

Book Reviews

***The Love Letters of William and Mary Wordsworth.* Edited by Beth Darlington. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981. Pp. 265. \$19.95 U.S.**

One of the most exciting literary finds of the past several years, these thirty-one letters give us a more personal view of William Wordsworth than ever before, and they bring Mary Wordsworth out of relative obscurity. In their language, tone, and form they capture the idiom of the Wordsworths' domestic happiness, the intimacy of their relationship, and the pace of their active lives. A marriage that for lack of evidence had been seen as placid if not dull now shows itself to have been animated and inspired.

Through his poetry Wordsworth is known for a love of nature that is aesthetic and a love of man that is philosophic. In these letters he shows himself a passionate and devoted husband, as he expresses "how profoundly in soul & body we love each other" (p. 229). The passion of both William and Mary shows the strength of having matured from early courtship through eight and ten years of marriage and family, yet it maintains freshness and vigor—"a lively, gushing, thought-employing, spirit-stirring passion of love," as William calls it (p. 60) and as their language dramatizes.

Mary Wordsworth, hitherto overshadowed by her husband, here stands out as intelligent, alert, witty, and articulate—a most suitable mate for William and his match as a correspondent. It is remarkable how much husband and wife share in their interests, desires, dispositions, and language. Mary frequently uses phrases familiar in William's poetry, but in a way that makes them her own: who is to say from where they originated? She refers to William's presence as an "underconsciousness that I had my *all in all* about me" (p. 49). As she anticipates her visit to the Wye valley, "Every object which I see that gives me pleasure will be ten thousand times more dear to me for thy sake" (p. 197). As she thinks of their reunion, "My heart dances" (p. 169). In the letters one can readily see why Mary became the object of William's passion and of his tender affections, synthesizing thus the feelings he had held for Annette Vallon and for his sister Dorothy.

The occasions for these letters were two periods of separation—one of about ten weeks in 1810 when William visited friends and Mary's relatives, and the other of about nine weeks in 1812 when Mary visited her brother and sister in Wales while William looked after business in London. The separation heightened their awareness of what they meant to each other and gave them a certain satisfaction in allowing each to tell the other about their feelings. "Those yearnings towards each other" from their days of courtship have "strengthened a hundred fold," Mary writes William, as proven "from thy letters & from their power & the power of absence over my whole frame" (p. 183). The strength of their relationship is apparent not only in their professions of love but also in their exchange of observations and advice, in their playfulness and earnestness, in the way they reveal their very personal hopes and fears to one another, and in the delight they take in one another's letters. What I found most rewarding was the way in which both William and Mary evoke the other one's presence in their writing and so make that personality come alive through the fineness of the detail and the intimacy of the tone. "Fill your paper with the breathings of your heart," William tells Mary (p. 112), and they both succeed in doing just that.

In his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, what Wordsworth explains about poetic composition also characterizes these letters: they show "emotion recollected in tranquillity" growing into "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." In their separation from each other, both William and Mary show "a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present." But the letters—poetic as they are in individual passages and underlying sentiment—are not poetry: they have the liveliness and truth of real passion and lack the control, artifice, and aesthetic distance of good poetry. Nor do they embody fancy rhetoric. Fine phrases are occasionally hit upon but without any studied form. Dashed off in haste and unrevised, the letters serve an immediate and private purpose, conveying "tender and overflowing expressions of Love which were meant for no eyes but thine," as William tells Mary (p. 157). Such expressions Mary deems "too sacred and too intensely connubial for any eye but my own" (p. 88). The distance of 170 years and the public stature of Wordsworth presumably allow us to look in on such privacy, but an unsympathetic reader by ignoring this context will distort and parody Wordsworth. "'Twere profanation of our joys/To tell the laity our love," Donne had written to his wife, and that is the risk of the Wordsworth letters.

The personal and intimate passages are interspersed among news, gossip, family business, and amusing incidents. Mary's letters give engaging sketches of their household and of their children's antics. William's letters afford especially interesting views of Regency London. He was obviously attracted by the liveliness of fashionable society but at the same time put off by the superficiality, affectation, and debauchery. The assassination of the Prime Minister, Spencer Perceval, gives William occasion

to comment on the potentially dangerous political situation. During this period William met Coleridge a number of times and attended his lectures, but unfortunately his remarks say all too little. He had come to London specifically to settle the misunderstanding that had severed their friendship in 1810, and his taciturnity suggests that, although he succeeded in clearing up the differences, some of the hard feelings still remained. The many different events and observations that both Mary and William relate give their correspondence a range and rapidly shifting movement that reflect the fullness of their lives.

Beth Darlington has edited these letters superbly so as to represent accurately their original form and also make them easily readable for a general audience. Her introduction places the letters in a literary and biographical context. Head-notes to each letter identify the dozens of names, personal circumstances, and topical allusions with acuity and economy. A genealogical table, maps, and twenty-two illustrations of people and places mentioned in the letters help the reader to follow the details and capture the atmosphere of English life at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Professor Darlington presents the letters in a form that all may appreciate what she aptly calls "the joyful hymn in celebration of a marriage" (p. 257).

University of Manitoba

John T. Ogden

W. B. Yeats and W. T. Horton: the record of an occult friendship. By **George Mills Harper.** Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980. Pp. 160.

In "All Souls' Night" Yeats called up the ghosts of three former acquaintances with whom he had been associated in his theosophical activities, W. T. Horton, Florence Farr and MacGregor Mathers. Unlike the other two, Horton was not named when the poem was first published in 1921 (though the name was inserted later), presumably because of the way he is characterised as one who "knew that sweet extremity of pride/That's called platonic love" and who after the death of "his lady" hoped only for his own. That supposed hope was fulfilled in 1919; Horton, as a recent convert, having received the last sacraments of the Roman Catholic rite.

The woman with whom Horton had lived under the harsh, self-imposed discipline, of suppressed desire and who remained in communication with him after her death, was Audrey Locke. She was a woman of some academic accomplishment and beauty. Yeats found her erotically exciting and was thus the more fascinated by her platonic relationship with his friend. Not that Yeats in any way shared their conviction that the denial of sex was more productive spiritually than satisfied desire: quite the contrary. Indeed, after Audrey Locke's death he attempted to make a match between Iseult Gonne (who had refused his own proposal of marriage) and Horton. Yeats's role was so overtly paternalistic in this matter that he

thought it necessary to assure Horton that he was not actually Iseult's father.

There is a good story to tell about the later years of the Yeats-Horton relationship; one that involves such interesting characters as Ezra Pound and a certain amount of mystico-erotic goings on. The story of the earlier years may also be more interesting than has yet become clear, though the friendship meant more to poor (we may say) Horton than to Yeats.

The two men met some time before 1896, when Yeats sponsored Horton's initiation into the Order of the Golden Dawn. Horton soon found membership uncongenial and his resignation doubtless pleased Annie Horniman, whose animosity Horton felt acutely. Part of the problem appears to have been the conflict between their attitudes to sex. Miss Horniman felt a powerful aversion to it while Horton had decidedly mixed sexual feelings. If he had not married young, he told Yeats, he "might have given full sway to the Venus proclivities" that were in his horoscope. Perhaps Venus took revenge for this neglect. Anyway, that Yeats himself was important figure in Horton's erotic phantasmagoria is indicated by his dream of "Yeats—naked and gaunt, with long black dishevelled hair" being pursued by a lovely weeping girl. There were other dreams of Yeats and, on one occasion, Horton warned his friend that he might make an astral visit some night. If Horton took a too complicatedly "mystical" view of such psychic experiences, ours may be a trifle too simple. What Yeats thought and felt about them does not emerge from this book.

As to the artistic relationship between Horton and Yeats, its high point was the publication of Horton's *A Book of Images*, with an introduction by Yeats, in 1898. After that, poor Horton seems to have sued in vain for Yeats's good opinion of his symbolic art and to have suffered many harsh judgments on it. He attempted to counter his deep sense of inferiority by offering unsolicited spiritual advice to the poet but at a certain point he made viciously paranoid accusations. To these Yeats responded in an unusually (for him) charitable way. He clearly felt there was something special about Horton. If it seems rather odd that Horton does not get a mention in *Autobiographies*, the explanation may well be that he did not die soon enough for Yeats's literary purposes but went on living in the nineties right up to the Great War. An early death would probably have made him a strong candidate for Yeats's "tragic generation". Instead he got mixed up in the ironies of the 1925 *A Vision* and the later *Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends*.

Once again, a view of Yeats's theosophical activities and friendships leaves one wondering how he found time to make himself a great poet and, of course, about the relation between the contents of those activities and his poetry. Not surprisingly, George Mills Harper is disposed to validate the theosophy by the measure of the poetry. This has always been his position in his work on Yeats. "Surely," he writes, "we can no longer think that great art can emerge from or be based upon a simplistic or ridiculous

metaphysic." But as Yeats well knew, art is your only alchemy; based upon, or a transmutation of, all kinds of rubbish. The rubbish remains but we have the art to console us.

Unfortunately, the story I have alluded to is very obscurely presented in this oddly devised book. What the book *wants* to be is an edition of a double correspondence, like the Yeats/Sturge Moore or Yeats/Margaret Ruddock volumes. But OUP's projected (now imminent?) collected letters stood in the way; even, apparently, in the way of Professor Harper's access to the originals of Yeats's letters to Horton. So what we have is a descriptive commentary on the correspondence, followed by Horton's letters and synopses (based on transcriptions) of those by Yeats. The exception is that a few of Yeats's letters already published are here reprinted. This structure involves a great deal of irritating repetition. Still, it is very useful to have the letters, the commentary and the notes. They add to our knowledge of Yeats and indicate some important gaps in it. And Professor Harper is certainly thorough. I wonder, though, at his bafflement about the date of Mrs. Horton's death. Is the extreme paucity of information about what happened to Mrs. Horton complicated by the disappearance of the death certificate?

University of Toronto

Michael Sidnell

***Childhood Regained, The Art of the Storyteller.* By Fernando Savater.** Frances M. Lopez-Morillas, trans. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982. Pp. xv, 208. \$17.50 U.S.

Childhood Regained offers readings of works by Robert Louis Stevenson, Conan Doyle, Jules Verne, Jack London, H. G. Wells, J. R. R. Tolkien, Agatha Christie and many others who, often on the strength of their popularity alone, have been dismissed as second-rate. *Aficianado* Fernando Savater feels the need to "work out a defense of 'genre' literatures, like detective fiction, westerns, novels of science fiction or terror, [fantasy, and adventure]" (p. 141). The defense, such as it is, comes in the form of a critical-narrative journey with the reader as initiate and Savater as guide.

Childhood Regained is quite literally an adventure among books, or, in the terminology of today, a reflexivist text, or, even more precisely, a book about Savater's relation to books (and writers), various fictional characters' relation to their various adventures, and the reader's relation to both Savater's text and the works in it. Thus, in his chapter on Jack London, Savater tells us that the prisoner-protagonist of *The Star Rover* is a symbol of Savater as a sick child reading London "just as this whole chapter is a symbol of this book and of the relationship that makes us brothers, my reader" (p. 121). The address to his brother-reader, besides confirming my sense of exclusion from this hyperbolically symbolic journey, hints suggestively, with its turn-of-the-century masculine gusto and

up-to-date critical stance, at the contradictory tensions of the book. That this study is more than a species of literary nostalgia made over by a critical facelift cannot be denied; Savater's scholarship, wit, and eclecticism are remarkable indeed. But the mixture of old and new demands a measure of caution: readers who take Savater's journey cannot expect to find themselves in altogether unfamiliar territory; nor can they expect to find their exploratory apparatus consistently dependable.

Ultimately Savater's defense of "genre" literatures comes to rest on his understanding of story, which is practically indistinguishable from what we know as "romance." As Savater sees it, story is identified by its emphasis on action rather than on character and by its frequent connection with the sea, the chase, danger, courage, loyalty, and the marvelous. It is quite separate from the novel, and the difference between the two is key. Far from being E. M. Forster's "lowest and simplest of literary organisms," story is loftily "hopeful" and "hope-imparting." Positive, open-ended, and regenerative, it is also useful, containing, as it does, the storyteller's wise counsel. The novel, by contrast, carries an association with death. And the novelist, isolated, solitary, and in search of meaning, is "uncounseled and cannot counsel others" (p. 9). The novel is linked to the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie and is thus governed by secondary conventions — economics, politics, marriage, adultery, divorce. The story, rooted in community, goes beyond these conventions to primary ones, and is central in our "acquisition of a moral sense" (p. xiii). Even readers who question such assertions are bound to find they require a response. Those who routinely downgrade the value of all but psychological fiction will find it less easy to do so another time.

Savater's theoretical remarks are actually far more rewarding than those on the fictional works themselves. A great deal of what he says about the journey motif and initiation, for example, is not new. Similarly, the comments about various emotional needs to be satisfied by the fiction will not surprise. The trouble for many readers, however, will likely be to maintain even minimal patience while going through longish passages on his boyhood or on things thought, felt, or dreamed. Attempts to discover anything so crude as an objective interpretation of a text will be frustrated by the reflexivist technique. The closest one comes to such an interpretation is the superb chapter on *Treasure Island*, but it is not nearly enough.

Savater's philosophical training draws him sympathetically to the aesthetics of Walter Benjamin and Jorge Luis Borges. Their influence is chiefly apparent in the first and penultimate chapters of the book, in which the major theoretical premises are explained, but can also be felt throughout the book in its adumbration of "correspondences" and "mirrors," in the fluidity of the boundaries between "reality" and "discourse," and in its subjective methodology. Although the avowed subjectivism initially promises a cosy and straightforward reminiscence, the reader is soon enough disabused of this idea. Savater himself, who claims to be astonished by the ingenuity of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, both

of whom have written about Jules Verne, concludes that perhaps he also lacks "the gift of simplicity" (p. 45).

In the end it is the subjective approach which determines the character of the book. In the context of story, propelled more often by passion than by reason, this approach seems especially ill-advised. The book leaves an impression of opacity rather than clarity. The voice of Savater, modulated and rhythmic as a storyteller's, displaces argument with the evocation of a spell. So when he whispers his affections for "that type of English adventurer, the golden child of imperialism . . . whose heroism consists in being . . . sufficiently sensitive to epic beauty to create the legend of the world which he destroys" (p. 106), it almost escapes unnoticed. But not quite. Although Savater is aware of the risks of his enthusiasm in a way that earlier enthusiasts have not been, aware that between us and adventure "the shadow of the sinister swastika will fall for a long time yet" (p. 88), he does not link the risks with his subjectivist stance. It seems safe to say that others will.

Saint Mary's University

Wendy R. Katz

***Scheherazade in England.* By Muhsin Jassim Ali.** Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1981. Pp. 193 \$18.00 Paper, \$8.00.

In this volume, based on a doctoral dissertation submitted to Dalhousie University, Muhsin Ali, Professor of English at the University of Baghdad, provides a detailed account of the responses of the English reading public and English critics to the several translations of the *Arabian Nights* that appeared in the nineteenth Century. The significance of such a limited topic lies in the fact that responses to the *Nights* embodied many of the sensitivities, aspirations, and assumptions of the Romantic and Victorian ages, so that Ali's material does have broad cultural implications.

Quite appropriately, Professor Ali begins his survey of English criticism with an examination of reactions to Antoine Galland's pioneering French translation, *Les Mille et Une Nuits* (1704-17) and the "Grub-Street" English version, which James Beattie found incompatible with such eighteenth-century virtues as "seemliness, propriety, and balance," all the while he admitted the work's Oriental charm. Chapters Three and Four describe Romantic and Victorian responses, and Chapter Five assesses the *Nights* against specific Victorian values, observing that Sinbad's voyages may have appealed to the Victorian love of hard work and that Scheherazade's realism may have supported the Victorian distrust of "the wayward and nonsensical." Ali also suggests that the Victorians appear to have enjoyed the story teller's sense of poetic justice as well as the many otherworldly passages in the *Nights*.

Professor Ali is to be commended for his comprehensive assessment of Edward Lane's contribution to Arabic studies in general and to the study of the *Nights* in particular. Lane's translation was one of three great

Victorian versions, and it was enjoyed by the English because of the information it provided about Arab life and customs and because, unlike Richard Burton's translation, it did not offend Victorian propriety. Ali's evaluation of the translations by Lane, Burton and Payne is also a valuable supplement to the treatment of these same translators by Mia Gerhardt in her *Art of Story-Telling* (1963), which offers less about responses but considerably more than Ali does about sources and styles of translation. Ali also provides valuable information about the influence of the *Nights* on such writers as Dickens, Meredith, and Leigh Hunt, as well as about nineteenth-Century illustrators. The illustrations to Ali's volume are poorly presented, however.

A highly detailed study like Ali's, which still has something of the flavor of the dissertation about it, may suggest the wry comment, "All you wanted to know about . . . and more," and this observation is not made frivolously here, since this reviewer has an honest question about the audience to which the book is addressed. In one sense *Scheherazade in England* belongs with studies like Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) which assess the quality and direction of Western studies of the Middle East, yet the focus of Ali's book is so narrow as to limit its appeal even to Arabists who, if they are studying Western images of the Middle East, probably need a broader range of data.

Ali's study might also be grouped with works like Sprague Allen's *Tides in English Taste* and Richard Altick's *The English Common Reader* as an examination of the moral and aesthetic standards of a particular age, except that the book's narrow range limits its value even to the student of Victorian tastes. Samuel Chew's now classic *The Crescent and the Rose* (1937), a study of the impact of Middle Eastern materials on Renaissance thinkers, strikes a better balance between detail of treatment and breadth of coverage.

Ali's work may also be seen as an "influence study," the author maintaining, quite legitimately, that Middle-Eastern influences on Western culture have all too often been neglected in favor of stress on the influence of Greece and Rome. This is an idea that all of us who are in some way involved in Middle East studies have been trying to advance for some time—with limited success. Ali's work makes me think that perhaps the problem is that there is really very little interest now in speculations about influence and even less, perhaps, in literary history. Neither approach is able to provide the kind of textual illumination we seek or to reveal the inner reality from which a text springs or to which it points. In this sense, Ali's book is a curiously old-fashioned study, a work that almost seems to antedate Lowes' *Road to Xanadu*, which revolutionized influence studies by revealing how a knowledge of poetic sources could uncover the workings of an artist's mind.

What is the future of studies in the *Arabian Nights*, now that translations of this huge work are attracting more and more attention? Or, to put it another way, what questions about literature are today generating answers that are most valuable to us as readers? My own suggestion is that

more attention should be devoted to the mythic elements in the *Nights*—what these tales have to say about the development of the personality, about the structure of events, about the inner forces holding society together, about the importance of non-rational thought, about the worlds that lie beyond our material world. For the fact is that the *Nights* constitute an incredibly rich and still largely untouched source of information about the “spiritual” dimension of reality. The ties between these tales and Sufism—Islamic mysticism—are beginning to be recognized now in the West; Western analysts like Bruno Bettelheim and Marie-Louise von Franz have pioneered discussion of the *Nights* as documents illuminating the depths of the personality; and Andras Hamori has examined selected stories as investigations of the structure of reality.

Ali does hint at this mythic dimension in his discussion of the reactions to the *Nights* of Leigh Hunt, who praised the book’s unsurpassed imaginative attainments; R. L. Stevenson, who found the *Nights* to meet primary human desires and longings; and Walter Bagehot, who, early in his career, found the *Nights* to be “an act of initiation into a dream-like world,” but Ali is inclined to dismiss such reflections as “Romantic” and to shy away from dealing with the *Nights* as serious reflections of human needs. I have noticed this same tendency in other Arab academicians with whom I have talked about fantasy literature, finding them quite uneasy with the intuitive, the mystical, and the non-rational. I can understand why this is so but I also regret it, since Muslims and/or native Arab speakers have much to contribute that will help us all to a depth reading of these marvelous stories.

Wittenberg University

James Roy King

***The Almost Meeting, and Other Stories.* By Henry Kreisel. Edmon-
ton: NeWest Press, 1981. Pp. 147. \$12.95.**

Henry Kreisel is a slow, deliberate writer—this is only his third book in over thirty years; *The Rich Man*, his first novel, appeared in 1948, and *The Betrayal*, his second, in 1964. Now he has gathered together his short stories, most of which have been published before but without receiving the attention they obviously deserve. Cumulatively, as they present themselves in book-form, they are extremely impressive.

Their most noteworthy characteristic is a deceptive simplicity. Kreisel’s prose is direct and spare; without imitating the self-conscious simplicity of Callaghan, he nonetheless eschews any hint of the rhetorically ornate. A spade is a spade is a spade. The plots, too, are straightforward and clear-cut. In “Homecoming,” for instance, surely a minor masterpiece, a young Polish Jew, who has survived the holocaust, returns to his native town in hope of finding his parents and relatives. Little happens, but the human process of painfully facing the realities of a shattered life and making an effort towards new growth is movingly presented. It is not

merely the subject-matter that reminds us, without any sense of incongruity, of the great Russian writers.

I have said that little happens, but Kreisel is at the opposite extreme from so many of his contemporaries who give us detailed and elaborate slices of life to illustrate the rich but frustrating meaninglessness—and helplessness—of everyday living. A true humanist, he is preoccupied with moral values. In “Annerl” and “An Anonymous Letter,” youths are prematurely confronted with—and so initiated into—the bewildering complexities of adult problems and responsibilities. In “Chassidic Song,” a chance encounter in a plane jolts a young man into reconsidering his Jewish heritage. In “The Broken Globe,” a story which examines a subject Kreisel later explored in an influential critical essay, “The Prairie: A State of Mind,” a modern intellectual is shown developing a grudging respect for an obstinate, ignorant farmer who belongs in a moral world centuries older than that of his scientist son.

At the same time, Kreisel is not as morally austere as the above discussion might suggest. He is eloquent on the importance of the artistic imagination. “The Travelling Nude,” whose title (and, to some extent, subject) depends upon a verbal pun, is more whimsical in tone than we usually expect from him, but its presentation of the clash between artistic principle and puritan or (worse) prurient response is central to his work.

But it is in his latest story, “The Almost Meeting” itself, that we encounter Kreisel’s most absorbing and creative, albeit unostentatious, foray into artistic theory. Alexander Budak has written a novel in which a young man goes out in quest of his father, who disappeared some years previously. He almost finds him on two occasions “only to have him vanish before he could meet him face to face.” Budak receives a letter of appreciation from David Lasker, a distinguished poet and novelist (whose description intriguingly recalls A. M. Klein), congratulating him on his achievement. Budak then makes a number of attempts to meet Lasker, but the older man always (and, it seems, deliberately) eludes him. As Lasker wrote about the protagonist in Budak’s novel: “An almost meeting is often more important than the meeting. The quest is all.”

So life, in a curious way, is made to imitate art. The novelist finds himself within a situation that he has himself imagined, invented, created. Or, we might say, Kreisel has himself imagined, invented, created an “almost meeting” between art and life. What impresses me about this story is that Kreisel has taken a decidedly “modern” subject—the claimed autonomy of text, the artist’s capacity to play with the connections and separations between his art and the world in which he lives—but has explored it in a probing yet traditional way. In other words, he displays another “almost meeting” between conventional realistic modes and the more serious challenges of the current avant-garde.

Kreisel’s stories, in my experience, have a curiously delayed effect. They are likely to impress immediately, but they go on to expand and develop within the mind. We realize that they contain depths and resonances that do not reveal themselves at once. These stories sent me back to *The*

Betrayal, and I find myself even more impressed on the second reading than on the first. There is no one quite like Kreisel in Canadian fiction. If we underestimate him, we are doing ourselves an injustice.

University College, University of Toronto

W. J. Keith

***After the War.* By Andy Wainwright.** Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1981. Pp. 65. \$6.95

***Alter Sublime.* By Christopher Dewdney.** Toronto: Coach House Press, 1980. Pp. 97 (Illustrated). \$5.50

***Mimosa and Other Poems.* By Mary di Michele.** Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1981. Pp. 64. \$6.95.

I hope that it is something more than plain perversity that causes me to like and admire these three books in inverse proportion to the deal of attention that each of their authors receives. In the contemporary Canadian poetry market the watering-down of a particular product when it becomes popular is quite commonplace, as is a simultaneous inflation of the price and of the claims made for that product. A case in point is the work of Mary di Michele. *Mimosa and other poems* is the third collection from this poet who until recently was poetry editor to *Toronto Life*, who has the popularizing distinction of having won the 1980 CBC Poetry Prize, and whose stock is generally on the rise. Her poetry is without a doubt saleable, and its popularity might be a direct result of its implicit confidence in the transparency of language or in the ability of language to explicate extensively whatever womanly emotions are brought to its attention. This poetry might be popular, too, for its use of the standard typology of a vulgar feminism; for its talk of women "no longer young" or "raging to be thin," women threatened by the wandering male and his penchant for younger women, or threatened by the stereotyped images of media-women.

These two kinds of specious clarity—the confidence in language, and a prefabricated typology—are used by di Michele to tackle some important and interesting questions: the role and experience of the woman writer, the position of daughters in relation to fathers and, by extension, the position of women in patriarchy. But what is painfully lacking in the exploration of such questions is any but the most tentative sense of how the woman writer could and should disrupt patriarchal influences by refusing not only the stereotypes it delivers but also the assumed clarity and power of its discourses. Mary di Michele seems finally resigned to the voice of the father: "I have his face, his eyes, his hands, / his anxious desire to know everything, / to think, to write everything, / his anxious desire to be heard." It's quite obviously the explication of the tensions of such an "anxious desire" that enables the moments of power in di Michele's voice,

but ultimately this is work that is too ready to sell itself to the men who run the business.

Somewhere altogether different on the current circuits of exchange is the work of Christopher Dewdney. Of the three poets under consideration Dewdney is the one who is least likely to become a popular line, but it strikes me that he is by far the best poet; indeed, I can think of no more careful and impressive work being produced in Canada now. If the consumers have heard Dewdney's name at all it may well be through Michael Ondaatje's poem about him in *There's a Trick with a Knife I'm Learning to Do*. Signally enough, that poem says little directly about Dewdney's work but is concerned to remark his ability at the age of twenty-three to cope with his wife's suffering a brain haemorrhage. If I relay that painful information here it is not because knowledge of it can provide some commercial 'human interest' by means of which the reader can counter the resistance of a difficult poetry; rather, because the pain and damage of that event is bizarrely apposite within the development of Dewdney's work.

In his previous books Dewdney has been concerned with what I might call—almost in mimicry—the poetics of the neuro-psychology of language and memory, and with an unavoidably romantic search for what language makes inexpressible. The "fractionally communicable and chronologically ephemeral" layers of our existence have been Dewdney's area. Always more circumspect than any romantic, he has at once sought the expression of "unborn concretions/rolling in their oiled memory jackets" and insisted upon the ineptitude of language in its search for the deep structures of human experience, its attempts to bring into focus what he calls in *Alter Sublime* "the virtual image," the sublime form. In these earlier books his meditations have been marked by the innocent smile of one whose religion it is to construe the multiple, circular ironies endemic to all human attempts to express not just the ineffable but even the commonplace.

With *Alter Sublime* there is an alteration: the inscrutability and the deadpan ironies have given way to something more like the rictal grin of the tragedian. I don't want to say that the playfulness of Dewdney's early work has gone—far from it. But in this book the sheer painfulness of our reaching out for the objects of our desire, for the sublime, and our inevitable collisions with the glassy surface of language (a mirror of the world for poets like di Michele, but for Dewdney a mirror that "is no longer silvered") take their proper place next to the comedy of our aspirations. In other words, the pain of "the mind eating itself" has been given a larger role to play in Dewdney's theatre of language. The result is, for me, most powerful in the strange lyrics that can only be called love-songs, where hopelessness crashes head-on with the language. In this short space I can probably explain no better than by quoting the perfections of one of the shorter of these poems:

And when I kissed you
 the stars over the river flickered slightly
 and were recorded. The design of the moon
 through leaves, is to reduce a certain
 inevitability into dance
 and play with the odds, which
 when stacked high enough
 articulate gravity &
 point in one steady finger
 to the moonlight on one side of your face.

This poem is not highly typical but its hazardous, intense and yet finally unsentimental lyricism ought to pique the interest of any serious reader of poetry. And in Dewdney's work I think one can find many other achievements capable of making some more extensively advertised products look most unappetising.

Dewdney's work constitutes a sort of incessant murmur beneath the foundations of conventional poetic affairs and encourages an undermining questioning of what we often take for granted—the translucency of language and poetic form. Andy Wainwright's poetry, on the other hand, is more above ground. I sense that Wainwright might share much of Dewdney's distrust of language but that he would be unwilling to embrace Dewdney's radical working of that distrust. What the two poets have in common, I think, is an ability to take meaningful risks in their writing; but Wainwright's risks work in an almost opposite direction to Dewdney's. The poems of *After the War* seem to be trying to find solid formal shells that could preserve human emotion intact against the subversive despair of a poet like Dewdney. That's to say, Wainwright's poems attempt to present patterns of emotional experiences (of memory in particular) that will safeguard in the present some anterior human response. This is ultimately a romantic obsession similar to Dewdney's but Wainwright simply has more faith. It is this faith that leads him, I think, to construct deliberate formal guidelines for his poetic commerce, and these are his weapons against a flood of murmurous feeling. But these weapons also constitute Wainwright's risk since they suggest a confidence that formal structures can *contain* experience, or that pattern is what the world and our emotions inevitably fall into. A poet today pays heavily for such confidence; in Wainwright's case the price is a certain sing-song quality to many of his lines such as the iambic lines that often end his stanzas. Similarly, some of the many rhymes that he uses simply sound facile.

But this urge to patterning is the risk that Wainwright embraces and he manages for the most part to walk the tightrope well. Because he is at least aware of the risks, and because he allows his writing a conscience and a consciousness of the ironic effects it can achieve, he produces a body of work that is certainly not a negligible exploration of the possibilities of poetic language. If I object to his underlying romantic faith in language, this doesn't prevent me from following the careful building that Wainwright undertakes in developing his book. Nor does it prevent me from

seeing that there is at work here a rare fusing of formal concerns with the subject matter at hand. Generally speaking, the poems concern themselves with the nature and pressure of past experiences as they impinge upon or grow into the present. Wainwright's present is not a "territory/ of calm and order" or an unproblematic product of an older tradition, but one invaded by a sense of the "real [that] is here/ between us, invisible,/ unspoken, yet rich to touch." I respect Wainwright's ability to pass on a sense of that richness but I find that what he describes in the preface as his "customary compaction and paring down" sometimes leads him to a greater simplicity than is warranted; with that simplicity comes a flood of ironies that perhaps not even the poet is prepared for.

When Wainwright's customs are altered he produces what are for me his best lyrics, such as "After the Fall" or "Living It." And blossoming out at the end of this book there are two short stories where the constraints and the confidence of the poems are significantly missing. These stories are the highlights of the book, so far as I can see: they are more murmurous than the poetry, and more questioning, because they ironically explode the very constrictions that will probably make Wainwright's poetry gain a readership.

Wesleyan University

Paul Smith

***Turned Clay.* By Cheng Sait Chia.** Fredericton: Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1981. Pp. 75. Paper, \$5.00.

Most of the poems in Cheng Sait Chia's *Turned Clay* were written, according to R. L. Raymond's introduction to the volume, in the time between the second appearance of cancer in her life and her death from it less than a year later. For the most part, therefore, the poems touch upon her approaching death in one way or another, forming a remarkable record of her coming to terms with it. Nevertheless, the poems are entirely free of any trace of self-pity or morbid self-indulgence, they are characterized rather by varied subjects, subtle shifts of mood, a clear eye for both human nature and the natural world around her, and an attractive deftness of phrasing.

Her subjects include not only herself but also the people and things around her, either at the time of writing or in the past. She contemplates the possibility of death for "This body this firm flesh/this flow of silk black hair/and these strong white teeth" in a number of poems. But she also considers the disastrous floods which follow the "winter thaws", and notes compassionately how "men with hearts like lead/watch over the drowned land." Consequently, although her poems are, in the best sense of the word, self-centred (as any poet's must be), her sensibilities reach out from that centre to encompass the humanity of which she, though dying, is still a part.

In many of her poems, Cheng is also concerned to extend her sensibilities even further and to reach the natural world, which she observes clearly and with love. Here reflections are carefully placed within this natural world:

Crocuses are out
on the foothills this morning

Horses loom huge and quiet
against the dark edge of the slope . . .

My thoughts float to the East
where my village lies asleep.

Her feeling for nature is marked by a keen eye for detail, so that, surveying the aftermath of the flood, she not only shares the feelings of the men who watch it, but also notes the "twigs with buds like tiny fists" of the overhanging trees and the "ducks with young like fluff" gliding on the muddy water. Hence she seems at one, not only with humanity, but also with the nature of which humanity is a part.

The moods of the poems shift subtly. The many shades of feeling include an occasional flash of alienation from people ("Eyes roll like a doll's/laughter cackles like that of a toy") and a certain impatience with the preliminaries and taboos of death:

Why talk of God and all those things
that chafe me

I'm not a child
afraid to go to bed.

There is also an occasional flash of humour. But for the most part the poems offer a softer range of moods. There is a sense of the preciousness of the time remaining with her husband:

Grief forgotten
we embraced in flame
yet awhile.

Accompanying this sense is an empathy for his grief and loss after she is gone:

When he draws the curtains in the morning
the hills the lake the pines the bare birches
will not look the same.

Of her own feelings she writes detachedly:

The sun does not lift the mist
from my world.

Her thoughts turn also to her father's death and her guilt and pain at not seeing him again before he died. The constant play of mood throughout the volume creates in the reader a comprehension of the ambience of approaching death which may elicit grief but does not encourage depression.

All her subjects and moods are characterized by deftness of phrase and crispness of statement. In the face of her death, she notes, "time crackles past." Her husband is observed as being "Quick in his strides/warm in flesh." Grief for loss of her will be to her husband "a taste of turned clay/ . . . at the root of your tongue." There is no padding, no fumbling, no confusion in her poems, only a crisp simplicity which everywhere enhances the subtlety of mood.

The poems of Cheng Sait Chia reveal a delicate and attractive poetic talent. By capturing her death in them, she has created out of it her own living monument.

Dalhousie University

Patricia Monk

***Critical Observations: Diverse Essays.* By Julian Symons.** New Haven: Ticknor and Fields, 1981. Pp. 213. \$12.95.

Collected essays can be problematic enough. And diverse essays pose even more problems. Do scattered pieces gain anything from collection into a single volume? Is it worth the effort? Or the expense?

In the case of Julian Symons' *Critical Observations* the answer is yes to both these questions. Diversity itself is one of the attractive features in the volume. Symons' range of interest reinforces the strength in his literary common sense. In topics as varied as recollections of writer-friends, an account of a year's teaching at Amherst College, commentary on little-known literary figures and critical assessments of those who are well known, he shows the same ease, conviction and consistency.

Symons began his career as editor of *Twentieth Century Verse* in the 1930s. During the second world war he was active as a critic and commentator in many of the magazines and journals that reflected the avid interest in books, writing and ideas of that period. Since the war he has followed the twin pursuits of established literary critic and noted author of detective and crime stories, the two pursuits being fused in his work as an authority on the history of crime fiction. His whole life has been involved with books, journals and writers. His criticism is an aspect of his career as a man of letters and shows both the confidence and concern of the professional.

That professionalism is itself rather awesome. Julian Symons constantly reveals his faith in the overriding importance of excellence in the writing which he discusses. Never strident, his insistence on the fresh phrase, the striking image, the genuinely new use of words in the writing dealt with is always implicit. No author gets away with the shoddy phrase,

the worn image, the automatic response in Symons' essays, and yet his sharpness of judgement is almost invariably coupled with warmth and a sense of fairness. Typical is this comment in a recent essay not included in *Critical Observations*. Symons is reviewing Walter Allen's "Memories of a Writing Life," *As I Walked Down New Grub Street*: "The book is to be enjoyed for its portraits of other people, many of them splendidly comic and vivid, a few as it seems partial or too tender.... Mr. Allen, a gregarious man, and a connoisseur of characters as well as an appreciator of talents, enjoys them all.... A certain limiting blandness that marks Mr. Allen as critic is noticeable in some portraits" ["Enterprising Missionary," *T.L.S.*, December 18, 1981, p. 1456]. As a critical comment, "a certain limiting blandness" is pretty deadly, but it is delivered in a way that appears both appropriate and good-natured. The judgement itself is an essential part of the critique as is the genial quality of the book and author under review. Both these elements are preserved by Symons in an essay that is pointed, informative and entertaining.

In his ability to write for the intelligent general reader and at the same time to pursue a cogent critical argument, Julian Symons reveals his professional origins as a pre-war author who flourished in that now-lapsed literary world in which critical ideas and values were established by writers themselves and not merely by academics or journalist-reviewers. Are younger, contemporary critics likely to be as crisp as Symons in his 1964 essay on Edith Sitwell?

When fruits are mentioned they seem made of wax, when Edith Sitwell writes of flowers they have no roots in earthly soil. Like other objects, flowers are named by words, and for her it is the words and not the objects that exist, coloured literary counters to be played with. So when she says that Skelton's poems "have the sharpness and coldness of an early spring flower's petals," it is plain that she has truly encountered neither the poem nor the "early spring flower" (what flower?). (p. 35)

Once again this is extremely damaging commentary, but it too avoids the impression of rancour. For that very reason Symons' summation appears all the more just:

Edith Sitwell's rhetoric is the product merely of words ringing like bells in her head. Those who thought otherwise for a few years were deceived by the experience of war, war the most powerful blurrer of intelligence, the arch-nurse of empty phrases. At no other time than during the war could poems which reverted in their language to Victorian archaism and rhetoric, poems so lacking in coherent thought and so determined to ignore the world of objects in which we live, have deceived so many intelligent critics. (p. 38)

Critical Observations is divided into four sections: critical essays on writers, essays on little magazines, a section on crime writers, three pieces of personal reminiscence. Each section has its own particular charm although I suppose the first, "Poets, Novelists, Critics," has the least

general interest, dealing as it does with writers like Arthur Symons, Francis Newman, Wyndham Lewis and Geoffrey Grigson. Even here, however, Julian Symons' sureness of touch is obvious as he uses just enough general biographical and historical information to place the writers he discusses in a context in which the focus of his observations is sharp and illuminating.

When he turns to crime fiction Symons is at his professional best. Not only is his knowledge vast, but also he knows the craft as a practitioner. His critical acumen and his familiarity with the lives and careers of crime writers combine in these essays to produce literary studies noteworthy both for their interest to the general, non-specialised reader and for their flashes of authoritative judgement. Symons is as stimulating when taking the broad view as when he is focusing closely. Here is an example of the former mode: "Other bad writers have been skillful craftsmen without lasting like Agatha Christie. Perhaps the nearest one can get to explaining the puzzle of her enduring popularity is to suggest that although the detective story is ephemeral, the riddle's attraction is lasting" (pp. 146-7). And here, though still part of a panoramic comment, is the second, close-up method:

The third important element in Chandler's writing was its Anglo-American character. He had been brought up in England, he longed to return (and on the whole was not disappointed when he came), and the delighted disgust with which he saw California came partly from the contrast between its brash newness and English good taste. When he read Max Beerbohm he felt that he too belonged to an age of grace and taste from which he had been exiled. "So I wrote for *Black Mask*. What a wry joke." No doubt he would have felt hopelessly out of place in an age of grace (if such an age ever existed) and would have written ironically about it, but that is not the point. The flavour of his stories is individual partly because, even though, as he said, all the pulp writers used the same idiom, his is filtered through an English lens. (p. 160)

It is the personality of the author himself that gives an overall unity to the diverse essays collected in *Critical Observations*. Shrewd and relaxed, demanding and forthright, Julian Symons constantly manifests an English fair-mindedness which is attractive both for its good humour and its toughness. Commenting on the reticence in Geoffrey Grigson's autobiography, Symons writes: "This is said not to criticize Geoffrey Grigson (to each his reticences and revelations) but to characterize him" (p. 84). That insistence on making the necessary comment without rancour is typical of Symons' virtue as a critic. Well aware of human idiosyncrasy, unwilling either to overlook it or rant at it, he is manifestly civilised when being most personal. Describing a recent visit to his friend, George Woodcock in Vancouver, Symons insists that "a certain tolerance is necessary when old friends meet again after a long lapse of time":

During the week.... with George and Inge, I had clearly brought home to me the immense difference in viewpoint between a Western materialist

like me with no faith in the perfectibility of man, and a romantic idealist like George, whose whole adult life had been based on belief in the naturalness of voluntary co-operation among individuals within a group. As I listened to George outlining his hopes of social change in Canada, and saying that the first step was a questionnaire that would be issued in a popular magazine, as Inge told me of the spellbinding revelations in Jung's autobiography which was her current reading, I began to feel a strong kinship with almost any kind of organised society. I had an inclination to sing the praises even of Macdonalds and Burger King, and to praise the architecture of Howard Johnson's. (p. 200)

Julian Symons is a professional writer and man of letters. The sharpness of mind shown in *Critical Observations*, together with the author's good-humoured poise offer convincing evidence that such a life is worthwhile.

Dalhousie University

Rowland Smith

***Ben Jonson: His Vision and His Art.* By Alexander Leggatt. London and New York: Methuen, 1981. Pp. xvi, 300. \$55.25.**

Ben Jonson: His Vision and His Art begins with a remark by T. S. Eliot that what Jonson's readers need is "intelligent saturation in his work as a whole," and attempting to meet this need, it offers a critical survey of Jonson's *oeuvre* that is both comprehensive and specific. Alexander Leggatt's strategy is not to group works by chronology or genre, but to trace common ideas or experiences in the many forms Jonson cultivated: tragedy, comedy, masque, and several different kinds of non-dramatic poetry. While the book is devoted mainly to discovering the similarities in all these, the theme that emerges essentially pits the non-dramatic poet against the dramatic poet and decides in favour of the latter. The conclusion finds that Jonson is not "the master of the plain statement, the single-minded vision" that he might seem to be, but rather an artist of "paradoxical double vision."

The discussion of *Volpone* in the first two chapters will serve to illustrate the argument. Jonson, Leggatt argues, is profoundly ambivalent about the secondary worlds or "false creations" his characters fabricate. There is a tension between Jonson's moral criticism of the character and his delight in *Volpone*'s creative power. The shape-shifting that *Volpone* imagines in his wooing of Celia, for example, is a special form of domination designed to break her identity in order to impose an endless variety of roles on her. His mode corresponds to the desperate, novelty-seeking sensuality of Sir Voluptuous Beast (Epigram XXV), and like the character in the epigram, therefore, *Volpone* condemns himself. Nevertheless, *Volpone* remains unrepentant and defiant to the end, even when exposing himself in the climax and especially when, still in his role as the Fox, he has the effrontery in the Epilogue to ask for applause rather than punish-

ment. "That Jonson allows this," Leggatt claims, "shows he is willing to identify Volpone with his own delight in artistic creation, a delight that supplements and at times overrides his critical judgment of the character" (p. 29). The second chapter offers two partial explanations for this reaction. One is the "imaginative horror" Jonson feels for characters who descend not merely to the subhuman but to a state of mechanical or inert matter. By comparison, the Fox, though sub-human, *has* a kind of living integrity and thereby wins his author's approval. A second explanation for Jonson's sympathy, against his better judgment, for degenerate figures has to do with his sense of social occasion, with a feeling that the special occasion of a masque (*Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*) or a fair (*Bartholomew Fair*) or a feast (*Epicoene*) grants a license that permits, if it doesn't wholly condone, a surrender of individual identity: "social occasions and artistic form protect us from the worst possibilities of the descent to the sub-human, putting that descent within limits that make it acceptable" (p. 72). I think that Leggatt rather skirts a number of difficulties in treating a play—in the importance he attributes to *Volpone's* Epilogue—as a social occasion of the same order as the others; but the general point is well-argued, and it is argued in such a way as to arouse one's interest in a number of lesser known works.

Subsequent chapters pursue the point and support it in some detail, but the most interesting chapters come towards the end of the book and discuss the questions of "Judgment and Transformation" and "The Poet as Character" in his own work. Part of Leggatt's strength is his infectious admiration for Jonson. He is able, for example, to offer persuasive refutations of the frequently-levelled charge of arrogance. A case in point is the famous boast in the Epilogue to *Cynthia's Revels*: "By God 'tis good, and if you lik't, you may." In Leggatt's view, this "may well be Jonson's considered estimate of his play; but it is presented as the climax of a self-portrait whose main effect is comic. Jonson knows, and virtually admits, that this is an odd way for a play attacking self-love to end; but that in itself is part of the joke" (p. 204). Jonson's art, including the self-portraits it contains, is fundamentally concerned with the disparity between the real and the ideal and is, Leggatt claims, equally committed to both.

The last chapter "Art and Its Context" and the "Conclusion" are less satisfying. For one thing, since one of the book's main aims is to prove that Jonson is not essentially a master of plain statement, one would like to see more account taken of the major book which claims that he is—Wesley Trimp's *Ben Jonson's Poems: A Study of the Plain Style*. There is only one minor reference to Trimp. In addition, Trimp's very full discussion of "The Celebration of Charis" puts seriously in doubt the perfunctory analysis that describes one of the steps in the sequence as "just one more game of courtship" (p. 272); is it rather *the* courtly game (and something more) since the debate between Jonson and Charis is an attempt to define intelligent love, an attempt having its antecedents in *The Book of the Courtier* and the *Symposium*. "The Celebration of Charis,"

combining so expertly elements of drama, masque, and lyric, is well-suited to Leggatt's purposes, and one sees why the discussion of it is saved for the end. It is also true that Jonson does not simply take over the Platonic or Neo-Platonic account of love. But I don't think his attitude here is summed up very helpfully as "paradoxical double vision." The term ignores rather than refutes the interpretation that sees the attitude of the sequence as a mean between idealism and cynicism.

Implicit also in the term "paradoxical double vision" is a predisposition in favour of drama, a habit of analysis that repeatedly applies critical terms derived from drama to the reading of lyric. Leggatt's comments on the non-dramatic poetry are often fresh and illuminating, and he is even willing to say that certain poems which appear in both dramatic and non-dramatic contexts are more impressive in the latter. But for the most part he is content to make the conventional assumption that the worlds of the plays are "larger and more complex" (p. 175)—even while claiming, for example, that the *Epigrams*, read as a group, add up to a coherent world. Leggatt overlooks the possibility that this world is larger, more complex, and more real than that of any of the plays because he refers to Jonson, as speaker of the epigrams, as a "persona." As is frequent in modern criticism, "persona" is a weasel-word, here begging the question of whether the Jonson who speaks the epigrams is at par with a character in a play. It is true that Leggatt pauses seriously for a moment on Jonson's avowal that the *Epigrams* are "the ripest of my studies."

The description is at first glance surprising; the conventional view would be that the ripest of Jonson's studies are *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*. But in one sense the description is just, for the collection read as a whole creates (with occasional reservations and disturbances) an ideal moral universe in which the poet is fully in command, giving the virtuous and the wicked each their due, and above all calling things by their true names. Jonson evokes here a sense of the power of names that lies very deep in the human imagination, and that links these polished and sophisticated poems with magic and primitive ritual. (p. 168)

To begin with, this sounds judicious, but it soon blurs, implying both that the poet is fully in command of calling things by their true names (which may be true) and that he is fully in command of an ideal moral universe (which is nonsense). The *Epigrams* make sense by referring to a universe, to all appearances a good deal less than ideal and moral, which is already in existence. Similarly, the modish remark about magic and primitive ritual obscures the sense of power that Jonson does attribute to names, a power he invokes, for example, in the "Epitaph on Elizabeth, L.H."

If, at all, she had a fault,
 Leave it buried in this vault.
 One name was Elizabeth,
 The other let it sleep with death.

Her fault, if it is one, is nothing less than mortality, which is why it has to be left buried and why her surname, her earthly name, must sleep with death. Her Christian name, on the other hand, stands revealed, suggesting, in a very understated way, the possibility of religious consolation. That the power of words might point to a religious rather than a dramatic transformation suggests a kind of single-minded vision that Leggatt does not seriously consider. It may sound reasonable to say of the poet we know from the non-dramatic poems that "he is in the last analysis a creature of Jonson's art" (p. 215), but it ignores those occasions when the art itself acknowledges another Creator. Jonson himself would likely have concurred with Alexander Leggatt's high estimate of his work; but he (and perhaps T. S. Eliot too) would in the last analysis have bestowed credit a bit differently: it *is* good, by God.

Dalhousie University

John Baxter

A Native Heritage: Images of the Indian in English-Canadian Literature.
 By Leslie Monkman. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981. Pp. xiii, 193. \$25.00.

A Native Heritage is the result of the author's observation that the significance of North American native peoples in English and Canadian literature has long gone unappreciated. Hence, Monkman sets out not only to demonstrate that natives have provided significant subject material for English and Canadian authors over the past two hundred years, but also to analyze the literary images of natives which have appeared with a view to identifying patterns and trends.

Monkman has identified two basic perspectives on natives as presented by white writers. The first is the perception of natives as savages and antagonists. Such a view was especially prominent well into the nineteenth century, but has tended to appear less frequently in twentieth century writings. The second perception is that which views natives as possessing "vital spontaneity, natural religion, and harmony between the red man and the natural landscape" (p. 5). Monkman observes that this romantic noble savage image has been dominant in the literature since the mid-nineteenth century, with its purpose essentially to provide a contrast for white society, a sort of mirror for reflecting on, assessing, and re-defining the values of white culture.

Overall, the book provides an almost encyclopaedic collection of citations of works dealing with natives in English and Canadian literature. These citations thoroughly document the two major trends mentioned above, but the disappointingly short conclusion which follows has no real discussion of the implications or associations of the material presented in the book. Instead, the author lamely asserts a final note, that recent twentieth-century literature has revealed an acceptance, appreciation, and incorporation of native values into white culture to the point where

these values have become "guides to concerns common to all cultures" (p. 161). This statement is not supported by material in the book. Although some recent authors such as Emily Carr indeed seem to have achieved an incipient understanding of native culture and worldview, this is by far the exception. Further, outside the world of literature, there exists virtually no evidence that whites have grasped and emulated such basic native values as generosity, sharing, or respect for nature and other living beings. One has only to look at development and its effects on both natives and landscapes in the Far North to see this.

Instead, this reviewer would suggest that what the author sees as understanding, acceptance, and integration is just a twentieth-century form of romanticism. Twentieth-century authors may be more sympathetic and sophisticated than their predecessors in integrating esoteric and subtle native material like myths and legends into their writing, but there is really no reason for them to be capable of any more understanding than were nineteenth-century writers. Few of them have had any significant contact with or study of natives and native worldviews.

Admittedly the book does not claim to contain accurate factual information on natives. At the outset, the author asserts that for critical literary purposes, "the anthropological truth of a work is less important than how the white writer uses his knowledge of the red man" (p. 4). But is such an attitude admissible today? Or should a book written from an ethnocentric stance be taken seriously? "Savage" and "primitive" are used without definition or qualification repeatedly through the book; "the Indian" also recurs and connotes mistakenly that natives and their cultures were uniform throughout North America.

In sum, *A Native Heritage* is a detailed review of a narrow topic. After finishing it, the reader realizes that he/she hasn't learned anything new about images of natives. The two major images discussed by Monkman are merely reflections in writing of major social viewpoints of the time. The service Monkman has done in this book is to document trends we all knew existed. The book's title might have been more appropriately *No Native Heritage: Social Stereotypes and How They are Reflected in Literature*.

Dalhousie University

Virginia P. Miller
Richard H. Miller

Acadia, Maine, and New England. Marginal Colonies in the Seventeenth Century. By John G. Reid. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981. Pp. xviii, 293. \$30.00.

Sir Francis Bacon once advised readers to "read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider." This advice is still as valid today as it was more than three centuries ago. There is much to weigh and consider in

John Reid's book. The student of Canadian or American colonial history will find a wealth of hitherto little known information in this book, and a stimulating thesis about the region in question in the seventeenth century. At the same time, some readers may be disappointed with certain aspects of the book.

Reid defines his approach quite clearly and concisely in his preface. The reader is informed that "This is a study in comparative North American colonial history." It has two aspects. First of all, it is an examination of three colonies: Acadia, Maine, and New Scotland. Secondly, it is "an account of the interaction of Europeans with the native peoples and physical environment of a region of North America." Reid's thesis is that all three colonies had a "tenuous existence from their beginnings in the early seventeenth century until they faced near-devastation by warfare in 1690."

One of the strengths of the book is the analysis of the gap between the original European concepts of the respective colonies and the requirements of actual survival in America. Reid is incisive and painstaking in his discussion of the colonizers who promoted settlement in these colonies, and of the merchants who were more interested in commercial establishments than in colonies. In probing the origins and evolution of the Scottish endeavour at Port Royal, Reid is particularly effective, bringing out many little-known facts about this venture.

One might, however, given the avowed intent of the author to explore the interaction of Europeans with "native peoples and physical environments" in this region, have expected greater integration of this aspect of the study with the European concept of the region. Instead, the discussion of native peoples is largely confined to a scant twenty-two pages in part II, covering the years 1630-1650. One might also have expected the author to have been more familiar with recent research on early contact and pre-contact Indian history. It is not clear from the discussion in chapter one if the author is aware that the work of David Sanger has cast considerable doubt on if not dispelled the notion that prior to contact with Europeans Indian bands in this region generally wintered in the interior and summered on the coast.

Although one might quibble with the author over such details, and on the balance he struck between the two aspects of his study, his essential thesis is strongly and capably argued. New Scotland was indeed a marginal endeavour, as its disappearance attests. Maine and Acadia were indeed severely tested in the warfare which erupted in 1689 and which lasted, with a pause between 1697 and 1702, until 1713.

There were actually fewer settlers in Maine in 1717 than there had been in 1660, despite the fact that the population of New England as a whole grew from about 75,000 in 1675 to about 113,000 in 1713. Maine settlers fled the frontier in such numbers in the 1690's that Massachusetts authorities feared the collapse of the frontier and forbade the residents of certain communities to move, under penalty of seizure of their lands.

Acadia was also marginal in certain respects, although Reid acknowledges that the Acadians demonstrated an amazing resilience and a noteworthy determination to survive. Other sources have noticed the same trend towards accommodation and adaptation on the part of the Acadians as has been noted by Reid. In 1691 Governor Villebon reported that he could not defend Port Royal from the New Englanders, and retreated up the St. John River. He left Port Royal under the command of a sergeant Chevalier, who had been selected from among the residents of Port Royal to administer the colony when the New Englanders returned home after their attack of 1690. As Villebon reported: "Without these compromises, it would be impossible to exist in this country...." Villebon was referring to his own decision, but his remarks very aptly summed up the plight of the Acadians, who had to contend not only with the attacks of the New Englanders, but also had to cope with the actions of French officials as well. In the 1690s the authorities at Quebec embarked on a policy which resulted in New England reprisals against Acadia. As the Quebec officials stated, the New Englanders

...are furnished with considerable occupation by the Indians (of Acadia), whose friendship we have found means to secure. In consequence of this diversion, the English are less able to injure the Colony of Canada.

Thus there is clearly ample proof of the validity of Reid's thesis. Much of the proof is to be found, however, in the period between 1690 and 1710, rather than in the preceding decades. One would hope eventually to see Reid explore the latter period with the same care he devotes to the former.

Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

Donald F. Chard