

Book Reviews

***The Family Romance.* By Eli Mandel. Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1986. Pp. 259, \$12.95.**

Eli Mandel has had an interesting double career. He is not only one of our foremost poets, but is also considered to be one of our most perceptive literary critics. This recent collection of critical essays can only enhance his reputation in that second category.

It is a book which is important for several reasons; three of the major ones I will outline here. Firstly, in two of the pieces, Mandel provides us with some acute insights into his own creative process and helps us to understand the motives and workings of a contemporary poet. Secondly, in essays such as "The Death of the Long Poem" and "Strange Loops", he adeptly describes the present position of literature, the "impossibility", as he terms it, of modernism, and the problematic nature of post-structuralist theory. In this, he provides us with a series of profound speculations on our in-between state, that terrain of creative absence that deconstruction has formed, showing as well, how Canadian literature has developed within this process. And thirdly, Mandel has introduced into Canadian critical thought the Freudianism of Harold Bloom, whose brilliant and challenging work, *The Anxiety of Influence*, haunts (favourably) many of these essays.

As already suggested, Mandel's discussions cover a wide range of topics, but for the purpose of this review, I wish to comment on two ontological questions, two problems of identity which *The Family Romance* raises. One relates to the author's character; the other, to the nation's.

The most moving pieces in this book are "Auschwitz and Poetry" (a daring title since one would have expected "Auschwitz and Silence") and "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin". Both are autobiographical, both about origins. Each attempts to reveal the process by which a poem is written: the first, through recollection and description; the second from inside the very process of writing, through diary and journal. "Auschwitz and Poetry" is extraordinary in that it not only attempts to account for the origin of the poem under consideration ("On the 25th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz: Memorial Services, Toronto, January 25,

1970"), but also contains a section about the genesis of the poet, his primary "motive for metaphor."

In this section, Mandel presents himself as a young man who has recently returned from the Second World War. Before him lies the awesome task of visiting his aunt and uncle to tell them of the last moments he spent with his cousin, their soldier son, who was killed in Normandy. Mandel writes: "I was the last of the family to see him alive," thus presenting the poet-to-be as a witness, a survivor of war, the one who in Eli Wiesel's words, must "suffer for not having suffered." It is not absurd, in this instance, to think of Mandel's cousin as the poet's projected other, his dead double, his ghost image, and, since poems are litanies against death, as the impetus for the first poem Mandel is soon to write. During his odyssey home, Mandel stops over at the house of his dead cousin's sister, where, "On an oppressively hot day, alone in the house, moody, depressed, I picked up a book ..." What he reads are words by Thomas Mann, relating the notion of suffering to creativity: "certain attainments of the soul and intellect are impossible without disease." That night, Mandel writes his first poem, "Estevan, Saskatchewan", which begins with the line: "A small town bears the mark of Cain." Cain and Abel; the dark doubles; Mandel and his cousin.

If Harold Bloom is correct in believing that the poet's calling arises from two death anxieties — the fear of physical death as well as a possible poetic death — then Mandel's account is supportive for he has seen his own death in the form of his cousin and in taking up the book has taken on the long struggle with the giant literary precursors, some of whom he goes on to name: Dostoyevsky, Kafka, Joyce. The account also reveals something about the connection between repression and poetry which is pre-figured here. For why was the day oppressive? Why was the poet-to-be depressed? What did Mandel ever say to his aunt and uncle? This critical self-examination, the title of which contains the connective, *AUSCHWITZ AND POETRY* (my italics), a title which will prove prophetic when we examine its successor piece, begins with this very theme of repression by calling itself an account of "an unsayable poem, a series of inevitable evasions." Poetry then as an evasion, a swerving, a way of intimating what cannot be said, a way of speaking around. On the personal level there is Mandel, the survivor of his cousin. And on the larger historical scale, there is Mandel, who was spared the Shoah, the attempted annihilation of Jewry. The technical problem Mandel poses is: how does one truly write about an event like Auschwitz, especially if one was not a direct witness? I quote his eloquent response as to the resolution:

I cannot recall to the day when it occurred to me I had been given a solution ... There was a way to write the poem to be thought of as "Auschwitz." It would be a series of displacements: structurally, grammatically, imagistically, psycho-logically. It would be a camp poem by not being a camp poem. Stuttering. All theatricality. All frantic posturing. All pointing to a resolution that would not be a resolution, a total ambiguity in which two different moments (Toronto 1970 Estevan

1930) dissolved into one another seamlessly, becoming at that instant another time, the unimaginable place of the killing ground itself.

“Auschwitz and Poetry” ends with the now established poet visiting the Dachau death camp and prophesying that he will one day “be writing about this moment.” Which leads us to the successor piece, “The Long Poem: Journal and Origin”, where the poet returns through his words, where the prophecy is fulfilled. Here Mandel is flying to Russia, returning to an earlier origin than Estevan, namely, to the home of his father and his father’s father. On his return trip he will visit Dachau and Munich, where he will witness the carnival of Fasching and will be told by a fellow Jewish writer that the ritual is called fasching after “sticks, bundles of sticks. As he fasches, in ‘fascist’. The sticks were used to beat the old Jews who were driven through the lines of revellers.” This revelation leads to the epiphany of the piece. Mandel writes:

I think of the theatrical carnival of fasching in Munich, and the ultimate theatre of cruelty nearby, in a little German town, and of all the old Jews whipped through holiday streets, of the Dnieper and Mother Russia where the same pogroms were acted out, and I wonder at what dark impulse took me one day onto that Aeroflot to the Soviet World so that I could see its shadowy images and the ancient play acted still one more time.

He then provides this conclusion, a quotation from Freud, which, given the passage that precedes it, strikes the reader as dreadful in its irony: “instinctual repression (is) a measure of the level of civilization that has been reached.”

Mandel has always displayed an uncanniness in his ability to relate the general social-political malaise to his own inner drama. This is what accounts for the power of his book *Life Sentence*, a collection of poems and diary entries whose theme is betrayal, experienced on a personal level and perceived in the wider political sphere. But with the two pieces discussed above, it seems to me that Mandel has proceeded deeper into his uncanniness for he has arrived at the terrifying probability that repression is not only at the source of art, but also at the source of historical cruelty. Hence, *Auschwitz and poetry*. It is a position arrived at by others, no doubt, but in these autobiographical pieces we find it expressed so powerfully: “the theatrical carnival of fasching and the ultimate theatre of cruelty nearby,” referring simultaneously to the Dachau camp and to Antonin Artaud’s *Theatre of Cruelty*, an attempt to totally transform modern drama. And here we must recall the quotation I provided from the first piece where Mandel says his poem on Auschwitz will be “all theatrically.” To complete this ironic circle, what Mandel likes to call a “strange loop”, we might point out that it is the awareness of connections such as those we have just described that to a large extent has undermined the project of Western civilization and has led to the very crisis in literature that Mandel’s book grapples with.

I wish to move on to my second question of identity which is national in scope and which arises from a comment Mandel makes in his preface. But first, a brief synopsis of Harold Bloom's theory, which, as stated before, informs much of this book. According to Bloom, every new poet must mis-read, mis-interpret his strong poet predecessors if his work is to appear unique and if he is to establish his own place in the poetic arena. To use a biblical metaphor — each poet is a Jacob, wrestling with the Angel who can be seen alternatively as the angel of death or as the strong poet father, until he (the poet) is victorious and given a new name, a prophetic name, and takes his rightful place within the tribe of poets. Literature then, is inter-textual; poems are re-visions of earlier poems. This is why literary influence is felt as anxiety-provoking. No poet appears out of nowhere. Every true poet's strength depends upon his having struggled with his strong father poets. Which is why young poets often sound like the already celebrated poets of a previous generation; they have not yet learned to subvert their influences. It is my contention that this theory of poetry has a special meaning for Canadian culture.

In his preface to the collection under review, Mandel comes close to apologizing for his use of Bloom's theory:

... there are other problems raised by this sort of approach to a literary history and some sort of justification should be offered. There is the peculiarity that once again an approach claiming insight into Canadian writing finds its origins in non-Canadian sources. It is tainted by an old dilemma, colonialism.

To my knowledge, Bloom, an American, nowhere in his writings expresses that particular sort of unease felt by Mandel, though he makes extensive use of European thinkers and theorists to develop and apply his critical stance. There are, I think, two reasons for this. Firstly, Bloom perceives his critical roots as being largely French since the father of deconstruction theory is Jacques Derrida. This is in itself a mis-reading since Derrida is, I believe, originally Algerian and *his* theories are derived for the most part from German thinkers. But Americans, historically, like their revolutions, either political or cultural, to originate in the land of the stormed Bastille. Secondly, and more importantly, Bloom has his own, that is, American deconstructionist ghost to support his vision — namely, Emerson.

Mandel's unease can be explained by the fact that there is no comparable ghost in Canadian letters. As Earle Birney put it in his poem "Can Lit": "it's only by our lack of ghosts/ we're haunted." I would alter that to say that we have our ghosts all right — Bliss Carman's, Charles G.D. Roberts's, Lampman's — but unfortunately they cannot compete with the terrible presences of Melville, Poe, Whitman. In fact, the true meaning of colonialism in its cultural sense now becomes clear: the swallowing of one nation's ghosts by the more powerful ghosts of another. But modern Canadian poets must be commended, for if the poets of Birney's generation came upon a scene lacking in strong precursors, that is surely no

longer the case. The fact is, that to the present generation of Canadian poets, Purdy, Layton, Atwood, Ondaatje, *et al.* have all proved to be formidable presences. And whether these poets chose as their models American or European influences seems to me to be beside the point. As Mandel states: "where there was emptiness, there are now words."

Yet our concern over the "emptiness", our obsession with the metaphysical absence, what Northrop Frye terms "the wilderness", persists. If Bloom is correct in seeing modern creativity as a problem of the anxiety of influence, a question of who is being influenced by whom and how to wrest a name, an identity, from this struggle, then it seems to me that Mandel has performed an essential task in injecting this critical influence (influenza) into our literary bloodstream. I believe it can provide us with a more dynamic reading of our own literature, as evidenced by Mandel's brilliant essay on the novels of Hugh MacLennan, which, of all his considerations of other writers, applies Bloom's type of thinking most strenuously.

As a postscript I will say that it now seems to me that we Canadians have displayed a fine uncanniness in our relentless obsession with this question of identity. All along we may have been acting the role of deconstruction's true masters of absence. "A Canadian," wrote Irving Layton, "is someone who goes from one coast to the other gravely asking 'What is a Canadian?'" A statement tinged with sarcasm but bespeaking its own, perhaps unintended seriousness. For in our late arriving, in our coming after the fact, in our struggles with "colonial mentality", who, more than we, know the anxiety of influence?

Sheridan College

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***Carl: Portrait of a Painter.* By George Johnston. Moonbeam, Ontario: Penumbra Press, 1986. Pp. 136. \$15.95.**

At one point in this book George Johnston describes Carl Schaefer's work table: "Besides the usual artist's paraphernalia — brushes, paints, pens, inks, knives, erasers, and so on — it held hundreds of squirrelled items ... There were collections of bells, knives and fishing gear ... birds' nests, a pair of blue, wire-rimmed spectacles, a wire basket, pieces of wood, stones and other things..." In several ways Schaefer's table and Johnston's book about him make accurate, mutual analogies. Both are rich happenstances, organized by curiosity, energy, quirkiness, patience, respect and affection. Both show exact attention to all that is given.

Most of the book consist of a chronologically arranged sequence of paraphrased or quoted letters written by Schaefer to Johnston during the last thirty years of half a century of friendship which began in 1934 when Schaefer was 31 and Johnston 21. To these letters have been added

explanation, anecdote and commentary. The book's structure, while it may seem rambling and unselective at times, allows Schaefer to speak with characteristic forthrightness about the many concerns, artistic and otherwise, he has had at any one time. It also allows Johnston to edit and write with characteristic self-effacement. As some reviewers have already made clear, the result is not a book the impatient, joyless or dogmatic will admire. But there is a principle of form (perhaps of morality) at work within it. Near the book's end, Johnston notes that "how Schaefer paints has been at the service of what he paints." To derive structure from subject in this way, rather than the opposite, may at present be unfashionable, but it accounts for the successes in *Carl* and describes Johnston's own way as an editor. It is one which has precedent. Think of Walton, for instance, showing Hooker "with a Book in hand (it was the *Odes of Horace*)..., tending his small allotment of sheep in a common field..." It is also Schaefer's way, for Johnston is right to see in his paintings and prints a loyalty to the plenitude of particular detail, to the instress of its identity, not just its external accident.

Stubbornly, with little critical or public support until very recent years, Schaefer has created work which does not quite fit into the categories of classification devised for Canadian painting. On the one hand he has rejected the "self imitation", the "splash and dribble" of abstraction. On the other he has questioned the limitations of high realism. During the late 1940's, for instance, Schaefer felt Colville's work "lacked passion". There is no indication in *Carl* that he has changed his mind since.

If Schaefer's allegiances must be found, they are really with mid-twentieth century, British, neo-romantic artists working in the tradition of Blake, Calvert and Palmer. Schaefer names them in a letter written in 1956: Paul Nash, John Piper, Graham Sutherland. Nash's dictum, "Go back to Nature for some fresh definition of order and simplicity," is one which Schaefer writes "has been with me through many years of painting."

Among the joys of *Carl* are those passages in his letters where Schaefer converts Nash's dictum into fact: "Those grain heads, mostly barley are so graceful with their long beards turning around and the long spear — like leaves, dry and brittle... the more I look at single images, the more I want to convey the idea that every image has its own special environment. I think that's good, don't you? And all bathed in God's own light, yellow, white, orange, green, blue and violet." Nine months later, in November 1962, Schaefer's subject is a "great grisly Scotch thistle with spiky heads and angry dry leaves... It's hard work doing these intricate drawings, at one time I'd simply do a generalized thing, but now I feel it is not as simple as all that. I want to tell all I know and see and feel about these things, like the dead leaves... damn near drove me nuts, but somewhere in the process I lose all consciousness and the pain is no more; it's always the fear that I will not succeed in exposing the truth."

In the only other book about him, one he dislikes, put out by the Gage publishing company in 1977, Schaefer says: "I'm frightened as hell when I

sit down to do a painting." Every artist, in whatever medium, feels the same premonitory fear, or something is wrong. Schaefer's honour is to have felt that fear, faced it down and created. The same honour is also Johnston's, not only in *Carl* but elsewhere, in his poems and translations. To adapt and re-direct one of the final sentences in *Carl*, Johnston's book, like many of Schaefer's pictures, shows "intensity, drama, and a haunting expression as though on a face, an awareness of something other, passing."

Nova Scotia Agricultural College

Peter Sanger

This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791.
By Neil MacKinnon. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986. Pp. xii, 231. \$27.50.

that devoted band,
 Who, when rebellion reared its impious hand,
 Spite of her faults, to Albion's standard true,
 Fought 'neath its folds, till fate her power o'erthrew;
 Then sought amidst Acadia's wilds to claim
 A Briton's feelings, and a Briton's name.

This is the way the Loyalists who emigrated to Nova Scotia in 1783-84 are described in Joseph Howe's *Acadia*, a poem written in 1832-33, half a century after the event. Of course Howe was naturally biased toward idealization of the Loyalists. His own father, John Howe, had actively supported the British cause and had been one of the small vanguard of Loyalists to settle in Nova Scotia before the great migration of 1783-84. Yet this conception of the Loyalists, with other flattering components such as the idea that they were mainly gentry and represented the cream of American society, persisted on this side of the border long after Howe's time. As Neil MacKinnon observes in his Preface to this study of the Loyalist migration, however, "Because of its excessive hagiography the Canadian loyalist tradition found itself easy prey for twentieth-century scholarship, and the loyalist myth of elitism, their motives for leaving the United States, and even their claims of sacrifice came under strong attack." That frontal and sometimes indiscriminate assault upon various myths about the Loyalists has served its purpose and has prepared the way for more balanced efforts in the field, efforts which focus upon a more objective examination of the Loyalists free from both the old hagiography and the modern tendency to defamation. Although *This Unfriendly Soil* may be seen as yet another debunking of the Loyalist myth, that is not its prime motivation or purpose.

Neil MacKinnon's book is a forthright, dispassionate study of the Loyalist refugees who flooded into Nova Scotia at the end of the Ameri-

can Revolution. It is solidly based upon a wide variety of documentary evidence, and the evidence is carefully weighed for bias and prejudice, for special pleading and justification, for the unwitting or deliberate sophistry of the particular points of view and emotional preoccupations expressed by the Loyalists and the individuals, groups, and official bodies affecting their lives. One of the outstanding aspects of the book is its author's grasp of the complexity of the subject and especially of the interplay of human fallibility in the actors of the drama who have left some record of their actions or opinions.

This Unfriendly Soil begins with the evacuation of Loyalists from the American colonies in 1783 and ends with their position by the end of the decade, by which time many had struck down roots in the province but many others had given up and returned to the United States or gone elsewhere. Between these lines of demarcation the author discusses several aspects of their experience: their arrival in waves during 1783 and 1784; their provisioning and mustering; their early progress as new settlers; their heterogeneity in background, places of origin, class status, and motivation; their varied attitudes to Nova Scotia, and to Nova Scotians, to the local and British governments, and to their fellow Loyalists; their presence in the Legislative Assembly elected late in 1785; their role in the economy. One chapter, "Reactions to the Loyalist," shifts the focus to examine what others—the British government, the local authorities, the pre-Loyalists—thought of the Loyalists.

One of the most interesting parts of the study attempts to answer the question "Who were these people?" The author calls his survey of their identities a "fragmentary profile" but nevertheless manages to convey a good sense of how complex a satisfactory answer to the question must be. Of the 20,000 or so "refugees" who came to Nova Scotia, the majority "had to leave their former homes because of their commitment to the crown," and most of these were "true loyalists, supporters of a losing side and casualties of a civil war" (57). Nevertheless, thousands more were not "loyalists" at all by the terms of this definition. Some non-loyalists had posed as needy refugees in order to get out of New York or had feigned strong allegiance to the Crown while really looking for economic advancement; some were regular troops disbanded in Nova Scotia; some were crass opportunists who had no intention of remaining in Nova Scotia but merely grasped the opportunity of free transportation and provisions; others were immigrants from Britain seeking to take advantage of the bounties being handed out to Loyalists, and they were often accompanied by indigent young people hoping to improve their lot in this rapidly growing society. The motivations and the conditions of genuine Loyalists also varied widely. Some had prospered during the war and, though known for their adherence to the Crown and so forced into exile, were able to bring much of their wealth to Nova Scotia; others were prosperous Americans who, having kept a low profile during the war, could have remained at home but chose to move for economic rather than patriotic reasons; many others, however, indeed thousands, had lost

everything in dedicated support of a losing cause and were entirely dependent on government support. In effect, "the motives of these immigrants, loyalist and non-loyalist, ranged all the way from pathetic necessity to naked opportunism" (57).

Another aspect of the question of identity, the social status of the Loyalists, emerges as less complex. The old myth of gentility is as convincingly dismissed in this study as in Esther Clark Wright's 1955 examination of the New Brunswick Loyalists: "the elite of prerevolutionary American society did not take up residence en masse in Nova Scotia" (62). Of course there were "people of stature" among the newcomers, but they made up a small proportion of the whole. Professor MacKinnon draws his evidence from the provision lists, the size of land grants, contemporary reports, and available lists of occupations. His conclusion is what one would expect: "The [Loyalist] communities were for the most part cross-sections of the American social pyramid, and the weight of numbers existed at the base of that pyramid, in the lower and lower-middle classes" (65).

A few aspects of the book are open to mild criticism. The title, a phrase used by a Shelburne Loyalist, Gideon White, when describing the thin and rocky soil around that town, is perhaps more colourful than felicitous or apt as a metaphor for the whole Loyalist experience as described by the author. The settlement of the town of Shelburne as a potential metropolis was certainly ill-calculated; its soil was indeed unfriendly for such a grandiose purpose. However, many Loyalists, as the author demonstrates, went or were sent to soils that were richer, actually or figuratively. Important though it was, the settlement of Shelburne was too bizarre to be typical. Another point is a matter of style: now and then one notices awkward repetitions of information, authorial or quoted, which are a little jarring (see, for example, Benjamin Marston's remark on pp. 81 and 84, and another on pp. 63 and 85). Then, although one can sympathize with the scholarly fatigue that probably led to the author's declaration that "It would be of little value to list all the material read in preparing this study" (225), many readers will hardly agree. The "Note on Sources" is perhaps sufficient for specialists in the field, but the book deserves a much wider circulation, and other readers would find a full bibliography definitely useful.

Yet these are relatively minor matters. This *Unfriendly Soil* is on the whole an admirable account of the Loyalists' first few years in this province; it should be regarded as required reading for anyone interested in the Loyalist migration.

***"They're Still Women After All": the Second World and Canadian Womanhood.* By Ruth Roach Pierson. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986. Pp. 301. Paper, \$14.95.**

In this collection of essays exploring various facets of women's experiences during the Second World War, Ruth Pierson demolishes the myth that the war liberated women from their inferior social status and promoted equality of employment between men and women. Although women took on some unaccustomed roles in war industries and as military personnel, it was for the duration only. Their subordination and femininity were carefully cultivated to keep them in their proper place.

Pierson explores a government policy which earmarked women as a vast reserve army of labour to be recruited as needed for both paid and voluntary work. While the appeal to women's patriotic duty succeeded in mobilizing the volunteers who entertained the troops, sold war bonds, collected salvage, and helped out on the farms, different incentives were needed to secure sufficient full-time and part-time workers for the factories and the traditional areas of women's work, especially the service sector, which were depleted by transfers to war industries. Both tax concessions and child care (in Ontario and Quebec) were organized to make work more attractive to women, particularly after the supply of young, single women was exhausted and married women became the target.

The government also supported job training at the end of the depression and during and after the war. Before the war women were confined to training in domestic fields but by 1942, with the creation of the National Selective Service, they were given access to training in a wide range of non-traditional trades. Although Rosie the Riveter sometimes worked side by side with the men in aircraft and munitions factories, she had been trained more narrowly and more expeditiously than her male workmates. Usually women were directed into feminized industrial tasks requiring patience and precision for which they were thought to be ideally suited and for which they were paid less than men engaged in parallel work. "Inevitably," wrote the *Labour Gazette*, "this type of training produces people who can only perform one job and are lacking in a wider range of skill." (73) After the war, job training for women resumed an entirely traditional focus, banishing them from the shop floor to the kitchen floor. Whatever gains had been made during the war were lost.

The other major focus of the book is on women's experience in the military, and more specifically in the Canadian Women's Army Corps (CWAC). The mobilization of women, other than nursing sisters, into the forces was a new departure in Canada and it was strictly a war-time measure, all three women's services being disbanded in 1946. The CWACs played non-combatant roles: there was never any question of deploying women in the front lines and even home guard defence duties were avoided. Although women performed a wide range of jobs within the military corps, they were clustered in female areas, seventy percent of

them being clerks. Their pay, benefits, and access to promotion in the structure of command remained inferior to those of soldiers. However unequal the policies of the military may have seemed towards women, they were nonetheless ahead of public opinion: Canadians were not particularly anxious to see their womenfolk in uniform. The military assumed the fear was de-feminization and they therefore set out to glamorize the female service corps and entice recruits with attractive uniforms, silk stockings, frilly underwear and make-up. Once enlisted, women encountered "the double bind of the double standard." (214) Their morality was impugned through a vicious whispering campaign which tended to confirm the undesirability of military service for women on the ground of their sexual independence, the most extreme abnegation of femininity. The sexual promiscuity of servicewomen, vastly overexaggerated though it was, sometimes led to pregnancy or VD. The control of venereal diseases in the military was an open insult to servicewomen who were not only denied equal access to prophylaxis with servicemen but were also implicitly vilified in male educational propaganda when "easy" women were held totally responsible for transmitting VD.

The essays in this well-conceived volume, some of which have been published before, are in effect a study of wartime propaganda — both how it affected women and how it used women. The copious illustrations reinforce this theme. The more heroic aspects of women's war work, particularly as nursing sisters, are ignored. And no attempt is made through oral history to find out how women themselves felt about being mobilized, patronized, and then fired. Perhaps if there were any feminist voices they were effectively silenced by the weight of the war machine. Patriarchy emerged unscathed at the end of the war and the war-weary wives/mothers/homemakers were not unwilling to relinquish the additional responsibilities they had assumed. Canadian women returned to the home and did not enter the paid workforce in wartime proportions again until 1966.

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Judith Fingard

***Justice Denied: The Law Versus Donald Marshall.* By Michael Harris. Toronto: MacMillan, 1986. Pp. xiv, 405. \$24.95.**

Donald Marshall, like Alfred Dreyfus, like Sacco and Vanzetti, is the subject of a case which has outgrown the man himself. As the renewed capital punishment debate drags on in Canada, Donald Marshall has become shorthand for the most compelling of all abolitionist arguments: that an innocent man may be hanged. In Nova Scotia, Donald Marshall has given (not lent) his name to a major judicial inquiry which will examine the most fundamental questions of the conduct of criminal justice proceedings in the province.

Who is the person behind the name? A ruined man whose name crops up occasionally in the newspapers after some tussle with the police. An unemployed 34-year-old Indian you can sometimes see in a Halifax liquor store. The tragedy of Donald Marshall continues.

Michael Harris's brilliant account of the Marshall case, *Justice Denied*, deserves to be read for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it has the pace and rhythm of a cracking good detective story. It is a complicated, at times unbelievable story, with bizarre twists and turns, weird characters, and coincidences that fans of Agatha Christie would dismiss as bad form.

The story began on 28 May 1971 when a black teenager, Sandy Seale, was stabbed to death in a Sydney park. His companion, 17-year-old Micmac Donald Marshall, Jr., son of the chief of the Memberton Reserve, was himself badly cut and sought out the police to report the crime. A few days later, the Sydney police, frustrated in their search for the mysterious assailant, the old man with the blue cloak who looked like a priest, and his younger companion, decided it was Marshall himself who had killed Seale.

The only problem with the theory was that the other teenaged witnesses initially seemed to corroborate Marshall's account. This did not prove to be an insurmountable barrier for the Sydney police who had no scruples about pressuring the witnesses until their evidence was realigned to accord with the new hypothesis.

One can easily imagine that this "massaging" of witnesses by the police was a common-enough occurrence in small towns where the culprit was perfectly well known but the facts were a bit thin, and that the police usually got it right, even if their tactics were a little dubious. But two weeks after Marshall's trial and conviction, Jimmy MacNeil, the young companion of Roy Newman Ebsary, the old priest-like man with the blue cloak, walked into the Sydney City Police Station and essentially confirmed Marshall's story. It is at this point that the Nova Scotia justice system fell apart. Marshall's lawyer was never told of MacNeil's testimony, which was discounted after he and Ebsary underwent conclusive lie detector tests. The Sydney police had their theory, their man, and their conviction, and they wanted to keep it that way.

For the next eleven years Marshall wasted away his youth in prison, maintaining his innocence throughout and paying a harsh penalty for doing so. Logically enough, rehabilitation and release in the prison system is conditional upon the prisoner recognizing his guilt and promising to reform. Unfortunately, if an innocent man continues to maintain his innocence once convicted, he pays a heavy price: no temporary absences for Christmas, no early release. His protests of innocence are seen as proof of recalcitrance. And so it was with Marshall: his stubborn refusal to admit his guilt was courageous and admirable, but it cost him extra years in prison.

As time passed, further proof of his innocence emerged. Ebsary's daughter, stricken with guilt at the memory of her father returning from

the park the night of the murder and washing blood from his knife, eventually went to the police only to be told the case was closed. Through an unbelievable coincidence, Marshall came to discover the name of the old man in the blue cloak and wrote to Ebsary asking him to tell the truth to the police.

Eventually, the RCMP were called in to re-examine the case. The two investigating officers, straight out of central casting, quickly began to piece together the real story. In due course, Marshall was released after being found innocent in a judgment of the Appeal Division of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court which added such gratuitous remarks as

“Any miscarriage of justice is, however, more apparent than real.... By hiding facts from his lawyers and the police Mr. Marshall effectively prevented development of the only defense available to him, namely that during a robbery Seale was stabbed by one of his intended victims.... There can be no doubt but that Donald Marshall’s untruthfulness through this whole affair contributed in large measure to his conviction.”

Of the judgment, Michael Harris makes the following acid observation:

The judges... apparently believed that it is not enough for an innocent man to plead not guilty to the crime he is charged with. He should also, in the course of proving his innocence, confess to other offences with which he was never charged and which had absolutely no bearing on his guilt or innocence in the charge he did honestly answer. After that, he must assist the police and the court in the investigation and trial of his alleged offense. And if the criminal justice system, without all that assistance from the accused, makes a mistake, the victim of that mistake must shoulder the blame.

Nor did the injustice end with Marshall’s release. The Nova Scotia government initially tried to postpone the question of financial compensation for Marshall and his lawyers until the Ebsary trial was complete, despite the fact that Marshall’s innocence had been legally established. Under public pressure, the government gave way but steadfastly refused to order an inquiry until Ebsary’s trials, retrials, and appeals had been completed, a process which ultimately took three years.

Michael Harris’s reconstruction of the facts is painstaking, and his indictment of the criminal justice system in Nova Scotia is devastating. The story is compelling and at times leaves the reader feeling sick as the injustices pile up. Along the way Harris paints a fascinating picture of the lives of poor young Blacks and Indians growing up in the racist atmosphere in Sydney, and of the claustrophobic, tense, trivial, violent world of prisons.

The story has its heroes: Harry Wheaton, the RCMP officer who unravelled the web of deceit spun by the Sydney police, Steve Aronson, Marshall’s lawyer, who went broke defending his client, and Marshall

himself for maintaining his innocence throughout. As for the villains, well, read the book.

In a way, the story of Donald Marshall illustrates the dark side of living in Nova Scotia. The bright side we know well enough: a society of human proportion where government is not remote, where we know each other well and tolerate our neighbour's failings. But this very cosiness and amiability seriously undermined the justice system in the Marshall case. The legal community, small and fraternal, is far too unwilling to criticize its members. Inevitable conflicts of interest arise: the investigating detective in the Marshall case in 1971 becomes the Sydney Police Chief, the Attorney General in 1971 becomes a justice of the Appeal Court which rehearses the case in 1982.

Michael Harris's book is a great read and would make a first-class film. But the real-life story is far from over, and for Donald Marshall, it will never be. Marshall lost not only eleven years of his life, he has perhaps lost the rest of it as well.

Toronto

John F. Godfrey

***Exile Home/Exilio en la Patria.* By Lake Sagaris. Dunvegan, Ontario: Cormorant Books and Casa Canadá, 1986, Pp. 104. Paper. \$7.95.**

Exile Home/Exilio en la Patria is a bilingual (Spanish/English) edition of thirty-three poems by Lake Sagaris, a Montreal-born poet and translator now living in Santiago, Chile, where she works also as a journalist and broadcaster for the *Globe and Mail*, *London Times*, and *C.B.C.* Though this collection is her first, the number of its poems familiar to readers from previous publication in the *Minnesota Review*, *Canada Poetry Review* and similar literary magazines attests to the volume's substantial quality.

The tone of Lake Sagaris's verse is quiet, often intimate, yet its prevailing theme is public, socio-political; an apparent contradiction which the details of Sagaris's biography readily resolve: her verse reflects both her personal commitment to Chile (a Chilean husband and child), and a professional journalist's acute awareness of Chile's extremes of political oppression and social injustice. Silhouetting virtually all of the poems of Part I, and even many of the more personal themes of Part II, is the central fact of Chile's recent history, the fall in the early seventies of Allende's brief, refreshing government of Popular Unity socialism, and in its wake the repressive, reactionary regime of General Pinochet which continues to the present, leaving many Chileans—as one implication of the volume's title suggests—exiles in their own land. In "The Journalist" Sagaris confesses to her unabashed commitment to the portrayal of this reality and simultaneously recognizes through the poem's tacit classical allusion the

personal pain and loss of professional perspective which this commitment inevitably entails:

I have been flung stonelike
against their clubs
my microphone a useful shield

I have walked head bowed
too close to the marches I've
heard their thoughts

If have fled with the victims
often enough to feel the club

. . . .

I have flown too close to the sun
I confess
I would do it
again and again and again

Though complete in themselves, Sagaris occasionally groups her poems quite effectively as multiple reflections of a central informing event. In one instance, the fact that "three men were slaughtered like pigs in a butcher's yard" provokes a miniature album of eight related but discrete creations. Two poems identically entitled "Near Utopia Yesterday" embrace the other six—more restrained than their introduction would suggest—and all somehow evoke these victims, their ideals, and the mark of their loss. "The Journalist," cited above, is one example from this group, and another is "The Funerals," which will perhaps serve to reassure the reader that Sagaris has not simply versified her daily reportage. Only its inclusion within the miniature album specifically connects "The Funerals" with the multiple assassination which was its stimulus. With a felicitous image, its opening lines transmute the tinkling sound of laughter into a potentially refreshing current which persists deep beneath man's arid world:

Laughter's sparkling crystals
have melted into
water absorbed by the earth's
hungry mouths flowing
along subterranean channels it
evades our persistent attempts at
wells

The dozen and a half central lines of the poem elaborate the desert of human struggle, and only in the final lines, after the sun has seared mankind's heartfelt pain, does the soothing water resurface, condensed in the revitalizing balm of tears:

There
we cool it with our

tears sweet salty
water

come from further than
our feet can reach

Lake Sagaris adeptly controls her free verse, often—as in “The Funerals”—with extended conceits and other rhetorical devices. The occasional excesses one might expect in a first collection are rare, and while the subject of her poems is generally weighty, their language is frequently crisp and vital. Their freshest, most rewarding element, however, is their memorable, even occasionally erotic, images—this kiss for example: “Two tongues/fish tremble in the cataract/of crystal laughter.” And anyone who has seen a Latin American park at sunset, with its uniformed students, its passionately embracing lovers and those daredevil, school-age, candy vendors, will immediately recognize the depth of sensitivity with which Sagaris has captured “The City.” Surprisingly for a writer who learned her second language as an adult, Sagaris’s lines scan more smoothly in Spanish than in English. That fact and the typically Hispanic placement of the Table of Contents at the rear of the book suggest that the volume was originally envisioned with an Hispanic audience in mind, but the reader only of English will not be disappointed.

Dalhousie University

James E. Holloway, Jr.

***Female Adolescence: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Literature.* By Katherine Dalsimer. New Haven & London: Yale U. P., 1986. Pp. 149. \$16.95.**

When she was fourteen-and-a-half years old, in the second year of hiding from the Nazis in hidden quarters in Amsterdam, Anne Frank confided to her diary “Kitty”:

I think that what is happening to me is so wonderful, and not only what can be seen on my body, but all that is taking place inside. I never discuss myself or any of these things with anybody; that is why I have to talk to myself about them.

Each time I have a period—and that has only been three times—I have the feeling that in spite of all the pain, unpleasantness, and nastiness, I have a sweet secret, and that is why, although it is nothing but a nuisance to me in a way, I always long for the time that I shall feel that secret within me again.

One of the most absorbing and illuminating chapters in Catherine Dalsimer’s *Female Adolescence: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Literature* concerns *The Diary of Anne Frank*, the private record of an adolescent girl in extraordinary and tragic circumstances experiencing her new-felt womanhood in a radiantly ordinary way. Indeed, the wonder of Anne

Frank's development, as Dalsimer reveals it, is precisely its ordinariness: in her diary we see unfolding all the "familiar processes of adolescent growth."

With remarkable empathy and insight, Dalsimer takes the reader into the strange yet "familiar processes," the "sweet secrets," and the convoluted conflicts of female adolescence. In a lucid and engaging interdisciplinary study, of great interest to the general reader as well as to students of psychology, literature and women's studies, she examines five consecutive phases in ordinary female growth as they are depicted in five very different literary texts. Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding* reveals the conflicts and the yearnings of preadolescence, and Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* anatomizes the intense sexual ambivalence and the equally intense friendships of early adolescence; *The Diary of Anne Frank* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* portray the sexual awakening and the conflicts with parental authority of middle adolescence; while Jane Austen's *Persuasion* raises the whole question of when adolescence ends by depicting a heroine at twenty-seven resolving at last her adolescent dependence on a mother surrogate made doubly dear by the loss of a mother in early adolescence.

The literary critics represented in *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development* (1985) employ new psychological theories of development advanced by Nancy Chodorow and others to revise traditional definitions of the *bildungsroman*. Dalsimer shows how a psychologist can employ literary texts to revise traditional psychological theories of female development—and Freudian theories in particular. Freud concluded his last extended discussion of female development by acknowledging that his observations were "incomplete and fragmentary" and not always "friendly," and urging those who wished to know more to "enquire" from their own experience "or turn to the poets." Dalsimer does just that. She brings all her experience and expertise as a clinical psychologist to bear upon her elucidation of the texts she chooses to discuss, and then draws upon both her own insights and those of the "poets" and novelists to present an incisive critique of distortions and omissions in Freudian theories of adolescent development.

Thus Dalsimer notes that Freudian theory views menarche, "the signal event of female puberty," in a context that precludes "the possibility of pleasure, delight, or pride on the part of the female in her own genitals *as they are*, and in her own femininity." Summarizing some of the considerable research that now challenges such a view, she further questions it through her sensitive evocation of Anne Frank's response to her "sweet secret." Moreover, she points out that the "language of psychoanalysis" describes the onset of puberty in "metaphors rooted in the sexual experience of males." "It is customary to speak of the 'flood of impulses,' the 'maturational spurt,' the 'upsurge of drives' "—using metaphors that "fail to accommodate the adolescent girl's very different experience of her emergent sexuality" as something gradual, irresistible and yet elusive. In

popular culture too, the adolescent girl's sexual impulses find no reflection: while there is "a rich vocabulary of slang available to describe boys' masturbation," for instance, there is not a single colloquial expression for the same activity in girls. Quite simply, the adolescent girl's secret is "unspeakable."

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie captures this particularly female experience of "unspeakable" yet insistent sexual impulses. According to Dalsimer, the Brodie "set" sees sexual meanings in everything—even the bobbing up and down of the sewing machine shuttles—and yet remains mystified by "the urge" in a way that boys, who experience erections all their lives and ejaculation in adolescence, are not. Mystified and afraid, so that the intense sexual longings of early adolescence can only be admitted in a shadowy world of fantasy like the Lady of Shalott's, where the sexual act is wrapped in veils of romantic language. "You came and took me in the bracken on Arthur's Seat," Jenny and Sandy imagine Miss Brodie writing to the singing master. But when they find that the fantasy is rooted in physical reality, they bury the fictitious romantic correspondence, in a symbolically resonant act, in a damp hole in a cave by the sea. Some might wish to question Dalsimer's argument that girls' experience of their awakening sexuality is much more marked by mystery and fantasy than boys' simply because boys experience erections and ejaculation. David Canaan's adolescent friends in Ernest Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley*, for instance, live in a mysterious fantasy world of intense sexuality much like the world of Miss Brodie's girls. And Stephen Daedalus's sexual "urge" is shrouded in mystery and fantasy even when he satisfies it by visiting the prostitutes of Dublin. But Dalsimer does point to the need for greater recognition of the differences between sexual development in females and in males, and to the relative neglect of female development to date.

Dalsimer's study also explores the "fantasy of fusion" that frequently accompanies the secondary individuation process of early adolescence, when there is a "heightened feeling of separation and estrangement" not only from parental figures but also from the adolescent's own changing body. Frankie, the young tomboy heroine of McCullers's novel, responds to this feeling by imagining herself a member of her brother's wedding, one with the groom and his bride as the child is one with her or his parents. "They are the we of me," as Frankie narcissistically and poetically puts it. Dalsimer subtly examines fictional renderings of adolescent fantasies of fusion and the forces of individuation that counteract them in Frankie, Sandy Stranger of the Brodie set, Anne Frank and the young Juliet. With equal insight, she analyses manifestations of the adolescent girl's Oedipal conflicts, most notably reflected in Anne Frank's confession to "Kitty" that "I want something from Daddy's real love: not only as his child, but for me—Anne, myself."

In keeping with many recent studies, however, Dalsimer sees the girls' relationship with her mother rather than her father as being much more important than it is in the Freudian view. The "passionate involvement"

with other females in the intense friendships and mentor worship of early adolescence “reflects the fact that the girl’s psychic struggles continue to center on her powerful bond with her mother.” Even when mothers are absent, as they are for the Brodie set and for Anne in *Persuasion*, the mother-daughter relationship remains crucial. Citing R. Schafer’s 1974 critique of Freud’s psychology of women, Dalsimer emphasizes that “one must see the girl and later the woman as being in a profoundly influential, continuously intense and active relationship, not only with her real mother but with the idea and imagined presence of her mother, and with her identification with this mother.” Dalsimer very convincingly shows this to be the case for Austen’s heroine, at first sight an unlikely choice for a study of literary depictions of female adolescence.

While she foregrounds the importance of the mother-daughter relationship, however, Dalsimer by no means reinforces the assumption that daughterhood naturally leads to motherhood reflected in Helen Deutsch’s classic 1944 study of female development, in which Volume I is entitled “Girlhood” and Volume II, “Motherhood.” “The endorsement of *the making of choices* as essential to psychological well-being has been muted in relation to female late adolescence,” she observes—muted in the psychological literature, but not in the texts of authors such as Austen. Perhaps the most notable achievement of Dalsimer’s study is that she succeeds so well in showing that, just as “psychoanalytic theory can enrich the reading of a text,” the reading of literary texts in turn can “deepen our understanding of psychological processes.” Whereas the theoretical formulations of psychoanalysis emphasize “the *common* patterns in human experience,” they “often give little hint of the richness of observation in which they are rooted,” and they also shape and distort that observation in critical ways. Great fiction and drama, on the contrary, take us back to the particularity of experience, and present it with a powerful insight that “the reader, with a shock of personal recognition, acknowledges to be just.” That shock of recognition is often felt in reading Dalsimer’s *Female Adolescence*.

Dalhousie University

Marjorie Stone

***William Cowper: A Biography.* By James King. Durham, North Carolina: Duke U.P., 1986. Pp. 340. \$35.00.**

Drawing on unpublished manuscripts and on recently discovered letters, James King’s biography of William Cowper is a thorough, inventive and convincing work of scholarship. Avoiding a pedestrian rehearsal of his subject’s life, King seeks to distinguish between the tortured individual and the creative writer. A reclusive and anguished person on account of his inability to come to terms with his mother’s death, Cowper had a

strong, even heroic, capacity for suffering, an engaging, if unsuccessful, desire to face up to the world, and the wish to endow friendships as well as writing with artistry.

Cowper's excessive sense of loss at this mother's death revealed a fragile nature: his whole life was affected by melancholia (6). Although he thought of his youth in Norfolk as idyllic, he never learned to detach himself from the memory of his mother and so lived a divided life. While he enjoyed Westminster School and later in life found the learning he acquired there a deep consolation, he also wrote against public schools. At Westminster, he learned to be a gentleman, but the worldliness and gallantry he cultivated was a masquerade which was exposed by his unsuccessful courtship of his cousin. King views the poems addressed to Theadora as revealing both desire for and hesitance about personal commitment (23). Cowper lived a divided life not only because, while his relationship with Theadora tortured him, he thought of himself as a rake but also because, while he reacted against London with evangelical zeal, he looked upon himself as one of its polished citizens (30). Moving comfortably in snobbish, literary circles, he abided by "all the rituals of the demimonde" (36), and, catching the tone of the time, he learned to write in a casual, elegant style which he never abandoned.

Social and literary accomplishments could not forestall Cowper's anxiety at having to appear before the House of Lords in pursuit of his legal career. Even after he dropped it, memories of suicide attempts fed his depression, the self-revulsion staying with him for the rest of his life. The hallucinations he suffered at Cotton's sanatorium suggest to King that Cowper was henceforth divided against himself in a psychotic way. Conversion to evangelicalism let him deal with his conviction that God was present in his life, but, even as depression lifted, he became obsessed with his past evasion of providential signs (55): his need for divine protection was transformed into a sense of damnation. Experience was always contradictory: if evangelicalism taught him to deny the world in which he had depressingly failed, it removed him from family favour. He never saw that his obsession with divine punishment was a reenactment of the loss of his mother. His childishness manifested itself in his naive attitude to money and in his unquestioning dependence on others for material support (59). By the same token, what he celebrated as the renewal of God's life for him in 1767 was actually his finding a substitute mother in Mary Unwin. Being divided against himself, he was not always helped by those he depended on. Thus, while John Newton, the evangelist who found a home for him in Olney, gave Cowper a sense of purpose in his retirement from society, Newton's doctrinal simplicity could do nothing but heighten Cowper's Calvinist sense of damnation, as manifested in the open-ended hymns he wrote for Newton which attribute sadism to God. Moreover, when Mrs. Unwin suggested marriage, Cowper lost his faith and descended again into suicidal despair.

King explains that Cowper used gardening and writing as forms of therapy and as ways of avoiding human relations. Thus, if writing gave

order to his life, it also perpetuated his personal conflicts. While work on the moral satires allowed him to distance himself from his unhappiness, it also made him doubt his literary competence and heightened conflicts with Newton. He could take advantage of publishing delays by writing new works, but he also repined at the delays and neglected to be a careful proof-reader. King's evaluation of Cowper's poetry in the light of his mental difficulties is less convincing. Granting that the moral satires are ineffectual because their description of religious experience is too general (107), King apologizes for them by detailing Cowper's antagonism towards Pope. King sees Pope through Cowper's eyes, presenting him, superficially, as calmly self-assured about faith and style. Moreover, he overpraises Cowper's ability to overcome the fear of art when suggesting that he was original in making personal struggles the subject of poetry. Pope's "Epistle to Arbuthnot" and Churchill's works suggest how common it was to make personal and spiritual crises the concern of poetry.

Cowper's relations with Lady Austen allow King to show how divided the poet continued to be: he fended her off rudely when he perceived her romantic interest, yet he made her into the muse of *The Task* and through her began to regain his social sense. Still, King's claims about Cowper's profound sense of the writing process are too sweeping and are not supported by the citations he provides. Cowper's letters are frank and whimsical and they do reveal his attempts to throw off evangelicalism. But about writing they are flippant rather than profound. More pointed is King's relation of Cowper's epistolary style to his competitiveness. Although Cowper boasted about not having read modern poets, just before his first volume appeared he started blaming and praising his contemporaries. Thus, he lashed out at Johnson's strictures against Prior and Milton because he imitated both poets (145). It is part of Cowper's self-division that, while he claims to have imitated nobody when he wrote *The Task*, King can argue that he saw himself seriously as writing a continuation of *Paradise Lost*. Not surprisingly, Cowper gave his friends discrepant accounts of the poet as it was being written, saying either that it was inspired by scripture or by nature. For King, *The Task* deals with the conflict between reality and art but does so with only a precarious balance (151). There are two voices in the poem: that of the would-be satirist and that of the confessional poet. Yet King attributes Cowper's failure to win an integrated vision to man's finite capabilities rather than to the poet's limitations. King is thrown back on seeing the poem's success in terms of its dramatization of internal conflict and of its expression of existential contraries. Yet, this claim is undermined by King's concession that the poet did not understand himself. The fact is that Cowper seems to have had little understanding of existential contraries. Doubtless, King is right to point out how influential *The Task* was among the romantics (156), but his claim that the poem was critically received as a masterpiece is not supported by the reviews he cites. Moreover, to say that the poem's lack of clarity should be excused because Cowper had no poetic autobiographies as models is untenable, as previously explained.

Although, after 1785, Cowper's residence with the Throckmortons of Weston led him to appreciate society again, a gracious life-style could not ward off the depression that followed William Unwin's death. Still, he renewed many acquaintances and set out through projected translations of Homer to be a professional writer. He liked writing for its own sake but he was also bent on outdoing Pope's translations. In fact, he attempted, says King, to translate Homer as if Pope had not existed. Ease of style and fidelity to Homer were Cowper's guiding principles; he rejected Pope's mannered and unhistorical approach. But he was frustrated by the publication process, especially by the fact that friends wanted a say in his translations: the collaboration they imposed on him was galling. In his full and moving account of the compositional and publishing history of the translations, King stresses how much Cowper's professional aspirations were at odds with his ignorance and frustration. The poet relied on Henry Fuseli's classical knowledge to avoid embarrassing mistakes rather than out of love for scholarship. If the process of revision insisted upon by Fuseli was exasperating, it helped pull the poet through a major depression in 1786-87. In this illness, Cowper came to regard Homer as a friend. Yet his unrealistic monetary expectations about the project and his fight about them with his publisher spoil the fulfilment of the work (228). The poetical result, despite the huge labour, was not great. Despite his attempts to match Homer's metre and diction, Cowper was criticized for loose language and inflexible metre. The reviews were mostly negative, either pointing out that Cowper's concern with exactness and inspiration was contradictory or suggesting that his execution was feeble and that he tortured the language by following Milton. Cowper's worsening conflicts are evidenced in the ecstatic way he greeted being invited to edit Milton yet quickly cooled to the project. Through their mutual affection for Milton, Cowper and William Hayley became friends, but, as with all his friends, Cowper eventually became alienated from him. So, too, with Samuel Teedon, the man he relied on for a while as his mediator with God: he was soon convinced that God was torturing him through Teedon (253). In 1794 he descended into a depression from which his friends never rescued him. He increasingly pulled back from them, leaving them to bicker with one another. After Mary Unwin's death, he retreated from everyone and suffered more and more from infantile fantasies. If King cannot, because of his subject's questionable poetry and poetic genius, celebrate Cowper as a creative artist, he certainly shows with insight and compassion that Cowper heroically struggled with himself and made those who know him feel that their lives were the richer for that knowledge.

***Ramuz ou l'intensité d'en bas.* By Philippe Renaud. Lausanne: L'Aire, 1988. Pp. 203.**

The Swiss scholar, Philippe Renaud, brings with him to this comprehensive analysis of Ramuz's writings not only the critical finesse and sensibility one has come to associate with all who have been touched by the Geneva "School", but also a wide-ranging awareness and understanding of recent literary theory from elsewhere. Genette, Benveniste, Bakhtin, Lejeune, Greimas, Weinrich, Ricoeur, Lotman, Dällenbach, Derrida, Hjelmslev, all have been absorbed, yet none is promoted with unbalanced evangelism. The result is a fascinating and original filtering of Ramuz through a plausible synthesis of critical schemes, with no loss of clarity. Not, however, that his is a study for the uninitiated: it is aimed primarily at those who know Ramuz relatively well and also presupposes some passing familiarity with contemporary literary terminology.

Hitherto, traditional Ramuz exegesis has concerned itself above all with what Renaud terms the "superstructure" of evident themes, plot, characters, time, point of view, etc. In Renaud's study another, more profound, level is sought, one largely concealed below the surface of the text: "C'est en bas que tout se passe. (...) En bas ont lieu le travail du préconscient et celui de la mémoire: d'en bas émergent les images fondatrices de la paradigmatique et de la syntagmatique des textes à venir." Inevitably he is brought to restate certain constants of Ramuz criticism — after all the past is not entirely objectionable! — but he often resituates even these through the added precision and support of modern theory. Certainly, much that is new emerges: the pre-eminently structural function of the imagery; the infernally and spectacularly tragic mode of Ramuz's preferred scriptorial and figurative machine; a focalization of narrative even subtler than previously presented. Noteworthy, too, are several of the analyses of individual Ramuz works, particularly those pertaining to *Vendanges*, *Farinet*, *Le Passage du poète*, *Le Garçon savoyard* and the early novels; but the most remarkable, perhaps, is the reading of *Histoire du soldat*, an important text coloured significantly by Ramuz's collaboration with Stravinsky at that time, yet one that has never really received its due. Here it does, and it will never be the same again.

The only mildly obtrusive element in an otherwise impressive volume might be the repeated insistence on what is to come, what has already been said, etc. What is admirable in teaching, in conversation, is often unnecessary in the less ephemeral experience of the essay. But perhaps I carp! It may be that such a tendency is better explained as an occasional softening of the considerable scholarliness, demonstrating an authorial concern and intimacy in which the reader is addressed directly, almost as a fellow-traveller.

Be that as it may, *Ramuz ou l'intensité d'en bas* continues and expands that re-alignment of Ramuz criticism, begun by Michel Dentan, which seeks to temper any vision of an entirely pantheistic and harmonious Ramuz world with a complementary recognition of an equally significant

fracturing — be it between parent and son, Self and Other, immobility and passage, *ici* and *ailleurs*, or whatever. There can be no doubt that Philippe Renaud's elegant and detailed exploration of this tension, this "*altum*", is an important contribution to a dialogue that is certain to be continued.

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