson can certainly be forgiven for retiring from the profession. *The Double Hook* was our great modernist fiction, the hope, in the post-war period, that Canada would not be consigned to hewing and drawing formula novels about dashed dreams under prairie snows.

Yet haven't we all regretted the irony that such a superior writer should write so little? It is probably normal then, that *Deep Hollow Creek* will be read in the light cast by *The Double Hook.* Is this the ur-novel? Did it deserve to be withheld all these years? Is it gratifyingly autobiographical ?

Deep Hollow Creek was written twenty years before the last version of *The Double Hook.* While there are similarities, notably in Watson's inventive observations, there are interesting differences. Chief among the latter is in the spirit of structure — *The Double Hook,* with its quests and fire and rebirth, resembles myth ; *Deep Hollow Creek,* with its indeterminacy and modesty, resembles life. Or rather living.

If the book had been published shortly after it was written, which would have been highly unlikely, would-be readers would have said that it had no story. Curiously, story is what it is all about.

Here's the plot. During the Depression, young schoolteacher Stella comes to marginal cattle country, the folded hills in the near Cariboo, after the dregs of gold-rush good times have been hauled out. She experiences the fall, winter and spring. First she lives with Sam and Rose, or in the back room of their poor abode up the hill above the better place of Sam's brother Bill and his pretentious wife Mamie. Stella teaches ten children in the poorly heated school room, but we hear little of that. After Christmas break at the Coast, she moves into a cabin on Bill's property. For a month she shares the small space with Miriam, a tall redhead from the Coast. She meets some ranchers, employees and Shuswap people. She buys a horse and acquires a dog. She goes for horseback rides and trades clothes with the Shuswaps. At the end of the year she prepares her departure.

No murders, no housefires, no Windings.

In *The Double Hook* there is no central character but a strained community in agon under Coyote's eye. Here there is a central character, but in relationship to story she is the reader in the text. Young Watson was very smartly uncovering a version of modernism in which the con-

vendons of the well-made late-Victorian novel were flouted in the interest of a particular real. We are perhaps less disconcerted by the absences we apprehend than 1939 readers might have been. We have the advantage of our reading experience, and Sheila Watson has been responsible for showing our way to that advantage.

Dry Hollow Creek is composed in the short passages we might have expected, and as with *The Double Hook* we learn strategy from the juxtapositions of the book's first two passages. In the first the literature-quoting young Stella "had come into the valley to find life for herself . . . with inevitable logic her mind pursued the theme from generation to decay." The second begins: "Rose stood at the door with a jug of hot water. / You get this every morning, she said. You use cold at night."

There is none of the voyeuristic bourgeois enjoyment of dogpatch folk one might have found in reading Erskine CaldwelPs 1930s fables. If we are amused by the deprivation or scantiness of pleasure in these people's lives, we are also touched by the simplicity with which they are recounted. Here is Rose: "I never asked Sam to take me anywhere, she said, except once. They'd all been. Every one of them had been to Green Lake. It's up the hill about eighteen miles from here. In the spring they go to picnics there. I asked Sam, she said, to take me there too. I asked him, she said, and he did. But then, she said — looking at Stella steadily — but then he had to go and take me when the leaves was off the trees."

That is wonderful prose writing. With our trained sensibilities we know that Watson's achievement here is a text made from the education of her Stella. We are allowed to realize that Stella has come to the valley not only to find life but to learn writing. Not that Stella is, in the wearing fashion of many first novels back then, a "young writer." She is not learning to express her inner experience. She is hearing the stories of these people's long lives together, and experiencing the assembly of the narrative they focus on her, stone in the pond.

Our reader-writer has her own metaphor for the event: "How dimly the light filters through the broken fragments gathered carelessly, pieced together when the sharp edges set in motion the curious workings of the fancy, Stella thought."

That's an excellent quick characterization of modernist composition. And in this (presumably) first book Watson is already skilled at the sharp edges her readers have always enjoyed. There is a porcupine "crossing the rock pile, with a rattle of quills." Readers of the later novel will not mind seeing again that someone "rode stiffly, slipped over the horse's back like a clothes-peg." Riders of the frozen sage will recognize Stella's sentiment: "I can't stand the feel of the stirrup iron at twenty below."

The "carelessly" gathered fragments have the effect of enjoining the reader outside the text to engage in assemblage and reconfiguration, just as the reader inside the text must do with these people's spoken and gestural narrations. These people are adept at recombining their own stories. To that end the valley telephone system serves well, there being no private lines.

It should be said that the young Watson had not yet learned to get her flame to white heat, a process that is well documented by F. T. Flahiff in his "Afterword" to the most recent edition of *The Double Hook,* wherein he demonstrates Watson's unerring revisions. In this earlier text there are still a few descriptions that seem supplied. An early description of a moose, for instance, seems a little academic: "a face solemn and bearded as a patriarch thrust through the brittle branches."

But as in the first juxtaposition, we learn the reader's progress, and we encounter with her the cut of prose stripped to elegance: "she told Stella of how she had gone, the youngest girl from her class at normal school, simple as she was then, to the school near the lake over which she had to row each morning, and of how Nicholas had come every day on horseback until she said she would marry him."

Such elegance, whatever its source, is implicit criticism of the canonical quotations Stella had brought with her to see the valley through, what she once calls her "lyrical self-pity." Further, she learns the limitations and failures of the willful mind, and the narrative success of the impoverished who live among animals and seasons, "those who live by the body."

So too, the mind grows unfettered. At the end of the book of Stella's sojourn: "That there was no rawhide stay for the mind was a fact that she had come to accept. The mind took care of itself — growing and expanding from some inner force. It could be destroyed from without as the leaf could be destroyed by the restless hand. It could not be made with the hand, though, as a cabin is made or a skyscraper. And if it could fall prey to chance and nameless accident it withered as it grew by some principle inherent in itself."

Before Stella leaves for the Coast she gives some of her clothing to various Shuswap women, so she sees herself spreading for a while into the landscape. She will take Indian-made clothing with her, along with the stories gathered without care.

Finally she does not as she had expected, and as formula novels would have it, "learn about life." She learns that you can learn to live with people you had never really imagined, hear as much of their story as is made available, and let fall away your intention to "understand" them. Or life. What from the outside looks like wisdom is that knowledge.

Readers of Sheila Watson's prose, finding very soon the absence of what their usual authors provide, learn that wisdom. Brave prose will do that.

GEORGE BOWERING

LOOKING BACKWARD

DAVID FENNARIO, *Joe Beef.* Talonbooks, 1991, n.p.
WENDY LILL, *Sisters.* Talonbooks, 1991, n.p.
MICHEL TREMBLAY, *La Maison Suspendue.* Talonbooks, 1991, n.p.

UNLIKE MOST OF their compatriots, Canadian playwrights don't seem to find the past boring. Indeed, it is probably no exaggeration to say that the majority of plays written in the last quarter century could be loosely described as "history plays." Whatever its cause, this fascination with the past has produced considerable experimentation with a form sometimes regarded as of limited interest dramatically. But, just how fruitful such experiments have been is demonstrated by three recently published examples of the genre : David Fennario's *Joe Beef,* Wendy Lill's *Sisters,* and Michel Tremblay's *La Maison Suspendue.*

The most conventional (indeed old-fashioned) of the three is Fennario's agit-prop history of Pointe Saint Charles centred on the character of an east end Montreal tavern keeper with the improbable name of Joe Beef. Written in 1985 and intended to be performed in halls and bars, *Joe Beef* is an easily portable show which relies on the tried-and-true methods of popular left-wing theatre derived from German models of the thirties via Brecht, Piscator, Joan Littlewood *et al.* Fennario employs the conventions with considerable finesse. His vicious wit, ear for working-class speech, and evident sympathy for the downtrodden and disadvantaged — all qualities he demonstrated in earlier works

such as *Nothing to Lose* and *Balconville* — are still in evidence. Unfortunately, the form in which he has chosen to express his outrage now seems woefully shop-worn.

In the 1970s, plays employing political caricature, audience confrontation, music hall turns, and large swatches of left-wing rhetoric were popularized by alternative theatre companies such as Toronto Workshop Productions and Theatre Passe Muraille. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, appeals for working-class solidarity with invocations of the Internationale and *The Communist Manifesto* ring decidedly hollow. It would be pretty in these post Meech times to think that the English and French workers of Pointe Saint Charles could make common cause with the Indians. Nevertheless, honesty and the example of Yugoslavia compel us to admit that the realities of social economics can scarcely be reduced to the formulae of political melodrama.

Wendy Lill's search for a more flexible dramatic form in which to explore the contradictions and ironies of history has led her to a version of the "play of ripe circumstance." In *Sisters* she uses flashback techniques to dramatize the memories of a teaching nun who is suspected of setting fire to a Catholic residential school for Indian children. In the course of the play, we learn of the woman's complex motivation for becoming a teaching sister. We see her admiration for her own mother, her perfectionist nature, her fear of having children, and above all her longing to be admired and loved like her own teacher. We also learn how those dreams are gradually shattered — by the emotional deprivation of convent life, by the rigorously applied discipline, and most of all by the gradual alienation of the children forcibly separated from their families and prevented from speaking their own language. Sister Mary's agony is brought to crisis by a letter from her favourite pupil, Alice Paul, in which the young woman writes of her hatred of the school and of the "Sister of the Dark House." Recognizing a sisterly kinship with her former pupil, Mary realizes that her hopes too have been betrayed, and she burns down the building that has destroyed her life.

In a rather breathtaking attack on simplistic liberal views, Lill suggests that within the rigid system of native education the teaching sisters were scarcely less victimized than the pupils they abused. In making her case, however, Lill tells only part of the story. The reconstruction of the past from selected snatches of memory produces a mosaic of disconnected experiences in which only Mary emerges as a fully three-dimensional character. There is little plot development in the usual sense as most of the play is given over to exposition. Nevertheless, the work is a powerful study of misguided idealism and of the terrible consequences of the perversions of love. Some liberals may object that sympathy for the agents of a policy of cultural genocide ignores an important distinction and devalues the suffering of the true victims. But *Sister* explores a tragic area of Canada's history and does it bravely without resorting to easy simplifications.

The playwright who has experimented most consistently and provocatively with dramatic methods for exploring the past is Michel Tremblay. Tremblay's fascination with the ironies of Québécois life led him first of all to rebel against the artificiality of plays written in "classical" French instead of the language of the streets, and secondly to pen a series of political "allegories" such as *Hosanna* in which he compared Quebec's uncertainty about its identity to that of a transvestite. *La Maison Suspendue* marks an interesting new departure on the part of the author in that it represents the first Tremblay play that I know of that is set in rural Quebec rather than in the Montreal of rue Fabre or the Main.

On the surface the play tells the story of 47-year-old Jean Marc reaching a mid-life crisis and retreating to the house where his father was born in an effort to make the house "live again." Because he is afraid of the dark, he brings with him a friend (Mathieu) and the friend's young son, Sébastien. Mathieu, a city person, is uncomfortable in the countryside, but envies Jean-Marc's family life and eccentric ancestry, a legacy he wishes he could provide for his own son. now in the custody of his divorced wife. During several hours at the isolated cabin, Jean-Marc (and the audience) encounter the ghosts of the past — Josephat, the fiddler and story-telling grandfather, Edouard, the homosexual transvestite uncle, and Marcel, the imaginative cousin. These artistic and impractical men are matched by strong and pragmatic women — Victoire, the grandmother who resolves to move to Montreal to give her illegitimate son a better life, and Victoire's daughter, Albertine, who has inherited all her mother's rage at being uprooted.

The play can be read as a story of family conflict and reconciliation, or even as an expression of the author's own regrets and apprehensions as he reaches late middle age. But it works best as a study of Quebec facing the challenges and risks of independence. Describing himself as a "dinosaur," Tremblay remains a committed sovereignist, convinced that Quebec's existence as a nation depends on its learning to live on its own. The province, like the characters in the drama, must somehow gain strength from the past. If the vision the playwright conjures up is one that disturbs those of us who are federalists, it is nevertheless one which is presented in a richly complex theatrical metaphor.

NEIL CARSON

TWO RETURNS

CATERINA EDWARDS, *HomegTound.* Guernica, $10.00. PASQUALE VERDiccHio, *Nomadic Trajectory.*
Guernica, $8.00.

Listen
beyond the shore
there is the command of
unwritten things

to itself
only the thread of a return.
— Verdicchio, "The Arsonist" (XVII)

DRAWING UPON the proceedings of the September 1986 First National Conference of Italian-Canadian Writers, C. Dino Minni, in his introduction to *Writers in Transition,* concludes that Italian-Canadian writing was about to enter a second stage of development, one that would go beyond the immigrant literature of first generation Italian Canadians and the apprenticeship writing of the second generation, by including "the tradition of the Journey." Ironically, while the Conference's participants were hailing a transition from first to second stage, literature signalling yet another transition had already been launched. This second transition is anticipated in the final essay of *Writers in Transition,* Antonio D'Alfonso's "Where Do We Go from Here?" D'Alfonso alludes parenthetically, in his closing paragraph, to a "third stage [that] will perhaps bring us back to the personal and political realm." As founder and editor of Guernica, which for twenty-five years has been devoted to publishing literature from different cultures, D'Alfonso was sensitive to "the thread of a return" that promised to mark the converging point of new directions being taken by Italian-Canadian writers. Two 1990 publications from Guernica — Caterina Edwards' play, *Homeground,* and Pasquale Verdicchio's collection of poetry, *Nomadic Trajectory* — fulfil this promise.

Taken from a thematic perspective, Edwards' *Homeground* may seem to negate this promise by regressing to the first stage that many of the Conference's participants, including Verdicchio, saw as a form of paralysis. In "The Intellectual Ghetto," included in *Writers in Transition,* Verdicchio contends:

> Since immigrants have travelled from one place to another, so their writing should, as all good writing, contain and express a sense of movement. It should express their experience through plurality, a plurality of tensions: diversity in constant motion and interaction, away and toward. Plurality in motion cannot be altered : it is kinetic. ... By this I am not implying that we should forget the past, but we should see it as a dimension of ourselves, not *as* ourselves. Any writer writing only of the past is doomed tostaticity.

First produced during Edmonton's Fringe Festival in August of 1986, *Homeground* is meant, as Edwards notes in "A Playwright's Experience" *{Writers in Transition),* "to give voice to that first generation of immigrants and from their, not the second generation's, point of view." The play focuses on characters many of whom have previously appeared in Edwards' prose fiction — Cesare and Maria, now with two children, their boarders and friends. The play builds up through various forms of exile, to which some of these first generation Italian-Canadian characters have surrendered, to the unendurable exile of Lucio, who arms himself with a gun and is only conciliated by the child he fantasizes to be his son, five-year-old Beppino.

Though Edwards concedes the playwright's satisfaction of "making a social, even a political statement, speaking for and to a minority" (that is, the often inarticulate and illiterate first generation Italian Canadians), she concludes by observing that the sense of exile and displacement, rather than marginalizing, places this "minority" in a post-modernist mainstream or centre. Edwards' concern with language, particularly Maria's inability to communicate in either Italian or English, also reveals *Homeground* to be informed by a post-modernist sensibility. Dramatizing the dynamics of those within the world of this "boarding house of displaced people," Edwards thus attains a powerfully felt political dimension.

Edwards recognizes that she is inscribing the voice of these first generation Italian Canadians in a form that, for many, impoverished circumstances and language barriers have denied access. Nevertheless, in the artistically conceived and rendered form of *Homeground,* with its retrospective time frame, incorporation of memories, operatic style, and multiple ironies of the end as Cesare's vision of family and community, connectiveness and bonds, is simultaneously reinforced and challenged, affirmed and negated, Caterina Edwards dramatically achieves the "plurality of tensions" of which Verdicchio speaks.

And Verdicchio himself: how does he achieve this "plurality of tensions" in the poems of *Nomadic Trajectory?* Building on the strengths of his first collection of poems — the vibrant images and fluid structures of *Moving Landscape* (Guernica 1985) — Verdicchio has developed a more meditative but equally evocative voice in the poems included in his second collection, what he refers to as "notations of absence and displacement." In *Moving Landscape,* Verdicchio creates the sense of the duplicity of language in capturing the image; in *Nomadic Trajectory,* he extends this sense of duplicity to the image itself caused by the "deception of view" introduced immediately in the first poem, "Removing Depth."

Verdicchio thus provides a cue for a reading of his poems. The first four poems are grouped under the title "Toward," but the "toward" will not be accomplished by a forward movement as might be thought by the shift that "Removing

Depth" undergoes from past to present tense and later to the uncertain and mysterious future with the allusion to "Something to turn to / not yet imagined." Nor will it be accomplished by a backward movement, which leads only to places of exile. In "Parthenope," the final poem in the "Toward" group, the exile is reflected in Verdicchio's characteristic fragmented and depersonalized style from which any trace of the traveller's presence has been eradicated. Instead, as "Removing Depth" anticipates,

> everything takes place
> in imperfect tense
>
> from a distance
> in order to intuit totality
> — a closed rose, impenetrable
> image of silence — its impact as whole.

The main impulse of *Nomadic Trajectory* is toward a vertiginous reading to complement the "vertiginous writing" to which "Parthenope" refers:

> Thought of the city access
> from a distance
>
> multiple representation says itself false
> impression
>
> vertiginous writing
> refuted irony of containment
>
> at a point in which sound no longer calls
> up any word riddle-less
> sphinx of Piazza Mercato . . .

Unlike the more static imagistic style of *Moving Landscape,* the fragmented style of *Nomadic Trajectory* creates the opportunity for a vertical, lateral, circuitous, and ultimately vertiginous reading. This is well exemplified by the contrast that "Between the Desert" from *Moving Landscape* provides with the much longer poem by the same title, which opens the "Nomadic Trajectory" group of poems in the later collection. It is, however, the reflexivity of *Nomadic Trajectory* that particularly compels a vertiginous reading by constantly taking us backward and forward and around with new insights, often for a parodie re-reading of previous sections.

Until the final group of notations, "The Arsonist," no "toward" seems possible as we are pulled in all different directions. Moreover, for the reader and critic of Italian-Canadian literature, all attempt to distinguish stages and transitions, as some form of chronology, seems fatuous while we experience the "plurality of tensions" created by the operatic voices of *Homeground* and the "vertiginous writing" of *Nomadic Trajectory*. But Verdicchio, as his notations draw to an end, recognizes the impulse in all of us for "The story transformed; a supplement / established" and provides a final opportunity for both closure and openness.

> when the structure breaks
> the rescue
> motion into coherence

LESLEY D. CLEMENT

UN-CATHOLIC CANON

RHEA TREGEBOV, éd., *Sudden Miracles: Eight Women Poets.* Second Story Press.

WE SHOULD CELEBRATE the measure of influence women poets, who represent the vanguard of our contemporary literature, currently articulate upon Canadian publishing. Mary di Michèle, Judith Fitzgerald, Rosemary Sullivan, and now Rhea Tregebov, have all edited anthologies of poetry by Canadian women within the last decade. Of the eight poets Tregebov features in *Sudden Miracles* — Roo Borson, Susan Glickman, Claire Harris, Elisabeth Harvor, Paulette Jiles, Anne Michaels, Erin Mouré and Bronwen Wallace — four appear in di Michele's selection *Anything is Possible* (1984). And whereas not one of Tregebov's elect appears in Fitzgerald's similarly "personal" assemblage of sixteen of today's "best" women poets, *SP /ELLES*

(1986), seven of the eight, alongside Tregebov herself, occur in Sullivan's *Poetry by Canadian Women* (1989).

Of these collections, only Sullivan's attempts to *anthologize* with historical breadth. The writers Tregebov champions are uniformly recent, and, with the exception of the late Bronwen Wallace, still producing. Yet the range of Tregebov's poets is considerable. The gulf is vast between Michaels's spectacular, if almost reactionary, faith in landscape metaphor and the geological "unity" of the poem ("A family is a study in plate-tectonics, flow-folding") and Mouré's relentless sublimation into anti-lyrical, métonymie and image-free statement ("The writer as witness, speaking the stories, is a lie, a liberal bourgeois lie").

Its eclectic composition lands *Sudden Miracles* in an awkward market niche. A devotee of contemporary poetry finds a certain redundancy, a generous reprint of poems already on the shelf. An instructor seeking a survey for undergraduates discovers, ineluctably, great gaps and famous absences. Such evaluation is predictable, however, and anticipated by Tregebov when she insists that *Sudden Miracles* represents neither a "new canon" nor a "catholic survey." She defends her personalized, "in-depth" focus on eight writers she admires as "valuable . . . given the current tremendous difficulties of distribution and promotion poets face."

And even recycled, the contents of *Sudden Miracles* do make for a rich resource. The volume profits from Tregebov's long introductory essays, acute despite the necessary generalities of an eight-part overview, and from aesthetic statements by each of the poets. The poetry itself is pointedly, lastingly political. Jiles's incantatory eco-feminist long poem, "Song to the Rising Sun," revives "old devices" of repetition, evangelical imperative and choral voicing to elaborate an eerie lament around Arctic isolation and ozone depletion. And from Harris, the only woman of colour included in this sampler, comes "Policeman Cleared in Jaywalking Case," its juxtaposition of newspaper epigraph with prose lyric delivering an indictment of systemic racism and a refusal of white signifying power.

Sudden Miracles concludes with Mouré and Wallace. Tregebov's inclusion of three paired pieces reflects a fidelity to Moure's poetics of process and self-correction. Mouré's matrices of sensual reportage, intra-/inter-textual reference and theoretical rug-pulling produce visceral world-impressions that are, simultaneously, feminist interrogations of their own saturation with dominant literary and social values. Bronwen Wallace, by different strategies, works an analogous textuality of (affirmative) resistance — to narrative form and Author-ity, unity of voice, and poetic language. Wallace's poetry of women's lives ("These stories, because they are women's stories, have never been heard before"), of daily news, mortality, story and the unravelling of story — a widening gyre of inclusiveness — is feelingly subversive. "Koko," about the sign-speaking gorilla, displaces the human-animal binarism while remaining within the register of Wallace's deceptively "straightforward language." And in long rumination such as "Food," the writing/written moment proliferates wildly along tendrils of narrative, the deliberate yet Form-less webworks of memory.

As Tregebov observes, Wallace and Mouré have redefined for an entire community of poets, *what poetry can do,* now.

MARK GOGHRANE

MANY-MOUTHED BIRDS

BENNETT LEE AND JIM WONG CHU, eds., *Matiy-Mouthed Birds.* Douglas & Mclntyre, $24.95.

STEPHEN S. FUGITA AND DAVID J. O'BRIEN, *Japanese American Ethnicity.* University of Washington, US $30.00.

IN "WHY MY MOTHER Can't Speak English," Gary Engkent explains that his mother did not learn English "not because she was not smart enough, not because she was too old to learn, and not because my father forbade her, but because she feared that learning English would change her Chinese soul." It is appropriate that *Many-Mouthed Birds: Contemporary Writing by Chinese Canadians* begins with this story, for implicit in the enterprise of assembling such an anthology is the question of whether it is possible to write in English and still give expression to a non-English cultural sensibility.

Many of the works in this collection deal explicitly with assimilation and cultural loss among Chinese Canadians. But there is an almost equal number of works which have no explicit references either to Chinese culture or Canadian society, and are set far from the Chinatowns of Canadian cities. Winston Kam's wonderful "Mabel's Hockey Game," for example, takes place in Trinidad, and describes a poor black woman's obsession with field hockey.

Nonetheless, some of the strongest pieces in this anthology do focus specifically on the Chinese-Canadian experience. Anne Jew's story, "Everyone Talked Loudly in Chinatown," describes the death of an old woman from the point of view of her granddaughter. The old woman is the final link with the past, and for this, she is both despised and cherished. The girl has to feed the dying grandmother, and as she scrapes the rice off the old woman's chin and spoons it into her mouth, the girl thinks of her white boyfriend: "Todd would die if he knew I had to do this." Yet, at the end of the story, she comes to the grandmother for solace after quarrelling with her parents over Todd. She kneels beside the bed and holds the old woman's hand. But the hand is cold; the grandmother has died.

Several stories in the collection deal with the distorting effects that the head tax and the Oriental Exclusion Act had on the family life of early Chinese immigrants. Most of the men who came in the 19th and early 20th centuries were unable to bring their wives. Thus families were divided; men returned to China intermittently to father children they never saw. Some, like the grandfather in Denise Chong's "The Concubine's Daughter" had two wives — one in China and one in Canada. In Paul Yee's "Prairie Night 1939," the central character, Gordon, is a restaurant owner in a small Saskatchewan town. In order to carry on the lineage, he must visit his wife in China. But the thought of returning to the dust and squalor of the village dismays him. As he sits in his empty restaurant in the prairie night, he recognizes that he wants only what his white neighbours enjoy: "I want this life here and I want my son here." But for Gordon, it is impossible to be both a Chinese man and a Canadian; only by giving up his restaurant and returning to China can he fulfil his obligation to his family and be a man worthy of respect.

Such stories illustrate the traditional view of social scientists that a "zero-sum" relationship exists between assimilation and ethnicity : in order to become assimilated, immigrants must give up ethnic identity. But researchers Stephen Fugita and David O'Brien contest this view in their recent book *Japanese American Ethnicity: The Persistence of Community.* On the basis of studies conducted among Japanese-Americans in California, they conclude that Japanese immigrants have

acquired a remarkable degree of structural assimilation without sacrificing ethnic identity.

Fugita and O'Brien convincingly demonstrate that cultural values which predate immigration will determine a group's ability to reconcile ethnicity with success in the mainstream culture. Unlike European immigrants from peasant cultures, who brought from nineteenth-century Europe a familistic, village sense of social organization, the Japanese came with a well-developed national identity. Excluded from professions and management positions, they turned to agriculture, using ethnic ties to establish highly effective horizontal and vertical networks. The pre-war concentration of Japanese-Canadians in the fishing and boat-building industries seems a similar adaptation.

But for the immigrant, or descendant of immigrants, who becomes a writer, cultural identity — with all that it implies about family loyalties, aesthetics, and notions of the self—is a terrain that must be consciously explored and exploited; it goes far beyond the memberships in churches, investment clubs and softball leagues that Fugita and O'Brien use to measure retention of ethnicity. In order to find a wide audience, "ethnic" writers must acquire a double identity, an ability to express the experience of one culture in the forms of another. They must assimilate in order to master the new language, yet they cannot abandon their ethnicity, for in it lies the source of the stories they have to tell.

The closing poem in *Many-Mouthed Birds,* Paul Yee's "Last Words II," remembers the sad bachelor society of the early days, the young men who "laid track to the horizon" and waited for the day when they could bring their families. For most, that day never came. Their only consolation was to send letters home. In a sense, this anthology is a letter home, a chance to collect all the sad and true tales of the past. If it were only this, *Many-Mouthed Birds* would have historical and sociological values, but not literary excitement. What is marvelous about this book is that many of the contributors are not Chinese Canadians who happen to write, but writers who happen to be Chinese Canadian.

Fugita and O'Brien make two points which seem relevant to the study of literature. First, they convincingly demonstrate that cultural values which predate immigration will determine a group's ability to reconcile ethnicity with success in the mainstream culture. Second, they show that it is indeed possible for a group to achieve a high degree of assimilation without losing their ethnic identity. The Japanese are clearly one such group, and perhaps the Chinese are another.

Over two or three generations, the families in Fugita and O'Brien's study population had moved from agriculture into management and the professions. In so doing they were able to retain ethnicity, as measured by such things as church membership, and participation in Japanese American softball leagues and investment clubs. But what happens to the immigrant (or descendant of immigrants) who becomes a writer? It seems to me that the writer is in a special situation which cannot entirely be explained by Fugita and O'Brien's data. For a writer, cultural identity — with all that it implies about family loyalties, aesthetics, notions of the self and so on — is a terrain that must be consciously examined and exploited; it goes far beyond the ties that Fugita and O'Brien use to measure retention of ethnicity. I do not think a writer can reconcile assimilation and ethnicity as easily as Fugita and O'Brien's businessmen and professionals. In order to find a wide audience, "ethnic" writers in Canada must necessarily adopt the language of Anglo-Canadian culture; but to find their own voices, they cannot abandon their culture

of origin. They must acquire a double identity, an ability to express the experience of one culture in the forms of another. What is important about *Many-Mouthed Birds* is that it demonstrates that this "doubleness" can be acquired with tremendous vigor and originality. The result is not an exotic sidelight, but a central contribution to what we understand as Canadian literature.

SUSAN FISHER

APPARITION

JUDY MILLAR, *The Rules of Partial Existence.* Red Deer College Press, $12.95. FRANK THOMPSON, *Journey to India.* Oberon, n.p.

HAVING SPENT "eleven years in India" seems to be sufficient reason for *Journey to India* to stake a claim for the writer's "new and growing awareness of the Indian people, their history and their way of life." In fact not until a third of the narrative has elapsed do Thompson and his wife, Elaine, actually set foot in India, at Bombay. In more than one place in the book, he confesses to being "so ignorant of Indian scriptures and its past." Yet he describes the bride at a "Brahim wedding" as "a beauty in a classical Indian way," omitting to clarify what his assumptions of classical Indianness are based upon. Nonetheless, there are a few instances of self-scrutiny. For example, he writes:

> In letters home, I described it as a krait, a quite deadly and fairly agile snake found in our area. I am not sure, however. I could not at that time have identified a krait.

One highlight of this book is Thompson's account of certain aspects of the Indian education system as encountered at Kottayam (in Kerala) at the Christian Missionary Society College where he and his wife taught. Thompson sees "a country with an enormously high literacy rate" and "budding teachers galore." Even now Kerala is celebrated as the state with the highest literacy rate in India. In fact, he discovers that two members of the staff were "let go" to "make room for us." "The difficult transition" for educational institutions "from colonial to independent times," the dissociation of "syllabus from experience," the compulsory use of the English language at college level for lectures and examinations, "the proliferation of 'Guides'," and "rote-learning" are extensively documented. But Thompson's observation that "very little Indian history was taught," becomes ironic when he describes how the situation provoked "our British colleague Phoebe Bankart" into writing "a text-book in World History, in order to be able to offer to her students (by empathy and by her treatment of the facts) an Asian point of view."

Introducing *The Rules of Partial Existence,* her debut collection of stories set in Nepal, Ontario-born writer Judy Millar, replies to the often asked question about the subject of her stories, "Are these stories *about* Nepal?" Her answer is "I don't think so. Nepal is their ground, their universe. Its phenomenon is the root of whatever they achieve. But that is something different." One wonders, then, why a young-looking and female Nepali face is used on the book's cover, her face appearing as in a dream, bounded by the deepening violet background that the book's cover projects onto her. Does she not stand for Nepal at all? Why was she and not the tourist/traveller who views her singled out for depiction? Judy Millar (who lived in Kathmandu in 1981-82 and 1985) shares Dawa Tenzing Sherpa's view that, as tourists to Nepal, people see what they want to. Squalor, suffering, romance, magic and spiritual beauty, "all of it is there and not there depending on the extent of the illusion and the depth of the perception." Millar continues the tradition of perpetuating Nepal as the

"name" that "evokes" with story titles that read "Elephant in Taxi," "The God Within You," "Book of the Dead," "Vishnu's Dream." Dreams, chants, half-formed memories, voices, death, elephants, gods, and remembered threats of human sacrifices stalk her characters incessantly during their stay in Nepal. Not only are tourists like Lorna from outside Nepal said to experience them, but also Nepali locals.

The book equates Nepal with the hues of an insubstantial, hallucinatory apparition, thereby failing to give "more than we bargain for, a world in fact we hadn't admitted to ourselves existed," as Millar's Introduction promises. But the author does admit: "I quickly saw, in any case, the impossibility of ever fully conveying the life of a country in fiction. I grew, as all writers must, to be satisfied with parts."

MARIAN GRACIAS

SPEECH ACTS

EKBERT FAAS, *Woyzeck's Head.* Cormorant, $14-95-

REINGARD M. NiscHiK, *Mentalstilistik: Ein Beitrag zu Stiltheorie und Narrativik dargestellt am Erzâhlwerk Margaret Atwoods.* Gunter Narr, 68,- DM.

ON AUGUST 27, 1824, Johann Christian Woyzeck was publicly executed for having murdered his lover. Two reports on Woyzeck's mental health served as the source for Georg Biichner's drama-fragment *Woyzeck.* Ekbert Faas's novel *Woyzeck's Head* pretends to give access to a series of other documents and fictional accounts of the same murder case. These papers argue that Woyzeck is the perfect specimen to illustrate the very nihilism that ultimately bred the repressive regimes of Hitler and Ulbricht/Honecker. While in Biichner's *Woyzeck* the focus is on the human being who is driven to madness by the social condition in which he is living, in *Woyzeck's Head* the focus is on the nihilism of the existential condition and its consequences. In the process of recounting the editorial history of these papers, *Woyzeck's Head* proffers a one-dimensional account of ideology that also shows certain revisionist tendencies.

Woyzeck's Head recounts the efforts of Hans Martens to collect and edit various papers pertaining to the Woyzeck case. Despite his "lifelong obsession," he never published the papers and they are presented by his literary executor. The underlying reason for Martens's editorial failure and its implications are the real centre of interest in *Woyzeck's Head.* It is most clearly revealed in the correspondence between Dr. Bergk and Arthur Schopenhauer.

These insightful letters recapitulate the basic premises of Schopenhauer's nihilism. Bergk emerges as a stout admirer of his friend's philosophy and thus approaches Woyzeck with the curiosity of the nineteenth-century scientist who found the perfect example for the nihilistic condition of life. Interestingly enough, Schopenhauer's last letter reveals doubts about the contempt for life his philosophy might breed. As a Marxist, Martens experiences similar doubts about the Woyzeck Papers which lead him "to combat one . . . ideology with another." In this way, he reaches the conclusion that there is a connection between the Woyzeck Papers, Schopenhauer's nihilism and Hitler. Yet once he attempts writing an introduction to the Woyzeck Papers which would explain these insights, his own ideological background is drawn into doubt by events such as the crushing of the Prague Spring in which to his dismay DDR-troops are involved. In this way, he painstakingly comes to understand his own ideological obsessions, but he dies before he can bring his editorial work to fruition.

The implicit equation of ideologies —

Marxism and Nazism — emerges uncritically. Unfortunately, Faas, who is himself an East-German emigre, gives into the popular hysteria of associating everything Marxist with the evil of the DDR-regime. Faas equates Stalin and Hitler but does not put his comparison into a critical perspective at all, a procedure which recalls, of course, the German *Historikerstreit* of 1988 in which historians discussed the revisionist thesis that the Archipel Gulag was a model for Auschwitz. Hitler is seen in both as a mere imitator of Stalin, and Marxism as the ultimate root of all evil.

Reingard Nischik's *Habilitationsschrift* is commendable as a theoretical introduc-is commendable as a theoretical introduction to the analysis of mind styles as well as a practical application of mind style analysis to the narrative work of Margaret Atwood. In the first part, Nischik introduces the concept of *Mentahtil* which is a German translation of a term ("mind style") introduced by Roger Fowler in 1977. Working through a wide range of secondary literature, Nischik defines mind style as portraying the "mental (cognitive and emotional) attitudes... of characters/ senders" such as attitudes, opinions, values, world views, psychological states. Mind style thus emerges as an indirect means to characterize literary figures and narrators. At the end of the first part, Nischik provides a methodically ordered catalogue of questions to be answered when engaging in mind style analysis.

In her analysis of Atwood's work, Nischik again displays a remarkable scope of critical reading. Stylistic analyses accomplished so far are complemented with exercises in mind style analysis. This is no small feat since much Atwood-criticism has concentrated on content, not on form. Nischik switches elegantly from inductive observations about Atwood's oeuvre to deductive analysis of stories or (aspects of) novels. Speech act theory and mind stylistics turn out to be complementary because both analyze speaker's attitudes. Nischik shows that untruthful speech acts are especially revealing with regard to a character's mind set. Finally, Nischik investigates sexist and non-sexist language. She shows convincingly how mind styles help in characterizing attitudes of speakers and narrators in *The Edible Woman* and *Surfacing*.

Nischik voices her hope that mind style analysis will become a frequent form of textual analysis once the ground work she has laid is more widely known. One can only hope that her rigorous study will find the attention it deserves. This formal study of Atwood's work fills a void in Atwood critcism and should be read by every Canadianist interested in Margaret Atwood.

STEFAN HAAG

NATIVE STORIES

MOURNING DOVE, *Coyote Stories*. Nebraska University, $7.55 pa.

MICHAEL J. CADUTO, JOSEPH BRUCHAC, *The Native Stories from Keepers of the Earth*. Fifth House, $12.95 P[a]-

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED in 1933, *Coyote Stories* has fortunately been reprinted by the University of Nebraska Press with new notes, an enticing introduction, and three additional stories by the author's half-brother. While this reprint makes these stories available again, it will also open the way for a much needed reconsideration of the life and career of the collection's author, Mourning Dove. Her own story is the most extraordinary one in this collection.

Mourning Dove, as the introduction by Jay Miller explains, was born around 1888 as Christine Quintasket and raised on the Colville Reservation in north central

Washington. She later adopted the pen name Mourning Dove from a Salishan legend. An aspiring writer from an early age, she eventually published a novel, *Cogewea,* in 1927 and her autobiography was published posthumously in 1990. A successful Native rights activist and organizer for the social rights of Native women, she was, among other things, the first woman elected to the Golville Tribal Council. She died in 1933 after being committed to an asylum suffering from what was diagnosed then as "exhaustion from manic psychosis."

Around 1912 Mourning Dove was encouraged by a Yakima businessman to gather together the stories and legends of her own Interior Salish people. After twenty arduous years of gathering these stories, or which she preferred to call "folklores," she published *Coyote Stories,* this compelling collection of twenty seven loosely connected pieces focusing primarily on Coyote, the ubiquitous trickster figure of North American Native culture.

Hoping to reach as large an audience as possible with these stories, Mourning Dove expurgated those elements of the legends she thought a white audience would consider "ugly." She therefore excluded allusions to Coyote's sexual and scatological nature. In "Coyote Meets Wind and Some Others" she ignores the fact that Coyote caused the blinding fog by ejaculating, while in "Coyote and Buffalo" she omits the scene of Coyote's urinating on the bison's skull. Three original stories which Mourning Dove felt were too offensive, "Why Dogs Sniff," "Coyote and the Swans" and "Skunk," have been replaced in the appendix and are some of the most amusing pieces in the collection.

To further guarantee the largest possible audience, Mourning Dove also fictionalized elements about her own life. She invented a white ancestry, claiming that her grandfather was white, "a hardy, adventurous Celt." He was not. She also adopted something of a noble savage persona, claiming in her preface, for example, to have been "born in a canoe on the Kootenai River."

While these necessary fictions may have given Mourning Dove the legitimacy she needed to attract a white audience, they also reflect the schizophrenic conditions under which she had to work. Forced to deny her own Native identity in order to pursue her interest in writing, she also had little control over the final presentation of her stories. Her two white male editors heavily reworked her oral material and even sketched the incongruous drawings that accompany her stories. She makes it clear in her preface that it was *their* decision, not hers, to market these stories "for the children of another race to read." To a sensibility shaped by the current concern over violence in the media, these stories do not seem suited for children, as many of them are too violent, especially towards female figures such as Coyote's wife Mole.

Forced to package these stories for the reading pleasure of white children, Mourning Dove had to belittle the importance of Coyote stories for Native culture. She also had to belittle her own important role in fostering Salish culture. This reprint thus contributes to a wider knowledge of Salish narrative traditions while documenting the egregious misrepresentation of an earlier moment in the reception of Native culture.

In *The Native Stories from Keepers of the Earth,* co-authors Joseph Bruchac, an Abenaki storyteller and teacher, and Michael J. Caduto, an ecologist, have gathered together twenty-four tales which showcase the rich oral and cultural traditions of over twenty different North American aboriginal groups. Each story admirably describes "the most important of all considerations in human experience : the relationship between man and na-

ture" and all have been selected because "the lessons they teach are relatively easy for nonnative people to understand."

The tales are thematically organized according to their description of a particular natural phenomenon (e.g. "Creation," "Seasons") and are accompanied by a glossary of terms and pronunciation key, a detailed description of the Tribal Nations, and a colour map of "Native North America" which conveniently locates with symbolic markers the geographical sources of the stories.

Although these stories were originally published in *Keepers of the Earth: Native Stories and Environmental Activities for Children* they will interest adults and children alike. Children will enjoy Mohawk artist John Kahionhes Fadden's delightful illustrations (especially the drawing for "Old Man Coyote and the Rock") and the easy-to-read large print, while adults, especially those who teach, will appreciate Bruchac's informative Introduction which draws upon his own personal story telling experiences to offer a cogent theory of orality. Bruchac advises, among other things, that these "lesson stories" are meant to teach readers the necessity of environmental consciousness; the necessity to become, like the progenitors of these stories, the keepers of the earth. It is an invaluable lesson.

THOMAS HASTINGS

UNCERTAINTY

NEIL BISSOONDATH, *On the Eve of Uncertain Tomorrows.* Penguin, $12.95 P[a]-

IN "CRACKS AND KEYHOLES," perhaps the best story in Neil Bisoondath's recent collection of short fiction, *On the Eve of Uncertain Tomorrows,* Lenny, a Caribbean immigrant who has lived in Canada for fifteen years and presently finds himself washing beer mugs at a run-down strip-joint in Toronto, proclaims, "Fs livin' proof that not every immigrant is a multicultural success story." For Lenny, as for a number of characters in this uneven collection of ten stories, life doesn't always work out the way it is supposed to. Consequently, the individual effort to take control of the future by making sense of the present moment is an important theme in these stories. As the collection's title suggests, Bissoondath's characters stand precariously on the eve of a better tomorrow.

What that tomorrow will bring is, however, never clear. In the title story, for example, a political refugee waiting for landed immigrant status dreams at one moment about "fantasies of tomorrow" and then admits a short while later that "there is no tomorrow . . . yesterday is forever." For a number of characters the only future that awaits them is death, or what one character calls "glances of uncertainty."

Images of death and dying permeate the collection. Three of the stories conclude with the central character losing consciousness in the throes of death. "The Arctic Landscape High above the Equator" ends as the protagonist "feels himself beginning to shatter" and "Security" ends with the protagonist "blinded by the light." While offering a significant narrative challenge, such episodes also imbue Bisoondath's stories with a darker ethos than any of his earlier writing. The word "uncertainty," or variations of it, appears in almost every story.

While the injustice of everyday living, from the inevitability of death to the insidiousness of immigration lawyers and the disrespect of children for their parents, is a common concern in these stories, the effort of the human will to triumph over the tyranny of everyday living is equally important. In the excellent story "The Power of Reason," Monica, a single mother with five children, overcomes the feeling of stagnation that has infected her

life by correcting the sense of alienation that has developed between her and her three sons. Although she understands her sons when they are at home because they speak with an "island accent" that she is familiar with, she does not know who they are when she hears them on the street as "they speak in a dialect not of the island, not even of Canada, which would not have surprised her, but of black America." Eventually Monica kicks her sons out of her small apartment. In doing so she not only stops their freeloading but forces them to take responsibility for their own lives as their sisters have. In this small act of defiance Monica relearns the power both to reason and to love.

Although "Smoke" and "Kira and Anya" are uninspired, bordering on banality, and "A Life of Goodbyes" is inexcusable for its homophobic presentation of a gay male couple, the best stories in this collection, "Crack and Keyholes," "The Power of Reason" and "On the Eve of Uncertain Tomorrows," are those which chronicle the inequities of a world irreparably fractured along numerous class, gender and racial lines and the efforts of individuals to mend those ruptures.

THOMAS HASTINGS

VOID & PRECISE LOCATION

SAM HAMILL, GAi.EN GARWOOD (ill.), *Mandata.* Milkweed Editions, US$12.95. KATHLEEN MCCRACKEN, *Blue Light, Bay and College.* Penumbra Press, n.p.

THE RAMBLING introduction to *Mandala* issues the following warning from Sam Hamill to any critic or reviewer of this collection of poems and monotypes : 'Art criticism is to the painter as literary criticism is to the poet: the poet or painter is midwife, the critic is a coroner.' Aside from the fact that the work of a coroner is no less important than that of a midwife, no less part of a cycle or birth and death in the modern world, a coroner has a vital and necessary role within the judiciary, pulling apart the corpse, commenting on reasons for death, making sure that there are no signs of foul play. It might also be apt to remark here that poets are not always the most just or informed of literary critics, even if they do claim to be life-giving writers.

HamilPs comment that 'Art demolishes nationality, removing even the barrier of language to reveal the unfettered thusness of universal experience' would seem to be exactly the kind of deathly judgment that would make me inclined to remainder the poetry collection which this comment introduces to the morgue. However, Hamill also goes on to explain in some detail the importance of historical context to the work of Morris Graves, the inspiration for this collaborative art and poetry project, and the contemporary historical references in some of the poems in the collection (for instance, the Exxon Valdez disaster, DDT pollution) would seem to rub against the metaphysical ideal of 'universal experience.'

The poems and the monotypes offer a variety of meditations on themes taken from the work of Morris Graves, rather than copying images from his paintings and drawings, claims Hamill. The themes recur throughout in various guises, juxtaposed in different ways. 'To evoke is to transform' is the final line of the first poem, and this project does evoke, reinvoke, revoke, image after image. Thus the 'elemental image at core,' a 'single grain of sand dropped into the surf is immediately refused by the second poem through the quotation from Lao Tzu : 'A way that can be named / is not the way.' The 'core image' remains ever elusive, slipping away, anchored unsatisfactorily

by language: 'in the Hopi tongue, there is no whale; / and, in American English, no Fourth World.'

Garwood's monotypes offer spools, circles, hoops, camera filters and microscope lenses, planets, stars and snow, masks and coyotes. Sometimes whole, sometimes divided (yin and yang), the visual images connect only abstractly with the poems, and through them we are offered a variety of mind games to ponder, encouraging us to believe that technique has been completely mastered so as to be forgotten. If this earnest embrace of Zen philosophy sounds too much, Hamill's occasional lapse into irreverent self-consciousness provides relief for those of us not quite ready to contemplate the desubjectivised void just yet: 'As one perhaps might come / to Literature — capital L — / only to find — what in hell? — / Geoffrey Chaucer's bare red bum.'

The contradictions between the earthy and the spiritual aren't shown to be in quite as much conflict in Kathleen McCracken's *Blue Light, Bay and College.* Articulating connections with Ontario, the American Southwest, France, Italy and Ireland, inscribing bonds with loved ones over distances and time, rewriting conversations and describing detailed scenes, McCracken's varied poetry, like her Canadian archetypal blue heron, seeks a 'degree of equilibrium' in 'substance and absence.' That is, this rather disordered collection of poems treads a careful line between the lyrically evasive and the forcefully evocative.

It has been said that Canadian writing is 'compulsively photographic,' to the extent that as Russell McDougall calls it, the Canadian writer's use of the photographic image becomes 'a short cut,' 'a razor to the eye.' In McCracken's 'Snaps' the photograph is represented as creating a frozen moment, something which the poems seek to fix again, a look or a gesture. But rather than being a 'short-cut' or writerly dodge, the photographic moment creatively produces a sense of relationships between visual dimensions and velocity :

> The mid-west is linear, horizontal, parallel.
>
> Picture it. Two roads unable to cross.
> Hold it one sixteenth
> of a second. And move on

The sense of location in time, space, vision and memory is something which this poem, like many others in *Blue Light,* seeks to reproduce. A rearing horse frozen in Florence statuary, a small bird worked into a William Morris tapestry, a chameleon becoming a flake of skin haunting a mother's 'desert of linen presses,' tracks which 'cross an open field' symbolising 'missed contact' : through these images, and many more, McCracken attempts to 'decipher bright / signatures of resumed spaces.' Instead of focusing on the desubjectivised void like Hamill, McCracken looks for evidence that marks a precise location in this world and holds it fast.

JILL LEBIHAN

EXCLUSION & REWRITING

THE CANADIAN CHILDREN'S TREASURY. Contributing eds. Frances Hanna, Sandra Martin. Foreword. Janet Lunn. Key Porter, $29-95-

NEHIYAW/GLECIA BEAR, *wanisinwak iskwesisak: awasisasinahikanis/Two Little Girls Lost in the Bush: A Crée Story for Children,* ed. and trans. Freda Ahenakew and H. C. Wolfart. Illus. Jerry Whitehead. Fifth House Publishers, $14.95.

SANDY WATSON, *Fiona & the Prince of Wheels.* Illus. Terry Stafford. Orca, $7.95 pb.

IN HER FOREWORD to *The Canadian Children's Treasury,* Janet Lunn calls the collection "an old-fashioned peep-show" that celebrates the "many worlds of the Canadian imagination." It is ambiguous praise

for peep-shows work through exclusion. Old-fashioned the collection is, the perfect gift book from those adults, grandparents perhaps, even middle-aged friends and parents, who construct Canadian children's literature by what they themselves recall from their schooldays. Surely, they, if anyone, are the Canadian readers who "will recognize themselves" in these pages. Many others will not.

Although the anthology does include some material published in the 1980s, such as an excerpt from Joy Kogawa's *Naomi's Road,* the overall effect of this very glossy collection, with illustrations commissioned by seven artists, is to enshrine a Canadian children's literature with very specific characteristics. It is neither urban nor contemporary. Its Native literature is mainly fairytale and folklore; its selection of poetry is remarkably brief. In 280 pages of text there are only eight poems, a fact that implies an editorial belief that chapters from novels are somehow more treasured than poems. In addition one longs for an explanation from the editors for their selection of poems. Why choose "The Song My Paddle Sings," and "The Ships of Yule"? If contemporary children's poetry must be restricted to only four poems, why choose an Atwood poem, "Dreams of the Animals," from an adult collection? The absence of editorial explanation implies a rigidity and inevitability about the canon of children's literature that is highly questionable.

Most likely the Atwood poem shows up because it is about animals, for in the construction of Canadian children's literature offered here, animals play a very big part. The collection is divided into five sections: the First People; Other Worlds; Other Times; Animal Lives; and Here, Now. In this structure fantasy dominates, and characters are always escaping the present for the past. Only animals appear to live in the present, an ahistorical present full of supposed biological truths such as the model of maternal sacrifice in Ernest Thompson Seton's "The Springfield Fox" in which a mother fox deliberately poisons her trapped child : "The mother's love was strong in Vix, but a higher thought was stronger." Including a chapter from *Anne of Green Gables* and a story by Stephen Leacock in Here, Now is another form of editorial fantasy. In this final section, the only urban tale is Morley Callaghan's "The Shining Red Apple," a story that seems idyllic after a summer of young people rioting in both Toronto and Montreal, events that qualify the storeowner's power in a way that Callaghan's ironic treatment cannot imagine. Only two science fiction tales dare to imagine a Canadian future. The final poem, Jean Little's "My Own Day," has the persona consider "Stopping the world right there" ; the editors by constructing a world of children's literature that never questions the principles behind its choices produce a world that excludes many readers.

In contrast, *Fiona and the Prince of Wheels* by Sandy Watson attempts to include those traditionally excluded, specifically the physically disabled. In this version of the young reader's detective novel, the nine-year-old heroine is aided by the ever so politically correct hero, P. C. Gillingham III, born without legs but not without a sense of humor, wit, and mechanical genius. A sequel to *Fiona and the Flying Unicorns,* the novel is vaguely Canadian if the occasional reference to Surrey place it in B.C., but in fact inhabits the North American world of middle class culture, of bicycles, Easter parades, and science fair projects. The references are to television culture: Mr. Rogers, Ninja Turtles, Terminator, and Star Trek. Watson's similes are often excessive, "A horrible sinking feeling hit the pit of her stomach like an elephant dive-bombing a kettle drum" and her sensitivity to those traditionally marginalized does not ap-

parently extend to her villains who are as class-determined as any cartoon villain; they belch, they chew tobacco, they talk funny; no wonder they steal bicycles, they are just like badly behaved children.

Yet despite the limitations of a simplicity Watson believes necessary for children's fiction, her novel does rethink the concept of the disabled. P.C. insists that he be treated like everyone else, only to discover that occasionally he does need help. In this, he is like Fiona, who is also constructed as disabled because of her age, but whose acts in discovering the bicycle thieves suggest the limitations of adult perceptions.

Watson acknowledges that her novel grows out of personal encounters with several disabled children, *wanisinwak iskwesisak: awasisasinahikanis/Two Little Girls Lost in the Bush: A Crée Story for Children* also is the result of personal experience, in this case the memories of a Gree woman, Nehiyaw / Glecia Bear, whose story has been translated by her niece, Freda Ahenakew and H. C. Wolfart. Available also as part of a larger collection of Crée women's narratives, *kohkominawak octacimowiniwawa/ Our Grandmothers' Lives, As Told in Their Own Words,* the book immediately challenges the marginalization of Native story to children's literature. Why is a Native story necessarily a children's book? Is it the fact of illustration, here the paintings of Jerry Whitehead? Often Native stories are given to children as simply one more variant of the fantastic, make-believe for those not yet ready for the "real world." Nehiyaw's story, however, is not make-believe. It names itself a children's story because it tells the story of an eleven-year-old, a story that nevertheless the translator thinks is so different that in her introduction, she must explain the narrative point.

Nehiyaw tells about what happens the day she obeys her father's instructions to follow a pregnant cow. Like Fiona, she becomes a heroine. But unlike Fiona's story, there is no obvious attempt to shape the story for children's assumed needs. Nehiyaw tells her story and notes with wonder that she was never afraid : "If I were to be lost some place today, I would be scared to death!" In her modest way Nehiyaw's text challenges assumptions about the nature of children and children's texts, indifferent to its status as treasure, but rewriting the meaning of Canadian children's literature.

ADRIEN NE KERTZER

CLARITY & TUMULT

SUSAN IOANNOU, *Clarity Between Clouds. Poems of Midlife.* Goose Lane Editions, $i2-95-JANIS RAPOPORT, *Upon Her Fluent Route.*

Hounslow Press, $12.95. LAURA LUSH, *Hometown.* Véhicule Press, $8.95-

JOYCE'S STEPHEN DEDALUS defines "claritas" as the serene, radiant integrity of aesthetic vision. In the same vein, Susan Ioannou's *Clarity Between Clouds* celebrates the powers of light and sight. Her collection is dominated by the eye looking into, through or beyond things, and registering itself through perspective, atmosphere, colour and composition. Several poems are about or employ the vocabulary of painting. Others present a variety of personal incidents, usually involving natural scenes, friends and family (including cats), but all revolve around a cluster of themes: art, vision, being, love and death. Each subject merges with the others, as the eye surveys and relishes its surroundings. To see is to be:

> To be. To feel the sun
> redden our evening faces
>
> here, now
> this particle of time
> is enough

to isolate
to know to
love

Ioannou's family illuminates her life. A month or season offers itself for inspection. Rooms, memories and events compose themselves like works of art. In each case the moment inspires a luminous apprehension associated with love, grace, ease, or certainty. At their best, the verses seem effortlessly melodic:

Widen the window, Kathleen.
With love's long, slow hum
come stalk the flowerbeds,
faded forget-me-not among yellow, reds
bobbing over the sunken sill
tangled with wet-earth scents. (36)

I am especially impressed by the assurance of these poems, which observe but do not strain or moralize. Is this the attitude of midlife, as the book's subtitle suggests?

Just as sight, when it grows most intense, elicits the unseen or unseeable, so clarity hovers between clouds, which figure in the poems as shadows cast by death:

On this blue and white canvas, the black
speck
in the bottom left-hand is death. It doesn't
frighten or spoil the horizontal design . . .
(33)

The black speck is a fulfillment of the design, just as shade is essential to chiaroscuro, just as "death washes between words and hearing," just as elegy accompanies the celebration of "artistry's delicate clasp on life." When vision grasps reality, it misses as much as it catches, but even its failure can be revelatory:

Unseen, I stand,
untangle my emptied line.
There is peace in this lightless moment
spreading between imponderable shores.

Ioannou pauses on the near side of wonder. Her vision promises something further, but does not turn visionary. She offers oxymorons ("fragility's strength," "Relentless patience") but does not pursue them into paradox. By contrast, Janis Rapoport begins on the far side where romance displaces reality. *Upon Her Fluent Route* could serve as a textbook on lyrical romanticism. Its lush style evokes incantations, whispers and confidings; its voices are wistful, enraptured and vatic; its poems are riddles and spells; its characters are goddesses, witches and earth mothers. The poems are not old fashioned. They show that romantic fashions are perennial.

Romance is always fascinated by energy in its endlessly varied natural and imaginative configurations. Accordingly, Rapoport creates a world of powers heightened until they become magical and redemptive, a world ruled by metamorphosis in which identity is fluid. Because energy can be felt intensely but not be ordered rationally, the poet never tries to understand reality, only to share its fluency in the faith that fertility will conquer death by embracing it. Female fertility, seasonal rhythms, moonlight, rituals, cats — all combine in Rapoport's highly embroidered vision :

At night the moon whispers hieroglyphs
of leaves along the wall, floats their
silhouettes out toward the red waves of
morning.

We dream we are digging forever.
We are welcoming the forest,
embracing the white shape that belongs to
the voice and the path beyond the
horn. (75)

My own taste favours Ioannou's clarity over Rapoport's tumult, but I must admit that Rapoport is willing to take risks. Her poems are not romantic concoctions; they are sincere and often succeed in conveying an urgent, enigmatic questioning:

What darkens water
into history,
rings memory
inside young trees,
joins nature and mythology . . .

I feel, however, that some of her cata-

logues of flowers, gems and colours are too long. There are too many unicorns, cute children, and arcane words (spondylus, mandolas, meniscal, rhodonite). The illustrations by Maria Gabankova show too many dreamy ladies. I prefer Rapoport's writing when it is more restrained, or when it adds a satirical edge to counter its own romanticism. "Framing the Family," for example, is remarkable because it examines how family legends arise from the scraps and pretensions of ordinary life. The poem's position in the collection implies that the same transformation operates in all memory as well as in literature, and so suggests that life is inconceivable without the aid of romantic imagination.

A few words remain to recommend Laura Lush's first volume, *Hometown.* To call it promising or unpretentious would be to offer the kiss of death, but the terms are apt. These short, free-verse lyrics quickly present a scene or memory, which finally prompts a moment of insight, resolve, or wonder, that moment usually signaled by a turn of phrase or striking image — "mushrooms glow / in velvet stupors," "urging them gently out / like a carrot's midwife." The risk of this style is in becoming too flat or mechanical : by trying to illuminate the ordinary, you might only prove the obvious. But Lush shows a real talent in her tact and concision. Like Ioannou, she aims at clarity. She admires the haiku and does not insist on epiphanies. "The First Awakening of Summer" illustrates her abilities :

> In the riverbed, a fish, ruby bright
> startles a rock to life.
> Trees bend their million buds
> popping like corks.
> Happy, the moon goes on and on
> about plums.

JON KERTZER

MALASPINA & GALIANO

DONALD C. CUTTER, *Malaspina & Galiano: Spanish Voyages to the Northwest Coast 1791 & 179^-* Douglas and Mclntyre, $34.95.

THE SPANISH SAILED along, charted, and disputed the jurisdiction of the Pacific Northwest Coast for twenty-one years beginning in 1774. Entirely the enterprise of its institutions — the Navy and successive viceroys of New Spain (Antonio Maria Bucareli, Manuel Antonio Florez, and Juan Vincente Revillagigedo) —this coastal exploratory activity grew out of three concerns: the encroaching southern push of Russian naval and sea otter interests; the renewed promise of a northwest (actually, a northeast) passage around the top of North America as a result of the discovery in 1770 of a hitherto unknown manuscript, by Lorenzo Ferrer Maldonado, which claimed that the navigator had made a voyage to the Pacific through a Strait of Anian ; and the British expansion into the North American hinterland following the fall of Quebec in 1759. One should, but does not, learn this much from Donald C. Gutter's thin book about two of the Spanish expeditions near the last of those twenty-one years; rather, the more solid and expansive orientation to the expeditions is offered in the publication to which Cutter's book ought to have been the more detailed companion, John Kendrick and Robin Inglis' *Enlightened Voyages: Malaspina and Galiano on the Northwest Coast iygi-iyga.* This is the catalogue, also published in 1991 and including a foreword by Gutter, for the exhibition mounted at the Vancouver Maritime Museum.

What Cutter provides on the present occasion is a relatively uncomplicated, unrewarding survey of, first, the visit in 1791 by the ill-fated Alejandro Malaspina José Bustamante y Guerra to the

Tlingit of Port Mulgrave, Yakutat Bay, Alaska, and to the Mowachaht and Nuuchah-nulth of Nootka Sound, Vancouver Island, and, second, of the chartings in 1792 by Dionisio Alcalâ Galiano and Cayetano Valdés of the east coast of the island, and of the mainland in the Strait of Georgia (Gran Canal de Nuestra Senora del Rosario was the Spanish name). Although the 1791 and 1792 bicentennials make this an understandable project, it has, like other books by Cutter, exacerbated a problem that began when the Spanish, unlike the British, for a complex of reasons either were slow to publish narratives of their naval activity on the coast, or did not publish them at all. Despite the Spanish aim to exceed the detail of the chartings made by James Cook in 1778 and, after his death at Kealakekua Bay, Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), by James King in 1779, there is nothing from the Spanish side to parallel or displace the published narratives of either Cook's third voyage (pub. 1784) or George Vancouver's (pub. 1798). And because the Spanish had no commercial presence in the trade on the coast, there is no Spanish publication to parallel Nathaniel Portlock and George Dixon's *Voyage Round the World* (1789) and John Meares' *Voyages* (1790).

In his published research, Cutter has channelled, by region, by officer, journalist, or artist, and by expedition, the Spanish naval activity; his *Malaspina in California* (i960) set this pattern of placing details on published view and in English for the first time. But instead of providing at long last a publication that brings under comprehensive discussion the discrete Spanish voyages and various archival records of them, Cutter's channelled publications serve chiefly to exacerbate the fragmentation. One glaring example in the present book is Cutter's failure to provide the context for the presence at Nootka Sound in 1792 of Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra, Vancouver's opposite number in the negotiations held to end the Nootka Sound Controversy; Quadra's name simply begins to appear in the text describing the explorations of Galiano and Valdés.

Nor has Cutter brought to his descriptive history what is necessary in this decade: the bibliographer's concern for the reliability and provenance of the sources he quotes at length; an art historian's interest in the composition of the expeditions' works, which serve as seldom more than decorative illustration in the book; or an ethnographer's evaluations, in the light of late-twentieth-century studies, of the high or low value of the descriptions and depictions that have been unearthed and assembled. Will this procedure do any longer? The current concern (well nigh an obsession) with the politics of imperial exploration, of the collections of artifacts, and of the writing of history as a straightforward narrative of events would seem not to countenance it.

It is unfortunate for Cutter that both the catalogue for the bicentennial exhibition and John Kendrick's nearly simultaneous translation, *The Voyage of* Sutil *and* Mexicana *1792: The Last Spanish Expedition of the Northwest Coast of America* (1991), appeared before he could gain the scholarly benefit that they offer. Moreover, he seems not to have been aware of Catherine Poupeney Hart's *Relations de l'Expédition Malaspina aux Confins de l'Empire: L'Échec du Voyage* (1987), a thorough questioning of the undeclared assumptions that lie behind eighteenth-century narratives of imperial exploration, and Malaspina's in particular. In her "Annexe A: Les Textes," Poupeney Hart clarifies how complex the bibliographical dimension of Malaspina's voyage is, and, therefore, how important it is for one to take care when making use of the narratives. However, one finds Cutter practising an inconsistent policy

with respect to his sources. Whereas, for the chapter on Galiano and Valdés, he remains loath to quote from the published version (Anon., *Relacion del Viage [sic] hecho por las Goletas Sutil y Mexicana en el ano de iyg2 para Reconocer et Estrecho de Fuca* [1792]), in the previous chapters, which deal with Malaspina's voyage the year before, he freely quotes from Pedro Novo y Colson's edition, almost one hundred years after the voyage, of what may only loosely be called Malaspina's own *Viaje politico-cientifico alrededor del mundo de las Corbetas Descubierta y Atrevida, al mando de los capitanes de navio D. Alejandro Malaspina y D. José Bustamante y Guerra desde iy8g a ijg^.* (1885).

This inconsistent use of published texts is disconcerting in itself but also because Cutter shows throughout his book a keen interest in the archival record. His has not been a superficial research; on the contrary, he has done precisely what is required for a body of work that, unlike Cook's or Vancouver's journals, received, however altered, contemporary publication. Aligning published accounts besides archival ones makes no authoritative sense. Moreover, while Cutter does point out discrepancies between officers' sketches and published engravings of the same scene, he does not seem to know, as Poupeney Hart clearly does, what to make of them ; that is, he does not take note of how a journal or sketch necessarily evolves in order to become an official imperial statement of exploration.

Malaspina & Galiano shows other signs both of description halting short of the necessary scholarly inquiry and of superficial treatment of assembled material. For example, Cutter mentions that the Spanish chose not to explore Puget Sound because they considered the north the most likely direction in which to look for a northwest passage after entering the Strait of Juan de Fuca; however, he does not analyze the Spanish thinking. The same is true of his passing mention of the Spanish practice of purchasing young children at Nootka. Similarly, there is no attempt made to study the differences between the pictorial records of these two expeditions and those of earlier Spanish ones, or those of Cook's third voyage or of Vancouver's. Despite the fact that Cutter has translated and published the journal of one of the artists *(Journal of Tomâs de Suria and his Voyage with Malaspina to the Northwest Coast of America in ijgi* [1980]), he makes no mention of Rudiger Joppien and Bernard Smith's two-part third volume of *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages* (1988), let alone consider reasons for the differences in, say, the representations of Ship's Cove and Friendly Cove, Nootka Sound. In this respect and others, given that he is engaging an English-language audience, Cutter ought to have set his subject clearly within the context of the voyages of Cook, Dixon, Portlock, Meares, and Vancouver, if not of Jean-François Galaup de Lapérouse. Indeed, discussion of Vancouver's surprised encounter of Galiano and Valdés is disappointingly minimal : there is no mention even of Vancouver's memorable admission: "I experienced no small degree of mortification in finding the external shores of the gulf had been visited and already examined a few miles beyond where my researches during the excursion had extended."

As to the presentation of the work, the index is too often faulty — either by commission or omission, entries on Maquinna, Cardero, Bodega y Quadra, Vancouver, cannibalism, and prostitution are inaccurate — and necessary modern maps are not provided. Dates of expeditions' calls at each port ought to have appeared prominently, if not in chapters' titles; captions for pictures often neglect information that they ought to include ; and the pictures themselves, by bearing no num-

bers, are difficult to match with Cutter's discussion of them. It is difficult to determine if Cutter discusses some pictures that he does not reproduce. Generally, then, this work does not thoroughly exploit the occasion that prompted it.

I. S. MACLAREN

SERIOUS WIDOWS

CONSTANCE BERESFORD-HOWE, *A SerioUS Widow.* Macmillan, $24.95. EMILY woRTis LEIDER, *California's Daughter: Gertrude Atherton and Her Times.* Stanford U.P.

"TOTALLY INCOMPETENT women may be snubbed a lot, but people do look after them." So says Rowena Hill, the central character in *A Serious Widow,* Constance Beresford-Howe's recent novel. Set in Toronto, the story offers a wry view of very "English" Canadians, complete with teacups and Anglican ministers. Rowena Hill, unadventurous, bookish and completely helpless, meets with some rather trying circumstances. Edwin, her frugal husband of thirty years, dies "in his Adidas" while jogging. Although somewhat surprised by his sudden death, she is not by any means overwhelmed by grief. Instead, she entertains herself during the funeral service (and for much of the rest of the book) with comical, imaginative musings. Now, for the first time in her life, she must learn to take care of herself. This becomes especially difficult when a stranger claiming to be her husband's son appears at the funeral. He explains that Edwin had another wife and family in Ottawa: the strange man's mother was and still is the original Mrs. Edwin Hill and is therefore the legal recipient of all of Edwin's possessions including Rowena's home.

Initially angry at being the dupe of her bigamist husband, Rowena quickly begins to feel afraid as she understands her situation. Through a series of blunders, she learns to live independently. Yet Rowena Hill is woefully inadequate if she is to serve as an inspirational symbol for the emancipation of women of any age or at any time. Her 'transformation' into an autonomous individual is neither triumphant nor liberating. Through much of the book, she is a passive observer of her own life; while she spends much of her time alone thinking, she is not introspective or self-aware. Instead, she drifts into a world of fiction, preferring, for instance, imaginary conversations with the Prince of Wales to dealing with her own life. The reader is often frustrated by her inability to think or act on her own behalf. A less sympathetic critic might fault the book for an unconvincing conclusion as the typically submissive Rowena rejects an offer of marriage in favour of independence. However, the character does make small steps towards individuality. True, much of her success hinges on accidents and, while the conclusion may be unsatisfying, it is not necessarily unrealistic. To my mind, the narration is refreshingly honest, highly readable, and often genuinely funny.

If Rowena Hill is not as much of a freedom fighter as we might like, we are offered a very independent, if overwhelmingly egotistical, figure in Emily Wortis Leider's biography of Gertrude Atherton (1857-1948), *California's Daughter: Gertrude Atherton and Her Times.* Leider writes a very carefully researched biography which examines important issues, works and events that played a role in Gertrude Atherton's day. If the book has faults, they lie in overscrupulous rather than in sloppy scholarship. In addition, the book deals with a decidedly American topic, and is often rather Californi-centric. These limitations aside, the biography offers a fascinating and readable look into an extraordinary life. Born in San Francisco when it was little more

than a Gold Rush outpost, Gertrude Atherton became one of the most celebrated authors of her time. She travelled widely across the United States and Europe (as well as to the West Indies and Cuba). She witnessed the Great San Francisco Earthquake, reported on the First World War from France, and held opinions (which were often contradictory but always sensational) on every important issue of her day. A life-long socialite, she was acquainted with figures such as Ambrose Bierce, Henry James, Isadora Duncan, and Gertrude Stein. She produced some fifty books, most of them novels, but lier personal life is stranger than any fiction she could have produced. At the age of nineteen, she eloped with George Atherton, who had originally been courting her mother. Eleven years later, after a turbulent marriage, she became a widow. Her husband died at sea and was returned to California embalmed in a barrel of rum. Atherton immediately began to support herself with her writing, and produced a novel noted for its scandalous eroticism. As her reputation as an author spread, so too did her penchant for causing a stir in the papers. While promoting Woodrow Wilson's campaign, she twice violated a social taboo by appearing in public smoking a cigarette. Even at the comparatively mellow age of sixty-six, she produced a startling and often-banned book based on her own experience of 'rejuvenation,' the x-ray stimulation of her sexual glands in an effort to reverse the process of aging.

Most remarkable, however, is the phenomenon of Atherton's fame. While today neither her name nor her books are familiar, in her time she was honoured with Edna St. Vincent Millay, Willa Cather, and Edith Wharton. At the height of her fame, her novel *Black Oxen* topped the best seller list (while Sinclair Lewis' *Babbit* was fourth). In Leider's own words, her book offers a "morality tale on ... the evanescence of fame." She points out that Atherton wrote to sell books and acted to attract attention in the press. While Leider offers an unsugared account of Atherton's work, she suggests that had Atherton chosen to write with integrity rather than for profit, she might have produced work worth remembering. The question is unresolved and unresolvable, but the fact remains that Atherton did not, in fact, produce anything that has withstood the test of time. All the same, her biography makes captivating reading, especially as it offers an original perspective of the people, places and issues of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in America and England.

Leider worries that she had difficulty understanding Atherton on a personal level and suggests that Atherton did not really know herself, but instead played the roles she created. However, Leider gently and humorously paints a very revealing portrait of this colourful and contradictory woman. Atherton was considered by many to symbolize the 'new woman,' and yet she was vain, flirtatious and vicious in her attacks of "ugly feminists." She wished to be treated as a serious author, but when the critics lambasted her, she scolded them for their ungentlemanly treatment of a woman. She loved to be thought avant-garde, and yet she was characteristically prudish about sexual scandals, especially ones which involved her own friends. She was often critical of California, but she was eager to sell her stories of the "savage West." While she was certainly spirited, courageous and independent, she is no more attractive as a role model for the twentieth century feminist than her fictional (and decidedly more likeable) fellow widow, Rowena Hill.

MICHELE o'FLYNN

DELIBERATE ORDINARINESS

ELIZABETH BREWSTER, *The Invention of Truth.* Oberon, n.p.

SHARON BUTALA, *Fever.* Harper Collins, $14.95.

THESE TWO SHORT story collections by women writers are similar in their autobiographical dependence and realistic depictions but remarkably different in tone and depth, possibly the result of their authors' differing generations and ways of life. Together, they portray a significant range of female experience.

Brewster's book is a "sidelong autobiography," a retrospective on her seventy-plus years. The last three of the seven prose pieces (there are also four interspersed poems) are presented as stories, the others as memory. But the recurrent theme of "truth" and "invention," the subjective interpretation of life and the self-consciousness of storytelling, unifies the parts in an interesting dialogue between fact and fiction. The diary form, documentary details, understated tone, and prosaic language characterize these pieces as they have all her works so far, both poetry and fiction. In fact, two long pieces were published in her previous collections. In "Collage" (from *Visitations)*, Brewster reveals both the strengths and limitations of her non-dramatic slices of life: "This is not a story. A story has a beginning, a middle and an end ... a direction ... a theme ... a conflict you can recognize ... a climax, maybe a recognition scene, a reversal ... a mystery."

The first two sketches detail her "Beginnings" in painful poverty, her creative escapes and her "University Days" in the budding Canadian literary culture of the University of New Brunswick. "Collage" is a scrapbook of dreams and memories which both commemorates her love for her father and does "penance" for her earlier shame of him. Its counterpart is "Victorian Interlude" which ties recollections of her mother to the cards of the Tarot pack. Both these conceits yield some psychological and symbolic insights but also produce superficialities without significance ("Where did I intend to take this, if I intended anything?"). The emotional resonances result from a tension between independent rebellion and filial guilt, but the profound questions ("Did I object to being a woman?") are frustratingly avoided. And, stylistically, these "prose poems" are too prosaic to achieve poetry.

"Visit of Condolence," "Essence of Marigold," and "The Real Truth" fictionalize, respectively, the death of her brother, her friendship with P. K. Page, and her relationships with friends and lovers in early 1972 (during rewrites of her novel, *The Sisters).* Ironically, there is more personal revelation in these distanced narratives : an undercurrent of resentment of the exciting, glamorous fulfilled lives that intersect with the timid, ordinary, self-deprecating spinster, but also a stubborn affirmation of "beautiful dullness," a belief that her art elevates "deliberate ordinariness ... to the level of myth." Nevertheless, despite Brewster's quiet warmth and wisdom, this acknowledged autobiography has too many unacknowledged gaps (most of 1942 to 1972) and depths ("When you have been raped as a child, you don't want violence again, ever") to be satisfying. It is a bloodless mythology: "I haven't quite told it the way it happened, how it felt. Though not much about feelings is in the 'real' diary either."

Fever, originally published in 1990, is the first paperback under the Saturday Night Books imprint. A generation younger than Brewster, Butala also writes realistic, semi-autobiographical stories but from a more contemporary female (though not feminist) perspective that includes motherhood, divorce and remarriage.

Like her avowed model, Alice Munro, she portrays the daily minutiae of her middle-aged protagonists while revealing their emotional responses to a complex and painful existence.

The collection is dominated by stories of unhappy and/or broken marriages and the effects of their offspring. Epiphanies are minor and resolutions ambiguous. In contrast to Brewster's stories, these pieces are distinguished by Butala's honesty in probing shameful and surprising emotions. In the title story, a woman whose husband is suddenly ill reacts with "bewildering indifference" and uncharacteristic adultery. "Dark of the Moon," "Mermaid in the Watery Deep," and "Domestici" evoke the guilt, shame, and longing of women deserted by the philandering men they still love. And "Justice" portrays their bitter frustration that the men do not share their suffering — or if they do that it is, surprisingly, so irrelevant.

The children of unhappy unions also suffer. The heroine of "Discord" realizes she and her siblings have been emotionally warped by their parents' conflict; in "Broadway Shoes" a woman uncovers the secret of her dead mother's loveless marriage as a "black hole" in her past. The two daughters in "Sorrow" compare their painful relationship with their father. In all these stories Butala probes the relational complexities and ambiguities so deeply there is no simple assignment of blame or suffering. The (clearly autobiographical) middle-aged protagonist of "the Vision of the Hohokam" recognizes both the intolerable pain of her first marriage and the guilt of having "abandoned" her son.

The latter story also explores the theme of "truth" as subjective, and relative, in relationships, memories—and art. In the two longest stories Butala depicts the mysterious forces behind creativity. "The Prize" dramatizes a novelist's agony and loneliness, the traps of fame and the "fate" of inspiration. In "What the Voices Say" an adult writer recalls her fascination with the "mystery" and the "unplumbed, dark, subterranean currents . . . below the surface" of life. Vague spiritual forces are also connected with the land in "Gabriel" and "Healer of the Earth," although the human pathos does not always sufficiently balance Butala's ecological didacticism.

The sixteen stories are varied in length and subject but the voice provides some unity. Most of the protagonists struggle with middle age concerns — failed relationships, troubled children, dead or dying parents, memories and mortality — and survive with quiet courage. Not as brilliantly as Munro, but more profoundly than Brewster, Butala explores Munro's "deep caves paved with kitchen linoleum" with undramatic honesty and without facile resolutions.

BARBARA PELL

ESPECIALLY INTO HISTORY

JACK HODGINS, *Innocent Cities.* McClelland & Stewart, $27.95.

FOR JACK HODGINS, inventing a world has never been simply a matter of recording (or exaggerating) the peculiarities of folk culture and local speech patterns, as important as forms of island are to his fiction. He realizes his Vancouver Island not so much by the usual methods of comparison and contrast, but by layering. When he stretches the lines of his fiction across Georgia Strait, or across the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean, he superimposes other worlds upon — or recognizes them within — his potentially depthless new world. *Innocent Cities* extends the method by pushing an accident of naming into a strategy of fictional mapping. The novel is set in Victoria, capital city of the colony of Vancouver Island since 1848, and in an

antipodean Victoria, the state in south-eastern Australia legally defined since 1851. The Gold Rush mentality of one ("this tiny city of exalted hopes") turns out to animate the migrants from the other; the paradoxical fauna of one ("a world where birds are the size of pigs") mutate into the strangely twisted flora of the other. As this geographical arabesque — and the dust jacket — so blatantly announces, Hodgins has written "the ultimate Victorian novel."

Ultimate, in this instance, signals both an extreme — conventions of plot and character pushed to their limit — and a form basic and original. Hodgins' mock Victorian novel rests on a plot that might have played at the Theatre Royal in 1890. James Horncastle, comically cocky gambler, operates, with his wife and family, Victoria's The Great Blue Heron Hotel. Until the arrival of Kate Jordan from the other Victoria, married to Horncastle years earlier in Victorian England. Add to the mix Kate's two sisters, with their own designs on Horncastle, or on Logan Sumner, the local builder, who pines for Adelina, Horncastle's daughter, etcetera and so on. But in the Victorian novel, as in the Victorian parlour, decoration and overstuffed upholstery are often more interesting than narrative. Hodgins crowds his fictional world with as much bric-à-brac as will fit. Like his hotel, which keeps expanding, and incorporating its earlier forms, so the plot embraces set pieces of countroom confrontation, a half dozen revenge motifs, a deathbed vigil, and a suspense mystery. Like Dickens, he pursues the singular oddities of his characters until their absurdity is indelible: Logan Sumner is never seen without his yardstick, with which he unconsciously measures everything within reach ; Horncastle seldom speaks a sentence which contains a subject. Like the serial novel which it remembers, it wanders into other forms— into the epistolary at one point, into journalistic, into the self-reflexive, into history.

Especially into history. *Innocent Cities* is Hodgins' most obviously "researched" novel. Sometimes neatly, sometimes a little awkwardly, it incorporates bits of Victoria's history, be they the excitement of a Royal Visit, or the brand of shaving soap on display at the Agricultural Fair. Hodgins seems to have combed the archives carefully to convey, in the midst of his parody, the texture of life in the nineteenth-century colonies. But, again, the sense of history is not limited to Vancouver Island vignettes (although I recognized a confidence in evoking the Victoria where he now lives that is not matched by the details of the Victoria where he is still a tourist). In good measure, at least, the whole world's history is entered into the mix by the global circling of the geography. To be sure the world's wider history is often mentioned only to point up how determinedly it is ignored by Vancouver Island's Victorians. Thus, of course, Hodgins quietly investigates the peculiar culture of a city determined to become what Victorian Britain had long since ceased to be, and thus to mask the brawling, unprincipled extraction of resources which was its economic mainstay. As Logan Sumner intoned at one point, "'tidy histories tell more lies than messy ones'." Hodgins has used the capaciousness of the Victorian novel to create a decidedly messy one.

The landscape seems to complement this twisted circuitry: "individual pines and scrub oaks, isolated from other trees, created strange paradoxical shapes out of their tensions : trunks thrust south toward the source of light, while limbs strained north away from the winds of the strait — each tree struggling as though to pull itself apart." As with the historical detail, Hodgins devotes more space in *Innocent Cities* to establishing the peculiar topographies of local settings, to the biological details of typical flora and fauna. And yet

it is a bemused regionalism, pulled apart by the "naked passion" of another region of windmill palms, frangipani, and shrieking whip-birds.

Immersed in this "jungle of names," Kate Jordan "could almost smell the earthy green scents emanating from the sounds themselves," "could easily imagine the sounds of the tree-names sending down extra sets of aerial roots." Such passages, which direct the reader's attention to the "intimacy" of words, are the most surprising feature of this crowded, rambunctious novel. *Innocent Cities* is Hodgins' post-Saussurean novel. Often he writes as if he had just set aside one of the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets to wonder how "to translate into the language of another place." This interest centres, fittingly, in Zachary Jack, Sumner's native assistant, who lives among four languages: bits of his mother's language, a comic-book pidgin, Chinook, and a briskly colloquial English. In the washed up debris of a shipwreck are pieces of board with words, in several languages, printed on them. Zak gathers these to cover up the cracks in his shack, until he has what appears to be "a building constructed entirely out of words." Words — without context, without meaning — just a jumble of clumsy words such as Logan hears himself recite when declaring his love for the lovely Adelina. Sumner also tries to give words a more permanent form, by erecting beside his wife's grave marker, his own tombstone. What's set in stone is, for Logan, alterable: to the original one-word expression of his grief, "inconsolable," he keeps adding phrase after phrase, and stone after stone to record his current and shifting emotional state. Eventually Sumner is required to demolish his "ridiculous palace of fantastical words," by which time he cannot remember why it had once been important to him. And so, in such motifs, Hodgins' plot and setting and character live uneasily amidst questions of what is meaning, and of how it is produced, and of what ideological content is masked by language use, and of what is the *physical* status of language itself, as sound and hieroglyph. So the ultimate Victorian novel becomes the a-Victorian novel and the post-Victorian novel, its anti-narrative seeming to erase its narrative. But then Victoria itself can be seen as "the absolute end of everything." And at that limit, beyond language, float still the dreams — of the perfect match of cricket, of the whispers of the séance, of the flying machine modelled after the great raven, which flies with the inspiration of people who have had "centuries of experience inventing devices to make the impossible easy."

LAURIE RIGOU

HUG THE GROUND

j. E. SORRELL, *In Broad Daylight: Stories of Sex, Love, and War*. Mercury Publishing, n.p.

j. E. SORRELL, *On The Other Side of the River*. Mid-List Press, $12.995.

MANY OF J. E. SORRELL'S poems are titled "confessions," and all of them in these two books might be so labelled. In turn, Sorrell gathers his confessions into suites : *On the Other Side of the River* ends with "The River Road Confessions," a sequence of ten poems ("Sheriff Dale's Confession," "Rachel's Confession," and so on) which together, in their indirect stories and seemingly accidental cross-references, convey some buried sense of community.

Sorrell's speakers usually prefer the oblique confession. They are likely to veer away from the most intensely private matters; they are certainly not St. Augustines or John Bunyans intellectualizing what they have learned from examining their inner selves. If Wendell, in

"Wendell's Confession," is admitting an infidelity (to himself? to his wife?), the reader catches only an alcohol-stained vision, "blurred/with my hands on the strange curves/of another woman's face." For Sorrell the confession is always ironic —admission of guilt, contriteness, are seldom explicit. And the appeal of his poems rests in the speculations prompted in the reader.

Sorrell's poetry is similarly oblique. Because he is usually giving voice to people whose working lives are more physical than bookish, the reader seldom recognizes the poetry of innovative language or literary figure. When the characters pile clichés upon crudeness, as Eddie does in the confession which opens *In Broad Daylight* ("I smothered her body with my kisses"; "it hurt like hell"), we have to remember that the most banal phrases will become mesmerizing in the pace, and pauses, and intonations of performance. And Sorrell has an excellent reputation as a performer of his own monologues. On the page, as in this brief passage from one of the historical monologues ("Kate's Midnight Plea: *to her son in the Civil War, Dublin")* the poetry is more likely to be found in a startled choice of detail, or a nervous disjunction in syntax and line ending:

> The constable in the street waved a car
>
> On, stopped a donkey cart, and from nowhere
> A van roars around the corner, careening,
> Shooting up Mac's pears and plums — and myself.
>
> With his window, it would have, but I stumbled Back from the whizzing midst of smithereens.

Not all SorrelPs poems are uniformly readable. My attention sometimes drifted where the speaker loses grip on her narrative line and I began to recognize a script for performance rather than a poem for the printed page. But I was impressed by the range of voice — the cry of an abused child, the frustrations of an elderly woman, the resigned fury of an Irish stonemason in the Famine years — and by the range of line lengths and stanzaic forms that Sorrel uses both to define intonation and to colour character. A moving example is "The Telling," a *tour de force* of periodic construction which delays the ultimate humiliation of incarcerated Jews — narratively and syntactically— to the final line. These twists and turns leave a great deal more to be thought about than will fit into a brief review. Helen Vendler noted in *Part of Nature, Part of Us* that "lyric has, historically, voiced a prayer or a complaint, both presupposing a listener, the 'thou' of remedy." This near-aphorism explains perhaps why Sorrell's confessions so often slant away from acknowledgement — toward pleading, or anguish, with the *reader* overhearing, perplexed to offer a solution. Sorrell's dramatic monologues hug the ground and still catch in the throat; his speakers take a lot for granted, and in what they don't or won't explain their rough mystery resides.

LAURIE RICOU

NEW DIRECTIONS

SHERRILL GRACE, ed. *Swinging the Maelstrom: New Perspectives on Malcolm Lowry.* McGill-Queen's, $49.95.

IN MAY 1987, the University of British Columbia hosted the International Malcolm Lowry Symposium. Over one hundred delegates participated in panels and workshops, listened to papers, and enjoyed related artistic events for four magical, Malcomical days. Although there have been no published "proceedings," *Swinging the Maelstrom* does include thirteen of the twenty papers delivered at the conference. Moreover, this volume's variety of topic and approach reflects the

sumptuous richness of Lowry studies demonstrated at U.B.C. in 1987.

Sherrill Grace, a prolific and widely recognized authority on Malcolm Lowry and his works, has assembled a wonderful collage of criticism and commentary on the man, his texts, his influences, and his echoes. Her introductory essay provides a gridwork not only for this book, but also for the current state of Lowry studies — a remarkably interdisciplinary and intertextual field of scholarship. Grace has divided the essays, some of which come from the Symposium, and some of which she invited to represent current aspects of the discipline, into four categories.

Part One deals with the inevitable biographical treatment of Lowry; however, Grace manages a fresh approach here, for example by including Jan Gabrial's story "Not with a Bang," which has, in the light of other artistic meta-biography such as Michael Mercer's *Goodnight Disgrace,* become more significant and interesting now than when it was first published in 1946. I am surprised, however, by this section's lack of material on Conrad Aiken's involvement in Lowry's life and work. While it is refreshing to see Grieg's influence highlighted, especially in Hallvard Dahlie's excellent paper, the inclusion here of at least one essay on Lowry and Aiken would have been more representative of Lowry's life. Yet it is typical of Grace's interdisciplinary approach that she has printed a recently discovered letter from Lowry to Grieg; she is to be commended for her attention to primary research materials — attention too often lacking in essay collections.

Part Two focuses, as one might expect, on *Under the Volcano,* but it demonstrates an interesting and welcome twist : not one of the six papers offers a conventional thematic treatment of this much-analyzed novel. Instead, Christine Pagnoulle addresses the issue of translation, Hilda Thomas offers a political reading of the *Volcano,* Sue Vice revitalizes the text through a postmodern approach, which D. B. Jewison follows up beautifully with his study of the novel's intertextuality. These essays, among others, combine into easily the most energetic and imaginative discussion of Lowry's masterpiece to date. Especially informative is Frederick Asals' bibliographical/critical analysis of chapter 5. This essay should light the way for many young Lowry scholars ; the richness of Lowry's manuscripts have not yet been properly documented, nor have we yet fully tapped all there is to learn from them.

Part Three provides a forum for essays which deal with Lowry's *post-Volcano* works; this is perhaps Grace's most important contribution to "new perspectives" on Lowry studies. The great wealth of "unfinished" texts which came after 1947 receive well balanced attention here. Cynthia Sugars' treatment of *Dark as the Grave* throws light on this shadowy text, and Victor Doyen's fascinating study of the "October Ferry" manuscripts evokes the complexity of Lowry's manuscripts and compositional method. Eisa Linguanti examines Lowry's short story canon in the context of his other work, and, much to my delight, two essays on Lowry's poetry — by Suzanne Kim and Mark Ellis Thomas — explore different aspects of Lowry's voluminous poetic output.

In Part Four, Grace pursues her interest in spinning the web woven of artists who influenced Lowry and, more interestingly for contemporary Lowryans, of those whom Lowry has influenced. One such artist is Graham Collier, the British composer whose jazz suite "The Day of the Dead" had its North American premiere at the Lowry Symposium, and whose essay discusses the parallels between free jazz and Lowry's work. Robert Kroetsch, who delivered the keynote address at the Symposium, contributes a spellbinding paper that invokes Lowry and Lowry's work in

an intertextual blending of voices that celebrates the joy and laments the anguish of literary creation with a vivacity and an energy that brings the collection to a climactic close.

Sherrill Grace and her contributors have indeed presented us with new perspectives on Malcolm Lowry; this book, with its blend of established and new critical voices, will revitalize the field and offer new directions of study. Handsomely produced by McGill-Queen's, *Swinging the Maelstrom* is a welcome (and essential) addition to Lowry studies.

KATHLEEN SGHERF

ORAL HISTORIES

ROBERT HUNTER AND ROBERT CALIHOO, *OcCUpied Canada. A Young White Man Discovers His Unsuspected Past.* McClelland & Stewart, $26.95.

Enough Is Enough: Aboriginal Women Speak Out. As told to JANET SILMAN. Women's Press, n.p.

USING FORMATS that speak to the continued value of oral history as a vehicle of continuity and identity in First Nations communities, both *Occupied Canada* and *Enough Is Enough* tell striking stories of the immense and devastating impact of Canada's Indian Act on First Nations people, and of the strategies by which Native people prevail all the same.

Occupied Canada tells the double story of Robert Calihoo's coming to political consciousness as a Cree/Iroquois man in contemporary colonized Canada, and of the European conquest of Canada, as told from a Native point of view. Sandwiching the two sections on Canada's history of Native oppression, the two sections on Calihoo's individual life begin with his growing up first in a middle-class suburb of Edmonton, and then, abruptly, on the Calihoo Reserve west of Edmonton. Equally abruptly, the reserve is dismantled, and Calihoo returns to Edmonton, to a life on the streets and eventually in jail. There he comes into contact with the growing Native activism of the 1960s, and empowered by a new capacity to analyze his own condition in political terms, he goes to university and eventually to work for the Department of Indian Affairs. It is while working for that body, as told in both the historical and biographical sections of the work, most responsible for the comprehensive oppression of Natives in the name of their supposed best interests, that he conceives a plan to regain his illegally-lost reserve lands on behalf of the disbanded Calihoos. This story of Calihoo's unfulfilled quest (as of 1991) to regain something of what has been lost, is paralleled by the second story of how the First Nations' originally suffered these losses under the white colonial rule, particularly the stories of Calihoo's own Iroquois and Cree/Metis Nations.

Both stories are deeply affecting, Calihoo's own for its revelation of the utterly pervasive and ongoing effects of the Indian Act on contemporary Natives; and that of the conquest of the First Nations in general for its revelation of the deeply cynical strategies employed by European invaders to justify and whitewash the eradication of the five hundred or more First Nations.

The main difficulty I have with the work concerns the way in which these parallel stories are told: the book jacket says the work is co-authored by Hunter and Calihoo alike, but Calihoo's personal story is written in the third person, as if actually penned by Hunter, though that is never clarified. Thus, it is never really clear *who* is speaking at various points in the story: when the characterization of some of the people around Calihoo descends into the frustratingly stereotypical — his father's second wife is a shrewish nag; his mother's French-Canadian hus-

band seems to be an abusive creep partly *because* he is French Canadian — it is uncertain whether this is simply a portrayal of a young, frightened boy's effort to decode a bewildering world, or whether it is Hunter's own writing style and attitudes showing through.

Similarly, in the historical sections, I often wanted to know where the information had been found — in order to have a sense, again, of who was really speaking through the information. The story of the Iroquois brothers who started the Calihoo settlement was fascinating, but how it was discovered is never told: is this "the essential historical connection" attributed in the Acknowledgements, to Grand Chief Joseph Norton of the Iroquois Six Nations Confederacy? If so, the recovery of the story might testify to the accuracy and longevity of oral history, as both the historical and the personal sections of the work clearly speak of and from the form — and to the inaccuracies of the official Group against the legislated sexual discrimination of the Indian Act. Like formerly-statu s women across the country, women of the Maliseet Tobique Reserve in New Brunswick were being refused adequate housing and subsistence for themselves and their children, because of the law by which status women marrying white or non-status men lost their status under the Indian Act — while their male counterparts retained their status and could even confer it on their white wives.

Over the course of 1976 and 1977, as several women returned to Tobique Reserve to find that the band council would not grant them houses on their own reserve, a number of women — some status, some no longer status — staged demonstrations at the band office, occupying the building in order to house the homeless families. The women's stories tell how the action escalated from this local gesture to provincial and federal-level demonstrating and lobbying, and eventually to Sandra Lovelace's filing a complaint against the Canadian government with written histories of (white) Canada, against which the historical section implicitly set themselves. As the text stands, however, the story is an interesting and important one, but the manner of its telling is an uneasy blend of the oral and the written, the voices of the teller and the writer never clearly distinguished.

I found *Enough Is Enough* far more satisfying in these terms, as it tells the story, in the words of the participants themselves, of the struggle of the Tobique Women's the United Nations Human Rights Committee in Geneva. Though the Committee rendered a decision in 1981 confirming that Canada was in breach of the international human rights code for their policy on Native women, it was not until 1985 that the Tobique women finally won their cause, and Bill C-31 was passed, eliminating sexual discrimination from the Indian Act and offering reinstatement to all those born with Indian status.

The work thus deals with the intricacies of Canadian law and politics, but the strength of the story is its concentration above all on the Tobique women's own stories, in the form of monologues and conversations recorded by Janet Silman over several years. If the women's astonishing competence and patience in dealing with the immovable body of the government is thus revealed, it is their spirit and courage that comes through most strongly, their continued sense of humour despite the seeming enormity of their struggle.

Like *Occupied Canada, Enough Is Enough* is the result of a collaboration between a (mostly) white writer and the Native subject (s), and critics will doubtless be able to argue with the precise manner in which Silman has chosen to inscribe the oral, and with the ideological implications of her seeming position as an arbiter between cultures and forms of history. But this format of telling, through

anecdote and remembrance, rather than through more conventional, impersonal forms of history, permits the work to avoid the difficulty I had with *Occupied Canada,* where I was never certain who is speaking through the text.

What is lost in the text's anecdotal format is a sense of the precise chronology, in conventionally European historical terms, of the Tobique women's struggle — exactly which conference Karen Perley or Shirley Bear is talking about, exactly when the women undertook this specific action or that one — a problem partly rectified by the inclusion of a chronology at the end of the text. But what stands is a text that functions as a testimony not only to the strength and delightful spirit of the individual women and the community they create, but also to the strengths and delights of oral history itself — to the women's capacity to tell their own stories in their own way.

DOROTHY SEATON

ABSENCE OF DRAMA

GERALD D. PARKER, *How to Play: The Theatre of James Reaney.* ECW, $25.00 pa.

DANIEL BROOKS AND GUILLERMO VERDECCHIA, *The Noam Chomsky Lectures: A Play.* Coach House, $9.95 pa.

AT FIRST SIGHT, these two texts seem ill-matched, linked only by the generic classification of drama. One is a critical examination of a more modern than post-modern playwright, and the other tries to be a post-modern play. They do share a concern with Canadian nationalism; but more importantly, they both problematically share an absence of "drama" or theatricality.

Gerald D. Parker introduces James Reaney in *How to Play* as the playwright who combines nationalist and internationalist thought, the writer who is accused alternatively of being too literary and too regional. The book opens with a quotation from Reaney, expressing his theory of theatre — which consists of little more than bodies, lots of simple props, and a building. Nevertheless, Parker prefers to explore the language of the plays, attempting to find the theatricality there. He reasons,

> Changes that redirect or refocus the spectator's attention do not occur because of some underlying idea of *theatre* form and vision. They occur because of an attempt conceived largely in *poetic* terms to relate primary with symbolic modes of experience and seeing and to discriminate linguistically between them.

While words are certainly significant in theatre, other dramatic elements — such as staging, lighting, gestures, and other aspects of the *mise en scène* — are equally important. Parker's centralizing of poetry in Reaney's plays derives from a rather tenuous argument: language is playful, so language is theatrical. This argument holds for Reaney's early plays, but the theatricality of *The Donnelly Trilogy,* for instance, is far more extensive than Parker's focus on language allows. He finds that circles, maps, and lines are the overriding theatrical metaphors, but much more can be developed in relation to the actual staging requirements of the play, requirements which would, in fact, distinguish the play linguistically *and* dramatically as regional.

How to Play contextualizes Reaney's dichotomous background (the nationalist and internationalist, or the literary and regional writer), demonstrating Reaney's importance in the formation of contemporary Canadian theatre, but the sheer volume of quotations from major writers, film-makers, and poets of the modern era supplants the analysis of Reaney's work. It seems to be the resonance with other 'great' international writers that validates Reaney in Parker's assessment. *How to Play* makes 'play' seem contrived, not the

spontaneous and fun event that Reaney himself envisions.

The Noam Chomsky Lectures: A Play begins in lecture format, complete with slides, the first one of which reads, "'Citizens of the democratic countries should undertake a course of intellectual self-defence to protect themselves from manipulation and control'—Chomsky." This quotation opens the process by which the play's authors and performers, Daniel Brooks and Guillermo Verdecchia, reveal the ways in which the audience needs this unorthodox defence program. The primary target is media manipulation, which includes omission: Brooks and Verdecchia expose Canadians to the atrocities that we like to think do not touch us. For instance, they explain that the "bullets used in the Mai [sic] Lai Massacre were made in Canada." The play's final slide, another quotation from Chomsky, reads, "The question for Canadians is whether they feel comfortable being accomplices to mass murder. In the past the answer has been yes, they do feel comfortable." The play ensures that its audience will feel uncomfortable for at least two hours.

The Noam Chomsky Lectures has been performed several times in Toronto and Ottawa, and each time it is re-produced, sections are rewritten to include some of the latest *faux pas* of governments and the press. These reprises also include recent reviews of their play, taking to task theatre reviewers who, according to Brooks and Verdecchia, never seem to understand this (or any) play. At the risk of being the next reviewer to be pilloried at their stake, I found *The Noam Chomsky Lectures* informative and certainly discomforting, but not dramatic. The play is tied too closely to its lecture metaphor and to the slides and overheads (the Corporate Flow-Chart, the Sexual Flow-Chart, the Universal Wit Factor Graph) to sustain drama. There are brief moments when the two performers re-enact the visit by two American senators to Saddam Hussein four months before Iraq invaded Kuwait; they also hold an auction, but all these moments are not sufficient to give dramatic weight to the piece.

Ever the ones to predict responses, they say,

> Some of you may be thinking that what we have embarked on here is not theatre. Well, that's too bad. … [I]f the theatre is to survive, it must become something other than an expensive alternative to television. We are going to have to look at the world and the world of the theatre without ideological or artistic blinders.

But the play in fact becomes a combination of television documentary and a weak comedy show : in other words, *The Noam Chomsky Lectures* itself is little more than an "alternative to television." While the authors acknowledge that the play lacks a narrative (and assume that such an acknowledgment is enough to counterbalance criticism), it is the lack of a dramatic structure that mars the play most.

The play's purpose is, as Verdecchia notes, "to protest that which we can affect." Some of their "dos and don'ts" are important political gestures that Canadians ought to heed: "Do attend rallies and teach-ins to make connections between local, domestic, and foreign policy issues." The don'ts, however, dissolve into self-indulgence that tends to threaten the entire project: "Don't call me a self-hating Jew. I hate that, I really hate that."

The text includes over thirty pages of notes, some of which are explanatory, others of which offer alternative 'scenes' that have been used in earlier productions. There is also a partial bibliography, pushing the drama genre beyond drama into the world of post-modern performance and text. The performers note in the course of their show that they are trying not to "turn [it] into just another silly post-modern push-up." I can't help thinking, though, that this is just what they've

done. While lectures often use dramatic techniques, this "play" too closely resembles a lecture: it has stretched the bounds of drama so far that it has eliminated the dramatic elements.

JOANNE TOMPKINS

COMIC LAMENT

GEORGE F. WALKER, *Love and Anger.* Coach House, $9.95.

ALLAN STRATTON, *Bag Babies.* Coach House, $12.95-

AS THE EIGHTIES became the nineties, boom turned to bust, and the mega-musical carried out its relentless conquest of theatre audiences, Toronto playwrights must have experienced record-high anxiety levels. A decade of real estate speculation and Gimme-Generation greed had washed over the city leaving a tide-line of homelessness in its wake. Community activism that once empowered people to stop freeways and save neighborhoods had wilted. Cynicism became the dominant mood. Companies like Factory Theatre and Theatre Passe Muraille that had provided alternative politics and voices to those of the mainstream since the early 1970s found themselves on the verge of bankruptcy. In this climate even playwrights who had typically focused their attentions elsewhere could hardly help noticing what was going on in their own front yard.

Enter George F. Walker and Allan Stratton. Among Toronto's most successful theatre veterans, they had spent much of their careers avoiding hometown social realities, Stratton as a popular farceur *{Nurse Jane Goes to Hawaii* et al), Walker with his unique brand of exotic black comedy *(Zastrozzi, Nothing Sacred)* and genre parody (*Gossip, Theatre of the Film Noir).* With *Love and Anger* and *Bag Babies,* produced in 1989-90 at the Factory and Theatre Passe Muraille respectively, both playwrights returned adamantly to the here and now. The plays were major commercial successes, giving the two theatres new economic life. Moreover, they marked a significant re-engagement of Toronto's alternative playwrighting tradition with the social and political immediacy that first gave it such central importance in the development of modern Canadian drama.

Driven by terrific comic energy and wit, both plays dissect a society based on exploitation and self-interest, and both fantasize the revenge of the poor and powerless on the rich and powerful. But both nearly succumb to the very cynicism they attack. The self-consciousness of their main characters suggests that the playwrights themselves and we their audiences are far too deeply implicated in the power structure — and far too sophisticated — ever seriously to consider its overthrow, even if that were possible. This nudge nudge wink wink approach to political theatre I find very uncomfortable.

Love and Anger is the more naively hopeful of the two. Set in the basement office of Petie Maxwell, corporate lawyer turned social revolutionary, the play revolves around Petie's attempt to free a young black woman's husband from jail and in the process, with typical Walker-esque megalomania, "to undermine the entire institutional bias of our culture." Petie's textbook rhetoric is enacted by an impractical strategy of ad hoc guerilla warfare that includes blackmail, kidnapping, and a mock trial, all aimed at the arrogant tabloid publisher among whose crimes is "making this city a place which is only satisfying to baseball fans and real estate agents!" Enlisted as allies in Petie's quixotic crusade are his secretary's schizophrenic sister, Sarah (a comic gift of a role) ; the reluctant Gail, who only wants her husband out of jail; and

the even more reluctant secretary, Eleanor. As in all stories where the inmates take over the asylum, the comic chaos that overruns the plot also generates serious questions as to who, and whose value system, is really mad. To the publisher, Conner, economic logic is self-evident: "We've got to get richer. The only alternative is to get poorer." To Petie this is "the law of the jungle. And the problem with that is actually very simple to understand. This is not a jungle! It's a civilization!"

Petie has the moral high ground. But his radical theory — an undigested stew of sixties idealism, new age romanticism, and pop political correctness ("You don't 'take' your wife out to a movie anymore. You go together. I read that in a magazine a while ago") —remains rooted in the practice of a middle-aged white male professional. Taking it upon himself to organize the three women, he sets their agenda and steamrolls over their objections. He refers to God as "she" but dismisses Gail as "honey." In the end the tenuous victories that may have been achieved seem far more apparent than real, and when the cheering dies down the audience has to wonder whether it too has been conn(er)ed.

In *Bag Babies* Stratton wonders aloud for us. His play ends with "a big brassy" finale in which a chorus kickline sings about fighting for justice and dignity, followed by an epilogue in which George, street person cum master of ceremonies, smilingly declaims: "Gentle patrons: It's odd satirizing social elits / For an audience sitting in twenty buck seats. / But our author, producer, cast and crew / Are equally morally snookered too." The breezy tone and rhymed couplets mask a ferocious social satire. It's no coincidence that George calls his plan "A Modest Proposal."

His proposal — actually "a trap / To give these hypocrites a whap" — is to offer people the chance to assuage their conscience by adopting their very own street person, or 'Bag Baby.' "You won't even have to meet us! Just send cheques through the mail for a certificate and photo of your very own 100% guaranteed outcast." He even offers "a monthly videotape from your Bag Baby's shelter." The hypocrites George aims to whap by marketing the homeless are Dick and Jane whose business, 'Having with Heart,' has as its objective "to make compassion / The newest trend. The latest fashion." They provide wealthy, angst-ridden clients like Rick and Elaine with elaborate rationalizations for continued gluttony and greed. A typical presentation, "Shopping and Ethics: An Approach for the Nineties," alliteratively prescribes trickle-down economics as the cure for liberal guilt: "But by buying bright baubles that bring you enjoyment / Your consumer demand will create new employment."

Like Walker, Stratton lambastes the popular media for reinforcing the Big Lies that have come to be held as self-evident truths. In a world where style is substance and ethics nothing more than public relations, the TV talk-show host is the perfect icon, and Stratton creates a beauty in glitz-and-glamour maven Katie Hughes. Rounding out the cast is Stratton's answer to Walker's Conner: rabid free-enterpriser and philanthropist Elgin Marbles, for whom bribery is commerce, corruption is progress, and "slavery is capitalism with balls!" All these characters remind us just how difficult it is to parody their real life counterparts.

Bag Babies barely avoids collapsing under plot overload, excess farce, and its own knowing cynicism. Surviving those dangers, it emerges as Stratton's strongest play to date and, with *Love and Anger,* a devastating comic lament for the soul of one particular city that bespeaks, perhaps, the urban Canadian condition, circa 1990. You need not live in Toronto to

appreciate Elaine's enthusiasm: "To experience the poor up close — gee whiz—/ it's even better than seeing 'Les Miz.'"

JERRY WASSERMAN

DERRIDEAN

SUSAN RUDY DORSCHT, *Women, Reading, Kroetsch*. Wilfrid Laurier, $24.95.

INSTEAD OF going west, I went east. To put it another way, I began reading Susan Dorscht's *Women Reading Kroetsch* in the lounge of Manchester Airport, England, and completed the review before touching ground in Tokyo, Japan (a journey of over fifteen hours). So while my body was moving forward in time, my imagination about-faced in order to appreciate this fascinating and scholarly account of the Canadian poet, Robert Kroetsch. Although Dorscht would no doubt appreciate the post-modern implications of this cultural fragmentation, at the same time it allows me to initiate a metaphor which highlights the problematic division in her text between feminism and Derridean deconstruction. Although *Women Reading Kroetsch* locates its theoretical dialogue firmly in the feminist tradition, bringing together Kroetsch and feminism because his writing exists "across the spectrum of sexual differences, without the opposition male/female," the work is thoroughly indebted to contemporary French critical theory in the form of that iconic figure, Jacques Derrida. A brief glance through the bibliography confirms the number of Derrida texts as fifteen, surpassed only by Kroetsch who has a respectable thirty-six, and approached only by the excellent Linda Hutcheon who numbers seven. By indicating this propensity I am not criticizing Dorscht, indeed, I greatly admire her ability to explain the more complex concepts of literary theory in Part I of her work, as well as her adept practice of them in the close textual analyses of Part II. But her split-allegiances seem to highlight a problem which many contemporary feminists face. The seductive draw of *différance* does indeed, as Dorscht points out, allow us to "reread the concept of 'woman' by locating moments at which (sexual) identity breaks down, when messages are not delivered, at which meaning and speaking — sexual and otherwise ■— are carried out in the play of *différance."* Nevertheless, the denial of material referentiality inevitably neutralizes the political power of feminism — now we have travelled so far towards asserting (not REasserting) our independent subject identities, should we allow ourselves to be so casually swept back by the linguistic free-play of deconstruction? Moreover, while none of us would deny Derrida's right to be honoured by Cambridge university, that doesn't mean we condone the misogynistic treatment of women students witnessed in his celluloid excursions. Even though she refers to this issue in footnote 6 of her introduction, Dorscht never really addresses the problems her divided loyalties accrue. But this theoretical proviso aside, I enjoyed the book immensely, and found her readings of Kroetsch enlightening and imaginative.

The text divides into two sections — theory and practice—the former concentrating upon why Dorscht finds Kroetsch's dislocating of the subject identity useful for feminism, and the latter focussing upon a range from his canon. The first works to be considered are *Badlands* (1975) and *Fieldnotes* (1981) which are identified as post-structuralist texts that open up a plurality of meanings to his reader (Chapter 3). This hypothesis reemerges in Dorscht's analysis of *Alibi* (1985) in Chapter 7. She also deals with Kroetsch's challenge to the conventional novel form *(But We Are Exiles* [1965]; Chapter 4) ; with the instability of his gendered/sexualized subject *(The Stud-*

horse Man [1969]; Chapter 5) ; his transmutation of the unnatural and unknowable into the 'natural' desire of the reader *(What the Crow Said* [1978]; Chapter 6) ; and his interrogation of the autobiographical self *(Completed Field Notes* [1989]; Chapter 8). This latter chapter is, perhaps, where she comes closest to engaging with contemporary Canadian feminist writing, since autobiography and its variants are some of the key areas for development in the writings of authors such as Nicole Brossard and Daphne Marlatt. It is also the chapter in which Dorscht herself highlights the tension between the material and the theoretical: quoting Kroetsch she reiterates, "we eat real potatoes" and concludes that, "not only the fictions, but also the contradictions, make us real."

Dorscht returns to gender issues in her conclusion where she refers to Rosalind's epilogue from Shakespeare's *As You Like It.* At this point in the play, the Renaissance boy actor (women were not allowed to act on the public stage), who has been dressed as the heroine, informs the spectators of his true gender, and proceeds to evoke homoerotic tensions by offering to kiss the men in the audience. Dorscht interprets this speech as "destabilizing] the pronoun," thereby theorizing our perception of the play. By chance, I recently experienced a performance of *As You Like It* with an all-male cast (Cheek By Jowl, 1991) which threw a somewhat different light on the ending. Rather than leaving the women in the audience empowered by a destabilizing of gender roles, it left them feeling alienated by the man on stage responding exclusively to the men in the audience. By "eating real potatoes," then, a text may be interpreted quite differently. This is, perhaps, exactly the risk that Derridean feminists run ; after all, deconstruction sometimes appears like a game for the boys or "men speak," to borrow a phrase from Lola Lemire Tostevin *(Color of Her Speech,* 1982). Dorscht herself suggests that Canadian feminist theory should "support, question, challenge, and reconfigure deconstruction," and her own knowledge and skill in this precise area suggest that she would be the ideal person to take up her own challenge.

MARION WYNNE-DAVIES

ADVENTURE, MYSTERY & FANTASY

MARTYN GODFREY, *Wally Stutzgummer, Super Bad Dude.* Scholastic, $4.50.

GORDON KORMAN, *MacDonald Hall Goes Hollywood.* Scholastic, $3.95.

MARY JANE MILLER, *Upside Down.* Viking, $17.00.

BiLLi ROSEN, *Sophie's Cat.* Faber and Faber, $18.99.

MARY wooDBURY, *Letting Go.* Scholastic, $3.95.

ADVENTURE, MYSTERY and fantasy seem to be particularly important ingredients in children's and young adult novels. Books that combine any or all of the three and that are well-written are likely to achieve instant popularity. These three important ingredients appear frequently in this selection of novels for the young reader. *Sophie's Cat,* Rosen's third novel, has both mystery and adventure. Who is the mysterious Farmer Stone? Why is he always stalking around the countryside with a huge gun? Why are animals disappearing all around Upper Catsfield? And why does Farmer Stone have a kitchen full of knives, poisons and animal cages? These questions alone, particularly in order, point to answers which even someone who has not read the book can articulate. And that is the first problem with this disappointing novel. The ending is predictable. The townspeople rise up against the vicious Farmer Stone, only to find that he is not what they think he is. Even an

unsophisticated reader can see it coming from early on in the novel. Equally irritating is the style of the novel. Although written for pre-teens, this book is written too simply. The whole books seems to be constructed of short, simple sentences, large numbers of editorial comments that are both juvenile and completely unenlightening, and characters that are stock, dull and undeveloping. None of the children develops in any way. There is no shift in awareness, even at the end when the whole town realises it was wrong about Farmer Stone. In fact, the ending of the novel is sentimental and trite. There is little or nothing to recommend this book, an unfortunate fact given the success of Rosen's first two novels.

Godfrey's *Wally Stutzgummer, Super Bad Dude* is another adventure story for pre-teens. This slim novel works much better than did *Sophie's Cat.* The writing is terse, the novel is action-packed, and there is distinct character development in the main character, Wally. His development is both emotional and moral, without being either sentimental or "preachy." He makes some bad mistakes in the course of the novel but learns from them, while engaged in outrageous yet somehow typically boyish adventures. The presence of his strong-minded and independent girlfriend adds another dimension to this well-written novel. Further, Wally's fascination with language is a major benefit, as it will encourage young readers to think more about words and how and why they go together the way they do, stimulating an intellectual engagement with language and concepts that goes far beyond the boundaries of this highly entertaining book.

Another new book which deals with issues of the heart and making choices is Woodbury's *Letting Go*. However, unlike *Wally Stutzgummer, Super Bad Dude,* this novel is both dull and unconvincing. It is supposedly set in 1956, and concerns the development of Toronto's Centre Island into a parkland, which means the demolition of the summer homes there. However, unless the readers know the history of Centre Island, there is no other indication that this novel is set in the 1950s. Unlike Thurman Hunter's or Lunn's excellent historical novels, the tone, the settings and the language all suggest the 1990s. In fact, the novel offers little of anything else. The writing is uneven, as is the tone. The language is sophisticated in one part, simplistic in another. The protagonist Sara says several times that she is beginning to be treated as though she were "a big girl," language normally reserved for pre-schoolers, not young teens. This kind of writing makes the novel irritating at best. Furthermore, there are no adventures and little in the way of character development, despite the fact that Sara has to come to terms with her grandmother's imminent death. The transitions from scene to scene are poor in the extreme so that it is impossible to see how and if the character has grown from any particular situation.

A less disappointing "domestic" or "problem" novel is Miller's *Upside Down.* Set in the 1990s, it shows the struggles of a teen to come to terms with her mother's desire to date a year after her father's death. Sara also has to come to terms with *whom* her mother is dating — the dentist father of a "dorky" classmate. Of course, as one would expect, she does come to terms with her mother's actions, developing an understanding of her mother's needs as she does so. She even comes to accept Adam, Dr. Quigley's son.

In this novel, the writing is terse and the characters are reasonably well-defined. However, while feelings and motivations are well-portrayed in the early part of the novel, by the end they are more murky, so that we never find out why she decides to accept Adam, nor why he has changed his obnoxious behaviour so radically.

What character development there is, therefore, is hard to follow or accept.

This novel, like *Letting Go* and so many others of the "domestic" and "problem" genres, is vapid. These books are not entertaining. They have poor character development, often showing the end result of the young person's working through a problem or a set of feelings, without showing the process. They are one-dimensional novels, exploring nothing much about life or people at all. Although possibly encouraging to young people facing similar problems to the ones they outline, they have no real content, and certainly do not qualify as literature.

Korman's most recent novel, *MacDonald Hall Goes Hollywood* also does not qualify as literature. However, it has a quality that the previous two novels are completely lacking — it is highly entertaining. Another madcap adventure involving the two incorrigible characters Bruno and Boots, this novel is sheer fun from beginning to end, having a clever and complex plot that contains some nice and quite unexpected reversals. Unlike the tedious predictability of the "problem" novels, Korman's MacDonald Hall romp entertains while it stimulates the mind. Geared for the same age-group as the previous two books, it stands so far above them in style, complexity and potential to amuse that there is simply no comparison.

LYNN WYTENBROEK

MR. SAM

MICHAEL MARRUS, *Mr. Sam: The Life and Times of Samuel Bronfman*. Penguin, $35.00.

I HAVE ALWAYS found, being both, that in dealing with the gifts of contingency, the biographer has his obvious advantages over the historian. Granted that both have taken as their task providing a clear, comprehensible form for the chaos of events, it is obviously better to be faced with a single life, which has its necessary limitations of time and space, than with a century or an epoch or even a single striking year like that of the Plague or the Great Exhibition. History small-case — not the History as a moving force of which Hegel and Marx wrote — is made by the historian out of the facts at his disposal, with the collaboration of his predecessors. The biographer has the added advantage of the collaboration of his subject, who rarely, if he is important enough to become the subject of a Life, has failed to give a glance towards posterity. As a result, one's assessment of the biographer's intent in making his arrangement becomes important when we approach a figure like Samuel Bronfman, about whom most people *know* little though they may have strong opinions of him and his "diabolical" associations.

There are several reasons why I have picked *Mr. Sam* for review out of a pile of more or less popular biographies. One is personal, and can be passed over quickly; the earlier days of the Bronfman brothers were lived out in that prairie borderland region where my father also wandered and worked in the decade before World War I. Then there is the matter of the best known and saddest of relations between a Canadian writer and his patron —A. M. Klein and Sam Bronfman. I shall return to that as a question concerning the literary world in general. But first I would like to say something about *Mr. Sam* as a biography, and the sub-genre to which it belongs.

For this is an example of the rehabilitative biography; there is no evidence that it was ever actually commissioned, but it is clearly written with the benevolent interest of at least the direct line of the Bronfman extended family. It has the look that corporate hagiographies often have — fat and substantial though poorly illustrated, with a glittering dust cover like one

of Mr. Sam's own packaging efforts, but inside a hard board cover of cheap texture and vulgar tint. (Here it must be said that Mr. Sam did have, as Marrus contends, a real sense of quality; he *was* after all the creator of *Chivas Regal* and might have been less than happy at this lapse on the part of Penguin, usually such excellent packagers of books.) And its approach is one of kindly understanding, more than a little tinged with admiration; there is nothing of the destructive biographical fury a Lytton Strachey might have felt called to apply to a life of Mr. Sam.

Michael Marrus, whose past is that of the controversial popular historian, begins his book with a couple of sentences such as an experienced biographer would have instinctively avoided.

> Sam Bronfman has become a mythic figure in Canadian life — even more so in the twenty years after his death than during his long and eventful career. And increasingly, the myth bears less and less relationship to the life itself.

In fact, Sam Bronfman was at best a timid associate of the bad and the bold during the Prohibition period, and a main aim of Michael Marrus has been to create a respectable counter-image of a kind of Canadian paragon, the untypical rustic Jew who comes in from the outback (though without dung on his impeccably kept shoes), and builds an empire, a dynasty and an international philanthropic reputation out of booze.

Sam Bronfman was seldom targetted, publicly at least, for his Jewish origins, and he quite effectively countered any attacks from that direction by his often expressed imperialist sentiments and his devoted monarchism. If at times he enjoyed the jest of being called "king of the Jews," he was equally definite about his fidelity to George VI, Rex Imperator, and later, when the Empire faded, to Elizabeth Regina. It was the booze and the money that counted against him, and Marrus's problem is to dispel the puritanical prejudice that seizes on the first, and the democratic egalitarianism that aims at the second.

What is to be said about booze? You like it or you don't, and stern teetotal fundamentalists will not be led aside by the smokescreen Marrus pulls over the road when he talks of Mr. Sam's devotion to quality. And similarly Sam was generous, exceptionally so among Canadian businessmen who keep close hands on their cheque books. Surprising projects benefited from Bronfman grants — including a *festschrift (A Political Art)* which Bill New compiled in my honour in 1978. But Sam still kept more than he gave away and left a family conglomerate strong enough to prove that booze is a better fence against misfortune than real estate. But that doesn't satisfy his radical critics.

The higher ground on to which Marrus is finally driven is Sam as the warm human being, great family man, fine friend. But his children were browbeaten, and Phyllis Lambert at least had to find a path for her own great talents. His closest and most loyal friends were subjected to glittery-eyed and obscene tantrums that made a mockery of their loyalty.

Indeed, the more one sees these men of abilities if not of talents enduring such behaviour with indulgent shrugs, the more one is troubled in telling the friend from the toady. And this applies especially in the case of Sam's relationship with A. M. Klein. The real Klein has doubtless been over-valued as a poet, but he was not talentless, and his behaviour, though it showed an apparent eagerness to be dependent, was clearly motivated by multiple insecurities, personal as well as financial, including shame over the need to show such gratitude as Mr. Sam implicitly demanded. Like all personal patronage relationships, it was a humiliating one, especially in a mid-twentieth century con-

text, and while it might not be fair to Bronfman to claim that he was the cause of Klein's ultimate collapse, there is no doubt that he helped. Not that the Canada Council's kind of patronage has done away with toadyism, but in making it less direct it has made it less personally degrading.

The fact is that rehabilitative biographies like *Mr. Sam* never work, any more than debunking ones, because in either the manipulating hand of the biographer is evident. Canadians tend these days to the rehabilitative approach, and that is probably why our biographical tradition is so flat in comparison with our historical one where, as in the case of Donald Creighton, the imagination has flourished far beyond the facts.

Making Mr. Sam respectable has merely made him dull.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

HIGH ELBOWS

JAN GORAK, *The Making of the Modern Canon: Genesis and Crisis of a Literary Idea.* Athlone, $60.00. ROBERT BOYERS, *After the Avant-Garde: Essays in Art and Culture.* Pennsylvania State Univ., $23.50.

JAN GORAK'S *The Making of the Modern Canon,* the latest addition to the Athlone Press *Series on Canons,* is an important and timely contribution to the current debate on canonicity in literary studies. It is particularly to the point here in Canada, where the discussion, with respect to our own literature, has generated for a decade much heat, motion, and some pretty high elbows along the boards. We all ought to take a short time out from the fray to read Professor Gorak's excellent book.

He begins by clearing away one misleading abstraction about canons which both conservatives and radicals, oddly enough, seem to accept. "They both invoke," he writes, "an abstract, hypostatized 'Canon' rather than explore the circulation and function of actual historical canons in specific communities, institutions, and individual critical careers." The wealth of historical evidence which Gorak gathers indicates that "the Canon" as a singular "homogenizing entity" has never really existed. Of course, the manysided concept itself and the practical canons devised in particular places and times most certainly did and do exist.

Recent hostility to *the* canon normally takes two directions. First, many critics believe that the canon operates as a tool of systematic exclusion and is, thus, repressive in effect. It reinforces class, gender, and ethnic assumptions; it helps to reproduce the culture of domination by which socioeconomic elites shape society to serve their own particular needs and ends. Literature is not itself directly the agent of repression, but in the complex layering of repressive apparatuses and discourses which make up a whole society, the literary canon serves to occupy and seal off the upper end of the culture, in short, to colonize the soul.

The second line of attack is more specific. Within the general repressive apparatus, the canon promotes and transmits, unreflectively, a fixed set of orthodox values and responses. Institutional authority, rather than intrinsic merit, legitimizes this transmission. As a result, those who occupy the most powerful positions in the institution (the conservative minority who are most threatened by change) maintain their grip on cultural power by policing the canon, or, to put it another way, by superintending canonic culture in the service of the powers-that-be in general. This is experienced by the dominated, then, as a prison world of surveillance and punishment, and the final examination and the threat of failure are its rack and dungeon.

As a general account of how canons

(plural not singular) work in actually existing societies the above reflects a good deal of wishful thinking among the so-called radicals; the account fails because it is far too unhistorical. The strength of Gorak's book lies in making us aware of the altogether messier histories in which canons are devised and promoted, contested, modified, subverted, and, eventually, surpassed. As long as societies are constructed by power relations, canons will remain battlegrounds.

The first two chapters of the book constitute a richly detailed survey of canonic thinking in the past, from Aristotle's "leaden rule" of the Lesbian builders to the establishment of scriptural canons, from the Romantic concept of *Weltliteratur,* to the use of canons for the purpose of nationalist self-definition in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His survey finally comes to rest on the debates of the present. All this is very informative and should be required reading.

However, it is Gorak's central chapters that are particularly important. Here he examines the critical careers of four authoritative critics and scholars and considers their impact on canonic thinking in the twentieth century. He begins with Sir Ernest Gombrich, the great art historian, and his defense of functionalist canons ("they have a scientific basis in our most elementary perceptions"). He moves on to what he calls Northrop Frye's visionary canon, which "works towards a Utopian future" from a framework of myth. He, then, tackles Frank Kermode's canon of interpretation which interposes the more limited instrumentalism of the mutable fiction in the place of essentialist myths. And he culminates, not surprisingly, with Edward Said and the open canon which proposes not only the end of the eurocentric canon, but more importantly the end of canonical habits of thinking, the ritualistic routines which characterize "the closeted academic world stretching from Frankfort to Berkeley." These detailed studies of seminal thinkers contain some of the best writing today on the canon question.

The weakest part of Gorak's book is his final chapter, where he speculates rather limply on the future of the debate. Most of his comments verge on the banal, a problem when one gets too topical. He does raise one interesting issue though ; he inserts the debate about canons into the institutional process now at work from Frankfurt to Berkeley transforming the traditional department of literature into a department of cultural studies. The amorphous curriculum which cultural studies threatens to put before us will perhaps resolve finally the problem of a unified, exclusivist, vertical canon, by putting in its place a kind of decentered ainoebal horizontality that simply ingests everywhere at once whatever texts lie in the way of its rolling protoplasmic progress.

Robert Boyers' *After the Avant-Garde: Essays in Art and Culture* is quite definitely a celebration of the vertical. Unlike Gorak, a literary historian and scholar, Boyers is an intellectual; I don't know whether he lives in Manhattan (he probably doesn't, being neither poor nor rich enough to manage it), but I suspect he can put himself forward as the current model of what that endearing term "New York intellectual" has come to mean in post-Trilling times. He *is* a professor, of course, just like everyone else, but, more importantly, in his capacity as intellectual he is editor of *Salmagundi,* a periodical of liberal humanist sentiments and modernist aesthetic tendencies. The collection of writings in *After the Avant-Garde* is not a professor's tenure or promotion book, it is the product of ten years of literary journalism, essays, book reviews, occasional writings on a large number of highly topical issues, The pieces cover the contemporary cultural terrain at most of the crucial skirmishing points, all the way

from language theory, the modern-post-modern debate (Boyersis firmly modernist in his aesthetic values), the argument for a homosexual literary tradition (he says that the gay critic Robert Martin has blown the attempt), and, finally, a series of essays on the cinema.

The essay on Ingmar Bergman is particularly interesting because it is a riposte to feminist critics of the Swedish film director. Boyers tries to place what feminists see as "Bergman's troubling attitudes towards women" in a context that redeems the integrity of Bergman's art. Does he do it? Well, no, not if you're a feminist, but, well, yes, if you're a liberal humanist New York intellectual.

JOHN XIROS COOPER

MANAGING, MOSTLY

ROSEMARY NIXON, *Mostly Country: Short Stories*. NeWest, $9.95. JOAN FERN SHAW, *Managing Just Fine*. Oberon, $23-95/$' ï-95-

HERE ARE TWO new collections of short stories, Rosemary Nixon's first, *Mostly Country* and Joan Fern Shaw's second, *Managing Just Fine*. Margaret Atwood's praises appear on the back cover of Nixon's book: *"Mostly Country* is not only a collection of stories, it's the portrait of a rural western community — lovingly but toughly observed, told with tenderness and understanding but also with no holds barred. The stories themselves are deceptively simple, familiar as wheat, surprising as a handful of blood in a flour bin. An excellent debut." Shaw's book is advertised in her own words : "most of my characters are quite ordinary people, people who manage their lives as best they can, despite the difficulties they encounter. Each lives his or her life with quiet, unspoken courage. These are the small victories I celebrate."

Both books speak particularly powerfully of the courage of women's lives. Like Audrey Thomas' *Mrs. Blood,* Nixon's story "TAKE; EAT" takes on and transforms the metaphors associated with communion. In Nixon's story the mother, Martha, is an ambiguous figure, both priest (she offers food to her grown daughter, Ruth, to heal her after she loses an infant son) and communicant (the mother too needs to take, eat). The complex relationship between the women, eating to make a new connection following the death of the child/grandchild, is evident in this passage :

> They have corn at the kitchen table under waning light. Creamed peas (two vegetables because the occasion is special), a lettuce salad with cucumbers, radishes, a bit of onion, new potatoes — all from Martha's garden — and cold sliced beef. Rasperries with milk, and bread and butter for desert.
>
> They chew in almost companionable silence. Martha's good at silence. Ruth never was. Always needed to laugh, or shout, or cry loud tears. Now it's the other way around. Ruth veers away when Martha reaches out. Martha looks at Ruth, slight, nibbling on her corn, her eyes somewhere inside herself; she wants to reach out and touch her on the wrist, to cry, "Child, arise!" like Jesus. And her daughter's spirit will return and she will rise up at once and eat.

The conjunction of daughter and son, child and grandchild, lost child and child lost now that she too is a mother, and the desire for many kinds of rebirth makes the traditionally male and masculine image into a communion ritual based on women's experience and needs.

Joan Fern Shaw's "The Kiwi Fruit and I" also revisions traditional symbols, making them more useful to women. "I persist, you see," says the "senior" narrator, "by hypnotizing myself with symbols. And I enter the castle certain that something inside will be symbolic enough to get me through another day." The "artistically attired but "empty" Easter egg which she finds there is replaced, at the

end of the story, with the kiwi fruit which, not unlike Daphne Marlatt's kiwi in *Touch to My Tongue,* is blissfully female:

> I … select a kiwi fruit, cut it in half and gasp.
>
> Now, I have always loved the colour green: ferns, fields, the tiny maple leaves of May; a bowl of Granny Smiths, smooth avocado flesh, crème de menthe frappé.
>
> But never have I seen a green as verdant as kiwi fruit. Delicate veins lead the eye through clear emerald pulp to a centre cupped in black. My hands trembling, I peel the next one, unveiling a jewel; surely the trees in Aladdin's cave were hung with precious stones like these. I slice it, select the middle piece and pause, afraid the flavour will let me down.
>
> But it tastes exactly like its colour.

The woman narrating, with her "greying hair," begins the story "walking, seeking symbols," but finds she doesn't need the "age-old" Easter egg, which bears the sign of the "fertility symbol." Instead she celebrates her full, verdant sexuality by vowing "On Easter, on every Easter, I shall fill a basket with kiwi fruit."

Not all the stories in both collections are as satisfying as these two. But both collections are well worth reading. I look forward to future work by Nixon and Shaw.

SUSAN RUDY DORSCHT

END-GAME OF THE AVANT-GARDE?

BARRY SMART, *Modern Conditions, Postmodern Controversies*. Routledge, $19.95.

ZYGMUNT BAUMAN, *Intimations of Postmodernity*. Routledge, $21.50.

THESE FIRST TWO volumes in the Routledge Social Futures series confirm that controversy about postmodernism is far from over.

Barry Smart, the General Editor of the new series, gets things off to a good start with a lucid, densely documented account of those practices — aesthetic, economic, technological — whose inescapable distinctiveness has been labelled postmodern. This is not a book that performs its postmodernity in an unhelpfully mimetic way ; instead, it contains a wide array of examples within a structure and prose style which continuously reassure the reader that effective communication is possible. In fact, one is left wondering whether anything important has been lost in Smart's elucidation, whether postmodernism has lost its edge, its shimmer, its *Unheimlichkeit* in the interests of academic objectives laudable in themselves but in some ways distorting and oppressive. Smart does not play down or brashly oversimplify the "controversies" he discusses, but there are moments when one would have liked to see more sophisticated reading practices in operation.

Smart begins aptly with "Reflections On Change." If change is inevitable, then does that make it important or trivial, mysterious or banal, or within and beyond such oppositions? How do we understand change as difference, and how do we apprehend it (if indeed we do) as sequence? Obviously, how we choose (or are positioned or required) to understand and practice reflection—whether as reflexivity or the quest for the referent, as a confident or cautious or deeply ironic employment of the mirror and other mainstays of visual epistemology — will help determine what emerges as the product of reflection : consciousness (more or less incommunicable) or knowledge (more or less contingent), or something else. Smart pays insufficient attention to this latter question, directing himself instead to Alain Touraine's view that "social life cannot be reduced to change." It is clear from the outset that the preservation of the social, and the varieties of collective experience and practice it has traditionally supported, will be defended against various forms of self-

intoxicating solipsism (Baudrillard) and sour Jeremiad (Fukuyama). The argument turns on competing reading of the current historical moment as post-marxist, post-industrial, post-capitalist, all analogues or sources for postmodernism which Smart connects to problems of inequality and the dangerous persistence of the nation-state. Rather than being defeated by difference and the pervasive obsolescence or extinction of the old economic and political orders, Smart aligns himself with Ernesto Laclau and Chantai Mouffe's search for a "radical imaginary" which will help realize a "radical democracy" through the introduction of deconstruction and related forms of literary theory into some of the holiest places in marxist thinking.

Smart offers a number of checks to Parsonian narratives of progress with their very American (not to say high imperialist) conception of a *universal* modernity. His informed scepticism about claims to universality and purity allows him to establish links, for instance, between information technology and a "military-industrial axis," and to expose (after Foucault) the illusory neutrality of information. His comments on our ambivalence about work have considerable bearing on the intellectual labour we think we are (or ought to be) engaging in in Canada at this time. Chapter three usefully summarizes "alternative Futures," and will hearten those interested in developing an ecological criticism which would move us beyond industrialization and professionalization. Chapter 4, "Art, Work and Analysis in an Age of Electronic Simulation," pursues the implications of technological change for thought and agency, both individual and collective, in the work of Benjamin, McLuhan, and Baudrillard. Smart brings out important disagreements among marxists about what mass circulation of simulacra means for a politics of the masses : "For [Stuart] Hall the political possibilities of the masses remain open, a matter of struggle, for Baudrillard the 'indifference of the masses is their true, their only practice'." Yet the "Postmodern Paradox," despite the dangers of aestheticism, trivialization, may still prove, as Giddens and others continually remind us, a source of *productive* contradiction and collectively *usable* discursive space. Smart's final pages respond to the possibility that marxism is the only "grand narrative" able to cope with the challenges of late capitalism. He makes a solid, critical case for continuity and for the dangerously reifying and confining effects of labels at a time when logos has become a plural dear to advertisers and informed consumers, and when we need perhaps more than ever to heed Marx's caveat: "all I know is that I am not a marxist." For those unfamiliar with Zygmunt Bauman's work, especially *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-Modernity and Intellectuals,* this new collection of essays has many treats in store, including an interview in which he talks of his formation as a marxist humanist through reading Gramsci and others and experiencing anti-semitism in his native Poland. Like Smart, Bauman engages with doubleness, insisting on the capacity of sociology to put it to work, not by controlling it completely but by displaying wariness and resolve in the face of its ubiquity, and seeking, despite the difficulties, "the golden mean between colonizing temptations and the selfishness of tribal self-closure." Aware that narrative may violate the incoherencies of postmodernism in a very basic way, and that western civilization has a particular need to exchange totalizing gestures for local initiatives, Bauman offers "a number of sightings, or glimpses of the postmodern scene," first in a group of essays that question the traditional disciplinary profile of sociology in this new cultural field, and then in a number of analyses of the failure of com-

munism and the dangers of a capitalist reduction of freedom to "consumer choice." A master of the aphorism, Bauman also offers tactful, cumulative support for his view that "the contemporary reorientation of cultural discourse can best be understood as a reflection on the changing experience of intellectuals, as they seek to re-establish their social function on a new ground in a world ill-fit for their traditional role." He constantly connects our recent linguistic turn to other forms of social change, and is especially suggestive in linking Lyotard's comments on "the novel freedom and independence of language games . .. [to] the decoupling of the communicative sphere from the structure of political and economic domination." As with his comments on Derridean textuality later, Bauman puts language in its place, but only by underestimating its continuing connections to power and its unrivalled usefulness as medium and model for social interaction. This book demands and rewards critical reading, and will send many readers with renewed determination back to the question of whether postmodernism is "the end-game of the avant-garde" (Huyssen) or the latest phase of that intellectual vanguardism which has for centuries kept a clerkly conversation going.

L. M. FINDLAY

SOMEDAY

JOY KOGAWA, *Itsuka.* Viking, $24.99.

SOMETIMES THE context in which you read a novel conditions forever your response to it : I read *Itsuka* in Berlin, while attending a conference on multiculturalism. It was both fitting and disturbing to have brought together in one place for you themes of war and loss, the political and the private, pain and healing. *Itsuka* continues the story of Naomi Nakane from *Obasan,* Kogawa's earlier novel, as she leaves the prairie town in which she had grown up and first worked and moves to Toronto in 1976. But the real focus is on the middle years of the 1980s, the years that marked the fight for and successful achievement of Japanese Canadian redress for their treatment at the hands of the federal government during World War II. The leader of the fight, once again, is Naomi's Aunt Emily, "militant nisei," whose motto — "Hands and a seeing heart . . . can do anything. Anything" — does not protect her from exhaustion and illness, discouragement and anger, even if she is vindicated in the end.

Parallel to the story of anger — of the innumerable battles both with the government and within the Japanese Canadian community itself — runs a story of love, as the gentle, silent, fearful Naomi, a self-defined "old-maid orphan, a barren speck of dust … a watcher of other people's children," falls in love with a college chaplain, Cedric, who seems to come to incarnate what is good about multicultural Canada: "His father, an Anglican priest like himself, was predominantly English, French and Eastern European. His mother was an Ontario Francophone. On his mother's side, his grandmother was Métis, part Ojibway." From his mother, Cedric learned "a capacity to sense sentience" and so loves in the middle-aged Naomi her very silence and reserve. As she herself notes, however, these days, this can be no ordinary love story: "In this my autumn season, in this feminist era, I am opening the book of an untimely tale. Somewhere in the air are Cinderella's slippers, and on earth, soft moccasins are dancing." In this "untimely tale" of love, Cedric becomes her "black-robed fairy godmother," and the awkwardness of that image may suggest something of the text's awareness that the character it describes is just too good to be true. He must carry a heavy burden in Naomi's story : teacher and companion, love interest, moral guide,

symbolic sheltering "kindly tree" — in a novel in which nature takes on dimensions well beyond those of mere setting. The strong ecological motif throughout the narrative ties together, in a holistic way, threads as seemingly diverse as history, love, anti-urban (anti-Toronto) feelings, and even multiculturalism. Here, for instance, is a passionate intervention from the floor at an "ethnocultural breakfast" held by the Minister of Multiculturalism : "We're going to stamp out racism here and show the world how it's done. Not by homogenization. We know that a homogenized mindset is ecologically unsound. But by real plurality. And I'm not talking about ethnic folkdancing, I'm talking about access to power__ Not tolerance of difference, but celebration __" *Itsuka* is a celebration — but of similarity within or in spite of difference : it is in Cedric that Naomi finds the sympathy, affection and understanding she can find nowhere in her "own" community.

In one of the most daring and challenging connections in the novel, the dispersal of the Japanese during and after the war becomes a metaphor for the fragmentation of Canada as a nation : "If you aren't joined to those you love, your heart shrivels up and blows away in the dust. Whole countries get disappeared that way. It could happen to Canada. . . . If we're to survive as a country, we need to be in touch. We need communication. . . . If our country isn't to erode away, our roots have to be firmly interlocked." Like the Japanese Canadian community itself, the nation is like a jigsaw puzzle: "The scars, the marks of our separation, remain. But the picture grows clearer, our wholeness forms, when even a few of us, in our brokenness, start coming together." Part of Canada's unity problems, in Emily's eyes, comes from its history in dealing with the Japanese Canadians: "when Canada smashed our lives apart, it sickened its own soul." One of the important and insistent themes of the novel is that, during World War II, Japanese Canadians suffered at the hands of their *own* government, that they were Canadians first and foremost. For Emily, as for Kogawa, "home is where our stories are, and that's not just a question of ethnicity or even country." But with the achievement of redress in 1988, at last, another story could come into being: finally, for Japanese Canadians, the novel suggests, "to be Canadian means what it hasn't meant before. Reconciliation. Liberation. Belongingness. Home." The weight of the rest of the narrative suggests that this will not necessarily mean the end of stories of racism — overt or covert — and betrayal : "political betrayals, leadership betrayals, betrayals in communities and families, betrayals of our values" ; but it clearly marks an ideal. *Itsuka* — someday — may have arrived.

The title of the novel provides a kind of refrain of hope: "itsuka, someday, the time for laughter will come" is repeated at the beginning and the end of the book, but both times in the future tense. "Itsuka" is also the message of the Japanese Canadian Father Nakayama, preaching to the first-generation issei: "someday, your sacrifice will be known." That someday arrives, perhaps, with this novel, a eulogy and elegy to the issei, a literally dying generation. The members of the next generation, the nisei, themselves greying and suffering the effects of stress and anger, chafe against their parents' uncomplaining silence and desire for harmony and compromise : "The isseis' legacy, the niseis' muzzle." But it is, significantly, this generation that fights and wins the battle for redress.

Emily, a nisei, may choose to devote herself, as she says, to the "body politic," but Naomi has to come to terms, first with both her body and politics. Through the novel, she moves, slowly and self-consciously, from a passivity that is almost a

form of paralysis to action — on two levels at once. As she learns to fear love and sexuality less ("How do I fear and fear. Let me count the ways" and to trust her own body and emotions, she can liberate her political along with her private passions. Kogawa has set herself a difficult problem with her first-person narrator, for Naomi is, by her own admission, "unspeakably boring." But we watch her come to life and love as she realizes that loneliness, solitude, invisibility, and silence can be transmuted into community and communication. The persistent metaphors of flight (associated with love, sexuality, and commitment) and of breath, specifically the "breath of life," trace the changes in Naomi away from the woman who could say of herself: "I've always known that on an emotional quotient chart I'd score somewhere between a cactus and a chimpanzee." Cedric, Emily, her estranged brother Stephen, Obasan, Uncle — all play their roles in this change, but it is through a stylistic transformation on the level of metaphors and of "as if" structures of comparison that the reader is led to feel the change. At the beginning, images (often noticeably odd, even almost inappropriate) proliferate, litter the pages, as Naomi admits: "I can't be direct." In her relationship with Gedric, she trusts touch more than words: "Better the instant language of limbs than the stilted messages we form and reform with the tongue." But with the formal announcement of redress comes a change, a "washing of stains through the speaking of words." Still aware that "speech is a trickster, slipping and sliding away," Naomi trusts instead the piece of paper with which the novel itself ends — the government statement that is both an acknowledgement of wrong and a proclamation of ideals : "As a people, Canadians commit themselves to the creation of a society that ensures equality and justice for all. . . ."

The paradox of a wordsmith who distrusts words—and says so within a novel — is a familiar one, but rarely has it been as moving as here. But, battling with this affective power throughout the novel is an equally strong didactic drive, an almost fierce desire to teach us as much as possible about both the Japanese Canadian past history of repression and its recent history of redress. Naomi's words about Cedric describe herself as well : "He may not look like a professor, but he sounds like one much of the time." The multicultural magazine, *Bridge,* for which many of the characters work, offers another space for documentation and instruction, and actual speeches by politicians and other figures are reproduced in the text. History and fiction meet, but do not always merge with ease here; the prose and the passion are also connected, as E. M. Forster wanted them to be, but the seams often show. But the personal warmth, commitment, and generosity that characterize the dedication of the book — to all those people involved in bringing redress — are what make the reader as student, for the most part, happy to listen here to the author as teacher.

LINDA HUTCHEON

A WOMAN SPEAKING

MARGARET LAURENCE, *Dance on the Earth: A Memoir.* McClelland & Stewart, n.p.

In a prefatory note Jocelyn Laurence explains how her mother's memoir came into being. Terminal cancer was diagnosed one month after its first draft was completed, and Laurence's customary re-drafting was perforce dictated into a tape-recorder for typing up by a friend before being corrected by Laurence and returned for a final re-typing. The loosely discursive form to which the memoir lends itself is rendered additionally conversational by

this unusual process of composition. And in a sense it is that conversationally unstructured mode that holds the book together. A woman speaking to women is how Laurence comes across, and the cadence of a distinctive voice is heard on page after page, by turns relaxed and chatty, moved and emotional, angry and impassioned, but overall celebratory and grateful, and sometimes very funny.

First and foremost her memoir is a celebration of motherhood : of her joy in her own children certainly, but powerfully of the three women she felt privileged to enjoy in that relationship; her natural mother, her aunt who became her stepmother, and her mother-in-law. There is a fourth, because Adele Wiseman's mother, it is recorded here, also treated Laurence like a daughter. Laurence at times produces a quasi-religious ambience that gives a passionate edge to her denunciation of war and of nuclear terror, and together with the stories she tells of her own child-bearing suggests that this book should be warmly recommended to all those who would deny young people the pleasures of her writing.

One of those pleasures is a reliving of structures of feeling from the nineteen-thirties, forties and fifties that shaped young and old, with them hardly being aware of it : the design of women's clothes immediately after the war almost compelling a return to domesticity; 'literature' naturally meaning 'English literature' during Laurence's undergraduate career; wartime popular music proclaiming the sentiments that 'a world without England wouldn't be worth living in; and everywhere the effective because naturally assumed determinations of gendered subordination. And, insistently, Laurence's dogged refusal to be so shaped. The emotional attitudes registered here feed transparently into the rest of her work to the extent that she enjoys the distinctive position of being the name instantly conjured whenever a newcomer to the field asks about contemporary Canadian writing. She does, anyway, take pleasure in remembering that *The Stone Angel* 'was reviewed in England as the study of an old person and in America as the story of a strong pioneer woman — but in Canada, Hagar was, and still is, seen as everybody's grandmother or great-grandmother.

It is also intriguing to watch sub-texts unfold in *Dance on the Earth*. The writer who did more than most to repatriate myths of origination, to re-locate and redefine ancestors in terms of domestic Canadian space, and thus give depth and definition to Canadian subjectivity, constantly refers to her Celtic forbears in vindication of various attributes and emotional characteristics — 'my canny Scots background' — 'my Scots-Irish independence' — the bagpipes are 'my ancestral music' It makes it doubly interesting to be reminded that it was in Africa that Laurence garnered material for her early work (theorists of post-colonial writing should pause over her excitement at 'African writers producing what I thought I and many Canadian writers were producing: a truly non-colonial literature.') ; and it was in a Buckinghamshire village that she produced six more books, making her stay in England her most artistically creative period. It was in Elm Cottage, too, that she started work on *The Diviners* (in 1971), though that novel was to be completed on native ground. 'I worked on *The Diviners* during the next two years, in the summer at the shack and, in the intervening months, back at Elm Cottage. The river flowing both ways was, of course, the Otonabee river, and every time I looked up from the page I was writing at the shack, I could see it.'

I was left wanting more; more of her experiences during the early days of the Writer's Union, barely touched upon here, and more of her remarks about the way she wrote and the process of construction,

things which, again, are glimpsed here, sometimes tantalisingly, but then not explored in any satisfactory way. With the exception of her sharply-written reconstruction of the genuine hurt she suffered at the hands of those who seek to ban her books from schools, it seems that when the subject at hand is remembered personal relationships then the writing is fresh and fluent; at other times it glides rather too quickly away from areas of potential difficulty. *Dance on the Earth* veers uncertainly between the memoir, conventionally concerning itself with actions and personalities other than those of the writer, and autobiography's heavier stress on the inner and private life of its subject. Though she firmly repudiates being an autobiographical writer (with the exception of *A Bird in the House,* and *The Diviners* being described as a 'spiritual autobiography'), Laurence could justifiably claim to have explored such inner privacy in her fiction.

COLIN NICHOLSON

CULTURE WARS

CHRISTOPHER NORRIS, *Spinoza and the Origins of Modern Critical Theory.* Blackwell.

KENNETH R. JOHNSTON, GILBERT CHAITIN, KAREN HANSON AND HERBERT MARKS, eds., *Romantic Revolutions: Criticism and Theory.* Indiana.

BOTH OF THESE books are part of today's academic "culture wars." Norris's work is a critique of the cognitive and moral relativism of such as Fish and Foucault, yet Norris wants to preserve the subversive power of *Ideologiekritik,* which is normally taken to be a form of relativism. Spinoza, as both a subversive, historicizing Biblical critic and believer in cognitive absolutes, is portrayed as he who can show the way.

I'll let Norris summarize the aims of his book: "Firstly, it seeks to establish the case that nearly all the great debates in present-day literary theory have their origin in one or another aspect of Spinoza's work. [Not proved. What Norris mostly means and actually says is that Spinoza tackled the same problems; and "nearly all" is very overstated.] Secondly, it points to a number of (mostly French) movements of thought over the past few decades where Spinoza has figured as a major source of theoretical arguments and ideas. And thirdly — most important — it argues that a better understanding of Spinoza's work may help us to perceive some of the fallacies, blindspots, and effects of foreshortened historical perspective that have characterized the discourse of literary theory in its latest 'post-modern' phase." I shall focus on this last claim, which is the heart of the matter.

What Norris wants to combat is the extreme sceptical assertion that we are always and only within ideology, and thus can make no legitimate truth claims. (Norris wisely avoids kicking the stone by not pointing out [once again] that strict relativism is incoherent since it presupposes that *its* claim can be true.) Norris rightly believes that this view undermines all efforts at social criticism. What he wishes to show, and thinks Spinoza did show, is that "we are always 'in' ideology, but capable of thinking its limits and internal contradictions through an exercise of reason whose truth is in some sense *its own guarantee."*

Norris's problem rests on a confusion. He seems to think that if you say someone holds a belief because it serves her interest, then her belief cannot be true. Suppose we inquire into why a woman believes that women ought to be aided by affirmative action and are given three possible answers : i) her mother was a feminist who taught her that, 2) she has studied historical precedents and the moral issues, or 3) it serves her interest when looking for a job. Whatever answer we come to has

nothing to do with the *plausibility* (i.e. the truth) of her belief. However, *psychologically* we are disposed to think that if she believes in the justice of affirmative action because her parents told her so or because it serves her interest then the belief is false. But that does not follow, nor does it follow that if she based her belief on alternative 2 that it is true; there is, therefore, no conceptual problem. Norris is trying, without quite realizing it. to alter psychological predisposition to confuse *causal* with *justificatory* claims. He is not clear about this, and so the book does not have the argumentative force he intends. However, when a leading exponent of deconstruction claims that Spinoza, Derrida and he himself believe that truth and contextualism can and must co-exist, then believers in truth have gotten some powerful allies but no better arguments. As authority is usually more potent than reason, Norris is in a position to help his cause.

Romantic Revolutions is a collection of essays that stems from a conference at the University of Indiana occasioned by the popular 1988 exhibition "William Wordsworth and the Age of English Romanticism." The collection of seventeen essays under the rubrics "The Spell of Wordsworth," "Romanticism without Wordsworth," "American Counterpoints." and "Critical Reflections" can be made into an emblem of literary study today. A number of essays re-cast Wordsworth as canonical poet and representative person by "finding" our intellectual fashions in his work. Other essayists are sceptical about the very idea of canonical poets as representative persons. Finally, there are those who take it for granted that literary greatness is real, that Wordsworth is great and that it is worth saying it again from a somewhat different angle. We refit, reject, or repeat.

The worst essays are all in the first category, interpretive refitting. Here is a sample of this ancient path of ingenious self-indulgence, genus Lacaniensis: "This is where the child constitutes himself as a subject, as a subject for a subject, and identifies himself as the child of its mother by making a *claim* to or shouting out (from *clamo, clamare)* the name of the mother. . . ." That is a commentary on these lines: "when his soul, / Claims manifest kindred with an earthly soul, / Doth gather passion from his mother's eye" (1805 *Prelude* 2.241-243). Bring back the Freudians, I say, though an essay in this volume that offers a psychoanalytic explanation of a section of Crane's *The Bridge* is no better. Isn't it about time we abandoned such activities or just re-wrote the damn poems to suit current taste for this sort of meaning or that?

At the other end of the spectrum there are essays by Stanley Cavell, Meyer Abrams and Charles Altieri that are classic instances of humanist commentary. Altieri's essay is an exposition of the meaning of eloquence in the poetic tradition : "I define the ideal of eloquence as that feature of rhetorical performance which exemplifies the power of the passions rendered to situate the speaker so that a mutual process of amplification takes place : what the speaker attributes to the world as worthy of the passion rendered can be tested only to the degree that it moves the audience to identify with it as a potentially transformative force in their lives." To put it bluntly, the canon rests on the belief that some literature is good and often yields pleasure as well. That is what the authors thought, that is what their audiences thought, and that is what many students find; it follows that the size of English literature departments depends on this belief.

Therefore, the most provocative and academically revolutionary essay in this collection is Marilyn Butler's "Plotting the Revolution: The Political Narratives of Romantic Poetry and Criticism." What

Butler shows is that the canonical Wordsworth is an artifact of the humanist *use* of literary works, i.e. cultivation of selves, but that this use either ignores or suppresses other narratives which would give us a very different idea of a period. Butler shows that "The scale of these events [Napoleon's wars and the conquest of India] ensured that the period's dominant modes were not in the end personal, meditative and lyric, as might have been predicted in more ordinary times from what went before. The attractive Cowper became quickly superseded, and no wonder. He had to compete with allegorical narratives enacting revolution — Blake's *America,* Landor's *Gebir,* Campbell's *Pleasures of Memory,* Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer,* Byron's *Bride of Abydos* and *Corsair.* And then, since accounts of war didn't end with war, Moore's *Lalla Rookh,* Shelley's *Revolt of Islam,* Keats's *Hyperion."* Assuming this is a good account, my education in the period was poor, for I was taught the books that were good for me, and thus got a distorted view of the dominant concerns of the era. But Butler and others are confused about the significance of such re-tellings. While it makes perfect intellectual sense to say that we should make literary history independent of the edificatory use of canonical works, the narratives that we then construct may not serve contemporary political interests, which is what the revisionists believe. And if we simply get rid of the canon, there will be smaller departments, for, as Butler herself admits, most of the works that made and still make literary history do not bear much attention, such as *The Fountainhead.* Once we admit that the revised tales we tell may not connect to current concerns, and are neither morally useful nor aesthetically compelling, the interest of the new narrative is, for better or worse, strictly academic, and literary history can join intellectual history and the history of science as a minor concern of history departments. It seems sensible then to retain the idea of canonical works that are good to read (and there should be room for debate about which ones are), yet not limit literary history to a string of canonical works. Just as the explanation of why X believes Y does not mean Y is false, no form of literary history, radical or not, entails the claim that there is no such thing as literary value and that it can be expressed in a canon. That is a philosophical, not an historical claim. We can retain the idea of literary value, but remain open to alternative narratives which are not intended to shore up the canon. However, we here run into Norris's problem; what is theoretically sound may not parse in the real world of academic politics, which is the only world in which these books matter, despite the occasional authorial pretension.

ROGER SEAMON

CRITIQUE

MARIE-ANDRE BEAUDET, *Langue et littérature au Québec (i8gs-igi4).* l'Hexagone, n.p.

JACQUES PELLETIER, *Le Roman national.* Vlb, n.p.

DANS *Langue et littérature au Québec (i8g§-igi^.),* Marie-Andrée Beaudet étudie la période qui voit l'apparition d'un discours critique "indigène" au Québec. Au milieu de la mêlée, deux nouveau intervenants collectifs vont peser d'une façon durable sur toute la conjoncture qui s'étend jusqu'aux lendemains du régionalisme, c'est-à-dire presqu'à la veille de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale: l'École littéraire de Montréal (fondée en 1895) et la Société du parler français au Canada (fondée en 1901). Après les nombreux cris d'alarmes sur la qualité déplorable du français canadien, avertissements qui retentissent tout au long de la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle (d'Octave Cré-

mazie jusqu'à Arthur Buies), ces deux groupes vont publiquement mettre en oeuvre des stratégies diverses pour promouvoir la langue et la littérature canadiennes-françaises.

Alors que l'École littéraire réunit des jeunes gens de bonne famille qui se mettent à la lecture du dictionnaire et qui orchestrent brillamment quelques beaux coups de publicité au profit de la poésie moderne (dont Emile Nelligan sera parmi les premiers et les plus grands bénéficiaires), les membres de la Société du parler français sont des notables et des clercs qui s'emploient à restaurer la pureté "classique" de la parlure campagnarde. Profitant du soutien matériel et du prestige de l'Université Laval, l'influence de la Société (portéepar un puissant réseau culturel et editorial) sera surtout relayée par les écrits critiques de Mgr Camille Roy. Celui-ci est bien sûr la figure dominante de la scène littéraire canadienne-française en instance d'autonomisation, mais il y a d'autres voix individuelles qui se font entendre, quoiqu'avec moins de retentissement: Louis Dantin, Charles ab der Halden, Jules Fournier, Olivar Asselin, Marcel Dugas prennent activement part au débat. La polarisation de la discussion est nette et rejoint le divorce de la ville et de la campagne, de la modernité et de la tradition, de l'écrit et de l'oral, bref de la culture et de la nature, conflit sous-jacent à toute la production littéraire de l'époque.

Marie-Andrée Beaudet met à profit une documentation impressionnante qu'elle sait utiliser sans alourdir son texte. Elle restitue les arguments en présence avec toute la lisibilité souhaitable. Elle ne néglige pas non plus les apports des travaux les plus récents qui ont éclairé sous de nouveaux aspects plusieurs éléments de son dossier. L'ouvrage se situe dans la perspective théorique des analyses de l'institution littéraire, à la suite des travaux de Pierre Bourdieu. La période retenue — une vingtaine d'années charnières entre le XIXe et le XXe siècle — se justifie parfaitement, mais l'essayiste aurait pu en faire ressortir davantage les déterminations à long terme.

L'un des principaux enjeux de la période se dessine clairement dans la polémique qui oppose Jules Fournier à Charles ab der Halden. Jeune et brillant prosateur canadien-français, Fournier prend l'initiative d'un échange de lettres ouvertes avec l'un des premiers avocats de la littérature canadienne-française en France. Cela se passe en 1906 et 1907 dans les pages de la *Revue canadienne.* Fournier vise des adversaires locaux à travers son correspondant européen, dans la mesure où le prestige d'un Camille Roy ne peut évidemment que profiter d'une légitimité consacrée par le critique français. Le nerf de la guerre est de savoir si, oui ou non, on peut parler sans mystification d'une telle chose que la littérature canadienne-française. Fournier soutient contre ab der Halden (qui venait de publier à Paris ses *Études de littérature canadienne-française)* que cette littérature n'existe pas, notamment pour cause d'insuffisance linguistique.

Le roman national de Jacques Pelletier est un recueil d'essais sur le "néo-nationalisme et (le) roman québécois contemporain." L'ouvrage scrute les oeuvres des romanciers Jacques Godbout, Victor-Lévy Beaulieu et André Major. Fidèle à l'approche marxiste qui a caractérisé tous ses travaux précédents, Pelletier avoue l'inconfort de s'appuyer sur une théorie qui vient de connaître la déconfiture historique que l'on sait. Il achève donc ses propos d'introduction sur une note ambiguë en se disant marxisant plutôt que marxiste. Quant aux fondements intellectuels de son analyse, ils s'inscrivent dans la lignée de Lukacs et de Goldmann, en combinant une lecture à la fois interne et externe du texte littéraire, c'est-à-dire en postulant l'existence d'un rapport entre,

d'une part, les structures et les thèmes de l'oeuvre, et, d'autre part, le contexte littéraire, culturel et politique dans lequel cette oeuvre s'élabore. Du côté du contexte, l'essayiste retient surtout l'idéologie néo-nationaliste du Parti québécois. Du côté des romans, il s'emploie à déceler la portée révolutionnaire du discours narratif, l'hypothèse étant que la littérature doit contribuer au changement historique des rapports sociaux. A propos, par exemple, *d'Un rêve québécois* de Beaulieu, Pelletier interroge la comparaison de la crise d'octobre, qui se profile à l'arrière-plan du roman, avec la fureur criminelle du héros alcoolique, Bartholémy Dupuis, qui tue et mutile sa femme. Voici comment le critique interprète ce rapport:

> L'acte, dans l'un et l'autre cas, n'a pas permis d'échapper à l'aliénation et d'accéder à la liberté. Celui des Rose se situait sur le terrain de la réalité et de la collectivité; celui de Bartholémy, sur celui de l'imaginaire et de l'individualité. Dans les deux cas c'est l'échec. Ce qui est gênant, c'est que Beaulieu établit une relation d'équivalence entre les deux actions alors qu'il n'en est rien: la crise d'octobre a bel et bien existé et a permis d'exposer un certain nombre de problèmes que l'on se refusait à aborder jusque-là; le crime de Bartholémy, lui, est demeuré dans la sphère du rêve et n'a pas ouvert de façon certaine la porte à une prise de conscience claire.

On ne saurait mieux illustrer les fâcheuses conséquences qui s'ensuivent pour la littérature, lorsqu'elle doit faire l'objet d'un semblable traitement : la réalité reste hors-texte, tandis que l'écriture est reléguée au rang de fantasme impuissant. Quant à la certitude d'une conscience claire, on voit à quel prix l'écrivain est ici invité à y parvenir.

Et pourtant, Jacques Pelletier connaît à fond les oeuvres qu'il étudie: il en repère les lignes de force, en souligne les constantes, en dégage les points tournants, et il respecte même la complexité de leur configuration générale, ce qui n'est pas rien dans le cas d'une aventure scripturaire comme celle de Victor-Lévy Beaulieu. Ce souci d'intégrité est tout à l'honneur du critique, mais il favorise en même temps l'expansion du résumé dans le commentaire critique. De plus, l'analyse a tendance à reconnaître la présence du sociotexte au coeur du roman, sans l'établir d'abord sur un plan proprement esthétique. Il serait absurde de reprocher à ce genre d'étude de privilégier les contenus, puisque c'est justement sa visée explicite. Par contre, le problème n'est pas seulement de renvoyer le discours littéraire à l'instance politique, mais aussi de montrer la teneur textuelle de l'horizon socio-culturel. Là-dessus, la perspective de Pelletier tourne court. Il ne s'agit pas de savoir si Jacques Godbout est le mètre étalon de l'intellectuel petit-bourgeois au méridien d'Outremont, si la vision du monde de Victor-Lévy Beaulieu est asociale et anhistorique, ou si André Major a trahi l'idéal de sa génération et de sa jeunesse partipriste. Ce qui importe, c'est le fait qu'ils aient rempli ou non leur tâche d'écrivain. C'est une autre question, mais la théorie qui l'évite intéresse-t-elle encore la littérature?

RÉJEAN BEAUDOIN

Mark Cochrane's poem
"(T)rail Separation" was
inadvertently printed
in issue 135, page 110,
as " (T) rial Separation."
Canadian Literature
regrets the error.

DE QUOI FAIRE JAPPER

HENRI TRANQUILLE, *Lettres dangereuses à Yves Beauchemin, 1970-1975*. Vlb éditeur, $16.95.
YVES BEAUCHEMIN, *Une histoire à faire japper*. Québec/Amérique, $7.95.

LES *Lettres dangereuses* d'Henri Tranquille sont un complément aux *Lettres d'un libraire* parues en 1976. Ces lettres d'un personnage attachant, un érudit, une sorte d'humaniste du vingtième siècle aux goûts éclectiques, comblent en partie chez lui le regret de n'avoir pas accompli une oeuvre littéraire proprement dite. Ces lettres sont d'ailleurs à l'exception de trois, toutes adressées à l'écrivain Yves Beauchemin entre 1970 et 1975.

Henri Tranquille a lui-même justifié l'emploi du qualificatif "dangereuses" dans son titre qui évoque, selon lui, "l'un des romans les plus pétillants de la littérature française, *Les Liaisons dangereuses."* Lettres dangereuses certes, car "penser librement" est dangereux et parler en 1970 des événements au Québec et de la répression policière qui s'ensuivit, n'allait pas sans un certain risque.

Les *Lettres dangereuses* sont intéressantes à plusieurs titres. Elles furent adressées à Yves Beauchemin au moment où il évrivait son roman *L'Enfirouapé,* l'histoire d'un Québécois victime des événements dans le cadre d'un Octobre 70 parodique. Plusieurs lettres, souvent fort élogieuses, mentionnent la difficulté de trouver le titre convenable à l'ouvrage, soulignent le "sang si bouillant d'humour naturel du romancier," les "étrangetés valables" de ses personnages, le compare comme styliste et observateur à Balzac. Il aurait été intéressant à ce propos de voir les réponses de Yves Beauchemin à Henri Tranquille.

Si les lettres de Henri Tranquille ne sont pas un traité sur la littérature, il donne dans une sorte de "chronique libre," ses avis de critique littéraire sur de nombreux ouvrages, ses idées assez traditionnelles sur le roman (il abomine le nouveau roman et la nouvelle critique). S'il aime des romanciers comme Jacques Ferron, Claire Martin, Hubert Aquin ou des poètes comme Gaston Miron, Paul Chamberland entre autres, il fulmine contre la poésie des Herbes rouges et contre certains poètes québécois comme François Charron qu'il qualifie de "vidangeur."

Dans sa correspondance adressée à Yves Beauchemin mais toujours en pensant à de possibles autres lecteurs (cf. *Les Lettres d'un libraire* où il mentionne son improbable public posthume des années 2000 à 2100) Henri Tranquille aborde l'actualité politique, dénonce Trudeau le "Méphisto," cite le passage de Gauvreau sur la censure, s'insurge contre les arrestations politiques, contre l'intolérance religieuse. Cet esprit méticuleux, ce champion mondial au jeu de dames qui aime résoudre les problèmes posés à l'intelligence, entretient son destinataire de la publication de ses livres sur les échecs et les dames. Il parle avec enthousiasme de la présentation de son livre ou dénonce une journaliste qui a faussé sa pensée dans "son torchon d'ignorante sans culture."

Henri Tranquille qui dans sa correspondance se réclame de Rabelais et de l'humour d'Alphonse Allais, sait rendre la lecture de ses lettres agréable par leur formule initiale et finale souvent drôle qui peut être un hémistiche humoristique, par le jeu de mots, la métaphore, le mot concret et dru. Ce genre d'exercice littéraire ne va pas sans une certaine pose qui peut agacer parfois mais les lettres d'Henri Tranquille sur la toile de fonds d'événements politiques qui ont secoué le Québec dans les années 70 est un précieux témoignage d'un lecteur infatigable qui n'hésite pas à donner ses impressions sur la littérature, ni à soutenir ses amis littéraires

comme Yves Beauchemin "le jeune pape" dont il avait prévu le foudroyant succès.

Si la demande de Renaud Beauchemin à son père d'un livre pour la jeunesse est à l'origine de l'écriture *d'Une Histoire à faire japper,* c'est peut-être Henri Tranquille qui, dans ses lettres à l'auteur lui a suggéré certaines caractéristiques de la chienne "mutante," l'héroïne du premier roman pour enfants de Yves Beauchemin. C'est Henri Tranquille, en effet, qui dans sa correspondance mentionne à Beauchemin *Coeur de chien* de Boulgakov ainsi qu'une histoire où s'illustre une chienne qui parle comme les humains.

Pour répondre à la demande de son fils comme plus tard il voudra faire plaisir à un petit ami leucémique en écrivant l'histoire d'un rat, Yves Beauchemin crée Pantoufle, une extraordinaire chienne mutante qui commence par tracer un carré, se met à écrire et à manger comme les humains et manifeste une intelligence exceptionnelle. Dans une histoire au départ réaliste mais qui débouche très vite sur la fantaisie et la science fiction, Yves Beauchemin dans un style alerte décrit les aventures de Guillaume, de son ami Renaud et de la chienne Pantoufle. Les péripéties se succèdent à un rythme soutenu: envahissement de leur vie privée par les savants, les curieux et les journalistes, tournage d'un film à Charleston dont la chienne est la vedette, enlèvement des enfants et de Pantoufle, suspense, retour au foyer et renoncement par la chienne à la gloire pour goûter la tranquillité dans les bois avec son compagnon canin.

Yves Beauchemin qui a toujours insisté sur le respect de l'intelligence du jeune public récepteur et pour qui un roman pour enfants se différencie seulement d'un autre par le fait que le personnage principal est un enfant, a écrit en un style pour jeunes adultes. Ses métaphores frappantes que relevait volontiers Henri Tranquille dans *L'Enfirouapé,* émaillent *Une Histoire à faire japper:* par exemple, à côté des films tournés par Pantoufle, "la série des Lassie va paraître aussi intéressante qu'un dessous de lavabo."

Si Yves Beauchemin refuse de tomber dans le didactisme, certains détails nous renseignent cependant sur ses idées politiques et autres : son amour pour le vieux longueuil qu'il voudrait préserver ainsi que l'habituelle référence à René Lévesque que le nationaliste Beauchemin n'a jamais cessé d'admirer sans oublier l'allusion facétieuse à Réjean Chrétin, le chef du parti libéral dont l'apparition au petit écran fait éteindre l'appareil de télévision à Pantoufle.

Yves Beauchemin qui déjà dans ses romans pour adultes accordait une grande place aux enfants, lui qui en collaboration avec Andrée Ruffo avait écrit *Finalement! … les enfants,* aborde avec *Une Histoire à faire japper,* un genre difficile où il semble avoir réussi selon les sondages parmi son jeune public de lecteurs et lectrices.

EVELYNE VOLDENG

CONGRUENCE

MADELEINE MONETTE, *Amandes et melon.* l'Hexagone. JEAN-ROBERT SANSFAÇON, *Dernier théâtre.* VLB. MARC LESAGE, *L'Exil de Sullivan.* Quinze.

ONE LARGE — VERY large — novel, one medium size and one small, and — not always the case — a congruence between size and importance.

The appearance of Madeleine Monette's third novel is a literary event, and *Amandes et Melon* lives up to expectations. The crux of the novel is a disappearance. Marie-Paule, whom we meet unmediated only in the first chapter of the book, is expected back from a jaunt to Turkey. She doesn't turn up. Around this central absence, Monette builds a complex struc-

ture of presence, carefully assembling chains of connection, backtracking painstakingly into the lives of family members until their earliest existences are revealed. (It's easy to mix metaphors writing about this densely constructed novel; one is reminded of boxes within boxes, of onions peeled away, of bridges flung across chasms.) Monette's own metaphors are the series of family portraits executed by Elvire, the dependable and loving aunt of Marie- Paule, and the naked and distracted character played by the equally loving but less dependable actress Marion, her mother. As the title suggests, food is a constant of the novel, carefully prepared and presented by Marie-Paule's father Charles, offered as a family ritual, unconsumed in moments of crisis, represented in Elvire's canvasses. The representation of the adults is acute and searching, but the portrayal of the children is a triumph: Céline trying to find her sister by insinuating herself into her skin — and into her former boy-friend's bed — poring over her letters, treating their father with solicitousness; Alex turning to acts of petty crime, and above all Vincent, poet, anorexic, family seer, trying to duplicate Marie-Paule's disappearance through his own. We have an impression of extreme intimacy, of the closeness of people bonded by love and tenderness as well as by impatience and irritation, who know how to spare each other pain in times of stress, but who also know how to heighten anxiety if they choose to be spiteful. There are few sorties from this intimate space: Turkey represents the chaos and destruction that results from severing bonds, but Marion's trip to visit her parents on the coast of New England is a breath of fresh air which brings a new understanding of them and an escape from an encounter she wishes to avoid at home.

The tutelary literary presence in the novel is Proust, evoked by Céline for the significant observation : "N'était-ce pas en lui faisant le corps aussi heureux que Jérôme lui faisait l'esprit aussi libre?" But it is particularly Monette's style that reminds us of Proust's long, complex periods and precision of vocabulary. She knows how to describe her characters as they appear to others as well as to portray them through their actions. A television documentary causes Charles to ponder the differences between Jeanne, his wife and Marion, his ex.

> A en croire les participants, Charles se serait dégoûté de son épouse rangée comme de son morne confort, pour languir après une femme instable, tourmentée, combative et insoumise, une amoureuse insatisfaite trouvant son inspiration dans le désordre, car c'était bien ce qu'était Marion avec son laisser-aller qui frisait le sans-gêne, sa liberté d'allures qui invitait tous les regards sans discrimination, ses exubérances irresponsables, ses tenues d'aspect improvisé et relâché, sa sensualité habilement annoncée, ses coiffures au flou savamment achevé qui lui donnaient un air émotivement indigent, son intolérence prétendument biologique à la routine, ses licences sentimentales, son entêtement à vivre seule pour n'être contrainte de rien se refuser . . .

Monette guides us through the labyrinth of human relationships in a most writerly way and confirms her reputation as one of Canada's most important writers in French.

The two other novels speak in the first person as we enter the minds of two very different men. *Dernier théâtre* is a most ingenious examination of the blurring of fantasy and reality and the perception of a character from within and without. Revelation of the truth comes gradually, as the novel begins innocently enough with a former actor preparing an intimate dinner. Gradually, we begin to realise that the person who explains with perfectly logical coherence the batty events of his life is a *persona* in the play he has invented for himself, and that to his audience he is a completely different character. It takes us a while to realise that despite the fre-

quent trips to the Vietnamese corner store to buy cat food, there are no cats in this man's life, and that the elaborate construct of his neighbour Celine's life as librarian and potential fiancée exists only in his tortured imagination. His stamp collecting gives him a pretext for examining the mail delivered to his apartment building by the unsuspecting mailman every day, and steaming off the stamp on a letter to Céline leads quite naturally to steaming open the letter :

> Combien ai-je eu raison d'agir ainsi!
> A l'intérieur de l'enveloppe, je trouve une petite fiche d'ordonnance médicale sur laquelle sont inscrits les noms de Mlle L'Oiseau et d'un médicament que je ne peux identifier. Mais dans le haut du mémo, il y a le nom de Marc Voisin m.d., et sous ce nom, son titre : psychiatre.
> Ainsi donc, on entend m'accuser de quelque maladie mentale propre aux régimes stalinien, khrouchtchevien ou brejnevien.

He rationalizes his action in theatrical terms:

> . . . qui peut prétendre connaître l'âme de Shakespeare et donner de Hamlet la représentation exacte que le maître avait imaginée? Celui-là est un pauvre bougre, et un prétentieux avec ça. A chacun son interprétation du drame et le théâtre vivra!

The title of the book has overtones of Samuel Beckett, and Paul Longtin is, indeed, a worthy Quebec descendant of Molloy or Krapp.

L'Exil de Sullivan begins promisingly with a fascinating, if somewhat convoluted family history of the narrator; we are led to expect a reaction of the narrator's grandmother, of whom his daughter exclaims:

> Au fond, papa, il te faut une femme comme ta grand-mère. Une femme qui saurait te fasciner passionnément et très longtemps !

And it is easy to see why. Grandma was a famous anthropologist in Chicago, who was involved with an Italian anarchist, and was the only survivor in a subway accident in New York City which killed the Canadian ambassador who was inexplicably on the train at 5 a.m. when he should have been on his way to a high-powered diplomatic meeting. She'd also given the nine-year-old narrator a Gordie Howe sweater for Christmas. Unfortunately, Mary Sullivan makes only fleeting appearances throughout the novel, and we are left with the less interesting perspective of her grandson, widower, unlikely Latin scholar, singer, who works at several odd jobs in order to make a living, but whose main task is making a recording of his songs. The record bears the same title as the novel itself and the songs are vignettes of his own experiences — the experiences of a white, educated male from a middle-class family.

> Il s'est refusé à Être ce qu'il aurait dû être et se cantonne côté cour, dans la position du mauvais garçon: de celui qui observe le monde adulte, le dénigre autant qu'il le craint, parce qu'il ne se sent pas désiré . . . obstinément! Côté jardin, cet homme est à l'image du dernier critique, marginal ou prophète. Habité par une autre vision du monde, il refuse d'occuper toute place, parce que cela est totalement méprisant et injuste envers tous ceux et celles qui n'en auront jamais. Cet homme a tout perdu, tout quitté: pays, travail, maison.

These experiences are what constitute the novel, but the "alternative vision" of the world does not become clear to us, and the passion that ought to inform the life is absent. The actual exile is a trip to Paris to visit his mother, and the novel ends with a suggestion of the return of Sullivan to Quebec. One can only hope that there will be a return to his stunning grandmother too.

VIVIEN BO S LEY

ADELE WISEMAN, 1928-1992

ON 1 JUNE 1992 Canadian literature lost an important but underestimated writer in Adele Wiseman. Wiseman was an iconoclastic figure whose work, which brings together her private and public interests, reflects a vital, engaged individual. In addition to being an accomplished novelist, she was a short story writer, a playwright, a poet, an essayist, a children's author, a critic, a literary reviewer, an editor, and a one-woman performer of the "Doll Show" which celebrated her mother's handmade dolls. Moreover, an ardent friend and supporter of other writers, she sustained an impressive number of correspondences with her peers and colleagues throughout her life.

Adele Wiseman was raised in the North End of Winnipeg when it was still a Jewish enclave. In her writing, she mines repeatedly the prairie landscape and secular Jewish culture which was her inheritance. When she won the Governor General's Award in 1956 for her first novel, *The Sacrifice,* Wiseman was just 28. In this moving but tragic tale, the author introduced her penchant for myth, characters who challenge normative behaviour, and an affirming belief in community. The novel was published to loud acclaim and her readers looked forward to her second work of fiction.

Crackpot did not appear until 1974, eighteen years following Wiseman's debut as a novelist. In the intervening years, her vision had become increasingly female-centred and to articulate that vision she moved from the tragic to the comic mode. At the centre of this epic novel is Hoda, an obese Jewish prostitute who remains one of the greatest characters in our literature. Only now is *Crackpot* receiving the critical attention it rightly deserves as a watershed work.

One of Wiseman's favourite forms was the essay. Founded on her mother's craft of doll-making, *Old Woman at Play* (1978) is a book-length study of the creative impulse and a moving testimonial to the bond shared by mother and daughter. Written as an extended essay, the work is conversational in tone and engages the reader in dialogue. Here Wiseman reveals an unpretentious attitude toward art that informs all of her writing: ". . . art, uncapitalized and unshunned, is our human birthright, the extraordinary right and privilege to share, both as givers and receivers, in the work of continuous creation."

In *Memoirs of a Book Molesting Childhood and Other Essays* (1987), the final book to be published in her lifetime, Wiseman favours the personal over the authoritative voice. This eclectic collection of essays provides a unique portrait of the writer. It shows the breadth of her knowledge of world literature, her fierce sense of commitment to her craft, her open mind, and her generosity and loyalty to those she loved.

Despite continual difficulties with publishers who challenged her writing, Wiseman clung to a highly original vision throughout her career. Her life was marked by a similar tenacity of vision. She was a nurturing woman who cared lovingly for her daughter, her parents, her friends and colleagues, her students, and those she perceived as oppressed. Her life is reflected in a body of work which speaks passionately for the marginalized and the dispossessed — those who have been denied comfort and security by the relentless force of circumstances. In the exceptional short story about physically handicapped

youth published just before her death, "Goon of the Moon and the Expendables" *(Malahat Review* Spring 1992), Adele Wiseman's vision remains one of generosity and community. Today, such a vision is to be cherished.

RUTH PANOFSKY

EU MANDEL, 1922-1992

ELI MANDEL WAS BORN on 3 December 1922, in Estevan, Saskatchewan. He studied at the Universities of Saskatchewan and Toronto and taught at the Universities of Toronto, Alberta, York, and the Collège Militaire Royale de Saint Jean. His curriculum vitae lists 23 books of poetry and criticism, which he wrote, edited, or contributed to. He gave lectures, seminars, workshops, summer courses, and readings all over Canada, and also in India, Germany and Italy. He died on 3 September 1992, after a long illness.

Generous with his time, he was also generous with ideas. His lifetime of work dealt at once with the issues raised in "international" literary criticism and the concerns specific to Canada. His earliest poetry seems to ask how a colonial writer not in open revolt can deal with the appalling inheritance of metropolitan culture. This difficult work has been called "mythopoeic," a designation Eli himself refused, but its juxtaposition of the mythical with the everyday suggests a relationship with surrealism. The boy who, in his own adult words, "was brought up as a genteel Victorian boy, with a quaint though serious touch of middle-European Jewish gentility" and at the same time as "a sensuous little savage" *[Another Time* 73), grew up knowing that the forms of literature are both given and chosen. In his Introduction to *Contexts of Canadian Criticism* he says,

> We might also want to consider whether the literature itself coheres into a consistently developing form, the context for which is its own body of images and that larger body of traditional literary patterns . . . For as soon as we add the word Canadian to criticism, we move the object of our concern into a particular space and time, a geographical and historical context ... (3)

Eli's observation of the particulars of place was to lead him "out of place" toward an understanding of the relationships of any place to its contexts, literary and sociohistorical; he showed that to ignore such contexts is also to lose sight of the place on which one stands.

Eli Mandel's engagement with the ideas of Northrop Frye brought their idealism down to Canadian earth. His concern with the political risks of both speaking about (aestheticizing) or leaving unspoken (condoning) the horrors of the twentieth century took the form of a discussion of the ideas of such critics as George Steiner and Susan Son tag; but it also produced "On the 25th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz : Memorial Services, Toronto, January 25, 1970. YMHA Bloor and Spadina." A preoccupation with its own composition shares its place in the poem with a specific street corner in Toronto in 1970 and a movie theatre in Estevan in the thirties.

Mandel's work, with its recurring doppelgangers, anticipated the current "crisis of the subject" ; it anticipated the "crisis of representation" in its insistence that form and content, the autonomous realm of literature, and our connections to our own place are all located "in story, in word, in language" ("Northrop Frye and the Canadian Literary Tradition" 294). If this realization means that our relationship to our homes must always be to places we have invented, it also meant, for him, a continued liberation into new explorations of form, place, and history. As literary studies move through their "linguistic turn" toward a greater awareness of cul-

tural and historical issues, Eli Mandel's place among the first to see the importance of such questions gives his work renewed value. As we deal with the current round of crises, both in our discipline and in our construction of a Canadian identity, we can be guided by Eli Mandel's work while we sadly miss what he might yet have told us.

JULIE BEDDOES

THAT THIN MAN

Ian Sowton

for Eli Mandel ig22-igg2

Years ago and weighty
with many words to come
Sometimes, you said, / *see*
myself as a thin man

That thin man hid lengthily among
your other doppelgangers — which you
was it hustling tickets to your Big Top
of words words
making proud grammars roar
with surprise at strange commands?
oompapah-ing highwire speech acts
while athletic phrases launch at eachother's
wrists with never a safety net of platitudes in
sight?

Nightly in dreams shapechanger
you improvised yourselves :
spider munching yesterday's clichés
to spin tomorrow's cobweb truth beachcomber
uninnocently strolling, taking your poems as you find
them clown tumbling words from an old magician's
coat
uncanny pockets inside pockets inside pockets

or even (eat your heart out Proteus)

keynote speaker asserting in so many words that all
assertions have as punchlines an evasion

Then once upon a time a stroke not
knowing who was who bushwhacked
all of you but one that one among
your doubles that thin man bespoke
so long ago Whoever you were had
descended many times to rediscover
poetry and bring her singing back
that last time, though, your
one remaining head was turned you
were sat immobile in a wheelchair
dressed in tracksuit running shoes
all the manuals of style yapping in
triumph as the beloved figure of your
speech faltered receded into silence

But listen. Listen.
From your body's text
the body of your text's
alive with versions of you
unauthorized and authorized
calling
telling
calling in your magic dialect
of silent speaking words

Julia A. Kushigian's *Orientalism in the Hispanic Literary Tradition: In Dialogue with Borges, Paz, and Sarduy* (U of New Mexico P, $29.95) claims that studies in orientalism have so far ignored its Hispanic variant, which differs from others in its "spirit of veneration and respect for the Orient unparalleled by other Western nations." While Kushigian's reservations about Said's definition of orientalism are well taken, her own argument is not persuasive either. It is surely problematic to speak of Hispanic America as mostly an extension of Spain, and to emphasize the Arabic sources over the indigenous languages which have shaped Latin American Spanish. Kushigian's working definitions are vague, and unfortunately also fit the very brand of orientalism she seeks to castigate: "Hispanic Orientalism is political in the sense that it is committed to opening a dialogue and exchange with the East for the purpose of learning about the self from the other, revealing truth through dialogue and ending cultural dominations." Sara Suleri's *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago) is a much better book and one of the most significant contributions to orientalism to come along in recent years. It is not the novelty of Suleri's ideas that makes this book outstanding (many of her assumptions have been expressed elsewhere about the same sort of texts), but the complexity and subtlety with which she handles these ideas. In her chapter, "The Feminine Picturesque," for instance, Suleri departs from the usual positions which either exempt women writers from colonial guilt or immerse them wholesale in it, and argues that "[the woman writer's] work, far more than that of her male counterpart, engages in an incipient questioning that dismantles colonialism's master narrative of rape." Yet the woman writer's questioning is cushioned by an insistent pursuit of the "domestic" which transforms the other into picturesque commodity. However, after reading Mary Louise Pratt's recent *Imperial Eyes,* I am not so certain that this procedure is gender-specific: Pratt vividly describes male botanists whose guise of harmlessness and introversion cloaked their complicity in the imperialist enterprise. Suleri also provides interesting parallels to Pratt's discussion of imperialist chronology. In her chapter on *Kim,* for instance, she analyzes the trope of childhood as one which "suggests an atrophied absence of adulthood," a silent assumption which ultimately accounts for Kim's death. Another recent publication on orientalism is Chris Bongie's *Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin de Siècle* (Stanford), with chapters on Segalen, Conrad, and Pasolini.

E.-M. K.

The title of Elaine Showalter's *Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing* (Oxford, $27.95) derives from Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* in which Celie and Sophia "make a quilt together out of some torn curtains and a yellow dress" and call it "Sister's Choice." Showalter retains the metaphor of the quilt throughout, concluding with an essay discussing the AIDS quilt as a haunting emblem that draws on, and transforms, a long tradition of female creativity. Several of the chapters in *Sister's Choice* were first prepared as lectures, and the book as a whole retains the looseness and flourish of oral delivery, but unfortunately also some of the empty rhetoric, as in the conclusion: "The pages of the ongoing history of women's writing to which this book is a contribution will have to give up the dream of a common language and learn to understand each sister's choice; but we can still choose to read American women's stories and to ask American questions about their past and future." Still, there is much in this book to compensate for such annoying passages. Canadian readers may be particularly interested in "Miranda's Story," a reading of adaptations of *The Tempest* which takes Canadian critics to task for having failed to recognize the feminist potential in post-colonial parodies of the text. One of Showalter's concerns is the recovery of women modernists, a task which also preoccupies Whitney Chadwick's beautifully illustrated *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (Thames and Hudson). Frida Kahlo and Remedios Varo have already received a fair amount of attention in recent years, but Chadwick also writes well about Leonora Carrington, Lénor Fini, Lee Miller, Dorothea Tanning, Toyen (Marie Cerminova) and others, and it spends much space on documenting friendships and partnerships among these. The book impressively evokes the international artistic milieux that these women helped to produce and it is very blunt in documenting the extent to which their male fellow-painters and subsequent art criticism belittled their contribution. But Chadwick also remains respectful of the view of some of the women that a book devoted to surrealist women artists would enforce their isolation even further. A similar concern informs *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology,* ed. Bonnie Kime Scott (Indiana UP), which includes "five male figures [Eliot, Joyce, Lawrence, Pound, MacDiarmid] intricately involved in writing with women or on gender [in

order to] resist both determination by sex and reversed neglect." Although it is doubtful whether Joyce *et al.* are in danger of being neglected, the inclusions make for some useful juxtapositions, and the entire collection is bound to become an important textbook, equally valuable for the excerpts it presents from the work of Djuna Barnes, Willa Cather, Nancy Cunard, H.D., Jessie Redmon Fauset, Zora Neale Hurston and others and for the thorough (and tolerably jargon-ridden) introductions and bibliographies provided for each author. Surely one of the most important recent books on women and modernism is Susan Rubin Suleiman's *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Harvard) and in several ways, it makes a perfect companion to Whitney Chadwick's book. In her chapter "Feminist Intertextuality and the Laugh of the Mother," Suleiman analyses Leonora Carrington's feminist parody of the Holy Grail legend in *The Hearing Trumpet.* Elsewhere, Suleiman addresses the question of pornography in Robbe-Grillet, but her observations apply equally well to the dismembered female bodies so current in surrealism. In offering an alternative to Bruce Morrisette and Andrea Dworkin's work, Suleiman pleads for "a feminist reading of Bataille's and other modern male writers' pornographic fictions [which] seek[s] to avoid both the blindness of the textual reading . . . and the blindness of the ultra-thematic reading ..." I am not convinced that such texts always deserve the patience and respect which Suleiman is willing to devote to them, but her approach is still a welcome departure from the usual simplifications. "Subversive intent" also informs the writing in which Suleiman abandons the impersonal objectivity of traditional scholarly discourse for a heterogeneous style which incorporates elements of the journal, drama, and the letter. In her chapter on *The Hearing Trumpet,* Suleiman takes her reader through a series of critical detours, paralleling those of the Knights of the Holy Grail whom Carrington's book parodies, and she responds to (imagined) impatient questions such as "Is this novel critical? Radical? Parodie? Anti-patriarchal? Surrealist? Postmodern?" with a teasing: "Patience. Slow-burning fuses make big blasts."

E.-M. K.

Those who have followed the debate over whether or not Sikhs ought to be allowed to wear their turbans while serving in the RCMP, will find the essays collected in *Cloth and Human Experience,* ed. Annette B. Weiner, Jane Schneider (Smithsonian, $16.50 pb), very illuminating indeed. In "Cloth, Clothes, and Colonialism: India in the Nineteenth-Century," Bernard S. Cohn discusses turbans, uniforms, and everyday clothes as colonial signifiers, while Susan S. Bean explores their rebellious counterparts in "Ghandi and *Khadi,* The Fabric of Indian Independence." Other geographical and cultural areas are served equally well: Ronald Waterbury analyzes exploitative aspects of tourism in an essay on Mexican embroidery, and feminist scholars will find Linda Stone-Ferrier's discussion of "Dutch Depictions of Female Handwork" an interesting complement to Roszika Parker's *The Subversive Stitch* (1984). For its references alone, Patrick Brantlinger's *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Cornell, $10.95 pb.) would be a valuable book to have. However, there are also clear and informative analyses of Orientalism and Africanism in the British novel. Especially worthwhile are chapters on "literary representations of the Indian Mutiny of 1857" and on "imperial gothic." Michael Roper and John Tosh, éd., *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (Routledge) also pays a great deal of attention to the semiotics of imperialism, perhaps most extensively in Graham Dawson's "The Blond Bedouin: Lawrence of Arabia, Imperial Adventure and The Imagining of English-British Masculinity." Dawson explains persuasively how T. E. Lawrence acquired his exceptional stature because he transcended the boredom of trench warfare and "of the modern world itself," accomplishing this feat in a 'colonial space,' made knowable by and for Western interests, economic and political as well as cultural." The essay waffles on the explication of Lawrence's ambivalent sexuality, which has been the focus of much recent research, including Marjorie Garber's work on cross-dressing. The cover blurb on Beryl Schlossman's *The Orient of Style: Modern Allegories of Conversion* (Duke) promises that this book "reveals how the Orient came to symbolize the highest aspirations of literary representation for such writers as Marcel Proust, Gustave Flaubert, and Charles Baudelaire." *The Orient of Style* does no such thing. Instead, there is some old-fashioned symbol-hunting, mostly *in vacuo,* and some stultifying prose, as in "Flaubert's novels of descriptive exteriority create an objective scene deprived of the human dimensions of subjectivity." By contrast, Hans-GiintherSchwarz's *Orient-Okzident: Der orientalische Teppich in der westlichen Literatur, Ästhetik und Kunst* (iudicium) is an eminently inspiring book on oriental rugs as a literary and painterly motif.

Besides heaping together a mass of interesting material, Schwarz also provides a superb introduction to the "metaphysics" of oriental rugs and its allure to Westerners; his observations on de-centred patterns provide an effetcive complement to Vinaver's work on the arabesque. For her anthology *Veiled Half-Truths: Western Traveller's Perceptions of Middle Eastern Women* (Tauris), Judy Mabro has collected a broad array of texts which will provide useful source material for researchers interested in the variegations of "orientalism." Some of the excepts are predictable, focusing either on the inertia observed by women travellers admitted to a harem, or else documenting the prurience of their male counterparts. But there are still shocking surprises such as C. S. Sonnini's *Voyage dans la haute et basse Egypte* (1798), "In which the intrepid M. Sonnini paid a family to have their daughter circumcised in his room, all in the interest of scientific research." Less illuminating than the texts themselves are Mabro's introduction and commentary: although her criticism of women travellers as "as ambiguous . . . hostile and Eurocentric as men" is well taken, her own analysis is too biased and superficial te» provide a persuasive alternative. Unfortunately, the answer will not be found in Shirley Foster's *Across New Worlds: Nineteenth-Century Women Travellers and Their Writings* (Harvester Wheatsheaf) either, for there is little new in this book. The stories of Bird, North, Jameson, Kemble, Trollope, and the Stickland sisters have been told in more or less the same manner by others before, and the dusting of Foucauldian theory is too light to make a difference. But the book is written competently enough and makes for a pleasant read. Colin MacKerras's *Western Images of China* (Oxford, $25.50 pb.) also lacks depth, despite the brief excursions into Foucault and Said that appear to have become *de rigueur* in books of this kind. In some 300 pages, the book covers what seems like everything Westerners have ever said or thought about China in every possible genre. The result is a tantalizing series of snippets and impressions. Still, this is a valuable introduction to the field, with an equally valuable bibliography. Despite its at times heavy-handed theorizing in which Foucault once again looms large, the first volume of Jean and John Comaroff's *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Univ. of Chicago) offers substance where MacKerras and Mabro do not. Observations in the chapter on "Africa Observed : Discourses of the Imperial Imagination," for instance, are placed within the context of contemporary theories of biological determinism, of gender ideology, and utopianism. The authors pay extensive attention to *belles-lettres,* and there are good illustrations and detailed notes.

E.-M. K.

LAST PAGE

ONE OF THE QUOTATIONS in my highschool Latin text read "Nihil dictum quod non dictum prius" : *Nothing is said that has not been said before* (Terence). It's not the sort of advice that people either welcome or listen to very much, but the more you age, the more you see the wheel invented again, and again and again. Literary criticism is a hotbed of wheel-reinventing these days. New names for old knowledge, old banalities disguised as fresh truths: it's a process that's been stimulated by the critical cliché that history is fiction — which means to some people that they don't need to find out if other people have already said what they are about to say. *Their* "subject position" (by definition singular) means that their saying it is all that matters. Maybe this conclusion is inevitable when "originality" is a critical bad word, and when the academy desires a restricted set of ideas; the wax face of some writing, however, ought still to be distinguished from the model it resembles, and interesting approaches to knowledge differentiated from those that simply repeat the expected.

A recent stack of books reveals a variety of observations. David Perkins' *Theoretical Issues in Literary History* (Harvard UP, $29.95/ $12.95) tells us that a consideration of the peripheral case of the Third World will alter our perception of the metropolitan one. Vincent Newey and Ann Thompson's *Literature and Nationalism* (Liverpool UP, £27.50) suggests at one point that "England *means* Shakespeare" and "Ireland" *means* "Yeats," though the point is that literary identities can become confused with political identities, often by political design. Richard Gray's *Black Christians & White Missionaries* (Yale UP, $20.00) explains that Africans have devised particular kinds of Christianity. Kenneth H. Harrow's *Faces of Islam in African Literature* (Heinemann/Irwin, $22.50) points out that Islam means different realities in practice. Ainslee T. Embree's *Utopias in Conflict* (U. California P, $22.50) finds that "the use of the vocabulary of religion has corrupted political discourse in India." Mildred Mortimer's *Journeys through*

the French African Novel (Heinemann/Irwin, $27.50) says that women travellers use travel as a strategy of escape, which differentiates them from men. Salman Rushdie, in *Imaginary Homelands* (Penguin, $29.95), designs a paper tiger he calls "Commonwealth literature" in order to attack it, a tired ploy, though stylishly expressed. Alan Brissenden's *Aspects of Australian Fiction* (U. Western Australia P, n.p.) collects uneven essays (three interesting ones look at Edwardianism, expatriate women, and allegories of colonialism) ; and Giovanna Capone's *European Perspectives* (U. Queensland P, n.p.) collects more essays on Australian literature (one useful commentary reads the terms/images *landscape, aborigine, drover,* etc., semiotically). Mary Lou Emery, in *Jean Rhys at 'World's End'* (U. Texas P, $24.95) says that Rhys's work recurrently uses themes of colonial and sexual exile, and S. V. Gallagher's *A Story of South Africa* (Harvard UP, $29.95) discovers that Coetzee's fiction concerns torture, race, and South African social history. These are earnest books, but none much shakes the earth.

Despite its unpromising title, there's more spark in Hena Maes-Jelinek's *Wilson Harris: The Uncompromising Imagination* (Dangaroo, n.p.), a series of solid introductory essays and interviews; and though it's mechanically written, Leslie Smith Dow's *Anna Leonowens* (Pottersfield, n.p.), raises some fascinating questions about Leonowens's "fake" (or at least "creatively fabricated") public identity. But sometimes even writers with vigorous points of view return to familiar ground. Trin T. Minh-ha's *When the Moon Waxes Red* (Routledge, $56.50, $18.95) largely concerns film-making and the techniques of questioning master-narrative formations. Even Gayatri Spivak, who has said before that double standards affect the reading of margins, says it again, in an essay collected by Jonathan Arac and Barbara Johnson in *Consequences of Theory* (Johns Hopkins Univ. P, $30.00/$11.95). It's a message that's *worth* repeating, but if the critic who says it can't then get beyond the politics of saying it, it will seem as though the repetition merely serves the separate political cause of self-advancement.

Dorothy Hewett's selected poems, called *Alice in Wormland* (Bloodaxe, n.p.), provide strikingly more insights into one margin than do a host of critical animadversions; for Hewett, surrealism occupies the edges of domesticity, the disparities between the (real) and the (assumed) "everyday" being all the more violent because at first the assumed *seems* familiar. Connections between "white women, racism, and history" constitute the subject of Vron Ware's mordantly-titled *Beyond the Pale* (Routledge, $59.95, $18.95), [4] book which also pushes at the edge of the comfortably familiar. Ware examines ways in which gender and race get mixed up in analyses of "freedom" — in ads and other propaganda, and in critical discourse — and goes on to claim (familiarly) that women colonists in Africa and India were as imperial as the men: *even the women who could fairly claim to be feminist.* The book goes on to insist that arguments for the greater "morality" of women (as opposed to men) have now to respond to historical *fact* : the presence of women in the KKK, the racism in missions and colonial schools. But "historical fact" is itself a term in dispute.

Murray G. H. Pittock's *The Invention of Scotland* (Routledge, $59.95) is the latest in a series of recent books about the "invention" (i.e. the social construction) of national identities, canons, and other cultural absolutes. In the case of Scotland, it is the Stuart Myth, Pittock argues — the glorification of Culloden and the philosopher-kings — that functioned to "clad" people in the past; when the Stuarts become linked with other kingly myths of heroism, the romance of nationalism was born, and when the Unionists argued for "prosperity" while the Nationalists articulated a "romantic illusion" of community unity, the tensions that resulted shaped modern Scotland. The terms spread wider than Scotland; Newfoundland in 1949 and Quebec in 1992 spring readily to mind.

Among other related books are Michael Andrews' effectively illustrated *The Birth of Europe* (BBC, n.p.), which — although it still uses terms like "virgin landscape" as though they were not political — examines the way geologic movements (from continental upheaval to resource creation) affected the subsequent course of national histories; Claude Meillassoux's *The Anthropology of Slavery* (U. Chicago, $49.95/$ 19.95), which quotes Benveniste on the semantic origins of the words *kin* (meaning "free") and *alien* (meaning "not growing up together"), then applies this distinction to the social construction of the exploitability of "others" (concubine, servant, slave) ; Annette B. Weiner and Jane Schneider's *Cloth and Human Experience* (Smithsonian Institution, $16.50), which considers the role of cloth in the determination of wealth, power, and gender responsibilities (chapters on India probe the "orientalism" of display: the importance attached by ruler and ruled to uniforms, ostentation, and — with Gandhi — deliberate

simplicity) ; Christopher Miller's *Theories of Africans* (U. of Chicago P., n.p.), which asserts that most Western criticism reads orality through literacy, finding as a corollary that anthropology is necessary to understand Africa; Isidore Okpewho's *The Epic in Africa* (Columbia UP, $17.00), which attempts to devise a poetics of oral performance, addressing problems of nomenclature and (comparing African texts with the Homeric tradition) problems of cultural difference; and John Corner and Sylvia Harvey's *Enterprise and Heritage* (Routledge, $75.oo/$24.95), which in a series of essays examines the commercialization of culture (particularly in "Great Britain Ltd." of the 1980s) — Yasmin Ali, writing "Echoes of Empire: towards a politics of representation," analyzes the New Right's stereotypes: "the Asian" as peaceable and passive, "the West Indian" as oppositional.

One of the underlying signs of social malaise being examined throughout is the desire — on the part of many of those who hold power or design ways of securing existing power — for general (however inaccurate) "truths." "Individuals," in such designs, exist only at the top; "others" are all designed *en masse,* as though any out-of-power person were merely a representative example of a bloc, there to be manipulated. The tribal forms of nationalism depend on the emotions roused by just such mythic "unity"; but they're also signs of the corporate mentality operating on a larger scale, and as in the corporate structure, they serve (often in the name of security) only a narrow power group, not the validity of alternatives, and not the opportunity for change.

From such generalizations it's refreshing to turn again to the specific. Rhonda Cobham's essay in Raoul Granqvist's *Canonization and Teaching of African Literatures* (Rodopi, $30.00) usefully and carefully comments on the problem of teaching a text that some readers will find (for example) sexist or inauthentic, and probes the implications of these terms for the future of education. Finally, Norman Simms's *Writers from the South Pacific* (Three Continents, $35.00/317.50) is a useful, though not consistent, biobibliographical resource, with information on Maori and Aboriginal writers, and on English-language writers from Malaysia, Singapore, Fiji, Samoa, Niue, and the Cook Islands.

W.N.

Hilda THOMAS, Réjean BEAUDOIN, Deborah BLENKHORN, Mark COCHRANE, John Xiros COOPER, Susan FISHER, Marian GRACIAS, Eva-Marie KROLLER, Michèle O'FLYNN, Laurie RICOU, Roger SEAMON, and Jerry WASSERMAN teach at U.B.C.; Julie BEDDOES and L. M. FINDLAY at the University of Saskatchewan; Jars BALAN, Vivien BOSLEY, Bert ALMON, and Ian S. MACLAREN at the University of Alberta; Susan Rudy DORSCHT, Adrienne KERTZER, and Jon KERTZER at the University of Calgary; Ian SOWTON and Tom HASTINGS at York University. Dorothy SEATON, Stefan HAAG, and George WOODCOCK live in Vancouver; Irving LAYTON and David SOLWAY in Montreal. Fred COGSWELL lives in Fredericton; W. A. SHAHEEN in Manotick, Ont.; Patricia YOUNG in Victoria; Danielle SCHAUB in Haifa, Israel; Ruth PANOFSKY in Thornhill, Ont; Francis SPARSHOTT in Scarborough. Helen HOY teaches at the University of Minnesota; Douglas REIMER at St. John's College ; George BOWERING at Simon Fraser University; Neil CARSON at Guelph; Lesley CLEMENT at Medicine Hat College; Jane SELLWOOD at the University of Victoria; Nicola VULPE at the University of Leon, Spain; Tom WAYMAN at Okanagan College; Jill LEBIHAN at Sheffield Hallam School of Cultural Studies; Colin NICHOLSON at the University of Edinburgh; Barbara PELL at Trinity Western; Joanne TOMPKINS at La Trobe University; Evelyne VOLDENG at Carleton; Marion WYNNE-DAVIES at the University of Keele; Lynn WYTENBROEK at Malaspina College; Linda HUTCHEON at the University of Toronto; and Kathleen SCHERF at the University of New Brunswick.

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