

Book Reviews

***A.M. Klein: Short Stories.* Edited by M.W. Steinberg. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983. Pp. xxv, 338. \$35.00. Paper, \$15.95.**

***The Lost and Found Stories of Morley Callaghan.* Lester & Orpen Dennys/Exile Editions, 1985. Pp. 252. \$16.95.**

To read these two volumes of stories, today, by Callaghan and by Klein, is a bit like encountering a familiar compound ghost. We think: Klein, oh yes, the McGill Movement, the 'twenties; and Callaghan, yes, Mid-west realism, Hemingway and so on. And then we recognize, with a start, that Callaghan is still among us, still writing; and we acknowledge, a bit pretentiously, again, how brief is the history of modern Canadian fiction.

I hadn't meant this review to be either pretentious or reminiscent, but both seem inevitable. Once, in the mid-fifties, I encountered Morley Callaghan and Loretto shopping in Eaton's, and thought: Here is a bit of Can. Lit. Hist. on the hoof, as it were; I wonder if I dare speak to them? Of course I didn't. And I also remember from a few years before that, as an undergrad at the University of Western Ontario—it must have been about 1951—attending a poetry reading by Abraham Klein. Both were events for me; that Canadian writing was present and topical and alive, was something they represented, something I could take for granted. I can't yet get used to the attitude of my students today, who approach such writers the same way they would approach an essay on, say, Erasmus, as representing the mind-set of this Renaissance. But perhaps there is something to be said for their critical objectivity.

I was one of those lucky students who went to school to Carl Klink, which explains my presence at the Klein reading. And it must have been a successful one: I still see his image clearly, still hear his voice reading "Political Meeting: for Camillien Houde." He was gray, wearing a gray striped business suit and glasses, and quiet-voiced, but flexible, the humour showing through. We students had no notion, of course, of his impending illness. Had he? It seems odd to think of him now, and those long years of silence before his death. I find myself reading him backwards, for signs. How far was his "withdrawal" self-willed, as M.W. Steinberg's Introduction seems to suggest, rather than the "increasing signs of mental illness" attributed to the years 1952-54 in the Chronologi-

cal Table? Apparently there was an attempted suicide in 1954, but that is not necessarily a sign of insanity.

The signs do not show in the writing, in this new volume, though Steinberg draws attention to the "darkening" vision—the stories are arranged chronologically. Of course the tone at 40 is not likely to be the same as the tone at 20, especially when depression, world war and the holocaust intervene. But other writings, including the published poetry, do not bear out the "darkening" thesis. *Hath Not a Jew* (1940) and *The Hitleriad* (1944) reveal the dark and the militant Klein, and of course they are both wartime books. *The Rocking Chair* (1948) and *The Second Stroll* (1951) are later Klein, they are Klein at his brilliant best, and they are his most positive work. The darkening must therefore have come rather abruptly in those years of public-speaking to international Zionist audiences between 1952 and 1954, when the poems stopped.

This volume of Klein's short fiction is the second in what is to be the Collected Klein, under the editorship of M. W. Steinberg and an editorial board. The prose non-fiction was published in 1982 as *Beyond Sambation*. The editors claimed that, though a substantial volume, it comprised only a small part of Klein's journalistic writings—will there then be more, or will this be a Silently Selected Klein? A third volume is to be made up of the literary criticism and reviews, and another of unpublished fiction, and these will be awaited with interest. We have not yet been told, as far as I know, how the poetry is to be done, or *The Second Scroll* or the unpublished longer fiction.

Klein died in 1972. Almost immediately Kleiniana became hot items. Because of his Zionist activities of the 'thirties and 'forties, the State of Israel itself was interested, and some harmless Can. Lit. profs were astonished to hear of veiled threats on official letterhead warning against keeping any Klein flotsam that might have come their way. And then a few years ago there was another stir when the papers finally were offered on the archival market with strong hints that they might go elsewhere if the Canadian universities and the National Library could not raise the kind of money that would keep them in Canada. Fortunately, they did stay here, and the cataloguing and editing that have been going on since then are valuable contributions to Canadian letters.

Beyond Sambation recorded both Klein's broadly international reading and his Zionist commitment. The present volume reinforces both those strands. Because almost all of these pieces were published in Jewish magazines such as *The Young Judaeon* and *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle* they are often directly instructive, hortatory, exemplary, satiric, in the Zionist cause. And as *The Young Judaeon* addressed a young readership, many of the stories are of the sabbath-school or the nursery-tale variety. "The Lost Twins", for instance, has its similarities to "Hansel and Gretel", even to the wicked one being pushed into the oven.

The editors acknowledge that not all of the pieces are properly short stories; the opening "Epistle Theological" is a satire in the form of a letter of advice to a young man seeking a career that will bring him comfort and

respect, and suggests that the rabbinate, properly handled, might do—clearly the satire cuts two ways. Others, e.g. “Master of the Horn”, “By the Profit of a Beard” and “The Bald-Headed Monarch” seem to be communal folk-lore. Others are literary adaptations, but like “The Parliament of Fowles” they are apt to be didactic in an un-Chaucerian way. There are oriental tales—“Too Many Princes” and “The Tale of the Marvelous Parrot”—and there are also pieces that are recognizable short stories. All of them are, at least, short fiction, whether tales, colloquies, satires, exempla, so one doesn’t finally quarrel with the selection but only with the title: this is Klein’s short fiction, not his short stories.

With Callaghan there is no problem of definition: his are short stories, very much of their time and place. Like Klein, Callaghan was a new voice shaping Canadian literature in the late ’twenties. Both were moved by international developments, but in very different directions. Callaghan followed the Anderson-Hemingway line of mid-West bald psycho-realism; Klein was Joycean in fiction but drew on numerous traditions in verse, adapting even the sonnet to satire. That wealth of sources enriches the short fictions as it did Klein’s verse; “The Meed of the Minnesinger” is close to Klein’s “Design for a Medieval Tapestry”. Callaghan, on the other hand, is in a tradition that eschews pretension in language; it seeks its effects by omission, by calculated understatement, by the terse, the journalistic, and the pose of the street-wise observer.

A further difference in the present volumes of course is that the Klein stories were published decades ago, the Callaghan stories only now are seeing the light. In his Introduction, Barry Callaghan provides a gentle vignette about coaxing his father into rummaging these fugitive pieces out of the attic. He does not offer explanations about why they were never published—are they rejects? Experiments? Pieces Morley Callaghan himself did not think successful at the time? It is a very different situation where the author himself is offering early work for sale. This is a kind of housecleaning, and we are fortunate that father and son are co-operating in this venture; one is reminded of the anecdote of F.P. Grove and his son weighing out old manuscripts at Simcoe—part of the process of putting one’s literary house in order in one’s lifetime rather than risk having it botched later on.

The value in the Callaghan volume I should think is in seeing some familiar material as it was being worked up in various guises—material we are familiar with from *Strange Fugitive*, for example, and *Luke Baldwin’s Vow*. Perhaps we can also see, in this concentration, the weakness not only of Callaghan’s writing but of the whole movement. There is good insight, there is the deft touch, there is the very human sense of guilt at the moment missed, the failure to express a needed sympathy. In its day, the apparently simple, lucid prose was exciting. Callaghan was right to protest that it really was not like Hemingway; Callaghan is much more openly the moralist, even as Klein is. Callaghan is also sentimental. And whereas Hemingway’s dialogue at its best, e.g. in *A Farewell to Arms*, before it began to parody itself, is altogether credible, Callaghan’s often is not; it’s

stilted, unreal. Too much information is served up in those inevitable opening sentences, and with too few, inevitable adjectives, so the style soon cloys:

THE LANGLEYS, A HIGHLY RESPECTED, WELL-OFF FAMILY, lived in a big red brick house on the outskirts of the prairie town. Old Mr. Langley had been the bank manager until he suffered the stroke that left him crippled. Living with him was his housekeeper, a pretty young woman named Rita, a stranger in town from the east, who was working her way to the west coast, and the Langley children, Pauline, the town librarian, and her brother, twenty-two-year-old Steve.

It's economical, compact, efficient, and old-fashioned without being attractive. How differently an Alice Munro story would begin: how much would be gained by indirection; how much more of the interior of the characters we would know. This is an unfair comparison, and in fact some of these stories are very effective, in the tradition of "All the Days of Her Life," for instance. If it is true that Klein wears better, the fault may not be entirely Callaghan's; it may be in the narrow and unlovely world he represents. Maybe Klein's erudition and archaisms give a false exoticism, where Callaghan's pseudo-naiveté makes all his characters seem shallow. Callaghan cuts himself off from just those elements that give Klein his power—oddly, since both are steeped in their respective religions and both often use religious materials ironically, good-humouredly. It's just that Callaghan's more familiar world somehow seems less real.

Callaghan has one edge though. The portrait of "Dora" on the cover of the Klein stories is curiously inappropriate: Klein does not write about women, except marginally and stereotypically as devoted or shrewish wives, or shrewish and loquacious landladies. Callaghan's women are often superficial, but he can elicit sympathy for them, and sometimes they have genuine strength.

Queen's University

D.O. Spettique

***The Paris-Napoli Express.* By Janice Kulyk Keefer. Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1986. Pp. 127. Paper, \$12.95.**

The Paris-Napoli Express contains some interesting experiments in fictionalizing a political point of view. A story about abortion, for example, presents the "pro-life" position in the character of an extra-ordinarily beautiful and privileged woman with three wonderful daughters of her own and a pair of friends who grace the pages of *Catholic Life* with the twenty abused children they have adopted from around the world. "Would you believe the things that can be done to help people, if only we'd give ourselves up to doing them?" says the symbolically-named Bridie. "God, but I've seen my wife weep," Bridie's husband tells the symbolically-

named Eve later in the car as he explains how upset his wife is by the existence of legalized abortion. That abortion is not society's most heinous crime does not emerge until midway through the story, when it becomes clear that Kulyk Keefer's point is both political and personal.

On the political level, the privileged emerge as unfit to legislate the unprivileged: a story Bridie tells of the brutal rejection of one of the orphans by her "natural" mother is still lingering in the air when we learn from Bridie's husband her abhorrence of abortion. The fact that unwanted children often suffer untold torments is a point worth making as often as is necessary. The story is perhaps less successful as Kulyk Keefer turns to the personal, a shift that marks her experiment with form. For it is only at the mid-point in the story that we are given the point of view of the deliberately reticent heroine. Perhaps by this point it is too late to ask for our unquestioning sympathy for this woman. Her story seems the too-familiar tale of the prairie preacher's wife who has found her own freedom only after living through the growing years of her sons and then abandoning her repressive wifely existence. If we are meant to see the abusing mother of Bridie's story as merely the extreme end of a continuum that begins with the self-sacrificing Eve, the conjunction makes me vaguely uncomfortable.

"In a Dream," however, is a chilling successful merging of the political and the personal. As a pregnant woman is half-awakened by the sounds of her daughter in the next bedroom, she sinks back into the nightmare reality of the world's political prisoners. And we are forced into this world with her: equally pregnant, equally terrified, equally vulnerable, we must follow her as she is led out of the safety of a Canadian home on a cul de sac — so much less traffic to threaten the children — into the world of the irrational will to power and violence that dominates the society of so many nations. With this woman we sit, naked and uncomprehending, in a cell that threatens, above all, her/our unborn child. And when that life is sacrificed, we pray, with her, that the child left safely behind in consciousness will not be noticed by the nightmare world that has taken us beyond what we can stand to know. But, of course, the child is noticed. (One can understand if Kulyk Keefer was reluctant to end the book with this story. It is a chance she should have taken. One *cannot* read on, and, consequently, the innocuous final story, "Mrs. Putnam at the Planetarium," is lost).

These stories are really pastel mood pieces. Action is limited, muted by forces stronger than personality. Jerry is, for one reason or another, drunk throughout most of "The Paris-Napoli Express," and his physical inability to move cleanly is accentuated by his limited ability to understand the Italian spoken by his fellow passengers: the story is filled with images of stultification — Sheba's astigmatism, Jerry's lisp "corrected into a slur," a grotesque child who turns out to be a dwarf, a pair of teenagers who are indistinguishable ("Were they brother and sister or just look-alikes, or was he seeing double?"). Sunny of "Windy Cove" cannot

move either. Trapped by poverty that she, an unemployed and unemployable woman is particularly helpless to redress, she is, like the wind chimes given to her by her mother, gradually being smashed by the Nova Scotia wind — the relationship between girl and ornament is made specific when each is termed a piece of china. And, of course, the unforgettable pregnant woman of “In a Dream” who is trapped not only by her vulnerable body and the fact of a prison door but also by the way that reality and dream merge and then change places: while the story begins with her fighting off the power of the nightmare, it ends with her awakening to the call of her child “in her dream,” with her picking up the child “in her dream.”

By using the term mood piece, I do not mean to suggest that we do not know where we are. Kulyk Keefer’s sense of place is magnificent. Whether, like Jerry, we are trapped on the wrong train by the actions of a jealous friend, or, like Sunny, in a Maritime fishing village by the futile promises of a helpless husband, or, like Laurie of “Mrs. Mucharski & the Princess,” by the illogical frustration of new motherhood, her care to portray every detail of place is one of the great pleasures of her stories.

Kulyk Keefer has won the CBC short story contest two years in a row. *The Paris-Naopli Express* is her first book of fiction — *White of the Lesser Angels*, a book of poems, was also published in 1986 — and these quiet tales of (mostly) small betrayals make an interesting contribution to a genre that is flourishing in Canada right now. I thoroughly enjoyed all nine of these stories, even when they irritated me. (I wish she would not urge Similac on the unsuspecting female public of North America!) She has the poet’s love of language and her imagination is completely engaging.

Dalhousie University

Laura Groening

***Road to the Stilt House.* By David Adams Richards. Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1985. Pp.171. \$27.95. Paper, \$14.95.**

Road to the Stilt House is a darkly comic novel — a “sad funny” book, to quote an oxymoron from David Adams Richards’s previous work, *Lives of Short Duration*. One doesn’t know whether to laugh or cry at the impoverished life that it chronicles. The wonderfully complex tone of this novel, as it rides along the knife edge that separates pathos from bathos, will draw blood from many a sympathetic reader.

Certainly, no one these days is writing more challengingly about the dispossessed in our society than is Richards. His poor challenge us because they are not the lovable, socialist-approved poor — who are so necessary to our good and progressive intentions; nor are they the literary poor — who have been conventionalized so they can be interpreted or accorded meaning, and thereby mastered or evaded. The characters who

populate Richard's violent landscape are inexplicably themselves; there is often simply no accounting for their brutish or tender behaviour.

Road to the Stilt House is short, concentrates on relatively few characters, and affects a simple, laconic style. As a result, it is more accessible and enjoys a greater narrative drive than most of Richards's densely textured writing.

Arnold, from whose point of view events are registered, has just returned to live at home, having lost his job taking tickets in the town's theatre. Home is a stinkingly dirty wooden house, raised on stilts, along a road that cuts north-south across the back end of New Brunswick. The insufferably hot, depressingly cold, and claustrophobically cramping house is home to five people: Arnold, Arnold's mother, Mabel (just back from a third operation on her gut); young brother, Randy (just returned from a foster home); and Mabel's new live-in man, Harry (just arrived with his unspeakably vicious mother, Sadie). The occupants of the stilt house live on welfare, in the grip of a deadly inertia. But stasis, in their case, may be preferable to movement, for event and action serve inevitably to worsen their lives and set them at one another's throats.

Although dismissed by some characters as simple-minded and disposed towards trouble, Arnold is actually presented (and presents himself when the narrative slips into the first person) as reasonably sane in his judgments, appropriately modest in his expectations, and willing to put decent effort into realizing a satisfactory level of good intentions. He wants nothing more than to marry his girlfriend and get a job in the federal prison that is being built down the road.

The prison, so central to the region's future and so representative of its present condition, is mentioned frequently. If Arnold ends up in prison, we come to understand, whether he enters as guard or as prisoner will depend as much on the bad luck of the poor as it does on his practice of the virtues of "courage," "determination," and sense of "responsibility" that are urged upon him by priest and social worker. Without giving away any more of the plot, one can reveal that life slowly grinds Arnold down. Crushed by events, as well as by the fact that he is a skinny 5'2" and has no hair on his chest ("A man without hair on his chest or belly is a lonely thing, his own worst enemy."), Arnold grows increasingly paranoid and nihilistic, eventually becoming an agent of violence.

Richard's spare, terse, yet rhythmical writing conveys a stylistic equivalent of Arnold's consciousness. The minimal, declarative structures work the way his mind works. Arnold has a good vocabulary and some good ideas, but he has difficulty with the consistency of his connections, the concentration he is able to bring to sustaining an action or analysis ("... his life was filled with ideas that didn't come together"). Nonetheless, Richards also orchestrates the discontinuities of the short stylistic elements so as to surprise us with a consciousness that is engaging in its ironic complexity, capable of an imagist's poetic grasp of the diminished

landscape, and possessed of a bleak humour so understated as to be almost subliminal.

All of which makes us care about Arnold and wonder whether lives such as his can be solved or redeemed. For as much as Arnold's life is determined by public and personal forces that might lend themselves to an effective utilitarian overhaul (a job and psychological counselling would help), his life is also determined by its participation in a human way of being that perversely subverts reason and its social intentions: "There is something that Juliet [the social worker] doesn't know," Arnold confides in us. "People cut each other open just for spite and you can't apply any words to it. The more you apply words, the more there is misunderstanding."

Richards strikes a hard bargain with the comfortable reader: there are no simple motives for destructive behaviour, no reductive attitudes towards the dispossessed, and no easy social solutions or aesthetic compensations. Hard as it is, it is a fair and honest bargain. *Road to the Still House* is a brilliant achievement, a kind of black humour with heart that is guaranteed to tickle your sad bone.

Carleton University

Larry McDonald

Frank H. Underhill: Intellectual Provocateur: By R. Douglas Francis. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986, Pp 219. \$27.50.

Douglas Francis has written an excellent and sympathetic intellectual biography of Frank Underhill. He traces Underhill's career from his origins in rural Grit and Presbyterian Ontario through his university education at Toronto and Oxford to his professorship in Canadian history, first at Saskatchewan, then at Toronto. He also deals with Underhill's involvement in the League for Social Reconstruction, his role as political critic in *The Canadian Forum*, his presence in the CCF and Liberal parties, and his position as intellectual provocateur in the thirties and forties.

In those decades Underhill was the gadfly of Canadian academe. He was everything that the establishment in Toronto disliked. As a result he was in constant trouble with the president and board of governors at the University of Toronto and with the politicians at Queen's Park over issues which though they may now seem purely quaint, such as "hurling insults at the British Empire," in fact posed fundamental questions of academic freedom.

Francis clearly outlines the background in the Ontario legislature where many politicians believed that professors were hired to teach the young the official pieties rather than encouraging them to criticize the

status quo. They also saw no reason why they should not intervene in the operations of the university if they wished.

What he does not make clear is the historical context within the university world in which the President, Canon H.J. Cody (inevitably Canon Toady to the students), operated. Anglophone universities such as Toronto had only recently gained control of their own operations from the province thereby ending direct political patronage in appointments. The board of governors could not appoint or dismiss a professor unless there was a recommendation from the president. In other words the president would be the guarantor of academic freedom. However, the presidents of the University of Toronto before the Second World War thought there was a trade-off in the area of academic freedom. Professors should be free to discuss their subject without any interference or censorship in the classroom, but they should not be free to participate in political debate outside the university. This, it was thought, would derogate from their role as disinterested searchers after truth. It would also provoke the politicians who might take back the autonomy granted to the university, and it might undermine private fund-raising which in turn would affect all the other professors at the institution. The proper analogy was thought to be with the judiciary or the higher civil service. Nor was this simply the view of the presidents of the time, but it was shared by the majority of the faculty including some of the most distinguished such as Harold Innis.

Underhill rejected this view. He believed in the critical university which would subject everything including the functioning of society and of the university to the test of reason. He regarded the university as a collective Socrates. He thought professors should be free to speak their minds in public. He considered that a freedom which was so fragile that it could not be used was no freedom at all. Today so complete has been the victory of Underhill's views, at least in official oratory, that it is hard to remember that the other view once prevailed. However, a quick glance at the files of the CAUT would indicate that in practice the views of Canon Cody are not without current support although expressed in different terms.

However, the events at the University of Toronto made Underhill seem much more radical than he really was. He remained, as Arthur Lower remarked, the clear Grit disciple of George Brown, with all the strengths and weaknesses of that position — a distrust of authority and power, a feeling for ordinary Canadians outside the golden triangle, a sense of moral outrage about the use of power, and a commitment to free speech and liberal constitutionalism. This led him in the thirties to the League for Social Reconstruction and to the CCF.

However, he was never very happy about collective approaches or bureaucratic solutions. More and more he came to believe that the CCF suffered from these sins, and after World War II he moved back toward liberalism. He had similar concerns about the collective aspirations of Quebec.

In an essay in "A Place of Liberty" he expressed his fear that egalitarian democracy led by the new plutocracy in North America might produce

collective mediocrity in the universities. "We need," he wrote, "to recover the Jeffersonian concept . . . of democracy as a society capable of picking out its best people and relying upon them to take the lead in fostering the good of the whole." He believed in a meritocracy but one which justified its position by service to the community and which allied with government scientists, broadcasters, and artists in this enterprise. How, he wondered in this essay, could these various groups maintain independence in an era of ever-increasing governmental subsidy and intervention.

He remained throughout his life a gad fly — a man with a mischievous sense of humour. I remember meeting him shortly after he was offered an honorary degree at Toronto. He was, he said, honoured, touched — and amused. It remains a pity that he never wrote an extended opus about liberalism and its practitioners in Canada. Nevertheless by his superb teaching and by his polemical writing, he affected an entire generation of Canadian intellectuals.

Ottawa

Donald C. Savage

***Varieties of Exile: The Canadian Experience.* By Hallvard Dahlie. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986. Pp. x, 216. \$22.50.**

Varieties of Exile has a potentially interesting topic. Much writing from or about new countries that were recently part of European empires deals with a sense of displacement: cultural, climatic, geographic, and linguistic.

Canadian writing, from the earliest travellers' accounts and letters, is rich in its evocation of otherness. Hallvard Dahlie deals with a wide range of writers from the old world who record this sense of difference, and also discusses a group of Canadian writers who left the new world to live and write in the old. This, too, is not a uniquely Canadian experience. Many of the best-known writers from the English-speaking Commonwealth have split their lives between Europe and their provincial, colonial, or simply remote places of birth. A new phenomenon in the last quarter of the twentieth century is the permanent — or at least lasting — residence in North-American cities, including Toronto, of English-speaking writers from the Third World.

A topic such as Dahlie's not only deals with a common phenomenon in much colonial and post-colonial writing in English but could also lead into a debate on the modern writer as exile in any twentieth-century milieu. And here the company is distinguished. Terry Eagleton's *Exiles and Emigres: Studies in Modern Literature*, first published in 1970, remains incisive and provocative. Andrew Gurr's *Writers in Exile: The Identity of Home in Modern Literature* (1981) is less stimulating, but still useful. *Varieties of Exile* is not in this league.

Dahlie is cautious and serious. The dust-jacket blurb offers a good indication of his technique: "Dahlie traces the continuing presence of the exile theme in all its variations from Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* to Josef Skvorecky's *The Engineer of Human Souls* Dahlie examines their shared reactions to the experience of exile while at the same time stressing the unique perspective of each writer." What we are left with is a careful, but often plodding categorisation of "shared reactions." Although he does make linking comments of the "as we have seen with" variety, there is really no argument in *Varieties of Exile*. To indicate what his selected writers said about either the old or the new world is often all that Dahlie sets out to do. This factual emphasis is ultimately indigestible. One simply does not care to have such reactions categorized or listed. Because the emphasis in the book is basically descriptive, Dahlie also spends some time on plot summary. He does this to place his exposition of comments in the context of the fiction in which they occur, to describe them accurately. Once again the result is indigestible. At its worst his approach produces passages like this one about Richler's *A Choice of Enemies*:

His intrusion into Norman's conscience begins well before the members of the expatriate colony are even aware of his existence: some of the birthday money Norman sent to Nicky is given to Ernst, thereby helping to ensure his survival; the phone call announcing Nicky's murder interrupts Norman's seduction of Sally, thus keeping her on hold, as it were, until Ernst arrives; and finally, Ernst's moving into Karp's rooms allows him physically to begin replacing Norman. As a result of these successful manipulations, he is able, by the time he meets the expatriates at Winkleman's second party, to turn them against each other and particularly against Norman, at the same time ensuring his own continued safety. (98)

Varieties of Exile is not consistently as turgid as this, but one of the problems of Dahlie's factual approach is that it ignores nuance and texture. With writers like Mavis Gallant, Sara Jeannette Duncan and Mordecai Richler, the bite in descriptions of cultural difference or ethnic mannerism is almost always part of their depiction of style. And style is what Dahlie does not discuss. The liveliness in so many of his chosen texts is, as a result, conspicuously absent from his study. Nevertheless, the facts assembled in *Varieties of Exile* are useful, and Dahlie's extended treatment of a worthwhile topic opens up the field for later studies.

Dalhousie University

Rowland Smith

Cape Breton at 200: Historical Essays in Honour of the Island's Bicentennial 1785-1985. Edited by Kenneth Donovan. Sydney: University College of Cape Breton Press, 1985. Pp. 261. Paper, \$14.50.

This is not the first collection of historical essays on Cape Breton published in recent years. Three other multi-authored volumes appeared in 1973, 1977 and 1980. The first two were slim volumes, the one edited by Brian Tennyson, the other by Robert Morgan, and consisted of papers given in 1971-76 to the Old Sydney Society. The third, edited by Don Macgillivray and Brian Tennyson, included, with one exception, reprinted essays. Apparently the spirit of separatism is sufficiently rampant among historians of Cape Breton to conjure forth yet another island-centred volume. The current one, comprised of original essays dedicated to mainlander R. A. MacLean, is designed to celebrate the bicentennial in 1985 of Cape Breton's sometime status as a crown colony, an event dredged up to justify the volume but otherwise deservedly unmemorable. Unfortunately no attempt is made to cobble together a unifying theme for the wayward collection. The ten essays go their separate ways, perhaps on the homely principle that variety provides something for every taste. On the whole they constitute a reasonably balanced volume except for an excruciatingly long catalogue by Peter Moogk of Cape Breton's military highlights, an undoubted source of delight to the regiment of army buffs. Of the other nine essays, three are essentially heritage pieces, heritage being a major industry in Cape Breton since the restoration of Fortress Louisbourg. These essays are distinctly propagandist in intent. A.J.B. Johnston's biographical study of J.S. McLennan and Mary MacLeod's of Guglielmo Marconi's Cape Breton years are aimed at encouraging and publicizing the restoration of the Petersfield estate of the former and the wireless signal stations of the latter. Terry MacLean's essay on the historical research by the Louisbourg restoration offers more of an apologia than an analysis. Three other essays deal with aspects of Cape Breton culture. Kenneth Donovan adds to his ample list of social studies of Louisbourg with a discussion of the rich and poor, Robert Morgan examines separatism in the nineteenth century, and David Frank presents examples of Raymond Williams's residual culture in the early twentieth-century mining community. The remaining three essays have a vaguely economic focus. Rosemarie Languout explores Sydney's role in nineteenth-century shipping, a useful companion piece to the port studies of Memorial's Atlantic Canada Shipping Project; A.A. MacKenzie takes us on harvest excursions with Cape Bretoners and introduces us to the hooliganisms of trans-Canada railway trains; and Hugh Millward traces the pattern of mine development over three centuries. The volume concludes with a useful bibliography, though it would have been enhanced if review articles had been so identified.

The essays demonstrate a variety of approaches taken by practising historians and historical geographers, ranging over the whole gamut from sheer antiquarianism in the cases of MacKenzie and Moogk to a sophisti-

cated acquaintance with methodological and theoretical trends by Langhout, Millward, and Frank. Together they constitute a volume of papers from the bottom drawer of both established and aspiring scholars.

Dalhousie University

Judith Fingard

***Henry James: Fiction as History.* Edited by Ian F.A. Bell. London and Totowa, N.J.: Vision and Barnes and Noble, 1985. Pp. 188. £13.95.**

If history is equal somehow to struggle, the reader of this book will know what it is like to be a historical figure as he or she trudges perplexedly from essay to essay, all the while dashing to and from the preface in order to discover what this collection is about. The preface promises a study of the "social and historical provenance" of James's writing and an attempt to "politicize" the elements of his fiction, but there is precious little social history and almost no politics at all in these essays. There is a good deal about economic history in some of the selections; the useful phrase "history of capital" occurs, but not until page 170. There are also several essays which are well-written but methodologically traditional and therefore quite out of place in a collection purportedly devoted to the relation of James's fiction to history and politics. Bearing in mind that any gathering of work by different hands is likely to be uneven, though usually not as casually organized as this one is, I should like to speak highly of two essays that, to my mind, make major contributions to James studies, both in their own right and as methodological models for other studies, and then recommend another book which addresses the intended topic of this one in a somewhat more forthright manner.

The first essay of note is Ian F.A. Bell's "Money, History and Writing in Henry James: Assaying *Washington Square*." Bell treats James's novel as an "explicit critique of New York's bourgeois economy," that is, an economy that came about as a result of the country's transition from an agrarian to a commercial society. There is a curiously appropriate coalescence of, on the one hand, *Washington Square's* setting and its time of composition and, on the other, nineteenth-century American economic history, since the bourgeois economy under criticism had "its nascence in the accelerated commercial practices of the 1830s and 1840s" (when the novel is set) yet only manifested "its most expressive characteristics in the late 1870s" (when it was written). In the hurly-burly of the business world, Dr. Sloper has found such stasis as he can by commodifying his daughter Catherine, as it were, and presenting her as an all but priceless object to such a tyro as Morris Townsend. However, cautions Bell, there is a danger in adapting Dr. Sloper's negative view of Townsend, as virtually every critic of the novel has. Townsend is not merely a social climber, as Sloper thinks, but, as a sort of shadowy broker of domestic manufactures in

foreign markets, he represents the new economy in a manner that suggests how liquid and vulnerable and unstable it is. In the end, says Bell, Townsend is no villain but "the novel's less obvious victim and, more clearly, the victim of the period's transformations as he struggles within its simultaneous promise of economic amelioration and its damnation of those whom its accelerations leave behind."

The second essay I should like to single out for praise is Stuart Culver's "Representing the Author: Henry James, Intellectual Property and the Work of Writing." Culver will be greeted as a godsend by critics as well as would-be novelists themselves who have been led by Percy Lubbock, R.P. Blackmur, and others to consider James's prefaces to the New York Edition of his work as (and these are the words of James himself) "a sort of comprehensive manual or *vademecum* for aspirants in our arduous profession." The prefaces are something quite other than a how-to manual, says Culver, no doubt to the relief of anyone who has looked there for anything resembling a hammer-and-nails approach to novel-making. Instead, the prefaces dramatize James's management of his psychic and emotional resources and those of his characters. In one preface, James compares himself to a civil engineer, a "rueful builder" who feels a distance from the bridge he has built and that others now use (Culver points out that both engineering and authorship were reorganized in the nineteenth century along lines that made work in these fields less personal but more professional in the sense of a practitioner having to meet certain standards of accountability). James extends this idea of managing resources to the fiction as well. For instance, he deliberately allows Hyacinth Robinson to mismanage the economy of *The Princess Casamassima*; instead of James tidily "closing off the text's play of values or containing their fluctuation," as Percy Lubbock would have it, the author's strategy is one of "conscientiously withdrawing efficiency, for both staging and acknowledging that the work of composition is essentially a matter of financial management, amateurish speculation." Like the rueful engineer, Hyacinth loses authority over his enterprise: in James's words, he is "overcharged with treasures of reflection and spoils of passion of which he can give, in his poverty and obscurity, no honest account." This essay presents such a fruitful approach to James's fiction that one must assume the author is expanding it into a book-length study, one which will result in a very useful employment of Mr. Culver's own resources.

There is already a book on James's understanding of power and control and its relation to his fiction, Mark Seltzer's *Henry James and the Art of Power*. This is a brilliant study if a somewhat lopsided one, since it devotes so much space to background that it leaves room for examination of only three books by James. If a little wishful thinking is not unwarranted, one might envision, or at least hope for, a monumental study examining the mechanisms of nineteenth-century social power in their relation not only to the life and writings of Henry James but to those of other novelists of

the day, a study that will have its roots in these seminal works by Bell, Culver, and Seltzer.

Florida State University

David Kirby

***Revolutionary Politics and Locke's Two Treatises of Government.* By Richard Ashcraft. Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1986. Pp xxii, 613. \$65.00 Paper, \$16.50.**

Locke scholarship has enjoyed a splendid quarter-century, which so far as I can see culminates in this book. So far as I can see: Ashcraft offers copious documentation for the political activity of Locke and Locke's friends; also for exchanges in the pamphlet literature, which supply essential ingredients of the context in which Locke's political thinking found expression. Ashcraft's deductions seem continually judicious and on historical points persuade me; but I must leave criticism on these points to an historian who matches Ashcraft in command of the evidence — if any such historian can be found. Meanwhile, I am persuaded that Ashcraft has carried to the end the demolition of the once-standard view of Locke as a timid, retiring, even secretive man, whose bent toward reflection unfitted him, like other philosophers, for the hurly-burly of practical politics. No doubt, this view allowed, Locke had political sympathies that lay with the Whigs; however, it was supposed, these carried him no further into practical politics than to write his *Treatises of Government* (in particular, the *Second Treatise*) as a rationale of the Whig triumph in 1689.

Not a defensible view. Ashcraft reinforces the lesson already propagated by Peter Laslett — Locke may have published his *Treatises* after the Glorious Revolution, but he wrote them much earlier. Ashcraft reinforces, too, the lesson that other recent scholars have joined in teaching: if Locke was a Whig, his sympathies lay with the radical wing of the Whigs' revolutionary efforts, not with the coalition of moderate Whigs and backsliding Tories who impressed their stamp on the immediate effects of the Glorious Revolution.

Ashcraft has much more to offer than reinforcement to these lessons. On his showing, Locke was as revolutionary in activity as he was in sympathies. If he was secretive, he had every reason to be. In the eyes of the pre-Revolutionary regime, Locke was a marked man, closely associated with conspirators who aimed to assassinate Charles II and James II, and one of the organizers in Holland of Argyll's and Monmouth's rebellious invasions against James II. Somehow Locke found time amid these conspiracies, beginning with his long service in the household of Shaftesbury — arguably the conspirator-in-chief — to write his two *Treatises*, but he wrote them, except for a little topical retouching, not to justify the

Glorious Revolution, but to justify revolutionary efforts beginning a decade or so earlier — efforts ready to rally in language echoing the Levellers' a constituency equally broad of merchants, shopkeepers, artisans, factory workers. The justification extended literally to assassination — if assassination turned out to be the only way of preventing the brothers Stuart from carrying through their sinister project of establishing an absolute Catholic monarchy in England.

Locke published his *Treatises*, Ashcraft argues, in an attempt to get the Glorious Revolution back on the radical Whig track by demonstrating that radical results alone were consistent with the justification of the Revolution. This was to be found in the argument that James had by abuse of his constitutional powers forfeited the kingdom before he left — as Charles II had forfeited it previously, vindicating the efforts of Locke and his friends to unseat him, too, in his time.

Living comfortably under a constitutional government that we take for granted, we quite properly would deplore having our philosophers involved in assassinations. We are not, however, confronted by a king, a would-be dictator — financially independent of Parliament (partly because of secret subsidies from a foreign dictatorship), hence beyond control by elections — who is in the process of destroying our constitutional liberties. The position of Locke and his circle vis-à-vis Charles II and then James II was closer to the position of the Germans who plotted to kill Hitler than anything that politics in the English-speaking countries has led to since constitutional government has been firmly established there. It was established finally and democratized as Locke's teaching eventually took hold.

We now take in Locke's precepts with the air that we breathe. Would there, however, have been an atmosphere in which Locke's teaching could flourish, if he and others had not risked their lives to frustrate the royal dictators? The English-speaking countries (and not those alone) should have a public holiday to commemorate his courage and resolution along with his doctrine — Locke Day, perhaps coinciding with the day of every general election.

Read as Ashcraft would have us read it, Locke's doctrine turns out to be one that pushed representative democracy as far as it could go at the time and still hope to mobilize a winning coalition within the English public. It argues, like the Levellers, for a wide franchise. Everyone — at least, every householder — has enough stake in government for his consent to be sought and respected. For does he not have property to be protected (on Locke's definition of "property") in his life and liberty, even if his estate is vanishingly modest? "The people," who according to Locke unite to form a political society and through it to set up government, who may act again to replace it when it dissolves itself by betraying the trust reposed in it, can take in even what Tories denounced as "the rabble" and still act responsibly and on principle. For they have natural law to guide them and it guides them to support constitutional government. This appeal at once to the people and to natural law is something that Locke deliberately makes,

moreover, in terms that were for the time, Ashcraft demonstrates from the pamphlet literature, unmistakably democratic. From the pamphlet literature, too, comes the inflammatory rhetoric that treats Charles II and James II, given their violation of the laws of nature along with their betrayal of trust, as beasts of prey, properly killed as dangers to mankind.

Ashcraft fully observes the cautions recommended by Quentin Skinner against reading a political philosophy in abstraction from the practical context of political discussion in which it was conceived; and fully vindicates in richness of results Skinner's recommendations. But Ashcraft goes further than Skinner in deploring the tendency of philosophers to treat their predecessors as taking up one or another position on timeless issues. Ashcraft, less cautious than Skinner, suggests that there is nothing timeless about the issues raised by political doctrines, and hence no place for philosophers' methods in interpreting the doctrines in question.

As a philosopher, I must take to heart the corrections that Ashcraft offers on many features of Locke's teaching; but must I concede that philosophers and their methods have nothing to offer in return? One point on which Ashcraft has radically reshaped my thinking about Locke is Locke's intention in treating property: not to uphold the privileges of the propertied against any challenges from the propertyless; but, almost the reverse, to uphold against the efforts of landed grandees and others to exclude from political participation people whose property consisted chiefly in their labour and skills the claims of these modest citizens. In this perspective, it is even a misreading of Locke to find him complacent about the gross inequalities of property present in his own society. At most, he was ready to go far enough in endorsing the claims of property to conciliate the small farmers and less affluent country gentlemen whose alliance the city folk needed to carry through the radical program. All the same, it is a timelessly true observation about his argument that he omits to treat the dangers of oppression that inhere in large inequalities of wealth. It is a second timelessly true observation that his justification for the inequalities (from the consent people supposedly gave to them when they consented to the use of money) is at best perfunctory. It is worse, subject to objections parallel to those that he himself presses against taking as irrevocable the consent without stipulated conditions of a past generation to monarchy.

Another timeless issue suitable for philosophical treatment is what Locke supposed would remain after a government by abuse of its power and betrayal of the people's trust dissolved itself. Ashcraft asserts that "the dissolution of government returns men to the state of nature, but not as separate individuals; rather, the people, acting as 'the community' retain a corporative political power" (p. 577). He cites par. 149 of the *Second Treatise*, in which Locke speaks of "the Community" as having supreme power, but never to exercise it again "till the government be dissolved." What is this "Community?" By the account that Locke gives of the emergence of Civil or Political Society out of the state of nature, this "Community" is Civil Society, as is confirmed by pars. 132 and 133; and in

par. 211, to which Ashcraft has not given due philosophical — logical — weight, Locke expressly distinguishes between the dissolution of government and the dissolution of the Society or Community in which men are brought out of the state of nature; and says that the latter almost never lapses unless the society is overrun by invaders. Not everything that Locke says harmonizes readily with this interpretation — back to Civil Society, not to the state of nature — though it fits Locke's practical purposes in contemporary discussion as well as, indeed better than, Ashcraft's suggestion. In particular, what Locke says in par. 219 about "the People" becoming upon the government's ceasing to enforce the laws "a confused Multitude, without Order or Connexion" supports Ashcraft in implying that dissolution leads back to the state of nature. However, it is a state of nature that answers not to Ashcraft's conception of a "community" in the state of nature; it is one that answers, oddly, to the description of the state of nature given by Locke's opponents.

I think on this issue philosophy must pronounce that Locke did not succeed in making his doctrine fully consistent — which he could have done, again without undermining his practical purposes, by holding that the dissolution of government might lead to a whole range of things of which anarchy was both the most extreme and the least probable. Parliament after all, remained even after Charles II "dissolved" the government; the possibility of reconvening or reconstituting Parliament remained after James II fled the kingdom.

On this issue — in general — historical scholarship and philosophical analysis surely ought to work hand in hand. Logic alone will not give us an author's meaning. But how can we discover that part of his meaning which depends on connections between various features of his doctrine without resort to logical analysis? Moreover, is it not left to logical — philosophical analysis invoking logical principles — to assess finally how far the various features harmonize with one another, once every care has been taken to set the author's intentions in the perspective of his own time? And left to philosophical analysis to establish logical relations with other doctrines? There is, for example, a relation that makes Locke's Civil Society an approximation within Hobbes's framework of a Sovereign in the form of a democracy. Locke may not have intended this; he certainly had good political reasons for not acknowledging any such relation. Logic, however, establishes the relation.

***Poetics of Children's Literature.* By Zohar Shavit. Athens (Georgia) and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1986. Pp. xiii, 200. \$25.00.**

Any serious study of children's literature is welcome, and a book with as noble a title as this one is even more eagerly received. Zohar Shavit begins with the place of children's literature, not as an adjunct to education, but as "part of the literary polysystem" (x), albeit an underrated part. Shavit is concerned with the inter-related complexities of that polysystem and the "socioliterary constraints" which affect them. Thus she is not interested in evaluating texts, and she refers to individual texts only to illustrate the "universal structural traits and patters" that she claims are "common to all children's literatures" (xi). To be strictly accurate, her study of universals embraces children's books in English and Hebrew chiefly, but also in French and German.

The early part of the book is not new, but it is a valuable introduction for those to whom children's literature is a new study. It traces the history of the "notion of childhood" and outlines how changes in that notion correspond to changes in children's literature. For all the updated critical language, however, this is still the stuff of the usual histories of children's literature; it is only in a later section that the argument becomes really interesting. Using England as her example, Shavit sketches the origin of children's literature in response to the demands of an emerging education system, and its changes as the principles informing the educational system change. But her contention that this development is a universal pattern rather than one peculiar to any historical era or national culture gains credence from the example of Hebrew literature for children. The similarities in the development of children's literature in England, France, Germany and the United States are not surprising, since they are roughly contemporary. But though Hebrew children's literature emerged a century later, it still followed the same pattern, despite the fact that Hebrew was a second language, and even across national borders.

Shavit goes on to examine the relationships between children's literature and other parts of the literary polysystem. Like non-canonical literature for adults, children's literature is of lowly status. Both systems share other characteristics, too, such as subdivisions by subject and by the gender of the readership. However, Shavit prefers to downplay the parallels with non-canonical adult literature, and to concentrate on the "self-image" of children's literature.

In examining self-image, Shavit seeks to clarify "society's expectations of the children's system" (34) and the literature's response to those expectations. Her catalogue of evidence for the low status of children's literature is dispiriting; no wonder writers for children often resent being penned off (in Jill Paton Walsh's lovely phrase) from the literary mainstream. This discussion of writers' self-image and their sense of the place of children's books needs further attention; Shavit uses it only as an introduction to the constraints placed upon children's literature by society's pronouncements as to what is suitable or appropriate for child readers

in the way of subject matter, language, or narrative form. Roald Dahl's "The Champion of the World" (in *Kiss, Kiss* 1959) and *Danny the Champion of the World* (1975), an adult story reworked for children, is the fascinating, and rare, test case.

The essential problem of children's literature, in this study, is its dual audience. Though addressed to child readers, children's books must also meet adult standards. Two kinds of solutions to this problem are analyzed, neither of which actually reconciles the duality. The first so-called solution is the text of ambivalent status, which appeals "primarily to adults, using the child as an excuse rather than a real addressee" (63); the second is the non-canonical text which "[rejects] adults altogether" (63). *Alice in Wonderland* exemplifies the first; Nancy Drew the second. The discussion of Carroll's various version of *Alice* as different solutions to the problem of audience illuminates her point.

In fact, the book is illuminating whenever it deals with the broad cultural contexts of children's literature. The force of the argument is not irresistible, however. From time to time it falters over its own details. How trustworthy is the test case, for instance, when the translation is inaccurate? (One example: "un libraire" (12) is not a librarian.) And how much faith can we put in a writer who thinks that reluctance to attend school only appeared in the nineteenth century? (26)

Ironically, moreover, in a book so concerned with readership, the writer's sense of her reader is confused. That confusion is partly explained, though not excused, when we realize that chapters of this book appeared earlier in quite different kinds of journals. Insufficient attention has been paid to making the parts into a coherent whole. However, that is not the only problem. Shavit has, I think, misjudged her audience appeal. She sees her book as a contribution to "poetics and semiotics" (x), whereas I suspect it is more likely to be read as a contribution from poetics and semiotics to the understanding of children's literature. If I am right, then Shavit has erred in choosing to assume her readers' familiarity with the polysyllabic formulas of her criticism and their lack of acquaintance with the elementary history of children's literature.

Finally, it is her allegiance to her critical categories and systems which raises the most serious questions. For example, Shavit takes for granted that children's literature means literature written for children. Such a definition excludes both the literature which children have appropriated and such creations as schoolyard songs and stories which are generated and perpetuated out of the adult's hearing. To include either of these would destroy the neat circularity of Shavit's argument, that is, the explanation of how a literature which is defined by its readership is shaped by that readership.

Add to the narrowness of that definition a fondness for "binary opposition: either the text is for children or for adults, either it is canonized or non-canonized [sic]" (64), and real weakness appears in the resulting argument. For example, for Shavit there is no such thing as a truly ambivalent text; a book like *Alice* only pretends to address itself to child-

ren. Yet the economic dependence of young readers upon adults not only to buy their books, but also to publish and sell them, means that every text for children is ambivalent. It must appeal to the guardian in order to reach the child. Even non-canonical works — even the comic books a child buys secretly with her pocket-money — have met the minimum standards of adult society or they would not be on the cornerstore shelves.

When a system has no clear place for *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Hobbit*, *The Little Prince*, and *Watership Down*, then perhaps the whole system is at fault. It is not, I am sure, an accident that all these books, so troublesome to Shavit's systematic mind, are fantasies. Perhaps readership after all is only incidental, and we should look elsewhere for the real issue.

To question the very premises of a book may seem like faint praise, but it is, in fact, a sincere compliment. *Poetics of Children's Literature* demands, and deserves, thoughtful attention and response.

Mount Saint Vincent University

Susan Drain

***Despite This Flesh: The Disabled in Stories and Poems.* Edited by Vassar Miller. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985. Pp. 146. \$15.95.**

The literary world has always ignored minorities: those of different race, sexual orientation, of poorer financial standing, those disabled. And while it might be said, mumbled perhaps, that many of these are finding their own voices, prominence, print and exposure, the same cannot be said of the disabled; for this reason alone, the idea behind this anthology is a good one. Unfortunately, the choices in it are rather disappointing. I came to this anthology to learn. To see the best of literature dealing with physical handicaps, to learn what it's like to bear further burdens to the ones we all grow up with from society's bad teachings, family frustrations, education's limitations and so on. I came predisposed to like this book, *not* because I was one of those that Vassar Miller, the acclaimed poet, describes in her introduction as a killer by kindness, a stifler by overprotection, not, in other words, to condescend. I wanted to hear voices I feel tellingly missing from the slick worlds of the middle classes, the empowered, the in-work, the articulate that our littérateurs give us. There is another side and I wanted to feel it. I was left, I'm afraid, still groping.

To Vassar Miller's credit the anthology contains, beside the more widely acknowledged James Wright, Richard Wilbur, David Wagoner, and Anne Tyler, many lesser known writers, but this did not bring the freshness of approach I hoped for. (Nor did it bring contributor's notes which would have been welcome). The book deals with people with sensory and motor dysfunctions, hemophiliacs, dyslexics, people with cerebral palsy, the blind, deaf, lame. Rather than self-pity, the tone is often one of a celebration of capability. Stylistically and thematically,

however, there is a certain lack of daring. In what may be the most inventive piece, "Beating and Beatitude," a dyslexic's tangled syntax opens the narrative. But even though it deals with an important topic, the story itself remains prosaic: the unoriginal differences in parental treatment between a bright son and a "penny dull" one. Children feature prominently, and in their confused innocent helplessness they are obviously deserving of compassion, but the stories following the struggles of procuring a library card to obtain books on sex, or charting the agonies of straining parents, or the conflicts between sisters and brothers, seem just as much stories of adolescence, nothing particularly new, engaging, or thought-provoking.

The problem, it seems to me, is that too many of these works look at the handicapped from the outside. A blind girl stares at a poet and *he* then writes a poem about her — guessing, blinder than she, about what is going on as she types in braille:

I look at the
short and long flow
of the lines:
and guess at garlic,
the sun, a silver desert rain,
and palms.

Or is it simply
about hands, a river of light,
the ear of a snail,
or rags?

(“Black Lightning,” 28)

This is a poem about a person not disabled inspired by one who is. There are no insights except for the poet. The Impaired remain mysterious objects. Elsewhere, a stutterer is told to take “courage” as the poet describes the blockage in a beautiful metaphor: the teeth are rocks that the air of speech *should* flow over, as a “straw-hat/canoeist with a mandolin/yodelling over the falls.” But this is an easy liberality masking an inability to give anything but sympathetic platitude — and a poem. It is in the killing-by-kindliness spirit the editor warns against. There is a distance between “us” and “them” in many pieces that I found not bridged by art. Stories and poems that contain the handicapped are certainly an improvement over none, over forgetting these people exist, but for such an anthology surely there should be more than mere portrayal; surely there should be challenge.

This exists in parts of this collection where there are voices without sentimentality. This is where it is least forced, most urgent, least flatly descriptive and musing, most gutsy, angry, blunt. This is when poems show a stroke happening in one of those messy moments of life, while its victim is on the toilet, or deal with “bad babies” with “no dome at all above the eyes” who “didn’t mean to be bad / but who does.” In Natalie Petesch’s

story, "The Street," a deformed beggar battles with a prostitute more disfigured by her greed than he with his pain, a "sorrow" in his chest. It is a harsh New Orleans street where money is a weapon that can make the handicapped stronger but a handicap will not prevent the burning of a beggar's bed. In Ben Belitt's "Veteran's Hospital," the disfigured are again seen from the outside, but the atmosphere prevailing there is one amputated of lightness. A plethora of articles and apparatus engulfs them from which a cynicism exudes. This is contrasted viciously with a Youth that blithely celebrates its own virility and the agents of the ultimate sugary answer waiting outside:

There is singing
from the Ward-Room — a buzzing of transistors
like blueflies in a urinal. War over war,
the expendables of Metz and Château-Thierry,
the guerillas of Bien-Hoa and Korea,
the draftees, the Reserves, the re-enlisters,
open a common wave-length. The catatonic
sons are revving up their combos in the era
of the angry adolescent: their cry is electronic.
Their thumbs are armed with picks. The acid-rock guitarist
in metals studs and chevrons, bombed with magnesium,
mourns like a country yokel, and the innocents
are slaughtered.

On the terrace, there are juices
and bananas. The convalescent listens to his
heart-beat. The chaplain and his non-combative daughter
smile by the clubbed plants on the portico.

They shall overcome.

("Veteran's Hospital," p. 50)

But seriousness has a humorous side, which can be seen in Ronald Wallace's irreverent poem, "After Being Paralyzed from the Neck Down for Twenty Years, Mr. Wallace Gets a Chin-Operated Motorized Wheelchair." The mobile Mr. Wallace roars with abandon around corridors, leaving a wake of fearful nurses, gaping wallpaper, and the reader with a greater sense of the indomitable spirit than other pieces in this collection, so vague no flesh seems to be referred to at all, so desperately optimistic one begins to feel much too nice, and consequently, resentful.

There is, nevertheless, some fine writing here. Anne Tyler's perfectly titled "Average Waves in Unprotected Waters" (which might make a good title for another collection a little more socially aggressive) has a sting to its ending when a mother, having institutionalized her retarded son, is pulled up from escaping so quickly from the scene — and from her most fearful painful thoughts. In "Waiting for Happy," the title character, one-armed from birth, makes a go of life. He sells ice cream, passes the basket on the long pole at Mass, becomes a barber, falls in love, hitch-

hikes into town legend, and the story simply bobs along. Again it's one with a context that seems to acknowledge other aspects of life usually ignored — companies close down and people are put out of the hairdressing business as those laid off begin to get their hair cut as an economy measure at home. But then it's yet another piece where we stare, where perhaps deeper insights lie within the object — a person! — we never really get to know.

Despite This Flesh is a great conception, but ranging as it does as far back as 1952 for its works it seems at times to scrape the barrel bottom. There *must* be better pieces that could have been included. What *Despite This Flesh* perhaps shows us most of all is that our literature is woefully lacking in its depiction of the disadvantaged, though we knew that. It shows we are uninformed about these 'others.' But we knew that too. It shows something sadly inhuman about what we choose to write about, what we deal with and what we ignore. These said, it shows us that another anthology would not be wasted.

City University of New York

Peter Bricklebank

Jules Michelet. *L'Oiseau/L'Insecte*, volume XVII of the *Oeuvres complètes*, edited by Edward Kaplan. Paris: Flammarion, 1986. Pp. 541.

Of all the books I have read over the last few years, the two, *L'Oiseau* and *L'Insecte*, published by Jules Michelet in 1856 and 1857 respectively — in the midst of the completion and publication of the exhausting and shattering *Histoire de France au seizième siècle* and the somewhat more uplifting volume on *Henri IV et Richelieu*, as well as the early preparation of *L'Amour!* — these two "interludes," then, in Michelet's relentless production of his vast *Histoire de France*, must rank amongst the finest from whatever angle one cares to examine them. *C'est beaucoup dire . . .*

Here is a passage from *L'Oiseau*, chosen more or less at random, in which Michelet evokes the swirling, majestic struggle of tropical forests (the translation is mine):

Here and there, their living gloom thickens out into a triple vault: giant trees, intertwings of lianas, thirty-foot high grasses with broad, magnificent leaves. In places these grasses plunge down into the old primitive slime, while a hundred feet overhead, above the great night, proud and powerful flowers flash their images in the burning sun.

In the clearings and narrow passages where its rays penetrate, there is a shimmering, an eternal buzzing, of beetles, butterflies, hummingbirds and colibris, mobile animate jewels in endless agitation. At night — an even more astonishing scene! — begins the fairy-like illumination of glowing flies which, in billions of millions, trace out their whimsical arabesques, their frightening fantasies of light, their scribbles of fire.

[. . .] Do not yield to it all, look to yourself, do not allow your overwhelmed mind be to caught in the spell. Up! Up! in a hundred forms danger lies around you. Yellow fever is beneath the flowers, and *vomito nero*; reptiles crawl at your feet. If you gave in to fatigue, a silent army of implacable anatomists would take possession of you, and, with a million tiny lances, would turn your every tissue into an admirable lacework, a gauze, a breath, a nothingness.

To this er gulping abyss of absorbing death and hungering life, what does God oppose, to reassure us? Another abyss no less famished, thirsting for life, but less relentless for humanity. I see the third, and I breathe.

What! You, animated flowers, winged topazes and sapphires, you will be my salvation? Your liberating ruggedness, bent upon the purging of this superabundant, furious fecundity, alone renders accessible the entrance to this dangerous fairyland. You gone, jealous nature would accomplish its mysterious task of solitary fermentation, and the boldest would not ever have dared to observe it. Who am I, here? [. . .]

Everywhere throughout these writings, then, is a poetic intensity: an amazement and receptivity, a seeking of pattern and meaning, a caressing sense of language's symbiotic relation to the world. Every line is alive to the immense sensual lushness of the earth's unfolding, its magical though startling teemingness, its brusque confrontation of the exhilarating, the luminous, and the hideously disturbing. Whimsy and 'logic' interlock for Michelet in his movement back and forth between immanence and transcendence, a movement largely mirrored, moreover, in his vacillating insistence now upon stern observation, now upon pure intersubjectivity and a consequent insertion, for him, of the self's myriad sense of cosmic spirituality.

Michelet's writing here, as elsewhere, in effect always transcends mere method. Sight and reading lead to knowledge that is visionary, based upon compassion, love, a sense of the divinity of that which unfurls itself and then crumples in a ephemeral. The apparently banal — ants, bees, crows, spiders, swallows and so on, in their contact with air and light, twigs and grass, rain and sun — always hollows out a deep mystery within, a sense of purpose and belonging, and reveals, too, the inventive genius of nature thrusting in infinite gamut of its matter up against the creative brilliance of consciousness, the splendour of that 'soulness' Michelet perceives in all things. *L'Insecte* maps out in this way the movement from fear to astonishment and admiration, to comprehension and tenderness, that in many respects may be said to lie available in all the journeys of the soul. Like *L'Oiseau*, it is a book which demonstrates that total intrepidity in the expression of the self and its immersion in the world, beyond pride, pretentiousness and idle aestheticism, that is the mark of very rare insight into the reciprocity of the simple and the complex, the fleeting and the eternal. Books like these are finally no less revelatory, no less dependent

upon 'seeing,' than are Rimbaud's *Illuminations* or Char's *Les Voisinages de Van Gogh*.

Dalhousie University

Michael Bishop

***Science, God and Nature in Victorian Canada* (The 1982 Joanne Goodman Lectures). By Carl Berger. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983. Pp. 92. \$15.00. Paper, \$6.50.**

Carl Berger traces the rise and fall of the British tradition of natural science as it was nurtured in colonial Canada, before being overwhelmed by the Darwinian deluge. His lively description of the popular social and cultural function of early scientific institutions and natural history societies, in a world dominated by a comforting religious orthodoxy, makes for interesting reading. Cakes and tea, lemonade and ices, graced the social evenings of the larger societies in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto, while "the public were invited to view microscopic slides, observe chemical demonstrations, or inspect the holdings of the museum or specially arranged collections, interspersed by lectures or the music of military bands."

The pre-Darwinian age was characterized by reverence and a kind of intellectual innocence which the author deftly captures. Natural science was the province of the cultivated clergyman, country gentleman and educated layman. As such it was more accessible to the general public, and with the establishment of the Mechanics' Institutes, could even be the means of social improvement. Despite arguments among geologists about the age of the earth, there was no conflict or dichotomy between science and religion, indeed it was only in 1840 that the term natural philosophy began to give way to the more precise definition of science. The "two theologies" tradition — both natural and revealed — along with the inductive Baconian methodology of classifying and collecting facts was the order of the day. Early Victorian science was marked by harmony and unity: it confirmed the truth of divine revelation.

Elsewhere I have used the metaphor of the serpent entering the Garden of Eden to suggest the impact of Darwin on the ideology of colonial Canada; yet it should be stressed that the Darwinian revolution in thought was a gradual process and did not occur overnight. Where I take issue with Professor Berger is in his assessment of the Canadian response by Daniel Wilson, who along with William Dawson reviewed Darwin's *Origin* in 1860; their reviews appeared in the *Canadian Journal* and the *Canadian Naturalist and Geologist* respectively. Wilson, a liberal Anglican, was a poet, artist and man of letters, as well as a scientist; in his open-minded way he would champion the cause of higher education free of ecclesiastical authority. Dawson, the famous geologist, was a religious

fundamentalist who was suspicious of the liberal arts. He equated support for evolution with atheism and would make a lifelong career as an anti-Darwin controversialist. The author fails to differentiate sufficiently between these two very different men. After conceding what I thought should be self-evident from the primary documents, namely that Wilson "accepted a good deal of the evolutionists' case," he spends most of chapter three in suggesting the congruence of his views with those of Dawson — who was of course totally negative with respect to Darwin. Like A.B. McKillop who has written on this subject he ignores the considerable psychological evidence for divergence on Wilson's part.

In examining some of Wilson's letters and his diary (most of which he ordered destroyed upon his death) and in subjecting his review to a rigorous textual analysis within the framework of psychoanalytic methodology, a somewhat different picture emerges. Wilson is ambiguous and ambivalent, reflecting his internal anxiety over the implications of the Darwinian synthesis, in marked contrast to Dawson's single-minded obduracy. Even at the surface level the rhetorical tenor of both reviews is almost wholly dissimilar and emphasizes Wilson's divergence. In his discussion of Wilson's *Caliban: The Missing Link* published in 1873, Berger suggests he was registering his "opposition to evolution as applied to man" in a literary study of the Shakespearean character. Yet this "whimsical scholarly joke" can just as easily be an attempt to deal with interior conflict by asserting the aesthetic component of his romantic and poetic nature. Significantly in this strange book of criticism, in contrast to Dawson, he is able to make a clear separation between science and theology: gone is the sense of mystery and awe that informed his pre-Darwinian approach to science. Graham Carr in a trenchant critique of Berger draws attention to the discrepancy between rhetoric and reality or assertion and belief, citing the tendency of some historians in the face of persuasive sources to accept them as indisputable testaments of faith, without realizing that what is said or written does not always correspond to true belief, deepest conviction, or inmost feelings. Such was surely the case with respect to Wilson's attitude toward Darwin.

The author asserts that Canada produced "no fervent champions of evolution," which might have been true initially but certainly not later. He neglects to cite J.A. Allen who resigned his ministry in 1862 and became a Social Darwinist, engaging in debate with John Watson of Queen's. While he mentions the noted essayist, William Dawson LeSueur, as a member of the Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club in the 1890s, unaccountably he ignores his role at the center of the evolutionary controversy in the 1880s, disseminating the ideas of Darwin and Herbert Spencer and debating the reactionary Bishop of Ontario. Apart from a misprint on page 56 in which the word Darwin is substituted for Dawson and an inadequate index which fails to cite Wilson's *Caliban*, although it has been discussed, this is a delightful little book written with lucidity and economy. It presents a vignette of a pristine age when science was less recondite and

materialistic and man could reconcile his preoccupation with nature with an immutable God.

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Clifford G. Holland

***The Art of Autobiography in 19th and 20th Century England.* By A.O.J. Cockshut. New Haven & London: Yale U. P., 1984. Pp. 222. \$20.00.**

Two kinds of criticism of life-writing exist nowadays: the special sense and the commonsense. The special sense people are the followers and leaders of the deconstructionist, semiotic, and hermeneutic schools; those who attend the MLA sessions on biography and autobiography; psychologists and sociologists such as idiographic case historians and symbolic interactionists who are not number-crunchers; literary psychologists sensitive to the special import of literary symbols; and formalists and functionalists of various sorts. Commonsense critics of life-writing are those such as Michael Holroyd, a polite maverick; and A.O.J. Cockshut as he appeared in his 1974 study, *Truth to Life: the Art of Biography in the Nineteenth Century*, although he was earlier the author of such works as *Anglican Attitudes*, *The Unbelievers*, and editor of *Religious Controversies of the Nineteenth Century*. We could expect on the basis of Cockshut's previous record that he could be either a commonsense or a religious critic in *The Art of Autobiography*. In truth, he is both, only we are not told that until we are well into the book.

The Introduction, which we later find out is only part of the story, leads us to believe that we will be treated to a disarming dose of Oxford-Pall Mall commonsense. "As in my other books, *Truth to Life* and *Man and Woman*, the method of this book is selective, and no general historical survey is attempted. . . . Choice must be to some extent arbitrary. . . but the principle has been to select both from well-known and comparatively little known works. . ." (p 2) Then, after making a number of sound commonsense distinctions between autobiography and biography, between falsification and omission, between expressive and documentary evidence, he makes what appears to be his controlling statement: "Reading it [autobiography] intelligently involves two kinds of judgment, a judgment of the author's idea in writing and of the formal principle upon which he composed it, and judgment of the degree to which the finished work embodies the idea." (p 12) So far, so commonsensical. The blurb from the Yale University Press calling it "a sensitive critical essay so free of psychological-sociological-anthropological baggage it almost seems reactionary" confirms our first impression that it could have been derived from conversations on a wintry afternoon in 1904 in a clubroom overlooking Pall Mall an hour or so before the late afternoon train leaves for Oxford.

The second chapter seems to confirm Cockshut's commonsense approach. In a series of transfers between himself and a selection of subjects, he adopts a number of stylistic stances, still circa 1904. First, he is the Oxford tutor censuring Boswell for having "rapid oscillations of feeling . . ." Next he treats the autobiography of Harriette Wilson (b. 1786), a fashionable Regency courtesan, as if he were a Harley Street physician performing a spiritual pelvic examination. Then he treats Byron as a "precocious schoolboy" (30) in need of headmasterly guidance. The point of this chapter is in the epigraph from Benjamin Franklin, ". . . it would not be altogether absurd if a man were to thank God for his vanity among the other comforts of life." It may seem strange that the study of vanity is a precondition to the exposition of art, but there are still eight chapters to go. In fact, each chapter, as part of the peculiar format of the book (including the spelling of the title), has its whole first recto page for edifying epigraphical quotations. But now, as we enter the body and blood of the book, a different approach becomes apparent.

Chapter 3, "Childhood," has a section titled Bereavement. Where does childhood bereavement lead? Chapter 4 has sections on Paradise Shared and Paradise to Order. Where do the lost paradises of childhood lead? Chapter 5 has sections on the dominant father and the dominant mother. In later life where is the new domination? Chapter 6, titled "The Dedicated Child," includes discussions of Ruskin, Gosse, and Katherine Tait, a daughter of Bertrand Russell, who becomes for Cockshut the Great Adversary of spiritual autobiography. Chapter 7, "Defined by the World," on Beatrice Webb, H.G. Wells, and Russell, uses the word "world" to mean in a Bunyanesque way the secular world as contrasted to the spiritual universe. And the last two chapters—"The Quest" and "Conversion"—finally show it to be the successor to *Religious Controversies of the Nineteenth Century*: the book is really about those whose autobiographies show that they got religion and those that show they did not and how the former, as both people and "art," are really much more satisfactory than the latter. At the end of Chapter 9 is Cockshut's beatific vision, Newman's *Apolgia pro Vita Sua*. The two-page concluding chapter does return us to the secular, as if it were urged by the publisher. So the "art" of autobiography is the art of the spirit made manifest in well-turned phrases that shun emotion but embrace spiritual feeling. These avatars of spirituality conduct themselves mentally, physically, and socially like well-bred dons or Hillaire Belloc. The "art" is literally parochialized. We are even told near the end who the patron saint of this kind of book is: St. François de Sales who was, according to Cockshut, "a distinguished exponent" of the "commonsense [that] had been a corner-stone of an older tradition of spiritual writing." (179) So, after 179 pages (out of 222) we are finally told that we get both commonsense and religion from the same source, an insinuated sort of religion, a sense religious of things mundane. God and man at the Yale University Press.

Who then, are the saints and sinners in this book, which is a kind of human development text or *The Seasons of a Man's Life* written by a

member of the Oxford Movement, full of universal agonies writ small? The saints are Ruskin, really more a Virgil of spiritual agony, still in limbo because he has not caught the vision. Then there is Kathleen Raine (b. 1908), who, attending Cambridge, is forced by her rejection of her childhood Methodism and her beautiful body to embrace Platonism, possible Manicheism, and, of course Catholicism, the real hero of the book. There are Dom Bede Griffiths, Ronald Knox (praised for "his distrust of religious emotion"), and C.S. Lewis (praised for finding true religion in the Death Scene of his mother and for permitting a pervasive sense of mystery to infect his understanding). One suspects that Cockshut is only too aware that Oxford has need of a spiritual successor to C.S. Lewis.

For Cockshut, the principal sinner, if not fallen angel, of autobiographers is Bertrand Russell. Cockshut concedes that Russell is a great autobiographer and in his many sexual adventures is never a cad. (144) And we are reminded twice on one page that Russell was a "member of a great Whig family." (137) But Russell is flawed, not only because he has no respect for tradition, the snobberies of status, religious guilt, or the pervasiveness of religious evil in everyday life, but also because he ran his life according to passion not hedged about by Roman church symbol, dogma, authority, tradition, sacramental nature, legend, and the inferences derived from all these certainties.

Cockshut claims that the trouble with Russell is that passion and reason are split asunder in his protestant personality. Cockshut has it wrong, but he's kind enough to quote the passages that show how wrong he is. Russell's great human statement that he has lived for three "simple but overwhelmingly strong" passions — "the longing for love, the search for knowledge and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind" — is totally misunderstood. Cockshut has no understanding of the passion Russell feels for intellect and for intellectual exploration unfettered by the old symbols, sights, sounds, and smells. He simply cannot handle the courage and genius of Russell. And besides, Russell was a proponent of "the easy free love principle." (7)

Why this book is titled *The Art of Autobiography* is a mystery. The nearest thing to a definition of "art" in it is whether the form (some kind of controlling thesis) has been fulfilled, the kind of advice given beginning students of writing. If one wants really to learn about the art of life-writing as it is understood today, one should turn to the wide ranging, acute, and graceful work of the Canadian-American from the University of British Columbia, Professor Ira Nadel, whose *Biography: Fiction, Fact, and Form* is more modest in its claim for universality than Cockshut's book but casts the light of reason and knowledge much more deeply and broadly. If *The Art of Autobiography* were to lose its secular introductions and conclusions and be re-titled *Secular Error and the Quest for Redemption in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century English Autobiography* it would supply an honest if limited service. But perhaps Yale did not want to promote God and Man at Oxford because the autobiographical background to and consequences of Tract XC, trinitarian arguments,

trans- and con-substantiation controversies, the Gorham case, the question of Mr. Philpotts, and the defense of Bishop Colenso, are not big sellers in an essay that has no bibliography, sketchy footnotes, and a limited index. Tractarians and St. François de Sales would not have it otherwise. Nor is it particularly popular to let the autobiographers show a few sex scenes while at the same time decrying the passions; there's something voyeuristic about that. Given its tractarian background, the book should have been issued initially in a cheap paper edition, something less than one-third its US\$20 price.

In sum, this is a parochial work with a misleading title, a technique of thematic insinuation, and a religious bias suitable for an audience familiar with the adversarial proceedings historically connected with its subject and patient enough to translate yet another idiom for developmental psychology.

University of Hawaii

George Simson

***Cataclysm: the North-South conflict of 1987.* By William Clark. Toronto: Methuen, 1984. Pp. 240. \$19.95.**

The world economy and polity survived 1984 (just!); William Clark, former Vice-President of the World Bank, warns us in this future history that 1987 may be more problematic. An informed and sensitive observer of international diplomacy and diplomats, Clark offers a readable and plausible scenario of how global negotiations, communications, and assumptions could fall apart if the leading Southern debtors really do disengage and set off an avalanche of ripostes: an explosion of apparently anomic acts against the *ancien regime*. An antidote to Brandt Commission pablum (which he helped conceive) and NIEO rhetoric (which he has endured), Clark's thinly-veiled novel constitutes a stark warning to hard-line "monetarists" in the industrialized world: radical regimes and movements advocating "Southern" redistributive rights may yet bring down the whole pack of cards through "inconvenience terror" involving computer sabotage, virus warfare and telecommunications hijacking.

In a stylised, subtle extrapolation which treats both super- and sub-structures, William Clark identifies the weak links in the West's defence against any threat from the South: "soft" states and sophisticated immigrants. Likewise he highlights contradictions in the South's position: ambitious and expansive Latin and Pacific entrepreneurs versus African bureaucrats in desperate decline. But latent patterns of alignment only appear after South American defaulters and Reaganesque hardliners have conspired to undermine the global financial network. The new dependence of the US on the Caribbean makes it vulnerable to a transnational Black vanguard — the Anti-Racial Movement (ARM) — which

draws "tricontinental" support from the West's reincorporation of South Africa back into its security nexus. Allied with the "Black Hand" in Britain and the PLO in the Middle East, ARM is the apex of a radicalized NonAligned alliance which exposes the industrialized world's new technological vulnerabilities to "Southern" scientists' interventions into computer-based communications infrastructures. These combined with nuclear terrorism in the West's underbelly — South Africa and Israel — brings conservatives to their senses after some tense incidents and global tele-conferences.

Despite the technicalities and complexities of the plot — economic and strategic alliances, crises and settlements — Clark has a sharp eye for personal and situational detail: Professor Joshua Adebayo represents the new President of Nigeria in assuming the direction of G77 following Mexican Madrieno's abdication; Thabo Bokwe leads the ANC into power in Pretoria and membership of the Commonwealth; Gerry Strong the Aussie Labour PM attempts to mediate between Japan's "Yen Zone" and China's renewed paranoia; and a post-imperial Hong Kong becomes the scene for the "World Conference on Restructuring" under new Secretary-General Fred Loh. Eventually, at the end of the crisis in late-1988, conservative regimes are voted out in the major OECD countries and the new global centre shifts ineluctably from the Atlantic to the Pacific. As Loh reflects: ". . . world leadership has fallen to us in Asia . . . In the last analysis we must recognise that once again it is Asia's opportunity to make the world a safe home for all races, for poor peasants as well as rich merchants. The future of the world is once again in the hands of the oldest surviving civilisation" (233-4). Relatively reassuring?

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Timothy M. Shaw