

## Book Reviews

***The Rebel Angels.* By Robertson Davies.** Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1981. Pp. 326. \$16.95

Robertson Davies has described himself, in one of his public addresses, as a moralist always conscious of "the deep, heaving, rolling ocean of hilarity that lies so very near the surface of life in most of its aspects." In *The Rebel Angels*, morality and hilarity contribute in about equal parts to a story of theft and murder set in the College of St. John and the Holy Ghost (Spook, to its familiars) on the campus of a large Canadian university. Careful readers of Davies will not be surprised by the simplicity of the story-line, the adept management of narrative structure, the lively characterisation, the re-emergence of familiar themes, the acerbic commentary on academic and other forms of life, and the flurry of esoteric information.

The story-line of the novel consists of the sequence of events which begins with the reappearance on campus, after a long absence, of John Parlabane, Spook's black-sheep philosopher, and ends with his death a few months later. Linking the events is the disappearance of the manuscript of a work by Rabelais with some important letters enclosed in it. Caught up in the disappearance are four other members of the College: Simon Darcourt, Clement Hollier, Urquhart McVarish, and Maria Theotoky. In, around, and through this main story-line, Davies has constructed a complex thematic pattern involving a larger group of eccentrics, academic and otherwise.

The narrative takes the form of two linked first-person accounts, one by Simon Darcourt and one by Maria Theotoky, alternating through the novel. Simon Darcourt is an Anglican priest on the faculty of Spook, middle-aged, and of impeccable "Canadian Wasp" descent. Maria Magdalena Theotoky is a beautiful, brilliant graduate student of Spook (where she also acts as Hollier's research assistant), and a Gypsy of Polish and Hungarian decent. The distinction between them is so neat as to appear almost over-contrived, yet it is thematically appropriate as well as structurally useful, for each of them represents a psychic element of the other which must be reckoned with. Darcourt must come to terms with his physical self, particularly in the form of erotic love and a tendency to put

on weight. Maria, whom he loves, must come to terms with her Gypsy inheritance while living in a *gadje* (non-Gypsy) society, represented at its best by Darcourt.

Although Darcourt is an interesting and well-realized character, it is Maria who really occupies the centre of the novel, for she is one of Davies' most engaging characters, and certainly his most interesting female character. The female characters of a male writer often attract, not always justifiably, both amusement and abuse from feminist readers. Maria should escape both, for Davies in presenting her shows himself to be informed on the interests and issues of feminism, although not necessarily in agreement with all of it. Maria holds aloof from the women's movement, therefore, and does not have much use for liberation, at least not in the standard definition of the term. But in spite of her unrequited affection for Hollier, a marriage ceremony in which she agrees to obey her husband, and her adoption of two senior males (Darcourt and Hollier) as mentors, Maria manages to be completely herself.

It is true that in the story she tells of the "rebel angels", who fell from grace and came to earth to teach human beings about fire and the wheel, winning a great success with women, Maria would appear to relegate herself and other women to a secondary status in the hierarchy of beings in the cosmos (the angels, being, like God and men, male). Nevertheless, it must be read in the context of the association of Maria with Sophia, who is Divine Wisdom, according to the Gnostics, a feminine deity of equal rank, status, and power to the male deity whom she inspires. Hence the association is by no means casual, for it indicates a change in the sexual hierarchy. Maria, not claiming such status, considers herself to be seeking wisdom, and seeks it with the assistance of Darcourt and Hollier; but in her acceptance of their assistance as her scholarly mentors she does not make them her superiors in anything except their learning as scholars. What she receives from them is exactly what the world received from the original rebel angels — knowledge. What she gives, in her capacity as the manifestation of the Divine Wisdom (if not its incarnation), is a gift of the spirit designed to make both of them more complete as human beings. For unquestionably, right from the beginning of the novel, in contrast to the rather unfinished and lopsided personalities of the men around her, Maria is complete and balanced, her own woman.

In his presentation of Maria as the development of a feminine personality, Davies is of course re-engaging an earlier theme, in this case the theme of *A Mixture of Frailties*. Other earlier themes and ideas also emerge, notably Jungian psychological theory. If this is not immediately apparent, it is because Davies has moved beyond the now familiar theory of the archetypes, to the more esoteric involvement with the relationship between psychology and alchemy which occupied Jung for many years. In the person of Ozias Froats, the biologist with his shining stainless-steel laboratories and specially designed "buckets" for human excrement, conscientiously deploying statistical methods and microphotographic techniques to the categorization of fecal samples in search of a clue to the

temperaments associated with certain categories of sample, Davies explicitly recreates the mediaeval alchemist in modern guise, and through him examines the issue, common to both the alchemist and the modern biologist, of the relationship between soma and psyche.

But the mediaeval alchemists, although the hazards of their lives were numerous and varied, did not have to contend with crusading MLAs calling for their funding to be withdrawn ("Get the Shit Out of Our Varsity") as Froats does. Confronting Froats with this particular hazard is just one of the ways in which Davies displays his talent for impeccably accurate satiric observation on academic life. Another target for his satire is the College Guest Night which offers a rich array of professorial eccentricity to be recorded by Darcourt, just as Darcourt's own professorial activities (other than teaching and research) provide opportunity for a bitterly funny exposé of the academic scutwork every professor has to complete a share of. Anyone who has had to go through a similar process will appreciate the scene in which Darcourt, patiently filling out grant application references for graduate students, is confronted by the section "For Personal Comments" and succumbs to the temptation to tell the plain truth.

In addition to some rich exhibitions of humour, Davies in each of his novels provides his readers with a display of esoteric knowledge. In *The Rebel Angels*, he offers two. The first is a display of Gypsy life, history, and lore, complete with a sinister Tarot reading and a curse that misfires. But, however esoteric it may seem, this is Maria's inheritance, an inheritance which she must learn to reconcile with the academic world of scholarship into which she has worked her way. Consequently, it forms an important part of the novel's thematic structure. This importance is shared by the novel's other display of esoteric knowledge: the exposition of W. H. Sheldon's constitutional theory of personality, which is at the back of Froats' research, and through which Davies continues to pursue his search for the understanding of human nature. Neither of them is present merely to allow Davies to show off.

*The Rebel Angels* does not mark a radical change in Davies' development as a writer. Morality and hilarity are still directed to understanding human nature as this presents itself to him. There is some shift in the thrust of his exploration, in that for the first time he seems to be taking an interest in the effects of ethnic and physical factors on human personality. Since Davies seems to work in threes (as witnessed by the Salterton trilogy and the Deptford trilogy), and since it is rumoured that another novel related to *The Rebel Angels* is already on the way, perhaps we should be looking forward to the Spook trilogy. Certainly, *The Rebel Angels*, opening with one death, ending with two more, and packing between them a study of human nature at once hilarious and deeply serious, enjoyable and thought-provoking, is an enticing beginning.

***Bodily Harm.*** By Margaret Atwood. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 1981. Pp. 301. \$16.95

Margaret Atwood's is a bleak and uncompromising vision. It has also become rather limited. While Atwood is an immense writing talent (witness her poetry, her novel *Surfacing*), her latest novel is both predictable and an effort to read. The predictability is there because the message and the way in which the message is delivered never change. The effort is present because Atwood does not involve the reader in anything: her prose talks *at* you, it tells you what you should think, how you should react. It also implies (because of its critical tone and the size of Atwood's reputation) that if you don't think and react as you should, it's you who's in the wrong, not the novel.

Rennie, the heroine of *Bodily Harm*, has an operation for breast cancer. Her surgeon, Daniel pares away a quarter of one breast and leaves a large scar; Rennie submits to the operation because "the alternative he offered her was death." Under the knife or not, Rennie is in the hands of men. First there is Daniel, who is a marvellous surgeon but not much else. Or, if he is anything else, he's a wimp, afraid of emotional commitment, hiding behind his scalpel, unable to offer Rennie anything but platitudes and, eventually, guilt-ridden sex. There's always Jake, of course, Rennie's live-in lover. Jake likes kinky sex ("pretend you're being raped.... Ask for it") and when his lover/victim is no longer whole, Jake cries and leaves. Enter a stranger who invades Rennie's empty apartment, prepares himself an Ovaltine, and leaves a coiled rope in the middle of her bed. Enter investigating police officers who insinuate that Rennie invites such visits. Exit Rennie to the Caribbean on a writing assignment and a needed break from male control. Enter Paul, a possible CIA agent and certain dope-and-gun-runner *extraordinaire*. Paul is so cool that he asks no questions about Rennie's scar and mutilated breast. The key is that he never loves and would rather live dangerously than with a woman. Meanwhile, the stranger with the rope and the Toronto cops are replaced by the black cops and politicians of St. Antoine (the Caribbean island to which Rennie travels) who rape Rennie's mind if not her body—and now it doesn't matter if she's asking for it or not.

Atwood employs a sledgehammer approach to relationships between the sexes that shatters the sympathetic reader's concern for Rennie and for women everywhere caught by male power and dominance. We are told (the text never itself convinces) that "men don't want love and understanding and meaningful relationships, they still want sex, but only if they can *take* it." A blanket statement supposedly proven by Jake and Daniel and Paul, and by the many, minor male figures who unpleasantly dot the novel with their blind and not-so-blind control of women. Rennie and another woman, Lora, are imprisoned together on St. Antoine and fucked over (no other term suffices) physically and psychically. Their cell is *the* cell around all women, their guards *all* men; even though Rennie gets out, she

does so only because she agrees to say nothing about her experience. It is a conspiracy of silence to which women contribute but which men create.

Atwood's portrait of Rennie is ambiguous. Presumably one cannot judge harshly anyone who has just had an operation for cancer. Or can one? What has the operation to do with Rennie's naivety, her stupidity, and her glib response to any life beyond her own pop-journalism vision? She is a "lifestyles" writer for a hip Toronto mag, *Visor*, and she writes illuminating articles entitled "How To Read Her Mind" and on drain-chain jewellery. Rennie deals, as she herself admits, with "surfaces." The question is, does she surface through her Caribbean experience? She has a lot to surface from. In addition to acquiescing to Jake's weird and macho sexual demands, Rennie is from Griswold, Ontario (no sunshine sketches of a small town with such a name). Griswold grants Rennie an unhappy childhood (is there any other kind?) and a view of sexual roles that would stunt the growth of even the most determined rebel. There is mother, separated from father, who waits until two weeks after Rennie's first period to tell her about her father living with another woman: "She must have felt I was ready for pain," says Rennie. Then there's grandma who worshipped grandpa and who can *only* deteriorate after his death (mother, of course, spends the rest of her life looking after grandma — the prison cell again). But Rennie doesn't have just Griswold to contend with. She's given a vision of the world around with which Atwood readers will be familiar. A few lines about tea and biscuits will explain: "The biscuits ...look like enlarged corn plasters. Rennie bites into one...it tastes like winter foot.... Rennie fishes the teabag out by its string...it's too much like a dead mouse."

So, Rennie never escapes Griswold, nor her dependence on men, nor her "lifestyles" mentality that allows her to misjudge constantly the political realities and dangers of St. Antoine. She lugs a box of guns from an airport pickup to her hotel room to a drop-off point, increasingly confident that the box doesn't contain the heart medicine she was told it did. She falls for Paul hook, line, and almost sinker—Paul, who if he were one-tenth of the operator Atwood makes him out to be wouldn't bother to save Rennie's neck when island revolution breaks out (does Atwood believe in, or is she mocking, the sentimental Hemingway hero?). Meanwhile, amidst Caribbean catastrophes, as possibly the CIA, the Cubans, and certainly the pathetic St. Antoine blacks surround her (the poor black folks are little more than familiar stereotypes) Rennie moves, apparently, towards a surfacing.

In the prison cell, after Lora has been sexually victimized and beaten to a pulp by the guards Rennie attempts to pull her back to consciousness, to show her that someone cares: "this is the hardest thing she's ever done.... Surely if she can only try hard enough, something will move and live again, something will get born." This is too little and too late. Above all, these are words only, delivered perhaps with intellectual conviction by Atwood but with no depth of fiction.

At one point, Jake says to Rennie, "You can't rape a women's mind without her consent." Rennie replies, "You can try." Margaret Atwood has gone after the reader's mind in fairly undisguised fashion. The attempt is to coerce through touching on enough general truths while hammering home selected and distorted details. Atwood may well be one of the finest writers this country has; she may indeed be acclaimed by international critics. But these are facts that simply underline the immense failure of *Bodily Harm*. Atwood seems to forget she is writing fiction, not a rhetorical tract, that she must create a world that is *not* reality in order to focus the reader's attention on, among other things, reality. Instead she has produced dogma that insists one must be either for or against the vision offered. Hers is a closed system, a world in which men fuck women over and over again and in which women either take it or leave it and either way enter a space of exile and confusion and pain. Everyone in *Bodily Harm* is a victim writ large. The reader is a victim, too, of this novel, struggling not with Rennie but despite her, looking to surface with some suggestions and/or solutions in mind but never being allowed to do so.

Dalhousie University

J. A. Wainwright

***Cent Ans dans les bois.* By Antonine Maillet. Montréal: Leméac, 1981. Pp. 358. \$14.95**

Those who expected Antonine Maillet to complete her epic cycle and to lift the veil of mystery and misunderstanding from the least-known period of Acadia's history, will be disappointed. The "Hundred Years in the Woods" of the title do not bridge the silent gap of oblivion which separates the Goncourt-crowned Pélagie of the 1780's from the heroines of *Mariaagélas* or *La Sagouine* of the twentieth century; instead, they have been compressed into the chronicle of little more than one year, from the spring of 1880 to the first Acadian national convention in July 1881, so that Jules Boudreau's *Cochu et le soleil* (1979) remains the only detailed literary treatment of at least one period of that dark age, the second expulsion of the Acadians under Joseph Walleth DesBarres in the 1830's.

Beyond the frequent allusions to this and other events, *Cent Ans dans les bois* celebrates above all the culmination of a century spent in unspeakable and indescribable misery: unbroken and proud, the refugee descendants of the first Pélagie are starting to "come out of their hole," as Laval Goupil had already called the Acadian awakening in *Le Djibou* (1975).

Antonine Maillet is convinced that no historian, no novelist even, could satisfactorily explain the extraordinary Acadian renaissance which began in 1881. What led to the Memramcook convention is so deeply buried in the guts, soul and imagination of the people that it can only be recreated by a storyteller, a balladeer or truly medieval jongleur such as Jérôme-le-Menteux or Antonine Maillet. Being thus led down the folklore path, we



find that the momentous national conventions grew out of regional Committees-To-Recover-The-LeBlanc-Treasure (see *L'Acadie pour quasiment rien*, 1973), and that Memramcook ended once and for all the epic struggle not between an Upper and Lower Village as in *Les Craseux* (1968) or *Les Cordes-de-bois* (1977), but between The Land and The Sea as represented by Marie-Babée Poirier of Le Fond-de-la-Baie in New Brunswick and her fiancé Pierre Bernard from Egmont Bay, P.E.I.

The penultimate treasure hunt of 1880 and the final discovery that the ancestral inheritance has in fact developed into the entire city of Philadelphia (when Antoinine Maillet accepted an honorary doctorate from Dalhousie in 1981 and spoke of a common Maritime culture, did she think of the University of King's College's claim to the campus of Columbia?), make for masterful storytelling and suspenseful reading. So do the tortuous love affairs of the couple-to-be. But does Acadia need another epic tale? Is she really generically unfit for, among others, novelistic treatments? Surely there is in the hallowed or avant-garde narratology labs of the world a structural and stylistic model or catalyst for dealing with even the most complex and obstreperous collective psyche. This must be found and applied soon, or else Acadian prose writing will begin to stagnate in repetitiveness.

Besides the numerous instances of *déjà lu* (the matriarch, here called Pélagie-la-Gribouille Poirier, née Léger; genealogimania; the shipwrecked amputee stranger resembling Germaine Comeau's hero in *Le Retour de Jérôme* [1976, unpubl.]; etc.), there is a fair amount of novelty in this tale. There is some quoting from historical sources (pp. 340-45), some inclusion of folklore lyrics (pp. 108-12, 132-33, 316, 319-21), some attempt at including Saint Mary's Bay and Chéticamp in the epic, some insightful allusion to the problematic transition of an oral society to a literate one (pp. 233-39). Antonine Maillet's greatest achievement is, however, her recreation of the archetypal bard in the persons of old lady Lamant and Jérôme. Nowhere have the material existence, the imaginative processes, the narrative techniques and the recitative strategies of storytellers been more acutely felt, understood and brought back to life. Lovers and scholars of "oral" literature, from professional epicists to the readers of John Steinbeck (see his correspondence with Elizabeth Otis concerning his *Acts of King Arthur*, esp. his letter of January 28, 1959) and of Helen Creighton, will be delighted and enlightened.

*Cent Ans dans les bois*, volume 55 in Leméac's "Collection Roman Québécois," is neither a novel nor Québécois. It is an opulent fresco of a land in search of the novel, of Acadia in search of herself.

***Love and Money: The Politics of Culture.*** Edited by David Helwig. Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1980. Pp. 187. \$15.00. Paper, \$6.95.

***The King's Evil.*** By David Helwig. Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1981. Pp. 130. \$15.95. Paper, \$7.95.

In the introduction to *Love and Money*, David Helwig points out that the title of his book is not whimsical as the rich "can afford to play with art," but the artist is the man "who can't afford to but does anyway." How this situation manifests itself in the public and political position of the arts in Canada is laid out in the book in seven essays and one excerpt from a forthcoming novel by John Metcalf. Positioned at the end, Metcalf's "The Musical Ride" sums up the bleak discussion: "In Canada...all literature is, in effect, *samizdat*." Although the Canadian government supports writing, and the Russians check it, the effect is the same: serious writing is an underground affair because the Canadian audience is not interested and the Russian is.

That this situation is probably true of television as well is implied by Joyce Nelson's article analyzing the economics of U.S. commercial television and its effect on Canadian programming. She argues for a united Canadian network front for program purchase and for indigenous TV programming. The questions that loom large and which Nelson sidesteps are whether *King of Kensington* is an improvement on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*? Should we produce our own TV junk if it costs more? If the balance were tipped in favour of good Canadian programming, would lack of an audience turn it into *samizdat*?

Michael Macklem (head of Oberon Press) faces the issue of what might really happen to "seed money." He cites a variety of government programs which have the effect of encouraging Canadian publishers to develop a line of popular bestsellers, albeit Canadian ones, and argues that the money should be going into finding and developing writers and then cultivating an audience for their work. But there are no concrete suggestions for turning a Harlequin reader into a reader of Oberon Press books.

Who keeps track of those who dole out the money? The main dispensing body, the Canada Council, is ably defended by a former Associate Director, Frank Milligan. He sees the role of the Council as one in which it acts as a public trustee which mediates between its artist clientèle and the politicians and bureaucrats. Although Milligan does not intend it, the Council comes out sounding as if it thinks it is guarding the Grail. This view is reinforced by Heather Robertson's article "Starving Slowly," in which she presents the creative community in this country as "in the grip of a powerful bureaucracy which wields absolute, often capricious control over its financial affairs and, therefore, over its artistic direction." Milligan sees the Council as fending off the politicians; Robertson thinks they are needed as a healthy defence against the arbitrary decisions of bureaucracy. Robertson wants the Council, which spends public funds, to be accountable to the public. And although Milligan recognizes that the autonomy of the arts might be jeopardized by their dependence on the



public purse, he never allows that the political process which created the Canada Council might not have gone far enough—that the jeopardy might hinge on a failure to make the Council itself more responsible to the mainstream of political life. This polarization ignores Metcalf's view of things. It assumes an audience which wants more than Harlequins and *King of Kensington*. But if Metcalf is right, a capricious bureaucracy is the best we can hope for. The degree of public scrutiny Robertson wants would send artists into the marketplace, where they would be more uncomfortable than they are right now. If culture is not *samizdat*, it may well be because of the Canada Council. If Metcalf is wrong, Robertson's remarks are more to the point.

With the exception of Paul Stuewe's "Thinking About Censorship," which is pompous about the obvious, Helwig has assembled a lively and provocative collection of essays about "big-C Culture," as Thomas Hathaway's excellent article on music puts it.

Helwig's novel is less interesting. It is the story of a man named Dross who tries to escape his body and his history by immersing himself in deceptions. His wife, dead of cancer, had left him for another man. "Fat and ungainly," he is left to resurrect himself as best he can. Dross develops the theory that Charles I, instead of being executed, escaped to America and changed his identity. Dross's delusion is strong enough to propel him from America to England in search of proof. In England the papers he had hoped would lead to the truth about Charles lead only to the history of another thwarted lover who had hidden behind a change of identity. Dross, who had wanted a resurrection through a reconstruction of history, finds one through a recognition of his common humanity with another rejected lover. His fantasy of their bodies uniting and merging with nature closes his search.

This simple story is encumbered by a variety of distracting literary devices (for example, sudden shifts in point of view, shifts in time) which are intended to suggest the hero's unbalanced state, but which, used clumsily, cause the narrative to stall repeatedly. The choice of Charles I on which to peg Dross's obsession seems arbitrary. "Hilaire Belloc made him [Charles] into the saint of monarchy, the saint of those longing for order and a power above them that could give their lives music," thinks the hero. Unfortunately, the hard work of making Charles symbolically convincing to the reader has not been done. We simply do not see him through Dross's eyes. Because the fantasy rarely comes alive for us, large sections of the book seem mechanical.

This is not to say that *The King's Evil* does not contain some excellent writing. What comes to mind is the sixth chapter in which Dross gets stuck in a narrow passage in the basement of an old house. Here is an example:

Never before had he been in such complete darkness. Thought flowered and crumpled into nothing. The eye could not measure the space so there was no space; everything was immediate and infinite. Again he touched his hand to his body to feel that it was there.

Helwig's mixture of apt imagery and concreteness is admirable.

Carleton University

E. L. Bobak

***The Journal of the Reverend John Payzant (1749-1834)***. Edited by Brian C. Cuthbertson. Baptist Studies in Atlantic Canada series. Hantsport, Nova Scotia: Lancelot Press, 1981. Pp. xiv, 130. Paper, \$5.95

The Reverend Thomas McCulloch, Dalhousie's first Principal, was both a Presbyterian and a Haligonian. That made him doubly an outsider when two great religious revivals swept through mainland Nova Scotia's small towns and backwoods in 1776-84 and 1806-08, but his satirical fiction (*The Stepsure Letters*) offered an engaging and remarkably accurate sketch of the kind of person who led the revivals.

Miss Clippit, though formerly a miserable sinner, is now, as she says herself, a very religious young woman. In her own opinion, she knows more about experiences and marks of grace than Parson Drone himself; and some of those who have attended her ministrations even say that she can preach a better sermon... In addition to (her), our town enjoys the ministrations of Parson Howl, and also of young Yelpit, who was lately converted and called himself to the preaching of the gospel.

Despite their prejudices outsiders can sometimes shed invaluable light on religious revivals. The Reverend John Payzant was a leader of the two revivals in question but in some important respects he was an outsider.

The Great Awakening of 1776-84 was led by the charismatic "New Light" preacher, Henry Alline, a Yankee farmer from Falmouth who was immortalized by William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* as the archetype of the "twice-born man," and who has been credited by others with keeping Nova Scotia from joining the American Revolution. Alline shared his mystical conversion experience with his brother-in-law, John Payzant, and the two went on to "awaken" most of mainland Nova Scotia outside of Halifax, the "Sodom and Gomorrah" of its day.

The New Light revival, however, depended on Alline's charisma and on easily dissipated passions rather than on enduring ecclesiastical organization. Some of Alline's successors proposed to make the "awakening" last by demanding that church members commit themselves to adult baptism, but neither Alline nor Payzant could support such a demand. The first revival petered out when Alline died in 1784, but when a new revival broke out in 1806 John Payzant was almost alone in urging that questions of dipping versus sprinkling, adult versus child baptism, were unimportant. When the dust had settled in 1808, most of the New Light enthusiasts had become closed-communion Baptists, and the revival movement had been transformed into the Baptist denomination. Payzant clung to his post as Liverpool's Congregationalist minister until his death in 1834.

John Payzant was a Huguenot among neutral Yankees. In 1756 his father was scalped by Indian allies of the French and the rest of the Payzant family were carried off to Québec as prisoners of war where John received a classical education in French from the Jesuits. Perhaps it was his position as an outsider that made him more resilient and tolerant than others who caught fire under Alline's influence. Payzant was challenged by free-will Methodists, by respectably stuffy Anglicans, by class differences within his own congregation, and by more than one Miss Yelpit who rose from the pews to demand that the minister turn his pulpit over to her. His invariable response was to state his own position (suitably buttressed by Scripture and by experience) and then to urge everyone to try to live together peaceably until time could heal the divisions caused by religious controversy. His rare displays of animosity were tempered by wit and reserved for the Baptist leader who had, as Payzant saw it, betrayed him and his people. "Mr. Chipman...was more after the fleece than after the Souls of Sinners." (p. 91)

As the spelling suggests the *Journal* is difficult to read because archivist Brian Cuthbertson has chosen to make as few changes as possible in the original text. The lack of a map and the sketchy character of the introduction are drawbacks balanced by the extensive and careful footnotes by which Cuthbertson identifies various characters as they march through Payzant's memory. The *Journal's* publication is a welcome contribution to the efforts of those who are trying to make sense of the religious revivals that constituted the first real social movements in Nova Scotia's history, but it may also be read with pleasure by those who would like to see how an early Nova Scotian tried to come to grips with the uncomfortable reality of religious diversity.

And the fact that Payzant's *Journal* has been published in a Baptist series may mean that the old gentleman, defeated over 160 years ago by strict sectarians, may have had the last word after all.

Dalhousie University

Tom Sinclair-Faulkner

**Canada's Economic Strategy.** By James Laxer. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1981. Pp. 202. Paper, \$12.95.

James Laxer's latest book develops two themes and portrays two heroes. The themes are perhaps predictable: on the one hand, the struggle between right wing free-market advocates of a laissez-faire energy policy for Canada and left wing interventionist supporters of a controlled energy policy, and on the other hand, the emasculation of the Canadian manufacturing sector through a branch plant economy in which United States technology is a Trojan horse preventing the development of an indigenous industrial strength. The heroes are less predictable: John A. Macdonald and Pierre Elliot Trudeau. Sir John is described as the author of the "one coherent industrial strategy" (page 73) that the country has ever

possessed, the National Policy of 1879. Mr. Trudeau, in the National Energy Policy of 1980, has pointed the way to economic nationalism in Canada, and in so doing he has "understood the fundamental imperatives of Canada . . . more clearly than any other political leader." (page 202).

Mr. Laxer's central political argument is that the Progressive Conservative and Liberal parties in Canada have changed roles. The Conservatives, traditionally the party of state intervention, have become the party of free enterprise; the Liberals, historically committed to laissez-faire, have become the party of federal power and state intervention. It is this juxtaposition that of course allows Mr. Laxer to claim both MacDonal and Trudeau as political heroes.

Much of the detail in the book is focused on the last half of the 1970's, and there are interesting discussions of many wide-ranging issues and events, from the formation of the Business Council on National Issues to the problems of the nickel industry, from the Québec referendum to Petro Canada. The thrust of the book is to argue that Canadians have a choice as to the political and economic environment in which they live, and that they ought to opt for a strong federal presence in political and economic decision making. Whether the book would persuade anybody of this who did not already more than half agree is doubtful, since in the limited space of 200 pages the complexities and inconsistencies of economic and political life are inevitably ignored or glossed over. I will illustrate with three examples.

The claim is made that "the Liberal Party led the country into the branch plant era." (page 10). But both John A. MacDonal and R. B. Bennett raised tariffs in Canada, in part to induce branch plants to locate in Canada from the United States. Branch plant development in Canada is a long-standing continuous process stretching back over 100 years and more. The claim is made that, with rising energy prices, "the shifts in economic power to the west had been accomplished . . . at the direct expense of Ontario . . . and potential manufacturing jobs." (page 65) But whatever was happening to Ontario manufacturing jobs, they were not moving to the west, and Ontario would have to pay as much or more for energy if the west had none to produce and sell. Finally, the claim is made that Canada's main problem in the late 1970's was an international balance of payments problem (page 13), a problem somehow partly caused by an "importer" mentality when it came to manufactured products." (page 145) Whatever problems Canada may have, it is surely confusing to call them balance of payments problems. Nor is Canada especially prone to imports of manufactured products, by international standards: half of the countries in the European Economic Community, for example, import more manufactured goods per person than does Canada.

All in all, the book is of interest, with the chapters that deal with the energy theme (Chapters 1, 6, 7, and 8) being more interesting and easier to read than those dealing with the branch plant phenomenon. (Chapters 2-5).

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*Alasdair M. Sinclair*

***Marx's Social Ontology.*** By Carol C. Gould. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: MIT Press, 1980. Pp. xxvi, 208. Paper, \$5.95, U.S.

Serious attention to Marxist ideas is a hallmark of real intellectual vitality in the modern world. This is especially the case when crises, which have been endemic to our kind of society, erupt and some variation of Marxist thought appears to be the only ideational form to make any sense out of them. We are again living in such a time and Marxism is once more becoming interesting, if not downright fashionable (at least in some academic circles). Always a part of a Marxist revival is an engagement with what Marx, the originator of the outlook, "really meant". The book under review is part of this tradition and within that tradition, it is a good book.

Either because of antipathy to Marx's ideas or to what has happened in his name, the bulk of this genre customarily has various axes to grind. It is to Gould's credit that she means only to understand the fundamentals of his thought, its basic philosophic assumptions and its direction. This is what the concept "ontology" refers to in the book's title since Gould is quite aware that Marx's work is a distinct break with philosophy as it was known before him and therefore with all ontological categories dealing with the absolute essence or nature of things. Marx's philosophy, asserts Gould, is not a speculative quest for final truth, but a guide to scientific understanding in a world of relentless change. In the human sciences, it is the human intervention of rational comprehension into man's eternal quest for control over nature and himself.

The basic text for Gould's articulation of Marx's fundamental categories is the *Grundrisse*, the recently translated opus of his early private notebooks. It is believed by many that in these more informal outpourings of ideas written for himself rather than for publication, Marx reveals some heretofore unknown keys to the wellsprings of his thought. It appears to me that Gould could have understood Marx quite as well without the *Grundrisse*; others before have set down most of her own ideas without the benefit of these notebooks. Be that as it may, Gould's book demonstrates a firm understanding of Marx's presuppositions about the individual, society, labour, property, freedom, and justice, and expresses them in a fashion understandable to even the introductory reader.

While there is very little that is polemical in this quiet, expository book, any work which clarifies Marx's original ideas must explode the miasma of myth and ignorance which surrounds his name. We learn, for example, that Marx was no historical determinist since his very approach to human history precludes the possibility of objective laws. The human agent, albeit in an ensemble of social relations, is the sole determiner of history. We also learn that the central place of economic factors in Marx's theory follows from his assumption that labor and control over its product is a primary human problem and upon its social organization depends the issue of human creativity and human freedom. Moreover, in Gould's rendition of Marx, we see a thinker who does not envisage a future of regimented homogeneity, but one of freely associated individuals working together and apart on projects which produce useful, beautiful things and reproduce themselves. This emphasis on the centrality of work for human life undercuts the prevailing modern imagery of a boring socialist future with nothing to do.

Gould fully realizes that the essential Marx is more than a philosopher; he is also an investigator and critic (Gould sees these as intrinsically and necessarily related in Marx) of modern capitalism, a prophet and political strategist for its transformation. Gould has very little to offer to clarify Marx along these lines. But in a thinker as seminal and still vital as Marx, one whose philosophy was meant to be so eminently political and applicable, it is impossible that even seemingly simple understanding does not lead to the wheels beginning to turn on our contemporary crisis. For renewing this process of understanding, this book is invaluable reading.

*Dalhousie University*

*Herb Gamberg*

***Abortion and Moral Theory.* By L. W. Sumner.** Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1981. \$16.50 U.S. Paper, \$4.95 U.S.

With a great deal of care and clarity, Sumner stakes out and defends a moderate course on abortion policy, not too liberal and not too conservative. He argues that abortion is morally and socially permissible in the early stages of fetal development, but it is wrong and ought to be prohibited in most cases of late fetal development. The critical "threshold" of development is the point at which the fetus acquires sentience, at some time during the second trimester.

His is surely the politically popular position (especially in Canada where moderate policies seem to be generally preferred to any extreme alternatives). While Sumner takes comfort in the common-sense appeal reflected in the popularity of his position, he knows that this is not an adequate justification, and offers comprehensive theoretic support for his view. His methodology and style are flawless.



In the first half of the book, he argues against the alternative extreme views represented by the liberal and conservative positions. He objects to the liberal view on the grounds that it depends upon a foundation of some implicit but unspecified theory of rights, when in fact its proponents are quite unable to provide an adequate rights theory. However, I am not convinced that the liberal view does depend upon a moral theory of rights. The liberal view is that there ought not to be any political constraints on abortion, that is, that there ought to be a legal right to abortion. Such an attitude may derive from a belief in a natural right to autonomy and the moral impropriety of state intervention in such decisions, but it need not. It may also arise from a Kantian or Rawlsian theory which disclaims a more fundamental commitment to rights, or it may arise out of a rule utilitarian social policy about what is best with regard to a controversial social issue like abortion. On the policy level, liberals are committed to a view of political rights, that is, that a state ought to guarantee the political freedom to procure an abortion or not if one chooses, but they are not dependent on a theory of moral rights to support it.

His other principal objection to the liberal position addresses the additional fact that liberals also tend to believe that abortion is in fact morally permissible, since many believe that fetuses do not have full moral standing. Liberals tend to equate moral standing with personhood and personhood with self-consciousness. Sumner finds such arguments unprovable and hence believes the question of personhood a matter for scepticism. Moreover, he believes the liberals are caught in a *reductio ad absurdum*, for if self-consciousness is the morally relevant criterion, newborn infants also lack this property and hence infanticide is permissible. But, liberals who rely on the self-consciousness criterion do not find absurd the conclusion that infants lack full moral status. They do, however, believe that there are other reasons for opposing a liberal policy of infanticide—namely the side-effects (effects on others) of such a policy.

Sumner attacks conservatives for defending an unsupportable natural law theory, even though some conservatives do argue from rule utilitarian grounds (e.g. the “slippery slope” arguments that abortion is the thin-end-of-the-wedge to mass involuntary “euthanasia” and other Nazi-like horrors). Further and more importantly, he argues that the conservative cannot establish any valid moral distinction between abortion and contraception.

In the second half of the book Sumner offers the positive part of his thesis, arguing for his own moderate view of abortion and developing his underlying moral theory, classical utilitarianism. I shall avoid any detailed analysis of his fundamental moral theory, since debates about utilitarianism are so extensive in the literature. I was pleased to see him avoid many of the standard objections by defining his theory carefully, but I am not convinced he resolves all of the deep problems. For example, although he discusses the difficulties of defining the good to be maximized in either subjective or objective terms, he does not really offer any compelling justification for his choice of the problem-laden subjective

approach other than as a rejection of the problem-laden objective approach. I think he is too optimistic in his expectation that large scale social decision-making can be handled by generalizing from personal experience.

He chooses to resolve the problems of choosing act or rule utilitarianism by opting for a mixed view which directs us to choose whichever approach results in the most utility. While it is always nice to have things both ways, it is necessary (as Sumner argues against other intuitionist views) ultimately to rank one's moral principles. He sidesteps this issue, though he seems to be committed to an act utilitarian theory which allows appeal to rules of thumb for social purposes. He does not deal with the many paradoxes, such as the Prisoner's Dilemma, associated with an act utilitarian approach. Nonetheless, Sumner is correct to offer a developed moral theory as a basis for his position, and while his theory is more problematic than he reveals, there is no trouble-free alternative he might have chosen.

The keystone of his position on abortion is his analysis of the moral status of the fetus, which, he argues necessarily reflects the gradual developmental pattern of the fetus. Arguing that the only significant criterion of moral standing for any purpose is sentience, he distinguishes between fetuses according to whether they have acquired this property yet or not. As a result, all beings with sentience have moral standing; in fact, they all have equal moral standing. And yet Sumner also wants to claim that human fetuses have a very privileged moral status relative to their very limited sort of sentience. In the final chapter he tries to distinguish sentient fetuses from pre-sentient fetuses (and also from pre-conception potential fetuses) on the one hand, and from equally or more sentient creatures on the other (fish, chicks, rats, cat fetuses, etc.). What he offers for this job is a very *ad hoc* argument. In order to block his slide into liberalism, Sumner makes two suspicious moves: first, he invokes without proof a rule utilitarian claim that his policy has better social consequences than the alternatives. More questionably yet, he also argues that once sentient, a fetus is to be evaluated in terms of its lifetime potential for enjoyment and not its current ability. This move is purely *ad hoc*. If potential is relevant, there seems to be no consistent reason for excluding the potential of early or even yet to be conceived fetuses. If not, other animal rights are far more demanding than fetuses; we must take seriously the equal moral standing of all sentient creatures, and then there are surely more pressing abuses to address than protecting the relatively tiny number of human sentient fetuses that are or might be aborted. While Sumner does note that we should opt for vegetarianism, he does not seem to appreciate just how complicated our dealings with animals are, for they surely go far beyond exploiting them as a food or research source.

It is no wonder Sumner wants potential experience to count for those who already have moral standing and not for those yet to acquire it. But if potential experience really has moral significance, it surely ought to count for all beings with such potential; but then we would be pushed to an

extreme conservative position which Sumner finds even less hospitable than the liberal one.

In sum, I do not find Sumner's arguments ultimately convincing and doubt the truth of his conclusion, but I do find the book well-written and well-argued. It is a significant addition to an expanding literature on a continuing controversy in our society.

*Dalhousie University*

*Susan Sherwin*

***Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought.*** By Jean Bethke Elshtain. Princeton: Princeton University press, 1981. Pp. xviii, 379. \$25.00 U.S. Paper, \$6.95 U.S.

Elshtain's book is a very ambitious undertaking. Not only does the author review over 2,000 years of philosophical writings and a diverse variety of modern feminist works, she also attempts to delineate the structure of a future world in which sexual equality and respect for all human beings are the cornerstones. Given such a large task it is to be expected that Elshtain has had to condense arguments and cannot give full attention to the subtleties of all the theorists' positions which she considers. For some readers, therefore, Elshtain will be seen to be giving a superficial account of how the relations between women and men have been considered and the differential evaluation placed on the sexes, and this will detract from the value of the book in their eyes. I think, however, Elshtain's book is a valuable contribution to the debate about the status of women and men in society precisely because it does attempt to evaluate a whole tradition of thought from a particular point of view and in doing so gives the reader a better sense of continuity and of the points at which new and often contradictory ideas were entered into the discourse.

The major part of Elshtain's book is a consideration of Western philosophers' and political theorists' discussions of women's place in the world. Elshtain undertakes this review of previous treatises through an analysis of what she terms the public and private spheres of life. The author argues that the fundamental division within the organization of society and, therefore, an issue to which all the philosophers she discusses have given attention, is between the two spheres of life she calls public and private. Elshtain is essentially taking a common-sense definition of these terms seeing the public world as the area in which politics and the maintenance of the state are activities undertaken by men largely to the exclusion of women. Conversely, the private world is characterized by the household and the family and is the domain in which women predominate. It is Elshtain's contention, and a thesis which she argues convincingly, that the relationship between the public and private worlds is the crucial issue in determining women's status in the eyes of previous political thinkers. For some, the evaluation placed on the public sphere as opposed to the private accounts for their attitudes towards women; for others, the evaluation

placed on the sexes explains why one sphere is considered more important than another. The fact that Elshtain analyses the works of the theorists from this particular perspective gives a coherence to the book and puts the debate above the level of simply reviewing what has been said about women by some of the great minds throughout the centuries.

Elshtain gives the reader a clear discussion of the public and private spheres of life as seen by philosophers from Plato and Aristotle, through Christian theologians, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Mill, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx, and a few others. There will undoubtedly be disagreement over Elshtain's interpretation of some of these writings. For example, is Rousseau a misogynist as some have argued, or a reluctant proponent of women maintaining the private sphere as a condition for the survival of a humane society, as Elshtain argues? And, similarly, did Marx resolve the dispute between the public and private worlds by absorbing the latter into the former or not? But, because Elshtain keeps her arguments focussed around a central theme she brings a clarity to the discussion which is not always found in the treatment of male and female relations, and the reader has the satisfaction of knowing exactly where the author stands. From here we are able to enter into a reasoned debate on the issues presented and perhaps move our understanding of the questions forward.

The second part of Elshtain's book is predominantly a critique of the writings by major feminist theorists of the past twenty years. Since serious criticism of feminist writings has not been too common, Elshtain's contribution in this regard is most welcome. As the author mentions in the introduction, however, some may find it incongruous to discuss the writings of apparently minor theorists in the same manner as those whose works have been with us for centuries and who have undoubtedly influenced the course of our societies. Nevertheless, feminists have initiated and sustained a critique of our social organization to an extent found in very few other current-interest groups. We must, therefore, consider their writings in order to understand where our present views of the public and private spheres stand and the visions held by some for the future.

Feminists have been plagued by attempts to categorize the women's movement and the writings associated with it into standard political terminology. Elshtain's categorization of radical, liberal, Marxist and psychoanalytic feminists will no doubt appear problematic and unsatisfactory to some. As an attempt to illustrate the diversity within feminist writings, however, I think it has virtue. Too often feminist concerns have been dismissed because critics could point to one particular theorist or proponent and ignore the range of ideas which must be included under the rubric 'feminist'. Anyone who reads Elshtain's book will get a trenchant analysis of a variety of feminist theorists and should no longer have any illusions about the diversity of current feminist thought. Within her review, Elshtain discusses in particular the writings of Firestone, Brownmiller, Daly, Friedan, Rowbotham, Mitchell, Dinnerstein and Chodorow. Those familiar with feminist writings will realize that these authors have written books for very different audiences and hardly at all

from the point of view of political theorists. Nevertheless, without straining our credulity, Elshtain is able to analyze these writings within her public and private theme.

While Elshtain maintains a reasonably dispassionate discussion in the earlier part of the book, her own biases and preferences intrude to a far greater extent in her analysis of recent feminists' writings. This is problematic to the extent that Elshtain's discussions and conclusions are not always well grounded in the research available on male and female relations or the rearing of children, for instance. Rather, we are given Elshtain's opinions with only minimal and selected supporting evidence. While the author criticizes feminist writers for not working from a set of basic moral ideas, she in turn will be seen to fall short in failing to show reasonable support for the family life that she considers superior to all others. In particular, I find her discussion of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic feminists problematic. It is unclear, for instance, why Elshtain attaches so much importance to the psychoanalytic approach when many of the arguments she wishes to make could be supported by more acceptable research within the social sciences. In fact, her arguments are at their weakest when she moves her analysis into the realm of psychology and the family.

Elshtain's own attempt to draft a vision for our future, I think, will disappoint most readers. Perhaps because she indicates throughout that she will attempt to draw together the views of the established Western philosophers and the recent feminist writers to produce a new way of looking at the old questions and a new vision of the future, we are expecting her to deliver more than is reasonable. But Elshtain's views and suggestions are not new. Essentially, she is arguing for a reaffirmation of the private sphere and its increased valuation in society. While on the one hand her suggestions can be seen as realistic and as in tune with the *status quo*, on the other, her views may be regarded as mundane and lacking in vision.

Despite these shortcomings, the book is a very welcome addition to the literature on women's place in society. It is not an easy book to read since it assumes a fair degree of familiarity with the writings of the theorists discussed. It is, however, a very articulate presentation of views about the relations between the public and private spheres of life and should spur further discussion not only of past theories but also about our future directions.

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Susan M. Clark

***Daniel Defoe's Moral and Rhetorical Ideas.* By Robert James Merrett.** Victoria, B.C.: University of Victoria, 1980. Pp. 112. Paper, \$4.25.

This important work casts much light upon the ideological conceptions of Daniel Defoe and their impact on the style and content of his literary



work. Merrett brings out very successfully the dominance of religious ideas in Defoe's work, and shows that these themes do not simply underpin the philosophical and moral aspects of his writings; rather, they serve to illuminate at every stage, the arguments that are advanced. Aside from illustrating the role of these religious ideas, Merrett also indicates the literary methods by which Defoe interwove religious and social ideas. Having established this relationship, Merrett uses it to interpret Defoe's presentation of political, social and religious issues.

This analytical approach is a great success and helps to broaden the understanding of much of Defoe's work. The book is well written, closely argued and draws on a comprehensive knowledge of Defoe's works. Many fruitful comparisons are made. For example that of Robinson Crusoe and the Earl of Pembroke (p. 87), is a very interesting one, and is used to make an important point about Defoe's conception of society.

The principal drawback with the book is that it fails to relate adequately Defoe's ideas and works to developments in the period. For example, there is no real attempt to compare Defoe with contemporary writers whose works were similarly infused with a strong providential and religious ideology and yet who arrived at totally different conclusions when they considered political, religious and social topics. Recent work by Mark Goldie on Tory political and religious thought after 1688 could have been turned to good use here. In addition, because of the absence of a consideration of the political background, the degree to which some of Defoe's political works can only be described as impractical fantasies is not analysed. For instance, his suggestion in *The Succession to the Crown of England, Consider'd* that the Crown be given to the Earl of Dalkeith was, at the best, bizarre. Despite these caveats there is no doubt that Merrett's work is an important contribution to literary studies, and it can be hoped that he will go on to produce a longer study of Defoe's works.

University of Durham

Jeremy Black

***Flames Across the Border, 1813-1814.* By Pierre Berton. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981. Pp. xiv, 492. \$24.95 (\$29.95 deluxe).**

On the dust jacket of this volume there are brief quotes, both favorable, from the *New York Times Book Review* and the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*. In my review (*Dalhousie Review*, vol. 60 no. 3, Autumn 1980) of the first volume of this study of the War of 1812, I said the book "should but probably will not be much noticed in the United States." I am pleased that there has been some notice given to it; the second volume deserves the same notice, perhaps even more. I hope that the precedent set by the one-volume paperback edition of *The National Dream/The Last Spike* will be followed for these two volumes.

In that earlier review I speculated as to whether Berton "will show Canada as inept and the U.S. in as good a light as they are shown in



reverse order in this volume." Readers can be assured that he does in fact treat both sides with fairness, pointing out the indecisions and blunders that made this conflict such a useless one. His decision to omit any discussion of the Battle of New Orleans may annoy American readers. Similarly his lack of discussion of any effect of the war in the Maritimes may upset some Canadians.

Berton suggests that the real losers in the war were the Indians. His treatment of this group is sympathetic throughout. In fact Tecumseh emerges as one of the true heroes of the story. In connection with the Battle of the Thames, at which Tecumseh was killed, Berton gets confused in his geography. He refers to the forks of the Thames near Chatham. The forks of the Thames are generally considered to be in what is now London, Ontario. Obviously he is referring to the union of McGregor's Creek and the Thames. But few histories have as many clear maps or are so carefully put in their geographical setting as Berton's.

The author claims this work "is not intended primarily as a military or political history" but rather "a social history." To this reviewer the book is in fact military history. There are a few occasions when the war is put in a broader context and its effect on future economic factors considered such as his excellent section on the importance of Michilimackinac and the future of the fur trade. In general, however, there is little that would make the volume social history in a broad sense. There is virtually no attempt to put the struggle for the border in the broader context of the European struggle of which it is a part.

In the concluding pages of the work, Berton writes: "Men will write that the War of 1812 was the making of the United States: for the first time she was taken seriously in Europe; that it was also the making of Canada: her people were taught pride through a common resistance to the invaders." And he adds; "The war helped set the two countries on different courses. National characteristics were evolving: American ebullience, Canadian reserve." While these conclusions may be valid for Canada and Canadians, many Americans would consider such statements gross overgeneralizations. It is best perhaps for Berton to interpret the meaning of the War of 1812 for Canadians and leave the evaluation of its importance for Americans to the latter.

This is not to say the book should be ignored in the U.S. It should be read and be read carefully. Too few Americans understand the importance of this struggle to their northern neighbour.

Once again Pierre Berton and his staff, especially Barbara Sears, have done thorough research. All will be grateful if Berton continues to produce this kind of good reading for the general public. It ranks with *Klondike*, *The National Dream* and *The Last Spike* as enjoyable informative history, often with new perspectives.