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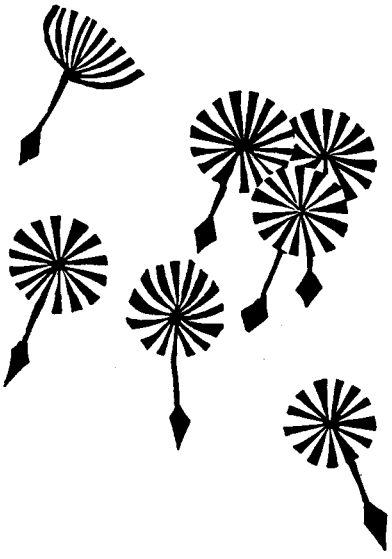
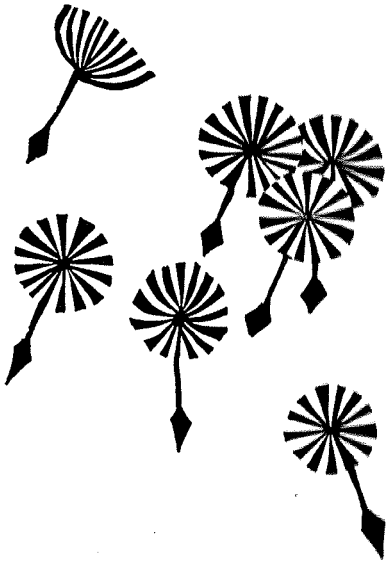


BACKGROUND, FOREGROUND

A QUARTERLY OF CRITICISM AND REVIEW



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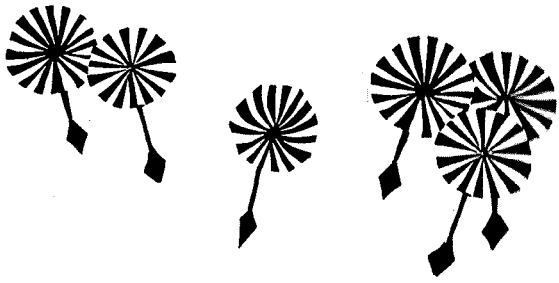

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editorial

WEIGH, WAYWARD, WORDS

SOMETIMES A SPATE OF PUBLICATIONS reminds a wayward reader that the art of essay-writing is not dead, just hiding in small corners of occasional publications. The tomes that collect them can attract people who would never see the original, but such books seldom read consistently, despite their intent. They serve best as samplers — of phrases eloquent in their implications, and of ideas stirring into words. The late James Thurber's *Collecting Himself* (Harper & Row), a gathering of parodies and reviews, edited by Michael J. Rosen, quotes Carl Van Doren at one point, observing that "It's hard to write, but it's harder not to." This impulse helps explain the passionate commitment to clarity that one finds in the writings of John Clive, Stephen Jay Gould, Phillip Lopate, and others. It's also a passionate commitment to the specifics of individual observation.

Clive's *Not By Fact Alone* (Random House) reflects on the humorous, the anecdotal, the paced, and the cliometric as the techniques of the historian, defending the "validity of 'I'" in historical writing. Gould's detailed *An Urchin in the Storm* (Norton) delights in the particulars of nature, resisting overeasy generalizations about Creationism, Cartesianism, and creativity. Lopate's *Against Joie de Vivre* (Poseidon) relies less on linear logic than on an intentional associative sprawl as it discourses on sex, suicide, habit, and the rare capacity for forgiveness. It, too, defends the particular and the private — not just against collectivity but also against the tyranny of rhetoric. About his title subject, for example, Lopate observes: "What rankles me is the stylization of this private condition into a bullying social ritual." And to what end? As Dick Hebdige's remarkable *Hiding in the Light* (Routledge) adds, apropos of Lopate's complaint, every social ritual (and every design of national authenticity, racial identity, and 'heritage') carries with it a set of attitudes which in turn are constructions that serve particular ends. Whose are they, and how do they constrain individual imagination? Hebdige, writing about design history and popular taste, refers in particular to the force of photography and stereotypes as agents of cultural organization. Two standard versions of adolescence, for example — as trouble and as fun — he traces respectively to nineteenth-century social document and to post-World War II market research. The images,

consequently, can be seen as the effective (because normalized) rhetoric of religious judgment and private profit. They are not neutral.

William Manchester's collection of Magnum photographs, *In Our Time* (Norton), testifies further to this conclusion. The Magnum Foundation was a collective concerned to give photojournalists "all freedom"; but *In Our Time* remains a deeply American book, its perspective shaped by a particular political context, and Manchester emphasizes that "freedom" does not mean "objectivity." If further evidence were needed, other books (through both commentary and illustration) stress the politics of all visualization. 1. Martha Anderson and C. M. Kreamer's *Wild Spirits Strong Medicine* (University of Washington) affirms that African art celebrates a binary: the civilization inherent in village life as opposed to the wilderness of the surrounds. 2. David Ward's *Chronicles of Darkness* (Routledge) eludicates the cultural frames or expectations (e.g., regarding social order and disorder) that white perceivers from Conrad to Coetzee have found in Black Africa, defining a colonial cultural as one with no memory — i.e., no effective belief in the past. Ward does, however, place a surprising faith in the promise of "true stories." 3. Roger Daniels' *Asian America* (University of Washington) draws on life stories and legal cases (and only one passing reference to Maxine Hong Kingston, though she is the one writer he says is "essential" to an understanding of the subject) with two ends in mind: to document the presence of ethnic Chinese and Japanese in the U.S.A. since 1850, and to question the system of social evaluation that, through the process of stereotyping, constructs these peoples as either "model minorities or scapegoats." 4. Maxime Rodinson's *Europe and the Mystique of Islam*, translated by Roger Venius (University of Washington), shows how "Islam" was constructed in Europe as a "menace" before it became a "problem." 5. Peter C. Newman's *Empire of the Bay* (Viking) uses words to write a history of the Hudson's Bay Company and uses the full resources of colour illustration to record a parallel history in terms that visually say hardship, wealth, earnestness, expanse, mastery, and whiteness. 6. Even on a smaller scale, this process operates: Nicole Eaton and Hilary Weston's *In a Canadian Garden* (photos by Freeman Patterson, with comments by Arthur Erickson, Barbara Frum, Angela Bowering, and others; Viking) visualizes the domestic garden as escape, prospect, and "earthly paradise." These are metaphors of desire, constructed in part, perhaps, against memories of unease.

I am less persuaded by Cynthia Ozick's reviews and reflections — a reading of Coetzee in terms of *Huck Finn*, for example — as collected in *Metaphor & Memory* (Random House) or by the judgmentally absolutist versions of life-writing described in Jeffrey Meyers' *The Spirit of Biography* (UMI). Though when Ozick writes that what we value in biography is the *unfractured* nature of man (the version of *whole* as constructed by *story*), she is commenting further on the power of invention to construct "acceptable" truths. Against such a premise one might

read Wole Soyinka's *Ìsarà* (Random House), a dramatically fictionalized version of the author's own past, his double schooling in folktale and received European tradition, and his metamorphosis; or the Jamaican autobiographical essays of Louis Simpson's *Selected Prose* (Paragon); or Amin Malouf's imaginary autobiography of the sixteenth-century geographer Hassan al-Wazzan, *Leo Africanus* (Norton); or Marq de Villiers' use of family history in *White Tribe Dreaming* (Macmillan) — a personal analysis of the "politics of faith" that constructed a tribal bureaucracy in South Africa in the name of Christianity — to explain apartheid's roots.

De Villiers asserts that one reason the British social model failed in South Africa is that it didn't take account of ethnic divisions, with centrifugal forces consequently proving more powerful than cohesive ones. David Noritz and Bill Willmott's anthology, *Culture and Identity in New Zealand* (GP Books), takes up related issues, asserting the "dialectical" nature of national identity (and therefore its constructedness); particularly illuminating chapters include those on speech, Maori, and the cultural survival of pastoral aspirations. Lawrence Steven's *Dissociation and Wholeness in Patrick White's Fiction* (Wilfrid Laurier/Humanities Press International) further pursues the question of duality, using social "value" (rather than "mythic transcendence") as a normative measure, and attempting to explain (with reference to five models) White's coded desire for permanence and wholeness.

Nicola Beauman's *A Very Great Profession* (a 1983 book reprinted by Virago/Random House) seeks to validate what she calls "The Woman's Novel 1914-39" by appreciating the life-skills female writers require; yet the numerous misprints, and the construction of some writers (Mansfield for one) as straw critics, opens the judgments, if not the aspirations, to question. Critically and stylistically more satisfying is Kay Schaffer's *Women and The Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition* (Cambridge). Schaffer is concerned with the way cultural myths of national identity construct ideas about gender and with the way (from settler narratives to *Crocodile Dundee*) language circulates these ideas and gives them credence. For example, women are generally absent from bush narratives and bush traditions in Australia, she argues, yet represented (as "harsh and unforgiving") through metaphors of landscape. In a brilliantly contrastive reading of the text and critical history of bush stories by Henry Lawson and Barbara Baynton, Schaffer then goes on to illustrate how a dominant discourse can mask the recognition of cultural plurality, and to demonstrate how it does so in part by lulling readers into accepting as "natural" the hierarchy of values that a dominant discourse covertly reinforces.

Ellen Rooney's *Seductive Reasoning* (Cornell) questions the naturalness of all systems of persuasive discourse. It begins by presuming that such critics as Hirsch (privileging logic), Booth (ethics), Fish (the rhetoric of persuasion), de Man

(trope), and Jameson (politics) *all* are pluralists of some order, and proceeds by arguing that their criticism, like that of others (representations of a "democratic" practice), uses these attributes of discourse in order to deal with the anti-pluralist edges of poststructural theory. "Social contradictions," from this perspective, can be seen not as a ground for theory but as "*internal* to theory, . . . constitutive of its structure."

The eleven essays in Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse's *The Violence of Representation* (Routledge, Chapman & Hall) — studies of tyranny, hysteria, witches, Vietnam, rhetoric, and the carnivalesque (with Coetzee writing on perceptions of "idleness" in South African travel writing) — collectively question the effectiveness of anti-canonical criticism. In the name of opposing the canon, the editors argue, such writings appropriate the margins, incorporating them into the residual discourse of criticism and therefore losing any political "oppositional edge" they might have aspired to. Though it calls for a *recognition* of "subject-position," this adopts covertly an American rhetorical position — its fascination with representations of violence articulating some deep-seated cultural assumptions about "democracy," "independence," and "resolution." Its own interest in margins, consequently, runs repeatedly up against the anti-pluralism of its own expectations. Yet that textual "violence" — or interruption — is not a distinctive characteristic of American *texts* is amply demonstrated by the republication of what may be the first English novel, William Balwin's *Beware the Cat*, written in 1553 (introduction and modernized text, based on a British Library transcript of the first [1570] edition, by William A. Ringler, Jr., and Michael Flachmann, with an appended history of longer prose narrative in English to 1558; Huntington Library). Made up of "interludes" about cats (asking if beasts have reason, retelling folktales and superstitions, and dismissing papists), it conveys the discussions that take place between the narrator, a divine, and an astronomer. It also thereby constructs a version of a society at war with its own conceptions of truth. It may therefore not be irrelevant that it should be rediscovered in — and appeal to — the last years of the twentieth century.

Peter Gay in 1974 asserted in *Style in History* (Norton) that matter and manner are organic, and that "style is the art of the historian's science"; Lionel Gossman argued in *Between History and Literature* (Harvard) that historiography is not a series of unresolvable confusions but an evolutionary system involving decipherment, narrative, and semiotic code. Beside both books one has to read Brian Stock's *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Johns Hopkins), which observes yet again that cultures tend to prefer one form of retrospective or another, and that over time these alter. Generalizing about Western cultures, based on both medieval and modern texts, Stock observes how evolutionary models (involving thesis and antithesis) have been giving way to theories of origin and global mentality and to game models (involving "fields of interactive play," expression, and performance).

This shift, Stock avers, indicates an increasing preference for a *lived* rather than a *symbolic* reality, and an increasing expectation that resolutions can come about not in symbolic ways but only in ways (such as wars) that affect real human lives. One "use" of the past is clearly to justify such courses of action. Another is to challenge them. Even within the single house called "Western Culture" are many separate rooms, and the understanding of the efficacy of both symbol and "actual" continues to change.

Resources of Hope (Verso/Routledge, Chapman & Hall) collects several essays by the late Raymond Williams, written from 1958 on. They remain full of resonant phrases that bear on the issues that have been raised here: "Western societies do not embody the democratic values they proclaim," "Culture is ordinary," "A writer's job is with individual meanings, and with making these meanings common." Most importantly, perhaps, Williams seeks to retrieve "commonality" from the ash-heap of pejorative utterance and to claim judgment away from the absolutists by insisting on the value and clarity of thoughtful exchange. "Some people," he writes, "when they see an idea, think the first thing to do is to argue about it." Far better, he writes, is to "see why the notion of commitment which an idea articulates was developed and against what alternative ideas it was directed." Why? Because language, for all its thorny ambiguities and entrenched biases, remains one of the "resources of hope" out of which human beings can still try to fashion meaning.

W.N.

We would like to dedicate this issue to the memory of our colleague, Ann Munton, who contributed frequently to *Canadian Literature*, and whose scholarly enquiries into Canadian poetry and prose are familiar to students both at home and abroad. She succumbed to cancer in September 1990. We valued her advice and her friendship, and we miss her.

W.N., L.R., E.-M.K.

VISITING YEATS

Harold Rhenisch

One entire room of this house
is full of books,
on pine shelves nailed into cracked
and mildewed plaster.
It has a door
that can be shut,
and no heat: not
what could be called a shrine.

Lately, as the dogs
prowl through the yard outside,
I've come to wonder
what I would do
if the churches of this town,
Pentecostal, Jehovah's Witness,
Adventist, Baptist,
Anglican, Catholic, and the others,
little known and unnamed,
that have found, as I have done,
in the poverty of this town
fertile soil
and indifference,

ever succeed in gaining the power
they have for so long,
with such endurance
and clumsiness
sought,

for even here, on the crippled edge of the world,
they would not allow these books
among themselves,

and I would have to cover the beams in the basement
and hide them there, under a false floor —

and there, as here, they would be unread.

I look at all my books,
and blow the dust off of them tonight:

Whitman, Pound, Williams, Eliot, Wordsworth,
and Yeats, and Kroetsch
who has made use of all our post-modernist trash,
and most close to my heart, Skelton and Graves,
who speak of the timeless world,
and Shakespeare for his fractured,
symbolic verse.

And as the stars
drown in the black
shadow of the mountain,
and the wind
eats right through the skin,
and more and more every year
this town silts up
with the old
and the broken
who can find here

the last shards
of whatever it was
they had lost, and find
that after all these years
it is nothing anymore,
it is just silt,
just photographs
rippled with water,

it strikes me that Yeats
could walk step by step
through the gallery of his youth
and friends, and give thanks
and blessing, in art,
could share with them a community,
but here I cannot,
for I have no friends in art
and my brothers in god
believe only in my destruction.

What is left to me, little used
and often forgotten in the back room
down the hall, are these few books,

and it is a loss
and admonition, and no good will come from it
except art.

These are my friends, sure, but they are more,
and I worry about them tonight,
worry about what they have led us to;
on one hand institutionalized art;
on the other this struggle to speak
against the oppressions of silence and hate:

while we all can see our land,
this land,
the Interior of British Columbia,
which has never been part of any country,
being broken up by time,

and not one of us speaks.
This is shame.

My friends cluster around me
in the cold of the room tonight,
here where I've made a small
space for them,

and as they watch the North Star
burn high in the sky at the cold Solstice,

shame me.

SIDE BY SIDE BY

1. Still Life with Menno

2. No Stone

Magdalene Falk Redekop and Elizabeth Falk

1. *Still Life with Menno*

THE PICTURE HAS ALWAYS BEEN so vivid in my mind's eye that I am surprised to see how fragile it really is. I peel it carefully from the sticky yellowing surface of the photo album. I must have done this before because there is already a small rip on one edge. The paper seems dangerously thin, not like the stuff now used by Kodak. I turn it over. On the back, in a round, childish hand, is pencilled: "On this picture I and my sister are side by side by brother Mano who died."

His name was really Menno. My adolescent self must have cringed seeing this spelling error. I'm surprised that I haven't erased it. *Mano* is the flat Low German way of saying Menno, the way that gives you away, for sure, as being a *Mannonite*. It is rare, in any case, for Mennonites to name their sons after Menno Simons. Would my parents, I wonder, have chosen a different name had the child been born alive?

"Brother Mano who died." What was I thinking of? Man? Oh? He would have been Brother Falk if he had lived to be part of the brotherhood of *die Stillen im Lande*. Right away I start to give him an argument. To begin with, he wasn't "brother Mano who died": he was born dead. Stillborn. I used to wonder about that word when my mother spoke, with a certain pride, of the noise that she always made when she was in labour. Could they hear her all through the hospital or was this a still one? *Doutgeboere*: the Low German word is more brutally correct. Birth and death organized life on our farm in southern Manitoba but here it was a death before birth that challenged all our orders. My mother's womb was his first burial place. His last one, in the cemetery in Altona, is marked with a stone. I haven't been back there in years, but I think I remember the words on the stone: *Der Herr hat's gegeben; der Herr hat's genommen*. This was a puzzle. How could the Lord

take back what he had not yet given? The words were carved on the stone by my mother's brother, but they are a duplicate of other words on other tombstones. In Altona, Prussia, in Altona, Russia, in Altona, Manitoba — you can hear the echo, always with the same end: *Gesegnet sei der Name des Herren.*

I cannot read those words without hearing the deep voice of my father, who was a preacher. My father could make the *s* in *Gesegnet* vibrate; he could make the *m* in *Name* hum; he could make the *r*'s in *Herren* roll so that the sheer richness of his voice drowned all questions. But they always came back. How could brother Menno be in heaven before he had fallen on earth? This Menno was surely no anabaptist. How could he be born again before he was born? And how, above all, could we praise either the name of the Lord or the name of brother Menno?

And praise him we did. He was, after all, part of the Falk family and family pride was quite capable of turning the death itself into a kind of cosmic compliment. The babies that died were the ones that were too good to be true. They were always the most beautiful, spiritually and physically. The family consensus was that Menno was a handsome child. If you look at the picture for evidence of this it is hard to see anything at all in the screwed-up face. Life is in the eyes, they say, and the eyes that greet you are the eyes of "I and my sister" — the sad eyes of my sister Elizabeth and my own eyes, so flooded with *angst* that there is no space left for sadness.

My teacher would have corrected me and told me to say "on either side of" rather than "side by side by." Was it the photographer who made the decision about where to put the coffin? Teacher, father, preacher, photographer — all authorities seem to agree that it is a simple matter. From my pencilled caption, however, you can tell that for me there are still matters left over. What I felt — what I feel most right now — is the impossibility of dealing with them without my sister by my side. In actual fact, of course, she is on the other side of the coffin. The coffin could be a barrier or it could be a bridge. That depends on how the story is told.

WE SIT, MY SISTER AND I, on our toy chairs, with our hands in our laps — clenched as tightly closed as the eyes of the baby in the coffin. We might be playing with a doll. "She's a doll" they now say of such little girls. Menno's death fixed me, permanently, as the baby in the family. When I was an adolescent I would squirm in an agony of embarrassment when my parents announced me to guests as their baby. Maybe it was because I was the last of a dozen that my mother was so urgent about wanting me to reproduce. She began by giving me dolls. If I wanted to escape being the baby, I could play at being a mother. I did so with a vengeance, fiercely hoarding my large collection.

I remember the last doll my mother ever gave me. It was always her custom to come into our room first thing on the morning of our birthday and, when we were still half asleep, surprise us by producing the present, unwrapped, from behind her back. This doll was as big, she told me, as I had been when I was born. But for its exceptional size, the doll was like all my other dolls: an image of a baby. Not for me the fancy bride dolls or grown-up dress-me dolls. Perhaps because of the strict injunction against graven images, I did not name any of them. It was enough that some of them could cry and some could even wet their diapers.

I should have named my last doll. It was certainly the most realistic doll I had ever had. It even wore a real baby's woollen cap. Many years later, after I had left home and after dozens of grandchildren had played with it, the soft pink plastic of the legs and arms began to disintegrate and eventually even the face was deformed. I try to imagine my mother's feelings on the day when she was finally moved to throw the doll into the garbage. I should have done that myself. How it must have pained her to do so before I had produced a grandchild. Birth control she must have seen as an interference with what the Lord giveth. We did not talk about it. Much later, after my mother died, it became a problem of infertility and I wondered if she would have understood that better. The Lord taking away before he had given, that was easier for the mother of Menno than us choosing to take matters into our own hands. Punishment for having dared to control — that was even easier. We did not speak of these things but my mother did give me the woollen cap that my last doll had worn. I still have it but I was not tempted to use it when I became a mother.

Like my last baby doll, Menno is wearing a woollen cap, presumably in preparation for a winter grave. My sister and I are dressed for the warmth of the house in identical dark plaid dresses made by my mother. Who made the woollen cap? Could it be one that I wore when I was a baby? I have looked often at the toddlers in the picture, looked with the paralyzed eyes of nostalgia at our compressed lips, our haunted eyes, at our unbraided hair, at our rumpled stockings. My high shoes mark me as the younger of the two girls but I am, for once, not the baby in this picture. I remember looking at the picture, but what do I remember of that day? How curious that we remember almost nothing of our early, most formative years. We have no choice but to live according to some version of those early years handed to us by our elders. I must trust somebody's memory or live with a blank.

I do remember a brief glimpse of an older sister walking up the stairs with our pink enamel baby bathtub — the one we later used for years to wash our feet before bedtime. I think I remember thinking that it was mine and that, besides, it was the wrong colour, but maybe I am making that up. Years later, even my father used that bathtub. He was a big, strong man but he used to quote, with apparent pleasure, his mother's comment that his skin would always be like baby skin. When he wounded himself on some farm implement, we would fetch camomile plants

from the ditch while our mother prepared hot water in the pink bathtub. Night after night he would bathe his wound. Sometimes I wondered if it would ever get better.

On this night, however, the night before Menno's burial, the pink bathtub was filled not with hot water but with ice. I know this for a fact. And yet I cannot remember whether I actually saw the ice or the body. I do not remember, and yet I know that we were not allowed to go into my father's *staefche*, the tiny upstairs room in which he prepared his sermons. This place of stillness had temporarily been turned into a place for the preparation of the dead, a place to read sermons in stones.

Is that what my father said in his sermon on that day? My memories cannot be kept apart from what I have read in the more than forty years since that day, from what I have seen and heard and from what others in the family make up or remember. To the Mennonite gaze the open coffin is a familiar object, a family possession, not an obscenity or an object of horror. It is as richly familiar and as empty as those chests which came from Russia, once containing all the earthly belongings of an escaping family. I have seen them, over and over in many photo albums: pictures of babies in small, plain boxes; of patriarchal features displayed in long, narrow boxes against a whiteness which could be either Russian snow or Canadian snow. Often there is somebody leaning over the coffin crying or trying hard not to cry.

The figure I see clearly is my father, William, standing beside the coffin that contains his first wife Sarah. His clenched right fist is held to his eye as if holding up his head, which falls forward limply like the head of a rag doll, too large for the body. The snow on the picture looks dirty, the way it would in spring, but that must be the earth from the grave, or perhaps just the muddy look of spreading sepia. My father's first wife died on Christmas Eve; the snow in southern Manitoba would have been clean and the ground hard as a rock. Still, there was new life then too. The Lord had taken and given, sending my sister Sarah as a Christmas gift as He took her mother Sarah to heaven.

Some time later the Lord gave in another way (with a little help from my father) when Elisabeth Schellenberg, who had worked as my father's maid, took the name Falk and came to be a stepmother to the six children of Sarah who had once been Friesen. This was no collection of dolls but my mother was young, energetic, an expert already at milking cows and changing diapers. Besides, she had help. The oldest stepdaughter was as old as the stepmother. I was married myself before I saw an actual photograph of William and Sarah and their six children. What I remember most is not pictures but my mother trying desperately, often clumsily, to do honour to the memory of that other mother. The history of that first family seems to exist on another level, apart from what I know, and yet it is at the same time part of my own world. Here too there were infant deaths. The Lord gave and

took a William, then gave another William. The Lord gave and took an Anna. This family picture lies under the one of William and Elisabeth and their six plus six children. Minus the four, altogether, who died. It is not a double exposure without pain.

FOR SO MANY DEATHS, how can there ever be enough tears? The only person I remember crying at my brother Menno's funeral is my sister Mary. There had been another Mary who died of pneumonia at the age of ten months and there is still another photograph. Although that picture, too, was taken before my birth, I see it now superimposed on the picture of brother Menno. That picture was underexposed and there is no sepia here; not yet. It is all in black and white. The double negative shows my mother as a tall, slender figure hovering like a shadow over the box that is propped up against a predictable pile of snow. The very snow seems more black than white. The wall of the house behind it is unpainted, grey. My mother's hands are clutching the collar of her black coat. Her face is lost in the shadow of her black hat. It wasn't supposed to matter what pain was on the face hidden in this mocking chiaroscuro. My mother's Lord knew best and he soon sent another baby as a replacement for the one he had taken away. On her birth certificate she is registered as Maria but we have always called her Mary.

That's the Mary I mean — the Mary that cried at Menno's funeral. I don't actually remember her crying. What I remember is that her nose was running. Like the first Mary, she often had a cold and when she got pneumonia you can believe that she had special care. My mother would squeeze fresh orange juice which Mary drank from a special cup lavishly decorated with tiny red roses and rimmed with shining gold. We were kneeling side by side, I and my sister Mary, kneeling at our chairs while our earthly father prayed — a typically long, long, long prayer — to our Heavenly Father. What I remember — surely I could not be making this up — is that her mucous formed a thread from her nose down to the seat of her chair. Perhaps I remember this because I felt guilty for not having my eyes closed. Mary herself remembers feeling that she should not get up to fetch a handkerchief during a prayer.

I did not understand why Mary was crying, nor do I remember crying myself. What I do remember is that my mother and older sisters told me, again and again in the years after Menno's funeral, the story of how I demanded at breakfast to have *Mama-biet*, when I meant marmalade. *Eck vell Mama-biet.* I still puzzle over whether or not there is a Low German word for marmalade. It seems such an English kind of food and the marmalade we ate was made of rhubarb. In the mother tongue my demand came out as: I want a bit of Momma, or I want to bite

Momma. This amused the sisters taking care of me since our mother was absent. I have heard the story so often that I feel as if I remember saying it. I liked to imagine my mother afterwards comforted with this story, reminded that she still did have a baby after all.

My mother is not in the picture. She was still in the hospital on the day of the funeral, hovering between life and death. The baby had been almost a month overdue. Later I imagined the monstrous dead body of Menno and wondered how it could have come out of her without tearing her apart. Reading about the grandmother who emerged from a wolf, I might have been able to understand a knife, but how could this happen in nature? Afterwards my mother often told the story but she never did answer that question. What she told was a story that was both an accusation and a celebration. She told of how she was assumed to be unconscious and how she heard the doctor speaking angrily to the nurse: "Why did you give her that pill?" She told of how she heard heavenly choirs and felt her soul leaving her body behind, of how she was disappointed to be returned to life on earth. Never again would she fear death. On the contrary, she looked forward to it. She longed for it as a release.

A release from what? From me? From us? Did she not want the family of real dolls that she so urgently wished upon me? I cannot look at this picture without thinking of my mother wanting to die. This is not a picture of my dead brother at all. This is a picture of my absent mother. It is a motherless arrangement of chairs and a table and a box — rectangles and squares and circles in an abstract pattern. At the moment the picture was snapped, the God that took away what he had given in Menno had still to decide whether or not he would take my mother. The picture waits, in suspension, for a meaning that never comes. As it turned out, my mother did live to tell the tale but what difference does that make when the tale she told was a death wish?

That way nothingness lies. The comfort of Mamabiet is snatched away. Meaning drains from the composition like flour through a sieve, making it impossible any longer to sustain nostalgia. I look at my eyes in the picture as they gaze into the eye of the camera and I am dazed at the thought of all that I did not see. Missing my mother I missed it all, aware only of the eye of the camera and of that other Eye that hung on the wall, embroidered in swirling floral designs and saying: "Thou God Seest Me."

In the picture our eyes are averted from the coffin. We look obediently at the camera eye. With my double vision now I can be outside as well as inside and look through the mechanical eye, notice the layers and layers of filters. It is my mother's absence, her death, that makes it possible for me to do this. In my way of seeing I am invaded by other images and stories and happenings, most of all by the fact that I am now a mother, that I now reproduce the mother's role, play doll with a joyful vengeance once again. To the child in the picture the objects are so familiar

that she does not see them. To the mother looking through the camera eye now, the images are estranged, almost electrically charged with visibility, as if they have undergone some magical process of distillation.

What is it that makes me see my self in this picture at all? The chair. That's it. My mother gave me one and I still have it, still enjoy the crimson colour that my mother painted it before she died. My two children are nearing the age that "I and my sister" are in the picture and they take turns using it. I have a son and I have a daughter. Both adopted. Both too good to be true. At the same time that they bring me joy that feels like a flame burning inside my body, my children make it possible to imagine the pain of loss as more than arithmetic in the Eye of God.

MY SISTER, ELIZABETH, the one who is named after my mother, Elisabeth (with the difference of one letter), she who sits side by side with me, she too had a son who was too good to be true. Her story breathes warm life into mine. If this were her telling of the story, the baby might be called Michelangelo. That is the name her son Darcy playfully bestowed on the memory of his stillborn uncle. What was he thinking of? Michael? Angel? O? We will never know because Darcy, you see, is dead. Those were the only three words my sister could bring herself to say when she phoned me in the middle of the night: Darcy is dead. Even now, four years later, any words beyond those words that describe what actually happened, always seem made up, like some bad dream too overdone to be believable. Looking at his face in the coffin I thought of Michelangelo of those figures in Florence that seem to be coming out of the stone. But nobody made Darcy up. I remember that other phone call, sixteen years earlier, to say that he was born. I don't just remember, I feel at this moment, the love that Darcy's special character drew from me. What she misses most, my sister told me once, is watching him grow. All that ended when a train smashed into a car at Newton Siding, Manitoba, in October of 1984. It must have been a noisy death but we did not hear it. We fought against the stillness, I and my sister, by quarrelling noisily in the dark after the accident.

DO YOU OR DO YOU NOT BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION, MY SISTER DEMANDED. I HAVE TO KNOW?

I do not remember what answer I gave although I do remember that we were comforted by seeing the crossing as a cross. It wasn't Good Friday though. It was Thanksgiving, a golden balmy day in fall when I watched my sister agonize over the obituary. Only minutes remained before we would have to leave for the funeral. My sister went to take a shower while I finished typing up the bits and pieces we had put together. I thought she might want to be alone so I let her howl for a while

before I went in. I THINK THIS IS HELL, I SAID, AS WE LOOKED AT THE BROKEN LINOLEUM OF HER BATHROOM.

And then Menno fell out of heaven again, where we had shelved him on that winter day long ago. It was my sister who urged me, some time later, to take the picture out for another look. With the clairvoyance that sometimes comes with intense grief she saw that Menno was the baby I had never had. I saw only the babies that I had chosen, that were far lovelier than any baby that the Lord could give or take from me. I did not want to look for the Hand of God. I saw only that the family pattern was broken, that the tombstones were tumbling down like dominoes. My son was born just days after my sister's son died, but the Lord who had taken Darcy had not given another Darcy and on this matter I and my sister were agreed.

I RESPECT THE WOMEN in whose bodies my children were conceived, the women I have never met and who lead lives apart from mine, the women who have names for my children that are different from the names I chose. Their grief is real but it is not like my mother's grief after Menno's stillbirth and not like my sister's grief after Darcy's death. These children are alive; their noses are running at this minute. We all, we who care for them, celebrate their lives. The pattern of substitutions is shattered, leaving difference. Except to those who bore the names, the old pattern was once rather quaint — a William for a William, a Sarah for a Sarah, a Menno for a Menno. My mother once told me that they had considered naming me Anna, after another dead baby, the one born to my father's first wife. Luckily my mother thought of yet another Mary and asserted her right to join in the act of naming. I was relieved to be Magdalene. With a Maria for a Mary, an Elizabeth for an Elisabeth you can see the pattern showing cracks. We now insist on these cracks. When we were little, people sometimes mistook us for triplets since my mother dressed us in identical clothes. In the mother tongue our names were different enough: Marieche, Liesabet, Maglena. Out of our very differences we made a trio: the Falk Sisters. We even made a record which bore the title *Sing Unto the Lord* — the same Lord, presumably, that gives and takes. We still find joy in our mergings as much as in our differences, but so great is the bond forged by mutual fear that Elizabeth and I have sometimes had to work to keep the edges from blurring. We rehearse this motto: *Eck see eck en dü best dü*. I am I and you are you.

Sometimes we still play, and listen: we can still harmonize. When my son was born, my sister sent a present. I imagined her having eliminated various choices (toy trains, for example, are no longer toy trains for either of us) and I knew that she knew that any presents would remind us both of the absence of Darcy. Her

choice was a stroke of genius. She sent a clown with shiny colourful red costume and a painted face that could be either weeping or laughing. I named him Michelangelo. It seemed to me that Darcy had the right idea. As a poet he knew the importance of the act of naming. Perhaps I was also influenced by what I had learned in Japan about the uses of dolls. I wanted the doll to carry the burden of the old pattern, to bring it into play so that it could change. But this business of grieving is not child's play and the patterns do come back. There is more than one way of being the baby in the family. I work hard at playing with names because I have seen how the pattern of identical names leading up to THE NAME can do violence. It's a question of survival. Once I thought that being a mother would be a rejoicing in shared identity. I now see that a mother must protect a space for difference. I am appalled at the slightest suggestion that any of this could be the design of the Lord. The pattern once seemed innocent. Now it threatens to do violence to the very life of my child and the life of my sister's child.

But my sister makes me think. The pink bathtub is long since sold at an auction, and still I seek for ways to avoid throwing out the baby with the bath. I have chosen, yes, but what about the parts I have not chosen? I did not choose infertility. The women who bore my children did not choose fertility. We speak of birth control but what about the births that we do not control? What pattern is knitting itself in and out of the choices we make?

You see the sort of thing we struggle with, side by side. We have not sung together for years and yet we still listen for each other's voices. Even as we feel the pain of our differences, we also learn to share the body of the mother, host to the growing body of the child. When my sister lost her son, she began to tell her version of the story of Menno. One of our older sisters tried to comfort her by telling her that when Menno died, she (Elizabeth) asked at breakfast for *Mama-biet* when she meant marmalade. Childishly I clutched my bit of story to myself. Hadn't mother herself told me this? I feel the pain of loss again but only if I try to take the story and run. I must stay here with my sister — side by side by. There is plenty of *Mama-biet* to go around. *Mutt je turns nehme*, Mother used to say.

Even taking turns is not enough. There are so many stories untold — so much that is not in the picture. It is the picture of Mennonite family history forever unwritten. Church history the men write, yes, but this, this is what hysterical women do. How can I presume to write any of these stories? I cannot speak for my mother, for my father, for my sister, for Darcy, and certainly not for Menno. There are stories of uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces — all clamouring like tyrannical toddlers for equal time with the mother. It seems impossible to tell them all and yet — here is the contradiction — absolutely necessary. The stories urgently demand to be told side by side, lovingly, because only this love prevents the body of the mother from being torn apart. It is only on those rare occasions when toddlers are busy loving each other that they forget about fighting for their

piece of the mother. Side by side by my sister I can respect my mother's absence from all my reconstructions of this picture. I respect her difference.

How inadequate the picture is and yet how eloquent in its blatant inadequacy. Behind us hangs a blanket, like a temporary stage curtain hiding the machinery. Whose story is hidden behind that blanket? Next to that blanket is a closed door which, I remember, led to the bedroom where Menno was conceived. On a small table stand two flowering plants potted in tins. They look like lilies but it was gloxinia that I remember my mother growing. She loved them for their velvety textures and rich colours. Although right for the symbolism, the white lilies are wrong for the place and I can't make them fit. On the tins you can just discern bees and a beehive.

Who ate the honey? Who made the marmalade? Who killed cock robin? Whose hands prepared the body for burial? Who cut branches of fern from my mother's favourite plant and put them on the body? Who was digging the grave in the frozen ground while this picture was being posed? Who arranged the picture? Where was Mary? Where were my other sisters: Martha and Sarah and Susie and Justina? Where were my brothers: David and John and Henry and Peter and William? Who trimmed the edges of this photograph? Whose child is this? Where was my father? Who took the picture? Whose camera was it? Whose story is this anyway?

As the questions feed each other and grow, I feel myself nearing the hub of a spinning wheel, a still point in a world that was and is turning. I remember or I make up a memory of the bustle of activity around the house, all surrounding the motionless body of a baby. I do not remember and yet I can smell the percolating coffee; I can feel the smooth curve of the funeral buns and smell their delicate yeasty fragrance; I can taste the rough disintegrating edges of the sugar cubes, dipped in coffee. Around Menno move these details of life as we knew it. Some are petty details. Some are sentimental. There is confusion, but there is also a reaching for a ceremony of innocence. The picture (worth more than a thousand words) can become an excuse to resist the telling of all those other stories. To tell Menno's story, the story that is not, is to resist this multiplication of stillborn stories, stories that are like a collection of battered dolls. It is Menno's story, the blocking voices say, Menno's day, Menno's picture.

BUT WHO IS MENNO? This is the question that drowns the ceremony, then takes us by the hand and leads us, poor children, back into the human world — the world of unwiped noses. And it is these untold stories that bring the picture to life. By itself the story of my absent mother was a horror story. Joined by these other absences, there is comfort after all for the motherless child.

The fern on the body (long since turned to dust in the grave in Altona) now intertwines with the swirling pattern of the fern on the linoleum (long since abandoned as refuse) to offer new life. Something stirs. It is hard to hold the picture still. What stirs is not a message. What is on the picture is as nothing. Unlike the sombre portrait of Menno Simons so often reproduced for his followers, this portrait of Menno makes no claims to authority. This Menno cannot see for us. Flesh is turned to stone which speaks of limits.

Situated symmetrically at the centre of the composition, the coffin contains no kernel of meaning. The composed pose of the baby and the closed eyes make it impossible to conflate the eye of the camera and that other Eye. This is more like that painting by Mantegna that distorts the perspective on the crucified body of Jesus so that all we see are the soles of his feet. On the soles I make a motto saying: STOP.

Side by side by side by side. . . . All washing our feet in the same pink bathtub; all telling different stories. Always another side, another layer, another angle. This is the limit that turns us back to life. Those are not pearls that were his eyes, little children, little children, like gems for His crown. Like a handful of pebbles, gravel thrown into a pond, the stories multiply from many centres, expanding outwards like watery flowers in ever-widening circles, forming endlessly new combinations. If this is the richness that happens when a child is born dead, imagine it multiplied many times over when the child lives — for ten months or for sixteen years or for sixty years. Death is an explosion of life that cannot be taken away from you. You reach out to take it. But tell me, sister, is this the resurrection? Has the stone been rolled away or is it at the bottom of the pond? Or are we, perhaps, talking of Michelangelo?

MAGDALENE FALK REDEKOP
Toronto, July 1988

Altona, Manitoba
Box 321
February 20/49

Dear Mother,

I am very lonely for you already. Please bring along our game if you come home. I would very much like to kiss you. Martha wrote this for me. I always told her what to write.

x x x x x x x x x x

Goodbye,
From your,
daughter Magdalene

COME HOME SOON!

* * *

Altona, Manitoba
Box 321
February 20/49

Dear Mother,

Three
~~Nearly~~ all of our crayons are broken already. We sometimes play outside. Today we had such good food to eat that we had to button everything open. We had meat and water moose. ~~Come home soon.~~

x x x x x x x x x x

Goodbye,
Your daughter,
Elizabeth

COME HOME SOON!

2. *No Stone*

STANDING HERE, I am in awe at the size of this place. The Lord only knows what I am doing here. I am thinking maybe it will be like my recurring nightmare. We have been asked to sing in a church and the music is in my care. I page and page and I cannot find the song. Finally the service is over and I still have not found the music.

Menno's day was March 1, 1949. Forty years. Give or take. Martha said of her brother Lazarus: "But Lord . . . by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days." Still, the Lord was in favour of removing the stone.

Between us, I believe we have located the bones of our brother. The colouring seems easy. Exposing flesh: that won't be a Sunday School picnic.

At the mere mention, here stands a gleaming pulpit, behind it white sepulchral walls, on either side a bare rectangular window. Our father's body has been raised for a moment in time, upright from his coffin (woman, how you do take liberties) dressed in his black suit and white turtleneck sweater . . . the air is filled with deep rumbling sounds . . . alles fleisch ist grass . . . all flesh is grass.

As if by design I have been given the ideal place to write, I think. I am spending a few days at a serene cottage on Pelican Lake with my artist friend. She will do what artists do. I will do what writers do.

She has cleared the kitchen table for me, overlooking the water. Here, she says, I can do my work. Behind me, on the wall hangs a water-stained picture of a blue August sky, a grassy prairie, an empty train track leading to a train station in the distance. Above the horizon in small black letters:

> As for man, his days are as grass:
> As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
> Soon the wind passeth over it, and it is gone,
> And the place thereof shall know it no more.
>
> King David 1000 B.C.
> Psalm 103:15-16

I am very familiar with this door where I find entrance to Menno's day. I see my daughter there now, Tamara, returning the first time to her brother's burial place, her body bent in the wind, weeping. The ground beneath the lonely elm is covered with snow. There is no stone. She returns to the car, her face glistening with tears. I was thinking she says, its place remembers it no more. We have placed an evergreen wreath and as we leave I look back. It seems there is someone there. One end of the red ribbon bow is snapping jauntily in the wind, waving us out of sight. There is in the gesture a brave gaiety combined with the dignity of a military salute.

Here at Darcy's grave I find entrance to this massive cave. I pause before I enter as if to memorize the exact location where I am. Instinct. I am in a sunfilled place, with white birds winging across the water outside; on the other side hills separate lake and sky.

You must know I do not want to go inside. The photograph. I Elizabeth am very sad. You Magdalene are petrified. I know that Fear and Sadness have long inhabited this place. Fear is at the door. If I address it sadness begs to be released into the sunlight. I restrain sadness and fear grips me. Am I afraid of sadness?

There is clutter and confusion here. I know by now that all this has little to do with time and chronological order. (Yes, certainly, our father has long since gone back to rest.) Sorting it out now will be like trying to wrestle with live wires, like making eternity fit into time. Electricity crackles through the bond that was forged between us when Menno died . . . a cord of three strands is not easily broken . . . do you know where Mary is?

I look outside once more; my eyes readjust and rest on flowing slate-coloured water, little flecks of white foam moving with the liquid rock. I hear the wind sighing.

Inside the cave I see a light. I am not sure I trust it. It is the light on my mother's face. I can see her telling the story of Menno's birth. She is leaving her body, going higher and higher, singing Nearer My God to Thee. It is ecstasy. She can see her body in the bed below, her grief-stricken husband sitting beside it. He is losing another wife in childbirth. Plumps! she says. She is back in her body. Never again will she fear death. Her face is shining.

I am afraid here. If you do not see the same light I see, is it really there? I don't know where Mary is.

Mary is in school. She is not here for the picture and when she comes home and finds out they have taken it without her, she feels left out.

The little dresses we are wearing are red plaid with white eyelet trim.

The chairs we are sitting on are varnished brown wood. I remember my first glimpse of them in the lamplight of an early Christmas morning. (I painted them red.)

The lilies were orange. The plants appeared dead in their tin containers of earth for most of the year, but early in spring they produced orange coloured blossoms. I don't remember any fragrance.

The pots are standing on the squeaky organ stool that Uncle John built.

There is no air in here. Outside there are white butterflies, blowing about in the wind. I don't understand why they would even try to fly. I wonder if their sailing is without effort and if they land where they choose?

I don't think the door behind me in the picture is the door to our parent's bedroom, Magdalene. I think that door is beside you, outside of the picture frame. The door in the picture (in this story) leads into the hallway.

The little coffin rests on a telephone directory. I'm not sure why.

Directly behind me, behind the blanket is the wall telephone. (I think the blanket is a rough-textured dark earth colour. Did it come from Henry and Peter's room?) The wall is a corner wall. In this corner behind the blanket stands father's heavy wood and brown leather rocking chair.

Grandfather built the coffin.

David and John dug the grave.

Sarah baked the bread. In the absence of our mother, other visiting "mothers" hovered and worried and hours before the funeral Sarah baked more bread. Kneading the white dough, watching it rise, what was she thinking, our sister Sarah?

IT WAS AUNT ELIZABETH (our father's sister) and Mrs. Bergen who laid the leaves on Menno's body at the funeral. I like to think they brought leaves from their own potted plants. I have a vague memory of brightly coloured leaves. I dig out my album and find the close-up of Menno alone. Yes there is coleus. Bunta Yosaf we called it. Joseph's Coat. This picture is taken on the funeral day outside in the snow, exotic leaves on soft white flannel. That cannot be a bare little foot at the lower end of the coffin. More leaves have been added for this occasion. How do I express the sorrow I feel. Am I crying for my brother now, or for the plants? All flesh is grass.

The funeral was in the large room which was our kitchen/dining room before a wall separated the two. The coffin stood at the entrance to the hall. Father was there by the coffin. I have a sense of Aunt Elizabeth presiding. Mother was not there. (Actually I don't know if Aunt Elizabeth spells her name with a *z*. The little plastic card in my wallet clearly states that I was registered Elisabeth Falk. I have a vague memory of standing at the blackboard in school. I remember the spot. What they taught in school was right, wasn't it? There was the Queen Mother on the wall. Elizabeth? Zed for Zoo and Zebra, Xylophone and Zuider Zee. Exotic. Zed.)

The funeral is over. Before the procession begins there are pictures taken outside the house. Menno alone. A group picture: to the left of the box are Mary, Martha, and Magdalene; to the right David, John, and Elizabeth. Who arranged this grouping?

NOW DAVID IS ON THE ROAD, walking. David is fourteen. He is wearing a checkered heavy wool shirt against the March wind. In his arms he is carrying the wooden box. At the treeline bordering the garden he pauses to shift

the weight and I see the side of his face. I look away and now I feel my own features contorting in grief and guilt. Down the long muddy driveway, eastward, toward the highway on the way to the cemetery, he carries our brother. We walk with him. The mud pulls at our boots, imprinting our footsteps.

They said it was good that Menno had died, because by the time he was an adolescent, father would have been too old. Who said this? (Mother wrote in her little book:

> "Ein lieber sohn Menno vom Herrn erbeten und auch erhalten" . . . dear son Menno petitioned of the Lord and also received . . . "Der Herr in seiner grossen Liebe nahm ihm aber gleich zu sich am 1 Maerz 1949. Dort ist er sicher von Suende, Teufel, und Welt an Jesu Brust!" . . . the Lord in his great love however took him to Himself immediately on March 1, 1949. There he is safe from sin, the devil, and the world on Jesus' breast . . .)

Father would have been too old. Who said this? I know I repeated it in the pink bedroom of our farmhouse when I was an adolescent.

My only memory of the burial is that a neighbour lady stood between me and the grave pulling me away from it.

I am in the mortuary, the place of embalming; an employee has arrived and is waiting in these chilly recesses to do whatever it is he will do. Thanksgiving weekend . . . two minutes . . . the stone cold table . . . my son's long body six feet two give or take draped with a white sheet, feet cold, I dare not lift the sheet from my son's naked flesh, what will I see, the eyes half closed, the tongue is thick, blond hair is matted with blood, the beautifully shaped head is roughly stitched at the back of the scalp trickling blood and water from the autopsy, are you sure he's dead . . . very sure . . . my son . . . could you please wake up Darcy . . . could you please wake up. She pulls me from behind, the neighbour lady. I know without looking it is she because if I looked to see who it was that pulled at me I'd want to beat them to a pulp. Clutching hands . . . grasping . . . appearing protective . . . thinking I am being sucked in by death . . . hands that believe they have power over life and death . . . I am furious . . . I am calm. Why is it so cold in here?

I COULD TURN AROUND NOW and leave. There is no one behind me. You are over there on the other side of the coffin, warm and compassionate and supportive. Yet I feel cold and angry and sad and alone. We are not finished. I have not forgotten about the bread. I like to believe it was I who ate the bread . . . laughing and crying and saying Mamabiet, she said . . . I like to believe it was I because I am the one who laughs and cries and if that one ate the Mamabiet that proves I was really there, already alive when Menno died.

It seems to me like it was morning and we were just waking in our shared "little girl's" bedroom. Half asleep. Someone came in and told us we had a baby brother. I don't know who. It was a woman. A brother after four girls. Oh joy! Jumping up and down. He can sleep there. Right there in that cradle in the corner against the wall adjoining Father's Staefchi. What's that she's saying? He's dead? What does it mean? He is dead. Who is alive and who is dead? Who decides? Who is a person and who is not? Who decides? Was I a person?

Somewhere here there is the old blue tub in the "old house." It is mid-December, almost Christmas. Someone is bathing a baby, washing naked flesh, "Jreesu Bet, Liesabet" (Elizabeth is a dirty tub). All is forgiven. Under the blood. How many washings after grandmother found the baby lying in a pool of blood from an umbilical cord too loosely tied? How many . . . how much water . . . blood . . . how many deaths . . . damned spot. Microfilmed newspapers at the city library call it the Black Winter of Hitler. 1942.

It was a pink tub full of ice you say, almost new? In father's Staefchi, in the "new house"? I cradle and rock the memory of warm summer evenings, all of us washing our feet, each in our turn in the pink enamel tub.

Perhaps I'll skip the Michaelangelo thing. I was going to play with Revelations chapter twelve. Can you imagine? It is not to be played with. Angels and red dragons fighting . . . Menno and mother falling in and out of heaven . . . flight and fear . . . twelve stars . . . like the stars of the morning, His bright crown adorning . . . the angel Michael appears, the great warrior . . . Darcy is a warrior, I say. Perhaps, you tell me, I should go back to *Pride and Prejudice* from which I got his name and see that Darcy and Elizabeth were lovers. I say nothing. I know he is a warrior.

Fear rises up in my stomach. Why is it so hard to talk about the clown? Once more I experience joy and sorrow mixed with fear in the memory of my son's death and your son's birth. Out of that which was inseparable Menno came into being. I can't really remember anymore how it all happened. Who was it that took Menno's graveclothes wrapped around Darcy from birth and loosed him? Who freed them both, my brother and my son, to exist in separateness? I am very afraid. It is getting so dark in here and I have a sense of the uncanny. Who else is in here? How could we both think we named the clown?

I don't remember. Like the bread. I thought these were inanimate objects, long turned to dust. Somewhere there is betrayal here. The bread is stone. Stone figures. Faces and bodies, partially released from solidified prisons of mass molecules . . . there is an incredible life force in here and I have no control . . . flesh is grass . . . stone is flesh . . . the earth is shaking . . . we have disturbed the universe and rocks are warring with each other. All for a piece of bread with marmalade.

If there is betrayal here, I see that it is I. I have betrayed myself here in this place reeking of death. I traded my own existence for the security of mother's. No

matter if she willed it. I do know how to get out of this cave. We are only here to explore together. It's only a story. What else is in this wretched place? Longings for heaven and release, failed lovers, mothers, brothers, fathers . . . ice-filled pink bathtubs and rocking chairs behind blankets. Arrogant fool that I am, I have often tried to bring about the resurrection in this cave. Believe me I have tried to undo the fall. We are approaching the entrance. Two lights now dangle strangely here, reflecting on all the grotesque shadows we have wrestled with. The lights contain within them these truths: neither mother (nor I as her namesake) killed Menno; babies, even dead ones, are not promised new dolls.

"My sister's story breathes warm life . . ." I think not. I feel so cold. Correction. At this rewriting my body is flushed with heat. Eureka! Here is the place to balance my son's "Michaelangelo" with my daughter's title for this story: "that menopause thing" . . . Surely if I draw in both of my children, invoke their creative powers, there will be enough life.

A shadow follows me out of the cave . . . there was never enough of mother to go around. I turn. There is never enough life in mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, children, or lovers to sustain us. There is not enough life in me to sustain those I love. The words rise and push out of me like a groaning. The Lord giveth. The Lord taketh. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

NEVER ENOUGH AND YET ENOUGH, for you and I, Magdalene, have broken bread. The memorial crumb is broken and multiplies. If we passed it on to Mary, Martha, David, John, Sarah, Henry, Peter, Susie, William, Justina, would there be enough? You have "priested" to me, Magdalene, by making space beside you for my separate story of Menno's still life. Will there be enough bread? If we try to gather up more than enough for you and me, for today, will it rot like manna in the wilderness by tomorrow? Certainly we make space for their stories; there is room at the table. Some sit quietly, others speak formally and with dignity. There are those who laugh raucously and some who think it's no use to cry. A few of us speak better with our hands and wine bottles crash and spill across the table. Some wish others would be silent and some must preach. In all of us there is a little of the other, here at this table. Mother and father are here, Menno and the other Mary, the other William, and Anna. We are all here with room to spare for all our children and grandchildren. There is plenty of bread and as I have said wine flows freely. A marriage is taking place. He is here, Jesus our brother kind and good.

The Name becomes a Door. Now the dark cave disappears into thin air and we are in a new place, at a new table. We are all here and still more coming . . .

Our father raises his deep voice in a song:

"Grosser Gott wir loben Dich,
Herr wir preisen Deine Staerke."
Holy God we praise Thy Name
Lord of all we bow before Thee.

Our Older Brother breaks the bread, gives thanks, and says, take, eat.

Mother's face is radiant and raised in confident anticipation. She turns and extends her hand and there is room beside her. The other Sarah. We are all here.

* * *

I confess I plumpsed.

I am back in the photograph trying to make an ending out of a beginning . . . a beginning out of an ending. Gathering fragments. Each one enough to make another story.

I don't know if we should wait here any longer, Magdalene. There is no one here. They have all gone away.

I wonder if our brothers will like what we have done.

Mary was here. I saw she was crying.

I wonder if anyone said thank you to Sarah for the bread?

I had a dream. Father and I were in the same pew; he was partaking of a basket of stone wafers and he was laughing so hard I could feel the pew shaking.

It is the wrong time of year for all this. Almost Thanksgiving. Yesterday I went outside (of the picture) for awhile and the leaves were falling. I was very sad for the last three days. It will be ten years next week since mother died.

It is very early; still dark. I don't think there is anything more we can do here . . .

ELIZABETH FALK
Winnipeg, September 1988

WATCHING THEM

Anne Swannell

At first I think they're just a collection of weirdos,
some group of losers that somehow ended up
at the same bus-stop. On the bus, though, I realize
they're from that sheltered workshop up the road . . .
that school for the . . . people who aren't quite

they don't know how to

they say things people don't.

The bus lurches forward, accelerates, stops
to wait for an overweight girl — hard to tell how old —
could be fifteen, could be thirty.
She's wearing a mauve-flowered dress and thick glasses.
"I shouldn't run like that!" she announces
as the bus starts off again. We all pretend
it isn't us she's speaking to. She says she thinks
she's going to faint. Wordless, we reach for her,
guide her bulk into a seat. None of us wants her
falling.

She recovers quickly, twists around, shouts
"Hey Donnie! You still going to Explorers ?"
He's at the back of the bus.
"Shit, no!" he shouts back. "I quit."
"I thought you did. I never see you there no more."
"No, I quit."
"I'm still going," she says.

She keeps calling out to him
down the length of the bus,
he keeps answering her
all the way into town,
and we keep listening,
locked in our separate skulls.

"TELLING THE MISSING DAYS"

Iain Higgins

The following fragment, offered here as a psychological curiosity of some poetic merit — since it details what seems to have been a vision in a dream, or at least the subsequent recollections thereof — would appear to date from the early part of the first century of the common era, although the single text in which it was preserved dated, according to its projected editor, from the earliest days of the next century (i.e., II in, to use the scholarly convention). In the summer of 1987, the present adapter, pursuing an unrelated matter in the depths of Widener Library at Harvard University, stumbled across a mis-filed pamphlet by one Gottlob Piontek, Ph.D.; the undated pamphlet (whose fragile condition and Gothic type nevertheless dated it from the latter part of the last century) announced the discovery of a papyrus fragment containing an epistle of undoubted significance to biblical scholars, the full details of which, along with a transcription and translation of the epistle, were soon to be published in the *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Palästinaforschung zu Berlin.* A thorough search of the journal produced no such publication, nor did the library catalogue reveal any other pieces by Piontek. The pamphlet itself — now unfortunately unlocated after having been sent for rebinding — contained a periphrastic summary of the epistle, which apparently came to light as a patch in certain scrolls purchased from a street vendor in Karshi (Karshish?), Uzbekistan. The adapter, having then jotted down some notes based on his reading of the paraphrase, now supplemented with some few details still lodged in his otherwise vague and dim recollections of the general purport of the pamphlet, has produced the following (somewhat) free rendering in verse (the rather formal nature of the summary suggesting that an appropriate modern equivalent would be found in verse). Though by no means scrupulously accurate, since it stands at two removes (at least) from the original, the present rendering may nevertheless have the virtue of reminding the reader just how durable past experience really is. The title is the work of the adapter, translating a compelling phrase repeated several times in the pamphlet: "*die verlorenen Tage nicht zahlen*" (or perhaps "*erzählen*" — who knows what possible tricks memory plays?).

Now when I speak I have to spit
the bits of earth out — my tongue . . .
ugh . . . I shudder to recall . . .
had — had begun to crumble under
the cover of that fragrant cloth
sweetening the darkness; when I gaze
on the earth itself I have to squint
against the light: the light that probes
so deep now, into nothing, something,
I don't know what, not what I'd thought,
if ever I had thought about it
anyway. . . . Those cloths scraped,
as I moved, across an unfeeling
flesh; what skin could take so much
at once? Forget women, their touch
I mean — the one washing his feet
with her hair and spikenard, the other looking
on, jealous like a lover, and I,
unable to touch the food before me,

my stomach turned by the fruity smell
of wine, bewildered simply — even
the touch of air, dry as it is
in summer now, stops my heart
again — or seems to; plays such childish
tricks with my thoughts that questions, yours
or the others' — those who would have me speak
as witness to this or that (you know
what I mean), or take my life instead,
as if that were anything now — will never
bare the truth. . . . You ask, you ask,
but try as I might, I just can't tell
the missing days: you, of all people,
should understand . . . you, who had showings
yourself, but now can't utter them,
should understand how knowing rises
with the breath, but catches suddenly
in the throat . . .

EMILY, LATE MARCH

J. E. Sorrell

Emily lives in this room.
Everything she has touched
Breathes now: the pillow, books,
My hair. Where her finger
Has rested, all is clear.
Where her warm thumb has pressed,
Dust has formed a frail halo.

Emily lives in this room,
But has taken my hands
With her into the meadow,
Under her blue, breezy frock.
She's gone down to the spring
To kneel from the steep, yellow moss
And look.

NAÏM KATTAN, "LE DISCOURS ARABE," AND HIS PLACE IN THE CANADIAN LITERARY DISCOURSE

Nasrin Rahimieh

IN THE COURSE OF HIS CAREER in Canada Naïm Kattan has become known for his role both in the Canada Council and as a creative writer. Appellations such as those chosen for him by Jacques Godbout, "le fée des bourses [à Ottawa]" (12), and the anonymous author of a *Saturday Night* review, "Our only Arab-Jewish-French-Canadian Writer" (9), reflect a duality essential to Kattan. Those who believe the life of an artist incompatible with that of a bureaucrat have criticized his position in the Canadian literary institution — a charge which has not hindered Kattan from pursuing his two seemingly disparate realms of endeavour.

Whatever view Canadians might take of Kattan's "double existence," they have unanimously adopted him as the very model of cross-culturalism. They recognize him as a man who has gone beyond the fear of assimilation by refusing to cling onto a single identity. In Jacques Allard's words, he is "un voyageur du transculturel, soucieux de comprendre les rapports de l'Orient et de l'Occident et tout aussi bien ceux des groupes ethniques canadiens. Juif d'Arabie, Arabe de la judéité, oriental d'Occident, occidental d'Orient . . . ce francophone québécois est toujours ailleurs que là où on le fixe" (7). It is this willingness to exist on the borders of many nations and languages which makes Kattan an enviable character in a polarized Canadian society. Kattan's very presence in Canada is a stern reminder of the need for a Canadian cultural plurality. This perception is often articulated by Kattan's critics, for instance in the title of I. M. Owen's review: "Why an Arabic-speaking, Baghdad-born Jew is a perfect guide to the modern Canadian experience" (5) or in Alexandre Amprimoz's assessment: "Naïm Kattan is an international writer. Social integration into the Canadian society is a very difficult thing. But paradoxically, the loneliness and the isolation of Kattan's caracters [sic] make them rather similar to the other heroes of contemporary Quebec literature" (82).

That Kattan fits within the Canadian literary mosaic is self-evident (the 1976 edition of the *Dictionnaire des auteurs québécois* lists him, albeit as a "critique littéraire," and *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* presents a comprehensive survey of his literary production). What is less frequently discussed is the manner in which Kattan finds his voice within the various Canadian patterns. Is he a Canadian writer or an immigrant writer whom a historical accident has brought to Canada? It is the extensions of Kattan's transcultural spirit in his literary works which I wish to examine in the following argument. My contention is that while the ease with which Kattan moves in and out of languages and cultures affords him a high degree of artistic sensitivity, it also poses a constant threat to his literary voice. By refusing total integration, Kattan risks becoming "marginal." Yet, he has manipulated this same marginality into an art.

Let us begin with Kattan's choice of literary languages in Canada and elsewhere. Although fluent in English,[1] and in spite of the fact that English Canadians have found an affinity with his work, he insists on writing in French. For Kattan, English appears to be associated with the British occupation of Iraq, while French created a link, however illusory, with freedom and "authentic" self-expression. That is perhaps why to this day, his choice of literary language remains firm: "It was so painful for me to change from writing in Arabic to writing in French — and it cost me 15 years of silence — that I don't think I will ever be able to make a change again. I am satisfied writing in French, since there's a public for what I say in that language. I can write in French without feeling that I am exiled" (Simpson 36). What goes unnoticed by Kattan's interviewer, who is intent upon fitting him into a "Canadian" pattern, is the allusion to his mother tongue, Arabic. This closing statement of the interview reveals, if only indirectly, the essential in understanding Kattan — what I will call the need to exist on the margins.

Altough born into the Jewish community of Baghdad and educated both in Hebrew and Arabic, he consciously opted for Arabic and its literary heritage. His first short stories and critical pieces were published in Arabic: ". . . je me suis rendu compte que pour moi ce qui comptait c'était écrire en arabe. C'était de ma langue maternelle que j'étais fier" (Allard 12). This duality of vision is even reflected in his name, which is at once Arabic and Hebrew: "En hébreu, le nom *Kattan* veut dire *petit*. C'est une description, comme dans toutes les langues il y a des noms des gens petits. Mais *Naïm* veut dire charmant, agréable. Alors il y avait cette double signification. Du côté arabe le mot *Naïm* est encore plus élogieux. C'est paradisiaque. C'est la grande fortune d'être dans un climat de paradis. Et *Kattan* veut dire cotonnier" (Allard 11). However, the balance between Arabic and Hebrew is not as undisturbed as it first appears: "Enfant, parlant avec les musulmans de ma propre ville, dans leur dialecte plutôt que dans le mien, j'ai pressenti la condition minoritaire et je ne l'ai pas acceptée" (*Le Réel* 182). In the opening chapter of *Adieu Babylone*, Kattan's semi-autobiographical novel, the reader glimpses this

same clash of identities. The protagonist's Jewish friend, Nessim, insists on communicating with Muslims in his own dialect of Arabic. In contrast, the protagonist chooses silence, before arriving at another solution: "Je choisis un moyen terme. Mes mots n'étaient ni ceux des juifs ni ceux des Musulmans. Je m'exprimais en arabe littéraire, coranique" (*Adieu* 12). The compromise reached by the protagonist and, by extension, Kattan is one which avoids simple polarities and insists upon complex inter-relationships. Recalling an incident in his earlier years, Kattan points to what has become a conviction throughout his life:

> Il y avait quelqu'un qui m'a dit. . . . De quelle nationalité vous êtes? Je lui dis irakienne. Alors il me dit: oui, mais c'est quoi ça Irakien, vous êtes Musulman? je dis: non, alors il me dit: vous êtes de nationalité juive? je dis: Ce n'est pas une nationalité, il me répond: Il fallait le dire, pourquoi vous n'allez pas chez vous? Il fallait, et c'était un choix à l'époque, me dire que j'étais refusé par tout le monde ou me dire c'était ma chance d'appartenir à personne. (Allard 24)

The only mould into which Kattan's affinities can be fit is that of a cross-cultural man. The title of his recently published novel, *La Fortune du passager*, aptly emphasizes his vagabond spirit. The historical necessity of wandering across cultural barriers becomes clear in the light of Kattan's biography.[2] But its implications for his literary endeavours still remain obscure.

WHILE WRITING IN FRENCH and identifying with its literary traditions, Kattan refuses to suppress a past closely linked with Arabic and Hebrew. He claims that his style of writing, which leaves much to the imagination of the reader, is derived from Arabic narrative techniques. Quite often, essential details remain unsaid. In *Adieu Babylone*, for instance, the protagonist is never named and although we recognize an autobiographical speaker in the text, he remains a shadowy figure throughout. This creates a sense of distance not usually associated with biographical narratives.

Kattan attributes this style of composition to what he calls *le discours arabe*; in the interview with Allard, in answer to a question regarding the prudish air of his texts, Kattan explains:

> Je ne peux plus dire à cet égard que je suis tout à fait Arabe. Il y a deux aspects de ce discours arabe qui expliquent un peu peut-être mes écrits. D'abord on parle beaucoup mais l'essentiel, ce qui est le plus fragile, quand il est encore fragile en nous, on ne le dévoile pas parce qu'on a honte de cette fragilité. . . . Dans le discours arabe, il y a beaucoup de mots, les gens parlent beaucoup mais l'essentiel est très peu dit . . . le deuxième élément dans le discours qui vient de mon enfance et qui est de ma culture, c'est de dire aux autres ce qui leur fait plaisir, même si c'est pas tout à fait vrai. (15)

The crucial elements in this description, at least in so far as it applies to Kattan's texts, are the cryptic and highly codified nature of language. There is a strong sense of the alien and the unutterable in *Adieu Babylone*, very little dialogue, and the characters are barely outlined and are not introspective. To borrow Kattan's own words, the essential is never said. Some of this effect can be attributed to cultural differences. Kattan himself encourages this type of interpretation through the notion of *le discours arabe*. Some critics have taken the same route. For instance, Spettigue speaks of "cultural differences difficult for Westerners to understand," which then develop into communication barriers between author and reader:

> One does not question the authenticity of the representation; but the result is to deepen the shadow-effect. All seems disembodied, unreal, except in moments of sordid and commonplace reality. . . . Socially and politically we are filled in on the current movements, journalistically, and this helps, but at the same time it reinforces the feeling that with the protagonist we inhabit a world of shadows. . . . It is not that *Farewell, Babylon* is unconvincing at all, but that it is exile literature, essentially colonial, recording marginal people for whom everything important happens somewhere else. (510)

What creates the "shadow-effect" in *Adieu Babylone* and Kattan's other works of fiction is not merely a function of his exile. In fact, his thematic preoccupation seems to be immigration rather than exile. I would suggest that the roots of what some critics have regarded as narrative unease are in Kattan's medium of expression. This is not to say that by choosing French he has denied himself and his creative works accessibility to Western audiences, but rather that the constant juxtaposition of languages in which Kattan has been immersed has created a narrative style devoid of "signifying" stability.

For an understanding of Kattan's notion of languages, we must turn to his essay *Le Réel et le théâtral* in which he outlines the differences between Eastern and Western cultures in terms of their relationship to "reality." He argues that for the Semites there exists no mediation between man and reality. In the West, on the contrary, man achieves the same relationship through the theatrical and the illusory. In a passage reminiscent of early German Romantic thought, he explains his understanding of the East-West dichotomy in the following manner:

> . . . C'est l'homme qui établit une alliance avec Dieu pour sinon contrôler la nature, du moins prévenir sa menace. Cette forme de rapport se manifeste dans la langue elle-même. Dans la langue hébraïque et dans la langue arabe, il n'y a pas de séparation entre les mots et les choses. L'objet vit parce qu'il est nommé. (16)

On the level of linguistic and poetic expression, Kattan implies that semitic languages have an immediate power of evocation which the West cannot grasp or recreate because of its own preoccupation with modes of mediation. Clearly, Kattan's notion of *le discours arabe* is based on the same theory: what appears as unspoken and implicit to the Western readers of his novels would have much

clearer and more concrete significance for an Arab reader. This perspective allows us a partial understanding of the writer's own linguistic vision, but we must recognize the extent to which Kattan's own Judeo-Islamic heritage is fragmented from within.

THROUGHOUT *Adieu Babylone*, the protagonist speaks of linguistic exile in his homeland. To belong, he must imitate the accent of his Muslim compatriots. That is to say, for the protagonist, as for the young Kattan, the most conventional form of speech becomes a mark of internal exile. When Kattan assures us that he considers Arabic his mother tongue, we must understand the statement in its proper context. Not only did he learn Hebrew and Arabic simultaneously, but also he mastered the transposition of the two. In this process, both languages are forced to undergo such transformations that ultimately they exist in complete neutrality. In fact, they create a new linguistic system.

In a chapter of *Adieu Babylone*, the narrator describes the use of Hebrew alphabet for writing Arabic. This cryptic language, *Souki*, creates a bridge between the two languages. At the same time, however, it empties both of their internal logic of significance. For the Jewish teenagers who are employed by Muslim officials to decipher documents written in *Souki*, the language offers a glimpse of power: "Les Musulmans exprimaient ouvertement leur envie à l'égard des Juifs qui disposaient de cette écriture secrète" (129). The narrator does not further explore the implications of the simultaneous process of mutilation and conflation of languages, but Kattan's own sensitivity to the emptied-out medium surfaces in one of his short stories, "Le Gardien de l'alphabet."

The protagonist of this story, Ali Souleyman, leaves his homeland, Turkey, at the time of Ataturk's reforms, to find support for the preservation of the sacred alphabet of his language. He believes that the Latin script which has been chosen to replace Arabic threatens the very identity of his nation. Ironically, his convictions take him increasingly further away from his own land. He reaches total exile in Edmonton where he diligently rewrites new texts in the old alphabet. His zeal gradually obscures his goal; he copies and catalogues texts without ever reading them. Like the protagonist of *Adieu Babylone*, Ali Souleyman is estranged from the language he desperately wants to preserve: "Souvent, Ali était pris de vertige. Allait-il s'arrêter? Quand et où?" (119). Both protagonists suffer from a cultural alienation which is rooted in their medium of communication. The mother tongue itself is a vehicle for fragmentation of the self. In "Le Gardien de l'alphabet," this linguistic disorientation is accompanied with physical exile. The more fervent Ali Souleyman becomes in the preservation of his alphabet, the further he is removed from his own language and culture.

This analysis can also be extended to Kattan's own situation of the permanent migrant. Like the characters of his fictional works, he too is distanced from his mother tongue. In his interview with Allard, Kattan narrates an episode which is symptomatic of his linguistic dilemma:

> Il y a deux ans, il y a un Musulman, en Israël, qui a lu *Adieu Babylone* et a décidé d'en traduire un chapitre en arabe. Il l'a fait et me l'a envoyé après. Et j'ai lu *Adieu Babylone* qui se passe dans un pays arabe traduit en arabe. Ç'a été une expérience très dure et très étrange. Dure tout de même parce que je ne m'y suis pas reconnu, écrit dans ma langue maternelle. (Allard 16)

The inability to recognize himself in Arabic points back to his pluralist approach to all languages and cultures. In *La Mémoire et la promesse*, he writes: ". . . l'individu existe et son appartenance à une culture, à une langue doit être un choix libre et cette liberté comprend celle de changer de culture et de langue" (158-59). What he resists is the possibility of being firmly placed in one linguistic system: "J'ai opté pour une langue que j'invente à chaque moment. J'ai choisi un lieu que je dote de présence en y inscrivant mon invention" (*Le Réel* 188). When translated into the language of fiction, this linguistic plurality poses a number of difficulties to the readers. Hence, the narrative unease remarked upon by the critics and the reviewers. The linguistic realm created by Kattan is one which maintains a critical relationship with all languages which enter it. As explained by the Moroccan writer and critic Abdelkebir Khatibi, this relationship is essential to all bilingual or multilingual writing:

> . . . la langue étrangère, dès lors qu'elle est intériorisée comme écriture effective, comme parole en acte, transforme la langue première, elle la structure et la déporte vers l'intraduisible . . . la langue dite étrangère ne vient pas s'ajouter à l'autre, ni opérer avec elle une pure juxtaposition: chacune *fait signe* à l'autre, l'appelle à se maintenir comme dehors. (186)

Kattan consciously adopts such a model in his creative works. Because he insists that elements of Arabic, Hebrew, French, and English be preserved in his writing, he is never entirely within one given linguistic or even literary system. In this sense it is neither *le discours arabe* nor a particular "Canadian" discourse which gives him his unique style of composition, but rather a transcultural discourse "qui parle *en langues* se mettant à l'écoute de toute parole d'où qu'elle vienne" (Khatibi 63).

NOTES

[1] "J'avais le choix entre le français et l'anglais comme deuxième langue, c'était à parité. J'apprenais autant l'anglais que le français et j'ai choisi le français parce que pour moi l'Occident libérateur était francophone" (Allard 13).

[2] For a short biographical note, see Richard Hodgson, "Naïm Kattan," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 53: *Canadian Writers since 1960*, first series, ed. W. H. New (Detroit: Gale, 1986), 238-40.

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PROTEXT

M. Travis Lane

Imagine a text that does not cling to any of those univalent nouns that zoo about in the pages of tidy-minded professors. A text that does not interpret, describe, express. A text for which reality is only the texts among which it takes its existence, striking off small flashes of delight at every touch — much like a firefly leaf to leaf. A text of partial similes, allusions, puns, and anagrams — fluid rather than rigid, a cross-word of cloud-shapes, inventive, casual. A text of texts.

Of old texts which, half-forgotten, floating in the skies, have figures we no longer see. Of fairy stories, of ballet, of opera and of cinema. Above all of the theatre with its artificialities so matter-of-factly impermanent, all paper, tinsel, masquerade —

and yet demanding an assent (our fingers crossed). The cardboard boat can float if we believe it floats.

If we concede we don't know where we are going, why do we insist upon having a map? a plot? some prehistoric form? Is there an author for our play? Is someone piloting our boat? Is the river itself, that milky way, flowing up as well as down? Or is it never the same river, and only flowing out?

Who's being conned? How much of any disbelief can we believe? There is nothing under the masks we are told, not even our selves. We are all dissolved. Meaning is gone, and shaping is a lie. Scene after scene each life becomes a "trivial pursuit."

But poetry can not tell us that. The ship floats while we sail in it.

A DESERT SONG UNFINISHED

Stephen Pender

a song of desert heat
tea in the Sahara.
three sisters recreate themselves
in silver and purple silk

each a parody of each, sing-song
replica of a growing thing
that skirts the borders of the town
whistling from the desert

as peacocks poised with three eyes
the heat sickened them to a strut
prickled their desire
and later, blessed them with sleep

as the rail of their dream disappears
(for they dream as one, alone)
their wish is to follow it:
the hot wind rises

the song fades
through a gate of horns
the sisters know
the truth of dreams

COMPOSITION #12

Carl Grindley

over the long time things talk us gently

these words are eaten by brambles
these words are eaten by leaves

Butterflies in Japan fly cho cho,
wingbeating and sosoftly flying anyhow
our language doesn't do them justice

The concrete is a scar that all the cultured ivies in the world cannot cure
I can't even open my window to breathe
my building is sealed
and I am ceiling airfed hollow by metal ducts

even outside life is earthburied by asphalt three meters thick
when someone smashes through
everyone stares
surprised at the wet earth

over the long time things talk us gently
unlistening except sometimes we turn and turn again discord
until something inside smashes through

I was talking, yesterday, to someman staring . . .
I can't remember what about.

BROKEN GENERATIONS IN "OBASAN"

Inner Conflict and the Destruction of Community

Mason Harris

THE REMARKABLE SUCCESS of Joy Kogawa's documentary novel in weaving historical fact and subjective experience into a coherent whole is partly due to its ability to co-ordinate several layers of time around a single event: the internment and dispersal of the Japanese Canadians during and after the Second World War. The most obvious purpose of the novel is to reconstruct a suppressed chapter in Canadian history — this is Aunt Emily's special project. In counterpoint to Emily's facts and documents stands the intense personal history of Naomi's narrative, which reveals the damage inflicted on a child by the destruction of her community. As the narrative unfolds we become aware of another layer of history: that of the succeeding generations through which an immigrant community adjusts to a new culture, and the disruption of the relation between these generations by the dispersal of the Japanese Canadian community. Aunt Emily provides the essential facts, and Naomi's record of inner experience invites the reader to a strong emotional involvement in the narrative, but it is the history of the generations, as represented by the Kato and Nakane families, which binds together the various time-layers of the novel. Here I will stress the close connection between historical and psychological aspects of the novel by beginning with a discussion of the relation between generations, and then showing how this provides the basis for Naomi's relation to her two aunts and her absent mother, and also for some central imagery in which Naomi expresses both the fragmentation of her world and her final sense of resolution.[1]

In all immigrant communities the first, second, and third generations represent crucial stages in adjustment to the adopted culture. The importance of these generations in the Japanese Canadian community is indicated by the fact that they are given special names: *Issei* (immigrants from Japan), *Nisei* (the first generation born in Canada), and *Sansei* (the children of the *Nisei*). In the novel, Obasan and Uncle Isamu represent the Issei, while Emily comes from the political side of the Nisei. Though Naomi is a Sansei by birth, the fact that she was raised by an

immigrant aunt and uncle puts her more in the cultural situation of the Nisei, but without politics or community.[2]

Emily and Naomi are drawn together by a mutual need to heal the breach the destruction of their community has opened between Nisei and Sansei generations. Emily pursues this goal actively over twenty years, with amazing persistence considering her niece's lack of response, while in the course of the novel Naomi gradually comes to recognize her need for the values her aunt conveys to her from the ideals of her own generation, so cruelly defeated by history. I will first consider Emily's pursuit of Naomi as an attempt to re-establish a relationship between the Nisei and Sansei generations, and then Naomi's resistance as the attitude of a damaged Sansei who has repressed her actual history while becoming fixated on an ideal past before the internment — an attitude which has much in common with the traditional generation represented by her aunt and uncle. In reconstructing her past under Emily's influence, she must confront her affinity to both generations as a route to accepting her own situation; her development involves the resolution of conflicting attitudes towards language, the outside world, and the traditional concept of woman.

In his comprehensive history of the Japanese Canadian community, Ken Adachi describes the conflicts between Issei and Nisei generations. These conflicts are characteristic of any immigrant culture, but made sharper for Japanese Canadians by the conservatism of the Issei community and its rejection of the *mores* of western culture. Like many first-generation immigrants, the Issei sought a dignified accommodation with the surrounding society, but without joining it or altering their way of life. They saw western society as an alien world with which they sought only a peaceful coexistence, bolstered by an idealized memory of their homeland. In contrast, the Nisei, the first generation born in Canada, eagerly sought to identify with the new country — an attitude reinforced by the Japanese emphasis on education, which induced the Canadian-born quickly to acquire English as their first language. Thus the Nisei found themselves in conflict both with their parents' generation and with the larger society with which they identified, but which responded to their enthusiasm with social rejection and exclusion from most of the professions for which their Canadian education qualified them.

One response to this situation — a response vigorously condemned by the Issei — was the formation of a group of young Nisei activists to agitate for full citizenship including the right to vote. In the late 1930s, politically-minded Nisei founded their own newspaper, *The New Canadian*, and sent delegations to Ottawa. Adachi observes that their belief in the right to vote "grew into an exaggerated — and

illusory — sense of the importance of political rights in a modern democracy. The growing sense of grievance and injustice . . . was still mitigated by the belief that a society which professed democratic ideals would ultimately practise them."[3] If ineffectual and doomed to disillusionment, however, these activities provided the Nisei with a sense of western identity very different from the world-view of their parents. Under normal circumstances the activities of the progressive Nisei, however ineffectual in the short run, would have transmitted the new identity to the next generation, the Sansei, who could be expected to enter into full membership in Canadian society. The internment and dispersal which destroyed the progressive Nisei movement developing in Vancouver in the 1930s left Emily an activist without a political community and Naomi a deracinated, depressed, and apolitical Sansei with the psychological conflicts of the Nisei and no ethnic community to mediate between her sense of alienness and the WASP world of rural Alberta.

Emily's affiliation with the progressive Nisei of the 1930s is made clear in her diary, which also records her bitter disappointment as the justice and decency which she expected from Canadian society failed to appear. Emily does not, however, lose her confidence in what seems, for Naomi, a lost cause and a lost generation: "She believes in the Nisei, seeing them as networks and streamers of light dotting the country. For my part, I can only see a dark field with Aunt Emily beaming her flashlight to where the rest of us crouch and hide, our eyes downcast as we seek the safety of invisibility" (31-32).[4]

The frequency of Aunt Emily's visits to the family in Alberta and her persistent bombardment of Naomi with political reading and exhortation, indicate a profound need to rescue her niece from her frustrated solitude, and to hand on to her the zeal of her own generation — to find a political successor in her own family. Because of the loss of her own parents, however, Naomi has been raised by a very conventional though well-intentioned pair of Issei. She seems to side with her aunt and uncle in their disapproval of Emily's departure from female tradition — "'Not like woman'" says Uncle, "'Like that there can be no marriage'" (36) — and of the "agitation" which she always introduces into the domestic circle. Naomi implicitly agrees with her uncle when he insists that "'This country is the best. . . . Gratitude. Gratitude.' . . . He was right, I thought. If Aunt Emily with her billions of letters and articles and speeches . . . if all that couldn't bring contentment, what was the point?" (42). This "contentment" which must exclude all "agitation" is a traditional Japanese ideal. Naomi's passive acceptance of the *status quo* indicates that she has no real sense of membership in Canadian society: "'But you can't fight the whole country,' I said. 'We are the country,' [Emily] answered" (42). Naomi seems to consider "the whole country" a hostile group to which she does not belong. Yet it is Emily's diary describing the effects of the deportation in Vancouver — the living heart of the bundle of documents Emily has sent to her niece — that will launch Naomi on her own reconstruction of the past.

Despite her emphasis on "contentment," Naomi reveals, in her "self-denigrating" self-presentation in chapter 2, an intense discontent with her way of life and personal appearance. A pun linking nervous tension with stoppage of time suggests a blocked sense of development: "Personality: Tense. Is that past or present tense? It's perpetual tense" (7). A rather harsh observation from Emily provides objective confirmation of the sense of inner crippling which haunts Naomi through the narrative: "'Look at you, Nomi, shuffling back and forth between Cecil and Granton, unable either to go or to stay in the world with even a semblance of grace or ease'" (50). Emily diagnoses Naomi's psychic crippling as a case of repressed memory: "'You have to remember. . . . You are your history. If you cut any of it off you're an amputee. . . . Cry it out! Scream! Denial is gangrene'" (49-50).

While this diagnosis is amply confirmed by the imagery in which Naomi thinks of herself, there is a certain injustice in Emily's exhortation to remember, for Naomi's experience of the war and post-war years was far more traumatic than hers. As the internment was taking place Emily had the luck to get permission to move to Toronto with her father, while Naomi went with her aunt and uncle first to internment in Slocan and then to a kind of slave labour in appalling conditions in Alberta. Most important, Emily is twenty years older than her niece; at the time of the internment she was twenty-five, and had already established an identity as political activist and non-traditional woman. Naomi, on the other hand, experiences internment, orphaning and, worst of all, six years living in an uninsulated one-room shack on a beet farm, between the ages of five and fifteen. For Emily remembering means re-establishing the facts of history; for Naomi, it forces the reliving of a damaged development — an exploration of the self in an area beyond Emily's experience and also beyond the limitations of her abstract, polemical discourse. Emily's speech is external and rhetorical because she is trying to maintain and persuade others of values she developed in the past. Naomi's narrative is subjective and connotative because she is trying to recover a past she experienced as a child, much of which, at the beginning of the novel, has been expelled from memory. In this exploration we encounter another aspect of Naomi's resistance to Emily — a memory of an ideal childhood provided by a very traditional mother.

BEHIND THE STRONGLY EMPHASIZED CONTRAST between Naomi's two aunts — Emily and Obasan — lies a related contrast between Emily and Naomi's mother, pointed out by Naomi in her explanation of the family photograph: "Aunt Emily . . . definitely takes after Grandpa Kato — the round open face and the stocky build. . . . Not a beauty but, one might say, solid and intelligent-looking. Beside her, Mother is a fragile presence. Her face is oval as an egg and delicate" (19). In this case, contrasting appearance also represents a difference in

cultural values. Grandma Kato, a strong-minded but traditional woman, frequently returned to Japan and took her favourite daughter, Naomi's mother, with her, leaving Emily to stay with her father — eventually she would help him in his medical practice. Although born in Canada, Naomi's mother had a Japanese upbringing provided by Grandma Kato, while Emily's diary reveals her sense of closeness to her father.

Naomi's intense identification with her mother places her in a lineage of traditional women which includes Grandma Kato and Obasan. The leading characteristic of this concept of woman is defined by Obasan: "She has often spoken of my mother's 'yasashi kokoro', her tender, kind, and thoughtful heart" (46).[5] Naomi attributes the same quality to Obasan — she finds an "exquisite tenderness" in her expression in the family photograph (19). Naomi's intense memories of the perfect mother of her childhood make clear that for her this mother represents a feminine ideal: "Mother's voice is yasashi, soft and tender. . . . She is altogether yasashi" (51). In her own identification with the "yasashi kokoro" Naomi rejects Emily's brusque and angry discourse, but also finds it difficult to express or even acknowledge angry feelings of her own. (A use of the word "yasashi" by Emily implies an inability to survive outside the family circle. When the parents of Naomi's father are interned, Emily writes in her diary, "You know how yasashi Grandma is. This is too great a shock for her" [99]. Grandma Nakane is the first member of the family to die in exile.)

This ideal mother is the centre of a completely unified family life so perfect that it is painful to remember: "Every event was a warm-water wash, drawing us all closer till the fibre of our lives became an impenetrable mesh. . . . We were the original 'togetherness' people" (20). This absolute "togetherness" makes possible the positive "silence" of Japanese family life, exemplified by an understanding of the child by the mother so complete that words would only be an intrusion (59). This intuitive understanding which does not require words is characteristic of a family group where, as exemplified in the oft-told story of Momotaro, "Simply by existing a child is delight" (55). Family life is governed by a code of behaviour emphasizing self-restraint and consideration of others — a world of "sensitivity and appropriate gestures" (56). One of its leading injunctions is that one must never burden others with distressful feelings of one's own. When Momotaro leaves home, his grandparents "are careful, as he goes, not to weight his pack with their sorrow" (56). One must, like Momotaro, "behave with honour. . . . To do otherwise . . . brings dishonour to all" (56). The ability of relatives to anticipate the needs of the child without words also provides the child with the best example of this code of behaviour: "To travel with confidence down this route the most reliable map I am given is the example of my mother's and Grandma's alert and accurate knowing. When I am hungry, and before I can ask, there is food . . . and if there is pain there is care simultaneously" (56).

The loving "silence" of Naomi's childhood provides the basis for whatever sense of self-worth she retains despite the humiliation and dispersal of her community. Yet as an attitude towards life it is unable to provide an adequate response to this situation. To function, loving silence requires a community where everyone is perfectly known and from which no one feels alienated. A world where response is "simultaneous" and thus does not require words cannot deal with a drastic breach in continuity with the past. Without community, the loving silence of Naomi's childhood becomes the negative silence of Obasan — an inner "retreat" from which there is no return. Obasan's "silence that cannot speak" (proem) is a pathological response of the Issei world-view to permanent loss of community. She gives Naomi no direction into the outside world or the future.

The vulnerability of the language of silence lies in the dichotomy it fosters between an inner family world of complete togetherness and the hostile outer world of an alien society: "Inside the house in Vancouver there is confidence and laughter. . . . But outside . . . there is an infinitely unpredictable, unknown, and often dangerous world. Speech hides within me, watchful and afraid" (58). The western world of eye-contact, so alarming to a child whose mother knows only the code of downcast eyes with which the traditional Japanese woman is obliged to greet the public world, also represents a larger world of possible relationships outside the family. Like her mother Naomi hides from threatening eyes, but she knows from the example of her Canadian-educated relatives that entrance into the outer world is possible: "Aunt Emily and Father, born and raised in Canada, are visually bilingual. I too learn the second language" (47). Under the influence of her progressive Nisei relatives Naomi would have been able to make a natural transition from her supportive family life to the outside world, but the internment disrupts this process and separates her from those who would have provided the best guidance. While Naomi adapts externally to her life in exile, she, like the Issei, does not really trust the outer world or believe that it belongs to her. The political discourse which Emily brings from afar seems an alien language.

In Naomi's memory the language of silence represents the perfect childhood but its negative aspects are more evident from her point of view as adult narrator. The location of this language "in the belly" suggests a limitation as well as a childhood ideal. Circumscribed by a family womb, this language can deal neither with the relation between the self and the outside world, nor with conflicts within the self. The "language of eyes" is rejected not just because it represents an alien culture — even within the family the act of looking becomes suspect if it threatens to convey any consciousness which might be disturbing to family unity: "even a glance, if it is not matter of fact, is a betrayal" (59). Hence the calmness and perfect trust of family life must depend partly on the suppression of undesirable knowledge. Naomi idealizes a childhood self inseparable from the mother when she asserts, "There is nothing about me that my mother does not know, nothing that

is not safe to tell" (60), but immediately contradicts this by telling of her seduction by Old Man Gower. Of course, a child would naturally be reluctant to talk about this experience, but for Naomi disclosure is inconceivable, and thus her secret experience results in a deep sense of self-division and separation from the mother, manifested in nightmares of dismemberment.

Later Obasan and Uncle deliberately suppress knowledge that might link a disturbing past to the present when, "for the sake of the children" (219), they decide not to tell Naomi and Stephen why their mother has never communicated from Japan. Also, it appears that Naomi is never clearly informed of her father's death. The language "in the belly" is put in a negative context when, years later, she tries to mention her father's death in a matter-of-fact way and then collapses "with a sharp pain in my abdomen" (211). Internalization of pain and anger that cannot be acknowledged finds expression in a particularly gruesome image when Naomi imagines Aunt Emily, with her "insistence on knowing all," as a surgeon cutting growths from her abdomen (194). The silence that seemed ideal in childhood becomes pathological for the adult.

In the disruptions of the internment, Naomi increasingly experiences as a burden the ethic behind the silent language, though she continues to identify with it. When their grandparents are taken away in Slocan the children must imitate the stoicism of Momotaro's grandparents: "We will make the way smooth by restraining emotion" (128). The need to find verbal expression for the pain of separation is equated with selfishness: "To try to meet one's own needs in spite of the wishes of others is to be 'wagamama' — selfish and inconsiderate" (128). Here Naomi does her best, but begins to find the traditional ethic less satisfactory as the world of the extended family breaks up: "It is such a tangle trying to decifer the needs and intents of others" (128).[6] Only in the present, nearing the conclusion of her narrative, does Naomi openly express a desire to rebel against the "decorum" required by the language of silence: "I want to break loose from the heavy identity. . . . I am tired of living between deaths and funerals, weighted with decorum, unable to shout or sing or dance, unable to scream or swear, unable to laugh, unable to breathe out loud" (183). Here Naomi's sense of psychic crippling is related to a taboo against expressing anger, imposed by the family culture which is also her childhood ideal.

In addition to her anger at Canadian society and government, Naomi struggles with a hidden ambivalence towards the traditional values of the family life from which she seeks to draw a sense of identity. The peculiar intensity of this conflict is also the result of the internment. Disruption of her natural emergence into Canadian society has pushed her back towards the values of the Issei, which she now attempts to re-evaluate under Emily's provocation. Early in her narrative, when she is still siding with Uncle and Obasan against Emily, Naomi defends the ethic of self-restraint in a manner so ambiguous that her dissatisfaction with it is already

evident. Accusing Emily of being one of those indecorous people "who talk a lot about their victimization" in order to "use their suffering as weapons or badges of some kind," Naomi concludes: "From my years of teaching I know it's the children who say nothing who are in trouble more than the ones who complain" (34). Is this not an acknowledgement that talking is the cure, and that Naomi feels herself to be a child "in trouble"?

THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN AN INNER WORLD of silent warmth and a cold, threatening outer world finds expression in a central contrast in the imagery of the novel: the opposition between protecting and fertile combinations of earth and water, and the empty, hostile sky. Naomi compares the Japanese Canadians to plants torn up or trees cut down. They are represented as seeking safety in undergrowth, tunnels, or "a door on the forest floor" (151). The prairies are a dry land but may be rendered fertile by underground water, while Naomi associates her childhood with the rain forest and ocean of the west coast. A former fisherman, her uncle dreams of returning to the sea. Burrowing into the earth represents a regressive fixation on an ideal past as well as fear of the outer world. Naomi imagines her uncle's state of mind just before death: "Had the world turned upside down? Perhaps everything was reversing rapidly and he was tunnelling backwards top to bottom, his feet in an upstairs attic of humus and memory, his hands groping down . . . to the water, down to the underground sea" (14).

Naomi adds a personal longing to the nostalgia of the Issei when she asks, in this fantasy, whether Uncle manages "to swim full circle back to that other shore and his mother's arms, her round moon face glowing down at her firstborn?" (14). We hear nothing of Uncle's childhood — this "moon face" must belong to Naomi's ideally "yasashi" mother, lost forever in Japan.[7] Again, nostalgia as well as exile is suggested when Naomi describes her people as plants uprooted and planted upside down, with their roots exposed to the prairie wind (189, 226). The Issei aunt and uncle, and Naomi as well, bear the double burden of being immigrants in a strange land, and exiles from the community which might have provided a sense of home in that land.

Naomi's dislike for the open sky of the prairies could be taken simply as hostility towards her land of exile. Eventually the winter sky over the beet farm becomes associated with a sense of strangled development in the midst of her adolescence. The devastating physical hardship of Alberta, especially after years in the closed community of Slocan, constitutes the most damaging aspect of Naomi's experience, and the centre of her resistance to Emily's injunction to remember: "There are some nightmares from which there is no waking. . . . my late childhood growing-up days are sleepwalk years. . . . The sadness and absence are like a long winter storm.

. . . Something dead is happening" (194, 200) — a sense of frozen process reflected in Naomi's present state of "perpetual tense."

The forced dispersal of the Japanese Canadian community after the war, which sent the family to forced labour in Alberta, was the most unjust and gratuitous aspect of the Canadian government's attack on Naomi's community.[8] In addition to negative personal associations, the open sky of the prairies comes to stand for the public world of a country whose government is represented as a series of hawks hunting the Japanese Canadians: "one hawk after another circles overhead till the chickens are unable to come out of hiding. . . . The seasons pass and the leghorns no longer lay eggs. The nests are fouled and crawl with lice" (189) — cultural continuity fails in an unhealthy enclosure imposed by fear of a hostile outer world.

Yet there is one benevolent influence in the sky — as a reward for her mastery of political discourse, Naomi consigns Aunt Emily to the upper air: "Love no doubt is in her. Love, like the coulee wind, rushing through her mind. . . . She never stays still long enough to hear the sound of her own voice" (8). Just before she opens the diary, Naomi describes Emily as a pilot in a fog, looking in vain for a landing place on a "safe and sane strip of justice and reason. Not seeing these, she did not crash into the oblivion of either bitterness or futility but remained airborne" (79). Since Naomi has little confidence that this airport will be found, the only cure for the dichotomy of earth and sky would be upward growth from Naomi's earthbound world. (The caring woman, bound by domestic ties, is also located in the earth and the house.) This growth occurs decisively in a series of images which transform the mother from a dead tree into a living forest in chapter 38 — Naomi's meditation after learning the fate of her mother in Japan.

In this chapter the emotional turbulence generated by Naomi's ambivalence towards the female ideal represented by Obasan and, especially, the memory of her mother, finds a climax and a resolution. In the case of her mother, this ambivalence is complicated by the mother's departure for Japan when Naomi was five years old and had been seduced by a neighbour. Any child might feel resentment at her mother's disappearance, but Naomi, burdened with secret guilt, might also imagine that her mother had rejected her because she had done something bad.[9] Naomi's later discovery that her mother was alive in Japan after the war, along with the fact that the mother had never attempted to communicate with her, reinforces her sense of abandonment to the point where the mystery of the mother's fate becomes a persistent obsession. This ambivalence is concealed behind the image of the ideal mother of infancy, and Naomi's fixation on this image binds her to the traditional image of woman as represented by the mother and Obasan. The translation of her mother's letters from Japan enables Naomi to relate to her mother as an adult in a loving but also critical way, and thus she can affirm her allegiance to the "tender heart" while moving beyond the "silence" this ideal imposes on her in its traditional form. The account of the mother's fate provided by the letters

enables Naomi to interpret her failure to communicate as a loving silence rather than the silence of rejection. At the same time as Naomi gains a new sense of relation to her mother, however, she also places the mother's silence in a critical perspective and thus distinguishes her own consciousness from her mother's traditional values.

This change in her sense of relation to her mother is accompanied by complex changes in a central image associated with her attitude towards her mother in early childhood. The warmth and security of Naomi's early relation to her mother and the communal world she represents are repeatedly symbolized by the image of the mother as a tree, beginning with the peach tree associated with the mother's telling of the story of Momotaro (54-55) and the photo Obasan presents showing Naomi at the age of two or three clinging to her mother's leg (46); here Naomi sees the mother as a tree from which the child is growing as a branch, an extension of the mother both in body and consciousness: "Where she is rooted, I am rooted. . . . The shaft of her leg is the shaft of my body and I am her thoughts" (64). Because of the disappearance of her mother and the disruption of her family life, however, Naomi's relation to her mother fails to develop as she grows older; the tree image also comes to represent her fixation on the ideal mother of childhood, by whom she now feels abandoned. After the mother's departure the tree becomes ambivalent: just before the internment Naomi becomes frightened of the peach tree (80), and in Slocan she has a nightmare in which the mother appears as a tree which deserts the child (167). Finally, the failure of the childhood image of the mother to give her strength is represented by the change of the living maternal tree of the photo into a dead tree on the prairie.[10]

In the final paragraphs of chapter 38 (243) Naomi re-emphasizes the image, derived from the photo, of mother and child as tree and branch, and then moves to an image of herself as a crippled child sitting beside a dead tree: "The tree is a dead tree in the middle of the prairies. I sit on its roots still as a stone." Her paralysis is linked to her inability to communicate with the childhood, "yasashi" image of the mother in the photo: "The child is forever unable to speak. . . . I beg that the woundedness may be healed and that the limbs may learn to dance. But you stay in a black and white photograph, smiling your yasashi smile." Then, with a sudden change of tone, Naomi addresses her mother as an adult, rejecting the code of silence for both of them — "we were lost together in our silences. Our wordlessness was our mutual destruction" — to finish with an image of a forest growing out of the graves of her family: "But the earth still stirs with dormant blooms. Love flows through the roots of the trees by our graves. . . . [W]e have come to the forest tonight . . . you turn to earth and form the forest floor" (243, 246). The conversion of a single tree into a forest suggests that she has found a new relationship to the outside world as well as to her mother, while the fact that this forest

grows from graves suggests that she has accepted the permanent loss of relatives and community.

This sense of resolution is preceded by a violent image which combines the pain both of excessive attachment and separation. In a variant of the tree image, Naomi sometimes thinks of her mother as a maypole around which the child dances holding a ribbon attached to the pole — suggested by the streamers held both by the passengers on the ship which will take her mother to Japan and by the relatives on the dock (66-67, 167). Towards the end of chapter 38 this image becomes the self-mutilating Sun Dance of the Sioux warriors, in which thongs attached to a pole were hooked into the chest muscles, then torn out as the initiate danced backwards: "Maypole Mother, I dance with a paper streamer in my hand. But the words of the May Day song are words of distress. The unknown is a hook that pierces the bone. Thongs hang down in the hot prairie air. Silence attends the long sun dance" (242).[11]

The pain of acknowledging physical separation from the mother frees Naomi to exist independently in the outside world, associated with the hostile emptiness of the prairie. As she imagines the mother as an adult, irreparably separated from her in a loving but mistaken silence, Naomi also experiences herself as an adult, freed from fixation on the ideal mother of childhood: "I am thinking that for a child there is no presence without flesh. But perhaps it is because I am no longer a child that I can know your presence though you are not here" (243). By internalizing the family life of her childhood in a more mature way, Naomi can draw on the sense of self-worth that she found there, while moving beyond the limitations imposed by its language of silence. Thus the vanished mother becomes the focal point for an arrested, and finally completed, process of mourning for the whole communal world of her childhood.

The image of the forest, further developed in the next chapter, also indicates a new sense of identification with Canada. Naomi's first genuine sense of Canadian identity appears in a burst of anger in which she reproaches Canada as "a cold country": "Oh Canada, whether it is admitted or not, we come from you we come from you. From the same soil, the slugs and slime and bogs and twigs and roots" (226). After recovering her past, she is able to end with a warmer image of trees growing around the graves of her lost relatives (243, 246).

In her grandmother's description of the bombing of Nagasaki, Naomi finds the ultimate form of death inflicted from the sky and destruction of community — a much more visible example of racist atrocity than the hypocritical policies of the Canadian government. The grandmother's account of nuclear horror makes possible a release of inner rage which Naomi has never been able fully to acknowledge in relation to her own experience. In confronting the "catastrophes . . . possible in human affairs" (234) and the fragmentation of time implied in the letter's long journey to reach her, Naomi enters the public world of injustice, genocide, and

isolation which until now has been the exclusive domain of Aunt Emily. This enlarging of Naomi's vision prevents the final resolution from becoming sentimental — otherwise all too possible for a narrator of such "tender heart."

Whether or not Emily will be successful in her political project, the fact that Naomi has become able to acknowledge the validity of Emily's concerns indicates that Emily has succeeded in establishing a parental relation with her Sansei niece.[12] In moving towards resolution, Naomi responds to two disturbing voices which represent different aspects of female strength — to Emily's polemic is added the "outpouring" of Grandma Kato, the most tough-minded of the traditional women, who breaks the code of silence to send her husband in Toronto "the burden of these words" (236). Naomi's final sense of wholeness arises from her ability to reconcile Emily's Nisei activism with a traditional concept of woman inherited from the Issei, thus showing that the preceding generations can become a source of strength despite her isolation and the disruption of her community. It is on this sense of progressive change within continuity that the final affirmation of the novel depends.

THE REMARKABLE FUSION of historical and psychological time in *Obasan* is facilitated by a clear distinction between the attitudes of the different generations towards the past, the public world, and the role of woman. Thus the history of the community is implicit in the various kinds of discourse with which the characters signify these attitudes. Uncle and Obasan are entirely oriented towards an idealized past, while Emily represents her generation's orientation towards a delayed future, only now she demands that the future acknowledge the unjust past which thwarted the aspirations of the Nisei. Uncle and Obasan represent conventional acceptance, Emily the revolt against tradition of the activists of her generation. If the Issei idealize their homeland, or family life in Vancouver before the internment, she is still looking for the ideal Canada which the Nisei longed to join. The image of the circling airplane suggests that since leaving Vancouver she has never found a new community. In her initial arguments with Aunt Emily, Naomi claims to have no interest in the past, but the images of the ideal mother with which her memories begin show that she is far more attached than Emily to the past and its values. This can be an advantage as well as a vulnerability, because once she deals with her own past Naomi will be in a position to appreciate the strengths of both generations.

Although Naomi at first rejects Emily's angry discourse, we cannot fully understand the changing dynamic of Naomi's memory unless we realize that within the "sealed vault" guarded by the "cold icon" of a decorous silence (proem) lies a profound if wordless anger. Naomi's identification with the "yasashi" ideal of

woman should not blind us to the bitter sense of injury which gradually rises in her narrative, reaching a climax with her permanent exile in Alberta. The gentle underground stream of the proem and the first chapter changes to a torrent of anger and grief: "I must . . . release the flood gates one by one" (198).

Finally the "outpouring" of pain and implied anger in Grandma Kato's letter provides a public object for indignation, while the hideous physical injuries it describes correspond to Naomi's sense of an inner injury which has resulted in psychic crippling. Near the beginning of her narrative Naomi sees Emily as crusading to bring medicine to all injuries inflicted by injustice — "wounds seen and not seen" (34). Actually, Naomi knows more than Emily about unseen wounds and the difficulty of healing them. Beginning with her stay in hospital in Slocan, Naomi increasingly represents her sense of psychic injury through grotesque imagery involving crippling, head injuries, and growths which must be cut away.

The universal destruction and maiming revealed in the letter provides an objective correlative to Naomi's repressed feelings — a graphic physical wounding which corresponds to her sense of inner injury. The wounds "not seen" may be almost as damaging as the wounds made horribly visible in the letter. Because of war and racism the mother suffers physical disfigurement in Japan, her daughter a more subtle kind of psychic disfigurement in Canada. The mother's feeling that disfigurement is a disgrace which renders her unfit for family life represents a conventional Japanese response to nuclear injuries, while Naomi's acknowledgement of her psychological injuries enables her to regain her family life in memory and to establish a strongly felt if angry identity as a Canadian.[13] In her narrative she discovers a capacity for self-expression and communication with others which is necessary for psychic survival in a culturally fragmented world where the individual may be isolated and cut off from the past.

Naomi's narrative could be seen as a synthesis of two opposing kinds of discourse present in her situation as she begins to remember.[14] As she ponders Emily's documents in the silence of Obasan's house, Naomi has already responded to the silent discourse implicit in the accumulation of carefully preserved objects which makes the house a filing cabinet of the family's past. Naomi praises her aunt as the characteristic "old woman" who preserves the past — "the bearer of keys to unknown doorways. . . . the possessor of life's infinite personal details" (15-16) — but here the doorways remain unknown because Obasan refuses to supply any narrative which could link these objects to the present. Rather, she insists that all her objects be viewed in the timeless togetherness of a family photo album; in response to Naomi's interest in the family group-photo, Obasan says only, "'Such a time there was once'" (20). When Naomi asks about some sheets of paper covered with Japanese writing (the grandmother's letters) Obasan deliberately suppresses narrative in favour of image when in reply she brings Naomi the photo of herself as a child clutching her mother's leg and insists, "'Here is the best letter. This is the

best time. These are the best memories'" (46). Meanwhile, Naomi's memories of the family past remain as depressing and incoherent as the spider webs and shredded blanket in Obasan's attic (25-26).

Emily's polemical view of the past, on the other hand, does not at first reveal to Naomi any concrete reason why, as she thinks early in the novel, "Crimes of history" should not "stay in history" (41). Naomi and her two aunts represent three different ways of dealing with the past: Emily seeks to research historical fact and to publicize moral issues arising from it; Obasan preserves the past in objects but uses these only to reinforce a narrativeless ideal of family unity; making use of the material supplied by both aunts, Naomi, in her day in the silent house, relives the past in a narrative both poetic and factual, establishing a conscious relation to the past while freeing herself from the secret burden it imposed.

In response to Emily's exhortation to remember and the associations aroused by Obasan's file of objects, Naomi discovers a "living language" which can give a narrative to the family photographs, revealing the full depth of her psychic injury while animating the "infinite personal details" of family life still contained in Obasan's house. Through a loving disclosure of family life which ruthlessly violates all the taboos of silence, Naomi revives the living content of the silence with which her community endured injustice, thus finding a speech within silence (228). Naomi also resolves the conflict between her identification both with Emily and with the traditional "yasashi" concept of woman through a narrative in which sympathy becomes a mode of vision, including her understanding of Emily, yet which also expresses a deep anger, perhaps even deeper than is openly admitted.

In conclusion, I should like to review the history of Naomi's development and to consider some implications of her changing relation with Emily. Naomi begins with an apparent acceptance of her present world and a professed lack of interest in her past as a Japanese Canadian. In fact, however, she is ill at ease with herself in the present while, in her resistance to Emily, remaining loyal to the most conservative values of her former community. Her ideally communal childhood, repressed from conscious memory because of its contrast to later experience, continues to influence her identity, blocking acknowledgement of the pain and anger caused by her brutal separation from it. A period of intense recall enables Naomi to relive her past while retaining an adult perspective informed by Emily's documents and advice. While much of the past returns readily, the emotional impact of her most painful and ambivalent experiences finds expression only in symbolic terms; to complete her task she must confront a layer of grotesque images involving inner wounding, dismemberment, conflict between inner and outer reality, and between ideal togetherness and self-mutilating separa-

tion. The final transformation of these into images of a growing forest suggests a new sense of rootedness in that hostile outer world which Emily has forced her to acknowledge, but where Emily herself never seems to have found a landing place.

Since Naomi has experienced the full impact of the internment and dispersal in her formative years, she can render in personal detail a period which Emily — aside from her diary — presents in moral abstractions; thus Naomi reinforces Emily's argument by showing that the psychological consequences of this experience extend into the present. The depth and convincingness with which Naomi's inner conflicts are presented provide the basis for an intensely personal narrative which can assimilate the objective, historical elements presented by Emily. The novel emphasizes a fracture between inner and outer worlds as a central problem for Naomi and her community, but also suggests a resolution in the very effectiveness with which it combines historical and subjective reality.

The difference in discourse between Emily and Naomi also suggests a conflict between the literary and political consciousness. Naomi's awareness of the connotative value of words, which makes possible the poetic aspects of the novel, also provides a part of the motivation for her resistance to Emily and the purely political world her discourse implies. Emily's rapid-fire, exhortatory and rather indiscriminate use of language suggests a lack of sensitivity to the subjective self: "she never stays still long enough to hear the sound of her own voice (8). . . . from the moment we met, I was caught in the rush-hour traffic jam of her non-stop conference talk" (32). As she begins to appreciate Emily's values, however, Naomi moves towards a vision where the public and private life — political activism and poetic sensibility — are no longer irrelevant to each other. Naomi remains sceptical of the effectiveness of her aunt's activities, but in her painful sense of growing from Canadian soil she affirms Emily's assertion that "'We are the country.'"

NOTES

[1] Some recently published, pioneering studies of *Obasan* define essential aspects of the novel but also reveal the difficulty of doing justice, within any one critical perspective, to Kogawa's combination of historical-political discourse and fictional narrative. Erika Gottlieb — "The Riddle of Concentric Worlds in *Obasan*," *Canadian Literatue*, 109 (Summer 1986), 34-53 — makes a comprehensive study of style and imagery, finding in the novel's conclusion an affirmation of a "transcendental love in the cosmos" related to Buddhism (48). A. Lynne Magnusson, in an approach based on the psychology of Jacques Lacan, discusses Naomi's creative "fall" into language from a "pre-linguistic paradise" (66) — "Language and Longing in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*," *Canadian Literature*, 116 (Spring 1988), 58-66. In a comparison of *Obasan* and Anne Hébert's *Les fous de Bassan*, P. Merivale interprets the novel as a lament for a lost community, emphasizing its effectiveness as elegy — "Framed Voices: The Polyphonic Elegies of Hébert and Kogawa," *Canadian Literature*, 116 (Spring 1988), 68-82. I agree with many points in these interpretations, but all of them tend to some extent to emphasize the novel's literary qualities at the expense of its politics. Marilyn Russell Rose does justice to Kogawa's political intent

in an essay which discusses the novel's successful blending of the rhetorical strategies of history, documentary, and fiction — "Politics into Art: Kogawa's *Obasan* and the Rhetoric of Fiction," *Mosaic*, 21/2-3 (Spring 1988), 215-26. My object in the present essay is to show how the history of Naomi's community is re-enacted in her inner conflicts and her attitudes towards others. I will argue that Kogawa gives unity to her novel through a successful combination of history and politics with psychological fiction, thus making her novel's intent as political protest an integral part of its literary coherence.

[2] Gottlieb errs in making Naomi a Nisei (second generation) (35). Naomi is a Sansei (third generation) because both her parents were Nisei, born in Canada (*Obasan*, 7 and 47). Her mother was partly brought up in Japan and hence shared some cultural traits with the Issei (first generation), but her father had entered fully into Canadian culture (*Obasan*, 47). Naomi's grandparents and Uncle Isamu and Obasan are Issei, her parents and Aunt Emily are Nisei, and Naomi and Stephen are Sansei.

[3] Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976), 158. My sense of the conflict between Issei and Nisei is based largely on Adachi's book, especially chapter 7 ("Generations"). In her dislike for her physical appearance and her feeling that life has passed her by, Naomi, though a Sansei, displays some of the psychological problems that Adachi attributes to the young Nisei (169-71).

The spirit of Nisei idealism can be found in Roy Miki's edition of the writings of Muriel Kitagawa: *This is My Own: Letters to Wes & Other Writings on Japanese Canadians, 1941-48*, ed. Roy Miki (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1985). Kitagawa's writings provided Joy Kogawa with a source for the manuscripts of Aunt Emily and may have helped her in creating for Emily a style very different from Naomi's narrative. (Naomi seems to have an affinity with Kogawa's sensibility as poet.)

[4] Joy Kogawa, *Obasan* (1981; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), 31-32.

[5] *Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English Dictionary* (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1954) gives the following range of English equivalents for "yasashi": "gentle; tender; soft; meek; graceful; delicate; affectionate; sweet; mild-mannered; kind-hearted; suave; quiet; amiable." Thus Mother's "fragile" and "delicate" beauty seems appropriate to a woman who is ideally "yasashi" — as opposed to Emily's "stocky build."

[6] Magnusson argues that Naomi found the traditional code of behaviour ideal with her mother but less so in Slocan because in early childhood the code "served the narcissism of the child, before any differentiation of the self and the other emerged to constitute the required behaviour as self-denial" (64). I would suggest that the problem here is not so much self-denial as that the internment has disrupted the communal world in which the code effectively defined the relation between self and other. In forbidding Naomi to express or acknowledge her sense of loss, the code denies the needs of the self but no longer provide a supportive community.

[7] Merivale notes that the quest of Naomi's uncle, as defined here, becomes "an emblem for hers" (79).

[8] When the war ended, the U.S. government assisted interned Japanese-Americans to resettle on the west coast, while the government of Canada maintained all the wartime regulations, including exclusion from the west coast and restrictions on employment and place of residence, until March 31, 1949 — see Adachi, ch. 14, and Ann Gomer Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1981), ch. 7. The forced dispersal after the war was a deliberate attempt by Mackenzie King to destroy the Japanese Canadian community and, unsuccessfully, to win votes by

placating a bigotry in British Columbia which he overestimated (Adachi, 335; Sunahara, 149-50). Sunahara notes the widespread influence, even among liberal-minded sympathizers and the Japanese Canadians themselves, of the "assimilationist" belief that racism is caused mainly by the tendency of ethnic groups to gather in communities. After the war the Japanese Canadians were forced to move east of the Rockies, not allowed to live near each other, discouraged from social contact, and influenced to forget their cultural heritage and devote themselves to assimilating into Anglo-Saxon culture (Sunahara, 131-33; 142-45).

In this context, it is significant that the worst of Naomi's experience begins after the war, with the family's forced relocation to Alberta. At the beginning of her narrative, Naomi's rejection of the past is the result of forced assimilation. She can only establish conscious contact with the different role-models her community provided through a prolonged struggle with memory.

[9] This possibility is lucidly explained by Erika Gottlieb (46-47).

[10] In his discussion of the significance of the tree Cinderella plants on her mother's grave in the German version of the story, and related imagery of death and rebirth in folk tales, Bruno Bettelheim argues that the tree represents the child's need to internalize a symbol of the mother as a replacement for the sense of physical proximity needed in early childhood. Bettelheim distinguishes two stages of this process of internalization which enables the child to gain independence from the immediate relation to the parent. The first involves the "basic trust" granted by a good early childhood, but the inner image of the parent must continue to develop as the child matures: it is not enough "simply to retain the internalized image of the mother of a past period. . . . As the child grows up, this internalized mother must undergo changes, too, as he does" (*The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976], 259). In Naomi's case, the death and rebirth of the tree could represent a partial failure and finally a completion of this process.

[11] The Sun Dance is described by Erik Erikson in *Childhood and Society* (New York: Norton, 1963), 147-49. Erikson links this ceremony to the loss of the "paradise of orality" and suggests that the injury to the chest may represent the turning against the self of an anger originally directed at the mother as an inadequate nourisher. Such imagery could be relevant to Naomi's ambivalence towards the lost mother, who, she feels, abandoned her.

[12] Magnusson notes that when Naomi revisits the coulee in the final scene she wears Emily's coat, suggesting an acceptance of her aunt's world (66).

[13] In his detailed account of the psychological effects of the bomb, Robert Jay Lifton describes the sense of shame and inferiority experienced by the survivors, and especially by disfigured women, "in a culture which places such great stress upon aesthetic presentation and 'appearance' in every sense" (*Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* [New York: Basic Books, 1967], 174-77).

[14] Merivale observes that the "seemingly incompatible voices" of Obasan and Emily are essential to Naomi's "eventual synthesis of herself, which is also her novel" (70). I would add that Obasan's presence consists not so much of a "voice" as an attitude towards the past manifested in her love for her family objects and her refusal to tell their stories.

WASHING HER BACK

David P. Reiter

The dawn is damp in Bangkok
and the dust and smoke are slow
to wake until sun can dry the air.

He washes himself first so Buddha
will taste no sweat on his knees
nor sin in his contrite, lonely sighs.

He wears the same white shirt,
the same silk slacks and thongs,
as though a week's wrinkles might

bring her back, *his* tourist lady,
whose touch wakened him to skin
pale as paper before the kiss

of ink. Blond hair, soft red lips
with a hint of mocking tongue —
she watched him dripping suds

on his feet, the rag limp in his
fingers. "Do you wash your car
every morning?" she asked,

her eyes loosening the buttons
of his shirt. "Yes, lady. Metal,
it hates the grimes of night, so I

must scrub it always clean to save
the paint!" He dropped the rag
in the pail like an apology after

twisted words, but she bent down
and drew it out again, a hot dream
cupped safe from the murky depths

of sodden wishes. "No, please —
don't stop. I saw you first upstairs.
You rubbed in circles along a spine

as if you massaged to sooth muscles
not steel. How I envy your lover's limbs!"
And so he began again, washing the car

this time for her, feeling downy hair
on fenders, each headlight becoming
a breast eager to flood with passion,

wiperblades begging for the tease
of warm water. Yes, even his mirrors
moaned. But when he turned back

to ask her name, there was nothing
but indifferent stone, not a whiff
of her remained. She had vanished

on wings shy of those confessions
sunlight demands, this tourist lady,
his tourist lady who wouldn't see him

drop his pail in mourning, dark suds
lapping across his feet, like blood
from a coffin's wound. Now he tells

no one of his loss, and tries to forget
her by polishing his surfaces
to a sheen finer than a lacquered

fingernail. The metal becomes
a looking glass, daring him inside,
where he washes her back, she his.

MEETING DIEFENBAKER

Jay Ruzesky

The photograph is missing
details of before and after
top and bottom, left and right.

A very old man shaking
hands with a very young boy
(elegantly composed, age and youth
juxtaposed in the blur of hands in motion).

Shows the old man descending
grandstand stairs, rows of seats
on either side, young boy ascending.

Spectators ignorant of this moment,
dressed in short shirts, summer wear.

Old man dressed for winter in July
wears a woollen greatcoat
buttoned to his neck, his aides
support him down the stairs.

Anyone with a sense of history
recognizes the man, he is
Mr. Prime Minister 1957 to 1963.
Few could place the boy,
barely recognizes himself now
but recalls the old man.

With effort he remembers
left and right. The stairs
are the Calgary Stampede grandstand,
he has been pushed there,
his parents' voices:
'You'll remember this someday.
That's John George Diefenbaker
there for Christ's sake. Dief
the Chief. Go shake his hand
like the rest of the kids. Go on.'

Dief descending
angelic, geriatric,
stopping at him, bending
to offer a hand.

Outside the photograph
the smell of roasted peanuts.
Had the lens been turned precisely
behind itself one hundred and eighty
degrees it may have caught in a smear
some unfortunate cowboy
thrown from a hurricane,
seven seconds short.

And the next year.
The old man will die quietly
late in his study.
The child, slightly older, will
read about it.

The photograph shows Diefenbaker
looking past the boy at someone else
perhaps the boy's mother
off to the side smiling,
the boy with his eyes closed
as though blinking from a flash.
The boy in cowboy hat and shorts
old man wrapped for a furious
Ottawa winter.

It cannot show the twenty odd years
since its taking or why
he looks at it so long, wants so
much to push beyond the edges
of the frame.

A picture of a moment almost forgotten.
It cannot show in the blur of hands,
just a glance on the stairs in July,
how soft and warm his hand was,
shaking.

REFLECTIONS ON BEING "ARCHIVED"*

Henry Kreisel

MY CONSTANT COMPANION FOR OVER FORTY YEARS, my closest friend, my wife Esther, is an archivist. For several years she worked in the Provincial Archives of the Province of Alberta, and I used from time to time to visit her there. I remember her excitement when the longest-serving premier in the province's history, Ernest Manning, gave his papers to the archives. A retired premier or minister was not at that time obliged to give his papers to the archives. They were his or (rarely at that time) her personal property. I went to see the papers after they had been catalogued, and there they were, all neatly packed in what I jokingly referred to as "shoe boxes." And ever since I have had the image of a shoe box in mind when I thought of archives. Life arranged in shoe boxes!

I did not at that time, nearly twenty years ago, think that I myself would one day be "archived," that my manuscripts and papers and whatever documents had been saved in nearly half a century, would one day be deemed important enough to command space in a public institution, and be catalogued and neatly stored in shoe boxes! I am still somewhat amazed that I am here tonight.

Ever since the cataclysmic events of the 1930s and 1940s, which shattered the world I knew, I have accepted the strange and often incomprehensible ways in which destiny deals with us. At the same time I have also believed that we can ourselves shape something of that destiny. We are not pre-destined puppets.

When I was going through my papers in the last few weeks (a sometimes painful process) and read letters from my parents — particularly from my mother, and from other members of my immediate family — all the figures of these men and women, some long since dead, rose again, and we stood face to face again. There were times when I could not continue and had to stop, so powerful was their presence.

I thought then that to prepare to be "archived" is to go on an archaeological expedition, never quite sure of what one would find, often astonished about what one does find hidden behind doors one had thought were locked, with the key lost. Archives unlock the memory. Memory is ambiguous and ambivalent. We must

*A speech given on November 16, 1989, at the University of Manitoba, on the occasion of the official acceptance by the Department of Archives and Special Collections of Henry Kreisel's manuscripts and papers.

remember, even if we don't always want to remember. Archives are our collective memory, and memory, however painful, is what makes us truly human.

What was interesting as I went through old and yellowed documents was not only that they evoked the presences of the writers themselves; other figures also rose and imposed themselves, though none of their own words survived in the letters and documents that had somehow been saved. The most insistent image was that of my maternal grandfather, Solomon Schreier. He seemed to look over my shoulder as I was trying to order material, as if he was amused by my activity. How, he seemed to be saying, did you get here, doing what you are doing? This was not the first time that his ghostly presence rose to me, often quite unbidden. And traces of his presence are imbedded in my writing, most particularly in *The Rich Man*, where his death is narrated, and in the story "Chassidic Song," where his presence is deliberately invoked. He was a pious, orthodox Jew, and he had a beautiful long beard, which, sitting on his lap, I loved to stroke. It is an indelible memory, though he died when I was not yet six years old. What, I have often wondered, would he have made of what became of me? It was surely a scenario he could not have imagined — that his grandson would become a professor of English literature in a country he was not likely even to have heard of. Nor indeed could I have dreamed of such an outcome when I first set foot on the soil of Canada as an interned "enemy alien" in 1940. And yet, isn't my experience in some ways a typical twentieth-century experience? The pattern of displacement, of alienation, and then of the growing of new roots and integration into new communities is a pattern I share with millions of others. My experience is in a profound way a quintessential Canadian experience. The papers trace the experience in a clear, though obviously unpremeditated and often quite unselfconscious manner, and that may turn out to be one of their chief uses for researchers in the future.

There must have been difficult times, when I thought that not much would come of all my efforts. I must often have worried about what would become of me, and I must have voiced my concerns to my parents, who were then in England, because in March of 1945, a year before I graduated, my mother wrote to me, in her clear, though broken, English: "We received your Air-graph letter, and are very pleased to learn that you are all-right sofar. You dont need to worry about your future dear. Your knolige and intelligent will make you possable to find a job suitable for you everywhere, never mind being a yew. We send you a little present love, consisting of 2 ties and 7 handkerchiefs, and we wish you very well to yus them." My parents, whose education had not gone beyond grade school, were in fact apprehensive about what I was studying. English Language and Literature did not seem to them a viable career choice. Nothing in their experience made it possible for them to relate to so esoteric, not to say quixotic, an undertaking. And I could not very well say to them that there was an assured path that I could follow. For in spite of the fact that I had a very distinguished scholastic record at Toronto, I would often

wake up in the middle of the night and wonder if it was all worth it. The thought of becoming a university professor of English never occurred to me. There were no openings in the field, and the fact that I was a non-native speaker and a Jew certainly did not make the prospects any brighter in the middle 1940s. Still, my parents, and especially my mother, gave me moral support because ultimately she trusted in my judgment of what was right for me. It is something I learned from her, and I tried to follow the example in my dealings with students when they came to me, often depressed and uncertain about where they wanted to go. I tried to encourage them, as I had been encouraged, by my mother and by some of my professors, notably A. S. P. Woodhouse, Barker Fairley, and Norman Endicott, who had faith in me.

My parents were worried about quite another matter, however. This worry they never expressed directly, but obviously they must have talked about it because it surfaced in a letter from my brother in January of 1945.

> I received your letter today, [he writes,] and was very pleased about it in more ways than one. For one thing it revealed that you still possess the more worldly instincts — women. I wish you would sometimes write home and tell them when you've been to a dance, or been out with a girl. They'd like to hear about it, and I think it would bring you closer to them, and to me too. You see Ma thinks that when she sees you again, she'll not be able to talk to you, because you'll be such a highbrow intellectual, that she won't know what to say.

I don't know how I answered that because very few of my letters home have survived. To be sure, I was at times worried about the distance that was opening up between us, and I no longer felt free to discuss important matters in letters that, in so far as they have survived, grow increasingly shorter and restrict themselves to reports about my health, and since I was a very healthy, even athletic young man, I could report nothing much of interest.

Fortunately, a letter I wrote in December of 1949 to my oldest friend, Dr. Gus Gavis, who was then finishing his medical studies in Indiana, has survived. In it I report to him about my visit home with Esther in the summer of 1949, two years after we had married. *The Rich Man* had been published a year earlier and, I wrote to Gus, had

> brought us enough money so that we could actually put into practice a long-wished-for desire and take a trip to Europe. That is what we did and so, as you correctly surmised, we spent the summer in England and travelled on the continent, too. We left Edmonton at the beginning of May, spent about three weeks in Toronto with Esther's family, and then sailed from Montreal on May 23.
>
> You can imagine what it meant to my parents to be reunited with me, to see Esther, to talk over so many things which it is impossible to discuss in letters, indeed to renew acquaintances almost, because after all we hadn't seen each other for ten years, and that's a long time. And you can imagine how much I had looked forward to this. It was amazing how quickly we picked up the threads, even though a lot of

things had happened in those ten years. Esther made a big hit with all my family, and we had an extremely happy time. The only trouble is that one cannot undertake such journeys very often, for by the time we got back here we found that we had spent close to $2500, just about all the cash we had, and we were happy only that the book had made it possible for us to go without getting into debt. I think we would have gone in any case, even if we'd had to borrow the money, because I felt that I couldn't much longer hold out. I simply had to go and see with my own eyes how everything was going at home, especially after my mother's severe illness of last year. After all, our parents are not getting any younger.

AS I WENT THROUGH MY PAPERS I had conflicting emotions. I felt that since someone other than I myself had made the decision that the papers should be preserved, then everything that has survived should be included. Nothing should be withheld. But I also wondered whether a good deal of the material would be of the slightest interest to others. Here I had the wisdom of Richard Bennett and of my wife to guide me. No one can know, said these archivists, what someone in the future might find to be of some importance or of some significance. I accepted that advice. It was in some ways a relief. I could have doubts, but I did not need to make a decision to withhold or censor anything. Such as it is, the book is open.

To go through private letters that are to become public property is difficult and sometimes emotionally quite devastating. One lays oneself open to public scrutiny. But then a writer does anyway, whether consciously or unconsciously. A writer is in some respects like an actor who, if he is to perform memorably, must reveal more than he consciously wants to reveal.

As in a play, there are also bit players who come on stage for a moment, and say a few lines and then step out of the momentary spotlight and disappear. Occasionally I kept the script of these cameo appearances which are curiously touching, as when someone sends a letter addressed to "The Austrian Professor of English, University of Alberta," or a nun, who must have been in one of my classes, sends "A Little Note for You," with a reproduction of a Filippo Lippi painting of the Virgin, and writes "Thank you, Doctor for *many* things. Sincerely, Sister Mary Aloysius." I have long forgotten what I did for her, but the note established some kind of bond with someone shadowy and now forgotten.

A young girl writes to me in January 1959:

> We have just taken up in class a story which was written by you. It was a very interesting one, so I thought I might write you, to get to know you better. How many stories have you written already? I am in grade eight. I would sure appreciate a snap of yourself. If you would want us to send it back to you we would sure do it.
>
> We read about your life, (in the back of our book,) you must have had an interesting life. We talk both the German and English language. From 8 to 8.30 we have German school, then from 9 to 12 we have English school with recess in between.

From 1 to 3:30 we have English school, then again at 4 German school, and live in a Hutterite Colony. We live at Ft. Macleod, our colony is called Ewelme Colony. Am going to be 14 years of age on June 5th 1960. Hope to hear from you if it is convenient with you.

Thanking you.

Miss Susanna J. Hofer.

Why did I keep the note from Sister Aloysius and the letter from young Susanna Hofer? Perhaps because Susanna Hofer was born on June 5, which happens to be also my birthday, perhaps because when I got the note from Sister Aloysius the person who wrote it would have been clearly in my mind. I referred to these two documents (if "document" isn't too portentous a word here) not because they are in themselves important, but because they raise important questions about archival materials. What is preserved, what is kept? And what is not preserved, what is not kept? And, more important still, why are some letters kept and others discarded? Here one can only speculate, and often quite fancifully, as when I noticed that Susanna Hofer and I were born on the same day. It is also clear from internal evidence, that some very important documents have not survived. My correspondence with Sybil Hutchinson, who was editor at McClelland & Stewart when I was working on what became *The Rich Man*, fills a large folder of my papers, but they are essentially letters from her to me. Occasionally I would keep a carbon copy of my own letters to her, but relatively rarely. Many of the letters I wrote were hand-written, and often I was just too lazy to insert a carbon when I typed letters. She makes many references to long letters I wrote to her, and in her answers one can infer something of what these letters said. What I wrote was preserved in the archives of McClelland & Stewart. McMaster University acquired these papers, but when Professor Shirley Neuman edited *Another Country: Writings By and About Henry Kreisel* and wrote to McMaster, she was informed that my letters were part of the archives that had been destroyed in a fire.

The writing of biography and of history is a delicate undertaking which requires the utmost integrity, and the most careful evaluation of such documents as do survive. Autobiography presents even more problems, partly because subjective elements, which are certainly present in the writing of biography and history, are even more pronounced in the writing of personal memoirs and in the writing of autobiography. Memory itself can play strange tricks. There is nothing quite so disconcerting as to go through letters and find references to people one no longer recollects, although at a certain stage they played a part in one's life. And sometimes one comes across a sudden shaft of light that seems to come out of a darkness, and leaves one in the end mystified and even shaken. Such a moment occurs at the end of the diary I kept in the internment camp, where I spent the first eighteen months of my life in Canada. The entry reads: "Oct. 1st. (1941). The cobbler Reif went mad last week. They took him to an asylum today." This entry, stark in its dramatic

simplicity, is now mysterious. I remember nothing of the "cobbler Reif," though at the time I must have known him well. And I am sure that the incident made such an impression on me at the time that I thought I would always remember the details, and there was no need to describe any of the circumstances leading to his being taken to an asylum. But in a curious way, I have been brooding about the cobbler Reif ever since I re-discovered the diary of my internment in an old suitcase in 1973, and copied it after Sheila Watson persuaded me to let her print it in *white pelican*, a journal she was editing at the time. The cobbler Reif has taken on a mythic dimension in my mind. How exactly had he gone "mad"? Since we were confined in close quarters we must have all known and observed his madness. Then how could one so completely forget? And to what asylum had he been taken? And what happened to him afterwards? Did he recover? Did he continue to repair shoes somewhere in the world? Is he perhaps still alive?

There are no answers to these questions. We are in Franz Kafka's world. Not long ago the name of the cobbler Reif went out throughout the country when Peter Gzowski interviewed me on "Morningside" after the publication of *Another Country*, and concentrated almost exclusively on the internment diary, which had been reprinted in that book. And there the ghostly presence of the cobbler Reif arose and I spoke his name. But no echo came back to me.

IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPEDITION which the gathering together of my manuscripts and papers turned out to be, the internment diary is the bedrock, the Ur-document, recording as they occurred what were to me momentous events that changed my life in fundamental ways. There are in the papers, in letters, in memoirs, in essays, events that are recalled and remembered, and perhaps reshaped, long after they occurred, but the diary records, in a quite unselfconscious, quite unpretentious manner what the 17-year-old Heinrich Kreisel, as I then still was, torn from all that was familiar, transplanted to a strange and wholly unknown country, with no seeming prospect then that I would be allowed to stay, was experiencing. On the first of January 1941, the entry reads,

> Our future is like a dark, impenetrable wall. I said I should give something if I knew where I will be next year at the same time.
>
> 1938 Vienna, 1939-1940 England, 1941 Canada. 1942 — where?

How proto-typical that entry is. Change the dates and the places, and millions of people, driven hither and yon, in leaky boats, in battered cars, in trains, on foot, seeking refuge here, seeking shelter there, could write that entry.

Perhaps that is why, when Sheila Watson persuaded me to let her publish the diary, the publication evoked a quite unexpected response. I had hesitated because

I found some of the things that very young man had written somewhat embarrassing, and it took all the will power I possessed to refrain from tampering with the text. But then I thought it didn't matter because no one would be interested, anyway. But Sheila Watson's instinct was surer than mine. The issue of *white pelican* in which the diary appeared was much sought-after, and then, to my astonishment large excerpts from the diary appeared in books and articles that were beginning to examine the internment of aliens by Britain and Canada during the war. These books and articles were published in Canada, in Britain, in Australia, and friends have told me of translations of excerpts in books by German and Austrian historians. A graduate history student at the University of Toronto told me that the diary was one of the main sources of her Master's thesis.

I was both amused and amazed. For the last thing that that young man thought when he was scribbling away in smoke-filled, noisy barracks in New Brunswick and Quebec was that he was producing a historical document. Had someone told him that, he would no doubt have been as astonished as M. Jourdain in Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* when that worthy gentleman was told that he was speaking prose.

What the episode taught me is that the person who records things helps us to redeem time. We cannot hold back the river of time, but we can throw a stone into the river and see it stay on the bottom of the river, at least for a time. And we can preserve the stone in our archives.

IT IS ALWAYS INTERESTING to see what others make of a document like the diary. In a recent article, George Woodcock examines the diary. He finds it "generally interesting as a document of the times," but for him it has another,

> more exceptional interest, because it shows the way in which Kreisel consciously made the decision that from that time he would fulfil his early ambition to become a writer by using the language of the country to which fortune had brought him. Any records of the motivations that lead to creation are interesting, but in Kreisel's case they are made all the more so by their revelation of the way in which exile was carried to the point of creative self-transformation. The most tragic exiles are those who daily await the moment of their return. The most triumphant are those who accept their separation from the past in such a way that they do not become alienated in the present. Henry Kreisel was one of the latter, and the sign of his triumph is that the books he has written belong not only to the international literature of exile and alienation, but also, more tangibly, to Canadian literature, as Conrad's novels belong to English literature.

It is comforting for me to read this, for I certainly wanted to transform myself, to create a new persona that would contain the old, and Woodcock has found the

glimmers of that transformation in these Ur-texts. What he could not find because I did not know it at the time, was the enormous psychic effort that the transformation would demand, and the cost of it, which was great inner turmoil and long, protracted silences. In an essay I wrote in 1979, I expressed it this way:

> In the end, I thought that I could perhaps use a double perspective that allowed me to see European experience through Canadian eyes, and Canadian experience through European eyes, and so to say something that, however modest, might have some value. Thus language and identity could be brought into focus, each modifying the other, but without the one destroying the other. And the new language could be made to express the old as well as the new. It was a constant struggle. That one had to accept. There were many aborted efforts, many failures, a few modest successes. One was grateful when something succeeded, and learned to accept failure. What mattered ultimately was the attempt, now and again, to break the silence.

The first silence of the creative youthful voice occurred immediately after my release from internment and it lasted for four years.

My release from internment was as sudden, as unexpected, as traumatic in its own way as the original arrest had been. In October 1941 I received a letter, out of the blue (it is preserved in the papers), that began as follows:

> Dear Mr. Kreisel,
>
> I would like to tell you that we will be your sponsors and hope to have you with us very soon.
>
> Yesterday, when I saw Mrs. Cowan about a boy in one of the camps, she showed me your curriculum vitae and your poems. They express so intensely all you have gone through — beside the Godsend they must have been to you these endless months. . . .
>
> Will you find it very hard to go back to school for a year? For I am afraid that is what you will have to do, because, you see, you cannot study literature or anything else without your senior matric.
>
> I suppose you would like to know who we are. We are German Refugees who left Germany in 1933 and are now Canadians, and my husband is a biochemist and Professor at the Toronto University. We have tried to do all we could, here and in England, ever since you were sent out here. But as you know it has been very difficult.

The letter was signed "Bruno and Hertha Mendel."

After my release I threw myself into my studies with a wild abandon. Listening to the great voices of the masters of English literature with an increasingly sophisticated critical awareness made me conscious of my own deficiencies, and I buried the hundreds of pages I had written in the camps in the bottom of an old suitcase, but I did not throw them away, but kept them in a sort of archival private grave until Sheila Watson and later Shirley Neuman resurrected them. Robert Kroetsch also had something to do with this, for every time we met he urged me to open the suitcase to see what was there. And now what was there is here.

My own voice reasserted itself in the summer of 1945, when I started to write a short story which suddenly and without seeming volition began to turn into a novel. It was the story of a little Jewish tailor who returned to Vienna from Canada to see his family. In two or three months of intense work I wrote about 200 pages of text. Robert Weaver, who became a leading editor and producer of literary programs for CBC, liked what I was doing and he introduced me to Sybil Hutchinson, who took an interest in the manuscript, but she couldn't persuade McClelland & Stewart to publish it, and so the whole thing dropped. I finished my studies at Toronto and went to Alberta. But I kept in touch with Sybil, and on April 8, 1948, she wrote to me:

> Dear Henry:
>
> You ask in your last letter if I have any ideas about your writing. Well, you know, I have. But I don't know how you will react to this suggestion. Quite frankly, we are desperate for a novel this fall. . . .
>
> I am wondering what you would think of turning back to *The Angels Weep* (that was the working title of what became *The Rich Man*). You are a little older now, and have put the novel out of your mind for a while. Have you any ideas for working it up a little? Could you make the setting for the tailor, Toronto? Work in a little Toronto background. Perhaps heighten the European part. . . . I really think you could do a rework of this in two months. . . . Turn this over in your mind seriously. That is a good piece of work. When you appeared with it you were a poor little lad and it was difficult to get an organization to think you had it in you. You don't understand how difficult that is. . . . It is quite unfair, but *standing* counts. I am speaking quite frankly. Let me know what you think about this.

I needed no further encouragement. For four months I worked without interruption, with the barest minimum of sleep, Esther encouraging me and urging me on, and on August 1, the deadline Sybil had given me, the completed manuscript was on her desk. No other editor had the same influence on me as Sybil. She was an intensely alive woman, and the many letters she wrote to me exude her vitality and her enthusiasm, and above all, her sound critical judgment. She saved me from making embarrassing gaffes, she reined in my tendencies to embroider a text with fanciful metaphors and taught me that less is more. I am glad that we were thousands of miles apart and she had to write to me, so that her letters are preserved and may perhaps serve as a model of the creative role a fine editor can play in helping to develop manuscripts. We have never in Canada valued editors in the way in which they have been valued in other countries. It pleases me to know that a student or a researcher, perhaps one not yet born, will come across these letters and learn that Sybil Hutchinson mattered in the development of a Canadian literature.

There is correspondence with many other editors, but in none of the other letters is there the same urgency, the same feeling that the person is there in the room with you, talking to you, as in the letters Sybil Hutchinson wrote to me. She was of

course a good deal older than I and in a way she was my literary mentor. Letters from other writers who were my contemporaries and friends have a different kind of tone. There is a fairly lengthy correspondence with Bob Weaver, who writes fine long letters, intimate and full of sometimes delicious gossip, and there are single letters from a good many writers I knew — Earle Birney, Dorothy Livesay, Eli Mandel, and Adele Wiseman, to mention only a few. In letters to Adele, who is of course a Winnipeger, and author of that marvellous Winnipeg novel *The Sacrifice*, I must have complained about something or other, because she writes to me from New York where she was then living:

> . . . we could have spent the summer exchanging items on the intransigence of our respective projects. I left my desk in a spitting rage this afternoon, not the happy, explosive kind of rage, but the sick, contemptuous, despairing, bilious kind that accompanies the realization that you've been writing crap. Even so, one is to assume that this might be a step ahead, say, of yesterday, when one wrote nothing at all. Or is it? Phooey. . . . It's slow work, for me as for you, and every now and then, when least welcome, the old material irrelevancies, like finance, intrude themselves. Well, I shouldn't complain. It's tougher for you in a way, since you have to take account of certain basic responsibilities before you can even think of writing.

She dates the letter "March 13, 1959, and Friday, yet, too."

One comes across odd little bits of social history that allow one to measure what has happened in Canada since the late fifties. In 1959 or 1960 the CBC broadcast a little story of mine, called "Annerl." It's a story about two young boys in Vienna who stop every day on their way from school and buy chestnuts from an old woman on a windy corner. She tells them about her life with a drunken husband who was a good lover when he was sober, but who used to beat her up when he was drunk. And then one day, he dies, and she mourns him. It is a gentle story about the loss of innocence and the boys' encounter with death. But Annerl's language is profane, though certainly not obscene. In a broadcast there were three or four voices and their reading was dramatic. Two members of parliament railed against poor little Annerl in the House of Commons, and Weaver wrote to me, "You may be interested to hear that we received a number of objections to the language and some of the incidental themes in 'Annerl.' Morrison looked gloomily at me, said that it was a good story, but that it was a 'tactical error' to present it without censorship. Of course I try to avoid censorship whenever possible. Anyway, I was amused by the whole issue, and we rode out the storm. . . ." In 1961 Desmond Pacey, who always championed my work, wanted to include "The Travelling Nude," a gentle satire, I think, but in the end got cold feet. "Rather reluctantly," he writes to me, "I have decided that 'The Travelling Nude' is a little too strong meat for my book, since the book is used as a high school text in Quebec and New Brunswick. I therefore propose to use 'Two Sisters in Geneva,' of which I am also very fond. I hope you won't object to this." But nothing quite so amused me as an elegantly

written letter from a former student who didn't quite know what to make of "The Travelling Nude," because "To begin with, I cannot accept the premise that anyone in this country would be permitted to travel in the nude. . . ."

I never set out to shock or scandalize or titillate. I was never a professional writer in the sense that I had to make my living by writing. When publishers suggested from time to time that I spice things up in order to sell more books, I could resist the temptation. Writing was an essential activity for me. I wrote to break the silence, to make some sense for myself of the unpredictability, the seeming arbitrariness, the absurdity of life. Writing was thus essential for keeping my sanity. It was an activity absolutely central, but at the same time, and paradoxically, also marginal. I was engaged in many different activities, and when I was so engaged, writing moved to the margin, only suddenly to reassert its dominion and take command of the centre. And when it did, it commanded absolute allegiance. Everything had to be put aside. What caused the sudden eruptions? Remembrance, first of all: The emergence of characters whom I had long brooded over, but who had then lain dormant, and then suddenly arose and demanded attention; the sudden illumination that suffused a certain image with meaning. It was necessary to be patient, to wait for situations to ripen. I learned that when I tried to force things, then I did a tremendous amount of typing, but little writing. I had to learn to listen to the inner voice, to be still so the voice could make itself heard. Above all, to be in readiness. Writing for me was a quest for meaning, a way of calling up presences.

Years ago I took part in a radio program and the host asked me what my favourite Shakespearean passage was. I always hate it when I am confronted with such questions. I stammered out some kind of answer, mentioning, I think, Macbeth's speech that begins "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow." But I knew even as I said it, that this wasn't it at all. In all of Shakespeare there are six words that have, from the moment I first encountered them, had enormous resonance for me. They have found their way into my own texts, sometimes with variations on the theme, and they were constantly in my mind when I prepared my papers for the archives. They are from *Hamlet*. The first two words are spoken by the ghost of Hamlet's father after he has revealed to his son how he was murdered. "Remember me," he cries. The second passage is spoken by Hamlet to Horatio just before Hamlet's own death. "The readiness is all," says Hamlet. I should in fairness quote the twenty-seven words that precede these four and the sixteen words that follow them. It is an astonishing passage of forty-seven words, only one of more than one syllable. And yet they contain the essence of our destiny here on earth. "If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all. Since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is 't to leave betimes? Let be."

THE GIFT

Audrey Poetker

she tries to tell him
this is one thing
to hold on to like when
she was a girl who never
missed a dance who picked
black-eyed susans & tiger
lilies were wild then

dancing & life when did it
all become wrong
when she gave in to him
& put on her shoes when she
hung out the wash or when
he became a deacon making
her behave like a wife
a wife with a dryer
& a deacon

who needs a dryer when
her strong thin line binds
trees together keeps the leaves
from unravelling the sound
of wind against her apron
gathered to hold clothespins
the sound of her hair rushing
free from its bun
this fine wind clear heat
& sunshine trapped forever
in the sheets between two
chokeberry trees

CALIBAN DOWN UNDER

Kevin Roberts

I had my island sung
for my steps, seasoned
for my crops, insured
with snake and duck and fish
collateral for flood and fire

you came and trampled it
built bull-headed across
the seasons, flightpaths
migration tracks
your old smells stuck
rancid, rotting in one
place

castles in the grass
bungalows by water

not even the big blow wind
could stir away the stink
of your habits

more, you planted daffodils
and daisies where my sweet
buds flowered and fell, grubbed
out trees for lawns, tame gardens

named my birds all again
from your hard tongue, gold
finch, robin, wren, bizarre
transmutations of song and flight

rabbited my warrens, tally-hoed
your foxes to horns of derision

my game, fowl and fish
declined, my sister birthed
a grey child, both lost

in my island grown concrete
tough, alleyed in dark
corners where only soft
circles grew before

mazed with bottled screams
brainstorm pills

I would like to scrape you off
my island like maggots writhing
in your dumb sheep's eyes.

GIRALDA

Anne Swannell

Back in Canada,
I discover one poem is missing.

Left in some cafe in Córdoba ?
Or slipped behind a lacy bed in Rhonda's hills ?

Trying to recapture
the rhythm of the lines, the proper order.

Some progression, I remember,
from tired horses pulling carriages of tourists

to the massive square cathedral in Sevilla —
which replaced the Moorish Mosque

but clung to its Giralda
and crowned it, in the Renaissance, with bells —

to marmalade in childhood, the way Mother said it,
accent on the first syllable: Séville.

to the Cariboo of British Columbia
and Purdy's golden oranges of dung.

COUREURS-DE-BOIS, VOYAGEURS, & TRAPPERS

The Fur Trade and the Emergence of an Ignored Canadian Literary Tradition

Konrad Gross

ALTHOUGH THE TOPIC OF THE FUR TRADE was the most popular stock-in-trade in earlier Canadian literature, literary criticism has largely ignored the numerous works peopled with the colourful figures of coureurs-de-bois, voyageurs, and trappers.[1] Contemporary critics are hardly to blame, for the sheer bulk of books on the subject, not to mention the aesthetic weakness of most of the texts involved, would have driven many to despair. Take, for instance, the following passage from *The Three Trappers* (1909), a juvenile novel by Achilles Daunt:

> The gloom and the mystery which brooded over the great wilderness made the youths pensive and silent . . . Away from the influence of an over-ripe civilization, nature speaks with her thousand tongues to those who love her: the roar of the waters; the gloom and solitude of the vast forests; the sighing of the wind, as if wearied with endless travel; . . . all act on the souls of nature's votaries and find therein something responsive to their appeal.
>
> With feelings alive to such influences, our young trappers floated onwards.[2]

Similar passages — which can be found in many other works — may tempt some to hail the critical neglect of the literature on the fur trade as a sure sign of the maturity of Canadian criticism. A. J. M. Smith and Co. were certainly right to rave at the mediocrity of Canadian literature. Their well-known diatribes against canoe and maple leaf, however, induced Canadian criticism to turn a blind eye to the vast field of popular literature[3] and to lose sight of an important Canadian tradition which (with the help of quite a few well-known artists) was established in the nineteenth century and which survived mainly within the realm of juvenile and mass literature. Dismissing this type of literature simply as aesthetically unassuming and therefore negligible would mean ignoring its immense iconographical value and neglecting its enormous appeal to many readers.

The idealized image of the coureurs and voyageurs emerged in the nineteenth century. The reputation of the coureur as a notorious bad man, created by the official sources of New France for political reasons, was forgotten when literature, and later historiography, discovered the romantic potential of the fur trade and helped to model characters of almost mythical dimensions.

It seems to be a general rule that the myth-making process of literature starts in most cases only after the event. Cooper's Leatherstocking appeared on the scene when the settlement of the territory east of the Mississippi had been nearly completed, and the American Western emerged after the last frontier had fallen in 1890. The myth of Leatherstocking and the Westerner originated in the U.S.A. and from there found its way to Europe, where it met with great admiration and where it was later imitated. In Canada, matters were different, for the myth of the coureur and voyageur was brought from Europe to Canada and it was shaped while the fur trade was still in full swing. Robert Ballantyne, one of the most popular writers of juvenile fiction in the Victorian Age, started his writing career with a book called *Hudson's Bay* (1847), in which he recalled his six-year stint in the employ of the venerable Hudson's Bay Company. Out of this grew an enormously successful novel, *The Young Fur-Traders* (1856), perhaps the first novel to deal with the fur trade.[4] Here Ballantyne presented the fur trade glowingly, thus contributing much to its romantic image. Yet he also exploited the exotic potential of life in the Canadian wilds in another, no less effective, manner. While his novel was in print, he went on a lecture tour through Scotland to aid a church charity. His topic was Hudson Bay and the fur trade, and he proved to be an extremely entertaining performer, appearing on stage in the dress of a Canadian trapper. While he told his stories of life in the posts and sang French-Canadian voyageur songs, he fired his unloaded gun at a stuffed eagle which he had just brought back from a trip to Norway. This eagle, perched high over the stage, was with "a jerk of a hidden string sent crashing down on the platform amid the horrified screams of the ladies. . . ."[5] It is impossible to estimate Ballantyne's success as a fund raiser, but there can be no doubt that his show must have whetted the appetites of his audiences for his forthcoming book, which was decorated on the spine by a figure of a romantic fur trader.

Ballantyne, however, was not the first writer to bring the romance of the Canadian North and the voyageurs to British readers. An Irishman from Dublin, Thomas Moore, had already paved the way. Moore's connection with Canada was slight. Unlike Ballantyne, he had no first-hand experience with the fur trade and he knew Canada only from an excursion during a North American tour in 1804. A year later he published his famous "Canadian Boat Song," which became so popular that it is safe to say it started a spate of nineteenth-century works on the voyageurs and determined some of the most persistent literary conventions in which the voyageurs were enshrined. The "Canadian Boat Song" was patterned after a real

voyageur song, and Moore did everything to give the song an authentic ring. He assumed the collective persona of the voyageurs and he took as a subject the voyageurs' custom of singing a parting hymn to their patron saint Anne before their departure from Montreal. For the Catholic voyageurs in the service of the North West Company, the church of Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, situated at the western tip of Montreal, was the last visible link with the familiar world. It was Saint Anne whom they asked for protection before they set out from their homes on their arduous and long journey into the interior.

Moore had listened to songs sung by a group of voyageurs who had rowed him from Kingston to Montreal. His "Canadian Boat Song," a religious chant, was, however, not a song that he had heard, but one he composed. In a footnote to the published text he confessed that he had understood only parts of the song on which his own text was modelled. Unwilling to blame his poor French for this, he put the blame on the "barbarous pronunciation of the Canadians."[6] What he had actually heard was an old French-Canadian folk song which had come to Canada with the early settlers from France and which was entitled "J'ai trop grand' peur des loups."[7] Moore had taken the idea for his song not from real life, but from Alexander Mackenzie's famous account of the fur trade (1801) which he had read before his North American tour.[8] Whereas Mackenzie had given a rather factual report on the fur trade and drawn a rather mixed picture of the voyageurs, Moore created a mythical image. He singled out something that suited his conservative sensibility. The result was a simplification of a very complex character, the image of the pious, devout, and singing voyageur. Mythmaking is generally a simplifying process, shutting out the more disturbing features of reality in favour of stressing its pleasing aspects. Although the selected traits may be based on reality, as in Moore's case, the image becomes false and distorted because of its reductiveness. Ideologically, Moore's image of the pious voyageur may be rooted in his Catholic upbringing. It may also be linked to the anti-republican sentiment which he had voiced repeatedly during his North American tour.[9]

The image would, however, not have been so powerful if the author had not possessed another talent on which his later reputation rested. Although he did not have an ear for the French pronunciation of the *Canadiens*, he had an excellent ear for music. When he listened to the singing voyageurs, he immediately took down the notes of the air and wrote words to accompany it. With his "Canadian Boat Song," Moore was practising a form that would bring him fame a few years later when he published the first part of his famous *Irish Melodies* (1808). These later tunes were to earn him recognition as *the* Irish national bard; in them, Moore took the original Celtic tunes and changed them a little to suit the tastes of the English dinner parties at which he sang his songs.

The "Canadian Boat Song" was the product of the Romantic Age with its predilection for folk traditions and the beneficial effects of a life close to nature.

Hence, Moore's text was a far cry from what the real voyageur songs were about. It may suffice to contrast it with a song called "Le Voyage, c'est un marriage." This song speaks of the voyageur's existence as a life-long marriage contract with a job, the dreariness of which compares unfavourably with the life of the *habitant* who, in the words of the singer, spends the night in a snug bed and is well looked after by a loving wife.[10] Other songs complain about the solitude, boredom, homesickness, hunger, frustrated love, disease, and premature death as the inevitable lot of a voyageur's life. All these ingredients of the voyageur's existence were toned down or wholly sacrificed to an idealized image for which Moore's "Canadian Boat Song" was responsible.

MOORE'S SONG WAS SO POPULAR that it became a frequent source of reference. In 1863 the newly founded *British American Magazine* ran an article on "The Voyageurs of Canada." This essay not only commenced with a colourful description of singing voyageurs; it also quoted two lines from the boat song and praised Moore for his faithful rendering of the music.[11] In Daunt's novel *The Three Trappers*, written nearly half a century later, Moore's text was even passed off as an authentic voyageur song.[12] Moore's literary image had proved to be so powerful that it was taken for real. But the story of Moore's influence does not stop here. With Moore the myth of the voyageur was launched, and the myth-maker himself was even later turned into a myth. In Alan Sullivan's novel *The Fur Masters* (1938), Moore makes a brief appearance in a chapter which has no bearing on the plot, but which heightens the romantic colouring of the story. Here he is shown on arrival in Lachine at the end of his boat-trip on the St. Lawrence, when he runs quite accidentally into Simon Fraser and William McGillivray from the North West Company, who invite him to the company's exclusive Beaver Club in Montreal. At the club, Moore meets also other well-known figures from the fur trade: Simon McTavish, John Frobisher, John Jacob Astor, and Alexander Mackenzie. Moore is asked by his distinguished hosts to sing a song, and it is easy to guess what Moore will sing: his "Canadian Boat Song." Sullivan shows no great interest in historical accuracy. Simon McTavish was already dead when Moore stepped on Canadian soil, and the poet is presented in this scene as the creator of both the words and the music of the song. Sullivan makes myth and reality merge, for the reaction of the audience to the performance is evidence that Moore has grasped the truth of the voyageurs' lives and that his pathos is not false:

> At his first words the room became silent: as he sang on the Norwesters — the childhood of most had been spent in the wilderness of Scottish Highlands and poetry was in their nature — turned to each other with understanding eyes and nodded. They knew what this stranger sang of; all the beauty and the mystery of the story

> of the voyageur were there as in their dreams they themselves had visioned it, but now it came from the lips of a stranger, a young interpreter who had captured and given it life and form.[13]

This passage declares the romantic ideal of the poet as the inspired seer whose interpretation of life is eagerly embraced by his spell-bound audience. Sullivan's notion of the poet fuses myth with reality by assigning a greater truthfulness (in the Romantic sense) to Moore's text than to authentic voyageur songs. Simon McTavish in the end assures the singer that his song will be adopted by the voyageurs as one of their own:

> We will remember it, . . . our voyageurs and their children will sing it; by many a camp-fire it will be heard when the flame burns low and the waters lie quiet.[14]

Sullivan's main concern is the mythmaking capacity of literature in general, and it is to this end that he transforms Moore, the mythmaker, into a myth. (That Moore's influence does not stop short even of the historian's territory can be seen in Marjorie Wilkins Campbell's fairly recent study *The North West Company* (1957), where a few lines from Moore's boat song are quoted in a brief paragraph, further idealizing Campbell's portrait of the voyageurs.[15])

Though it is doubtful whether the "Canadian Boat Song" was ever accepted by the voyageurs, Moore's song was taken up in French Canada, where a French translation ("La Chanson du Voyageur") appeared in 1826, from the pen of Dominique Mondelet, a judge in Trois-Rivières and a minor French-Canadian writer of occasional verse.[16] Moore's example of remodelling voyageurs' songs, moreover, was imitated in French Canada as well as in English Canada. The best French-Canadian example is "Le Chant des Voyageurs" (1862) by Octave Crémazie. Crémazie's attempts to preserve a French-Canadian identity against the pressures of English-Canadian society resulted in the patriotic and nostalgic poems for which he became known as the national bard of Quebec. It does not matter in this context that Crémazie, in his French-Canadian boat song, does not praise the voyageurs of the fur trade but the voyageurs working in the lumber camps and on the rafts on their way downriver. The stereotypes are the same. Like Moore's text, Crémazie's was set to music, but as Crémazie's musical talent was less than Moore's, the air was composed by a French-Canadian compatriot and publicly performed on St. Jean Baptiste Day (June 24, 1862), Quebec's community holiday.[17]

In English Canada the writing of voyageur songs became a mania which lasted right through to World War I. A host of minor Canadian poets, now mostly forgotten, produced endless variations of these songs. One of them, Arthur Weir, praises the strength of the voyageur who fears none but God in his poem "Voyageur Song."[18] The voyageur's fearlessness could best be illustrated in dangerous situations, of which the shooting of the rapids became the most popular. A variant of the

voyageur song is the canoe song, which was also of French-Canadian origin; but in the hands of nineteenth-century English-Canadian poets, it underwent an interesting transformation, in the course of which the voyageur and his life were lost sight of. In one of the surviving French-Canadian songs, called "Mon Canot,"[19] most of the ingredients of the later English adaptations are apparent: the fearless voyageur, whose only wealth is his canoe, shooting the rapids. Yet this is where the parallel ends. Whereas the French-Canadian song talks about the canoe as a useful tool that is loved because, for example, it gives the voyageur shelter in the night, English-Canadian canoe poems frequently turn the canoe into a human. Pauline Johnson's "The Song My Paddle Sings" (1894) anthropomorphises the canoe, which assumes the strength and fearlessness of the voyageur himself:

> Be strong, O paddle! be brave, canoe!
> The reckless waves you must plunge into.
> Reel, reel,
> on your trembling keel,
> But never a fear my craft will feel.[20]

In poems by other writers the canoe even becomes independent of the voyageur, who is no longer mentioned. Alan Sullivan's poem "The White Canoe" is of this type. The canoe here is apostrophized as "the wandering phantom bride of the river she rests upon."[21] The canoe has become a romantic symbol, certainly not as deep and charged with meaning as Shelley's *West Wind* or Keats' *Grecian Urn*, but a symbolic object nevertheless. Sullivan's white canoe stands for peace and quiet as opposed to the "trouble on shore"; the voyageur's existence has faded; the figure of the real voyageur has given way to a universal comment on life, reminiscent of Moore's pious generalization. Even Charles G. D. Roberts, the best known of the Confederation Poets, could not refrain from writing a canoe poem, "Birch and Paddle" (1886). Here the voyageur's task of paddling and rowing has been turned into a romantic pastime: a weary soul escapes from the harsh world, "on care-unsullied streams," to an idyllic nature which nurses the troubled human spirit back to harmony and peace.[22] This sampling should be sufficient, although there are many more poems of this kind.

VOICES FINDING MOORE'S SONG SENTIMENTALIZED are extremely rare. One such voice is that of William Kirby, whose novel *The Golden Dog* (1877) contains a chapter entitled "The Canadian Boat Song." Unfortunately, the abridged version of this chapter in the NCL edition makes the reader miss Kirby's point. The editor has omitted a few pages with pieces of actual information about the origin and form of voyageur songs. Apparently Kirby wants to correct the mistaken impression created by the authors of songs in the wake of Moore,

for he denounces "the sweet little lyrics sung in soft falsettos to the tinkling of a pianoforte in fashionable drawing rooms, . . . called 'Canadian Boat songs.'"[23] Furthermore, he quotes two original songs in French as examples. One song is an old French ballad, which, like most other paddling songs, was transplanted from medieval France to French North America with an added refrain imitating the rhythmic dipping of the paddles as the only alteration of the original.[24] The reader who has no command of French learns from Kirby that this is a "famous old ballad of the King's son, who with his silver gun aimed at the beautiful black duck, and shot the white one, out of whose eyes came gold and diamonds, and out of whose mouth rained silver," and so forth.[25] All this information adds to a certain realism, but Kirby's Toryism quickly undermines this effect, instilling the chapter instead with a type of idealization that approximates Moore's image of the pious voyageur. In contrast to Moore, however, Kirby places his voyageurs in a political context which is determined by his anti-democratic, pro-monarchical leanings. The voyageur, together with the *habitant*, becomes the representative of the French-Canadian people, who are presented as virtuous, simple, submissive, and obedient, and who acknowledge the social hierarchy as God-given. This wishful dream of a staunch conservative is heightened when Kirby explains the quality of the transformation of the Old World ballad to the New World boat song in the following terms:

> The Canadian boat song is always some old ballad of Norman or Breton origin, pure in thought and chaste in expression, washed clean of all French looseness and its adaptation to the primitive manners of the colony . . .[26]

Thus, the boat song and the voyageur bear witness to the wholesome effects of life led close to nature. Moreover, Kirby's voyageurs as the singers of the ballad about the King's son are acknowledged as the guardians of a monarchical tradition that is threatened by a group of upstarts in the government whom the novelist blames for the ruin of New France and the British conquest of Quebec. Kirby, who in his own time saw the old monarchic spirit crumbling around him, made his voyageurs part of a social idyll comprising an idealized union between monarch and people. The chapter on the Canadian boat song does nothing to advance the plot of the novel, for the voyageurs fade quickly from the action never to re-appear again. Yet viewed from within the ideological matrix of *The Golden Dog*, the voyageurs remain an integral part of the story.

The notion of the pious voyageur was a popular image in nineteenth-century Canadian literature. It was taken up by many authors, both English and French, and even by an American writer, John Greenleaf Whittier, whose poem "The Red River Voyageur" (1859) transformed the voyageur and his life into a Christian allegory. As an American, Whittier could not translate this figure into a national symbol, even though it suited his religious perception of nature and rural life. Thus

in his poem the Red River becomes an allegory of life: the voyageur, who stands for man in general, paddles toward his Christian destination, heaven.[27]

Although the image of the pious voyageur was powerful, it was frequently mixed with other, conflicting images. This is particularly true in Ballantyne's novel *The Young Fur-Traders* which, despite its violence and its active accounts of adventure, still cherishes the image of the pious voyageur. It is hard to believe that Ballantyne had a first-hand knowledge of the fur trade and the voyageurs. For he banned every notion of realism from his novel and infused his portrait of the fur trade with a strong tinge of romanticism.[28] The book concerns two young boys who are initiated into the life of the voyageurs. The main character, Charley, the son of a retired fur trader, is an unruly boy with a fierce dislike for his boring office job in the counting room of Fort Garry; after he manages to blackmail his father and the chief trader into sending him with a group of voyageurs into the interior, there begins a series of exciting events which take Charley into the Saskatchewan and Athabasca regions. There he helps to open up the fur trade, learns to paddle and hunt, fights with wild Indians, and lives the life of a voyageur. For Charley, a dream has come true, as his life is just like a great holiday, a kind of eternal boy scout experience to which Ballantyne reduces the voyageur's life. Though the real hardships of the daily routine are excluded and the hardships of the voyageur's life completely ignored, Ballantyne makes the reader believe that Charley has become a voyageur. In a letter to his best friend, Harry, who is doomed to spend his time in the counting room of York Fort, Charley depicts his life fervently: "Ah! There's nothing like roughing it, Harry, my boy. Why, I am thriving on it — growing like a young walrus, eating like a Canadian voyageur, and sleeping like a top."[29] Fortunately, Harry is not left long to smoulder in jealousy, for soon he is allowed to join his friend and to become a voyageur, too. With the help of a French-Canadian trapper, the two boys effect their transformation with great success and apparently without complications, for the reader is quickly confronted with a Harry who is able to spice his conversation with scraps of French words, while Charley in the garb of a voyageur and with traces of outdoor life on his face is not recognized by his father on his return to Fort Garry.

In the last analysis, the transformation is not convincing and is restricted to externals: The life of unrestricted freedoms and the encounters with violence and savagery do not tell on the characters of the two friends; they remain remarkably innocent throughout a book which never allows them to lapse morally. There is none of the moral ambiguity of Cooper's Leatherstocking whom the reader often catches musing on the potentially pernicious effects of life in the wilderness. In contrast, *The Young Fur-Traders* is no more than a survival guide, in which the chief characters not only are rather resistant to the savagery around them, but also become the agents of civilization and British imperialism by forging an alliance

with an Indian Chief whose keen interest in the Bible will bring his tribe under the sway of Christianity and British commerce.

There is in many adventure novels a curious mixture of conservatism and progressive utopian thinking. The escapist qualities of adventure stories frequently serve to reconcile the reader with an unsatisfactory present, thus affirming traditional social values and norms. At the same time adventure fiction possesses a strong utopian element in its more or less latent opposition to the bourgeois commandment to pray and to work.[30] In Cooper's *The Prairie* this basic dichotomy is obvious, for Leatherstocking (because he is a misfit) stays in the wilderness, but he sends his younger friends back to the settlements where they accept responsible roles in society. In *The Young Fur-Traders* the utopian element is virtually nonexistent, for the freedoms of a voyageur's life are never meant to discredit accepted social values. Charley and Harry return to the Red River colony where the former is appointed chief factor and the latter marries Charley's sister. The unruly boys are tamed and will spend "their days in peaceful felicity from the cares of a residence among wild beasts and wild men."[31] The novel has, of course, the potential of focusing on the contrast between savagery and morality, but this is never fully exploited. In order not to manoeuvre himself into a scrape, the author resorts to racist explanations. The voyageurs, as descendants "from French-Canadian sires and Indian mothers," are prone to lapsing into savagism because

> they united some of the good and not a few of the bad qualities of both, mentally as well as physically — combining the light gay-hearted spirit and full muscular frame of the Canadian with the fierce passions and active habits of the Indian. And this wildness of disposition was not a little fostered by the nature of their unusual occupation.[32]

Thanks to their genetic code and the reading of the Bible the boys' souls are hardened to the temptations of the wilds.

THE NOTION OF THE WILD VOYAGEURS — together with the image of the pious voyageur the most powerful picture in nineteenth-century literature — was, of course, not invented by Ballantyne. It occurs already in the historical documents of New France which regard the roving existence of the coureurs-de-bois as a constant threat to the survival of the sparsely settled colony and which generally present them as an unruly and loose lot. It crops up again in Alexander Mackenzie's account of the fur trade, where the explorer mentions the coureurs' disregard of wealth, "the pleasure of living free from all restraint," and "a licentiousness of manners" which he also traces among their successors, the voyageurs.[33]

Mackenzie is, however, far from condemning coureurs and voyageurs, for he is not only aware of their usefulness within the fur trade, but also able, without resort-

ing to Ballantyne's racist argument, to link these traits to their mode of life. He starts his characterization with a sentence to which Ballantyne would hardly have subscribed: "experience proves that it requires much less time for a civilized people to deviate into the manners and customs of savage life, than for savages to rise into a state of civilization."[34] Mackenzie was still a belated offspring of the Age of Enlightenment. As such he believed in the role of environment and circumstance as powerful forces affecting the development of man. Yet though many of the traits listed by Mackenzie were taken up by later writers, their factual content was either played down or completely ignored. George Beers, in his essay "The 'Voyageurs' of Canada," was still willing to assign many of the voyageurs' traits to their mode of life, but he also expanded Mackenzie's list, placing greatest emphasis on the exotic and picturesque. "The voyageurs of Canada," he wrote,

> are a fraternity of peculiar interest, to be found only in our country — a class of men strangely incompatible with the rest of humanity, as brave as they are strong, as wild as they are happy, as careless of life as they are capable of enduring hardship; always ready to give their heart and hand to a friend, or put their knives through a foe. Born, reared, and living among the thistles of life, instead of its clover, accustomed to nothing but the extremes of hardship or indolence, "roughing it" in the wilds of our mighty forests, risking their lives . . . crashing down the rapids — verily, the refinement of city life is far from being congenial to their wild nature. Nature in all her freedom, unrestrained by the customs of civilization, has made the *voyageurs* a peculiarly intrepid, romantic race — with rather a tendency to the savage. The voyageurs are a proof that when man is placed in circumstances at all favourable, he soon learns to assume the savage. There is an actual romance about their lives. . . .[35]

For Beers, the voyageurs are brave, enduring, generous, hospitable, happy, but also careless, passionate, irascible, anarchic, dirty, unrefined, vain, cursing, rough, noisy, uneducated, and slightly amoral.

The wildness of voyageurs and coureurs became the literary stock-in-trade during the second half of the nineteenth century. Most writers felt that the time of the voyageurs was nearing its end. The fur trade lost in importance when in the 1830s silk hats began to replace the once fashionable beaver hats, in the 1840s the missionaries reached the West, in the 1850s the government sent out expeditions, and when, in 1869, the Hudson's Bay Company had to sell its territories, which were then opened up for settlement. These developments, together with the rise of Canadian nationalism in the Confederation period and the strong persistence of literary Romanticism, helped to keep the voyageur in focus and to cement all those aspects which would lend themselves to the mythmaking process. Charles Sangster, in *The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay* (1856), lamented the disappearance of the singing voyageurs:

> Long years ago the Voyageurs
> Gladdened these wilds with some romantic air.[36]

In his poem "The Rapid" (1860) he makes the reader feel that a whole way of life has gone. The speaker observes a group of voyageurs approaching the rapids with a merry song on their lips and without fear of death. They have to pay for their recklessness and carelessness, for they drown, and the poet concludes the poem:

> No voice cheers the rapid, that angrily, angrily
> Shivers their bark in its maddening play;
> Gaily they entered it — heedlessly, recklessly,
> Mingling their lives with its treacherous spray![37]

The poem is a tribute to the heroism of the voyageurs and the accident is meant to stand for the destruction of a light-hearted, happy-go-lucky way of life — which makes an excellent topic for a Romantic poem, but which is doomed.

IN THE LAST QUARTER OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, the image of the wild and reckless coureur became the predominant stereotype. This shift from the pious to the wild figure was due to the overpowering influence of the historical writings of Francis Parkman, who in *The Old Régime in Canada* (1874) sensed the literary potential of the figure of the coureur:

> Though not a very valuable member of society, . . . the *coureur de bois* had his uses, at least from an artistic point of view; and his strange figure, sometimes brutally savage, but oftener marked with the lines of a dare-devil courage, and a reckless thoughtless gayety, will always be joined to the memories of that grand world of woods which the nineteenth century is fast civilizing out of existence. At least, he is picturesque, and with his red-skin companion serves to animate forest scenery. Perhaps he could sometimes feel, without knowing that he felt them, the charms of the savage nature that had adopted him.[38]

Parkman's influence can be traced in a host of works from the end of the century, for example in the poem "The Coureur-de-Bois" (1897) by Samuel Matthewson Baylis, a minor Montreal poet. Here the coureur is seen as an exotic, wild character, a "rattling, roving, rollicking rake"[39] whose loose morals can become acceptable to the English-Canadian reader only because he is placed in the historical context of the Old Régime and because he is viewed as an Empire-builder. By this time, the coureur had fulfilled the mission for which he was necessary, and with the march of civilization he had a right to disappear from the historical stage.

Parkman's influence can also be discovered in two stories by William McLennan, a Montreal writer with a keen interest in the history of New France. "The Coureur-de-Bois," the first story, deals with the conflict between the French-Canadian authorities and an historical coureur. The second story, "The Coureur-de-Neiges," shows the transformation of a dissatisfied younger son of a

French-Canadian seigneur into a coureur. Although McLennan had taken the idea for both stories from historical sources, he soon stripped his coureur characters of all historical traces, converting them into compound figures with all the well-known stereotypes of carelessness, cruelty, anarchy, immorality, and passion.[40] "The Coureur-de-Neiges" is a particularly revealing example of how history is sacrificed to the sensational. The seigneur's son is transformed not only into a coureur-de-bois, but also into an Indian whose savagery soon excels to such a degree that he is finally forced to roam the vast wilderness alone, accompanied only by his terrified Indian wife. He dies in desolation, degraded to the state of an animal and haunted by the curses of his dying wife. Perhaps McLennan took Parkman's advice too literally when he subjected history to the picturesque. In addition, like many other contemporary Canadian writers, he had to cater to a mass reading public with a limited sense of history, whose tastes were accustomed to the undemanding fare offered by popular magazines in Canada and the United States.

In quite a few stories by other authors history dissolves completely and is replaced by the timelessness of the Canadian North, which becomes a myth, lending its colouring to the trappers in it. It may suffice to mention two stories which appeared in one of Canada's popular magazines, the *Canadian Magazine of Politics, Science, Art and Literature*: Arthur Stringer's "A Woman of the North" (1897) and Herman Whitaker's "The Devil's Muskeg" (1906).[41] Here the traits of the trapper figures are attributed simply to race and breed. History and the Northern Environment, as forces shaping human nature, have both faded away. The two stories each deal with the lax sexual mores of French-Canadian trappers who are brought to their right senses by their jealous wives, the one an Indian, the other a French-Canadian woman. It does not matter that the women, not their trapper husbands, are in the centre of the stories. Both men and women share the same characteristics; only the intensity of the stereotypes is heightened, because in these stories the racial features of half-breed (or Indian) and French-Canadians find their most unadulterated expression in women. Here the two women are passionate in their loves and hates and fierce and cruel in their jealousy and revenge. Their outbursts of passion are always accompanied by the violent outbursts of a hostile and destructive nature. The image of the cold Canadian North as a powerful, purifying force is reversed; the mythical North has become a playground of primitivist passions.

It goes without saying that the North is only vaguely localized. As a mythical construct it does not require specific geographical details, since its northern features rest on the characters who people the stories. It does not matter here that Whitaker, unlike Stringer, had actually been to the Canadian North where he had tried his luck at pioneering for some years.[42] For the failure of both authors to give a more realistic rendering of northern life was due to the dictates of the powerful American magazines and book market. This market tempted quite a few Canadian writers,

among them Stringer and Whitaker, to cross the border, and it forced them to keep the mythical northland in popular fiction alive. The influence of the American magazines becomes obvious also in the work of Gilbert Parker, whose first stories were published in the *Independent*, a New York magazine. In book form (as *Pierre and his People*, 1882) his stories became a best seller. They were followed up by a second collection, titled *An Adventurer of the North* (1889), in which the chief character of the first collection, Pierre the half-breed trapper, reappeared. Pierre is an adventurer of almost gigantic proportions, careless and fearless, passionate and obsessed by an irresistible urge to roam the Canadian North from Labrador to the Rockies. In the last story, "The Plunderer," Parker comes closest to the American Western. Although the story is set in a little prairie settlement sprouting up near a Hudson's Bay Company trading post, Pierre is more like a Western hero in whom some of the typical Western conflicts are concentrated: East versus West, freedom versus order, play versus work, physical prowess versus sham morality, and so forth. The story also displays a few Western gadgets: the hero hunted by a posse, a shooting (in which Pierre is triumphant), and the hero's escape. In the end, after Pierre has confounded the posse of indignant townspeople, he elopes into the prairie, on a horse with his sweetheart, where he is silhouetted against a prairie fire, a grandiose finale which would do credit to any Western:

> Far behind upon a divide the flying hunters from Guidon Hill paused for a moment. They saw with hushed wonder and awe a man and a woman, dark and weird against the red light, ride madly into the flickering surf of fire.[43]

Needless to say, Parker also had never been in the Canadian North and, like Stringer, became an expatriate.

It is perhaps appropriate to conclude this survey with an historical novel by another Canadian expatriate, Agnes Laut's *Lords of the North* (1900). It is not easy to see why the subject of the fur trade made a relatively late appearance in the form of historical fiction, for Sir Walter Scott was one of the most powerful literary influences in nineteenth-century Canada and his model of the historical novel would have been also suitable for a treatment of the fur trade. Scott's novels focused on the clash between historically reactionary and progressive forces, with the progressive side victorious. Scott's typical hero is the so-called mediocre hero with a Romantic predilection, who travels from civilized England back to the primitivism of the Scottish Highlands, where he soon finds himself involved in the rebellions of the Highland clans. In the end he returns to England with his romanticism worn off and with the prospect of becoming a useful member of society by getting married and by starting a business career. In some ways, the pattern of *Lords of the North* is reminiscent of Scott's *Rob Roy*: the hero sets out from civilized Quebec into the wilderness, though on a personal mission he becomes involved in an historical conflict, the feud between the Hudson's Bay and North

West companies, and he finally returns to get married. But this is where the parallels end. For Scott never idealizes the past, he constantly questions heroism, and the encounter with the negative aspects of primitive life hastens the hero's abandonment of his romantic notions. In contrast, Laut emphasizes the heroic elements of the fur trade period on which she imposes a pseudo-chivalric ethic. Her central character, the well-educated Rufus Gillespie, joins the North West Company only in search of his friend's wife who has been abducted by Indians. Though in the garb of a trapper, he moves about like a knight who in his dealings with his own lady-love and a French-Canadian opponent constantly resorts to a chivalric code. This earns him not only the lady's hand, but also the respect of his French-Canadian adversary, who, as the offspring of a degenerate seigneur family, has retained enough dignity to remember his dues.

He assists Rufus in freeing the damsel in distress from the clutches of a witch-like Indian woman. Despite their involvement in the historical conflict, the characters are far removed from history, which is used only to put additional ordeals in the way of the rescuers. As in *Rob Roy*, the story is told in retrospective by the chief character, who, in contrast to the narrator in Scott's book, has lost none of his useful romanticism. Laut's intention is clear: Canadians need not be ashamed of their history, which even surpasses the splendours of the chivalric age in Europe, or to quote the narrator of Laut's second novel on the fur trade, *Heralds of Empire* (1902):

> Your Old World victor takes up the unfinished work left by generations of men. Your New World hero begins at the pristine task. I pray you, who are born to the nobility of the New World, forget not the glory of your heritage; for the place which God hath given you in the history of the race is one which men must hold in envy when Roman patrician and Norman conqueror and robber baron are as forgotten as the kingly lines of Old Egypt.[44]

The works discussed here all tapped Canadian history without granting their readers historically faithful insights into the fur trade period. Yet literature follows its own rules. The dictates of literary conventions and tastes often override any concern for objectivity and historical truthfulness. The critic researching the artistic transmutation of history is left with a paradox: literature is the instrument of transforming history into myth, and at the same time history becomes palatable to the mass of readers only through mythopoeic distortions of history.

NOTES

[1] The only critical treatments are Jack Warwick, *The Long Journey. Literary Themes of French Canada* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1968) and David Tretheway, "Alienated Adam: The Voyageur," *Copperfield*, 5 (1974), 11-33.

[2] (London: Thomas Nelson, 1909).

[3] Exceptions permitted, of course.

[4] Eric Quayle, *Ballantyne the Brave. A Victorian Writer and his Family* (Chester Springs, Penn.: Dufour Editions, 1967), 104.

[5] Judging from its title, *The Young Voyageurs* (1853), a juvenile novel by Th. M. Reid, may be an earlier treatment of the fur trade.

[6] *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Moore.* Shamrock edition (London: Longman's, 1869), 105.

[7] See Howard Mumford Jones, *The Harp That Once — A Chronicle of the Life of Thomas Moore* (1937; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, 1970), 86. For an English translation of the French text see Grace Lee Nute, *The Voyageur* (New York and London: Appleton, 1931).

[8] See footnote in Moore, *Complete Poetical Works*, 105.

[9] Later Moore apologized for his anti-American comments, cf. A. G. Strong, *The Minstrel Boy. A Portrait of Tom Moore* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1937), 100.

[10] Printed in Madeleine Béland, ed., *Chansons de voyageurs, coureurs de bois et forestiers* (Québec: Presse de l'Université Laval, 1982).

[11] George Beers, "The 'Voyageurs' of Canada," *British American Magazine*, 1 (1863), 473.

[12] Daunt, 17.

[13] Alan Sullivan, *The Fur Masters* (London: John Murray, 1938), 48.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] (1957; rpt. Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1983), 24.

[16] Printed in Jules Fournier, ed., *Anthologie des poètes canadiens* (Montreal: Granger Frères, 1920).

[17] Octave Crémazie, *Oeuvres I: Poésies* (Ottawa: Univ. of Ottawa, 1972), 395. The composer's name was M. Dessane. An English translation ("The Song of the Voyageurs") appeared in the *Canadian Magazine of Politics, Science, Art and Literature*, 15 (1900), transl. by William Wilkie Edgar.

[18] Printed in Theodore H. Rand, ed., *A Treasury of Canadian Verse* (Toronto: William Briggs, and London: J. M. Dent, 1900).

[19] Printed in Edith Fowke, *Folklore of Canada* (1976; rpt. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979).

[20] *The White Wampum* (London, 1894), rpt. in *Flint and Feather. The Collected Poems of E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake)* (Markham, Ont.: Paperjacks, 1979).

[21] 1891; rpt. in Rand.

[22] Roberts, *Selected Poetry and Critical Prose*, ed. W. J. Keith (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1974), 66.

[23] The unabridged chapter is reprinted in Albert Durrant Watson & Lorne Albert Pierce, eds., *Our Canadian Literature. Representative Prose & Verse* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1923, 1922), 227, 229.

[24] Fowke, ed., *The Penguin Book of Canadian Folk Songs* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 205.

[25] Watson & Pierce, 230.

[26] *Ibid.*, 229.

[27] *The Complete Poetical Works of Whittier.* Cambridge Edition (Boston: Mifflin, 1894), 69.

[28] I disagree with Joan Selby who detects traces of authenticity in the description of the male characters ("Ballantyne and the Fur Traders," *Canadian Literature,* 18 [1963], 40-46).

[29] *The Young Fur-Traders* (London: P. R. Gawthorn, n.d.), 196.

[30] See the discussion of German adventure fiction in Ralf-Peter Märtin, *Wunschpotentiale. Geschichte und Gesellschaft in Abenteuerromanen von Retcliffe, Armand, May* (Königstein i. Ts.: Hain, 1983), 11.

[31] *Young Fur-Traders,* 11.

[32] *Ibid.,* 53.

[33] *Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Lawrence through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in the Years 1789 and 1793* (1801; rpt. Edmonton: Hurtig, 1971), ii, xlvi.

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] *Beers,* 473.

[36] David Sinclair, ed., *Nineteenth-Century Narrative Poems* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1972), 48.

[37] *Hesperus and Other Poems* (1860), rpt. in Douglas Lochhead & Raymond Souster, eds., *100 Poems of Nineteenth Century Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974), 32.

[38] Printed in Rand, 25.

[39] *The Works of Francis Parkman.* VIII: *The Old Régime in Canada* (1874), vol. 2 (1902; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1969), 113.

[40] Both stories were printed in William McLennan, *In Old France and New* (Toronto, 1900), 105-51. "The Coureur-de-Bois" appeared first in *The Canadian Magazine of Politics, Art, Science and Literature,* 11 (1898), 321-25. On McLennan see also E.Q.V., "Canadian Celebrities. No. V: Mr. William McLennan," *Canadian Magazine of Politics, . . .* 13 (1899), 251-53.

[41] 9 (1897), 162-67; 27 (1906), 561-67. Whitaker's story first appeared in his story collection *The Probationer and Other Stories* (New York: Harper, 1905).

[42] Whitaker left Canada in 1895 to become a journalist in the U.S. See *Who Was Who in America,* 1: 1897-1942 (Chicago, 1962), s.v. Whitaker.

[43] *An Adventurer of the North* (London: Nelson, n.d.), 287.

[44] *Heralds of Empire* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1902).

ISLAND

Grell V. Grant

Dark reefs
circle
and corral
the sea,
and gulls
are thrown
by a wind
into the hollow
waiting mouths
of caves.
A sun blooms
above
long columns
of trees:
the colour
washes over
each
evening,
like a shimmer
ing, yellow
glaze. Here,
a warm
rain pours through
my veins. Transient
stars map the beat
of
my heart. I contain
the vast
sky:
birds
fly,
clouds,
drift, within
me.

HUSBAND, FLYING BY NIGHT

Anne Swannell

Asleep beside me, he breathes deep and slow.
Maybe the air he breathes is Araby's.
and while I'm earth-bound here
the snake-limbed girls
he's surely flown to
writhe; lithe and free of such concerns
as I am plagued with. In the dark,
they do not ponder chimneys that need sweeping,
what to do with all the fruit in some garage,
or remind themselves to dig up glads before the frost.

Or he's flying over mountains I can't see,
surveys the dark land under, wonders
where the moonlit river runs. He may never
return to this house — which needs painting, as usual,
and the lawns — always the lawns.

I slip out of bed to retrieve the blankets.
and realize I'm standing in a valley
looking upward, and he is silhouetted
on a rose-strewn Texmade sky;
legs together, slightly bent,
one arm poised for balance,
the other raised in blessing's tender gesture,
black curls framed
by clouds like pillows piled.

CONVERGENCE/ECLATEMENT

L'Immigrant au risque de la perte de soi dans la nouvelle "Où iras-tu Sam Lee Wong?" de Gabrielle Roy

Estelle Dansereau

LA DIVERSITÉ CULTURELLE ET ETHNIQUE des immigrants de l'Ouest canadien peuple les récits manitobains de Gabrielle Roy. Dans son autobiographie, *La Détresse et l'enchantement*, elle attribue la fréquence dans son oeuvre de ce matériau narratif à l'emplacement stratégique de la maison familiale rue Deschambault à Saint-Boniface, située "au sein du pêle-mêle et du disparate de l'Ouest canadien,"[1] et au travail du père Roy comme agent de colonisation. Avant la Grande Dépression, s'appeler Yaremko, Demetrioff, Wong ou même Roy, c'était se déclarer immigrant, venu d'ailleurs et ayant retenu des liens toujours récents et fragiles avec un pays, des coutumes et une langue différents. L'expérience de l'immigrant, normalement décrite à l'aide de clichés — "recommencer à neuf," "se faire une nouvelle vie" — risque trop souvent de devenir, par sa valeur historique indéniable, une histoire de déplacement avec de fortes connotations référentielles. Cependant, comme la critique l'a déjà démontré dans les oeuvres de Roy, l'importance de la figure de l'immigrant dépasse le référentiel pour atteindre l'existentiel, voire l'humanisme.[2] Nicole Bourbonnais, dans son analyse de la nouvelle éponyme du recueil *Un jardin au bout du monde*, démontre que chez Roy l'immigrant fonctionne comme métaphore pour l'homme exilé sur terre.[3]

L'histoire de l'immigrant, traditionnellement racontée dans un style réaliste, est paradoxale: décrite surtout comme un déracinement, une aliénation, un exil, elle est en même temps un recommencement, une renaissance. En dépit de préoccupations thématiques ou contextuelles aisément accessibles dans des textes sans résistance apparente pour le lecteur, il est possible de cerner la complexité des textes d'exil en employant une stratégie de lecture moins traditionnelle qui permet de construire un sens à partir de l'identification d'une dialectique fondamentale au texte. Dans les nouvelles de Gabrielle Roy, *Un jardin au bout du monde*,[4] l'expérience de l'immigrant, fondée à la fois sur le désir d'appartenance et sur la

conscience de non-appartenance, pourrait fournir cette porte d'entrée. En faisant ainsi ressortir une tension opérationnelle du récit, il est possible d'aller au-delà de la transparence du texte se voulant l'histoire de l'immigrant, comme thème analogique à la migration universelle, pour examiner la problématique de déplacement transmise par le discours.

Contraire aux histoires de colonisation d'un Frederick Philip Grove où un réalisme classique tend à valoriser l'expérience même des colons,[5] les nouvelles de Roy font surgir la conscience intérieure de ces gens déplacés.[6] Sans pour le moment s'arrêter pour interroger les stratégies discursives qui font ressortir cette conscience, nous pouvons reconnaître l'importance accordée au niveau de l'histoire à la rupture d'avec le passé, du risque implicite dans une telle aventure: "risque de la solitude, risque de la désillusion, risque de la perte irréparable de soi-même et d'autrui."[7] Malgré sa détermination de réussir dans sa nouvelle vie, le ressentiment de danger pour un être fragile comme Sam qui chancelle devant la solitude est le plus évocateur dans la nouvelle "Où iras-tu Sam Lee Wong?" Au delà de la présentation d'une vie si "solitaire qu'elle apparaît insolite"[8] se déroule le drame fondamentale de l'existence, conserver l'unité d'un Moi déjà constitué par un langage et un milieu culturel autres. Fondamentale à cette analyse est la notion que tout déplacement, y compris sa forme extrême, l'exil, apporte une aliénation culturelle et linguistique inévitable qui menace profondément le sujet. "Effacé et presque sans identité, Sam Lee Wong passera inaperçu au milieu de ces gens venus pourtant de tous les horizons, qui ne s'apercevront de son existence que la veille du jour où il sera forcé de partir, chassé par le 'progrès' que connaît le petit village."[9] Le fait tout simplement de concevoir Sam Lee Wong comme objet du regard (sujet perçu), comme le fait Thuong Vuong-Riddick dans son résumé de l'intrigue, fait disparaître la problématique de l'immigrant ressentant profondément son aliénation.

L'intrigue simplifiée en masque une autre vécue à l'intérieur de l'être et rendue manifeste par des stratégies discursives repérables qui font ressortir certains aspects du sujet aliéné. Parmi celles-ci comptons le choix d'un narrateur omniscient et donc l'effacement quasi-total de la conscience du sujet de l'énonciation (c'est-à-dire du locuteur) qui donnent à l'exposition une qualité de transparence par laquelle l'auteur et le lecteur semblent partager la même vision et la même connaissance du monde. Cependant, une lecture capable de distinguer le niveau contextuel de celui du discours arrive à construire une histoire différente, dans sa profondeur psychologique, de l'exil vécu par Sam Lee Wong. A cette fin, nous rejetons au départ la notion de l'auteur comme autorité suprême sur le récit, pour adopter une méthode qui privilégie la lecture; celle-ci accepte au départ que le narrateur ne peut jamais être objectif, qu'en racontant il révèle non "seulement sa manière individuelle et typique de penser, de sentir, de parler, mais avant tout sa manière de voir et de représenter: en cela est sa destination directe en tant que narrateur rem-

plaçant l'auteur."[10] Les stratégies discursives d'opposition, d'exclusion et de contrôle, pas nécessairement immédiatement accessibles au lecteur, peuvent révéler des tendances contraires ou complémentaires au premier niveau d'interprétation. Pour arriver à l'approfondissement de l'expérience de l'immigrant Sam Lee Wong, il conviendra d'étudier la nouvelle à partir de deux aspects en particulier: d'abord celui de l'acte d'énonciation pour déduire le rapport du locuteur (narrateur) à son sujet, puis celui des isotopies (ou paradigmes) qui pourraient dégager les mystères de la conscience du sujet constitué. Pour l'étude de ce dernier, nous aurons recours à quelques notions lacaniennes de la phase du miroir dans la construction du sujet. Ces notions, tirées de la psychanalyse, nous permettront d'interpréter, à partir de marqueurs discursifs, le rapport entre l'être et sa réalité.[11]

LA PREMIÈRE STRATÉGIE DISCURSIVE, le choix d'un narrateur omniscient donc occulté par l'acte d'énonciation du locuteur, permet à celui-ci de dominer et de contrôler la vision du lecteur en lui communiquant des connaissances privilégiées. Le passé et la conscience de Sam Lee Wong lui sont facilement accessibles comme le seront l'histoire et les tendances de colonisation dans la prairie canadienne. Cependant, bien qu'y domine cet accès privilégié, il y a de nombreuses variantes dans l'acte d'énonciation du narrateur, parmi lesquelles figure mais de façon masquée la perspective innocente de Sam Lee Wong, le sujet de l'énoncé.[12] Les stratégies adoptées par le narrateur dans le premier paragraphe de la nouvelle révèlent la variété de perspectives accessibles au lecteur. Ces stratégies sont cernées ci-dessous à l'aide des écrits de Benveniste, de Genette et de Bakhtine qui soulignent les traits distinctifs des trois états de discours et les rapports ainsi révélés entre sujet et objet de l'énonciation.[13]

1e phrase: "Sa vie avait-elle pris naissance entre des collines?" Il s'agit d'une phrase interrogative qui suppose un manque de certitude de la part du narrateur. Dans sa forme de discours indirect libre,[14] l'énonciation révèle à la fois une connaissance privilégiée de réflexion et le fait que cette réflexion se fait au centre de la conscience de Sam Lee Wong. Cette stratégie discursive ambivalente masque le contrôle qu'exerce le narrateur sur le récit et présente en situation liminaire un des mystères fondamentaux de la conscience de Sam Lee Wong.

2e phrase: "Il croyait parfois en retrouver le contour en lui-même, intime comme son souffle." Le narrateur reprend sa domination sur le discours tout en formulant une conjecture ("croyait parfois") non une certitude; il établit une perspective qui privilégie l'omniscience et le pouvoir d'analyse.

3e phrase: "Alors il penchait la tête pour mieux les voir dans le recueillement de la mémoire." Sam Lee Wong est l'objet du regard tout en demeurant distant du sujet percevant. Son geste extériorisé est remarqué pour sa valeur intérieure, celle-ci étant connue du narrateur omniscient.

4e phrase: "De vagues formes rondes, à moitié estompées, s'assemblaient sur une imprécise ligne d'horizon, puis se défaisaient." Le regard du narrateur passe de Sam Lee Wong aux collines sans établir pour le moment le rapport entre eux. Il s'agit d'une constatation de la chose perçue; toutefois chaque mot sera significatif dans le récit pour la place qu'il prendra dans une isotopie structurante.

5e phrase: "L'image lui venait-elle du souvenir de vraies collines très lointaines ou de quelque estampe qui avait frappé son imagination?" Cette deuxième interrogation marie la perspective du locuteur et celle du sujet de l'énoncé; elle soulève ainsi l'incertitude des deux consciences devant l'origine de l'image. Gabrielle Roy conserve ainsi la vraisemblance par l'interrogation et par le processus de découverte de soi, à la fois en logeant cette incertitude chez Sam Lee Wong et en permettant au narrateur de paraître ignorer la résolution possible. Cette stratégie établira les valeurs symboliques et paradoxales des collines qui traversent le récit.

6e phrase: "En un sens elles étaient pourtant plus réelles que ne l'avait jamais été à ses yeux sa propre existence, . . . au milieu du flot humain, une petite voix à peine distincte qui osait dire de lui-même: Moi." Cette déclaration a la valeur d'une analyse psychologique. Le locuteur reprend, après la deuxième interrogation, son autorité narrative et discursive. C'est cette autorité qui énonce la notion du Moi comme étant l'élément en jeu, l'objet de la quête entreprise par le sujet de l'énoncé, Sam Lee Wong. Tout en affirmant sa domination sur la narration, le narrateur indique que sa réelle entreprise est la (re)présentation de la profondeur psychologique.

Cette fluctuation dans l'acte d'énonciation crée l'illusion non seulement que la conscience de Sam Lee Wong est parfois au centre du discours mais que son exploration est simultanée à celui-là. Dès la phrase liminaire, l'incertitude est marquée par le discours indirect libre, laissant paraître que le narrateur énonce les pensées pour Sam Lee Wong sans toutefois exercer pleinement son autorité sur la narration. L'emploi des temps narratifs renforce cette impression de contrôle en créant une distance temporelle insurmontable et une distance spatiale entre le sujet percevant et l'objet perçu. Cette distance est d'autant plus confirmée par les déic-

tiques (pronoms personnels et possessifs) utilisés pour identifier le sujet de l'énoncé, et qui diffèrent au troisième paragraphe le moment où le protagoniste est enfin nommé.[15] En retardant ainsi l'acte de donner au personnage principal de son récit un nom, le narrateur se fait complice de la crise d'identité de Sam Lee Wong. L'effet produit par la répétition des instances pronominales à la troisième personne, qui expriment selon Benveniste la "non-personne" au niveau discursif,[16] situe la conscience d'identité, les questions d'appartenance et de non-appartenance au centre de l'intrigue. Il est sans doute significatif que cet acte de nommer Sam Lee Wong a lieu juste avant sa décision d'émigrer afin d'échapper à la foule encombrante en Chine. Etre nommé ici constitue la première étape dans son individuation.

Si l'acte d'énonciation révèle une situation où le sujet de l'énoncé est soumis au regard et à la voix du locuteur, de même la situation communicationnelle trahit l'exclusion sociale de Sam Lee Wong parmi une société d'immigrants. Le rapport locuteur-allocutaire (en narratologie souvent nommés narrateur-narrataire) n'est pas cependant uniforme et constant; le narrateur omniscient adresse souvent un allocutaire identifiable seulement par le pronom collectif "on." Nous constatons les variantes suivantes dans l'usage de ce pronom:

1. un groupe collectif indéterminé qui ne semble exclure personne: "un horizon si éloigné, si seul, si poignant, qu'on en avait encore et encore le coeur saisi" (67). En général, il s'agit de constatations de nature impersonnelle.

2. un groupe qui exclut implicitement Sam Lee Wong: "—Choisis! lui disait-on" (64). Le pronom "on" désigne les membres de la société qui en assurent son bon fonctionnement et est en opposition au pronom "lui," marquant ainsi l'exclusion de Sam du groupe social sans toutefois le nommer. Il est à remarquer que l'ami de Sam Lee Wong, le basque Smouillya, est également exclu par cette stratégie; à son sujet le locuteur observe ". . . par peur, si on lui disait seulement boujour, qu'il ne vous retienne par la manche" (78). Les pronoms collectifs (on/vous) indiquent implicitement l'unanimité de l'opinion publique qui suppose la raison de son côté. Une rare tentative explicite de la part du locuteur de persuader l'allocutaire, et donc indirectement le lecteur, appartient à cette même structure: "Il est pénible, il faut en convenir (il faut que nous en convenions), en écoutant quelqu'un qui vous raconte . . ." (78).

3. un groupe qui exclut explicitement Sam Lee Wong: "C'est plutôt d'un Chinois n'ayant pas toujours le sourire que l'on eût été choqué" (71-72). Dans toutes sociétés fermées le nouveau venu devient l'objet du regard des autres et continue à incarner ses caractéristiques d'origine, c'est-à-dire, tout ce qui en fait un "archétype culturel." L'objet perçu se situe donc en opposition au sujet qui

perçoit, celui-ci retenant non seulement le pouvoir idéologique mais le contrôle discursif (on = locuteur + allocutaire). L'attitude du locuteur envers l'objet de son discours, devenant ainsi clairement énoncée, rend explicites les stratégies implicites de dissuasion. Démasquer la complicité supposée entre le locuteur et l'allocutaire au niveau discursif, c'est mettre en lumière l'appareil idéologique qui fonctionne pour identifier et marginaliser un groupe au niveau de l'histoire.

De même, l'exclusion prônée de Smouillya, de par sa situation analogique à celle de Sam Lee Wong, voudrait rendre acceptable au lecteur l'exclusion du restaurateur chinois. Quand Sam Lee Wong est compris parmi les villageois, une énonciation comme la suivante fait ressortir la marginalisation sociale du restaurateur: "Comme tout le monde, Sam Lee Wong espérait la pluie" (98); tout en faisant semblant d'inclure Sam le locuteur l'exclut du groupe "tout le monde." Les noms collectifs qui servent à désigner les habitants d'Horizon dans la description de la fête d'adieu sont à remarquer. Rares sont les personnages nommés de leur nom; ils sont plutôt désignés par leur fonction sociale d'autorité (le maire, le curé) ou par les appellations collectives "tout le monde" ou "les gens," "les uns et les autres" ou encore "quelques-uns." Non seulement les habitants sont-ils ainsi à l'abri de toute responsabilité personnelle de discrimination mais l'exclusion de Sam Lee Wong est masquée par un air de bonne volonté et de tolérance multiculturelle. Il est marginalisé par le discours même qui établit une ligne invisible et infranchissable entre Moi/Eux. Ne confondons pas, cependant, cette séparation sociale discriminatoire avec la distinction en psychanalyse lacanienne Moi/Autre, fondamentale à la constitution du sujet.

Si l'appareil utilisé par la société pour nommer l'être est également révélateur, les conventions qui permettent aux habitants de nommer Sam "Charlie" (105), une pratique injustifiable selon lui et qui le prive de son nom propre, signalent davantage son exclusion des habitants de Horizon pour l'identifier à tous les Chinois ainsi nommés et lui enlever son identité viscérale. Plus surprenant pour le lecteur est l'emploi péjoratif du mot "Chink" dans le discours du locuteur: "Jim Farrell apostropha directement le Chink" (86). Attribuable sans doute à Farrell au niveau événementiel, car à la page précédente on trouve la sanction du locuteur d'un tel usage ("Il s'en vint essayer la cuisine du 'Chink' comme il l'appelait" [85]), cette appellation choque quand elle glisse trop facilement dans le discours du narrateur et, on pourrait dire, attire davantage l'attention à la dérision collective; ce mépris étant d'autant plus blessant qu'il est sanctionné inconsciemment par toute une société d'immigrants qui s'entend pour exclure un des leurs. Ne soyons pas dupe. La fête d'adieu ne réussit pas à effacer cette division: quand on peut se féliciter de sa largesse d'esprit et de tolérance, de l'harmonie atteinte dans une société hétérogène — "Fêter un Oriental, c'était en quelque sorte témoigner d'un sens cosmopolite rare, c'était élargir considérablement les frontières de Horizon" (117) — c'est reconnaître cette présence extraordinaire et différente. Plus frappante encore parce

qu'insidieuse est la stratégie discursive qui cache cette exclusion; en s'immisçant dans les recoins les plus obscurs du récit, elle tente davantage d'aligner le lecteur du côté d'une société qui exclut Sam Lee Wong et les siens. Dans un premier temps, c'est de là que surgit la résistance du lecteur qui l'oblige à décoder les paradigmes utilisés pour représenter l'être viscéral de l'immigrant.

Les stratégies opérationnelles pour exclure consciemment ou inconsciemment Sam Lee Wong de la communauté dans laquelle il oeuvre patiemment et silencieusement pendant vingt-cinq ans sont en conflit avec le désir d'appartenance énoncé explicitement à travers la conscience rapportée de Sam Lee Wong et, comme nous le verrons, à travers un désir vague transposé sur les choses. Comment sont exprimés ce désir et les forces qui articulent son échec? Personne ne pourrait nier que la vie de Sam Lee Wong dans la prairie canadienne est une vie tragique. Au niveau événementiel la nouvelle évoque, à partir de ce modèle, les nombreuses vies tragiquement solitaires de ces fils d'Asie contre l'invasion desquels le gouvernement canadien a senti le besoin de se protéger en imposant une taxe discriminatoire.[17] Contre une politique d'exclusion explicite, historiquement documentée, joue une intrigue beaucoup plus subtile, à fortes connotations humanistes. Cette intrigue, construite à partir de la reconnaissance de tendances binaires, se résume ainsi: la quête infatigable car fondamentale à l'être pour retenir ou refaire son identité dans un milieu qui lui est hostile. Cette intrigue centrée sur le sujet joue en opposition à une pulsion sociale implicite d'exclure Sam Lee Wong de cette société. C'est la tension entre ces deux tendances qui fixe le désir au centre de l'intrigue.

Afin de démontrer le fonctionnement complexe de cette tension, nous aurons recours à certaines notions avancées par Jacques Lacan sur la constitution du sujet, plus précisément celle de l'étape du miroir, utile pour décoder les désirs inconscients de Sam Lee Wong, tels qu'ils sont codés dans la nouvelle, ainsi que le rapport Moi/Autre. Ce n'est pas notre intention ici de faire l'exposé de la théorie lacanienne de la construction du sujet,[18] mais de nous limiter à quelques idées bien établies dans la théorie pour faire ressortir ces aspects de la crise psychologique de Sam Lee Wong. Pour Lacan, l'étape du miroir, précédée par l'angoisse du corps morcelé, fonctionne pour "mettre fin à cette dispersion panique, en intégrant l'enfant dans une dialectique qui le constituera comme sujet."[19] Il s'agit dit Lacan de trois étapes consécutives: se voyant dans le miroir l'enfant prend sa réflexion comme étant un être réel et tente de le toucher; deuxièmement, il comprend que l'autre du miroir n'est qu'une réflexion, puis en troisième lieu, il reconnaît que la réflexion est son image. Au lieu de valoriser la conception traditionnelle du miroir qui reflète un moi déjà constitué et produit une ressemblance secondaire mais fidèle,[20] Lacan

avance que la phase du miroir est le moment de la construction du sujet, c'est-à-dire, ce moment où l'enfant se voit comme disctinct de ce qui lui est extérieur;[21] commence dès lors l'importance du rapport Moi/Autre. Cette expérience, c'est l'identification. Cet ordre de l'imaginaire devance nécessairement l'ordre du symbolique où le sujet accède au langage; où il entre dans un rapport discursif Je/tu/il et peut ainsi se présenter comme sujet dans son propre discours. Sur ce plan, la théorie du discours élaborée par Emile Benveniste est indispensable à l'étude du modèle lacanien.[22] Ainsi conçue la construction du sujet, l'expérience de l'immigrant, le déplacement subit par lui, ne peut être entendue que comme crise atteignant le plus profond de l'être et devenant problématique dans son identification; le sujet ayant été structuré par un monde différent de celui où il cherche à s'intégrer, la conscience de marginalisation est inévitable et presque insurmontable.

Il est sans doute significatif que Sam Lee Wong traverse les moments importants de cette trajectoire primordiale et que le paragraphe liminaire de la nouvelle annonce le réveil à la conscience. Les isotopies récupérables selon la dualité Moi/Autre annoncent la division fondamentale de l'être autour de laquelle se regroupent dès le premier paragraphe d'autres isotopies qui auraient comme fonction de donner à cette première des dimensions spatiales. Nous remarquons surtout celles de centre / linéarité et de convergence / éclatement.

MOI / CENTRE / CONVERGENCE	AUTRE / LINEARITE / ECLATEMENT
entre	
le contour en	
intime	
mémoire	
formes rondes	une ligne . . . d'horizon
s'assemblaient	se défaisaient
au sein de	
une face	une infinité de face
une face seulement	la mer des foules
au milieu . . . une petite voix	
MOI	flot humain

En quittant la Chine et traversant la mer, Sam Lee Wong se sépare de la mère patrie et met au risque la constitution de lui-même comme sujet.

Dans cette situation inquiétante, une situation de non-plaisir, s'établit le pattern du manque qu'il tentera inconsciemment de combler de deux façons classiques: d'abord en se fixant un prototype inconscient (appelé *imago* par Lacan) pour représenter l'image de soi; puis en cherchant dans le nourrissage symbolique un équivalent émotif pour assouvir le manque du sein de la mère. L'image toujours

imprécise des collines constitue l'*imago* dont la fonction est "d'établir une relation de l'organisme à sa réalité."[23] Leur absence provoque l'effet de manque analogue à celui du regard dans le miroir qui ne rencontre que le tain. Arrivé à Vancouver, Sam Lee Wong cherche désespérément l'image qui lui confirmera son existence: "Il cherchait . . . les collines à peine saisissables du fond de son souvenir. Elles seules parvenaient à lui conserver une sorte d'identité et le sentiment que, projeté au Canada, il était encore un peu Sam Lee Wong" (65). Ainsi tient-il à son identité fragile en s'associant à l'image de son passé, une image qui reflète ce que Teresa de Lauretis appelle "*configurations of subjectivity*," c'est-à-dire, les formes par lesquelles les expériences, les émotions et les souvenirs sont organisés pour construire l'image qu'on a de soi et des autres.[24] Gabrielle Roy se sert des collines comme la configuration extérieure qui révèle l'être viscéral: "C'est alors pourtant que Sam Lee Wong . . . saisit un peu mieux le fil ténu qui le reliait aux vieilles collines du fond de sa mémoire" (62). Tant qu'il peut se rapprocher d'elles sans nécessairement les toucher, Sam est confiant d'être lui-même. Par la seule puissance du regard, les contours lui confirment son identité aussi sûrement que la garantirait sa réflexion dans le miroir. L'acte réciproque d'inscription nous suggère l'importance signifiante de ce pattern: comme Sam inscrit par deux fois son nom sur la vitre du restaurant, affirmant ainsi son existence, de même les collines tracent "la nette découpure de leur profil sur le bleu un peu moins accentué du ciel" (74).

Si les collines renvoient à Sam l'image de lui-même comme confirmation de son identité, la symbolique du nourrissage, de son côté, désigne le manque inconscient.[25] Les premiers paragraphes invitent le lecteur à faire le rapprochement entre la trajectoire de Sam Lee Wong et une naissance: par le lexique ("grain d'humanité," "Sa vie avait-elle pris naissance entre des collines?"), par les métaphores pour traduire l'attachement primordial à la mère ("Il croyait parfois en retrouver le contour en lui-même, intime comme son souffle") et la rupture du sein de la mère ("souvenir de vraies collines"), enfin par l'énonciation explicite du sujet comme conscience déjà constituée ("Moi"). Les références à la consommation sont trop nombreuses pour passer inaperçues: Sam est "le descendant des générations affamées" (69); en voyant les hautes montagnes de Vancouver il imagine "un bol de riz offert" (63); en Saskatchewan il s'installe dans une ancienne grainerie (72); il ouvre un restaurant et nourrit les autres; et enfin, quand il doit s'installer ailleurs, il choisit "Sweet Clover," nom qui, désignant le fourrage pour bétail, complète l'isotopie de nourrissage. Associée à ce nom, l'expression anglaise "to be in clover" annonce une amélioration, sinon l'atteinte du plaisir anticipé.

Bien que le paragraphe liminaire dessine cette trajectoire essentielle pour tout individu, les événements qui suivent brouillent passablement cette structure essentiellement narrative. Deux facteurs entrent en jeu: d'une part, il s'agit d'un texte de fiction et non d'un cas de psychanalyse; et d'autre part, l'expérience d'émigration interrompt et ralentit la quête d'identification par l'aliénation linguistique et cul-

turelle qu'elle apporte. Du moment où il met pied sur le territoire canadien, Sam Lee Wong perd l'image du monde clairement dessinée pour lui antérieurement. Le regard confus tâchant d'enrégistrer les effets spéculaires est introduit dès les premiers paragraphes. Par exemple, lors de la traversée, Sam Lee Wong croit apercevoir la réflexion sur l'eau d'un "petit garçon aux joues rebondies" (62) qu'il prend pour un être réel sortant de son passé. Cette image de la division de l'être (Moi-Autre) est notamment suivie de toutes une série de syntagmes qui servent à nier l'identification de Sam Lee Wong comme individu, comme unité distincte: "un autre fils d'Orient," "les immigrés Chinois," "aux petits hommes jaunes" (63), "trouver à leurs arrivants d'Asie un emploi toujours le même" (64). Devant l'impossibilité de se définir ("il avait éprouvé l'impression de n'être plus vraiment personne" [65]), il s'accroche à ses fidèles collines: "Les paupières de Sam Lee Wong battirent comme s'il s'était entendu appeler doucement par son nom" (65).

Ses manques de connaissances du pays dans lequel il descend lui cachent les signifiants mêmes. D'abord incapable de comprendre la différence entre être et paraître, le restaurateur devient surtout un homme tâchant de cerner et de comprende par le regard: "Tout ici paraissait vide. Avec le temps, Sam Lee Wong devait se faire à l'idée d'un village englouti dans le silence à en paraître déserté" (71). Il se trouve face à face avec une culture, un langage, des paysages qui n'ont pas participé à la construction de son Moi: "Sam Lee Wong moins que jamais semblait s'appartenir" (68); "Sam Lee Wong . . . eût l'air d'un être humain arrivé ici comme par un tour de passe-passe" (68). A partir de son arrivée à Horizon, Sam scrute son entourage afin d'identifier quelques signifiants reconnaissables. C'est alors que les collines prennent une importance si grande qu'elles seules lui fournissent un asile contre le vide, cette terrible "plaine qui continuait, sans un pli, sans une ondulation" (69). Nombreuses sont les analyses de l'impact du paysage des prairies sur la conscience des immigrants qui rencontrent pour la première fois un tel étendu désert.[26] Gabrielle Roy ne semble pas vraiment accentuer l'aliénation extérieure provenant d'un tel paysage. Si l'on peut dire, le monde horizontal, silencieux que rencontre Sam à Horizon est essentiel à une plus profonde connaissance de soi; ainsi les collines resteront toujours à l'horizon visible pour Sam de la porte de son café. Le regard devient alors particulièrement important dans la signification de cet espace.

CE REGARD EST UN des marqueurs les plus puissants de son besoin d'appartenance. A partir du second chapitre, Sam Lee Wong est présenté maintes fois examinant avidement mais discrètement son entourage: "Il contemplait les espaces qui l'enveloppaient" (68), "il marchait lentement, sans bruit, en regardant tout autour de lui mais à coups d'oeil furtifs, comme s'il n'eût rien encore

osé s'approprier d'un regard entier" (68), "il se mit à chercher pour de bon ce qu'il espérait" (70). Egalement craintif devant le regard de l'autre, Sam Lee Wong "par discrétion s'effaçait davantage si possible et finissait par passer inaperçu chez lui" (86). Solitaire et contemplatif, il vient à prendre l'apparence des collines, et cet autre lui-même: à mesure qu'il prend conscience de celles-ci comme une "idée de vieillesse infinie, de passé profond" (102), lui-même "était devenu très maigre, tout à fait sec" (100), et prenait "la forme des choses soumises et usées par le temps" (102). Même après vingt-cinq années de vie à Horizon, Sam Lee Wong n'a toujours pas pu construire un Moi en harmonie avec la plaine canadienne. Le progrès, la soudaine prospérité, menace l'équilibre fragile qu'il a pu conserver: il "regarda avec des yeux vides devant lui comme pour faire jaillir quelque chose à lui, une idée, une image tout au moins qui le rattacherait à sa propre personne" (105-6). En perdant sa matérialité, Sam témoigne que la constitution de soi comme sujet est un processus qui dure toute une vie.

Si Sam examine avidement son entourage, ceux qui l'habitent le scrutent à leur tour avec autant de prudence. Réticents de laisser voir la curiosité qu'ils ressentent envers cet étranger, les habitants signalent leur conscience de différence, une conscience qui ne sera jamais surmontée. Ces regards réciproques jouent un rôle important au niveau événementiel. En décidant où situer son restaurant, Sam opte pour une "des masures désertes," celle "munie d'une extraordinaire vitre prenant bien une moitié de la façade" (72). Analogue à l'appareil du miroir, cette vitre encadrante permettra à la fois aux habitants de percevoir Sam Lee Wong et de se percevoir eux-mêmes, incarnant ainsi une des fonctions de Sam dans le village. Récemment arrivé,

> il colla son mince visage à une fenêtre d'une maison particulièrement inanimée. Les mains pressées au bord des yeux pour intercepter la lumière et mieux distinguer à l'intérieur, il la fouillait du regard, lorsque, à sa profonde stupéfaction, il rencontra un regard le fixant avec une surprise égale à la sienne, peut-être même de l'indignation. Il recula d'instinct, puis avança de nouveau le visage pour offrir en guise d'excuse, à la vitre sombre ou au regard stupéfait, un immense sourire très humble. (71)

Cette réflection, qui suggère que l'autre perçu est un autre lui-même et que cet autre lui rend l'image de son désir d'appartenance, sert à Sam à se situer avec acuité dans ce monde qui l'observe au lieu de l'accueillir. Se voyant différent grâce au regard stupéfait des autres, il se forge un moyen de communication (appelons-le un pré-langage) qui s'intégrera à son identité — le sourire: "Or ce sourire allait maintenant devenir une partie de Sam Lee Wong et paraître à tout propos sur son visage triste. En lieu et place de langage? Parce qu'il ne savait autrement se faire comprendre?" (71). Par cette interrogation, Roy nous mène à créer une équivalence entre le sourire et le discours de Sam; mais cette façon indéterminée de focaliser sur le désir de Sam et sa maladresse brouille l'interdiction à sa réalisation.

La fonction de Smouillya, le vieux basque solitaire et dépossédé dans son pays adoptif, a également une valeur spéculaire significative mais opposée à celle des habitants de Horizon. Incompris par les autres, les deux immigrants Sam et Smouillya se complètent, chacun remplissant les lacunes chez l'autre. De sa part "dès son premier jour dans les affaires, Sam Lee Wong se découvrit une habileté suprême à lire sur les visages et dans les gestes des hommes" (79). Cette habileté ne pourrait être qu'un effet de miroir. Ne projetant aucune identité dominante, Sam peut offrir à son interlocuteur la réflexion de son propre désir: "Il (Smouillya) était écouté dans un silence patient, il n'y avait à lire dans l'oeil de son interlocuteur le désir ni de s'enfuir ni de se boucher les oreilles" (80). Smouillya de sa part possède le logos qui manque à Sam. Par sa plume, Smouillya, lui-même orateur incompris, devient l'agent de la parole de Sam.

Privé du logos par son déplacement et par son aliénation, Sam Lee Wong arrive à communiquer par d'autres moyens, ceux-ci sanctionnés bien sûr par la société. Les rares instances de discours direct transmettant les paroles de Sam révèlent également les contraintes imposées à son intégration. D'une part, elles annoncent une connaissance élémentaire de la langue, grammaticalement incorrecte ("Toi pas t'en souvenir?" [90]), dite typique des immigrants. Pour le différencier davantage, l'immigrant est pourvu d'un modèle de discours simplifié au maximum, réduisant ses tentatives d'expression à une imitation élémentaire. Sam cependant n'est pas dupe; il perçoit cette stratégie chez ses interlocuteurs. Si l'apprentissage d'une langue se fait par mimétisme, il est évident qu'en lui donnant un modèle faux on ne peut s'attendre à la maîtrise parfaite de la langue:

> — Toi, Chinois, bien chanceux au fond de n'avoir pas femme!
>
> Sans posséder encore un vocabulaire étendu, Sam Lee Wong serait parvenu à s'exprimer convenablement, si on l'y avait un peu aidé. Il apprenait vite. Mais on continuait de lui parler comme à un déficient. Et lui, par politesse, pour ne pas faire honte à ceux qui lui parlaient ainsi, répondait à peu près sur le même ton. . . .
>
> — Oui, Wong chanceux pas femme! acquiesça la cafetier. (86)

L'imitation dont il est question ici est une tactique par laquelle un membre marginalisé peut sembler consentir à la place inférieure qui lui est accordée. C'est le cas de Sam dans cette scène où le regard pénétrant de l'inspecteur préfigure la fermeture de son commerce: "Sam Lee Wong l'accueillit humblement, sans trop de crainte cependant. D'instinct, il reprit son anglais le plus bas. — You make . . . trip . . . good?" (106). Au niveau discursif, cette imitation fait ressortir précisément les stéréotypes pour les soumettre à l'examen du lecteur. Sans avoir à sermonner, Gabrielle Roy expose cette conduite, fondée, nous le savons, sur une réalité. Si nous adoptons la perspective que le langage est le seul moyen pour l'être d'accéder au monde, les conséquences sont en réalité très graves pour les immigrants. Il nous semble que le choc de se retrouver dans un pays nouveau exigeant l'apprentissage d'une nouvelle langue, de nouvelles coutumes, expériences vécues par de nombreux

groupes même jusqu'à nos jours, suffit pour provoquer sinon la perte de soi-même du moins une grande confusion devant une identité constituée dans et par une réalité autre. Empruntant les paroles de Lacan sur les révolutions intellectuelles, Catherine Belsey propose qu'avec tout changement linguistique, "toucher si peu que ce soit à la relation de l'homme au signifiant, . . . on change le cours de son histoire en modifiant les amarres de son être."[27] Avant de faire la connaissance de Smouillya, Sam n'a pas d'amarres autre que les collines auxquelles il peut ancrer son être.

Blessé sinon vaincu, Sam Lee Wong protège le plus profond de lui-même contre l'invasion mais il ne peut se défendre contre l'inattendu. Le recoin où dort Sam, symboliquement le seul lieu qui lui appartient entièrement, est enfin envahi par un inspecteur et prononcé insuffisant. Ne lui laissant aucun refuge contre le monde (107), cette invasion l'oblige à franchir le seuil de la porte de son café et de s'exposer au regard des gens qui l'avaient oublié: "Il ne rencontra d'abord personne qu'il connaissait ou qui le reconnaissait" (109). Cette incapacité de le reconnaître confirme d'une part le manque d'identité propre à Sam Lee Wong; pour les villageois, son café est son identité entière. Du moment où il le quitte, il devient invisible. Ironiquement, c'est à la fête d'adieu où le village lui présente une montre en or gravée de son nom (118) qu'il est enfin nommé par eux et donc reconnu comme individu. Si la nouvelle se termine par Sam allant s'installer dans un autre village de l'ouest, ne croyons pas que Sam est *condamné* à répéter son passé solitaire; non seulement le désire-t-il, il le cherche comme il chercherait sa réflexion dans le miroir:

> il . . . entra dans une plaine si curieusement pareille à celle du versant opposé que Sam Lee Wong cligna des paupières, comme dans le doute de ce qu'il voyait. Même immensité rase. Même faible pointillé des piquets de clôture. . . . Sam Lee Wong scrutait. . . . Il guettait. . . . Il espérait un village. (126-27)

A la fin du récit, il redouble son lien avec les collines et son voeu de retourner en Chine. Cependant, dans ce cas, il connaît ses options; à l'intérieur de limites que lui-même ne questionne pas, il donne l'impression de faire ses choix, de se dessiner une vie, un destin. ("Il se concentra. Il se grava le mot dans l'esprit avec soin, avec application, comme un renseignement qu'il fallait se garder d'égarer, ou d'oublier de faire parvenir, s'il voulait arriver . . ." [130].) Le désir, se rapprocher de la représentation idéale — les collines — est constant, irréalisable, toujours hors d'atteinte mais nécessaire. Seule leur apparence à l'horizon rappelle à Sam Lee Wong qui il est et d'où il vient, et surtout qu'il participe toujours au long processus d'identification.

Comme nous avons pu le constater par l'étude de l'attitude du narrateur envers son sujet, Sam Lee Wong, et ensuite par l'approfondissement du modèle de la construction du sujet, la nouvelle "Où iras-tu Sam Lee Wong?" déploie un réseau

d'oppositions et d'exclusions qui offre au lecteur une intrigue à tendance humaniste de l'être déplacé. Une tension constante bien qu'implicite joue entre les stratégies d'exclusion et le désir de Sam Lee Wong d'appartenir, surtout de s'appartenir à lui-même. A partir de l'histoire d'un immigrant, comme le sont toutes les nouvelles du recueil *Un jardin au bout du monde*, Roy nous permet de connaître l'être fragile, dépossédé mais animé par le besoin de refaire sa vie. La sagesse et le courage qui en ressortent sont loin de faire de Sam un personnage tragique; nous le dirions plutôt héroique. Car le seul drame de conséquence qui joue ici est celui à l'intérieur de Sam et c'est là où il est victorieux. En faisant ressortir l'importance psychologique de ce drame de déplacement, nous avons pu proposer une lecture de ce récit qui reconfirme l'art de Gabrielle Roy et la richesse inépuisable de ses textes.

NOTES

[1] (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1984), 16.

[2] Nicole Bourbonnais, "La Symbolique de l'espace dans les récits de Gabrielle Roy," *Voix et Images*, 7:2 (1982), 367-69.

[3] Bourbonnais, 367-68, et François Ricard, *La Littérature contre elle-même* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1985), 113.

[4] (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1975). Toute pagination se rapportant à une citation ou à une référence de ce texte paraîtra entre parenthèses dans l'article même.

[5] Citons notamment les romans suivants: *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925), *Fruits of the Earth* (1933) et *The Master of the Mill* (1944).

[6] Il nous semble que c'est essentiellement ce à quoi Jean-Guy Hudon fait allusion quant il écrit au sujet des nouvelles d'*Un jardin au bout du monde*: "Tout converge vers la description de l'intériorité d'individus particuliers aux prises avec l'existence dans un lieu d'adoption éloigné où ils peinent pour survivre." Hudon ne suggère pas cependant comment cette intériorité est rendue manifeste, ds *Dictionnaire des oeuvres littéraires du Québec: Tome V, 1970-1975*, éd. Maurice Lemire (Montréal: Fides, 1987), 915.

[7] Ricard, 113.

[8] Thuong Vuong-Riddick, "Aspects du monde de Gabrielle Roy," *Lettres québécoises*, 7 (août-sept., 1977), 49.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] M. Bakhtine, *Problèmes de la poétique de Dostoievski* (Lausanne: Editions de l'Age de l'Homme, 1970), 221.

[11] Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), 96.

[12] Les observations d'Ellen Reisman Babby au sujet d'un autre texte de Gabrielle Roy, "Le Téléphone," sont très à propos: "The vocal interventions of this ambivalent narrator, who adopts *both* the innocence of the characters and the 'knowledge' of the reader, renders the conflict between their visions more complex," ds *The Play of Language and Spectacle: A Structural Reading of Selected Texts by Gabrielle Roy* (Toronto: ECW, 1985), 84.

[13] Les trois états de discours généralement reconnus sont: le discours narrativisé ou raconté, le discours transposé ou style indirect et le discours rapporté ou style direct.

Voir Emile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 258-60; Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 189-203; et Mikhail Bakhtine, *Le Marxisme et la philosophie du langage: essai d'application de la méthode sociologique en linguistique*, trad. Marina Yarguello (Paris: Seuil, 1977), 173-93.

[14] "C'est un discours qui se présente à première vue comme un style indirect (ce qui veut dire qu'il comporte les marques de temps et de personne correspondant à un discours de l'auteur) mais qui est pénétré, dans sa structure sémantique et syntaxique, par des propriétés de l'énonciation, donc du discours du personnage," ds Oswald Ducrot et Tzvetan Todorov, *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences du langage* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 387. Voir aussi Bakhtine, *Le Marxisme*, 194-220.

[15] Cette stratégie est d'une grande importance vu la signification qui peut émaner d'un nom: "Tout nom est toujours, a priori, un opérateur taxinomique du personnage, un opérateur de classement du personnage . . . qui renvoie à un archétype culturel," ds Philippe Hamon. *Le Personnel du roman: le système des personnages dans les Rougon-Macquart d'Emile Zola* (Genève: Droz, 1983), 111.

[16] Emile Benveniste, 228. Il met en question la légitimité de la troisième personne comme "personne": ". . . de la 3e personne, un prédicat est bien énoncé, seulement hors du 'je-tu'; cette forme est ainsi exceptée de la relation par laquelle 'je' et 'tu' se spécifient. Dès lors, la légitimité de cette forme comme 'personne' se trouve mise en question."

[17] La loi de 1885 pour restreindre et réglementer l'immigration chinoise au Canada obligeait chaque personne d'origine chinoise de verser "au port ou autre point d'entrée la somme de 50 piastres" (*Actes du Parlement de la Puissance du Canada*, 1885, Ch. 71, article 4, p. 215), et limitait le nombre selon le tonnage de chaque navire; la taxe avait été haussée jusqu'à $500 canadiens en 1903, une somme démesurée à l'époque. Voilà une des raisons principales pour lesquelles les Chinois laissaient souvent leur famille en Chine avec l'espoir de payer leur entrée au Canada plus tard. Les difficultés de s'établir et de s'intégrer étaient augmentées par les limitations imposées sur les occupations qui leur étaient permises: restaurateur, blanchisseur ou cultivateur (surtout les *market gardeners* de l'ouest canadien). Afin de terminer toute immigration de la Chine, le gouvernement canadien votait en 1923 une loi encore plus discriminatoire (La Loi concernant l'immigration chinoise, 1923). Les historiens nous disent que l'existence des Chinois sur les prairies au début du siècle était peu sûre, marginale et solitaire; que leur solitude était augmentée par le besoin de travailler inlassablement et par leur refus de maîtriser la langue du pays. Pour de plus amples renseignements voir Edgar Wickberg (éd.), *From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982); Howard Palmer, "Patterns of Immigration and Ethnic Settlement in Alberta: 1880-1920," ds *Peoples of Alberta: Portraits of Cultural Diversity*, éds. Howard et Tamara Palmer (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985), 1-27; Howard Palmer, "Anti-Oriental Sentiment in Alberta, 1880-1920," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 2:2 (1970), 31-57; et *Actes du Parlement de la Puissance du Canada*, 1885, Ch. 71, p. 215, et *Actes du Parlement de la Puissance du Canada*, 1923, Ch. 38, p. 319.

[18] Sources utiles: Jacques Lacan, "La Fonction du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je telle qu'elle nous est révélée dans l'expérience psychanalytique," 93-100 et "Propos sur la causalité psychique," 151-93, *Ecrits*; Jean-Michel Palmier, *Lacan* (Paris: Editions universitaires, 1972); Jane Gallop, *Reading Lacan* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985).

[19] Palmier, 23.

[20] Gallop, 38.

[21] Lacan, *Ecrits*, 95.

[22] Pp. 77-78 et 258-66. Emile Benveniste suggère comment cette constitution du sujet mène à l'identification avec l'autre par le moyen du langage: "La langue fournit l'instrument d'un discours où la personnalité du sujet se délivre et se crée, atteint l'autre et se fait reconnaitre de lui" (78). Voir Palmier, 22.

[23] Lacan, 96.

[24] *Feminist Studies / Critical Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1986), 5.

[25] Kaja Silverman explique ainsi le procédé au niveau de l'inconscient: "When confronted with unpleasure, the unconscious strives to establish a "perceptual identity" with a previous gratification" ds *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York et Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), 58.

[26] Pour une riche discussion de ce concept, nous suggérons les critiques suivants: Henry Kreisel, "The Prairie: A State of Mind," *Contexts of Canadian Criticism*, ed. Eli Mandel (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971), 254-66; Laurence Ricou, *Vertical Man / Horizontal World: Man and Landscape in Canadian Prairie Fiction* (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1973); et E. D. Blodgett, "Fictions of Ethnicity in Prairie Writing," ds *Configuration: Essays on the Canadian Literatures* (Toronto: ECW, 1982), 85-111. Voir aussi Marc Gagné, *Visages de Gabrielle Roy, l'oeuvre et l'écrivain* (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1973), 104-31.

[27] *Ecrits I* (Paris: Seuil 1966), 287; Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London and New York: Methuen, 1980), 132.

WALKING CANLIT IN INDIA

Frank Davey

1. My friend who tells me most of this story is not walking. He's riding in a taxi from the Bombay airport. Getting a taxi at the Bombay airport is complicated because of steps the government has taken for the taxi user's protection. On my first visit to Bombay many barefoot young taxi men surrounded my luggage. The person walking is a young woman, & she flags down my friend's taxi. The Bombay customs holds the Indian record for gold seizure. Now the young men are barred from the terminal building and the visitor is invited to book and pay for her taxi at a government counter located between the arrivals lounge and the luggage carousel. The

woman appears to be a friend of the driver. Posters
of glamorous Indians smoking cigarettes. The driver
says she lives along the route & would like to be
dropped off. Travel posters of Madurai temples and
Gulmarg snow. You are supposed to give the chit you
receive at the government counter to the taxi
driver. The young woman jumps into the back of the
taxi beside my friend. Many floodlights illuminating
the barren lands around the airport. The taxi driver
will ask for more money. Many young men help the
taxi driver start his taxi. Gracefully, the young
woman unwinds her saree and removes her undershirt.
The barefoot wallah in grey rags mopping the duty-
free store. She wants 200 rupees. Travel posters of
Jamalpur and Katmandu. The official taxi rate from
the airport to the city is 800 rupees. My friend
teaches theology or is unprepared or is Canadian or
is happily married or is afraid of variously ominous
venereal diseases. Petrol in India is very
expensive. The young woman embraces my friend and
accuses him gently of not liking Indian women.
Because of poor nutrition, most young Indian women
have the slim figures preferred by Western fashion.
The young woman chides my friend for being
unadventurous. Most visitors to India look eagerly
out their taxi windows for glimpses of authentic
Indian life. Poster of Indian movie stars embracing.
The young woman accuses my friend of being racist. A
police checkpoint at the airport ensures that all
departing taxis are driven by licensed drivers and
not by muggers and murderers. My friend manages to
look convincingly pious. Poster of glamorous
actress sucking a bottle of Campa-Cola. My friend
says he would like very much to return her embrace
but he is unfortunately on a pilgrimage to Benares.
Visitors arriving from outside India rarely have
small coins or bills for tipping taxi drivers and
their many assistants. The young woman modestly re-
covers her breasts. Posters of bright young men with
Ashok computers. The young woman bows several times
& says she is sorry. Poster of young man in western
suit impressing with his yellow scooter three young
women in silk sarees. Interesting odours flavour the
night breezes off the Arabian Sea. My friend reports

he was filled with warm feelings for this young woman, who bowed again and asked the driver let her off. The busy rhythms of a modern city. My friend really was going to Benares. A magenta glow on the skyline. A small moslem shrine on New Marine Lines. In Delhi he & I several times shared a taxi to the Chowdhuri market.

2. From my hotel I could walk to the S.N.D.T. Women's University. It was a minor street, with coconut vendors and amateur cobblers doing business on most of the sidewalk. *A life-like image of the goddess Holi draped in an expensive saree and jewels was burnt in the main square of the town.* I enjoyed reading the local newspapers. The worshippers at the little temple sat on mats on the sidewalk. I considered getting my shoes re-soled. The language boundaries of modern India have been re-drawn three times. The university was holding an internal conference on North American literature. At one corner there was always a white cow tethered across the sidewalk. Both times I spoke at the conference students asked questions about Margaret Laurence's views of marriage. The main building of S.N.D.T. features a rooftop garden. Holi is both a feast and a goddess. *Indian feminist Geeta Bhargava told her Delhi audience that mother is the natural parent, and hence she can bring up the children better.*

3. Ted Blodgett & I took walks in the Lodi Gardens. To imagine the Lodi Gardens imagine a landscaped North American garden path dotted with immense Mughal tombs. Each morning would-be athletes jog

slowly through the gardens. *Dreaded terorrist among eight killed.* The gardens came right up to our hotel windows. The bridge in the park was built in the 12th century. Unemployed young men sat in groups of 4 or 5 in the shade of the tombs. Every day at dawn we were awakened by the cries of a jogger who stopped to do Tai Chi. *Six brigands abscond with villagers' fortune.* My camera would sell for many rupees on the black market. Ted had a sore back and had difficulty moving when the young men marched 3 abreast past us on the narrow walks. *73 wedding guests die in bus horror in Uttar Pradesh.* A Hindi scholar we met in old Delhi told us all visitors to India should know a 'prime' Indian language. I got several splendid shots of the vultures that nest in garden's high trees. Soldiers posted at random through the gardens. *Groom survives but bride among the dead.* Ted occasionally walked in the garden alone. No one spoke to us, although Margaret Atwood was offered assistance by many young men when she took her daughter to the Delhi zoo.

4. *New-born baby devoured by pariah dog.* The conference on Canadian-Indian arts and society was held at the India-International Centre and was opened by a Deputy Minister. *A new born-baby was savaged and its torso eaten by a hungry pariah dog, a few minutes after being born at the Jhargram Subdivisional Hospital in Midnapore district of West Bengal.* The third speaker Vrinda Nabar, suggested that the kind of personal salvation sought by the narrator of *Surfacing* is irresponsible and selfish from an Indian perspective. *The mother, Ut Pal, was admitted to hospital on Tuesday night and felt labour pains around 4 a.m. on Wednesday morning, according to hospital sources.* Most Indian beers are named after birds. Margaret Atwood replied that in Canada concern for the environment is not considered personal and selfish. Golden Eagle, Kingfisher, Rosy

Pelican. *When Uttara drew the attention of the nurse on duty in her ward, she was told to walk to the labour room, as the trolley, to convey patients, was broken.* Anglo-Indian literature, that is British writing in India, went through three periods: confidence (Rudyard Kipling), doubt (E. M. Forster), and melancholy (Paul Scott). *Uttara gave birth while stumbling toward the labour room, the sources said.* The Amal milk co-op was opposed by the milk traders who had been cheating the farmers and by village headmen who had been taxing the traders. Margaret Atwood said that *Surfacing* was written in London England during an electricity and garbage strike. The nurse who was accompanying her failed to come to the patient's aid. The Amal milk co-op is protected by soldiers against sabotage. Vrinda Nabar said that "Indian Mutiny" is a term of British discourse. Margaret Atwood said that Canadian writers don't take place for granted. *Wan and helpless, Uttara, who had given birth to a boy, began to search for some cloth to wrap the baby in.* All the speakers stayed close to their allotted 30 minutes. All of Bombay is now provided with pasteurized fresh milk. *A female sweeper meanwhile picked up the baby and deposited the infant in a washbowl to clean off the afterbirth.* Margaret Atwood spoke of the 'haunted wilderness' elements in *Surfacing*, including the wendigo and the loup garou.

books in review

REAL & IDEAL

CAROLE GERSON, *A Purer Taste. The Writing and Reading of Fiction in English in Nineteenth-Century Canada.* University of Toronto Press, $30.00/16.95.

IF IT WERE NOT for Thomas Chandler Haliburton's *The Clockmaker*, William Kirby's *The Golden Dog*, Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush*, Catharine Parr Traill's *The Backwoods of Canada*, John Richardson's *Wacousta*, or some of Ralph Connor's historical romances, the discussion of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canadian writing at Canadian universities and universities abroad would almost be entirely restricted to lyrical texts, namely the most prominent examples of the narrative long poem. This is not least the result of canon formation which, as Carole Gerson points out in the preface to her study, "more accurately reflects the choice of a few professors and publishers than the actual situation of the last century." In contrast, earlier attempts to anthologize nineteenth-century Canadian fiction such as John Garvin's 'Master-Works of Canadian Authors' of 1922-23, disclose that the true predilections of the Canadian reading public rested with those innumerable works which were closely modelled on the stylistic and thematic patterns of romanticized historical fiction.

When Goldwin Smith delivered his now famous speech, "The Lamps of Fiction," at the Toronto Scott Centenary in 1871, Canada's cultural élite only too eagerly accepted the set of literary standards offered by the English-born journalist and critic. "Reality, Ideality, Impartiality, Impersonality, Purity, Humanity, and Chivalry" were hailed as aesthetic principles by a society that made strong attempts to foster its Puritan heritage and subsequently developed the same reluctance towards fiction which had impeded the rise of the novel in eighteenth-century England — apart from infra-structural deficiencies this reluctance also accounts for the lack of a serious dramatic tradition in the transatlantic Dominion. At the same time, Smith's catalogue not only guaranteed for literary continuity in post-Confederation Canada, but also successfully blocked the spread of social realism. For instance, as indicated in an abusive review of Emile Zola's *L'argent*, published by the reputed journal *The Week* in 1891, French naturalist fiction was not even considered an appropriate form of narrative (Duncan Campbell Scott stands out among the few Canadian writers who refrained from diatribes against Zola). Regardless of occasional exceptions like Ebenezer Clemo's forgotten *Canadian Homes; or, The Mystery Solved* (1858), the same holds true for the Dickensian city novel which had in Susanna Moodie one of its few prominent promoters. Instead, Victorian Canada's "conservative colonial culture" insisted on highly idealized forms of fiction with highly idealized moral implications, that is, the primary purpose of literature was to instruct "morally by presenting examples of proper conduct and pedagogically by providing useful information." 'Heroic' and 'romantic' were thus turned into synonyms while the historical novel was happily received as a perfect literary formula to serve the nationalist spirit proclaimed in the era of Confederation. Subsequently, Sir Walter Scott met not only with the approval of his Canadian fellow writers and critics, but also with that of political pressure groups like Canada First. Moreover, his all-encompassing popularity is confirmed by the rather curious fact that as early as 1814 "Five Nations Chief John Norton selected *The Lady of the Lake* . . . to translate into Mohawk."

This strict adherence to historical narrative is, of course, not an entirely Canadian phenomenon, but rather a typical symptom accompanying the emergence of new national literatures. James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*, or more recently, the historical novels of Nigeria's Chinua Achebe illustrate that the shaping of American fiction as well as the establishment of written literature in post-colonial West Africa have been equally influenced by the ideological potential inherent in historical writing. Whereas a contemporary novelist like Achebe has, however, easily managed to modify the formula according to the possibilities offered by the given political, cultural, and geographic context, nineteenth-century Canada's restrictive approach to the British model prevented her writers from striving for their own formal expression. Sarah Jeannette Duncan, who is frequently mentioned during the course of the analysis, marks an important exception here though on principle it became common practice "to write almost exclusively from within the received patterns, refraining in both form and content from [the] challenging prevailing cultural norms" that were advanced in periodicals like *The Literary Garland*, *The Canadian Literary Magazine*, *The New Dominion Monthly*, *The Canadian Monthly and National Review*, and so on. Thus Canadian cultural journalism played a similar normative role to that of the *Atlantic Monthly* in the United States as an advocate of the genteel taste in literature.

These are just some of the major issues discussed in a carefully researched, highly detailed, and elegantly written book which, nevertheless, aims at a critical reconstruction of the intellectual climate that fostered this kind of literature. While the place of the novel in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, or the development of prose narrative in the United States, including the more popular variants of fiction, have been extensively examined, an adequate study focusing on the (socio)-cultural history of fictional writing in English Canada has been a longtime desideratum. Consequently, Gerson's investigation into "Victorian Canada's frame of mind" opens with a sociological account of the writing and reading public in nineteenth-century Canada that is followed by discussions on the reception of the novel and the Canadian territory as fictional setting. Furthermore, Gerson deals with "Approaches to Realism," "The Long Shadow of Sir Walter Scott," and some general problems concerning the distinction between novel and romance, before she debates the particular thematic potential which Canada's past provided for many anglophone writers of fiction. Significantly enough, not only the pioneering days of English Canada, but also the history of La Nouvelle France and Acadia supplied the material for character and plot arrangements. The final chapter, entitled "Soulager le bourgeois," then points out how the novel was ideologically functionalized as a medium which seldom challenged, but rather helped to affirm, middle-class notions of society.

From a methodological point of view it is interesting to note that Gerson more or less refrains from employing extra-literary source materials. The different works examined under the above premises are as much understood as reflections of Victorian Canada's frame of mind as they are used to provide the necessary factual evidence for the Dominion's struggle towards (literary) self-definition. In other words, Gerson's interpretation is set essentially within the generic boundaries of fiction and its criticism. At first sight, this appears to be a somewhat limited approach towards the reconstruction of a mental landscape and its impact on literary aesthetics. Yet, the author leaves no doubt that *A Purer Taste* is intended as a

study which "does not alter the received notion that Canadian literary history is the history of a conservative colonial culture; rather, it illuminates that history by presenting it on its own terms."

In order to achieve her aim, Gerson studies a vast corpus of texts, whereby analytical arguments alternate with extended descriptive passages. The results take the form of general conclusions which are complemented by exemplary interpretations of some of the most characteristic works. Although the sheer quantity of literary evidence made an eclectic procedure unavoidable, it is certainly one of this book's greatest achievements that the author draws attention to those texts which would usually escape the attention of the canon-oriented reader. This holds particularly true for the European student and critic of Canadian literature who would usually not have access to the non-reprinted materials that are carefully hidden in Canada's literary archives.

Despite its many merits, *A Purer Taste* suffers from one unfortunate shortcoming: it was published ten years too late. Originally accepted under the title "Shaping the English-Canadian Novel, 1820-1900" as a doctoral dissertation by the University of British Columbia in 1977 and since then accessible in typescript, the revisions added over the past decade cannot conceal the fact that some of the evidence has also become available elsewhere. This even becomes obvious in Gerson's own revised footnoting and updated bibliography which lists the most recent publications on the subject although Dennis Duffy's *Sounding the Iceberg* (1986) seems to have escaped notice.

These minor critical remarks, however, cannot seriously question the actual validity of *A Purer Taste*, which is an excellent contribution to the as-yet-unwritten social history of Canadian literature in English.

WOLFGANG KLOOSS

MASTERY

ELIZABETH FREUND, *The Return of the Reader: Reader-Response Criticism*. Methuen, $37.50/10.95.

GAETAN BRULOTTE, *Double Exposure*. Trans. David Lobden. Oberon, $25.95/12.95.

SHELDON CURRIE, *The Company Store*. Oberon, n.p.

FOR A READER inured to jargon, Elizabeth Freund's overview, *The Return of the Reader*, emerges as a useful if rather eclectic guide to a complex field. Freund does not oversimplify the subversiveness of reader-response theory. Using and deconstructing M. H. Abrams's model of a work of art, universe, artist, and audience, she claims:

> The drift of 'pragmatic' or, as it is nowadays called, reader-response orientation in critical theory challenges the privileged position of the work of art and seeks to undermine its authority not only by displacing the work from the centre and substituting the reader in its place, but by putting in doubt the autonomy of the work and, in certain cases, even causing the work to 'vanish' altogether.

Freund proceeds to examine in detail various reader-response "criticisms," such as those of I. A. Richards (a "precursor"), Jonathan Culler, Stanley Fish, Norman Holland, and Wolfgang Iser. However, the book is not simply a literature survey. It offers itself as a text whose own readings must be read in that "unresolved tension" by which "[r]eader-response criticisms are at once generated and destroyed." And it valorizes, finally, as M. M. Bakhtin does, dialogue over monologue. The "post-structuralist concern with the problematic of *reading*" is characterized "not as mastery or appropriation [monologue] but as a patient dialogue or interrogation."

Mastery and appropriation are exactly what Gaetan Brulotte's novel, translated by David Lobdell as *Double Exposure*, is about. The French title is, significantly,

L'Emprise. This "mastery of execution" — which becomes alarmingly literal as the narrative proceeds — signifies here not the act of reading but the act of writing. Of course, since Roland Barthes' *S/Z*, reading and writing have become inextricably entangled in the concept of "textuality," but a distinction may still be drawn. Clearly, "writing" signifies the more active, expressive pole of the concept, while "reading" suggests the more passive, receptive pole.

Double Exposure is not subtle in its self-reflexiveness. The protagonist, Block, is writing a novel about a man, Barnes, who turns out to be writing a novel about him. Writing a novel about somebody, even if this person exists in the same fictional world as the writer, is cognate, in this novel, with mastery and appropriation ("*L'Emprise*"). Block destroys Barnes by driving him out of the world — the city with its "vast eruption[s] of humans and objects," its "parabola[e] of swirling, sinuous forms," its "warm sunlight," and its "white cocoon of snow," which Barnes loves — into the confinement of a mental institution, where he is castrated for "refus[ing] to integrate himself into the social order." Eventually, Barnes ceases to exist in the same fictional world as Block. He becomes not an acquaintance whom Block can see and hear, but a figment of the latter's imagination. In a dream, Block is forced to witness Barnes destroying himself by running head first into the wall of his prison. Although Block realizes at this point that he is a "soul snatcher," a "plunderer, a pillager, [who] has despoiled another human being," his mastery is ironically undercut because he himself is the subject of a novel. He is mastered by the authoritarian discourse of the narrator:

> But, in reality, Block never was the anonymous master of this particular story, the invulnerable artist answerable to no-one but himself, the impurturbable [*sic*], inviolable creature impervious to the workings of cause and effect, immune to the dealings of time.

The question the reader asks is where, in this great chain of authorship, is she, as reader? The answer, presumably, lies in her very absence from the pecking order. As a parody of the monological discourse, the novel offers no representation of the receptive dialogical other, not even in its second, more tightly closed trope in which the two characters, Block and Barnes, are indeed each other's doubles. After destroying Barnes, Block takes up all of Barnes's habits and even his mode of dress, thus predictably reversing the roles of master and mastered, possessor and possessed, which were never unambiguous from the beginning.

The symmetry of all this mirror imagery leaves no room for an awkward third in the mutually absorbing pairs that it generates. *Double Exposure* is a novel of alienation in several different dimensions. Despite the cruelty of Block and the sufferings of Barnes, the reader is not engaged emotionally by either character. Intellectual curiosity keeps her reading to the page's end.

In stark contrast, Sheldon Currie's *The Company Store* engages the reader emotionally in all its characters. In fact, the reader finds herself running rather short of sympathy in this novel. The only enemy is the Company — a coal-mining business that controls the Cape Breton village in which the story is set — but this Company is never individualized; even its foremen are friendly fellows. Although the narrator's belief in the universal goodness of man is perhaps praiseworthy, it does not invest his characters with very much vitality. Currie could have benefited from a little borrowing from D. H. Lawrence, whose coal-miner characters often disclose a genuine dialectic of violence and gentleness which makes them at once more hateful and more sympathetic than Currie's.

The Company Store is, as Jonathan Culler would call it, a "rhetorical" text, because it is "realistic" and exhibits few areas of indeterminacy. It is a modestly political novel. By means of a "chunk of life" plot and many flashbacks, it creates a sense of the dignity of life in a small community and of the endangered existence of such communities. Only in one section does the narrator play at all with his reader and with literary form.

In this section, the teenage protagonist is eavesdropping on a party of adults. He writes down their dialogue, but ascribes it to fictionalized versions of the characters, adding a "love interest" for himself in the form of a village girl called Morag. In Ian's "story," Morag discusses their elders' conversation with him, but is herself more fascinating to Ian than the conversation. This comic passage is full of delightfully clumsy tags such as "came the riposte" and "he offered, triumphantly." It is not only a parody of the novelist's technique and his relationship with his reader, but it also represents a kind of apology for some of the novel's own gaucheness.

The wooing of the reader might be more successful if, in its primal trope, Morag's response to Ian were left indeterminate. Breaking off his narrative because of a fire in the Company store, Ian rushes into town and meets the "real" Morag, who at once invites him home with her and seduces him. The reader would be perhaps more difficult to win.

CATHERINE ADDISON

RUSSIA & CANADA

GEORGE F. WALKER, *Nothing Sacred.* Coach House, $10.95.

GEORGE WALKER'S 1988 Governor General's Award-winning play, *Nothing Sacred,* is described on the title page as "based on" Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* rather than strictly speaking an adaptation. In many ways Walker has made the material his own. "This is a Canadian comedy, not a Russian tragedy," he would say to the actors during rehearsals of the first production. According to director Bill Glassco, Walker was listening for pace, "the quick intuitive response that characterizes so much of our conversation in real life." To this end, the idiom of the play is contemporary, one important element for rendering Turgenev's 1862 novel of generational conflict directly accessible to its Canadian audience. Another lies in Walker's perception of the story's comic potential. To realize this, and also to keep the needs of the stage in focus, the playwright has condensed events and relationships of the original narrative, expanding, eliminating, or to an extent re-inventing certain characters accordingly.

Walker first admired the novel "as a son" when he was seventeen, and wrote his play "as a father" when he was forty, himself now sensing the challenge of the younger generation. Therefore, like Turgenev, he shows understanding on both sides. But, as he stated in a CBC interview this year, "my trust is with the callow youth. They want the change."

Walker's central catalyst for change, as Turgenev's, is the rude and radical Bazarov, a medical student dedicated to tearing down present society so that later generations might rebuild the future. In nineteenth-century parlance he is a "nihilist" (Turgenev coined the term), one who refuses to recognize the authority of institutions. As his disciple and friend, Arkady explains to his own puzzled father (the unpretentious gentleman farmer, Kirsanov, whom the vacationing students are visiting), and to his skeptical uncle (the dandyish Anglophile, Pavel), a nihilist is "a man who looks at everything critically. Takes no principles for granted."

Yet for all his outrageous talk and contempt for his elders, this Bazarov really does have love and reconciliation hidden in his heart, wherein lies the comic centre of the play.

His rage about the futility of the recent emancipation is directed to a system that keeps the serfs "so without pride that they spend most of their time robbing each other and drinking themselves into oblivion." He is the obverse of Zastrozzi, the avenging aristocratic hero of Walker's 1977 work of that title, who hates the thought of the coming day little man. Bazarov wants to drag the peasant from his knees and make him human, although at the beginning of *Nothing Sacred* his "love" for the downtrodden Gregor seems ingenuously theoretical. By the last scene, however, his object of rescue from a sadistic bailiff (in the Prologue) is hinted as the voice of "the future" — the inheritor of Bazarov's iconoclasm and the true object of his love.

Indeed, the motif of love, in all its comic and ironic compulsions, largely keeps the play in motion. When the unpredictable Bazarov springs his long-time mistress and bomb-throwing collaborator, Anna Odintsov, on Arkady, this gentle liberal in spite of himself falls instantly in love with her and before long proposes. Anna, in turn, is revealed as the reluctant object of Uncle Pavel's romantic infatuation; he's already ruined his life in unrequited love for her late mother and is now projecting that old passion on her — another mark against him for Bazarov. Then there is brotherly love: in a tender scene between the desolate elders when, thanks to Bazarov's mischievous interventions, all other affections seem lost to them.

In the way Walker has constructed his version of the plot, Bazarov, for all his iconoclasm, impulsively sets up a fatal situation for himself by urging an 'institutional' choice between class and marriage on the widower Kirsanov. Arkady's father, a delightfully well-intentioned if incompetent new-style landlord to his former serfs, is confused about his relationship with Fenichka. She is the mother of his child, but also the daughter of his deceased housekeeper. It occurs to Bazarov to nudge Kirsanov towards remarriage by declaring his own love for the diffident peasant girl. Pavel seizes the opportunity to challenge the trouble-maker to a duel, ostensibly for the sake of his brother's honour, but in truth out of resentment of Bazarov's sneering irreverence at his own expense. Pavel does not mean to kill the young iconoclast, however. Indeed the whole situation is presented as something of a comedy of errors. Thus in a curious way the play actually has a 'happy ending,' which is to say happy in hope, if not in immediate circumstances.

Although far from Chekovian in tone, Walker has found a way to exploit basic tenets of Chekov's characterization to a rich comic effect. In particular he uses the comedy of habitual gesture, either physical or verbal — the kind the audience is intended to recognize as the sign of a character's evasion, puzzlement, or embarrassment. For example, when Fenichka is uncomfortable in the presence of her supposed 'superiors,' which is most of the time, she runs to the oftened imagined sound of her crying baby; when Kirsanov cannot face a frank discussion with his son, he must attend to the problems of the farm — an exercise in futility at the best of times. Pavel tries, unsuccessfully, to outface the upstart Bazarov with increasingly foppish costumery and defensive speechifying. Among the broader characterizations, the clownish acolyte, Viktor Sitnikov, has an excruciatingly inappropriate laugh, which Bazarov playfully mocks at every opportunity. The Kirsanov servant, Piotr, tries his absurd best to follow Pavel's instructions in the deportment of a European servant, while

the bewildered Gregor, at Bazarov's improbable instruction, tries equally hard to emulate the manners of Arkady.

This is ultimately a democratic play. Even the nasty bailiff is summoned with the other 'low life' characters to witness Bazarov's half-uttered deathbed prophecy about the future, for which Gregor is able to complete his words. Whether or not this helps to make the play 'Canadian,' it certainly makes it modern. Yet there are elements in setting and character for which a Canadian audience has natural affinity. The most obvious derive from the remoteness of rural life from cosmopolitan centre. This enables Walker to depict the touching pride of a plain farmer in his returning son's university degree and Kirsanov's scarce uttered hope that Arkady might still choose to remain at home despite the beckonings of the wider world. Arkady himself is clearly divided between the exciting influence of his radical friend and the love and loyalty he feels for his father. Then there is the all too familiar example of an Uncle Pavel who, in dress and manner, affectedly "lusts after foreign influences" as if pretending he were living anywhere else but in his native land. Certainly nineteenth-century Russia is hardly Canada, but in these matters Walker, with becoming irreverence, almost makes us think it could be.

DIANE BESSAI

RECOVERIES

ALDEN NOWLAN, *The Wanton Troopers*. Goose Lane Editions, $22.95/12.95.

RICHARD TAYLOR, *Cartoon Woods*. Oberon, $25.95/12.95.

REMEMBRANCE OF THE PAST, Taylor and Nowlan reveal in these two first novels, is a process as intrinsic to our lives as breathing. As Cora Ann, the principal narrator of Richard Taylor's *Cartoon Woods* understands as a result of her odyssey into the past, "I know that looking into the past can either carry you forward in time, or it can slowly kill you." She advises us "to go gently into memories."

Cora is twenty-five years old, working as a computer operator in an office building in Ottawa, when her mother invites her to attend her father's funeral. Raised by her mother and grandmother, Cora never knew her father, John Malcolm. Malcolm was a backwoods amateur artist and ladies' man who committed suicide at his cabin on the Ottawa River in Quebec. The circumstances of her father's death — coupled with the sudden revelation of his existence and the possibility of learning more about her mother's hidden past — inspire her to spend seven days alone at the place where her father's life ended and where hers, so she believes, may begin anew. In a sojourn similar to that undertaken by the narrator of Atwood's *Surfacing*, Cora spends a week at the cabin, away from her job and her boyfriend, Pitello, who wants nothing but to make a fortune and live comfortably. She experiences a literal stripping away of the claims made upon her by heredity and social convention. While investigating her father's past through his letters, photos, and other memorabilia, Cora is put in touch with nature and battles against her "illusory" fears — fears based not on actual threats to her physical well-being, such as those her grandmother underwent during zeppelin attacks in World War I, but self-constructed, imaginary delusions. She realizes, in a sudden epiphanic moment, that "we aren't here on earth to make children or money. We are each here to discover the mystery of our own lives." Cora gradually understands, however, that while we may make an unlimited number of discoveries in life, we will never be able to get to the bottom of the mystery.

The novel has elements of black comedy such as Cora's night swim across the river to the island of her dreams, which turns out to be nothing more than a swamp infested with mosquitoes. Taylor undercuts the seriousness of his self-absorbed narrator, and I would have enjoyed more such irony. Although he varies the first-person voice through the use of diaries and letters, Cora's ever-present "I saw . . . I thought . . . I started listening . . . I started crying" predominates and makes for tedious reading, even in situations where she is in dialogue with another. There is no doubt, however, that Taylor can create powerful images which render his writing painstakingly simple yet emotionally engaging, as when Cora sets the stage for her father's funeral: "A freak snowstorm in early May, the odour of too many chrysanthemums and the sound of a struggling Coke can dropping down through a machine in the hallway." The accumulation of images such as these marks him as a writer of style and polish.

For Alden Nowlan the process of remembering was complex, as he needed to be gentle and yet honest enough to overcome the maelstrom of his difficult childhood memories. From the dedication of his autobiographical novel, "To my mother and father in forgiveness," we infer that he was not gentle with others in his retrieval and re-creation of his childhood through fiction.

The novel tells of a year in the life of eleven-year-old Kevin O'Brien. The setting is a Nova Scotia sawmill town in the mid-1940s where there are two classes, the rich and the poor. We follow Kevin in his struggles with his romantic, repressed mother and his domineering, sometimes sadistic father and share in the protagonist's conflicts with society at large. Nowlan's portrayal of the life of a boy growing up in the backwoods of the Maritimes after the Great Depression is carried out with a poet's eye for nature and ear for language. He allows us to experience, through all our senses, what it was like to be poor and uneducated. His efforts to surmount the constrictions of his life draw our sympathy in this bildungsroman.

Whether it is by imagining himself as King David or a General in the Confederate Army, Kevin discovers that taking refuge in his fantasies, in a history that does not belong to him, is one way he can gain the courage to face the bullying tactics of his family and friends. In Kevin's relationship with his mother we experience the major tension in the novel. Mary O'Brien's desire to leave her family — which she does at the end of the book — informs and partly controls Kevin's own dreams for the future. In the first chapter, we are shown how close mother and son have become: "He might have been a part of her body. She washed him as she washed her own hands. He was all of him, hers: not the smallest part of him belonged any longer to himself. And in this surrender, there was a pervasive peace, an ecstasy of negation." Like Mrs. Morrell in Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, Mary feeds her son on the bread of negation, on the necessity of rejecting the world of the millworkers for something different. But she is a "solitary white birch sapling, surrounded on all sides by towering black spruces." One of the most prominent black spruces is Kevin's grandmother, a woman who preaches a philosophy of determinism rooted in a puritan ethic. "The O'Brien's has allus been poor," Martha instructs her grandson, "But they allus knew their place. And they was allus willin tuh work."

Kevin adheres to the safety of his dreams until one day when he has a chilling encounter with Sarah Minard, from a rich farming family in the region. In Sarah's house, Kevin eats of the fruit of knowledge — her bookcases are a form of stolen pleasure for the imaginative young boy. In a haunting scene, Sarah reveals

her real identity: "I am death. I was born dead. I was dead when I grew up. I am dead now.... Almost everyone in Lockhartville is a living corpse.... They'll come for you! Some night when you're asleep in bed, they'll come for you, and they'll make you a living corpse like all the rest of us."

Whereas he could attribute his mother's criticism of the town and its people to her own selfishness and silliness, Kevin's experience with Sarah Minard is inexplicable and takes over his dreams in the form of a recurring nightmare. But as Kevin learns through his first sexual attraction, which ends in abysmal failure, there are things he will never be able to control or completely comprehend.

The Wanton Troopers is not a complex novel written with any striking stylistic innovations. To some the book will seem old-fashioned and quaint. Some of the characterizations — particularly of the Grandmother who received a more rounded treatment in Nowlan's fictional memoir, *Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien* — are annoyingly stereotypical. Despite these weaknesses, the posthumous publication of this novel, which was rejected by one major publisher in 1960 and never resubmitted, is an event to be welcomed for the additional insight it provides into the life and work of one of Canada's most distinctive writers.

ELAINE AUERBACH

ABUNDANCE

DORIS HILLIS, ed., *Plainspeaking: Interviews with Saskatchewan Writers*. Coteau Books, $13.95.

GEOFFREY URSELL, ed., *Sky High: Stories from Saskatchewan*. Coteau Books, $5.95.

Sky High: Stories from Saskatchewan is the fourth collection of prairie fiction published by Coteau Books. "These are dry times on the Prairies, the driest for 100 years," editor Geoffrey Ursell informs us in his introduction. "It's a desperate time for farming. But there is no drought of words; here the climate is more of a literary rain forest." In the rain-forest metaphor, Ursell perceives an abundance in Saskatchewan writing. But this is a cultivated rather than a wild abundance. The Saskatchewan Writers Guild, now in its twentieth year, and the Saskatchewan Arts Board, in its fortieth year, have been significant forces supporting writers in their work. Publishers such as Thistledown, Thunder Creek, NeWest, Wood Mountain and Coteau — along with the Fort San Writers Colony and the city of Regina — cannot be ignored for the influence they have had on nourishing the writing climate.

Of the twenty-four writers included in this newest collection, there are many familiar names: Elizabeth Brewster, Byrna Barclay, Sharon Butala, Robert Currie. Many of the writers — Bonnie Burnard, Ven Begamudre, Barbara Sapergia, Pat Krause, Dave Margoshes, and Lois Simmie — have published story collections of their own.

The settings range from Nova Scotia, to Greece, to South Africa, but in the majority of cases, it is the small, often nameless prairie town where these stories occur. In Dave Margoshes "Uncle Tom Bragg Comes to the MD of Rocky View," Bragg Creek, Alberta, is the setting. However, it is a setting that is playfully undercut: "In 1847, long before the Mounties or the whiskey traders, even before Father Lacombe brought his holy water and crosses into the territory 'to save the souls of the savages', Uncle Tom Bragg came to what is now called the Municipal District of Rocky View looking for the right piece of land to set up his cat ranch."

Humour, satire, and playfulness are well represented in this collection. Along with Margoshes' comical tall-tale there is Pat Krause's "Star Bright," Robert Cur-

rie's "How I Became a Poet," Don Kerr's "Dead Soldiers," William Robertson's "Toplady," Lois Simmie's "Sweetie Pie," and Steven Smith's "painter." The destructive effects of racial and sexual stereotyping are evident in Regina Haensel's "Love Letters" and Ven Begamudre's "Word Games," while variations on the subject of love and care for fellow human beings in beginning relationships, and in ones that have run their course, are developed in McCrosky's "A Time for Us Someday There'll Be," Wesseler's "The Gift," Niskala's "Rainbow Show," McDonald's "my father in another city," Horne's "Exposure," Brewster's "Visit of Condolence," and Macfarlane's "John and Mac."

The collection opens with Rick Hillis's "Blue," which tells about a woman taking on a non-traditional job in a desperate struggle to make a living. Hillis's piece ends at a dance hall with uneasy partners facing an uncertain future. The tone of uncertainty struck in Hillis's story resonates in Wilma Riley's "The Girl in Rose Brocade," where a group of university students interested in history decide to reenact the Victorian era by duplicating customs of dress, food, and conversation. In spite of their efforts at recapturing the past, the present is always intruding: "But who needs historians now?" Francine, the narrator, asks. "Aren't our leaders making plans to blast human history off the face of the earth?" The young group's attempts to establish a vital connection with the past is sabotaged when one of their participants mysteriously disappears. "The question then remains of how to reenact the scene when the principal players are missing and everybody's lives are changed."

The unnamed female character in Bonnie Burnard's "Sister" returns to her home town for her brother's funeral. She discovers from her former boyfriend that the continuity of her past can survive periods of alienation and estrangement. In questioning whether her brother was loved, the narrator indirectly addresses her own fears about attachments she has made and broken. Her question has no answer. Burnard shows considerable skill in presenting a simple occasion as richly complex and provocative.

Other stories in the collection rely on the power of the mind and dreams to make connections with an elusive reality. Barbara Sapergia's "Night Riders" is a miraculous bringing together of an African woman who is a housekeeper for a white Madam in South Africa with Kate, a white middle-class woman who basks in the luxury of reading late at night and enjoying a relaxing bath at her own leisure. In Sharon Butala's "Babette," Ginny ministers to two dying women — her mother who is slipping pleasantly into death accompanied by marvellous dreams and her mother-in-law, Babette, who in resisting the onset of her death from cancer suffers nightmares of dark wells and visitations from her diseased husband and friends. Ginny's husband Armand, her previously active sexual partner, has retreated to a life of routine similar to the rigours of Ginny's caring for the sick. In order to survive the cold implosion of a heavy mortality, Ginny clings to erotic fantasies of an imagined lover who keeps her body warm and attached to life.

Of the other stories Ursell includes in this collection by new writers such as Sara McDonald, Terry Jordan, Judy McCrosky, Marlis Wessler, and Marina Endicott, my favourite story is Endicott's "The Orphan Boy." Primarily a playwright and actor, Endicott creates vivid, dramatic encounters between characters. She fuses the myth of Ariadne and the young Bacchus with a contemporary view of split personality and a woman's mental breakdown. The abused Ariadne of the legend becomes the misguided and perhaps — though we are never sure —

neglected wife and mother Ariadne Keller, who suffers from lost youth and lost opportunity. "The Orphan Boy" has echoes of fairy-tale and childhood reminiscence, about the consciousness of growing up. It reads well once and even twice. I am looking forward to reading more by this new voice in fiction.

A good companion volume to *Sky High* is Doris Hillis's *Plainspeaking: Interviews with Saskatchewan Writers*. Five of the writers interviewed are also included in Ursell's anthology: Butala, Simmie, Sapergia, Brewster, and Barclay. However, by repeating essentially the same formula used in her 1985 collection of interviews, *Voices & Visions*, Hillis begins to sound wooden and overprepared. Since she is careful to include a biographical abstract of each writer preceding the respective interview, it seems wasted to probe for similar information by asking how family and location influenced the writer's work. Despite the predictability of her approach, there is a practical side to Hillis's technique that is appealing for its sparseness and clean control. There is no welter of jargon to wade through as Hillis is never inflamed with the critical zeal of any one viewpoint. She is obviously taken with each of the writers, endeavouring to be objective, thorough, and colloquial.

Hillis listens not only to writers but also to critics. When *Voices & Visions* was criticized for not including any Native or Métis writers, Doris Hillis made an effort to correct the oversight. In this newest collection, she includes a Métis woman, Maria Campbell. And as if to withdraw completely from taking over and guiding what Campbell has to say, the interview with the author of the autobiographical *Halfbreed* (who has also worked in film and theatre), has less of Doris Hillis than any other interview in the book. Hillis seems genuinely interested in destroying any barriers that might hamper Campbell from receiving the opportunity to speak for herself about the problems and aspirations of the Métis.

I am impressed by the range of literature that is covered by the writers. Those whose work consists primarily of poetry include Mick Burrs, Gary Hyland, Elizabeth Brewster, and Andrew Suknaski. The playwrights are also well represented by Geoffrey Ursell, Rex Deverall, and Barbara Sapergia. The fiction and novel category includes Sharon Butala, Byrna Barclay, David Carpenter, and Lois Simmie, while an interview with Joan Givner focuses on her interest and achievements in writing biography.

It is to Doris Hillis's credit that in spite of her sometimes rigid focus, she draws from her subjects an awareness of critical issues that might be surprising to those who consider Saskatchewan writing marginal. Add to this quality an up-to-date bibliography of each writer's work, and you have a handy and informative introduction to the variety of writing and writers of the Prairies.

ELAINE AUERBACH

TRUE STORIES

MARTYN GODFREY, *Mystery in the Frozen Lands*. Lorimer, $9.95.

JEAN LITTLE, *Little by Little: A Writer's Education*. Viking Kestrel, $14.95/4.95.

DAVID MACAULAY, *The Way Things Work: From Levels to Lasers, Cars to Computers — A Visual Guide to the World of Machines*. Houghton Mifflin; in Canada, Thomas Allen and Son, $39.95.

ALTHOUGH BOOKSTORES and library displays promote fiction as the primary mode for adolescent readers, it was non-fiction that most successfully held the attention of one eleven-year-old male reader with an unprecocious literary bent. And the book he liked best was Jean Little's *Little by Little*. I draw attention to this occurrence because, while popular with adults,

literary autobiography is seldom considered a genre of interest to young readers.

Jean Little is, of course, an accomplished storyteller, and her telling of her own story presents an involving account of a disabled child growing up and achieving success in the uncomprehending and often hostile world of the able. Although her narrative partakes of the conventions of the old-fashioned morality tale, in which the overcoming of barriers by the long-suffering but deserving protagonist confirms her own intrinsic virtue, Little here (as in her other work) deliberately challenges the way such stories used to conclude with the miraculous cure of the disability. Believing that "crippled children [have] a right to find themselves represented in fiction," she has become the author and advocate of children's books in which the handicap is not cured but confronted. In the punningly titled *Little by Little* (the motto bequeathed by her adored father), this practice further enhances the narrator's own heroism: legally blind, she not only succeeded in the regular stream of Ontario's advanced educational system, but did so in a discipline where normal vision would appear to be a prerequisite: English literature. And the field where she proved her mettle was the Victoria College Honours English programme, under the presiding spirit of Northrop Frye.

While the Frygian critic might effectively analyze a juvenile reader's preference for this particular book as a spontaneous attraction to its archetypal structures, my son's conscious response was to empathize with the trials of a nearly blind child in a sighted world. I would guess that the nature of Jean Little's handicap adds to the accessibility of her story, given the propensity of normally sighted children to occasionally play at being blind. Above all, the major emotional events of the book — the death of Little's father, the isolation of the "different" child, the pain of being taunted by bullies, the delight in accomplishment — are those with which all children can identify, especially when they are skilfully recounted in their own language.

More conventionally a "boy's" adventure story, Martyn Godfrey's *Mystery in the Frozen Lands*, likewise takes its subject directly from the real world, in this case the disappearance of Sir John Franklin's Arctic expedition of 1845. The book's documentary quality is enhanced with maps, a prefatory "Author's Note" explaining Godfrey's use of historical materials, and its narrative format. To engage the young reader, Godfrey created the character of fourteen-year-old Peter Griffin, Franklin's fictional nephew who serves as cabin boy to the 1857-59 rescue mission aboard the *Fox* and is ordered to record its progress in his journal. Proof of the success of the diary format is my son's comment that, while reading the book, he pretended he was Peter and did everything Peter did; such utter suspension of disbelief must be the highest compliment an author can receive.

Typical of the way juvenile adventure fiction empowers youngsters is Godfrey's attribution of the *Fox* expedition's key discoveries to Peter. Yet while Peter unearths some evidence explaining the failure of Franklin's mission, the major question — the inexplicable behaviour of a hand-picked crew — must rest unanswered. The Franklin expedition remains one of the puzzles in Canadian history, which Godfrey has chosen not to resolve — a wise move from the historian's perspective, but a disappointment to the juvenile reader's expectation that mysteries conclude tidily. As if to compensate for this gap in his plot, Godfrey develops a close friendship between Peter and the other young member of the crew, an Inuit from Greenland, who teaches the young Britisher to survive in the North and questions many of his cultural practices and

assumptions regarding such matters as relations between the sexes and exploitation of the environment.

Both books are highly recommended — by the juvenile reader who enjoyed reading them, and by the parent who enjoyed watching him read. Another valuable addition to the family library is David Macaulay's *The Way Things Work*, a funny and informative guide to basic and complex machines. The principles of primary machines like the lever and the wheel are integrated into delightfully illustrated explanations of just about every device we might encounter in current life, including the combustion engine, the grand piano, the microcomputer, and the toilet tank. Children over the age of ten can learn on their own about holograms or smoke detectors, and explain to their pre-technological parents the inner workings of telephones, parking meters, and ultrasound scanners.

CAROLE GERSON
(IN CONSULTATION WITH
DANIEL GERSON)

MARGINS

LORNA CROZIER AND GARY HYLAND, eds., *A Sudden Radiance: Saskatchewan Poetry*. Coteau Books, $14.95.

MARK DUNCAN, ed., *Section Lines: A Manitoba Anthology*. Turnstone, $12.95.

THESE TWO VOLUMES, one a collection of recent Saskatchewan poetry, the other an anthology of prose and poetry from Manitoba of the last fifty years, are testimony to the recent upsurge of writing and publishing in Western Canada and to the desire of prairie writers and critics to shift the imbalance imposed by the cultural hegemony of Toronto and Montreal. Both are similarly iconoclastic in their attitudes to received critical opinion about prairie literature. Both set out to show that Western Canada (or more specifically their own province) has produced a significant number of writers who go far beyond gritty realism, the documentary mode and stereotyped responses to climate and topography.

A too narrowly geographical definition of regionalism (and to talk of Manitoban or Saskatchewan writing at all might be to invite Wiebe's criticism, quoted by Crozier, that all geographical regionalism in a healthy literature is balderdash) can favour the purely factitious. Who is and who is not a Manitoban writer? And does it matter?

Duncan's *Section Lines* are in fact generously if loosely staked out; his boundaries include not only Margaret Laurence and Adele Wiseman but also Dorothy Livesay, Miriam Waddington, Robert Kroetsch, and Sinclair Ross, some of whom, it could be argued, could as justifiably be claimed for provinces other than Manitoba. By arranging the collection in alphabetical order, he fortunately arrives at a balance of poetry and prose (including two pieces of non-fiction) which makes for an interesting anthology, the more so for its juxtaposition of familiar pieces with the work of newer writers. A number deal with 'section lines' that exist between and among families: the generations of father and sons in David Arnason's short story "Sons and Fathers, Fathers and Sons," and the perspectives of immigrant experience in Sandra Birdsell's "The Bride Doll" and Di Brandt's "Diana." Common to all three, and indeed to other pieces, is an assured sense of the vernacular voice, the authentic experience of an achieved belonging here and nowhere else so that "it's hard to tell anymore what is exotic & what is plain i like it that way." A pity, however, that the "lines" still remain too firmly drawn to admit a voice from francophone Manitoba.

The anthology also lacks an adequate bibliography and biographical informa-

tion on the writers included. On both of these counts Lorna Crozier's and Gary Hyland's *A Sudden Radiance* cannot be faulted. Taking a much less defensive stance than Duncan, Crozier and Hyland, themselves poets of distinction, celebrate the remarkable explosion of poetry in the West since 1970 and the particular achievements of poets in Saskatchewan. "There are more poets per capita in this province than in any other" sounds as if it could be a fatuous entry in *The Guinness Book of Records*, were it not that these are poets of considerable achievement showing a wide range of form and technique. In her admirable introduction, Lorna Crozier effectively trounces the notion that regionalism equates with narrowness of vision or prescribed subject matter. The influences on Saskatchewan poets are those available to writers anywhere — from Russia and the U.S., from the cinema to Latin American magic realism; "the world is their place, and their regions are defined only by their imaginative reach." Nevertheless the editors remark that the specific place continues to influence the poetry — which could not have been written anywhere else. Again, though, is it not a happy fortuitousness that gives New Zealander Elizabeth Allen pride of place? Her poem "A Matter of Survival" begins with a Swedish tourist in Uganda and ends with the lines:

> in lemberg the librarian
> asks why i borrow
> a book of poetry
> for the third time

Another "immigrant" to Saskatchewan, Elizabeth Brewster, says "people are made of places" . . . "a door in the mind blows open." Read Crozier's essay, above all read the poets represented here — some well known across Canada (Mandel, Newlove, Suknaski, Szumigalski, Lane, Crozier herself), others perhaps not so well known — to get the sense of a world seen anew, a living, gutsy, vernacular responding, sometimes with exuberance, sometimes with pathos, to a clearly recognized or remembered sense of place and belonging. Gary Hyland in his contextual essay complementing Crozier's introduction says: "the cumulative effect is dazzling."

His piece also brings out the level of support afforded the arts and literature in Saskatchewan, by the Arts Board and the universities, and through the small presses and publishers who have sustained and developed a responsive local audience. Radiance, as Hyland says, "is in the eye of the beholder"; but the evidence of this anthology is that the culture of Saskatchewan both recognizes and encourages radiance.

Both of these books could with value be used in the teaching of literature, not only in their home province but across Canada and indeed beyond. In England, where I write this review, Canadian literature is still far too little known and largely identified with writers from the "metropolitan" provinces (Margaret Atwood, Robertson Davies), even Margaret Laurence enjoying far less recognition than she deserves. We need reminding that those places which seem to be "on the margin" of anglophone culture are nevertheless fully in the mainstream whilst having a distinctive contribution derived from their own sense of place.

MAGGIE BUTCHER

PERSONAE

OTTO FRIEDRICH, *Glenn Gould: A Life and Variations*. Lester & Orpen Dennys, $27.95.

GLENN GOULD is at once central and marginal to Canadian culture: central because of his concern with such topoi as the North; marginal because of his refusal to work with traditional forms. Friedrich reads this paradox as one of personality;

rather than attempting to pin Gould down, he approaches Gould through a metaphor derived from the recording for which Gould is most famous — Bach's Goldberg Variations. This choice recommended itself all the more strongly to Friedrich because Gould's career opened and closed with recordings of this work, and the Variations were written for a Count Keyserling, who, like Gould, was an insomniac. Chapters are devoted to The Prodigy, The Virtuoso, The Composer, The Conductor, and so on, all of whom are seen as variations on the enigma of Gould, who enacted his public and private lives through a half-dozen personae, including Dr. Herbert von Hochmeister, Fine Arts critic from the Arctic Circle, and Ted Slutz, New York cab driver. Friedrich's refusal to impose closure on this multifarious personality further influenced the form of the biography, and the chapters often reproduce transcripts of interviews with persons who knew Gould, revealing in all their nakedness the impossibility of the task Gould's executors had set Friedrich. "Gerry Graffman recalls meeting Gould several times in Berlin," writes Friedrich, "because the two pianists were both practicing in the Steinway building."

Q: But he often said that he practically never practiced at all.
A: He was practicing a lot.
Q: He was practicing a lot?
A: He was practicing a lot.

The variations on a personality which is always absent — an absence hypertrophied by Gould's withdrawal from the stage at the height of his career — include the child who started a newspaper called "The Daily Woof"; the virtuoso who, in 1957, gave triumphant recitals in Moscow and Leningrad; the hypochondriac addicted to Valium; the businessman who invested (sans broker) with extraordinary success; the technologist whose recordings were a myriad of splices; the legendary interpreter of Bach; the devotee of Strauss and Scriabin; the composer of quartets/documentaries/operas/fantasies; and the eccentric whose charge for dangerous driving was dismissed by the judge after Gould explained that his hands had not been on the wheel because he was conducting Mahler. The complete separation of these personalities is conveyed in a story told by Bob Phillips, whom Gould had invited to participate in the recording of "The Idea of North." When the session was over, Phillips asked, "Excuse me, Mr. Gould, but are you related to the pianist?" The complexity of Gould's talent is also illustrated by the catholicity of his discography, here compiled by Nancy Canning, and by the photographs of Gould.

One of the Goulds about whom Friedrich writes with considerable restraint is the media star, with all the attendant questions about drugs and sex. This inclusion is less to be lamented, however, than the omissions Friedrich makes. Principal among these are Gould the intellectual and Gould the Canadian, omissions all the more egregious because so intimately interrelated and so utterly central, as "The Idea of North" makes abundantly clear. Friedrich's admission, in the "Note on Sources," that on "the general subject of Canada, I have done my best to rise from a characteristically American state of abysmal ignorance to one of merely woeful ignorance" is accurate but inadequate. And to assess Gould's writing (based on a youthful sample) as the work of "an intelligent but rather inhibited literary amateur" ignores the fact that pedantry was always balanced by play. The 500 pages in *The Glenn Gould Reader* comprise an intricate body of musical and communication theory to which Friedrich does not address himself. Nor has Friedrich followed up the references made in the course of his interviews to Marshall McLuhan, who had a profound influence on Gould, or availed himself of the sugges-

tion in the Cott interviews that Gould saw his enterprise as Brechtian.

That Gould should return to the Goldbergs (the second version issued two weeks before his death in 1982, aged 50), that he should repudiate his 1955 recording of them, and that the second recording should be so radically different, is perfectly consistent with the refusal of interpretive mastery which characterizes Gould's *oeuvre*, a refusal which contradicts Friedrich's claim that Gould's ultimate concern was with control. Gould had in fact written, in "The Prospects of Recording," that, in "the best of all possible worlds," the "audience would be the artist and their life would be art." That the refusal of mastery extended, finally, to Gould's own life by no means supports Friedrich's contention that Gould is to be found only in his music. On the contrary: he is only to be found in his listeners.

RICHARD CAVELL

PORTRAITURE

KEITH GAREBIAN, *William Hutt: A Theatre Portrait*. Mosaic, $24.95/14.95.

A DISTINGUISHED CLASSICAL ACTOR, William Hutt is best known for his career with the Stratford Festival, a career which began with the Festival's inception in 1953. Introducing the book as "a theatre portrait rather than a full-fledged biography," and asserting his "belief that the actor is the man," Garebian sets out "to determine what has made Hutt the kind of actor he is today." In subject-matter the project is the first of its kind in Canada. Garebian traces chronologically the major events in Hutt's personal and professional life, beginning with his upbringing in Toronto in the 1920s and ending with Hutt's recent achievements at Stratford. In addition to documenting Hutt's involvement with Stratford, Garebian describes the evolution of and Hutt's participation in three other theatrical companies: Hart House, the Canadian Players, and the Canadian Repertory Theatre. Hutt's acting engagements in England and the United States between 1959 and 1966 are also recorded, as are his personal and professional interactions with fellow-actors, directors, and producers, chief among them Noel Coward, Sybil Thorndike, Frances Hyland, Christopher Plummer, Edward Albee, and John Gielgud.

The book's strength lies in the wealth of factual information it provides not only about the career of one of Canada's leading actors but also about the development of a national theatre. Particularly useful is the chapter on "Canadian Players (1954-1959)" chronicling Hutt's and other actors' struggles during Stratford's fledgling period when the seasons were so brief that "the actors had no way of exercising their craft as a group in the winter." These difficulties led to the formation of the Canadian Players, a small touring company aimed at exposing Canadian actors to good direction and live spectators, and at proving to both Canadian and American audiences that "Canada could produce good theatre." Also valuable are the numerous entries from Hutt's diaries and Garebian's interviews with Hutt and other Canadian artists such as Robin Phillips, Frances Hyland, and Timothy Findley. But while the subject-matter of the book is potentially indispensable to Canadian theatre history, Garebian's style is ponderous and chatty, his inquiry too frequently dwindling to a barrage of anecdotes and theatre gossip. A case in point concerns the question of Hutt's "star" status. Garebian never fully addresses why it took so long for Hutt to gain the prestige and notoriety that he craved. Although he was often praised for his technical skill, drawing reviews for his minor Shakespearean parts and for his leading roles in Noel Coward's plays, many of his

performances were faulted for lacking warmth and imagination. In the winter of 1964 Hutt "felt unjustly neglected" in New York for being cast in a supporting role in Albee's *Tiny Alice*. Garebian explains that "some American actors thought him an eccentric actor because of his peculiar energy and style, which allied a Method instinctiveness with a classical technique." Instead of exploring this observation fully in the context of the evolution and critical assessment of Hutt's acting style, Garebian deflects the issue, describing instead Hutt's moodiness and drinking bouts in the bars of New York City. Many anecdotes are easily forgettable; others verge on the presumptuous, as does the description of the student-actors in the Hart House theatre group with whom Hutt sometimes socialized and who "liked to sit around and philosophize about the meaning of the plays, though none of them really understood what they were talking about" until Hutt explained the plays to them.

The absence of full documentation of citations from various primary sources makes for frustrating reading, as do frequent typographical errors. One is left wishing for a more scholarly and probing theatre portrait.

VIVIANA COMENSOLI

FULFORD

ROBERT FULFORD, *Best Seat in the House: Memoirs of a Lucky Man*. Collins, $26.95.

CANADIAN POPULAR CULTURE remains as it was when I was a child: print, radio and television journalism. Robert Fulford is an anomaly in that culture. He is not a character in the way that Barbara Amiel, Jack Webster, or Alan Fotheringham is. He is not part of the Canadian conscience as Pierre Berton and June Callwood are. He lacks the boyish charm of Peter Gzowski and the grand ambition of Peter Newman. He is an important figure in Canadian culture without a personality that is clearly recognizable.

When we think of Fulford we think of the institutions with which he has been associated: the Toronto *Star*, *Maclean's*, the CBC, *Saturday Night*, and TV Ontario. Oddly enough, this memoir shows that he does too. Much of the book deals with the ordinary world of Toronto journalism in the last three and a half decades. Old colleagues are remembered fondly and not so fondly. There are accounts of Fulford's part in one of the many "golden" periods at *Maclean's*, of his late-night television interview program on the CBC in the late 1960s and of his constant difficulties in keeping *Saturday Night* alive during nearly two decades of editing it. More interesting than the journalist's memoirs, though, are the chapters devoted to important influences on his intellectual life. These are three: Marshall McLuhan, Margaret Atwood, and Glenn Gould.

Fulford has always been an explainer, a simplifier. He takes difficult ideas and makes them clear. During the 1960s he vulgarized the work of Marshall McLuhan. Many of us had our first inkling of what McLuhan meant from Fulford (as we later did of Arthur Kroker and the *Canadian Journal for Political and Social Theory* group in Montreal). Fulford has an inquiring mind, a good sense of intellectual fashion and a skill for making his reader go off and read more. This has always been his greatest value to us.

He does have his blind spots, and they tend to coalesce around the figure of Margaret Atwood. Her nationalism and feminism, although of interest to Fulford, combine to confuse him. They have slowly helped to move him from American-style liberalism (J.F.K. and black jazz) to an American-style neo-conservatism (Allan Bloom and free trade). It is very hard for him to understand just

what Atwood's appeal is. I think it is very simple: she is our E. M. Forster.

She writes about the large educated Canadian middle class in a way that simultaneously picks us apart and charms us. We read her because she delights us as she criticizes us. Few Canadian writers actually write about middle-class life in a way that interests the middle class. Atwood does, and she uses her feminism and nationalism (carefully and with irony) to "educate" us about our dealings with each other as individuals and as citizens. She constantly contrasts the way in which we see ourselves (or are made to see ourselves) with the way in which we act. Her books always suggest the possibility that our notion of ourselves and our actions can one day connect. Not the heart and the mind, but the image and the actor. Fulford sees little of this. For him any explanation of "celebrity" will do aside from the quite clear one that Atwood is a moralist who writes books that help intelligent Canadians understand the world they are in.

Fulford knew Glenn Gould when they were children. His chapter on Gould describes their friendship. He tells the usual stories about Gould's eccentricity (noting that Gould seemed quite conscious of it from an early age). More interesting is the way in which Gould became, for Fulford, a way out of his little world of school and family. Gould's world was larger, more abstract, and less ordinarily conventional than anything Fulford knew. Before Gould Fulford was a Toronto boy. After Gould he was a thinking boy who lived in Toronto. Understandably Fulford attributes his love of music to Gould, but a good case might be made for connecting Gould with Fulford's later championing of Canadian abstract expressionism. Gould's preoccupation with music dissociated from the instrument making it, and Fulford's fascination with painting that tries to alienate subjects seem somewhat related. The influence of a childhood friend, especially in matters of taste, is often very strong. Gould was one of those friends who transform the way the world is seen, as well as heard.

Fulford remains even with this memoir an enigma. In recent years he has become known as a television interviewer. He carefully reads the most recent books written by someone and then interviews him or her for an hour. He asks the questions we might want to ask. He clarifies and simplifies the answers he gets. Now, as always, he is explaining things to us and sending us off to read for ourselves. He is useful and important without being a media personality. May there be more of his sort in the future.

LORNE ELLASCHUK

LITTLE BOTTLES

KEN MITCHELL, *Through the Nan Da Gate.* Thistledown, $20.00/8.95.

KEN MITCHELL'S collection of poetry is a visual/textual collage recording his experiences as a Foreign Expert at China's Nanjing University, colloquially referred to as *Nan Da*, in the early 1980s. As Mitchell says in his introduction, the project began as a slide show he created to introduce his Western friends and colleagues to China (*Zhongguo* in Chinese), the elusive Middle Kingdom that had only recently been reopened after years of social and political turmoil and concealment from the rest of the world. Ultimately, he transformed the show's commentary into a poetic narrative illustrated by a series of candid black and white photographs of typical Chinese scenes and characters. The product is a diplomatic, perceptively written poetic documentation of a complex and puzzling country.

Mitchell adeptly presents many of the key cultural issues, customs, and attrac-

tions which simultaneously intrigue and mystify the foreigner. Crucial to the understanding of the Chinese way of life, for example, are the issues Mitchell deals with in the poems entitled "Face" and "Contradictions."

"No mere etiquette," "Face," a "fundamental principle" upon which the dignity and reputation of the individual rests, is critical in relationships between workers and their leaders, family members and friends. Actually, the unschooled foreigner in China may have great difficulty perceiving the complexity of *face*, an eastern phenomenon whose negative aspects Mitchell tactfully has not dealt with. The poet, however, aptly points out the irony that, at present, foreigners in China retain face whereas twenty years ago, in a campaign to end foreign interference in national social and political matters, Mao Zedong's Red Guards were "screaming for imperialist blood," the blood of people such as today's foreign experts who would have been labelled foreign devils, and their Chinese friends, who would have automatically been regarded as allies and, therefore, counterrevolutionaries. As Mitchell has illustrated, the foreigner in China "tolerates close scrutiny / Wherever he goes," and perhaps especially during the early wave of post-Cultural Revolution foreign aid when Mitchell first taught in China. At that time, teachers like Mitchell would have been treated with a mixture of the hospitality afforded to distinguished guests, the fascination of a novelty and the inbred suspicion born of the closed-door years of social and political turmoil.

Recent socio-economic problems in China have given rise to the dichotomous love/hate attitude of the Chinese public toward foreigners, who are generally perceived as stronger, richer, and freer and, thus, may retain face simply because they are regarded by many as potential sources of sales revenue, foreign currency, aid, or the overseas connections necessary to help them study or do business abroad. In a period of drastic political destabilization, foreigners within the country might very well be the first to become the object of suspicion and mistrust. Since Chinese government policies and attitudes fluctuate so often, they are not taken by the people to be hard and steadfast.

Recognizing the fundamental contradictions being an integral part of life in China, Mitchell's perceptive "contradictions" focuses primarily on the clash between old and new, rich and poor. China's current trend of rapid economic development has made these dichotomies of past/present, affluency/poverty even more acute. Foreign and domestic investment in the trade and tourism industries has turned many urban areas into gigantic construction sites upon which luxury international hotels and corporate buildings have quickly sprung up. It is not surprising, therefore, to see an impoverished "fungus of squatters' shacks," evidence of a serious housing problem, "against the American Embassy wall," symbol of the "corpulent" West, or "sweatshops" dwarfed by "Shanghai's imperial Jin Jiang Hotel."

Similarly, China's recent modernization program has produced a rash of rural and urban millionaires, a phenomenon commonly referred to as the "10,000 yuan [per year] family," (1 yuan = Cdn$3). This nouveau-riche class, coupled with foreign trade workers whose salaries may double, even quadruple, the national average, has created a new breed of consumers whose increased buying power sharply contradicts that of the average person. In the winter of 1987, I saw a woman's pullover sweater, adorned with the head of a fur-bearing animal and trendy sequined designs, selling for well over 1,000 yuan in a Guangzhou boutique. My students suggested that perhaps a movie actress, highly paid model, or a

film studio might purchase it. In a nation in which the average salary runs at about 110 yuan per month, commodities such as this are, in fact, becoming more noticeable in major economic centres such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Special Economic Zones like Shenzhen, situated on the Hong Kong/mainland China border. Thus, the most blatant, harshly felt contradiction lies in the very fact that while China's new wave of millionaires may have plenty of money to spend on luxury items, the majority of the population still lives at a mere sustenance level.

Demonstrating students and workers have pointed out that the roots of the contradictions within post-Maoist China rest within China's leadership, which preaches patience, hard work, frugality, honesty, and unfailing support of the current modernization program on the part of the nation's more than one billion impoverished subjects. The leaders hoard desperately needed foreign currency in overseas bank accounts and propagate the "guanxi" system of cultivating and maintaining relationships that have exacerbated the nation's "back-door" phenomenon which dictates that acquiring good jobs and certain privileges depends on one's connections rather than on qualifications and capabilities.

Given this fact, it is not surprising that the common people have begun to outgrow the attitude of subservience cultivated during Mao Zedong's regime, and have clamoured for freedom, democracy, and an end to corruption, thus rejecting the submissive attitude illustrated in Mitchell's poem, "Ren Li":

> Work is salvation,
> work is therapy.
> Work defines, liberates.
> and entertains.
> In China, work is life.

Young people, especially, want to find their own jobs, have control over their own futures and earn more money in order to cope with drastic inflation and afford luxury items like television sets, stereos, refrigerators, washing machines, and other quality household goods. Fewer and fewer people are willing to accept the lot of Lao Fan, "the proud janitor... [l]iving alone in a third floor garret" who "sees his family only twice a year" and is "so grateful to the party / for his plum assignment."

While Mitchell's book may seem outdated in the light of events in 1989, it is still well worth reading since it touches on key aspects of Chinese life, culture, and sensations, thus providing a useful introduction to this complex, profound country. The photographs offer valuable illustrations of the psychological, social, and cultural phenomenon Mitchell writes about. While, in places, the text may seem a touch too diplomatic, it is, of course, important that foreigners writing about China avoid saying anything that might tarnish or, even worse, damage the reputation of Chinese citizens and institutions, particularly since official policies often fluctuate. Moreover, at the time Mitchell wrote this book, China was just emerging from the terrible years of the Cultural Revolution and thus the people would undoubtedly have been more cautious in dealing with topics considered politically sensitive.

Mitchell's poems are charged with energy emanating from his deep love for and devotion to the Chinese people. His speculation as to the direction China would take in the post-Gang of Four era is hauntingly ironic: "What will follow next? / Free Enterprise? Marxism? / A new emperor?" Discontented students and workers would affirm, without hesitation, that Deng Xiao Ping, head of China's military and, therefore, the nation's highest-ranking leader, is China's newest emperor. In the 1989 demonstrations, cries of "Down with [Premier] Li Peng and Deng Xiao Ping" and big char-

acter posters bearing the words, "Deng Xiao Ping, my child is hunger-striking. What is your child doing?" (referring to Deng's penchant for securing exorbitant privileges for his allegedly corrupt children) illustrate the common people's desire for an end to this demoralized era in Chinese history. Because "xiao ping" means "little bottle" in tones slightly different from those used to pronounce Deng's name, many people smashed glass bottles in a blatantly symbolic gesture, a marked change from the post-Gang of Four era when he first came to power, at which time they put small bottles in their front windows to show their support for him.

In his poem, "Mao Zedong," Mitchell states, "Chairman Mao passes into history" after his "portrait is gone — / from every classroom / every public building . . ." Could the poet have ever imagined that in the spring of 1989 a resurgence of intentionally ironic pro-Maoist sentiment, aimed at denouncing Deng as the most corrupt of the two dictators, would inspire people to wear Mao buttons left over from the Cultural Revolution, when everyone had to wear them, on their lapels and carry huge Mao portraits in demonstrations?

SANDRA FILIPPELLI

HESITATION

ERNEST HEKKANEN, *The Violent Lavender Beast.* Thistledown, $14.95.

THIS COLLECTION of six short stories, the second from Ernest Hekkanen, continues in the Gothic vein, with a twist to every tale. The beast within, so carefully masked most of the time in the characters and settings about which he writes in concise detail, is the real subject of these stories, and, as each story progresses, we see its features with increasing clarity. His writing makes articulate the area between dream and reality, and, without going into the realm of the supernatural, Hekkanen takes us into the dark fears and haunting images created by minds under pressure. His themes are the clash between expectations and individual limits, the search for the self and "the murky basement, where things rotted in dark corners, furtively, without being noticed."

His stories are well crafted variations on classic Gothic themes, with his characters shown trapped in repressive family or job circumstances, prisons of the mind (as in the title story) and heart ("The Wooden Arms of the Angel"), and the familiar suddenly turned ominously strange. He uses shock openings, as in "When Death Comes Home to Roost," to startle us and make us see the richness of the images he uses and makes resonate throughout individual tales.

The tone for the collection is set in "View Across the Meadow," a tale that conforms to the mythic pattern of the Fall, with the paradisal expectations of the two women on their island being met by scenes of pain, sadistic eroticism and death in a way reminiscent of D. H. Lawrence's poem "Love on the Farm." The mix of the erotic and deadly is conveyed in the sentence "She felt carved out inside, as though someone had reached into her and had relieved her of all desire, all life," a sentence repeated almost word for word in the last, title story, "The Violent Lavender Beast." The effect of this is all too cyclical: Hekkanen's vision shows life itself as a fearsome, enervating, nasty process, where cruelty manifests itself as a powerful force between humans and animals, between humans, and particularly between men and women. The men in these tales are sympathetically realized characters; the women are shown as erotically either fascinating, like Millie in "Death Comes Home to Roost," or unattractive, like Ethel in "The Wooden

Arms of the Angel," but above all antagonistic, critical, and powerless, even in the face of the annihilation of their males.

Perhaps the least successful of the stories is "Cadillacs and Chevies Don't Mix." Again, the characters are finely developed, and the narrative viewpoint is consistent, that of a child hero in the line of descent from Ray Bradbury and Stephen King. This child is no innocent; he wants to preserve his family's status quo, and, to do so, he manipulates people shamelessly. But the tale does not go into the darkly resonating areas explored in the other stories, and forms a weak link in an otherwise thematically coherent collection.

While Hekkanen's writing is in the realistic tradition, the aura of the taboo, the fantasies of the mind, the conventions and the transgressions of them haunt the reader. The themes of descent and loss of identity sound familiar notes, and, while Hekkanen is working within a well-developed Gothic convention, he tunes it well to his own particular, delicate song.

TANYA GARDINER-SCOTT

THEORY & PRACTICE

SHARI BENSTOCK, ed., *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*. University of North Carolina Press, $34.95/10.95.

MARGARET ATWOOD, *Cat's Eye*. McClelland and Stewart, $24.95.

BY SOME FORTUNATE COINCIDENCE the two books I am about to review came across my desk at the same time, and the timing could not have been better. Reading Margaret Atwood's most recent novel, *Cat's Eye*, together with the essays in *The Private Self* provided me with a test case for the theory while, at the same time, illuminating important aspects of *Cat's Eye* and alerting me to similar features in her other novels.

The Private Self, edited by Shari Benstock, is not the first critical study of autobiography or of women's autobiography. The twelve essays collected in the book do, however, provide a critical range, depth, and variety that is both stimulating and satisfying. Benstock separates the essays into two equal groups — one devoted to theory, the other to practice. The practical section contains six fine studies by Patricia Meyer-Spacks, Mitzi Myers, Deborah Kaplan, James Holt McGavran, Jr., Joanne M. Braxton, and Nancy Walker who discuss a wide range of actual "life-writing" by eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century women. The "life-writing" under consideration includes the early "pedagogic" works of Mary Wollstonecraft, the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Jane Austen, and others, Dorothy Wordsworth's "Journals," *The Journal of Charlotte L. Forten, 1854-1862* by a black American poet best known for this edition of her diaries, and the "private" writings of Emily Dickinson, Alice James, and Virginia Woolf. My only regret here is that Benstock did not solicit an essay on a Canadian writer (Emily Carr and Susanna Moodie are fascinating examples).

Omissions aside, these essays provide abundant riches for anyone interested in a particular figure and convincing evidence that, as Mitzi Myers says, "women's life studies depart significantly from typical male patterns." Nevertheless, it is the theoretical section of the book that I found most important. Taken together, the six essays by Shari Benstock, Susan Stanford Friedman, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Kathleen Woodward, Jane Marcus, and Felicity A. Nussbaum provide a thoughtful exploration of various political, conceptual, methodological, and narratological challenges faced by women who, for one reason or another, decide to write about themselves, despite prevailing stereotypes of gender, race, and class

which create real obstacles for the woman writer. The work of some of these female autobiographers, from the antitextual classicist Jane Harrison to the flamboyant extrovert Marie Bashkirtseff, from that *éminence grise* of feminism Simone de Beauvoir to the doubly marginalized discourse of women of colour, provides the critic with the "gynocentric space" necessary to theorize women's life-writing.

In a collection that has so much to offer, it is somewhat invidious to single out one essay for attention, but the one that struck me as central to *The Private Self* is Friedman's "Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice." To begin with, Friedman carefully analyzes the model of autobiography established by Georges Gusdorf in his 1956 essay "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography." Needless to say, Gusdorf's model is based on male authority, male experience, and male example, and the model does not match autobiographies by women. In her essay, Friedman argues that the political and psychological assumptions underlying Gusdorf's individualistic male model lead to the misreading and marginalization of women's texts, and she goes on to describe an alternative female model, based upon the work of Nancy Chodorow and Sheila Rowbotham, that foregrounds collective and relational principles. The model of female autobiography, she argues, must reflect the experiences of "identification, interdependence and community" that characterize women's lives and, hence, women's literary self-representations. Friedman's argument is too complex to summarize in a few words, but she, together with the other theorists of women's life-writing, present useful paradigms for the reading and study of women's texts and force us to question the assumptions underlying the basic nature of the autobiographical act.

In "Authorizing the Autobiographical," Shari Benstock concludes that the

> self that would reside at the center of the text is decentered — and often is absent altogether — in women's autobiographical texts. The very requirements of the genre are put into question by the limits of gender — which is to say, because these two terms are etymologically linked, genre itself raises questions about gender.

The generic requirements, paradigms, and models that emerge from *The Private Self* are useful, not only for the reading of life-writings as such, but for fictional autobiographies as well. Because life-writing necessarily attempts the construction and representation of a Self, it forces both writer and reader to recognize the interrelationship of gender and genre. Works like Alice Munro's *The Lives of Girls and Women*, Joan Barfoot's *Dancing in the Dark*, or Anne Hébert's *Kamouraska* take on new meaning, acquire new power when seen in the multiple frame of female autobiographical fictions.

Cat's Eye is Margaret Atwood's seventh novel, and coming after her last, that *tour de force The Handmaid's Tale*, with its fascinating, horrifying vision of the future, it seems a sharp reversal, an about face into the past. But the apparent shift in style, temporal direction, and subject in *Cat's Eye* is just that — apparent — for like much of Atwood's fiction this novel explores the ways in which the past makes us what we are and the challenges to identity and self-representation faced by a female protagonist.

Atwood has suggested that, although this novel is not *her* autobiography, it is closer to her own life than any of her previous novels. Certainly, it is cast in the form of autobiography, and the person who is recalling the past that made her is Elaine Risley, a successful painter at the height of her career. Autobiography is, by definition, a retrospective mode, and the occasion for the narrative is Risley's return to Toronto, where she grew up, to attend the opening of a major retrospective of her paintings at a local gallery.

Being back in Toronto, which for Risley has many of the qualities of a city of dreadful night, triggers disturbing memories from her childhood and adolescence: memories of her family abandoning their cheerful nomadic existence in northern Ontario, where her scientist father pursued his research on tent caterpillars, to move to a raw Toronto subdivision; memories of her initiation into the sadistic rituals of being a little girl in a group of middle-class peers to which she does not quite belong; memories of one particular "friend," Cordelia, whose psychological terrorism forced little Elaine into one of the ominous Toronto ravines where the "bad men" lurked. Cordelia still haunts Risley, all these years later; she is, indeed, the most enigmatic, troubling character in the book, a kind of alter-ego or evil muse for Risley.

If Risley was irrevocably shaped by this past experience (these memories comprise over half the book and mark some of the finest writing in Atwood's *oeuvre*), her retrospective does not stop at the age of nine or ten; she goes on to recall her decision to be a painter, her first affair, her first marriage, her first exhibitions in Toronto and later in Vancouver where she, rather like Morag Gunn in Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*, has moved as a single mother to escape a bad marriage and pursue her career.

Now, back in this haunted city which she finds as smug and repugnant as ever, Risley revisits the scenes, one might even say the archaeological sites, of her past. Most notable among these, because it is/was the site of greatest trauma, is the ravine, but on this visit she realizes that the terror and vision she experienced there as a child cannot be recuperated. Perhaps, by visiting the place, she has exorcized the ghosts of her imagination.

In any case, these memories have already served her well for they have provoked the powerful images of her canvases, the same ones that are hung for this retrospective exhibition. And this is one of the major successes of *Cat's Eye* for me: Atwood has created a convincing, moving portrait of an artist, not a writer but a painter. Risley's paintings come to life in the mind's eye through Atwood's powerful visual imagery until they seem inevitable, exactly right, trembling with the kind of subdued violence and shock waves that I find in Alex Colville or in the representationally clear yet magically disturbing surrealist canvases of Remedios Varo.

All Risley's paintings draw upon objects and people from her past (the first lover, the husband, the mother of one of her so-called friends), but the most resonant of them is called "Unified Field Theory," and it represents her vision of the Virgin of Lost Things, that sightless figure of a woman, roughly modelled on the Virgin Mary, but draped in black and cradling a huge cat's eye marble against her breast who appeared to her in the ravine and gave her the courage to crawl back to safety. This figure, hovering over the ravine (or, in the painting, over the rim of the earth) is a compound of witch, goddess, Virgin, and seer; she is the source of mystery, threat, comfort, and power, a beneficent muse (and, as such, the antithesis of Cordelia), a mother and a mirror of the psyche.

This figure should be familiar to Atwood's readers because she represents female power and empowerment, and Atwood has evoked her before in the shape of the mother in *Surfacing*, the triple goddess in *Lady Oracle*, Circe in *You Are Happy*, and Moodie in *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*. Nevertheless, reviewers of *Cat's Eye* are already claiming that here, at last, Atwood has moved beyond feminism. William French, for example, quotes Risley's critical observations on a feminist/lesbian group of painters in Van-

couver as evidence. But this is what she says:

> Women know too much, they can neither be deceived nor trusted. I can understand why men are afraid of them.... They want to improve me. At times I feel defiant: what right have they to tell me what to think? I am not Woman.

To consider the ramifications of these comments is far beyond the scope of a review. Suffice it to say that Atwood's artist is not rejecting feminism or women, but articulating a space that will allow her to be fully human and herself, and that is the *sine qua non* of feminism.

To be sure, Elaine Risley is no Marie Bashkirtseff (that stridently individualistic painter whose 1912 autobiography shocked an Edwardian world). She is a *Canadian* artist, and her autobiography is rich in the nuances of growing up female and Canadian through the forties and fifties. And *Cat's Eye* is a complex, subtle, quiet yet extraordinary prose evocation of time, place, and sensibility. It belongs in a line with *Surfacing* and *Life Before Man* in its probing of the past, its attention to realistic conventions and its Canadian locale (both the "north" and the urban dead-end of Toronto). Finally, however, I think it goes well beyond these novels; there is a depth here, a wisdom, and yes, a celebration of life and art that needs time to reflect upon.

Perhaps more important, *Cat's Eye* is an autobiographical fiction by a woman (Risley, *not* Atwood) who does not see her life as the purposeful development of some egocentric, publicly oriented design. Her story is pieced together from private memories and crippling self-doubts; it is a life reflected in art and further re-duplicated in the verbal mosaic of its telling.

SHERRILL GRACE

MYTHS & PARADIGMS

FRED CANDELARIA, *Chinese Chamber Music.* Cacanadada, n.p.

LLOYD ABBEY, *Selections: 1959-1989.* Cacanadada, $12.95.

HEATHER SPEARS, *The Word for Sand.* Wolsak and Wynn, n.p.

BOTH FRED CANDELARIA and Lloyd Abbey use mythopoeia, but their approaches differ: *Chinese Chamber Music* brings us closer to remote history or legend/myth, and *Selections: 1959-1989* manufactures homespun myths. While Candelaria dramatizes an historic-legendary relationship between Marco Polo and Li Ch'ing Chao, Lloyd Abbey creates myth-allegories around such sea creatures as blue whales, dolphins, and squid. In contrast to these poets, Heather Spears in *The Word for Sand* employs meticulous realism reminiscent of the still-life painting which she presents to the reader as paradigms of meaning.

Unlike *The Word for Sand* which has a strong visual impact on the reader, *Chinese Chamber Music* works through cadence as the mind's eye completes the effects which words and silences have set in motion. In "Li Ch'ing Chao," Marco Polo's attraction to this Chinese lady is idealized and intensified as it is unrealizable:

> he hears her move behind the screen
> but cannot would not see
> through silk & bamboo
> such delicacy
>
> her silence is a perfumed fence
> exciting blinded touch
> to read the unwritten
> & lift the latch

In "Fables of Marco Polo's Muse / & their Different Dictionaries," Candelaria, however, modulates this romanticism with a more practical element. Explaining the failure of their relationship in terms of the language barrier, the poet remarks that

Polo was in danger not only of mistaking the "four shades" of Mandarin and Li's meaning but of "losing completely his head—"

> . . . so forces
> of different circumstance and language
>
> silently wedged them finally apart:
>
> marco back to caucasian commerce
> in things & lady ch'ing-chao to asian
> contemplations of yin and yang

Considering recent occurrences in China, we read "Cultural Revolution" with added attention. This poem, which provides an epilogue to the Marco Polo–Ch'ing Chao sequence, recalls the destruction of the once magnificent Chinese Empire with the advent of Maoism:

> the red guard blushed deep as shame
> but did it anyway
> aside he beat conscience (a fiction?
> & centuries
> of tradition to burn his father's books
> & scrolls
> then rolled the frail old bones
> out onto the road
> to sweep clean the street of the past

While Candelaria brings Marco Polo's experience, however dream-like, within imagination's reach, and thus naturalizes legend, Abbey's creative myths shape existing reality. In "Blue Whales over the Mid-Atlantic Ridge," the poet presents the Atlantic ocean floor as "God's spine" and the blue whales as riding His backbone while "their blue heads / retain / his rivulets / of blood." Referring to whale oil (used to fuel lamps) within the whale's head, Abbey ends with the suggestion that insight is immanent in these great creatures:

> each whale an arc
> of night and skin
> with light inside
> with light inside —
> so sings the Blue Whale
> to his bride

The description of the "Blue Whale" singing "to his bride" shifts the context to a domestic level, and Abbey thus parodies the traditional lover's preoccupation with unanswerable abstractions. With self-irony, he mocks his own contemplation at the same time that he maintains its underlying seriousness.

Writing about his wife's cancer, Abbey shifts away from myth-making. In "Home from Hospital: Holiday," the speaker describes his sudden fastidiousness, leaping up to pull out an odd weed when he and his wife were about to set out in the car for a holiday. As he explains to her, he associates the presumptuous weed with her cancer and, in eradicating the weed, he feels that he can "try to will [her] cancer dead." Although this action is not myth-making, we see Abbey interested in the effective thinking that makes myth possible.

Heather Spears in *The Word for Sand* employs detail with a similar incisiveness and with a selectivity that is powerful in its evocation. In "Undiagnosed," the speaker with an artist's precision describes a deformed baby:

> He was all wrong, lavished with black hair
> and lashes denser than my pencil trusts.
> He had no arms.
> Across the strange slur of his face
> grief was written with a perfect hand.
> He knew, it was where he began.
> Even his parents' look has less authority.

Unable to look on the child after birth, the mother-speaker only gradually adapts to her grief and asks her husband "to see him for [her], let his look / founder in [him], whatever [she] did not dare." Acting as a paradigm for injustice as we project those terms on an amoral universe, the poem affects us profoundly. Here Spears demonstrates not only her craft but her powers of empathy and her insight.

Similarly, in "Collaborations, On prematurity," the speaker represents a stillborn fetus as subsuming the cycle of life and death:

The foetal pose recalls
in wrist, marrow, shank
its death in old age: sunk eye,
and timid retracted jaw
even to the stare
that sees what occurred,
and will occur —

Like Yorick's skull, the dead fetus makes clear to the speaker that life's spirit cannot outlive the physical base that supports it: "between these limits / its span is contained . . . nothing / outlives this, nothing."

While Candelaria and Abbey mythologize medieval history and the natural world respectively, Spears presents us with paradigms for reality. She discovers symbol and meaning in everyday examples — whether in the maternity ward, in the court, or at the West Edmonton Mall — that we do not notice or ignore with subconscious wilfulness.

GILLIAN HARDING-RUSSELL

CLASS & CUPCAKES

EDWARD PHILLIPS, *Hope Springs Eternal.* McClelland and Stewart, $19.95.

TOWARDS THE END of Edward Phillips' latest novel *Hope Spring Eternal* the main character, Harold Adams, compares himself to an automobile. Will the automobile break through the paper screen by which the winner of the race will be determined? Will Harold triumphantly cross the boundary — "the giant paper screen" — dividing the age of sixty-four from sixty-five? Harold, exhibiting a resilent, if grouchy, optimism, believes that he needs only "the right gas" to subvert the status quo (the attitude that life slows, or worse, stops, at sixty-five) and make it to the other side. And Harold persistently holds to this belief "in spite of all evidence to the contrary." The fact that Harold's sixty-fifth birthday coincides with a Gala Performance commemorating the retirement of the opera star Maria Esperanza — to whom Harold jokingly refers as Mary Hope — underlines this theme of hope in the face of retirement with which the novel is concerned.

Hope Springs Eternal is then a reassuring novel. But it is reassuring on the level of the TV commercial from which Harold borrows his automobile analogy; it is reassuring on the level of the magazines in a doctor's office (Harold has read them all from cover to cover); it is reassuring on the level of tips to pregnant women gleaned from such magazines ("if you wear large earrings they will draw attention to your face and no one will notice you are pregnant"); it is reassuring for Montreal's "Westmount matrons"; and it is reassuring for homosexuals if they happen to be from this milieu (Harold and Harold's son Logan) or associated with this milieu (Logan's boyfriend). It is not reassuring on the level of Maria Esperanza's Gala Performance (to which Harold pays scant attention); it is not reassuring on the level of any sort of social change or reform; and it is not reassuring on the level of sexual discrimination against women. In fact, the novel is disturbing as soon as it moves beyond the world of glossy magazines, television commercials, and upper middle-class privilege.

The plot of the novel is straightforward: sixty-four-year-old Harold is having difficulty coming to terms with his retirement, his advancing age, and his desire to find someone with whom to spend his time (preferably a lover); he is smoking too much, eating too much, drinking too much. When his cousin Zoe Austin-Blake asks him to chair the fund-raising committee for Maria Esperanza's Gala Performance his initial reluctance gives way to acceptance, and it is this role which fills Harold's idle hours. The obstacles encountered by Harold, and those by whom he is surrounded, are successfully resolved in good comic form in the final chapters:

Zoe Austin-Blake is matched with one of Harold's old friends; Logan's relationship with his boyfriend improves; Elizabeth marries Harold's housekeeper's son, Donald; and Harold himself finds that "lightening can strike the same place twice" when an old relationship is revived.

Less than reassuring aspects of the novel are conveyed in its élitism and sexism. Phillips' characters, for example, act with all the "snobberies and infighting" *and* self-righteousness of the privileged. Harold's opinionated dismissal of class-levelling is indicative of his character, a character which sometimes achieves its greatest humour in precisely this sort of class conviction. But I think we can still ask: are the petty snobberies and infighting produced by class-consciousness entertaining for the reader to observe as she or he reads this novel? Speaking to Elizabeth, Harold says: "One of the advantages of being middle as opposed to lower class is that we can speak our minds without having to quarrel." The "we" is complicitous and self-congratulatory; and because this sort of smugness is not criticized within the novel (*we* are expected to laugh), it is in a sense implicitly legitimated.

The novel is equally disturbing in its sexism which is most blatant in the novel's weakest section when Harold advises Elizabeth to marry Donald. Elizabeth's options as perceived by Harold (and Elizabeth herself) are reduced to either "drifting" or marriage, and marriage is the "more promising alternative." Donald's place of residence (Calgary) should not trouble Elizabeth, asserts Harold, because she will be absorbed caring for the children that *her* place of residence will be immaterial. These comments are consonant with Harold's advice to his son Logan: "remember: the women on your committee don't really work; they just want to be kept busy. There's a difference. Send them on treasure hunts." Despite the fact that Zoe generates the sexism by insisting that the "committee will require a man" and Phillips is explicit in not characterizing Harold as progressive in any way, I find the sexual ethics informing this novel dubious at best: men are hard-working and industrious, women are interested in gossip and cupcakes.

As a social comedy of manners *Hope Springs Eternal* is an entertaining, if light, read. Nevertheless when the title of the novel affirms that hope springs eternal one is justified in posing the unsettling question: for whom?

BARBARA LECKIE

PLURALISM

MILTON ACORN, *Hundred Proof Earth*. Ed. and intro. James Deahl. Aya Press, $8.00.

Hundred Proof Earth is the second volume in the "Aya Press Acorn Series," edited by James Deahl. Although the first volume published by Aya Press was *I Shout Love and Other Poems* (1987), Deahl's commitment to publishing Acorn really began with *The Uncollected Acorn* (Deneau Publishers, 1987), a volume he undertook to work on with Acorn just before the poet's untimely death in 1986. *Hundred Proof Earth*, with its "thirty-three recently discovered poems," some of them very slight, amounts to a kind of addendum to the 135 poems of *The Uncollected Acorn*. Nonetheless this lovingly produced book is an important addition to the corpus of Acorn's work, not only for the few fine poems it contains, but for the very important essay that it publishes for the first time.

"My Philosophy of Poetry" begins by embracing Sartre's "proposition of choice" (we must continuously choose our lives, not only for ourselves, but for all humanity). Acorn argues that we must see to it that "each choice enriches one spirituality, so that one might have the

equipment to face the next — more difficult — choice." A crucial consequence of this moral predisposition, he insists, is to weaken the assumption "that the means may justify the ends." That is an important point of origin for a poet who insists we read him as a committed revolutionary, for it works to safeguard both his poetry and his politics from the temptation to tailor specific, concrete responses to suit the demands of generalized, abstract goals.

Equally important is his championing of pluralism, of the differences among poets. He does not insist that all poets write as he does, and asks only in return that we grant politics to be a legitimate subject for poetry: "I don't urge other poets to be political. I think and feel politically: other people do not." This essay is more than a good introduction to Acorn's poetics (its subtle, intelligent, and altogether reasonable pronouncements on metaphor, form, and political commitment should counteract any tendencies to dismiss him as a vulgar ideologue or to indulge him as an unsophisticated folk-poet from the Island); it is a good introduction to the issue of poetics in our time, period.

There is a perhaps unexpected reference in Acorn's essay to the "spirituality" of his poetic endeavours. This idealist note is seized upon in James Deahl's intriguing introduction, which cites C. S. Lewis as an important influence in "an underlying order, or truth, or beauty that the act of poetry might uncover." Deahl's account of Acorn's response to sex and nature is full of terms like "Heaven, fallen man, holiness, sin and grace." But whatever may be the case for Acorn's poetry in general, the thirty-three poems in this volume, which span almost the whole of his career, are insufficient to convince one that, in any significant sense, Acorn should be read as a Christian ("of the gnostic variety"). The case for a hidden order immanent in nature seems a more promising line of inquiry; it is certainly consistent with Acorn's self-identification with Lampman (also a socialist whose relationship to Christianity is a slippery matter). The importance of *Hundred Proof Earth*, aside from its welcome publication of new poems — which are representative and contain no surprises — is that it sends us back to the main body of Acorn's work in search of a poet whose vision and craft are more complex than is commonly believed.

LARRY MCDONALD

RURAL POETRY

IAN MCCULLOCH, *The Efficiency of Killers*. Penumbra Press, $9.95.

PETER CHRISTENSEN, *To Die Ascending*. Thistledown, $22.00/9.95.

DAVE MARGOSHES, *Walking at Brighton*. Thistledown, $22.00/9.95.

IAN MCCULLOCH'S *The Efficiency of Killers* dwells on the past and on the peculiar patterns that memory traces. On the first page of the long poem "The Efficiency of Killers," the persona moves from the present, to yesterday, to his childhood, the clink of a beer bottle as it rolls against the pavement the catalyst for the act of remembering:

> Across the street
> the door to a
> half-ton opens,
> a beer bottle rolls out.
>
> It strikes the pavement
> with a pure, curious tone
> in an afternoon that is
> devoid of resonance.

McCulloch's three-part volume is ponderous and somewhat melancholy; but the heavy tone works because it sustains itself and is often deeply affecting. This poet is very skilled at conveying anguish, pain, desire, without the power of his feelings overwhelming his poetry. His style is anec-

dotal but also meditative. He understands how the small gestures of the past gain a reverenced, perhaps false importance in the mind of the one who recalls.

While McCulloch is not interested in a formal poetry, he is highly conscious of diction. His diction, however, is his downfall. It is not that McCulloch is effusive or highly metaphorical; to the contrary, he does not pursue beautiful images or sounds. Too often, though, his diction draws attention to itself at the cost of the poem:

> Remember the agonic sphere
> of adolescence
> the dialogue of the initiate
> that propelled itself
> on the momentum of decipher
> and discovery.

McCulloch's poems seem truer when they are sung in a lower key, through language compatible with the experience he describes. The weaker poems are those written in the highly self-conscious rhetoric of the now well-read poet. When he uses words like "desquamation," "agonic," "aphoric," and phrases like "paregoric tendency" and "inclement appetite," he is obviously experimenting with diction, but high abstraction and arbitrary difficulty of some of these words simply ring false.

Peter Christensen could not be less concerned with abstract diction. His *To Die Ascending* reminds one of Hemingway, but Hemingway's skill with language was of a very different kind. In Part I of Christensen's book, the short, hard-hitting lines, the tough words, the sweat, and the killing all create what some call a very male mythology:

> On hard lit afternoons
> elk fall
> are gutted
> dragged out of the bush.
>
> Without knowledge
> they convert the earth
> to flesh sinew bone
> hot life.
>
> They are the pantheists
>
> I the predator
> who accepts the gift
> from death, my patron.
>
> The sun stares
> through lime green poplars.
> The killing binds us together.

The poetry is forceful and unpretentious, but it seems too concerned with a rendering of events. Christensen's deliberately stilted lines not only mirror the toughness of the life they describe, they also thrill in it:

> I moved to the Ice River
> built seven cabins
> seven miles apart.
> Trapped four directions
> of the compass.
> Martin. Lynx. Coyote.
> I was not lonely
> the bush is my woman
> she gives me asylum.

We do not often see a poet relying on these sorts of myths anymore. In this book we have man in communion with nature; man battling nature; man proving himself through initiation (again and again). In Part II, the persona softens somewhat; the poems in this section show us the kind of sensitive observer one expects to find under the hard exterior.

Walking at Brighton is Dave Margoshes' first collection of poetry. One senses, though, that he has been writing poetry for a long time. A certain confidence comes through in this volume, in addition to a willingness to play with form (sometimes, alas, at too great a risk). As in many first volumes, a few poems are much better than the rest. Despite the uneven quality of the poems, Margoshes often demonstrates a fine ear:

> and lilacs in profusion, lilacs
> the color they should be, pale
> as the closing of eyes, soft as butter,
> in alley hedges tall as distant fathers,

What is most enjoyable in Margoshes' poetry is his clearly articulated love for life.

He is not a brooding poet but one who happily celebrates his lover, the August heat, "autumn walks at Brighton," his dog. He writes of everyday events completely unselfconsciously (his ego is not on the line). Margoshes' language is generally simple and clean, but he does often try to steer the direction a poem will take through introducing similes and conceits that cannot be sustained in the poem. As a result his lines occasionally seem clogged:

> This air we breathe
> doubles back on us,
> closes up a fist in the lung
> pounding your back to dislodge
> longing thick as bites of steak,
> shutting down the sucking weeds

These lines are striking, but they soon begin to flog the reader. This is to say nothing of some of the rather odd similes in this poem — "thick as bites of steak"! Margoshes is nevertheless a pleasure to read.

All three of the poets reviewed here write of rural life, and one can hear many of Canada's prairie poets in their work. Canada's "rural" writers (and I use "rural" very loosely) have learned from one another how to perfect the evocation of rural experience. One hopes now for a poetry perhaps a little more conscious of refinement in its composition.

CYNTHIA MESSENGER

MUSIC

JOHN BECKWITH AND FREDERICK A. HALL, eds., *Musical Canada: Words and Music Honouring Helmut Kallmann*. University of Toronto Press, $37.00.

FREDERICK A. HALL, ed., *The Canadian Musical Heritage 3: Songs I to English Texts*. Canadian Musical Heritage Society, n.p.

LUCIEN POIRIER, ed., *The Canadian Musical Heritage 7: Songs II to French Texts*. Canadian Musical Heritage Society, n.p.

A FESTSCHRIFT FOR Helmut Kallmann (author of *A History of Music in Canada*; research editor of the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*; music librarian of the CBC; founder and chief of the Music Division, National Library of Canada), *Musical Canada* seeks to provide an overview of contemporary scholarship in Canadian music.

Judging by the contents, that scholarship is largely based on historical principles, the major exception being Beverley Cavanagh's "The Transmission of Algonkian Indian Hymns: Between Orality and Literacy," which draws on the work of Ong and Geertz. Otherwise, we learn about Canada's first music theory manual, *Musique spirituelle* (1718); about the connections between J.-J. Rousseau's *Le Devin du village* (1753) and the first Canadian 'opera,' *Colas et Colinette*, by Joseph Quesnel (1746?-1809); about musical activity in Ottawa during the 1870s; about fifty years of CBC commissions; and about Ernest MacMillan's incarceration, during W.W.I, in a German prison camp. Maria Calderisi Bryce writes about "John Lovell (1810-1893): Montreal Music Printer and Publisher." Lovell, who, in 1840, published Canada's first piece of sheet music, began publishing music in *The Literary Garland*, for which he also solicited literary manuscripts, earning praise from Susanna Moodie as a pioneer in establishing a national literature in Canada. Musical life on the west coast in

the mid-nineteenth century is the subject of Robert Dale McIntosh's essay, which describes the contribution of the fleet musicians attached to the Royal Navy ships anchored in Esquimalt harbour to the local scene. By the beginning of the twentieth century, according to Gilles Potvin, the situation had improved, with Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Elgar, Prokofiev, Milhaud and Ravel (the subject of his essay) visiting Canada. Ravel's tour took him to Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver, where Jean Coulthard heard him; she remembers that most of the audience walked out. The final essay, by Geoffrey Payzant, provides us with those sections of his book on Glenn Gould which his editor had removed. This exercise in self-indulgence, while it attests to the acumen of Payzant's editor, does not at all serve Gould's genius. This, and the lack of attention to opera, constitutes the book's lacuna. In addition to scholarly articles, the book also contains short compositions (by Clifford Ford, Richard Johnston, John Weinzweig, R. Murray Schafer), a bibliography of Kallmann's writings, and illustrations.

Among Kallmann's many enterprises has been his involvement with the Canadian Musical Heritage Society, which is engaged in the facsimile publication of a comprehensive anthology of Canadian music, complete with biographies, annotations, and bibliographies. The reproduction of sheet music (including the at times elaborate title pages) is excellent; one could easily prop it on the piano, gather round the singers, and give a little concert. First on the programme would be some patriotic tunes, which are prominent in both volumes, starting with Calixa Lavallée's "Ô Canada" (which gained official status only in 1980), followed by Alexander Muir's "The Maple Leaf Forever," to be sung "*con spirito.*" Continuing the patriotic mood are O. F. Tilgmann's "Our Premier," dedicated to Sir John A. Macdonald, and "For Canada Fight," with text by Charles Mair. After this rousing beginning, singers could try their lungs on Susanna Moodie's "Welcome, Welcome, Little Bark," with music by J. W. Dunbar Moodie, and on the witty "Oh! No, We Never Talk in French," by Francis Woolcott. Then, just before lemonade is served, a resounding chorus of "No!" subtitled "A Temperance Song." After intermission, a more solemn note would be struck with the religious selections which tend to predominate in the volume of French songs. With a selection of patriotic songs (the other major category represented in the French songbook) we return to the opening theme, concluding with E. Blain (words) and A. Dessane's "La Mère Canadienne," which begins "L'Américain, dans sa folle arrogance, / A dit un jour 'Prenons le Canada!' / Il oubliait que les fils de la France / Le noble sang toujours lui résista." All agree at this point that an encore is called for, and without hesitation we choose "The New X Rays," with text by Arthur Blakeley, who wrote this song using the prophetic pseudonym James Fax.

RICHARD CAVELL

SEQUENCES

STEVE MCCAFFERY, *Evoba.* Coach House, $10.95.

ROY KIYOOKA, *Pear Tree Pomes.* Coach House, $14.95.

THE TWO BLURBS on the back cover of *Evoba* intimate readings more positive than my own. The authors of the blurbs like not so much the substance as the idea of the book. *Evoba*, we are told, is a "challenging, hard-won text" that examines "the relation between reader and text." It is "a contrapuntal series of fugue-like flights of logic." These fugue-like flights of logic consist of "philosophy, linguistics, humour, visual gesture and profundity"

in which McCaffery attempts "a semantic expedition through the two-dimensional surface of his writing into a deep, multivalent anti-text" and questions "many implicit assumptions of both the reader and the writer." Normally, one does not judge a book by its cover. *Evoba*, however, is in every way worthy of its cover.

When we look inside, we find the following:

> If the aim of philosophy is, as Wittgenstein claims, to show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle, then the aim of poetry is to convince the bottle that there is no fly.

This poetic manifesto is singularly appropriate for the poetry that follows. It is what my father, blunt as he was and unsophisticated, used to call "guff."

There are recurring themes: logic, calculus, and algebra; many allusions to Wittgenstein; there are anagrams and puns; there is a good deal of play with the physical setting of the text on the page.

Evoba may "plunge reader and writer alike across discursive difference into the paradoxical space between two meanings" — in fact, it very likely does — but in lines like "falls of snow / as red assed / as truth can be," or "Long ago there was resemblance / long ago this was a fact," or "in his eyes is still / the place of pain / her gladness feeling / sadness is a somewhere" are we not faced with the free-floating pathos, the sentimentality that is common to most second order poetry?

Roy Kiyooka's *Pear Tree Pomes* embodies a quite different approach to poetry than *Evoba*, although there are some surface similarities between the two. Both employ, though in a different way and to different degrees, non-verbal elements: McCaffery uses diagrams, line illustrations, a cartoon; Kiyooka's book is illustrated with both black-and-white and colour images by David Bolduc, some of which are strikingly suggestive in their oriental simplicity. Both poets, too, are self-conscious about language, though again the difference is greater than the similarity. Both poets are, in short, working with recognizable contemporary conventions and concerns.

That said, without intending to detract either from the contemporaneity or the individuality of Kiyooka's book, it is self-consciously traditional, and it is so on a number of levels. For instance, the "pomes" of the title, I suspect, is not merely a witty mis-spelling, but reminds us of the story from Ovid of Vertumnus and the wood nymph Pomona, who disliked men but loved fruit trees. In a more obvious way, Kiyooka pays tribute to Wallace Stevens, whom he quotes and refers to in several poems. There are also allusions to Robert Browning ("o / little / bird / / chirp / pippa's song / / into / my blue / ear") and to Catullus. One thinks of Stevens when one comes across a line like this: "how to qualify a pear tree without pointing at the sky." But the earthy raciness of Browning and Catullus is equally omnipresent, for example, in this, from a poem entitled "dear wallace stevens": "i'll take a twang of / your 'blue guitar' anyday of the week over reams of semiotic- / nonsense." Kiyooka here is unwilling to see language and reality as coextensive: "language is a fool's fruit / fool-proof pear trees bear the laughter of. / put your ear to its forkt / trunk — hear its sap thrum."

While unmistakably contemporary and himself, Kiyooka is also "traditional." In many ways the book is a sonnet sequence. I do not mean that the poems are sonnets in that they all have fourteen lines and this or that rhyme scheme. The poems, in fact, come in different sizes and shapes. But a great many of them have the force and trajectory of sonnets, and require, so to speak, the same depth of breath that a sonnet asks. Kiyooka's modernization of the genre, like his allusions to other works and other poets, is genuine, not a library exercise. Sometimes, Kiyooka's long lines

and his verbal facility tend toward diffuse shapelessness, as sometimes the self-pity, used consciously above, seems disconcertingly unconscious. But such relative fallings off as there are occur within a very impressive spectrum of moods.

I do not want to end on a sour note, but Coach House Press really should employ a proofreader. In "since you I forsook . . . ," the dash and the word "without" have obviously been transposed. In "moment," one suspects Kiyooka wants "airily," not "arily." "Arily" would be clever, but it destroys the acoustics of the poem. When one is publishing a book of such quality, one should do it properly.

In any case, beside *Evoba*, in which, for all its experiment, one note is struck repeatedly, *Pear Tree Pomes* is striking for its variety. The latter is the kind of book one re-reads from time to time for the sheer pleasure of it. The former is the kind of book that gets put into a box when shelf space is at a premium.

PETER MITCHELL

OUTPORTS

JOHN COLDWELL ADAMS, ed., *Selected Stories of Norman Duncan*. University of Ottawa Press, $11.95.

NORMAN DUNCAN is a little-known writer who deserves to be more widely read. Duncan's collection of stories *The Way of the Sea*, originally published in 1903, was reissued several years ago. Now thanks to John Coldwell Adams we have a further selection of Duncan's stories. For anyone interested in Newfoundland an acquaintance with Duncan's writing is a must. But the essays will also be of interest to students of Canadian literature and history. Duncan's stories have been used in Newfoundland school readers for some time. They might be used more widely by teachers.

Duncan was born in Ontario in 1871. His early years were spent in Brantford. At the age of fifteen he became briefly involved in journalism. Later he enrolled in the University of Toronto where he developed a close friendship with Mackenzie King. They both became involved in university "settlement work" amongst the city's poor. In 1895 he left the university without graduating and again took to newspaper reporting before following his brother to New York and obtaining a position with the New York *Evening Post*.

In New York Duncan discovered the Syrian Quarter and began to write about these immigrant Christian refugees from Beirut. John Coldwell Adams includes three Syrian stories in this collection. Duncan's explorations soon moved further afield. He was on his way to visit Wilfred Grenfell and write about his work when he arrived at Exploits Islands in Newfoundland's Notre Dame Bay in 1900. The growing interest in Grenfell's missionary work in the United States led to this assignment for *McClure's* Magazine. For several years Duncan was to return to Newfoundland and write about what he found there, including the work of Grenfell. In later years Duncan travelled to the Middle East, the South Seas, and Australia. He continued to write, but it was his experience in Newfoundland which gave rise to his finest work. Norman Duncan died an alcoholic in 1916.

Patrick O'Flaherty in *The Rock Observed* (1979) claims Duncan as "the first writer of fiction to make ordinary Newfoundlanders the leading characters in his stories and to see in their routine, everyday activities a fit subject for literature." And *Selected Stories of Norman Duncan* contains some of Duncan's best essays as well as some less significant pieces. "The Strength of Men" (1903) and "The Fruits of Toil" (1902) are both exceptional stories of life in the rocky northern

outports of what Duncan called "the real Newfoundland."

Duncan was fascinated by the harsh life of outport Newfoundlanders and by the 'drama' of their "grim battles" to wrest a living from the bitter land and the punishing sea. He was awed and humbled by their heroic struggle to endure. He is a "sentimental traveller" with a weakness for adventure and melodrama. But he is also a talented recorder of "harsh realities." In a passage like this from "The Strength of Men" he reminds us of England's most important nineteenth-century documentor of rural life, Richard Jefferies:

> For the world which lies hidden in the wide beyond has some strange need of seal-fat, and stands ready to pay, as of course. It pays gold to the man at the counter in St. John's; and for what the world pays a dollar the outport warrier gets a pound of reeking pork. But what the matter? What matter — all this toil and peril? What matter when the pork lies steaming on the table and the yellow duff is in plenty in the dish.

Perhaps Duncan is best thought of as a social explorer and a documentarist. He was one of that group of writers who, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, set out to bridge the chasm which existed between the classes by exploring, analyzing, and reporting upon the lives of people lower down the social scale. Such documentary writing touched middle-class consciences. It played a small but significant part in stimulating efforts to improve the lot of the suffering poor. If Wilfred Grenfell's mission in Newfoundland was to rescue "shipwrecks from the ocean of humanity," he found an ideal publicist in Norman Duncan. Duncan told the story of the people of the outports and in a sympathetic and often heart-rending way.

The limitation of Duncan's vision is that, despite the presence of "hope," it is steeped in fatalism and pessimism. Change has no place in his outports. The hope and the heroism of the people seem to be simply a way of keeping them on the unchanging treadmill of "toil" which stops only with death. Duncan was writing in a period which saw the emergence of the Fishermen's Protective Union in Newfoundland. This mass-movement of fishermen was at its peak over 20,000 strong and it found its strongest support along Newfoundland's northeast coast. Yet, Duncan saw none of the dissatisfaction and political determination which led outporters to unite and fight for better conditions. Duncan's outporters are given the role of victims no matter how heroically they struggle.

JAMES OVERTON

ADAPTATIONS

HENDRIKA RUGER, ed., *Distant Kin: Dutch-Canadian Stories & Poems.* Netherlandic Press, $8.95.

PLEUKE BOYCE, *Dutch Medley.* Netherlandic Press, $8.95.

GEORGE FALUDY, *Corpses, Brats and Cricket Music.* Trans. Robin Skelton, with one illus. by Herbert Siebner. William Hoffer/Tanks, n.p.

ALTHOUGH JUDGING BOOKS by their covers may not be, in general, a wise practice, doing so in the case of these exquisite little volumes would not lead one far astray. Their contents are indeed worthy of the obvious care Netherlandic press has taken to create books beautiful enough to remind readers that publishing, like writing, is an art, and that books, even paperbacks, can be a pleasure to touch and to look at, as well as to read. As their titles suggest, both books have an ethnic *raison d'être*; this is particularly true of *Distant Kin.* Although it is certainly not heavy handed in its exploration of what might be called "the Dutch-Canadian experience," as compiler Hendrika Ruger makes clear in her introduction, in which she quotes

Dutch-Canadian historian Herman Ganzevoort, the stories and poems collected here do represent recent attempts by ". . . the children of immigrants . . . to examine the history of their parents' migration and struggle, and to give their discoveries academic or literary form." That such attempts would be occurring now is not surprising, since the major wave of Dutch immigrants to Canada came in the aftermath of World War II, and the children of those post-war immigrants have come of age. What might perhaps be surprising to some is that such attempts would be made at all, given the low profile of the Dutch in Canada. Indeed, the Dutch have been distinguished by their apparent invisibility, due to their general tendency to assimilate very rapidly, linguistically and otherwise, into Canadian society. In fact, proponents of a Canadian melting pot might well point to the Dutch as an example of what is possible for immigrants if they take a sensible approach to nostalgia, that is forget their past and get on with the business of becoming Canadian. However, like the work of a number of writers who have explored immigrant and ethnic experience in Canada, many of the poems and stories in this collection suggest that this process of adaptation to a new world has not been completely smooth or painless, even for the "invisible" Dutch.

The first story in the collection, Guy Vanderhaeghe's "What I Learned from Caesar," focuses more directly than any other selection in *Distant Kin* on the inevitable costs of immigration and adaptation, both for the first and second generations. Like many second-generation characters, Vanderhaeghe's narrator must find a literary vehicle that will tell his father's troubled story, and thereby his own. In creating this vehicle, Vanderhaeghe fashions an artful metafiction that illuminates a number of things, including the subjectivity of any discourse as well as the power of the success motif in the mythology of immigration to North America, and the price of forgetting one's language and origins. The last story in the collection, Hugh Cook's "Exodus," also focuses directly on the immigrant experience. Although Cook's mimetic approach is less revealing than Vanderhaeghe's, the story is nevertheless an artful comment on the kinds of strengths, both physical and spiritual, that adaptation demands.

The other selections in *Distant Kin* do not address the Dutch immigrant experience directly; they are, nevertheless, infused, albeit subtly, by a migrant sensibility and by what Hendrika Ruger calls in her introduction ". . . a certain Dutch outlook . . . in their perception of the world. . . ." Pleuke Boyce's "The Crossing" uses a trip on a B.C. ferry from the Island to the mainland as the archetypal frame for an encounter between marginal sensibilities — that of the narrator, a middle-aged immigrant woman, part Bohemian, part housewife, and an aging non-status Ojibway, hung over because as he puts it, "I smoked a lot of stuff." Their chance conversation not only forces the narrator to see her life in a new light, but also the reader, who can see in it a microcosmic illustration of the loneliness and contradiction that is inherent both in personal experience and our attempts to communicate it.

The poetry in this collection also focuses on the gap between experience and expression, and between surfaces and deeper realities. In fact, a keen awareness of these gaps is, in my view, at the heart of the "certain Dutch outlook" Ruger refers to. A number of the "Twenty-Five Poems" by Hannah J. Main that are included in *Distant Kin* explore this gap in a style that conveys a kind of matriarchal wisdom through strikingly original and vivid images, the latter often the result of the world being viewed from a new vantage point that allows it to be seen both

in detail and as a whole. These qualities are apparent in "Dominion, SkyLink Flight #711, Victoria–Vancouver," in which the speaker in the poem sees from the air (a vantage point made possible by an arrogant technology) a striking juxtaposition of the natural and the man-made worlds. This contiguity encapsulates the contradiction, slowly becoming apparent to the postmodern sensibility, between the assumption that through technology humankind is heir to "a manageable earth" and the obvious, but often ignored, reminders of human limitation, suggested so vividly in the poem's final image of "the city cemetery" where "polished stone shines out: / ornament, inlaid brooch / for an ample bosom."

Main uses a particularly Dutch image — that of land reclaimed from the sea — to explore this same contradiction in "Walking by Faith." The speaker in the poem recalls her childhood experiences of "walking on water" as she played in areas where the land was being reclaimed. The last stanza is a thinly veiled warning: "Now fat contented farms doze on that hidden sea, / . . . These farms don't heave, neither do they sing. / Little do they know of miracles and the danger / in taking them for granted." Though the vision they present is less global, more personal, the poems included in the collection by Diana Brebner also explore, through vivid domestic as well as dream imagery, the delicate margin between sleeping and waking, between various levels of experience and potentially contradictory versions of reality. An immigrant sensibility informs Brebner's work, directly in "Grandmother Remembers her Wars" and indirectly in her sensitive attention to detail that draws on an outsider's insight that everything could be different, and on her constant awareness of competing versions of experience.

The poems and stories of Pleuke Boyce, collected in *Dutch Medley*, reflects a similar sensibility and are presented with the same artistry that makes her story "The Crossing" among the most memorable of the selections in *Distant Kin*. The book is informally divided into two sections, the first consisting of twelve poems, the second of four sketches/short stories, three of which are presented both in English and in Dutch. As an immigrant herself who came to Canada, not as a child, as is the case with the majority of the writers represented in *Distant Kin*, but as a young adult, Boyce creates the dual world of the émigré; some of her work is set in Holland, some in Canada, and in both cases an awareness of one shapes her depiction of the other. Many of the poems are memory poems, but this backward glance is not shaped by the kind of nostalgia that often equates childhood, old world and Eden. Rather, the tone is an ironic one that highlights the gap between the potential and the actual. Boyce captures this contradiction repeatedly in memorable images, as in her poem "Frog Country," in which the retrospective narrator remembers sitting at the kitchen table "thirsting for knowledge," with her naïve and somewhat inept mother and an ex-farmhand of very limited vision as her willing but inadequate mentors. Similarly, in "Memories of Bleskensgraff," the speaker in the poem remembers family outings along the river. "Rowing wasn't as easy as it looked. / All afternoon we'd spend in those reeds / . . . The river was quite wide / and led to even wider waterways, / but we would always find ourselves close / to the shore. In the end we would have / a picnic."

Boyce's ironic tone also highlights the contradictions and inconsistencies in human behaviour and the inevitable distances between individuals. She skilfully portrays the immigrant dimension of the latter theme in her short story "Karlheinz Bohm," in which the narrator struggles with the difficulty of articulating her

idiosyncratic experiences to a diverse group of friends. "Sorry, Wrong Number" is a haunting depiction of an individual's struggle to find love and authenticity in a world built of and with clichés. Boyce's repertoire of approaches to her material is impressive; as well as being a medley of the diverse experiences of a postmodern immigrant, this collection is also a medley of genres and styles that range from the somewhat traditional to the avant garde.

Both of these volumes are significant and worth reading for several reasons. First, as the work of first- and second-generation Dutch immigrants to Canada, they bring a new dimension to the already considerable body of Canadian literature that portrays immigrant and ethnic experience from the inside. That the Dutch voice would seem to be hard to discern, given the group's rapid assimilation, if anything, enhances the importance that these attempts to "break the silence" may have for those interested in the relationship between immigration, ethnicity, and the evolution of Canadian society. But it is primarily the literary quality of the poems and stories collected in these volumes that will enlarge both the readers' vision and Canada's literary canon.

Corpses, Brats and Cricket Music, the title of one of the most memorable poems in Faludy's book, provides the reader with a broadly representative sample of Faludy's poetry, written over the last half century. The poems, which are presented in both English and Hungarian, appear in a loose chronological order. The first, written during the 1930s, are samples of the translations of Renaissance and medieval writers that Faludy became infamous for, since he often used them as veiled vehicles for his own critical commentary on Hungarian society and politics. Marked by a bold, raucous and earthy humour, these poems, such as "A Letter, written allegedly by Master François Villon when he had not a stinking penny to the Duke Jehan De Bourbon of Lorraine," and "Pietro Aretino's Letter to the Duke of Alba," provide the reader a naughty romp down the byways of European history as well as the pleasures of cleverly executed and bitter satire.

The second group of three poems represent what might be called poetry of war and imprisonment. Combining lyricism with images that shift with stunning rapidity from soft to shocking, Faludy ponders the paradox of a human nature at once capable of exquisite tenderness and horrific cruelty, godlike creativity and satanic destructiveness. This seeming contradiction is captured in the haunting lines of the long narrative title poem, "Corpses, Brats and Cricket Music." The poem's narrator tells the story of a minor riot in Marrakesh in which he witnesses a young street urchin killing an Armenian grocer: "Poor Kid! He had no toys to play with. Now / he's found himself a wonderful cracked head / from which blood and brains are spurting out / instead of coconut milk." Later, after also trying to kill the narrator, the same boy plays for him a delicate song on a tiny homemade musical instrument and then gives him a singing cricket in a matchbox, a humble gift of music.

That such contradictory impulses have shaped human history and are our ambiguous inheritance continues to preoccupy Faludy in his later work, poems composed in Toronto during the 1970s and 1980s. Together, they present an equally ambiguous verdict on history and the future. At times the message is darkly apocalyptic, as in "The Cockroach on My Desk," in which the speaker in the poem realizes that the cockroach, not humankind, whose "philosophies were daydreams" and whose "science led us straight to a mass grave . . ." will survive the final holocaust. Occasionally, the vision contains a trace of tentative hopefulness as in "Sonnet 105," where the poet asserts that

"... one thing in this universe is eternal — / the rack and ruin that holds all things together." He also presents a weak hope that the artist may offer a kind of salvation from both destruction and despair, as in Sonnet 111, in which he suggests that though "... life remains / nightmare trapped between two slabs of darkness ... I am blessed at least by the insanity / of hunting poems and beauty ... / They've moved the ladder from beneath the painter. / Hold fast, hold fast Maestro to your brush."

Though some might prefer to forget the haunting images of past and future that Faludy creates, the breadth and depth of his vision, as well as his artistry make this volume a powerful addition to the émigré voice in Canadian literature.

TAMARA J. PALMER

ACCURACY & PROFIT

RICHARD A. DAVIES, ed., *The Letters of Thomas Chandler Haliburton*. University of Toronto Press, $45.00.

IN A HUMOROUS, anachronistically postmodernist episode in Haliburton's *The Clockmaker, Second Series* (1838), Sam Slick tells the Squire how publication of the *First Series* (1836) has damaged Slick's reputation as a clock peddlar. Sam insists upon reading the manuscript of their present adventures — that is, the Second Series that we are reading — to make sure the Squire (Haliburton's *persona*) is accurate! Later, at the end of the *Third Series* (1840), when Sam is appointed attaché at the American legation in London as a reward for his writing, Sam observes approvingly how the United States and Great Britain heap honours on their authors, and he cites Irving, Scott, Mrs. Trollope, and Capt. Maryatt. Clearly, Haliburton is hinting at patronage for himself, a point he makes in the Swiftian preface to *The Letter-Bag of the Great Western* (1840), which is addressed to Lord John Russell, the Colonial Secretary. It is no surprise, then, to find the concern for accuracy and the quest for patronage running through *The Letters of Thomas Chandler Haliburton*, edited by Richard A. Davies of Acadia University.

Through the 1820s Haliburton, a young country lawyer and member of the Legislature, aspired to become a great politician and writer. Extracting information from Judge Peleg Wiswall and Abbé Sigogne on Nova Scotia before 1763, he laboured for five years on *An Historical and Statistical Account of Nova-Scotia* (1829), which brought him a modicum of fame but no profit. A similar desire for accuracy, as well as for money, runs through his correspondence with Joseph Howe and Richard Bentley, the publishers of *The Clockmaker* series. Haliburton argued that the dialect spelling was part of the humour, and complained to Bentley that succeeding English editions became more and more "*anglicized.*" Even so, scholars who collate the various editions come away puzzled by what seems to be any lack of principle in Haliburton's dialect spellings.

From the moment of his international fame in 1837, Haliburton began to squeeze as much profit as possible from his publishers and to frequent the drawing rooms of the literary establishment and of the rich and powerful in England. He was not poor but was financially insecure for most of his life. He had given up his seat in the Assembly in 1828 to become a Justice in a court that was abolished in 1841, at which time he was appointed a Judge of the Supreme Court on condition that his pension be merged with his salary. In 1853 when he resigned, partly due to unhappiness with Nova Scotia's drift towards independence or colonial federation, he had no pension and never did get one from Nova Scotia. Very shabby of

them. This explains his obsessive pursuit during the 1840s for a comfortable colonial governorship, which of course never materialized. Only after his permanent move to England, followed by his second marriage and his selection to Parliament, did he begin to accumulate capital and find some contentment.

The 245 letters and fragments are divided into six chronological sections, each with a short linking introduction, a format that was also used by the Press for the Moodie *Letters of a Lifetime*. At the end are letters of uncertain date and additions that were too late for inclusion in the main text, the archival sources, and a good index. Davies has placed copious notes at the end of each section and has included many illustrations that will be new to readers of Haliburton.

Richard Davies has spent years collecting these letters from sources in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain, as well as from Haliburton's descendants in England. He has retained the punctuation and spelling of the original manuscripts, except for "minimal emendation" such as indenting paragraphs and regularizing capitalization. In the case of Haliburton-Bentley correspondence in the Houghton Library at Harvard, Davies was able to provide more accurate readings by using the manuscripts rather than the transcriptions by W. H. Bond for his 1947 published version of those letters.

Important as they are, these letters will not resolve the problem, for once and for all, of how to evaluate Haliburton, a writer of undeniable gifts and craftsmanship. Much of our delight in Sam Slick arises from his non-literary monologues, with his endless supply of metaphors and colloquialisms. But Slick's democratic voice is counterpointed with Haliburton's other voice, which extols in polite English the traditional tory views of politics and society. The letters reveal a sociable and kindly personality, but unfortunately there is little passion here, and Haliburton's epistolary style is almost devoid of the wit, sparkle, and linguistic flights of *The Clockmaker*, *The Letter-Bag*, and *The Old Judge*. Even so, they reverberate with all the contradictions associated with Haliburton's imagination. Here is the colonial writer who imposes an identity on his society by a comparison with despised American ethics and admired American energy; who criticizes his society with ironic contempt but who wants its respect and serves it well as a judge; who finally goes "home" to England to get into Parliament and society. In the end we have to accept both his North American frontier yelp along with the Loyalist ideal of British civility.

GEORGE L. PARKER

LIVES

FRANCESS G. HALPENNY, gen. ed., *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. VII: 1836-1850. University of Toronto Press, $70.00.

WITH THE PUBLICATION of Volume VII, the eleventh of the project, the *DCB* fills its remaining gap in the colonial period; when Volume XII (1891 to 1900), which is now in preparation, is published, the *Dictionary* will be complete up to 1900. Volume VII covers biographies of persons who "died or flourished" between 1836 and 1850. This means, in effect, that the activities and achievements recorded range over the first half of the nineteenth century.

The reader who is well acquainted with our colonial past will recognize many of the names in this volume but will find relatively few persons who were famous players on a wider stage than Canada — some of the various colonial governors, no doubt, and of course Sir John Franklin and perhaps the novelists John Galt and Frederick Marryat. Otherwise, even most

of the biographies running to many columns are of persons whose lives are remembered mainly in the Canadian context, such as William Baldwin, Michael Fleming, Christopher Hagerman, Alexander McDonnell, Patrick Morris, and Jonathan Sewell.

It is to be expected that the biographies of literary figures should include few writers whose names are prominent in Canadian literary history. Most of the major colonial writers — Goldsmith, Howe, Haliburton, Traill, Moodie, Richardson, Heavysege, Sangster — died after 1850 and so are recorded in other volumes; when these notables are excluded, those who remain from the first half of the century are mostly writers of diaries, journals, memoirs, tracts, and letters. First among the exceptions, however, and taking pride of place with a twenty-six column article, is Thomas McCulloch (1776-1843), the doughty Scot whose collection of satirical sketches, *The Letters of Mephibosheth Stepsure* (1821-22), is one of the most significant works of prose fiction in the period. This account of his life is particularly valuable for its detailed description of his various activities as theologian, educational theorist, reformer, religious and educational polemicist, naturalist, and founder and principal of the Pictou Academy. The *Letters* are better understood when they are set within such a context of McCulloch's intellectual interests and convictions, and of his persistent efforts to influence provincial life.

Unlike McCulloch, who spent most of his life in his adopted country, several other literary men of modest note contributed to colonial literature as temporary residents. One of these was Alexander Croke (1758-1842), who spent one-sixth of his long life in Nova Scotia, from 1801 to 1815, as judge of the Vice-Admiralty Court and occasional administrator of the colony. Croke contributed frequently to the on-going controversy over education in the province but made his literary mark with the long Popeian satiric poem "The Inquisition" (1805), unpublished in his day but widely circulated in manuscript in the Halifax high society it so skilfully ridiculed. Yet another was Standish O'Grady (*c.*1789–*c.*1845), who lived in the Canadas from 1836 until his death about a decade later and earned his place in this volume by virtue of his disjointed but forceful and sometimes witty poem *The Emigrant* (1841). A transient of much shorter term, the Scottish novelist John Galt (1779-1839) stayed in Upper Canada for only about two years; his inclusion in the *DCB* is due more to his major role in the Canada Company and his many depictions of North American society, and especially *Bogle Corbet* (1831), than to his literary activity in the country. Much more tenuously included is Frederick Marryat (1792-1848), the English novelist and author of *Midshipman Easy* (1836), who spent a few months in Lower Canada serving with the forces of Major-General Sir John Colborne against the Patriotes.

Other known literary figures in Volume VII are the native-born Adam Hood Burwell (1790-1849), who is remembered for "Talbot Road" (1818), his early long poem on pioneering in Upper Canada; William (Tiger) Dunlop (1792-1848), the colourful warden of the Canada Company and writer of sketches and tales of Upper Canada; and the notorious Maria Monk (1816-1849), whose scandalous anti-Catholic tale, *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* (1836), made a great stir in the 1830s. The entries for the more obscure writers who complete the roll for this volume — Peter John Allan, James Cawdell, James Haskins, Sarah Herbert, John MacLean, John McPherson, George Menzies, Emily Shaw, Hannah Thompson — reveal no inglorious Miltons rescued from undeserved oblivion; they do, however, attest to the thoroughness of the

DCB in its mission to record the lives of peripheral as well as conspicuous contributors to Canadian history and culture.

M. G. PARKS

TRUTH & LIE

BRYAN MOON, *The Western Kingdom: Part Two of The Grapefruit Tree.* Oberon, $25.95/12.95.

BRYAN MOON, *Union Day: Part Three of The Grapefruit Tree.* Oberon, $25.95/12.95.

BRYAN MOON, *Harvest: Part Four of The Grapefruit Tree.* Oberon, $25.95/12.95.

BRYAN MOON has demonstrated that one can definitely have too much of a good thing. The main problem with this "novel in four parts" is that it isn't a novel in one part.

In Part One of *The Grapefruit Tree, Seeds*, we were introduced to twelve-year-old Jonathan Corning, who had been disturbed and disenchanted by his social and sexual initiations in the city. He attempts to retreat to a timeless pastoralism in his grandparents' small prairie town during a summer "more than two decades ago." In *The Western Kingdom* time, change, and "broken dreams" begins to intrude into his romantic idealism. Like his Grandfather Caldwell, he attempts to counter them with the magic of storytelling. Yet, despite the Tolkienesque elements of his fantasy narratives, the realities of life and the ridicule of the townspeople begin to disillusion Jonathan, as they discredit his grandfather's fanciful projects to achieve significance.

Union Days begins with a Huckleberry Finn river adventure with his grandfather and friends; its abortive conclusion seems to confirm the triumph of skepticism over story. Nevertheless, the old man's dream of a town festival, Union Day, finally liberates his neighbours from scorn and selfishness and briefly enables them to realize the narrative of their town's ideal spirit. This "story" too, however, is turned into "a lie" by Tessa's father, whose bitterness and failure have resisted the magic. In desperation, the three children try to escape physically to the forest of their imaginative realm.

In *Harvest* Jonathan has grown up, and tragedy has triumphed over catastrophe. The voices that have formed the prologues of the earlier volumes now complete their stories of pain and loss. The children return from their secondary world of scandal and cynicism. In the climax of this summer epic, Jonathan betrays his grandfather by siding with Tessa's father. Recantation and despair are not, however, the final words of this wordy book. Six years later, Jonathan returns to his grandfather's deathbed and tells his mentor, who can no longer talk, all the stories "about the way the world was and about the way I wished it could be" in a desperate attempt to defy death. Nevertheless, his faith in "a great pattern and order in the world" is somewhat ambiguous when, at the end, the grapefruit tree finally "blooms" with crêpe-paper fruit, "affirming in a cruel and ironic way that dreams sometimes do come true."

For an epic that is all about narrative, surprisingly little actually happens in these books: a prank, a raft trip, a celebration, a confrontation, and *a lot of talk*. But the theme — the power of story/myth to express and shape people's lives — is of ultimate literary and philosophical importance. Moon's writing is marked by polished prose and lyrical descriptions, realistic plot detail and rounded characterization, gentle humour and some genuine suspense, but four volumes of 528 pages are too much! Not only does the combined narrative become too diffuse, repetitive, and eventually tiresome, but the stories, symbols, and themes of the individual books are so interdependent that it is impossible to understand the volumes separately. Their publication over a pe-

riod of many months was an editorial miscalculation; this is no Dickensian three-decker cliff-hanger. In fact, these four "first novels" would have been much better if pruned and packed in one volume. Bryan Moon's achievement is impressive, but it is not yet of epic proportions.

BARBARA PELL

TRADITION & EXPERIMENT

NORMAN DESCHENEAUX, *Fou de Cornélia.* L'Hexagone, $17.95.

JEAN ÉTHIER-BLAIS, *Entre toutes les femmes.* Leméac, $19.95.

JEAN ÉTHIER-BLAIS' *Entre toutes les femmes*, a consummately traditional novel recounting the lives and fortunes of a globe-trotting French-Canadian diplomatic family, and Norman Descheneaux's *Fou de Cornélia*, an experimental and blackly humorous novel about the non-writing of the definitive biography of Goethe's sister, both clearly demonstrate the ever-increasing variety and cosmopolitanism of the world of Quebec fiction.

Éthier-Blais' latest novel, comfortably realist in the tradition of Balzac, traces the history of François Bois-le-Duc and Blanche Plateau during the period 1915 to 1962. François, son of an eminent physician, is obviously destined for greatness. His is the perfect childhood (an only child, he is the adored son upon whom all parental attention is lavished), his the perfect education (Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf in Montreal, studies in Paris with André Siegfried, a year at Cambridge's Trinity College). Strikingly handsome, gifted for languages, well-read and possessed of extraordinary skill for analysis, he chooses the diplomatic corps as his life's work.

Like all young and ambitious diplomats, however, François is aware that he will not advance rapidly in his chosen profession without an acceptable wife. The beautiful and gracious Blanche Plateau, daughter of a corporate lawyer and only girl in a family of four children, seems a likely candidate. Like François, Blanche, too, has had what most would term an idyllic childhood — summers at Lac Vingt-sous, a fine education, a social life filled with dances and parties — yet she remains reluctant to give up her "independence" and enter into the confines of an upper middle-class marriage.

Fate, however, combined with François's persistent desire for Blanche finally bring the two together; and after much soul-searching Blanche agrees to marry. Yet soon a tragic event occurs which will unalterably transform the Bois-le-Ducs' perfect marriage: their first child, Anne, is born with mongoloidism — what today would be termed Down's Syndrome. Two healthy children, Gilles and Adèle, are later born to Blanche and François, and the saga of the Bois-le-Duc and Plateau families continues — with new diplomatic postings to Boston, Rio, and Moscow, the death of both François's and Blanche's fathers, the development of new friendships. But every aspect of family life is somehow profoundly affected by the mere existence of Anne, a child whose handicap is not "acceptable" to the society into which she has been born. Blanche, chosen like Mary ("entre toutes les femmes"), adjusts to her maternal role in a radically different manner from François to his paternal one. Traditional thematic conflicts — passion versus reason, love versus duty, truth versus hypocrisy — underlie this family novel, which is also the novel of a particular class during a particular period of French-Canadian history prior to the Quiet Revolution.

In sharp contrast to the rather comfortable traditionalism of *Entre toutes les*

femmes, Norman Descheneaux's first novel, *Fou de Cornélia*, is much more closely related to the French *nouveau roman*. At the outset of the novel the male protagonist, who has been engaged for some thirty years in doing research for a projected biography of Goethe's older sister, Cornélia Goethe-Schlosser, has recently moved all his archives from a city apartment to an isolated country house located near the village of Morteplaine. The text is narrated entirely in the second person ("Vous"), yielding a bizarre reading experience similar to that of reading Michel Butor's *La Modification*. The reader soon realizes that although the biographer-protagonist has a compulsive need to talk to himself (and, of course, through the "vous" to the reader also) about the many problems associated with the writing of his great work, and although he is totally obsessed with the need to establish the perfect outline prior to actually beginning his writing project, he is an inveterate procrastinator, constantly allowing himself to be diverted by both the commonplace occurrences of daily life (the arrival of the invariably inebriated postman, the visits of Crisou, the village idiot) as well as those of a rarer variety (most notably, visits from the singer Obésina Pasta, celebrated for her love of garlic and her many husbands).

The protagonist, enraged because of the village idiot's constant visits to the house, eventually shoots him and is sent away for a time to a psychiatric hospital where his continual use of the second person, even in interviews with the examining psychiatrists, clearly illustrates Descheneaux's wicked sense of humour, one involving a kind of "Who's on first?" narrational technique. The psychiatrist asks the biographer, "And just where was your apartment?" to which he receives the response: "You lived in the apartment for thirty years — why ask where it is?"

The narrator, convinced that the key to writing the life of Cornélia Goethe-Schlosser consists in proving an incestuous relationship between Cornélia and her famous brother, gradually leads the reader to the very heart of his inner powerlessness — the tragedy of not being able to write. The protagonist's repetitive verbal tics and wild puns, his obsessive-compulsive interpretations of events and people, leave the reader alternately fascinated and repulsed.

Although greatly dissimilar in both thematic concerns and narrational techniques, *Entre toutes les femmes* and *Fou de Cornélia* show nonetheless the wide range of novelistic talents in contemporary Quebec fiction, whether traditionally realistic in approach or experimental in nature.

LYNN KETTLER PENROD

FABULATIONS

JOAN GIVNER, *Unfortunate Incidents*. Oberon, $25.95/12.95.

MATT COHEN, *Living on Water*. Penguin, $9.95.

JOAN GIVNER'S *Unfortunate Incidents* is a slim volume of stories which explore the unforeseen and often tragic dimensions of child-parent relationships. The stories are limited in terms of their formal and linguistic possibilities, but they nevertheless bring some unusual perspectives to bear on the central theme of "growing up." The title story cleverly interweaves relationships between mothers and daughters. Libby, the mother of Patch (a high school student in Toronto), is writing the biography of the Victorian novelist Rachel de la Warr, with the assistance of Rachel's adopted daughter, Aimée. The obvious contrast in names is meant to infuse the narrative with a sense of mystique, as are the scattered intrigues and revelations, but the prevailing impression is one of

triviality. This is partly a syntactical matter, since the insistent present-tense narrative is apt to sound repetitive and formulaic: "Aimée identifies with Patch . . . Libby likes Aimée very much . . . Patch loves going out for a good meal with Libby and Aimée."

The first-person voice of "Letters Home" creates a much more vigorous and engaging narrative. The transatlantic relationships of the story, especially an English grandmother's legacy of hardship and poverty, establish a much broader social and cultural context than the narrowly academic and privileged domain of the title story. The feigned letters to a runaway sister and the elegy scribbled by a suicidal mother deepen the pervasive sense of loss and give the story an imposing textual resonance. "The Headline Game" approaches the same family conflicts through the interaction of memory and textual fragments — letters, newspaper cuttings, tongue-twisters — in a way that is strongly reminiscent of the stories of Margaret Laurence and Alice Munro.

The closing story, "Holiday," introduces death with a touch of malicious comedy. The syntax here is satirically assured and effective. "After a lifetime of performing post-mortems, his own remains had at last been laid out for inspection and, as might have been expected, proved irreproachable." The death of Lucy's father is the prelude to a narrative that probes the sources of grief and loss in modern Europe, including the Second World War. Lucy's friend Yvonne has lost her brother "in circumstances so gruesome that they were never spoken of," and Lucy's "holiday" takes her past "the great acres of allied war graves." Unfortunately, the story shows an obvious disregard for historical accuracy, and a setting that is presumably around 1950 involves attitudes and assumptions of the seventies and eighties. In a postmodernist narrative such flagrant anachronisms might be expected, but here the effect is faintly ludicrous. Although the story ends with Lucy gratefully accepting the comfort and protection of her husband, it exerts a profound sympathy for the lonely endeavours of women throughout history, whether it be Joan of Arc or the anonymous needleworkers of the Bayeux tapestry. The desperate need to speak with such women across the ages rescues the story from its occasional Gothic indulgences in incest and horror.

Matt Cohen's stories are usually too alert and reflexive to be in any way "indulgent." *Living on Water*, however, reveals an obsessive fascination with the dismal sex lives of ageing academics. The impulse behind these tales of fornication is Cohen's anxious need to transcend the protestant conservative ethic which he believes has inhibited the free play of imagination in Canadian literature. Far from constituting a moral and aesthetic rebellion, however, some of these stories convey an impression of lingering salaciousness, every bit as dreary and restrictive as the small-town mentality Cohen abhors. The repeated strategy of setting up disenchanted individuals at odds with the social formation has obvious comic possibilities but ultimately leads to a debilitating liberal pessimism. Norman in "Lives of the Mind Slaves," Jonathan in "Mirrors," and Maurice in "Living on Water" are all defeated intellectuals, narrowly preoccupied with their private dreams and desires. Alternative forms of individual fulfilment or social transformation are difficult to find in this privileged but pitiful academic environment.

Rather oddly, the stories in this new collection return to a set of formal procedures closer to conventional realism than the postmodernist fabulation of such Cohen classics as "The Eiffel Tower in Three Parts." There are, however, some impressive and intriguing experiments in "Mirrors" and "Living on Water." Both

are non-linear, discontinuous narratives which skilfully engage the reader in a re-creation of events as they shift through place and time. The effect here is not to expose the arbitrariness of language or the vulnerability of all fictional structures, as in earlier Cohen stories. Instead, the stories are strangely mimetic, working to maintain an impression of physical and psychological dislocation.

The outstanding story in the collection is "Racial Memories," a comic yet sombre account of Jewish family history in Toronto. Any tendency towards structured autobiography is subtly undercut by the random flux of dream and memory, and by the unusual second-person address to the anonymous lover at the end of the story. Here, Cohen does justice to the full social and historical complexity of the events he describes, and his characterization ranges from the uncompromising religious orthodoxy to the narrator's grandfather to the intense political activism of Leonard, the student lodger. The opening description of the grandfather is beautifully restrained and affectionately detailed:

> His indoor hats were *yarmulkahs* that floated on his bare and powerful skull; the hats he wore outside had brims which kept the sun away and left the skin of his face a soft and strangely attractive waxy white. White, too, were his square-fingered hands, the moons of his nails, his squarish slightly-gapped teeth, the carefully washed and ironed shirts my grandmother supplied for his thrice-daily trips to the synagogue.

The problems of cultural assimilation find a temporary outlet in sexual assimilation, with "mutual desire" fusing two "foreign bodies," but unlike the earlier tales of weary coupling this story deserves and justifies its sparks of passion.

STEPHEN REGAN

DECISIONS

CLAIRE HARRIS, *Travelling to Find a Remedy.* Fiddlehead Books and Goose Lane Editions, $7.95.

DON DOMANSKI, *Hammerstroke.* Anansi, $8.95.

GREG SIMISON, *The Possibilities of Chinese Trout.* Okanagan College Press and Kalamalka New Writers Society, n.p.

"A DECISION, THEREFORE, has to be made about language." Thus states Claire Harris in "Poets in Limbo" (*A M A Z I N G SPACE: Writing Canadian Women Writing,* eds. Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli). The immediate context of Harris's observation is the burden upon black women writers, now living in English Canada, of having to choose among standard English, dialect (e.g., Trinidadian, Jamaican), and degrees of mixture. This choice is artistic, economic, and political. Dialect has its problems, including the economic one of intelligibility to a general readership; but the use of it occasions obvious artistic felicities and political effects. Standard English — which is an artificially stabilized dialect in flux — has its problems too. True, it has certain economic advantages, less so for most women than for men; and it has its own promises of artistic felicity. But it is also doubly oppressive: masculist and colonizing, much in need of prolonged detoxification. If the project is, as Harris says, "to discover/define [and for that matter, integrate] two aspects of the self: the authentic female self and the authentic black self," will standard English serve? For *Travelling to Find a Remedy,* as elsewhere, Harris chooses standard English, "content to try to write well and trust to the authenticity of image, content and perception to see [her] true" ("Poets in Limbo"). As Harris tries (successfully) to write well, her native English is put into decidedly destandardized play in *Travelling to Find a Remedy.*

In "Poets in Limbo" Harris also remarks that the quest of black poets returns them to Africa, physically or metaphorically. Several of her pieces in *Travelling to Find a Remedy*, "Mali," "Quo Vadis," and the title poem, are in this specific travelling-to-find genre. The title poem is particularly strong on at least two counts. First, wiser even than the prose of "Poets in Limbo," this poem knows that actually travelling to Africa and falling in love with a Nigerian does not necessarily disclose a remedy; or if it does, the remedy is in accepting that there is no quick geo-spatial fix. So much has happened between ancestral departures and filial returns that the speaker necessarily dreams "in another tongue." She cannot "jeer at history." Second, this poem movingly integrates the double project of discovering/defining both authentic negritude and authentic femaleness. The speaker learns that she could never really come to fit her lover's culture's construction of his masculinity which, for all their passion, produces an alien version of her as woman. If, then, she cannot easily reappropriate an originary Africanness, neither can she be appropriated to a contemporary African version of herself. Differences, particularities both historical and gendered, speak in the poem's concluding, farewell lines:

> There are advantages
> to your ebon calm
> your reason but I was not born to it

Among other good things in this collection are "Every Moment: A Window," "Coming to Terms," and "The Testimony of pPeter p pPetrus." All three are notable instances of Harris's skill at polyphonic writing, at unbinding the spell of spuriously unitary, phallic discourse and installing voices, as simultaneously as may be, for multiple subject positions.

Don Domanski's *Hammerstroke* is at least as venturesome as *Travelling to Find a Remedy*. Reading *Hammerstroke* is like stepping into a painting done by Klee and Chagall after an evening with Dali: Klee for witty whimsies browned by fearsome knowledge, even terror, at their edges; Chagall for ludic numinosity; Dali for casual seeming decomposition of norms. Witness "A Poem Almost Written at le Couvoir de Scott, Quebec":

> The morning after their deaths
> the chickens arrive back on earth
> with photographs of God's hands
> scotchtaped to their feet . . .
>
> and if we look closely
> when they're in the yard
> pecking at the dirt
> we'll see among them the medieval sheen
> of an invisible choir
>
> the sweet bridal veil of the Otherworld.

Domanski's text is also characterized by affectionate, inventive fidelity to the importance of place, season, shape, colour, sound, time of day, nighttime. And speaking of nighttime: without inviting statistical mysticisms of any sort, one notes that the moon appears in at least sixteen of these poems. Then there is a concluding suite of eighteen poems, "The Madonna Room," that impressively unfurls numerous ways of asking "rose" to signify. Moonlight and roses, with never a whiff of sentimentality. If this is lunatic writing, I should be so mad.

The Kalamalka New Writers Series was inaugurated well, but I do not think outstandingly, by Greg Simison's *The Possibilities of Chinese Trout*. I rose to the lure of Simison's title, but the collection as a whole does not live up to the promise of its title. In producing a reading of these poems I seemed to pick up a drift, a sense of thematic direction: from pieces celebrating both the outdoor pleasures and the metaphysical shudders that go with inhabiting the British Columbian in-back, through a section called "Deathwatch" that addresses modes of contingency, de-

cay, and death, to a concluding section, "Ear to the Ground," that wryly and disturbingly chronicles a process of acculturation to postnuclear-catastrophe civilities such as how many importunate surviving neighbours can one afford not to kill. This whole drift is pervaded by a sense of how unexpectedly and/or easily genteel glosses can wash off; of how suddenly night, loneliness, or other primal dreads can invade the well-stocked, well-armed, well-versed psyche; of how unrelentingly the ego calculates pleasure and survival values. One attractive thing about these poems is the speaker's ability often to achieve ironic, even amused, distance from himself. Another is his ability to locate the animal in us, the creature whose hair can still bristle. To have meaning, to produce activity — such as an effective resistance to the idea of a kill or be killed culture — that idea has to be linguistically reanimated as unacceptable and avoidable. Not much of Simison's text, however, shows such re-creative power. One result of this lack is the naturalization, in his "Ear to the Ground" section, of nuclear catastrophe and its savage corollaries. Though I can admire the impulse to face up to likely grimnesses of postapocalyptic behaviour, such a naturalization, whether inadvertent or not, makes me uneasy. If a final silence descends upon our planet it will be less because words failed us than because we failed words.

IAN SOWTON

SCIENCES

SUZANNE ZELLER, *Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation.* University of Toronto Press, $35.00/15.95.

ZELLER'S THESIS, based on her vast reading of archival and published sources, is that Victorian "inventory" sciences (geology; terrestrial magnetism; meteorology; botany) contributed to the "invention" of Canada as a transcontinental phenomenon, insofar as they directed attention to the country beyond its settled areas.

A number of interesting details emerge. Lord Durham's interest in mining and geology is placed in a new light, as is Catharine Parr Traill's interest in botany. (Like many of her generation, amateur and professional, she believed that Canada's climate would be improved by clearing the land of trees.) The importance of Montreal freemasonry as a link between the business practices of the Molsons (among others) and the geological surveys of William Logan, by far the most outstanding figure in the book, is brought out, as is Edmund Walker Head's friendship with Charles Lyell. Edward Gibbon's statement, in his *Decline and Fall*, that the Canadian climate is characterized by "the most vigorous cold" is related to the undertaking of meteorological surveys in Canada; Egerton Ryerson sought, in 1850, to establish a chain of meteorological stations in grammar schools around Upper Canada, wherein the subject was also to be taught. Goethe's *Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen* (1790) is shown to have been a major influence on William Hincks, professor of natural history at the University of Toronto from 1852. And the myth of the North — R. G. Haliburton hoped that all of Canada would eventually be renamed "Norland" — as promulgated by such Canada Firsters as Charles Mair is seen to have been promoted by the interest in botany and magnetism.

These facts, however, are not fashioned into the whole which Zeller's thesis promises. The reason is partly her method of development, which is to supply a brief statement of the main idea of a particular section of the book, then to explore it through a series of character sketches (as is evidenced by the illustrations, as well:

of the twenty, eight are portraits). The results of this method are not always germane; in the section on magnetic surveys, for example, focus is immediately narrowed to the surveyor, Henry Lefroy, and his delight in Polly Hagerman's singing voice. Far from adding zest to what is a rather dry book, these vignettes further limit the range which Zeller's thesis promises. It is as if these surveys were produced in an ideological (not to mention political) vacuum. Only in the last paragraph of the book's "Conclusion" does Zeller make the fascinating statement that the theories of Innis and Creighton "were heirs of the ideas presented here"; only in the last paragraph of her "Note on Sources" does she make reference to Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things*, which contains a brilliant chapter on "Classifying." One can only hope that these tantalizing references are promises of a second volume which will complement and complete this first one.

RICHARD CAVELL

ENCLOSURES

PETER ANDERSON, *Rattle in the Dash*. Playwrights Canada, n.p.

MARGARET HOLLINGSWORTH, *Endangered Species*. Four plays. Act One Press, n.p.

DENNIS FOON, *Skin* and *Liars*. Playwrights Canada, n.p.

PLAYWRIGHTS' IMAGINATIVE RELATION to the bounded space of the stage became increasingly worrisome and self-conscious with the arrival of movies. Movies brought with them a casual, effortless mobility and a breathtaking proximity to "reality." In the nineteenth century, the theatre's fixed frame still seemed a natural site for metamorphosis and sensory freedom; theatre was pre-eminently a place to behold magic and to escape confinement. With the rise of film, however, realistic stage pictures, formerly one of many strategies of representation, came to be regarded as theatre's best chance of rivalling movies' appropriation of the visible world. At present, stage space continues to be understood by most theatregoers as a set of walls, solid walls. Playwrights and audiences alike still *depend* on them, either as a protective, defining barrier, a guarantee of familiarity, or a way of signifying the oppressive weight of a reified social order.

There are, of course, many ingenious and moving demonstrations in contemporary drama that stage space need not be Beckett's eternal waiting room, where one is condemned to speech and repetitive activity simply because one *cannot* leave. But however boldly playwrights and directors experiment with choreography, spectacle, and the resources of other media to make stage space once again a space of freedom and the conditions of stage space into conditions of possibility, theatre (unlike film) is always haunted by the threat of enclosure. No matter how much "openness" is claimed for the stage, playwrights seem always to be arguing with the appearance of being shut in, as if stasis were theatre's natural law.

The cover photograph of Peter Anderson's play, *Rattle in the Dash* appears, at first glance, to be a movie still. Three males in a large, beat-up convertible are apparently engaged in a Kerouac-influenced road trip. We learn in the author's production notes that the car model is to be suspended by wires and should appear to be floating in the air. Indeed, the entire play is a commentary on this image of the vehicle hanging, motionless, in space. Anderson suffuses his drama with the sort of romantic fatalism one associates with the death-magnetized Porsche of James Dean. A sinister hitchhiker named Frank performs the allegorical duties of the Grim Reaper from the back seat. At the end of the play, moments be-

fore the *heavily* foreshadowed final collision occurs, a skull alarm clock goes off in Frank's hands. The only element missing from this portent-laden journey is an old gypsy soothsayer.

Anderson has a fine ear for natural dialogue and knows how to maintain dramatic momentum. The scenes between the two principal characters are well developed and display a range of tone and mood, though the characters' friendship seems more a matter of authorial convenience and thematic necessity than something which arises plausibly from specified life circumstances. Finally, the play seems to have no subject but the impossibility of an automobile on-stage credibly traversing space and time to arrive at a 'material' destination. The *reality* of the car lends an air of unreality to the world the car is meant to evoke. By what might appear to be the logic of the realist's stage picture, the car is doomed to fail since it can never make contact with anything as imposingly substantial as itself.

Margaret Hollingsworth's *Endangered Species* is a collection of four one-act plays. All of them, as Hollingsworth notes in her introduction, are "pre-occupied with male/female relationships," and these relationships are conceived almost exclusively in terms of power struggles. The settings for the plays are cramped rooms or chillingly bare spaces in which the characters, from the outset, are "caught." Many of the women dwell in suffocating proximity to an enemy who is "disguised" as a lover, friend, or spouse. Hollingsworth's most exciting plays in this collection, "It's only hot for two months in Kapuskasing" and "Prim and Duck, Mama and Frank" make the playing area or frame an integral part of the problem of self-definition. The question "Who am I?" becomes transformed into "Where am I?" The struggle to secure a place for oneself on stage is made to feel like a penetration of the mystery of being. In "It's only hot," an unnamed female visitor gradually learns that the "friend" she is helping to escape from an abusive relationship has grown to depend on the violent intimidation of her partner, and can no longer differentiate between fear, hatred, and sexual desire. The visitor guiltily finds herself mirrored in this conflict, and deflects *her* fear of formlessness (and inadmissible identification with the "victim") into a "simpler" urge to kill her own lover, who has recently betrayed her. The visitor is defending herself before an unseen judge at the beginning of the play. Perhaps she is on trial for losing all sense of who she is. She suggests throughout her story that nothing she was involved in hapepned "for any reason."

The action of "Prim and Duck, Mama and Frank" is a series of verbal and physical improvisations on the subject of mind/body division. The characters (two female, two male) exist in a kind of loose family relationship, and possess only the most fitful, preoccupied awareness of one another's existence. Their moments of contact are nearly always bursts of irritability at someone's failure to stay fixed in the dead image they've formed of them. Each member of the family experiments, in a mounting frenzy, with the objects that cover their living space, alternately trying things on for size, moving them around, or destroying them. It is as though they are attempting to effect inner change by doing something, anything, to the unresisting bits of consumer debris in their not quite meaningless environment. What one does with *stuff* at any given moment is all that can be known.

Dennis Foon's *Skin* and *Liars* belong to a dramatic genre for which I confess I have little imaginative symapthy — didactic theatre for young people. The assumption underlying such plays seems to be that most serious life questions have sensible answers. The characters are essentially mouthpieces for position statements

in a too fully calculated ideological argument. How do "young people's plays" differ, either in their approach to issues or in their level of moral sophistication, from movies made for television? *Skin*, for example, reassures us that beneath their sometimes bewildering variations in colour and accent, students from ethnic minorities are decent, hard-working citizens whose values are exactly like ours — i.e., impeccably middle-class. *Liars*, a better because somewhat less complacent play, shows us two teenagers — from different backgrounds — confronting parental alcoholism (and related abuse). One of them matures to the point of seeking help from the "appropriate" authorities. The other *wrongly* believes that his situation is hopeless (Foon thankfully refrains from judging him for his state of mind) and withdraws into a cocoon of drugs and walkman music. The liberating counsel that Foon's plays presumably offer to their viewers functions, paradoxically, to close off rather than foster authentic, unprogrammed inquiry. Didactic drama, however resourceful its devices, never carries us beyond theatre's "fixed frame," the familiar, protective box.

GEORGE TOLES

DRAMATIC IRONIES

BRONWYN DRAINIE, *Living the Part: The Turbulent Times of John Drainie*. Macmillan, $27.95.

MARY JANE MILLER, *Turn Up the Contrast: CBC Television Drama Since 1952*. UBC Press and CBC Enterprises, $34.95.

GEORGE F. WALKER, *The East End Plays*. Playwrights Canada, $16.95.

IN *Living the Part*, Bronwyn Drainie, eldest daughter of actor John Drainie, chronicles the joys and frustrations of her father's career from the late 1930s to 1966, the year of his death from cancer at 50. Throughout the book she describes a series of "dilemmas," the key word in the work's subtitle and a theme that unifies her book.

John Drainie, it seems, both suffered and created the contradictory forces that shaped (or diffused) his career. He was touted by Orson Welles, for instance, as "the greatest radio actor in the world," but was excluded from many other dramatic venues, performing less on television and very little on stage because of a severe limp. CBC radio used his considerable talent well and frequently, but failed to give him genuine star status because of its no-star policy. A Canadian actor by choice, Drainie's legacy remains mostly unknown to the general public thirty years later, a fate not shared by his fellow artists who left for the United States. Bronwyn Drainie's title epitomizes her father's experience: "Canadian" and "Stardom" is a contradiction in terms, a dilemma that both amused and enraged him.

Drainie's biography chronicles the usual family history: early days, marriage and children, and steps in career. But it is far richer in scope and depth than the standard treatment of a subject's life. Drainie demonstrates that her father's career reflects and embodies, in part, Canada's development in the arts: CBC radio in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s; Toronto professional theatre in the 1950s (the New Play Society, the Jupiter, the Crest); and, to some extent, CBC television in the 1950s and 1960s. (Notably absent is Stratford, which snubbed Drainie because of his limp.) Moreover, Drainie supplements her research with her impressions of him and with observations by many of her father's contemporaries: Lorne Greene, Monty Hall, Lister Sinclair, Len Peterson, John Bethune, Fletcher Markle, Bernard Braden, Donald Davis, Donald Sutherland, Frances Hyland, Christopher Plummer, and others. Finally, Drainie compares this history with contemporary situations — with her own experience as a

CBC broadcaster and with R. H. Thompson's experience as a Canadian actor. Her sobering conclusion: little has changed in thirty years. All these threads make *Living the Part* a highly readable and interesting work, aimed at the general, informed reader intrigued by the figure of John Drainie and by the fate of Canadian performers in general.

Like Bronwyn Drainie, Mary Jane Miller embeds her thesis in the title of her book, *Turn Up the Contrast.* In producer John Kennedy's words, CBC television was and is "determined to have CBC drama contrast, be different, be distinctive." Miller argues for this aspiration throughout the book, and its organization reflects her thesis. After defending CBC television as the principal shaper of this country's imagination, Miller divides programming into two groups: series television and television drama. She includes under the former such popular genres as copshows and mysteries, family adventure, sitcoms and domestic comedy, other series and miniseries; under the latter, she includes anthology, such series as *Scope*, *Festival*, *Folio*, and *For the Record.* Further, she contrasts Toronto productions with those from the CBC regional stations, couching the difference in the oxymoronic subtitle, "The Peripheral is Central." In short, contrast is the leitmotif of the book: CBC television versus American and British television, series versus anthology drama, central Canada versus regional Canada. Throughout, Miller argues that contrast, at its best, can promote awareness, can transform our longstanding indifference towards CBC television into knowledge about our past achievements and present ambitions. Not to do so, she points out, will jeopardize our very identity.

This book surveys, classifies, and assesses CBC television's dramatic efforts over thirty-five years, since its inception in 1952. Its weaknesses are those endemic to projects so ambitious: we look for pages instead of paragraphs on our favourite programmes, for more detail about shows that are new to us. Miller compensates for this necessary brevity, however, with numerous comments on dramatic genre, comparisons with American and British traditions, assessments of numerous actors, producers, and policies, and suggestions for greater public assess to programmes.

To close her work, Miller characterizes John Kennedy's notion of "contrast" as "distinctive" of CBC television: ambivalent, challenging, topical, and ironic. These same adjectives also characterize the third book of this review, George F. Walker's *The East End Plays*, which suggests, if nothing else, that Walker's preoccupations are peculiarly Canadian. He holds this loose trilogy together by repeatedly setting his odd assortment of characters in the same location — east-end Toronto — an absurd world, as he depicts it, filled with crooks, young urban lovers, witches, bums, architects, priests, lawyers, and hookers. The trilogy format shows us Walker working out some preoccupations — the fragility of human relationships, the simmering violence of the world, the necessity of community.

He does so in plots — if "plot" can describe the lurching action based on series of crises — as dark, witty, and absurd as Pinter or Stoppard. In *Criminals in Love* (which won the Governor General's Award in 1985), for instance, the plot traces a dilemma: Junior will be "snuffed out" if he doesn't join his uncle's girlfriend in small crime. In *Better Living*, a family of women await the dreaded return of a father drummed out of the family ten years before. Here the plot hinges on negation: the father denies his identity to rejoin the family unit, and this father/not father confusion teases us throughout the play. And in *Beautiful City*, the plot develops through contrasts of character (the two architect brothers,

the mother/son developers) and setting (the downtown city and the east-end neighbourhood) to tell the story of Paul, an award-winning architect, who retreats to the east-end hoping to escape the skyscrapers and megamalls of the city. Like the first two, *Beautiful City* delights us with far-fetched situations, a dizzying array of off-beat characters, and social satire of 1980s Canada.

Dilemma, negation, and contrast shape these dark comedies, which express the irony of the Canadian temperament explored in *Living the Part* and *Turn Up the Contrast.* Each writer approaches the ironic perspective from his or her vantage point: Drainie, a journalist; Miller, an academic; and Walker, a playwright. For this kaleidoscope of views alone, very Canadian in their focus, these books are well worth comparing.

JILL TOMASSON GOODWIN

SATIRE & ROMANCE

ROBERTSON DAVIES, *The Lyre of Orpheus.* Macmillan, $25.95.

The Lyre of Orpheus, the third volume of Robertson Davies' third trilogy, completes the story of characters who appeared in *The Rebel Angels* (1981) and *What's Bred in the Bone* (1988). The title derives from a comment by the early nineteenth-century Romantic author, composer, and critic, E. T. A. Hoffman: "The lyre of Orpheus opens the door of the underworld." Davies' lyre is an imaginary opera which the composer supposedly roughed out as he was dying of syphilis and drink. The process of completing "Arthur of Britain or the Magnificent Cuckold" as a doctoral "dissertation" and staging it at the Stratford (Ontario) Festival reveals that lust, greed, anger, envy, in fact, the full complement of Deadly Sins run rampant among the participants. At the same time, music effects the eventual sublimation of base passion.

While the title suggests an archetypal pattern derived from classical mythology, the major influence on Davies' mythopoeic imagination is the legendary material about King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. Malory's *Morte Darthur* (1485) is the obvious source, though one suspects that Davies has also broused in *The Arthurian Encyclopedia* (1986). He is not the first to update medieval Arthurian romance by presenting it as contemporary fiction. G. A. Lawrence's *Guy Livingstone* (1857) depicted an aristocratic cast drawn from Victorian gentry of the horse and hounds type, army officers, and public school graduates. The Canadian version of an élite features academics at the University of Toronto and a well-heeled businessman who presides over their deliberations and funds their "noble actes" with the resources of the Cornish Foundation. As in medieval romances, "le génie feminin" dominates the cultural scene. Female professors and graduate students prove to be as powerfully aggressive and amorous as were the courtly ladies and fées.

Each major character has an Arthurian prototype who represents a "buried myth." "Fish up a myth from the depths and it takes you over," observes Professor the Reverend Simon Darcourt whose predilection for giving advice, skill in machination, and bardic contributions make him a Merlin figure. The beautiful graduate student, Maria Theotoky, now married to Arthur Cornish, is both Guenevere (proud to be the wife of a noble spirit but a little bored) and Elaine of Corbenic (the mother of Galahad). In a manner suggesting both King Uther's begetting of Arthur and Lancelot's begetting of the Grail hero, she is seduced and impregnated by a man "disguised" as her husband. Geraint Powell, a "self-seeking bastard," is the pseudo-Lancelot. Arthur

Cornish, rendered infertile by an attack of mumps, must endure the role of cuckold. Yet he sustains the attribute of magnificence (the virtue which Prince Arthur represents in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*) not only by presiding over the Round Table and footing the bills but also by practising patience, forgiveness, and love (Tennyson's Arthur is not an appropriate co-relative!). The composer, Hulda Schnakenburg, a grubby graduate student cleaned up and seduced by the lesbian musicologist Dr. Gunilla Dahl-Soot, unconvincingly enacts an Elaine of Astolat role when her hopeless love for Geraint-Lancelot leads to her attempted suicide. The illegitimate Wally Crottel, an ignominious Mordred recast as a schoolyard drug-pusher, is easily thwarted when he threatens the mythic society.

The Tarot pack provides a second layer of mythic correspondences. In order to foresee the opera's fate, Maria's gypsy mother lays out for Darcourt the nine-card deal, "a very womanly hand" that includes the Empress, ruler of worldly fortune (Arthur); Force, a lady subduing a lion by opening its jaws (Gunilla); the Lover (Geraint); Judgement (Maria); and the Fool with the little dog nipping at his bare arse "to make him go in a path that the mind would not think of." Simon's appropriation of the Fool figura enables him to rationalize the thefts he commits in order to complete his biography of Francis Cornish.

On the literal level, the functions involved in producing the opera are distributed among the major characters. "Schnak" and her advisor turn Hoffman's sketches into an operatic score. Darcourt fits a libretto to the music, lifting his best parts, he confesses, from Sir Walter Scott whose metrical romances — "Marmion," "The Lady of the Lake," and "The Bridal of Triermain" (in which Arthur fathers an illegitimate daughter) — are similar in diction and metre. Geraint Powell, who is responsible for the staging, attributes his schema to Malory and Hoffman. In fact, both the projected drama which Powell describes at Maria's Arthurian feast and Stratford performance which forms the novel's climax Davies has appropriated from the Victorian dramatist J. Comyns Carr (1849-1916). His "King Arthur" was produced at London's Lyceum Theatre on January 12, 1895, with Henry Irving as King Arthur, Forbes Robertson as Launcelot and Ellen Terry as Guenevere. Edward Burne-Jones designed sets and costumes and Arthur Sullivan provided music. As in *The Lyre of Orpheus*, the drama begins with a Magic Mere prologue: Arthur receives his sword from the lake spirit and sees in a vision his "fate," Guenevere. In Act I (the great hall at Camelot) Arthur and the knights depart on the Grail Quest, leaving Launcelot to rule and Morgan with her son Mordred to plot. Act II in both productions is "The Queen's Maying," followed by "The Black Barge," where the dying Elaine of Astolat reveals the love between Lancelot and Guenevere. Both conclude with the final conflict, Mordred's death and Arthur's departure across the Enchanted Mere to Avalon.

Davies does not assume his readers' familiarity with the conventions of Romantic opera or with the literary sources. One authorial voice belongs to Hoffman (ETAH) who from limbo provides autobiographical details, information about early nineteenth-century theatres, disquisitions on Romantic art, and sardonic assessments of the Torontonians. A psychologically appropriate technique of exposition is that of allowing know-it-all academics to instruct the less informed. We get discourses on everything from the Questing Beast's anatomy to the Madness of Lancelot. The frequent interpolations not only slow plot development but also,

by reminding us of their noble predecessors, emphasize the moral inferiority of the modern characters. Foul-tongued Hulda, self-centred Geraint, and casuistic, toadying Simon re-enact a story that has "its shape and its pattern somewhere outside our daily world." The result borders on farce.

Davies is at his best when satirizing academia. His sharp ear accurately catches and pen records the hectoring tones of the upwardly mobile female professor, the American graduate student's woolly-minded jargon, the dissertation committee's bitchiness and sly manoeuvring, the professional propensity for dragging apt quotations into every conversation. At times Davies' eclecticism strains our patience. There are too many characters introduced for no better reason than to get a cheap laugh or provide a link with previous novels. And the dash of lesbianism, dash of gnosticism, and snide characterizations of "the Canadian identity" have a formulaic modishness that seems forced.

Despite the irony inherent in juxtaposing the idealized Arthurian society of medieval romance and the realistic Kater Murrish Ontario world, Davies chooses a fairy tale ending to conclude his novel and his trilogy. Arthur and Maria are accepted as genuine patrons of the arts when they establish the Francis Cornish Memorial Gallery. Simon Darcourt, whose explication of Francis Corning's great painting, "The Marriage at Cana," (and a couple of thefts) has enabled him to complete the biography, receives the critics' accolades. Schnak is "on her way" to becoming an established composer; Powell has produced a terrific "Orfeo" in Milan. And Robertson Davies has effected a synthesis of Arthurian romance and Canadian setting that is a witty, plausible expression of his thesis: "'A Man's life of any worth is a continual allegory'."

MURIEL WHITAKER

POINTILISM

DOUGLAS FETHERLING, *Rites of Alienation*. Quarry Press, $10.95.

DOUGLAS FETHERLING, *The Crowded Darkness*. Quarry Press and Subway Books, $12.95.

DOUGLAS FETHERLING is a mean (which is to say, generous) hand with images. Consider this hat-trick. *The Crowded Darkness* collects Fetherling's reviews of mainly American films of the 1970s. *Rites of Alienation* comprises 100 Canadian Haiku poems of urban desolation. The cover illustration for the latter is a detail from Fetherling's 1985 oil painting, *Figure*. To conclude the puckish analogy: all three are clear scores.

The two books have radically different content, but both use a splattering of images to detail a place, a time. This 'pointilist' strategy establishes the viewer as at once detached and involved. From different subjects and from different fictional forms, Fetherling moves to a common effect: depicting a world through telling strokes of isolated images.

The film reviews are solid pieces, worth exhuming from the old *Canadian Forum*. Fetherling's film commentary is informed by social concern and historical knowledge, a welcome respite from the hermetic theory in the specialized journals or the flippancy of popular reviewers.

As most of the selected columns deal with American films, Fetherling's favourite orientation is genre. But he reads the works in their historical context, not just as inflections of a literary formula. As author of a biography of Ben Hecht, he is especially sensitive to the real and mythic worlds of the journalism and major ganglands of the 1920s-1930s. So he is excellent on Ricco, Corleone, and Mitchum's Marlowe, as well as on the Nixon sagas, *All the President's Men*, *The Front Page*, *Network*, and their respective contexts. Fetherling also defines some useful

new types such as the "urban picaresque" of *Medium Cool*, *Midnight Cowboy*, and the first three features by Bob Rafelson. Hal Ashby's *Shampoo* emerges a melancholy summary of the age.

Fetherling's reflections remind us how much of a culture is expressed in its popular artefacts. This collection forms a portrait of a time, its public and sunken tensions chronicled through the Hollywood dream-factory. But it also warns that our own continental psyche is being aired and shaped by the current Hollywood hits. The recent spate of Canadian masterworks might read as swan song of a species no longer endangered but extinct. What Canadian reviewers have we in Canadian journals now to draw the opposite distinctions, say, between *Betrayed* and *Mississippi Burning*, or between the ersatz feminism of Mike Nichols' *Working Girl* and the genuine article, Lizzie Borden's (censored) *Working Girls*? The only thing better than a collected Fetherling would be a whole new one.

Fetherling's reviews stand as well on their own as they do as part of his larger canvas, but his Haiku poems read better as a poem sequence than as individual works. Sometimes a line seems redundant, an image a cliché, the formal rigour of the genre suspended. Some are just one-liners:

> Self-destruction
> if you want it done right
> do it yourself.

But even such limited single-frame compositions thrive in their sequence. These 100 three-line "takes" finally form a "film," a montage of shots depicting the modern urban landscape as ritualized alienation amid ruins and shadows. The last line (end credit?) reads: "14 names for despair."

Sometimes the poems cling together. A Cagney allusion in the sixtieth poem sets off a fourteen-poem sequence that reads like a self-reflexive short film. Elsewhere a motif may fade in and out like a phrase from a film-score, e.g., the dignity and compulsion of the storyteller; the historical necessity of language. Or poems may be edited together on the principle of conflict: on page 9, the present blocks out the future but unfurls layers of import in the next poem, and establishes a context that redeems the cliché image ("the last leaf remaining on the tree").

Finally, these two quite different books together form a montage, linked through Fetherling's common vision and creative compulsion to see and to speak through fragments of resonant images. The reader and the maker of word or of image are of imagination and compulsion all compact.

MAURICE YACOWAR

PROBLEM TORY

GERALD LYNCH, *Stephen Leacock: Humour and Humanity*. McGill-Queen's, $24.95.

THE READER OF Gerald Lynch's book is immediately confronted by the disconcerting echo of the title of Ralph Curry's *Stephen Leacock: Humorist and Humanist*, published thirty years ago. Whether the author was personally responsible for his title, or whether it is a quirk of Canadian publishing, it indicates a familiar line of argument. Lynch observes that earlier discussion of Leacock's Toryism (Pacey) and humanism (Curry) lacked "illustration and analysis." But here the range of illustration is not as complete as a book-length study at this stage in Leacock criticism would require, and the analysis provided is hampered by a too simple, uncritical thesis about the relation of Leacock's "philosophy" to his humorous writing.

Lynch's procedure is to "first present and discuss Leacock's tory-humanist phi-

losophy and ground his theory of kindly humour in that tory humanism," and then to "examine *Sunshine Sketches* and *Arcadian Adventures* in light of that Tory humanist philosophy and theory of humour." Although prefaced by the claim that the author has spent "years chasing down Leacock's numerous literary mounts," this study is thus disappointingly limited to a detailed discussion of the two works that have already received the lion's share of critical attention.

From the outset, the argument for a serious Tory humanism in Leacock's nonfiction is rendered unconvincing by the evident weakness of the ideas Lynch is able to cite. When influences and parallels from Burke to Carlyle to Matthew Arnold to Veblen are invoked, the effect is only to remind us of the difference in grasp and strenuousness between Leacock's writing and that of his intellectual betters. To compare Leacock's "vision of social order" with Coleridge's, as "one of 'equipoise and interdependency,'" is, given the passages from Leacock that Lynch can bring to bear, positively to risk bathos. If Leacock is imbued with Coleridge, it is Coleridge at several enfeebled removes, and it is incumbent on the kind of intellectual history that is being undertaken here to make such discriminations. Lynch is aware of the difficulties (he admits that Leacock's own words make him appear much more of a facile compromiser than one seeking "equipoise"), but he deals with them by defensively asserting a stature for Leacock's ideas that cannot withstand critical consideration. This defensiveness is wrongheaded, a vestige of provincialism, because Leacock's value as a distinctive humourist is by now beyond question. In one of his best moments, Lynch tells the story of how Harold Macmillan once paraphrased a Leacock joke, without knowing his source, suggesting that Leacock is one of the few Canadian writers who can be said to have become part of world literature. An ambitious new book-length study should define the special nature of Leacock's comic art cogently and comprehensively, and although it is doubtless true, as Lynch argues following Robertson Davies and others, that Leacock's comic fiction and his non-fiction are continuous, the continuity is not that of fiction which reflects or "enacts" serious ideas; in fact Lynch's own suggestive citations might persuade us that a kind of uncertainty in his thinking helps to account for the special accents of Leacock's comic writing. It is the greater pity that Lynch did not adopt a more probing approach to his evidence, since he suggestively brings the nonfiction to critical attention, and in fact reports usefully in the contradictions and evasions in Leacock's efforts to articulate a "middle way" between "the extremes of liberalism and socialism."

When it comes to Leacock's "theory of humour," the humourist's intellectual deficiencies (or his lack of interest in theory) are even clearer, while the need for some systematic analysis of Leacock's distinctive techniques, the special rhetorical accents of his humour, becomes evident. But Lynch fails to provide such analysis, preoccupied as he is by the message and moral attitudes of the work (which have been pretty thoroughly gone over by Watt, Spettigue, Cameron, Bush, Watters, and others). W. H. Magee's discussion, many years ago, of Leacock's use of the "exploded cliché" was a step in the right direction, which Lynch does not even mention. It is hard to see, moreover, how a *book-length* study of Leacock in which *Literary Lapses* and *Nonsense Novels* do not even appear in the index, can advance our knowledge of his comic art. And yet Lynch states, quite correctly, that "criticism of [Leacock's] writings" is needed to make up for the prevalence of "biographies, reminiscences, and oral histories."

In his lengthy discussion of *Sunshine Sketches* and *Arcadian Adventures* (hereafter cited as *SS* and *AA*), Lynch repeatedly acknowledges, but never quite deals with, the many questions raised by his argument that these works can be read as reflecting or "enacting" Leacock's "tory-humanist attitudes" and "theory of humour" (as these have been defined in the first two chapters). There is, for one thing, the notorious equivocation in the presentation of Mariposa in *SS*, with which so many critics from Pacey onwards have been usefully concerned. Lynch is not oblivious to this equivocation, of course; he repeatedly draws attention to it. Following Northrop Frye, for instance, he suggestively remarks that "in *SS*, Mariposa is at once the object of much satire and the satiric norm, morally lacking and the moral norm." Surely here a more searching connection could have been made, by someone so well read in Leacock's non-fiction, between the uncertainty of the treatment in *SS* and the "contradictions" in Leacock's thinking on social and moral questions, and the evasions and exclusions of his "kindly" theory of humour. But Lynch's argument involves an uncritical defence of Leacock's problematical "Tory humanism" and the drastically restrictive "theory of humour" that (as Lynch usefully points out) flowed from it. So we are told throughout that Leacock is to be praised for sticking to "kindliness" and avoiding the "harshness" of satire, whereas the more persuasive interpretation is that Leacock was not able steadily to muster the critical, unsentimental outlook of a satirist. Hence the equivocations of *SS* and the bitter, fatigued disillusionment of *AA*, which of course is not satire either, but the jaundiced complement to the wash of sentiment at the end of *SS*. Lynch notes but does not adequately interrogate the recurrence in *AA* of the cyclical pattern at work in *SS*, so helpfully described by Douglas Spettigue, whereby all forces cancel each other out and a return to the status quo is the only outcome. The recurrence of the identical pattern, in such a gloomy context, must shed a revealing light back on the happy stagnation of Mariposa. And although Lynch argues that Mariposa can be seen retrospectively as a consolation for the grim world of Plutoria, the last-ditch sentimentalism of *SS* might be more persuasively seen as the appropriate prelude to the disillusionment of *AA*. The distinctively oppressive nightmare of Plutoria (Lynch notes the "dark vision" of this work without fully exploring its continuity with the uncertain sunshine of Mariposa) is dreamed in the chair of the Mausoleum Club by the former Mariposan, who has flinched from even his own best knowledge about Mariposa, who has lost his dream of innocence but found no adequate world of experience to replace it.

It must be said that suggestive evidence for the interpretation offered here is very well presented by Lynch himself. His discussion of *SS* and *AA* raises many of the important issues, and even gestures frequently in the directions I have tried to outline, but he has pulled his critical punches much as Leacock did in his treatment of Mariposa. Signally, the discussion requires grounding in a more wide-ranging and incisive account of the nature of satire, in order to delineate Leacock's special outlook more sharply, to determine how his humour differs from satire, and what the strengths and limitations of his position are (Reginald Watters has offered a few notes towards this project in an article on Leacock's distinctively "Canadian" outlook). On the subject of satire Lynch leans mainly on Frye, which is a fair enough reliance as far as it goes, but his overall contribution on this subject adds little to the useful discriminations of Cameron. It must be said, to follow Frye, that the "militant irony" which is satire

requires an acute and steady appreciation on the satirist's part both of the deficiencies of the object of his satire, and of a possible standard of comparison which would amend those deficiencies. Satire, to put the matter negatively, but in terms pertinent to Leacock's case, can afford to be neither sentimental nor cynical; positively put, satire is concerned with nameable vices and real (if often only possible) virtues. On Lynch's own evidence, it is clear that Leacock was incapable of such a concern. A co-ordinated study of his fiction and non-fiction might provide interesting evidence of the salient features of late Victorian thinking on moral issues, and an occasion to augment our understanding of Canadian intellectual history of the time. Here an opportunity for critically investigating this history has been missed: Frank Watt has more searchingly assessed Leacock's work in this regard in a brief article published many years ago.

FRANCIS ZICHY

THE HUMAN WHOLE

DAVID WATMOUGH, *Families*. Knight's Press, n.p.

DAVID WATMOUGH'S latest book, *Families*, is a novel with a double purpose. On the one hand, it delineates the social relationships of gays in a world which, for the most part, is intolerant and often openly hostile. On the other, it explores both the painfulness and the regenerative power of family bonds, even when these bonds are to those unrelated in blood.

Set partly in Vancouver and partly in France, through the 1960s and 1970s, the novel contrasts the relative innocence of Western Canadians, including the narrow parochialism of their sexual mores, with the sophistication and disconcerting assurance of Europeans. The three couples in the book are all abnormal, according to the prescription of their society. Ken and Davey are gay, the spiritual "uncles" of the other two couples' sons, close friends of both the gay husbands and their hapless wives. Though loyalties are strained by conflicts that emerge in the course of the narrative, the extended family of the three couples and their two sons somehow survives all opposition. The notion of what a family is, has been opened up by Watmough to include those whom the culture seeks to exclude from participation, either because their sexuality is unconventional, or because it is not reproductive.

Watmough's narrative reveals that homophobia is the true agent of affliction here, for the cultural devaluation and penalizing of gay practice and gay desire drives many gay men to attempt heterosexual lives as husbands and fathers, either as camouflage or in flight from an unbearable image of the self. This betrayal of authentic feeling results in the husbands' betrayal of others, and in the disintegration of family life, together with self-respect. Gordon and Neil, actively though covertly gay, live double lives, deserting their wives and sons at night, or, ludicrously, in the middle of shopping expeditions, to pursue rapid, multiple encounters in public lavatories and steambaths.

In Gordon's case, the agony of inner dividedness leads to profound self-loathing, mental breakdown, and later, a return to religious fundamentalism. Neil, happier and more resilient — perhaps, Watmough hints, because he is an Irishman — is called to a reckoning when he is arrested in a campus toilet, caught having sex with a student. At first shattered, he soon recovers, and takes advantage of his wife and son's departure for a holiday in Europe finally to defy social tyranny, "come out," and begin a more integrated

and open existence. When his family returns, he announces that he is leaving his wife Jacqueline and their teenage son, to move in with his younger lover Daniel.

The wives, children, and husbands all pass through a crucible of anguish and fierce resentment, which comes near to destroying both their love for each other and their individual dignity. The antidote, in Watmough's terms, is simple but hard-won: it is the sustained, difficult exercise of love, loyalty, and understanding. With these ingredients, Neil's son Benjamin overcomes his homophobia, stops hating his own father, and even becomes good friends with his father's new lover, Daniel. Instead of unmitigated loss, there is an augmentation of support, of human resources, in the lives of these people, because of their eventual willingness to forgive injury and to accept friends and family as they are. Thus the potentially tragic destruction evoked in the first part of the novel is averted, though not dismissed, through a comic salvaging of relationships. Watmough's book affirms the crucial value of such loving tolerance and of that hardy wisdom that most of all abhors waste.

The fun in the novel resides most frequently in the character of the narrator, Davey Bryant, an anti-hero who is engaging precisely because he is so full of flaws and follies.

In other of his works, such as *Fury* or *Vibrations of Time*, Watmough has inquired relentlessly into the savagery and hypocrisy that often colour human interactions. Here, he turns instead to the kind of wounding that can only be inflicted by those who love, upon those who love back. The hopefulness of the book is a measure of the writer's own vigorous confrontation of all that is politically and psychologically inimical to his own sense of the human whole.

KATE SIRLUCK

NO-HED-TROIS

JACQUES BOUCHARD, ed., *Liberté* ("L'autre Grèce: Huit poètes contemporains") 172 (août 1987). $5.00.

STAVROS TSIMICALIS, *Liturgy of Light.* Aya Press, $8.95.

> Grèce, début des années 60. Je faisais partie de la jeunesse qui migrait massivement vers Athènes, seul lieu ou l'on pouvait rêver, rêver de changer le monde.... Notre jeneusse avait grandi en pleine période de transition, faite de privations et de peurs mais porteuse de promesses. Il fallait croire à celles-ci, oublier les premières. Plus tard nous comprendrions que l'Histoire avait été truffée de mensonge, que l'attachement à la culture antique était une forme de détournement de la culture contemporaine et que les promesses étaient des leurres.
>
> À l'école, quelques professeurs (deux ou trois) nous avaient parlé de nos grands poètes et romanciers — donc nous cherchions en vain les textes dans les livres officiels. Nous devions nous rassasier à même des poètes écrivant dans une langue qui, pour être savante, n'en était pas moins étrangère à nos oreilles. La musique grecque? Nous la méprisions — elle faisait trop *turc*. Nous n'ecoutions que la chanson francaise, italienne et, bien sûr, américaine. Nous viellissions avec de la littérature étrangère de traduction douteuse, des danses et musiques venues d'ailleurs.

THESE ARE Irène Perelli-Contos' opening paragraphs of "La Grèce: L'écriture est politique," a special issue of the Québécois magazine *Nuit Blanche* dedicated to contemporary Greek literature (mars, avril 1987). Any modern Greek interested in Greek literature would certainly identify with her experience; at least, I do. "Ithake" and "Waiting for the Barbarians" were the only poems by Cavafis on the curriculum; I improved my French by memorizing the lyrics of popular French singer Sylvie Vartan ("par amour, par pitié") and my English by memorizing the lyrics of The Doors, The Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel, and Chuck Berry. By the time I was eighteen I knew more about French literature than about Greek;

I began reading Greek poets such as Embiricos and Engonopoulos because of the French writers that had influenced their work. As far as folk music and the popular songs of Kazantzidis and early Marinela went, that was a no-no: that was the music coming out of the open windows of "peasants"; "we" listened to "light music," and I had a passion for Italian opera.

This xenomania (comparable to the pervasive American influence on Canadian culture), whether it makes some Greeks cosmopolitan or not, has estranged them from their own culture. Their pride in their ancestors has long become an inhibiting and debilitating force; since it is still the Acropolis that advertises modern Greece, no wonder little is known about modern Greek culture and literature. This intent, but passive, gaze on a past whose monuments are eroded by carelessness committed in the present, together with the political and social events of modern history, has created the historical gap that Perelli-Contos talks about. Nevertheless, it is the poets of modern Greece such as Seferis, Elytis, and Ritsos — the best known of modern Greek poets — who have appropriated that historical blind spot and relocated the Greek psyche within its indigenous and imaginary terrain.

"L'autre Grèce" in *Liberté*, the presentation of eight contemporary Greek poets in French translation, is an excellent introduction to some of the styles and trends of Greek poetry. Introduced by Jacques Bouchard, the poetry of Kostas G. Papageorgiou, Stéphanos Békatoros, Leftéris Poulios, Yannis Kontos, Yannis Patilis, Réa Galanaki, Kostas Gouliamos, and Michalis Ganas is selected with a specific theme in mind, namely "le thème du paysage poétique." Far from being a strange and somewhat idiosyncratic focus, as Perelli-Contos' words indicate, it is a focus pertinent to the recent developments of Greek culture in general and literature in particular. Also, this special issue of *Liberté* is meant to be a continuation of the much longer and more inclusive introduction to modern Greek poetry and fiction published in *Nuit Blanche*. And it is not a coincidence that Jacques Bouchard has edited and introduced, in collaboration with Perellis-Contos in *Nuit Blanche*, both issues. Bouchard, a professor in the Departement des Études néo-helléniques de l'Université de Montréal, "le seul du genre au Québec," speaks Greek better than many Greeks I know, including myself, and has an intimate and thorough knowledge of Greek literature, especially of the modern times and of the Enlightenment period. Bouchard, who lived and studied in Greece, was also one of the organizers of the "First International Congress on the Hellenic Diaspora from Antiquity to Modern Times," an ambitious and successful congress which took place in April 1988 in Montreal and in Athens. This congress was envisioned and directed by John Fossey, another hellenophile Canadian, professor at the Montreal Institute of Hellenic Studies and Archaeology, McGill University.

Jacques Bouchard's "Présentation" not only creates the context necessary for a better appreciation of the poets anthologized, but also offers the reader a brief yet succinct introduction to the origins of modern Greek poetry and the directions it has taken. In order to account for "Les ruines des Modernes," for "le problème chronique, et éternel de l'héllenisme: l'émigration," for the paradox of seeing "l'artiste postmoderne prendre la défense d'un humanisme néo-classique," Bouchard begins with a gesture — classical in the clarity of its performance and in its methodological function — that deconstructs the very Apollonian light that has blinded many modern Greeks as well as lovers of Greece:

> S'il existe une Grèce éternelle, des humanistes, des artistes, des esthètes et des ama-

> teurs d'Antiquité, qui constitue la toile de fond — bleu azur — de notre imaginaire collectif, son reflet kaléidoscopique a infiniment varié selon les événements des temps et les phantasmes des hommes. . . . Car comment croire aujourd'hui que la Grèce puisse signifier autre chose que charters, vacances et tourisme international? Les frontières de l'Orient reculent toujours plus à l'est; la Grèce s'avère être une des dernières conquêtes de l'Europe occidentale, une des curiosités obligées de tout demi-civilisé de l'Empire américain.

Bouchard is performing here a pas-de-deux: without debunking what constitutes the very essence of "la 'Belle Grèce'," he addresses his readers, who most likely know more about classical than modern Greece, by making them aware of what reading modern Greek poetry entails; he also questions the clichéd assumptions and myths about Greek culture that more often than not hinder the way to modern poetry instead of opening it up. Bouchard de-scribes the very signature that has given Greek civilization and literature its status. Taking poetry to be "le plus précis des sismographes de la psyché grecque," Bouchard observes that Greek poetry of the last decades is "la poétique du paysage."

He distinguishes three stages in the evolution of "la poetique du paysage." The poetry of George Seferis (1900-1971; Nobel Prize 1963) represents the best attempt at relying on the concept of "hellénicité," a concept that synthesizes, while revalorizing, "l'Histoire" and "la culture populaire." The writing of Odysseas Elytis (b. 1911; Nobel Prize 1979), with its lyric exuberance and private mythology, has added a metaphysical dimension to Greek poetry; in Bouchard's words, "Elytis a réussi à créer une mythologie néo-hellénique, à imposer son image de la 'Belle Grèce', émanant d'une projection surréelle du monde des îles de la mer Égée." The poets included in this small anthology continue what Bouchard identifies as the third stage of the development of modern Greek poetry. The work of Andreas Embiricos (1901-1975), Yannis Ritsos (b. 1909; Lenin Prize 1977), and Manolis Anagnostakis (b. 1925), to mention only a few examples, marks "un mouvement iconoclaste destiné à démystifier l'icône de la 'Graecia beata'." The modern Greek poet as iconoclast moves from celebrating a Belle Grèce to recreating a Grèce maudite.

Lefteris Poulios, one of the most respected voices of this generation, expresses in "Démotique" his precarious position in contemporary Greece:

> Assommés par le déluge qui nous a précipités ici-bas
> dans ce misérable coin de terre
> Nous soufflons comme un tacot en bas du ravin
> sur le chemin
> Un couteau dans le fourreau de la Méditerranée
> à la poignée travaillée par des siècles d'artistes
> et de combats. De la couleur de l'or rutilant
> et les doigts comme les clous du Christ.
> Étant Grec, c'est en Grèce que je découvre qui je suis. . . .
> qu'est-ce que je suis à chercher dans ce pays-ci
> en ces temps des plus maudits?

Even when the vision of the modern Greek poet is not as tragic as Poulios', who has spent most of his adult life in and out of asylums, the same feeling of dislocation within one's own history and place pervades the poetry collected in *Liberté.* Here is another example, an untitled poem by Kostas G. Papageorgiou:

> Aujourd'hui
> n'y a plus de mains pour cueillir l'olive
> plus de mains pour récolter le raisin
> que des mains habiles dans l'art du montage
> — démontage de la machine
> des doigts qui connaissent ses secrets
> mieux qu'ils ne connurent jamais le corps de la femme
> couvert d'un fin duvet
> et semé de taches dorées
> Mais le mécanisme qui le connaît?

Comme les chevaux hennissent
à l'approche du danger
ainsi les meubles de ma chambre
se déplacent, haletants
et s'installent en des endroits absurdes.

"L'art du montage" could be seen as a metaphor aptly reflecting the ways in which these Greek poets perceive and use landscape in their writing. As Bouchard points out, these poets employ a "langue elliptique, qui fait constamment usage de l'ironie et du sarcasme, s'apparente plus au langage filmique qu'à la tradition littéraire; elle utilise souvent les effets de découpage et de mondage." "Refrain pour une excursion en ville" by Réa Galanaki, the only woman poet included in this anthology, repeats the same prose stanza four times to create a haunting rhythm that, paradoxically, suspends both the arrival in and the departure from the desired (feared?) place:

C'est le moment vas-y ils approchent
continue vite à
droite une porte planque-toi des
larmes la vaseline ils sont
partis des rafales
et du ressors

Not quite knowing what or whom to hide from, the person addressed finds that place bears the double possibility of threat and refuge. The voice, at once incantatory and breathless, identifies in its self-reflexiveness place with poetic ground. Stéphanos Békatoros in "Onirique," also a prose poem, finds too his place on the page (the dream of language), a place of sacrifice, only one that does not necessarily offer redemption:

Je me trouvais donc alors en plein midi de la nuit, en pleine réalité aveugle invisible. Tout nu, étendu sur les mâchoires huilées d'une presse typographique. Sur ma peau, on allait m'imprimer un livre. Moi, j'étais le papier et j'étais l'encre, l'agneau écorché qui attend le sceau de l'abattoir. . . .

Language both dissects and recreates the landscape, as it does in Yannis Patilis' untitled poem: "Après-midi de l'Attique! . . . / La vie de pagaille / se dénoue. / En deux simples lignes. / Une ceinture se dénoue."

Bouchard offers two principal reasons for these poets' iconoclastic intentions: the political instability caused by the junta (1967-1974), by the return from his self-exile in Paris of Constantinos Caramanlis (1974) and his unfulfilled promise to deliver stability, and by the rise to power of Andreas Papandreou's (so-called) socialist party, which has led the country into yet another period of stagnation and ineffectiveness; the other reason is what Bouchard accurately describes as "l'exode effréné des ruraux vers les villes, puis une urbanisation sauvage qui a entraîné une destruction galopante de l'environement." This massive migration of those called "peasants" by traditionally urban Greeks has not only upset, as Bouchard says, both the urban and rural environments, but also the economic balance and security of the middle class. Talking at present about the damaging effects of this urbanization is largely an academic exercise, although the graffiti I saw last summer on Hariloau Trikoupi, a street in downtown Athens, shows that the issue has not lost its currency: it said in Greek, "Athens belongs to Athenians."

Kostas Gouliamos' "Paysage mutilé" illustrates effectively some of the physical and psychological results of these conditions:

Il m'assassine sans pitié la paysage
il grimpe aux roues de la voiture
des béliers cloche au cou s'entrechoquent
sur le boulevard rétroviseur étoilé
Après souper
il vente des maisons cachées se consument
je change
de musique de voix de vitesse
paysage mutilé me paralyse

But no matter whether these poets deconstruct the Greek landscape or reconcile themselves to what is left of its spirit, they

write a poetry that deserves attention and recognition. Jacques Bouchard is to be commended for his continuous, and successful, attempts to make this poetry known to Canadian readers. His team of translators, which also includes Françoise Mhun, has done a wonderful job as far as I can determine through the Greek texts that I have access to. I am looking forward to Bouchard's next "petite anthologie" of Greek poetry and to seeing included more women poets.

Liturgy of Light, poetry by Stavros Tsimicalis with a facing English translation, reiterates Bouchard's notion that Greek poets are preoccupied with landscape, only it does so with a difference. The landscape in Tsimicalis' work is often "an old trail," a landscape where "The statues with stained hands / anticipate the future," but also a landscape whose geographical/ethnic boundaries blur. *Liturgy of Light*, like Tsimicalis' first book, *Exiled The Myth Needles Deeper* (1982), seeks to express, in the poet's words, how he has become "Unrecognizable":

> . . . how have I become so unrecognizable?
> I've been away too long.
> Beached along with planks of timber,
> forgotten.
>
> Memory
> sustains child's dreams
> seeks forgotten traces
> touring museums
> poking around fields
> dressed in poppies
> feet stumbling on scattered drums
> of columns
> and in their decimated houses
> vipers, lizards, scorpions scurry along
> claiming their silence. . . .

Although we find here the same dislocation that we encountered in the poets discussed above, Tsimicalis' alienation has a different source. His is the dislocation of an immigrant Greek who tries to relocate himself in the home country, fully aware of the irony that he can do that only by imagining the past, or by following a tourist's trail. Tsimicalis, a Greek who lives in Toronto and who describes himself as "a Hellene who speaks Canadian with a Greek tongue" (a statement that appears on the back covers of both of his books), deliberately, I believe, places himself in a world that is timeless. It is a world which, despite its strong Greek signature, resists naming, a world which remains close yet untenable. Appropriately, the clepsydra is a recurring image in both of his collections.

He finds meaning in the old Greek myths, subtly inscribed in the terrain of his poems, in the debris of abandoned towns — "Stone walls spotted with bullet holes, fireflies nestled: small icons" — but also in the mythology he discovers in his new country. The last section of *Liturgy of Light*, "The Medicine Man's Dream: Take the Shaman's Advice," speaks of aged maples, caribou, and glaciers; the poet anticipates his future and gets hold of his present environment by retracing a past which is as alien to him as is the present of his home country. He does that with poetic sureness, largely due to his vivid imagery and the strength of his convictions:

> This land must be understood.
> We must come to terms with it.
> We must measure it. We must respect it.
> And the medicine man's dream
> should blossom in the northern wind.

Tsimicalis' language, however lacks the energy of the language used by the Greek poets Jacques Bouchard has gathered together in *Liberté*. He writes in a way that evokes the stillness and aesthetic anxieties of modernism.

I find it hard to be any more precise in my reading of the book, for it is highly flawed by the peculiar translations by Christina Tsimicalis and Xenofon Gounaropoulos. The translators take liberties far beyond the licence allowed an imaginative and sensitive translator. They condense poems, make deletions, add lines

such as the line "Healer of the wound," insert verbs where the original Greek fragments could easily be translated and with greater poetic effect, and render words in plainly wrong translation. A few examples will suffice to illustrate how aberrant are many of the poems' translations. Poem number 3 from the book's first section has one four-line stanza and two distichs in the Greek original. The translators have decided that stanzas and line-breaks do not matter; they have condensed the poem into one five-line stanza. Moreover, the phrase "Shadows grow" is a mistranslation that greatly alters the meaning and feeling of the poem; what they translate as "grow," the verb "xemakreno," means the opposite: to move away, withdraw, diminish, grow distant or fade away. What they have actually done is translate literally the second component of the Greek word completely ignoring how the prefix "xe-" alters its meaning. The same problems arise when, for example, they decide to omit the adjective "krimeni," "hidden," in poem 4 of the same section which, as the opening word/line, sets up a beautiful and effective frame for what is whispered (not "told" as the translators would have it) between "the warm sheets of love."

In "Clepsydra that Fills the Dark, Light," the third section of the book, a prophetic dream in the original Greek becomes a "shadowless dream" in a short prose poem where it is the dream itself, not the translators' "you," that gropes with its fingertips for the "apocalypse." The choice of "shadowless" completely alters the tight imagistic structure of the original poem, whereas the insertion of the possessive "your" changes the poem's perspective.

The result of these mistakes is that the English reader gets a very different taste of Stavros Tsimicalis' poetry. It is difficult to understand how these free translations were sanctioned by the poet. His first book was obviously translated by himself (at least no reference is made to another translator) and the facing texts are recognizably, and effectively, each other's doubles. Since no explanation is provided as to why or what prompted the translators to take such liberties, often to the detriment of the original poems, the reader who knows Greek is bound to be puzzled and irritated. Tsimicalis' poetry deserves a better translation.

SMARO KAMBOURELI

FRAGMENTS D'ESTHÉTIQUE

ANDRE DUHAIME, *Au jour le jour*. Editions du Noroît, n.p.

JEAN CHAPDELAINE GAGNON, *Malamour*. Editions du Noroît, n.p.

GUY MARCHAMPS, *Sédiments de l'amnésie*. Editions du Noroît, n.p.

L'ESTHÉTIQUE DU QUOTIDIEN est l'une des composantes fondamentales de la culture québécoise. La thèse de Cécile Cloutier porte ce sujet. Plus qu'une coïncidence, il faut voir dans ce fait un signe marquant. On peut ainsi distinguer deux courants au sein de l'écriture symboliste: le devenir, si cher à Mallarmé, et la recherche des moments privilégiés qui plaisaient tant à Baudelaire. André Duhaime, Jean Chapdelaine Gagnon et Guy Marchamps me font penser que Paul de Man avait raison quand il disait: "Symbolism's greatest period still lies ahead in the future."

Mais il y a deux genres de symbolisme et leur complémentarité me paraît indispensable. L'esthétique du quotidien chez les poètes du Noroît est beaucoup plus parente de celle de Baudelaire que de celle de Mallarmé. En ce sens les trois auteurs choisis ont une véritable valeur d'*exemplum*. Leurs poses anti-intellectuelles constituent le signe d'un actant national d'où il ne faudrait pas exclure Line

McMurray, Jacques Brault, Jean Charlebois, Pierre Nepveu et Paul Savoie, pour n'en citer que quelques uns.

Bien qu'il écrive des haïkus, André Duhaime dans *Au jour le jour* nous offre un énonciateur qui n'est pas sans rappeler le Roquentin de *La Nauseé* ainsi que la 'mauvaise foi' de ce dernier. Celle-ci se manifeste surtout pendant les 'moments privilégiés.' L'intérêt de ce livre se situe dans l'exposition d'une certaine complaisance, un ensemble de variations sur le thème de la séparation. Le symptôme est à la fois fascinant et grave: l'esthétique se confond avec le thème et la poétique n'est qu'une question de divorce. Les existentialistes, au moins, savaient se situer entre la nostalgie et le dégoût. Mais nos poètes font feu de tout bois et ne reculent devant rien:

> les plus belles fraises
> sont toujours
> dans la rangée voisine

On apprend ainsi que l'énonciateur met ses manuscrits à la poste, range le linge de sa femme (avant la séparation bien sûr) dans des tiroirs qui sentent la lavande et est ému quand il arrache une dent de lait à l'un de ses enfants. Pourtant, *Au jour le jour* vaut la peine d'être lu pour les quelques épiphanies qui se rapprochent de l'exploration, du devenir poétique, du haut langage, du Symbolisme selon Mallarmé. Un exemple de ces trop rares exceptions suffira:

> sur un fil électrique
> un écureuil traverse la rue
> sans applaudissements

C'est au niveau de la sélection que se pose le problème. Nous avons besoin d'éditeurs qui, au lieu de publier les yeux fermés des auteurs connus, soient capable de trier des textes. D'André Duhaime ont aurait préféré voir un seul livre qui offre le meilleur depuis *Peau de fleur* (1979) jusqu'à aujourd'hui.

Dans *Malamour*, Jean Chapdelaine Gagnon lui aussi se laisse aller à cette poétique de la séparation qui est en train de réduire l'art contemporain à la chansonnette. Ici aussi les éditeurs sont responsables. Sur la couverture arrière du livre ils affichent leur peu de goût en mettant en vedette ces vers:

> La pluie s'ébruite dans ma nuit
> Comme des pas martelant
> Ta mémoire

Le nez ne trompe pas, on commence à rouvrir les armoires des années soixante. Mais à cette époque-là les écrivains citaient Camus, aujourd'hui Jean Chapdelaine Gagnon cite Jean Charlebois! Cependant l'auteur de *Malamour* n'est pas sans talent. Quand il ose se tourner vers le Symbolisme du devenir il entreprend une exploration plus précise et moins bassement sentimentale. C'est ainsi que le manchot et d'autres mutilés constituent une image clef pour comprendre "l'espoir chaque fois trompé d'exister." L'impossibilité du devenir rapproche dans ces rares moments ce poète de certains moments de Franz Kafka. Ce n'est que dans la mesure où ces poètes toucheront les mots qui font vibrer l'angoisse de l'existence qu'ils toucheront le lecteur. On veut bien suivre une illusion mais à condition que ce ne soit pas du réchauffé.

Le cas de Guy Marchamps est-il bien différent? Oui, car le paysage imaginaire semble à la fois plus vaste et plus subtil, malgré la simplicité apparente qui fait songer à d'autres poètes contemporains, à ceux du Noroît en particulier. *Sédiments de l'amnésie* joue en effet sur deux niveaux de lecture:

> marcher sur les os
> depuis la foudre
> jusqu'à l'amnésie
>
> un iris de roc
> pour sonder l'Univers

Je n'insisterai pas sur la voie de la simplicité puisque d'autres en font leur sen-

tier battu. Mais "l'iris de roc" fait appel à l'intertexte de Mallarmé dans la mesure où il constitue une variation du "sol de cent iris" de "Prose *pour des Esseintes*." Comme générateur de texte, l'iris se manifeste tout d'abord comme 'agrammaticalité' dans le sens riffaterrien du terme. C'est en effet cette image de la fossilisation du végétal que le lecteur tente de faire entrer dans la configuration rationnelle qu'il voudrait bien donner au texte. Nos réflexes littéraires ne nous poussent pas vers l'obscurité poétique. *Sédiments de l'amnésie* permet ainsi de distinguer lecture et expérience du texte. L'esthétique du quotidien acquiert chez Guy Marchamps la perspective universelle. Depuis *Agonie Street* (1981) ce poète suit son chemin. Que le Noroît lui ait ouvert ses portes nous prouve que:

là où se situe
l'absence
un fossile persiste
dans le filament
du verbe

ALEXANDRE L. AMPRIMOZ

COUNTRY NOVEL

CONSTANCE BERESFORD-HOWE, *Prospero's Daughter*. Macmillan, $19.95.

I THINK THIS NOVEL is best described by William French's phrase "the English country novel," although French believes this genre "has no counterpart in Canadian literature," having "the strange and exotic flavour of a never-never land." The characteristics of this type of novel are stereotypical: manor house settings, clear class distinctions, eccentric character names, and a spurious element of mystery. French is wrong, however; although it remains alien, Beresford-Howe has imported the English country novel into Canadian literature.

This is Beresford-Howe's ninth book; she is a popular writer who has earned a respectable literary reputation for her four mature novels, beginning with *The Book of Eve*, although critics have faulted the "romantic clichés" which undermine her "overambitious themes." In *Prospero's Daughter* she again tackles weighty ideas — the relations between illusion and reality, art and life, and the moral responsibility of the novelist who attempts to manipulate life into art. Unfortunately, these aesthetic considerations are trivialized into high-brow dinnertable digressions while the plot proceeds according to Harlequin Romance formulae.

This "country novel" is set in a "baronial" manor house in Kent (complete with servants), where the "internationally celebrated" and royalty-rich novelist, Montague Weston, has exchanged his Kitchener upbringing for an "Edwardian façade" (the Canadian content is brief, perfunctory, and unconvincing). He coopts his rebellious daughter, Paulina (injured and grieving after a car accident which killed her lover), into assisting him in manipulating various prospective suitors into marriage with his simple-minded daughter, Nan. The pseudo-mysteries involve the romantic reactions of the country doctor (Crispin Bagshot), the local vicar, and finally the successfully bribed suitor, the playboy literary agent.

The story encapsulates the archetypal cycle of the seasons, from spring to spring, and is marked by a procession of elaborate and symbolic rituals (a Midsummer Eve dinner, a birthday masque — significantly *Comus*, a Christmas revel, and an engagement masquerade) leading up to the life-as-art Victorian wedding. However, a scorned woman vengefully sabotages the nuptials, and Nan runs away with the dirty-but-decent gardener. In the Epilogue, Paulina finds domestic bliss with her father's dour and lame secretary, who has actually transformed himself into a romantic hero with "contact lenses" and "a swimming course" to "toughen the

muscles in his arms and legs with their pelt of red-gold hair." Unfortunately, by this time the intriguing deconstruction of the Shakespearean myth — in which Prospero's autocratic and abortive spells result in Miranda's escape with Caliban, the magician's imprisonment in a nursing home, and Ariel's retirement to a suburban bedsitter — has transformed itself into a soap opera.

Prospero's Daughter is a competent and entertaining diversion. The themes of illusion and reality are deftly woven into a structure which plays variations on literary myth and symbolism. The plot seeds are carefully planted for the attentive reader; there are some good dramatic set-pieces at the seasonal "fêtes." The characterization is conventional but competent, and some of the minor figures nicely enrich the plot by being appropriately appalling or endearing. The author's pleasant descriptions create a well-paced narrative and even a few magic moments of English pastoralism. There are some tartly ironic comments on writers and their audiences ("I've always thought I'd like to write a book myself — some poetry, maybe — only somehow I never seem to find the time," says the book-club lady from Utah), and some that the reader certainly hopes are ironic ("Tears of pity and sorrow for all women had begun to entangle themselves in my sequins . . ."). The most entertaining aspect of the novel, of course, is the glimpse of the lifestyles of the rich and famous which panders to the voyeuristic and vicarious impulses within us all.

Nevertheless, it is this excess of luxury and leisure in the characters' lives which ultimately persuades us of the unreality, even immorality, of the novel's values. Given a more profound sense of irony and intelligence at the core of the novel, one might be tempted to interpret the entire book as an elaborate metafictional parody instead of Harlequin Romance goes to the country. Instead, the profound ideas are reduced to cocktail party chit-chat, and the myths become excuses for ostentatiously expensive parties. The romantic *raison d'être* for all the female lives is anachronistic, and the plot consequently predictable, melodramatic, even repetitive (every emotional trauma produces an illness in one of the characters). The major characters are unconvincing: we are told to believe that a man with so little intelligence and sensitivity as Montague Weston has won three Governor General's Awards, a Booker Prize, and is in line for the Nobel; the first-person narrator ends the novel with equanimity by musing that her missing-person sister must be "somewhere — elsewhere — perhaps everywhere." Only the sister, Nan, has the potential for mystery and surprise, yet the premise of the novel is to conventionalize and domesticate her. She is reduced to makeovers in hair and dress and the itemizing of wedding gifts. Even her final defection (supposedly life resisting artistic manipulation) reads like one romantic myth (Elizabeth Bennet) exchanged for another (Lady Chatterly).

"The books [Montague Weston] wrote were not only very popular but regarded as serious literature by the weightiest critics." Once again, Constance Beresford-Howe has achieved the former but not entirely the latter goal.

BARBARA PELL

BOOKS RECEIVED

1) Anthologies

GEORGES LEROUX et MICHEL VAN SCHENDEL, *Sediments 1989*. Hurtubise, $34.25.

STEPHEN LEACOCK, *Christmas With Stephen Leacock*. Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., $14.95.

EDWARD D. (SANDY) IVES, *Folksongs of New Brunswick*. Goose Lane Edns., $16.95.

PETER HINCHCLIFFE, *Family Fictions In Canadian Literature*. Waterloo University, $12.00.

2) The Arts (incl. Music)

DENNIS REID, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting — 2nd ed.* Oxford University Press, $29.95.

LORRAINE CAMERLAIN et DIANE PAVLOVIC, eds., *Cent ans de théâtre à Montréal.* Cahier de théâtre Jeu, $25.00.

3) Children's Literature

MURIEL LEESON, *Journey To Freedom.* Herald, $5.95.

4) Criticism

PHILIP RICE and PATRICIA WAUGH, *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader.* Routledge Chapman Hall, $49.50/14.95.

BRUCE L. GRENBERG, *Some Other World To Find: Quest and Negation in the Works of Herman Melville.* Illinois University, $24.95.

PAUL STROHM, *Social Chaucer.* Harvard University, $29.95.

KIRBY FARRELL, *Play, Death, And Heroism In Shakespeare.* North Carolina University, $50.50.

SUSAN BEEGEL, ed., *Hemingway's Neglected Short Fiction: New Perspectives.* UMI Research, $44.95.

ROBERT VON HALLBERG, *American Poetry & Culture 1945-1980.* Harvard University, $9.95.

DENIS HOLLIER, ed., *A New History of French Literature.* Harvard University, $49.95.

5) Fiction

CHARLOTTE BOISJOLI, *13, Rue de Buci.* Plume Edns., $5.95.

TED STONE, ed., *Thirteen Canadian Ghost Stories.* Western Producer Prairie Books, n.p.

HEATHER ROBERTSON, *Igor.* James Lorimer & Co., $24.95.

NOW IN PAPER

FROM Bibliothèque Québécoise come paperback reprints of Germaine Guèvremont's *Le Survenant,* Louis Hémon's *Maria Chapdelaine,* Antonine Maillet's *Pélagie-la-Charrette,* Gabriel Sagard's *Le Grand Voyage du Pays des Hurons,* and Pierre Desruisseaux's *Dictionnaire des Expressions Québécoises.* From Penguin N.Z. comes Ian Wedde's new postmodernist mystery-satire, *Survival Arts* (US$6.95). Penguin Australia has recently released Marion Halligan's *Spider Cup* (A$12.99), John Sligo's *The Faces of Sappho* (A$14.99), Sarah Campion's 1941 novel, long out of print, *Mo Burdekin* (A$14.99), and Tim Winton's *Minimum of Two* (A$8.95); the University of Queensland Press has published Laurie Clancy's stories, *City to City* ($12.95), Victoria University Press Virginia Were's *Juliet Bravo Juliet* (NZ$17.95), and Fremantle Arts Centre Press Julie Lewis's *The Walls of Jericho* (n.p.). An annotated edition of *The Short Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe,* ed. Stuart Levine and Susan Levine, with extensive notes, has appeared from the University of Illinois Press, as part of the Collected Writings of Poe. New Directions introduces the short stories of Carmel Bird, with *Woodpecker Point* ($9.95); Black Swan has published stories by another Australian, Michael Wilding, *Under Saturn* (A$12.95). Rodney Hall's *Captivity Captive* has been reprinted by McPhee Gribble (A$12.99). Michael Jackson's *Rainshadow* appears from John McIndoe (NZ$19.95). Heinemann has released M. G. Vassanji's magic realist novel of East African Asians, *The Gunny Sack* (£4.95), and an English version of the Gikuyu play, *I Will Marry When I Want,* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ngugi wa Mirii ($12.75). Cyril Dabydeen's *Coastland: New & Selected Poems 1973-1987* is available from Mosaic Press ($12.95). A hardback reprint from St. Martin's Press also selects from among Richard Rive's stories of resistance to apartheid, reprinting them as *Advance, Retreat* (US$16.95). Geoffrey Davis's collection of conference papers, *Crisis and Creativity* (Editions Rodopi, US$35.00), brings together essays on Laurence, Bowering, Salutin, Atwood, Edith Eaton, women's journal diaries, and other subjects.

opinions and notes

BECKWITH'S "MARK TWAIN" & THE DATING OF GROVE'S "A SEARCH FOR AMERICA"

WHEN PHIL BRANDEN, Grove's persona in *A Search for America,* refers specifically to James Carroll Beckwith's portrait of Twain (289) the reader may well question Grove's familiarity with this portrait as a possible clue to the history of *A Search for America.*

Beckwith (1852-1917) painted the picture in 1890 when Twain was at Onteora, a resort in the Catskills, where Beckwith ran an art summer school (Paine 900-01). In due course, Twain took the painting to his house in Hartford, Connecticut, which in 1929 became the Mark Twain Memorial. Although Twain left Hartford in 1891, the house was not sold until 1903, since Twain lived mostly in Europe from the summer of 1891 to the fall of 1900. Not until 1904 did the family furniture come out of storage (Kaplan 442-43), when he settled in New York. Twain lived there until his move in 1908 to Redding, Connecticut. From these facts, one may reasonably conclude that the portrait followed Twain from Hartford to New York and then to Redding. After his death (21 April 1910), the portrait came into the possession of Twain's only surviving child, Clara Clemens Gabrilowitsch, who donated it to the Mark Twain Memorial in 1936.

In view of Grove/Greve's emigration in 1909, I find it unlikely that he saw the original portrait. Still, his references to Branden's stint as a book salesman in, among other places, Connecticut, may not completely rule out a visit to Redding. In the absence of any record of such a visit, I am inclined to argue that Grove saw a reproduction. The portrait appeared, for instance, as a woodcut on the cover of *Harper's Weekly*, 26 September 1891, an implausible source for Grove who was then twelve and at school in Hamburg. The same woodcut appears twenty-nine years later in the *Saturday Evening Post*, 6 March 1920, where it is at the beginning of "Memories of Mark Twain," an article by Brander Matthews (1852-1929).[1] While Grove might have seen the portrait elsewhere,[2] he most likely found it in the *Saturday Evening Post* while at work on *A Search for America*:

> A copy of the current issue of the *Saturday Evening Post* having strayed into our cottage, my wife, browsing in it, said that there was the natural outlet for *A Search for America.*
>
> I wrote the fiction editor, giving him a fairly accurate idea of what the book was.
>
> To my surprise I received a prompt answer saying that the editor was extraordinarily interested in books of the type I described. Could I let him have a copy of the manuscript by such-and-such a date? If so, it would have his personal attention. After the date named [a deadline of ten days], it would be dealt with by others; for he was going to leave on his holiday. (Grove, *In Search of Myself* 359)

At first glance, this passage seems to rule out the *Post* issue that carries Matthews' article with the Beckwith portrait. That issue appears inappropriate because "current issue," in the context of *In Search of Myself*, points to a Saturday in September 1920. It is curious, though, that Grove tries to distance himself from the *Post*. His is a stray copy, not part of his regular reading material; his wife, not he, is "browsing in it." Furthermore, Grove's intentional vagueness about the editor's deadline ("by such-and-such a

date," "after the date named") leaves sufficient room for doubt about the precise date of "the current issue."

According to Grove himself, in a letter dated 29 March 1927, the editor's deadline was "about 10 y[ea]rs ago," that is about 1917 (Pacey 63). The earliest verifiable date for a manuscript version of *A Search for America*, however, seems to be late January 1920 (Stobie 53, Spettigue 60); that would be a reasonable date, allowing him to incorporate the Beckwith-Twain material from the *Post* of early March 1920. This non-extant manuscript was rejected for publication by McClelland and Stewart in 1920 and by Macmillan in 1923 (Stobie 53; Grove, *ISM* 378). For its possible rejection by the *Saturday Evening Post*, no record other than *In Search of Myself* appears to exist; the private letter of 29 March 1927 does not mention the *Post* by name.[3]

In the sketchy provenance of *A Search for America*, the Beckwith-Twain matter provides at least some evidence of Grove's being actually at work on the book in 1920 and throws some light on its eventual publication by Graphic Press in 1927. Grove's letter of 14 November 1926 to Henry C. Miller of Graphic Press indicates that he submitted the 1920 version rather than a possibly more recent one (Pacey 40). Yet, his letter of 25 November 1926 to his friend Watson Kirkconnell adds confusion about this point: "I have ruthlessly cut the *Search* to one half its former vol[ume]. I hope, Miller will take it that way." He further states, not without some ambiguity, "I don't like it a bit any longer" (Pacey 47). This supposedly ruthless cutting between 14 and 25 November may of course imply Grove's acceptance of Miller's request for a two-thirds reduction of the 1920 version, which itself is supposedly not even half of an elusive *Urtext* (Pacey 40). Such a formidable ten-day or so transformation of the book, however, seems as doubtful as his meeting the ten-day deadline of the *Saturday Evening Post*, even if Grove simply omitted whole chapters including, perhaps, an account of Branden's European years, the kind of material he could easily recycle later in the European section of *In Search of Myself*. In the absence of the alleged pre-1920, and the 1920 and 1926, versions of the manuscript, it is impossible to go beyond reasonable speculation; Grove is too wilfully and shrewdly inaccurate about dates and other biographical facts.

This is precisely why the reference to Beckwith and Twain in conjunction with the *Saturday Evening Post* is significant. Taken together, Matthews' genteel reminiscing, Twain's stature, and the *Post*'s power as a voice of respectable American culture[4] reinforce my view that the *Post*'s copy of 6 March 1920 had a direct impact on Grove's drafting of *A Search for America*. After all, he was a literary pragmatist ready for literary connections, allusions, and chance.

Consequently, one should also not overlook Matthews' first name, Brander, as one more likely indicator of Grove's familiarity with the *Post* issue in question. Matthews, in an anecdotal aside about himself and Twain in their New York circle of friends, quotes Twain as saying:

> "Matthews has redeemed the awful and appalling name of B-r-a-n-d-e-r" — and he drawled forth my name in the lowest notes of his wonderful voice.
>
> "B-r-a-n-d-e-r — it sounds like the mutterings of imprisoned fiends in hell! B-r-a-n-d-e-r — why, it was months after I knew him before I dared to breathe that name on the Sabbath Day!" . . .
>
> "That's what he has done. He has redeemed the awful and appalling name of Brander, which was good only to curse with — and has made it a name to conjure with." (78)

Matthews' fiery first name may well have found an echo in the name of Phil Branden, a Greek and Germanic combination, it seems, designating a friend of fire. It is

another name to conjure with, because it alludes to Grove's fondness for confidence games that tend to obstruct the history of *A Search for America* and other books of his.

NOTES

[1] For the location of the reproductions I am indebted to Robert Pack Browning, Associate Editor, Mark Twain Project, U. of California at Berkeley. Matthews' article is reprinted without the Beckwith picture in his *The Tocsin of Revolt and Other Essays* (New York: Scribner's, 1922).

[2] No reproductions of it in books are listed in I. S. Monro and K. N. Monro, *Index to Reproductions of American Paintings* (New York: Wilson, 1948; 1st supplement, 1964). These days, the portrait is readily available as a colour postcard from the Mark Twain Memorial.

[3] Pacey assumes that the nameless publisher referred to in his letter is the editor of the *Saturday Evening Post* (64). Grove, of course, may never have submitted the ms. to the *Post*.

[4] After near bankruptcy in the 1890s, the *Post* was able to increase its circulation to two million copies by 1918 (T. Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* [Urbana: U. of Illinois P., 1964], 13).

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K. P. STICH

MEDJÉ VÉZINA'S PROPHETIC VOICE

THE AUTHOR OF A SINGLE BOOK of fifty-five poems which appeared on 20 February 1934,[1] Medjé Vézina enjoys a favourable critical reputation not out of keeping with the high quality of her published work, but undeniably enhanced by the controversial nature of her subject matter. Largely as a result of the judgements formulated by the critics Gilles Marcotte and Jacques Blais,[2] it has become a commonplace to applaud in Vézina's poetry one of the earliest literary studies in Quebec literature of the related phenomena of sensuality, desire, and sexual gratification. Likewise, these critics have associated Vézina's verse with the work of Jovette Bernier and Simone Routier, two other women writing in the same stifled atmosphere of official prudishness that prevailed in the Quebec of the 1930s, who dared to address in a more or less overt fashion the problems associated with repressed sexuality. The three poets, in the words of Gilles Marcotte, bring to their depiction not only what had heretofore been lacking, "l'amour présent, . . . l'incandescence d'une véritable passion" (Marcotte 136), but also the particular insights afforded by feminine sensibility. And all three likewise conclude that the joys of the flesh lead inexorably to an ultimate sense of regret, abandonment, and disappointment. That these women should approach the same themes in the same place at about the same time, is seen by the critic as a long-awaited response in Quebec literature to the repression of sexual energy inherent in the Jansenist-inspired traditional ideology of such works as Laure Conan's *Angéline de Montbrun*, itself a novel of repressed desire, which had appeared some fifty years before (Marcotte 137).

Ernestine-Medjé Vézina was born in Montreal on 16 April 1896, the daughter of Damien Vézina, a physician, and Fabienne Alain. After studies at the convent of St. Anne in Lachine which lasted until 1914, she attended the Académie de Musique in Quebec, where presumably her nascent artistic sensibilities were encouraged and developed (she was later to write, "O musique, pays d'où mon âme est venue . . ." [Vézina 136]). Her career ultimately took a quite different direction, however. From 1926 until her retirement in 1961 she worked as an editor and publicist, first at the École Provinciale des Arts Paysans, and later in the provincial Department of Agriculture. In the latter department she served as editor of the *Revue des fermières*, and later as co-editor (with Adrienne Choquette) of *Terre et foyer*, a journal of popular education. As well she contributed pieces to a number of other journals such as *Le Canada*, *Le Jour*, *La Revue populaire*, *La Revue moderne*, and *Paysana*.[3] Throughout at least the first twenty years of this rather staid and uneventful journalistic career, Vézina was nevertheless actively involved in the literary life of Quebec. Jacques Blais has written of her contacts with various writers, publishers, and critics during the pre-war years (Blais 55). *Chaque heure a son visage* must be seen at least in part as the fruit of the encouragement afforded to the poet by these literary associations. She died in 1981.

The innocuous title of the collection (Marcotte describes it as "incolore" [137]) betrays nothing of the sensuality and emotional tension which are the stuff of the texts. On the other hand, it gives a precise indication of the format chosen by the poet to present her varied observations: different moments of the day seem to favour the evocation of characteristic forms of emotional experience. Further, just as the daily round of hours repeats itself and presents similar successions of light and shade, of warmth and cooling, of sound and silence, so too does the poet's recollection of a complex suite of sensual impressions and emotional crises. As the day evolves, thus do the memories unfold, relived with an immediacy that imprints upon everyday existence an endless succession of moments of unfocused, vague longing, of heightened desire, of exhilaration and fulfilment, of regret and exhaustion, and finally of a sort of empty torpor, a *degré zéro* of passionate experience. The title of one poem, "Quand les roses sont mortes," may be seen as a quintessential expression of this evolution from expectation to impotence, with a brief flowering of passionate fulfilment in between.[4]

Thus, all moments of the daily cycle are evoked in the collection, as the titles of the poems themselves reveal: "Le petit pied nu de l'aube," "Matin," "Midi," "Après-midi," "Soir," "Un soir à la Malmaison," "Nuit de l'esprit, nuit sans étoiles," "Nocturnes." Joining the daily successions of hours and remembered emotional and sensual experiences, two further sets of contingent elements make up the substance of this poetic cycle. Of primary importance is the depiction of concrete external phenomena, both natural and man-made, and particularly of those settings in which man meets nature and interacts with it: "O trains exténués de frénésie," "Vieille mâture, tristement endormie," and (with a nod of acknowledgement to Debussy) "Jardin sous la pluie." Worthy of note as well are poems which present fictional analogies, particularly of an exotic nature, with the poet's own interior mythology; in this respect the titles of "Poème sur un chant d'Ossian" and "Hasoutra la danseuse" may be cited. In this way the varied array of the poet's passionate experience, in metaphoric relationship with both exterior phenomena and interior fictional meanderings, is metonymically bound to the

rigid armature of the daily cycle of hours.

Formal variety in this collection is limited to differences in the rhyme scheme and in the length of the poem, the stanza, and the line, although once a structure has been established, the poet generally adheres to it in a traditional fashion. The twelve-syllable *alexandrin* predominates, with lines of five, six, eight, and ten syllables, and combinations thereof, being not uncommon. An interesting exception to this rule is the poem "Pocharde," in which lines of varying length follow one another in drunken, chaotic succession. Traditional rhyme patterns are used (*plates*, *croisées*, *embrassées*), but the strict classical rules regarding the alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes, and especially those governing *rime riche*, are not always observed.

Jacques Blais has underscored the imperfections readily discernible in Vézina's versification (Blais 65). Further, it must be admitted that to consume the whole of *Chaque heure a son visage* at one sitting would leave a distinct aftertaste of overabundant apostrophe: a list of words preceded in these texts by the apostrophic "O" would be long and varied indeed, ranging from "Muse," "Vierge," and "Trains," in the first pages of the collection, to "Musique," "Étoile," "Douleur," "Bien-aimé," "Mon coeur," and "Mon âme" at the end. Coupled to this tendency towards overdramatic outburst is a similar inability to weed out the naïveté (or clumsy false naïveté) of such verses as: "Peut-être était-ce mal [de rêver à un homme]? Moi je sais peu de choses / Au-delà des oiseaux, du feuillage, des roses" (Vézina 18), "[Le train] va si vite que j'ai peur / Que tout à coup il ne s'écrase . . ." (22), "Je suis un grand délire, et puis je ne sais plus, / Non, je ne sais plus bien les paroles à dire!" (55), and especially "Je ne sais plus ce que c'était [que j'ai bu], mais Dieu que c'était bon!" (37).

To be contrasted to the unfinished character of such lines is the power of a finely wrought trio of poems grouped together at the beginning of the collection, entitled respectively "Matin," "Midi," and "Soir" (the first of which has found its way into at least two recent anthologies[5]). Together the poems constitute a coherent unity, not only because of their similar structure (eighteen *alexandrins* each), but also by their shared thematic material (seemingly placid scenes of animals, birds, insects, and flowers, the play of sunlight, subtle sounds). Their unity is further enhanced by the presence in each text of disquieting hints of the disorder and violence occasioned by desire. In the first poem, insects come innocently upon the flowers in a moment of osculatory bliss, the tableau of which is gently tinged (in metaphor and simile) with a sensual reddening: "Sur le sein plus rosé d'un calice mignon, / Comme une bouche, s'attarde le papillon . . ." ("Matin," Vézina 12). But at noon, birds attack the poppies (a *defloration* clumsily attempted?), pushing them towards nocturnal perdition: "Des ailes, des cris volent, / Fuient le coquelicot qu'ils ont cru poignarder, / Tant son calice au loin semble de sang fardé" ("Midi" 13-14). Finally, in the same way that resistance to sensual temptation inevitably declines, so too does the rose shed its petals in a gesture of surrender to desire: ". . . notre coeur humain bourdonne, guépier sourd, / Et la chair devient plus désarmée et fatale / Que le rosier de nuit qui pleure ses pétales" ("Soir" 16). The hours of light, in all their diurnal splendour, thus in a manner of speaking prepare the inevitable fall that waits at the nocturnal hour.

Such vaguely Jansenist vocabulary is not at all out of place in a discussion of Medjé Vézina's sensual itinerary. Indeed, talk of destiny and inevitability pervades the collection, and it is evident that she has written in reaction to the moral stric-

tures of puritanical Jansenist Roman Catholicism, without freeing herself entirely from them. However, what was in 1934 perceived as being of shocking novelty in her verse, was the fact that her portrayal of these moments of sexual initiation, although in the end coloured by remorse and regret, speaks also of frenzied exhilaration, transcendent ecstasy. Erotic experience, real and remembered, is thus habitually associated with the notion of a fall and, at one and the same time, with that of an uplifting towards a higher plane: "Sans doute tu comprends, ô Madame Marie, / Que trop douce est la nuit, et furtive la vie . . ." (Vézina 18). Light is painful ("La clarté me fait mal . . ." [30]), and the poet is drawn to darker tones in preference to the brilliant lustre of midday: "Qu'il est doux, ô mes yeux, de regarder les ifs / Marier leurs ramures! / Peut-être ainsi l'absent, comme un ramier plaintif, / Énamouré, murmure? . . ." (31). Delicate evocations of nocturnal bliss give way, towards the end of the collection, to a kind of orgiastic revolt, especially in the tempestuous poem "Regretter est un blasphème," in which recriminations are directed against the lover not for having been the agent of perdition, but for having abandoned his task. Sexual delirium is seen as a new consecration, one whose suspension is evoked in terms of bitter regret: "J'ai souffert d'être heureuse en ces nuits dont chacune / Incendiait ma chair de ton fougueux désir, / Je te bénis d'avoir aimé dans mon étreinte / Tous les enlacements où gémit le plaisir . . ." (126-27).

Nevertheless, such heightened awareness cannot last, and sensual experience leads ultimately to a feeling of emptiness and disappointment. However incandescent the memory of pleasure may be, in the end it loses its brilliance: "Ce monde est plus étroit que l'espace d'un rêve. / Ah, vous ne savez pas combien triste est la chair . . ." (Vézina 139).

In the two concluding pieces of the collection, Vézina takes a step back from her subject, as it were, in an attempt to break out of the prison-house of hours. While proclaiming the fullness of her ecstasy ("Ma joie a tout aimé"), she underscores a Baudelairean resolve to probe even the blackest depths of experience ("Ma douleur a tout osé"). Finally, in a concluding apostrophe to destiny, she repeats the poet's age-old claim to immortality through verse, asserting the ultimate victory of text over flesh, of language over nocturnal silence: "Et vers son pâle étui / Quand la mort à ma chair désignera sa nuit, / Tous ces mots tournoieront sur mon corps solitaire / Ainsi qu'un fruit s'éboule et retourne à la terre. / Tu pourras surplomber, silence triomphal, / Mon sommeil pavoisé comme un chemin royal!" (Vézina 155).

Vézina's verse, despite its stylistic imperfections and especially its limited range, remains as the expression of a spirit in revolt against a seemingly impervious dominant ideology. Her message, like that of certain other female voices of the time, crying out as in a darkened wilderness, was destined thirty years later to be heard finally with widespread sympathy and taken up with new strength.

NOTES

[1] *Chaque heure a son visage* (Montréal: Éditions du Totem, 1934) (henceforth "Vézina"). Thirty-one of these poems were later republished in a single volume: *Le Choix de Jacqueline Vézina dans l'œuvre de Medjé Vézina* (Charlesbourg, Québec: Presses Laurentiennes, 1984).

[2] See in particular Gilles Marcotte, "La Chair décevante," in *Une littérature qui se fait* (2nd ed., Montréal: HMH, 1968), 135-53 (henceforth "Marcotte"), and Jacques Blais, *De l'ordre et de l'aventure: la poésie au Québec de 1934 à 1944*, collection "Vie des lettres québécoises," no. 14 (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1975), 44-45, 55, 63-67 (henceforth "Blais"). Vézina's singular contribution to the evolution of po-

etry in Quebec is further underscored by Richard Giguère, *Exil, révolte et dissidence: étude comparée des poésies québécoise et canadienne (1925-1955)*, collection "Vie des lettres québécoises," no. 23 (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1984), 134-43 (henceforth "Giguère"), and by Joseph Bonenfant, *"Chaque heure a son visage," Dictionnaire des œuvres littéraires du Québec*, 2 (*"1900 à 1935"*) (Montréal: Fides, 1980), 215-17.

[3] See Jean Bruchesi *et al.*, eds., *Répertoire bio-bibliographique de la Société des Écrivains Canadiens* (Montréal: Société des Écrivains Canadiens, 1954), 243, and Bonenfant, 215.

[4] Richard Giguère has emphasized the cyclical nature of Vézina's intense emotional experience. See Giguère, 128, 134.

[5] Jean Royer, ed., *Le Québec en poésie*, collection "Folio Junior" (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), and Laurent Mailhot and Pierre Nepveu, eds., *La Poésie québécoise* (Montréal: Hexagone, 1986).

DENNIS F. ESSAR

CHANGE AND THE KAILYARD

The Fiction of Adeline M. Teskey

INTEREST IN SUCH turn-of-the-century women writers as L. M. Montgomery and Nellie McClung is prompting us to rediscover their contemporaries. Adeline Mary Teskey was a prolific writer of local colour fiction in the first two decades of this century. Her fiction blends dominant literary modes with the stirrings of social change in a country that was shifting from largely agrarian in nature to industrial, from two cultures to multiculturalism, and from an ideal of women in the domestic sphere to the reality of women in the workplace. While strongly traditional, her work reflects both a nation in transition and women in transition within that society.

The little we know of Teskey's own life suggests that it mirrored the changes in women's lives at this epoch.[1] She was both a dutiful daughter and an independent writer who earned her living and never married; she began life in a pioneer settlement and died in the burgeoning Toronto of the twenties. Born in Appleton (near Almonte) in Upper Canada in about 1855 — her birth date is uncertain[2] — she was the eldest of eleven children of Thomas Teskey and Elizabeth Kerfoot, whose families had been among the Irish emigrants brought by land speculator and politician Peter Robinson to the Almonte area in the early 1820s. The Teskeys quickly came to share in Lanark County's mid-century prosperity based on woollens and water-power. The large Teskey clan were millers and merchants, leading citizens of Appleton (first called Teskeyville) who built its first Methodist church.[3] Adeline Teskey grew up with the pioneer lore of Lanark County in her ears, some of which she appropriated for the pioneer stories of *Candlelight Days* (1913).[4] When by the 1880s her merchant father moved to Welland on the Niagara Peninsula, Adeline accompanied the large family, living in the family home there as late as 1891.[5] But she looked beyond the domestic sphere. She studied at Genesee College, Lima, New York and Boston art schools. She taught at Alma College, a girls' school in St. Thomas, 1900-1901, and then achieved success as a writer with the publication of *Where the Sugar Maple Grows* in 1901.[6] She moved to Toronto early in the century, and published seven more titles in Canada and the United States.[7] Incapacitated by a stroke a few years after the publication in 1913 of *Candlelight Days*, her last work, she died in Toronto on 21 March 1924, and is buried in Welland.

Adeline Teskey — like her contemporaries Marian Keith (Mary E. MacGregor), author of *Duncan Polite* (1905),

Nellie McClung, Ralph Connor, and others — wrote in the kailyard tradition with its Scottish models: for example, John Galt's *Annals of the Parish* (1821) and J. M. Barrie's *The Little Minister* (1891). Such work focuses on the humble and familiar and employs, as Elizabeth Waterston aptly puts it, the "double specification of work and worship."[8] In that tradition, Teskey's novels and stories, while they give affectionate voice to the values of the devout and the bucolic, do not scant the unpleasant side of life as men and women encounter sin and travail. *Candlelight Days*, a group of stories evoking the pioneer life of Welland and of Lanark County, has an epigraph from Tennyson suitable for a regional idyll: "So bright, so fresh, the days that are no more." But the stories include accounts of a crude euthanasia — a feeble old Indian woman chooses to be shot — and the amputation without anaesthetic of a drunkard's leg, both narrated by a horrified young boy. Teskey's *Alexander McBain B.A.* (1906)[9] traces a young drunkard's decline to petty theft and disgrace. His mother dies desolate and repentance comes only at the close of his short and sordid life. The idealization of maternal love traditional in kailyard fiction[10] is qualified here: "Sandy" McBain's mother is shown to be foolishly permissive and excessively self-sacrificing in her boy's upbringing.

For the modern reader, the fascination of Adeline Teskey's fiction lies in the way it encloses not only nostalgia for the pioneer past but also issues and concerns which emerged as the country experienced urbanization, industrialization, and feminism. Teskey's *Where the Sugar Maple Grows: Idylls of a Canadian Village* (1901) was her first and most successful regional idyll.[11] The twenty-two stories are narrated in a manner not unlike Sarah Orne Jewett's Maine classic *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896). In the former, a townswoman returns every summer to Mapleton, a "typical Canadian village" in "law-abiding Canada, where righteousness seemed to have the upper hand, as to a Sabbath rest" (9). In the stories, the faith of ordinary people (especially women) and their steadfastness in suffering are valorized. As in Nellie McClung's work, but in far more modest and personalized terms, women discover and overcome their own powerlessness. In "The Ram Lamb," a story trilogy, Janey Bender, a farm wife, voices the hard lot of women and the economic thraldom of farm wives. Married to an insensitive husband, Jane Bender successfully shows a ram lamb her husband has abandoned and spends the prize money independently for the first time in her married life. Jane herself declares: "I never before hed any [money] really my own to give,—not even the widow's mite—married women don't seem to hev no mite . . . " (76). She is well aware that "women hev it hard enough enywhere . . ." (73). Kirsty McAllister, the heroine of another story triad, rejects the security and status of marriage to raise her orphaned nieces on the proceeds of her own dressmaking business.

Mapleton is also the setting for Teskey's next two books, *The Village Artist* (1905)[12] and *Alexander McBain B.A.* (1906). In *The Village Artist*, the central character, the aptly named Serena Slade, voices a far from naturalistic artistic ideal:

> . . . when an artist goes to paint a portrait he does not make prominent the warts and blemishes, he just passes them by as though they were not there, and searches for the pretty spots. (59)

Serena is convinced that "it has been given to me to paint [word] pictures so as to show people the things that are 'round them" (23), primarily the beauties of nature and the mercies of God. In the stories, which lack the freshness of *Where*

the Sugar Maple Grows, Serena's task includes counteracting the jadedness and materialism induced by big-city life in her neighbour Mrs. Fitzgerald:

> Her eyes that used to be soft and blue with kind of deep places in them where you could imagine something mysterious and not altogether of this world was hiding, had grown hard and shifty, too hard and slippery-like for even a thought to have a resting-place in them; and she was always wanting something she could not have. (21)

In *Alexander McBain B.A.: A Prince in Penury* (1906), Teskey turns from the coarsening effect of urban life to the degrading results of drink. She traces a drunkard's path from spoiled boy to promising college student to alcoholic drifter. The temperance debate which raged so hotly in Canada at the turn of the century enters the pages of the novel. Unlike Nellie McClung, however, Teskey, despite the stout Methodism they shared, does not come down unequivocally on the side of prohibition. The hereditary factor in alcoholism is discussed in the novel, and prohibition is debated but not endorsed:

> Even one of our women muttered that because some misused a privelege she did not think others ought to be made to suffer for it. . . . The villagers recognised that there were three classes — drunkards, drinkers and abstainers. The first and last class they regarded with about equal contempt. (177)

Teskey also touches upon the "new woman's" desire for a career through the character of Maggie Thompson, Sandy McBain's love, one of "braver, stronger nature" (53) than he. Early in the novel, Maggie articulates some of the aspirations of the new woman, and dreams of an autonomous career as a nurse:

> I shall probably never be married. . . . I don't need any person to take care of me, and I can take care of Sandy without marrying him. I want to do something in the world, — something *great*. (90)

Maggie does become a nurse. But Teskey's characters are as ambivalent about career as about prohibition. A bereaved parent convinces Maggie of the truth of her intimation that the role of daughter supersedes that of nurse:

> Maggie had by this time finished her probationary term and was duly installed into the arduous work of a nurse in training. Somehow, however, she did not enjoy her work as she had expected. She could not get out of her mind the lonesome look on her father's face when she was leaving home; and it had grown, in some mysterious way, to seem like a great work to stay at home and be a comfort to him, [rather] than to wait on strangers. (218)

Just as Maggie ultimately accepts a traditional role, Teskey's drunkard, having fled to the newly opening West, finds the Christian salvation dear to the kailyard genre and dies after saving a child from a train.

Prohibition and careers for women aside, Teskey was much more forthright on two other questions of the day — nativism against Orientals and conservation. Both topics are treated in *The Yellow Pearl* (1911),[13] her most unusual novel. The heroine, Margaret Morgan, is a "yellow pearl," that is, of mixed race, the daughter of a white father and a Chinese mother. Orphaned (like Pollyanna and Anne of Green Gables, two other popular fictional heroines of the day),[14] the adolescent Pearl, as she is nicknamed, comes to the urban United States to live with her racist aunt and uncle. Her aunt considers her "mongrel" Chinese blood a disgraceful secret, and Teskey uses Pearl's "outsider" status to question the values and norms of North American life. A male cousin's obsession with sports is exposed as absurd, and a wide-eyed Pearl asks:

> This curious country, that Aunt Gwendolin says has gone away ahead of the rest of the world, why do its women talk more about dress than anything else? And why have its men such pushing, hurrying, knock-you-

> down-if-you-stand-in-my-way faces? (24-25)

Another Canadian writer, Edith Eaton (1867-1914), looked at discrimination against the Chinese in her stories, collected in the 1912 volume *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*.[15] But Eaton herself was Eurasian, and it was unusual for an Occidental like Teskey to address the theme so strongly in the era of Canada's discriminatory Chinese Immigration Act, revised in 1903 to raise a head tax. A Canadian royal commission report of 1902 had called Asians "unfit for full citizenship . . . obnoxious to a free community and dangerous to the state."[16] Their literary image was usually cast in the same terms at this time. For example, in 1917, four years after *The Yellow Pearl*, Marjorie Pickthall wrote a story for *Saturday Night*, "The Flower of Silence," in which an invasion by the 'yellow hordes' devastates the Americas. The protagonist's boyhood visit to an Oriental quarter foreshadows the menace:

> Yellow, yellow, everywhere the blank, inscrutable threat of the yellow face.[17]

By contrast, *The Yellow Pearl* praises as well as criticizes much in Chinese culture, and is even more critical of North American life. The things Pearl deplores in Chinese culture — for example, the abandonment of handicapped children — she ultimately returns to China to help redress after her marriage to a young American doctor bent on medical work in China. The strongest note of ethnocentricity comes at the end of the novel. The kailyard primacy of the Protestant kirk is echoed in Pearl's closing praise of her white grandmother:

> Dear grandmother is a standing proof to me that the Christ means more to the world than China's Confucius or Buddha. (208)

Pearl is also critical of the slaughter of birds and animals for the whims of fashion. Theodore Roosevelt and Canada's Marshall Saunders and Clifford Sifton spoke and wrote widely on conservation issues in these years, and Teskey's heroine attacks trapping and the tyranny of fashion, even urging support for the American Humane Association. Teskey evidently felt strongly on the issue: in 1906 she published "McClosky's Boy in the City" in *Canadian Magazine*, a story which uses the outrage of a young protagonist to attack the use of wild bird plumage for millinery. Young McClosky, like Pearl, attacks the vanity of fashionable Sabbath congregations, fatal to thousands of birds:

> "I s'pose it was for their Easter hats an' bunnets they killed all them birds," he said moodily. "Och, Easter!" with a little shiver at the thought of so many of his dead favourites. "I'll never come to church again!" he added fiercely.[18]

Teskey's fiction, then, blends pioneer nostalgia and the changing climate of turn-of-the-century social issues. A reading of her fiction convinces us that the Canadian kailyard was beginning to foster fragile shoots of feminism, temperance, conservation, and social concern as well as a sheaf of tributes to homespun hearth, cradle, and kirk.

NOTES

1 Chief among the scant sources of information about Teskey are an entry in Morgan's *Canadian Men and Women of the Time* (1912) and an obituary, "Adeline M. Teskey," *Welland Evening Tribune*, 25 March 1924, p. 5. Her photograph appears in *Canadian Magazine*, 19 (July 1902), 282.

2 Teskey never revealed her birth date in the published sources. The Census of 1881 for Welland gives her age as 25 years while in the 1891 Census lists her age as 32. Her death certificate of March 1924 lists her age as 69, and her middle name as Mary, not Margaret as in Morgan.

3 Elaine L. Schulte, *The Wind Bloweth Where It Listeth: A History of Almonte United Church* . . . (Almonte United, 1982), 218. See also Jean S. McGill, *A Pioneer History*

of the County of Lanark (Toronto: Best, 1968).

[4] Teskey, *Candlelight Days* (London: Cassell, 1913).

[5] Canada Census of 1891.

[6] *Where the Sugar Maple Grows: Idylls of a Canadian Village* (New York: Fenno, 1901). All page numbers will be cited in parentheses in the text.

[7] Besides works mentioned here, she published a booklet with a sequel story to "The Ram Lamb" stories of *Where the Sugar Maple Grows*: "A Little Child Shall Lead Them" (London: Hodder and Stoughton, [1911]). Jake Bender, mentioned above, finds religion because of his wife's unselfish donation of money to an overseas missionary. Morgan lists another work, *The Little Celestial* (Toronto, 1912), but I was unable to locate this.

[8] Elizabeth Waterston, "Canadian Cabbage, Canadian Rose (1973)" in Lorraine McMullen, ed., *Twentieth-Century Essays on Confederation Literature* (Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1976), 96.

[9] Teskey, *Alexander McBain B.A.: A Prince in Penury* (New York: Revell, 1906).

[10] Waterston, 99.

[11] Stephen Leacock may have read it before writing his popular *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912). There is a parallel in narrative mode and to some extent in tone; Teskey shares Leacock's humour but not his irreverence or sly debunking of religion.

[12] Teskey, *The Village Artist* (London: Revell, 1905).

[13] Teskey, *The Yellow Pearl: A Story of the East and the West* (Toronto: Musson, 1911).

[14] L. M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* appeared in 1908, and Eleanor Porter's *Pollyanna* in 1913.

[15] Edith Eaton (Sui Sin Far), *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (Chicago: McClung, 1912).

[16] E. B. Wickberg, "Chinese," *Canadian Encyclopedia* (1988), 416.

[17] Marjorie Pickthall, "The Flower of Silence," *Saturday Night*, 3 March 1917, p. 19.

[18] Teskey, "McClosky's Boy in the City," *Canadian Magazine*, 27 (May 1906), 28.

I wish to thank Dr. Lorraine McMullen of the University of Ottawa for generously sharing her knowledge of Adeline Teskey's works. A story by Teskey is included in *New Women: Short Stories by Canadian Women 1900-1920* (scheduled for publication in the spring of 1991 by University of Ottawa Press), which we have co-edited.

SANDY CAMPBELL

FREDELLE BRUSER MAYNARD (1922-1989)

FREDELLE MAYNARD — who died at 67 on 3 October 1989 in Toronto — was a woman of many hats. She wore an elegant, jaunty black hat on one of the first occasions I met her, when she swept into a national meeting of the Periodical Writers Association of Canada. By that time, the late 1970s, she was a far more accomplished journalist than most in the room. She had written for *Chatelaine*, *Homemaker's*, and American publications such as *Woman's Day*, *Parents* magazine, and *The Atlantic Monthly*; she'd ghosted Dr. Joyce's Brothers' syndicated column, and had already published two books, *Guiding Your Child to a More Creative Life* and a memoir of her own prairie childhood, *Raisins and Almonds*. Despite her stature, Maynard turned out to be an enthusiastic supporter of PWAC's striving neophytes. In time, she came to play the grande dame mentor to many of us. But then, Maynard had great flair for all the roles she adopted, whether it was child-rearing expert, flamboyant hostess, rigorous scholar, or that rarity, a friend who transcends the barriers of age.

Her earliest role was that of outsider. Chia Friedele Bruser was born on 9 July 1922 in Foam Lake, Saskatchewan, the younger daughter of a gentle but inept

Jewish shopkeeper and his powerful, competent wife. Rona Bruser kept the family table full and her daughters prettily dressed, even as Boris Bruser dragged them across the West, leaving a wake of failed general stores behind. *Raisins and Almonds* (published in 1964), which charts the family's unsteady course from disappointment to disaster, is a loving, buoyant, humorous book. It became the basis of a musical performed in Calgary and Toronto and also a CBC-TV drama.

While the book has been praised for its "sunshine," that sunshine can scorch, particularly the passages describing petty small-town cruelties inflicted on those who were different. In one chapter, Fredelle and her playmates persecute the only Chinese in town, a rival shopkeeper; in another, a farmer with a long, unpaid account at the Bruser store terminates his last visit with the ugly word "kike." The most poignant chapter, "Jewish Christmas," describes the torn loyalties of a Jewish child's participation in the town Christmas pageant, and her parents' bungled attempt to make her feel included. Years later, Margaret Laurence wrote that Maynard "communicates the sadness at the core of laughter, she communicates the laughter as a means of survival."

The central image of that first volume of memoirs is of a family turning inward, against the weather, the prairie spaces, and the often warm but potentially volatile relations with gentile neighbours. It seems that the string of financial problems also turned the parents' hopes in on the prowess of their younger daughter. They pushed the precocious Fredelle to recite on the stages of church basements and Chautauqua gatherings; they also sent their five-year-old's poetic efforts to the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*. (Her first published work, titled "A Christmas Alphabet," was an unconscious revelation of a little girl whose nose was pressed hard against the dominant culture's window.)

Bright, ambitious, hungry for recognition, Fredelle Bruser excelled academically. At 16 she won a scholarship to the University of Manitoba. There she encountered the exotic personage who became her first husband: Max Maynard, her English professor, a gifted painter, and the son of Protestant missionaries. As more scholarships took her on to the University of Toronto and to Harvard (where she earned a Ph.D.), their courtship flourished. They married in 1948, and she immediately donned the hat of Anglo-Saxon matron — or, as she later wrote, "The day after my wedding I ordered stationary [*sic*] engraved Mrs. Max Singleton Maynard. A fool-proof disguise."

By the time Max took up an assistant professorship at the University of New Hampshire, it was clear that their genteel, bookish life together would be a more disastrous version of her parents'. Max was another failure. He never finished his book or book illustration projects, never went beyond his B.A., never won tenure; worse, he was alcoholic. Meanwhile his wife, brilliant though her scholarly credentials were, was denied by university policy from being offered a job at her husband's institution. Nor could she find full-time work in the local high school system, because she lacked a teaching certificate. Her obvious talents blocked, she taught part-time and turned to journalism as a release. Here again she excelled brilliantly, in contrast to failed academic and failed writer Max. Significantly, their twenty-five-year marriage finally broke up after she and her younger daughter, Joyce, both published successful books.

Maynard moved back to Toronto in 1974. There her elder daughter, Rona, was pursuing a career in journalism, and there too, a one-time suitor of her sister, businessman Sydney Bacon, was waiting to court her. Bacon became her link to her Jewish roots and the catalyst that reawak-

ened her more vivacious, sensual side (she once appeared on a CBC-TV talk show, extolling her new role of late middle-aged mistress). He was also the inspiration for her second book of memoirs, *Tree of Life* (published in 1988).

A darker and in many ways more honest account of family dynamics, *Tree of Life* shares the earlier memoir's disciplined cadences and exquisite anecdotal grace notes. Critic Douglas Hill described Maynard's writing as "strongly rhythmic prose, analytic, brooding, severe; the musical analogy would be a later Beethoven quartet. . . ."

Meanwhile, Maynard also wrote and hosted two TV ONTARIO series on parenting, churned out articles for U.S. and Canadian magazines which were models of clarity and structure, and published a heavily researched, highly controversial book, *The Child Care Crisis*. Coming down squarely in favour of stay-at-home parenting over day-care during a child's formative years, this book by a woman who had helped support her own family infuriated other feminists. At least one women's bookstore refused to stock it and Maynard was excoriated on talk shows and TV debates. Though the attacks certainly wounded her, she never shied away from a good fight, and after the mikes were turned off would invite her opponents home for a glass of wine and more debate.

Maynard, proud since childhood of her intellectual abilities, grew alarmed when in the winter of 1988-89 she began to have spells of depression, confusion, and forgetfulness. The family feared Alzheimer's, which had affected her older sister. Then, in late spring, she was diagnosed with a brain tumour and given six weeks to live.

It is a testament to her love of life that her response to this terrible sentence was to marry Sydney Bacon. Their wedding, which brought together friends and family from across the U.S. and Canada, was held in Maynard's back garden. This was the same garden where, whenever I went that summer to look in on Fredelle, I would find her sitting in a broadbrimmed sunhat, eating pastries, drinking wine, and holding court. Vital and sensuous long after the time doctors had allotted to her, she died just after Rosh Hashanah, Jewish New Year.

V. J. C. ROSS

HELEN CREIGHTON (1899-1989)

Farewell to Nova Scotia, the sea-bound coast
Let your mountains dark and dreary be;
But when I'm far away on the bonny ocean tops,
Will you ever heave a sigh and a wish for me.

FROM THE TIME she first heard this song while drying her feet in an oven during a field trip along Nova Scotia's eastern shore in 1932, Helen Creighton thought of it as her personal theme. Well might it be her epitaph, for since her death on 12 December 1989, many are the sighs over her passing and wishes for her peace after a life devoted to the preservation and propagation of folklore, most especially folksongs, in her beloved Nova Scotia and throughout the Maritimes.

Born into a comfortable and genteel Dartmouth family in 1899, Helen attended school in Halifax. She was reared to be a lady and remained so throughout all aspects of her long life. Partly because of health problems that surfaced early on, she never aimed for a career as such, but rather a position of usefulness through public service and thereby, in a truly Old-World manner, she nursed her "delicate" condition into a grand old age.

After doing volunteer work during World War I, training for social service at the University of Toronto, and travelling some, she wrote magazine articles for

a time, but had nothing particularly gripping to tell until 1928 when, urged to seek out folksongs in Halifax County to supplement W. Roy MacKenzie's study, *Ballads and Sea Songs of Nova Scotia* (1928), she encountered traditional singers at Eastern Passage less than ten miles from her home and so found her way. Like many of the urban upper classes, she was unaware of the living oral tradition and felt she had personally discovered untold cultural treasures to write about. And write she did — eleven books in all and many articles, too. It is worth noting that her recognition as a writer — through affiliation with the Canadian Writers' Union, her publications, and writing awards — seemed to give her the greatest satisfaction of all her life's accomplishments, except perhaps her association with music educators, who used folksongs she had collected in their Kodaly-method instruction of children.

Helen's was not a scholarly life, and she herself never became an academic folklorist. She was, rather, a collector — a field worker trained by experience and schooled by the folk themselves — and an exceptional one given the limitations of her time and circumstances. She had special gifts for her chosen work, for she was very talented and persuasive with people as well as a careful listener, a good observer, and an avid learner. Unlike many other collectors active around the time she began, Helen did not restrict her interest to the Child Ballads, but rather noted a wide range of material. From the outset she carefully kept extensive field notes and data on her informants, a practice not typical of collectors until the 1960s.

Armed at first only with a melodeon and lots of guts, this intrepid little woman first started collecting in the fertile and untapped fields of the Halifax Harbour and moved ever further afield, first in mainland Nova Scotia then on to Cape Breton Island and much later (1940s) into New Brunswick on her personal quest for traditional material. She was neither the first nor the only active folksong collector in the Maritimes then, but she was the sole native who remained in, and dedicated to the study of, the region — a circumstance that certainly contributed significantly to her pre-eminent public reputation.

Her first book, *Songs and Ballads of Nova Scotia*, appeared in 1932 and included both texts and tunes, which was uncommon at the time, though standard scholarly practice by the 1950s. By the mid-1930s, Helen was travelling between three and four thousand miles a year in her faithful car, Cecil (named after Cecil Sharp whose work she admired), at first alone and later with Doreen Senior, her musical collaborator. Motivated by profound interest, she was supported until 1942 entirely by her parents and by her other work: she told bedtime stories to children on the local radio station, and served as Dean of Women at the University of King's College from 1939 to 1941. But her reputation was growing. In 1942 her work came to the attention of the Rockefeller Foundation, which awarded her a Research Fellowship to attend that year's Folklore Institute at Indiana University. There Helen met and was influenced by the leading folklore scholars of the time. Her subsequent publications, especially *Folklore of Lunenburg County* (1950) and her most popular work, *Bluenose Ghosts* (1957), clearly demonstrate her incorporation of academic approaches and her evolving interest in folktales, superstitions, and other aspects of folklore. Greater support ensued from the Institute as well when the Archive of American Folksong offered her equipment and expenses to continue her work. In 1949, Helen acquired her first tape-recorder through the National Museum of Canada (which supported her work for two decades from 1967).

Throughout a career spanning over fifty years, she amassed a collection of more than 5,000 songs, 2,300 still images, 600 recorded tapes, films, 5,000 file cards, 20 metres of manuscript, and 3,000 correspondent files, now all fortunately housed in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. Further, she endeavoured to bring her songs and singers to public attention through many lectures, radio broadcasts, festivals, and films. She also took pleasure in the use of her material in opera and drama, by amateurs and professionals alike. She said that the purpose of studying folklore, which was her primary public service, was that "it is of great benefit in understanding other people." She herself studied and helped further understanding and appreciation of fishermen and lumbermen; of Scottish, Acadian, Celtic, German, English, and Caribbean Black Canadians; and of Maritimes popular culture.

Her legacy is a great one. She extended popular and scholarly awareness of folksong and folklore through various media. Her accomplishment was recognized with five honorary degrees, membership in the Order of Canada, election to the prestigious American Folklore Society, and numerous other honours from provincial, national, and international bodies. Yet, I sigh, the greatest honour — followers to continue what she had begun or to establish folklore within a university programme — continues to elude her. What Helen Creighton collected is certainly not the canon of Nova Scotian lore — all there was, or is, in tradition. Much remains to be done. I heave this wish, then: may her life's work become the foundation of a folklore studies programme in Nova Scotia and may her ancestors' spirits continue to smile on her as she firmly believed they did throughout her productive life.

CAROLE H. CARPENTER

REFERENCE

RECENT WORKS INCLUDE John Sutherland's *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction* (Copp Clark, n.p.) — an informative encyclopedic dictionary, with references on everything from *Robbery Under Arms* and Sara Jeannette Cotes to *She*, "Sheba," and *Ships that Pass In the Night* — which amply guides readers, without referring to national boundaries, through English-language writing. At least, it doesn't refer to *some* national boundaries. Americans get left out, perhaps not being Victorian enough; but the colonies and the new nations of the old Empire are absorbed here (as they no doubt were, a hundred years ago, politically and attitudinally) into the mainstream. *Scenic Splendours: India Through the Printed Image*, by Pheroza Godrej and Pauline Rohatgi (The British Library, £25.00) testifies further to the pervasive images of the Queen's Empire: the numerous plates collected here (and usefully annotated) display two of the attitudes that coupled visual representation with political desire — the taste for the exotic and the architectural desire to be a new Athens. India, the Jewel in the Crown, offered what seemed like palpable glimpses of both, made material (and consequently "real") by the etcher's and lithographer's skill.

The Literary Guide to the Bible, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Harvard, $29.95), brings together essays on the separate books of the two testaments, together with general essays on Hebrew poetry, canonicity, translation, and allegory.

Kelvin Jarvis's *V. S. Naipaul* (Scarecrow Press, US$27.50) is a reliable (though selective) annotated guide to over 1,000 items by and concerning Naipaul, including translations and reviews.

A Dictionary of Superstitions, ed. Iona Opie and Moira Tatem (Oxford, $39.95), provides fascinating snippets of lore. Authorities apparently divide on whether it is lucky or unlucky to stumble going upstairs. But it is unlucky, without question, it seems, to bring leather into your house at Christmas. And hens stop laying if you burn eggshells. The strength of the book lies in the multiplicity of sources consulted. The weakness derives from its dictionary intent. It tells us whether things are deemed lucky or unlucky, but often that's it. Most readers will still want to know *why*.

W. N.

NOTES

RE-READING ROBERT KROETSCH'S collected long poems (many of which are very short) I am surprised, again, at the range of forms. Kroetsch dares (one of his favourite words) the reader to predict that he has found such a congenial method — rewriting the community text of an A. E. MacKenzie seed catalogue, for example — that he will surely try something like it again. But then follows a poem predicated on unhiding the very radicals of the English sentence ("The Sad Phoenician"), or one which attempts to jam an entire poem between an unsuspecting subject and predicate ("Mile Zero"), or a journal whose prose claims everything is poetry ("Excerpts from the Real World"). Another surprise: Kroetsch's long poems include a poem, "Sketches of a Lemon," which became my high school daughter's absolute favourite (much more engaging, she found, than "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening"). Readers will be pleased to have in *Completed Field Notes* (McClelland & Stewart, $16.95) the long poems in one volume. And as for what Kroetsch calls "the dread 'c' word of postmodernism," which he surprisingly uses for a title, I wait to be surprised by the poems not yet completed. Speaking of Kroetsch, George Bowering does, about a dozen times, in *Errata* (Red Deer College Press, $8.95) ninety-nine *jeux de la critique*. Each funny, punny paragraph-long *essai* teases an idea around a particular writer or title. The method is "comic tapinosis," "a sneaky kind of rhetoric . . . the saying of very serious things in offhand language, in vernacular, even in slang." They are a joy to read, even when he's pulling his will over our eyes. "Of course any text is an intertext," Bowering notes "Even a former reading of *Surfacing* will be woven into a new reading of the 'same' novel." Which brings me back to Robert Kroetsch and his *The Lovely Treachery of Words: Essays Selected and New* (Oxford, $14.95). The element of tapinosis is not quite so strong, but the playful embrace of paradox is everywhere. One reading of *Surfacing* finds that "In Québec, on 'my home ground, foreign territory,' she [the unnamed narrator] is, like Aquin's narrator, only made aware of larger failure of language to name, to signify." Most of these essays are familiar, but some — on Lowry, on *Tay John* — are unpublished and essential. What surprised me reading the essays through at a sitting is 1) how certain writers (Ross, Buckler, Laurence, Wiebe, Atwood, Haliburton, Grove, Bowering) keep coming up again and again, usually the former reading woven almost invisibly into a *new* reading of the same novel, 2) that the canon, however "uncertain," seems sufficient given the energetic deconstruction of the reader, and 3) that no matter whether the piece is much anthologized, or unpublished, the reading will seem new, so adept is Kroetsch at the insight by inversion.

Another perceptive and engaging essayist, albeit on a different subject in a different register, is Paul Fussell. Those who read Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* as a crucial context for Timothy Findley's *The Wars* will be staggered again by his *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (Oxford, $24.95). Like its predecessor, *Wartime* is concerned with "ways of bringing interpretation to bear on the war." This attention to methods of understanding involves patiently researched analysis of contemporary magazine advertisements, the lingo of the enlisted men (under the general rubric "chickenshit"), and a remarkable survey of the books read and preferred by the troops. "Astonishing" is a key word for the entire book, as Fussell records how many of the deaths were by miscalculation, or even because of mistaken identity by one's own allies. The human mind, Fussell keeps arguing, tries to make sense of the slaughter, but slaughter proves to be inherently, radically stupid, and will not — cannot — make sense. Aside from the obvious general applicability to Canada and Canadian experience, I was pleased to find in an essentially American book dozens of references to Canada and Canadian participants. It's rather surprising, therefore, to pick up Stuart Sillars' *Art and Survival in First World War Britain* (St. Martin's Press, n.p.) and find that neither Fussell (nor Findley, nor Buitenhuis) nor any Canadian war artist is mentioned, even in the Bibliography. Nonetheless, the book is an impressive compilation of sheer fact and information, but being diffuse and unsynthesized or uninterpreted, it remains material for the scholar who will follow in Sillars' footsteps rather than for the (horrified) general reader.

When Kroetsch ponders the relation between a European past and writing in a new country, where Fussell's and Sillars' books situate themselves for me, he notes that "the human response to this landscape is so new and ill-defined and complex that our writers come back, uneasily but compulsively, to landscape writing." Kroetsch is thinking here specifically of the prairies, but most of his remarks apply to Canada generally. Among recent books which can contribute to our reading of land-

scape writing is Tony Tanner's *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Men* (Cambridge, n.p.), a collection of his essays and lectures on American literature written between 1961 and 1986. The title essay is a stimulating exploration of the question "Does nature really have its own language of signs; or do we alphabetize and 'figure' nature even in the act of looking at it?" Also very useful to students of Canadian literature is Tanner's "Notes for a comparison between American and European Romanticism," which plays intriguingly with the attraction of the spider for American writers. But such slightly offbeat approaches make Tanner consistently interesting to read, whether it's on Henry James or *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. The interest of *The Development of the Pacific Salmon Canning Industry*, edited by Dianne Newell (McGill-Queen's, $34.95), in this context is not for landscape writing (although it might bear on nature writing) but in its method. This is not a conventional history but a compilation of documents, the papers of Henry Doyle, the founder of British Columbia Packers. As in many recent literary works, the original documents are respected as texts with their own inherent value to be translated by the reader. It may or may not be comforting to find that conservation of dwindling stocks and the threat of the American fishery were Doyle's primary concerns in 1905. But it was pleasing to find that Newell at least anticipates a literary dimension to her subject by appending a list of ten 'salmon-canning novels' to her Bibliography. A. Carl Bredahl Jr.'s *New Ground: Western American Narrative and the Literary Canon* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, $29.95) argues that the eastern imagination, which has determined the canon of American literature, has been concerned with "the act of intellectually enclosing wilderness." The writers of the American West, by contrast, fascinated with space, developed "an imagination . . . that respects surface . . . surfaces of the land and . . . of those whose lives are interdependent with the land." I found the idea of "surface," as critical concept, difficult to locate in several of Bredahl's otherwise useful analyses — an attempt, for example, to define the sub-genres of "divided-narrative" (cf. short story cycle) and "border story," or a discussion of verb tense and the verb "to be" in Harvey Fergusson's *The Conquest of Don Pedro*. In the penultimate chapter, on Ivan Doig, Bredahl quotes with approval Harold Simonson's view that a sense of literary place should involve not only topography but ecological and social systems (e.g., Salmon canning?). This more profound sense of landscape writing offers a challenge to Canadian criticism, not to mention to the increasingly visible nascent discipline of ecocriticism: Bredahl's book works toward the idea, but it begs to begin where it ends. Had it been available to him, Carl Woodring's *Nature into Art: Cultural Transformations in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Harvard Univ. Press, US$30.00) could have extended and refined some of Bredahl's ideas. Chapter Five, in particular, on "Realism" elaborates the intellectual backgrounds and complexities of a professed exclusive "attention to surface." Woodring's study is immensely learned, impressive in the range of texts it cites, incorporates and assumes as it traces concepts of nature and their translation from the sublime, through the Pre-Raphaelites and Darwin to the Aesthetes. Many distinctions are nicely drawn (as between "landscape" and "countryside" in the early nineteenth century) but so encyclopedic is the author, so intent on cataloguing terms that were used and revised, that the reading is often frustrating — as if Woodring has little sense of theme, of argument, and is reluctant to make his own informed choice of the most satisfying definitions.

L.R.

THERE HAS BEEN a particularly rich crop of books relating to travel lately. First and foremost is Elizabeth Waterston's magnificent bibliography *The Travellers: Canada to 1900* (Univ. of Guelph, n.p.), prepared with the help of Ian Easterbrook, Bernard Katz, and Kathleen Scott. Each one of the more than 700 entries receives a thorough annotation; in addition there are illustrations, a fine introduction, and an extensive bibliography of travel criticism. An equally attractive book is Marc H. Choko and David L. Jones's *Canadian Pacific: Posters 1883-1963* (Meridian, n.p.), which presents a brief introduction to the social context of CP posters, but mostly consists of handsome reproductions, an excellent source for the study of Canada's public image abroad. The cover of Lisa St. Aubin de Terán's anthology *Indiscreet Journeys: Stories of Women on the Road* (Virago, $29.95) could well be taken from this collection of posters: a detail from a 1925 *Vogue* cover, it shows a slinky motorist in art nouveauish design. But cover and title are somewhat misleading, because the book is an odd collection of excerpts from travel classics such as Isabella Bird's *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains* and Isabelle Eberhardt's *The Passionate Nomad*, travel stories such as Anna Maria Ortese's "Thunder in Naples" and

Katherine Mansfield's "An Indiscreet Journey," but also pieces evoking "the road of life," a category which covers just about everything else, including Edna O'Brien's "An Outing" and Elizabeth Bowen's "Love." Despite its lack of focus and St. Aubin's rather breathless introduction and notes, the book is worth browsing through, if only to rediscover favourites such as Dorothy Parker's "Here We Are," which contains the quintessential train conversation of all times:

> "Well!" the young man said.
> "Well!" she said.
> "Well, here we are," he said.
> "Here we are," she said, "Aren't we?"
> "I should say we were," he said. "Eeyop. Here we are."
> "Well!" she said.

Much of Dea Birkett's *Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers* (Oxford, n.p.) is ground that has been covered elsewhere before, best perhaps in Katherine Frank's 1986 biography of Mary Kingsley, *A Voyager Out*. Still, Birkett draws out some details that could be of considerable interest to a future systematic study of women's travel writing. The book is particularly good at pointing out the complexities, paradoxes, and contradictions of the women's behaviour which make it so difficult to co-opt them wholeheartedly for contemporary feminism. Thus, women travellers routinely infantilized native men, describing them as "babies," "child-people," and "wild children of the wild heights" and deliberately keeping male servants in a state of infantile dependency. The women's attitude may well have been an oblique revenge for the prolonged servitude in which several of them had been held by the male members of their families, but it was also a paradoxical assertion of colonial privilege — paradoxical, considering these women's own search for freedom. The travellers' reception at home, too, was contradictory. Formal recognition, sanctioned by admission into one of the learned societies, was slow in coming, but occasionally the traveller's identity as an Anglo-Saxon was allowed to compensate for the deficiencies of her sex. One reviewer commented: "Sometimes one is tempted to fancy that they had quitted home and all its comforts for the express purpose of bonding the British government in relations of closer amity with those of the rest of Europe, and . . . of some parts of Africa, than the mere official modes of intercourse had been able to effect." Travel during the Victorian era is placed in a more general context in *Creditable Warriors*, edited by Michael Cotsell (Ashfield Press, n.p.), third in a series of four volumes entitled "English Literature and the Wider World." The series has an ambitious goal, namely to describe and analyze literary responses to British expansion from 1660 to 1918, and in the "General Editor's Preface" the names of Edward Said, Martin Green, and Gayatri Spivak are invoked to give a sense of critical impulses propelling the undertaking. But *Creditable Warriors* promises more than it keeps. Most of the essays are fairly traditional explorations of the influence of travel on individual authors such as Disraeli, Newman, Dickens, Arnold, Clough, the Brontës, and others. This kind of work has been one of the staples of comparative literature for some time now, and the occasional mentioning of historical dates and events to create a "context" does not accomplish enough to rectify the situation. The most useful parts of the book are Michael Cotsell's introduction and the bibliography; both document British travellers' contacts with non-European places, whereas the essays, with few exceptions, heavily dwell on Europe. It is to be hoped that the remaining volumes will indeed present "a variety of initial responses" as the general preface promises and that the editors will exercise their considerable erudition and care in soliciting a more catholic and challenging range of contributions. Only a specialist will be able to tell what exactly Malcolm Andrews's *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Stanford Univ. Press, n.p.) has to add to what is already known about the subject from older critics such as Christopher Hussey, Elizabeth Manwaring, Esther Moir, and Marjorie Nicholson, but even so, this is a handsome and comprehensive book with many illustrations. Throughout, Andrews emphasizes how picturesque travel was "staged" and how theatrical metaphors dominated the writing about it, and the book may be read as a British companion piece to Barbara Novak's work on American landscape painting and the panorama. Particularly useful are Andrews's comments on the instruments used in "framing" travel as theatrical production, "travelling knick-knacks" such as the Claude glass, predesigned diary ("Is the place chearful [*sic*] melancholy romantic wild or dreary?"), and sketchbook.

E.-M.K.

IT HAS LONG BEEN RECOGNIZED that the history of transport is essential to the history of Canada as a nation. *Building Canada: A History of Public Works* (Univ. of Toronto Press,

$37.50) presents essays on and illustrations of bridges, roads, railways, waterways, and airports. Such information may be fairly easy to obtain from other sources; less easily accessible is documentation of such topics as urban mass transit, irrigation and flood control, and electricity, all of which receive competent coverage in this book, accompanied by excellent notes and a particularly detailed index.

There is enough material in Maria Tippett's *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission* (Univ. of Toronto Press, $40.00/17.95) to fill five books. In six tightly packed chapters, the author discusses amateur and professional companies, public and private sponsorships, "models from abroad," and the movement toward a co-ordinated cultural scene following World War II. Tippett draws extensively on archival sources, and many of her findings have not been documented to this extent before. Thus, she discusses at length the considerable impact the Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations made on Canadian cultural activity, providing funding for artists that would not have been available elsewhere, but also perpetuating "styles in vogue in the United States, but not necessarily appropriate in Canada." The CPR endorsed only those works that subscribed to the kind of optimism the company found useful for its propaganda. Moreover, the dominant cultural philosophy was Arnoldian and there was little room for alternative perceptions. It is to Tippett's credit that she has spied these out where they existed and that she pays much attention to avant-gardist and proletarian organizations and movements. She has also made an effort to refer to those parts of the country that have traditionally been neglected in similar surveys: British Columbia, for instance. In her preface, the author indicates that the cultural life initiated by non-Anglo Saxon immigrants deserves an investigation of its own, but some of the most poignant moments in this book occur when the institutions she describes come into conflict with Canada's multicultural reality. The first New Canadian Folk Song and Handicraft Festival sponsored by the CPR in 1928 stirred up much criticism by those who felt the company "'had no right to encourage these immigrants to be anything but good Canadians.'" Tempers calmed down when "these immigrants," clad in ethnic national costume, sang the national anthem with commendable enthusiasm. *Making Culture* is an indispensable book, and one can only hope that Tippett will turn her attention to the pre-1900s and to the years after the Massey report as well.

By contrast to Tippett's book, there is not much in Leo Marx's *The Pilot and the Passenger: Essays on Literature, Technology, and Culture in the United States* (Oxford, $12.95) that cannot also be found in his classic *The Machine in the Garden*. Still, the book is noteworthy for a feisty response to the critics of the "myth and symbol school" (Marx, Henry Nash Smith, Alan Trachtenberg, and others) and for an application of Marx's ideas to contemporary situations, especially in "Susan Sontag's 'New Left Pastoral': Notes on Revolutionary Pastoralism."

B.C. readers of *Cemeteries and Gravemarkers: Voices of American Culture*, ed. Richard E. Meyer (UMI, n.p.), will be particularly interested in Richard E. Meyer's "Images of Logging on Contemporary Pacific Northwest Gravemarkers," a contribution to the study of the rich lore "stating the worth and respectability of an often maligned profession." Other essays explore the adaptation of European stone images to an emerging American identity, ethnic and regional varieties of grave-marking, and the interaction of business and pleasure in landscaped cemeteries such as Boston's Mount Auburn. Also from UMI comes Thomas J. Schlereth's *Cultural History and Material Culture: Everyday Life, Landscape, Museums* (n.p.), an inspiring collection of essays on subjects as diverse as mail-order catalogs, the material culture of childhood, the Chautauqua movement, world expositions, and history museums. Particularly well taken is Schlereth's repeated plea to allow the public some insight into the planning of historical displays and the principles of selection shaping them. History textbooks and museums "are methodologically prejudiced to show only development, not decline," Schlereth argues; by the same token, material history often focuses on the mainstream, ignoring the subjects and artifacts of marginal groups and movements. Schlereth's insistence that landscapes, cities, and buildings be "read" like an archaeological dig makes for an interesting complement to recent developments in bibliography (D. F. McKenzie).

Jens Peter Becker's *Das Automobil und die amerikanische Kultur* (Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, n.p.) explores the significance of the automobile in American culture. A long list of literary references is included, among them a perceptive reading of a Canadian poem, George Bowering's "Far From the Shore." Readers will find this book useful as a reference guide (although there is no index, there is a fifty-page bibliography), and they will enjoy the illustrations, but the book is too diffuse to serve

as the ambitious study of the subject it sets out to be.

E.-M.K.

A NUMBER OF women's biographies have recently appeared on our desk, and each is a distinct contribution to the ongoing effort to rescue female writers, artists, and other notable figures from misunderstanding or obscurity. Bradford Keyes Mudges's *Sara Coleridge: A Victorian Daughter* (Yale, $39.95) is a relatively traditional narrative, carefully documenting its claim that Coleridge's editorial work on her father's papers must be recognized as a separate, not an auxiliary, achievement, and that the latter challenges entrenched notions of canonicity. Despite the unobtrusive writing, the book presents a harrowing account of Coleridge's opium addiction, her hysterical seizures, and her attempts to stake out, through her illness, a space of privilege and relative calm. Anne K. Mellor's *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (Routledge, US$14.95) is a more ambitious, but also more jargon-ridden, book whose theoretical agenda is not always clear or else is occasionally misused to arrive at simplistic conclusions. Still, its very shortcomings are also its virtues, because Mellor's reading of Shelley's life is challenging and provocative, as is her detailed attention to *Frankenstein*, together with an admirable synthesis of recent revisionist readings of the book. (Aficionados of Frankenstein may also enjoy Steven Earl Forry's recent *Hideous Progenies: Dramatizations of Frankenstein from the Nineteenth Century of the Present* [Univ. of Pennsylvania, $39.95].) Mellor explains that the "monsters" in her title refer to Victor Frankenstein's creation as well as to the cultural ideologies which prevented Mary Shelley from reaching her full potential. Reading the account of Percy Bysshe Shelley's egotism and frequently manipulative and callous behaviour towards his wife and children, he should perhaps be included among these "monsters" as well. By contrast, Mary S. Lovell, author of *The Sound of Wings: The Life of Amelia Earhart* (St. Martin's, $22.95), strives hard to salvage George Putnam from the disrepute into which he has fallen as Earhart's allegedly exploitative husband. Lovell appears frequently overtaxed by the complexity of her subject, and one wonders what an author with the proper psychoanalytic equipment would have done with the material. The story remains compelling, however. The details of the misogynist responses in the American and European press to Earhart's flying feats are especially shocking. Despite an awkward opening marred by large dollops of undigested feminist theory, Roxana Robinson's *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Life* (Harper & Row, US$25.00) makes for informative reading. Much of the story has, of course, been told before, and a more original and analytical approach to the O'Keeffe-Stieglitz myth is welcome news. It is to be found in Barbara Buhler Lynes's *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics, 1916-1929* (1989; UMI, n.p.) which explores the "making" of O'Keeffe by often sensationalist reviewers who "implied that [she] was a sexually obsessed woman [and] described her art as if it were an extension of the forms of her body." A valuable addition to the work on sexist art criticism accomplished by Katherine Hoffman and Marilyn Hall Mitchell, the book also reprints numerous reviews. Of related interest is *Feminist Art Criticism: An Anthology*, ed. Arlene Raven, Cassandra Langer, and Joanna Frueh (UMI, n.p.). Gloria Orenstein's "The Reemergence of the Archetype of the Great Goddess in Art by Contemporary Women" deserves special attention. While the myth surrounding O'Keeffe was fuelled by her longevity, Sylvia Plath's suicide as a young woman helped create her particular legend. Ann Stevenson's *Bitter Fame: A Life of Sylvia Plath* (Houghton Mifflin, $19.95 pb.) attempts to right the balance which has so far been strongly in Plath's favour, representing her as a martyr at the hands of a patriarchal society and philandering husband. Stevenson presents much new evidence for the extraordinary demands Plath's difficult personality made on her family and friends, but on occasion her efforts are too emphatic to ring true. Still, this is the best-written biography among those considered here, and Stevenson deals with Plath's life and poetry with equal competence.

E.-M.K.

DLB 88: Canadian Writers, 1920-1959, Second Series, ed. William H. New (Bruccoli Clark, n.p.), the fourth of six DLB volumes devoted to Canadian writing, is a companion volume to *DLB 68*. While the latter concentrates on important fiction writers of the period, volume 88 focuses on poets, and the book contains major essays on Earle Birney (by Paul Matthew St. Pierre), Louis Dudek (by Frank Davey), Hector de Saint-Denys Garneau (by John Hare), Claude Gauvreau (by Roger Chamberland), Irving Layton (by Ira Nadel), Al Purdy (by George Woodcock), F. R. Scott (by Sandra Djwa) to mention only a few. But there are also unorthodox fiction writers here, such as Elizabeth Smart and John Marlyn, and experimental

playwrights such as Bertram Brooker and Herman Voaden, each of whom is given due attention in the proven format of the DLB which also provides bibliographies of primary and secondary sources for each author and illustrations for many entries. The special value of this volume comes from its catholic inclusion of major thinkers such as Donald Creighton, George Grant, Jean LeMoyne, George Woodcock, and of best-selling authors such as Arthur Hailey. Thus, the book not only yields information that is difficult to come by in comparable handbooks but also sketches a broad cultural profile of the years under scrutiny.

E.-M.K.

VOLUME 92 of the *Directory of Literary Biography*, ed. W. H. New (Bruccoli-Clark, n.p.), is entitled *Canadian Writers 1890-1920*. The book is a major exercise in recovering authors who, for one reason or another, have been excluded from, or distorted for the sake of inclusion in, the canon, and the volume is a tribute to those critics who have accomplished painstaking detective work in restoring such writers to their proper place. Among many noteworthy contributions, there are Mary Jean Green on Robertine Barry, Eva Senécal, and Adèle Bibaud; Carole Gerson on Martin Allerdale Grainger, Agnes Laut, Florence Randal Livesay, Madge Macbeth, Agnes Maule Machar, Margaret Saunders, and Joanna Wood; Gwendolyn Davies on Alice Jones; and W. H. New on Jessie Georgina Sime. Several of the entries include valuable discussions of the factors (political, economic, and otherwise) which determine an author's reception over time. New, for instance, points out that deliberately or not critics failed to appreciate Sime's experimental sketches which were designed to offer "an oblique education" in female realities and their possible improvement. That misunderstanding was enshrined by the critical comments in the 1965 *Literary History of Canada*. One factor precluding a proper understanding of Sime's subversive sketches and other publications like them was the strong influence of the Arnoldian cultural ideal on Canadian letters, Klinck's history included. Several entries provide evidence for the latter; thus Paul Matthew St. Pierre describes Andrew MacPhail's autobiography as revealing his "dedication to cultural heritage and cultural tradition" and David Ingham points out the "structural metaphor" in Wilfrid Eggleston's work — which is "botanical": "what conditions . . . produce the 'flower' of belles lettres?" *Canadian Writers 1890-1920* is discourse-oriented, and the inclusion of essayists, anthropologists (Marius Barbeau), and linguists (Edward Sapir) provides cross-connections and juxtapositions relatively rare in English-Canadian criticism, as do the entries on best-selling authors such as Grant Allen (Paul Matthew St. Pierre) and Pauline Johnson (Donald Precosky). Within this context, even the role of well-established authors such as Bliss Carman (Donald Stephens), Archibald Lampman (Bruce Nesbitt), Emile Nelligan (Kathy Mezei), and F. P. Grove (Walter Pache) is modified, and their place of privilege in anthologies, histories, and handbooks is revealed as a choice in cultural semiotics, not a manifestation of axiomatic truth. This considered, a few entries have been allotted surprisingly little space, such as the essay on Louis Hémon (Larry Shouldice), whose *Maria Chapdelaine* is one of the most extensively documented cases of literary myth-making in Canada and abroad.

E.-M.K.

DURING THE RECENT Meech Lake debate, commentators — Ed Broadbent among them — invoked the example of Europe on the brink of unification which, they claimed, ought to serve as a model to a shamefaced Canada. As the contributors to *Cross Currents: A Yearbook of Central European Culture 9* (Univ. of Michigan, n.p.) make clear, however, this view of Europe does not take into account the enormous obstacles that are still to overcome, nor does it give due attention to the voices of dissent opposing a unified Europe. Of particular interest is the transcript of a round table at the Lisbon Conference on Literature entitled "Central European and Russian Writers" in which a painfully maintained tone of "friendship" soon gives way to an acrimonious debate occasionally heightened to Kafkaesque dimensions because none of the principal contributors was able to use his own language. During the most furious exchange, attack and counterattack proceed in slow motion, as it were, because the translation takes time to sink in, and sometimes panelists literally cannot believe what they have heard. Topics discussed include the political responsibility of a writer and the forms that responsibility should take. Russian authors, Joseph Brodsky among them, refuse to be typecast as representatives of the Soviet Union or to be restricted to political subjects, but have to sustain reproach after reproach from their Central European colleagues who "believe very strongly that your whole attitude, your whole ethos, your literature, reflects the fact that you are quite cautious with your own reality in the

sense that you feel somehow unconnected to your tanks." Much of the debate centres on the origins and appropriateness of the term "Central Europe," described by Soviet authors as a falsification of cultural diversity, by the Central Europeans as an expression of solidarity, and by others as the invention of Milan Kundera bent on selling translatable works to a West European public. Toward the end of the panel, important interventions come from Derek Walcott, Salmon Rushdie, and Susan Sontag, who remind the debaters of imperialist parallels to their differences in the United States and in Britain. Walcott even challenges the legitimacy of the discussion by suggesting that "the imperial voice . . . dominates this conference and its range increases with every representation by European tribe, by European nation." Other informative contributions to *Cross Currents* include Luise von Flotow's "*Samizdat* in East Berlin" (*Samizdat* is a Russian neologism referring to illegal, unofficial publication). *Samizdat* strategies have illuminating parallels with the "discours illicites" (graffiti foremost among them) used by nationalist Québécois and documented in a recent issue by *Voix et images*. There is also an essay on Josef Skvorecky by Sam Solecki, but it fails to point out the complexities of Skvorecky's place in Canadian culture and the heated controversy provoked by *The Engineer of Human Souls*, some of which echoed the concerns raised at the Lisbon Conference. Books of related interest are Anton Kaes's book *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film* (Harvard, n.p.), which includes a detailed reading of Fassbinder's *The Marriage of Maria Braun*; a paperback edition of Peter Paret, *The Berlin Secession: Modernism and its Enemies in Imperial Germany* (Belknap, US$12.95); Harold James, *A German Identity: 1770-1900* (Routledge, US$25.00); Dominick La Capra, *History, Politics, and the Novel* (Cornell, US$26.50/8.95); and *Politics and the Muse: Studies in the Politics of Recent American Literature*, ed. Adam Sorkin (Bowling Green, US$17.95).

E.-M.K.

A NUMBER OF recent books focus on the investigator as protagonist. Among them are Richard H. Weisberg, *The Failure of the Word: The Protagonist as Lawyer in Modern Fiction*, 2nd ed., (Yale, US$10.95 pb.); D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Univ. of California, US$11.95 pb.); and Howard Good, *Outcasts: The Image of Journalism in Contemporary Film* (Scarecrow, US$25.00 cl.). The latter is a sequel to Good's *Acquainted with the Night: The Image of Journalists in American Fiction, 1890-1930* (Scarecrow, US$16.50 cl.). Weisberg covers works by Dostoevski, Flaubert, Camus, and Melville, while Miller concentrates on Wilkie Collins, Dickens, and Trollope. Films discussed in *Outcasts* include *The Year of Living Dangerously*.

E.-M.K.

ON THE VERGE

** *Johan Schrøder's Travels in Canada, 1863*. Edited, translated, and with an introduction by Orm Øverland. McGill-Queen's. $24.95. This is a minor work whose interest lies partly in the freshness of its impressions of the Canadas in the years closely preceding Confederation, and partly in its projection of the concerns of a particular group not hitherto greatly represented in immigrant literature, the Norwegians. Johan Schrøder, a Norwegian farmer with pretensions to learning (he termed himself "Candidate in philosophy") visited Canada in the summer of 1863 to gather information there and in the American Midwest that might be of use to prospective Norwegian settlers. He never completed the full task, but he did prepare a narrative of his Canadian travels, which was published in Wisconsin in 1867. The version now presented is the first translation, by Orm Øverland, and it is accompanied by an informative historical introduction relating to the early Norwegian attempts at settlement in Canada, mostly unsuccessful.

G.W.

*** ERIC NICOL, *Dickens of the Mounted*. McClelland & Stewart, $24.95. Is Eric Nicol having us on again? If so, he is doing it very pleasantly. The protagonist of *Dickens of the Mounted* is Francis Dickens, the bibulous, tactless, incompetent, perhaps craven, and undoubtedly difficult third son of Charles Dickens, who, after an undistinguished career in Bengal, joined the Mounted Police in 1874 and is perhaps best known for having evacuated Fort Pitt during the Northwest Rebellion, when he was threatened by Big Bear and his followers. Until recently, apart from his other negative qualities, Dickens also seemed singularly uncommunicative on paper (there are apparently no letters from him in the Dickens family papers) and one imagined that to be a reaction against an overbearing Papa. But now Eric Nicol produces this batch of extraordinarily lively letters, purportedly written by Frank Dickens, presenting a witty, whimsical, and sometimes

wise view of the Canada of his time and life in general, and addressed to a London publican and his wife in whose establishment before he left for Canada Dickens had squandered much of his means. They were discovered in a "somewhat inchoate collection of personal papers" (which one speculates may be related to a certain famous copper cylinder) found in the University of British Columbia Library. The issue is notably complicated by the publishers who in their blurb remark that "Editor Nicol's wonderful skills have brought this man so alive that when we part from Drank Dickens at the end of the book, we do so with the end of having lost a friend." But since, apart from a very brief introduction, the letters are entirely presented as Dickens is supposed to have written them, where do "Editor Nicol's wonderful skills" come in? Unless. . . . And if that is the case we should accept the book gratefully as a happy invention.

G.W.

*** KEN COATES & BILL MORRISON, *The Sinking of the Princess Sophia*. Oxford, $16.95. The sinking of the CPR boat, *Princess Sophia*, bound from Skagway to Vancouver in the fall of 1918 was surely the greatest single tragedy of the Pacific Northwest. Thanks to appalling weather there could be no rescue attempt while the ship lay aground on Vanderbilt Reef in Lynn Canal, and when the waves pushed it off everyone drowned, choked by the heavy oil as much as by the water. The official death toll was 343, but there were certainly stowaways, and the final toll was probably more than 350. In sheer numbers that was far fewer deaths than on the *Titanic* six years before, when an estimated 1,500 had died, but as Coates and Morrison suggest in their well-researched and interestingly written book, the relative effect of the tragedy was perhaps much greater, since a large proportion of the leading people of the Yukon Territory and Alaska were on the boat, travelling to winter in the south. The north was already in decline as the old placer mining economy drew to an end, and this tragedy dealt a blow to the life of the region from which it recovered slowly. Even as a roll call of the dead the book is interesting and valuable, for it tells one much about the people who stayed in the north after the gold rushes ebbed, and of the relations they maintained with each other and with the world outside.

G.W.

** GEORGE FALUDY, *Notes from the Rainforest*. Hounslow Press, $12.95. "One of the best things about growing old," George Faludy writes, "is the way one gradually learns to contemplate things without coveting them: to treat 'life as a vehicle for contemplation and contemplation as a vehicle for joy,' as a Spanish philosopher once put it." This small book is a record of Faludy's joyful, and wise, contemplations recorded while he lived alone in a Vancouver Island cottage during two early summer months in 1987. Although the entries are dated as in a diary, they show little of the form's tedium because Faludy's mind ranges widely through world literature, history, and politics, and repeatedly spikes the mix with wry humour. Despite the title, Faludy pays little attention to the world surrounding his retreat, which is apt given his self-description — "a wanderer and perpetual exile." Yet his most extended comment on Vancouver Island is typical of the studied lyricism of his terse observations: "it would be hard to imagine a more *limpid* wilderness than this, or one more beautifully clothed in moss and cold dew — it's like Brazil at the dawn of an ice age." Canada rates high on Faludy's 'fit-to-live-in' scale, but the idea of a Hungarian-Canadian literature strikes him as "lump[ing] together for purposes of ethnographical convenience three or four genuine writers with a lot of dilettantes and versifiers." But whether he is writing on the Canadian military, or the Moroccan writer Mohammed Choukri, or the virtues of indecision, he is consistently engaging, and almost always quotable.

L.R.

A BOOK ON William Faulkner may seem a surprising place to discover information on Bliss Carman, but in tracing Faulkner's early connections to *art nouveau*, Lothar Hönnighausen, in *William Faulkner: The Art of Stylization in his Early Graphic and Literary Work* (Cambridge, n.p.), also refers to the design of *Songs from Vagabondia*, and the entire book may, largely by inference, throw new light on Carman's aesthetic affiliations. Another Canadian-American literary interrelationship may be explored through two new books on Walt Whitman: Edwin Haviland Miller's *Walt Whitman's 'Song of Myself': A Mosaic of Interpretations* (Univ. of Iowa, US$35.00) and M. Jimmie Killingsworth's *Whitman's Poetry of the Body: Sexuality, Politics, and the Text* (Univ. of North Carolina, n.p.). The full impact of Whitman's poetry on Canadian writing remains to be explored, but *TISH* is a good place to start.

E.-M.K.

LAST PAGE

FRANK BIRBALSINGH'S *Indenture & Exile* (Tsar, n.p.) brings together a series of essays on a subject that has come to be known as the Indian Diaspora. The impulse that led South Asians to immigrate to many other parts of the world were many — often economic originally, and broadly cultural in their impact. The essayists in Birbalsingh's book include writers, historians, sociologists: they trace uneven parallels between history and slavery, probe the survival of Hinduism in Trinidad and the impact of Christian missions, reflect on the nature of "Indianness" and "otherness," and (as Cyril Dabydeen does in the case of Canada, for example) suggest some of the tangible and less tangible effects that ethnicity has upon literature. Another compilation by Birbalsingh, *Jahaji Bhai* (Tsar, $10.95), assembles an anthology of Indo-Caribbean literary works, including some by Dabydeen, Neil Bissoondath, Arnold Itwaru, Samuel Selvon, and Ramabai Espinet, all Canadian residents.

Sam Selvon's role in Canadian Literature has always been minimized, though he has been a Canadian citizen now for several years. Still written about as a "Trinidad writer," his situation raises some uneasy questions about ethnicity, multiculturalism, hyphenated identities, and the reasons why some writers are embraced by their new culture (as Rohinton Mistry has been, for example) and others remain attached (in critics' minds) to the culture from which they came. (Race is not the issue, or not the sole issue here; a similar demarcation divides Canadian critical attitudes to Malcolm Lowry and Wyndham Lewis.) Susheila Nasta's *Critical Perspectives on Sam Selvon* (Three Continents, $25.00/15.00) does little to change this perspective, drawing as it does mostly on Caribbean reviews and comments, but the volume should bring more public attention to a writer whose skill with vernacular idiom and sense of the irony of human relations will repay a reader's attention. Selvon (together with Trinidad-Canadian writer Harold Sonny Ladoo) also appears in Jeremy Poynting's *From the Sugar Estates to the Suburbs*, one of two "occasional papers" recently published by the University of Warwick. (The other, Michael Gilkes' *Creative Schizophrenia*, traces how a standard dialect division in Caribbean verse has been reinterpreted by Derek Walcott, and others, so that a new "contradictory culture," responding anew to history, is emerging.)

Related publications include the special "Desh-Videsh" issue of the *Massachusetts Review* (vol. 29, no. 4), which focuses on South Asian expatriate writing and art. Two essays on Bharati Mukherjee reiterate her attacks on what she perceives to be Canadian "racism"; other articles consider Salmon Rushdie and the plight of immigrants to America; and there are poems by Canadian critic Tillotama Rajan and others. *Across Continents*, ed. W. A. Shaheen et al. (National Federation of Pakistani Canadians), reviews the presence of Urdu language and literature in Canada, and efforts to preserve "heritage languages" through various educational programmes. The periodical *Urdu Canada* provides a sample of Pakistani-Canadian writing and Urdu fiction and poetry in translation.

Guyana-born Fred D'Aguiar is one of the writers to whom Gilkes refers; he has been commanding attention for the poetry he has been writing in England, as in *Mama Dot* or more recently *Airy Hall* (Random House, $13.95). In the latter, two broken sequences trace the impact of colonial surroundings on the shaping of the imagination, and the development of an idiom to deal with "*contra*-diction" ("Language can stretch so far / then it snaps, stinging the used"). Somewhat more conventional verse is represented by Edward Baugh's *A Tale from the Rainforest* (Sandberry Press, n.p.).

Examining more closely the social contexts of Caribbean literature are such works as Reinhard Sander's excellent *The Trinidad Awakening* (Greenwood Press, $37.95), a well-documented account of the class-, race-, and economy-based movements that urged Trinidad writers into new energies of expression in the 1930s; in particular Sander focuses on journals, institutions, and such figures as Alfred Mendes and C. L. R. James, apostles of reform. The latter is the subject also of Paul Buhle's enthusiastic biography, *C. L. R. James: The Artist as Revolutionary* (Verso, $35.00/13.95).

Grenada-born Michael Humfrey's *No Tears for Massa's Day* (General, $35.95) is a romantic historical fiction that reconstructs West Indian colonial history. Fastening on plantation life, it employs two of the more familiar topoi of this narrative paradigm: the map (which opens the novel, in a chart of assertive power) and the birth of a child (which ends it, in a gesture of reconciliation and hope, without necessarily having altered the fundamental structures that led to conflict in the first place. More illuminating about colonial encounter and the exigencies of plantation life, two recent publications draw attention to the lives of women. Harriet A. Jacob's *Incidents in the Life*

of a Slave Girl, newly edited and extensively annotated by J. F. Yellin (Harvard, n.p.), emphasizes the "radical feminist content" of an account by an American slave (b. 1813) of her Carolina and New York life, long thought to be a fictional invention. "Sensational" — in that it details the physical and sexual violence of slavery — it raises questions about the character of *property* in the collective mind of a society. Jacob herself found solace in religion. For others — notably those in power — solace derived from institutional order, as John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Year Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*, a 1790 manuscript edited for the first time by Richard and Sally Price (Johns Hopkins, $95.00), testifies. Stedman, a soldier, is a striking source of visually apt details — involving things seen and done during his years of campaign; yet he uses without question the idiom of empire (the "rebels" of his book are not unrelated to the "freedom-seekers" of Jacob's), rewrites passages of Shakespeare ("this blessed realm") to his own purpose, and uses the received conventions of his gender and status (e.g., the so-called "Suriname marriage") to his own convenience.

Some other contacts, fortunately, have been far less violent. The illustrated *Barbados Journal 1932*, by the Canadian painter J. E. H. MacDonald (Penumbra, $15.95), ed. J. W. Sabean, shows many characteristic features of a tourist-outsider's glimpse of reality; MacDonald notes the 'picturesque' and empathizes with white settlers' attitudes, possibly not considering all their ramifications. Joana McIntyre Varawa's *Changes in Latitude* (Little, Brown, n.p.), by contrast, traces an empathetic identification with the culture *in place*, on the part of the American author who left Hawaii "for adventure" but married into a traditional Fijian family. A detailed autobiography of a fisherman's domestic life, Varawa's book is also a romance (incidentally inviting some comparisons with Edith Iglauer's *Fishing with John*), indicating one of the transformations that narratives of intercultural contact have taken over two centuries.

Hajji Musa and the Hindu Fire-Walker, by Ahmed Essop (Reader's International, $16.95/8.95), gives voice to another part of the Indian Diaspora, this time in South Africa. The title story is a comic rendering of community rituals of marriage and manhood; other tales tell of over-reaching businessmen and the pressures of social categorization. Another South African writer, Es'kia Mphahlele, collects several stories from previous publications in *Renewal Time* (Reader's International, $16.95/8.95). The stories this time are framed by meditative essays, the first autobiographical, explaining where the stories came from; the second polemical, reflecting on the increasing irrelevance of white society inside an African literature concerned with its own renewal, and concerned that the opportunity for connection not be irrevocably lost.

Writers within India have also continued to publish absorbing new books of fiction, and to retrieve the classics for a modern readership. *Manimekhalai (The Dancer with the Magic Bowl)* has been translated into English for the first time by Alain Danielou (New Directions, $21.95/11.95). Among contemporary writers, Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* (New Directions, $8.95) tells of Delhi society during the Emergency, especially of two women — one Indian, one Cockney — whose family lives are shadowed by custom and desire. Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's precisely phrased *Three Continents* (General, $11.95) tells of young Americans' susceptibility to India for all the wrong reasons (the opening sentence asks to be read carefully, for its evocation of ethnicity, duality, difference, possession, and power: "Michael, my twin brother, and I always wanted something other — better — than we had"). The novel begins as casual adventure; it ends with manipulative charm and ruthless power winning out over naïveté and flirtatiousness. No sentimentality alleviates this glimpse of cultural contact; nor does religion offer solace — it's implicitly dismissed, rather, as a mechanism of romance and control.

A second Sahgal title, *Mistaken Identity* (New Directions, $16.95), tells of the last days of the Raj, focusing on a minor prince who is mistakenly imprisoned for treason; in jail he spends his time entertaining other prisoners — communists — with tales of the exotic and forbidden in courtly life. A modern-day *Arabian Nights*, the novel is by turns witty and serious, the "mistaken identity" of the title having as much to do with survival and cultural priorities as with one man's predicament. By contrast with such a book, Gita Mehta's *Raj* (General, n.p.), though it takes the less typical path of looking at empire through a female character's eyes, seems much more conventional. Vocabulary, syntax, structure: all derive from the romantic saga — and this novel, too, ends with a familiar trope of closure: laughter wells up and rolls through the bazaars "until it merged with the silver waters of the river." The adjectives command; the paradigms obey.

With Adam Zameenzad's *The 13th House* (Random House, $21.95), style creates a different world entirely. Pakistani-born, East Africa-educated, English resident, Zameenzad writes of living in a house full of contradictions — ordinary, but occupied by stories. Set in modern Pakistan, the stylistically rich novel recreates one man's life in a world beset by random violence, and where ironies cut in several directions: "In a world where money, security, children, money, temptation, sex, money, passion and more money is all that women expect of men, that is what men begin to offer women." The "13th House" of the title is the one beyond the twelve mundane signs of the zodiac: "the house of perpetual despair and therefore no despair; . . . designed not by philosophers but gypsies; built not by politicians but children; blessed not by priests but clowns."

South Asia continues, too, to exert an imaginative appeal to those outside. Antonio Tabucchi's *Indian Nocturne* (Chatto & Windus, £10.95), trans. Tim Parks, is a quietly elusive quest story, through tourist India, for more than tourist meanings. Marianne Wiggins's *John Dollar* (Harper & Row, US$17.95) turns quest and saga into a different kind of nightmare, one more reminiscent of Martin Boyd and William Golding than of historical romance, but lived out in language as much as in external events. Schoolgirls who lose their outward show of civilization after a monsoon maroons them maintain their passion for the wildness of *story* and a preoccupation with the appeal of *law*; in the margins of the text language literally turns upside-down, and an "other"-language takes over from Received Standard. The point is not that civilization is a veneer, but that words are the agents of illusion and power, and are therefore as dangerous as they are comforting.

Günter Grass's *Show Your Tongue* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, $29.95/19.95), trans. John Woods, derives from the author's six-month residence in India in 1987; it is a sketchbook and a short poetic meditation on chaos, poverty, and disease. Grass gets as far as dismissing the tourist brochures that advertise how "charming" chaos is. He stays not quite long enough, however, to identify the "chaos" he sees as a phenomenon in part of his own imaginative manufacture. This is a book about shame and anger; it is a book also about the dispersal of wealth and the power of images and expectations.

W.N.

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3. The work must be either the first or second work of creative non-fiction published by the writer.
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