Canadian Literature

A Quarterly of Criticism and Review Fall/Winter 1994 $25

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Hispanic-Canadian Connections

MICHAEL ONDAATJE:
Express Yourself Beautifully

A BIOGRAPHY BY ED JEWINSKI

Michael Ondaatje's life is as intense — and at times as dramatic — as his poetry and fiction. As Ed Jewinski's new biography reveals, much of Ondaatje's life has been a series of intense moments followed by ruptures and dislocations. *Express Yourself Beautifully* traces the moments that stand out: Ondaatje as a child, unaware that his father was drinking away the family fortune; Ondaatje as a teenager, enduring the rituals of British boarding schools while his mother ran a lodging house; Ondaatje arriving in Canada at the age of 19, beginning to write at 20, and marrying at 21.

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The Writers' Union of Canada is holding its second annual Short Prose Competition for Developing Writers. Prizes: $2,500 to the winner and $1,000 to the runner-up. Winning author agrees to permit publication of piece in *Books in Canada*. Open to all writers who have not been published in book format. Submissions must be 2,000-2,500 words and not previously published in any format. Phone 416-868-6914 for full entry details. Entries are to be submitted with $25 entry fee by November 3, 1994. Mail to COMPETITION, Writers' Union of Canada, 24 Ryerson Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 2P3.

Editorial

Once Upon an Overtime

On the fifth of June, in the year 1994 (by current reckoning), in a large room in the small city called Cedar Falls, Iowa, I listen to Isabel Allende tell stories about telling stories. *Once upon a time,* she says, pausing—the room turns silent, still—and then: *You see the power of the storyteller....*

Storytelling and lovemaking are the same, says Isabel Allende: *they both require stresslessness, a sacred space.* ("Fictions are dangerous," says Salman Rushdie, in *The Wizard of Oz*; "In fiction's grip, we may mortgage our homes, sell our children, to have whatever it is we crave.... Like men dying in a blizzard, we lie down in the snow to sleep.") So why do Spain, Portugal, and Latin America turn Canadians into storytellers? Does it have anything to do with passion, or more to do with the national love affair with cost accounting? Is it the narrative of History imprinted in our infant past? (*In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed...*)—what colour did we expect from the ocean back then, in our collective grade-school days? the solid steel-grey of Atlantic fogbank or Pacific rim? or the blood-red, wine-dark prism of adventure, mystery, romance? Ferdinand and Isabella, Luis de Camoens and King Philip's Armada, Magellan on a quest for Empire, da Gama, Maximilian, Prince Henry the Navigator, Bolivar, O'Higgins, Balboa (lost by Keats and stranded on a Panamanian shore). Perhaps it was the adventure itself that coloured the

arctic mind with tropical expectations, the Boys'-Own world of dauntless difference—*Felipe thought quickly, knowing the anaconda coiled around his companion would shortly press from him his whole life's breath: there remained but a fraction of a moment—he must decide where to strike the scaly reptile, and around him the Amazon seemed alive with...*

Statistics: the 1991 Canadian census reports that, out of a population of 27 million, .9% claim a Spanish ethnic heritage, .3% claim a Portuguese ethnic heritage, and another .3% claim Latin American origins. The earliest arrivals were Portuguese sailors, fishing for cod on the Grand Banks; the last group is made up primarily of Chileans and Salvadoreans, emigrating north as political refugees, becoming exiles, émigrés, telling their life stories as footnotes to authoritarian history. In their lifetimes, say the recent storytellers, they grew up with the generals, they grew up when the Americans invaded, they grew up when they lost the rest of their families to the guerillas in the high plateau, the soldiers in the streets. Theirs are serious stories. They recount documentaries of victimization and terror. They also make magic realism real: *When the soldiers rode out of the cornstalks, they found only the old cabinetmaker, for all the other villagers had heard the green parrot two nights earlier tell them to leave, the random rain was coming, and famine, and the generals would offer them bread but only in exchange for the virgin-of-the-second-stone...* Latin America is a world divided by the generals, the exiles say, though united by the way its artists tell their tales.... But who can reliably foretell the future?

No-one expects the Spanish Inquisition... Disruption. Caught off guard. The element of surprise. Interruption marks the fragmentary mode, in art as in life. The Cisco Kid meets Colombian gold. So when North American TV news runs narratives of experience, does anyone anticipate more than the usual *sierra, siesta, señorita* clichés—the big hat and smile, the gold braid and moustache, the poncho, bolero, and toreador? Yes, lots of people do. So if the semiotic range of Carmen Miranda's hats no longer constitutes the true extent of Canadian *knowledge* about hispanic realities, why do the stereotypes persist? (*Don't cry for me, Evita...*) This is, of course, the premise of Guillermo Verdecchia's witty and achingly personal 1993 play *Fronteras*

Americanas/American borders. The Latin American experience in North America, says Verdecchia, "is provisional, atado con alambre"—always running up against La Bamba and *Cielito Lindo,* Speedy Gonzalez, the Alamo, and the TV drug wars. But Savonarola's apocalyptic expectations are not the only guide to the future. Love matters, too, and celebration. Verdecchia's narrator (knowing his home is *On* the border, not *Inside* it, yet) can none the less *choose* to make Canada his home—"where I work...where I make the most sense, in this Noah's ark of a nation"—and say *Let the dancing begin!*

Two to tango, two to tangle, two to... Rafael Barreto-Rivera, writing about Puerto Rico, distinguishes mordantly between Canada and sex. Malcolm Lowry characterizes Mexico's "Cuahnahuac" as hell and British Columbia's "Eridanus" as paradise. Yolande Villemaire writes Latin America into her differentiation between paradise and reality. Louis Dudek, analyzing the opposition between the two "primitive faiths" of Cortés and Moctezuma, sees South America as a "tornado": but adds that you can see Canada afresh from a tornado's perspective: "It is most quiet/where it is most violent./ That's why we appear so good." (All these writers appear in Hugh Hazelton and Gary Geddes's anthology *Compañeros,* along with examples of the work of several Latin American writers who have made Canada—some just for a short time—their chosen home: among them, Urbina, Urbanyi, Etcheverry, Nómez, Mallet, Vallejo, Lavergne.) Canadian writers' perceptions of hispanic realities generally link day and night, the beautiful and the damned, love and war. Beausoleil meets Borges, Livesay meets Lorca, Wayman meets Neruda, Hodgins meets García Márquez ("It's the same coast"), Thomas meets love and separation ("the more little mummy in the world"), Purdy meets Castro, Leonard Cohen meets the last tourist in Havana, travel meets the TV news. Does everyone know each other here?

Like water for chocolate. Similes for answers. With conditions. As though the world needed name tags. As though the party was always in the house next door. As though the word "Hispanic" were not a cultural generality, taking meaning from the particulars of lived life: Don Juan and Saint Theresa of Avila, Birney's bland tourists and the gauchos in Francis Bond Head's *Rough Notes Taken During Some Rapid Journeys Across the Pampas* (an 1826

Argentinian travel "classic," according to John Walker, writing in Alistair Hennessy's *The Land that England Lost*). Borges' labyrinths, MacLennan's Jerome Martell in the Spanish Civil War, the Andean peasants of Chilean-born Frederick Niven's *Triumph*, Diego Rivera's murals, and Villa Lobos making music in Ralph Gustafson's *Tracks in the Snow*. Death, love, and aspiration. Likeness in dissimilarity. Galiano and Valdez sailing off the edge of "Vancouver's Island." Eli Mandel observes "ancient bondage" and the "madwomen of the Plaza de Mayo"; Dennis Gruending remarks on poverty and urban decay; Pat Lane notices "unborn things"; Brian Brett dreams of a nightmare Argentina; George Woodcock and Ronald Wright record the lives of the Inca and Maya and society's dealings in civil power. Richler, Sagaris, Sternberg. *Witness, witness, witness*: it is an imperative, not a noun.

Because of *the Disappeared*: the grammar of relationship—in silence as in speech. Katharine Beeman, in *Direct and Devious Ways*, specifies a subject and a motivation: "Spain, the poets' war./ Nicaragua, the poets'/ revolution." In the Barcelona zoo, she adds, "we learned/ we can all die/ sooner than later/ that dead men on leave/ make love at night/ lest morning never come." In politics, as in words: Elias Letelier-Ruz, translated by Ken Norris in *Silence/Silencio*, reiterates a single theme: *I am witness to* ...—to what? *fire, violence, hatred, flood*. And so? Alfonso Quijada Urías' last story in *The Better to See You* ends with a reason for writing: "If I'm alive today, it's a total miracle. Maybe. Possibly. To tell the story."

How? Passionately, eloquently, matter-of-factly, desperately, earnestly, calmly, *quixotically*. Listeners mostly know reality; they know when they hear it told them blunt with grief. They also know they're listening to some old familiar truths when fantasy gossips at a gold corner on a summer twilight. *Maria Consuela tells of her second cousin's oldest friend's daughter—the one they call Carmen Bianca—one day she took a bent hairpin from the back of her head and used it to try to catch a fish for dinner, and hooked instead the crimson conjuror who lives at the bottom of the sea and who before her eyes turned giant sharks into hay wagons and six white eels into uniformed soldiers, and then, she says, and then*—How does this story end? W.N.

Highway

Song is stilled in the air
Nothing but silence:
sadness withers the minutes of the day.
The highway becomes unfolded
to my darkened estrangement.
I hear the hammering of tires
upon its naked surface.

The muted highway
recoils its snake-like coils on itself.
My thoughts throb at my side,
they advance spurred on
by the horses in the motor.
Sunset is bitten off by solitude.

Carretera

Se ha muerto la canción en el aire.
Solamente el silencio:
la tristeza marchita los minutos.
    La carretera se abre
    en mi oscura extrañeza.
    Escucho el golpear
    de las llantas
    en la desnuda superficie.

La carretera muda
    repliega
    anillos de serpiente
    sobre sí misma.
    Junto a mí
laten mis pensamientos,
avanzan espoleados
por los caballos del motor.
Muerde la soledad en el ocaso.

Devil's Hole
(Niagara Falls)

The withered grasses emerge from their cocoon,
their muted greens aglow amid the stones,
wind's icy howl still lingers in the air.
The waters down below
spin in the vortex of their icy spoils
chase one another biting off their tails
as chilly mists slowly ascend,
add to the throbbing of the trembling wires,
they advance to the confines
that lead to a wide expanse of leaden sky.

And yet in this vacation spot
there will be daffodils
and other spring-time flowers
alien to the beginning of my life,
when colours swirled in even plenitude,
and the rivers of beauty flowed unspoken
asleep in honey contours of their dreams.

I know I will return year after year,
I will always return wearing a smile
minute and modest
like this silent nostalgia
that goes out in your search.

Agujero del Diablo
(Cataratas del Niágara)

Las hierbas mustias rompen su crisálida,
sus verdes apagados brillan entre las rocas,
aun se oye en el viento el aullido del hielo.
Las aguas allá abajo
vertiginosas giran sus despojos,
se persiguen mordiéndose la cola
mientras la niebla asciende lentamente
aumentando el latido de cables temblorosos
que avanzan hacia el fin
de un cielo ceniciento.

Y a pesar de todo,
habrá también narcisos y otras flores
en este triste sitio;
flores ajenas a mi anterior vida,
cuando aromas violentos
giraban sus colores llenos de plenitud,
y el bello río indecible fluía
en la miel de su sueño.

A traves de los años volveré,
siempre vendré luciendo una sonrisa
diminuta y modesta,
como esta silenciosa nostalgia que te busca

Lake Sagaris

Countries Like Drawbridges
Chilean-Canadian Writing Today

The Canadian edition of a collection of Naín Nómez' poetry is called *Burning Bridges*, whereas the book's original Spanish title means *Countries Like Drawbridges*. The literal translation doesn't sound as good, but that difference raises blisters: have we pulled those bridges up or have we burned them? Does anything but commerce travel between Canada and Chile these days? Who cares? And what does this mean for writers on both sides of the chasm?

In these days of neo-liberal economics and markets masquerading as the solution to all ills, with Canada suffering the consequences of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Chile panting to be next in, Canadians generally and Canadian writers specifically may have more in common with their Chilean counterparts than ever before. But they hear about each other less than ever, a sad and costly loss.

An essential question for writers today is what it means for us to exist as people who live by our wits, applying the best our minds can produce to reflecting, refracting, raising consciousness and ultimately, yes, improving, the world around us, in a new world order where the market has become the supreme arbiter not only of trade but also of an expanding circle of human relations.

Throughout this century, there have been those who argue that a writer's work should be evaluated primarily in terms of numbers, preferably with dollar signs attached. But many Canadians, struggling to build a common identity, have argued in favour of cultural policies that compensate for the market's many blindspots.

These two poles around which the cultural debate has orbited have profound implications for the question of writers' role and the role of culture itself, in a modern, hopefully democratic, society. Are we critics, pathfinders, eternal malcontents, company for those who find themselves alone? Or are we clowns and entertainers, crowd-drawers, producers of a commodity to be sold like wheat or wood? Can the two roles somehow be combined?

These apparently theoretical questions boil down to issues close to the skin of writers anywhere — our own physical survival, not to mention the development of our skills and mental muscles, our work's ability to reach its destination, readers, the fractured mosaic of a community that they have become.

We can no longer croon our poems to them as lullabies, or recite our histories to the tribal crowd in a central square. The open hearth that the home once was and that common meeting place, the public square, were long ago co-opted, primarily by a media that purports to be universal, or at least to decide what universal is, using the criteria of one enormous and powerful member of the international community that we from smaller countries are encouraged to emulate, but can never become.

These phenomena, and the debates that accompany them, have spread their concentric circles throughout the world and refracted through the Americas in specific, similar and contrasting ways. We need each other's perspectives, confrontations, solutions. Questions.

The dictatorship that spurred what was probably the greatest exchange of Chilean and Canadian experience in the history of both countries disappeared in March, 1990, although anti-democratic relics remain, like the mines planted in metronomes in Ondaatje's *The English Patient.*

Since then, Canadian investment in Chile has mushroomed with companies like Placer Dome, Cominco, Lac owning a significant percentage of the Chilean mining industry. Chilean exports to Canada have also grown enormously. But the burgeoning community of expatriate Canadians in Chile, a small but growing mirror of the 40,000 Chileans estimated to live in Canada, has not brought with it an increase in cultural exchanges and literary connections.

We remain as ignorant of each other's moral and imaginative place on this planet as we ever were.

In literary terms, Canadian interest in Latin America generally and Chile specifically has followed a haphazard route, first traced by Earle Birney's entertaining search for Chile's Nobel and poet, Pablo Neruda, in the fifties. After the 1973 military coup, others followed physically or projected themselves by imagination, producing work like Pat Lane's Latin American poems, Tom Wayman's Chilean poems, Pat Lowther's Letters to Neruda and her long poem about the Chacabuco Concentration Camp, or, later still, Gary Geddes' *No Easy Exit*, or poems included in collections by Lorna Crozier and Mary Di Michele. Geddes, Crozier, Di Michele and Lane visited Chile at the height of military power.

As the Chilean coup provoked Canadian writers' to journey through dictatorship and its multiple shades of meaning and dissonance, it also blasted many Chilean writers into the dubious limbo of exile in Canada. The most concrete result was the bilingual (Spanish-English) anthology, *Chilean Writers in Canada (1982)*, edited by Naín Nómez, and a special edition of *Canadian Fiction Magazine* dedicated to Latin American writers in Canada (1987). Eight of the thirteen writers were Chilean.

In more recent years, books by Leandro Urbina and others continue to explore the meaning of this experience. Increasingly, these writers turn their critical eyes away from the now non-existent society that they left behind, and toward Canadian society and its most treasured delusions.

The coup, idealism and a passion for Spanish took me to Chile in 1981. Eventually, I prepared an anthology of Canadian poetry, *Un Pájaro es un Poema*, and one of short stories, *La Reina Negra y Otras Historias*. They were the first of their kind in Latin America and possibly the world.

The result of these events has been a scattered knowledge of Canadian writers among some Chilean readers and the development of some strong individual Chilean-Canadian writers who have begun to stand out among their generation.

Thematically, Chile has become another milestone on Canadians' road to identification with the world's victims, a concern that is often expressed as a preoccupation for human rights and that has helped to strengthen Canadian democracy. For the Chileans, their Canadian experience has provided a distance and a space for pruning memory into something that goes beyond mere testimony, baring the white bone of human vulnerability and the dogs still snapping and anxious to crunch it between their teeth.

Naín Nómez, a fine poet, returned to Chile from Canada with a PhD and a (Chilean-Canadian) hyphen added to his identity, in 1985. For the next five years he survived by working at a cultural non-governmental organization, until an elected government ended political blacklists and he returned to work, as an Associate Professor of Chilean Literature, at the University of Santiago. Nómez has only returned to Canada three times over the past nine years, but his Canadian years deeply influenced him.

Two key experiences for Nómez were the "desacralizing" of the writer, reducing Chileans' view of the writer as a godlike, prophetic (and inevitably masculine) figure into a "demystified, normal being." He sees Canadian writers' ability to work well in different genres as a reflection of this. The Canadian obsession with craft has also served him in good stead in a society where "writers often publish any old thing and think they're ingenious for nothing."

But Nómez says "we have wasted the possibilities for creating stronger links between the Chilean and Canadian cultures. We've had a few momentary and sporadic bridges, but they haven't been developed into a more solid literary or cultural exchange, in spite of the many possibilities." He contrasts this with the growing volume of exchange in the hard sciences.

"I think the mutual feedback between the Chilean and Canadian experiences must become more intense," he adds, "perhaps through writers' exchanges, conferences, essays, mutual congresses, and so on."

The "multiplication of voices" in the work of writers like Ondaatje, MacEwen and Atwood, along with some of Canadian cultural institutions could contribute to Chileans' attempts at rebuilding their culture after the destruction of the dictatorial period, while Chileans' experience with literary workshops, the "public enthusiasm for poetry," and some cultural laws and prizes that Chile has developed could be very useful to Canadians.

"All dialogue between different literatures is always productive," he adds. "You might think we don't have much in common. But both countries were colonies for a long time and the linguistic dependence, in one case on England and France and, in the other, Spain, have weighed enormously on our own cultural originality. These are also countries that have had to confront the problem, still unresolved, of their own historical identity."

Among the common, schizophrenic roots shared by both societies is the problem of how the descendants of both the "conquerors" and the continent's original peoples can overcome a brutal colonial past. This conflict, says Sonia Montecinos, a Chilean anthropologist, has produced a continen-

tal identity, "which today seems to be a fracture, but is nothing more than the confirmation of a cultural synthesis, ambushed by its own negation."

Unlike Naín Nómez, Leandro Urbina's wandering has taken him to Chile only for visits, and even a lengthy stay in Washington, DC, couldn't tempt him away from Canada forever. Like Nómez, Urbina writes in Spanish, although his first book of short stories was published in English, by Cormorant Press (Ontario). Urbina's first published novel, *Cobro Revertido* (Calling Collect) was among the ten finalists in the 1992 literary competition sponsored by Planeta Publishing, one of the biggest in the Spanish-speaking world. He says the Chilean on the jury voted against it, but the novel has been successful in Chile, selling about 6000 copies over the past year. It also won a newly established national prize, sponsored by the National Book Fund.

Cobro Revertido "is the story of thousands of Chileans," says Bartolo Ortiz, the Planeta Manager responsible for its Chilean edition. "People want to know what happened to [the exiles] abroad. That's the hook."

Written in a relentless stream of consciousness, switching from first to third person, *Cobro Revertido* tells the story of a Chilean exile living in Montreal who has never quite recovered from the shock of being blasted out of his home country and away from the family ties that bind him too tightly, particularly to his mother. He learns of her death through a phonecall and goes on a binge, sharing (apparently) half-baked social theories about here and there, as he tries to gather the willpower and the funds to return to Chile for her funeral. The novel is an asphyxiating portrait, seasoned with sarcasm, of a desperate, dislocated man.

Although it doesn't achieve the exquisite clarity of his best short stories, the novel is among the best of a modest boom in Chilean narrative currently gracing the shelves of Santiago's bookstores. It invites comparison with *Morir en Berlín*, a novel about Chilean exile in East Germany, by Carlos Cerda.

While Urbina writes in an effective but sometimes overwhelming first person, Cerda experiments with the omnipresent "we," giving us multiple characters (including several East Germans), and a broader view of the Chilean community in exile, watching over, judging and, all too often, sentencing its less fortunate members.

And, since hatred is more obsessive than affection, aversions ruled, and the already familiar closeness of friends became the terrain in which antipathies toward the rejected were justified, fed each other, grew. In the end, what became unknown in the [Chilean ghetto in East Berlin] was neutrality and tolerance. We had created another exile within our exile.

Urbina illustrates similar misunderstandings and incommunication between "close friends" in a scene in a Greek restaurant where his main character, "the sociologist", begins to sigh uncontrollably. Convinced that he's choking on a piece of tyropita, his friend Tito

begins to slap him on the back more and more violently and he says no with his hand, but the other continues to hit him and, upon observing no improvement, with Nico [the proprietor] opts for the emergency treatment for those who are choking and throws him to the floor, like in the diagram for first aid, and they jump on him and he shouts no, no and the others say it looks like it's out, this method always works, and Nico had already saved a client this way once, even though he broke a rib and the ungrateful guy wanted to sue him...

Urbina's character relates to Canadian society through his English-Canadian ex-wife, a doctor named Meg, and a Quebecois lover, Marcia. Forced to work as a janitor to finance his almost mythical masters, the sociologist observes:

He was trying to study during the coffee breaks and the central Americans and the Portuguese kept screwing him up with their infantile joking. Basically, they were offended that he unintentionally wanted to place himself over them. So in the end he decided that his candidacy for la maitrise could go to la mierdise for awhile, since he wasn't prepared to live between two worlds with the worst of both. What's more, considering some reasons of a scientific nature, perhaps this was a good opportunity to do some sociological research in the field. Perhaps he could write something about their cleaners and their rites of integration in Quebecois society at the end of the seventies. Cleaning offices was the first threshold to cross in order to join in the dream americaine...

Biting criticism straight from the immigrant's mouth, Urbina's novel remains primarily a claustrophobic view of the mind of an intelligent man, torn from his own world and thrown haphazardly into a new one that's not the least bit concerned about someone worthwhile landing on the junk heap. A pitiless criticism of the man's own weaknesses, it deals a few glancing blows to the society that receives him.

After over a decade in Canada, Urbina lived in the States for several years where he "helped to raise my children, walked endless streets, drank litres of coffee reading the *New York Times*, spoke with a lot of people, bled at times,

laughed 'til I shit at the economic model, so admired by some drooling Latin Americans and Canadians, finished my doctorate, separated from my wife and am now back in Canada (Oh Canada, our home and native land)...," he says.

He refuses to get sidetracked into what he considers a pseudo-identity crisis.

"I don't think writers have much identity," he says. "Not like politicians who live on it. What is really important is to have a publisher."

He expects both English and French editions of *Cobro Revertido* to be published soon in Canada. His decision to remain here has been dictated primarily by his need to both survive and write.

"I'm obsessed by the need to survive by doing what I love most, that is: writing and reading; and to live closest to those whom I most love and who are spread all over the place," he says. Urbina likes the "great macho" Canadian poets, Purdy, Lane and Geddes, but thinks Canada's strongest prose is still to be found mostly in Mavis Gallant, Alice Munro and "some short stories by Atwood."

He finds a lot of Canadian writing "flat, bubbleless, commercial" and remarks that recent plays are full of American characters and incidents, "as if here there were nothing interesting and vital."

"Years ago, I discovered that the window panes in my house filled with condensation and that it was possible to trace there the first letters that I was learning at school. Through them I could see the back yard, the animals my mother raised, the grey sky, the snow. That is, through those letters I could see life. From then on, and perhaps without realizing it until many years later, I was compelled to re-create my world or build others, starting with the word," says Ramón Díaz Eterovic, a Chilean novelist and poet, and former president of Chile's National Writers' Society, the Sech.

"Those who assume writing as an exploration of man's destiny," he continues, "are taking on an enterprise that is neither a pass time, nor a game, but rather an often agonizing effort." Writing in Chilean society, he says, is marked by the double solitude of the creator, confronting the blank page and "that other solitude, that could be called abandonment, related to the conditions a writer must overcome in order to develop and live through his work."

The writer in Chile today is an ambiguous figure, navigating through the mists of multiple transitions — from dictatorship to democracy, from antiquity to an undefined version of modern, from exclusively male (as Díaz Eterovic' own words reveal) to male and female, from Hispano-centric

to something more open to other ethnicities, among them the country's own, oft-forgotten native groups.

Do Canadians really have nothing to say to and nothing to learn from writers and thinkers of this calibre? Do we have nothing to gain or offer, in the way of our own experience trying to build a common culture and a country?

In the past, Chilean governments compensated for non-existent programs for artists by giving the upper class among them diplomatic postings that provided generous incomes, time to create and considerable prestige. This continued under the elected government that replaced the military in March 1990. In fact, the Chilean Ambassador to Canada was Francisco Simón Rivas, a fine novelist.

In the past four years, the government has created two significant programs for financing cultural projects, among them individual creation, book purchases for libraries and, to a lesser extent, publishing ventures. The main program, Fondec, is administered by the Ministry of Education. It suffers from a fixed jury that includes the minister himself and a limited budget for which individual creators, established universities, and major cultural institutions alike compete. The National Book Fund, created rather hastily last year, using income raised from a whopping 18% value added tax applied to books, provides a major prize for writers, won by Leandro Urbina in its first version.

In spite of the advances these programs represent, there are few opportunities for Chilean writers to survive and develop through their writing alone. There is no such thing as a Creative Writing program, nor do universities have Writers-in-Residence, except in the traditional position of university professor. While English is required throughout the educational system and while university programs often include courses and even degrees in English and English literature, Canadian literature is not studied and there is no literary equivalent to the kind of exchanges going on in the sciences.

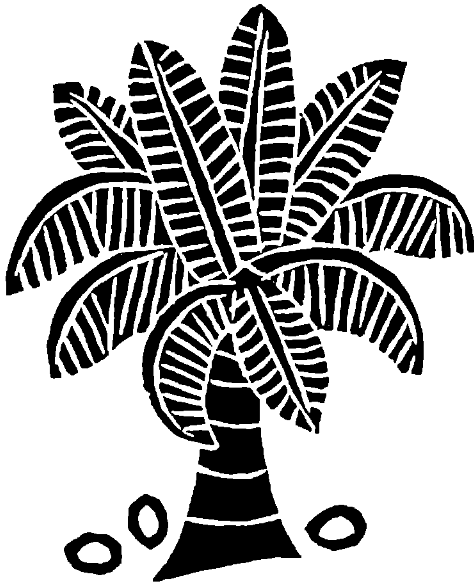
Canadian literary periodicals seldom cover news of what's happening in literatures from other languages and other parts of the world. If asked, that's "outside their mandate." Chile has few literary publications, period.

Canadian writers' organizations seem to exercise only sporadic contacts with their equivalents elsewhere and focus primarily on other English-speaking and European countries. In spite of extremely limited resources, the Sech has attempted to convoke writers from at least the rest of Latin America. In 1991, the Canadian poet, Gary Geddes participated in an international gathering in Santiago.

And while Canada finances several fulltime staff positions at even its smaller Embassies to develop trade relations, it seldom invests a similar amount in culture, unless the country is selected as a special showplace (Mexico City, Paris, and London are in this category).

In Canada, Urbina, Carmen Rodríguez, Jorge Etcheberry, Daniel Inostroza, among others, work and write as Chileans within a Canadian environment. In Chile, Casa Canada, a Canadian centre for development and culture, eventually lost its lengthy battle for financing and survival. Naín Nómez, racing from one responsibility to another, wonders and worries over what more could be happening between the two countries. I survive and occasionally get the chance to tear time away from that concern to write articles like this one.

Perhaps there are two answers to my initial question. At both ends of this landmass that Canadians learn is two continents while the Chileans consider it one, individual writers have learned to live between "countries like drawbridges," whipping across whenever we get the chance. At the same time, some of our institutions, that is, the ones we all finance through our taxes, are, if not burning bridges, at the very least, not building them, where they should.



Richard Sanger

Magical Flurries

(for Ricardo Lobo Da Silveira O'Reilly Sternberg)

So what? A well-tanned weatherman draws a line
Like a shark's tooth necklace across a map,
Mumbles a few mysterious syllables,
And down comes all this white stuff—as boring
As styrofoam in a department store window
And just when we were expecting crocuses.
So complain, curse, cavil... Yes, but does that explain
The village thousands of miles to the south
Where the labourers rushed into the street
With pots and pans, and the grannies dropped their rosaries,
And, here, right beneath our noses, the cars
For once chastened and tentative as they creep along,
Like pilgrims on their knees approaching
The site of some new, some fabulous disclosure?

George McWhirter

From
The Business of Ramón García's Disappearance

Thinking of him, writing this, I wonder—has our disagreement with his politics delayed him? Does our opposition put us beside the two policemen who stop him on the road, in the black Volkswagen Beetle he has borrowed (without knowledge or permission) from his sister, Mara? His mother, Esperanza—who would like to see a stop put to his politics—is her hand raised too, bringing him to a halt on that road to Contepec. She has said it often—*Con Ramón es la política primero, es la política segundo, es la política tercero*—politics comes first, second and third with her son. It is her other deadly daughter-in-law, Ramón's lover. Ana, his wife, has the house and plot of land Esperanza has mortgaged for them in Agua Hedionda, and she has his children—Iker and Indarki, but the other one has him.

What wears him out finally is working for PRT in the campaign for the Presidency of Mexico which returns Salinas de Gortari. He struggles on with the *Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores* (Revolutionary Worker's Party) into the strenuous protest of the electoral fraud. The opposition parties led by Cardenas and Clautier claim more ballots have been counted for Salinas de Gortari than were cast, many marked for them—lost. Ramón's own run to become Mayor of Cuautla, the town where he lives and we have travelled to for fifteen years, has soured him. The aftermath of local politics, the shit he has left in his own soup at home causes heartburn. On the eve of being disappeared, he talks to us over the red smear of chili sauce left on a plate of *chilaquiles*. He speaks about something as mixed up as what he eats with us in the Hotel Cuautla when he visits with his Party comrade and business

partner, Raúl. The tongue-biting swirl of red chili disguises the scrambled egg, stale tortilla and disgusting left-overs fried into it. Late the next night, December 16, 1988, Raúl will call my wife and I on the telephone to find out if Ramón has come to the same place to have supper with us. Ramón has not and he has not arrived at Contepec, where he was to negotiate an order of detergent with a client and talk to a member of the Party. Raúl does not say if comrade and client in Contepec are one and the same. Ramón has not returned for a meeting of the *Trabajadores* local in Cuautla. He never fails to appear, something has gone wrong. Raúl hangs up and proceeds to another call.

We have told Raúl what we think. Ramón has gone up to Mexico City. Ana and Esperanza are there, at the fever clinic with Ramón's youngest, Indarki, who has contracted typhoid from drinking dirty water. Iker is staying with Fernando, Ramón's brother, manager of the Cuautla CONASUPO (a state supermarket) and scout-master, among other things. Iker, Ramón's eldest, adores playing with his cousins' Belén, the toy crib and manger with cast of biblical characters he is forbidden to have at home.

A call comes from Esperanza to Fernando and his wife, Blanca, who have invited us for supper. Esperanza asks if Ramón is in Cuautla, he has not come up to get them in their friend, Fidel's truck. Fernando tells his mother Ramón is not in Cuautla. *Problema*, he says to us and immediately he gets ready to walk us home through the streets of Cuautla and to begin looking. In the yard Fernando looks at where the black Volkswagon Beetle sat. He remembers he has let his brother take it without his sister's permission. Fernando has been garaging it for Mara because she knows he can be trusted not to let Ramón—the great serpent of a persuader and settler of accounts among all seven siblings—get it. Since childhood, Ramón looms over them, responsible for all of them, even Manuel—the eldest. Because Manuel has an impairment, Ramón proxies as eldest and arbiter, but Ramón's and Mara's relations have been bitter ever since Pepe, the youngest brother, has held onto Mara's government-regulated apartment in Mexico City, which was on loan to him for a year while Mara worked as a manager for *El Presidente* hotel in Cancún. Over a year has passed since Mara's return, Ramón believes he cannot get her back what she let go.

Walking us up the street, Fernando decides he must first call on Raúl and that party of his brother's to see if they have learned of his whereabouts or the black Volkswagen Beetle. They have not. Now, Ramón is disappeared in his sister's car and cannot be got back.

At one point in the initial investigation of Ramón's disappearance, Raúl will be identified as Ramón's homosexual lover, but that is false. Raúl's physical relationship with Ramón is as pure as the pine-scented cleaners they develop jointly in their factory. It is set up in a ramschackle disorder of comings and goings, more like a soup kitchen than a cottage industry, in the old refrectory of the Hotel Santa Cecilia. Ramón's father and mother decorated the dining hall and managed the Hotel a quarter of a century ago. The charcoal murals of Quixote and Sancho Panza on its walls paid for the the board and lodging of a poor Mexican artist who drew them. The perverse, smoky shapes of the two figures of fiction make odd witnesses for the fumblings of Ramón and Raúl in manufacturing, but ask Esperanza, Ana—any of the women in the family—they will tell you, Ramón and Raúl share the one androgynous lover. After Ramón is disappeared, it will embrace Ana, his wife, and whirl her round the world, looking for him, crying out after for him. The beast, which has one head on the right, one in the centre and one on the left, will bray from right and left into the motionless mask of scar and bone in the centre, will say that this skull eating and drinking for them, governing their lives unlawfully in the middle has swallowed him up.

Ramón's loves have interested me greatly. I have a sixteen-year-old memory of him saying he is in love with my wife, of attending his wedding two years later in Cuautla, to Ana Santander, a Basque—who will give him two boys. Ramón's and Ana's is a romantic story. They meet in París, Ramón has come there to study Marxism. She has come there from Victoria in the North of Spain and works as a chambermaid to cover her studies. He is handsome, a *Marxista de París*, she is a beautiful Basque. They meet in classes of instruction at the Sorbonne and enter into the holy wedlock of the dialectic. The civil marriage is peformed while the two have a break in their schedule as guides in a tour Ramón has organized from Paris to the Yucatan. The marriage will appease Ramón's family and it will not tie Ana to the town. They are wed in passing through, on a free-wheeling enterprise in a tour of their own making. The Ramón who sits down to his wedding dinner lectures us in dialectics; the Ramón who counts heads on the tour bus, never fails in his gestimates of the rich—how far they will go and how much they will pay. He shares their taste, he wants them to share it with everyone. Which of his means will he use—charm, argument or a gun?

By the time he is disappeared charm and argument are exhausted and Ana is bound to the town, a prisoner of politics she now half-hates which—

outside of family—is the only social life she has. In a fit of weariness at that, after a party row and suffering from a strep throat I hear him croak—*¡Ojalá que me maten!*—I wish they would kill me. Who they are isn't identified, but I see what the real infection is. The reaction to the government, his own party—Ana's bondage to this dirty backwater, us and our disbelief of him—all jam his eyes with rheum.

Here the circle of exhaustions come complete. Sixteen years before, in our living room in Vancouver, I hear me saying — *¡Estoy agotado!*— The two young Latin Americans in the room topple over, laughing at my choice of words. They are Ramón and the poet, Krufu (who in prose is known as José Manuel Gutierrez, the Peruvian novelist, who will win the Blasco Ibañez prize for *Así me dijo Arturo*). I say I am squeezed out to the last drop with this writing that has driven my wife, Angela, mad at me, but not insane enough to stay if I don't shape up.

Gota, the core of *a-gota-do* means drop. I am melodramatic, dirty-thirtied. The last word has dripped from my vein of inspiration, I believe. The word *agotado* also means something sexual. That amuses them the most, the two younger Latin Americans consider me comic, a poet, only playing with puns. They know Angela looks after me, they know I will fill up again, they wish Angela was looking after them, Ramón most of all. He knows Angela is *muy madre*, very much a mother, like his own—Esperanza. When Ramón has his *Ojalá* on his sick bed, it is just within Esperanza's hearing, but neither Esperanza nor his wife can nurse him, nor Angela and I tease him back to optimism. I gauge Ramón's *Ojalá* too deadly, too readily fulfilled. He has started carrying a revolver.

We are leaning over the gingham tablecloths in the Roosevelt Café, arguing, bantering, poo-pooing the platform his party is working on. We are at the Hotel Roosevelt, on Isurgentes, in Mexico City where he meets Angela and I. We have come, visiting the Pachecos to celebrate the publication of José Emilio's SELECTED POEMS which I have done for New Directions in New York. The Pacheco's live a walk away, beyond the old motorcar racecourse round the Hippodromo, in Colonía Condesa. Ramón is up from Cuautla to attend the Party Conference. From his briefcase, Ramón takes out a small revolver, wags it like a tail at us—pretending to be as playful as a puppy still, at the power in the barrel of a gun. He points it, knowing he not only looks for a target, but makes himself one. The gun is the one thing the

government will not tolerate, but he has to have something when they come hunting. Can't we agree with the need, the ambiguity? Dead if you do, dead if you don't.

We are shocked, we want the gun gone, in the briefcase, out. That crack for crack kind of government and opposition debate—we hear enough of its logic replacing a parliament in Northern Ireland, where we come from. Ramón's eyes mist over as he refreshes his memory over the food on the table. He tells us again of his moment of illumination in Victoria, Spain—the part in a demonstration where he comes to grips with a riot policeman and presses his fingers into the policeman's eyes in the brawl. It is the revelation of what he was capable of doing for the cause, but isn't the problem of Spain—the home of his wife—part solved by socialism and the great Gonzalez who Ramón's father-in-law, the working-class Basque, adores?

Ramón talks little now, but in grudging sympathy with the violence of ETA on behalf of the Basque indpendence which is still not won. In Mexico, on the other hand, things are awakening, for the year leading up to the electoral campaign that will elect Salinas de Gortari, all the old options are opened like the vaults of the undead, for the devotees of the revolution to follow its corpse, find fresh blood to coax it to life. In adding his, Ramón will become what one Cardenista calls the first martyr of the new regime.

The missing person and martyr—José Ramón García y Gomez. Who is this serious personage whose name grows longer after his death? The dealmaker, the trader, the trickster, the schemer, the humorist—who has disappeared him?

When I see him, it's always me who stands too serious, matchstick stiff in his *abrazo*. He lets me free of the embrace, always given with a sparkling eye, and I see the killed enthusiasm, the murdered enthusiast. My wooden inhuman hug, a rejection. I would like him to set fire to this wooden effigy of me that always greets him, would lend him the matches.

It is always like this, he is always doing something I resist, but follow with fascination, something human, something to do with gain, a bit of business, a shrewd move. This man isn't mentioned in the descriptions of Amnesty International. Living off his wits in small businesses, he is what I would have been if I had grown up in the family businesses after the Second World War. A young fruiterer with other intellectual aspirations, going to the market in a horse and cart or van, a fish-fryer trying to turn our one chip shop into a shoal of fish and chippies. Who disappeared the Ramón who spent

days trying to prolong the life of the flawed cleaning pad on a commercial floor-polisher with a length of hemp? Was it a rival firm, like Ramón's, that wanted to line up the floors of all the banks in town?

Dead of an endless line-up at the bank and the ballot box for his pay-off, Ramón should have grown old, waiting like the rest of us.

The Bank

On the morning of the day he is disappeared, there we are, Angela and I, in the bank. It is on the corner where the old Hotel Cuautla stood, where they filmed scenes for BUTCH CASSIDY & THE SUNDANCE KID. We line up, choosing from a battery of queues at the wickets. The army arrives to collect its payroll. Two riflemen step inside the door, back to back with two other porch guards covering the outside. They track us from the portals, eyes as piercing and non-committal as Siamese cats. The teller tabulates the payroll twice on a manual adding machine, hitting the keys, the fastest teller in the bank. Our line swells, not lengthening, but thickening as those behind inch up on us. The teller counts the payroll twice, the payroll officer repeats the count. Ramón tugs at my arm. "Let him in." He pushes the young Indian, very white young Indian, but Indian who is the gofer for Ramón's detergent business that he partners with Raúl. The young man washes the bottles, stirs the pine-scented mixes, fills the containers, puts in, takes out, will stand in line for eons to make a withdrawal or deposit for the firm, but Ramón wants to make it easy for him, shorter, with the help of a friend, of two friends. I remember my apprenticeship in lining-up during the rationing after the Second World War. I am loyal to the queueing and my place in it, waiting for hours at the age of six to collect one rabbit at the fishmongers in Belfast to bring it home to my mother. Angela and I are incensed at the threatened overtakings, the queue jumpers. Richeousness rising, patience in the name of patience goes. —No— we insist—the people will go mad. Let him wait with the rest.—

Ramón's hands go up, his shoulders shrug. See—he says— without having to open his mouth. Five hundred years of waiting and still you want to keep a poor Indian back.— We debate our stand for ages. We accept our own indignation, we have earned it.

Fresh today as yesterday, from Ulster and Canada, I toe the Imperialist line. Ramón wants a miracle, to move things forward while appearing to keep in line. How could PRI disappear such a prime candidate for an

approach on their behalf. They are the Institutional Revolutionary Party—the Party that leaps forward on behalf of the people while keeping them line. Both Ramón and it would move the Indian along to their own advantage. Faces on a coin, a mere flip the appearances, the difference between them.

How could he become the first martyr of this regime?

The Cardenista, who makes this pronouncement a year after Ramón's disappearance, says it in the doorway to a set of lawyer's offices in Mexico City. He has taken us downstairs in the elevator, shown us to the great glass doors. We have been brought there by a poet and ex-ambassador, Homero Aridjis, along with his wife, Betty, to the Christmas cocktail party of an organization for the creation of effective opposition in Mexico.

Before the great glass door I try to say what I think.

I cannot put it into Spanish, I don't even try—exhaustion takes its easiest refuge in martyrdom; it is Ramón's last resort, a hellish destination for a holiday.

Here is what I can't understand about what happened to Ramón? How can an imp, whose temperament assign him to tweak the Government's nose, turn into a mono-minded ogre with an inflexible mission.

I have to look at myself again to see him. Again, I stand, matchstick stiff in his *abrazo*, am let go. The imp circles the Ulster Canadian seriousness which is locked inside me like a constipated Luther in his clapboard privy. Again, I wish he would set fire to this wooden effigy of me that always greets him, I lend him the matches and he does set fire to seriousness.

It is his own, that blazing image of Marxism he carries graven in his mind. He has learned its catechism and climbs that bloody, boring cross of dialectical materialism, and is extinguished with it before the U.S.S.R.

The other human half is taken too, his Mexican contradiction which ought to have been assumed by the gods into the governing heaven of PRI I always had a secret bet. PRI would take him live because he was a living embodiment of the Institutional Revolutionary Party. Officially, his talk is all socialist, about state-control; unofficially, instinctively—he is individualist, free enterprising—the opposite of the three-c (small, middle, and large) conservative Canadian, who preaches privatization publicly, and in private calls for all kinds of state guarantees and subsidies.

I can still hear the Consul General of Mexico in Vancouver, Sr. Herrera, attempting to recruit José Emilio Pacheco into Mexico's ambassadorial ranks. An inarticulate poet, on a bi-lingual reading engagement with me for

his book at U.B.C., José Emilio protests his unsuitability to Sr. Herrera, José Emilio says he leans in the wrong direction. —You would want a former youth leader of PAN—says José Emilio. PAN is the party of the right that Clautier leads into the Salinas de Gortari election. —*¡O nó!*—says Sr. Herrera, —¡o nó, *el colibrí siempre entra desde la izquierda!*—the hummingbird always enters from the left. Quetzlcoatl, the god, the hummingbird, the morningstar, always comes into his flower from the left to extract the honey. Ramón is to their taste, as the god prefers, a ferment of policies flowering on its left. Perverted of Ramón, to wag a gun in the face of the Quetzlcoatl, bringer of light, inventor of the opiates—pulque and mescal—guardian, guarantor of what appears dead but is alive, P.R.I., the institutionalized revolution...

Blame it on the loss of tolerance, his gun. No two ways about it, bullets are non-convertible currency, but why was Ramón tortured, as reported, not lectured and let out to live his life. Ramón's life is a parable of lost opportunities—how he strives to gain for himself by winning for the Indian at the bank, or for himself and both parties in a dispute between an Indian brother and a sister over the sale of the land, doled out to their father for service to Zapata in the Revolution. Cuautla, Zapata's garrison town, has many such well-endowed Indians.

We enter into the dilemma in a time of flood. It is when I am working on drafts of Pacheco's SELECTED POEMS and my novel, CAGE, which is set in Tetelcingo, a village north of Cuautla, where the Irish American priest, Patrick Dillon, taught the Tetelcingan Indians to make Taj Mahals for the birds, out of wire. Ramón picks us up at Mexico City in a Peugeot he has got in a good deal for his mother. It is raining amazingly strong, even for the rainy season in July. The River Cuautla has broken many of its bridges, climbed its banks and taken to the road. The sky hangs low and the light peeps through its edges when we drive down the *Cerro* from Mexico D.F. Ramón talks of the airport whence we came and the one where we might arrive on the plain below at Tetelcingo. In the future we might land a minute or two away from thrice-heroic Cuautla, which has been not only the garrison town of Zapata, but H.Q. for Morelos and Hidalgo, strategic for their attacks on the Spanish in nearby Cuernavaca, capital of Morelos, and the other infamous capital, the only capital in the world with the same name as the country. It has sucked up one third of the people in the country, it blows out one half of the effluent in the country. Pollution has made flying into it a hazard. We know, we have just come down out of a brown

cloud, and when we landed there was applause louder than for the finale of an opera at Bellas Artes.

Land here at Tetelcingo will be worth a fortune. Ramón drives us through the toll, off the highway past Oaxtepec, the old Olympic village of 1969 and swimming centre. Ramón drives us over hills of subdivisions, which are called *Lomas de*—the *Heights*, or *Slopes* of this and that. Curling onto undeveloped land, he stops at the fence of a sloping field. The tussocky grass in the field is bent and green from the rains, the sugar cane stands like blades of spear grass in the distance. This slope has a view of all the dark and light in the valley. —*Un dólar— ¿Cómo es la medida de ustedes? Un dólar el pie cuadrado*—a dollar a square foot in your measurements, Ramón says. —*Y tendrá el valor de milliones*—It will be worth millions, he adds.

—Why this land?—

—Because of the airport and development.—

—Who owns it?—

—A brother and a sister. The brother wants to sell it for 50 cents a foot, but I can get the sister a dollar. I have found her a lawyer. The family is like Licha.—

(Licha is a friend of the Garcías, who lives adjacent to the Hotel Santa Cecelia, who—as a young girl—married an aged judge, an Indian, a literate revolutionary who was given land and a seat on the bench. The brother and sister are like Licha in that they rent out the land and do not work it.)

—They want to sell it. I know that's bad, but I can make it better. Both will do well if they sell it at a dollar and settle at fifty cents between them.—

—And how will you do?—

—Fine, if I can manage to buy it.—

Has Ramón brought us here, looking for us to invest through him? Are we thinking we might? Has Ramón hit upon the perfect formula for justice in the pursuit of profit. Will we line up at the bank again in front of the Indians Ramón is helping to get ahead?

Everyone is helping everyone else. It is a time of flood and plenty. Even the President is helping Cuautla. In Amilcingo, a village one short step across the river from Cuautla, Miguel de la Madrid, the President, has his country home. It is down a walled and leafy street from *Los Flamingos*—a condo colony of pink stucco nested in lime trees and bamboo. De la Madrid has brought changes to the town of Cuautla, which Ramón shows us. The *zócalo* has been ornamentally paved over in red tile; the taxis and other traf-

fic shut off. Since they haven't put in drains, Ramón informs us of his civic disaffection, the *zócalo* fills up with water from the partly-repaved *Los Bravos*, which is the main street running south into the town square. On our first evening, we drink *café americano* with Esperanza in a restaurant under the columnaded arcade at the River Cuautla end of the square. We watch the rains start in the evening. The water gathers and begins to race across the square, round the bandstand with the booths and counters built into its base. In the street where the water drains out of the square, the people leap up out of eight inches of water onto a bus.

Sudden survivors from a shipwreck picked up by a coastguard who is screaming for payment, the excited busriders neglect to offer the few pesos of thanks for this government-supported service in the spate of glee and repartee let loose. They glance repeatedly at their their wet legs and the water blots that turn their thin cotton shirts and dresses into sausage skins. Crowded on board, their nipples and breasts rub so close together that their teeth can only chatter or bite.

The water swirling through the square will leave a line of slime and silt at the door of the Morelos' house in the corner of the square. The government have recognized it as a museum and given a grant for its maintenance. Between the silt and subsidies, the liberator who gave his name to the state will not sleep easy.

The same rain and rise of the river has taken out the platform bridge at the end of the walled and leafy lane where the President has his country place. The pink stucco colony of *Los Flamingos* stands in puddles. The President will make more changes, wall the banks of the river, make a concrete esplanade where people can walk from Amilcingo down past Cuautla's social security hospital on the main road to Oaxaca. These changes will come after he looks down into the faces of the folk by the broken bridge, the folk spanning the flood, hand to hand, being swept round against the bank by the force of the flow, the brown swirl laden with dead dogs and cattle. De la Madrid comes down with his team from the capital for refreshment at Amilcingo—as Moztecsuma did with his retinue eons ago, to take the stinking sulphur waters at Agua Hedionda nearby. Scanning from the sky in a helicopter the President might ask of his friend, his aides, his pilot, the presidential guard in the seat beside him—What do they think they are doing?—Faces, thrilled with desperation and disaster below, might ask the same of him.

Whatever it is they are doing, Ramón wants us to go and see the next

morning, for de la Madrid has washed away a lot in Cuautla in a blind flood of reform. He has also given them a regional writer-in-residence, Jose Augustín, and a writer's workshop where they can put pen to their problems and produce parables about the forked provider. In a one-man presidential system, the President is the source of all—deluge and drought.

Ramón's eldest brother, Manuel, has things to show too. He wants us to see where the *Zona Roja*—the red light district—is now, the bushes where they murder and kill in the dark, across the Oaxaca road from the empty sites and streets of an industrial city that is stalled *in utero*. The lovely old *Zona Roja* of the homosexual and heterosexual brothels—night-club small to as big as dance halls, the one hundred and one bordellos behind the convent school of La Paz—is gone, swept under a shrub by de la Madrid. After Ramón takes us to Amilcingo in the morning, Manuel will take my son and I to view the new *Zona Roja* in the Peugeot.

Down the walled and leafy lane we go, past President de la Madrid's weekend retreat. Opposite it, we see three municipal workmen in overalls polishing the bronze bust of Morelos, which is set into a white memorial recess with an inscription. The bust has not been placed there since de la Madrid became President, it has always been there, waiting as if for a conference with the new custodian of the country.

The slowness of the work and the attention make the bust appear enormous. It is either the workmen's laziness or they are slowly working it up, rubbing it like Aladdin's lamp to conjur Morelos into a contfrontation with the distinguished neighbour who will at some time wheel through the dark wooden gates with the iron studs. The work is also so haphazard that, like weak arguments, it has no effect on Morelos. The liberator remains impassive, only the resistance on his bronze face becomes clearer and clearer. Or are the workmen simply distracted by us passers-by walking in droves under the overhang of trees between the walls—as distracted by us as we are by the Volkswagen beetles lining the curbs and the butts of machine guns sticking out the windows? The faces of the bodyguards in the flotilla of Volkswagens, which are parked up and down the road from the presidential gates, have absorbed all the gloss and shadow from the leaves, the metal on the guns. The bodyguard's faces gleam in the morning as if they had been individually polished by the workmen. The presidential guards climb in and out of the cars to chat and light each others cigarettes, or to follow anyone whose face and figure arouses their suspicion, or catches their fancy. Along

the lane, the pavement thins and crumbles as it nears the river. Around the wheels of the last Beetles, there is a layer of silt. Boys and girls are on their hands and knees pressing at every lump in it.

Are they squashing the Volkswagen Bugs in effigy?

It turns out that they are looking for tortoises washed out of the river banks in last night's deluge. The tortoise are pretending to be stones. Out, on the remaining platform of what was the concrete bridge, a team of young men has gathered. The same on the other side. They are debating who will go next to extend the human chain that will clasp the hand of a young man from the Cuautla side. This has been going on all morning. They say two participants have been lost off the end already in such attempts. But who can believe them? They start again, and the third or fourth human link to venture out is swirled round and hurled against the bank. As they swing round they are watched by us and the people passing farther downriver across the roadbridge from Cuautla to Amilcingo. The Cuautla side of this would-be human span reaches farther into the river because the brown body of the flood is rolling and twisting against the curve on the Amilcingo side, aiming to worm its way into the grounds of the presidential retreat. Slime at the door of Morelos, at the door of de la Madrid.

The Cuautla side shouts their superior achievement, holding their chain just short of the fiercest rip in the river, inviting the Amilcingo team to do their bit. There are taunts and yapping, dogs standing on their skinny legs beside their masters, watching the woman with a bucket of *camotes* (yams soaked in corn syrup) collecting coins.

Take them to the most dangerous place and they will try to cross, take them to the safest and they fall asleep, or shuffle and somnambulate across. Risk is their reason for action. What risky inundation will wake these Amilcingan and Cuautlense tribes on some future morning, bring them together to play a dangerous game? Commerce, the NAFTA, when they might drown in a river of our loonies, US dollars or pesos?

I ask Ramón about these horsemen from the towns and villages who play at spanning the impossible with their bodies to reach friends, who are as good as foes, on the other side. I ask Ramón about this orgy of trying to straddle a river, what does it mean?

These horsemen who ride mules and asses and scrawny ponies, if he could only arouse them and saddle their courage! He would dearly love to ride this source of power bareback, brandishing a pistol, whooping, tramp-

ing on the rooves of the bodyguard's Bugs, galloping over their machine guns in a collective glee, up to the presidential gate..

Either that or he would like to sell the government half the land for their new airport which, like many of their plans, will lie next year *in utero*, as fallow as the fields.

In the afternoon, we drive with Manuel in the direction of Izúcar de Matamoros. The sky is glazed with grey. We pass *el panteón*, the cemetery where his father, Manuel Senior—the Seminarian who trained as a chef for the refrectory, but fell in love with Esperanza and went into hotels and catering—lies cooking in the sod near the onion field that Ramón planted for a time during one of his agrarian projects, when the price of onions for export was high. `The land belongs to those who work it'!

Concrete platforms of phantom factories, streets *sans* trucks... The red oxide-coated girders rise like another cemetery on the same side as *el panteón*, the pantheon of the dead, on the right. Manuel points down into the ground on our left. Here lies the grave of Manuel Junior's sexual satisfactions, on a trail twisted through thorn bushes and maguey. A trail like the one John Houston chose for his production of UNDER THE VOLCANO, much of which has been filmed in Yautepec, almost the same distance away as here, on the other side of Cuautla. It is like the trail where the white horse rears up to kick at the Consul's chest—a ghost out of that namesake bottle of scotch, or runaway from the lightning which always arrives in the afternoon, at four in the afternoon. After the wind comes the thunder, and after the wind the lightning bolt. The trail leads back fifty years to the thirties, to a bordello in a Bedlam of darkness, not the bright Bethlehem of whores where Manuel stabled his horse, safely. Even if the women in their belts, buckles and tunics were like Roman legionaries, they took care of themselves and Manuel. Manuel loathes the pimp-protectors who have revived in flocks, like the birds around the *jagueys*—the natural sinks, the water holes on the desert flats between the arroyos here. He dreads the pimp-pickpockets who cull lives in exchange for a sac of sperm. He brays his disaffection with the regime—the President is as God: the origin, the light glistening at the core of the Mexican, political onion. As brood-master, the President ought to shepherd the successful completions of Manuel's urges. The President should chaperone Manuel's visits to *las amazonas en la Zona*, Manuel can love the President no more.

Danger or no danger, Manuel stops the car to get out and make it down

to the trail. My son squeaks. He is old enough to understand, but too young for any practical demonstrations. —Later, Lian—, Manuel says, pronouncing Liam as Lian, like he always does. Then, he repeats his lament—*Muchos robos, muchas dagas, muchas matanzas.*— Every robbery, gleam of a dagger, every murder—every driver's licence in an emptied wallet reflects Manuel's fearful, angry face. He sees the same face on Liam. —*Mejor no irnos ahora. Mas tarde, Lian*—-

Yes, better for us not to go now. We are being shown what de La Madrid has sewn with his out-of-touch purity. The stitches in the skin of the stripped and stabbed appear in the Cuautla paper, for which Ramón is trying to connive an interview with me—*el cronista de Cuautla*—the chronicler of Cuautla, which is what he calls me. —He lets people know about the town,—he says to the reporter.—He knows our ways, he understands us.—

Do I?

In the dark, after we come back with Manuel to Esperanza's house on the corner of Privada de las Palmas, after we have eaten and argued, when we are outside and Ramón is about to drive us home in the Peugeot, a horn sounds. —Wait—he says—I'll introduce you.— Bucket slung to her arm, horn to her mouth, she rounds the Garcia house which, in fact, forms the corner of Privada de las Palmas with its walls. In the private place of palms, Esperanza's street, the Indian woman sets down her bucket with the *camotes* she is announcing on the plaintive horn. She is selling the sweet potato soaked in corn syrup at her brother's price for one square inch of land. Does the money belongs to the thing out of the ground that grew it, or the ground itself, or the owner of that ground. The ground, like God, owns all three steps in the cycle. Everything comes back to it in its own mystery of exchanges and commerce. The ground can grow the golden money of onions or yam forever, but she has rented out two steps of it for years and now, in her anger at her brother, will sell the cycle of the seasons.

She nods shyly and suspiciously, also resentfully. She knows she is introduced by Ramón as a cause, a legal notoriety. She and Ramón discuss the impasse between the two lawyers—her brother's and the one Ramón has found for her. They decry the stupid hatred that costs so much. When she offers me the *camote*, the sickening sweetness is refused. I couldn't eat one square inch of their land, I can't eat the *camote.* The awkwardness of my dislike is crippling my encounter with her, embarrassing Ramón. He never says that he wishes I could swallow it with relish because it is my wooden human

thing—this problem of my taste. I could accept it, but I would never swallow it the way it is done. This is my contradiction. I may dip my pen in syrup, but my reality...?

Like Juan Rolfo, the Mexican who wrote THE PLAIN IN FLAMES—*Llano en llamas*, I am a puritan. Yes, my yam has to be cut and dried. I prefer it hot, but as plain as the desert.

George McWhirter and José Ramón García y Gomez

Squamish

She hears the poet read.
He speaks in foreign words
she doesn't understand. They bubble
around the room hollowed spheres.
She wants English subtitles.
Impatient to wait for translation,
her mind wanders to another place—
a place where the winds meet.
A place that once held no name,
only stories, families,
until Europeans moved in and claimed
ownership. Tried to give it a name.
An English name. Newport.
A sound like spit caught between frigid
tongue and lax lips.
How can you name the air
that screams between cliffs?
The sun, trapped behind blown drapes,
glows into the room where the poet reads.
She sinks down into her sweater,
slips below the sound of his voice
and listens to his eyes.

Mayte Gómez

Infinite Signs
Alberto Kurapel and the Semiotics of Exile

"Las luces se apagan
sólo queda una zona atrás
junto al desfiladero
donde tendré que reventar y maquillarme
maquillarme y reventar
reventar
y
maquillarme"

"Les lumières s'éteignent
derrière, il ne reste que cette zone
près de la falaise
où je devrai crever et me maquiller
me maquiller et crever
crever
et
me maquiller"

"The lights go out
there is only the space in the back
next to the chasm
where I will have to burst and put on my make-up
put make-up on and burst
burst
and
put on make-up"

ALBERTO KURAPEL, *Pasarelas/Passerelles* 1991[1]

The 1987 edition of one of the best known international theatre festivals in Canada, the festival de théâtre des Amériques,[2] brought to Montréal some of the greatest talent in the Americas and the rest of the world in a program which included The Wooster Group, Meredith Monk, Carbone 14, Eduardo Pavlovsky and Denise Stoklos and in which among the many highlights was the Canadian premiere of one of the most acclaimed productions ever to come out of Latin America, Antunez Filho's *Macunaíma*.[3] In the midst of the excitement created by such a powerful

international line-up in a festival which was still young and faithful to its mandate of bringing the best of theatre in the Americas, there was room to celebrate the discovery of a voice which had not come from afar, a voice of the Americas which long before 1987 had already found its home in Québec.

When Alberto Kurapel presented his original production *Off Off Off Ou Sur Le Toit de Pablo Neruda*, *La presse*'s theatre critic Jean Beaunoyer hoped the event would serve to bring Kurapel out of the confinement of his small alternative space in Montréal in order to have him recognized by international critics and audiences. "It is unthinkable"—Beaunoyer argued—"that such a creative force had remained confined, limited and ignored by the 'greatest' in theatre for such a long time" (C8). Unthinkable as it may have been, Alberto Kurapel's "creative force" has been often confined, limited and ignored, even after his debut at the festival de théâtre des Amériques. A highly original and versatile voice in the Quebecois cultural milieu, Kurapel—a Chilean songwriter, poet, playwright, director and actor, founder and artistic director of La Compagnie des Arts Exilio—has lived and worked in Montréal for twenty-one years experiencing a most unusual combination of acclaim and oblivion. Admired and respected by many, ignored by others—including many official granting agencies—Kurapel is a controversial figure who has learnt to live and work in a sweet and sour world with just the right doses of personal and professional struggles and of critical acclaim and international recognition.[4] These circumstances are hardly surprising given the nature of his work, which poses great difficulties to any attempt of classification or cultural decoding.

Kurapel's bilingual (Spanish/French) multi-media performance pieces, a form which he has come to describe as "Latin American Performance of Exile," are highly stylized productions in which he encodes every performative sign—from the use of bilingual texts to that of film and video—with multi-layered meanings, often extremely difficult to decode. His is a style of performance in which scenic signs are foregrounded in order to transmit to audiences not only an intellectual reflection on uprootedness and exile but also the feeling and experience of exile itself. In other words, Latin American Performance of Exile is not meant to offer audiences a vision of exile but to make them become subjects in the re-creation and re-production of exile itself, not just observing it but experiencing it; a proposal which is bound to encounter resistance in a society which has yet to recognize exile as a possibility within its realm of experience.

Alberto Kurapel left his native Chile in 1974, after the military coup-de-etat which in September of the previous year had left the country immersed in political chaos, an event which has become a world-wide symbol for disappearances and torture. A graduate of the Theatre School of the Universidad de Chile, Kurapel combined his work as an actor in theatre, film, radio and television with his other talents as a songwriter, poet and director.

In 1981 Kurapel founded La Compagnie des Arts Exilio in Montréal, with which he has had seven major productions in the last thirteen years, all of them exploring different aspects of exile: *Exilio in pectore extrañamiento* (1983), *Mémoire 85/Olvido 86* (1986), *Off Off Off ou sur le toit de Pablo Neruda* (1986), (the three of which have been published under the general title *3 Performances Teatrales de Alberto Kurapel*), *Prométhée Enchaîné selon Alberto Kurapel* (1988), *Carta de Ajuste ou Nous N'Avons Plus Besoin de Calendrier* (1989) and *Colmenas en la sombra ou l'espoir de l'arrière-garde* (1992). The latter, which premiered in Santiago de Chile and which is Kurapel's only play never produced in Montréal, is the first part of a trilogy under the general title of *America Desvelada ou Mon Nom Sera Toujours Aupres de Vous* which also includes *Círculo en la luna ou Jamais C'est Assez* and *Antes del próximo año ou Autour du Soleil*, both of them still to be produced. In September of 1994, la Compagnie des Arts Exilio will present its latest production, *La bruta interférence.*

During his early years in Montréal, as he saw the many faces of cultural shock in a city whose body and soul were far removed from those of his native Santiago de Chile, Kurapel searched for ways to bring together his knowledge of different artistic forms in order to explore the theme which would become his inspirational force for years to come: exile.

Kurapel defines his work not as theatre **in** exile but **of** exile. Theatre **in** exile, he argues, is any kind of theatre produced by a person forced to flee his/her country, whether or not it deals with exile itself. Theatre **of** exile, however, is a theatre form in search of scenic signs and symbols which are able to express the very experience of exile. Theatre **of** exile seeks to perform the "aesthetics of uprootedness," the "theatricality of exile" (Kurapel, "La encrucijada...," 339), that is, to impregnate every scenic sign with the essence of exile, heightening broken actions and fragmented scenes to give a sense of split consciousness (340).

As the focus of the performance moves away from the text, other factors

come into play. The use of a bilingual text, of an alternative "non-theatrical" space, of masks and costumes, of multiple media, is both heightened and semioticized.

Language is, clearly, one of the first issues which a theatre of exile must contend with, as exile forces the creator to work in two different languages or risk ghettoization. Defying all possible social pressures to choose between Spanish or French in order to achieve membership in a particular "community" by virtue of the language spoken, Kurapel writes and performs *bilingually*. In his performances every text is spoken in Spanish and French without transition.

But bilingualism in exile is much more than the use of two languages. A bilingual statement is the manifestation of a split thought which must be communicated in two different languages because it contains within itself two different realms of experience. Thus bilingualism refers both to the fragmented consciousness of the individual and to the process of "translation" (cultural and linguistic) which must take place for him/her to live in those two realms at once, a "schizophrenia" every exile has come to accept as a "normal" experience.

The environment in which theatre of exile takes place must be a space of "rupture" (341), challenging the notion of "natural" space as we know it. "Exiled from our theatre buildings"—Kurapel says—"we couldn't look for similar spaces in different landscapes" (341). In 1984 Kurapel found a home for his performances in an old warehouse in the heart of the Montréal Harbour, a poorly-kept space in which rehearsals took place in the midst of factory noises and which could only be called "Espace Exilio." In this "non-theatrical" space, performances were meant to recreate the notion of exile, as they became "artificial" acts in which both performers and audiences felt they were in "no man's land" (342). "No man's land" is the space of exile, a state of mind in which an individual belongs neither to the country s/he abandoned nor to the one in which s/he is forced to live. The sculptural installations made out of garbage which function as the only set design express the poverty and marginalization of exile. "No man's land" became much more than a symbol when Kurapel and his actors were forced to leave Espace Exilio. Since then, the company has had no permanent home.

Exile is also symbolized by the use of multiple communication media, which create "a succession of rapid images" (345), reconnecting "disjointed images and circuits" (345). All signs ultimately converge in the actor,

embodiment of exile itself, essence of *transculturation.* Actors *of exile in exile* are performers of rejection, who create *in a state of rejection* and *with rejection,* for they are exiles in a foreign land. Their costumes are "the suits of the unknown, the icons of the foreign" (344).

Because Latin American Performance of Exile seeks to explore the idea of exile not only in its content but also in each of its scenic signs, these signs have to be "foregrounded," that is, the audience's attention has to be brought to them and their theatricality rather than to their signifieds or their dramatic equivalent" (Elam 9). The process of "foregrounding" thus serves for the spectator to take note of the "semiotic *means*" of the performance, becoming aware of the signifiers or signs and their operation (17-18).

Technological media, for instance, foregrounded as semiotic signs, become theatrical in their own right. "Framed" in such a way as to be marked off from the rest of the text (Brecht 203), they create two levels of meaning: the most obvious one is produced through the transmission of images which must then be decoded by the audience; the least obvious but equally efficient is produced by the media themselves as signifiers. In *Off Off Off ou sur le toit de Pablo Neruda,* Mario (Kurapel) is passionately seeking the woman he loves. When he finally finds her, it is only in the cold reproduction of a slide. She appears in a white and black medium close-up frame as her voice is heard in a recording. Mario turns to look at her, walks upstage to face her and talks to her with his back to the audience. The fragmented focus and consciousness of the blocking creates a particular meaning for the audience, as they experience the triangle created by the woman's image, her voice coming from outside and Mario's body. But the fact that the woman's image is reproduced in a slide (as opposed to being played by a live actor) makes the audience experience her as a cold, distant, grey figure which exists only in the diffuse form of a dream, an effect intensified by the fact that her voice comes out of a tape recorder not less cold and impersonal than the slide itself. Even more importantly, the fact that Mario is facing a slide has a further "cinematic" effect, for Mario's presence acts as a liaison between the woman and the audience, in a similar role to that of a camera in a film. Because Mario's gaze comes from the same direction as the audience's and is facing a frame, spectators are encouraged to assume a subjective position in the same way a point-of-view shot would do to the audience of a film.[5] In this way, the audience is not just offered a vision of split consciousness but is brought into the action to experience that rupture from the subject position.

Bilingualism as a scenic sign follows a similar process of "foregrounding," as the linguistic utterance (signifier) is brought to a level of importance unusual for language in this kind of theatre performance, based as it is in action rather than text. Meaning is decoded not only from *what* is said but also from *how* it is said. In the same performance, *Off Off Off,* Mario uses a tape recorder to express a number of ideas which he calls "Consciences" (Conciencias, in Spanish; Consciences in French), reflections on life and art written by European, Latin American and Quebecois intellectuals, from Pier Paolo Passolinni to Jorge Enrique Adoum. Mario records each of his "consciences" in Spanish, concluding all of them with the question: "¿Donde está?" ("Where is she?). When he plays the tape back, the text is heard in French, with the final words being: "Où est-elle?" The French version of the text (the "translation") is heard through the impersonal and cold tape recorder rather than in the personalized and passionate sound of Kurapel's natural voice.

A first level of meaning is created by the content of the "consciences," heightened or "foregrounded," as it were, by the repeated use of the final question, where is she?, which takes the audience back and forth in a journey of intellectual reflection on exile and the concrete experience of a passionate search for completeness with another human being. A further level of meaning is created by the French-language versions of the "consciences" which are, first of all, reproduced in a tape recorder—and therefore perceived as cold, strange and foreign, just as an exile would experience a second language—and, not least importantly, are uttered using Spanish intonation, a tactic which rids the French language of its distinctive personality to turn it into a linguistic hybrid, a symbol for the psychological experience of an exile.

Kurapel also experiments with the actors as semiotic signs, making them undergo a similar process of "foregrounding." In semiotic analysis, actors are often seen as "icons," that is, signifiers which represent their objects mainly by similarity (Elam 21), in a process in which the audience loses the awareness that what they see "is not the thing itself" (Peirce 363). In Kurapel's performances, however, audiences are not encouraged to surrender to this process of identification. Instead, performers hide behind a "mask" of costumes and make-up. The "mask" is stylized and foregrounded to contain the symbol for the character, while performers hide behind it, avoiding identification with the character they represent.

The effect of foregrounding the "masks" and not the performers might seem to be occasionally effaced by the fact that the actors' real names are often revealed in the course of the performance, apparently bringing the audience's attention to the performer's true self and away from the mask or character s/he is embodying. In *Prométhée Enchaîné selon Alberto Kurapel*, Prometeus (Kurapel) calls the stage manager (a character in the play) by the actor's name, screaming: "¡Susana! ¡Suéltame para poder continuar! Susana!" ("Susana! Release me so that I can continue! Susana!) (86). In *Off Off Off*, Kurapel (as Mario) recites a long list of well-known historical figures from Henry Kissinger to King Juan Carlos I of Spain as he speaks of their (sometimes real sometimes fictional) deaths, only to end speaking about his own death: "¡Alberto Kurapel, maldito de exilio, muere asesinado en exilio!" ("Alberto Kurapel, damned by exile, killed by exile!")(104).

Although the revelation of true names makes the audience identify with the performers themselves, it also serves to deepen the alienation gap between the performers and their masks. In Kurapel's performances, characters are often symbols of ideas; Kurapel himself has spoken about his Prometeus as a symbol for the unscrupulous search for power; as well as Mario in *Off Off Off* can be seen as the symbol for the human search for completeness in the midst of uprootedness, all of these ideas symbolizing different aspects of exile. As exiles, as "performers of rejection," actors are portrayed as human beings who have the potential to experience these many different facets of exile. The characters they represent, however, symbolize *one of them*. Having disclosed their true names, these "performers of rejection" can be shown as what they are: people who actively choose to initiate a process of self-exploration by putting on a character, which in turn acts as the symbol for the idea they want to explore. In this case, the audience is not encouraged to identify with the performers as if they were "the thing itself," that is, the idea they represent. Instead, spectators are brought into the performer's role (again, a subject position) and encouraged to undergo the same internal process of characterization, eventually experiencing too the same state of split consciousness, of exile.

The foregrounding of scenic signs ultimately depends on the spectators' ability to decode meaning. Latin American Performance of Exile, however, powerfully challenges the resources audiences normally have to "undercode" what they cannot decode. Keir Elam has explained "undercoding," a

term originally coined by Umberto Eco, as "the formation of rough and approximate norms in order to characterize a phenomenon which is not fully understood" (55). Difficulty arises when the range of cultural codes normally used by spectators to decode dramatic signs turns useless, for the social factors which are thought "to determine historical changes in the function, nature and meaning of particular sets of signs" (Alter 13) will not necessarily include the experience of exile in a place like Québec. This might be the case because, as Jean Alter has argued, often there is a tension between a changing social reality and a "lagging adjustment of ideology" (16)—ideology understood in this case as the manifestations of that social reality—usually resulting in the "obsolence of the society's system of signs" (19). When this is the case, Alter suggests that fiction no longer offers a "mediated. . . picture of a state of affairs acknowledged. . . to be true. . . but a *disguised picture of a state of affairs that has not yet been acknowledged to be true*" (18; emphasis mine). This is certainly the case of the Latin American Performance of Exile, a form whose system of signs creates hitherto unknown meanings which defy both theatrical and cultural decoding. In this way, the function of this kind of performance becomes "to provide a vehicle for communicating information about History that historical discourse has not yet diagnosed" (18). Thus the Latin American Performance of Exile creates codes and ideas which society has not yet recognized, and which are therefore "foreign" to its system of cultural codes, to its ideology.

But it is precisely this sense of "foreignness" that Kurapel seeks to create, emphasizing the reciprocal relationship of estrangement between the performers and the audience. For it is not only that the performers are "exiles" in this land (Québec or Canada). It is also that Québécois and Canadian audiences are "foreign," but not only to the notion of political exile—for that happens simply by virtue of their lack of personal or collective experience—but also "foreign" (indeed exiles) in ways which may remain unknown to them. Thus the difficulty in understanding the meaning produced by the foregrounding of scenic signs is itself the most efficient tool to bring audiences to confront their own personal experience of exile and uprootedness.

Ultimately Kurapel is not speaking only about political exile. As a man who fled his native country to escape death and torture, he might have first understood exile as a political experience. As his exploration evolved, however, he began to understand that exile was as well an existential question. "Exile is a word which means many different things"—says Kurapel—

"something which manages to move what is deeply hidden inside a human being." To him, it does not matter whether or not audiences are able to understand the experience of political exile. "I want to touch every person's unhappiness"—he argues—"the unhappiness produced by social or political oppression, by the experience of a majority being exploited by a minority. . . that is universal. . ." (interview).

The fact that Kurapel perceives his message as "universal" is not in contradiction with the obvious difficulty found in decoding the signs in his performances. He expects his audiences to receive this "universal" message through a dialectical process, one in which meaning, far from being one-sided and readily assimilated, has multiple forms and faces, being able to take audiences into different journeys which are not always intellectually understood. Audiences are not only encouraged to understand exile in their own personal ways but to take with them questions, doubts, recollections of broken statements or images, which they might not be able to process mentally but which will make them be moved by an unknown feeling, which will then take them into an intellectual process, however fragmented or incomplete.

In this postmodern view of experience, the process the artist follows to encode signs and the audience's process of decoding them follow similar patterns. Kurapel offers a fragmented experience of reality, a vision of the human split consciousness which does not "uncover for us any metaphysical or ideological center. . .[to] serve our understanding" (McGlynn 139). The final experience of "understanding" is as non-linear, fragmented and volatile as the performances themselves.

This is so because theatre of exile does not simply offer a theory or a vision of exile; it is a recreation of exile in which both performers and audiences must assume the role of protagonists, the subject position. Audiences are challenged with abstract and fragmented ideas which are meant to take them into the experience of exile, whatever that might mean for them, in a never-ending, infinite range of possibilities.

Exile is, ultimately, all that is left. Latin American Performance of Exile reproduces it for its creators, its critics and its audiences. It brings the experience of personal, artistic and professional uprootedness right into the heart of Montréal's theatre community. This desire, more than a symbolic gesture, is truly an infinite one, best expressed in Kurapel's own poetry, for "el gesto nunca ha sido inútil cuando entrega lo infinito", "a gesture is never useless when it offers the infinite" (*Pasarelas* 60).

NOTES

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1 Original poem from *Pasarelas/Passerelles*, published in Spanish and French. The English translation for this essay is my own. All other translations from French and Spanish into English are also mine, including statements from a personal interview with Alberto Kurapel, conducted in Spanish.

2 Le Festival de théâtre des Ameriques was founded in Montréal in 1985 with the goal of bringing together the diversity of theatre practice from all countries in the Americas. Since then, it has been held every second year, although participation from Latin America has been uneven and there has been a stronger presence of European companies.

3 Macunaima was produced in Sao Paulo (Brazil) in 1978 by the acting company of the Centro de Investigación Teatral del Servìcio Social de Comercio e Industria (Centre for Theatre Research of the Social Service for Commerce and Industry), directed by Antunes Filho. The production was based on the classical work of Brazilian literature of the same name, written by José de Andrade, which dealt with some ever-present conflicts in the Latin American continent, among them the confrontation between indigenous cultures and 20th-century civilization. Filho's production, with an imagery and lyricism hitherto unknown to Brazilian theatre, combined a primitive sensuality and a universal "pathos" which challenged dominant theatre aesthetics and made it a landmark of Latin American theatre. European critics have called it one of the greatest theatre creations of all times.

4 In general, Kurapel's work as a theatre artist, poet and singer has been well received and strongly supported by the written media in Quebec and the rest of Canada. Most Montréal daily newspapers have had favourable reviews of his work, especially during and after Kurapel's debut at the Festival de théâtre des Amériques. Articles by or about Kurapel have also been published in national magazines and journals such as *Canadian Theatre Review, Cinema Canada,* or *The Canadian Composer,* and in international journals of Latin American Theatre such as *Diógenes* or *La Escena Latinoamericana* [The Latin American Stage], published in the United States and Canada respectively.

5 A point-of-view shot is a shot taken with a camera placed approximately where the character's eyes would be, showing what the character would see; usually cut in before or after a shot of the character looking. See Bordwell/Thompson.

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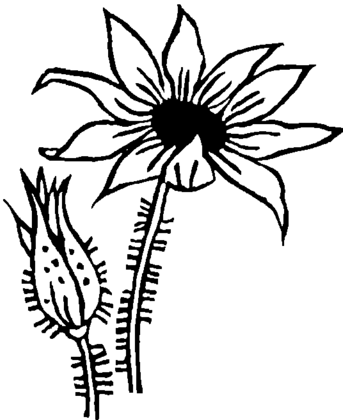

Ted Plantos

Iguana Soup

Ruinas El Rey — Cancun, Mexico, 1990

A tongue flicks at the sky
Iguana soup, the Mayan sun

El Rey's small temples
Ancient ceremonial
centre and settlement

Ages splintered under
lizard droppings

Bearded Gods
everywhere, down
in ruins
with the skies
that topple, crack,
open like iguana eggs
frying on temple platforms
where sacrificial hearts
still beat to the spirits

Lizards squirm
through holes in time
Others in crevices
peek out at the ruins

Pillars waver
like dried grass,
wobble in the eyes

Black circles
ring flattened tails
through the wildflowers

Iguanas crawl,
leathery spines
up temple steps, claws
scratching toward
papaya nirvana
Juices for the soup

Wings overhead
Perhaps the gods are returning

George Woodcock

Empires of Blood and Sun

Travel writing differs from most other kinds of literature in the sense that it inevitably undergoes a metamorphosis, if it survives publication, in the minds of both writer and reader. All genres undergo changes in their relationship with the general culture; the misunderstood verse of the past can become the revered ancestral poetry of the present, as happened with Gerard Manley Hopkins or, even more, with William Blake. But I am talking in the case of travel writing not so much about changing tastes, as about the special potentiality of all travel writing—as of much autobiography—to become history within a generation.

When we read a new travel book, we are concerned largely with its subjective and impressionistic virtues: how well it can catch (through the writer's ear and eye and nose) an ephemeral pattern of human relations played out against a much more slowly changing backcloth of the natural and the manmade environment. True, the best travel books contain a good deal of reflection about the culture they portray; but this is not why most people read them. They read them for the assurance that there are other possibilities of life from their own. By offering us alternatives, they subtly reconcile us to our situations.

The life cycle of a travel book begins with its recognition as a true or at least agreeable rendering of the present seen through the eyes of a perceptive wanderer. After a period of popularity, it will often recede into temporary twilight because it is seen as merely out of date. Who read *Beyond the Mexique Bay* by the time Aldous Huxley died? But there is a time, rather

more than a generation after its first appearance, when a travel book can take on a new and more complex role. We no longer see it merely as an immediate representation of a strange but actual world other than our own. What was written as reportage, more or less sophisticated, becomes a presentation of life in a certain time and place, neither of which is ours.

The best of the old travel books, like Doughty's *Arabia Deserta* and Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle*, like D.H. Lawrence's *Mornings in Mexico* and Waterton's *Wanderings*, like Bates's *Naturalist on the Amazon* and Madame Calderon de la Barca's *Life in Mexico*, live as immediate experience in our minds and at the same time contribute to our awareness of the past. For myself, I know that I would not have fully understood whole periods of history if it had not been for the narratives of great travellers from Herodotus and Xenophon onwards, through whom I understood the complexities of that distant present which became the past.

I am interested in the life history of the travel book for personal as well as objective reasons. My own first travel book was written about British Columbia following on travels there in 1950, and was published in 1952. What I saw was still a frontier society battered by depression and war which seemed to live almost on sufferance of nature in a splendid environment. Shortly after the book was published, the era of Social Credit materialized, and all changed utterly. The province of decaying farms and decrepit towns and derelict roads receded into the past on a wave of post-war prosperity. *Ravens and Prophets* has been republished in 1993, more than forty years afterwards, and offers what even to me is a strange vision of a departed age. It has, in other words, become a document, a part of history, and whatever immediate charm it may have had in the 1950s is now revived because of that documentary role.

When I was invited to reflect on Canadian perceptions of Latin America, I realized that I could not write anything that involved immediate perception. I went to Mexico and Peru in the 1950s and never went back, largely because the experiences were so intense that I feared they could never be repeated, but I did write two books which at the time acquired considerable prestige. One, *To the City of the Dead* (1957), was about Mexico, and the other, *Incas and Other Men* (1959), about Peru. As journals of immediate experience, stiffened by historic awareness, I have always regarded *Incas and Other Men* as my best travel book (and one of the best of all my books) and *To the City of the Dead* as not far behind it.

Clearly much of the detail in these books is obsolete and became so soon after I published them. The growth of Mexico City and Lima over the past four decades had been enormous; urbanism is a problem in such countries that was only beginning to become evident in the middle 1950s. On the other hand, when I read contemporary Canadian writers on Latin America, I realise that in many striking ways life today is not much different in its social structure—a structure based on the equivalence of race and class distinctions—from what I saw when I travelled there in the 1950s.

I must say in background that I reached both Mexico and Peru in times of rural distress when the fissures in the social order were strongly emphasized. The winter of 1954 I lived through on the Mexican plateau was meagre because of the lack of rain in preceding months, and the Peruvian Sierra in the winter of 1956 was undergoing a severe drought in which the peasants killed off almost all their animals and survived only because of large American shipments of grain. These conditions emphasized in both countries the vast gap between the educated and prosperous creole minority, mainly of Spanish descent, and the large, illiterate and poverty-stricken Indian majority, with the mestizos, or cholos as they are called in Peru, occupying the precarious middle ground.

That was forty years ago, and I wrote of it as I saw it, but what I saw then was not in its essentials very much different from what Ronald Wright saw in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s and recorded in *Cut Stones and Crossroads* and *Time Among the Maya.* Perhaps the principal difference between his and my books as presentations of a time and place condensed into a writer's experience, is that in his notable history of racial relations in the Americas, *Stolen Continents,* he perhaps pays too much attention to Mexican nationalist propaganda in assuming that the country has in practice rather than in theory recognized the Indian strain of its heritage. At the moment when I write, in the beginning of 1994, I can hear the voices on the radio telling me that the native people of Chiapas have risen in armed rebellion to demand the restoration of their land rights.

When I went to Mexico in 1954, the country was fairly stable. The last of a series of revolutionary struggles was over, and the insurrectionary tradition had congealed into an authoritarian and corruptly bureaucratic regime under the oxymoronically named Party of Revolutionary Institutions. Tribute was paid to the old guerilla chiefs like

Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa, and while I was in the country a celebration actually took place in honour of the old anarchist leader Ricardo Flores Magon at which the reigning President, Ruiz Cortines, declared that the anarchism of Flores Magon showed the direction in which Mexican society must go. In fact the distinguishing feature of Mexican public life had become *la Mordida*, which literally means "the bite," but in practice means graft in all its many kinds, from policemen exacting three pesos for an invented traffic offence and the customs officer accepting ten pesos to leave one's bags unexamined all the way up to the Presidents of that era. By a combination of brute force and corruption the Party controlled every level of authority from the village mayors to the government itself. It ruled over a realm of vast inequalities where freedoms were broad so long as one did not challenge the established order. I knew one man, the brother of a famous archaeologist, who had been thirty-five times behind bars as the spokesman of a minority that based its notions on peasant discontent. He clinched his argument about peasant grievances by telling me that one of his prison mates had been a man who had been jailed fifty-five times—always for stealing potatoes.

I imagine that even in the 1950s the tourists who frequented the Pacific Coast resorts like Acapulco, and the expensive hotels in Mexico City, were able to preserve without difficulty their unawareness of, their indifference to the plight of Mexican peasants and workers, and of Indians in particular. Some of the world's great tourist goals, like Kashmir and the Nile Valley, have also been places of dramatic poverty. I found this was also the case in Mexico among the Bohemian self-exiles, the writers and painters who had sunk into spectacular inactivity and whose anthem could have been George Orwell's favourite ditty, "Come where the booze is cheaper." They lived in cosy little expatriate societies, ignored by the authorities except when some special scandal resulted in a whole company of them being shipped to the border, and for many of them their criadas (housemaids) and the staffs of the local cantinas were their only contact with working Mexicans.

There was indeed a great difference between those who went to Mexico to enjoy and escape, and those who went with some intent of understanding the life that went on behind the splendid architectural facades. If one was sensitive enough to the social atmosphere, a single day in Mexico City, even in the 1950s, was enough to reveal to one the vast differences in the ways Mexicans lived.

They had been there almost from the Conquest, noted in the seventeenth

century by the renegade Dominican, Thomas Gage, in his book, *The English American, or a New Survey of the West Indies* (1648), which was probably the best English account of New Spain a century after the conquest. Gage was particularly impressed with Mexico City and its wide and opulent thoroughfares:

> The streets of Christendom must not compare with those in breadth and cleanness, but especially in the riches of the shops which do adorn them... It is a byword that in Mexico there are four things fair, that is to say, the women, the apparel, the horses and the streets. But to this I may add the beauty of some of the coaches of the gentry, which do excel in cost the beauty of some of the Courts of Madrid and other parts of Christendom; for there they spare no silver, nor gold nor precious stones nor the best silks of China to enrich them. And to the gallantry of the horses the pride of some add the cost of bridles and shoes of silver.

But the grandees who gained their wealth by exploiting the dispossessed Indians on their haciendas and in their mines, moved even then through a metropolis teeming with destitute beggars. Even in the nineteenth century when Madame Calderon was there, these leperos, as they were called, and their willingness to riot, made them an important element, even politically, in the life of the capital. Nowhere, except perhaps in Calcutta, has the channel between what Disraeli called the Two Nations been so deeply scooped.

Reaching Mexico City in the 1950s, I summed up to myself what I saw as a fatally divided city in metaphorical terms, likening the nation of the rich and powerful to Mexico City sitting on the bed of the vanished lake around which preColumbian Tenochtitlan had flourished. The buildings floated precariously in the quaking earth, some of the finest of them sinking downward year by year. In the same way, underlying the ostentatious glitter of the lives of the wealthy lay the great quagmire of Mexican poverty, which was largely identical with Indian poverty. On the edges of the city the poor people who had fled from an unkind countryside lived in appalling shack suburbs, made mostly of cane, cardboard, and flattened gasoline cans and perched on a marsh of ordure, and many of them filtered into the centre to live by menial work and begging.

Begging was in fact well organized by competent survivalists. There was one cafe where we went of an evening on La Reforma from which we could see a typical operation carried on from the porch of a local church, where a fat Indian woman sat quietly knitting. She herself never begged, but she had a little corps of children, none of them, I guessed, more than ten years old. She would survey the people taking the air on the pavements, and would

send the children out to make their wailing appeals—a boy if it were a group of women, a girl if it were a group of men, and sometimes a boy and a girl for a mixed party. I noticed that she never despatched one of her little attendants to waylay a man on his own. She had evidently realised that before one's friends it is harder to maintain a callous, ungiving attitude than if one is unaccompanied. I admired her simple professionalism and that of other beggar "mothers" whom I later observed elsewhere in Mexico. A gulf of poverty lay between the beggar and the begged, yet they were united in the mutual dependence of Mexico's Two Nations.

The personal effect I experienced in confronting Mexico and its ways of life was a powerful sense of detachment from my own past, from my customary preoccupations, even from my normal sense of values. There were times when this disturbing feeling became so strong that I felt as if my personality had emptied itself, as if the past life I began to remember so faintly had been that of another person, as if I were living in a kind of bizarre childhood. I had intended when we settled for a while in a small city of the plateau to start some serious writing in a place where I thought I could live peacefully, and I hoped to gain stimulus from the strangeness of the place. In fact I found it hard to write anything; the most I could do was to keep a few rough notes of observations and impressions. Only when I had got well away from Mexico and had let time pass was I able to turn the experience into my book, *To The City of the Dead.* I encountered at least two other writers who were similarly afflicted. It was, indeed, a kind of cultural shock so severe that it inoculated me against a repetition, so that, no matter how dreadful the conditions I encountered in my later travels in other lands might be, I never fell into the same kind of mental and creative paralysis.

What one perceived in those relatively distant days, and what some people perceive even today on reaching Mexico, was a kind of ruthless stripping down of life to the bones of existence. I have never seen a country or a society revealed in such elemental terms, and yet with such a complexity of negation.

It begins with the landscape of the plateau, the endless hills eroded to arid skeletons where the forests were felled by long dead silver smelters, the plains desiccated into sandy wastes, the lakes dried into alkali flats, the vegetable forms almost geometrical in their starkness, so that the very flow of sap seemed dried into a tortured angularity. A Mexican scene can be so severe that it takes on the neutral quality of an abstraction, and in such a

setting one has a curious double feeling of having no organic link with one's immediate surroundings, yet of being isolated by them from any more sympathetic world. Physically, it is a country without compromise, made for the direct confrontation of man and death, across a waste of challenging indifference.

This challenge is repeated in the existence of human and animal beings, and in the combination of an extraordinary preoccupation with death and a stubborn ability to survive on the edge of living. In Mexico the cruelty of the Spanish Conquest, with its introduction of the Inquisition to help subdue the Indians and their beliefs, replaced the harsh realm of the Aztecs with its obsession with death and its cults of human sacrifice. The Day of the Dead, with its sugar skulls and chocolate skeletons for sale in the markets and its graveside feasts for the spirits of the departed, is still one of the most important Mexican festivals, and the churches most frequented by Indians and the poorer mestizos are filled with gruesomely realistic images of the crucifixion and the flogging of Christ, with painted gore flowing everywhere. In real life there are manifestations like the flagellant cults which survived even during the days when the Church was banned in Mexico. Death is so familiar and ambivalent that the funerals of children in their white coffins are occasions to be celebrated with laughter and merry music, for are not these infants innocent and therefore privileged to be received as Angelitos into the realms of death? The other dead somehow continue and return on their feast day to join the feasts of the living. In such ways the presence and inevitability of death is kept in the minds of Mexicans, which may in the end be more healthy than our own efforts to exorcise and ignore it, but which creates a strain of morbidity in Mexican life that cannot fail to impress the aware outsider.

Yet all the time one perceives the spark of consciousness burning clearly yet meagrely in an existence so stripped of what we have come to regard as necessities that it assumes almost the character of a defiance of nature. In such a life nothing is wasted; everything is used down to the last thread and the last rusted edge. In such a life, also, nothing is concealed; everything that is negative and malignant is forced upon one's attention with merciless candour, as it was fatally on the attention of Lowry's Consul in *Under the Volcano*. Poverty, hunger, disease, inequality, injustice, violence, untimely death—all are there, and none can be ignored. The Mexicans can be fatalistic about such matters, as the Indians among them often are; they may

profit from them, as the more powerful and crafty have always done in this unhappy country; they may rebel in some terrible eruption of violence. But they rarely avoid their circumstances, rarely try—unlike so many people in our more sophisticated culture—to anaesthetize them out of their consciousness. They accept the existential tragedy of which circumstances daily remind them, and in doing so are often able to gain a great satisfaction from the rest of life; the man who is aware of being in the midst of death can begin to live his life more fully. Significantly, Mexicans may often kill each other, but they rarely kill themselves.

But while the Mexican is habituated from childhood to recognize and to deal in his own way with the necessities of his environment, the visitor from Western Europe or the United States, where social circumstances have cushioned most people from the outcropping of raw existence, could hardly avoid a sense of disturbance when, forty years ago as I did, he reached Mexico. It was partly a moral horror, and partly a feeling of guilt at the relative prosperity of one's own life in comparison with the privation one saw around one. After a while such feelings lose their acuteness, as longtime residents of Mexico have assured me, not because one ever accepts the vast injustice of Mexican life, but because on occasions like rural fiestas, one realizes that, even for the poor, life is not so abysmally dejected as one had imagined.

Perhaps the one virtue of Mexican society, as Ronald Wright has pointed out, is that it retains a degree of mobility and malleability not evident in other Central American states (with the exception of Costa Rica). What has been developing there since liberation from Spanish rule is a largely mestizo society, created by a second wave of revolution in the early twentieth century—in which a great deal of pre-Columbian mythology has been cosmetically incorporated. The last Aztec leader, Cuauhtemoc, who tried to reverse the Conquest after the death of Moctezuma, has been made a hero while Cortes has receded into the twilight of rejection. More than a century ago a Zapotec Indian, Benito Juarez, became the president of Mexico and cold-bloodedly insisted on the execution of that hapless and idealistic Hapsburg princeling, Maximilian, who had tried to reimpose a European rule on the country. But in spite of the attempt to create a synthetic Mexican, the divisions have remained, and—particularly in the South—the Indian traditions have persisted, so that in a Oaxacan market in the 1940s one could distinguish the different tribal groupings, Zapotec and Mixtec and half a dozen

others, by their distinct garb as well as their distinct languages. Culture set them apart from their fellow Mexicans, the Latinos and some of the Mestizos, but so did poverty, as the present uprising among the Mayan peasants of Chiapas has shown. There is still no really homogenous culture in Mexico while the poor and aboriginal are neglected and exploited. Forty years ago I found no reason to respond to the concept of a united Mexico, and I have not changed my mind as I have watched the country in the intervening decades.

In Peru, which I reached two years later, in 1956, there was never even a myth of homogeneity. The control of the country was in the hands of people of European descent (creoles or mistis), and the land was divided dramatically by natural barriers that coincided with social divisions. The social divisions had been fairly rigidly fixed during the eighteenth century, when the cholos or people of mixed blood appeared as a separate group that ceased to marry with the Indians, while the mistis ceased to marry with the cholos, who became a class of craftsmen and merchants.

The three great regions of Peru in the mid-century largely corresponded with the social divisions. The desert strip of the coastline, with its large cities like Lima and Trujillo, was dominated by the creoles and largely inhabited by the cholos who formed its working class. There, in Lima, the tomb of the conqueror Pizarro was still honoured, while in Mexico it was uncertain where the bones of Cortes had actually found refuge. The Altiplano, the high mountain region of the Andes, was essentially the land of the Indians, divided mainly between two great traditions, whose who spoke some form of Quechua, the tongue of the Incas, and those who spoke Aymara, the language of the founders of the pre-Inca Tiahuanuco civilization that once flourished around Lake Titicaca. The whole mountain chain from Ecuador formed the core of the great Inca Empire, which extended also to the coast and into the Amazonian jungles to the east, and its traditions, of light and sun worship, had never included a death cult like that of the Aztecs; the conquered were turned into subjects rather than sacrificial corpses. Even as conquerors, the Incas were as non-violent as they could be; the great kingdom of Chimu, whose capital of Chan Chan covered eight square miles in the north of Peru, was not reduced by military means but by cutting the aqueducts that provided it with water; the Incas were great manipulators of the politics of need. If they made the kingdom of Chimu

die of thirst, they kept their own people from hunger by taking a proportion of the crops in the name of the Inca and the sun god, and storing it in granaries from which it would be released when shortage threatened. There is no mention of famine in the traditions of Inca rule.

It was an intrusive but largely benevolent despotism and its heritages remained on the Peruvian Altiplano; the Inca terraces that scored the high mountainsides were still in many places cultivated by twentieth century peasants; the ancient stone roads straggled over the ranges from Quito southwards, and still one saw them being travelled by llama trains; the cyclopean Incas' walls in Cuzco and other places still stood against the earthquakes while the Spanish structures that used them as foundations crumbled away.

Perhaps most important as a living heritage of Inca society were the ayllus, landsharing communes that in many Andean villages had survived the Conquest, and had evaded the grip of the creole and foreign hacendados and mine owners who employed many of the Indians of the Altiplano in conditions not much different from those of colonial slavery and considerably more oppressive than anything that existed under the Incas. The ayllus lay in areas that the big land-grabbers did not find it profitable to appropriate, the rougher mountain areas higher in the ranges, but there were still five thousand of them left in Peru, and the people would come down in their thousands to the great weekly markets—of which the one at Huancayo was the greatest—carrying their produce, which consisted largely of potatoes in an amazing variety of colours, on the backs of llamas or on their own backs. They wore traditional dress in which large belling skirts, worn one on top of the other, characterized the garb of the women. A woman with ten skirts was not considered over-dressed, and they would lift their skirts at the front as they walked, to show the variety of colours, which seemed like a spectrum of sun-worshippers' tints, the range from vermilion through orange to clear yellows being that preferred.

I was never aware of the Two Nations of Peru so strongly as when we sat at lunch in the hotel in Huancayo and these brightly dressed but never too well-washed people would be standing several ranks deep before the big windows watching the mistis eat. Racial distinctions were sharp on the high plateau. The working and enduring majority were the Indians. The cholos ran the stalls in the markets, their women wearing big panama hats with wide black ribbons. And the state was represented by the Guardia Civil, tall,

strutting men with their scabbarded sabres clattering on the cobblestones who once held me as a suspect journalist for a short time in one of their guardhouses, and who were clearly of a different race from the small Indians whom they chivvied off the buses to poke in their bundles, and whom they sometimes shot when there was trouble on the haciendas. In those days the Guardia were the main peril of the highways. As yet, in 1956, there were none of the resistance movements like Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) or the Tupac Amaru guerillas who in recent years have given a special danger to travel in Peru which we did not experience.

Beyond the Altiplano, spilling down the slopes towards the Amazon valley, was the Montaña, not mountains so much as the parallel courses of forested tributaries flowing down to join the great river. Here, climate and disease marked out the social boundaries. The Indians of the Altiplano feared the malarial lands, and preferred if they could not survive on their highlands, to filter down into the great shack settlements of the coast. The Montaña was inhabited by Indians of many small tribes, speaking many languages, whom the Incas had not subdued, with an exploitative superstructure of white speculators which included many Americans, Germans, and even English, running plantations and mines. Again, there was a deceptive feeling of harmony, as there was at that time in the neighbouring jungles of Brazil. Neither Indian resistance nor the great plague of rapacious miners had appeared. Neither neo-Maoist teachings nor Kaleshnikoff guns had yet reached into Peru, as they had not reached into Mexico where the few bandits at that time were mostly machete-and-pistol men. In Peru, the southernmost of the two great imperial lands of pre-Columbian America, the great creole rebellions of the early nineteenth century had left a society in which a native-born class of European and mostly Spanish descent took the place of the hated rulers exported from Spain (the *Gachupines* or spur-wearers). The creoles used the Indians as cannon fodder in their wars against the Spaniards and with each other, and never gave them a share in the power or the spoils. Occasionally a cholo might rise through the ranks and stage a military coup, as General Odria did in Peru (he had just stepped down as dictator when I got there in 1956), but never an Indian. The structure was solid and found its allies among the foreign speculators who flocked to Peru from the mid-nineteenth century, taking over the mines and building the railways to serve then, astonishing railways like that built by Honest Henry Meiggs which clambers sixteen thousand feet from Lima into

the copper-mining country of La Oraya and Cerre de Pasco. The break with the pre-Columbian past was complete, except that the Indians stayed to be exploited; the care for the land and its resources and for the life of the people that was central to Inca concepts of rule had ended. Land and people were now only to be exploited, and that situation continued in the 1950s. I doubt if, several decades and regimes later, it has come to an end. And what I have been saying of Peru serves for the Central American republics where to this day corrupt creole governments use Indian conscripts to oppress the Indian peasants. Nowhere is Disraeli's vision more fully achieved.

Mexican society was not, as I remember it, as closed as that I encountered in Peru. True, we had to bribe our way in and out of the country, but we never encountered the kind of obtrusive oppressive presence the Guardia Civil had been on the roads and in the towns of the Peruvian Altiplano.

Where Mexico differed from Peru was in the fact that the revolutions of the twentieth century had left not a rigid social system, but an all-powerful institutional system. The attempts to take over the Mexican past have perhaps been spurious, but the Party of Revolutionary Institutions—with its sinister paradox of a name—was a reality in the 1950s as it is today, however much it negated the aims and ideals of genuine peasant revolutionaries like Emiliano Zapata (in whose name rebels still act in the 1990s!)

In this sense the Mexican system has been predominantly political rather than social, based on the "Institutions" of the Party's title, rather than a traditional social system of caste and race, as in Peru. The Party of Revolutionary Institutions is "a house with many mansions"—its left, centre, and right wings having in common mainly the will to keep power by any means, corrupt or otherwise. On every level *la Mordida* bites deep. A parody of democracy occurs within the party; it is possible for an Indian village mayor to become a parliamentarian and eventually a power broker, though it rarely happens. It is this offer of opportunity, as much as crude ballot stuffing, which explains why in elections the PRI always wins, following the quasi-monarchical tradition by which every President handpicks his successor. In this perverted sense, Mexico when I saw it four decades ago, was a highly imperfect democracy, whereas Peru was an imperfect autocracy. They have not changed.

Jorge Etcheverry

Strategy

Everybody believed it—at least I did—that a pebble had worked itself into the heel of my left shoe; it was the kind of shoe that had a hollow heel. They would think that for sure if they heard the clicking as I walked along, thinking, immersed in the resolution of a problem. But they are mistaken. It is the radio the others have implanted. The harder I try to examine the shoe, to insert my index finger (that is very thin) through the little hole, the more certain it is that there is no stone or anything else. This exacerbates the problem that I have more and more with the phone. It rings even in the middle of the night. It doesn't wake me up, since I don't sleep much, but it forces me to get out of bed, where I lie, letting my thoughts twine and untwine. I run towards the living room, pick up the receiver and they hang up. I also get real calls from time to time: wrong numbers. But since I know how they are, I do the unexpected: I get dressed if I'm naked and I go out to the most unexpected place. They might tell each other that it's business as usual, that they're free to devote themselves to their endeavours, with me safe at home. But no, I'm unpredictable. Lots of people have told me that before. I always surprise others forcing them to rework the careful machinations with which they discretely surround me, trying to avoid my finding out. But in the long run, they fail. Just like that. I have the advantages of the terrorist and the guerrilla: surprise, unpredictability.

Translated by Jorge Etcheverry and Sharon Khan

Ben-Zion Shek

in collaboration with

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Maria Chapdelaine in Iberoamerica

Hernández Catá's Translation of the French-Canadian Classic

Canada's links with Cuba did not start with the beginning, some twenty years ago, of the flood of tourists to the Caribbean island to escape the harsh winter. They go back at least to the early 18th Century, when Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville et d'Ardillères, a French soldier and adventurer who has been immortalized in Quebec's topography, died,"likely of yellow fever," on July 9, 1706, "probably at Havana, Cuba." At the time, d'Iberville was engaged in "the plundering of the English colony of Nevis in the West Indies", his last campaign in that period of "desperate colonial competition and savage border wars." (Marsh, II 857)

Two lesser-known connections are that of the Irish-Canadian revolutionary William Albert Charles Ryan (b. ca. 1841) and the celebrated railroad-builder, Sir William Van Horne. Van Horne, after retirement as president of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1899, was hired to direct thhe building of the Camagüey to Santiago rail link in Cuba. (Marsh, III 1890). Ryan was executed in Santiago de Cuba in 1873 following the failure of the "Virginius" expedition. Spanish colonial authorities seized the ship carrying independence fighters, including Ryan, and summarily shot them. (A portrait of Ryan hangs in Havana's Castillo de la Real Fuerza (Captain-General's Museum). He has been painted more recently by the Cuban-born Canadian artist Harry Tanner, and will soon be the subject of a film by Peter Blow.)

But perhaps the least known of all the nexuses between Canada and Cuba

is the fact that the first Spanish translation of Louis Hémon's French-Canadian classic, *Maria Chapdelaine*, was done by a major Cuban novelist, short-story writer and essayist, Alfonso Hernández Catá. In this article, we shall speculate on the reasons why Catá undertook to translate Hémon's best-seller—for there is little documentation thereon—and examine his translation strategies, their strengths and weaknesses.

The son of a high-ranking Spanish military officer and a Cuban mother, Catá was born in Aldeadávila de la Ribera, Salamanca province, Spain, on June 24, 1885, and died in an air crash in Rio de Janeiro on November 8, 1940, after a distinguished double career as a diplomat and writer. (Curiously, Louis Hémon, born five years before Catá, died in a train accident near Chapleau, Ontario, at 33, on July 8, 1913.)

Catá's mother was already pregnant with him when the family moved briefly to Spain. But they soon returned to Santiago de Cuba, where he studied in elementary and secondary schools until he was 14, although he did not complete his baccalaureate. Now a widow, his mother sent him to a college for orphans of military personnel in Toledo, Spain. Not finding the military life to his liking, he ran away to Madrid, then returned to Havana in 1905. Thus ended his formal schooling, although he was described as having "una vasta erudición de autodidacta" and being a man of "una cultura extraordinaria" [a broad self-taught erudition; extraordinarily cultured] (Gutiérrez 13) with a considerable knowledge of languages, literature, music, psychology, psychiatry and history.

During his Madrid sojourn, he is said to have lived a "Bohemian life" not unlike that of Hémon in London, England (1902-1911), but also frequented the literary *tertulias* at which leading writers of the time read from their works. He also worked as proofreader and translator, all the while writing in his spare time. On his return to Cuba, he began a career as a journalist and editor in some of the leading dailies of the Cuban capital. Four years later he entered the diplomatic service, becoming Cuban consul in Le Havre (1908-1911). Later he served in Birmingham as consul (1911-1913) then returned to Spain, where he worked in various consulates before moving to the embassy in Madrid (1918-1925). He became Cuban ambassador in 1933. He was also a diplomat in Portugal, Panama, Chile and, finally, Brazil, where he died. The best of his production of novels, short-story collections, plays, essays, *zarzuelas*—all published in Spain—were considered to be of

equal or superior quality to that of his Spanish contemporaries, and his works were translated into French, English, German, Russian, Dutch, Portuguese, Italian and Lithuanian.

Catá's translation of Hémon's best-known work appeared in Madrid in 1923 under the title *María Chapdelaine. Novela Canadiense*, with a foreword by the Cuban's brother-in-law, Spanish writer Alberto Insúa, dated October 1922. The subtitle is very close to the original *Récit du Canada français* of the first Canadian edition (J.-A. LeFebvre, Montréal, 1916), and the first French editions (1916, Paris, Librairie Delgrave; 1921 ff., Paris, Grasset). It is likely that Catá read the first Grasset edition in 1921, but he may have perused the earlier serialized version that first brought *Maria Chapdelaine* to the attention of French readers (*Le Temps*, January 27-February 1914). Catá's translation appeared only two years after the standard Grasset edition. The first translations, in English, appeared that same year—1921. There were German and Danish translations the following year; and in 1923, in addition to Catá's rendering, there were editions in Dutch, Czech, Polish, and Swedish. (Lemire 670). The only other translation to appear in Spanish is one by Tomás Garcés, published in Barcelona (Libreria Catálonia) in 1925 (Lemire 671).

At least one other edition of Catá's translation appeared under the simple title, *María Chapdelaine*, by Editiciones Selectas, Santiago, Chile, in 1924, with a foreword by Norberto Pinilla (in which, incidentally, there are a number of errors of fact, the Chapdelaines being called "campesinos franceses [...] residentes en Canadá" who suffer from "[l]a nostalgia de la tierra nativa " [French peasants living in Canada who long for their native land.] (I). It is this edition that was most readily available to us and that will serve here as our main point of reference. Page references to it will be preceded by the letter C, followed by the page number. The French-language edition that will be our point of comparison is that of Boréal Express, Montreal, 1980, which, for the first time, ressurrected the author's original manuscript version, with minor corrections. It will be designated by B, followed by the page number.

What might have motivated Catá to translate Hémon's novel? It is difficult to say, given the paucity of documentary sources. When this question was recently put to her, Catá's granddaughter, Dr. Uva de Aragón Clavijo—who successfully defended her dissertation at the University of Miami in 1991 ("Modernismo y modernidad en la obra de Alfonso Hernández Catá")—answered: "According to my mother, Uva Marquez Sterling (her maiden name was Uva Hernández Catá), her father translated *Maria*

Chapdelaine because he felt [*sic*] in love with the novel. She recalls that as a youngster she was given a copy of the book to read, and that her father often praised Hémon's work and was very proud of having translated it. As far as she knows, he did it out of his own initiative and not at the request of any publisher." (Aragón Clavijo) After suggesting that Catá "probably read the novel when it appeared in *Le Temps*," she added: "I wonder if he ever met Louis Hémon."

We have no way of knowing whether or not he did. Nor do we have any direct documentation regarding Catá's undertaking of the translation. So we are forced into conjecture. Critical evaluations of Catá's work by Alberto Gutiérrez de La Solana and Félix Lizaso suggest some possible explanations.

Gutiérrez de La Solana (*passim.*) points out that Catá belonged both to Spain and to Cuba (just as Hémon's name is forever linked to his native France *and* French Canada). While Hémon pursued studies (in law and Oriental languages) considerably beyond those undertaken by the mostly self-taught Catá, these were done at the behest of his family, and his primary journalistic and writing interests were far removed from these fields. His love of adventure and travel and his independence make him a kindred spirit to Catá. Two of Catá's maternal great-uncles fought in Cuba's forces during the independence war of 1895, thus adding a possible "nationalist" element in his background. Members of Hémon's family, too, displayed Breton nationalist tendencies and a progressive outlook. His father Félix was described as a "[f]ervent régionaliste, défenseur de la langue bretonne qu'il maniait avec aisance," a "[r]épublicain convaincu, ennemi de Napoléon III [qui] nourissait une grande admiration pour Victor Hugo avec qui il échangea plusieurs lettres durant l'exil de Jersey." (Trébaol 170). Hémon's uncle and namesake, Louis, too, fought for the teaching of the Breton language in the schools and was described as "un ardent défenseur de la culture." (Thomas 181) Thus, these elements in Hémon's family history may account for his interest in, and exploitation of, French-Canadian nationalism in *Maria Chapdelaine*. It is possible that Catá's family history may have made *him* receptive to these aspects of that novel.

La Solana also notes Catá's great admiration for Guy de Maupassant and naturalism. While there are few elements of naturalism in *Maria Chapdelaine*, numerous critics (most recently Frank Rannou) have pointed to its linguistic, social, economic and ethnographic realism—which, however, cannot be discussed without noting at the same time the mystical and

idealistic elements of Hémon's work that are manifest especially in the novel's dénouement. Still, it may be that Catá was attracted to the naturalistic-realistic features of the novel he chose to translate.

Another element of affinity seems to be the interest of both authors in moral conflicts and psychological analysis. Chilean writer Eduardo Barrios has said that Catá seemed to derive pleasure from his characters' suffering and that the main aesthetic pleasure of the author is that of pain (quoted in Gutiérrez 23). For La Solana, Catá's main protagonists were "el dolor, el sufrimiento y la muerte" [pain, suffering and death] (78). He also said that for Catá it was essential to probe the internal universe of the characters, and to analyse complex beings, his protagonists always findings themselves at a "crucijada espiritual" [spiritual crossroads] (Gutiérrez 213) Félix Lizaso, too, stressed this latter characteristic. He noted that for Catá external action was less important than his characters' inner lives. He gauged their motivations and doubts, and weighed the alternatives with which they were confronted. Lizaso also saw in Catá an essayist who chose the novel form to express his ideas (Lizaso 54-57). He says that the Cuban writer "ha sabido intercalar en sus libros une serie de teorias, de opiniones, de juicios [...] que dan a la obra una dimensión, un alcante mucho mas allá de la narración y de la trama" [knew how to inject into his books a series of theories, opinions, judgements...which give them a dimension and a breath that goes considerably beyond the narration and the plot] (Lizaso 57). Lizaso also points to the symbiotic relationship between Catá and his creative writing, calling him a "hombre lleno de opiniones y de enfoques, muchas veces de paradojas" [a man full of opinions, special angles and often paradoxes] (Lizaso 56) The critic compares Catá to Oscar Wilde "en esa actitud paradojal en que el alarde de inteligencia redunda en no saberse a ciencia cierta cual sea el partido del autor, capaz de defender con igual fervor y acento convincente tesis contradictarias" [in that paradoxical attitude in which the display of intelligence redounds in not knowing for sure what what choice the author is making, since he is able to defend with equal fervour and convincing emphasis positions that contradict each other] (Lizaso 56).

Clearly, Louis Hémon had similar concerns in *Maria Chapdelaine.* His presentation of the conflict besetting the Chapdelaine parents (e.g. the nostalgic dream of Laura for the settled communities versus Samuel's inexplicable penchant for constantly moving northward to begin the isolated pioneering process anew) and especially Maria's dilemma before her three

(and eventually, two) marriage choices, each having an adversarial ideological as well as emotional dimension, parallel Catá's novelistic preoccupations.

Regarding Catá's strategies of translation, one can say, in summary, that they are successful, even though Catá took certain liberties with the source text and failed to render particularisms and shades of meaning that escaped him. The dominant liberty taken is that of embellishing the original text, of poeticizing a work that already contained substantial lyrical elements, of making overly explicit the original subtleties and suggestiveness through rhetoricization and borrowed cultural/literary references. While Hémon's poetic touches are, on the whole, sober ones (this adjective certainly is not adequate to describe the mystical explosion of the three voices in the dénouement), Catá, at that point in his writing still under the influence of Latin American *modernismo*, couldn't resist adding qualifiers and images to the existing text. (This movement, launched by Rubén Darío in 1888 and dominant until around 1905, aimed at smashing the ethics and aesthetics of Romanticism. It stressed the complex of sensations, line, colour and a taste for the exotic, and renewed poetic language in the direction of art for art's sake. [Portuondo 626ff. and 819ff.] There are, too, a number of cuts in the translation, as well as inaccuracies (some the result of the errors in the Grasset edition), and a refusal or inability to find an equivalent for the particularisms of French-Canadian speech with its anglicisms and "archaïsmes."

Catá's additions and embellishments are part of his strategy of poeticizing of Hémon's text. One can say, in general, that while some of Catá's additions alter the text here and there, they do not effect radical transformations in it. Often Catá used these additions to make clearer to the Spanish-language reader what Hémon assumed his French-language readers could readily understand. The horizon of expectation of the original readers and that of the Hispanic ones was quite distinct. At the same time, some of the additions are unnecessary, and only encumber the text.

Near the beginning of the novel, Hémon described *en acte* the joviality of the male churchgoers, generalizing that "ces hommes appartenaient à une race pétrie d'invincible allégresse et que rien ne peut empêcher de rire." (B 2) Catá's rendering is a good example of his tendency to poeticize: "una raza [...] duena del supremo tesor de la risa" [a race...mistress of the supreme treasure of laughter]. (C 9) (There is, at the same time, a slight weakening

of a poetic element of the original in the use of "dotada" [endowed] for "pétrie"—kneaded).

A little further on, during Maria and her father's signal meeting with François Paradis, Hémon had simply put in Samuel's mouth the following greeting: "François Paradis! s'exclama le père Chapdelaine" (B 8), which, expanded, becomes for Catá: "¡ Francisco Paradis!—exclamo cual si viese un aparecido el tío Chapdelaine "[.. exclaimed old man Chapdelaine, as if he had seen a ghost]. This inappropriate image adds nothing to the original.

Maria, after meeting François again and experiencing a surge of love, sees her surroundings in a new way. Even the dark, menacing forest seems different: "tout ce qui l'entourait ce matin-là lui parut soudain adouci, illuminé par un réconfort, par quelque chose de précieux et de bon qu'elle pouvait maintenant attendre. Le printemps qui arrivait peut-être...ou bien encore l'approche d'une autre raison de joie qui venait vers elle sans laisser deviner son nom." (B 9-10) The vagueness of the warm feeling that pervades her being, expressed succinctly, becomes overly elaborated and poeticized under Catá's pen: "una luz tibia, confortadora, que se infiltraba en el alma con resplandores verdes para iluminar de esperanza los días venideros [...] Tal vez proviniese ese optimismo de la proximidad de la primavera o de algún misterioso florecimiento sin forma y sin nombre que avanzase de lo desconocido hacia ella, y cuyo influjo empezase ya a iluminar su alma" [a warm, comforting light, which infiltrated her soul with green radiance and illuminated with hope the days to come. Perhaps this optimism resulted from the proximity of spring or from some mysterious, nameless, shapeless flowering that moved towards her from the unknown, and whose power already began to brighten her soul]. (C 15)

Similarly, Azalma Larouche's invitation to Samuel and Maria to spend an extra night with her ("C'est bien juste que Maria ait encore un peu de plaisir avant que vous ne l'emmeniez là-haut dans le bois," B 11), is, this time, exaggerated negatively by Catá: "Justo es que María se divierte un poco antes de ir a enterrarse en su destierro del bosque" [It's only right that Maria enjoy herself a little before going to bury herself in exile in the woods]. (C 16)

Catá idealized the heroine of Hémon's novel to the point of making her a near replica of her sacred namesake. Here are some examples. François's thoughts about Maria are marked by sensuality and desire, but also by tenderness: "une grande faim d'elle lui venait et en même temps un attendrissement émerveillé, parce qu'il avait vécu presque toute sa vie rien

qu'avec d'autres hommes, durement..." (B 69-70). For Catá, this becomes: "Francisco sentia verdadera hambre de toda ella. Y al mismo tiempo, sentía también un respeto casi religioso y una especie de maravillada ternura al pensar que aquella flor viva había nacido y se había abierto entre hombres, duramente" [François felt a real desire for all of her. At the same time, he experienced an almost religious respect and a kind of marvellous tenderness at the thought that this living flower had been born and had blossomed in the tough environment of men...]. (C 55) Here Catá not only added a religious element and the metaphor of the flower but also shifted the reference to François's life among rough men to Maria herself.

Catá added sacred qualifiers to Hémon's prose on other occasions as well. "Toute sa forte jeunesse, sa patience et sa simplicité sont venues aboutir à cela: à ce jaillissement d'espoir et de désir" (B 81) becomes: "Toda su fuerza juvenil, su paciencia y su inmaculada sencillez, se encienden para hacer mas alta la magnífica llama de su deseo" [All of her youthful strength, her patience and her immaculate artlessness caught fire and made the magnificent call of her desire speak louder...]. (C 62) Here, again, there is embellishment and expansion, but also the gratuitous contrast created by the added "inmaculada," and "su deseo."

An example of rhetoricization and *literaturiza* occurs in the two renderings of the transformation of the face of the dead Laura, as seen through the eyes of Samuel and her children. Hémon noted the calm, refined paleness of Laura's face which, for her loved ones, resulted from "une métamorphose auguste et qui marquait combien la mort l'avait déjà élevée au-dessus d'eux." (B 182) For Catá, this becomes "aquella metamórfosis augusta que mostraba cuan por cima de ellos habia puesto la Parca, con solo tocarla, a su elegida" [that august metamorphosis that showed how high above them Fate, simply by touching her, had placed its chosen one]. (C 126)

Catá's deletions also affect Hémon's work. Early in the novel, young men outside the church of the opening scene discuss Maria's attributes, but one of them regrets her family's isolation: "C'est de valeur qu'elle reste si loin d'ici, dans le bois." (B 6) Catá dropped altogether the significant phrase, "dans le bois", one of the major ones of the novel, which (repeated with variations) underlines Hémon's stress on the physical ambience of the action. Immediately afterwards, too, Catá dropped (C 13) the italicized words in the phrase "cette belle fille *presque inaccessible*" (our emphasis, B 7), a possibly polysemic expression and a key attribute of the characterization

of Maria. Catá also cuts phrases that reveal the psychology of the character, keeping only Maria's simple affirmative "Sí" (C 31), when she learns of François's impending visit, but letting go the significant "et bénit l'ombre qui cachait son visage." (B 32)

Catá weakened the judgmental phrase "sans subtilité ni doute" (B 27), used by Hémon to describe the *habitants*' adoration of the God of the Scriptures (and possibly his own religious questioning), by his translation: "adoran sin que la menor sombra empañe su fe!" [adore without the slightest shadow cast over their faith]. (C 28)

Describing autumn, Hémon noted that "sur le sol canadien il est plus mélancolique et plus émouvant qu'ailleurs" (B 84-85), but Catá dropped the "mélancolique" (C 63) of that phrase which the original had used twice within the same sentence, obviously for emphasis.

More serious than the above deletions, and even the embellishments dealt with earlier, is the decision of the translator not to keep the anglicisms that traverse the text, or to find a colloquial Spanish or Cuban rendering for the *canadianismes* and *archaïsmes* of the source text. As is well known, Hémon's novel preserved many anglicisms in the speech of his characters as an integral part of his strategy of realism, and also to add "exoticism" for the French reader. Unchanged English words like "boss," "foreman," "track," "rough," "cash," and "gangs" abound; other words of English origin are integrated into French syntax by the author: "clairer" (to clear), "badrant" (worrisome), "toffe" (perseveres), "mouver" (to move). Canadianisms, especially, are everywhere: "icitte," "toé," "ben," "boucane," "Anglâs," "Canayennes," "écureux," "siau," "mon Dou," "batêche." (A number of these are also found in dialects in France. Rivard, *passim.*) All the particularisms mentioned above are translated by Catá in standard Spanish, never dialectally or colloquially. The last two of the Canadianisms listed are euphemistic renderings of religious terms, and there is evidently no exact counterpart to this phenomenon in Castillian, whereas it is a frequent socio-cultural sign in French Canada. ("Batêche," a euphemism for "baptême," is rendered by "Caramba," C 115, meaning "I'll be dashed!") Neither, it seems, is there an equivalent for Hémon's use in dialogue of "son père" and "sa mère" in direct address, another characteristic of French-Canadian popular speech found also in the Lyon region and in Switzerland. (Rivard 632). It should be noted, too, that Catá didn't translate some of these words (like "siau"), or mistranslated others, like "amitié" (meaning love—another euphemism, C

90; *cf.* B 125) and "raquette," usually omitted in the translation but rendered wrongly as "pertiga" (rod, staff, C 103). This was probably due to his ignorance of the specificity of these words in the given context.

Critics who have commented on Hernández Catá's attitude to literary language have stressed his general avoidance of particularisms in his own writing. According to de La Solana, Catá aimed at giving a universal quality to his own fiction, and thus dealt with "los problemas del hombre absoluto, prescindiendo de regi6n o país determinados" [the problems of man in the absolute sense, dispensing with a specific region or country]. (Gutiérrez 29) To do this, he chose "un castellano culto [...] neutro por su falta de matices particulares de una regi6n, de una clase o de un pueblo qui permita identificarlo con él de un país, una localidad o un grupo social o étnico determinado" [a cultivated and neutral Spanish without regional, class or national particularisms that would make it possible to identify it with that of a country, a region or a distinct social or ethnic group]. (Gutiérrez 137) While de La Solana notes Catá's use of selected *Cubanismos* in some stories set in his homeland, these evidently were infrequent and are described as "toques sabiamente mezclados dentro de su prosa castellana [...]" [touches skillfully melded into his Spanish prose]. (Guttiérrez 183) One *Cubanismo* is found in Catá's translation, namely "manigua," meaning a piece of land covered with weeds and scrub. (Ortiz 345) It is used (C 39) to render the state of the uncleared land in the original: "Un beau morceau de terre qui a été plein de bois et de chicots et de racines." (B 46) Also, in one of his additions, there is a clear Cuban source. Hémon had written, describing the inhuman effort needed to clear the land, "Il faut avoir besogné durement de l'aube à la nuit avec son dos et ses membres" (B 27), which Catá transformed thus: "es necesario haber trabajado con pertinaz rudeza, como un negro" [one had to have worked with persistent harshness, like a Negro, i.e. a slave] (C 28), obviously "contextualizing" the passage for his Cuban readers.

Catá, unlike Hémon in his original typescript, used "salvaje" (savage, i.e. Amerindian,) without quotation marks in the narrative passages, following the Grasset edition. But his sympathy for the aboriginal people was equal to Hémon's, judging by the following additions to the original. Hémon had written: "ceux des 'sauvages' qui avaient fui les missionnaires et les marchands" (B 66), and Catá: "los salvajes que huyen perdiendo palmo a palmo su tierra ante la intransigencia de los misioneros y la codicia de los comerciantes" [the savages who flee, losing their land inch by inch to the

intransigence of the missionaries and the greed of the merchants]. (C 52)

Also, while occasionally weakening Hémon's recurrent "le pays de Québec" by using terms such as "región" "comarca" [territory], and "provincia" (equivalents of which the original text also used, showing an ambiguity as to Quebec's status that has a contemporary ring), Catá mostly used "país" and "tierra" (country, land), and even "corrected" Hémon's own watering down of his usual term in the essential words of the "third voice," that of Quebec. The original read: "Car en vérité, tout ce qui fait l'âme de la province" (B 197). It became: "Todo cuanto constituía el alma del país" [Everything that made up the soul of the country...]. (C 137)

It is clear that Catá's strategy of not attempting to render the specificity of French-Canadian language diverged from Hémon's. Only once does Catá use an original French-Canadian term, and italicize it: *godendard*, a two-handled saw. (C 65) (*cf.* Rivard 371). Yet Catá is generally quite faithful to the texture of the original, as in the close proximity of his translation of the key "voices" section of the dénouement to Hémon's original (with, however, certain of the same types of distortions—embellishments, cuts, changes—that were seen in the translation as a whole).

This sampling of comparisons between Catá's rendering and the original *Maria Chapdelaine* points to major problems of literary translation not only in Catá's day but in our own as well, such as how to treat colloquialisms and contextualized expressions, and how to preserve the spirit and style of the source text. Our conclusion is that Catá did an honourable job, with qualifications. By so doing, he established a unique literary link between Cuba and Canada.

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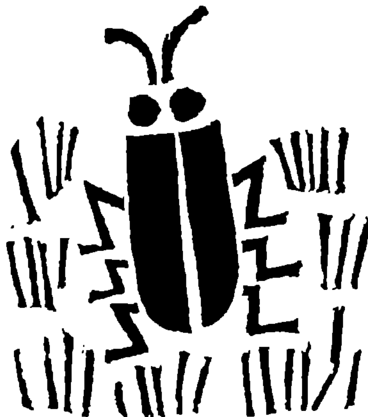

Part III, Chapter XIV
Wherin fresh from defeat in a recent skirmish the ingenious gentleman sallies forth to Skydome in quest of a victory

Determined to notch a win, Q ties his nag
Rozinzante to a concrete tree in front of
McDonald's, hitches up his britches
and hikes up eight flights of stairs to
Gate 2. Sending his faithful squire Sancho
to stand in the hot dog line, he collapses
in Section 113-C to catch his breath.

The home team has just had yet another
runner picked off second, the potential
tying tally. Q watches in disgust
as the three and four hitters whiff
in succession, fortifies himself
with soft pretzels and diet coke.

Whereupon seven innings later,
his patience worn thin, the valiant
knight-errant, undoer of wrongs
and injustices, hops the fence
and charges down the first-base
line with leveled lance. " O scum
of the earth! O miserable
spiteful bullies! Stop
in the name of common decency,"
he shrieks, tripping over the bag.

He hoists himself up and falls upon
the opposing shortstop with a hail
of blows, rendering him incapable of
fielding nary a pop-up nor grounder.
Drawing a rusty sword, he slashes the
pitcher's shins and blinds the umpire.

This accomplished, Q waits in the on-
deck circle as our DH smacks a hanging
curve between the disabled shortstop's
legs, then urges him along the basepaths
with the tip of a tilted lance, easily
stretching a double into a triple.
The crippled pitcher and blind ump
combine to walk the bases full.

Bottom of the ninth, one down,
the three and four hitters due up.
Q, with an inkling of what will happen
next, slips out the nearest exit, headed
in the general direction of Queen's Quay
in search of a gift for the lovely
Dulcinea. The stout Sancho lopes
along behind on his ass, guarding
the saddlebags full of caramel corn,
ignoring the chorus of boos
trailing in their wake.

Pierre Rajotte

De Québec à Mexico, de Faucher de Saint-Maurice:

Une tentative de voyage vers soi

Le récit de voyage est une pratique littéraire particulièrement prisée au XIXe siècle. Déjà dans la première moitié du siècle, il n'est guère en France d'écrivains qui n'aient consacré une partie de leur œuvre à leurs souvenirs de voyages, à une époque en particulier où la mode romantique confère aux voyages en Orient, en Italie, en Espagne et en Normandie une actualité renouvelée. Au Canada, le genre connaît également une grande vogue, en particulier dans les périodiques et les revues littéraires de la seconde moitié du siècle qui lui accordent une place de choix.[1] Certes, la révolution des transports et la transformation des modes de communication entre les divers points du globe ne sont pas étrangères à cet engouement. Mais plus encore peut-être, le succès du genre coïncide avec la suspicion qu'on entretient à l'égard des œuvres issues du seul travail de l'imagination. Le récit de voyage apparaît comme le substitut tout désigné aux écrits romanesques, d'autant plus que, sans cesser d'être un ouvrage documentaire, il peut également être lu comme une œuvre divertissante.

Bien que les voyageurs canadiens soient surtout attirés par l'Europe,[2] et notamment par la France, l'Italie et l'Angleterre, certains n'hésitent pas à chercher l'aventure en dehors des sentiers battus. C'est le cas entre autres de Narcisse-Henri-Édouard Faucher de Saint-Maurice qui se rend au Mexique en 1864 pour servir comme officier dans l'armée du corps expéditionnaire français de l'empereur Maximilien. Blessé, fait prisonnier puis échangé, il revient finalement au pays en 1866. Il publie alors le récit de ses aventures dans la *Revue canadienne* (1866-1867) sous le titre "De Québec à Mexico",

récit qu'il réédite en deux volumes en 1874, sous le titre *De Québec à Mexico. Souvenirs de voyage, de garnison, de combat et de bivouac*, puis en 1875 [édition abrégée], 1878, 1880 et 1881, sous le titre *Deux ans au Mexique.* Le premier tome relate surtout son voyage, avec une visite à New York suivie de la découverte du Mexique. Le second tome est davantage consacré aux opérations militaires, et notamment au siège et à la chute d'Oajaca auxquels il a participé.

Ce récit, estime John Hare (1964, 29), "est un des mieux réussis et des plus intéressants de toute la littérature de voyage au Canada français." Pour peu qu'on le compare aux récits de voyage de l'époque, force est d'admettre en effet qu'il jouit d'un statut particulier, ne serait-ce que pour l'itinéraire dont il traite. Faucher de Saint-Maurice est l'un des premiers Canadiens à proposer sa vision du Mexique. Ce n'est que vers la fin du siècle que d'autres voyageurs canadiens comme Honoré Beaugrand (1888), Paul-Marc Sauvalle (1891), l'abbé J.-A. Lippé (1907), l'abbé A. Poulin (1921) et Yolande DuSault (1954) livreront à leur tour leur représentation de ce pays.

Mais surtout, le récit de voyage de Faucher de Saint-Maurice a ceci de particulier qu'il n'est pas entrepris dans un but scientifique, informatif, ou même touristique, mais correspond plutôt à un projet de nature "autobiographique." On y trouve en effet un décalage entre deux types de discours, l'un proche de l'autobiographie, et plus précisément des mémoires et des "souvenirs," l'autre obéissant à la démarche du "reporter" qui observe et décrit le Mexique pour informer le lecteur. La présente étude vise à démontrer le caractère hybride de ces "souvenirs de voyage, de garnison, de combat et de bivouac," et plus précisément à montrer comment l'auteur privilégie le premier de ces discours, malgré quelques excursions sur le deuxième, comment sa visée autobiographique éclipse sa représentation de la réalité extérieure, c'est-à-dire du Mexique.

La manifestation du moi

Depuis quelques années, plusieurs chercheurs ont noté "l'occultation du moi" qui caractérise la littérature québécoise du XIXe siècle. La personnalité de l'auteur ne peut se permettre le luxe de s'exhiber: elle est tout entière réclamée par l'urgence de la situation collective. La société canadienne-française du XIXe siècle, estime Sylvain Simard (1981, 261), "où l'existence individuelle et collective est toujours en péril, n'est pas le lieu idéal pour l'apparition d'un genre littéraire nourri d'introspection." Comme le men-

tionne Pierre Hébert (1988, 72), "l'épisode conservateur qui marque tout le 19e siècle à partir de 1840, où le nous désigne la "première référence," ne pouvait fournir un terrain propice à l'éclosion de valeurs individuelles." Dans ce contexte, précise-t-il (1988, 38), la plupart des journaux intimes de l'époque "sont des textes de voyage, de guerre, ou de journaux spirituels où le moi, comme tel, n'a que bien peu de place. Et dans le cas où la personnalité pourrait s'afficher, elle est d'emblée intégrée dans la collectivité." Tout se passe comme si les événements concernent à peine leur auteur. Cette résignation court tout au long de plusieurs récits de voyageurs, résignation qui les place en quelque sorte en dehors de leur propre histoire. Comme le note Françoise Van Roey-Roux (1983, 14), "le Québécois [est] plus enclin à raconter ses faits et gestes — sinon ceux des autres — qu'à dévoiler sa vie personnelle. Même lorsqu'il se propose de raconter sa propre enfance, ce ne sont pas nécessairement des confidences personnelles qu'il livre au lecteur, mais plutôt des souvenirs collectifs."

Sans être totalement exempt de cette occultation de la conscience individuelle, le récit de Faucher de Saint-Maurice doit néanmoins être considéré à part dans la mesure où il pousse l'introspection à un niveau qui n'a eu que peu d'exemples jusqu'alors. Il en émane en effet une écriture autobiographique dégagée des voiles de la fiction, sans qu'elle soit toutefois présentée encore comme autonome. En fait, cette écriture est fondée sur un double alibi: parler de soi, de ses exploits militaires dispense de faire un voyage en règle (connaître le pays); mais parler de soi en voyage ou au bivouac dispense de répondre à la question autobiographique fondamentale: pourquoi parler de soi ? Détour obligé qui balise ainsi un "voyage vers soi," pour reprendre l'expression de Jean-Claude Berchet (1983, 92).

Cette approche singulière, qui caractérise presque tout l'œuvre de Faucher de Saint-Maurice, n'a d'ailleurs pas échappé à ses contemporains qui semblent unanimes à le considérer comme un original: il "fut toujours une physionomie à part dans notre monde: un original, un être exceptionnel," dira Alfred D. Decelles (1906, 276). Selon L.-O. David (1911, 127), "cet homme d'esprit avait une manie, la manie des grandeurs, la passion des honneurs, des décorations et un désir insatiable de se singulariser, qui lui a fait perdre une partie de sa vie à mystifier ses contemporains." "Le caractère de M. Faucher de Saint-Maurice, note pour sa part Louis-H. Taché (1886, 5-6), se lit dans ses œuvres comme dans un livre ouvert. Prenez un de ses volumes, au hasard: peu importe lequel ! Vous y trouverez l'auteur dans ce qu'il

a de plus intime, vous suivrez les impressions de son esprit et de son cœur, vous pourrez décrire son caractère comme si vous le connaissiez de longtemps."

Compte tenu d'un contexte peu propice à l'expression du moi, Faucher de Saint-Maurice ne peut y parvenir qu'à certaines conditions. Pour éviter d'être taxé d'égotisme, il se constitue d'une part en personnage digne d'intérêt, en l'occurrence en militaire, et opte d'autre part pour la pratique plus libre du récit de voyage.

Le personnage du militaire et du flâneur

Pour s'adonner, même de façon détournée, à une écriture autobiographique, il importe de pouvoir se réclamer d'un statut qui en légitime l'entreprise. "La valeur autobiographique du nom propre, estime Jean-Claude Berchet (1983, 97), se mesure aussi à son pouvoir de référence, efficace dans la mesure où il désigne un sujet intéressant." C'est dire qu'il a fallu que Faucher de Saint-Maurice devienne un militaire, mieux encore un officier, qu'il ait participé au siège d'Oajaca, ait été blessé et fait prisonnier, pour se croire autorisé à parler de lui. Les grands risques et les dangers auxquels il s'est exposé lui permettent de se constituer en personnage de récit. Dès lors, le sens de son récit réside non seulement dans un objet (l'expédition du Mexique), mais dans le sujet (le militaire) qui s'est trouvé sur les lieux mêmes où se sont déroulés les événements. Acteur et témoin, ce sujet peut à tout moment franchir la frontière qui sépare la fiction de la réalité et participer à l'Histoire, ou à tout le moins à un événement réel digne de la transposition romanesque. Ainsi, à plusieurs reprises Faucher de Saint-Maurice rapporte des anecdotes dont il garantit l'authenticité en offrant comme caution sa propre présence, sa participation ou celle d'un tiers, c'est-à-dire d'un narrateur au second degré. Qu'il s'agisse de la résistance héroïque d'une "poignée de braves" (1874, I: 81) contre l'ennemi dix fois plus nombreux, du combat de Camerone, cette "tragédie glorieuse qui s'était jouée, il y avait à peine quelques mois [...], dans l'hacienda qui faisait face à notre buvette" (1874, I: 80), mais plus encore de la description de la campagne et du siège d'Oajaca, ces anecdotes importantes et autonomes concourent toutes à un même objectif: poser le réel comme présence/absence, le théâtraliser, mettre en évidence le courage héroïque des militaires, et du même coup de Faucher de Saint-Maurice.

Cette perspective laisse entrevoir une problématique bien ancienne: celle

de la gloire. Les allusions de Faucher de Saint-Maurice à cet égard ne manquent pas. Au début de son récit par exemple, il rappelle les circonstances qui sont à l'origine de son voyage. Au cours de ses études de droit, la lecture de *l'Histoire du Canada* de François-Xavier Garneau lui révèle que "nos ancêtres ne manquaient pas d'une certaine gloire militaire" (1874, I: 10). Il ne songe dès lors qu'à épouser la carrière des armes. Tel un héros épique, il aperçoit en rêve le présage de sa destinée: "Toute la nuit, je ne rêvai qu'Iroquois, Hurons, amiral Phipps, frères Latour, etc. tout cela entremêlé d'un tourbillon de tomahawks, de chevelures scalpées et de milles gentillesses *ejusdem farinæ*" (1874, I: 10). Trois années plus tard, avide de gloire militaire et d'aventures, il s'enrôle dans l'armée du corps expéditionnaire français au service de l'empereur Maximilien.

Participant de l'Histoire, Faucher de Saint-Maurice aime se constituer en archiviste de lui-même, ou à disséminer les mentions de son propre nom: "Mon nom figurait parmi ceux des nouveaux chevaliers de l'ordre de la Guadeloupe, entre le major Tydgart, tué quelques jours après au combat de Tacambaro, et le lieutenant Carrère, de la compagnie franche du bataillon où j'étais stagiaire"(1874, II: 117). Malgré les apparences, ces mentions ne sont pas gratuites, ou de pure vanité, mais un moyen très simple de prendre possession du texte, de le signer le plus souvent possible. À quelques reprises par exemple, il reproduit des lettres ou des listes officielles dans lesquelles apparaît son nom, notamment une lettre de la Commission Scientifique, Littéraire et Artistique du Mexique (1874, I: 121-122), une "lettre de service" (1874, I: 188), une lettre du Ministère de la guerre (1874, II: 66), la liste des officiers "placés sous les ordres du commandant d'Ornano dans le village de San Félipe de l'Argua" (1874, II: 32-33), la liste des officiers à bord du transport l'Allier (1874, II: 153), un "certificat d'origine de blessure" (1874, II: 47-48), ou encore un brevet de "Chevalier de l'ordre de la Guadeloupe" que lui remet en mains propres l'Empereur Maximilien (la *Revue canadienne*, 4 (1867): 481-483). Ces diverses transcriptions témoignent de la valeur autobiographique du nom propre. Au-delà du simple effet de réel (attestations qui prouvent ses blessures, sa participation au siège d'Oajaca, sa présence à bord d'un navire, etc.), elles assignent ici au moi, exhaussé en personnage historique, une forme de consécration. Ainsi se trouve réalisée la coïncidence opérée par toute écriture autobiographique entre un auteur, un narrateur et un personnage (Philippe Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, 1975).

Au thème du militaire qui permet à l'auteur de se mettre en scène, s'asso-

cie le thème baudelairien du "flâneur" qui observe, note, décrit et commente le paysage social pour un destinataire étranger. En ce XIXe siècle, "âge d'or de la flânerie," affirme Walter Benjamin (1989, 437), "le phénomène de colportage de l'espace est l'expérience fondamentale du flâneur" (1989, 436-437). Dans *De Québec à Mexico* cependant, cette expérience concerne autant sinon davantage le "colporteur." Sous les traits du flâneur, Faucher de Saint-Maurice marque en fait son intention de renoncer aux précisions purement descriptives pour centrer son écriture sur l'impression personnelle. La structure nonchalante de son texte s'harmonise avec la démarche habituelle du flâneur qui va herboriser sur le bitume.

> [...] comme je ne voudrais pas troquer, contre le gros titre de littérateur, mes coudées franches de militaire, de touriste, ou, si vous l'aimez mieux, de rêveur comme on m'appelait au régiment, j'esquisse à grands coups de crayon mes flâneries et mes impressions, me gardant bien surtout d'y mettre trop d'ordre. (1874, I: 22)

Il s'agit bien ici du flâneur, tel que le définit Victor Fournel, (cité par Walter Benjamin, 1989, 477), c'est-à-dire d'un observateur "en pleine possession de son individualité" et qui, en ce sens, se distingue du badaud dont l'individualité "disparaît au contraire, absorbée par le monde extérieur [...] qui le frappe jusqu'à l'enivrement et l'extase." "Le badaud, sous l'influence du spectacle, précise Fournel, devient un être impersonnel, ce n'est plus un homme, il est public, il est foule." Il en va tout autrement de Faucher de Saint-Maurice qui n'est jamais tout à fait dans le moment présent, ni dans le lieu concret où il se trouve, mais toujours en train de se perdre dans ses rêves et ses souvenirs. "Pendant ces longues promenades sans but, note-t-il, chacun de nous oubliait à qui mieux mieux le Mexique, pour causer de ses souvenirs, de son cœur, de son pays" (1874, II: 206).

Faucher de Saint-Maurice ne retient pas dans son esprit l'empreinte des choses; il met plutôt sur les choses l'empreinte de son esprit. Ses flâneries, comme il les appelle à plusieurs reprises, contribuent moins à "l'effacement des traces de l'individu dans la foule de la grande ville" (Benjamin, 1982, 67), qu' à la révélation de ces traces. Elles participent, en ce sens, à un processus créatif. Le Larousse du XIXe siècle s'exprime à ce propos en ces termes:

> Son œil ouvert, son oreille tendue, cherchent tout autre chose que ce que la foule vient voir. Une parole lancée au hasard va lui révéler un de ces traits de caractère, qui ne peuvent s'inventer et qu'il faut saisir sur le vif; ces physionomies si naivement attentives vont fournir au peintre une expression qu'il rêvait; un bruit, insignifiant pour tout autre oreille, va frapper celle du musicien, et lui donner

l'idée d'une combinaison harmonique; même au penseur, au philosophe perdu dans sa rêverie, cette agitation extérieure est profitable, elle mêle et secoue ses idées, comme la tempête mélange les flots de la mer. [...] La plupart des hommes de génie ont été de grands flâneurs; mais des flâneurs laborieux et féconds (*Grand Dictionnaire universel,* par Pierre Larousse, Paris 1872, VIII, 436 (art[icle] "flâneur").

Qu'il soit entrepris à titre de militaire ou prétexte à de "douces flâneries" (1874, II: 40), le voyage de Faucher de Saint-Maurice représente un écart fondateur: le détour nécessaire pour parvenir à soi. Plus précisément, il en résulte que la fonction du récit autobiographique sera moins de poser ou de résoudre une question existentielle (qui suis-je ?) que de procéder à une affirmation de soi à travers des impressions personnelles et une mise en scène textuelle.

Récit de voyage et récit de vie

L'avantage de la littérature de voyage, c'est de se situer en dehors des genres reconnus: forme libre, non codée, ouverte à diverses expériences narratives. Tous les tons sont permis, selon une esthétique de la *variatio* chère à Faucher de Saint-Maurice.[3] Or ce caractère hybride du récit de voyage sert bien l'élément stratégique de la visée autobiographique. Il brouille les pistes. Ni voyage ni souvenirs, mais souvenirs de voyage, voyage de souvenirs où le moi avance la plupart du temps masqué, ne se montre que travesti, mais se trouve sans cesse mis en scène.

En fait, les récits de voyage touchent à l'autobiographie, entendue au sens large, par la forme. Ils se présentent généralement comme des récits rétrospectifs — de fait sinon d'apparence — en prose, marqués par l'identité auteur-narrateur-personnage.[4] En revanche, l'obstacle majeur qui empêche normalement d'assimiler l'écriture du récit de voyage à une écriture autobiographique concerne le contenu même. Certes, c'est bien le je de l'auteur qui parle mais il ne parle guère de lui, de "l'histoire de sa personnalité." L'autobiographie est infirmée par le refus de pronominaliser le verbe raconter: les voyageurs racontent à la première personne sans pour autant "se" raconter. Ils tirent du reportage leur centre d'intérêt, un pays étranger, dont ils enregistrent les mœurs les plus répandues comme les curiosités les plus rares. Ils interviennent en tant que personnages-narrateurs à seule fin d'authentifier le récit dont ils se portent garants en assumant les petits faits vrais concernant les transports, les auberges, les visites, etc., et de lui donner une homogénéité dont ils seraient sans cela dépourvus. Bref, ces narrateurs-voyageurs n'appa-

raissent que très rarement comme personnages et ils s'effacent devant le double objet qu'ils mettent en scène: le voyage et les lieux visités.

Le récit de voyage de Faucher de Saint-Maurice, on l'a vu, tend à inverser ce rapport dans la mesure où il vise moins à informer ou à décrire fidèlement le Mexique qu'à relater avec complaisance certains épisodes qui mettent en valeur sa carrière militaire et ses impressions personnelles. De façon générale, les préoccupations autobiographiques l'emportent largement sur la description systématique du pays. Détourné de son objet référentiel, c'est-à-dire le Mexique, le récit devient à maintes reprises pour l'auteur l'occasion de se mettre en valeur: réceptions mondaines, rencontres particulières, participation à la campagne et au siège d'Oajaca, exploits militaires, blessure, emprisonnement aux mains des guérilleros. Il s'agit de donner à son aventure une dimension symbolique, un sens qui dépassera le déroulement banal du voyage et démarquera son récit personnel des itinéraires purement descriptifs.

Déjà en France à la même époque, ce genre de récit hybride (récit de voyage-récit de vie) ne cesse de faire des adeptes. Chez les romantiques surtout, la tentation est grande de rapprocher les deux pratiques. Chateaubriand[5] et Stendhal,[6] pour ne nommer que ceux-là, ont tous deux l'illumination autobiographique en Italie: c'est dans ce pays que naît leur projet d'écrire des mémoires. Conscient de cette situation, Faucher de Saint-Maurice n'hésite pas à prévenir son lecteur.

> Vous l'avouerai-je, mon bon lecteur, votre figure sarcastique m'apparut, et il me sembla vous entendre murmurer, en mettant la main sur mes humbles souvenirs: —Bah ! je parierais que ce bouquin est comme tous les autres ! Sous prétexte de nous parler de l'étranger, nous allons ne voir à chaque page, que le moi, prenant des poses à sensations ou délivrant des brevets de reconnaissance à ceux qui lui auront donné à dîner. Tous ces messieurs et tous ces penseurs qui vont de Londres à Pékin, et de Naples en Australie, ne grimpent sur les paquebots et ne vont sous d'autres cieux que pour faire des effets de mollets, ou pour se donner les airs de grands hommes incompris. (1874, I: 193)

La précaution oratoire est ici de pure forme. Elle n'empêche nullement le moi de s'affirmer. Quelques lignes plus loin par exemple, Faucher de Saint-Maurice ajoute: "bien que nous apercevions depuis fort longtemps les cîmes neigeuses du Popocatepetl et l'immense mausolée de la Dame Blanche, je vais prendre la liberté de vous montrer un tant soit peu ce moi, dont vous commencez à dire déjà du mal" (1874, I: 193). En fait, il est conscient du caractère original de son entreprise et des reproches qu'elle peut lui attirer.

Malgré tout, il n'hésite pas à se donner le premier rôle au détriment du pays visité et de la situation donnée. Là où le lecteur s'attendrait à une description des lieux ou à entendre parler de l'histoire de l'expédition du Mexique et de ses causes, il ne trouve souvent que des impressions personnelles, ou mieux ce que Faucher de Saint-Maurice nomme lui-même "ces douloureux retours sur soi-même" (II: 11), "ces flâneries poétiques" (II: 38) et ces "douces flâneries" (II: 40). Un déplacement s'opère de l'extérieur à l'intérieur, de l'objet au sujet. L'objet, dépourvu de valeur intrinsèque, ne vaut alors que pour le retentissement et l'écho qu'il fait naître chez le voyageur.

Une curieuse ellipse au début de son récit témoigne de ce déplacement. "Je ne décrirai pas le commencement de mon voyage. [...] j'avoue franchement n'avoir rien admiré ce soir-là; car j'avais sur le cœur les larmes que ma mère avait versées à mon départ" (I: 12). Cette formulation paradoxale (je ne vous en parle pas, car je n'ai rien à dire), dans une perspective informative du voyage, ne se justifie qu'en fonction d'un horizon autobiographique où l'auteur-narrateur préfère le rôle de personnage à celui de témoin, et où ses émotions et sa sensibilité passent avant la description de son itinéraire.

Certes, à quelques reprises le rôle civilisateur du corps expéditionnaire est mis de l'avant: "L'armée française [...] accomplissait noblement la mission que lui avait donnée sa consigne: rendre ce pays [le Mexique] déchu à la civilisation" (II: 181). Mais en dépit de son allégeance inconditionnelle pour le "sage gouvernement de Maximilien" (I: 160), Faucher de Saint-Maurice se défend bien de commenter la situation politique et prétend même avoir "pris la peine d'écrire ces souvenirs de manière à prouver au lecteur que je ne m'occupais jamais des affaires des autres, ou de politique, ce qui est synonyme" (I: 161). Contre toute attente, relativement peu de chose nous est dit sur l'expédition du Mexique, son origine, les rapports de la France, à ce sujet, avec l'Angleterre et l'Espagne.[7] Entre la publication en feuilleton dans la *Revue canadienne* en 1866-1867 et celle de l'édition de 1874, Faucher de Saint-Maurice semble toutefois s'être rendu compte de cette lacune. Aussi, dans l'édition en volumes, rajoute-t-il un appendice dans lequel on trouve une description de "La Guerre du Mexique 1860-1867," un document intitulé "Pensées de Maximilien," composé de maximes sur l'art de gouverner (qui par la forme et le contenu ne sont pas sans rappeler *Le Prince* de Machiavel), une biographie du colonel Du Pin, commandant de la contre-guérilla, et finalement un bilan des Mexicains "tombés assassinés par les réactionnaires" pendant la guerre.

En fait, bien qu'il coupe à l'occasion le récit de ses exploits par de longues digressions sur les mœurs locales, sur l'armée et particulièrement sur le soldat français pour lequel il manifeste la plus profonde admiration, il n'en demeure pas moins que ce voyageur sensible, cultivé, qui a le loisir de regarder, de réfléchir, de "flâner," de rêver, toujours de retracer ses impressions les plus fines, ne cherche bien souvent qu'à réactiver des images de son propre passé, pour se livrer, en quelque sorte, à une exploration personnelle. Par un singulier paradoxe, le Mexique se structure comme un perpétuel oxymore, qui associe un ici à un ailleurs. Il en résulte une transformation du contenu même du voyage: devenu prétexte à se ressouvenir, à provoquer les échos de la mémoire. La résurgence du monde de l'enfance où se révèle la forme constitutive du moi apparaît significative à cet égard: "Je me rappelle encore de l'impression que laissa derrière elle la première douleur morale que j'aie ressentie. J'étais bambin de cinq ans [...] Pour la première fois, le moi se dressa alors; il tressaillit avec terreur sous l'aiguillon de la douleur morale" (1: 194-95). Pour Faucher de Saint-Maurice, il s'agit moins de retrouver un passé collectif que d'évoquer ses propres souvenirs. Le sujet se substitue à l'objet, la rêverie et le souvenir au regard, la nostalgie du passé à l'observation du présent

> Combien de fois, au milieu du bourdonnement et des lazzis de la caserne, dans le silence de ma tente ou de mon cabinet de travail [...] n'ai-je pas étouffé un long sanglot en contemplant furtivement toutes ces cendres blanchies, toutes ces feuilles jaunies qui jonchent mon pauvre moi (I: 197).

À travers le voyage, se précise une expérience de la temporalité interne: le moi ne se pense pas comme essence autonome (par exemple le cogito), mais comme unité psycho-biologique promise à la mort, orientée de façon irréversible dans un espace/temps, soumise à une évolution dans la durée. Un vertige ontologique se trouve ainsi creusé. Faucher de Saint-Maurice ne découvre pas seulement que les empires sont éphémères, mais qu'il est lui-même mortel.

> Profonde pensée que l'on retrouve partout, sur les débris des empires comme sur les débris du cœur, sur les ruines du passé comme sur la poussière sous laquelle va s'ensevelir le moment présent ! Tout n'est donc qu'illusion, fumée diaphane, ombre vaine ici-bas ? La mère meurt pour faire vivre l'enfant; l'enfant grandit et attend patiemment le moment de mourir en s'habituant à voir mourir les autres (I: 125).

Confrontée à celle des hommes, à ses multiples traces, le moi se découvre lui aussi une histoire, c'est-à-dire un passé, un présent et un futur: "j'allai m'asseoir tout rêveur près du gouvernail, regardant les lumières de la ville s'éteindre une à une, et me demandant quelles étaient les destinées que Dieu me réservait dans cet immense empire du Mexique." (I: 68) Dès les premières pages, Faucher de Saint-Maurice marque ce rapport en associant les commencements du monde, la "fondation du pays de Cocagne" et sa naissance, le "18 avril 1844" (I: 9). En ce sens, le pouvoir médiateur du voyage réside dans une homologie: commencé avec une naissance (celle du monde, celle de l'auteur) pour se terminer avec une mort symbolique: "J'arrivais au pays [au Canada] dans un jour de crise et d'épreuve. Une génération entière, génération forte et pleine de sève, venait de s'incliner vers la tombe" (II: 161). Le récit constitue un système clos de la même façon que la vie: la naissance/la mort. Cette analogie de structure ne fait que reproduire un thème millénaire de la morale antique ou de la spiritualité chrétienne: le voyage comme un symbole même du destin, *homo viator*.

Mais plus encore que d'évoquer des souvenirs, le récit offre à Faucher de Saint-Maurice l'occasion de se ressouvenir du florilège de textes qui constituent sa mémoire et son identité culturelle: "ces temps de rêveries[8] que je passais à causer avec mes auteurs favoris" (I: 53). Véritable voyage à travers les livres, il donne lieu à un étalage d'érudition. Le nombre de citations, leur nature (qui n'a souvent rien à voir avec le Mexique), leur répartition témoignent d'un artifice ornemental dont la fonction consiste essentiellement à mettre en évidence le savoir livresque du voyageur.

Intertextualité et étalage d'érudition

Le récit de voyage est un des genres littéraires où règne le phénomène de la "seconde main." "Non seulement les ouvrages précédents peuvent servir de guide au voyageur, note Pierre Brunel (1986, 8), mais encore le récit de voyage nouveau s'enrichit de leur substance. Pour l'érudit, l'invitation au voyage se transforme alors en sollicitation d'une archéologie livresque." À la limite, précise François Moureau (1986, 166), "sa fonction, dérisoire, est de prouver que la réalité se conforme à l'érudition qu'on en a." Chez Faucher de Saint-Maurice en particulier, le récit de voyage prend la forme d'un véritable étalage d'érudition. Certes, le voyageur puise dans le souvenir de ce qu'il a vécu, mais il est remarquable qu'il croit devoir faire appel, beaucoup plus largement, à ses lectures. Son récit tire sa substance aussi bien de la

réalité que de la littérature. Plusieurs éléments du voyage sont reliés à la fois à une expérience réelle et à un souvenir littéraire qu'explicite souvent une citation. Certaines affirmations s'appuient non sur des faits observés empiriquement mais sur des lectures. Ainsi, à son arrivée à Mexico, Faucher de Saint-Maurice préfère citer la description de la ville de Gustave Aymard plutôt que de rapporter ses propres observations.

> En passant par San Martin, j'avais acheté à un marchand de bric-à-brac un roman de Gustave Aymard —l'Éclaireur — et j'étais à le feuilleter [...], lorsque mes yeux distraits tombèrent sur Mexico, qui, comme une paresseuse créole, se préparait à s'endormir dans l'alcôve à demi-fermée par le rideau de saules que lui forment ses trois lagunes. [...] je n'eus que le temps de lire ces deux phrases de Gustave Aymard, sur lesquelles j'étais tombé par un curieux hasard: "L'étranger qui arrive à Mexico au coucher du soleil, par la chaussée de l'Est, une des quatre grandes voies qui conduisent à la cité Aztèque [...], éprouve, à la vue de cette ville, une émotion étrange dont il ne peut se rendre compte" (I: 104-05).

L'absence de la description de la ville se fait ici au profit d'un travail d'intertextualité qui réécrit le réel en fonction d'une œuvre littéraire. Le vécu du voyageur cède le pas à ses connaissances livresques. C'est dire que le visible semble moins se donner à découvrir, dans la fraîcheur inaugurale des expressions neuves, qu'à réciter, voire à déchiffrer. Mais plus encore, un déplacement s'opère de l'appréciation de l'objet référentiel "Mexico" à l'appréciation de la description qu'en a fait l'écrivain Gustave Aymard:

> Cette description de la capitale de Maximilien ne manque pas de vérité, et ma curiosité était excitée au plus haut point par ce commencement de chapitre de l'émouvant feuilletoniste, lorsque nos mules, toutes frémissantes d'impatience, entrèrent au galop dans la vaste cour de l'hôtel Iturbide (I: 106).

À cette substitution de l'objet référentiel (appréciation d'un roman plutôt que de Mexico), s'ajoute parfois même la substitution du sujet. Le voyageur se compare alors à d'autres écrivains-voyageurs, tantôt à Volney: "je me mis à faire ce que Volney faisait sur les ruines de Palmyre" (I: 109-110); tantôt à Chateaubriand: "À genoux sur cette fosse perdue, j'ai eu presque la pensée de Chateaubriand, et avec lui je me suis convaincu une fois de plus qu'ainsi passe sur la terre tout ce qui fut bon, vertueux, sensible !" (II: 59); tantôt encore à Alexandre de Tocqueville:

> Je lisais les souvenirs d'un aveugle par Jacques Arago, livre où tout l'esprit qui restait sur terre, est venu se réfugier. Les étincelles qui jaillissaient de ce style de feu me donnaient des éblouissements, et la tête renversée sur le coussin en cuir de la voiture je me laissais aller à une de ces rêveries indéfinissables, qui s'était emparée un jour d'Alexandre de Tocqueville, lorsqu'il descendait le Mississippi (I: 191).

Le voyage permet de devenir autre. À la limite, il fait accéder le moi à la jouissance ludique du polymorphisme, en lui faisant assumer tour à tour les rôles de voyageur, d'aventurier, de militaire, de flâneur, d'écrivain, et même de personnage fictif.

> Bien que je ne tienne guère à la réputation de poser en René — qui, à ses heures de chagrins et de découragements, n'a pas aimé, au moins une fois, à se mirer dans cette mélancolique création de Chateaubriand ? — je ne puis m'empêcher de retrouver à son cœur une ressemblance frappante avec la funèbre route que nous parcourons depuis ce matin (I: 196).

Ces exemples, qu'on pourrait multiplier, indiquent l'importance de l'intertextualité dans le récit de Faucher de Saint-Maurice; une intertextualité qui ne se caractérise pas, comme dans la plupart des récits de voyage canadiens de l'époque, par sa valeur documentaire et descriptive, voire touristique, mais qui vise plutôt à refléter les émotions et l'érudition du voyageur. Le choix des auteurs cités apparaît à cet égard pour le moins significatif. S'il cite, comme il est naturel, quelques voyageurs ou romanciers qui l'ont précédé au Mexique — Samuel de Champlain, Lord Kingsborough, Gustave Aymard, Just Girard "qui a parcouru le Mexique en 1854" (I: 113), M. de la Bédollière, Alexandre de Humbolt —, sa préférence va plutôt à des auteurs qui n'ont souvent rien à voir avec ce pays, entre autres Régnier, Rabelais, Ossians, Horace, Lamennais, Voltaire, Hoffmann, Sterne, Edgar Poe, Méry, Volney, Paul Féval, Xavier de Maistre, Hugo, Leibnitz, Jacques Arago, Fenimore Cooper, Jules Noriac, George Sand, Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Schiller, Mgr Dupanloup, etc. Plusieurs vers de Boileau, de Byron, d'Alfred Musset, de Casimir de Lavigne, d'Octave Crémazie et de Théophile Gautier, sont également cités.

À la limite, ce choix inattendu d'auteurs témoigne d'une forme d'éloquence qui cherche à rehausser, en les ornant, les observations et les impressions du voyageur. Pour Faucher de Saint-Maurice, il s'agit de marquer son appartenance au champ littéraire en montrant qu'il connaît ses pairs. L'attention qu'il accorde aux auteurs canadiens ne manque pas d'intérêt à cet égard.

> J'avais eu la précaution d'emporter avec moi quelques bons auteurs canadiens. Bien souvent, le jour, ou le soir, à la lueur bleuâtre du falôt de tribord, je m'amusai à parcourir de nouveaux toutes ces lignes qui m'apportaient comme un parfum de la patrie, et jamais je n'ai refermé les pages où pleure le poète des "Morts" et de "Carillon," où chante le barde du "Rocher Noir" et du "Héros de 1760," sans me sentir courir sur les reins ce singulier frisson qu'éprouvent les personnes nerveuses dans un moment d'exaltation et d'enthousiasme (I: 51).

On le voit, le récit de voyage s'édifie autant à partir des impressions reçues par le voyageur qu'à partir de ses souvenirs de lectures, la réalité des choses n'étant pas plus forte que celle des acquisitions culturelles. On aurait tort pourtant de croire que Faucher de Saint-Maurice se conforme passivement aux poncifs des guides et récits de voyage antérieurs. Au contraire, il multiplie les occasions de rejeter toute représentation mythique des lieux visités au profit d'une vision davantage personnelle. Pour marquer son originalité, il se démarque en adoptant une démarche iconoclaste de destruction des lieux communs.

Entre le lieu commun et l'originalité

Comme l'a bien montré Drewey Wayne Gunn (1969), le Mexique a suscité depuis le XVIe siècle un grand nombre de récits de voyage et d'œuvres littéraires. De cette production abondante découle nécessairement un consensus autour de certains lieux communs, de certaines représentations idéales ou non. Si bien que les nouveaux voyageurs peuvent difficilement l'aborder sans avoir déjà en tête une géographie mythique. Faucher de Saint-Maurice ne fait pas exception à la règle et demeure tributaire d'une vision préexistante qui détermine en partie son propre regard. À plusieurs reprises, il attache autant d'importance aux choses qu'il voit, qu'à ce qui a déjà été dit sur elles. La publication de son récit donne d'ailleurs lieu à une courte polémique, dans *Le Journal de Québec*, en février 1868, alors qu'Emmanuel Blain de Saint-Aubin lui reproche d'avoir fait plus d'emprunts qu'il ne devait à certains ouvrages français sur le Mexique, tels le *Journal d'un missionnaire du Texas et du Mexique*, de l'abbé Emmanuel Domenech, et *Les Bivouacs de Vera-Cruz à Mexico*, d'"Un Zouave."

Du vomito (fièvre jaune) de Vera-Cruz, au zopilote, cet oiseau charognard protégé par les lois du pays pour ses "fonctions de cureur d'égoût" (I: 72), du costume national mexicain aux antiquités aztèques, de la cathédrale de Mexico au sanctuaire de Notre-Dame-de-la-Guadeloupe, Faucher de Saint-Maurice tend pour une part à reproduire la plupart des topoï. Il se doit en effet de répondre à l'attente de ses lecteurs déjà familiarisés peut-être par d'autres lectures ou par les idées couramment répandues sur le Mexique. Le lecteur de récit de voyage désire avant tout avoir accès à un monde réel à travers une description fidèle. Or le lieu commun et le cliché, à l'aspect familier car ils sont perçus comme du déjà-entendu, correspondent parfaitement aux intentions du récit de voyage. Ils restaurent l'image

d'un monde cohérent et compréhensible, ils donnent l'illusion que seul le réel se trouve à l'origine du topos, pure émanation des choses vues.

Il faut éviter de conclure pour autant que Faucher de Saint-Maurice se conforme passivement aux poncifs des guides et récits de voyage antérieurs. Certes, son récit se situe dans une tradition, d'où le recourt au topoï, mais l'époque à laquelle il a été écrit prône l'originalité individuelle. Rappelons en effet que la littérature française du XIXe siècle prédétermine en grande partie la valeur d'une œuvre en fonction de son originalité (voir Pierre Rajotte, 1994). En proie à la crainte de la répétition et au désir de bâtir une œuvre singulière et unique, Faucher de Saint-Maurice a donc été amené à moduler son attitude vis-à-vis des idées reçues.

À cet égard deux solutions s'offrent à lui. La première, que l'on a abordée plus haut, consiste à déplacer l'accent du référent au narrateur, du voyage au voyageur. Dès lors qu'un référent subjectif, le moi de l'auteur, se substitue au référent objectif, le Mexique, le problème de la répétition et de l'originalité est résolu puisque l'écriture autobiographique renvoie à un sujet toujours unique. Ainsi, plutôt que de disparaître presque entièrement derrière la description détaillée du pays visité, le moi s'installe dans le cadre du voyage. En fait, Faucher de Saint-Maurice n'ignore pas que la médiation de l'écriture impose une présence subjective, si retranchée soit-elle, et que cette subjectivité, source même de la perception du monde, implique déjà en elle-même une déformation des choses vues. Il n'hésite d'ailleurs pas à avertir son lecteur de la subjectivité son récit : "Je trouve excessivement logique que l'on puisse ne pas s'amuser à me lire, et mieux encore, ne pas m'aimer une fois que l'on m'a lu, puisque, je ne puis placer en tête-à-tête avec mon lecteur que le triste moi, mon seul et unique compagnon de dangers et de voyages" (I: 196). À la limite, le voyageur privilégie non plus le monde des objets perçus mais le regard décrivant et ne dissocie pas ses descriptions et ses observations de sa propre subjectivité qui déforme tout objet perçu du monde extérieur en le passant à travers le prisme du moi.

La seconde solution vise à mettre en relief précisément le référent, mais en recherchant tout ce qui peut lui donner une valeur singulière, en s'attachant aux détails pittoresques. Puisqu'il est impossible d'adopter vis-à-vis du Mexique la démarche exploratrice du voyageur qui découvre une *terra incognita*, tout au moins peut-on introduire un élément de surprise, d'originalité, en contestant les représentations communément admises, en dénonçant certains lieux communs. Ainsi, aux yeux de Faucher de Saint-

Maurice, “La cathédrale si vantée de Mexico n’a pas du tout l’air d’un édifice qui a coûté deux millions et demi de piastres” (1874, 147). Même remise en question au sujet du type créole pour lequel il n’a, contre toute attente, aucune sympathie :

> On a beaucoup écrit et causé sur le type créole; les uns le donnent comme un modèle de beauté parfaite, les autres le citent comme le suprême du goût et de l’élégance. Tous ces romanciers et ces feuilletonistes ont été plus heureux que moi; car pendant les quatorze mois que j’ai eus à ma disposition pour l’étudier, je ne lui ai rien découvert de toutes ces bonnes qualités (I: 133).

Visiblement, Faucher de Saint-Maurice n’hésite pas à prendre le contre-pied des topoï en ne voyant que laideur là où d’autres admiraient la beauté, en ne ressentant qu’indifférence là où d’autres éprouvaient sympathie et ravissement. Son attitude à l’égard de la Havane demeure à cet égard fort révélatrice:

> Une fois dans la ville [la Havane], on est tout étonné de ne trouver, là où on s’attendait à rencontrer le goût, l’élégance et la propreté si vantés de la race créole, de lourdes maisons grillées, des rues sales et boueuses, et pas un monument digne d’être mentionné, à part le théâtre Tacon qui, je dois lui rendre cette justice, est peut-être un des plus beaux édifices publics de l’Amérique, du moins c’est ce qu’assure l’auteur des “Monuments modernes de Nouveau-Monde” (I: 63-64).

En fait, Faucher de Saint-Maurice se trouve tiraillé entre le discours de la tradition, adonnée au topoï, et le discours de la modernité, qui valorise l’originalité, affirme l’individu, exprime la subjectivité. Sa réaction au sujet du costume national du Mexique en témoigne bien:

> De tout temps, le costume national du Mexique a servi de thème à l’imagination descriptive de ceux qui se sont occupés du pays. Romans, nouvelles, récits de voyage, lettres particulières, il a trouvé le moyen de s’installer partout, et j’avais presque l’intention d’être original en lui fermant ma porte au nez, si un mien ami [...], ne m’eût assuré que ce serait là une lacune irréparable dans ces croquis à heures perdues (I: 131-32).

Cette tension entre la fidélité à une tradition de lecture et la recherche d’originalité sous l’angle littéraire du XIXe siècle explique la diversité des attitudes et les hésitations du voyageur qui tantôt refuse les topoï —au non du réel ou de l’originalité— tantôt les admet, quitte à se détourner de la réalité et à réintroduire, au second degré, une écriture qui signifie le parti-pris de rejoindre une filiation. Certes, au lieu de se soumettre à une lecture déjà imposée, il peut réagir contre la tradition pour marquer l’originalité de son récit, mais même en la rejetant, il montre qu’il la connaît et entérine le

phénomène de l'intertextualité. Ainsi, lorsqu'il évoque la comparaison traditionnelle entre Mexico et Venise, sans même avoir visité cette dernière, il ne vise pas tant à dénoncer un lieu commun qu'à faire l'étalage de ses lectures (George Sand, Byron, Alfred de Musset).

La plupart des voyageurs et des touristes qui ont visité Mexico n'ont pu s'empêcher de comparer cette grande paresseuse du tropique à l'éternelle fiancée de l'Adriatique, à Venise, sa sœur aînée en nonchalance. Quant à moi, je puis assurer qu'elle ne ressemble pas du tout à la cité des Doges, et cela avec d'autant d'aplomb que je n'ai entrevu le dôme de Saint-Marc, se dessiner que sous les chauds reflets de mon imagination. [...] Qu'on dise ce que l'on voudra [...] à coup sûr, George Sand, Byron, Alfred de Musset et tant d'autres n'y perdraient plus leur cœur "sur le chemin, sous un pavé, au fond d'un verre," car ils courraient le risque de s'y asphyxier, ou tout au moins de s'y salir, ce qui ne vaudrait guère mieux pour des poètes habitués à n'aller qu'au Almack's Hall, ou au faubourg Saint-Germain. (1: 129-130)

On pourrait croire, de la part de Faucher de Saint-Maurice, à une recherche d'authenticité fondée sur le sentiment que les circonstances paraîtront d'autant plus vraisemblables qu'elles différeront des clichés littéraires. Mais dans les faits, la réalité n'est jamais restituée telle quelle car, d'une façon ou d'une autre, elle passe par la littérature dont elle est à la fois le rejet et l'émanation. Dans les deux cas, elle est déformée au profit d'un travail d'intertextualité. Or, "cette tendance du discours à se replier sur lui-même, à réitérer l'inscription de son origine et le réseau de son intertexte, précise Roland Le Huenen (1987, 53) est la marque même de la littérarité." Chez Faucher de Saint-Maurice en particulier, elle témoigne de son intention de rejoindre ou de vérifier *in situ* un ensemble de textes littéraires, bref d'écrire dans l'ombre de textes antérieurs qui le rappellent à l'ordre de son appartenance.

Conclusion

À une époque où le progrès des moyens de transport incite à aller de plus en plus loin, où le romantisme favorise l'expression du moi et l'originalité individuelle, Faucher de Saint-Maurice n'a pas hésité à adapter ses souvenirs de voyage en conséquence. Comment ? En centrant l'écriture sur lui, sur ses aventures et ses exploits militaires, sur son érudition et ses connaissances livresques. En fait, le voyageur-écrivain joue allègrement sur tous les tons, écrit dans tous les registres. Son récit tient à la fois du reportage touristique, de l'autobiographie et du récit anecdotique. À la limite, le Mexique, réduit à

un matériau et destiné à servir une écriture, devient un pur accessoire qui sera manipulable et manipulé au gré de l'écrivain. Ne recevant qu'un statut annexe, celui de décor, il ne peut guère prétendre occuper le devant de la scène et devenir l'objet principal comme il l'est normalement dans un récit de voyage.

La spécificité des récits de voyage consiste généralement à montrer une subjectivité réelle tournée vers autre chose qu'elle-même. L'impératif catégorique qui fonde ces récits comme genre consiste à rendre compte, par l'entremise d'un regard individuel et, à des degrés divers, subjectif, d'une réalité extérieure sous ses multiples aspects, géographique, historique, social, politique, esthétique. Or, dans le récit de Faucher de Saint-Maurice cette réalité est la plupart du temps laissée en friche. Tout se passe comme si l'intérêt de l'auteur pour ce pays, jugé souvent de façon négative, vient à point nommé pour mettre en évidence une page autobiographique assez valorisante dans la vie du militaire. À cette fin, la pratique des souvenirs de voyage et de guerre constitue un masque commode. Sous prétexte de restituer l'identité d'un pays et d'un peuple, ou de décrire le conflit militaire avec ses enjeux, elle permet plutôt de communiquer une expérience personnelle. Cette expérience déforme doublement la réalité, d'abord parce qu'elle fait intervenir la subjectivité de la perception, et ensuite parce qu'elle se crée à partir d'un savoir préexistant d'ordre littéraire. En ce sens, elle tend à préformer la relation de voyage en fonction de deux procédés propres à l'œuvre littéraire, soit la transmission d'une culture littéraire et la manifestation d'une certaine individualité de l'écriture. En ce sens, le récit réitère les marques d'appartenance au système de valeurs esthétiques et littéraires de l'époque et, ce faisant, reflète la volonté de participer à un capital symbolique. À la gloire militaire tant recherchée se superpose ainsi une autre quête, celle de la gloire littéraire.

NOTES

1 Dans sa bibliographie sur les récits de voyages, John Hare (1964) relève 39 récits pour la période 1670 à 1800; 71 de 1800 à 1850; et 165 pour les années 1850 à 1900.

2 Voir entre autres: Eva-Marie Kröller (1987), Pierre Savard (1977) et Claude Galarneau (1989).

3 "Ma plume est comme celle de l'immortel devancier de Molière. [...] je la fais voltiger sur la tête de ceux qui m'entourent, sans même crier: "Gare !" leur laissant le soin de

deviner si elle sent le goudron, la poudre, l'algue marine, les parfums d'un salon, d'un boudoir; si elle laisse échapper un gros rire de caserne, une furtive arme de poète" (1: 23).

4 Rappelons la définition que Philippe Lejeune (1975, 14) donne de l'autobiographie: "Récit rétrospectif en prose qu'une personne réelle fait de sa propre existence, lorsqu'elle met l'accent sur sa vie individuelle, en particulier sur l'histoire de sa personnalité."

5 "C'est aussi à Rome, note Chateaubriand, que je conçus, pour la première fois, l'idée d'écrire les *Mémoires de ma vie.*" *Mémoires d'Outre-tombe* (livre XV, ch. 7).

6 Comment ne pas rapprocher le passage de *Rome, Naples, Florence* (1826) où Stendhal devant la contradiction qui l'habite entre son penchant pour les Romains et sa haine du pouvoir autocratique s'interroge sur son moi comme le fait Figaro, et l'ouverture de la *Vie de Henry Brulard* : Stendhal se représente en train de contempler Rome du haut du janicule, spectacle qui dispose à la méditation, au retour sur soi.

7 Voir à ce sujet Émile Ollivier, ([19..]).

8 Dans la version parue dans la *Revue canadienne*, 3 (1866): 515, on lit plutôt: "ces temps de rêveries intimes que je passais à causer avec mes auteurs favoris."

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Cauca Valley

A man drives a tractor
turning furrows of red earth
preparing another's land for corn.
With him sits a child
as I sat safely
between my father's knees
steering a straight line
while he rolled cigarettes
& gave cowboy concerts to the gulls.

When the man from Case
came for the tractor
father said he would fight,
get a lawyer, get a gun,
he said they could kiss his ass.
All summer he watched
the growing weeds and drank
putrid wine from a jug.

Light fades from the Andes,
this is the world as seen from buses
a man with his son

the soil is ready for so many
miracles. My father would have
known it, a lame man who wanted
to throw away his crutch.

April 1993

P.K. Page

Malinalco, Mexico 1962

We set out yesterday for the Aztec ruins at Malinalco. They are not particularly old as Mexican ruins go—only 1470—but distinguished for being carved out of the rock instead of being constructed stone by stone. They are also distinguished for being almost completely inaccessible, although we didn't know that when we started out or we might well not have gone. The guide book told us to go to Tenancingo from where a road would lead to Malinalco. Distance 7 1/2 miles. Inquiring at Tenancingo for the way, we were told we would be unable to get there in our car. Was the road bad? *Medio feo* (middling ugly). Was it far? Twelve kilometers. Was it dangerous? No, not dangerous. How long would it take? About an hour. We finally negotiated with a taxi driver to take us there for 200 pesos and off we set about 2:30. A bumpy mud track full of pot-holes and water led us past a cavalry regiment barracks, past an old and broken dam, through lovely bush, very Canadian—the tree branches brushing the car as we passed, maidenhair and wild flowers in the hedgegrow. After some little distance of this we came to a canteen and a shrine to Guadaloupe. There the poor drivers no doubt ask protection before going down, or offer thanks upon getting up. We paused briefly on a rock ledge which fell away before us in a series of rock terraces about 3000 feet to the valley below. A truly beautiful valley, moss green now because of the rains. A miniature church spire announced the existence of a hidden village.

The road down was loose rock, hacked from the mountainside itself, and it descended in a series of hairpin bends, with a sheer drop on the outside

and indications of rock falls on the inside. On one occasion we passed a bus; twice we passed trucks. Just how, I am not certain. That the brakes held, and the gears, can only be attributed to a miracle of modern car design. It took us an hour and a half to get down. At the bottom we crossed a river in full flood and then there we were in Malinalco—bananas, oranges, corn, beans. It was sweet smelling and green. Small barefoot boys ran alongside the car calling, *'a las ruinas'* as they ran, and their friends dashed out and joined them.

Nearly inaccessible though the village was, it had electric light and through the windows of the simple dwellings we could see beds. 'There is a lot of money here,' a small girl told us later and the lights and the beds rather bore that out. Moss grew over the cobble stones of the streets. By the time our driver came to a full stop, we had collected eight children of various sizes who accompanied us on our way to 'las ruinas,' through the outskirts of the village, past boys playing a game with tops and pennies, along the edge of a stream, past fruit trees and then back up 1000 of the 3000 feet we had descended. Meanwhile the little boys ran between our feet, the occasional charging pig nearly tripped us, the sweat dripped off us, and over and above all this, the sweet smell of wild lemons which the children picked and ate, and the burbling, humourous laughter of the small boys.

An old arrow pointing up to the archeological zone promised us the ruins we had come for but we could see only the goat track beneath our feet and the rocky mountain above. The children encouraged us, carried our cameras, offered us fruit, told us where to watch our step or look out for the ants, and finally, aftter a long and exhausting pull, that we had arrived. And we had. On a rock ledge, the first of the major terraces rising from the valley, at the top of a flight of steps, a circular temple had been cut into the rock. We entered by a door shaped like a keyhole. On the floor at our feet, facing us, was a stone bird, wings extended. And on a raised ledge that encircled the temple was a tiger's head, flanked on both sides by eagles. All these creatures, though carefully finished, were crudely carved. To the left, was a series of rooms the walls of which must once have been painted, for traces of color remained, although it was impossible to make out any drawings. And further on still, and cut out of the rock, was what the children called the Aztec Ballroom—a great level space with its immense rock wall smoothed and polished.

Unfortunately we could do nothing more than dash about glancing here and there for with each moment that passed it was, you might say, getting

later and the thought of the ascent hung over us, literally. It would be impossible to get up the hill in the taxi in the dark. So barely giving ourselves time to get our breath we tore down the hill again, the little boys tumbling like puppies between our feet, burbling and chattering, running ahead to hide and spring out on us with grass spears. Enchanting children, full of humour, courtesy and charm.

Exhausted and dripping we flung ourselves into the cab, tipped our eight children, and started off over the moss-covered cobbles. Our driver told us we were lucky it hadn't rained or the river would have been impassable, to say nothing of the road. Lurching, jerking, tires slipping on the loose rock, we somehow reached the top as darkness was falling, wondering why we had been so foolhardy, and thanking our lucky stars there had been no rain.

Awakening

Your face is the colour of dawn, I rise and worship
at your feet, against my will, dream
fragments like slivers of glass
embed themselves in my skin.

This love lasts and damages
like death, but there is no ice here,
only the sudden wet hiss on my leg
of urine. Your cry is a kind of cough
infecting me with needs.

Your cry is the screeched warning of thregle or crow
and I would leave you, to walk again, alone.
Your cry, desire to hold my flesh in your mouth,
hungering after the even shudder of my walk.

Your cry is the colour of dawn, I return
from my journeys, my countries, my other worlds.
My arms gather your crying and smooth it away.
A fountain of tears, in my arms, a fountain.

Your face is the sound of glass and dreams
breaking against a wall of night. Your eyes
dance like elves, swing me away from the seated circle,
whirl me around the fire. Your black, black eyes,

blind mine, bestow texture,
the hot, damp sponge
of recently broken
bread.

February 1994

Cynthia Messenger

'But How Do You Write A Chagall?'

Ekphrasis and the Brazilian Poetry of P.K. Page and Elizabeth Bishop

"Remembering the Strait of Belle Isle or
some northerly harbor of Labrador,
before he became a schoolteacher
a great-uncle painted a big picture."
ELIZABETH BISHOP, "Large Bad Picture"

"As I stepped from the small box of an elevator into the apartment of the Swiss minister, I entered a Matisse painting"
P.K. PAGE, *Brazilian Journal*

"your eyes proclaim,
That everything is surface. The surface is what's there
And nothing can exist except what's there."
JOHN ASHBERY, "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror"

When P.K. Page arrived in Brazil with her ambassador husband, Arthur Irwin, in 1957, Elizabeth Bishop had been living there for approximately six years. Both women wrote and painted in Brazil, and while they never met, both found it a strangely beautiful and also an alienating place. Their ways of coping with artistic and personal crises varied as widely as their poetics; nevertheless, an examination of P.K. Page and Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil reveals how travel poets write against a foreign surface. In what I will identify as their ekphrastic poems (and ekphrasis is always written in code) Bishop and Page attempted to write "visual art," that is, they tried to articulate a "foreign" perception of Brazil which could not be copied into words.

In his 1958 book, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry From Dryden to Gray*, Jean H. Hagstrum defines the term "ekphrasis" more narrowly than critics who have followed him:

> I use the noun "ecphrasis" and the adjective "ecphrastic" . . . to refer to that special quality of giving voice and language to the otherwise mute art object. . . . My usage is etymologically sound since the Greek noun and adjective come from *ekphrazein* . . . which means "to speak out," "to tell in full" (18).

Hagstrum uses the term "iconic poetry" to describe what has come to be known as ekphrasis:

> In [iconic] poetry the poet contemplates a real or imaginary work of art that he describes or responds to in some other way (18).

Recent definitions concentrate on representation and refer less frequently to the requirement that the poem give voice to a silent object. In "Ekphrasis and Representation," James A.W. Heffernan defines ekphrasis as "the verbal representation of graphic representation" (299). (See also his 1993 book *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery.*) Many critics remain preoccupied, however, with the binaries inherited from Lessing's *Laokoön*: time/space and movement/stillness. Murray Krieger, for example, in *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*, observes:

> Ekphrastic ambition gives to the language art the extraordinary assignment of seeking to represent the literally unrepresentable. Yet every tendency in the verbal sequence to freeze itself into a shape—or can we use "form" or "pattern" or some other metaphor borrowed from the spatial arts—is inevitably accompanied by a counter-tendency for that sequence to free itself from the limited enclosure of the frozen, sensible image into an unbounded temporal flow (9-10).

John Hollander has coined the term "notional ekphrasis" (209) to describe poems about *imagined* works of art—exactly what occurs in Bishop and Page. Hollander's is a useful term because it recognizes many poems that might otherwise be ignored in a discussion of rhetorical strategies and the problem of visual/verbal representation.

Ekphrasis is a particularly important strategy when it is employed in travel literature, for it acts as an intervention—and an intercession—between traveller/poet and place, the viewer and the subject of the gaze. For the poet/observer ekphrasis is a way of ordering experience. When a foreign place is turned into a painting, a double distancing occurs: the real scene is reimagined as a painting but one that has life only in terms of the poem. The poem, particularly in creating a notional ekphrasis, paints the visual art. If the poet actually creates the art about which she talks, then she has managed to take over the role of painter, bridging the gap between the sister arts and making, crucially, visual image depend upon word. And if a visual

image, particularly an unfamiliar one, depends upon the poet's own words, then it is sufficiently contained, reined in, and made comprehensible to a viewer who is made to feel "other" by it.

Bonnie Costello suggests that Elizabeth Bishop's "'Arrival at Santos' and 'Brazil, January 1, 1502' examine the persistence and self-defeat of the colonial mentality" (129). These poems also suggest Bishop's ambivalence about her own position in Brazil.

In "Arrival at Santos" a blandness and a depression overtake the tourist:

> Here is a coast; here is a harbor;
> here, after a meager diet of horizon, is some scenery:
> impractically shaped and—who knows?—self-pitying mountains
> sad and harsh beneath their frivolous greenery,
>
> with a little church on top of one. And warehouses,
> some of them painted a feeble pink, or blue,
> and some tall, uncertain palms. Oh, tourist,
> is this how this country is going to answer you
> (*Complete Poems* 89)

Victoria Harrison points out that, in this poem, the tourist can't see:

> Folded into the tourist's babble in "Arrival at Santos," these voice-over lines of self-judgment reveal her "suspension" between the expectations of home and the details of here, the not-home that she cannot really see, except in the irrelevant terms of home (147).

Bishop uses clichéd language and the understatement that is her trademark in "Arrival at Santos" to show that the tourist is without appropriate words and cannot adequately represent what she sees. Harrison reminds us that the "s" at the top of the eighth stanza is a diagram of the need for order in the mind of the tourist; the "s" is omitted from "Glens Fall[s]" so that "Fall" is forced to rhyme perfectly with "tall" (148).

In "Brazil, January 1, 1502," Bishop turns the landscape into a tapestry, ostensibly in response to Brazil's beauty:

> . . . embroidered nature. . . tapestried landscape.
> —*Landscape into Art,* by Sir Kenneth Clark1
>
> Januaries, Nature greets our eyes
> exactly as she must have greeted theirs:
> every square inch filling in with foliage—
> big leaves,
> little leaves, and giant leaves,
> blue, blue-green, and olive,
> (CP 91)

In these opening lines, Bishop records Brazil's lushness in terms of size and colour, preparing the reader for the painterly metaphors that give the scene shape. The first hint of visual art occurs when Bishop uses the term "relief" in line nine: "or a satin underleaf turned over / monster ferns / in silver-gray relief" (CP 91). A few lines later Bishop sets the tone for her central visual metaphor when she presents Brazil's flowers, which are "like giant water lilies," in a string of colours suggestive of the visual artist choosing a palette:

> purple, yellow, two yellows, pink,
> rust red and greenish white;
> solid but airy; fresh as if just finished
> and taken off the frame.
> (CP 91)

The word "frame" at the end of this first verse paragraph indicates that the scene is a tapestry, but it also alludes to the poet's containment of the scene, and, because the word presents itself at the very end of the line, hints at a self-consciousness in the poet, an awareness that she is composing. The second verse paragraph continues to sketch the scene, its modifiers doing double service: they describe an actual scene but also create the sense of artifice that is essential to the reader's "seeing" a tapestry. The "feathery detail," the palms "perching there in profile," the "big symbolic birds," and "Sin" in "the foreground" all speak of visual composition. The speaker's admiration for the skill of the piece is rhetorically the cleverest device in the poem—and perhaps also the subtlest—and is certainly important to Bishop's creation of the ekphrasis:

> The rocks are worked with lichens, gray moonbursts
> splattered and overlapping,
> threatened from underneath by moss
> in lovely hell-green flames,
> attacked above
> by scaling-ladder vines, oblique and neat,
> (CP 91)

The words "lovely" and "neat" communicate in their brevity, and in the colloquial tone they produce, the speaker's awareness of her position as "foreigner" in a new land. She realizes that she admires the landscape as she would merchandise or an artifact in a museum.

Bishop is, she acknowledges, by virtue of her cultural education, the inheritor of the conquerors' art, represented in this poem by the tapestry. No surprise, then, that she uses it to "see" Brazil:

> Just so the Christians, hard as nails,
> tiny as nails, and glinting,
> in creaking armor, came and found it all,
> not unfamiliar:
> no lovers' walks, no bowers,
> no cherries to be picked, no lute music,
> but corresponding, nevertheless,
> to an old dream of wealth and luxury

Structurally, the ideas in this poem form interlocking boxes: Bishop looks at Brazil's new beauty and nicely contains it in a one-dimensional tapestry (now it is seeable)—the tapestry the conquerors wove when *they* landed at Brazil; ultimately, they destroy it:

> Directly after Mass, humming perhaps
> *L'Homme armé* or some such tune,
> they ripped away into the hanging fabric,
> each out to catch an Indian for himself—
> those maddening little women who kept calling,
> calling to each other (or had the birds waked up?)
> and retreating, always retreating, behind it.
> (CP 92)

When Bishop wrote to friends about the metaphor of the tapestry in "Brazil, January 1, 1502," she referred to it as a cliché. As Victoria Harrison quotes her, a 1956 letter to the Barkers from Brazil declares that

> . . . the mountains really look amazing, like a tapestry—sorry to be so unoriginal but they do, a brand new tapestry, maybe. . . (160).

The second, more explicit reference to cliché occurs in a famous letter to Lowell (quoted by Harrison, Lorrie Goldensohn, and others):

> I am so glad you liked the New Year's poem—I think it is a bit artificial, but I finally had to do something with the cliché about the landscape looking like a tapestry, I suppose—And it does now in February, too. . . (Harrison 161).

Bishop finds herself invoking a visual cliché because she can't seem to find the precise words; language is failing to refer. The landscape, functioning as tapestry, expresses Bishop's anxiety over the new land, an anxiety immediately evident in "Arrival at Santos."

In a 1970 letter to James Merrill, Bishop uses another painterly metaphor, again to describe mountains: "You fly from Lima straight to Rio—I've done it by day and by night—the Andes are frightening, but the day flight is worth it, I think. You'll see how exactly like some of Klee's paintings they look

(rather a worn comparison now, but it is striking)" (*One Art* 521). This self-consciousness about using visual art as metaphor (evident in the words "worn comparison") suggests that Bishop feels somewhat uneasy or insecure about the relationship between visual art and language that relies on visual images.

The tapestry is an analogue of the map in Bishop's poetry; both are pictures, after all. The one-dimensional tapestry traces the contours of place in a way similar to a map. If "the map" in Bishop is "the poem," as Helen Vendler suggests (828), then the tapestry-poem is the map-poem reconfigured through ekphrasis. Like a map, however, the tapestry is finally only "hanging fabric."

The ekphrastic gesture involved in turning a poem into visual art is a distancing device; the ekphrasis, a rhetorical tool, operates like a cliché—it intervenes on behalf of the speechless (and directionless?) writer. The tapestry, as Goldensohn points out, has its limitations:

> But the perspective [on the halved birds] can also be seen as an instance of Bishop's insistence, as a sophisticated picture lover, on the limits of the pictorial, as she draws attention implicitly to the baffling nature of visual phenomena. Somewhere between the top and bottom of the second stanza both Bishop as tapestry-maker and Christians as tapestry-makers give way, under the aegis of the sexual, to an unworkable pattern in which flatness, no matter how lovely and fresh, can't quite tell us about everything (201).

Ultimately the tapestry is torn, the semiosis destroyed. The "maddening little women" are forever "retreating" from the Christian conquerors and, the implication is, from readers as well. Creating what is almost a kinship with the conquerors (guilt by association?) in the first few lines of the poem—"Januaries, Nature greets our eyes / exactly as she must have greeted theirs"—Bishop subsequently severs any ties with them through the surrealism of the closing images. The poet, having created the tapestry, watches the men tear through it. In "Brazil, January 1, 1502," art is not in the least transcendent. Bishop expresses her disgust with the raging conquerors and by implication with the imperial mentality. She is neither colonizer nor Brazilian, and her sense of estrangement as a visitor underlies her use of cliché.

Bishop's recognition of the visual cliché implicitly acknowledges her impulse to idealize. Perhaps more importantly, Bishop knows that her poem cannot recreate Brazil's natural beauty; any attempt to do so would be repetitive and would mirror the invaders' containment of the new world in their art—and through their violence. The torn tapestry at the end of the poem may be as much a self-reprimand as a metaphor for the colonizers'

destruction of the indigenous: "The poems in the Brazil section of *Questions of Travel* all deal with the ironic quest for a new Eden by forms of culture and consciousness that inherently defeat that ideal" (Costello 139).

Brazil's beauty—what P.K. Page sees as its exoticism in *Brazilian Journal*—will not answer, finally, for Bishop. If Bishop engaged herself in Brazil "with the colors of exile" (Goldensohn 194), they are very clearly American colours, especially the "blue-green," "two yellows," and "greenish white" in "Brazil, January 1, 1502." The simple modifiers, "big," "little," and "giant" also function to emphasize the ordinariness of the observer's language. This language is quite unlike the bolder, richer metaphors that Page uses, metaphors that, paradoxically, show a greater tentativeness than Bishop's bluish-greens because they express their insecurity by overreaching.

The deliberately simplified repetitions in Bishop's modifiers are meant to be self-referential. The disingenous little words of this poem exercise a good deal of control. Bishop's "monosyllables [as Vendler remarks, are] . . . a legacy from [her] dissenting Protestantism . . ." (831), and her language at once catalogues the beauty and suppresses it lest it exceed the viewer's experience. While Bishop's simple words indicate a refusal of metaphor, the restraint they convey is, oddly enough, itself a kind of trope.

The reader is invited, by Bishop's colloquial language, to see American. Colours such as "greenish white" have a local, you-know-what-I-mean feel to them. Importantly, they also suggest a refusal to name and a disavowal of representation. It's as though this articulate speaker doesn't have in her North American vocabulary the right words to describe what she hasn't seen before. The control over the landscape implied in the construction of the ekphrasis is echoed in the poem's tone and diction; word and image are working in unison. The mixed message to the reader: *I can't represent what I am seeing adequately, so I will recast it in my own verbal/visual experience; I can't properly express the beauty of this place, so I will suppress it; anyway, I am an intruder.* When the conquerors tear through the hanging fabric, the illusion of the tapestry—and therefore the ekphrasis—is destroyed. Leaving us with action and words, and no "picture," the poem moves into a different mode. By the end, although it protests against the "Christians'" "old dream of wealth and luxury," the poem does resist "a too-insistently framed ideology: an identifiable, controlling perspective, coming from a speaker clearly and continuously in command of the poem's opinions seems to be missing" (Goldensohn 199).

Bishop's search for her own position in the world is, by 1994, a firmly established literary topos. Bonnie Costello sees Bishop's travel poems as a kind of personal stock-taking:

> Bishop's travel poems, dominated by catalogues of things seen, include moments of reflection and retrospection, acts of tentative summing up and taking stock, assessments of the relation between process and goal. These end-of-the-line moments arise when the tolerance for plurality and particularity wears down; they do not mark a mastery over the world's variety" (159).

Bishop's ekphrasis is not, as Grant F. Scott suggests in his discussion of this term, a "cunning attempt to transform and master the image by inscribing it" (302). It is rather an admission of the impossibility of achieving the same.

Brazil leads, unexpectedly, to Nova Scotia; the character of these two places couldn't be more different, but Vendler points to what they share for Bishop:

> Bishop was both fully at home in, and fully estranged from, Nova Scotia and Brazil. In Nova Scotia, after Bishop's father died, her mother went insane; Bishop lived there with her grandparents from the age of three to the age of six. She then left to be raised by an aunt in Massachusetts. . . Nova Scotia represented a harsh pastoral to which, though she was rooted in it, she could not return. Brazil. . . was yet another pastoral, harsh in a different, tropical way—a pastoral exotic enough to interest her noticing eye but one barred to her by language and culture. . . (828).

Vendler argues that the traumatized childhood displaced Bishop permanently and meant that she felt foreign wherever she went:

> Bishop could taste for herself, each time she found another environment, her own chilling difference from it. Into no territory could she subside gratefully and grip down into native soil (829).

Bishop's sense of exclusion in Brazil led to the source of it in her Canadian childhood. To understand Brazil, then, readers must hold in their minds the circular relationship with Nova Scotia. Ekphrasis, because it creates a layer of artifice between the speaker and the subject, allows Bishop to confront an alienated past through a hierarchy of signs that will serve as protection from too bold an encounter. A poem about painting called "Poem" immediately signals a highly self-conscious rendering.[2] In "Poem," the speaker describes a painting, examining it, in part, for its accuracy in depicting a long-ago-familiar Nova Scotian landscape. A series of questions structures the poem: "Or is it a flyspeck looking like a bird?"; "Would that be Miss Gillespie's house?" (C.P. 176-177). To paraphrase, Bishop asks: *Was I sufficiently part of this past to recognize it? Do I really know its codes? And, more importantly, can*

I articulate them? The apparently innocuous questions in the poem signify the crucial one:

> Our visions coincided—"visions" is
> too serious a word—our looks, two looks:
> art "copying life" and life itself,
> life and the memory of it so compressed
> they've turned into each other. Which is which? (177)

Through reference to the painting Bishop alludes to the constructedness of the poem; "art" in "art 'copying life'" suggests poetry as well as painting. The questions of "Poem" are relevant to Bishop's Brazilian poems because they signify her sense of the problems intrinsic to representing "place."

P.K.Page shares with Bishop a sense of displacement and a need to turn inward. The political language of Bishop's Brazilian poems, however, does not appear in Page's work. Page's Brazilian poems derive directly from the prose she wrote during the late 1950s and published in *Brazilian Journal* in 1987. The Foreword to this book explains that the text "is based, mainly, on letters . . . and extracts from [Page's] journal, written during the privileged years, 1957-1959." Her deliberate refusal of subjects both intimate and political was, she has indicated in conversations with me, part of a wish not to offend or worry her mother or stepchildren, to whom she was writing.

In any case, critics do not generally categorize Page with Canadian protest/political poets, even though her canon is framed, at its beginning and now in her recent work, by poems of social protest. In the 1940s, under the influence of Patrick Anderson and the *Preview* poets, Page published many poems that revealed an active social conscience: "The Stenographers" may be the most famous. And recently, as in "Address at Simon Fraser" (*The Glass Air*, 1991), or "Planet Earth" (*The Malahat Review* Fall, 1993), Page has turned her attention to the environment. But in the 1950s in Brazil, Page was overwhelmed by the new landscape's natural beauty, and she was preoccupied with tracing surfaces:

> tremendous lengths of sand, blinding white in the sun; the facades of white buildings which, for all their contemporary design, look somehow like the ruins in a John Piper painting; pedlars with eagle-shaped kites under a barrage of bright balloons on the boulevard by the sea; black-eyed children in pony carts with coloured nurses in starched white; the faded patchwork of the houses in the *favelas;* women balancing parcels on their heads (BJ 15).

From early on in *Brazilian Journal* Page "sees" the country in terms of modernist art. The juxtapositions in the foregoing passage are typical in Page's text: the colours, smells, and heat of Brazil jockey for position beside subtextual references to social problems or conditions. Many scenes are shaped and made memorable by the invocation of a painting; in this way Brazil is fictionalized.

In June of 1957, Page, mysteriously unable to write poetry in Brazil, begins to paint. She refers to painting in *Brazilian Journal* even before she reports taking up this hobby: "I wish I knew how to describe the vegetation, or indeed how to paint it" (15). At first Page draws and paints exactly what she sees, using representational conventions; she works from models (of the landscape, that is; her subjects were rarely people). But her eye is interpreting Brazil through a whole cast of modern painters, many of them cubist, expressionist, or non-figurative. Her modernist aesthetic, apparent in her poetry even before she experienced Brazil, determines that she will see the "new," which is the old, baroque Brazil, metaphorically, the metaphor in her visual art finding its expression through stylized figuration.

Page reports more than once in *Brazilian Journal* (e.g., the journal entry for Aug. 1957, p.75) that she paints because words fail her. But attempts to paint from models soon frustrate Page, and by the end of her stay in Brazil she is moving away from the Dufy-influenced figuration of the work reproduced in *Brazilian Journal.* Page's non-figurative works of post-1958-59 signify Brazil only through synecdoche: "Labyrinth" (the 1958 drawing, not the work of the same title that appears in *The Glass Air*), stored in The National Gallery of Canada, features a discrete palm tree in an otherwise largely (deliberately) unreadable study of lineation and movement; in it there is no other indication that it might be "about" Brazil. As Page grew less dependent on models, she began to focus on the surface of her canvas, and under the influence of Paul Klee's work, lineation became central, and drawing took over from painting. The late works cease any attempt at representation, and by tracing often labyrinthine constructions (e.g., those reproduced in *The Glass Air*), they seem to rebuke the very possibility of mimesis. This frustration with representing Brazil is, I believe, evident even in the excess of metaphoric language in *Brazilian Journal.* Page indulges in making images because she can't find the words to express what she sees in Brazil. The painterly language intervenes for her and allows her to frame Brazil with modernist icons and thereby contain it.

Page complains often in *Brazilian Journal* of an inability to write, speculating that this has happened because she is living in Portuguese. But she did write a few poems (now in the National Archives of Canada) that until their appearance in this essay remained unpublished.[3] These poems are crucial for the insight they provide into Page's sense of the relationship between visual and verbal art in her work. The first is titled "Could I Write a Poem Now?"

> Or am I so
> sold to the devil
> that a hard frost locks
> those lovely waters?
>
> No, scarcely a matter of ice,
> but a matter of guilt
> having believed
> (and pledged my troth)
> art is the highest loyalty
> and to let
> a talent lie about unused
> is to break faith.
>
> But how do you write a Chagall?
> It boils down to that.

The conundrum of the penultimate line conveys the incongruity, for Page, of expressing through one art form what is clearly meant for another. Chagall is obviously on Page's mind in Brazil; in a 1958 entry in *Brazilian Journal* she writes that a gathering of musicians is "like a Chagall painting" (153). (In "Another Space," *The Glass Air*, p. 123, Page also enlists Chagall ekphrastically in a central conceit.) Indeed, to write a Chagall is a particularly difficult, peculiarly modern problem; to write Breughel as Auden did in "Musée des Beaux Arts" is perhaps a less daunting project because one has conventional iconography to work with. Chagall, like other modernists, cannot be easily paraphrased.

Page invoked the modern painters often to express what she saw in Brazil because they were the artists who experimented with colour, arrangement, and plane, and it was these elements of the baroque "surface" of Brazil that most enthralled and disconcerted her. Through reference to modern artists Page supplants a conventional iconography of mimetic figures with the new iconography of the modern age: line, colour, and form. The words "a Chagall" capture in the poem that which cannot be expressed any other

way. Consequently, when Page writes "Chagall" in this poem, it is not to write *about* his work or to represent it, but to invoke it as a sign for its own absence in the poem, and for the impossibility of its presence.

In a second poem, "Some Paintings by Portinari," Page reveals a persona unavailable in her published work, which may be why this poem never saw print. Whereas Page describes Cándido Portinari's paintings as "flat," "strange," and "grey" in the prose of *Brazilian Journal*, the "composition" of her metaphors in "Some Paintings by Portinari" reveals a more powerful verbal parallel for Portinari's expressionism:

With the first lot flat
it was as if he'd cut off my breasts
and levelled my nose
like the side of a barn
I walked
  and met them flat
flat on and one
up-tilted my chin.

with the others lord all the colours gone
strange but I wore
red when I came and green
and he made them grey
and painted the grey all over my skin
and the pain
pulled all the muscles and cords.

This is a remarkable poem from a poet who normally would not refer to her body in her work. The lacerated breasts and nose convey the shock and the power of Portinari's paintings and are themselves expressionist metaphors. Through "levelled," "flat," "cut off," and "up-tilted," Page "writes" the acute angles, the jaggedness of an expressionist work. The pain Portinari portrays in his visual art becomes the poet's pain: the "I's" colours turn to grey; even her skin absorbs the grey of anguish, and her "muscles and cords" pull taut in sympathy with the pain of the portrait. Portinari paints *her*.

This is one of the few poems in which Page identifies a specifically female reponse in her persona. Here it is her femaleness that is startled and disturbed by the art. Even in poems like "After Rain," where Page writes of "a woman's wardrobe of the mind," the speaker manages to remain aloof from her own gender. The damaged body in the Portinari poem further suggests a more compelling distress, which had everything to do with Page's inability to write

poetry in Brazil, complicated by a new sensitivity to visual art. Page is unable to find in Portinari a beautiful surface; in him she is forced to confront a narrative of deep psychic torture, a catalogue of Brazil's social problems.

In *Brazilian Journal*, Page acknowledges that her seeing is informed by the library and the museum: "In fact, I think much of my pleasure is a literary pleasure. Had I read nothing and seen no pictures, what *would I see*? (72). Page is troubled and self-conscious about the way her mind makes images, and she seems to realize that metaphor defers and masks this problem.

The way out? In her painting Page produced an increasingly metaphysical rendering of Brazil, abstracting the landscape—and also the problem of representation. In her poetry the answer, for a while, was silence, for Brazilian poems did not start to appear until the late 1960s. A few of these poems are ekphrastic but not conventionally so, in that they do not address a painting or give voice to a silent object; but they invoke visual art in a way that results in a reader being able to envision the scene described as though it were a painting. "Chimney Fire" will serve to illustrate. This poem draws on a scene from a 1957 entry in *Brazilian Journal* which refers to motorcycle troops. Impressed by the vivid colours of their uniforms, Page notes, "they might have been a painting by Rousseau the *douanier*, known to me alone" (BJ 13). This passage is a study in self-consciousness; the "painting" in this notional ekphrasis is available to no one except Page.[4]

In "Chimney Fire" the house is "orderly and quiet as a painting / of a house." The men are configured much as they are in Page's imagined painting in *Brazilian Journal*: "in an abandonment of blue and gold / that Rousseau the Douanier might have set / meticulously upon a canvas—those red brick / faces, vacant, those bright axes / and the weltering dark serge angles of arms and legs" (*The Glass Air* 85).

The incongruity of the original scene in Brazil—fiercely aligned troops against lush backdrop of landscape—obviously appealed to Page; this incongruity finds its expression in the poem: the fearless firemen are too much for the job, and the "puny" fire is not nearly big enough for them. Rousseau's tropical paintings capture just this sense of incongruity: rigour *vs.* dream. His lineation and composition are studied, clear, at times almost rigid, often apparently belying the metaphysical concerns of the painting.

Page focuses on the arrangement of colour and form in the scene she describes in her poem, for example, "the weltering dark serge *angles* of arms and legs" (emphasis mine). Artifice, signified through dream and the delib-

erate invocation of unreality, prevails in Rousseau's paintings as in most modernist art, where the painter still believes that the limitations of descriptive art, and importantly, therefore, of the finite world, can be overcome. And artifice prevails in Page's poem when the "tidy silence," only *likened* to "a lily on a green stem" in the second stanza, *becomes* the lily ("No tendril of silence grew in the green room") in the last—metaphor replaces simile. Page transforms the firemen into nearly mythic beings at the end of the poem. Their quest, their "dream," is for "beautiful conflagration."

Page communicates the exaggerated and incongruous effect of the overdrawn "firemen" through the metricality of her lines. The dactyls, spondees, and strong-stress endings create a certain crispness in the language that contradicts the languor of the Brazilian backdrop and emphasizes the firemen's seriousness about their mission. But the tone is mocking and lighthearted, a tone achieved partly through a deliberate over-emphasis on initial metrical stresses. The suddenly regular dactyls in lines four and five, for example, create a kind of emphasis that can be read only as ironic and humorous: "Ready and royal for crisis and climax / shining and stalwart and valiant—for *this*?" As is quite often the case in Page's poems, the more even meter at the end of the poem signals closure and moves the scene into a dreamy unreality, nudging an interpretation of the poem toward the metaphysical.

Page's ekphrastic poems are particularly revealing of how the "I" sees itself in relation to the world; the poet is always, in her painterly poems, witnessing a mystical transformation in her subject, undergoing some internal change herself, or observing the transformative powers of art. The link between visual art and mysticism is evident in even her earliest ekphrases and runs through all of her poems about art. What is perhaps more subtly articulated in these poems is the role of the speaker vis-à-vis the art object.

Quite often this speaker, even though she invokes the name of a famous painter, is herself taking on the role of the painter and is painting the scene, much as Bishop creates the tapestry in "Brazil, January 1, 1502." The reader's attention is very much directed to the single point of view, the "pressuring gaze" (Handa 19). This stems, at least initially, from Page's and Bishop's roles as travellers and observers in Brazil. Even if they are very different poets (Page's "ceruleans" are fundamentally incompatible with Bishop's "two yellows"), they surely have this much in common: Brazil confronted them with the inadequacies of language, requiring them both to respond by re-visioning their art.

NOTES

1 Lorrie Goldensohn notes that "only the words 'embroidered nature' correspond to Clark's book. . . . The apposition of 'embroidered nature' against a 'tapestried landscape' applies only roughly to Clark's discussion of either embroidery and tapestry, or nature and landscape (200)."

2 Costello acknowledges that "Poem" is ekphrastic, but an empty landscape seems to her an unusual subject for ekphrasis because the stillness/movement binary cannot pertain. An already motionless landscape cannot represent a stilled moment that is granted temporality in a poem. The constrictions implicit in this view of ekphrasis may explain why she fails to mention "Brazil, January 1, 1502" in her discussion of Bishop's ekphrases (214 ff.). For the travel poet, however, who is forever encountering new landscapes that require definition, ekphrasis is an obvious strategy of containment, and the time/space binary is beside the point.

3 I publish these Brazilian poems in this essay with written permission from P.K. Page.

4 In Bishop's *One Art*, James Merrill imagines Bishop "in a 'Rousseau jungle'" (303), and more than once Bishop herself compares Brazil to Rousseau. In his *TLS* review of *One Art*, Tom Paulin, remarking on one of Bishop's references to Rousseau, cites her interest in primitive art, calling this art "one of the most important values in her humane aesthetic" (4). Page, Bishop, and Merrill, in their mention of Rousseau, perfectly illustrate how their training gives them the same frame in which to compose Brazil. Their sense of the "primitive" in Brazil is aestheticized through Rousseau.

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When a Man and a Woman Separate

To Enrique Molina with paraphrase.

When a man and a woman separate,
the cliffs of evocation grow steeper
and a crack spreads relentlessly through dawns

there's the sound of suitcases closing, of keys
moldering in cupboards
and a silence dense with allusions
shrivels over meals
as the habitual gestures of the diners
fade into mere legend,
including perverse machinations,
cries of horror behind doors
or midnight hunts
with calumny about to explode

When a man and a woman separate,
there are so many illusory places they never reached
and people moving from one mirror to another,
leaving and lowering retinas:
the hotel room, the ghost train, cemeteries
of voices that wanted to be dialogue
and a vague disaster calculated
in weeks and days, where everything ends
doorless, journeyless, coveless, in a high sea
of shadows where before there was exhilaration

When a man and a woman separate,
what linger are the books wandering
through the ether, the clothes ripped off
the bones, open scars
and all those gestures snapping at each other in the air
like vague, unkept promises; an anguish lingers
keeps returning on the same boat,

the distant sounds of the party,
a slow decay of fervor

Paradise, human lightning, the breath
vibrant with fury,
escape us,
when a man and a woman
who have loved each other full of wonder,
lit by their irritations and their rages,
rent by the vehemence of summer,
open in every direction
and unfolding their wings
kill memory

and separate

(Translated by Lake Sagaris)

Hugh Hazelton

Quebec Hispánico

Themes of Exile and Integration in the Writing of Latin Americans Living in Quebec

Over the past several decades, as Quebec has become an increasingly multiethnic society, Spanish-speaking immigrants of Latin American origin have steadily been creating an ever-larger body of work. The phenomenon of writing produced in immigrant languages is not new, of course, but what characterizes work in Spanish is that it is produced by people from some twenty different countries, all of which have national literatures that are in turn part of a common Latin-American or Spanish-speaking literary tradition.

Latin American writing in Quebec has now reached the point at which it is possible to speak of "une littérature latino-québécoise." Some thirty different writers, working in the full array of genres—poetry, drama, short stories, criticism, children's literature, autobiography, and the novel—have published over eighty books. Due to linguistic and literary isolation from the French and English mainstreams, some of these works have been self-published, a fact which in no way diminishes their literary value. Other books have been brought out by one or another of the five Spanish-language small presses now operating in the Montreal area[1] or by larger commercial French and English-language publishers.[2] Lately, an increasing number of works are being published directly in Latin America, especially in Chile.[3]

Latin American writing in Quebec also, of course, forms part of the larger body of Hispanic writing of Canada. Given the high proportion

(about half) of Chileans within this group, one could speak as well of a Chilean-Quebec or Chilean-Canadian literature; likewise, since there are a large number of women writing in Spanish, Latina-Quebec or Latina-Canadian writing might constitute another possible field. Through translation and bilingual editions, there is now increased permeability between Latin American writing in Quebec and the literatures of the two official languages; influences are flowing back and forth between these three poles of literary activity, and such reciprocal osmosis may play an important role as Quebec increasingly defines itself as part of the Americas.[4]

The political and economic upheavals in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s sent successive waves of refugees and immigrants northward. The Chileans arrived first, following the coup d'état against Salvador Allende in 1973. They were followed by a smaller number of Argentines and Uruguayans from the same period and by several waves of Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Nicaraguans during the 1980s, as well as by many other arrivals from virtually every nation in South and Central America and the Caribbean.

These groups of refugees and immigrants have included a high proportion of artists and intellectuals. Some of the writers among them had already embarked on literary careers before leaving their native countries; others began to write after arriving here. Most have been strongly influenced by their own highly developed national literatures, yet all share a common interest in Latin American writing as a whole. Many have drawn strength from contacts with fellow Hispanic authors in Quebec and from audiences within the Latin American community, while a few have chosen to distance themselves from their compatriots. A substantial number of authors have gradually become part of the French and English literary worlds of Quebec, and some have even begun to move away from writing exclusively in Spanish; others, however, have preferred to remain on the outskirts of their new reality, continuing to write primarily about their native countries and be more concerned with their reception in Latin America than in Quebec.

Despite the diversity of these writers, certain key themes are common to much of their work. These include political militancy, nostalgia, exile, return to the homeland, and adaptation to the reality of life in Quebec. Writing by various authors may be characterized by one, several, or all of these themes; the general thematic progression is from militancy to adaptation, but this tendency is in no way paradigmatic. The patterns in which

these themes surface reveal both the commonality and the highly individual aspects and trajectories of the authors involved.

For most of the writers who have come North, their first works in Quebec reflect their preoccupation with their homeland; it is only after some time has passed that experiences in their new environment begin to surface in their writings. Early Chilean writing published in Quebec, for example, revolves largely around the theme of political activism, with emphasis on the sub-themes of economic and social oppression, revolutionary ideals of change, the trauma of military repression, mourning for those who have fallen, continuing opposition to the dictatorship, and search for some hope for the future. Themes involving social commitment have a long and complex history in Latin American literature, and in Chile date back to Neruda and other socially committed writers of the 1930s and 1940s. Although such poetry sometimes walks a fine line between literature and pamphletarianism, it must also be viewed within the context of the perceived role of the writer as the voice of the people in Latin America. In the case of writers who had published in their home country, there is often an understandable time lapse involved between the last book to come out in their country of origin and their first published writing in the country to which they have immigrated: several years are usually spent orienting themselves, learning the new language or languages, finding work, and healing psychological scars left by the régime they have fled before they begin to publish again.

The first works of Chilean authors to appear in Quebec have a strong apocalyptic element: the raw nerves left by the coup d'état are still quiveringly exposed, and images of soldiers, violence, pain, and death are fresh in the mind. However, there is no rule as to when poems of political militancy, and even of trauma, may occur as a writer's work develops. The following poem, "Ahora que el hambre avanza" ["Now That Hunger Advances"], by Nelly Davis Vallejos, the first woman from Chile to publish in Quebec, denounces both the dictatorship and those who passively accept it; yet this poem is from her sixth collection, *El ocaso del reino* [*The Decline of the Kingdom*], which treats a variety of themes and was published over fifteen years after the coup:

> Ahora que el hambre avanza
> rápida, implacable,
> dejando sus trazos
> en el cráneo de los niños;

ahora que el hambre
viene montada en el negro carro
de la injusticia,
custodiada por tanques,
apoyada por las metralletas,
escoltada por los mercaderes,
extendiendo su bandera de muerte,
ahora que el hambre sitia al pueblo
en la ciudad y el campo,
¿por qué os escondéis
en el silencio?
(Vallejos, 55)

—

Now that hunger advances
swiftly, implacably,
leaving its traces
on the skulls of children;
now that hunger
comes riding in the black automobile
of injustice,
in a convoy of tanks,
flanked by machine-guns,
escorted by merchants,
extending its flag of death,
now that hunger lays siege to the people
in city and countryside:
Why do you hide
in silence? (5)

The omission of proper names universalizes her outrage.

In contrast, the very first book of poems by the Chilean poet Elias Letelier-Ruz, *Symphony*, is almost solely dedicated to the theme of political activism and contains many direct references to Chilean history and elegies for specific figures fallen in the resistance; his second collection of poems, *Silence*, continues in the same vein by projecting the narrator's combativeness onto Central America and turning his revolutionary fervour to more direct action. Another Chilean, Alfredo Lavergne, author of nine books of poetry, channels the theme of political struggle into a Canadian context in this third and fourth books, which have numerous poems based on his years working on the General Motors assembly line in Ste-Thérèse; in his fifth collection of poems, *Rasgos separados/Traits distinctifs*, written after travelling through Guatemala, he also returns to the theme of revolutionary struggle within a Central American context. Finally, Tito Alvarado's *La luz y*

la palabra [*The Light and the Word*] is a fictional anthology of the posthumous work of twelve Chilean poets (all creations of the editor himself), most of whom published clandestinely either in their homeland or abroad. Alvarado has succeeds in creating a different poetic voice, vocabulary, and style for each of the men and women whose "work" is included: though united by their opposition to the military régime, each writes in a personal and often lyrical blend of defiance, longing, and resurgent faith in the future.

Other Latin Americans, aside from Chileans, have also taken up the theme of political struggle, usually with reference to their own nations. Yvonne América Truque, a Colombian poet, has written a series of poems, "Retratos de sombras" ["Portraits of Shadows"], in which the narrator wanders through the rubble of social chaos in Bogotá and meditates on

> [...]la blessure qui ne cicatrise pas
> *ou la nostalgie de ce qui peut être et que d'autres empêchent*
> (Truque, 21)

Another poet, Maeve López, a Uruguayan who arrived in Canada in 1974, takes a more intimate, personal approach to the horror of dictatorship. In a short untitled poem from *Grito con espejo* [*Scream with Mirror*], published in 1988, she personifies her country and defines her agonized relationship to it:

> vos sos mi país
> calentura difusa
> pretenciosa llaga
> asfixia lenta de revólveres cargados de
> palabras
> me tiro por el tubo del teléfono
> te asesino con almohadas de silencio
> te apechugo como el loro al tren
> sin otras historias
> (López, 19)
> —
> you're my country
> difused fever
> pretentious wound
> slow asfixiation of revolvers loaded with
> words
> I throw myself through the telephone receiver
> I murder you with pillows of silence
> I face up to you like a parrot faces a train
> without a word

On the other hand, Eucilda Jorge Morel, a Dominican who lived in Cuba during and after the revolution, turns the ideological tables in two short stories, "Verde melodía" ("Green Melody") and "¡Viva yo!" ("Long Live Myself!"), which deal with Cuban characters who long for the freedom to travel to the non-communist world, one of whom is swift to grab the opportunity to do so.

Finally, a Salvadoran poet, Salvador Torres Saso, also touches on several motifs of revolutionary struggle, but typically from a more specifically Central American point of view. In "Uno de mis muertos" ["One of My Dead"], he eulogizes the guerrilla poet Roque Dalton, ironically killed by a faction within his own party, simultaneously celebrating the poet's intellectual recklessness and idealizing him as the revolutionary hero/saint/martyr of liberation, similar to the image of Che Guevara:

> [...] Hijo bastardo de Dios
> -o de quien sea
> y de la dialéctica ramera.
> [...] Poeta con alma de saltimbanqui
> charlatán embaucador de musas
> y sarcástico blasfemo
> en horas atemporales,
> tu verbo incandescente
> fulgura en el renacer
> de la patria liberada.
> (Torres Saso, *Enjambres,* 59-60)
>
> —
>
> [...] bastard Son of God
> - or whoever -
> and the dialectic whore.
> [...] Poet with the soul of a mountebank
> charlatan swindler of muses
> and sarcastic blasphemer
> of timeless hours,
> your incandescent words
> flash in the rebirth
> of the liberated homeland.
> (Torres Saso, *Compañeros,* 150)

In contrast to the majority of Chilean writers, the speaker in Torres' political poems holds real hope for the future, the crisis in this case being an actual war for national liberation rather than a coup d'état. However powerful and pervasive the theme of revolutionary struggle may be in Latin American writing in Quebec, it would be incorrect to assume that it is

shared by all Hispanic authors. Renato Trujillo, a Chilean short-story writer and poet who arrived in Quebec in the late 1960s and therefore never directly experienced either the heady effervescence of the Allende years or the horrors of the dictatorship, has chosen to write exclusively in English and generally avoids overtly politicized themes. His lyrical, precise, and sensuous poetry, which has appeared in two collections, is largely concerned with the more personal, intimate themes of love, abandonment, solitude, ageing, and transcendence, and is thus perhaps more closely associated with the confessional aspect of much of English-Canadian poetry. In "Against an Adobe Wall," the speaker's very Canadian enumeration of what he has in life includes some very Chilean images:

> I have a friendship
> with the wind and a solid pact
> with the emerald sea. The mountains,
> the sky, a lonesome rooster I keep
> all rolled up in my memory.
> (Trujillo, 40)

Closely tied to Latin American writing that denounces the repression of the revolutionary ideal is the nostalgic evocation of a time that is irrevocably lost and a place to which the narrator may be prohibited from returning. Refugee writers have generally been intensely involved in trying to bring about political change in their homelands, with little thought to emigration abroad. In fact, their choice of a country in which to seek asylum is often dictated more by random factors such as which embassy happens to be closest or have the least police surveillance rather than by personal preference. Even the economic immigrant may only have chosen to leave his or her native land because of extreme hardship, not because of dreams of becoming Canadian. Often, therefore, such writers feel both torn from their own soil and alienated from their new country, whose culture may have been totally unfamiliar to them before their arrival. In the resulting longing for what they have left behind, their past life in the home country may take on the mythical proportions of a paradise lost.

Jorge Cancino is a Chilean filmmaker, poet, and short-story writer who was already in his forties when he immigrated to Canada in the mid-1970s. In his long poem *Juglario/Jongleries*, the narrator ("the Juggler") speaks to himself, relating the course of his life from childhood, adolescence and bohemian youth in Chile through the coup d'état and the uncertainty of the

future; images of the sea, wheat, vineyards, and dawn over the mountains predominate in the lyrical evocation of childhood which soothes the speaker's anguished memory and strengthens his resolve to go on. Edith Velásquez, a Venezuelan, has written a very personal long poem, *Brillo en los tejados* [*Radiance on the Rooftops*], celebrating her native island, Margarita, her childhood, and her ancestors who settled there. The work is practically a neo-classical epic, complete with personification of natural forces and hyperbolic allusions to the world's inherent balance, but the constant references to different types of exotic flowering plants, to sunlight and the ocean and childhood memories, speak overwhelmingly of a lost world of primeval beauty and innocence to which the narrator can never return, but whose mere evocation brings her respite from her longing.

Two Chilean authors in particular offer curious progressions in the development of the theme of nostalgia. Nelly Davis Vallejos published her first collection of poetry, *Ritual*, in Chile just before the coup d'état in 1973. Much of the book is composed of bittersweet portraits of Valparaíso and the small seaports of southern Chile, in which the references to the weathered frame houses, rain, kelp, fog, and winter storms are as evocative as watercolours, yet the poet was still in Chile when she wrote them; viewed in retrospect, the book is virtually a premonition of exile. Nelly Davis returned to Chile permanently in 1990. The thematic sequence in the writing of Francisco Viñuela, however, is entirely opposite. Viñuela was also one of the earliest Latin American authors to publish in Montreal, and his first book of poems, *Exilio transitorio/Exil transitoire*, which came out in 1977, borders on a revolutionary hymnbook, complete with an hommage to his political party. Yet the poet's exile was indeed permanent, and his second collection of poetry, *Nostalgia y presencia/Nostalgie et présence*, written the following year, deals with the meaning and relevance of the speaker's Chilean past within the context of his present life in Quebec. It is not until his first novel, *Las memorias de doña Alma Errante*, published in Chile twelve years later, that Viñuela finally immerses himself in a wildly surrealistic evocation of his homeland. *Doña Alma*, narrated in the first person by a Valparaíso octogenarian who is telling her life story to her descendents, is the apotheosis of nostalgia. Filled with all the surprises and caprices of magic realism, Doña Alma's account of her life and of the bizarre and legendary characters that moved through it is in many ways an extended reflection on the history of Chile (which she at first calls the "Platonic" and later the "Thalassocratic

Republic"). The narrative is purposefully vague about time, and makes no mention of the events surrounding Allende, so that the speaker and reader are transported back to a mythical world that exists outside the historical tragedy of modern Chile.

The anguish of exile is a common theme in the writing of many Latin American writers in Quebec, yet it is without doubt the principal concern of the Chilean singer/poet/actor/playwright Alberto Kurapel, who started bringing out songs on his own record label almost as soon as he arrived in Montreal in the mid-1970s. Kurapel's bilingual theatre, three volumes of which have been published, is relentlessly experimental, employing musical repetition, video, slides, off-stage voices, sudden noise, enigmatic characters, hanged men, transvestism, talking fleas, intransigent mannikins, and blind beggars, all designed to instill a maximum sense of disorientation and displacement in the audience and thus transmit the experience of exile, which Kurapel interprets as absolute homelessness.

Yet if exile is disorienting, what of going back? Gloria Escomel, a Uruguayan poet, dramatist, and novelist who writes mainly in French, has published two novels that deal with the theme of return. In the first, *Fruit de la passion*, a Uruguayan woman who works as a photographer in Montreal falls in love with what may be the hallucinated image of an older woman from her past. She subsequently journeys back to Montevideo and the resort town of Punta del Este and (seemingly) finds and lives with her beloved. The novel, written in post-modern style and avoiding political statement, is a meditation on loss, longing, and the power of the imagination. Escomel's second novel, *Pièges*, also involves a woman from Montreal, this time a journalist, who returns to the invented country of Riomar (which lies between Uruguay and Argentina) during what turns out to be the final months of the military dictatorship to look for a friend who has disappeared. She is eventually arrested, tortured, raped, and almost killed; when at last released from prison, she publicly denounces the military, becomes a national symbol of resistance, and finally resumes her career. Every political event that she experiences ends up ensnaring her in far more complex ways than she anticipated. She has become involved in a life-and-death struggle polarized between a more exalted idealism and vicious duplicity than she had ever imagined; only her openness and courage keep her from being annihilated. Moreover, she finds herself in continual conflict

with a society that is only just beginning to accept feminist discourse and is completely intolerant of her lesbianism. Yet she does not go back to Montreal, where she had previously felt dissatisfied with a life that seemed too safe; instead, she decides to stay in Riomar and search for fulfilment as a political journalist working for social justice.

All Latin American writers in Quebec eventually have to deal in some way with the theme of adaptation to life in their new country. Here the thematic variants, however, are legion, ranging from complete avoidance to acceptance of one's own singularity to the poles of assimilation or alienation. Gilberto Flores Patiño, for example, a Mexican novelist who has achieved considerable recognition both in his native country and in Quebec, has simply chosen not to write directly about Canada. In contrast, the Chilean short-story writer Hernán Barrios has shown a high degree of interest in the theme of acceptance and integration, but not assimilation, into his new homeland. A collection of his stories, entitled *Landed Immigrant* (the actual title of the Spanish editon), was published in Santiago in 1990 and is set almost completely in North America. In one of the stories, "Las noctilucas" ["The Phosphorescence"], a Chilean father meditates on his own gradual assimilation into North American life as he drives back to Montreal with his family after having spent the summer holidays on the coast of Maine. His children are opening up to the world just as he did, but far from his own realm of childhood experience. He recalls the phosphorescent plankton that he and his children found suspended in the sea that very afternoon as they took a last swim before leaving and how he identified with those tiny creatures that adhered to his skin and were "as anachronistic as he was" (Barrios 32). He interprets the plankton as symbols of all the magic that is missing in North America and remembers how their glowing light saved the lives of the Spanish sailors after the battle of Trafalgar (in which, again symbolically, the British under Admiral Nelson destroyed the Spanish fleet). In the last lines of the story, as he drives through the rain with the window partly open, his children point out with a shriek that his arms and beard have begun to glow in the dark as the plankton that had dried on them become wet and turn phosphorescent again, proof that he is indeed in touch with the fantastic and unexpected of his past and that the same natural wonders of his childhood also exist in his new reality.

Another Chilean, the filmmaker and writer Marilú Mallet, brought out two collections of short stories in Quebec in the early and mid-1980s; both

works were published in French and English translation but never appeared in Spanish. The thematic content of Mallet's work shows an almost unbroken progression from a Chilean to a Québécois identity. In her first book, *Voyage to the Other Extreme,* the stories move thematically from satires of the Chilean bureaucracy before and during the coup d'état to tales of flight and torture in Chile, and then to a key story set in Montreal in which two refugee lovers, a Latin American woman who has fled a rightist regime and a Pole who has escaped communism, find that all they really share is their pain. The stories of *Miami Trip,* on the other hand, deal with themes of the isolation of the individual and the difficulty of making intimate contact with other people, and primarily involve either Québécois or European characters. Only two stories involve Latin Americans, both in peculiar roles.

"Affaire classée" is narrated by a Latin American woman who has fled to Quebec from an unnamed country and has successfully assimilated into the new society. Frank, her former boyfriend, immigrated along with her and then lived with her. For him, she "represented Montreal" (Mallet, 39), and though she at first found him comical and imaginative, he later proves to be a psychotic madman who comes back to haunt her like a shadow from her Latin past. She describes him as an alcoholic, slovenly, violent person whose political meetings are sorry excuses for drinking bouts, and whose efforts at poetry consist mainly of vengeful diatribes and descriptions of female dismemberment. The narrator finally changes the locks on Frank and settles down with Pierre, a Québécois, who is kind enough to invite Frank out with them and even reacts with forbearance when Frank later tries to strangle the narrator herself. The difference between the two men shows how much the narrator's attitude has changed toward the opposite sex: she has come to prefer gentleness and understanding, even in the face of an outrage, to empty posturing. Frank ultimately kills himself by crashing into a streetlight in a new car, after which Pierre remarks that the matter is closed. The narrator has adapted; Frank hasn't.

In the succeeding story, "La mutation," the first child born in Quebec to a Latin American couple turns out to be a monster. The parents had found him strange from the beginning, especially since he was fat, with blond hair, while they were both thin and dark. As he grows older, the boy proves unable to communicate other than to make "deep, guttural sounds like a sick beast" (Mallet, 50). Neither parent can understand the child, and the father has doubts as to his paternity. The problem turns out to be that

Pepito has learned to speak from his little Hungarian friend at the day-care centre. Thematically, the story is an paradigm of immigrant fears, especially that of raising a child in a language that is not one's own. Indeed, the parents' alienation is so deep that the child himself is perceived as grotesque and threatening.

Finally, two authors already mentioned as politically inspired, the Salvadoran poet and fiction writer Salvador Torres and the Chilean poet Alfredo Lavergne, reflect the theme of alienation from the new country. One of Torres' recent short stories, "L'antre des égarés," written directly in French, presents the tragicomic world of multiethnic marginals, multiple substance-abusers, drunken philosophers, and would-be artists who frequent a Montreal bar. Unlike Frank in Mallet's "Affaire classée," Torres' characters, though thoroughly burned-out, are dangerous only to themselves; they congregate and exchange tales and polyglot reminiscences.

> —Moi, je me tiens pas mal ici, dit soudainement le doyen des habitués, parce que cette boîte me rappelle l'ambiance ineffable qui régnait dans la Babel mythologique. Et aussi parce que je suis un voyageur esseulé, parcourant les heures à l'affût des paysages renversants disséminés dans les mondes éthiliques et les univers stupéfiants... (Torres Saso, *XYZ*, 50)

One of them, Merlin, chemically reduces himself to a state of total numbness, in which he feels "[rien] pantoute, mademoiselle" (Torres Saso, *XYZ*, 55) and then falls dead as he walks outside. These characters' adaptation to their new environment is one of denial, withdrawl, or a frantic and doomed effort at transcendence. In Lavergne's poem "Y en la radio... Marjo cantaba" also deals with the marginalized immigrant, this time in his relationship with a *belle québécoise*, in which each takes advantage of the other in an effort to soothe their own particular alienations:

> La conocí
> balanceando en el parque
> a su hijo único.
> y a mí...
> con el cliché de macho-latino.
>
> Elevó la batuta de... "Te invito a un café."
>
> Se desnudó en la casa que la habita
> mientras a altos decibeles retumbaba
> la rocker-coca-colera.

Paseó en mi lengua
e intentó alejarse del "straight"
de su ex marido.

Y en una de las gotas de la eyaculación
sentí el timbre tan deseado
de inmigrante recibido.
(Lavergne, unpublished)

—

I met her
swinging her only child
in the park
and I
with my macho Latino cliché.

She began the overture with
"Come on over for coffee".

Then took off her clothes in the house that inhabits her
while the Coca-Cola rocker
boomed out her decibels.

She roamed across my tongue
trying to flee
her straight ex-husband.

And in the spurt of ejaculation
I felt the longed-for seal
of the landed immigrant.

What of the future for Latin American writing in Quebec? Although it is possible, as the Chilean poet and critic Jorge Etcheverry has observed (Etcheverry, 308-309), that Chilean or other specifically national literatures in the province may die out with the present generation of authors, Latin American literature as a whole in Quebec is almost certain to flourish as long as new immigrant writers continue to arrive, and many who do come will undoubtedly take up some of the same themes that their predecessors have explored. More established authors, meanwhile, may well increasingly integrate into the literary mainstream, and, as their writing develops, many will move forward to discover and explore new thematic ground.

1 Foremost among the small Spanish-language presses is CEDAH (Centre d'Études et de Diffusion des Amériques Hispanophones), which has published a dozen books of poetry and short stories including works by Edith Velásquez, Eucilda Jorge Morel, and Yvonne América Truque. Las Ediciones de la Enana Blanca, a trilingual (Spanish/French/English) publishing concern, has brought out *La Présence d'une autre Amérique*, the first anthology of Latino-Québécois writing in French, as well as the poetry of Maeve López and a book of bilingual (French-Spanish) children's stories by the Chilean dramatist and fiction writer Rodrigo González. Les Éditions Omélic has published books of poetry by Jorge Cancino and an anthology of four Chilean-Canadian short-story writers entitled *Exilium Tremens*; Édiciones Gráfico, now located in Ottawa, has published two Chileans, Jorge Lizama and Pedro Riffo; and Las Ediciones del Unicornio Verde has brought out half-a-dozen books, including an anthology of Latina writers of Canada, which was published in both Spanish and French editions.

Ediciones Cordillera, based in Ottawa, also has a long list of titles, mostly by Chilean-Canadians living in Ontario. In 1993 Cordillera published *Northern Cronopios*, edited by Jorge Etcheverry, an anthology of fiction by Chilean writers in Canada that included short stories by nine writers from Montreal.

2 Among the most active French publishers has been VLB, especially its "Collection latino-américaine," edited by the Uruguayan critic Javier García Méndez, which has brought out six works of fiction by Latin American writers from Quebec and the rest of Canada, as well as from South America. Humanitas has published three collections of plays and a memoir by Alberto Kurapel, as well as bilingual works by Chilean filmmaker Jorge Fajardo and Salvadoran poet and fiction writer Salvador Torres. Les Éditions d'Orphée has been bringing out books of poetry by new and experimental Québécois and English Quebec authors for almost half a century, and has been a key publisher of Latin American work, including four books of poems by Nelly Davis Vallejos. Virtually all of Alfredo Lavergne's work, as well as Tito Alvarado's recent fictional anthology of twelve Chilean writers, has appeared in Orphée's curious back-to-back bilingual (Spanish-French) editions. Boréal's attractively produced and more market-oriented editions have included the Uruguayan novelist and poet Gloria Escomel and the Mexican novelist Gilberto Flores Patiño. Québec-Amérique has published two very well-received books of short stories by Marilú Mallet, but has not gone any further. Finally, Les Écrits des Forges has brought out a semi-bilingual book of poetry by the Salvadoran writer Juan Ramón Mijango Mármol and two collections of poetry by Alberto Kurapel in French.

On the English side, Véhicule Press has published Marilú Mallet's first collection of short stories; The Muses' Company has brought out Elias Letelier-Ruz's two books of poetry; Renato Trujillo has had several collections of poems published with Goose Lane Editions of New Brunswick; and Cormorant Books, of Dunvegan, Ontario (near Montreal) has published *Compañeros* (edited by Hugh Hazelton and Gary Geddes), an anthology of Canadian writing on Latin America by 87 English-Canadian, Québécois, Haitian, and Latino-Canadian writers.

3 .In Chile itself, Ediciones Documentas has published a novel by Francisco Viñuela, a book of short stories by Hernán Barrios, and a literary study of Juan Goytisolo by Ariel

Del Barrio, all of which have received favourable, though limited, coverage in Santiago and Valparaíso.

4 Cross-cultural literary influences have so far been largely confined to authors themselves. Claude Beausoleil, who is in close contact with Mexican writers and published an anthology of Mexican poetry in 1989, has aided several Latino-Québécois poets in establishing themselves and finding publishers. Bernard Pozier, of Les Écrits des Forges, has reviewed works by Hispanic writers of Quebec in the handbook *La Poésie au Québec (Revue critique)*, which is published annually. Jean Jonaissant, a Haitian-Canadian critic, gave an enthusiastic reception to *La Présence d'une autre Amérique* in *Lettres québécoises* in the summer of 1991, and the Montreal *Gazette* has featured at least three articles on Latin American and Spanish writers in the city. Jean Royer has also published a long piece on Latino-Québécois writing in *Le Devoir* (June 22, 1991). Finally, the indomitable Janou St-Denis has been unstintingly generous in scheduling readings (in French and Spanish) by Hispanic writers of Quebec at least several times a year in her Place aux Poètes, the longest-running series of readings in French in Montreal.

In general, however, little notice is taken in Quebec of literature that is not directly written in French, and bilingual editions are largely ignored (one presumes this will not be the case with two bilingual anthologies of Latino-Québécois writing that will be published by les Éditions de l'Hexagone in 1995 and 1996). Thus Alberto Kurapel, the best-known Chilean writer and playwright in Quebec (and the only Hispanic writer to participate in the latest Nuit de la Poésie in 1991), who usually publishes in bilingual editions, has received little notice in scholarly reviews, while Gloria Escomel, who writes in French, has been well-received. No Latino-Québécois writer figures as yet in any dictionary of Quebec literature or appears regularly in any university curricula.

Few literary journals in Quebec have taken much sustained interest in the work of Hispanic writers in the province. This has, however, been offset by the development of two reviews directly in Spanish: *La botella verde*, edited by Jorge Cancino, of decidedly aesthetic leanings; and *Sur*, edited by Tito Alvarado and distributed in Cuba and Canada, which favours writing that is more politicized. Both editors have also hosted popular weekly radio programs on literature in Spanish on Radio Centre-ville, as has Sergio Martínez on Radio McGill. *Boréal*, a trilingual review founded almost two decades ago by the Spanish poet Manuel Betanzos Santos, still publishes periodically, and for the past two years *Ruptures*, edited by the Haitian-Canadian writer Edgard Gousse, has been publishing and translating work from all over the Americas (and beyond) in the principal languages of the Western Hemisphere: French, English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Funding by government sources such as Canadian and Quebec Multiculturalism has served primarily to finance translation from Spanish into French or English, and occasionally to help in printing costs. The Canada Council has also dispersed a few writing grants, awarded by Spanish-speaking judges.

5 This, and all subsequent textual English translations, are by the author of the present study.

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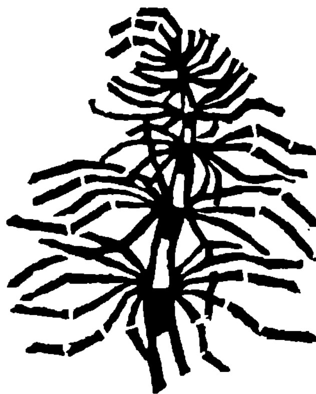

Ecologia Primera

de *Ecologas y Urbanas* (obra en preparacion)

La poesía
es
ecología
con
urbanidad

Reciclar
palabras
o usarlas
biodegradables

Aumentar
los recursos
de la lengua
explotándolos honda alta ilimitadamente

No contaminar
demasiado
el papel de la vida

¿Hay poemas
con chimeneas
o vertederos?

La radioactividad
de la poesía
es buena para los huesos

No se conocen
versos de plástico
ni con conservantes
ni con colorantes

El verso es siempre
cien por cien verso
ni una sola sílaba
es
de prosa o poliéster

Todo lo que no es verso
se hace verso en el verso

En un verso
cabe el universo
su materia prima
con aroma y color naturales

Porque hasta el ritmo y la rima
pueden ser ingredientes
supernaturales
si se cultivan orgánicamente

La poesía es casi
respirar
pero sin miedo
al aire

Usar
lo necesario
Sólo lo
necesario
aunque sea prácticamente inútil
o inútilmente práctico mejor dicho

La poesía es andar
por caminos y calles como por tu casa
o ir en tranvía
sin tubo de escape
recibiendo por el trole
y los raíles
la electricidad del cielo y de la tierra
en la ciudad del sol

La poesía
no quiere maximizar
el beneficio
sino minimizar
el perjuicio
Y siempre deja
un amplio margen
para especular

Las altas
acciones
de la poesía

son obligaciones
sin compromiso
a largo plazo

Para las personas
interesantes
la poesía es
desinteresada
pero con interés

La poesía
viene del aire
por la vida
va al agua
por la historia
vuelve a la tierra
por el aire
por el agua
y a la vida

Podrá no haber poesía
pero siempre
habrá poetas
mientras haya
hombres de palabra palabras de hombre

Ciclo natural humano

22-X-93 / 24-XII-93 / 12-III-94

First Ecologue

from *Ecologues and Urban Pieces* (work in progress)

Poetry
is
ecology
with
urbanity

Recycling
words
or using
biodegradable ones

Increasing
our language
resources
utilizing them to their depth height limitlessly

Not polluting
too much
the page of life

Are there any poems
with chimneys
or garbage dumps?

The radioactivity
of poetry
is good for the bones

Verses made of plastic
or with preservatives
or artificial colours
are unheard of

Each verse is always
one hundred percent poetry
not one single syllable
is made
of prose or polyester

Everything that is not poetry
becomes poetry in poetry

In just one verse
fits the universe
—its raw material—
with its natural flavour and colour

For even rhythm and rhyme
can be supernatural
ingredients
if cultivated organically

Poetry is almost like
breathing
but without fearing
the air

Using
what's necessary
only what's necessary
even if it is
practically useless
or better said uselessly practical

Poetry is walking
on paths and streets as you would in your home
or riding on a streetcar
with no exhaust pipe
receiving through its trolley
and rails
the electricity of the sky and earth
in the city of sun

Poetry
does not want to maximize
profits
but rather to minimize
prejudice

And it always leaves
a wide margin
for speculation

Poetry's noblest
transactions

are long-term bonds
without compromises

For interesting people
poetry is disinterested
but produces interest

Poetry
comes from the air
through life
goes to the water
through history
returns to the earth
through the air
through the water
and to life

There might not be poetry
but there will always
be poets
as long as there are
human beings of their words words of human beings

Natural human cycle

Translation by Alexandra López Pacheco

Mary Ellen Ross

Que le diable l'emporte
réalisme merveilleux et religion dans *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant*

Si le regard des critiques, tant québécois que latino-américains, commence à porter depuis une dizaine d'années sur l'étude comparatiste de ces deux littératures,[1] il n'en reste pas moins que le terrain est à peine déblayé. Bernard Andrès le reconnaît bien lorsqu'il situe sa propre démarche dans "l'état encore embryonnaire de la recherche sur l'axe nord-sud."[2] Les premiers jalons d'une critique à la recherche de liens possibles entre les littératures québécoise et latino-américaine dégagent quand même un certain nombre de points de convergence, dont l'importance d'une thématique de l'identité.[3] Par contre, malgré la condition de colonisés qu'on attribue souvent aux Québécois et aux citoyens de l'Amérique latine,[4] la critique affirme la plus grande influence européenne, et surtout française, sur la littérature québécoise, car le Québécois garderait "l'attitude d'une certaine façon déférente (...) pour la culture et la langue françaises."[5] Selon Flavio Aguiar, écrivain et professeur brésilien, l'insécurité des Québécois à affirmer leur littérature les distinguerait de ses concitoyens; il attribue cette insécurité de la "littérature-fille" au statut de la "littérature-mère," la française, comme une des grandes littératures du monde.[6] Certains critiques québécois partagent la perception d'une "contradiction dans l'américanité québécoise"[7]: Gilles Thérien reconnaît la particularité du Québec, qui "peut jouer alternativement la carte européenne en affirmant sa francité ou la carte nord-américaine au nom de son américanité."[8] Ces remarques liminaires ne servent qu'à démontrer la justesse d'une déclaration générale de Maximilien Laroche: "Il y a en définitive des points de divergence indéni-

ables et des points de rapprochement tout aussi incontestables entre les écrivains québécois et les écrivains latino-américains."[9]

La recherche de ces points de rapprochement, qui pourrait suivre plusieurs pistes, m'amène dans le présent cas à considérer le cas de Jacques Ferron, car Ferron figure sans conteste parmi les écrivains québécois qu'on évoque le plus souvent dans le contexte d'une comparaison possible des romans québécois et latino-américain.[10] On doit sans doute en partie cette perception d'un parallélisme possible à un caractère quasi universel du texte ferronien, qui "résiste à l'effet réducteur inhérent à toute lecture et échappe à la conjoncture et au contexte dans lesquels il est apparu"; cette caractéristique permet aussi, comme le note Pierre L'Hérault, qu'on discute Ferron, écrivain dont la production date surtout des années soixante et du début des années soixante-dix, dans les débats les plus actuels de la critique au Québec.[11] La capacité des textes de Ferron, quoiqu'ils représentent des personnages et des épisodes incontestablement ancrés dans une réalité québécoise,[12] de dépasser en même temps le contexte québécois de leur parution, justifiera donc la présente étude, où l'on considérera *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* de Ferron à la lumière d'une observation de Irlemar Chiampi sur le réalisme merveilleux de l'Amérique hispanophone.

Tel que défini par Chiampi, le réalisme merveilleux problématise les codes socio-cognitifs du lecteur sans créer de paradoxe, dans la mesure où il y a dans le texte une discontinuité entre la cause et l'effet. Cette causalité diffuse permet la coexistence dans le texte du réel et de l'irréel. Selon Chiampi, le réalisme merveilleux se distingue nettement du fantastique et du merveilleux: mise en question dans le texte fantastique, la causalité serait absente du texte merveilleux. Les personnages du réalisme merveilleux ne se laissent jamais déconcerter devant le surnaturel (à la différence des personnages du récit fantastique), mais le réalisme merveilleux ne présente pas non plus le refus net de la réalité et de l'ambiguïté qui caractérise l'univers merveilleux.[13]

Chiampi précise que le réalisme merveilleux se manifeste dans des références constantes à la foi religieuse, procédé qui permet d'éviter l'effet du fantastique. Elle cite chez Carpentier la représentation des pratiques magiques du vaudou, technique liée à la représentation de l'histoire haïtienne:

> En *El Reino de este Mundo,* de Alejo Carpentier, la serie de acontecimientos legendarios que precedieron la independencia de Haití es sistemáticamente vinculada al pensamiento mítoco de los negros, para evitar el efecto de fantasticidad que convertiría la misma Historia en un referente imposible.[14]

Selon Chiampi, le rôle de la mythologie, des croyances religieuses, de la magie et des traditions populaires dans le réalisme merveilleux consiste à instaurer, à la différence du fantastique, qui se caractérise par cette inquiétante étrangeté que Freud appelle "Unheimliche", son contraire, le "Heimliche", familier et collectif.[15] Il s'agit ainsi de concilier, par l'intermédiaire des références aux croyances religieuses, qui proviennent souvent des plus profondes racines autochtones d'un peuple,[16] les deux logiques du réalisme et du merveilleux.

Malgré le fait que Chiampi étudie le réalisme merveilleux comme un phénomène littéraire de l'Amérique hispanophone, elle souligne le caractère souple de son propre modèle:

> no pretendemos establecer un modelo rígido y absoluto, aplicable sin restricciones a todos los casos. Aun cuando el texto poético sea único, tal singularidad no impide que en él se manifiesten propriedades comunes con otros textos.[17]

Reconnaissant la "singularité" de chaque auteur du réalisme merveilleux, plus encore quand il est question d'un romancier québécois, je ne prétends aucunement poser un parallélisme complet entre l'ouvrage de Ferron et ceux des auteurs sud-américains qui préoccupent Chiampi. Par exemple, il faut noter une distinction de base entre le rôle de la thématique religieuse chez un auteur comme Carpentier et chez Ferron: il est surtout question d'une mythologie chrétienne, et non autochtone, chez l'auteur québécois.[18] Mais cette dissemblance n'empêche pas qu'on étudie un réalisme merveilleux ferronien, où pèsent très lourd la thématique et le lexique religieux, dans *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant*.[19]

Ce roman, relativement peu étudié jusqu'ici, présente les aventures de trois personnages qui s'appellent tous "Jean Goupil", nom qui évoque la ruse du renard. Les trois ont affaire au diable et deux d'entre eux se servent de sa chaise magique. Il s'agit d'une

> vilaine chaise de bois, (...) peinte à la suie et calcinée par endroits comme il ne s'en voit guère que dans les boutiques de forge, où s'assoient les maîtres des chevaux à ferrer pendant que du feu, activé par le soufflet, revolent les flammèches et parfois les tisons.[20]

L'association du diable et des forges relève d'une longue tradition québécoise, présente dans les croyances populaires et dans certains contes du dix-neuvième siècle. Pierre DesRuisseaux note que, dans au moins un village de Beauce, on racontait, "il n'y a pas si longtemps de cela," que les forges

étaient le domaine du diable, la nuit.[21] Le conte de Louis Fréchette, "Le Diable des Forges", décrit un tour du Malin, qui habite les forges d'un village et tient à punir un groupe de voyageurs d'avoir dansé le dimanche.[22] Pourtant, la fonction de cette association est distincte dans le roman de Ferron: si, dans le conte de Fréchette, comme dans d'autres récits de cette époque, le diable punit une transgression, rétablissant l'"ordre perturbé du monde [...] pour préserver la morale traditionnelle,"[23] on constate que le contraire se produit chez Ferron. En effet, la présence du diable comme personnage dans *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* permet le triomphe, souvent grâce à des comportements peu orthodoxes aux yeux de l'Eglise, des petites gens, et la défaite des institutions du pouvoir civil et ecclésiastique. Il s'agit en fait du "triomphe de la ruse sur la force, de la conscience sur l'obscurité du pouvoir,"[24] mouvement éminemment subversif. Ainsi, le premier Jean Goupil, contrebandier notoire devenu préfet du comté, dont le père vient "des Bas,"[25] réussit, quand le diable veut le suborner, à garder et son âme et l'argent du Malin. Le curé du village, qui s'est montré assez souvent hostile au défunt, se voit obligé d'accorder le bénéfice du doute à celui-ci et de l'enterrer en terre bénie. Le deuxième personnage qui porte le nom Jean Goupil jouit également d'un succès éclatant, réalisant, grâce aux pouvoirs magiques de la chaise, son ambition de devenir membre du Sénat canadien et ce, malgré ses origines humbles d'orphelin.

La donnée anecdotique du roman ferronien rejoint le modèle de Chiampi, offrant une juxtaposition non problématisée d'éléments naturels et surnaturels, où le rationnel et l'irrationnel figurent de manière égalitaire,[26] puisque c'est par l'intervention du diable dans la vie quotidienne des Goupil que ces héros populaires franchiront des barrières sociales importantes au Québec du vingtième siècle. Mais l'emploi, dans l'élaboration du réalisme merveilleux de *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant*, d'une thématique et d'un vocabulaire qui appartiennent au domaine de la religion, se fait d'une manière assez particulière: il s'agit de l'effacement, tout au long du récit, non seulement des distinctions entre le réel et l'irréel, mais aussi des pôles qui opposent, dans la tradition chrétienne et catholique du Québec, le bien et le mal, le sacré et le profane. En fin de compte, il ne reste plus aucune distinction entre le diable et le bon Dieu, et la chaise de maréchal ferrant a perdu sa capacité de voler dans les airs, "plus vite que l'éclair."[27]

La *Chaise du maréchal ferrant* comporte quatre chapitres, dont le premier se termine par la mort du contrebandier Jean Goupil, mort triomphale puisque Dieu survient au moment où le vieux Goupil est sur le point de conclure son pacte diabolique. Le bon Dieu amène Jean Goupil au ciel, tout en chassant le démon:

> Qu'avait donc le diable à témoigner d'un tel effroi? Voici qu'ensuite il déguerpissait, renversant sa vieille chaise de maréchal ferrant; voici qu'il ouvrait la grand-porte avec fracas, se sauvant dans le noir, parmi les hurlements des grandes mers qui se brisaient contre la falaise, en bas de l'église. Qui donc se tenait derrière Jean Goupil? Qui donc avait mis en déroute le diable, y perdant son argent et sa chaise volante, sans emporter pour autant l'âme qu'il venait d'acheter? Jean Goupil n'eut pas la force de se retourner mais il y avait quelqu'un, quelqu'un dont la voix était plus douce que celle de sa mère Fabienne, plus douce que la voix de sa femme Lorraine, quelqu'un derrière lui qui n'était pas son père Jérôme, qui n'était ni homme ni femme et lui disait:
> —Tu es mort, Ti-gars.
> —Je suis mort, Seigneur? [28]

Le dénouement du premier chapitre offre donc l'antagonisme du diable et du Seigneur, du bien et du mal, caractéristique de toute une pensée catholique qui a profondément marqué la tradition québécoise.[29] Il faut reconnaître le caractère assez émouvant de ce salut in extremis, épisode qui figure parmi les extraits préférés de l'auteur même.[30] Mais en fait, l'ensemble de *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* s'efforcera de déconstruire l'opposition binaire qui sépare ici Dieu et le diable. Beaucoup plus typiques sont les passages où l'on met sur un pied d'égalité des personnages et éléments que la mythologie catholique québécoise verrait comme des pôles inconciliables. Cette neutralisation d'une dichotomie se fait de plusieurs façons, grâce à l'application du lexique religieux à d'autres domaines de la vie quotidienne, l'appropriation par les personnages des privilèges de Dieu et du clergé, ou bien la juxtaposition insolite d'éléments diaboliques et sacrés.

L'abolition des frontières qui séparent le sacré et le profane se fait dès l'incipit:

> Jean Goupil éleva sa famille à Cap-Chat, en Gaspésie, où il avait acheté une grand'maison, près de l'église. Jeune encore, il fut un notable hautement considéré, familier avec chacun et respecté de tous. Souvent on le consultait avant le curé Godfrey, quelquefois après et il lui est arrivé de régler des affaires où le Révérend, pourtant si avisé, était resté tout embrouillé. Tout le monde savait que le grand saint Pierre de Miquelon l'avait déjà favorisé. Pour sa part, il sut s'arrêter au meilleur d'une dévotion qui, tolérée sur place, était persécutée par le Dominion du Canada. Que de mariniers on pourrait citer, qui, pris d'une sainte

frénésie, étaient allés trop loin et avaient assisté à la saisie de leur barge ou de leur goélette, y inclus le précieux chargement. Jean Goupil avait pris et n'avait pas été pris.[31]

Ce qui frappe le plus dans ce passage, c'est sans doute la circonlocution plaisante qu'emploie le narrateur pour se référer à la contrebande de l'alcool pendant la Prohibition aux Etats-Unis. Jean Goupil, qui cherchait du rhum à Saint-Pierre de Miquelon, pour le vendre par la suite aux Américains, serait un dévot, favorisé du "grand saint Pierre de Miquelon," tandis que certains des collègues du protagoniste, pris d'une "sainte frénésie," se font persécuter comme des martyrs par le gouvernement fédéral du Canada. La circonlocution qui rapproche le commerce illégal et la dévotion, reprise plus loin,[32] emploie le lexique religieux pour décrire ce qui est profane, voire malin. Cet extrait illustre la manière dont le vocabulaire chrétien, ou plus précisément catholique, devient la constante à partir de laquelle se décrivent le profane et le mal.

De même, le passage qui décrit les amours de Jean Goupil fait preuve d'une tendance à utiliser le lexique religieux dans un contexte plutôt terrestre. Lorsque Jean Goupil décide de se marier, Louis Barnèche, conteur admiré de tous à Mont-Saint-Pierre, "Bible vivante de la Côte,"[33] annonce l'arrivée de l'ancien contrebandier à l'amoureuse de ce dernier, disant "Qui vous attendiez est arrivé." La jeune fille, comblée, marche "comme un ostensoir entre les fleurs et les sapins."[34] De plus, cette annonce se fait à la sortie de la messe. Le vieux conteur est ainsi une Bible, tandis que Jean Goupil, criminel qui a voulu vendre son âme au diable, incarne le Messie attendu qu'on annonce sur le perron de l'église, et la jeune amoureuse passionnée brille comme un ostensoir.

D'autres épisodes de la carrière du contrebandier illustrent une tendance à usurper sur les prérogatives de l'Eglise. Lorsque Jean Goupil achète sa goélette, La Sainte-Anne, il la baptisera La Fabienne.[35] La mère biblique cède donc sa place à la mère du personnage, née Fabienne Blanchette. De même, incident plutôt comique, l'évêque Monseigneur Ross doit céder sa place au contrebandier:

Ce jour-là, toutes les populations étaient le long de la route pour rendre hommage à Mgr Ross qui de Gaspé se rendait à New Carlisle pour une cérémonie de confiration (sic). Sa Grandeur était haute auprès de Dieu et fort aimée dans tout le diocèse. Un peu avant l'heure prévue, debout dans une décapotable suivie de quatre limousines de dignitaires, elle passa en bénissant, à une vitesse moyenne qui était peut-être supérieure au petit train ecclésiastique, ce dont personne

> d'ailleurs ne se formalisa, car tout le monde avait été béni et l'on croyait que Sa Grandeur, pour une raison seul connue du Seigneur, était en retard. Seulement, lorsque le vénéré Mgr Ross s'amena par après, de trente à soixante minutes plus tard, il n'y avait plus personne pour le saluer au passage, plus personne à bénir...[36]

Ce n'est pas un hasard si Jean Goupil décide de se jouer de l'évêque pour contrarier la Gendarmerie royale, dont il franchit allégrement les barrages, déguisé en haut ecclésiastique. En franchissant les barrières érigées par les autorités civiles, le héros narquois abolit aussi celles qui régissent la hiérarchie sacrée.

Il n'est donc guère etonnant que Jean Goupil s'achète une maison tout proche de l'église paroissiale de son village. Lorsque l'ancien contrebandier s'y installe, c'est le curé qui signale la contiguïté des deux édifices et les préoccupations opposées de leurs habitants:

> Avec son argent, sa boisson, quel charivari je vais avoir! On pensera que le diable et le bon Dieu ont rappoché leurs deux boutiques pour mieux se disputer la clientèle...[37]

Ici Jean Goupil et le curé semblent représenter respectivement le mal et le bien. Mais on constate que ces personnages se ressemblent de près aux yeux des paroissiens: après tout, les villageois consultent indifféremment ces deux "notables" et Jean Goupil s'approprie de nouveau un privilège du clergé.

Si le premier Jean Goupil fait preuve d'une dévotion toute particulière à saint Pierre de Miquelon, se fait décrire comme le Messie et se plaît à empiéter sur les prérogatives de l'Eglise, le deuxième personnage à porter ce nom, celui qui se servira de la chaise de maréchal ferrant pour devenir sénateur, semble se placer dès sa naissance sous l'égide de l'église. On expose le nouveau-né "contre une des portes latérales de la basilique de Québec dans un petit moïse".[38] Mis d'abord sous la protection d'un vieux prêtre, il se trouvera par la suite chez "une grand-rousse venue de Jersey qui avait blondi après son baptême et son entrée dans la sainte Eglise."[39]

Ces débuts de carrière semblent irréprochables, mais, étant donné l'omniprésence du lexique religieux dans le récit, on ne s'étonnera pas devant le nom de ceux qui adoptent en fin de compte le deuxième Jean Goupil: il s'agit d'un couple nommé le pape Poulin et la Romaine. Il est évidemment question, encore une fois, d'usurpation de titre ecclésiastique. Le narrateur rend explicite le parallèle que suggèrent déjà ces noms:

Ce pape Poulin, plus haut en couleur que tous les Borgia qui l'avaient précédé, dont le faste était ostentatoire et connu, non seulement dans Saint-Zacharie, mais encore dans Dorchester et dans la Beauce, n'avait quand même que des moyens très limités pour se maintenir dans les pompes à la hauteur de sa renommée et de sa gloire.[40]

La métaphore se poursuit: lorsque le pape Poulin chasse l'orphelin de chez lui, il l'"excommunie," tout "comme s'il jouissait de l'infaillibilité pontificale."[41]

La cause de cette excommunication? C'est la rencontre du jeune homme et d'une prostituée, Thérésa. La description de cette fille est fidèle au schéma qu'on a relevé: même lorsque l'emploi d'un vocabulaire ecclésiastique semble au plus haut degré incongru, il sert à rappocher le sacré et le profane. Le narrateur insiste donc à plusieurs reprises sur le fait que la prostituée "a été formée au couvent de Sillery par les dames de la Congrégation."[42]

Quant à la chaise de maréchal ferrant, de nombreux détails suggèrent son appartenance au monde de l'Eglise. Le meuble diabolique passe l'hiver qui suit la mort de Jean Goupil dans la salle paroissiale de Cap-Chat.[43] A part le diable, le premier personnage à se servir de la chaise est le sacristain de la paroisse, homme des plus dévots. Celui-ci arrive, grâce aux pouvoirs de la chaise, à Québec, peu après la sortie du deuxième Jean Goupil de l'église Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, où il priait. Jean Goupil se trouve une canne à pêche et se met à prendre des poissons:

A peine avait-il avalé tout rond le dernier (poisson) qu'il aperçut tout contre lui, assis sur une chaise de bois peinte à la suie et calcinée par endroits, un chrétien qui roulait de gros yeux, semblait inquiet et lui parut fâché. C'était Eméry Samuel qui, parti de Cap-Chat, se trouvait rendu en moins d'un instant sur les quais de Québec et que Jean Goupil prenait pour le propriétaire de la canne à pêche. Eméry Samuel dit à haute voix, ne parlant qu'à lui-même:

—Sans la sainte invocation à Joseph, à Jésus et à Marie, je serais encore en l'air et Dieu seul sait où maintenant je serais rendu.[44]

L'arrivée du "chrétien" Eméry Samuel sur la chaise diabolique qui fera la fortune de Jean Goupil, suit directement les invocations de l'orphelin dans Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, comme s'il s'agissait d'un décret (peu orthodoxe) de la Providence. Et l'on insiste sur le fait qu'Eméry Samuel arrive à se servir de la chaise infernale à l'aide d'une prière catholique.

Jean Goupil éloigne le sacristain naïf de la chaise en le faisant séduire par la fameuse Thérésa. On retrouve ici l'emploi du lexique sacré, car le futur sénateur décrit l'initiation sexuelle comme un rituel religieux qui rendra définitif le voeu de chasteté que Samuel a pris:

—Tu y retourneras (à Cap-Chat), c'est certain, Eméry Samuel. Auparavant, pendant que je vais garder à l'oeil ta maudite chaise de maréchal ferrant, prends cette lettre rose et va dans la rue Saint-Vallier, à tel numéro. Là, une grand-rousse du nom de Sally O'Rooke voudra avoir la lettre. Refuse de la lui donner. Dis à haute et claire voix qu'elle est destinée à Mademoiselle Thérésa, formée aux choses de la religion par les dames de la Congrégation. Tu verras alors cette pieuse personne descendre par le grand escalier. Elle ne sera pas vêtue de chrétienne façon, mais n'y porte pas attention: ce n'est que pour te mettre à l'épreuve. Tu la suivras à l'étage dans la chambre numéro deux. Là elle te fera boire trois verres d'une boisson ambrée qui te semblera forte et corsée. Eméry Samuel, après cette libation, tes trois voeux seront définitifs.[45]

Tout se passe comme l'avait prévu Jean Goupil: après avoir connu Thérésa, Samuel ne désire plus retourner à Cap-Chat et confie la chaise merveilleuse à l'orphelin. L'ancien sacristain rend visite au diable, qui l'introduit au communisme, idéologie décrite comme une religion, puisque le narrateur note que Marx, Lénine et Staline deviennent les "prophètes" de Samuel.[46]

Il est souvent question dans *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* d'un rapprochement de Dieu, source traditionnelle du bien, et du diable, auteur du mal. Même si Dieu triomphe sur le Malin au terme du premier chapitre, il faut noter que le diable entre chez Jean Goupil par "la grand-porte", qu'on n'ouvre "que rarement pour les jours fastes de la famille et la visite de l'Enfant-Jésus."[47] Dieu et le diable partagent ainsi un moyen d'accès privilégié à la maison du contrebandier. De la même manière, les activités et attitudes du diable se présentent souvent dans *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* comme dévotes et pieuses. Que le diable se plaise à rouler ses dés pipés dans l'arrière-cuisine d'une taverne montréalaise, un autre personnage s'y référera en mentionnant les "pieux exercices" du Malin.[48] Et si le diable préfère croire que sa chaise merveilleuse est perdue à tout jamais, il s'agit selon le narrateur d'un "dogme de foi auquel il fallait croire absolument."[49] Le texte va jusqu'à poser l'équivalence du diable et du Christ. Lorsque le troisième Jean Goupil, qui se nomme en réalité Jean Goupille, fille du deuxième personnage de ce nom, veut faire passer le diable pour son grand-oncle, le démon prononce des paroles que l'Evangile attribue à Jésus-Christ:

—Qu'il en soit fait selon votre volonté, Jean Goupille, dit le diable en prenant un air de Jésus agonisant.[50]

Ce passage marque le rapprochement ultime du Dieu chrétien, en la personne de Jésus-Christ, et du diable. Dieu n'a plus d'emprise sur le Malin, puisqu'ils ont tous deux perdu leur fonction et leur identité surnaturelles,

ce que note Jean Goupille: "Puisqu'il n'y a plus de ciel ni d'enfer, rien ne saurait trop embellir la planète terre."[51] En fait, c'est un dénouement qu'annonçait déjà l'extension du vocabulaire religieux et des privilèges ecclésiastiques et sacrés à tous les aspects de la vie quotidienne des personnages. La disparition des limites qui séparent, sur le plan lexique, sacré et profane, bien et mal, reflète une disparition analogue au niveau de la matière anecdotique du récit, dont la manifestation ultime est la perte des propriétés magiques de la chaise.

A la fin du récit, après que la jeune fille a prononcé ces paroles, la chaise magique cesse de voler, devenue simplement "une vilaine chaise de maréchal ferrant."[52] Comme le diable le reconnaît, la perte des pouvoirs merveilleux de la chaise constitue le signe extérieur de son propre abaissement. De plus, le déclin du diable refléterait celui de Dieu, au dire même du démon:

> Certes, je détiens encore quelques petits pouvoirs magiques, mais que suis-je au fond? Un pauvre vieux diable auquel personne ne croit plus guère. Je ne sais pas comment on se maintient du bord de Dieu, mais du mien on péréclite. Tout a été ramené sur terre. L'au-delà, c'est l'humanité proliférante, et je n'ai rien qu'une vieille taverne dans le port de Montréal.[53]

Le diable quitte donc sa taverne, pour vivre chez les Goupil à Sainte-Catherine, où il se plaît à jardiner à côté du deuxième Jean Goupil. Quelque ridicule que soit ici le diable, être surnaturel dont on a coupé la patte de bouc pour qu'il joue le rôle d'un ancien combattant de la guerre des Boers, et qui semble incarner une sorte de Candide ferronien,[54] il conserve quand même une certaine dignité au terme de l'action. Ce qui est plus, il reste présent, à la différence du bon Dieu, qui ne daigne pas revenir sur terre après le premier chapitre du roman.

Si le fantastique isole le lecteur, effectuant la rupture de la littérature avec le réel, Chiampi déclare que le réalisme merveilleux touche la sensibilité du lecteur comme être de la collectivité, comme membre d'une communauté désirable sans valeurs monolithiques ou hiérarchiques. L'effet de l'enchantement qui caractérise le réalisme merveilleux restaurerait donc la fonction communautaire de la lecture, élargissant la sphère de contact social et les horizons culturels du lecteur.[55] Ainsi, Zilá Bernd analyse, à l'aide du modèle de Chiampi, la façon dont João Ubaldo Ribeiro, dans son roman *Viva o povo brasileiro*, récupère des croyances religieuses et des mythes populaires pour restaurer la conscience collective

du peuple, détruite par la rationalité européenne.[56]

Le présent article démontre que la démarche de Ferron dans *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* consiste moins à récupérer des mythes populaires qu'à défaire une vision binaire et hiérarchique qui privilégie l'ordre sacré au dépens du temporel. Le triomphe des Goupil et la disparition de Dieu au dénouement vont de pair. Selon cette optique, la métamorphose du diable en jardinier et la décadence de sa chaise magique n'ont rien d'étonnant. L'Hérault identifie dans d'autres romans de Ferron, notamment dans *Le Ciel de Québec*, une opposition verticalité/horizontalité, où la verticalité traduit une vision conformiste, tandis que l'horizontalité représente la transgression.[57] Un peu comme le Frank-Anacharsis Scot du *Ciel de Québec*, fils d'évêque qui désire descendre de "l'échelle absurde, glorieuse et branlante, d'une société qui s'édifiait tout en hauteur, dans le but de toucher terre et de fonder sur la réalité (son) appartenance à un nouveau pays,"[58] le diable descend de sa chaise merveilleuse, pour travailler dans son jardin de Sainte-Catherine. Puisque le lexique employé pour décrire le Malin fait de celui-ci non seulement un être pieux mais même une sorte de Christ, il est permis de voir le diable de *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* comme un avatar quelque peu comique du "Christ métonymique" ferronien dont parle Reinhart Hosch. Comme le démontre Hosch, Ferron, tout en se méfiant du Dieu-le-Père distant de la tradition québécoise, estime le Christ, descendu parmi les hommes pour partager leur réel.[59] L'admiration que Ferron voue au Christ est manifeste:

> Je suis chrétien à ras terre et de courte façon, n'arrivant pas à croire en l'au-delà, terminant la vie ici-bas, mais je crois en la Communion des vivants et des morts et suis dévot du Fils, abandonné de tous dès le jardin des Oliviers, principe de la mort individuelle, toujours solitaire.[60]

Tout comme le diable de *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant*, pour qui l'au-delà, c'était "l'humanité proliférante", Ferron limite son ambition à la sphère humaine.

Même si le diable ne réussit pas à emporter le contrebandier Jean Goupil, il l'emporte sur Dieu au terme de l'action, choisissant de travailler parmi les humains, plutôt que de décamper. Bien que Ferron renverse ainsi les valeurs d'une mythologie chrétienne, au lieu de mettre en relief celles d'une tradition religieuse autochtone, la visée de sa démarche s'apparente au projet réaliste-merveilleux des auteurs qu'étudie Chiampi. La neutralisation des oppositions bien/mal et sacré/profane dans le réalisme merveilleux de *La*

Chaise du maréchal ferrant rejoint le modèle de Chiampi, puisqu'il s'agit bel et bien de fonder, grâce aux références à la religion, l'appartenance à une communauté "horizontale" dont les valeurs ne se montrent plus, en fin de compte, hiérarchiques.

NOTES

1 On peut citer, par exemple, le dossier comparatiste "Québec-Amérique latine" paru dans *Voix et images* 34 (automne 1986) et le numéro d'*Etudes littéraires* consacré aux "Regards du Brésil sur la littérature du Québec" 16.2 (août 1983).

2 "Editorial," *Voix et images* 34 (automne 1986): 6.

3 Selon Zilá Bernd, les "problèmes concernant l'auto-définition de l'être deviennent la thématique obsessionnelle des principaux écrivains d'Amérique, y compris les Brésiliens et les Québécois" ("La Quête d'identité: une aventure ambiguë," *Voix et images* 34 [automne 1986]: 22). Amaryll Chanady évoque également le "manque d'identité nationale," question qu'abordent Aquin et Cortázar ("Entre la quête et la métalittérature—Aquin et Cortázar comme représentants du postmoderne excentrique," *Voix et images* 34 [automne 1986]: 46).

4 Irlemar Chiampi, intervention faite au cours d'un débat suivant une com munication de Maximilien Laroche, rapportée dans *Etudes littéraires* 16.2 (août 1983): 195.

5 Chiampi, *Etudes littéraires* 16.2 (août 1983): 196.

6 "De São Paulo à Montréal: circuits littéraires," entrevue de Lise Gauvin avec Flavio Aguiar, *Possibles* 8.4 (1983): 122.

7 Chiampi, *Etudes littéraires* 16.2 (août 1983): 196.

8 Gilles Thérien, "La Littérature québécoise, une littérature du tiers-monde?," *Voix et images* 34 (automne 1986): 13.

9 Maximilien Laroche, "La Littérature québécoise face à la littérature latino-américaine," *Etudes littéraires* 16.2 (août 1983): 197.

10 Laroche compare par exemple Ferron à Alejo Carpentier, qualifiant l'écrivain québécois, qui parle d'un "vodou québécois" dans *Papa Boss*, de fondateur d'un réalisme merveilleux ("La Littérature québécoise face à la littérature latino-américaine," 193). Andrès mentionne également Ferron dans son introduction au dossier comparatiste de *Voix et images* 34 [automne 1986]: 6).

11 Pierre L'Hérault, "Le Pas des générations," *Littératures* 9-10 (1992): 221.

12 Le fragment suivant insiste sur la nécessité de privilégier l'espace québécois: "Faire le point. Situer au Québec le centre du monde, l'opération la plus simple de la géométrie dans l'espace; il suffit d'un dilemne (*sic*): vous privilégiez l'endroit du monde qui vous porte ou bien vous êtes un insignifiant. Cela fait, vous pouvez vous donner des ouvertures sur le monde..." (Jacques Ferron, *Du fond de mon arrière-cuisine*, Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1973, 187).

13 Chiampi, *El realismo maravilloso. Forma e ideología en la novela hispanoamericana* (Caracas: Monte Avila Editores, 1983) 71-73.

14 Chiampi, *El realismo maravilloso* 75.

15 Chiampi, *El realismo maravilloso* 81-82.

16 Chiampi, *El realismo maravilloso* 77.

17 Chiampi, *El realismo maravilloso* 56.

18 Jean Marcel souligne justement la primauté de la mythologie chrétienne, retravaillée et renouvelée, dans l'oeuvre de Ferron (*Jacques Ferron malgré lui*, Montréal: Editions Parti pris, 1978, 116). Il existe cependant des personnages métis dans l'oeuvre de Ferron, dont Tinamer Poulin, femme du deuxième Jean Goupil et mère d'une fille, également nommée Jean Goupille dans *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant*: pour L'Hérault, le métissage, élément central du *Ciel de Québec* et du *Saint-Elias*, "veut suggérer le dynamisme d'un Québec en pleine mutation [...] figure de liberté absolue sur laquelle doit se fonder le Québec pour s'accomplir" (*Jacques Ferron, cartographe de l'imaginaire*, Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal: 1980, 146).

19 J'ai exploré ailleurs la transformation ludique du cliché dans *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant*, procédé formel et autoréflexif qui met en relief la double isotopie, naturelle et surnaturelle, du réalisme merveilleux dans le roman (Mary Ellen Ross, "Littéralisation du cliché et réalisme merveilleux dans *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* et *Papa Boss* de Jacques Ferron," *Etudes françaises* 27.2, 1991: 61-73).

20 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1972) 10.

21 Pierre DesRuisseaux, *Croyances et pratiques populaires au Canada français* (Montréal, Editions du Jour, 1973) 102.

22 Louis Fréchette, "Le Diable des Forges", *Le Conte fantastique québécois au XIXe siècle*, éd. Aurélien Boivin (Montréal: Fides, 1987) 329-48.

23 Aurélien Boivin, Introduction, *Le Conte fantastique québécois au XIXe siècle* 11. De même, Chiampi prétend que l'affirmation conformiste de l'autorité constitue l'une des marques du récit fantastique (*El realismo maravilloso* 81).

24 L'Hérault, *Jacques Ferron, cartographe de l'imaginaire* 122.

25 Le narrateur insiste sur le fait que les Goupil sont originaires de lieux humbles: le nom des Goupil "n'était pas non plus des parages, de Rimouski, de Matane ni de Cap-Chat ou de Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, venant de plus bas, de Gros-Morne, de Madeleine, de Paspébiac et même d'aussi creux que Chipâgan, près de l'île de Miscou et de Tracadie où, en plus de maringouins gros comme des oiseaux-mouches on gardait des lépreux pour tenir à l'écart les Maritimers" (*La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 15-16).

26 Chiampi, *El realismo maravilloso* 82. D'autres critiques, dont Stephen Hart, déclarent que le réalisme merveilleux présente le surnaturel comme s'il s'agissait du naturel et vice versa ("Magical Realism in Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*, *Inti: Revista de literatura hispanica* 16-17 [automne 1982-printemps 1983]: 47). Cette définition s'applique bien à *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant*: dans ce roman, l'homme, puisqu'il peut uriner debout, constitue "la merveille du genre humain" (*La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 74)!

27 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 49.

28 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 54-55.

29 Reinhart Hosch résume à cet égard les réflexions de plusieurs essayistes québécois

("Jacques Ferron ou la présence réelle: remarques sur la foi d'un mécréant/'mécréant'", *Etudes littéraires*, 23.3, hiver 1990-1991, 36-38). Pour sa part, Ferron se montre bien conscient de cette opposition binaire lorsqu'il crée, dans *Le Ciel de Québec*, Monseigneur Cyrille, ecclésiastique des années 1940 qui croit renifler partout l'odeur du soufre, et la contrepartie romanesque de ce dernier, Monseigneur Camille, beaucoup moins obsédé par le mal et seul personnage du roman à dialoguer avec Dieu (*Le Ciel de Québec*, Montréal: VLB Editeur, 1979).

30 Adrien Thério, "*Le Choix de Jacques Ferron dans l'oeuvre de Jacques Ferron*," *Lettres québécoises* 39 (automne 1985): 10.

31 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 9.

32 Voir *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant*, p. 14, 29, 33, 36, 44, 50.

33 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 38.

34 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 42-43.

35 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 28.

36 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 31-2.

37 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 36-37.

38 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 66.

39 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 72. Jack O'Rooke, serviteur du diable, est également roux: le démon va jusqu'à lui dire qu'il l'est parce qu'il prend déjà la couleur du feu éternel qui l'attend (*La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 105). Mais le Malin se trompe apparemment et le suppôt de Satan abolit lui aussi les barrières entre le bien et le mal, car O'Rooke aura les "meilleures funérailles du monde," grâce à sa parente Sally O'Rooke, "maquerelle" et bienfaitrice de l'église (*La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 181-82)!

40 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 75.

41 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 87, 89. Voir aussi p. 129, 133.

42 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 83. Voir aussi p. 85, 94, 99, 121, 129 et 146.

43 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 57-58.

44 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 96.

45 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 99.

46 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 123.

47 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 51.

48 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 110.

49 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 112. Voir aussi p. 161, 183.

50 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 218. Voir Luc, 22.42.

51 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 220.

52 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 221.

53 Ferron, *La Chaise du maréchal ferrant* 216-217.

54 Comment ne pas penser, dans ce contexte, à la fameuse déclaration "il faut cultiver notre

jardin" (Voltaire, *Candide*, Paris: Larousse, 1990, 216)?

55 Chiampi, *El realismo maravilloso* 82.

56 Bernd, "The Construction and Deconstruction of Identity in Brazilian Literature", *Latin American Identity and Constructions of Difference*, éd. Amaryll Chanady (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) 86-103.

57 L'Hérault, *Jacques Ferron, cartographe de l'imaginaire* 37.

58 Ferron, *Le Ciel de Québec* 387.

59 Hosch, "Jacques Ferron ou la présence réelle: remarques sur la foi d'un mécréant/'mécréant'": 52-3.

60 Ferron, *Les Confitures de coings et autres textes* (Montréal: Editions Parti pris, 1977) 141.

Nicola Vulpe

This Issue Is Not Ended
Canadian Poetry & the Spanish Civil War

The most striking characteristic of Canadian poetry about the Spanish Civil War is that although it has so little to do with Spain, nonetheless, it is about the war. The reasons for this rather unlikely state of affairs are several. First, with the exception of Norman Bethune who wrote poetry only occasionally, no Canadian poets went to Spain, during the war. Of the 1,448 Canadians who are known to have served in Spain almost all were genuinely working-class,[1] and whatever the ideal might be, the reality is, as Leo Kennedy has noted ("DfCP"), most Canadian poets were (and are) from the middle-class. Of the combatants, only Ted Allan and Hugh Garner were to make a mark on Canadian letters, both as prose writers. Canadian poets thus had little or no first-hand knowledge of Spain.[2] Second, until the start of the war on 18 July 1936, few Canadians (poets included) knew or cared much about Spain; and during the war what they did know they learned through the war. Spain thus for them quickly became practically synonymous with the war, or, more accurately, with the issues being decided there: its ideological and international (geopolitical) significance. Third, the Spanish Civil War coincided with two critical events in Canadian poetry, the one literary, the other social and economic: the arrival of modernism in Canada, and the Great Depression. If modernism had reached Canada more than a decade earlier,[3] its confirmation was the publication the same year the war began of the anthology *New Provinces: Poems of Several Authors*,[4] and of the first book-length appraisal of modernism in Canadian literature, W. E. Collin's *The White Savannahs*.[5] A particularity of

Canadian modernist poetry, which neither the anthology nor the critical text adequately reflect, is how the Depression transformed the poetry of key members of Canada's first generation of modernists. The most cursory comparison of early verse by, for instance, F. R. Scott and Dorothy Livesay with their work from the 1930s shows a reorientation from aesthetic to social and political considerations. Compare, for example, Scott's "Moment," written in 1926 or "Old Song" from 1928 with "Social Notes I, 1932" or "Overture"; and Livesay's "Doves" written in Paris in 1931, or even "Old Trees at Père La Chaise", also from Paris the following year, with poems such as "Twenty Years After" and "An Immigrant", written after the poet's return to Canada, when her experience of the Depression as a social worker in Montreal had, in her own words, "brought me to my senses." ("Zynchuk's Funeral" *RHLH* 87)

While Canadian poets were not alone in their turn to politics in the 1930s, in their ignorance of Spain, or in their concern above all for the issues being decided there, the coincidence of the Spanish War with the beginnings of modernism in Canada ensured that this far-off and apparently unrelated event would exert a special influence on the development of Canadian poetry.[6] Most interesting, however, is not the fact that Canadian poets turned their thoughts to the war —for almost three years the world did after all its attention fix on Spanish politics— but the particular manner in which they responded to it, writing at once about the Spanish War but only rarely about Spain. This apparent contradiction is not limited to Canadian poetry; the same may be said, for example, of W. H. Auden's "Spain", probably the most famous English-language poem on the war. Like the Canadian poets, Auden appropriates the Spanish War in his poem through a *displacement*, a transposition of the most pressing issues of the time to, as he called it, "that arid square, that fragment nipped off from hot/Africa."

The international and acutely ideological nature of the Spanish War facilitated, even demanded such a displacement. As Norman Bethune remarked to a friend just before leaving for the war, "It is in Spain that the real issues of our time are being fought out. It is there that democracy will either die or survive" (qtd. *Bethune* 90). Whether he was right or not is less important than that his contemporaries, right and left, saw the Spanish conflict as crucial. In Spain the future, alternatively utopian or cataclysmic, was being born. Spain herself: her peoples, her history, and especially the Republic,

was very much an unknown. But Spain was not the question. Rather, Spain was the theatre only, and to Spain and the very concrete and immediate struggle there for political and economic democracy the poets (and not only the poets) transposed from Canada, as from the rest of the world, their hopes and dreams, which at home could manifestly only belong to a remote and abstract future.

To speak of Canadian poetry about the Spanish War is to speak first of all of Canadian poetry in English. For though the Depression brought a new awareness of social and political issues to Francophone writers, as it did to their Anglophone counterparts, among French Canadian poets there appears to have been little if any interest in the Spanish War, as there was little support for the Republic in French Canada.[7] A notable exception was *Clarté*, the Communist newspaper in Montreal, which published some poetry, including translations of Arturo Serrano Plaja and Pablo Neruda, then Chilean Consul in Madrid.[8] None of the original, Canadian poetry in *Clarté*, however, makes any mention of the Spanish war, focusing instead on the immediate details of life in Canada and the struggle for social justice at home. In contrast, poets writing in English published some two dozen poems about the Spanish War, mostly but not exclusively in left-leaning newspapers and journals, from *The Daily Clarion* to *The Canadian Forum*. Like *Clarté* in Montreal, the short-lived New Frontier in Toronto and the better-established *Canadian Forum* also published translations of Rafael Alberti, Manuel Altolaguirre, Rafael Beltrán Logroño, Antonio García Luque and Pascual Pla y Beltrán. (The poems of Beltrán Logroño and Pla y Beltrán translated by W. E. Collin[9]). The group around *New Frontier*, a publication considered by Peter Stevens as "perhaps ... the one attempt in Canada to organize a coherent centre of writing" (*McGill* x), was also in contact with Republican supporters in Britain and the U. S. and, amongst others, published one of the finest poems about the war by a British poet, "Arms for Spain" by Rex Warner.[10] Whatever else the Spanish War meant for Canadian poetry, it widened its horizons, not least significantly exposing the first generation of Canadian modernists to Spain's brilliant Generation of 27 and the equally brilliant poets of the Civil War.

One of the most important poems of the Depression, Anne Marriott's "The Wind Our Enemy," written in 1937, is not, strictly, a poem about the Spanish War, but a portrait of life on the drought-ravaged

prairies in the Thirties. Yet the war is present, and its presence both situates the war in relation to Canada during the Depression and gives the poem a scope and depth it could not have attained had the reference been omitted. Placing Marriott's text in that vast library of Canadian literature of struggle against the elements, Northrop Frye has suggested that in this poem "the enemy is still the wind rather than the forces of economic breakdown that helped to create the wind" (*BG* 154). The elements, the wind in particular, are indeed unbearably present. But almost exactly in the poem's centre the stanzas change, shifting from wind to economics and politics:

> *Relief cars.*
> 'Apples, they say, and clothes!'
> The folks in town get their pick first,
> Then their friends—
> 'Eight miles for us to go so likely we
> won't get much—'
> 'Maybe we'll get the batteries charged up and have
> the radio to kind of brighten things—'
>
> *Insurgents march in Spain*
>
> *Japs bomb Chinese*
>
> *Airliner lost*
> 'Maybe we're not so badly off as some—'
> 'Maybe there'll be a war and we'll get paid to fight—'

The poet's use of italics for the brief snatches of news as well as for her descriptions of the devastating wind establishes an intimate relation between events in the world beyond the prairie, the war in Spain for example, and the wind: all are forces assailing life as the now desperate farmers had known it. In this sense Frye is correct, with the qualification, however, that the enemy includes a whole complex of elements, man-made as well as natural. Marriott's poem thus incorporates three key aspects of the Spanish War as it is (usually) represented in Canadian poetry. One, the war is a distant event with, for the poet, no specific attributes and especially no particular importance connected to the fact that it is in Spain; its significance lies above all, like that of the Japanese invasion of China, in its international and ideological character, that it is the product of fascist aggression and that it portends further war. Two, this aggression is transferred to a more familiar context, assimilated by the poet to forces closer to home—in the unique case of Marriott's poem, with natural forces: wind and drought. Three, this assimilation implies a translation of positions now (apparently) clearly

demarcated in Spain to Canada, and, most often, an analogous translation in the reverse direction of Canadian issues to the Spanish War, redefining it in terms that make it comprehensible and, especially, relevant to Canadians.

Very different from "The Wind Our Enemy," the satirical poems of E. J. Pratt, L. A. MacKay and Lionel Reid[11] effect no explicit displacement of Canadian issues to the Spanish War, although there is certainly an implicit connection made. In Pratt's "Dictator" especially, as in Marriott's poem, it is understood that the war in Spain may lead to war over all Europe, and that war in Europe will mean war for Canada. In these poems, Spain as a concrete place, a real country with a geography, history, culture and political life is irrelevant. Most important is the historical struggle between two opposing visions of humanity, the one humanist and democratic, the other fascist and totalitarian; a struggle which *at the moment just happens to have come to war in Spain.* Reid's "Salutes," a quatrain published late in the war (August 1938) but given its subject: Mussolini, probably written earlier, is a case in point. More than a poem about the Spanish War, it is an attack on the Italian dictator and what he represents, well demonstrated it is true by his actions in Spain, and an affirmation of solidarity with those who oppose him and his sort:

> Rome ..... over a reviewing stand
> the stout dictator's empty hand.
> Madrid ..... the tightly folded fist
> Of a dead baby Loyalist.[12]

This poem is certainly about the Spanish War, but it is just as certainly not about Spain. Spain is significant only as the theatre where fascism and its benefits are best displayed.

Pratt's "Dictator", alternatively titled "Baritone", published in the *Canadian Poetry Magazine* in December 1936 is, like Reid's short poem, clearly about the Spanish War, though not once does it explicitly refer to Spain. The poet compares an unnamed dictator, either Hitler or Mussolini, probably both, to a baritone whose "wind-theme ... grew into the fugue of Europe," a fugue answered in turn by the different sections of the orchestra: the stock exchanges, various currencies, clerics, "The clang of the North sea against the bows/ of the destroyers, ... The grunt of the Mediterranean shouldering Gibraltar," and finally "Morticians/ And the Linen Manufacturers—." Thus accompanied, Pratt's baritone

Called the brides and the grooms to the altar,
. . .
To replenish the earth,
And in due season produce
Magnificent crops of grass on the battlefields.

The poem's focus on Europe rather than Ethiopia or China, and its date (before the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia) confirm that Pratt's allusions are to Italian and German involvement in the Spanish War. And yet "Dictator" is also, as the absence of a specific reference suggests, not about this war, but about the general danger posed by fascism, about the consequences for the rest of the world of a fascist victory in Spain.

The most effective satirical verse written in Canada during the Spanish War is uncontestably the work of L. A. MacKay, perhaps a less accomplished poet than Pratt, but the author of some worthwhile verse nevertheless. MacKay published five poems on the war, three of them masterful assaults on non-intervention and attendant hypocrisies. Particularly effective is "Battle Hymn of the Spanish Rebellion", which makes excellent use of allusions to a popular Christian hymn, in response perhaps to Nationalist claims that they were saving Christianity and Civilization from godless Communism and Anarchy while systematically slaughtering civilian populations.[13] This short poem is worth quoting in its entirety:

The Church's one foundation
  Is now the Moslem sword,
In meek collaboration
  With flame, and axe, and cord;
While overhead are floating
  Deep-winged with holy love,
The battle planes of Wotan,
  The bombing planes of Jove.

"Battle Hymn" is of especial interest because it calls attention to some specifics of the war. MacKay makes much of Franco's use of Moroccan troops to shore up Catholicism in Spain, and of Italian and German help to carry home its message of "holy love". Yet despite this precise reference to an unambiguously Spanish fact of the war, the focus of Mackay's poem is less Spain than Christianity —Christianity at the service of Realpolitik.

Mackay's most complex poem about the Spanish War is "Murder Most Foul,"[14] a long denunciation of the various Republican factions engaged in

fratricidal struggles for power, apparently more concerned with advancing regional and sectarian interests than with winning the war against fascism:

Consider next the Catalan,
That singularly prudent man.
When bombs and bullets start to fall
He squats behind his mountain wall
And sees his neighbor's cities burn
. . .
They rally to Adventure's call
By taking pot-shots as they list
At Socialist, or Anarchist,
And the save the Duce and Fuehrer bother
By blowing holes in one another.

This poem sets MacKay apart from almost all other Canadian poets who have written about this war, and certainly it stands alone among poems published during the war. On the one hand, like Orwell, whose some might say naive concern for truth (as he could best see it) obliged him to describe the terrible May Days of 1937 in Barcelona, Mackay refuses to bow to "the logic of the times," as C. Day Lewis was to write, and "Defend the bad against the worse" (qtd. Cunningham, epigraph). On the other hand, and more importantly, MacKay's attempt to write about the Civil War as the specifically Spanish affair it also was fails. And it fails because the poet removes the concrete particulars of the war from their political (both national and international) and ideological contexts. The war thus abstracted from a context (or contexts) in which it can be understood, the killing and the sacrifice it involves can only be meaningless. There is no irony in the final lines:

And war's again a curse, save righteous war,
And we believe it, as we did before,
And still mankind pursues the same old goal,
To gain the world, and only lose our soul.

This conclusion, a move up onto the moral (and religious) high ground made possible only by a withdrawal from reality,[15] is as revealing as it is disappointing. As far as the poem itself is concerned, it shows that in spite of his attention to details of the Spanish War, MacKay is in fact not writing about it, but about all war —of which the present example in Spain is simply a convenient and especially nasty specimen. Further, as far as Canadian poetry and the Spanish War is concerned, this poem shows that, however

much its ideological and international aspects might obscure and distort its specificity as a Spanish affair, at least for a Canadian poet (but probably for anyone), to ignore or set these aside renders the entire business incomprehensible. More than its details, it is the war's links to events and questions beyond Spain, events and questions which more directly affect Canadians, that that transform it from a distantly viewed and incomprehensible bloodbath as in "Murder Most Foul," into an issue and a cause.

Few Canadian poets even tried to grasp the complexities of the Spanish War as Mackay tried—and failed—to do. If they entertained any of the sort of reservations concerning the Republic that troubled him, they kept them to themselves. Whatever its evils, the Republic was far better than the alternative proposed by Franco and his mentors in Rome and Berlin. This publicly uncritical (and legitimate considering the nature of the war and the strength of the opposition at home as well as in Spain) attitude encouraged the displacement of Canadian issues and aspirations for exposition and development on the Spanish stage. For there, where all was manifestly a matter of life and death, these could be presented with the urgency they demanded, but could command only rarely if at all in Canada, where despite the bitterness of the Depression the haves and have-nots had not yet taken to their respective trenches.

The Spanish War thus provided an ideal vehicle for advancing, amongst others, some of the views put forward by Leo Kennedy in his essay "Direction for Canadian Poets" published, significantly, only a month before the war began. Kenneth Leslie's dramatic narrative "The Censored Editor" published in *New Frontier* in September 1937, and curiously omitted from his *Collected Poems*, has been qualified by Dorothy Livesay as "the most ambitious of any poems written in Canada about Spain" (*RHLH* 254). Livesay's praise notwithstanding, this poem makes clear that Leslie knew little about Spain; he gives an Italian name, for example, to one of his main characters.[16] But this is unimportant. For the poem is not about Spain; it is a discussion of the intellectual's political and moral responsibilities conveniently set in Spain where such questions are now, dramatically, a matter of life and death. A dialogue between Inés and her son, Guido, who has chosen opportunistic collaboration with fascism, "The Censored Editor" is a condemnation of an intellectual's sophistic justifications for his lack of political and moral will. At the end of his poem Leslie

summarizes his argument in a fable about climbers in the Pyrenees:

> A rockface in the Pyrenees. Five climbers.
> Five dizzy lives held by a fingernail.
> That moment on the trail when every eye
> must focus on the trail. One puffing fool
> flings out his arms to point the distant view.
> The balance breaks. And so well roped together
> down go the five like plummets. All for one
> who was a two-fold enemy and traitor,
> betraying beauty and its living hosts.
>
> *"Beauty was underfoot there in the rock."*

Beauty, Leslie notes, echoing Keats, in the previous stanza, is truth. But, breaking with Romanticism, Leslie also maintains that beauty is not ideal; it is concrete and immediate. Beauty, and hence truth, is not in "the distant view" as the Romantics proposed, but "*underfoot there in the rock.*" Thus, Leslie concludes with a warning, one that acquires shape and substance through his use of the fable of the climbers, and immediacy and relevance by being placed in the context of the Spanish War. Whatever the ultimate goal may be or become, the issues are being decided here and now. To forget this: to hesitate, to doubt and dwell on intellectual niceties is to invite defeat, and is thus betrayal—of ourselves above all.

Similar to "The Censored Editor," Kennedy's most notable Spanish War poem, "Calling Eagles" is very much a poetic version of "Direction for Canadian Poets" applied to the present international crisis. The poet's eagles are the intellectuals and artists, "Swift thinkers, readers in books and the bones of nature." As in his essay, the poet calls on his fellows to turn to "immediates" (or "political immediacies"),[17] in his poem he calls on them to

> Come down to life, Eagles, where iron grinds bone, hands falter
> And brave men perish for a tyrant's peace;
> Come from where Spain strangles in blood, Ethiopia
> Groans at the ironcased heel, Vienna
> Numbers the dead ...

To remain above, aloof from the great and sordid questions of the day means not only denial of one's responsibilities as a human being. It also, and this seems to be Kennedy's chief concern at least in the essay and this poem, means the failure of one's art: "*There is only glacial death on the lonely crags.*" Although it provided an excellent context for settling, aesthetic as well as political scores, it would be unfair to suggest that Kennedy or any

other poets writing about the Spanish War cynically appropriated it for their own ends. Rather, their attitude is more like that expressed by Margaret Day in "Ode to Spring, 1937" in which she condemns poets who, knowing what is happening in Spain, continue to write of the first crocus, etc.: "While horror whistles down in Spain/Who can announce Canadian spring?" Her concern is firstly, if not overtly political, humanitarian, and only secondarily aesthetic.

For Canadian poets, by far the most common displacement occasioned by the Spanish War was of treasured utopias. Curiously, considering that the Republic was on the defensive, and that the war was consistently described, quite rightly, as the last chance to prevent a general fascist assault on the world, this war is often represented as the dawn of a new era of justice and fraternity, a vision which, as the war progressed and a Republican (let alone revolutionary) victory seemed less and less imminent, was transferred to an increasingly remote future.

A. M. Stephen's ballad "Madrid," published in *New Frontier* in May 1937, is typical in its final evocation of a bright and future world, and atypical in its attempt to present the war in some semblance of its Spanish context. In the poem's first four stanzas, Stephen sketches a caricature of Spain: guitars, castanets, shawls, moonlit squares and dark eyes that gleam—the sort of thing probably better left to Spanish poets. These individual details, however, are less important than what the poet does with them together. For he uses them to accentuate the contrast between the idyllic, fairy-tale Madrid of "Last night," and the Madrid of the second part of the poem, of "Tonight" where "Red death is arm-in-arm with hate—/Hate of the creeping Fascist horde." Madrid's "last night" is the world the fascists are determined to destroy. Neither the Madrileños nor the fascists in Stephen's poem, however, have an existence distinct from and independent of their respective roles in the present monumental contest, a contest which the poet ultimately defines in religious terms, the present battle in Spain comparable to the crucifixion, victory now or in a far-removed future, to the resurrection:

> Though on twisted Nazi cross
> They nail those hands that were so brave,
>
> The flower of liberty will spring
> Triumphant from the martyr's grave.

Stephen was not alone in his appropriation of the Spanish War through Christian myth. Increasingly, the Republic's waning chances of survival demanded an abstraction of its (and the world's) liberation to this sort of a resurrection in future time.

Like Stephen, two key members of their generation, Leo Kennedy and Dorothy Livesay, as well as a number of lesser-known poets such as Harold Gerry and H. G. M., draw on images of resurrection and rebirth to express their fears (usually implicitly) and their hopes concerning the outcome of the war. Kennedy's "You, Spanish Comrade" and "Memorial to the Defenders," published under the pseudonyms Arthur Beaton and Leonard Bullen, both end like Stephen's "Madrid" with evocations of a world reborn, the first with a socialist utopia where

> a place there'll be for work and skill and learning
> for peasants turning earth no locust bares,
> and girls with flowers, new children springing tall.

the second with a vision of revolutionary Spain victorious:

> And newborn men erect as monument
> To your dispersed flesh and valiant hearts
> The People's Spain with freedom in its towers!

Peter Stevens has noted the formal similarities between Kennedy's political verse and the poetry of his much-praised volume *The Shrouding*, published in 1933 (Stevens "Kennedy"), and Brian Trehearne has remarked on "the burials and potential resurrections that dot the book" (116), most certainly the reason why in *The White Savannahs* Collin calls Kennedy "this man of April." These similarities raise some important questions concerning Kennedy's poetic development, especially in view of how enthusiastically he renounced the poetics of *The Shrouding*. They seem to contradict the view that art requires new forms to master new questions —unless of course, and this is perhaps the key to the importance of the war for Canadian poetry, Kennedy's politics and poetics do not change as radically as they at first seem to, but simply find focus and substance through his involvement with *New Frontier* and the Spanish Civil War. This is not to suggest that Kennedy does not evolve as a person or poet, only that whereas the Depression provided the conditions for his turn to political poetry and his critique of Canadian society and art, because it was a war and a revolution, a historical moment when (at least from as far away as Canada) it seemed that anything

might happen, the Spanish War provided the poet with a context (or pretext) for expressing his aspirations and his most improbable but necessary dreams.[18]

Like Kennedy, Dorothy Livesay supported the Republic as a matter of course and transferred to it her utopias. Her poems about the Spanish War constitute not only the largest production by any Canadian writer, but also some of the finest verse written on the subject. Her poems written during the war are in many ways similar to Stephen's "Madrid" and Kennedy's poems: all end with an invocation of a better world to come. Like Kennedy, Livesay makes an appeal to solidarity with those fighting for democracy—and revolution—in Spain; and like Stephen and Kennedy, she concludes her poems with images of resurrection and regeneration, though unlike them she makes no overt religious references. Rather, as in "Old Trees at Père La Chaise," nature is the source of regeneration. But between the Paris poem and the Spanish War poems, politics have intervened and transformed Livesay's nature. It has been assimilated to history and humankind's (political) will-to-liberation; it is not a regenerative force in itself, but an aspect of that will upon which depend our individual and collective destinies. In "Comrade" this will is more profound in its influence on the individual than even romantic or physical love:

> I see you now a grey man without dreams,
> Without a living, or an overcoat:
> But sealed in struggle now, we are more close
> Than if our bodies still were sealed in love.

More typical are "And Still We Dream" and "Man Asleep," both published in *New Frontier* in October 1936, which emphasize the issues rather than the individuals who made and lived them. In these poems, nature is clearly dependant upon human efforts and sacrifices. Victory, the new more just world, is not an inevitability. In "And Still We Dream" the poet exhorts her comrades to greater efforts, for to falter is to be vanquished: "Manhood and growth are on us; rise up, Comrade! / It is death to rest." Perhaps because it was written at the start of the war, "Man Asleep" presents another, more optimistic aspect of the poet's vision. Just as surely as idleness will guarantee defeat, action will ensure victory. In late summer of 1936 (that is, between the start of the war and the poem's publication) the triumph of Republican and especially revolutionary Spain seemed, and indeed was, a distinct possibility. This possibility (*not* inevitability) is reflected in the poem's final lines:

See, the world's home they built in Spain—
. . .
Now hunched in sleep, you dream the battle's done:
But still your bones shall spring to life like steel
Clamp down on victory, behold the sun!

This conclusion is typical of Livesay's Spanish War verse, as it is of Stephen's and Kennedy's, but with the nuance, absent in their work, that the future is not predestined, but contingent.

As the war turned against the Republic Livesay's poems lost some of their early revolutionary euphoria. Though to the end the poet maintains her faith in the eventual establishmentof a new world, this promise is removed from the imminent to the far distant future. The poetry becomes more sober and, like Kennedy, Livesay settles some aesthetic as well as political scores. In her "Spain," published in *New Frontier* in June 1937, hard accusations replace the early enthusiasm. Aesthetes, those fortunate enough to contemplate nature and beauty at their leisure and in peace, she calls to account for their complacency. Their leisure and their peace, their art, is paid for by others:

You who hold beauty at your finger tips
Hold it because the splintering gunshot rips
Between your comrades' eyes ...

You who live quietly in sunlit space ...
Can count peace dear, when it has driven
Your sons to struggle for this grim, new heaven.

In another poem, "At English Bay: December, 1937," which she includes in her chapter on the Spanish War in *Right Hand Left Hand*, the poet turns her attentions from Spain to China, where the same battle against fascism was being fought. The tone of this poem is meditative, resigned. Nature is as always a regenerative force, but its powers now are limited, as are the poet's and her comrades' abilities to realize their dreams of a better world. As hope of victory fades, all that is left the poet is a sort of millenarian belief that the new world will come.

Livesay's longest poem about the Spanish War, "Catalonia," a description of the human catastrophe of the war's end and a (fictitious) tank battle during the retreats behind the Ebro River and into Catalonia in late 1938, ends with such a wish. Its last stanza turns to the future when the dead will "burst/Out of the earth again" to bring "another spring!" though now, with defeat, there is a conclusiveness about their burial in Catalonia's "rolling

plains" that makes this resurrection distant indeed. It is the rest of the poem that is most significant, however. The war is clearly lost. The roads are choking with refugees; the remnants of the Republican forces try to make brief stands, knowing they cannot hold. A soldier, Sorenson, saves several comrades from their crippled tanks. Almost certainly Sorenson is with the International Brigades, probably he is Canadian;[19] for the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion played an important and tragic role in this final phase of the war. These details: the refugees, the battle, make Livesay's "Catalonia" an anomaly; apparently it is the only Canadian poem published which (perhaps) makes a reference to the Mac-Paps, as the Canadian battalion was usually designated, and one of the few which attempts to describe something of the Spanish War as a war fought and endured by real people rather than as an issue.

Other exceptions are Patrick Waddington's so far unpublished "Daybreak on Spanish Hills"; and a poem which appeared in *The Canadian Forum* in June 1939, Gordon LeClaire's "Now When the Fire Long Frozen," a reaction to the slaughter in Badajoz after it fell to the Nationalists in August 1936.[20] That these poems are few is understandable, considering how few Canadian poets had any experience of Spain or of the war. Bethune, the exception, is remembered as a poet for "Red Moon," a poem which he wrote shortly before his departure for Spain. There are two extant versions of this poem, one which appeared in The Canadian Forum in July 1937 while Bethune was in Spain; the other, a draft found among his papers by Ted Allan and reprinted in his and Sydney Gordon's biography of the surgeon, *The Scalpel, the Sword.*[21] The principal differences between the versions are the final quatrains. In the draft they read:

> To that pale moon, I raise my angry fist,
> And to those nameless dead my vows renew:
> Comrades who fall in angry loneliness,
> Who die for us —I will remember you.

while in the Canadian Forum they are as follows:

> To the pale disc, we raise our clenched fists
>   And to those nameless dead our vows renew,
> 'Comrades, who fought for freedom and the future world,
>   Who died for us, we will remember you.'

Bethune has made some minor changes to punctuation, indented every second line and, in the first line of the quatrain, substituted "disc" for moon, a

word he had already employed in the first line of the poem. More important is the shift from the first person singular to the plural and the complete revision of the penultimate line. For with the changes the *Canadian Forum* poem conforms to the paradigm established by the first generation of Canadian poetry about the Spanish War. The change from "I" to "we" and from the vivid but subjective and politically uninspiring "who fell in angry loneliness" to "who fought for freedom and the future world" transforms the poem from a very subjective reaction to the scandal against humanity that was the fascist uprising in Spain to a more objective, but more vague and less effectively poetic translation of this reaction into a determinate ideological and historical perspective. This is not to say that such a translation is incompatible with good poetry. The Canadian poetry on the Spanish War is ample evidence to the contrary: a translation of some sort is an essential part of coming to terms with the (otherwise) chaotic and incomprehensible and thus unwritable matter of lived experience. The point is that in the case of "Red Moon" this translation has occurred, has been imposed or (most probably) has imposed itself, transforming the poem from a subjective response to the war itself to a perhaps more objective, but also less immediate and more abstract assessment of what the war means. This change is especially interesting because it was accompanied by Bethune's own displacement to Spain, where he wrote at least one other poem about the war. His "I Come from Cuatro Caminos" is a reaction to the continuous fascist bombings of this working-class district during the Siege of Madrid. Less well-wrought than "Red Moon," and especially than the *Canadian Forum* version of the poem, it is dominated by incomprehension and rage:

> Ay Little One, Little One;
> What hast thou done to these dogs
> That they have dashed you to pieces
> . . .
> Why have they killed my grandfather?
> . . .
> Because the blood that runs in their veins
> Is blood of brothel and mud
> Because in their regiment
> They were born fatherless
> A 'curse on God' rends the air
> Towards the infamy of heaven.

A poem *from* rather than *about* the war, "Cuatro Caminos" is unique

among Canadian poetry on the Spanish War. Significantly, it is also one of the few poems that makes no mention of the issues.

Even those poems with the most intimate connection to the Spanish War, poems written to friends who had gone to Spain, sometimes to die there, are, like Livesay's "Comrade," poems less about Spain than about the questions being decided there. Two poems dedicated to Canadians killed in the war, Harold Gerry's "To Jack Bloom" and the as yet unidentified H. G. M.'s "A Tribute to Rod Gillis," published in *The Daily Clarion* in August 1937 and February 1938 respectively, both end with declarations of faith in future victory over fascism. Understandably, neither poem conveys the same sense of its organic necessity that informs Kennedy's and Livesay's early war poetry. Whatever treasures the future may hold, however worthy the cause, the price paid is indeed high. And yet the rhetoric is there, Gerry's poem ending, for example, thus:

> Madrid that holds your honoured grave
> Shall be the site of Franco's tomb.
> That freedom that you died to save
> Will hurl reaction to its doom.

A. M. Klein's triptych "Of Castles in Spain" is more complex than Gerry's tribute to Jack Bloom, but it is informed by the same elements: an attempt to come to terms with a friend's decision to go to the Spanish War and with this war's implications, beyond Spain especially. Published in The Canadian Forum in June 1938, this poem reveals Klein the political poet at his best, the poet of "Political Meeting," "Of Shirts and Policies of State," and the Hitleriad, which, surprisingly, makes no mention of the Spanish War. "Of Castles in Spain" is best understood, however, not only in view of Klein's other political verse, but in the context of other Canadian poems on the Spanish War. The first part of Klein's poem is dedicated to his friend, Samuel Abramson,[22] who fought with the Mac-Paps until the International Brigades were disbanded in Barcelona in October 1938. Klein establishes the relation that binds him to his friend, and especially his debt, for by going to Spain Abramson is protecting the poet from fascism:

> 'Tis you who do confound the lupine jaw
> And stand protective of my days and works,
> As in the street-fight you maintain the law
> And I in an armchair—weigh and measure Marx.

In the second and third parts of the triptych Klein then presents alternative conclusions to the war. In the second and shortest part, "Toreador," he likens those fighting for the Republic to a toreador, the fascists to a bull whose death brings peace. The third part, "Sonnet Without Music," represents one of the few successful efforts by a Canadian poet writing during the Spanish War to impart some reality to some of its Spanish protagonists, though Klein attempts this only for the enemy, the three pillars of the rebel cause: the "haemophilic dons" who "delicately lift their sherry in the sun," the magnate who recovers his expropriated land and with it his smile, the priest. When he turns to the specifics of how these enemies will be defeated, the bull slain, Klein is understandably, considering how the war was going, vague, ending his poem with a familiar defiant and despairing cry:

> ... beware!
> The peon soon will stir, will rise, will stand,
> breathe Hunger's foetid breath, lift arm, clench fist,
> and heil you to the fascist realm of death!

Though a fascist victory in Spain is increasingly probable, no more than Kennedy or Livesay or virtually any other Canadian poet concerned with the war, can Klein accept the possibility of absolute, unredeemable defeat in Spain. He must therefore like them move victory to some distant, undefined future.

Ultimately, even William Robbins' poem "To L___ B___," published in *The Canadian Forum* a few months after "Of Castles in Spain" is no exception to this retreat, if not also into the future, into the issues. In this poem more than any other it is a friend's sacrifice, his decision to go to Spain, and his death there that are the overriding question; they preclude even the most tepid revolutionary rhetoric, any discussion of the issues except with disdain. For Robbins, L. B.'s death shames "the mumbling mouths that try to glow/The dying embers of democracy—," makes mockery of dreams like Livesay's "grim new heaven," "the world's home ... built in Spain." And yet, even as they are rendered irrelevant by this death, the issues return, giving it, however inadequately, meaning: "Before the broken mirror of his challenge, / We drop our eyes, and stammer to a pause."

As with the mocking death of L. B., the disastrous conclusion of the Spanish War became a scar on the hearts of those who had rallied to its cause. But, as the poets had so long maintained, defeat in Spain was not and could never be conclusive. This point is made most eloquently by F. R. Scott, who despite his involvement in campaigns to support the Republic

seems to have written only one poem about the war, "Spain 1937." A response to Auden's "Spain," this poem looks at the same time back to the war and forward into the future. Whereas Auden ends his poem with a reflection on the futility of the struggle:

> The stars are dead. The animals will look.
> We are left alone with our day, and the time is short, and
> History to the defeated
> May say Alas but cannot help or pardon.

Scott ends his with one terse line:

> This issue is not ended with defeat.

True, Scott did not go to the Spanish War as Auden did (albeit as a tourist), true his poem does not encompass the vast expanse of human history from the cromlech to the present, true Auden's is a great poem and his perhaps only an excellent poem, but Scott's response to Auden's disillusionment with the Spanish Republic and his historical pessimism is the only one possible.

However apt Scott's response, his resolution was not universally shared. The poetry written about the Spanish War in the years following the defeat of the Republic is imbued with a sense that in Spain, we, the entire human race, had failed in our apprenticeship to the 20th century. In "This Is No Crusade," for example, L. A. MacKay looks back from that war foretold in Spain that was the Second World War and, abandoning the moral high ground and implicating himself in the Spanish War's catastrophic consequences, writes:

> We patted Peace on the head, and smirked in our shell.
> Our death on China fell like the monsoon rain.
> Our death paraded, grinning at us, on the hills of Spain,
> And we grinned cheerfully back, and wished him well.

Similarly, George Faludy insists on the causal link between the Spanish War and the Second World War. Fleeing the Nazis after the capitulation of France, he laments the Nationalist victory in Spain, for it guaranteed the present war and robbed him in this war of his last refuge. Dorothy Livesay's "The Lizard: October 1939" and "In Time of War" reflect the same sense of betrayal. Spain was our last chance, we abandoned it, and now we too must pay the price of our indifference.[23] To refresh memories and consciences Livesay included the last section of "In Time of War" under the title "V-J

Day" as an epigraph to her collection *Poems for People* published shortly after the Allied victory over the Axis. The final stanza of this poem makes clear that this war that has just ended and that has cost so much began, not in Poland in September 1939, but in China in 1933 and Spain in 1936:

> Now it is eight years after, to the day, to the hour:
> The wrath has devoured itself and the fire eaten the fire.
> And again at sundown over the bird's voice, low
> Over the firs fluted with evening I hear the Yangste flow
> And the rubble of Barcelona is this moss under my hand.

Future generations of poets would continue asking what the war had meant, translating now, not their hopes, but their disappointments to that defeat, asking what had gone wrong, why fascism had triumphed over justice and humanity. The question is already present in Patrick Waddington's "Dust Patterns After Revolution," published, as the war was drawing to a close, in *The Canadian Forum* in February 1939 under the pseudonym David Andradeas. It returns with the poets of *Preview* and *First Statement* in the 1940s, with Patrick Anderson's "For a Spanish Comrade" and the epigraph to *The White Centre*, ". Who fell on bed"; P. K. Page's "Poem" ("Let us by paradox") and "Generation"; Miriam Waddington's "Dog Days" and "The Exiles: Spain," a poem written in late 1937, but which already conveys a sense of the war's outcome; and James Wreford's "The Mental Butterfly." To these poets must be added George Woodcock, who in England in the 1930s and 1940s had known many of the more prominent writers on the Spanish War and who, with his "Ballad for W. H. Auden" also settles a few things with the English poet concerning Spain.

Little by little the poetry has changed. No longer pressed by the battle as were the poets of the 1930s, poets who came after have had the opportunity to learn about Spain, the Spanish War, and of course the regime it brought to power. They have written about Lorca and Bethune, and writing about them have brought the issues from which their names have become inseparable home to Canada again. Dorothy Livesay's "Lorca" written in 1939 was followed by poems by George Woodcock, Louis Dudek, Eldon Grier, and Mark Frutkin. To Raymond Souster's "The Good Doctor" published in 1967 have been added poems by Robin Mathews, Milton Acorn, Marya Fiamengo, Laura McLauchlan, and Peter Stevens.

And finally, some poets have written about Spain. Starting with three

poems by Irving Layton, "On Spanish Soil," "El Caudillo" and "El Gusano," published in the *Tamarack Review* in 1964, perhaps struck by the grotesque survival of Franco a generation after V-E Day, Canadian poets began writing about the Spanish War as an issue, certainly: but also about the specifically Spanish affair it was and remains; about the war as the consequence of a specifically Spanish reality; about the Spain that had made Spain the stage where the world's destiny had been made and unmade; and about the Spain the world had abandoned to itself. To Layton's poems must be added Eldon Grier's particularly insightful "Biarritz"; Ralph Gustafson's "Valle de los Caídos," about Franco's monument to himself; and Seymour Mayne's "Parrots, Generals," "Madrid Evening" and "Spain, You Hurt Me," poems which, quite rightly, will not let the matter of the Spanish War rest.

Not the least remarkable thing about poems written in Canada about the Spanish Civil War since its unhappy conclusion is that they were written at all. If poets like Livesay, Kennedy and Scott were more or less directly implicated in the war, already for the poets of the 1940s the world was nothing like it had been in July 1936. The Spanish War had been lost; it belonged to history, to a past made suddenly distant by the holocaust that followed and the realignment of forces it entailed. Almost from the moment it was over the Spanish War, which for so many had been the battle upon which hung the future of civilization, was transformed by subsequent events into a minor skirmish, a dress rehearsal. And yet, this issue, as Scott insisted, is not ended. To write in Canada today about the Spanish War is, if not as obviously urgent as it was in 1936 or 1939, nonetheless a political act of import. For the poets of the Thirties transposed their dreams of a better world, a more just Canada, to Spain, to this war; by writing about the Spanish War today, the poets bring these dreams home again —and well they might!

NOTES

1 Only 729 returned (Beeching xxxvi). Mortality for Canadians in Spain was thus almost 50%. Compare with 10,000 French volunteers of whom 1,000 were killed; 5,000 Germans and Austrians, of whom 2,000 died (Thomas 983).

2 Ralph Gustafson visited Spain just before the war, a visit remembered in part in "Basque Lover."

3 *The McGill Fortnightly Review* was founded in 1925, succeeded in 1928 by *The Canadian Mercury; The Canadian Forum,* took up the banner of modernism in 1931 with a series of articles on modernist writers, followed in 1932 by a series on "The New Writers in

Canada" (Beattie, 751); and Dorothy Livesay's *Green Pitcher* and Leo Kennedy's *The Shrouding* were published in 1928 and 1933, respectively.

4 The authors are the Montreal Group: Leo Kennedy, A. M. Klein, F. R. Scott and A. J. M. Smith, plus Robert Finch and E. J. Pratt in Toronto.

5 These two events alone mark 1936 as a watershed in Canadian literature. As well, in 1936 the Governor General's Awards were instituted, though it was not until the following year that the first award was made for poetry, to E. J. Pratt for *The Fable of the Goats and Other Poems*; the *University of Toronto Quarterly* began the first systematic appraisal of Canadian writing with its annual reviews, "Letters in Canada"; the *Canadian Poetry Magazine* began publication with E. J. Pratt as editor; and êmile Coderre, writing under the pseudonym "Jean Narrache," published *Quand j'parl' tout seul,* poetry written in *Joual* about the poor of Québec during the Depression.

6 Dorothy Livesay noted in her conclusion to a lecture she presented at Bethune College in 1976 that "the Spanish Civil War has had reverberations which have stirred Canadians to think of their own human condition. The Thirties poets stated the case, but the Forties poets carried the message further through the Second World War. I think of Waddington, Page, Souster; and join with them Birney, Layton, Dudek, Mandel. They in turn have directed younger poets of today towards social concern, commitment to change .... And one has only to mention the names of Purdy, Acorn, Nowlan to realize how they have stirred the imagination of Lane, Lowther, Wayman and Lee." ("Canadian Poetry and the Spanish Civil War" *RHLH* 255)

7 There were, nonetheless, several dozen French Canadians with the Mackenzie Papineau Battalion in the International Brigades.

8 "Les quatres battalions de choque," 9 Jan. 1937; and excerpt from "L'Espagne au coeur," 30 Nov. 1938, respectively.

9 Altolaguirre: "My Suffering," *New Frontier,* Jan. 1937; Beltran Logroño: "Ascaso," and Pla y Beltrán: "Elegies On the Death of A Miner," *New Frontier,* May 1937; Beltrán Logroño: "Death of the Innkeeper 'Quitapenas'," and Pla y Beltrán: "This Is How We Live," *New Frontier,* June 1937; Alberti: "A Spanish Revolutionary Poem" and "Ay," and Antonio García Luque: "Yo Estar Un Rojo!," *Canadian Forum,* Jan. 1938.

10 July-Aug. 1937; the poem is signed "R. E. Warner."

11 Many of these poems were later reprinted in Smith and Scott's anthology of satirical verse, *The Blasted Pine.*

12 Every effort has been made to reach the author or copyright holder of this and all other poems quoted here. Some, however, have proven difficult to identify or impossible to locate.

13 For an overview of Nationalist sympathies expressed in the Canadian media, see Mary Biggar Peck's *Red Moon Over Spain,* ch. 1-4.

14 Brian Trehearne suggests that MacKay's poem was influenced by Oscar Wilde's "Sonnet to Liberty (90)."

15 A similar retreat greatly weakens a poem which mentions the Spanish War in passing: "Hunger," by Mary Elizabeth Colman, published in the *Canadian Poetry Magazine* in June 1937, and five years later in *For This Freedom Too.* In another poem which refers to Spain, "We Men Are of Two Worlds," also included in the 1942 collection, Colman hap-

pily refrains from asserting the primacy of a there-beyond at the cost of the here-below: "We men are of two worlds/how great the cost of our forgetting—."

16 Leslie was not alone. Bertolt Brecht, for example, gave Italian names to the characters in *Señora Carrara's Rifles*, his play about the Spanish Civil War.

17 In his essay Kennedy wrote that Charles Bruce "writes convincingly of the sea and ships, but his poetry carries the personal, insular emotion of one still unaware of immediates." Bruce's response, a poem "Immediates," included, when it was published in *Grey Ship Moving*, Kennedy's attack quoted at the bottom of the page along with a further comment by the poet: "Kennedy later said that ... a typographical error had resulted in 'immediates' replacing 'political immediacies'."

18 Necessary because, as Karl Mannheim remarked, when we lose our utopias we lose our will to shape history (*Ideology* 262-63).

19 His name may have been inspired by Henning Sorensen, Bethune's interpreter in Spain.

20 Especially in the revised version published in 1943, LeClaire does nevertheless insist on the Spanish War's international significance.

21 This is, interestingly, the version reprinted by Brian Davis in *The Poetry of the Canadian People*.

22 I thank Seymour Mayne for providing this information.

23 A Canadian veteran of the Spanish War remarks at the end of the NFB film *Los Canadienses*, that when the blitz began on London it was terrible, but that he thought, "Well, it serves you right" for not having done anything about Spain.

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Summer 1964. Mexico

I saw my first rhino
in Chapultepec Park, old Aztec
forest.
    Brückner's Second Symphony
& Maximiliano's palace,
            never quite
been in Europe, I,
         sit on a hill of forest
& see all Mexico City, all Carlota

Max in Mex would die, never
go back to Trieste.

> *You dwell in your father's house,*
> *the gold-wrought porches of Zeus,*
> *apart in the depth of space.*

2.

    Bent old Yanquis with newspapers
sit in Cuernavaca's three squares,
                persistent
boys with Chiclets harass the newcomers,

a lovely park surrounded by wall-spilled buganvilla
lies green, waits for afternoon rain
to clean the dust, make a green place
for a strange African animal.

Matt Cohen

Outside Spain

When Charles Dickens went to America, adoring crowds lined up outside his hotel hoping for an autograph. He was so energized by this mass display of love that during the day, as his coach proceeded from town to town, he would leap out and walk with the horses for hours at a time, dragging them along and exhausting all those around him.

When Byron visited Venice he swam from the Lido across the lagoon and up the Grand Canal. This took four hours and the two companions he'd started out with had to be fished from the water by a rescue gondola.

When in Spain I performed no athletic feats, signed no autographs, and was completely unsuccessful at writing anything Byron or Dickens would have wanted to find on their desks. Such are the limitations of travel.

My trip to Spain began on Vancouver Island. It was, as they say, a dark and rainy night. I had just finished the nth draft of a novel about rural Ontario, had spent the evening celebrating with friends, and decided that before I drove home I should take their dog for a walk.

During that walk I began to think about Spain. There was no particular reason for this—I had never studied Spanish in university, had a particular affection for *paella* or Spanish music, and the one Lorca play I'd read had totally passed me by, despite the fact it had been loaned to me by a woman I wished to admire.

By the end of the walk I'd come up with the idea of writing a historical novel set mostly in Spain about a Jewish doctor at the beginning of the Renaissance trying to make some sense of the struggle between reason and faith.

Why Spain? Because I at least knew that in Spain the Renaissance arrived late and that when the doctor fled Spain he would meet an advanced historical future. I had also by then remembered my previous—though forgotten—fling with wanting to know about Spain: about a decade earlier, when starting to write short stories, I'd become obsessed with Christopher Columbus and that had entailed a spate of reading about medieval Spain and Portugal.

A few months later I was on an airplane bound for Madrid. The idea for the novel had found much favour with my publisher and I had spent a bit of time looking at Spanish grammar books—but without much result except to notice that Spanish seemed to resemble Latin, a subject I'd taken without much enthusiasm while in high school.

Why was I even on this trip? One reason was that I love to travel. Another, more practical, was that though the historical novel idea seemed absurd, I was sure I would get something contemporary out of it—and had already written one story (*The Sins of Tomas Benares*) just thinking about that. Also my travelling companion, who was also my living companion, was from Guatemala and had promised to act as my interpreter, speak Spanish to me every day for at least an hour, and show me the northern region of Spain from which her father's family had originally come. But finally, and most importantly, having a novel arrive whole in my mind while out for a walk—even on a dark and rainy night—was not a usual experience for me. I felt I should pay attention.

It was late August and when we arrived, the airport was predictably hot and dusty. We went to our hotel, then walked out onto the streets of Madrid.

My first shock: looking around I saw everyone looked exactly like me! Slightly shorter than they were supposed to be, sallow skin, horn-rimmed glasses, clothes that didn't match— but it was more than that—it was something in the combination of being both extrovert and furtive, timorous and over-confident, night creatures at large during the day. Suddenly I knew, with a conviction that has never left me, that I was in the land of my ancestors.

Although I'd already noticed that I wasn't Dickens or Byron, it's also true that in our century writers may be unread but are seldom untravelled. I'd visited many countries, always enjoyed them, sometimes learned something about them as a result, but always felt, naturally, like an outsider, even if well tolerated. Just like being in Canada, I would say to myself, which had been my explanation of why I found travelling so easy.

But this was different. Even though I knew nothing about Spain I felt inside right away.

This sensation continued when we went to visit the Prado. Of course I had seen illustrations of many of the paintings on display there—perhaps that was why it seemed so eerily familiar.

After a couple of days in Madrid we went south to Toledo. This was to be the first physical locale for my novel. Originally, I'd though of setting it at the time of Columbus's first voyage to America—the irony of modern Spain's first two great historically significant acts being sending Columbus in one direction and its Jews in another was very tempting.

But as I read about the subject I discovered that the expulsion of the Jews from Spain was only the final step in a process which had been going on since the first great wave of the Black Death in 1348. The Jews, predictably, were blamed for this plague. But not—at least officially—in Castile, of which Toledo was the capital. In Castile there were as many as 300 separate Jewish communities. They lived under the protection of the King and supported—as did cities throughout Aragon, Portugal and Navarre—numerous universities and centres of study. For Jewish civilization in Europe these were the last moments of a not-to-be-repeated golden era, a period during which Spanish Jews lived in harmony with Arabs and Christians.

When Pedro of Castile (also known as Pedro the Cruel) was challenged in 1369, the Jews sided with him because he had been their patron. When he was overthrown, things began to go downhill. In 1391, beginning with a massacre in Seville, Jewish settlements and ghettos were attacked all over the Iberian Peninsula, from the Pyrenees to the Straits of Gibraltar. Tens of thousands of Jews died and tens of thousands more converted. These converts—eventually known as *conversos* or *marranos*—eventually became common targets for the Inquisition.

The destruction of Spanish Jewry—through the Inquisition and the expulsion—was to be the most tragic event in Jewish history until the Second World War. It seemed to me essential to set the novel in Toledo at the very moment it became apparent that this destruction became inevitable.

Another advantage of Toledo was its fame as a historically preserved city. I—and the tens of thousands of tourists who visited it daily—could expect to find a reasonably authentic version of what Toledo looked like in the fourteenth century. We arranged to stay in a hotel that had once been a Cardinal's palace. This seemed appropriate since such a Cardinal would obviously have an important although villainous role to play in my hypothetical novel. Also, I could be reasonably certain that there would no be

hotels based in residences that had once belonged to rich or famous Jews. (In fact, curiously enough, Toledo is not the only city I've visited which does not have this kind of hotel—but that would be a different travel story—.)

The Cardinal's palace was suitably opulent, as well as being provided with a restaurant splendid in every respect save that my companion got violently ill both times we ate there. As advertised the city was a well-kept version of what—for all I knew—it had been in the middle ages. A small, densely populated walled city set on a series of cliffs and divided into various districts that could be separated by iron gates, Toledo has an undeniable beauty and magic—even the strange emptiness and sterility that it radiates—despite the throngs of tourists—invite the visitor to fill that emptiness with his or her own imagination.

The former Jewish presence in Toledo was duly recorded in various guidebooks, and there was even a very attractive and ancient synagogue—which had later been converted into a church—to be seen. The day I went to see it happened to be Yom Kippur, and the synagogue was closed. When I asked why, I was told a German film crew was inside, setting up for a television special on the historic past of Spain's Jews. This led to a vigorous discussion during which my companion said many words I hadn't noticed in dictionaries, and we were allowed in. Afterwards I asked if the Jews of Toledo ever worshipped here and I was told that although the city did have some Jewish families, regrettably very few, they didn't use the synagogue.

There was a restaurant up the hill from the hotel, a modest place with a terrific view down to the plains where the medieval fairs would set up and towards which the Jews of Toledo tried to flee—mostly unsuccessfully—when their *barrio* was invaded and set on fire in 1391.

One night at this friendly and affordable restaurant, one which specialized in lunches because most of the tourist buses left in the late afternoon for Madrid—only two hours away—I realized my project was ridiculous. I felt as though I were in a sort of medieval Disneyland, dutifully making the rounds of churches, synagogues, old Roman arenas, paintings, houses of former illustrious citizens, etc. I proposed that we cut our losses, set out for the north, take advantage of being in Spain to see as much as possible.

That night I dreamed the first section of my novel: *The Spanish Doctor.* When I woke up in the morning and went outside, I saw not the prettily restored buildings, but the dry stony soil, the bushes that would have torn at your skin as you slid to escape, the claustrophobic architecture of a city designed to be ruled by fear.

We spent ten days driving around Spain, then returned to Toledo. Everything we saw in the present seemed a thin contemporary transparency laid upon a landscape from which, hour by hour, I was learning to subtract the centuries.

By the time we left Toledo a second time and went to spend a last night inMadrid before going to the airport, I had filled pages with notes, could speak rudimentary Spanish, and had bought the books I would need for my research. But now when I looked at the people on the streets of Madrid they were utter strangers. I was no longer inside them—instead I was in the nightmare their ancestors and mine had shared—the nightmare that for some had ended in death and exile, for others in the beginnings of a new and dazzling empire.

Brian Henderson

Tourist in Mexico

Who dare claim protection for their own
amid such unprotection
ADRIENNE RICH

*

The Mexican sun does not set,
a hummingbird ignites
its own ruby-throated death, shadows
a storm of arrows
The world is on the wane,
year bundles unravel

Is it the fever of stars
just beyond, is it
the skull racks
confined now to splendid museums,
is it the ferocity of the hidden
or of the obvious, excessive,
repetitious, too much itself,
a ripple of language just out of reach,
a buzz, a crackle, something
being said over and over,
a word, some word, the incessant
drumming of palm fronds,
quetzal feathers, flaying
light, the terrible
chatter of the sacred?

If God is a Scattered One
does terror bring the scattered
to be imagined more fully?
Or does it keep it
spellbound in every cell?

If the heart is a gift
what will you do with this desire?
Reject it, torture it, tear it out?
Are we saturated and blunted?
Are we knives?

*

I imagine I speak the language
I pierce my tongue with a thorn
The unbearable weight of heat
ripples the roofs. It is
the weight of history
gone astray, but unmoving,
we rise up through it like ghosts
with money

In empty Teotihuacan
we see something flickering
rippling, approaching
as we walk along the Avenue
of the Dead. Ripple
of wrist of hawk, flicker
of jaguar hide in the dusk.

Unspeaking
without one glance toward us:
a small figure with cane
and twisting plastic poncho,
nahualli, click of ocelot eye

The world becomes clearer
only to turn invisible again

In a town whose name I can now only imagine,
in a church whose many names like coral
sinew over every surface:
a woman kneeling and weeping
her hand running up and down
a glass-coffined christ,
her grief as big as the hunger
that gorges on her love

I can't get beyond this being beyond
in the night,
the guest who is always
departing

*

The moon's a bled animal
The dipper's upside down
pouring the night's
obsidian

You with the veranda light
switch the stars off
then on again

There have been too many deaths
we will not scare away with these lights
Perhaps in fact we attract them....

Ancient crickets
whir their blades of voices
slicing the hot pour of wind and sea
the clatter of palm fronds like rain

Did all the long dying bear children?
We have waited so long for something....

At Tula carried high
in the temperate plateau, moonlike,
Quetzalcoatl's conch shell
dreams this coast
dreams our imagination
of its dreaming

We are beside ourselves with
histories,
gashes of being, our bodies
lighter than the dawn

Sherrill Grace

Ut Pictura Poesis:
From Alberto Gironella to Malcolm Lowry

Mais si, sans se laisser charmer,
Ton oeil sait plonger dans les gouffres,
Lis-moi, pour apprendre à m'aimer.
BAUDELAIRE

I

"The book is written on numerous planes with provision made, it was my fond hope, for almost every kind of reader." LOWRY

Few readers of Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano* are better versed in the novel's "poetic cases" than the contemporary Mexican artist Alberto Gironella.[1] And few readers can teach us so much about *Under the Volcano*. In *El vía crucis del Consul* (*The Consul's Way of the Cross*), Gironella has taken up Baudelaire's challenge: to teach us how to read—and to love—Lowry's book.

What I propose to do here is to read Gironella's reading of Lowry and, in the process, to identify the ways in which their texts instruct and control a reader who dares to follow the textual signs in a search for meaning in the complex semiotics of Lowry's, Gironella's, and our contemporary world. My approach to this semiotics rests on basic assumptions that it is best to note at the start because it is at this very point of departure that readers and readings will differ.

Despite all that must be said about textuality, discursive formations and postmodernism, I believe that Lowry and Gironella intend to create artistic meaning that can be grasped by a reader and that this meaning, in addition to the language, form, and system in which it exists, can enrich our lives. This is a fundamentally romantic view of the artist and of artistic intention that is unfashionable in post-structuralist criticism. It takes us back to Baudelaire—that avatar, "kindred spirit," and fellow traveller of Lowry and Gironella—and back to an allegorical habit of mind in which correspondences are sought between our semiotic systems and a reality that is believed

to lie both in and somewhere beyond the surface play of signifiers. The *search* for that paradise where semiotics and reality (be it existential or transcendental) are one is, for the romantic artist, a voyage that never ends; arrival is endlessly deferred thus, the desire for meaning (call it *correspondance*, presence, Logos) provides the impetus for creative acts that ease the twentieth-century's sense of loss, or what Lyotard calls "nostalgia for the unattainable."[2]

In my reading of Gironella's and Lowry's creative acts, I will employ the tools of the archeologist, as Foucault outlines them in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, to uncover and compare the homologies and differences that allow me to describe the novel and the art as constituting an "interdiscursive configuration" within the discursive practices of romantic, western humanism.[3] But I will also move beyond Foucauldian archeology by insisting upon interpretation.

II

"The twelve chapters should be considered as twelve blocks. . . . Each chapter is a unity in itself and all are related and interrelated." LOWRY

Both *Under the Volcano* and *The Consul's Way of the Cross* defy summary and confound first impressions. Constructed, like a churrigueresque cathedral, in an "overloaded style" on many levels that duplicate and mirror each other, *Under the Volcano* proliferates images, symbols, signs, intertexts and meanings in a bewilderingly complex, yet meticulously balanced, system. Taking its cues from the novel, *The Consul's Way of the Cross* reconstructs that system in a multi-media, pictorial language that interpellates itself into the novel *and* stands outside it in an autonomous installation where it mirrors and comments on the Consul's story and the novel's discourse.

III

"The allegory is that of the Garden of Eden, the Garden representing the world, from which we ourselves run perhaps slightly more danger of being ejected than when I wrote the book." LOWRY

The story, or diegetic core, of *Under the Volcano* is familiar and simple. It is a tale of the collapse and disintegration of a marriage and of the couple whose love could not prevail over the internal and external forces undermining them. Lowry lifts this bathetic story from the level of soap-opera cliché to the level of tragedy and allegory through his discourse: the husband becomes a figure of Adam, Faust, and a cabbalist; his wife becomes a

figure of Eve, Marguerite, and the feminine principle of the cabbala; the failure of their marriage signifies our failure to remain in the Garden of Eden, which in turn signifies western civilization's failure (in two wars) to preserve the earthly garden of this world. Religious and political allegory expand the simple story into a discursive formation that, as Foucault reminds us, inscribes a "system of dispersion" (37) through "a schema of correspondence" between narrative events and other, extra-narrative "series of events" (74), between the discursive formation of a novel and the "non-discursive domains" (162) of political, social and cultural events.

IV

"Aunque el pintor se sirve de los ojos y el poeta de la lengua, ojos y lengua obedecen a la misma potencia: la imaginación." PAZ

Alberto Gironella's *The Consul's Way of the Cross* exists in three forms: as illustrations in a sumptuous new edition of *Bajo el Volcán*; as an exhibition catalogue containing a critical essay by Lowry scholar Carmen Virgili, with photographs, drawings, a set of testimonials, and reproductions of selected pieces from the exhibition; and as the exhibition itself. In each of these forms the work comprises a complex juxtaposition of visual and verbal texts that comment upon and address each other in a discourse ranging from agonistic celebration to comic parody and from dizzying narcissism to ironic objectivity. To say that *Under the Volcano* inspired *The Consul's Way of the Cross*, or to argue that Lowry's novel provides the model or "hypotext" for Gironella's art is to miss the point by over-simplifying the nature of each text in itself and of the relationship between them.[4]

Judging from the titles alone, I might say that *The Consul's Way of the Cross* refers to *Under the Volcano* synecdochically, as a part to the larger whole, except that Gironella, like Lowry, has a way of proliferating parts until they take on a generative power all their own. Synecdoche, then, will not help me, and another way into the dialogue must be found.

V

"Las verdaderas obras de arte siempre están más allá de su interpretación, se caracterizan por su capacidad de permanecer vivas dentro de ella." PONCE

At the May-June 1994 exhibition in the Mexican Cultural Centre in Paris, the unsuspecting gallery flaneur enters, literally, a set of rooms opening off one another rather like the rooms of the Farolito in chapter XII of the *Volcano*. The

first of these rooms, however, is hung with text. The wall to the left contains row upon row of books, their dustjackets displaying *Bajo el Volcan* on the front or a yellow altar to Malcolm Lowry on the back.[5] In a glass case near the window lie more volumes, some closed to display their deep blue cover embossed with a large black scorpion, others open to reveal the Spanish text.

The right-hand wall is covered by fifty-four brilliantly coloured images (16 x 24 cm) mounted on black mats and recessed in shallow frames. The visual impact is stunning. On closer inspection one sees that each piece, with its dominant blue, white, red, and black composition, is a collaged surface built from paint, ink, various types of paper and labels, and bottle caps. The letters MEZCAL leap out here and there; a horse with the number 7 surfaces at several points; Tarot cards emerge—"The Fool," "The Wheel of Fortune," "The Hanged Man"; the number 666 suddenly erupts from a corner of an image; maps and labels appear and disappear, announcing and obscuring the Battle of the Ebro, Tequila, Johnnie Walker, Carta Blanca, Alas, ALAS! The closer one looks, the more each collaged surface acquires a dizzying complexity and a paradoxical depth, until one slowly realizes that in the background (the pictorial ground) looms the abstract shape of a volcano.

On the threshold of the inner room are more rows of books, open or closed, displaying their dustjackets. Then, facing the viewer from the rear wall of this inner room is the "Grand Altar to Malcolm Lowry," an installation piece (see Figure #1) constructed of wood painted a vivid, cadmium yellow, the very yellow used for cantinas in Mexico. Dominating the "altar" in the central recessed enclosure, sits a slightly larger than life-sized portrait of Malcolm Lowry (looking uncannily like a younger Alberto Gironella), his hand extended from the recess, as if over the counter of a bar, holding an *empty* glass: "Mescal. . . . *mescal, poquito*."[6] And on the counter lie fragments of the Consul's last day, those objects that acquire such vitality in chapter XII of *Volcano*: dominoes, a gun, cigarettes, a telephone. The letters "Farolito" flash above his head. Instead of votive candles, further evidence from that Day of the Dead sits in the four altar niches surrounding this central recess: "bottles, bottles, bottles . . . Rye, Johnny Walker, Vieux Whiskey, *blanc* Canadien . . . the beautiful bottles of tequila" (*UV* 294). Beside the bottles are four smaller images, one per niche—an elaborately framed crucifixion here, a miniature portrait of John Donne there. Bizarre advertisements, or icons? Above and between the niches are signs and trays, the familiar appurtenances of a cantina, advertising beverages.

Figure 1: This photograph, taken at the opening of the exhibition, shows "Altar mayor a Malcolm Lowry" (300 x 190 x 21 cm) with red candles and yellow flowers and two of the boxed collages. It is reproduced by permission of Circulo de Lectores and courtesy of the artist.

Around the three remaining walls of this inner sanctum hang twelve boxed collages ("cajas-collage," each 83 x 100 x 21 cm). These are Gironella's windows opening into *Under the Volcano*. Each glass-covered, yellow box encapsulates and comments upon one of the twelve chapters of the novel. The "slow progression of the hours" (*SL* 66) is indicated by the shade of blue used for the ground of the collaged images that constitute the narrative link between boxes and across the gulf (*gouffre*/gulf/golf) that separates them; the blue builds from the pale light of early morning to the intense blue of mid-day to a deeper blue fading to grey before it gives way to the black of night. Arrayed in front of and beside the collage are key objects and verbal/visual signs of the chapter being presented; thus, the box for chapter VI features a guitar, and the one for chapter IX contains a crutch and bicycle wheel. And always there are bottles. Just as they do in *Volcano*, these dis-junct, inanimate, found objects, standing or affixed to the surface of the

box, acquire a disturbing, menacing vitality. As one peers in at them, mesmerized, or follows them from box to box, one plunges deeper and deeper into the proliferated thing-ness of the Consul's world. Each box captures and reduplicates the traces—the outline of a volcano, twelve faint letters (one per box) that spell M-A-L-C-O-L-M-L-O-W-R-Y, labels, words, numbers, *things*—already familiar from the wall of collages in the outer room.

The impact of all this reduplication on the gallery visitor as she moves from outer to inner room and slowly around the boxes to the altar is not unlike the shock received on entering a church/cantina/brothel in a Bunuel film where disjunct fragments of the objective world clamour, threaten, or mutely command attention in revolving iterations and *mises en abîme.* How can one read, and learn to love, such a text?

VI

"Hugh and the Consul are the same person, but within a book which obeys not the laws of other books, but those it creates as it goes along." LOWRY

The 1992 deluxe edition of *Bajo el Volcán* is a reprint of the 1964 Spanish translation of *Under the Volcano* by Raūl Ortiz y Ortiz, with a Spanish translation, by Carmen Virgili, of the "Prologue" that Lowry wrote for the 1949 French translation of his novel, and with fifty-six full colour illustrations, a cover and a dustjacket by Gironella. This volume takes its place in a long tradition of emblem literature and illustrated texts in which the relationship between verbal and visual languages is central to the semiotics and aesthetics of the text.

Gironella's illustrations of the novel exist in four forms that together constitute a parallel discourse to the novel: dustjacket, scorpion cover design, twelve small black and white reproductions (5 x 6.5 cm) of the lithographs based on the collages in the boxes, and fifty-six plates (16 x 24 cm) tipped-in strategically, with four at the beginning and end of the novel and four per chapter. First impressions on leafing through the volume are of brilliant colour, visual complexity, and dizzying repetition. One illustration *seems* to duplicate another, but what is duplicated are elements of composition, colour, words, numbers, and fragments of text. Only two plates are, in fact, repeated. The black and white lithograph reproductions, each one set below its chapter number, appear on the individual, otherwise blank pages that separate the chapters. They provide further reiterations of elements in the colour plates, and while they are less likely to catch the eye, they are subtle

visual/verbal *mises en abîme*, for the chapter that follows and for the important breaks (*gouffre*/gulf/golf) between chapters.

Nothing in this intertextual assemblage is accidental. Let me take one example: chapter IV. Here, the chapter lithographannounces "C.T.M." (see Figure #2), the Spanish translation of "see tee emma" in Hugh's telegram to the Daily Globe, the telegram that opens chapter four and finds its way into Hugh's sports jacket, which the Consul will put on in chapter seven and be wearing in chapter twelve. Behind these bold letters is the faint outline of a large letter "C" (from MALCOLM), holding within its open space the words "CONSUL," "mezcal," and traces of words barely discernible on the surface of the original collage. In harmony with Lowry's textuality (allusions, echoes, intertexts, re-presentations, proliferating signs), Gironella duplicates Lowry's methods and, thus, aspects of his meaning: everything is connected, interwoven, interconnected, yet these intertexts and signs are contained, controlled, isolated (like the characters), and *framed*.

Figure 2: Gironella introduces each chapter with these black and white reproductions of his lithographs from the boxed collages. This image introduces chapter IV and is reproduced by permission of Circulo de Lectores and courtesy of the artist.

Turn the page, and the telegram, in Spanish, with its "CTM confederación trabajadores mex," stares back at you. Half a dozen pages into the chapter sit the four illustrations, the first of which is dominated by the large black capitals: CTM. And because this is Hugh's chapter, a fragment of newspaper headline announces the Battle of the Ebro. The next three illustrations introduce new intertextual elements—Peter Lorre, the white horse with the number "7," "la sepultura" (the pulqueria where Hugh and Yvonne stop during their ride and Yvonne sees the armadillo)—and repeat what is, by chapter four, an already familiar set of signs: the volcano, the bottle caps, the blue, yellow and red, and "mezcal." Again, Lowry's method is duplicated in Gironella's pictorial language, so that words and images, novel and pictures, together, constitute an interdiscursive configuration.

VII

"Life is a forest of symbols, as Baudelaire said, but I won't be told you can't see the wood for the trees here!" LOWRY

"Golf = gouffre = gulf," or so Geoffrey Firmin reflects in chapter seven of *Volcano* (206) as he stares through binoculars, past Yvonne, from Jacques' tower to the distant golf course. From such small touches, Lowry establishes the correspondences that work inter- and intra-textually across the discursive formation of the novel. *Gouffre* invokes Baudelaire, and the gulf, of course, is the barranca, the ultimate hell-hole in Geoffrey's botched golf game of a life. The play on golf, however, carries Geoffrey into an elaborate, erudite parody of John Donne's "A Hymn to God the Father"—"Who holds the flag while I hole out in three?" (*UV* 207)—a parody that quickly becomes self-parody laced with self-loathing, self-reproach, self-pity, and with irony, regret, longing, and serious humour. Such rich ambiguity of tone and of self-reflexive parody lies at the heart of *Under the Volcano* and represents both Lowry's strength and his weakness as a writer. Time and again, his narcissism is relieved (just in time) by his irony, his "subjective [. . .] equipment" (*SL* 59) balanced by the objective demands of parody.

For whatever reasons, personal, temperamental, artistic, Gironella celebrates Lowry's subjectivity by placing his construction of the Lowryan artist at the centre of his work. In the catalogue for *The Consul's Way of the Cross*, Gironella is photographed seated before his "Great Altar to Malcolm Lowry," bearded, cane in hand, looking for all the world like the Consul and his creator. His signature repeats itself on all the images until it becomes an inevitable, unavoidable,

integral part of the total composition, until it (he) is written into the on-going voyage, until the name creates itself by asserting filiation and genealogy.

As with Lowry, Gironella's "subjective [. . .] equipment" is balanced by irony, parody, and serious humour, perhaps even with a touch of one-up-manship. So you can play golf-gouffre-gulf? Well, just watch me! Or just watch Donne watching you from several vantage points including the lower right niche of *my* altar. The joke, finally is on the reader/viewer who, dismayed by the extravagant self-reflexivity of Lowry and Gironella, may miss the allusions to precursors (here, to Donne and Baudelaire, but there are many others) that simultaneously mock and validate these romantic altar-egos.

VIII

"'Esto es gallo'. Es su sello y su juego de viñeta-sello con la literatura y la pintura." RÍOS

The Horatian dictum notwithstanding (*ut pictura poesis*, as is painting, so is poetry), the semiotic basis for inter-artistic comparison rests on structural homology, not analogy, let alone artistic temperament. To be fully comparable and complementary, the sister arts must be capable of being discussed in the same terms.[7] Where one might argue that pigment, line, and plastic form, the primary tools of the painter, are at best only analogous to the words and imagery, the sentences, story divisions, and focalization of the novelist, it seems to me that Gironella has grasped, almost literally, the principle of homology through the pictorial language of collage, the narrative genre (which, of course, has a long history in painting), and the concept of installation.

Gironella has created works that function autonomously as visual art, that engage Lowry in dialogue and that, within the covers of *Bajo el Volcán*, show us how to read by staging a reading of the novel. Collage works homologously in this staging by constructing a visual/verbal surface composed of the same fragments that constitute Lowry's verbal world—scraps of actual text, quotations, maps, labels. The syntax of Gironella's surfaces develops cumulatively and paratactically, as do Lowry's sentences, through the embedding of visual and verbal signs. Narrative is an obvious, traditional homology articulated here in the twelve collage boxes that should be read/viewed/studied in sequence and, like the chapters of the novel with which they correspond, carry one back, repeatedly, to the beginning. This narrative compulsion holds the novel and the series of boxes together as a discursive formation, while permitting each one to function on its own, in its own (temporal) frame and space.

Gironella's use of installation is at once the most daring and problematic of his homologies. It is problematic because it can only work for the gallery visitor with intimate knowledge of *Under the Volcano* and Malcolm Lowry. When it works, however, this homology is possibly the most fruitful one because what Gironella achieves by it is a dramatic staging *of the reading process* that literally places the viewer/reader inside a simulacrum of the text and leads her around and around a virtual reality of potentially endless readings of the text called *El Vía Crucis del Cónsul Under the Volcano.*

IX

"And I am telling you something new about hell fire." LOWRY

To some extent, all works of art attempt to instruct and manipulate their readers/viewers. They all assume an audience. Lowry's and Gironella's work, however, demands a participating audience, one that will accept the Baudelairean challenge to plumb the depths and learn to love. But as the traces of armadillos (literally, the bony plates from their backs) in Gironella's boxes remind us, and as Hugh warned Yvonne, armadillos cannot be tamed and, if you try to tame them, they will pull you into a hole with them. This risk of becoming confused and lost—swallowed up—in the proliferations of *Volcano* and the *Consul's Way,* is only one danger facing a reader/viewer. The other is the risk, as Baudelaire knew, of "se laisser charmer," of succumbing to the self-destructive, romantic myth of the artist as demi-god at whose altar we must worship and whose art we must accept as gospel.

To recoil and reject, however, is an extreme and hasty response, for taken singly these works provide a fascinating commentary on the activities of readers, on the creation and consumption of art, and on contemporary life. Taken together they demonstrate the attraction and persistence of the romantic artist as a central figure in the narrative of western humanism: Lowry wants to tell us "something new about hell fire" (*SL* 80), and Gironella wants to celebrate that telling. Why?

X

"The constant repetition of churrigueresque `of an overloaded style' seemed to be a suggestion that the book was satirizing itself." LOWRY

Although the hells created by Lowry and Gironella are secular, composed in and of the detritus of this world, the ghosts of religious belief hover over every bottle and behind every sign. Churches, altars, candles, magic, hymns, prayers,

and ritual pervade novel and art. And yet, because of the irony and parody in both texts, one must ask just what is being worshipped and what gods invoked. The obvious answers spring to mind from the Judeo-Christian tradition that is so obviously inscribed in both, but it is at this point that an important difference (*gouffre*) opens up between Lowry and Gironella.

Where Lowry wants to warn us about the failure of love and the imminent destruction of the world by the forces of evil within us, Gironella is content to comment upon the frantic consumerism of late twentieth-century life. He does this by displaying the empty bottles, crushed snakes (all that is left of the devil?), armadillo plates, dented bottle caps, used matches, torn labels, discarded boots, broken instruments, faded photographs, in short, the garbage of our lives, in aesthetically pleasing arrangements, side by side with images and fragments of the humanist tradition in art, literature, philosophy, and religion, *where it carries equal weight and value with that tradition.*

This and this alone—this actual, physical, garbage from the real world—is what we stand in the gallery worshipping. Things. Things consumed and discarded. Gironella nowhere indicates that this is his warning, but he has nevertheless actualized the Consul's tragic realization in chapter twelve of the *Volcano* that the things of this world, down to "the ash and sputum on the filthy floor" (*UV* 362) correspond to his being, sum up his wasted life.

XI

"You like this garden? Why is it yours? We evict those who destroy!" LOWRY

Lowry's vision is, finally, a modernist one, and *Under the Volcano* is a modernist text, albeit one that approaches what we now think of as postmodernism. For Lowry, the gods, the unities, the design-governing strategies of art are still operative, even though we have abused them. His novel has the high seriousness of a tragedy in which the fate of an individual soul still matters and the desecration of the garden is a sin punishable by eviction. His postmodern qualities lie in his sense of language as a system of dissemination, in the acute intertextuality of his discourse, in the proliferating signifiers of his semiotic system.[7] Between the modernist story of death, loss, and damnation and the postmodernist discourse of *Volcano* sits Lowry's thematization of the vertigo that accompanies his characters' nostalgia for presence, Logos. If this vertigo is not the "obscene" ecstasy described by Baudrillard as central to postmodernism, it is only because Lowry judges and damns it in the act of communication that is, and points beyond (transcends), *Under the Volcano*.[8]

Gironella's *The Consul's Way of the Cross*, as installation, is a fully post-modernist re-statement of the problem. For Gironella, the world is an aesthetic object and Lowry, like his novel, is a part, albeit a privileged part, of that simulacrum. Gironella takes collage, parody and intertextuality to their dizzying extremes in order to construct an "obscene" shrine at which we worship, without nostalgia, an always already written text that promises nothing beyond its own virtual reality.

XII

"For the book was so designed, counterdesigned and interwelded that it could be read an indefinite number of times and still not have yielded all its meanings or its drama or its poetry." LOWRY

But Gironella's art does not exist only in the installation space of a gallery. Within the dustjacket, cover, and pages of *Bajo el Volcán*, his collages serve to reinforce the meaning of Lowry's text and to instruct us in the way of the cross, of the Consul, of reading. Gironella's homage here is to the wonder of human creativity in the tangible text of Lowry's novel. By illustrating the Spanish translation of the novel, the painter's art supplements the writer's (and translator's) in an interdiscursive configuration that works to reassure us that, regardless of how desperate and hopeless the late twentieth-century may be, it is still possible to find meaning, order, beauty and pleasure in representational art and to find hope in the human capacity to make art.

Finally, one must not forget the humour, seriously parodic though it may be. From the gigantic jakes of this world, Lowry and Gironella have fabricated elaborate, churrigueresque jokes that remind us never to take ourselves too seriously. After all, when you close Gironella's *Bajo el Volcán*, what you see on the back of the dustjacket is the grand yellow altar to Malcolm Lowry.

Ceci n'est pas une pipe. Esto es gallo.

NOTES

1 The fourteen quotations that frame and introduce the twelve parts of this paper are from the following sources. Charles Baudelaire, "Épigraphe pour un livre condamné," *Fleurs du mal* in *Baudelaire: Selected Poems*, selected and translated by Joanna Richardson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 186-87: "But if, remaining free from spells, / Your eyes can plumb the hellish deep, / Read me, and learn to love me well"; for parts I, II, III, VI, VII, IX, X, XI and XII, they are from Lowry's 2 January 1946 letter to Jonathan Cape, *Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry*, ed Margerie Lowry and Harvey Breit (Philadelphia and New York: Lippincott, 1965), 66, 65, 66, 75, 78, 80, 85, 88; all further references to this

letter are included in the text. The quotation for part IV is from Octavio Paz's "Testimonial" in *Alberto Gironella: El Vía Crucis del Cónsul* (Barcelona: Circulo de Lectores, 1992): "Even though painting and writing exist in separate realms, both are the product of the power of imagination" (43); for part V, from Juan García Ponce's "Testimonial" in *Alberto Gironella*: "great works are those which are always beyond the reach of interpretation and are able to stay alive within it" (44); and for part VIII, from Julián Ríos's caption in *Alberto Gironella* explaining the artist's ironic use of a phrase from *Don Quixote* as a type of signature: "'This is a rooster'. It is his seal and an interplay vignette/seal between literature and painting" (22). The closing epigram is a combination of the inscription on René Magritte's 1928-29 surrealist painting of a pipe called "The Treachery of Images" and Gironella's "seal." I would like to thank Pablo Restrepo for his translations from the Spanish in the catalogue *Alberto Gironella: El Vía Crucis del Cónsul.* Gironella (1929-), a leading Mexican artist, has had solo exhbitions in Mexico, Spain, and France and been represented in group exhibitions of surrealist and contemporary art across Europe and Latin American and in London and New York. He has had a long and intimate interest in literature.

2 See Jean-François Lyotard's discussion of the nostalgia within modernism and the way it is transformed in postmodernism in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: U Minneapolis P, 1984), 79-81.

3 Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 1972), 158. All subsequent references are included in the text, but see, in particular, chapter 4.

4 "Hypotext" is Gérard Genette's term for the antecedent text in a set of texts that are closely related through their "hypertextuality": see *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982), 11-12.

5 At the Paris exhibition, the two second-floor rooms of the gallery contained Gironella's lithographs and a display of Lowry artefacts, letters, and manuscripts in a further reduplication of intertextualities.

6 The Consul whispers this to Cervantes at the beginning of chapter X of *Under the Volcano* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 283. All further references to the novel are to this edition and are included in the text. The new Spanish edition, described in part VI, was published in 1992 by Círculo de Lectores in Barcelona. I would like to thank Dr Ortiz for sending me a copy and for introducing me to Gironella's work.

7 In *The Colors of Rhetoric: Problems in the Relation between Modern Literature and Painting* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1982), 1-69, Wendy Steiner examines the problems and history of the painting-literature analogy, and the process of semiotic comparison.

8 In "The Ecstasy of Communication," a brief section translated by John Johnston from *Le Systèm des objets* (1968) for *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), 126-34, Jean Baudrillard outlines his distinction between "scene" and "obscene," between a traditional (and modern) faith in representation, referential meaning and mystery beyond a visible surface and the postmodern "delirium" produced by simulations of the real in which all things exist as fully visible commodities.

Yucatan

I'm on literacy duty in The Yucatan.
By a hotel's smooth jade pool, I sit
encouraging my stepson to write
a journal for the school-time he's missing.

He just suffered his mother's lecture
how tv back home is switching
his once airy imagination for dry tortilla.
He's sentenced now to a lengthy entry,
cruel and unusual punishment in these days
of human sacrifice to Nintendo.

While a cricket chants lost Toltec participles
from fronds above, I remind him
all we know of this peninsula's history,
including the drama of blood-smeared obsidian
and slab, comes from writing
(from this self-sacrificing cramp in the hand).
The pen alone preserves truly
the green scuttle of the iguana,
tail lashing in the idol's cracked maw.
Like writers, these beings persist
among the ruins; nourish the forgetful survivors.

But to him, I guess, the past's mossy glyphs
mean little: he wants mostly to play
on sunny heaps timelessly.
I'm flooding on in this vein passionately
when I notice that he,
likely thrilled by tales of human gore,
or the superb oddness of iguanas,
has drifted off elsewhere, or right here
scribbling furiously....
Well, he has begun—the high priest's limb
darts and stabs, though without its own agonies yet.
"Ignore the growing pain in the thumb!" I advise.
"Starting's easy; the hard part's keeping going."
The Mayas pierced their bodies to appease eternity.
Writers trek the broken world on their hands.

Coba, January 1991

Eva-Marie Kröller

A Carnival of Criticism

One of the most ambitious recent attempts to interrelate the literatures of the Americas is Earl E. Fitz's *Rediscovering the New World: Inter-American Literature in a Comparative Context* (Iowa UP, n.p.). Chapters are devoted to comparing Native myths, explorers' narratives, new world epics, the figure of the halfbreed, American modernism, and so forth. The reader comes away from these exercises intrigued with parallels that she may not have known existed and wanting to investigate some of the many titles heaped together here. At the same time, a specialist will be troubled by the lack of a discernible methodology, the superficiality of many of the analyses, and the unevenness of the presentation. The comments on Canadian literature, for instance, rely strongly on Atwood and Frye without so much of an indication of the debate surrounding their pronouncements; there is no effort to problematize the relation of French-Canadian and English-Canadian literature to each other, and no due attention to the challenge of minority writing to these two "founding" literatures. Women writers are characterized as being at their best when they "involve the reader not merely in a quest to discover what it means to be female or even a Canadian female but what it means to be human." Too often, Fitz's method consists in isolating one or two features—frequently applicable to *any* literature—before making them the basis of a sweeping comparison. The quotation above for instance is followed by the announcement that "this same thematic extrapolation from the sexual, cultural, and political condition of the individual to the universal is also found among a number of fine contemporary writers in Brazil," followed by a long list of names. Fitz's book is to be commended for its sheer courage in taking on such a vast subject, but it leaves much room for additional work.

A more narrow focus is found in *Confluences littéraires: Brésil-Québec, les*

bases d'une comparaison, ed. Zilà Bernd and Michel Peterson (Balzac, n.p.). This book documents both the potential and the limitations of a comparative project which is based on cultural exchange interests rather than actual literary interdependencies. After a rambling introductory essay by Wlad Godzich entitled "Brésil-Québec: à la recherche du *tertium comparationis*," which seems to talk about everything but the Brazil-Québec connection, various essays by Chantal Gamache, Serge Bourjea, Zilà Bernd, and others strain to document parallels that are more or less spurious or else apply to almost any comparison between so-called emerging literatures. Thus, the section "Approches critiques" strongly focuses on questions of "anthropophagie," that is the cannibalistic swallowing up of one culture by another, and on *métissage*, both concepts hardly specific to Brazil or Québec. And yet the book is rewarding because in the best tradition of that branch of comparative literature which is based on affinity rather than direct influence, the sometimes forced conjunctions can provide sudden flashes of insight. Among these are Zilà Bernd's comments on romanticism and modernism, and the realization, confirmed yet again, that Hubert Aquin's work appears to be relevant to almost any modern or postmodern context, and others. The book also provides texts documenting diplomatic relations between Canada and Brazil, as well as bibliographies of Québécois research devoted to Brazilian literature (the name Clarice Lispector looms large here, indication that a large portion of Québec's interest in Brazilian literature may come via Hélène Cixous) and vice versa: Brazilian research on Québec literature appears to favour Anne Hébert.

Confluences littéraires includes translations of poetry by Gaston Miron into Portuguese, and by Alfonso Romano de Sant'Anna into French. The latter is also featured in *Liberté* 36 (February 1994), a special issue on Brazilian literature. Authors included besides de Sant'Anna are Ferreira Gullar, Mário Quintana, João Cabral de Melo Neto, and others. Bernard Andrès and Zilà Bernd, both also contributors to *Confluences littéraires*, provide a tantalizing introduction in which they draw sketchy parallels between Brazilian and Québécois authors as well as suggesting a similarity between the separatist tendencies of Rio Grande do Sul and those of Québec. The selections include only one female author, Nélida Piñon, whose writing is described as excelling in the description of "les motifs fondamentaux de la littérature universelle, l'amour, la passion, la condition humaine et la mort." (Similiarly "universal" qualities are incidentally said to

infuse the relationship between Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, in a review of J.M.G. Le Clézio's *Diego & Frida* included in this issue.) Biographical notes on the translators who have contributed to *Brasilittéraire* indicate that there has been considerable collaboration and visiting back and forth between UQAM and the University of São Paulo in particular, and that there are academic and artistic connections between Quebec and Latin America which so far have failed to materialize to a similar extent in English Canada. While *Brasilittéraire* is devoted to one Latin-American country only, a somewhat greater variety is offered in *La Présence d'une autre Amérique* (La Naine blanche, n.p.), a slim volume anthologizing Latin-American authors currently working in Québec. Featured are Tito Alvarado, Jorge Cancino, Nelly Davis Vallejos, Jorge Etcheverry, Gilberto Flores Patiño, and others. *Ruptures*, subtitled "la revue des 3 Amériques" and published in Montreal, prints texts in French, English, Spanish, and Portuguese. A recent issue is devoted to Mexico and among numerous poems and short stories also features an ill-tempered essay by Lazlo Moussong entitled "Malcolm Lowry: the Volcano's Not What They Say It Is," presenting an attack on the book's status as classic from a Mexican perspective: "in Lowry's perception of Mexico, instead of values, we find unbearable weaknesses; heavy-handed distortions, excessively narrow compartmentalization; and, in the smug, petty, superficial way in which he views Mexico and it people, we discover the same point of view as is common among the thousands of North American ne'er-do-wells and European pensioners who settle in Cuernavaca and various other paradises and subsequently proceed to depict the immitigable mediocrity of their lives in exotic hues." A tension between North and South also becomes clear in Alberto Kurapel's *Station artificelle* (Humanitias, n.p.), an autographical work describing the Chilean's work with La Compagnie des Arts Exilio in Montreal. Besides documenting the concept of his theatre, Kurapel also has illuminating things to say about Quebec's multicultural policies which, so he suggests, favour folklore over alternative cultural expression.

Notable Hispanic American Women is one of the many reference works issued by Gage (n.p.). Writers, composers, dancers, and actresses are listed along with activists, entrepreneurs, chefs, government officials, lawyers, social workers, and educators (a particularly long list). While the entries tend toward the journalistic, there is still much to be gained from perusing this volume. Especially among older notable women, Hispanic backgrounds tend to be erased along with the names: Margarita Carmen

Cansino becomes Rita Hayworth, Blanca Rosa Welter adopts the name of Linda Christian, and Florencia Bicenta de Casillas Martinez Cardona turns into Vikki Carr. Several women complain that they have lost their Spanish because family and schools did not encourage them to cultivate it. The only alternative to ethnic invisibility appears to have been stereotyping. Rita Moreno for instance tells how she was frequently typecast as the fiery Latin, roles she "played. . . the same way, barefoot, with my nostrils flaring." Even the biographies of women who, like the writer Sandra Cisneros, have asserted their ethnicity, often display great conflict which in equal measure derives from their uneasy position within the mainstream as well as from the traditionalism, sexual and otherwise, of their own background. The 450-page volume, like all Gage publications handsomely laid out, comes with several indexes (by occupation, ethnicity, and subject), and makes for both a valuable research tool and an illuminating read. Women also dominate the anthology *One Hundred Years After Tomorrow: Brazilian Women's Fiction in the 20th Century* (Indiana UP, US 12.95 pd.). Darlene J. Sadler, the editor and translator, has sought to include well-established authors as well as less known ones. Thus, we find Clarice and Elisa Lispector but also Lygia Fagundes Telles and Dina Silveira de Queiroz. Female sexuality is evoked in Márcia Denser's work and, as Sadler points out, "the theme of erotic love seems to dominate much of the new writing."

One can only hope that John Updike's recent novel, *Brazil* (Alfred Knopf, n.p.), is a colossal joke for what the cover blurb coyly calls a "stylized Brazil" is the stuff of sensationalist pulp fiction without a trace of irony to mitigate its luridness. Tristão Raposo, "a nineteen-year-old child of the Rio slums," speaks the kind of stilted language peppered with italicized words that in colonial discourse used to characterize the Noble Native, while characters with a leftist bent are given to orating like a Marxist textbook. There are frequent erotic encounters of the hardcore Harlequin romance type, in which the virile Tristão induces Isabel Leme, "an eighteen-year-old upper-class white girl," into the joys of sex. The book is appalling. Not quite so irritating but getting close are several of the contributions to *Erotique noire/Black Erotica*, eds. Miriam Decosta-Willis, Reginald Martin, and Roseann P. Bell (Anchor, n.p.), an anthology. Calvin Hernton for instance feels compelled to interrupt his description of a steamy welcome at the airport with a sermon: "Why lascivious? She thought. For one thing, she and Yakubu were Black. Nobody, not even other Blacks, liked to witness such open display of

sexual feelings between Black women and men, right out in public! Such shameless behavior fed into White folks' stereotypes of Blacks." However, the book is worth looking at not only because it contains also some writing that is much better than this but also a number of essays such as Audre Lorde's "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" and a piece on sexual imagery in the Trinidad Calypso by Keith Warner. Stereotypes of Blacks in Brazilian literature are the subject of David Brookshaw's *Race and Color in Brazilian Literature* (Scarecrow, n.p.), as well as "the Afro-Brazilian writer's view of his experience and attitude towards Brazil's ethnic and cultural identity." Brookshaw draws valuable comparisons with stereotypes of Indians, and he does not exclude Brazil's star author, Jorge Amado, from his observations. Commenting on the mulatto figure in *Gabriela, Cinnamon, and Spice* and other novels; Brookshaw to some degree shares the view of literary historian Alfredo Bosi that Amado "has been. . .more interested in exploiting the stereotypes of Bahian life, and more prone to the portrayal of social stereotypes than concerned with illustrating the real causes and effects of social tension." Although ostensibly devoted to accomplishing the opposite, journalism and travel writing frequently contribute to reinforcing stereotypes. Paul Rambali's *It's All True: In the Cities and Jungles of Brazil* (Heinemann, £9.99) does some gritty reporting on the fate of Brazil's street children, on the *favelas*, political racketeering, and ecological destruction but it does not avoid the usual sexual clichés either which describe an afternoon shower as happening "with sexual release" or orchids "that open like the sex of women, like laughing faces, the secret laughter of the jungle." Several of Rambali's subjects (*telenovelas*, soccer, carnival) re-appear in *Memory and Modernity: Popular Culture in Latin America*, eds. William Rowe and Vivian Schelling (verso, US, $17.95). However, this is not a breezy travel report but an exemplary exercise in cultural studies, which makes a persuasive argument for the inclusion of so-called "low-brow" phenomena like soap operas in popular culture.

Aficionados of Bakhtin will enjoy Roberto Damatta's *Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma* (U of Notre Dame Press, US $24.95), a study in comparative sociology. Damatta compares the Brazilian carnival, in particular the parade, not only with military parades but also with Mardi Gras festivities in New Orleans. He draws the conclusion that, in contrast to the Brazilian suspension of class difference during carnival, the Louisiana version affirms it. The chapter on Pedro Malasartes,

a Robin-Hood-like character, is also informative, presenting in his subversiveness and adaptability a number of parallels to the Canadian trickster figure. The book which operates within all the usual scholarly trappings of sociology, is nevertheless motivated by a fervent sense of civic responsibility: "Perhaps all that I am doing here is trying to get to the heart of some issues that always bother me as a Brazilian. I refer to the perennially anti-democratic (and anti-egalitarian) Brazilian elitism that is characterized by an arrogant style of dealing with social and political differences. From this perspective, this text is a political denunciation of social practices that nobody takes seriously in Brazil but that I am convinced are at the heart of the Brazilian power structure. . . By studying what is indisputably 'Brazilian' in this system, I hope to open the door to the understanding of the blind authoritarianism that never ends, despite systematic libertarian experience and rhetoric." An even more satisfying book, also concerned with questions of national identity, is Nicolas Shumway's *The Invention of Argentina* (U of California P, n.p.), a well-written, lucid account of Argentinian concepts of nationhood. The book frequently evokes literary contexts as carriers of nationhood, as in its comments on *gauchismo*, and Shumway is careful to document questions of cultural institution as well.

Turning from Damatta and Shumway to *Latin American Identity and Constructions of Difference*, ed. Amaryll Chanady (U of Minnesota, US $18.95 pa.), is not an altogether happy experience. The introduction and several of the essays predictably plunge into the thickets of Derrida, Bhabha, and others, creating the impression that one has read it all before. The contributors are best when they get away from this framework and dwell on the specific, such as Iris M. Zavala's "A Caribbean Social Imaginary," an attentive essay on the "bookishness" of new world culture; questions of genre and periodization are also well handled in Françoise Perus's "Modernity, Postmodernity and the Novelistic Form in Latin America." Roberto González Echevarria's *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative* (Cambridge UP, n.p.) posits 16th-century legal discourse as the source of the picaresque, as well as of early travel and scientific documents about South America and, finally, of Latin-American fiction. In proposing his theory, Echevarria takes issue with Bakhtin who, he claims, wrongly perceives authority and its manifestations as somehow less natural and integral to society than its opposite, the carnivalesque. However, Echevarria's comments on Bakhtin and other critics such as

Foucault and Lévy-Strauss tend to be desultory and the whole book has a conversational rather than tightly organized quality about it.

Coach House Press has initiated its new "Passport Books" series which will be devoted to international fiction in translations. So far the series includes short fiction by Marguerite Duras, Turkish-German writer Emine Sevgi Ozdamar, Julio Cortázar and Argentinian writers Marco Denevi and Liliana Heker. Heker's *The Stolen Party* has been translated by Alberto Manguel who also provides a short afterword, situating Heker's work within the Argentinian context. Unlike Cortázar with whom she initiated a correspondence on the subject, Heker "maintained that her place was within the strife, taking the risks assumed by all those who were not able to leave." Heker was fortunate enough not to be arrested, but Guillermo Infante Cabreras found himself detained in Havana when he returned for his mother's funeral in 1965. He now makes his home in London having had to leave Madrid following pressure from Franco's government. Together with other prominent exiles, he participated in the 1987 Wheatland Conference in Vienna; *Literature in Exile*, ed. John Glad (Duke UP, US $37.50) contains the proceedings. Some of the liveliest material in the volume emerges during the discussions which are also printed here; many of the participants were Central Europeans, and their complex response to each other and to their Western and Russian colleagues make these exchanges an interesting complement to the Lisbon conference, also held in 1987. Exile is a political necessity for many Latin-American authors; other citizens exist in a condition approaching internal exile because their sexuality challenges hierarchies and authoritarianism: Manuel Puig, in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, posited gay exile as an allegory of political exile. David William Foster's *Gay and Lesbian Themes in Latin American Fiction* (published in the Pan American Series of U of Texas n.p.) provides a "first comprehensive review" of the topic examining tropes such as "Vampire Versions of Homosexuality" and "Utopian Designs" while also submitting his material to dominant theoretical models such as deconstruction and Marxism. The result is an eclectic, often intriguing book, prefaced by a remarkable introduction in which Foster pitches his investigation against similar ventures in North-American literary criticism. In *Exilerfahrung und Literatur: Lateinamerikanische Autoren in Spanien* (Narr, n.p.), Petra Stumm looks at Latin-American authors in Spanish exile and presents a detailed, but sometimes sketchy, analysis of the manifestations of this experience in their work.

New Rule

In a room crowded with stainless-steel
narratives, ripe with beings glittering
in convergence, our story machines thrive,
on proper voltages. Meat hangs from hooks
in cruel Mexican sunshine. Yes, conversions
hit with a painful sting. Heat ripples on
all the familiar planets. Or roads cross at
fear and conviction, among relaxed horses.
Our spines cramped in viscous media; marrow
in a spill. Our lips firm to the touch
of words willing to be true.

Border Writing

Giose Rimanelli
Benedetta in Guysterland. Guernica n.p.

Guillermo Verdecchia.
Fronteras americanas. Coach House Press n.p.

Reviewed by Sherry Simon

Both of these books are suggestive additions to the increasingly large body of works we can call "border writing." *Benedetta in Guysterland* is Giose Rimanelli's first novel written in English, his previous novels having made him an internationally known Italian writer by the end of the sixties. *Fronteras americanas*, winner of the 1994 Chalmers award for best Canadian play, is a one-man show which uses history, irony and the stereotypes of popular culture to question our views of Latin-American identity. Both books consciously straddle the frontiers of language and use the grossest stereotypes of national identity (the Mafia in America, the "Latin Lover") along with innovative narrative techniques to disorganize and provoke naive perceptions of identity.

The publication of *Benedetta in Guysterland* combines a number of extraordinary circumstances. As Fred Gardaphé's preface tells us, the novel was written in 1970, after Rimanelli moved to the U.S. to take up teaching positions at various universities including Yale and SUNY-Albany, of which he is now Professor Emeritus. By 1970, Rimanelli was already a very well-known writer in Italy, having published several successful books that had been translated into eight languages, including *Tiro al piccione* recently re-issued by Einaudi (1991). *Benedetta* has only now, however, been published, for reasons which seem to lie solely with the author himself.

Writing this novel in English was apparently for Rimanelli an experiment in English, an opportunity to engage ludically with his newly-chosen language of writing; and he brought to it a sophisticated modernist (or is it postmodernist, as Gardaphé argues?) sensibility. The backbone of the novel is the story of an Italian-American gangster, Joe Adonis. But the narrative elements are only pretext for an elaborate display of wordplay, which includes quotations from an immensely wide range of sources from Joyce, Carroll, Shakespeare, Donne, Swift, Dante, Neruda and Nabokov to Gay Talese's *Honor Thy Father*, and the *The New York Times*, *Vogue* and especially *Esquire* (from whose pages Rimanelli claims he first learned English).

Lest the reader feel mystified by the elusive mixture of Mafia history, exploration of violence and sex, and Anthony Burgess-like interpellations of Elizabethan English, Rimanelli provides an extensive and convivial appendix entitled "Benedetta and Environs". The first chapter of the appendix gives us a list of some forty names of friends to whom Rimanelli says he has been circulating the text for years. After explaining his use of quotation, giving exact sources for the first chapter, Rimanelli furnishes us with his "reader's reports". At first I took these reports for parodic imitations, but, taking into consideration the names and

styles, they would appear to be the real thing.

The sum of preface, text and after-text makes for a fascinating volume. There is indeed a special pleasure to be had in considering the "inter-life" of this text circulating in a purely ludic space for some twenty years among friends—who then became part of the book itself. In his own "For-a-word", Rimanelli presents himself as a modest "collector of paper joy and paper anguish instead of a producer of them...At one time in my life, as a master-building-producer in another country I was sick with language and style. My body was covered with sentences, words, newspaper print. Then I took a shower. The tattoo's still showing, because I was not at all convinced that one can free himself at once of the inherited malaise..."

Not all of Rimanelli's readers' reports are positive, and I agree with those who find the sexual clichés very tedious. Gardaphé, on the other hand, would have us consider *Bendetta* to be the great postmodern novel of ethnicity we have been waiting for. Whether this be so or not, *Benedetta in Guysterland* should be given serious attention as a novel whose interlanguage is crafted at the crossroads of America's many cultures.

I have no trouble believing that *Fronteras Americanas* was a tremendous critical and audience success when played in Toronto at the Tarragon theatre and at the Montreal Festival des Amériques in 1993. In this one-man show, the author Guillermo Verdecchia tells his own story as an immigrant from Latin America, at the same time bringing in a wide range of historical and cultural references from Simon Bolivar, Combus and Carlos Fuentes to Speedy Gonzales, Fodor's travel guides, Ricky Ricardo, the Latin Lover and "la Bamba". Verdecchia's style is incisive and funny, and skilfully structured as a narrative divided into short vignettes and highlighted by visuals on slides. He is extremely clever in balancing historical and political material on the one hand and the clichés of mass culture on the other. As Urjo Kareda writes in his preface, the play is dazzling with "Verdecchia's intelligence, wit and curiosity. But the satiric, the sardonic and the ironic are all counterweighted by the extraordinary personal candour of the writing". Verdecchia engages with his audience, and uses the theme of displacement to mobilize themes of self-identity and self-betrayal.

Like the plays of Marco Micone ("Gens de silence", "Déjà l'Agonie"), Pan Boyoucas ("Le Cerf-volant"), and Abla Farhoud ("Jeux de patience") *Fronteras americanas* explores themes of divided and mixed identity. Verdecchia's approach is lighter—he concentrates on the individual rather than attempting to construct a complex social fresco—but just as penetrating in its analysis of the conflictual demands of border-experiences.

Phantoms in the Ark

Ludwig Zeller and A. F. Moritz
Phantoms in the Ark: A Collage-Poem.
Cacanadadada, n.p.

Reviewed by Jack Stewart

A. F. Moritz's narrative poem with Spanish translation by Susana Wald interfaces Ludwig Zeller's brilliantly bizarre collages in this intriguing text. The "monstrous fusion of human and non-human elements" constitutes the grotesque (Wolfgang Kayser) and is the dynamic of surrealist imagery, as in Lautreamont's menacing *Maldoror*. Zeller and Moritz are masters of the art. Zeller's collages sunder and rejoin anatomical and mechanical parts to form lucid, non-existent entities: they are metaphors of the destructive/reconstructive, dissecting/creating capacities of the mind. The impossible is made visible, as interlocking parts fit smoothly but retain the tension of their opposition.

An interview that follows the poem provides some clues. "The collages say not only that we cut up the world and mix it with machine parts; we find a metaphor for ourselves and an objectification of our dreams in the machine" (Moritz). In a paradoxical interaction of dream and reality, the collages deliver "[the] shock that makes us want to wake up, to reawaken to our true selves . . ." The discussion draws us into creative issues behind the text. Moritz has collaged Zeller's collages in dream sequence and assimilated them to a series of poetic fragments of his own inspired by Zeller's poetry. The two minds challenge and stimulate each other in a spiral of collaboration that recalls early surrealist experiments.

Phantoms in the Ark is a saga of consciousness, a fugue that begins with a welter of images: "They woke with pieces of memories: fighting, / drunkenness, an alley, a burning open door, / asphalt and bloody vomit, youth's kingdom, / many friends, vast thought, spring wind, the freedom / of the streets." Images of the real world are co-opted, forced into new patterns. The reader awakens to a dream, is invited to a voyage on a drunken boat. There are echoes of Virgil, Dante, Rimbaud, Lautréamont. "Then I awoke / midway in the journey of our life / on a white table, / screaming the scalpel . . ." The opening lines of Dante's *Divine Comedy* meet Maldoror's conjunction of umbrella and sewing-machine on a dissecting table. The poetic speaker, a kind of Ancient Mariner, recounts how Sisyphus, explorer of the inner ocean, was captured and forced to tell all, which he does in a series of disjunct images. His discourse is familiar and strange, clear and obscure, symbolic and apocalyptic. He speaks of the poet's art—"I made again / the past and future according to my desire / as far as the circuitry permitted"—and, in lucid metaphors, of seeking harmony amid chaos and contingency.

A casual reader might wonder whether Zeller's collages "illustrate" Moritz's verse or vice versa. A verbal injunction—"In the midst, where the crushed herbs divide / into muscular heat and dung, install the philosopher / in his medicine cabinet"—refers to a hybrid animal/mechanical image, at the centre of which a bearded face is framed by glass doors. The thinker's image is located where the artist wants to be, "[in] the womb of nature, in the primal ground of creation, where the secret key to all things lies hidden" (Klee, *The Thinking Eye*). Zeller's collages are sinister or delightful. "*The robot fish-man Sisyphus*"—a bearded, dark-skinned torso in a grinder with plumbing parts and fish-tail—combines human, hydraulic, and piscatorial in a weirdly balanced image. Zeller discovers strange continuities between a saurian and a concertina-shaped pipe or a butterfly's body and a bottle-opener. A bat/woman with plumed hat and artificially supported wings is captioned "*I would grow young again . . .*"

In a series of witty or surprising *trouvailles*, lines from the poem function as "titles" to the collages. "*I did not always drink so much . . .*" is the caption to Zeller's collage connecting spirit level and optical frames with measuring tapes, pelvic girdle, tendrils, nutshell, and carpentry attached to a liver-like organ. By such artful juxtapositions, graphic images are interwoven with text while poetic images colonize graphics, infecting them with metaphorical suggestions. This is all part of the game: these airy visual structures allow the mind to come and go freely among their exposed and reconnected parts.

Surreal graphics and poetics imply a problematic ontology. "No limit is set to what human beings may become," but "there is no inner life . . . only combination and growth without cause." "The inside is the outside" as the dream manifests itself in outward forms. The surrealist poet plays God by reassembling the data of his experience and the intermedia text forms a pre-

carious but suggestive unity.

Cacanadadada Press is to be congratulated on the physical quality of this book: the crisp black-and-white reproductions allow one to see the creatures of Zeller's fantasy articulated on the page in hallucinatory precision, while the philosophical fantasia of Moritz's twin-language text unfolds alongside.

Poetry Teacher

W.H. New, ed.
Inside the Poem. Oxford $17.95.

Reviewed by George Bowering

Donald Stephens is recently retired from the English department at the University of British Columbia. Conservative in his literary tastes, and a tolerant man about others', he was noted among his colleagues for his tireless support for the study of Canadian literature on his campus. As a retirement gift, Bill New has produced *Inside the Poem*, a remarkable *Festschrift* of which both teachers should be proud.

In one way the book is a classic *Festschrift*; it collects twenty-four commissioned essays, each about a Canadian poem, many by Stephens's colleagues at U.B.C. and by his ex-students who are now championing the cause at other universities. But New has added something more. The front of the book reprints the poems that will be the subjects of the essays, and then follows the essays with single poems by twenty-eight poets, only five of whom were represented in the first batch. This is one *readable* collection. The only thing wrong with it is the cover: it looks like a college textbook. Well, it will make a good textbook, too. But the idea is more exciting than that.

A look at the list of poems chosen by the critics will let you know that the editor's hope for diversity of approaches is in no peril. In what other book will you find the work of Roy Daniells, Dionne Brand and Fred Wah discussed? Many of the poems are the familiar ones, "David" and "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" and "The City at the End of Things," for examples. But there are also some subjects seldom gathered into projects like this: Lorraine Weir's brief look at one of Wilfred Watson's enigmatic number grid poems, or Clara Thomas's discussion of the poems that Carol Shields had to construct for the plot of her novel about a mysterious dead poet in *Swann*.

Reviewers reviewing anthologies are pretty well expected to argue with the table of contents, to complain about omissions or target the weak efforts in the lineup. In this case, one cant do much about the former; it just so happened that none of the critics chose to say anything about a Nichol poem or a MacEwen poem. (Only two poets, Earle Birney and Phyllis Webb, were written about twice.) About the latter? Well, there are some dull pieces in the collection, but why bothering trying to remember which they were.

Certainly one cannot say much about the overall tenor of the book—it is happily various. Of course, one will not even mention all the pieces, though one wrote notes on all of them. One will perhaps mention a few that were particularly interesting to one reader in one way or another.

Pace all my friends here, this one reader (well, I) most enjoyed the dialogue between Robert Bringhurst and Laurie Ricou about Bringhurst's poem "Sunday Morning." The unusual approach, and the dialogic result of it, make for part of the delight. The wit and generosity of the two men certainly honour the hell out of the man to whom the book is dedicated.

I have not been a regular reader of Bringhurst, but learned while sharing a tour with him last year to admire his great ability to say things well and to speak about the most important things. Just the same,

he will tell Ricou that in his very good poem, "I don't have all the words right yet, and never will." He calls the poet's approach "intent inaction." Perfect. In the poem, he demonstrates a rare ability to handle abstraction well, as well as do Stevens and Newlove and Gardiner, as musically as Ondaatje handles his image-filled verse.

In this space I cant tell you how much insight and intelligence there are in this conversation, even while Bringhurst ranges, as he says, "from oracular assertion to casual cliché." When Ricou, a reader with credentials, suggests that the poet is a bird while the critic is an ornithologist, Bringhurst brings his quick revision: "If the critic is the ornithologist, the poem is the bird and the poet is the tree."

(That was so nice that I feel as if I have to enter a negative note here. I take it back: there is another thing wrong with the book. Some specific editing might have been done by people knowledgeable about certain areas. There are not many gaffes, and only a few typos. But surely Elspeth Cameron should not have succeeded with the misinformation that Earle Birney wrote to "James McLaughlin, the editor of the American journal *New Directions*, who was compiling an anthology of contemporary verse.")

Richard Harrison makes a sensible and persuasive re-reading of Dorothy Livesay's "Call My People Home," Livesay is still praised for writing that radio verse play critical of the wartime expulsion of Japanese Canadians from the west coast (he does not tell us whether the play was aired), but Harrison points out that Livesay's imagery (expulsion from Eden, etc) situates the narrative in Christian terms, thus introducing "a certain inevitability to the fate of these people, along with the Christian paradox of the fortunate fall as necessary to redemption." Thus the story becomes less political, finally, than transcendental. Harrison does not look to erase the poem, but he offers one of the best pieces of revisionist criticism I have seen in a while.

Bruce Grenberg does a useful job with his reading of Lampman's "City of the End of Things," successfully ridding that most important poem of the nationalist claptrap that has been festooning it since the nativist professors got hold of it. He successfully argues for a view of the poem as a Victorian dystopia, in which humankind (not Canadians) has abetted its own decline and future demise. Grenberg provides a particularizing and discriminating essay that will, if this book is going to be a textbook, be a model for graduating scholar-critics. At the same time he shows enough respect for Lampman to place him in the great tradition.

Manina Jones ("Rooting the Borrowed Word"), after a few slips, produces an amusing reading of Kroetsch's "Seed Catalogue" without trying to write as a Kroetschean. She calls the poem a transplanted garden, well manured. Some of her wordplay is perhaps a little unsubtle, but it sounds to me likely that she is an interesting teacher.

Readers of this anthology might think about teachers as they are reading critics; the title of the book refers to the place to which teacher Donald Stephens sought to transport his students. A few of these essays will make your eyes glaze over as if you were a captive in the classroom of Dr. Drone. Some of them will snap your neck up. One of them will just make you glad you came to this class: George Woodcock, talking about Purdy's Galapagos poems, begins with a narrative of Charles Darwin, persuades us that writing is a series of installments in cultural history or the career of literature, and speaks the most economical and telling words about the lyrics in question. In no time at all the hour is over and you have not taken a single note. You're glad you were there instead of outside the poem.

The books ends with a five-page tribute from David Watmough in his usual comi-

cally-inflated language. Mr. Watmough never reads when he can peruse.

Lowry Retold

Bowker, Gordon
Pursued by Furies: A Life of Malcolm Lowry. Random House. $35.00

Reviewed by George Woodcock

There are some writers whose proper reading demands biography, and one of them is Malcolm Lowry, who wrote almost exclusively about the writer and his personae. His work leaps into greater significance the more we know about his actual life, which could very well be described by one of Céline's titles, *Voyage au bout de la nuit.* Indeed, the greater part of Lowry's work lies in a kind of limbo between life and literature. After the apprentice work of *Ultramarine* (which he often tried to deny), Lowry only completed one novel (though *Under the Volcano* is indeed one of the masterworks of our time) and a handful of good-to-middling stories, and spent most of his time writing and revising a series of never-completed books in a cabin at Dollarton beside Burrard Inlet. The two of these — *Dark as the Grave wherein my Friend is Laid* and *October Ferry to Gabriola* — that were cobbled together by others from the surviving drafts, remain, despite their passages of piercing evocation, imperfect works, the sketches of masterpieces spoilt perhaps by their failure to make sufficiently clear the distinction between the writer character and the writer who is actually writing him. Lowry, of course, was also dominated, and in the end destroyed himself, by drink, yet how far the booze was his necessary source of inspiration as well as his destructive element we shall never clearly know. There is evidence that, like Dylan Thomas, he did his good work in interludes of sobriety.

It all adds up to a fascinating mélange of artistic achievement, of malign and benign influences (Conrad Aiken perhaps the most strikingly ambivalent of the lot), and self-destroying personal drama so that Lowry has become one of those literary figures, whose lives seem romantically to soar above or dip below their works, like Byron and Wilde, Poe and Hemingway. The drama of Lowry's life has been the subject of at least one good play, Michael Mercer's *Goodnight, Disgrace.*

Yet the literal facts of that life, as distinct from the legend largely created by Lowry and his second wife Margerie, are deeply important for understanding his works dominated by the idea of a writer's life.

There have been earlier biographical studies, notably the Life by Douglas Day which appeared in 1975 and was limited by the shadow that Margerie's influence cast over it. Now Gordon Bowker, an English writer who earlier on was involved in a BBC television programme on Lowry, has produced the most thorough account of Lowry yet written, a work of great use to his readers and his critics. Lowry was perhaps so mutable a figure that it might be rash to call it definitive, though it is extremely detailed, the result of years of industrious research, and it is complete enough to make another such book unnecessary and unlikely for a long time. I am aware of no possible sources that Bowker had left unexamined.

The title, *Pursued by Furies,* in fact suggests a melodramatic streak that is not really present in Bowker's book, though it does reflect the content of Lowry's own tortured works. What Bowker does, and very well, is to present all the existing evidence outside the works themselves by which we can envisage this combination of an alcoholic and an intermittent genius. I use the word (intermittent" because Lowry was capable, when circumstances came happily together, of completing with great labour a

complex work like his masterpiece *Under the Volcano* and such splendid smaller fictions as "The Forest Path to the Spring", but he also wrote some very dull pieces that never leapt beyond his diurnal experience. In later years he was attacked by such fits of perfectionist hesitation that all his later works were left for others to arrange and publish, and so remain only dubiously Lowry books.

A biographer must be judged by his empathetic powers — how well can he enter the beings of the people whose lives he tells. In a richly detailed work, meticulous without being monotonous, Bowker does successfully inhabit Lowry without being overwhelmed by him, or, for that matter, by his ideas of himself. In particular, Bowker deepens one's awareness of Lowry and his ambience by presenting fresh viewpoints on the secondary figures in the drama. Old Arthur Lowry, for instance, Malcolm's father, is shown to have been a very bewildered man, not without compassion and concern, rather than the monster of unimaginative rectitude that the legend, (much fed by Lowry and Margerie) suggested. Bowker presents much evidence that we have not seen before on Jan Gabrial, Lowry's first and often maligned wife, whom he sought out and whose accounts of their marriage illuminate some of the dark places of Lowry's part. Jan, it is obvious, was not a self-seeker but a half-willing victim of Lowry's occasionally boyish charm. As for Margerie Bonner, his second wife, she stands firmly but gently presented — despite her grudging and in the end blackmailing loyalty — as a minor monster of shallow vanity, which indeed she was. Her oddly passive role in Lowry's death — why she left him alone for a whole night when he was clearly in a disturbed state — is left as a matter of speculation, where it has to remain.

Bowker remains the biographer throughout. He tells the life rather than interpreting the work. Nor does he seek in any major way to enter into that maze of occult fantasy and symbolism that until now has so much clogged the critical approaches to Lowry. Critics, in fact, can have nothing but gratitude for the admirable objectivity of the book. For here we have Lowry as he was, the strange sad tale of a drunk like other drunks whose monotonously repetitive weakness led him towards one of the great prose works of our century.

Social Ethos and the Self

John Mills
Thank You Mother for the Rabbits. The Porcupine's Quill, $14.95, pa.

Reviewed by William J. Scheick

Autobiography is an odd genre. It promises to make public what is private, a contradiction that raises a host of questions about autobiography as narrative performance. How possible, for instance, is disclosure of the private self when typically this self is protectively resistant to such exposure and is incapable of penetrating its own nature? What about the phenomenological problems inherent in perception itself? And what about memory, always selecting and editing, preserving and abandoning, heightening and depreciating according to designs as *seemingly* autonomous and mysterious as those of Bartleby's dark-wall reveries in Herman Melville's famous novella?

Given memory's characteristically enigmatic behavior, we might reasonably suspect that autobiography is no less a work of the imagination than is a novel. We might accordingly approach serious attempts at autobiography, like earnest attempts at other kinds of creative expression, with an expectation of some authorial shaping. Such creative "ordering"—say, highlighting through strategic repetition—is not a misrepresentation of life's heterogeneity; it

merely enhances experience in a manner similar to memory's mode of fashioning. We turn to art precisely for such aesthetic enhancement because it can cast a surprising illumination upon something heretofore unseen and unappreciated within the commonplace; or, perhaps, we turn to art because it can provide an emblematic epiphany of sorts that we welcome as a memorable marker in our own life journey. Aesthetic pattern, such as seen in flower arrangements, is a means of reinvigorating our jaded everyday perception of the routine particulars of our lives. Rather than necessarily separating us from life, aesthetic ordering can reconnect us to it.

In his autobiography, Canadian novelist John Mills eschews such a well-crafted enterprise. Asserting that he "can see no good reason why [he] should try to write a conventional autobiography" or "to arrange it in any chronological order" (p. 7), he simply assembles a collection of memoirs written over the years. Taken singly, these personal essays may appear to be agreeable fare; taken as a whole, however, they prove to be unproductively repetitive and distractingly inconsistent. Mills might retort to this impression, *cela va sans dire.* In fact, he mentions Jean-Luc Godard once in passing. In turn, however, I would point out that even in cimena vérité the most rewarding responses—Bernardo Bertolucci's films, for example—evince muted structural features embedded in their verisimilitudionous texture.

My discontent in this instance is aroused less by Mills's refusal to engage art than by the communal implications of his refusal. By cobbling together personal essays, without any attempt to integrate them with grace or negotiate their inconsistencies, Mills reveals a disregard for audience. It is *as if* his own pleasure in seeing these essays together in book form is sufficient motive, though unhappily not enough of a motive to make something truly special of them collectively. It is as if the "solipsistic self-approval" he attributes to poet Irving Layton (p. 98) is a characteristic he is especially qualified to recognize.

I admit my discomfort in expressing this grievance. I wish my response to Mills's book were otherwise. But once I glimpsed the narcissistic undercurrent of his collection, I could escape neither its force nor its attitudinal inconsistencies. I found it lurking not only within his introductory comments but also within his various subsequent rhetorical attempts to manipulate his readers. When Mills observes, *en passant*, that he is a person "of luxurious tastes used . . . to being cosseted and enriched by a society whose basic values I despise" (pp. 134-35), for a startling moment a crucial inconsistency rises to the surface. But, alas, this brief moment, which might have occasioned rewarding self-reflection, is not even an palliative, only a quickly resubmerged rhetorical pivot for the rerouting of the author's and our attention.

Self-absorption and inconsistency likewise glide below Mills's references to the working class. Whereas in one place the working class serves as a weapon for assaulting middle-class values, in another place this class is itself assailed for its fears and desires. In Mills's book the working class is only a foil for his rhetorical brandishing, never full-blooded human beings. The work they do, moreover, is time and again disparaged by Mills as indicative of their denigrating submission to "the system," "the bleak desert valley" of the "capitalist Land of Jobs" (pp. 16, 167, 178), from which he (as an exemplary university professor) has been emancipated. The dubiety of exempting academics from "the system" notwithstanding, in the course of his essays we see Mills unselfconsciously using and enjoying these very services—the work of nameless and identityless table waiters and train conductors, among others. And we see him enjoying the attention of women,

who, unfortunately, fare far worse than even those in the Land of Jobs. They, particularly mothers, tend to be hopeless, sometimes vicious caricatures of mental ailments—a virtually non-human blight on Mills's egocentric life.

But I must stop this joyless account. As my opening comments on the nature of aesthetic design suggest, I concur with Mills that much "depends on a re-invigoration of a sense of community"; but I do not agree with, nor do I think his book makes a case for, the thread-bare Transcendentalist notion that for now "we are at the present time forced to seek our own individual paths through this wilderness" (p. 20). There is a dark heart beneath this notion in his autobiography, where the alleged "uncompromising standards and complete individuality" attributed to Mills in the *Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* takes on an unattractive aspect. Here "uncompromising standards" based on thoughtful analysis are displaced by outmoded cant and inconsistent attitude; here "complete individuality" degenerates into a narcissism antithetical to the re-invigoration of a sense of community.

Writing Women

Sandra Birdsell
The Chrome Suite. McClelland & Stewart $18.99

Janice Kulyk Keefer
Rest Harrow. Harper Collins $24.95

Reviewed by Coral Ann Howells

'There are no new stories. We are all retelling stories that have been told a hundred times already. It is our method that un-invents them.' Aritha van Herk's comments comes to mind with these two novels about women writing books which they manage to finish by the end of the narratives. Self-reflexive postmodern fictions, they draw attention to their own processes of construction, opening out into provisional endings and uncertain futures. Birdsell and Keefer make use of these conventions, which they reinvent in two strikingly individual novels about similar female protagonists haunted by loneliness and loss, especially the loss of fathers.

The Chrome Suite is a traumatic story about a girl who believes that at age nine she was struck by lightning in the small Manitoba town of Carona. She survived, as indeed she survives all the other disasters which strike across her life: her sister's death that same summer, the death of her best friend, her parents' broken marriage and later her own, her Polish lover's sudden death the summer before she writes this story. It is not so much an elegy as a defiant response to his challenge on the day he announced that he was going to leave her: 'What would you write?'

This is Birdsell's second novel and a far more taut narrative than her earlier *Agassiz Stories*, though there is the same disconcerting use of startling images which make complex emotional states physically palpable to the reader and so make them sayable. The novel opens with the swollen lump of absence 'that slides around inside my body,' but which no doctor can diagnose. Only a writer can do that through her memoir narrative, though at the end the pressure of the swollen thing is still there. This is not writing as therapy but as 'reminder', for the great strength of this novel is its construction of Amy Barber's personal identity through a narrative saturated by time. As it switches between present and past tense, flashbacks and flashes forward, and from the first to the third person, it acknowledges the process and the artifice of narrative reconstruction. Just as the present is pervaded by the past, so is recall of the past influenced by the complex awareness of its later significance to the remembering adult.

While this book would appear to be the story of a woman who puts the past behind

her, writing in the present tense as a successful script writer living in Winnipeg (Chapter 1 is headed 'June 1992') disruptions soon occur, and by Chapter 2 Amy's story springs back to her traumatic childhood summer of 1959. Time slips in this multi-voiced narrative composed from Amy's journals and told from many perspectives: her own at different ages, her mother's, and more briefly that of her father, brother, husband, son, lover, and women friends. Amy's lifelong dream is to 'teach myself how to fly,' and her relentless quest to achieve this (for she is another woman of No Fixed Address) involves many casualties, causing Amy to wonder if, like her religious mother, she too has the 'mind-set, with the heart of, a terrorist.' But hers is also a story of deadly rejection by those whom she loves and of sacrifice, especially in her decision to walk out on her marriage and her five year old son: "I left because I was afraid I might kill my son Richard."

This is one version of a feminist narrative marked "Canadian", with its wonderful dream of meeting Margaret Atwood on a boat in a lake and its other Atwoodian tribute in the Ojibway pictographs which Amy and her lover Piotr visit on their last day together. Yes, this is a story of surfacing and survival, but Amy's autobiographical narrative also sketches the subtext of loss and betrayal behind her present condition of "having power." It plainly shows Amy's limits of power and the endless return of the past in patterns that are far from random. This experience gives her whatever self definition she now possesses, but it also holds secrets which would be unbearable to know. And who is the hitchhiker? "The hitchhiker is no one, really."

Rest Harrow is the story of another woman writing, but Dr. Anna English, on sabbatical leave from Nova Scotia and living in a village in Sussex England, ends up writing a book she never intended to write. Instead of the critical study of Virginia Woolf's novels which she had planned, she writes an anguished disturbing books about what Cambridge sociologist Anthony Giddens calls the "high risk climate" of our late modern post-traditional society. Keefer's novel is poised on a paradox which is signalled in the title and elaborated in the opening dictionary definitions of "Harrow" and "Rest-Harrow" (an English field shrub). There is no definition of "Rest" here or anywhere else in the novel for that matter, with its unsettling mixture of domestic dramas played out against the scenarios of world disaster, threats to the environment, and England's national decline. The characteristic Keefer signatures are here, from the first chapter "In Transit", which recalls *Travelling Ladies* with their ambiguous homecomings, to Anna's surrealist dreams and her childhood memories coded into nursery rhymes, plus extraordinary hints of an apocalyptic imagination lurking behind the beautifully ordered prose.

It is a novel that springs many surprises, not the least being the radical shift around page 200 when, with a great rush of fire and water, this suddenly becomes a very passionate book. From having been a sensitive but rather brittle academic novel about a repressed lonely bookish woman (Anna is always in flight from emotional commitments), the novel abandons restraint at the very moment of Anna's break-through when she asks herself the question, "Why and what and how to write in a world of sirens and alarms and step-by-step catastrophes?" The last forty pages are energised with a social passion rare in contemporary fiction in English. *Rest Harrow* is a "condition of England" novel written from a disillusioned Canadian perspective, savagely critical in its "disappointed love" (Jean Rhy's phrase not Virginia Woolf's), for Tory Britain in the late 1980's is no longer a "book-built England", but an England of lager louts,

urban beggars and polluted countryside. Yet even in this phantasmagoria grace is still possible, alone on the misty Susses Downs or in a bluebell glade (albeit that the bluebells have been slashed off at the roots). Love too is possible, if only temporarily. Anna becomes pregnant by an Englishman obsessed with ecclesiastical architecture, and on the day of her return alone to Canada, she finally has her Woolfian Moment of Being in the garden of an English country house, where for the first time she sees her own face plainly, reflected in the pond.

The novel ends facing the future—note, a Canadian future—where Anna "and the child she's carrying will step out at last onto a different continent, where they'll breathe in the same half-poisoned, yet sustaining air." Compromise and complicity, but also survival and hope: paradox remains, glossed as characteristic Keefer indeterminacy. "Nice Work," as David Lodge would say, for if Virginia Woolf is the literary mother of this text, then he is the absent father.

Romance and Realism?

Jake MacDonald
Raised by the River. Turnstone $14.95

Greg Hollingshead
White Buick. Oolichan $10.95

Reviewed by Barbara Pell

These two books provide an interesting contrast that leads this critic to philosophize on the state of contemporary life, or at least of contemporary Canadian literature. The one is competently written — and presents a worldview so bleak and misanthropic one begs to deny its validity; the other is romantically appealing and uplifting — and so awkwardly crafted one could never accept its optimism.

As a novel, Raised by the River would make an excellent script for a TV movie-of-the-week: the same stereotyped characters, predictable and unrealistic plot, careless details, and slick, unconvincing dialogue. Forty-year old Mike Saunders is a Toronto consultant for a firm which takes advantage of the lucrative loopholes in the federal government's grants to marginalized groups ("native groups, women, the unemployed, the handicapped"). His job allows the author to take some cheap shots at stupid feds, freeloading Indians, and city-slickers in general. An artist manqu, Saunders has sold out his talent for a BMW and a yuppie girlfriend. But the inheritance of his family home, an old tourist lodge in Minaki Ontario, plunges him into a mid-life identity crisis. More than one-third of the way through the book, the protagonist does what the cover blurb has announced (seriously compromising any suspense) — he decides (with unconvincing motivation) to leave the city and renovate the lodge with the help of a "plucky heroine" who is equally accomplished in carpentry, cooking, and sex. After money-pit problems the Ontario government could sympathize with (their Minaki Lodge renovations were a notable financial scandal), Saunders is forced to take a loan from a cardboard-cutout mobster who demands as insurance the marriage of Saunder's boss to the gangster's gorgeous niece. This improbable subplot and a convenient forest fire add some suspense to a plot that has centred on the varnishing of roof beams, but generally the reader feels bored, confused, or manipulated until the boy-gets-girl ending. One wants to like this novel — it represents the romantic appeal and redemptive humanism of a contemporary Walden-with-a-love-story. Several descriptive passages idyllically evoke the land where the author works as a fishing guide and nature journalist. But the unsympathetic protagonist, cliched characters and situations, careless details, pseudo-hardboiled style and cynical humour (the lawyer jokes are transferred to

consultants) all subvert the realism of the plot and the sincerity of the themes. Hemingway did this kind of thing much better:

> Outside Saunders lit a cigarillo. Dark and rainy. Castanets rattled in the tree overhead. He was smoking. He was going to die. Just like his father. He felt his stomach twisting. Who had made up this lousy game?

White Buick is Greg Hollingshead's second collection of stories. He is well-regarded in the ranks of new Canadian writers, and his first novel, Spin Dry, was nominated for the 1992 Smithbooks/Books in Canada First Novel Award and celebrated for its wacky and wonderful satire. His craftsmanship is impressive, but I found in this collection little humour or humanity in his stories.

The book consists of fifteen stories with a variety of voices, situations, and themes. About half of the stories depict the destructive relationships between men and women; most of these end in violence or despair. In the title story an immigrant couple becomes fixated on an automotive representation of success in the new world. But the husband's betrayal of their marriage results in the submissive wife finally turning to planning revenge on his symbol of self-esteem. In "Small Death" a philandering husband's sudden terror about AIDS results, not in the promised faithfulness, but in another casual affair and more fateful "bad news." Three stories evoking the sixties hippie lifestyle of exotic but tyrannical girlfriends and "tight ass" male Canadians end in loss ("Under the Whip"), sadistic violence ("Youth and Beauty"), and suicide ("In the Sixties"). Even positive love relationships are undermined by chance encounters ("The Dog in the Van") and ironic reunions ("Kingbird").

Many of the characters in this book are typified by the story "Unacceptable People." They are unappealing, unsympathetic, and mutually destructive, and "what a waste they'd all made of their lives." They range from the ordinary and unattractive to the disturbed and psychotic — the loser whose paranoia will result in "stop, turn, walk in some place, and open fire" ("Secret Wars"); the mass murderer whose mother fixation results in his making the bodies of slaughtered women into clothes and knick-knacks ("When She was Gone"). The horror and disgust evoked by this penultimate story encapsulates the bleak misanthropy of the book and ties it to a subtext of misogyny. Most of the protagonists are male, and most of the pain they suffer (and inflict) is caused ultimately by women such as the historical Mary Dunbar whose "found narrative" reveals the accusations of a demented parlourmaid which sent eight women to jail for witchcraft in 1711.

The two most moving stories in the volume focus on the complex dynamics of family relationships. "Your God is Finished" originated in part from a memoir left by the author's father. It depicts the bitter harshness of the protagonist's grandfather, an illiterate gravedigger, and the lovelessness he passes on to his son. The story also realistically preserves the profound mystery of family legacies. The other heart-rending story, "The Comfort of Things as They Are," evokes the worst "nightmare" of parenthood — a sick baby and a cruelly incompetent hospital. Even though the reader feels slightly manipulated by this "worst case scenario," Hollingshead vividly portrays the helplessness and hopelessness of two yuppie parents who find for the first time that they can't control their environment, and experience life's lack of closure.

Hollingshead's style is clean and terse. His voices are convincing and his descriptive details compelling. He manipulates a remarkable variety of plots from traditional linear-suspense stories to postmodern frag-

mentation-collages. His is an impressive talent. But this is not a pleasant book. It may be good reality therapy for optimists (as Matt Cohen suggests in the cover blurb), but it could drive a pessimist to suicide.

De l'histoire littéraire

Sous la direction de
Clément Moisan
L'Histoire littéraire. Théories, Méthodes, Pratiques.
Les Presses de l'Université Laval $ 29.00

Reviewed by Antoine Sirois.

L'histoire de la littérature, que les années de nouvelle critique semblaient avoir reléguée aux oubliettes, renaît de ses cendres, comme histoire littéraire, depuis quelques années, histoire sensible aux conditionnements institutionnels. *La Vie littéraire au Québec*, sous la direction de Maurice Lemire, en constitue une manifestation. Nous espérons toujours que le projet de l'"Histoire de l'institution littéraire" à l'Institut de recherches en littérature comparée de l'Université d'Alberta, en marche depuis plusieurs années, finira par trouver son aboutissement, sans parler du projet de Laurent Mailhot de l'Université de Montréal.

Il était dans l'ordre des choses que tous les intéressés fassent le point sur les théories, méthodes, pratiques de l'histoire littéraire. C'est ce qui nous vaut, selon les termes mêmes de Clément Moisan dans la présentation de l'ouvrage, une contribution majeure à la réflexion sur la discipline. L'entreprise est le fruit du colloque international organisé par le Centre de littérature québécoise de l'Université Laval en 1986.

Il est impossible de résumer un ensemble de dix-neuf exposés contribuant tous à la réflexion sur les théories, les méthodes et les pratiques.

La première partie, qui se fixe comme objectif de donner un caractère scientifique à la discipline, livre les contributions de P. Ouellet sur la notion de paradigme, de L. Robert sur le fétichisme de la littérature, de C. Moisan sur l'histoire littéraire comme discours scientifique. De leur côté, M. Brunet touche aux différences entre les formes littéraires, M. Angenot, à la coupe synchronique et J. Melançon, à la recherche de l'effet didactique de l'histoire.

Pour les méthodes, A. Viala et L. Mailhot s'intéressent à la périodisation, tandis que R. Fayolle se penche sur l'anachronisme, J. Michon, sur la modernité de la littérature, P. Wyczynski, sur la biographie, M. V. Dimic, sur des modèles d'études proposés en littérature canadienne comparée et G. Bertoni Del Guercio, sur la didactique de la littérature.

La pratique de l'histoire littéraire soulève une variété de réflexions sur le retour d'un soucis historique par A. Compagnon, sur la construction et la déconstruction de l'histoire littéraire par E. Kushner, sur la nationalisation et l'autonomisation par D. Saint-Jacques, sur l'instance critique par M. Lemire, sur le "mouvement littéraire en Canada" par R. Dionne et même sur les problèmes de réception d'un auteur bilingue : Beckett, par B. T. Fitch.

Clément Moisan avait posé dès le départ le problème qui préoccupait les participants : "On ne sait plus bien de quelle histoire il s'agit, ni ce que veut dire le terme même de littérature" (25). Il propose lui-même un système ouvert, "celui de l'histoire littéraire entendue comme polysystème" (31), dont l'une des caractéristiques est de pouvoir susciter et maintenir une organisation dans un univers formé de composantes diverses et en constante mutation.

Alain Viala remet aussi en question la notion fondamentale de la périodisation en histoire, qu'il veut décrocher de l'histoire politique et événementielle, et propose son hypothèse en se centrant sur l'idée de champ littéraire. Si ce dernier s'intéresse à la France, Laurent Mailhot montre toute la

complexité de la périodisation en histoire littéraire du Québec. Paul Wyczynski, de son côté, expose les perspectives de renouvellement de la biographie.

On constatera l'heureuse diversité et l'intérêt des sujets traités. Cet ouvrage sur l'histoire littéraire constitue une référence majeure.

Writer as Critic

Aritha van Herk
In Visible Ink: crypto-frictions. NeWest Press $14.95

Reviewed by Elspeth Cameron

In Visible Ink: crypto-frictions by novelist and critic Aritha van Herk is a compelling collection of hybrid essays. Most of them—nine of the thirteen—have appeared in such journals as *Room of One's Own, Prairie Fire, Malahat Review*; or in books of essays such as *Language in her Eye: Writing and Gender* or *The Dutch in North America: their immigration and cultural continuity*. The result is a somewhat uneven collection—each essay addressing in its own way a subject suited to the journal or book at hand.

Despite this unevenness, van Herk's powerful literary presence and the persistence of her prosyletizing give an unexpected unity to *In Visible Ink*. Zany, while deeply in earnest, at once personal and philosophical, this is an important postmodern experimental work. To read these essays as "criticism" would do a disservice to their exuberant creativity. To read them as "fiction" would do a disservice to their incisive insights.

The thirteen essays in this collection cover a variety of subjects from the immigrant experience and prairie writing; through assessments of "fictioneers" such as Carol Shields, Bronwen Wallace and Henry Kreisel; to explorations of feminism and family.

As van Herk's title suggests, the writer's ink may be visible, but much more is communicated in an invisible, subliminal way in sub-texts, or even in absent texts. Van Herk's deceptively playful literary observations are thus "crypto-frictions": hidden or secret messages ignited by rubbing together criticism and fiction. This "blurring of boundaries," as she calls it, is a fashionable tenet of postmodernism. But van Herk applies it in several quirky ways. To the immigrant experience, for example. Her point of departure, in the title essay which first appears in this collection, is a cross-cultural encounter in the north with an Innuit man. When he speaks to and about her, she observes, he "writes" her in his own language. This transforming dynamic suggests to van Herk "the ultimate illusion of text: you [the reader]," she writes, "are not reading me but writing, not me but yourself; you are not reading writing but being read, a live text in a languaging world." Elsewhere, in her exploration of her own family's emigration from Holland to Canada, she observes that immigration is "a deliberately fictional act." Everywhere... in life, in art, in criticism there is "a covert story"—even "an absent story"—behind the "overt story."

A radical subversive, van Herk—somewhat like the child in the Emperor's New Clothes—makes some disconcerting observations. "I want to trouble the reader," she claims, "—to upset, annoy, confuse; to make the reader react to the unexpected, the unpredictable, the amoral, the political. ... I want to make trouble, I refuse to be held back." Examples are manifold. In a provocative essay on Nellie McClung, Sinclair Ross and Dennis Cooley, for instance, she asks: "How to re/appropriate the prairie, this prairie with its tinge of west, its male visage?" "Women need to be spies here," she concludes, "women need to be terrorists." In an explicitly feminist essay, "Of Viscera and Vital Things," she complains: "And I am up to my neck in this shitty, sexy language, shaped and developed

by a patriarchal frame of reference, excluding me and all women, a male m(y)nefield of difficulties, words capable of inflicting so much pain, and also so much pleasure." And in probing the essence of Bronwen Wallace's fiction, van Herk persists in getting at what is *not* written: "Her poet's gesture of ghost lines: the narrative beneath: acting as its own double: questioning its presumed answers; refusing to be managed. The slipstream story."

Because van Herk senses "the slipstream story," the elusive and complex flux that is communication, she abhors rigid categorizations. Northrop Frye's classification of literature into genres, for instance, offends her. Such rigid criticism, she complains, "is damned by its categories, its conventions, must return to footnotes, their irrevocable interference; their own implied displeasure with the text, a *coitus interruptus* of idea." Though van Herk is not above using footnotes herself, her point is an engaging one. She takes it even further to speculate that "it is arguable that the most interesting critics at work in Canada today are themselves—Frye's term—authors and poets *first*."

So, she asks, what is a critic to do? Her answer: write fiction.

And in an essay that is by no means the sole *tour de force* in *In Visible Ink*, that is what she does. In "Extrapolations from Miracles: Out of Carol Shields." Van Herk takes characters from Shields stories in *Various Miracles* and gives them new stories that—like mathematical extrapolations—infer series from known facts. In other words, she makes visible what she imagines as the invisible stories (or covert texts) behind Shields overt stories. If this happened to *that* character, Van Herk boldly asserts, then *that* could have happened too. And if *this* character from that story were to meet *that* character from this story, here's what they might do. It's a spectacular tribute to Shields—homage paid by one imagination to another. This is van Herk's "crypto-friction" at its best: brilliantly witty, incandescently philosophical, provocative, outrageous and true.

Writing Home

Marlene Kadar, ed.

Reading Life Writing: An Anthology. Oxford UP $20.95

Helen M. Buss

Mapping Our Selves: Canadian Women's Autobiography in English. McGill-Queen's University Press $39.95

Clark Blaise

I Had a Father: A Post-Modern Autobiography. HarperCollins Publishers $22.95

Reviewed by Susanna Egan

With the publication of these three important works in 1993, we may confidently say that autobiography in Canada is alive and well and "writing home." Implicating the reader as subject, explicating the interconnections of theory and practice, carefully positioning all subjects in time and place and cultural context, Kadar, Buss, and Blaise represent a liberating new phase for autobiographical genres. All three are concerned with tuning in to unheard voices, whether this means redefining common ground, as for Kadar, or identifying the geography of identity and influence for Canadian women, as for Buss, or positioning the self in relation to the mysteries of birth and place, of one's own prehistory, as for Blaise. All three engage in the exploratory tasks of "mapping," though Buss is the only one to flag this activity in her title.

Of the three, Kadar's anthology seems to me the most problematic. It builds, of course, on her earlier work (only last year), *Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice*; the two should be read, as they must have been prepared, together, because Kadar does not have or take the

space in this text to develop her theories of life writing as fully or as subtly as she would need to if this were all she were offering. Her introduction lacks the sophistication of her contributions to the earlier volume, even suggesting at times more haste than care. But I should state up front my own difficulty with all anthologies; their purpose is admirable but their performance invariably disappoints me. This is particularly true for an anthology that contains no whole work at all, only extracts. Kadar introduces each extract, providing historical and textual contexts and highlighting features of the given text that explain the value of its presence in this collection. What we lack is a sense of overall purpose to justify the use of one piece rather than another, to override the unnerving sense of absolutely random selection. Certainly, Kadar's juxtapositioning of selections is richly suggestive. "Diaries and Journals," for instance, consists of extracts from the writings of Sei Shonagon, Samuel Pepys, Anais Nin, Anne Frank, May Sarton, and Audre Lorde. Widely as Kadar angles her lens, however, her choices must seem both arbitrary (why these and not others?) and representative (by virtue of being chosen). Lacking a full statement of purpose, I have difficulty, for example, in accepting Goldman, Trotsky, de Beauvoir, and Hellman as writers of "conventional" autobiography. Similarly, I wonder why Empedocles, Augustine, and Kempe exemplify "Classics." If we are agreeing that the confession is a classical (or conventional?) trope for autobiography, should Rousseau not represent the secularisation of this subgenre? And could we not see it at work in contemporary autobiography, with an example, for instance, from a work like *An Unknown Woman* by Alice Koller?

But I am falling into the same trap as Kadar; if we see a value in categories (and we need some, certainly, in a field as varied as this one), and if we wish to share some common ground for teaching and discussion, then the question is where we begin and where we end. As a beginning, this collection will certainly stimulate courses in life writing and encourage an interdisciplinary approach to autobiographical theories and practices; like Kadar's earlier work, it suggests exciting fertility of imagination. I hope she will build from this collection, however, into fuller, and more focussed discussion of her readings of life writing, giving us perhaps a more developed conceptual framework in which to read her contributions to date.

Mapping Our Selves, in which Buss acknowledges Kadar as "an enthusiastic coplanner" in the bringing of "women's neglected autobiographical accounts . . . to the attention of scholars and the public," is exactly the kind of critical/theoretical work that I hope will be Kadar's next project. For myself, I positively envy Buss the production of this book, and am likely to wax lyrical in admiration. It is preeminently but not exclusively a woman's book, just as the intertextual reading that Buss advocates is necessary but not exclusive to feminist reading practices. Buss "maps" herself as woman: daughter, mother, sister, wife, as Canadian from Newfoundland and the prairies, as a feminist critic who explores the validity of her theories with refreshing honesty against her personal experience. She finds "the metaphor of the mirror insufficient," for example, "to describe the core experiences of human identity formation, especially female identity." Choosing her metaphor from "the ancient art/science of cartography," she develops its value in terms of "a complex of intellectual and practical skills . . . joining the activities of self-knowledge and knowledge of the world," implying "both picture-making and lettering, so that development is metaphorically interdisciplinary and multi-sensual from its beginning. It is also profoundly culturally influenced. . . . As a theorist, she

positions herself in a network of positive theoretical contributions, responding, for example, to Schweickart's emphasis on "the subject/subject nature of reading." As a woman, then, she positions herself as mother, sister, daughter of the texts she discusses, nurturing, identifying, learning, from these autobiographies. As a Canadian, Buss maps herself very carefully in sociocultural contexts that define her relatedness to other Canadian women, to the texts she reads, and to the needs and skills that she brings to her readings.

Divided, like Gaul, into three parts, *Mapping Our Selves* rereads pioneer writings (diaries by Simcoe, O'Brien, and Roberts), and memoirs (by Johnston, Sibbald, Hiemstra, and Allison), with an intensive focus on Moodie and Jameson. Part two focusses on some twentieth-century developments in women's autobiography from pioneer adventure to feminist self-discovery and assertion : Binnie-Clark, Black, McClung, Henry, and Campbell are central to this discussion. For a focus on literary women, Buss turns to Livesay, Maynard, Carr, Montgomery, and Salverson. Finally, with closely connected readings of Roy, Laurence, Marlatt, Clement, Meigs, Gunnars, van Herk, McCracken, Porter, and Foggo, Buss "gestures," as she puts it, "towards an embodied tradition." (The adjective is important for her feminist readings of women's texts.) Such lists may indicate the breadth of Buss's attention to her genres, and the sufficiency of her sampling, but they cannot suggest the lively and insightful quality of her readings, the continuous but easy, unpretentious grounding of her work in the theoretical discourse of her "territory," or the charm and refreshing good sense that she brings to her discussion. "I think," she says at one point, "that women need to name what is important to them, to name themselves outside of male generic contracts, or else they will be judged lacking by those contracts. I believe this naming will be a liberating act. It can be an act that does not reject our fathers, brothers, lovers, or sons, but that refuses to be named by our places in their stories." That she can radicalise our readings from a personal creed so balanced, so focussed, and so clearly developed, may testify to the inclusive and explanatory power of Buss's topography. The only problematic feature of this book, to my mind, is the editorial decision to provide endnotes that are essentially parenthetical references removed from the body of the text. For so engaging and readable a text, the removal of such clutter is, obviously, a bonus. For a text that is also scholarly and academic, however, it introduces a nuisance value; one has to go first to the endnotes and then to the bibliography in order to make sense of the number on the page. A small quarrel with an excellent book that is sure to be a source for much further work.

Where Helen Buss incorporates life writing into her practice of feminist theory, Clark Blaise theorises his life writings in what we might in this context call masculine mappings. He moves back into his French Canadian past by means of a topography at once geographical, temporal, and psychological. He calls Part One of his "post-modern autobiography" "My Life as an Atlas," a witty title that suggests both his interest in mapping himself and the burden he bears of indeterminate worlds that require exploration. "Geography is destiny," he writes in the introduction. His French Canadian father, who moved first to New England and then all over the United States, is both vivid to the present-tense writer who puzzles over memories of language and place and elusive to the mature man writing "the autobiography of a consciousness fighting to achieve sovereignty over its own experiences" (xi). Blaise's journeys take him backwards to the mystery of origins and, strangely, forwards, as he connects his father's life with his own. His exploration

of Montréal ledgers, like Ondaatje's pouring over archives in Sri Lanka, suggests simultaneously both deep roots and absolute deracination. He records with controlled bitterness his desire to identify himself as a Canadian, his sense of home in the writing community of Canada, and his frustration at the racism in Canada which ultimately drove him and his wife, Bharati Mukherjee, south again across the border.

While it is clearly our loss that Canada's climate is so unwelcoming, Blaise draws his life-maps across this border anyway: in New England, along the roads and beaches of the Florida of his boyhood, and into the midwest. His annotation of Canadian references reminds us that his audience extends well beyond Canada; his definition of the words *Métis*, for example, or his identification of himself as a transnational border-hopper: "Like Benedict Arnold, like my father, like me, Riel was a border-hopper of suspect loyalty." This book is really a series of meditations, a collection of essays, on ethnic roots, on relationship, on writing, on mid-life recognitions of one's shifting place in the galaxy. It bears naked traces of its origins in many different sources: in its repetitions, in its concealment and then its blunt avowal of Mukherjee's name, even in its sense of intentional nonarrival. Liable at times to charges of humourless solipsism, *I Had a Father* also conveys nostalgia, loss, and, somehow, failed aspirations, in quiet tones that make for painful reading.

Exploring the Feminine

Morag Shiach
Helene Cixous: A Politics of Writing. Routledge n.p.

Jackie Crossland
Collateral Damage. Press Gang n.p.

Reviewed by Janice Fiamengo

Morag Shiach's *Helene Cixous: A Politics of Writing* aims to redress a crucial limitation in the way "English Studies" has produced Cixous as theorist of the feminine. Shiach argues convincingly that the intense debate over *écriture feminine* in Anglo-American circles has been distorted by exclusive concern with Cixous' early theoretical texts ("The Laugh of the Medusa" and "Sorties") and inadequate attention to her extensive literary criticism, avant-garde fictions, and theatrical texts. Devoting equal space to these four components of Cixous' corpus, Shiach examines how Cixous' critical and creative practice extends, elaborates, and modifies her theoretical work.

Shiach provides a careful blend of critical interpretation, paraphrase, and socio-political context. Her readings of Cixous' fictions are particularly useful. Aiming for open-ended exploration rather than a determinate reading, Shiach shows an appreciation for the complexity of these works, and succeeds in relating the fiction to Cixous' concept of feminine writing without totalizing or reducing any of the texts to mere illustrations of theory. However, perhaps because her aim is to move beyond them, her treatment of the theoretical essays is sometimes reductive. For instance, feminist critics have long puzzled over the section of "Laugh" in which Cixous discusses the particular bodily presence of the woman speaking in public: "She doesn't 'speak,' she throws her trembling body forward. . . all of her passes into her voice, and it's with her body that she vitally supports the 'logic' of her speech." Shiach

explains Cixous' theory of woman's speech as follows: "Speaking, Cixous argues, is a powerfully transgressive action for women, whose bodies cannot be erased from their speech in the way that they have been from their writing. A woman speaking in public is seen first and foremost as a woman, not as a speaker." Here, Shiach shifts the focus of the passage away from the speaking woman to the objectifying gaze of the masculine observer, arguing that Cixous describes woman not as she "is" but as she has been made. While the border between affirmation and critique is often deliberately blurred in Cixous, Shiach's reading seems an unfortunate simplification of the relationship between voice and body so central to Cixous' imaginative project.

Shiach's own textual project shows little of Cixous' influence. Her reliance on the very rhetorical strategies (classification and division, chronological sequence, a teleological notion of organic development) that Cixous defines as effects of the masculine libidinal economy raises the question of whether conventional language structures can adequately represent a writing of disruptive feminine excess. More seriously, perhaps, in her rejection of "partial accounts" and her "commitment to seeing Cixous' work as a whole," Shiach risks containing Cixous within a phallic model of subjectivity and intellectual development. Here, Shiach's desire to make Cixous accessible to a wide audience seems to restrict her from engaging actively with her writing and reading strategies.

Shiach states at the end of her Introduction that her study "aims neither to praise Cixous nor to blame her" and this is puzzling both because the book clearly does admire Cixous' thought (Shiach repeatedly defends Cixous against charges of essentialism) and because an illusory (masculist) objectivity is no longer a goal for feminist scholarship. This claim of impartiality is also disturbing because sustained critique of Cixous' philosophical project is absent from Shiach's text. Although she mentions Cixous' anti-colonialism, Shiach does not question or even notice Cixous' appropriation and subsequent erasure of race in her universalizing "We are black and we are beautiful." Shiach also fails to interrogate the liberatory potential (and unexamined privileges) of writing "as a privileged space for transgression and transformation."

While the project of extending English readers' knowledge of Cixous is an important one, it is unfortunate that rigorous analysis and creative response, precisely the kinds of readings Cixous' work demands and repays, are not fully developed.

The idea of writing back to the dominant discourse — of taking the patriarchal stories which have made woman Other and opening them to women's resistance — has proved fertile ground for feminist creative practice. Jackie Crossland's *Collateral Damage*, a play in two acts which was first performed at Vancouver's Fringe Festival, re-writes the classical story of Medea, focusing with anger and humor on Jason's unthinking betrayal and on the phallic politics, epitomized in the men's reverence for the useless Golden Fleece, which marginalize women. Crossland reverses that marginalization. All parts in the play are performed by women and the play consciously adopts a woman's point of view, "with men presented as a woman sees them." In focusing on Medea's and her maid's resilience as well as their victimization, Crossland manages to subvert the authority of the Greek narrative while acknowledging and exploiting its emotional power.

The story is told by Cleo, a modern day chorus figure, as she and friends return to her East Vancouver apartment after a shopping expedition. Cleo has heard the story of Jason's desertion and Medea's murder of her children in the supermarket, already

distorted by a misogynist rumor-mill. In the story, as in life, women are "collateral damage" — sacrificed for the unity of the male narrative and disappeared by language. So Cleo, with her woman friends, retells the story, making it any woman's story (not Everywoman's), in which "Medea was a woman more or less like any other who depended on a man and got no thanks for it." Cleo re-writes the mythic narrative to move beyond its oppositions (Medea as wronged innocent or vengeful madwoman) and to explore its blind-spots (the history of abuse at the root of Medea's rage) in order not only to critique but also to correct a powerful cultural paradigm.

From the beginning, the story is clearly a made thing: the act of its telling and the power of that telling are emphasized. The play does not claim to have recovered the real story behind the misogynist lies: instead, *Collateral Damage* is a re-writing of the Origin which displaces the Law of the Father with an Other "truth" which does not claim historical purity. This re-telling points to women's collective strength, their empowerment in refusing to accept in silence the narratives patriarchy has imposed on them. As Medea's maid says in another context: "If you don't tell, nothing can change."

Feminism and the Bible

Mieke Bal
Murder and Difference: Gender, Genre, and Scholarship on Sisera's Death. Indiana UP n.p.

Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza
But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation. Beacon n.p.

Reviewed by Janice Fiamengo

Readers of *The Tent Peg* and *Not Wanted on the Voyage* will find the two books usder review particularly useful. Mieke Bal's *Murder and Difference* investigates how biblical scholarship has constituted its object of study. Bal employs the semiotic concept of "code" to study disciplinary methods: interpretive conventions, the institutional constraints that control them, and the interests they express. As a focus, Bal chose two short texts from the Book of Judges, both of which relate the murder of Sisera, enemy general, by Jael, an Israelite woman. Although they tell the "same" story, the texts differ in fundamental ways; Judges 4 is a prose narrative which emphasizes Jael's treachery in breaking the laws of hospitality and explains Sisera's momentary (and fatal) powerlessness. Such detail and emphasis are missing from Judges 5, an ecstatic lyric celebrating Jael's power and the erotic pleasure of the murder. Seeking a code able to explain these differences, Bal examines academic research and popular studies by specialists in the four disciplines of history, theology, anthropology, and literary analysis, as well as the trans-disciplinary field of thematics, and finds that all operate, to varying degrees, according to a logic of noncontradiction that is incompatible with difference. Her book seeks to return criticism to its etymological root — "to criticize" originally meant "to differentiate" — as part of the larger project of resisting the homogenizing tendencies of repressive ideologies.

Bal provides detailed readings of representative scholarship in the various disciplines. Her interrogative approach exposes how those interpretive practices which are supposedly most scientifically rigorous, exact, and impartial are in fact anchored in specific, interested (often ethnocentric and androcentric) preconceptions. For example, Bal traces a textual-historical argument which opposes the unity of the divine voice behind scripture and seeks to differentiate textual sources; Bal shows how the argument is itself bound by an organic conception of literature whose romantic roots are consonant with the very theory it rejects.

This is deconstruction at its most subtle, disciplined, and persuasive.

Bal also uncovers the unacknowledged masculism of many of the codes she has selected. For example, she examines how the literary code poses as a value-neutral analysis of formal features while another, less objective, gender code operates covertly. Within this code, the privileging of epic over lyric corresponds to the privileging of logic over emotion, Truth/History over poetry, and ultimately a masculine over a feminine perspective. Thus the lyric version of Sisera's death, because it does not excuse Sisera or castigate Jael, is condemned for its imprecision, its unreliability as a source, and its representational incoherence. In Bal's analysis, descriptive methods are revealed to be prescriptive.

Bal does not propose to abandon these codes, for this would leave critics with no means of interpretation at all. Rather, she suggests ways that the codes can be used to open texts rather than to close them. In the last chapter, she uses elements of the disciplines she has studied in the service of a consciously gendered reading, which elaborates the differently gendered dynamic at work in each text. Pointing the way towards a "socially relevant criticism" which does not neglect "aesthetic appreciation of the text" (123), Bal's serious scholarship is an excellent example of how disciplines can be transformed from within.

Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza's *But She Said* goes even further than Bal's text in arguing for an entirely new perspective on feminist biblical scholarship; Fiorenza seeks to redefine biblical criticism as a practice of liberation rather than a primarily hermeneutic enterprise. Rejecting the modern concept of bible studies as "value-detached inquiry," Fiorenza calls for "the elucidation of the ethical consequences and political functions of biblical texts" in both their historical and contemporary contexts. Working from the premise that "biblical texts affect the perceptions, values, and imagination not only of Christians, but of Western cultures and societies," Fiorenza is dedicated to a reading of the bible which no longer legitimates oppression, but instead grounds an emancipatory politics to "empower women and other marginalized persons in their struggles for freedom, justice, and well being." Feminist strategies of interpretation are thus de- and reconstructive: they seek to make visible the covert operations of domination and exploitation in biblical texts, but also to read those texts consciously from the subject positions of women and other non persons in a way that authorizes liberation struggles.

Feminist readings of the bible seek to "make those whom the androcentric text marginalizes or excludes centrally present as historical actors." It also requires "a theological reconception of the bible" as a text which "offers paradigms of struggle and visions that are open to their own transformation." To this end, Fiorenza provides a reading of the story of Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician woman (mentioned in Mark 7: 24 - 30 and Matthew 15: 21 - 28) which reveals women's contributions to the opening up of the early Christian movement to non-Israelites. In this narrative, the unnamed woman, a triple outsider by virtue of her gender, race, and religion, argues with Jesus about who is entitled to the benefits of divine grace, and persuades him against erecting exclusionary ethnic and religious boundaries. This reading is paradigmatic for Fiorenza's project because it both affirms women's significant contributions to the development of Christianity and also signals a re-visioning of "Christian faith as a combative, argumentative, and emancipatory praxis."

Fiorenza's revisions to traditional biblical scholarship are far-reaching and profound, necessitating a complete redefinition of biblical authority and truth. For Fiorenza, the bible is a text like any other, a rhetorical

discourse with specific aims and interests produced by its socio-historical locations. It has no divine authority; rather, it has had theological authority in struggles for emancipation and will continue to do so. It has been used as a weapon against women and others in their struggles for justice, as well as a resource for hope. Both Bal's and Fiorenza's texts chart the way for a use of the bible to empower women rather than to sanction their suffering.

In Near Ruins

Michael Ondaatje
The English Patient. McClelland & Stewart $26.99

Reviewed by Paul Hjartarson

In a bombed and mined Italian villa which the Allies have used as a temporary field hospital, an exhausted and traumatized Allied nurse, the character Hana from *In the Skin of a Lion,* chooses in the closing months of World War II to remain with a dying patient rather than to obey orders and follow the war and her hospital unit north. The war is ending, soldiers are going AWOL; patients are walking out of hospitals. As one of the characters in *The English Patient* notes, "It is a strange time, the end of a war," and Hana's insubordination goes unreported. She and the "English patient" are eventually joined by two others: a wounded and morphine-addicted Canadian soldier, David Caravaggio, a friend of Hana's father (and another character from *In the Skin of a Lion*), who decides to seek out Hana when he hears of her decision; and a young Sikh sapper from the British Eighth army, Kirpal Singh, known simply as Kip, who lives at the villa while he locates and defuses mines and unexploded bombs and shells in the surrounding countryside. *The English Patient,* easily Ondaatje's best novel to date, is not one narrative but four: the story of each character, of how war has made each a patient, and of how suffering has brought them all together, if only briefly, in this unlikely place.

The English Patient is, above all, an exploration of human suffering and of the possibility of healing. What the narrator says of Caravaggio is true of all four characters in the novel: "War has unbalanced him and he can return to no other world as he is . . ." All four have suffered devastating losses; all need time to heal and, if they can find the fortitude, to begin life anew. Hana has suffered not only the trauma of nursing wounded and dying soldiers but the death both of her father, Patrick, and of the soldier whose child she carried. Following her lover's death, she aborts the child. "After that," she tell Caravaggio, "I stepped so far back no one could get near me." Caravaggio himself has made a lifetime habit of hiding from others; "all his life," we are told, "he has avoided permanent intimacy." A thief whom war has transformed into a spy, Caravaggio is captured by the Germans in the closing months of the war. He is interrogated and his thumbs are cut off. Greater than Caravaggio's physical pain, however, is his fear that he was released by the Germans because, in his suffering, he told them everything they wanted to know. Recovering in hospital, he develops an addiction to the morphine used to treat his wounds. Although Kip's wounds are not as readily apparent as Caravaggio's, they are no less painful. When a 250-kilogram bomb explodes in Erith killing Lord Suffolk, Kip who, unlike his brother, reveres the British, loses both his mentor and his "home away from home." "I have lost someone like a father," he tells Hana. Following that loss, the Indian Sikh turned British soldier "escapes" into the Italian campaign and into his own self-sufficiency.

No character has more fully withdrawn from life and none is in greater need of care than the English patient himself. Burned

beyond recognition, he is unnamed and unknown.

> A man with no face. An ebony pool. All identification consumed in a fire. Parts of his burned body and face had been sprayed with tannic acid, that hardened into a protective shell over his raw skin. The area around his eyes was coated with a layer of gentian violet. There was nothing to recognize in him.

If there is "nothing to recognize in him," there is little he recognizes in himself, for he claims not to know his own identity. For Caravaggio, who is obsessed with his need to know the English patient's identity, the "man with no face" is the desert explorer and Axis spy, Count Ladislaus de Almsy. When Caravaggio interrogates Hana's patient, however, he discovers less an enemy operative than a man not unlike himself. And, a man in pain. "Everything I have loved or valued," the English patient laments, "Has been taken away from me." If the English patient must come out of hiding, so too must his interrogator. "You must talk to me, Caravaggio," Almsy demands,

> Or am I just a book? Something to be read, some creature to be tempted out of a loch and shot full of morphine, full of corridors, lies, loose vegetation, pockets of stone.

And so, interrogation gives way to conversation; the questioner in turn must speak. "There is something," Caravaggio later declares to Almsy, "I must tell you."

Concerning Hana's early days alone in the villa with the English patient, the narrator remarks at one point, "This was the time in her life that she fell upon books as the only door out of her cell." For the four inhabitants of the Villa San Girolamo the only way out of their own suffering is through each other. ". . . Here they were shedding skins. They could imitate nothing but what they were. There was no defence but to look for the truth in others."

If the central character in Ondaatje's novel is the English patient, the central story is Almsy's account of his involvement in the Libyan Desert explorations of the 1930s, including his discovery in the mid-1930s of "the lost oasis of Zerzura." Shaping that account, however, and forever changing Almsy's life, is his adulterous affair with Katharine Clifton, the wife of the young pilot who flew the members of the various expeditions in and out of the Libyan desert. "In the desert," the English patient remarks,

> the most loved waters, like a lover's name, are carried blue in your hands, enter your throat. One swallows absence. A woman in Cairo curves the white length of her body up from the bed and leans out of the window into a rainstorm to allow her nakedness to receive it.
>
> *Hana leans forward, sensing his drifting, watching him, not saying a word. Who is she, this woman?*

Thus, the male narrative of desert exploration, of self-sufficiency, gives way to a male version of the love story. "How does this happen?" the English patient asks, "To fall in love and be disassembled."

All four characters in *The English Patient* have been disassembled by love and by war. In the Villa San Girolamo and in each other, they seek the oasis they need to rest from their suffering, the water they need to restore their spirits. Describing how lightening momentarily illuminates "naive Catholic images" from tableaux reenacting the Stations of the Cross or the Mysteries of the Rosary, the narrator remarks late in the novel, "Perhaps this villa is a similar tableau, the four of them in private movement, momentarily lit up, flung ironically against this war." And then it was August 1945.

Society and the Self

Marc Diamond
Property. Coach House $12.95

Lawrence Hill
Some Great Thing. Turnstone $14.95

Reviewed by Ron Jenkins

These two books present something of a complementary pair: one deals with the interior life of its narrator, whose hermetic personality struggles with the significance of property in his life; the other is the much more public story of the development of how a Winnipeg journalist, Mahatma Grafton, finds his place in the society he is also paid to comment upon.

Marc Diamond's second novel, *Property,* is a single-paragraph novel written exclusively in the neurotic and intelligent voice of its narrator, who, while living in Vancouver, is burdened by his ties to a property he has inherited in London, Ontario. In form, this novel is something of both an interior monologue and a jeremiad, and is rather good at both. The novel begins with the narrator unhappily announcing the arrival of a letter through his letter slot, a letter whose return address has implications that occupy the narrator in digressions for the first forty-five pages of the novel, before he finally opens it.

The novel ramblingly reveals the connections this letter and its writer Robert Crow have to the narrator. It is a thread of communication that has the strength of a chain, since it connects the narrator to everything in his life he wants to leave behind. Crow, who lives next to the narrator's Ontario property, is complaining about the state of its grounds. This property has been foisted upon the narrator with conditions that bind him to a place he no longer wishes to live in or visit, to family and relatives he no longer wants connection with, and to responsibilities he has no effective means of discharging. Those with any of these problems will feel immediate sympathy, and find the narrator's embattled and slightly paranoid perspective more appealing than wearing. His dilemma is that he feels forced to resolve the role of this encumbrance in his life before he can proceed with his future, but the particulars of his ownership have tied him to an agonizing inaction.

The narrator's property in Ontario becomes the pretext for his parasitic mother to visit and attempt to stay permanently with him in Vancouver, and becomes the eventual unmasking of the duplicity of his cousin, whose advice in matters of property and life generally have been designs to advance his own ends.

Diamond's narrator knows from the outset that his property is a trap, when his whole desire is *escape.* He tells stories of those who become lost forever in London Ontario, and justifies his paranoia with personifications of London as a city of the type that has something lurking in its heart "that takes the liveliest part of a person and turns it into the deadliest, something in those complacent winding avenues that makes a person smug and mean and trivial, something embedded deep within the very molecular structure of London Ontario that pervades a person and crushes the spirit." The paradox of property, as *Property* shows, is that it cannot provide a boundary against itself. *Property*'s narrator knows the threat his property poses to his creativity, and finally realizes that he can—for now—fight his vampiristic property by refusing the dilemma of deciding what to do. He waits for a later strength.

Lawrence Hill's first novel, *Some Great Thing,* brings the struggle for a space for the self into the public; Mahatma Grafton, journalist for the *Winnipeg Herald,* discovers the relevance of the world to himself through writing about it for others. This novel is an engaging narrative that shows its main strength in a plot that is dynamic and involving enough to make its pages

pass very quickly, and that skilfully blends its various subplots.

In some ways this novel is a bildungsroman, but this feature is not its strength, since the character of Mahatma Grafton seems not fully realized; Hill more often describes than dramatizes Grafton's repudiation of his cultural past. The point, repeatedly made, that Mahatma lacks the motivation to understand or appreciate the accumulated wisdom of his sage father, Ben, verges on the didactic in its portrayal of his reaction to didacticism. Ben warns Mahatma that television will rot his brain, and adds:

> "Help me fill out this big book. It's going to be a history of our people."
>
> But Mahatma, eleven by then, had better things to do. Hide and seek. Baseball. Working alone, Ben slowly mounted his "Negro History Appreciation" binder.

The novel has an active plot that initially, in its episodic narrative, seems slightly unfocused, like Dragnet with a touch of *The Pilgrim's Progress.* It does, however, coalesce into a good story, and it reveals itself as well suited to the reportage theme of the novel.

Despite the omniscient narrator, many of the characters of this book fall short of being deeply developed, despite hints of levels of personality that might exist. One cannot help feeling also that some characters are presented on too sharply drawn moral lines; for example, the crime reporter for the *Winnipeg Star,* Edward Slade, and the city editor for the *Herald,* Tom Betts, from the novel's outset almost embody much of what is wrong in the world. On the other hand, the visiting journalist from Cameroon, Hasane Moustafa Ali (Yoyo), appears almost to caricature the naive, well-meaning, "good" innocent. This contrast reaches its extreme in the scenes of the novel set in Cameroon, a country which seems to be treated as a moral touchstone.

Hill nonetheless has written a novel that presents, in both Mahatma Grafton and others, a convincing portrait of both contemporary multiculturalism in Canada and how we might profit by it.

Montreal Story Teller

T.F. Rigelhof

Je t'aime Cowboy. Goose Lane $14.95

Reviewed by Gerald Lynch

T.F. Rigelhof's *Je t'aime Cowboy* is as entertaining as Hugh Hood's *Around the Mountain,* the book which it most resembles as a collection of stories set in and around Montreal. And one of *Cowboy's* minor failings is that recurrent images and ideas feel jimmied into the fiction—most often at the close, and usually associated with the cowboy motif—to add continuity or coherence. Story cycles have been popular in Canada since at least Duncan Campbell Scott's *In the Village of Viger* in 1896, which is well and good. But a miscellaneous collection of well-crafted stories is also a thing of beauty, and seemingly super-imposed linkages can only detract from such beauty with all the attraction of an exoskeleton.

Rigelhof does not commit this Procrustean sin all the time (if by adding the unnecessary rather than by chopping to fit), only occasionally. Unfortunately, when he does so it is often in connection with his fiction's major weakness: its frequent recourse to sentimentalism, especially at story's close. For example, the title story is working fine as a slice of weird life until its concluding sentence, when the befuddled urban cowboy beds down with his saintly tolerant and very pregnant wife: "When he finishes his story, she will let him ride her from behind. When he bucks and roars, she will whisper, Je t'aime, Cowboy." (But he's not been presented as the sort of guy who would buck and roar.) The longest story in the book, "A Hole with a Head in It" (novella length at forty-three pages) appears promising for a

good while as a fairly straightforward account of a male homosexual relationship. In fact, one of the achievements of the story is that homosexuality is almost incidental to its complex narrative of caring for a beloved who appears terminally ill. But the story ends precisely as it should not, bathetically, with the phrase "—and press Teddy tight against his chest." Teddy is the nurturer's Bridesheadish stuffed bear. I had to shake my own befuddled head and wonder just *what* the writer was intending here. And not just here at the close when his hero pitches into the story's grimace-inducing clinch, but earlier too, when the character whispers "into his old and nearly threadbare teddy [...] 'I've read Marx too. I'm not a dumb fucking machine. I looked at Mummy's life and learned how to use the dialectic of history to my own advantage.'" That's unintentional Woody Allen. Yet I believe that Rigelhof is honestly trying here to achieve an effect opposite to what such turns nonetheless invoke; that is, he is trying to write realistically about male homosexual love, but achieving only some degree of success. (Just as W.P. Kinsella believes he's honestly "on the Indian's side," as he was reported to have informed a group of antagonistic native youths in Orillia.) This long story begins well, and means well, but it stumbles a number of times before lurching recklessly towards its closing embrace of Teddy. (And as if bent on being as unfair to heterosexual males, in "Horses" the writer gives the following line to an unmoored husband: "What he really had to do was to loosen his grip on male dominant thinking." I failed to refrain from reflecting: Not to worry, he's well on his way.) A few other stories contain elements that are overworked, overwritten, or simply unconvincing. To give but one instance of the unconvincing that especially rang false with voyeuristic me: a teenager percolating testosterone and madly in love with the girl next door accidentally finds her bare breast with his telescope and hurriedly turns away. (And yet Barbara Gowdy blurbs on *Cowboy's* cover that these stories will tell us what men think and want.)

I offer the harsher criticisms above on the presumption that a part of the reviewer's job in a periodical such as *Canadian Literature* is to alert the good writer to damaging tendencies in his work. For potential readers, though, the more interesting aspect of *Je t'aime Cowboy* is that it shows a writer who can compose some very good stories. *Cowboy's* main strength is its ability to present an amply realized contemporary Montreal, a world of wandering males who slowly realize that they are now on something of a sexual-political slide. The best story in this regard, the best in the collection, is "William Burroughs in Westmount." In his evocation of place, his slantwise depiction of relationships, and his creation of an atmosphere of ennui, Rigelhof is here at his most wise and compassionate. This moving story of a broken family is also deeply humorous with its stylistic turns of italicized self-justifying remarks to an imagined judge, and technically impressive with its smoothly shifting point of view from the son—"His father had a shiny red face and little piggy eyes that lit up when he looked at women and went out when he looked at his son"—to the father: "He wonders what good smells his son will remember when he grows up." But the turn that this story performs most dazzlingly, the trick with fiction that Rigelhof has learned to do and which convinces me that he may well become an even better writer, is the way he introduces a situation that gains the reader's sympathy and then craftily works on that sympathy until readers must finally question why they ever sympathized with such a sad cowboy (though the fictional situation may have excluded some female readers from ever having sympathized). The main bounces on this readerly staircase occur when the

anxious father is shown to question his son too closely on his ex's doings, when he nonchalantly buys a gun at a firearms show, and when finally he leaves his son in the care of a chance-met acquaintance to rendezvous with his new girlfriend for some strange sex. It is the emotional mindlessness of the character that Rigelhof so deftly uncovers layer by numskull layer. In the story's most powerful passage the ex-wife puts the ethical boots to this descending man in a rhetoric worthy of Richler or Vanderhaeghe. The passage is too long to quote here and too seamless to excerpt, but it was brilliant of Rigelhof to have it delivered from a telephone answering machine and an inspiration to have it conclude, "'At the rate things are going, he's [the son's] going to grow up before you ever do. Think about it, Billy. Billy the Kid.'" And the story's closing sentence, reflecting on the strange sex, proves that coming to a bad end is not endemic to a Rigelhof story: "He wishes he understood why she wants him to do the things he does with her." With a poor memory I was able to quote that line blind.

Cowboy, handsomely produced and virtually typo-free, contains nine stories in all. Some of the other good ones are "Hard Country Rock," with its clever metafictive reflections; "Master Bo-Lu At Rest," with its wacky Koreshish theme; "A Little Conversation, A Little Red Wine," with its convincing humanity in a sad world; and "Horses" —despite its sensitive male reformer and sentimental close—with its great set piece on waking up hung over. If T.F. Rigelhof can better discipline himself to deploy sentiment more prudently, to excise the bad lines that fault and fracture a fictional world, and to trust his writer's instincts above his politically correct antennae, if, that is, he can write consistently at the level of "William Burroughs in Westmount," his future fictions will be a literary art to anticipate, to welcome, and to enjoy throughout.

(R)évolutions littéraires

Franca Marcato-Falzoni
Du mythe au roman, une trilogie ducharmienne. VLB Editeur 22,95$

Friedhelm Lach et **Hans-Herbert Räkel**
Berlin à Montréal: littérature et métropole. VLB Editeur 22,95$

Reviewed by Kenneth Meadwell

Publié originalement en italien en 1983, *Du mythe au roman, une trilogie ducharmienne* retrace l'évolution thématique de *L'Océantume* (1968), *L'Avalée des avalés* (1966) et *Le Nez qui voque* (1967), selon l'ordre de rédaction et non de publication, car chacun constituerait respectivement un volet du même tableau: le mythe, la religion et l'histoire. Cette trilogie retrace ainsi le chemin de l'humanité, partie "de cet âge que le mythe nomme d'or," et qui traverse "l'époque de la foi dans l'idéal pour aboutir à l'histoire, chaîne d'événements immanents qui ne laisse place à aucune illusion."

Si *L'Océantume* inaugure la trilogie ducharmienne, ce serait en se tissant autour d'une structure fondamentale, à savoir le décalage entre le réel et l'idéal. L'opposition entre réalité et mythe, entre présent et passé, se manifestant d'emblée dès le premier chapitre, oriente la narration qui suivra. La nostalgie du passé, et précisément d'un passé aux connotations féeriques, incarnée par la jeune narratrice, Iode Ssouvie, implique, en conséquence, un refus du réel. Que les adultes représentent la corruption du vécu sera assurément un thème récurrent chez Ducharme, et qui, dans *L'Océantume*, se traduit, à titre d'exemple, par le refus de Iode d'obéir à la maîtresse d'école. Elle préfère substituer aux ordres de cette dernière l'insolite et le merveilleux. L'enfance porte en elle, par conséquent, le signe de la pureté et de l'intégrité, ce qui poussera Iode à tenter de reconstituer l'unité du savoir et, ce faisant, de fonder de nouveau un mythe des orig-

ines, quête dont l'accomplissement s'avérera, bien entendu, illusoire.

Dans *L'Avalée des avalés* se dessine une exigence de liberté devant la puissance religieuse qui entrave l'accomplissement de l'individu. Bérénice Einberg, jeune narratrice, apeurée par la contingence, condamne son père juif et sa mère catholique, ainsi que leur religion, car ces derniers établissent leur autorité sur le pouvoir plutôt que sur l'amour. Métaphore de l'ange rebelle, et souveraine dans son maniement de la parole, Bérénice nie la transcendance divine tout en déifant l'être humain. Le "bérénicien" serait la langue de l'idéal de la liberté absolue par rapport à toute peur, langue créée par la narratrice pour combler les lacunes du langage humain, et par laquelle elle tente de se défendre contre la réalité. Si acharnée que soit la volonté de Bérénice, toujours est-il qu'elle ne pourra vaincre le pouvoir engloutissant de la réalité.

Dans un troisième temps, Marcato-Falzoni aborde *Le Nez qui voque* sous l'angle de la problématique du pays. Le ludisme qui ne cesse de se manifester chez Ducharme au niveau de la langue acquiert, dans ce cas, une signification qui, semblerait-il, dépasse largement celle du jeu car il coïncide avec la prise de conscience collective du risque de disparition de la langue et de la culture du Québec. Et pourtant, on doit se demander pour quelles raisons, non explicitées d'ailleurs, Marcato-Falzoni perçoit dans *Le Nez qui voque* un lien entre le socio-politique et le littéraire. On pourrait suggérer plutôt, grâce au vide créée par les répétitions d'une langue qui finit par s'annuler dans *L'Hiver de force* (1973), que ce texte-ci témoigne davantage d'un effritement du français. En plus, le nihilisme communiqué explicitement par la voix narrative dans *L'Hiver de force* évoque particulièrement bien cette saison mentale où règne le néant. Mais, pour Marcato-Falzoni *Le Nez qui voque* joue sur les registres du fabuleux et du réel dans un renvoi de l'histoire à l'Histoire.

Dans l'ensemble, *Du mythe au roman, une trilogie ducharmienne* évoque l'énorme richesse des trois premières oeuvres de cet écrivain des plus doués. Cet ouvrage a le mérite de capter l'unité chez Ducharme, d'en reconnaître, tout bien considéré, la nature constante mais variable dans ses apparences. Il manque cependant à l'étude une conclusion, et la bibliographie mise à jour n'inclut ni son roman le plus récent (*Dévadé*, 1990) ni allusion aux trois autres livres consacrés à la prose de Ducharme. Quant au premier de ceux-ci, on trouve dans la bibliographie les références à un compte rendu de cet ouvrage, mais aucune allusion à l'oeuvre même.

Berlin à Montréal: littérature et métropole est le reflet d'un colloque, tenu en automne 1987 à l'Université de Montréal, et qui s'est déroulé autour du thème "Littérature et métropole: le cas de Berlin". Cet événement, qui a rassemblé écrivains, critiques littéraires et journalistes, responsables d'affaires culturelles et professeurs, a eu lieu avant le mémorable effondrement du mur de Berlin. La plupart des communications et des tables rondes étant consacrées à la convention littéraire berlinoise, à ses hors-la-loi des années vingt et trente, à la littérature à Berlin et sa commercialisation ou encore à la promotion de la culture et la politique culturelle, quelques-unes avaient pour sujet, toutefois, la ville de Montréal.

Lieu façonné par les objectifs politico-culturels du Sénat, mais également celui de la contestation, Berlin occupe une place prédominante dans la littérature allemande. La vie intellectuelle berlinoise a connu divers courants littéraires, allant du réalisme au dadaïsme, en passant par l'existentialisme. Comme le signale Margret Iversen, ce qui est à noter à ce sujet c'est que la plupart des écrivains qui vivent et écrivent à Berlin n'abordent qu'accessoirement la question allemande. Selon un sondage effectué auprès de trois cents écrivains berlinois, on donne comme sym-

boles d'identification des exemples négatifs: mauvaise planification dans la reconstruction, politique d'assainissement destructrice (l'autoroute métropolitaine, quartiers de Kreuzberg en démolition). Et le mur, lui, n'a qu'une importance secondaire. L'attrait de Berlin ne saurait être mieux exprimé que par la métaphore de Günter Grasse: "Berlin, blessure permanente". L'insularité de la ville, ses signes de décadence, son caractère artificiel, la diversité de ses subcultures: autant de traits qui font de Berlin à la fois un symbole de la modernité et une source d'inspiration artistique.

Selon Jean-François Chassay, la ville est le lieu du savoir. Comme Berlin, Montréal étant le lieu de rencontre de diverses influences, cette ville offre un roman qui, de prime abord, se caractérise par une espèce de délire, par la gratuité de la masse d'informations que l'on y découvre. Jusqu'aux années quarante, le roman québécois se tient, en général, loin de la ville. Or, selon Chassay, c'est un lieu-commun de l'analyse historico-littéraire que de dire que *Bonheur d'occasion* (1945) de Gabrielle Roy marque l'arrivée en ville du roman québécois francophone contemporain. Rien n'indique dans ce roman une appartenance très marquée à la ville. Il faudrait attendre, plutôt *Au milieu de la montagne* de Roger Viau (1951) dont le titre est symptômatique de son appartenance, et surtout *Alexandre Chenevert* (1954), également de Roy. Chenevert ne se reporte jamais vers la campagne comme lieu des origines. En effet, bien qu'il soit angoissé par la vie urbaine, il ne peut imaginer la vie autrement. Citadin, il est assommée par la propagande et la publicité. Voilà, effectivement, le début de la littérature urbaine proprement dite au Québec francophone.

Berlin à Montréal: littérature et métropole offre une diversité de perspectives sur l'art et la ville, la littérature et la ville, l'individu et la ville. Bref, cet ouvrage raconte principalement l'histoire artistique de cette ville devenue mythe à bien des égards. La comparaison établie avec la ville de Montréal, capitale francophone du Canada, est des plus bienvenues, car nous aussi vivons à une époque où l'écrivain contemple son propre mur. Peut-être le verra-t-il, lui aussi, s'effacer un jour devant ses yeux.

Francophone Theatre

Victor-Lévy Beaulieu
Sophie et Léon, Théâtre; Seigneur Léon Tolstoï, Essai-Journal. Stanké, $19.95

Jules Villemaire, Marc Haentjens
Une génération en scène. Prise de Parole et Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques, $24.95

Reviewed by Jane Moss

Jules Villemaire's book is a photo album that lovingly documents twenty years of performance by Franco-Ontarian actors, singers, clowns, and poets. From behind the scenes to on stage, he shows us the writers, directors, designers, and performers who have devoted their energy and talents to bringing distinctive music, poetry, and theatre to the francophone audiences of all ages throughout the province. It seems that wherever an audience assembled, Jules Villemaire was there to capture the performance with his camera. There are photos of singing stars Paul Demers, Donald Poliquin, and Robert Paquette, of popular poets Robert Dickson, Patrice Desbiens, and Mariette Théberge, and of amateur and professional dramatic productions.

The text by Marc Haentjens organizes the photo album by tracing the evolution of the Franco-Ontarian performing arts over the last twenty years, underscoring their distinctiveness in relation to Quebec's cultural scene. According to Haentjens, the Franco-Ontarian community felt the influence of Quebec's Quiet Revolution, yet remained faithful to its social, religious, and moral roots. As was the case in

Quebec, nationalist impulses fueled the desire to create a collective identity through artistic expression, to create a sense of a community linked by faith, language, and heritage. While Montreal and Quebec City became the centres of Québécois theatre activity, Franco-Ontarian artists most often found themselves in small northern towns. To end their isolation, they came together at festivals, organized workshops, and formed theatre collectives. Early on, Franco-Ontarian theatre was youth-oriented because the greatest financial rewards were in touring plays for school audiences. The push to organize a commercial market for adult audiences did not begin until the late seventies. Special attention is paid to successful groups such as the Théâtre du Nouvel Ontario in Sudbury, the Théâtre d'la Corvée which was founded in Vanier but became the Théâtre du Trillium with a permanent home in Ottawa, the Théâtre de la Vieille 17 based in the eastern town of Rockland. These are the groups that have produced the biggest stars (Jean Marc Dalpé, Robert Bellefeuille, Robert Marinier, Michel Marc Bouchard, Brigitte Haentjens, Francine Côté) and the biggest hits (*Nickel, Hawkesbury Blues, La Parole et la Loi, Les Rogers, L'Inconception, La Poupée de Pélopia, Le Chien*). For those interested in francophone theatre, *Une Génération en scène* is a wonderful visual souvenir. Unfortunately, the book is more of a family photo album than a book of theatre history or criticism . Serious theatre scholars will not find enough dates, descriptions of productions, or textual analyses to satisfy their curiosity. Although this book complements Brigitte Beaulne's *Répertoire du théâtre franco-ontarien* (Ottawa: Théâtre Action, 1988), an in-depth critical study of Franco-Ontarian theatre is still needed.

Victor-Lévy Beaulieu's book is a triple-text: an "essai-journal" in which he situates Tolstoy's life and works in the context of Russian history and records his daily activities during the writing of the play, plus the play itself. The reader should begin with the essay-diary, *Seigneur Léon Tolstoï*, which is nicely illustrated with photographs and includes a bibliography of Tolstoy's works, critical studies, and works on Russian history. After reading about Tolstoy and the genesis of the dramatic text, the reader must turn the book upside down and begin reading the play, *Sophie et Léon*, from the other end. The two front covers of the book remind the reader of the text's dual nature: one reproduces a photograph of the real Tolstoy and his wife while the other displays a photograph of the actors who played the theatrical roles of Léon and Sophie.

Sophie et Léon was performed in July 1992 at the Théâtre d'été de Trois-Pistoles in a co-production by Montreal's Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui and the Production théâtrales de Trois-Pistoles. The play is divided into four acts and covers Tolstoy's last forty years—from his marriage to Sophie Bers to his death in 1910. An elevated railroad track (reminiscent of Anna Karenina's suicide) divides the surrealistic set into two spaces—Tolstoy's estate, Iasnaïa Poliana, on one side and the Astopovo railroad station, site of his death, on the other. The first act introduces Count Tolstoy and his radical ideas on politics, religion, and pedagogy, while painting an unflattering portrait of a sexually obsessed, unkempt country landowner who gambled away large sums. The act ends with his marriage to a respectable, middle-class Muscovite, Sophie Bers. The second act takes place ten years later and dramatizes the mutual resentments and recriminations that characterized their conjugal relations. Sophie resents Leo's sexual aggressiveness, her annual maternities, and his continued attachment to a peasant mistress. Leo resents the power of the Czar, the Russian Orthodox Church, and all western influences. With Sophie's editorial assistance, Tolstoy's literary reputation grows steadily

and will be further enhanced by the novel he is writing, *Anna Karenina*. By the third act, Leo is seventy years old and confined to a wheelchair. His belief in God and social justice notwithstanding, he is threatened with excommuncation for his continuing criticism of the Czar and the Church. Feeling old, ill, and ugly, Leo has become irrationally jealous of Sophie who, for her part, is extremely resentful of his close relationship with their daughter, Sacha. Sophie bickers constantly with Sacha and with Tolstoy's disciple, Vladimir Tchertkov, whom she fights for control over her husband. In a fit of rage, she has taken shots at Leo and Tchertkov. By the fourth act, the family feud has escalated to the point where the Count and his son have aired the Tolstoy dirty laundry in the form of literary attacks and counter-attacks. After thirteen children and forty years, the suicidal Sophie is filled with jealousy, resentments, and complaints about the real man whom the world hails as the greatest Russian writer. For his part, Tolstoy just wants to be rid of Sophie. As fate would have it, he falls ill and dies at the Astopovo train station just as he is leaving Sophie behind at Iasnaïa Poliana. The final curtain falls on the grieving widow who must now share with the whole world the man she loved for better and for worse.

While the "essai-journal" interests the reader as it follows the life and literary career of Tolstoy, the biographical play fails for a number of reasons. The main reason is that the two main characters are simply not likable. Sophie and Leo come across as egocentric, jealous hysterics caught up in an ugly, sado-masochistic relationship. By focusing the four acts on four moments in their long life together, Beaulieu is forced to fill in information on the intervening years in the form of long expository passages that detract from the dramatic quality of the text. Still, many of the conflicts seem unexplained. Although biographical dramas on authors are popular with Quebec playwrights, Victor-Lévy Beaulieu might be well-advised to stick to the biographical essay genre that he has employed with success to explore the lives of Hugo, Kerouac, Melville, and Ferron.

Kaleidoscope

D. Donnell

China Blues. McClelland & Stewart, n.p.

The New Poets of Prince Edward Island 1980-1990, Ragweed Press, n.p.

Reviewed by Derek Pollard

David Donnell will soon be getting accustomed to winning the Governor Generals Award for poetry. He has done it again with *China Blues* and deservedly so. Though there are question marks over where his poems end and his stories begin, his sensitivity to most human situations is so acute that language ebbs and flows in such a conversational manner that the reader can scarcely refuse the invitation to become involved in both forms. At the end of "July Light" Donnell writes:

> even ideas, lost emotions, stray ends,
> all become clear.
> That's what you want
> isn't it Goffman. Clear?

The answer is pressing for an affirmative, yet it isn't the right answer. It is too easy. Affirmations are temporary and temporising features. Donnell has the ability of engaging your attention so completely and so subtly that you forget where you are. In "The Skate", a father's death is mentioned in the opening paragraph, but soon one is caught up with the newly acquired friend and the party atmosphere so that when the narrator recalls his father at the end it comes as quite a shock.

There are touches of Proustian realities throughout though never tinged with the same regret. The kaleidoscope of shaken

memories presents novel pictures that we just have time to recognise before the next shudder of experience brings something else into myriad focus. "The Flowers" and "Clarities" are both examples of Donnell butterflying from idea to idea whereas "A Loaf of Bread on your Arm" is more conventional, recollecting Italian varieties of loaf-making in a Toronto bakery. But whether material is polarised or not his skills of improvisation are unaffected. It is scarcely surprising that jazz features so frequently in his urban iconographic scenery, for it renders possible infinite repetitions and variations of our humanity. "China Blues" may be "a song that Miles never got around to writing, and Oscar Peterson has not written yet". But the song exists in Donnell's mind for it is reality waiting to be realised, experience anticipating the experiencing, as we seek the fourth dimension.

It is clearly incontestable that David Donnell deserves to be recognised far beyond his Ontario boundaries and any student of Canadian culture cannot ignore the potent contribution that he is making. When he complains in "Borders" that

> "The Romans knew nothing about
> America, or Norway, for that matter.
> America wasn't even on their maps."

one feels that continued lack of curiosity must be corrected so every piece of publicity should be savoured.

Anthologies help aspiring writers stand together whereas by themselves they might topple and disappear. *The New Poets of Prince Edward Island* is no exception though the declaration to celebrate a decade of Ragweed publishing imposes restraints that might have been avoided given a less provincial approach. To parade poets in alphabetical order seems old-fashioned and presumes a neatness that is probably alien to the very spirit that usually prompts the psyche. Far more effective might have been a thematic arrangement for the nature of the island in every sense lies behind much of the production and could have provided more substantial contrasts. Today there is increased attention given to regionality, which is commendable, and also to environmental process. Whilst the human condition will always be the human condition, this kind of bias does not prevent universality. Maybe those contributors still extant wished it to be this way, but there is no indication in the text that they were consulted, or that the Prince Edward Island Writers Guild had any input.

There are numerous examples of grassroots activity and generally these poems have more immediate appeal and contextualization. Milton Acorn's "If you're Stronghearted" and "The Squall," all of Andrew Grimes Griffin and Elaine Harrison, Frank Ledwell's "Unsophistication," G.E. MacDonalds narrative of "Billie McKie," Laurie Murphy's "Cows and Unfinished Fences" and Gillian Robinson's intriguing saga "My Mother has a House to God" all qualify, with specific reference to place. However, other contributors too have good things to offer. For example, Susan Hughson examines natural things microscopically and Derek Martin has poems about the learning process. Indeed, everyone has a voice though I found John Smith's writing unpoetic. His strength lies in the philosophy rather than the format. "Granite Outcrops" was written for someone and the geological trigger was just that and no more.

Roy Kiyooka: 1926-1994

Eva-Marie Kröller

When I wrote *George Bowering: Bright Circles of Colour*, an account of the poetic and artistic avant-garde in 1960s and 1970s Canada, I did not know that the book would so soon turn into a collection of obituaries: Ann Munton, with whom I had many discussions about Canadian poetry, died before it was even finished; shortly after its appearance, Greg Curnoe was killed in a car accident, and now Roy Kiyooka too is dead, only a short while after his retirement as professor of Fine Arts at the University of British Columbia.

I first met Kiyooka when we had begun to puzzle over his *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine* in an Honours seminar and he agreed to meet with us in a Gastown studio one evening. We instantly understood why his students and friends in Vancouver, Emma Lake, Montreal, Halifax, Naramata, revered him as a mentor *par excellence*: I have rarely seen a teacher so attentive, patient, and loving with his students. There was no question that they did not feel free to ask, none that he would not have respectfully attempted to answer. I spent days on the beach that summer poring over the enigmatic images and poems that make up *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine* and the book of eighteenth-century engravings which he had taken apart to produce the collages. As I discovered later in his meditative slides taken throughout one afternoon on Kitsilano Beach, there could not have been a more appropriate place to study his patient and luminous work: "The whole sequence of 250 slides is about the comings and goings of us Humans. How we are beholden to the sea, sun, sand and sky."

But far from producing casual, unfinished work, as such serials might suggest, Kiyooka's creations—in painting, poetry, and sculpture—was, to use Bowering's words, always distinguished by great elegance, "a high finish, a final clarity of line, perfect rest." Clarity even inspires the often violent mono-type improvisations which Kiyooka contributed to Bowering's early volume of poetry, *The Man in Yellow Boots* where cheap paper and print reduce them to murky images. Again, I have a grateful memory of an afternoon spent over pear cider on Prior Street, looking at the precise originals which Kiyooka had lined up on the floor for me to see. Now, when I teach Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, I often bring along slides of these monotypes to remind both the students and me how offensive ethnic labelling can become: "... I'm sick of having my origins fingered," Kiyooka said in an interview, "it's as though an utterly 'Canadian' experience couldn't embrace either ocean and what lies on the far side of each." Nor was ethnicity the only label to which he refused to conform: he was a man of great expressive register, always ready to laugh away easy categorization, as I found out when I took my colleague Richard Cavell to meet him. I warned Richard that Kiyooka was given to long moments of

pensive murmuring not conducive to an efficient interview, only to stare in disbelief as the two initiated a crisply professional dialogue bristling with technical terminology. To this day I am not sure if they put on this performance for my benefit.

"Who knows if I'll be around when they come to chop my pear tree down," Kiyooka writes in one of the concluding pieces in *Pear Tree Pomes*. The pear tree is probably still standing, but sadly Roy Kiyooka no longer needs to ask "how long do you think it'll take me to learn to die, clear-eyed?" He died on 5 January, 1994.

Postcolonial

Recent reference books include books on language, bibliographies, anthologies, and guidebooks of various kinds. Among recent volumes are the 2nd ed. of Barry J. Blake's *Australian Aboriginal Languages: A General Introduction* (U Queensland P, n.p.), which comments on the spelling, grammar, word lists, and social function of surviving aboriginal languages (of the more than 250 that once existed, only a dozen now have greater than 500 speakers each, among them Pitjintjatjara, Aranda, Tiwi, and Wik); Graham McGregor and Mark Williams' *Dirty Silence* (Oxford, NZ$48.95), a series of essays on New Zealand language, literary constructions of oral culture, and the function of silence in NZ writing; and Martin Duwell and Laurie Hergenhan's *The ALS Guide to Australian Writers 1963-1990* (U Queensland P, n.p.), an indispensable bibliographic guide to contemporary Australian writing.

Anthologies include C.Y. Loh and I.K. Ong's *S.E. Asia Writes Back!* (Skoob, £5.99), containing a range of examples of prose and poetry featuring Shirley Geok-Lin Lim, Arthur Yap, K.S. Maniam, and Lee Kok Liang (their work demonstrating linguistic playfulness and cultural tensions, often constructed as an opposition between urban and rural sensibilities). *Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader*, ed. John Frow and Meaghan Morris (U Illinois P, $17.50) collects essays published primarily during the 1980s, on such subjects as the nature of representation, aesthetics and everyday life, Midnight Oil, the mini-series, and other examples of the uses of popular culture, and the effects of cultural policy; these are earnest essays, with useful bibliographies, and a densely solemn introduction. A useful tonic is Philip Neilsen's *The Sting in the Wattle* (U Queensland P, n.p.), a collection of Australian satiric verse—the prime subjects being men-and-women, travellers, the state, and other poets. Susheila Nasta's *Motherlands* (Rutgers UP, $12.95) collects studies of Black Women's writing, including good essays by Carolyn Cooper on the spirit possession trope and by Judie Newman on intertextuality. *Influence and Intertextuality in literary history* (U Wisconsin P, $19.95) is also the subject of the essayists (including Tilottama Rajan on intent and the reader's role) collected by Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein. Kay Ferres' collection, *The Time to Write: Australian Women Writers 1890-1930* (Penguin, A$17.95), usefully discourses on such subjects as the bush, journalism, dystopias, sexuality, and theosophy, and on women's engagement with them.

Anna Couani and Sneja Gunew's *Telling Ways: Australian Women's Experimental Writing* (Aust. Feminist Studies Publications, U Adelaide, n.p.) is interested in the construction of fragments, foregrounding language that deliberately and polemically resists (1) message and (2) cause-and-effect formats and ideologies—yet the book nevertheless seeks to have an effect on the reader. Gunew, with Kateryna Longley, also emphasizes the aesthetics of multiculturalism and the persistent filter of Judaeo-Christian traditions in Western culture, in the essays collected in *Striking*

Chords: Multicultural Literary Interpretations (Allen & Unwin, n.p.); the general emphasis falls on Greek-Australian and Italo-Australian culture, though Longley on "the 5th world" and Gunew on "reading for difference" probe more wide-ranging issues. Another anthology, R.F. Holt's *Neighbours* (U Queensland P, n.p.), arranges samples of 1980s Australian multicultural writing under categories, from "Rejections" to "Connections"; and Manfred Jurgensen's *Eagle and Emu: German-Australian Writing 1930-1990* (U Queensland P, n.p.) documents yet another ethnic dimension of this subject. Ray Willbanks' *Speaking Volumes* (Penguin, A$14.95) interviews 16 Australian writers on such topics as the past, England, sexuality, film, and America; Robert Drewe talks about remoteness, Thea Astley about gossip, Helen Garner about her admiration of Alice Munro, Tim Winton about Flannery O'Connor.

Yolande Grisé and Jeanne d'Arc Lortie's massive *Les Textes Poétiques du Canada Français 1606-1867, vol. 6: 1856-1858* contains 320 poems from various sources, with editorial corrections. René Dionne's *Anthologie de la Poésie franco-ontarienne* (Prise de Parole, n.p.) will surprise some readers, for it includes several writers whom convention has heretofore regarded as Québécois—William Chapman, Alfred Garneau, Simone Routier, Pierre Trottier, Cécile Cloutier—along with Patrice Desbiens, Evelyne Voldeng, and others; biographical notes accompany a selection of poems.

Other bibliographic guides include Gale's *Contemporary Authors*—vol. 140 deals with Gary Geddes and Robert Service; the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* vols. 117 and 125, ed. Bernth Lindfors and Reinhard Sander, constitute a major guide to 20th-century Caribbean and Black African writers and their works. Brenda F. Berrian and Aart Brock's *Bibliography of Women Writers from the Caribbean* (Three Continents, n.p.) is a photo typescript listing primary writings, for Spanish-, French-, English-, and Dutch-language writers. Charlotte Gilbert's *Bibliographic Directory of Amerindian Authors in Quebec* (Saint Luc: Research Centre for Native Literature and Arts in Quebec, n.p.) is a useful pamphlet. Jan Bassett's *The Oxford Illustrated Dictionary of Australian History* (Oxford, $72.50) is a goldmine of snippets—posters, stamps, photos—an alphabet of people, places, events, and cartoons.

J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. VanArsdel's *Victorian Periodicals and Victorian Society* (U Toronto P, $125.00) contains bibliographic essays on journals in the professions (law, science), the arts (music, theatre, the book trade), commerce and popular culture (comics, temperance journals, sport), workers' journals, and student journals—the whole designed to illuminate Victorian English society (Victorian being defined by the UK: one looks in vain for a sense of Empire or the colonial experience). David Gervais' *Literary Englands: Versions of "Englishness" in modern writing* (Cambridge, n.p.) extends Victorianism into the present, with comments on motifs of pastoral, exile, village, moral tradition, and nostalgia. Eamonn Hughes, ed., *Culture and Politics in Northern Ireland 1960-1990* (Open University P, n.p.) probes one variation in this paradigm, the "border country" of Ulster. Giving colonialism a wider definition, Carol Dougherty's *The Poetics of Colonization* (Oxford, $57.95) seems to me like a major text; while I cannot comment on the latter part of the book, which edits some ancient Greek texts, the early section is a necessary counter to much contemporary generalization about the modernity of colonial and imperial experience. Dougherty examines the roots of the 17th-century European "need" to occupy foreign lands—which relied on the convention of an "underutilized wilderness" and discursive strategies that would *justify* the expansion to America—by looking at the

6th century BC. When the Greeks attributed the colonial impulse to a divine cause, Dougherty argues, they authorized themselves to occupy the "spacious Eden" they located elsewhere; she then traces the Greeks to Sicily and the Black Sea, drawing on Hayden White's codes of emplotment, metaphor, argument, and ideology to demonstrate how textual strategies served political ends, and she relates these paradigms to such later border crossings as those of the Elizabethan and 18th-century captains and "explorers." C.C. Barfoot and Theo D'haen, in *Shades of Empire in Colonial and Post-Colonial Literatures* (Rodopi, US$27.95) focus more directly on the Raj, from Forster to Rushdie, and on cultural politics from Conrad and Carey to Bessie Head and the Caribbean motherlands; essays on Findley, Ondaatje, and Munro do not, however, much extend current comment. The essays in Robert L. Ross's *International Literature in English: Essays on the Major Writers* (Garland, $95.00) provide general introductions to 59 writers, organized according to how authors "decolonize" History, Patriarchy (Atwood, Laurence, Munro), Boundaries (Lowry), Self (Findley), and Art (Davies).

Volume III of Katherine Mansfield's *Collected Letters*, ed. Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott (Oxford $73.50), documents a hiatus in Mansfield's writing, during which she corresponded primarily with J.M. Murry and tried to regain her health. Volume XIII of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (U Toronto P, $85.00) catalogues the lives of people who died during the years 1901-1910; the first volume of the extended series, edited by Ramsay Cook, this continues the fine work of the earlier volumes. Figures to be found in this volume include such writers as Robertine Barry, J.G. Bourinot, R.M. Bucke (though this primarily historical entry does not include bibliographical reference to *Canadian Literature*'s articles on Bucke's literary connections), Arthur Buies, H.-R. Casgrain, Nicholas Davin, E.H. Dewart, W.H. Drummond, G.M. Grant, Moses Harvey, William Kirby, William McLennan, George Stewart, J.-P. Tardivel, W.H. Withrow, and Egerton Ryerson Young; other figures of note include Timothy Eaton, George M. Dawson, Henry Youle Hind, Joshua Slocum, and Adelaide Hunter Hoodless—their presence (and that of a number of native leaders and representatives of the new Asian-Canadian communities) indicating at once the changing character of Canadian society and the nineteenth century's predominant investment of social authority in business and industry.

Reference books of a familiar but in this context slightly more unusual kind include Nick Bantock's *Runners, Sliders, Bouncers, Climbers* (Hyperion/Fitzhenry & Whiteside, $17.95), which is a delightful pop-up book showing turtles, kangaroos, frogs, and others; along the way it explains how tendons work, what the top speed of a giraffe is, and how to slam-dunk a basketball.

Numerous critical works relating to the topics covered by these encyclopedic and biobibliographic works have also appeared. *The New Literatures in English* (Longman France, 100FF), by Carole and J-P. Durix, is an introductory book aimed at students, containing mini-surveys of postcolonial literary practice, with some specific cultural reference, and closer comment on one or two writers from several places (Canada is represented by Hodgins and Munro, with a paragraph or two of quotation each, followed by study questions and selective bibliographies). John McLaren's *New Pacific Literatures: Culture and Environment in the European Pacific* (Garland, $62.00) is a different kind of survey, involving the USA and the Philippines as well as Canada and the Australasian Commonwealth; it argues that the concept of the "New World" (as it manifests itself in literary production) is not best conceptualized as one half of a

binary dialectic. George Shaw in *1988 and All That* (U Queensland, n.p.) gathers "new views of Australia's past." And Robert H. MacDonald's *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1910* (U Toronto, $35.00) deals illuminatingly with the impact of imperialism on constructions of gender and place, and with one highly influential institutionalized version of these values.

Of somewhat less interest are Judith Dell Panny's *I Have What I Gave* (Daphne Brasell, n.p.), a rather mechanical, thematic-summary-driven account of Janet Frame's writings, and Judith Kegan Gardiner's *Rhys, Stead, Lessing, and the Politics of Empathy* (Indiana UP, $12.95), which, while instructive on Rhys's short fiction, and while its general argument merits thought—i.e., that these three writers constitute representative 20th century women, specifically in their relations with other women—is selective in its readings (ignoring, for example, Brydon's work on Stead). Oyekan Owomoyela's *A History of Twentieth-Century African Literatures* (U Nebraska P, $25.00) largely summarizes current approaches, though it does combine comments on English and French language literatures with those in Portuguese and African languages; beside it one should read Reingard Nethersole's *Emerging Literatures, vol. 1* (Peter Lang, n.p.), a collection of 15 essays, especially reading South Africa in the context of other Africas, and examining the legitimacy of conventional forms of literary history. The Nigerian critic Umelo Ojinmah descriptively traces the career of a Maori novelist in *Witi Ihimaera: A Changing Vision* (U Otago P, $15.95); Peter Quartermaine's *Thomas Keneally* (Routledge, $13.95) emphasizes the importance of this novelist's Australian origins; Livio Dobrez's *Parnassus Mad Ward* (U Queensland P, n.p.) examines the work of Michael Dransfield and the linguistics of the "new" Australian poetry of the 1970s; Cliff Hanna's *The Folly of Spring* (U Queensland P, n.p.) argues that Shaw Neilson is Australia's "most original" poet; Anthony J. Hassall's *Dancing on Hot Macadam* (Penguin, A$24.95) is a biocritical introduction to Peter Carey's fiction; Julian Croft's *The Life and Opinions of Tom Collins* (U Queensland P, n.p.) offers a critical account of Joseph Furphy's work, with one especially interesting feature being a "census" (or a character-by-character trace) of events and happenings in *Such Is Life*; Paul Buhle's *C.L.R. James: His Life and Work* (Allison & Busby, $9.95) accounts for the Marxist commitments in this influential Trinidad writer's work, and for its expression in his slave histories, his cricket reviews (the opposition being metaphor as well as imperial game), and his examination of the colonial relationship with Africa; Hazel Rowley's *Christina Stead: A Biography* (Wm. Heinemann, n.p.) is a substantial account of the effects of the writer's early life (her father's contempt for her "plainness" relates viscerally, it seems, with her novel *The Man Who Loved Children*); and Gareth Griffith's *John Romeril* (Rodopi, n.p.) is a carefully-illustrated and long overdue account of one of Australia's foremost playwrights, drawing on essays by various writers to reminisce about theatrical productions, to examine the effects of collaborative theatre, and to consider the social impact of Romeril's Asian settings and anti-war sentiments. Gordon Collier's *The Rocks and Sticks of Words: Style, Discourse and Narrative Structure in the Fiction of Patrick White* (Rodopi, US$99) will likely be read more for its detail than for its continuity; a very large book, it disputes the conventional dismissal of White's "mannered" prose, and examines minutely the functions of numerous stylistic paradigms: doubles, repetitions, modality, aspect, syllepsis, speech tags, and so on.

David Horton's *Recovering the Tracks: The Story of Australian Archeology*

(Aboriginal Studies P, n.p.) is hard to read for typographical reasons; while (through excerpts from Dampier, Cook, Philip, and the "classic" archeological writings after 1929) it carefully traces the shift from fragmentary knowledge of aboriginal culture and the geologic past to the specifics made possible by carbon dating, it less tells the "story" of this history than it relentlessly asserts its technology. I more greatly enjoyed reading Leonard Bell's *Colonial Constructs: European Images of Maori 1840-1914* (U Auckland, $69.95), a well-illustrated account of such painters as Angas, who "documented" the Maori by representing women as Amazons, men as warrior-foes, and the landscape as a Tennysonian dream of Shalott. Harvey McQueen's *The New Place: The Poetry of Settlement in New Zealand 1852-1914* (Victoria UP, n.p.) is the first major rethinking of early New Zealand poetry in some while; it retraces the route from alienation to optimism, but draws on a much wider range of texts than familiar anthologies do, from Golder and Fitzgerald to Mansfield and Baughan. Richard Helgerson's *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (U Chicago P, $27.50) also examines the relation between political order and the forms of art; comments on law, map-making, the staging of exclusion, travel writing, and apocalyptic expectations demonstrate convincingly the way conventions serve systems of political desire.

Sara Suleri's brilliant *The Rhetoric of English India* (U Chicago P, $10.95) has already been noticed in these pages, but warrants a more extended comment. Everywhere quotable, it proposes to examine the "radical inseparability" of "imperial and subaltern materials" in English India, noting that "English India represents a discursive field that includes both colonial and postcolonial narratives"—meaning that the political constructs of control and service are intertwined in the rhetoric that came to characterize representations of India. "What rhetoric," Suleri asks," is required to embody, and then to disembody, the communities of faithlessness that colonialism implies?" Burke's insistence on India's unreadability—the necessity of constructing it as the *sublime*—shows one canonical form of the embodiment of aesthetic and political power; the "feminine picturesque," which showed the Anglo-Indian woman sketching, provided another: as Suleri argues the case, the zenana (or *space observed*) came to constitute rhetorically the equivalent of the social hierarchy. Forster, Naipaul, and Rushdie suggest other models, and with *Kim*, Kipling "brilliant literalized the colonial moment" by representing it as an adolescent. What is necessary, Suleri argues—drawing on the idiom of migrancy and dislocation—is the breakdown of those schizophrenic binaries in critical discourse that perpetuate the division between ruler and ruled. The "Indian subcontinent is not merely a geographical space" on which colonialism has been enacted, therefore; it has also to be read as an imaginative construction, a tropological repository from which colonial and postcolonial imaginations "draw their most basic figures for the anxiety of empire." Other works relating to South Asia include a special issue of *Modern Fiction Studies* (39.1, Spring 1993), with articles on Ondaatje and Suleri, Feminism and Nationalism, Rushdie, Narayan, and the Sri Lanka insurgency. Ruston Bharuch's *Theatre and the World* (Routledge, n.p.) touches on India when, as part of its analysis of "performance and the politics of culture," it examines Western performances (e.g., the films of Peter Brook) of Indian tales. G.N. Devy's *In Another Tongue* (Peter Lang, n.p.) collects a series of serious essays not so much on Indian English texts as on the social factors that construct texts: multiculturalism for one (including comments

on its effect in Canada, assering that it raised the profiles of Mukherjee and Mistry beyond where they would be in India), and also language, translation, and nationalism. Jonathan White's *Recasting the World: Writing After Colonialism* (Johns Hopkins UP, $14.95) refers to Rushdie and travel writing, as well as to Melville, Morrison, Naipaul, Gordimer, Atwood, Munro, Gallant, and others; the basic premise is that the term "postcolonial" must be rejected because it signifies an end to colonialism (this is not the definition most widely in use outside the USA, one should point out), and that some texts have a transformative power. Indeed they do.

Finally, a series of books on the Caribbean adds further range to those already mentioned. J. Michael Dash's English translation of the essays of Edouard Glissant, *Discourse: Selected Essays* (UP of Virginia, $13.95), will bring them to a wider readership; largely dealing with Martinique and the paradoxes induced by such words as "spring" in the Caribbean, these essays also refer to Quebec writing—discussing Ferron's defensive appeal to ironic digression and Miron's "reversion" to "a kind of savagery" in his refusal to hear anything but his own commitment—in a way that clarifies the relativity of marginalized cultures. Jean d'Costa and Barbara Lalla's anthology, *Voices in Exile: Jamaican Texts of the 18th and 19th centuries* (U Alabama P, $24.50), is nothing short of revelatory; it samples the work of "slaves, masters, and sundry onlookers"—including the poetry of Francis Williams, the 18th-century black Latinist, and the diaries of Maria Nugent, wife of the colonial governor in 1801, despondent at her distance from what she thought of as culture—and reproduces some extraordinary examples of oral literature (graces, songs, Creole language). Moira Ferguson's account of *The Hart Sisters* (U Nebraska P, US$40.00) is an absorbing account of two early African Caribbean writers, evangelicals, and radicals, whose late 18th- and early 19th-century concern for the education of slaves and free blacks in Antigua led slowly to certain social reforms; the Methodist histories, conversion narratives, poems, and letters of Anne Hart Gilbert and Elizabeth Hart Thwaites are edited here. The Hart sisters also feature (along with Wollstonecraft, Austen, Rhys, and Kincaid) in Ferguson's *Colonialism and Gender...* (Columbia UP, US$29.50), an explicatory comment on the literary relation between women's roles and East Caribbean political discourse, largely based on the contrast between a metropolitan centre and the political periphery; Ferguson suggests that Wollstonecraft uses slavery as analogy in 1792, that the Hart sisters insisted on political and moral equality, that Austen was ambiguous (wanting gender relations at home to change, but assuming in the legitimacy of the British ruling class abroad), and that Rhys and Kincaid after 1966 "refuse obliteration." For all its reasonable tone, this book never quite takes account of the gap between the 1830s and the 1960s, nor is its deeply American attitude to the UK ever quite acknowledged. Joyce Jonas's *Anancy in the Great House: Ways of Reading West Indian Fiction* (Greenwood, $45.00), appositely, discusses the importance of the "perceptual frame" that readers bring to texts—declaring the need for a marriage between the phallic I and the womblike eye, and celebrating *play* in words and works—all with the intent of "decoding the colonized landscape." Patrick Taylor's lucid *The Narrative of Liberation: Perspectives on Afro-Caribbean literature, Pop Culture, and Politics* (Cornell, $34.95) demonstrates the way George Lamming's spatial metaphors encode social contradictions in Barbados and in the West Indies at large; it is also extremely good on Frantz Fanon and his influence, distinguishing his arguments concerning oral and written traditions—

and their relation with "national culture" (a subject Taylor approves)—from liberating and mythical narratives, troped forms that respectively issue a challenge to transform the state through "emancipating action" and limit the possibility of transformation by their appeal to a conventionalizing ideology. J. Edward Chamberlain's *Come Back to Me My Language: Poetry and the West Indies* (U Illinois P, $15.95) also recounts and reconstructs social history, in this instance by tracing the connection between language inventiveness in the contemporary Caribbean and the demands of an imposed order in a slave past; repeatedly concerned with the juxtaposition of beauty and brutality, this is an emotionally engaged survey of modern poetry that, despite all it uncovers about social cruelty in the past, still places its faith in language and the future.

W.N.

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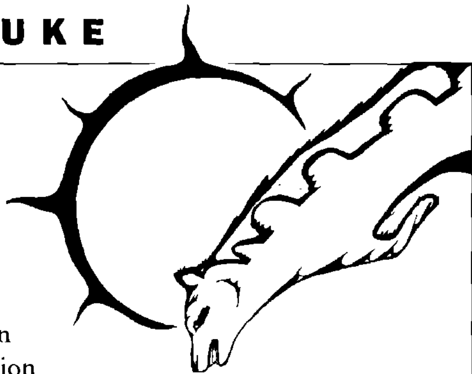

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New Americanists

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Last Page

Several absorbing recent books probe the intersections between geographical and broader cultural studies, emphasizing the constructedness of knowledge and the impact of expectation on interpretation. Mark Monmonier's *How to Lie with Maps* (U Chicago P, $12.95) demonstrates the effects, for example, of forms of displacement, projection, simplification, and enhancement on the representation of data. Statistics, too, come in for deconstruction. Clearly, cartographers can cultivate reactions by what they emphasize and what they minimize—numbers can rule consequentiality, the inconsequential can be made to seem monstrous. Monmonier himself writes with wit and common sense: a rare combination in an age more motivated by pretension and preoccupied with ostensible correctness.

The deconstruction of the map is also the subject of one of the essays in *Writing Worlds: discourse, text & metaphor in the representation of landscape* (Routledge, $23.95), a stimulating collection edited by T.J. Barnes and J.S. Duncan; other essays in this book examine physical and biological metaphors, the troping of Niagara Falls (also a subject raised in Rob Shields' *Place on the Margin: Alternative geographies of modernity*, Routledge, $22.50, as is the conceptualization of the Canadian north), and Barthes and the ideology of bliss. *The Changing Social Geography of Canadian Cities*, ed. L.S. Bourne and D.F. Ley (McGill-Queen's, $29.95), by contrast, is aimed at a more specialized audience, primarily of sociologists; ranging across topics from public health, gender, and class to social mobility, ethnocultural patterns, and welfare policies, the essays here draw weightily on statistical evidence, all with the general purpose, it seems, of justifying forms of social planning. It is a book to be read with interest, and with one eye open to look for Monmonier's maps.

Distinguishing between accomplishments is one of the tasks literary criticism has also recurrently set itself to, even if only at the level of personal preference. But it does sometimes seem as if physical bigness in a book is deemed a necessary sign of quality—look at Vikram Seth's much lauded and much hyped *A Suitable Boy* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, $34.95)—though perhaps it's a greater sign of a commuter-driven desire for a book that will endure journeying (if not time) and for an economic bargain in terms of page-count. Personally, I find Seth's novel a dreary, unstylish, overwritten, Harlequinesque family saga—but that's, of course, only my opinion. It's harder to say why other books don't appeal—Elizabeth Knox's *Treasure* (Victoria UP, n.p.), for one—perhaps style is again the problem, though I expect it has something more to do with subject. Inevitably some subjects appeal to one reader more than they do to another, and sometimes there's very little an author can do about that. Barbara Anderson is a very good writer, but *Portrait of the Artist's Wife* (Victoria UP, NZ$24.95), all scenes of domestic life, isn't a patch (to my mind) on her earlier stories. Nor does Albert Wendt's *Black Rainbow* (Penguin, NZ$24.95) insist on my attention the way some of his other work has done. It's not for lack of trying; while this book addresses a much more deliberately middleclass New Zealand household than other stories have done, it certainly doesn't rest easily in realism. It tries out allegory (disappearances turn into losses of history); it tries out satire (cultural erasure runs into the hard-edged thriller); it draws weightily on mythology; it ends up "absurd," with readers invited to improvise whatever ending (or "beginning") they prefer. Some, alas, will resist the temptation. Ben Okri's *Songs of Enchantment* (Cape, £14.99) reads unfortunately like a second

novel rushed too soon into print by editors keen to capitalize on the success of a first one. Dorothy Hewett's *The Toucher* (McPhee Gribble, A$29.95) is another work by a good writer that ends up not touching the sympathy the way it surely intends. This book tells of an aging woman writer, one now pressured by family, heart, and real estate, who sets out to recall the past, but then we hear of her sexual liaison with the grandson of her old flame (proving she's still a rebel) and of domestic violence. Is this love or is it perversion, she asks? Who is responsible for life? Why does life always end unhappily? Meanwhile she's writing away. We ought, I think, actually to care what the answers to these undoubtedly serious question are.

To turn to Patricia Grace's *Cousins* (Penguin, NZ$24.95) is to discover a very stylish account of the interconnected lives of three quite different and engaging women characters: one "wanting nothing and going nowhere," one who "opened the door and stepped in," and one who knows that dreams can be lost but that love persists. It's an emblematic story, too, of course, about cultural interdependence among other things; but the way it uses the fragment as a record of immediate sensory experiences involves readers rather than estranges them. In *The Shark that Ate the Sun* (Penguin, NZ$24.95)—by John Puhiatau Pule, a writer from the island of Niue—style and substance again come together: in an effective moral parable, with songs interrupting the present narrative, and traditional tales intervening in the life of an island boy growing up in New Zealand. Colonialism in the South Pacific is the larger theme: the animal obscenity of colonialism opposing the human love of the Pacific cultures—sexuality being an ambiguous metaphor. The boy, however, learns his way past the racism of the education system and the training in self-loathing that has led him only to jail, and he learns his way finally back to the ocean, finding there again the voice that he thought he had permanently lost. And David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* (Knopf, $26.50) is one of the more arresting reading experiences provided by the works here under review; in this book, a frontier settlement is upset when a young man of indeterminate origin stumbles out of the bush saying "Don't shoot, I am a British object!" The novel then proceeds to slice through different time periods, revealing ways in which the overturning of cultural expectations is constituted both as an opportunity and as a threat. "For every place there is the official and accredited view," writes Owen Marshall, in one of the 23 stylish stories collected in *Tomorrow We Save the Orphans* (John McIndoe, NZ$24.95); "and for every place there is a reverse of which only intimacy allows knowledge."

A number of Australian and New Zealand writers have recently been reissued in Penguin paperbacks, giving readers a chance to catch up on a range of subjects and styles. Jessica Anderson is a writer repeatedly concerned with marriage, sexual indeterminacy, and the ambiguity of safety, as in *Taking Shelter* (A$12.95), *The Last Man's Head*, and *An Ordinary Lunacy*. Elizabeth Jolley also writes about sexual conventions and other ambiguities, as in *The Georges' Wife* (A$24.95) Stevan Eldred-Grigg's new novel, *The Shining City* (NZ$24.95) traces the lives of two boys growing up in the 1960s, making different sexual choices but both marked by the culture of narcissism. The end of childhood is also the subject of Owen Marshall's evocative title story in *The Ace of Diamonds Gang* (John McIndoe, NZ$19.95), Barbara Hanrahan's *Where the Queens All Strayed* (U Queensland P, n.p.), and (though the focus could as well be said to fall on Catholicism and class) Thomas Keneally's *By the Line* (U Queensland P, n.p.), a

reprint of a 1965 novel called *The Fear.*

Still other fictions retrieved childhood or the future (or sometimes both) from the vantage point of middle age. Russell Haley's stylishly witty *Beside Myself* (Penguin, NZ$19.95) uses an actor-audience metaphor (life seen as a B-grade movie) to examine the chameleon identity permitted by speech and the consequences of a preoccupation with self. Rachel McAlpine's *Farewell Speech* (Penguin, NZ$24.95) is a realist novel about the recovery of information concerning the suffragettes. Tariq Ali's *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* (Verson, $14.95) is a historical fiction by a Pakistani writer, focussing on the fall of Granada, the conflict between the Moors and the Christians, and the relevance of European tensions to the idea of the conquest of the Indians of Latin America. André Brink's *An Act of Terror* (Minerva, £7.99) is a violent South African family chronicle. In Peter Carey's *The Tax Inspector* (U Queensland P, n.p.), an ordinary audit turns into a history of family abuse and the cycles of history. Tim Winton's *Scission* (McPhee Gribble/Penguin, A$14.95) also tells of violence in families and the ordinariness of abrupt change, in a series of 'short-cut' stories reminiscent of Raymond Carver, whereas Winton's *Minimum of Two* (McPhee Gribble, A$14.95) tells of love, the birth of a child, and faith in the future.

Mudrooroo's *The Kwinkan* (Angus & Robertson, A$14.95)—the title reference is to the spirit stick of nature, bawdily associated here with human anatomy—satirizes legalistic enquiries, colonial island politics, urban developers, and institutional (primarily university) affairs, all with the intent of instructing readers in the *real* facts of life. Kim Scott's *True Country* (Fremantle Arts Centre, A$16.95), which effectively handles dialogue and voice, tells a more conventional (perhaps autobiographically based) narrative about a part-aboriginal teacher who, undergoing an exile's return, finally finds a place to belong. For the part-blood aborigine at the centre of Sam Watson's *The Kadaitcha Sung* (Penguin, A$16.95), by contrast, initiation as a sorcerer leads primarily to a desire to be revenged on white society. Watson's literary skill shows in his command of a range of idioms, from formal diction to educated "standard" to earthy vernacular, each used for a cultural effect; Albert Wendt's skill in *Ola* (Penguin, NZ$34.95)—the title figure is identified with Life itself—lies in the way he links two cultural mindsets (traditional Samoan and contemporary Western). In *Ola*, a writer is given fragments of a real life: the challenge is to select and arrange them—it's a familiar metaphor about creativity, but it's also, in its way, a map of contemporary culture, of the borderlands of accommodation, and of the divided (and dividing) attractions of modernity and the past.

W.N.

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