

Book Reviews

***The Oxford Companion to Canadian Theatre.* Edited by Eugene Benson and L. W. Conolly. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1989. Pp. xviii, 662. \$59.95.**

Readers can be forgiven for pinching themselves, if not for feeling sceptical; a 650-page *Oxford Companion to Canadian Theatre* does seem like a dream, but it is a very legitimate reality. Even the possibility of such a beautifully realized reference book was undreamed of as recently as two decades ago. In 1969, enthused by the cultural renaissance that accompanied centennial celebrations and fuelled by make-work grants from Employment and Immigration (OFY, LIP and the acronyms that succeeded them), the professional theatre community stood on the threshold of a miraculous explosion. Certainly in 1969 there was no demand for a major reference work devoted exclusively to Canadian drama. Indeed, there were no university courses offered in the subject and few scholars doing any work in theatre history.

There is an historical irony at work here that should give heart to all who harbor cultural aspirations which seem impossible in their opposition to apparently irreversible social forces. It turns out that one can legislate culture, and that one can do things backwards. At a time and place in history where movies and television had supposedly all but eliminated live drama as a viable practice, and the penetration of foreign cultures had thoroughly displaced local activity, Canadian writers, theatre workers, and critics (well, a few of them) combined to build an indigenous, professional theatre of impressive size and achievement. It was only after present theatrical activity was able to support serious study that academic resources capable of studying past theatre practice were established. Present successes have led to the recuperation of the historical struggle of professional Canadian theatre to root itself.

To a certain extent one knows what one is getting in an Oxford companion. This volume is no exception in its arrangement of material; the book's 158 contributors have written 703 entries that encompass "genres, major subjects, theatres and theatre companies, biography and criticism (of dramatists, actors, directors, designers), and major plays."

This volume is exceptional, however, by virtue of its thorough and enormously detailed index. Other editorial initiatives are equally worthy of gratitude and applause. Not only did the *Companion* secure the participation of many francophone scholars to document the growth and variety of Quebec, Acadian and other French-language theatre in Canada, but it very commendably draws our attention to neglected or marginalized theatre communities with entries on topics like Amerindian and Inuit Theatre, Multicultural Theatre, and Feminist Theatre. The editors, Eugene Benson and L. W. Conolly, are also correct to point out the "new information and fresh insights" in genre and subject entries on, to cite a few examples, Acting, Directing, Archives, Television Drama, Théâtre Engagé, Cabaret and Summer Stock.

While there is much that is new in this book, it is a remarkable fact, given the state of theatre criticism twenty years ago, that most of the key entries were able to draw heavily on existing material and were written by scholars of established reputation. More than a few contributors, notably David Gardner, Herbert Whittaker, Timothy Findley, and Robertson Davies, were also able to write from the perspective of participants, thus ensuring lively and full treatment of the period leading up to the alternative theatre movement of the seventies. At that point they pass the baton to critics like Alan Filewod, Diane Bessai, David Barnet and Anton Wagner, who are singled out simply so I can record my pleasure that their entries on Alternate Theatre, George Luscombe and TWP, Political and Popular Theatre, Documentary Drama, Collective Creations, and Critics and Criticism ensure that intelligent and informed consideration is given to the political dimension of theatre in the seventies. But the editors were fortunate to find experts in virtually every area (Malcolm Page on anything west of the Rockies, Joyce Doolittle on Children's Theatre, Howard Fink on Radio Drama, to note a few random examples of the happy union of critics and subject matter). The suggestions for further reading at the end of many entries also give evidence of the impressive achievements of Canadian theatre historians. In this regard, perhaps the best place to enter the *Companion* is via the long and excellent surveys of Drama in English and Drama in French by Richard Plant and L. E. Doucette. Both essays are followed by very useful introductory bibliographies.

We shall all, of course, depending on our special interests, urge more of this or that in the next edition. I would like to see more attention paid to the sociology of theatre. While many writers have carefully noted the role played by individual artists in professional associations, for instance, the editors have downplayed the contribution of organizations like the Playwrights Union, Actors' Equity, and the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres by restricting them to a paragraph each under the general heading of Professional Organizations. But the central role these associations have played in the development of professional theatre surely calls for the kind of full treatment given throughout the volume to

turn-of-the-century buildings and minor artists. Nor are there entries for the federal and provincial arts granting agencies (that horrible word, "funding," is discreetly absent from the index). Surprisingly, the *Companion* has nothing to say about the Massey-Lévesque Royal Commission that led to the formation of the Canada Council. Another term conspicuous by its absence from the index is "nationalism." The concept might have found its way into the entries on Acting, National Theatre School, or Education and Training. None of them raises the important issue of the disparity between the needs of indigenous theatre and the kind of actor training that, until recently if at all, favors foreign-trained instructors, foreign plays as models for study and, consequently, the development of skills and attitudes ill-suited to the production of new Canadian plays.

But these are minor and personal reservations that pale in the light of this handsomely produced volume's truly impressive achievements. *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Theatre* combines the best features of a book that can be browsed in for an entertaining and instructive read with an accurate and comprehensive reference work that can be consulted with confidence for hard data. Finally, due credit must be paid to the University of Guelph and its dynamic Department of Drama for providing the base that enabled this ambitious project to be undertaken and completed in so thoroughly professional a manner.

Carleton University

Larry McDonald

***Dearest Emilie: The Love Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier to Madame Emilie Lavergne.* Transcribed with an introduction by Charles Fisher. Toronto: New Canada Press, 1989. Pp. 160. \$24.95.**

Collectors are valuable to society and Canada has reason to be grateful to Mr. Fisher for acquiring Laurier's letters to Emilie Lavergne. They have a curious history. In 1963, Emilie's nephew gave them to Marc LaTerreur, then professor of History at Université Laval. He put together an elegant paper which he gave to the Canadian Historical Association, meeting in Charlottetown in 1964. His conclusion was that whatever the intellectual relationship might have been between Laurier and Emilie Lavergne, it was not a love affair in the physical sense. An intellectual love was perfectly possible, and that kind of fastidiousness, which is quite characteristic of Laurier, rather resembles the tone of these letters. LaTerreur died in a plane crash in Newfoundland in 1978, but he had had the letters xeroxed for the National Archives in Ottawa. One possibility is that after his death the originals were sold by his estate to Bernard Amtmann of Montreal; whence Mr. Fisher's acquisition of them. They are now in the University of Toronto Library.

Mr. Fisher's publishing them may be useful, but they were first exposed 25 years ago and are well known by now. There are things wrong in the title. Laurier was plain Wilfrid Laurier when these letters were written; he was a decade and a half away from his 1897 knighthood. And, so far as this reviewer is aware, Laurier never addressed Emilie, in English or French, as "dearest Emilie." He called her "my dearest friend," or when he very occasionally used French to her, "ma chère amie." That is not quite the same thing. And whether they are love letters in the usual sense of the term is also in question. In his introduction and annotations, Mr. Fisher goes rather far on thin evidence. Because one would like to be able to infer something to be true, does not make it so, however ingeniously spun are the arguments. Mr. Fisher writes easily; perhaps he writes too easily, for one does not have the weight of words pondered and measured. He describes Laurier as sincere: for Laurier that's an adjective that has itself to be weighed. Laurier may have been sincere in these letters, but in politics he was apt to be quite the opposite. He was a good actor, he loved theatre, and he could mount a good speech in the House of Commons when he was properly rehearsed. Like most Canadian prime ministers, he hated to be boxed in; the net result is one of the most likable hypocrites in the history of the prime minister's office, and it has produced some good ones.

Historians, whether they be good amateurs or professionals, have to be hard-nosed about evidence. It has to be sought everywhere, and it frequently surfaces in unexpected places; one has to keep one's mind open to new ideas: but overall, one has to sit down before fact. The temptation to tease tortured meanings from texts is a bad habit whether medieval and modern. It is to be resisted by the historian's discipline, by the canons of the craft. More of it is needed in this book.

Dalhousie University

P. B. Waite

Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada, 1820-1914.
By Eric W. Sager. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1989. Pp. xviii, 352.
\$34.95.

In the late 1870s Canada had the fourth largest merchant sailing fleet in the world, with most of the tonnage registered at ports in the Maritime Provinces. By 1987 Canada had dropped to 63rd position, close behind Honduras and Lebanon.

What had caused such a dramatic decline? Initial blame was assigned to Upper Canadian politicians and capitalists and their eager dupes in the Maritimes, whose support of the Conservatives' National Policy led to a

sellout of maritime business enterprises, thus robbing Maritimers of their seafaring heritage. More recent studies have refuted these allegations and there is strong evidence that the region's business elite, far from being hoodwinked by central Canadian interests, made a conscious business decision to reinvest their capital in safer, more lucrative land-based enterprises.

This "revisionist" view of the decline of the seafaring economy of the Maritimes has been supported by the work of the members of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project of the Maritime History Group at the Memorial University of Newfoundland. Their analysis of the nineteenth-century crew lists of vessels under British registry and Atlantic Canadian port registers combined with their "landward" research, has provided a framework for the further study of this important subject. For many years, Eric Sager was an Associate of the Maritime History Group and this book draws liberally upon his own research and that of his former colleagues and is the first major work which treats our Maritime history from a purely "maritime" or seaward perspective.

Professor Sager attempts to integrate the lives of the nineteenth-century seafarers of Atlantic Canada into "the industrial civilization which sent them to sea." An avowed landsman, Sager nevertheless seeks to understand the seafarer and his ways by providing the reader with an appreciation of both "the way of a ship" and the labor undertaken by those entrusted with her care. He contends that industrialization at sea which began in the mid-nineteenth century, had a dramatic impact on how seafarers performed their work and indeed, on the work they were expected to perform. State regulation legitimized these new methods of industrial management, thus assuring the profitability of the shipping industry, while at the same time robbing seafarers of their traditional sense of craftsmanship and relegating them to roles not unlike their counterparts in coal mines or textile mills.

Sager succeeds in his attempts both to highlight the merchant marine of Atlantic Canada as an integral part of the maritime economy of the region and to analyze their behavior over the period of transition from pre-industrial craftsmen to industrial workers. In analyzing the impact of the merchant fleet on regional economic development, he creates a workable context for a consideration of seafaring labor. Likewise, he presents a coherent explanation of the seafarer's workplace: the sailing vessel or steamer. Drawing upon the work of many nautical writers and historians, he provides the reader with a simple yet concise description of the working of an ocean-going sailing ship, without the need for a glossary of nautical terms.

It is the use and analysis of the statistical data gleaned from the crew lists currently housed at Memorial University which produces the strongest and most important contribution to Canadian historical scholarship.

This material, supported by a limited number of contemporary accounts of life at sea, both published and archival, provide the basis for a quantitative and qualitative analysis of seafarers and their labor. This is especially effective when dealing with wages, working relationships and desertions in the Atlantic Canada merchant fleet from the 1850s to 1914.

Although the crew lists provide substantial data about seafarers in Atlantic Canadian vessels, the scarcity of first-hand accounts of voyages on these vessels makes it difficult to profile a typical maritime seafarer. Sager makes an attempt at this, but the convincing data are lacking. A closer look at the coastal trade with its cyclical links to land-based occupations and the whole question of occupational pluralism among seafarers, may produce a more convincing analysis than Professor Sager has been able to provide.

Nevertheless, this is an important contribution to our maritime history. Sager has defined the merchant marine of Atlantic Canada and has, to a lesser extent, given voice to these previously neglected seafaring workers. It is also a tangible legacy of the work of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project, one which both Keith Matthews and David Alexander, had they lived to read it, would have applauded.

*Maritime Museum of the Atlantic,
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David B. Flemming

***Three Medieval Views of Women: La Contenance des Fames, Le Bien des Fames, Le Blasme des Fames.* Translated and edited by Gloria K. Fiero, Wendy Pfeffer, and Mathé Allain. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1989. Pp. xii, 168. \$30.00. Paper, \$8.95.**

This collaborative edition of three Old French *dits* on the topic of women has more than one aim. The editors tell us, "we have presented one pro-female poem with two anti-female ones in order to mirror the medieval polemic concerning the role of women in society." The poems, each given in an Old French version and in a poetic modern English translation, "enlarge the fund of medieval documents available to specialists and nonspecialists alike. Their numerous references to medieval customs, manners, and fashions make them particularly valuable to historians and broaden our understanding of medieval attitudes toward women" (xi). Wendy Pfeffer has done the editing proper, and written an essay on "The *Dits*: The Genre, the Texts, the Language," while Gloria Fiero has contributed a long essay (of fifty-five pages) on "The *Dits*: The Historical Context." Pfeffer, Fiero, and Mathé Allain together worked on the translations and notes.

One worrying flaw is the principles on which the editions are apparently based. For the *Bien des Fames*, we are given a stemma, a family tree of the three manuscripts. We are told on p. 5, "The stemma, if properly constructed, allows an editor to see the relationships among the different witnesses, and he [*sic*] may try to use them to reconstruct the author's original, or something close to it. Alternatively, he may accept the testimony of one witness as it has come down to us today, making as few changes as possible." The stemma for the *Bien* shows that the London and Paris manuscripts of the poem are more closely related to each other than either is to the Rouen manuscript. How does the editor know? "On numerous occasions, the London and Paris versions present the same text where Rouen diverges" (10). But this is illogical. Shared readings prove nothing unless they are shared errors. London and Paris might present the same reading because they are descended independently from different parent manuscripts that both got a certain line right, whereas the Rouen scribe might have had a bad day and copied the line wrong from (for example) the very same manuscript the Paris manuscript is descended from—and in that case Paris and Rouen would be much more closely related than London and Paris. Yet it is clear that in the editor's judgment, the shared London-Paris readings are *right* ones, because in each example cited, the Rouen reading is relegated to an appendix of variants, and the London-Paris reading is adopted in the text. Perhaps the irrationality of the stemma doesn't matter, since it doesn't seem to have influenced the choice of readings at all: the editor always uses the reading of the copy text, Paris, except where lines are missing in it. But in that case why bother with a stemma? The editor has adopted editorial policy # 2, while appearing to follow # 1.

Old French is not my *forte*, but even so some of the translations strike me as infelicitous. "Hom [qui] lor disoit anois" (*Bien des Fames*, l. 42) is not a "vilifying bawd"; vilifying, yes, but a bawd, no. "Or se contient moult sagement" is rendered "Now she's proper as a crumpet"; the tone is off and the simile is no part of English idiom. And I suspect that "Or se tient com oisel en mue" (*Contenance*, l. 44) means neither "Just like a moulting bird she flutters" (as in the translation) nor "Now she holds herself like a moulting bird" (as in the notes), but "Now she stays in her cage like a moulting bird" (see *Thresor de la lange françoise*, muê: "Et pour le lieu obscur ou vne cage grande à larges barreaux ou on met le Faulcon estant prest à se despouillier de ses pennes iusques à ce qu'il les ayt refaites").

A lot of things make this edition and translation attractive. It has fourteen handsome black and white plates of various depictions of women in medieval art. It has a useful selected reading list (though it fails to specify what has been selected: histories of the lot of medieval women) and a much longer and more varied bibliography of references that is also a

potentially valuable resource. The essay by Fiero on the historical and social context of the poems is informative. The editorial explanations are basic enough and the paperback version is cheap enough that it could well be used for an undergraduate textbook. And the poems have their own weird fascination, though both the two that abuse womankind and the one that praises it are too irritatingly narrow-minded. That last may seem like a laughable complaint: what, after all, did I expect? But cultural relativism doesn't make purblind bigotry or misguided laud much less tiresome when it comes actually to reading them as works of literature:

Qui ces vers a vera en remembrance
Doutera femme plus que nul lance,

He who keeps these lines in mind
Fears swords less than womankind.
(*Blasme*, ll. 11-12)

Quar il n'est en cest mont nus hom,
Por que il ait sens ne reson,
Ne doie honor porter a fame
Por l'onor a la haute dame

For no member of mankind
With a reasonable mind
Would fail to honor women,
As he honors the blessed Virgin
(*Bien*, ll. 11-14)

Still, these works are a part of our literary history we should not ignore, and this edition brings them happily to hand.

Dalhousie University

Melissa Furrow

***Samuel Richardson: Tercentenary Essays.* Edited by Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989. Pp. xvii, 306. \$49.50.**

Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) has long been a focus of psycho-literary criticism, partly because of his own unusual status as a humble printer turned novelist and moralist, and partly because his intensive study of the emotional problems of young women, for whom he wrote love letters to order, has aroused the interest of scholars of almost every hue—feminist and non-feminist, traditional and postmodernist, Marxist and “new Historicist” alike.

On the occasion of the novelist's tercentenary last year, it was fitting that two leading eighteenth-century specialists, Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor (both Canadian, incidentally, and one of them, Dr. Doody, a distinguished graduate of Dalhousie) should have been given the task of bringing together fifteen essays on a rich variety of related topics. Of Richardson's three major novels, *Clarissa*, that tragic story of an angelic heroine who is preyed upon by a fiendishly calculating rapist and deserted by her own family, is the one that received the lion's share of attention. The others, *Pamela*, with its unfortunate sub-title *Or Virtue Rewarded*, the tale of a rather superior servant-girl under sexual siege by her master, whom she eventually marries, and *Sir Charles Grandison*, a novel about the perfect gentleman (written, so it is said, to compensate for the implied lubricity of the first two), are not, however, neglected.

The two essays that follow the excellent editorial introduction, in fact, train the spotlight on *Pamela*. Florian Stuber, with whom Dr. Doody has collaborated in a recent dramatization of *Clarissa*, and who works at the New York Fashion Institute of Technology, tells of an experiment, conducted over several years, in which his students were invited to react serially to *Pamela*: each one was required to keep a journal of his or her reactions at every stage of reading, and judgments were compared at the end of the academic year. Apart from providing a refreshing change from the more formal type of assignment, the experiment yielded some interesting results in the form of lively reader-response criticism. Perhaps surprisingly, much more admiration than scorn for Pamela's character was expressed in the students' journals, while Henry Fielding's hilarious parody of the novel, *Shamela*, was almost unanimously panned. Several of Stuber's female students clearly identified with Pamela and recalled, through her characterization, some of their own early teenage problems.

On a more romantic level, Gillian Beer sees Richardson's Pamela as an updated eighteenth-century version of Sir Philip Sidney's Princess Pamela in *Arcadia*, but, remembering the domestic status of the heroine of the later work, she argues that Richardson "abrades the distinctions so hierarchically observed in the language and events of *Arcadia* between princess and serving girl, Pamela and Mopsa" (25). She sees parallels between "the erotic movement of each work," including cross-dressing (Prince Pyrocles and Richardson's Mr. B. dressed as women). The parallels become a little less acceptable, however, when we are told that, just as the princesses in *Arcadia* are caught up in a civil war, so is Pamela, the rustic female, "caught into a class and sexual power struggle which unsteadies Mr. B.'s estate" (36).

The Elizabethan poet is invoked again in Janet E. Aikins's article on "Richardson's 'Speaking Pictures'" —the quoted phrase coming this time from Sidney's *Defence of Poesy*, which Richardson had printed in 1724-5, together with the *Arcadia* and the rest of Sidney's works. Illustrating her

argument with engravings from Hayman, Gravelot and Highmore. Ms. Aikins reminds us that Pamela is “less a teller than an illustrator” (151), and that Richardson’s fiction is centrally concerned with the complexity of being a “spectator” of both art and life. For the sixth edition of *Pamela* Richardson commissioned Gravelot and his pupil Hayman to produce a series of engravings to illustrate the heroine’s “mind-pictures,” but rejected some of Hogarth’s because they fell short of the spirit of the passages in question. Another contributor to this volume, Edward Copeland, in “Remapping London: *Clarissa* and the Woman in the Window,” points out that the often horrifying as well as fascinating visions of London depicted by Richardson are an unmistakable reflection of Hogarth’s world.

Jocelyn Harris, too, sees much of Hogarth in Richardson’s street scenes in *Clarissa*. Her article, “Richardson: Original or Learned Genius?” takes the form of an exercise in intertextuality, from which she concludes that the author, far from being an ignorant and unlettered printer, had drunk deep of the three thousand books he had published. As a consequence of this almost superhuman eclecticism, she argues, “It is part of Lovelace’s character that [Richardson] runs through other texts to flex imaginative skills, seeing himself as Shakespearean villains, Miltonic devils, Cavalier poets, and Restoration rakes, all in turn” (201). Though the chapter-and-verse evidence she assembles to support her argument is enormously detailed and impressive, one is left wondering whether anything at all in Richardson’s novels could justifiably be called his own.

Another contributor, James Grantham Turner, “places *Clarissa* in the European as well as the English libertine tradition,” (5) according Lovelace some of the qualities of Molière’s Dom Juan, Wycherley’s Horner, and Mozart’s Don Giovanni (the last by anticipation, since the opera was not performed until more than a quarter century after Richardson’s death). Turner sees Lovelace as a cerebral sort of rake, aspiring to contrive the ruin, not just of Clarissa, but of all womankind, in a concentrated burst of “pure amoral energy” (88) similar to that of Mozart’s hero. He concludes, in the increasingly familiar language of recent literary theory, that Lovelace’s self-image is “a decentred subject” or “an empty space on which various contradictory discourses leave their trace.” The rhyme, one assumes, is purely fortuitous.

Another tradition, more important for Richardson than the libertine, was that of sacred literature, and most notably the Bible. Clarissa’s will includes a bequest to a widow, one Mrs. Norton, of her own book of *Meditations*, from which only a few extracts are incorporated in the novel. In 1749, six months after the appearance of the second edition of *Clarissa*, Richardson published these as *Meditations Collected from the Sacred Books*, now a great rarity. Tom Kymer, who has scrutinized one of the two known copies, discusses its importance in “Richardson’s Medita-

tions: Clarissa's *Clarissa*," where he describes the book as a chronicle of the heroine's spiritual progress and suggests that the author may have intended it as a key to the novel itself.

Several of the contributors to this collection of essays stress the importance of Richardson's correspondence as an adjunct to our understanding of his fiction. In tracing the publication history of the correspondence, for instance, Peter Sabor argues strongly in favor of a collected edition.

Other topics include: Richardson's approach to characterization in the light of psychological theories available to him (Margaret Anne Doody); the expectation, by the author's contemporaries, of physical weakness, restraints and submissiveness on the part of female characters in *Sir Charles Grandison* (Carol Houlihan Flynn); Richardson's influence on later women novelists (Isobel Grundy); the theme of male friendship in Richardson's fiction (David Robinson); "lines of cultural force" in the lives and careers of Richardson, the Young of *Night Thoughts*, and Samuel Johnson (Pat Rogers); the major developments in recent Richardson criticism (Siobhán Kilfeather); and "truth and storytelling" in *Clarissa* (John A. Dussinger).

As is to be expected in a celebratory volume of this kind, most of the contributions are favorable to the birthday boy, though not quite to the extent of idolatry. He is stoutly defended, for instance, against Ian Watt's notorious charge that *Pamela* is "a mixture of sermon and striptease." What this well-chosen, well-edited group of essays accomplishes, indeed, is a faithful reinforcement of Dr. Johnson's opinion that Richardson knew well the workings of the human heart. We ought to remember, though, that it was the same eminent admirer who said, "Why, Sir, if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself."

Dalhousie University

James Gray

Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Making of the Major Lyrics, 1802-1804.
By Gene W. Ruoff. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1989. Pp. xviii, 318.
\$40.00. Paper, \$15.00.

At the heart of this impressive and important book is a detailed study of three poems which emerged from the increasingly troubled relationship between Coleridge and Wordsworth in the three years before the former's departure for Malta: Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode" and Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence" and "Ode: Intimations of Immortality." Ruoff's mode of analysis is primarily rhetorical, but he skilfully blends

into his discussion formal, psychological, philosophical, and biographical concerns, uniting them all under the banner of "Intertextual Genetics."

Ruoff demonstrates convincingly how in the spring of 1802 Wordsworth triggered a poetic dialogue with Coleridge by writing the first four stanzas of what was to become the "Intimations" Ode of 1804. He explains how that dialogue forced its participants to confront latent personal and professional crises and led both poets—particularly Wordsworth—to a mature understanding of themselves and their poetic gifts. During his discussion, Ruoff explores not only the influence that Coleridge and Wordsworth had on each other's work, but also how each poet drew upon "a canon of relatively recent writing" (Burns, Pope, Milton), "a canon of classic writers and texts" (Ovid, Sappho, St. Augustine, Chaucer, Spenser, Jonson, Shakespeare), and "a canon of forms or kinds" (elegy, erotic pastoral, ode).

Ruoff structures his book by devoting two chapters to each of the three poems under analysis. In each group of two chapters, one is devoted to an early vision of the poem in question, and one addresses the mature poem. These six crucial chapters are framed by a methodological introduction and a conclusion, and are interrupted by one brief transitional chapter that bridges a temporal gap in the composition of the poems. Most importantly, the six crucial chapters are arranged to imitate the compositional sequence of the poems they address; and being so arranged, they reveal the cyclical and dialogic nature of that sequence. Hence, the book begins with Wordsworth's 1802 Ode (a hypothetical text), proceeds to Coleridge's Verse Letter to Sara Hutchinson, Wordsworth's "The Leech-Gatherer," Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence," Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode" (from *The Morning Post*), and finally Wordsworth's completed "Intimations" Ode. Each chapter is preceded by a reading text of the poem that is to be discussed.

Ruoff's analysis of this dialogic cycle reveals at first a tension between Coleridge's despairing sense of a lost inner power and Wordsworth's insistent but nervous response that the power survives and depends for its survival upon self-control through concentration on things outside the self. This tension eventually moves towards a compromise in the 1804 Ode, but only after Coleridge answers Wordsworth's objections to his Verse Letter in "Dejection." Coleridge insists there upon the reality of fading poetic power, and this insistence is what drives Wordsworth to revise the 1802 Ode, which had in fact first raised the spectre of dejection. Ruoff argues that the 1804 Ode, completed as Wordsworth was expanding *The Prelude*, achieves a mature philosophy based upon the idea that "gain may be found in loss." Shifting the critical focus from the Ode's myth of pre-existence to the consolation offered in the final three stanzas of the poem, Ruoff reveals that Wordsworth is able to overcome his sense of loss by recognizing the importance of memory as the faculty that

“accepts the value of lived experience.” Memory renews the poet’s response to creation in its acceptance of time and in its continued commitment to what it remembers.

Ruoff’s optimistic interpretation of the 1804 Ode places him at odds with recent historical analyses of the poem which complain that in the Ode Wordsworth betrays his youthful political and social idealism. Ruoff celebrates a Wordsworth who achieves in the Ode a maturity that admits that failure of his idealism and that yet finds philosophic hope in the faith which replaces that idealism. It would be interesting to see Ruoff apply his ideas to poems such as “Elegiac Stanzas,” “Ode to Duty,” “To a Sky-Lark,” and of course *The Excursion*, all of which receive only passing mention in this book. Yet if Ruoff’s ultimate conclusions are contentious, his careful rhetorical analyses of the sources and cross-influences of several texts in the cycle are nevertheless immensely revealing and valuable.

Dangers exist in the study of genetics, whether the genetics be of the literary or biological variety. There is always the danger that one is tampering with creation and playing at being the creator, and it is a growing concern whether projects like the Cornell Wordsworth are not in fact inventing Wordsworth as much as revealing him. This book, as its author’s self-conscious narrative voice acknowledges, runs these risks. Yet the rewards of this study are numerous, and as a work that expands critically upon recent textual scholarship, it makes a provocative contribution to current efforts to redefine the Coleridge-Wordsworth relationship and the nature and progress of Romanticism.

Dalhousie University

David T. Matthias

***Upper Cape Poems.* By Douglas Lochhead. Fredericton: Goose Lane, 1989. Pp. 131. Paper, \$12.95.**

Titles like “Tantramar Again, Again” and “Gatineau Revisited” seem explicitly designed to suggest a connection with Charles Roberts; and, in fact, Roberts is one of the ghosts haunting this collection—perhaps less the Roberts of “Tantramar Revisited” than the poet of the sonnets from *Songs of the Common Day* with their homely particulars and their feel for the seasonal cycle. The images are often those used by Roberts: marsh, sea, hay-meadow, dyke, rock, brook, cattle, trees (spruce, hemlock, birch), house, barn, red mud, gull, hawk on wing. Like Roberts, Lochhead is concerned with memory as well as with place (or places). Techniques, of course, have changed in the ninety or so years since Roberts wrote his sonnets. Verse form, lineation, diction, are changed. The ten

poems of "Gatineau Revisited," for example, are not quite sonnets, though they have the feel of sonnets. (They remind me of a bit of the unconventional sonnets of the New Zealand poet James K. Baxter.) The poems seem more personal than the Roberts sonnets. The "I" enters more frequently into them.

There are other ghosts besides that of Roberts: William Carlos Williams; John Thompson, who lived also in the Tantramar area and died too young; settlers, French and English, who came early to the location; Lochhead's parents, haunting the Gatineau cottage which Lochhead revisits; Henry Alline, to whom he writes a not yet completed "Homage," which appears at the end of the book (an excerpt from which appeared in *Dalhousie Review*, vol. 67 no. 2/3).

The book is divided into five parts. The first and largest section is composed chiefly of the Tantramar poems, poems dealing with "this chosen place," with "something local." The second section continues with "particulars, specials/ of the local place," but it is also concerned with "going in" (to rooms, woods, the self). The third section shifts to Gatineau, to the "Gatineau Revisited" sequence and companion poems. I found this group the most successful part of the book. What appealed to me, I think, was the double layering of time. One is conscious of the mature Lochhead living and thinking in the present, but also of the younger Lochhead who came to the Gatineau cottage in earlier years. The poems form a sort of diary, which also includes notes written by Lochhead's mother sixteen years earlier. Unlike Roberts in "Tantramar Revisited," Lochhead does not avoid seeing the changes that time has made. He goes "deep into a jungle-past of feeling," but is aware of the particulars of the present, the "wet-leavings of hemlock around the old place the / forest has closed." Tantramar and Gatineau differ, but both include the fundamentals of nature, water, trees, rock, a garden which is nearly wilderness.

The fourth section includes more Tantramar poems, and also some European poems. The fifth section is the brief "Homage to Henry Alline." I don't know enough about Alline's own writing to be sure how much of the inspiration here is Alline's, how much is Lochhead's. The words given to Alline here take the theme of place to an experience beyond the local and yet connected with it: "I turn inward. Hymn for one. God / is a place." And again:

My eyes find white lights. White
fields. Trees. The sky is festive.
Enough. Enough.

In the words given to Alline there are both ecstasy and terror, the fear of death. ("Death. / is my tossing-time.") Elsewhere in the book there is also consciousness of death. People (like worm-ridden spruce trees, like mari-

golds in November) are "waiting for the frost." But meanwhile there is "all this growing."

Lochhead is not a poet who provides great fireworks (if fireworks are what you want) but he has maturity, intelligence, an admirable technical skill, and an engaging voice. Anyone who has enjoyed his previous books will enjoy this one; and it would provide a good point of entry for someone who has not yet read any of his poetry.

University of Saskatchewan

Elizabeth Brewster

***Modern Marriage.* By David Solway. Montreal: Véhicule Press, Signal Editions, 1987. Pp. 63. Paper, \$9.95.**

Modern Marriage echoes George Meredith's *Modern Love* in using the sonnet form and irony to explore the sadness and addictiveness of the romantic centre of the (male) poet's life and his isolation in spite of this attachment. *Modern Marriage* is actually two linked sequences—"Postcards from Plati Yalos" and "Memos from Pinnacle Mountain"—the first written in physical distance; the second in emotional distance.

I have a weakness for sonnet sequences, and these are very skilfully done, with a deceptively easy conversational tone, witty, often brilliant rhymes ("Mike Harris" with "Sarandaris," "Moby" with "No, be," "*faber*" with "Weber" for just a few) and some memorable lines: "The sonnet is the postcard of the craft." "I sit on Pinnacle and dream of Greece." "The bed's no blackboard. / What's written there remains on record." The sequences read quickly and are worth rereading for their technical mastery, for their wit and perceptiveness, for the pleasure of being in the company of the persona.

The marriage explored in these sequences is one which many readers will recognize: romance has rubbed thin to companionship, habit, irritation. In absence, Solway can write, "I love you, Karin" (in the last of the "Postcards from Plati Yalos"); reunited, he writes of their life together, "Still, it should be happier than it is." This is the sort of marriage Alice Munro heroines leave. Fairness is not really the point of these sonnets—which are dedicated to the poet's publisher, not to his wife—but I can't help wishing to have seen a little more of Karin besides the "slim reed of her body," her moods and instability. Her husband goes off to Greece, leaving her with the kids: who can blame her for being irritable? Almost any woman would tell you what has gone wrong with this modern marriage.

More interesting is the poet's sense of melancholy and malaise, his sense of dislocation and unease in the universe which has less to do with his

marriage than with a sense that where it's at is there, not here. When he's in Greece, he longs for home and is tempted to run up enormous phone bills. When he's home, he misses Greece. This is truly contemporary, perhaps born of our constant awareness of existing in a world of simultaneity, our temptation to change channels when things lag. The centre in this world is not so much marriage as language, the compulsion toward poetry itself, the search for ease in despite of ennui. Thus, *Modern Marriage* is essentially about solitude. The disappointments, the dissatisfactions, the loneliness it explores are transformed, paradoxically, into highly readable, companionable poems, which, on sounding, reveal depth as well as polish.

Queen's University

Elizabeth Greene

***Prometheus Rebound: The Irony of Atheism.* By Joseph C. McLelland. Editions SR (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier UP, for the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, 1988). Pp. xvi, 366. Paper, \$16.95.**

Joseph McLelland begins his investigation of atheism with the suggestion that, "The central subject of philosophy of religion is belief and unbelief, or theism and antitheism" (xv), and so we have a clear idea from the start of the general tradition of philosophy of religion in which he will be working. At the heart of his chosen subject is the issue of what it is in which one is to believe or not to believe; and in his view, the most important of all atheists, those committed to something akin to what Scheler characterized as "postulatory atheism" (5), have gone astray on this point. These critics of Christianity have become addicted to a shallow version of Prometheanism, and so are continually posing the loaded question, "Zeus or Prometheus?," which may be transposed into the question, "Divine will or human freedom?" (28-29). The postulatory atheist assumes that the only significant alternative to unbelief is submission to the arbitrary authoritarianism symbolized by Zeus. But a proper understanding of Christian faith requires recognition of how such faith is able to transcend the Zeus-Prometheus dichotomy. Prometheus is an admirable and useful symbol, the classical symbol of rebellion against tyranny (15); but Prometheus may live again "only if Zeus passes away in the shadow of God the living and the true, 'whom to serve is perfect freedom'" (292).

McLelland's project is thus apologetical in a sense, but the apologetic here is subtle and dignified; McLelland spares us the usual phony arguments, rhetorical gimmicks, and dogmatic pronouncements that mar most critiques of atheism. The author's concern are fundamentally existential—or Promethean, if you will—and what he wants us to be

troubled by is the extent to which Prometheus has been *rebound* by the postulatory atheists who sing his praises. McLelland invites us to reflect on the irony of atheism represented by the ironic fate of the new Prometheans who are continually serving as illustrations of the price to paid for "playing with fire."

McLelland's undertaking is ambitious, to show how almost the entire history of Western atheism, and much Western theism as well, has been rooted in an obsession with the conflict between Promethean freedom and the tyranny represented by God as Zeus. McLelland directly traces the development of this obsession from the time of the ancient Greeks to the most recent times, and describes its various manifestations in the writings of Renaissance humanists, Enlightenment thinkers, romantic poets, nineteenth-century German philosophers, and postwar French existentialists. McLelland's relentless application of his Prometheus-symbolism to thinkers as different as Pico, Kant, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and Camus could reasonably be expected to be tediously mechanical and reductionist, and sometimes it is. Yet much of his historical analysis is persuasive. There indeed seems to be a pattern here of the kind that McLelland is intent on exposing to us, even if along the way he systematically undervalues the importance of types and aspects of atheism other than the Promethean-postulatory. It is no small achievement on McLelland's part to have given us this insight; but it is not clear that McLelland has provided us with helpful guidelines as to how to exploit the insight.

It is all very well for McLelland to argue that postulatory atheists and their kind have failed to appreciate the extent to which authentic Christian faith is beyond the Zeus-Prometheus dichotomy. But what is authentic Christian faith, and how can we be sure that Christianity, or any other theistic faith, is capable of promoting a conception of the Divine that is supportive of, or even compatible with, the existential autonomy of human agents? These are very big and very old questions that have tormented many generations of philosophers and theologians, and this field is the one on which McLelland's case will ultimately be won or lost. In his concluding chapter, McLelland brings together poetic phrases from such modern luminaries as Barth, Tillich, Macquarrie, Hartshorne, and Moltmann. But these phrases, encouraging though they may be, do not in themselves dissolve the classical philosophico-theological problem of free will, which will probably always trouble reflective theists as well as postulatory and other sorts of atheists. McLelland associates the irony of atheism with "the master-image of tragedy, namely playing with fire": "In our times the image takes form in firebombing and napalming, in nuclear explosions, in furnaces at death camps. Therefore Prometheus started something with his stolen gifts . . ." (27). But is not Christian theism at least as "ironic" as atheism? Are not My Lai, Hiroshima, and Auschwitz perhaps as much the legacy of Christianity—despite all of its talk about

love and justice—as of atheistic humanism and materialism gone wild? No contemporary Christian theologian, no matter how mindful of the moral failings of the long-established churches, is going to blame God for such atrocities. It makes more sense to the theologian to say that evils have been routinely carried out “in the name of” the Divine. Still, it has been eloquently argued that when one studies the history of Christianity, a disturbing pattern emerges there too, and that pattern does not only parallel the pattern McLelland has uncovered in atheism, but has been the main factor contributive to it. The survival of Promethean-postulatory atheism cannot adequately be explained by the bald assertion that “antitheism assumes something about the Christian God that is not so” (286). For while McLelland may be right in arguing that the typical postulatory atheist too readily assumes that Christians are stuck with a Zeus-like, authoritarian God, the fact remains that antitheists have rather consistently had good reason to believe that, for the most part, Christians and other theists have been motivated by a conception of God that is neither sufficiently clear, nor sufficiently consistent, nor sufficiently morally efficacious, and that the classical philosophico-theological problem of free will is no mere “pseudo-problem” based on a mere misunderstanding of their ideological rivals’ world view. One main task for contemporary philosophical theologians and religious apologists is to establish more convincingly than their predecessors have that whatever “irony” theism ultimately generates is significantly less dangerous than the “irony” to which radical humanists have left us exposed.

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Jay Newman