Towards a History of the Literary Institution in Canada / Vers une histoire de l'institution littéraire au Canada

Literatures of Lesser Diffusion / Les littératures de moindre diffusion

Edited by

Joseph PIVATO
in collaboration with
Steven TÖTÖSY de ZEPETNEK and Milan V. DIMIĆ

Research Institute for Comparative Literature
University of Alberta
1990
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with the assistance of Charlotte Garrett and Lise-Anne Lavigne

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Preface

The conference "Literatures of Lesser Diffusion/Les littératures de moindre diffusion" was held at the University of Alberta on the 14th to the 16th of April 1988. The Research Institute for Comparative Literature/Institut de recherches en littérature comparée (RICL/IRLC) organized it as the fourth of the project Towards a History of the Literary Institution in Canada/Vers une histoire de l'institution littéraire au Canada (HOLIC/HILAC). The first aim of the conference was to elicit interest in and stimulate discussion about a particular type of literature, the second to build a basis for its further systemic and systematic study, and the ultimate goal to help the writing of a broad history of the literary institution in this country.1 The specificities of the Canadian literatures led the team which initiated this research to adopt as its methodological model a particular theoretical framework, derived from contemporary theories of literature as open, dynamic systems of systems and which emphasize institutional aspects of literary life.2 The approach privileged by us is Itamar Even-Zohar's Polysystem Theory. To complement the Polysystem Theory, the frameworks of the Champ littéraire (P. Bourdieu), the Institution de la littérature (J. Dubois), and the Empirische Literaturwissenschaft (S.J. Schmidt) are also applied in our research.3 Of

1 For more information about the project as a whole see Anthony Purdy's "Présentation" and E.D. Blodgett's "Afterword," in E.D. Blodgett and A.G. Purdy, eds. Problems of Literary Reception/Problèmes de réception littéraire (Edmonton: U of Alberta, Research Institute for Comparative Literature 1988) 1-8, 168-76. Progress reports are published at irregular intervals in the RICL/IRLC newsletter Upâste/À nouveau.

2 Some of the reasons for this decision are presented in M.V. Dimić, "Models and Paradigms for the Study of Canadian Literature: its internal and external relations as perceived by critics and scholars -- a comparatist view," E.D. Blodgett and A. Purdy, op.cit., 144-67, and M.V. Dimić and Marguerite K. Garstin, "The Polysystem: A Brief Introduction, with Bibliography," ibid., 177-96.

3 For those not familiar with such approaches, we are reproducing at the end of the preface dictionary definitions of the Polysystem Theory and Empirical Science of Literature.

"Literatures of Lesser Diffusion/Les littératures de moindre diffusion
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course, these approaches differ in their roots: the Polysystem evolved from linguistically and semiotically oriented studies of literature (such as Russian Formalism, Prague Structuralism, and the Tartu School), while the others from the sociology of literature and culture and certain philosophical and psychological premisses about the ‘radical construction of meaning.’ Nevertheless, they all define the field of their study and its specificity in homologous terms. The main elements of their compatibility are a similar range of phenomena considered as interrelated and therefore designated for description and interpretation: that is the whole field of ‘literary life’ or of ‘the literary communication situation’; heuristic models indebted to semiotics and the modern sociology of literature and firmly based on concepts of dynamic, functional and open systems; and a strong preference for empirical observation and verification, instead of speculation and metaphorical description.\(^4\)

In this context, ‘literary institution’ is not understood to mean only "an establishment, organization, or association, instituted for the promotion of some object, esp. one of public or general utility, religious, charitable, educational" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1987 VII 1047 7a), but also to include the sense of "a well-established and structured pattern of behavior or of relationships that is accepted as a fundamental part of a culture, as marriage: the institution of the family; the institution of slavery" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language, 1973 737 7). In this respect, the French usage is particularly clear: "L'Institution: l'ensemble des structures organisées tendant à se perpétuer, dans chaque secteur de l'activité sociale. L'institution juridique, littéraire, artistique ... d'une société" (Le Grand Robert de la langue française, 1985 V 43 16). Sociologists of culture generally employ the concept of the institution to cover the entire range of factors involved in the production, transmission, and consumption of the ‘artifacts’ of literature, the visual arts, cinéma, music, and other cultural activities. These factors include both institutions in the narrow sense, such as publishing houses, the media, schools, and universities, and the broader institution, that is the system (network, champ) in which they participate, dynamically and functionally. The study of the literary institution can be pursued, therefore, both in fairly narrow sociological and economic terms,

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and in the wider context of the literary polysystem or as part of the
empirical science of literature. In most cases, these convergent approaches
favour a comparative view of literature in its broadest and most varied, yet
significant parts. In Canada, such theories and methodologies have been
applied in recent years with great success in the study of Québec literature
(M. Lemire, J. Melançon, C. Moisan, L. Robert, D. Saint-Jacques, and
others). The relative scarcity of this kind of scholarship in English-Canada,
as well as the paucity of comparative treatments of the totality of literary life
in Canada, provided the initial impetus for our project and this series of
conferences.

The area of "literatures of lesser diffusion" seemed to be one particularly
suited to systemic approaches combining literary and sociological
considerations. The essential features of the literary life in Canada call for
such an interdisciplinary approach to literary history. The first of these
features is the following: Besides literature in French and English, there is
in Canada a mosaic of other 'literary uses of words,' ranging from age-old
oral traditions of the Inuit and the North American Indians to works in the
languages of immigrants, who have been arriving in trickles and waves since
the late nineteenth century, such as German-speaking groups, Ukrainians,
Icelanders, Jews, Chinese, Norwegians, Italians, and Japanese. After the
Second World War and since, various Oriental, Hungarian, Spanish,
Caribbean, East Indian, Black, and other ethnic groups and their writing may
be added to the list. And the present demographic picture of the country is
continually changing, albeit not as drastically as that of the United States.5
This important aspect of the Canadian experience, the creativity of
minorities has largely remained "the unheard voices."6 Although much has
been done to map out 'ethnic writing,' their interrelations with the
'mainstream' (in English and French) and among themselves have been
incompletely described; their institutional underpinnings are only partially
known and have not been analyzed in a systemic way.

The second feature is the dominance of social and political factors in the
development of the Canadian literary life; this diagnosis is generally accepted

5 For the demographic situation of Canada see, for example, R. Lachapelle, "Evolution
of Language Groups and the Official Languages Situation in Canada," Demolinguistic Trends
and the Evolution of Canadian Institutions (Montreal: Special issue in the Canadian Issues
series of the association for Canadian Studies 1989) 7-33, and for the U.S. the popular

6 Judy Young, "The Unheard Voices," Jars Balan, ed. Identities: Ethnicity and the
Writer in Canada (Edmonton: U of Alberta, The Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies
by scholars.⁷ Literary histories and standard reference works still articulate the flow of literary phenomena according to a grid of external circumstances: the colonial administration, confederation, economic transformations of 1900, the First and Second World Wars, the depression of the 1930s, and the nationalist movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Critics have often demonstrated, with ease, the influence of such political and social factors. They are also aware that another material condition upon which Canadian letters are dependent is that of publication: the attitudes of French, British, and American publishers towards Canadian talent, the concentration of mostly foreign and a few Canadian-owned printing enterprises in Montréal and Toronto, the more recent emergence of regional presses, the importance of "little magazines" in a young country with limited cultural resources, the massive financial and at times political intervention of the federal government and of some provincial governments since the 1960s, and the most recent possibilities of desk-top publication. Needless to say, changes in the immigrants' ethnic background, their numbers, and economic and social status, their choice of language strongly influence the production, distribution and consumption of writing representing their point of view, in the heritage tongue or English and French.

According to the Polysystem Theory, interferences among literary systems usually occur in two situations: a) when there are deficiencies in the systems; b) when systems become static because they tend towards full autonomy and impregnability. The first case is frequent in so called young or emerging literatures that are building sufficient resources to be considered relatively independent, but which remain weak, or those which belong to the periphery of stronger systems; both situations clearly apply to Canada. Even the literatures of the two "founding races" have been and still are marginal to those of France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and ethnic writing in the heritage languages usually remains marginal to the literary life of the "mother countries" and has a minimal presence in the Canadian "mainstream." In inter-literary interferences translations play major functions, which are either determined by the needs of the source system or, much more frequently, by those of the target one. The Polysystem Theory has been particularly successful in studying translations and using them as a diagnostic tool for the determination of the character of the systems in contact. The polysystem deals with literary dependence and independence, permitting therefore a systemic exploration of the major problem of shifts in the literatures of Canada in relation to Continental, British, American and other roots and contacts, the significant transitions which took place at

the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, and at other periods, and the forms these processes took. The systemic and institutional frameworks also allow for the proper contextualization and placement of so-called marginal forms or genres, such as texts in newspapers, travel writing, prefaces and manifestoes, and autobiography, that are of unusual importance in the early history of literary life in Canada; these approaches are essential for the study of bodies of texts which have been marginalized as large groups: writing by women, minorities, and others. The notion of contacts and interferences with adjacent systems, or with other cultural systems, is significant not only to the French and English colonial past of this institution, but also to the modern and contemporary exchanges with ethnic literatures, and between literature written in French and English; in the latter case, the functions of translations which are acceptable (within the target system) as opposed to adequate (to the source) are particularly meaningful.

Announcements about, and the call for, papers for the conference on "Literatures of Lesser Diffusion" explained these theoretical premises of the project and the main expectations for individual contributions. It was made clear, for example, that "lesser diffusion" has to be combined with ideas about certain types of marginality and, particularly, with those of "ethnic minority writing." The need to explain the terms used proves that those chosen are not self-evident. The truth of the matter is both simple and complex. Etymologically and according to usage the term "ethnic" has a wide range of connotations. Some are rather positive: the word is derived from the Greek ἐθνός, i.e. nation, people, and is probably akin to the Greek ἔθος, i.e. custom, which in turn lead to the Greek ἔθικος, i.e. ethical. Others are neutral: relating to community of physical and mental traits possessed by members of a group as a product of their common heredity and cultural tradition. Finally, there are those which are quite unpleasant: the opposition to the Greek δῆμος, i.e. populace, common (free) people, and meanings such as foreign, gentile, even heathen or pagan (Webster's Third International Dictionary, 1971 780-81, 600). In Canada, the terms of reference of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism have profoundly influenced the prevailing connotations: "to inquire into and to report upon the existing state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada and to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races, taking into account the contribution made by other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution...." (Report of the Royal Commission on
Bilingualism and Biculturalism, I xxi. My emphasis). This statement, which later on explicitly excludes native populations (I xxvi), establishes by its wording and sentence structure a clear hierarchy between "the two founding races" (my emphasis) and the "other[s]." It is interesting to note in this context a report in the Globe and Mail (Tuesday May 30, 1989 C8) that the Writers Union of Canada's 16th annual general meeting had rejected a bid to study the role of minorities in publishing; this decision was then commented upon in the November 1989 issue of Saturday Night, in Libby Scheier's article "Phrase Fraud? White writers who create native characters are being accused of misappropriation of language." Many writers thought that the proposal was very timely; among the reasons for the final refusal, as presented in these two articles, stand out pragmatic concerns (cost, complexity) and a question of principle: the possibility that such a study could be patronizing.

The term "lesser diffusion" was an attempt to anticipate and attenuate such concerns. It was also meant to draw attention to the fact that while the corpus of ethnic writing has continually grown since the late nineteenth century, it has remained in a minority, marginal situation, and has not undergone the same diffusion as the English and French-Canadian literatures, either in the form of publication and consumption, or in that of critical assessment. Furthermore, lesser diffusion and minority do not refer exclusively to numbers, but to the implied status of the ethnic communities and individuals, and their artistic expression. These facts suggest a critical interest in issues such as: immigration, preservation of, and search for, ethnic and cultural identity, relations of language, gender and race, acculturation, assimilation, inter-group dynamics, and others. A particularly important and complex question is that of the relations between ethnic writing and that of the English and French-Canadian official, canonical or central mainstream. Minority writers, both of the émigré and immigrant type, may work in one of the heritage languages or in English or French. For example, Marco Miconi and Nino Ricci, both Italian immigrants, write in French and English, Stephen Vizinczey, a Hungarian, Henry Kreisel, a Jewish-Austrian, and M.G. Vassanji, an East Indian from Africa, publish in English. Many other ethnic writers, and this type constituted for a time the majority of such voices, prefer their native tongue. This is the case for most Ukrainian writers and poets from Illia Kyrijak (Elias Kiriak) to Oleh Zujewskyj; George Faludy writes in Hungarian, Maria Ardizzi in Italian, Josef Škvorecky in Czech (and sometimes in English), Waclaw Iwaniuk in Polish, Manuel Betanzos Santos in Spanish, and Aziz Ahmad in Urdu. Clearly, important as a language is both to the definition of literary systems and institutions, as

8 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer 1967-70) 1-VI.
well as to demographic decisions about ethnicity, it is not the only factor in
determining the identity of the writer. Another factor is the content of the
work, its thematic fabric which usually focuses on exile, dislocation,
discrimination, acculturation, assimilation, language issues, and problems
of duality. An example of this kind of literature is Joy Kogawa's novel
Obasan (1981), written in English, in which the author describes from a
woman's point of view the experience of Japanese Canadians during World
War II. Undoubtedly, national origin and religion also shape the writer.
Authors from the West Indies, to quote one example, use English or French
as their first langue de culture, but their experiences and work reflect
different cultures and origins. This is clear from the anglophone books by
Austin Clarke and Neil Bissoondath and the francophone works by Haitian
writers such as Jean Jonassaint and Gérard Étienne. Much of this writing
has a biographical dimension that introduces the reader to social, political
and historical realities of various populations of Canada both in their past and
present circumstances. Many ethnic or minority writers are closely
related to their communities and act as their spokespeople and collective
memory. Some reconstruct the forgotten history of their group, such as Vera
Lysenko in Men in Sheepskin Coats: A Study of Assimilation (1947), others
describe the early experience of immigration, such as John Marlyn in Under
the Ribs of Death (1957), and still others present social criticism of the
values and behaviour of their communities, such as Filippo Salvatore in La
fresque de Mussolini (1985), which is a critique of the various social groups
in Québec.

In considering the specificity of ethnic writing, two additional
observations are in order. The thematological features, mentioned in this
text and in much of the existing scholarly studies, are not unique; there are
important similarities with the canonical English and French-Canadian
corpus. The experience of immigration, the struggle with the country's
geography and climate, the search for a new identity, the feeling of being at
the periphery of the Empire, and, in the case of the French, the memory of
grievances are among the frequent contents of all Canadian poetry and
fiction. Somewhat surprisingly, for the time being a stronger demarcation
can be found in the domain of literary devices: dependent on a "politics of
memory" ethnic writing is opposed to the postmodern and continues to use
traditional referential and representational strategies.9

Among the articles of the conference "Literatures of Lesser Diffusion,"
particularly those written from a theoretical point of view (e.g. J. Balan, G.
Bisztray, M.V. Dimić, F. Loriggio, E. Padolsky, T.J. Palmer, and J. Pivato)

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9 For an example of this phenomenon see W. Boelhower, "Italo-Canadian Poetry and
contain elements or debate the merits of the desired systemic and comparative perspective. As planned from the beginning, the majority of contributors present specific ethnic minority literatures and their representative authors: J. Balan and Robert B. Klymasz concentrate on Ukrainian, G. Bisztray on Hungarian, Sheng-Tai Chang on Chinese, M. Dorsinville on Haitian, L. Elliott on Black, J. Etcheverry on Chilean, H. Loewen on Mennonite, M. Maillet on Acadian, N. Mattson on Finnish, R. McGrath on Inuit, E. Mozejko on Polish, J. Pivato on Italian, and M.G. Vassanji on South Asian writing. N. Rahimieh discusses one author, Naïm Kattan and his works in the perspective of his multiple cultural and linguistic spaces. B. Rasporich comes perhaps the closest to a clearly comparative study in her paper on "Native Voices." The full text of W. Riedel's paper on "The Literature of German-speaking Canadians" has been published elsewhere, because of a previous commitment made by the author. To indicate the important corpus of this group's writing, we added instead a selected bibliography with a brief introduction, prepared by S. Tőtősy de Zepetnek. Otherwise, the order of the articles and their texts, subject only to authorial and editorial emendations, corresponds to the transactions of the conference.

Two disclaimers are in order. Firstly, neither the organizers of the conference, M.V. Dimić, M.K. Garstin, and J. Pivato, nor the editors of this publication intended to present a full survey of Canadian literatures of lesser diffusion and 'definitive' studies of certain questions. These articles are explorations leading to further inquiries; one of these is the project "The Institution of Ethnic Minority Writing in Canada," sponsored by the Secretary of State Ethnic Studies Program and conducted at RICL/IRLC by E.D. Blodgett, M.V. Dimić, and S. Tőtősy de Zepetnek (Alberta), J. Pivato (Athabasca), E. Padolsky (Carleton), and R. Dionne (Ottawa). Secondly, many organizational decisions were pragmatic and had no prescriptive or normative intent. For example, in the conceptualization of the conference, no attempt was made to decide in principle whether the North American natives can be considered as 'ethnic' or as a 'visible minority,' and whether they belong to this area of study in a political perspective. Experiences with women's writing, native folklore, as well as the creativity of ethnic and other minorities, have made us very much aware of the danger of transforming subjects into objects and using one totalizing discourse to replace other discourses of dominance. Therefore, both our particular explorations of ethnic literary institutions and the larger project of a history of the Canadian literary institution do not aim at a new, definite statement. We are attempting to achieve a polyphonic presentation, which not only makes statements about the diverse voices, but also permits them to speak for themselves. Our intentions are descriptive and interpretative (within the frameworks of systemic and institutional approaches to literature), not
prescriptive and normative; we wish to understand, not to judge. After all, this is the justification for the methodological approaches chosen for our inquiry.

Finally, I should like to acknowledge the contribution to the organization and conceptualization of the conference made by M.K. Garstin. Most of the pragmatic editing and all of the type-setting for camera-ready copy has been done by S. Tótösy de Zepetnek, while J. Pivato made a major scholarly contribution to the whole endeavour. I am indebted to these two colleagues also for help in the preparation of this Preface. Two graduate students of Comparative Literature, during their Summer employment as editorial assistants awarded by the federal and provincial programs STEP and SEED to the Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée, C. Garrett and L.-A. Lavigne, have spent many hours word-processing the articles and ensuring the accuracy of bibliographical information and quotations. I would like to extend my thanks to the University of Alberta’s Vice-President (Academic) J.P. Meekison, Vice-President (Research) C.R. James, and Associate Vice-President (Research) R.L. Busch, to the University’s Departments of Romance Languesages, Comparative Literature, and English, to the University of Alberta Conference Fund, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism. The interest and support shown by the Editorial Committee of the Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée permitted the publication of the papers as a special issue of the journal, in addition to the usual Proceedings of the RICL/IRCL conferences, which will markedly improve diffusion. Last but not least, the enthusiasm of the participants at the conference and their angelic patience in the face of repeated publication delays, made everything possible and worthwhile.

DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS OF THE POLYSYSTEM THEORY AND THE EMPIRISCHE LITERATURWISSENSCHAFT:

Polysystem (Theory). Theory that attempts to interpret literature within a semiotic frame of reference, on the basis of a general operation of laws in a communication system. Since the 1970s, the term has become familiar through the work of a few scholars (inter al. I. Even-Zohar and G. Tourny) at the Porter Institute in Tel Aviv. According to polysystem theory, literature is a complex whole of systems (concepts of literature on both practical and theoretical levels), which mutually influence each other and which constantly stand in new and changing relations as a function of scales of values (norms) and models which dominate in given circumstances. This theory radically elaborates the work of Tymianov, who repeatedly wrote in the 20s that literature must not be studied in terms of essences, but in terms of relations. The principle of dominant norms and models confers a relative, historical value upon all theoretical positions, whereas the study of literature [Literatuurwetenschap] is charged
with the examination of the norms and models according to which writers, texts, and readers function. This theory also radically elaborates the principle of historical reception (historically determined, whether indeed it belongs to dominant or dominating systems). The notion of system is an open, historical and interpretive concept; it points to the principle of an hierarchical order of literary concepts within a complex whole, such that systems and subsystems can be distinguished; the subsystems share fixed norms and models with larger wholes. Polysystem theory thus leads to new insights relative to the description of national literatures and the description of relations between national literary systems, whereby delimitation on the basis of political and linguistic frontiers becomes relativized (within a particular literature it is possible that, for example, popular genres function rather within international networks, while higher literature develops more along national lines). Thus the central function that literary translation can fulfill becomes clear as a key to relations (interferences) between more national or regional literary systems. Also, the basic mechanisms of literary contacts are studied in greater detail with this theory. Because polysystem theory attempts to take up the interpretation of literary phenomena on a fundamental level, it formulates hypotheses that could work for other forms of communication (such as cinema, social behaviours, cultural systems in general). This theory, considered literary in the first instance, evolves, following the problematics of interference, in the direction of transfer theory and general systems theory. But the descriptive research, that polysystem theory tries to test out, until now has situated itself in a provisional manner in translation and, generally, in literary research. The polysystem approach to literature as a scientific method is to be situated in the comprehensive, theoretical paradigms of systems theory. It in disciplines other than the study of literature, for example in thermodynamics, biology, sociology, psychology, such concepts as self-regulating, transforming, and interfering systems are operative. Ludwig von Bertalanffy's *General Systems Theory* (1968) is an important, standard work that examines thinking in various disciplines from their common points of departure. (Trans. E.D. Blodgett from H. van Gorp, R. Ghesquiere, D. Delabastita, and J. Flamend, *Lexicon van Literaire Termen: Stromingen en Genres, Theoretische Begrippen, Rectorische Procedes en Stijlfiguren* [Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff 1986]: 318-19.)

*Empirical Science of Literature*: new, systemic literary theory, initiated by S.J. Schmidt and others, based on intersubjective testability. It considers literary theory [Literaturwissenschaft] as an empirically oriented social science [Sozialwissenschaft] and its subject the total area of social interaction with and within the literary text(s). It is built on a system of aesthetic communication between the text/producer [Produktionsbereich], the processing of the text [Vermittlungsbereich], its reception [Rezeptionsbereich], and its post-production processing [Verarbeitungsbereich]. In and with this system of aesthetic communication the objective is to combine socially relevant aspects of literary history, and psycho-literary, socio-literary, didactic, and critical perspectives. (Trans. S. Tóth de Zepetnek from Gero von Wilpert, ed., *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur* 7th edition [Stuttgart: Krömer 1989] 233).
Canadian Literatures of Lesser Diffusion: Observations from a Systemic Standpoint

Even a cursory and preliminary scrutiny of the proposed title and topic reveals difficulties. To begin with, neither the expression ‘Canadian Literatures’ nor that ‘of lesser diffusion’ are self-evident. As ‘Canadian literatures’ I designate here the totality of oral and written literature produced in Canada, without judging the ‘Canadian’ character of the phenomena or making assumptions about the nature and number of identifiable units. The term ‘lesser diffusion,’ if left without its intended and required complements ‘ethnic’ and ‘minority,’ is particularly insufficient and potentially misleading; not all designated phenomena are of small diffusion and not all works which have not reached broad distribution are included in our considerations. The topic rather concerns the literary creativity of non-English and non-French inhabitants of the country, and it includes therefore the native populations. Furthermore, anglophones and francophones are also, at certain times and in particular regions, in a radical minority situation; the clearest example are the Acadians.

The systemic standpoint, mentioned in the title, refers mainly to the Polysystem Theory, as developed by I. Even-Zohar, and to aspects of P. Bourdieu’s analyses of culture and art, particularly his concept of Champion littéraire, and S.J. Schmidt’s Empirical Science of Literature ("Empirische Literaturwissenschaft"). In all these cases we are dealing with open, dynamic systems of systems, the basic factors of which can be schematically represented as follows:

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*Les litératures de moindre diffusion*

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This scheme demonstrates the compatibility of such older approaches to literature, as the Russian Formalists' ideas about "literature's by" (literary life), the work of the Prague Structuralists and Tarru, and the Semiotics, with contemporary theories of the literary institution and system (Polysemy, Institution de la littérature, Champs littéraux). It also concerns not only direct semiotic contacts between author and reader, but also educational, cultural, and historical influences on the literary system. The relationship of these factors is functionally interdependent, and thus, any given element or group of elements occupies different times different hierarchical positions in the system. The main binary oppositions in these hierarchies are those between the centre and the periphery, and between primary and secondary functions. While these positions usually underlie perpetual changes slow or rapid, even catastrophic, all literary systems have primary and secondary functions. While these positions usually underlie perpetual changes slow or rapid, even catastrophic, all literary systems have subsystems and are in contact with other cultural and extra-literary systems. In principle, the Polysystem Theory is expected to apply both to all literary phenomena. It is, therefore, fair to remember that the theory and its formalist, structuralist, and semiotic predecessors have been mainly developed and tested upon the basis of rather stable literary systems, such as the Russian since the late eighteenth century, or those which in the acquisition of all required institutional and other factors have obtained strong social and state support, such as the professional.
Czech since World War I and the Hebrew in Israel since 1948. Most subsequent inquiries have also involved stable literatures, such as the French and German.

In this context, ‘stable’ does not mean a ‘static’ polysystem, but rather one able to maintain itself in all the system’s vital factors. In using the systemic standpoint to elucidate some aspects of Canadian literary life, these possible limitations will be kept in mind. The very definition of the phenomena under scrutiny — ethnic, minority literature of lesser diffusion — relegates them to the periphery of dominant systems, and the vocabulary used to describe and analyse this situation seems to reflect the ‘majority’ or dominant point of view. This impression is strengthened if one remembers that in general social terms bearers of the so-called inner and outer points of view in culture usually situate themselves in the centre and consider themselves to be the ‘we,’ while they perceive others as the strangers and ‘they.’ This hierarchy is clearly at the very core of the terms of reference of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism, which exclude natives from their purview, relegate minorities to the position of “others” and privilege the “two founding races” (emphasis added).³

Needless to say, the Polysystem Theory does not validate hierarchies of literary factors and other social relations; it serves to perceive them better and understand more fully their origin, development and functioning. But no heuristic model or scholarly discourse is completely ‘objective’ or value free; therefore connotations of critical concepts and terminologies are not irrelevant and should not be forgotten. Nevertheless, there is no scholarly way to avoid questions of status and power in any social and ideological context which generates (fosters?) acculturation and assimilation. Before moving to the question raised at the beginning of this essay, one may want to mention that the inherent difference in status is expressed in the way ethnic characters and cultures are depicted in ‘mainstream’ literature: the most stereotyped, in the past at least, have been the native Indians, but such popular novels as The Foreigner by Ralph Connor (the Presbyterian minister Charles W. Gordon) strongly advocate the perceived need to transform the immigrant. Although all groups of immigrants from the United Kingdom have largely shown mutual solidarity, there was a period in the nineteenth


century, roughly between 1841 and 1855, when English writers were treating
the Irish and Scots as ‘ethnics’ (cf. for instance the very disparaging remarks
about the Irish in Susanna Moodie’s Roughing it in the Bush).

What are, then, the main relevant conditions under which the Canadian
literatures of lesser diffusion developed and what are the principle features
of their literary life? As in most multilingual societies and states, minorities
had to share, in various ways and to various degrees, time and space, and
certain social, economic, political and institutional realities with members
of the majority group. In fact, on the territory of today’s country, two
majority groups developed, both at first fully dependent on centres of
colonial power situated abroad. These groups also engaged in mutual
conflicts which resulted in shifts in the power relationship and, for a long
time, in a clear dominance of the English over the French. These two
groups, and others which arrived later, pushed aside and very drastically
marginalized the indigenous populations. (The Canadian hierarchy of the
‘foundling races,’ and of the ‘others’ — from European immigrant ‘relatives’
to visible minorities from different parts of the world, — and finally the
natives, is typologically not unique; there are similarities, in this respect, for
instance with the past Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires and the
present Soviet Union.) The precise relationships of the ethnic groups
changed significantly and perpetually, sometimes even in historical terms of
periods of ‘short duration,’ for demographic, political, and economic
reasons.

The literary life of all these groups can be seen in the form of at least
two hypotheses and models. According to the first hypothesis, these are
specific, but very weak polysystems, which in many different ways do not
have all the factors and functions of strong polysystems; they neither have
the ‘critical mass’ nor the institutions which would assure their full
development and stability. (‘Stability’ is again understood in the sense of the
system’s ability to perpertuate itself and not in the meaning of stasis.)

4 For basic sociological views of the Canadian situation, I have drawn on such studies as
Leo Driedger, "Ethnic and Minority Relations," Sociology. R. Hagedorn, ed. (Toronto:
Second edition (Edmonton: Hurtig 1988), e.g. Raymond Breton, "Ethnic and Race
Languages." For the essentials of a literary overview one can consult Tamara J. Palmer
and Beverly J. Raspornich, "Ethnic Literature," in the same encyclopedia.

5 For the demographic situation of Canada see, for example, R. Lachapelle, "Evolution of
Language Groups and the Official Languages Situation in Canada," Demolinguistic Trends
and the Evolution of Canadian Institutions. Montréal: Association for Canadian Studies
1989) 7-33.
According to the second hypothesis, they represent the periphery, sometimes the truly distant one, of larger polysystems, which have their own centre(s).

Both approaches have their heuristic use, because it may be shown that in many cases there exists an ambiguous duality of belonging to more systems than one, or least the appearance of diverse belongings according to the ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ perspective preferred by the observer. There are no absolute numerical values to be assigned to ‘insufficiency’ in a polysystem; what is meant here is a lack of resources and lack of hierarchical relations and repertoire within the system, factors which are necessary for the essential mechanisms of production and consumption.

When deciding which hypothesis to prefer in a first approach to particular phenomena, a critic may want to take as a starting point the individual author’s initial choice of language. In most cases, this weighty choice is between the heritage tongue of the minority group and one of the official languages. A few authors are bilingual, and in exceptional cases, for particular reasons, they may even use a plurality of language codes: Marco Micone, for instance, lives in Montréal, where writers of Italian origin use Italian dialects, standard Italian, French, and English and he has used all four in one and the same theatrical work. Still other authors are readily available in translations: among older internationally recognized writers such as Stephen Stephanson, George Faludy, and Waclaw Iwaniuk are being made increasigly accessible, and Josef Škvorecký has achieved exceptional acceptance with his novel *The Engineer of Human Souls*, which in translation won the Governor-General’s award, and whose detective novels have an increasingly large following in North America. Nevertheless, most translations serve the functions usual for this activity in interferences.

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6 Even-Zohar observes that "[i]n some cases, especially when the minority group is able to participate (in various degrees) in the literature of the majority, *intra*-literary interferences may be superseded by *inter*-literary interferences. As a result, what used to be just a system within a larger polysystem becomes a (poly)system in its own right." He adds to this statement two explanatory notes: "This is possible, for instance, when the writers produce bilingually, thus contributing at one and the same time to two systems. Unstable, or 'pluralistic;' linguistic canons may also make it possible for a while for a minority to be part of a majority, before stronger standardization prevails in either the one or the other community." And: "No doubt *intra*-literary interference has a great deal in common with *inter*-literary interference, but there are remarkable differences to justify a separate discussion. From a functionalist point of view, the differences between inter-systemic and intra-systemic relations lies mainly in what one may call distance and degree." Op.cit. 56, 16 and notes 3 and 4.

7 Cf. Even-Zohar 81, 123 about decisions how to determine the mechanism of a polysystem.
between systems and represent private gestures or an action sponsored by
the state in an attempt to make the minority experience available to other
members of society and so to foster mutual understanding and good will.
These functions and purposes explain why even relatively important texts are
subjected to radical adaptations, for example when Illia Kryjak's epic trilogy
Syny zempli became Elias Kiriak's abridged Sons of the Soil (or, for that
matter, much earlier Pamphile Lemay transformed William Kirby's Golden
Dog into a more 'acceptable' but not so 'adequate' Le Chien d'or).

Most commonly, the choice of language is largely also a decision about
the preferred audiences, and these audiences are frequently further
subdivided according to the authors' and the readers' acculturation 'strategies'. In fact, the two groups may have very different allegiances:
those writing in the mother tongue are attached to the culture of the old
country, as in the case of most Hungarians writing in Canada, or to the
traditions of one's own group, as in much of Ukrainian writing. Those
preferring English or French have mostly opted for the new country, but
even this option is the result of a variety of possible contingencies and
choices: some writers are simply not able any more to use the language of
their ancestors, others want to justify their group's values and experiences
(for example Vera Lysenko in some of her texts), others want to make a
clean new beginning and join the new environment (for example Henry
Kreisel who speaks movingly about the immigrant's language dilemma is his
autobiographic pages).

In the case of literary texts produced in the two official languages, it is
impossible to speak, from the standpoint of the polysystem, of independent
systems, although the thematic aspect of these works may be quite different
from the 'mainstream' and the formal aspect may exhibit particularities. In
the case of writing in the heritage languages, there is a greater possibility
that the specific literary life of individual groups may evolve into a relatively
autonomous system. This possibility increases with the importance of the
group and its ability to create institutions (schools, publishing houses,
newspapers, etc.), which is somewhat the case of Canadian Germans, Jews,

8 Cf. Even-Zohar 45-51, 73-78 and G. Toury, In Search of a Theory of Translation (Tel
Aviv: Porter Institute 1980).
9 In these proceedings, see E. Padolsky's contribution to this topic.
10 As shown by G. Bixtray, Hungarian-Canadian Literature (Toronto: U of Toronto P
1987).
11 Cf. M.I. Mandryka, History of Ukrainian Literature in Canada (Winnipeg: Ukrainian Free
Academy of Sciences 1968).
12 "Diary of an Internment," Another Country: Writings by and About Henry Kreisel. S.
Neuman, ed. (Edmonton: NeWest 1985) 13-44.
and Ukrainians. Nevertheless, the greater likelihood is that such phenomena belong to, and will remain, in the periphery of the main system in the same language, or that they will become epigonal, 'imported' epiphenomena of the French and English polysystems. The situation of writers using their inherited tongue is further complicated by the fact that some important ethnic groups have used a multiplicity of forms of their language: German immigrants, for example, have employed both High and Low German and a variety of dialects. The situation of authors who are bilingual or trilingual is rare and special: their works belong to different systems, and the repertoires they have drawn upon in their oeuvre may come from more than one system.

The possibility has been raised that the literary life of a given minority group may grow into a true polysystem, with its own centre and periphery, primary and secondary functions, a polysystem which generates repertoires (paradigms, codes, canons). For all that, it is more likely, perhaps inevitable that this literary life will remain at the periphery of the system of the country of origin until it blends into the dominant systems of the new country. Authors sometimes consciously decide to remain within the orbit of their system of origin. For this, there are at least two motivations. First, the desire to substitute one's Canadian experience to that expressed in the mother country because it is different and because the old country is seen to be flawed; that has been frequently the Ukrainian position, and, much earlier, one of the driving forces behind the evolving autonomy of the French-Canadian and even British-Canadian literature. Second, the need to make statements which for political and social reasons cannot be made, for a time at least, in the country of origin; that has been the case of most politically motivated immigrants, from Central and Eastern Europe and Latin America, for example. In principle, this phenomenon of writing in a variety of languages which have their centre elsewhere raises the question of 'literature abroad' for many national literatures which are usually not considering that possibility, for instance the Italian and Croatian, and not only those which are used to linguistic commonwealths of varying strength and scope. At first sight, the situation of writers who adopt English or French and therefore belong to the periphery of the dominant polysystems of the new environment, and are working their way towards the centre, seems easier to establish. In most cases, what these authors and works are trying to communicate and their readers to experience is, partially at least, similar to the material used by writers of in the heritage languages. It is coming to terms with the new environment and the specific existence, the so called 'immigrant experience' and 'Canadian content,' favoured in historical, social and 'ethnic' studies of the 'ethnic mosaic.' The 'dictionary' (content) of these texts involves specific events, characters and settings, which also
figure in ethnic writing in other languages. True enough, the content of the mainstream literatures, especially that in English, is not completely bereft of such elements and searches for one's identity; still, there are telling differences between the life and outlook of members belonging to privileged, or at least relatively privileged groups and those who are placed, at least temporarily, in the nether regions of the social structure (the so called vertical mosaic). There are also 'grammatical' (formal) specificities, particular preferences of forms and genres, different hierarchies among the genres, or specific poetic and fictional strategies. Authors writing for a traditional audience, whether in Canada or abroad, do this with an inspiration which is not exclusively literary but historical and social, to bear witness about the ancestors and contemporaries of the group; this may lead, quite naturally, to the continuation of referential and presentational modes and the rejection of postmodern experiments and game playing. This has been observed in diverse groups, such as the Ukrainian and Italian.13 An interesting illustration of the phenomeon is the refusal of Futurism and other avant-garde movements in Ukrainian letters both in the Bolshevik homeland and the free Canada. This option to remain traditional, does not apply, of course, to émigrés such as the Chilean writers in exile who are catering to Latin-American audiences used to avant-garde writing. Another possible 'grammatical' feature is the special use of language levels or of different languages, including syntactic, semantic, and phonological markers of the minority language or dialectal and sociolinguistic features, even macaronisms. Dialectal and specific sociolinguistic features are frequently used by authors from South Asian, West Indian and African origin for whom English or French are already their langue de culture, so that they need other signs of demarcation.

Another source of literary tension within these groups and among them is the extreme variety of relations between oral and written phenomena, and their relative importance. Orality is usually lost to a great extent among small immigrant communities, but it is quite lively in others, for instance the Acadian and Ukrainian, and still of paramount and dominant importance among the Inuit and Indian. For historical reasons, the strongest oral traditions are paradoxically most frequently transcribed, translated, adapted, used and studied by members of the dominant groups. Matters are further complicated by the fact that Canada has so many minorities, and that their strength and interactions are constantly changing. The very possibility of developing a specific system, or maintaining even a modest position at the periphery of larger systems, depends to a great extent on demographic,

linguistic and institutional factors. Particularly important factors are the numbers of people involved and the arrival of new immigrants. Sociologically, it is normal to assume that smaller communities and individuals assimilate within three generations. At this time (1988), reports commissioned by the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and completed so far, indicate the existence of "Canadian literature" in Hungarian, Spanish, Polish, Italian, Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati and Sinhalese. By country of origin the Spanish language authors come from seven Hispanic countries and regions: Spain, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, and Puerto Rico, which have profound cultural and systemic differences. The situation of authors coming from the Indian subcontinent is also very complex indeed. In addition, the emergence of these groups, or at least the recognition of their literature, are often very recent events. For example, although there have been Italian immigrants and publications at least since the last two decades of the nineteenth century, there has been no recognition of a specific body of writing before 1978, the year of P.G. Di Cicco's anthology of Italian-Canadian poets and F. Paci's novel *The Italians*. In addition, the two dominant literatures are themselves relatively young systems, which have been for long periods on the periphery of older and much stronger systems. English-Canadian literature has even today particular interferences and shared institutions with the British and American and Commonwealth polsystems, and the Québécois literature has similar special relations not only with the metropolitan French polsystem, but also with the world-wide francophonie and, to some degree, with the U.S. (In the latter case, it is possible to show some unidirectional interferences in the dictionary and grammar of the two polsystems, in 'high' and, more strongly, in 'low' literature, and also some sharing of institutions and markets.) Neither in English nor in French-Canadian literature is there any absolute unity forged through the use of a common language. There are differences between the *champ littéraire* of the Québécois, the Acadians, the francophones of Ontario, and Western Canadians; and in the anglophone literature, there are not only perceptible traditional ethnic voices, but also some recent differentiations of the Irish, Scots, and Welsh and Jewish writing in English has been recognized as specific for quite a while. In his book on the Hungarian-Canadian Literature, G. Bisztray has proposed a general model for the study of ethnic literature which contains five levels of interferences: world literature, the literature of the country of origin, the national literature of the new country, the other immigrant literature of the

14 Only thirteen years later (in 1991) was Nino Ricci named winner of the 1990 Governor-General's Award for *English-language* fiction, for his first novel, *The Lives of the Saints*, published by tiny Corraorant Books of Dunvegan.
new country, and the literature of the same language group produced in
other countries. This is a useful starting point, but it should be adapted
to the empirical realities of polysystems. For instance, world literature is not
one unified level, but a hierarchy of at least two or probably more literary
(and cultural) macro systems (the Western, the Islamic, the South and East
Asian, etc.); the literature of the country of origin may consist of a variety
of polysystems (this applies both to small countries like Switzerland and
Belgium and large ones like the U.S.S.R. and India) or belong to a broader
polysystem (Austria, for example); Canada does not have one national
literature; other immigrant literature(s) may be typologically akin but, in
specific cases, without provable interferences; last but not least, this lack of
interferences may also characterize some of the otherwise possible and
plausible contacts with foreign literature(s) in the same languages.

In spite of all difficulties, complications, complexities, and ambiguities,
the systemic approach, prudently applied, permits questions to be asked in
a way which should lead to new insights and to a reasonable synthesis. At
the end of this conference, during the Round Table, we may see better
whether this perception is shared by other participants, most of whom are
closer to the ethnic literatures than I, and whether we have gained insights
en cours de route.

University of Alberta

History, Literary History, and Ethnic Literature

One of the more interesting aspects of ethnic literature as a field of study is the obligations it entails. The critic is forced to work on many levels simultaneously. S/he must name the texts, disseminate them, and, at the same time, at this particular stage of the game, define them, situate them within the literary agenda of the century and the debate it has fostered. Editing, translating, the journalistic piece or the one-page review are not beyond his/her ken. And neither are the more ethereal spheres of his/her discipline. In short, s/he must document the existence of the corpus, of the tradition, while grappling with the criteria that establish them. Plain criticism and theory cannot be disjoined: they are part of one single activity.

There are in this many advantages and many disadvantages. One does not have to continuously check back to see if it is all right, to worry, about Coleridge’s or Samuel Johnson’s cogitations on the topic. The topic — the tradition — is precisely that which is missing, that which one is trying to make appear out of the hat. If one is lucky, one may even develop a strong sense of solidarity with the writers and feel that one is collaborating and adding focus to their venture, that one is somehow partaking of criticism in its ideal form, i.e., is helping to found, to render public a literary vein. On the other hand, not having to show one’s respects to the great predecessors of the discipline, while it does quell some anxieties, lets surface many others. Just as they must conjure up the tradition — the writers, the texts, so to speak — critics of ethnic literature must forge their critical vocabulary. With the canonic past having no authority, being almost completely silent on the subject, that can be quite a trick to perform, and quite a responsibility. For, obviously enough, not all the perspectives that the present offers have the same degree of adequacy or appropriateness. And when it comes to the criticism of ethnic literature, adequacy and appropriateness are very much at the heart of the matter.

An earlier draft of this paper was read by Enoch Padolsky. I would like to thank him for his comments.

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1. *Literatures of Lesser Diffusion/Les littératures de moindre diffusion*  
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To be a critic of ethnic literature is, indeed, first and foremost, to learn about position, to be aware that one speaks from some point or some status, hence to become more careful about and with theory. One may not be entirely comfortable with the peremptoriness with which in a recent collection of essays on Black literature structuralist poetics are declared to be "inapplicable in Africa" because "structuralism is European," but it would be wrong to snub or disparage such pronouncements. Certainly they should not be disparaged or snubbed because they bring geographical considerations into the field of literature or of literary criticism. Geography often divides, and the divisions it does perpetrate are not innocent. And in any case, some of the European masters of criticism or some of the European thinkers who have influenced criticism have themselves warned us about false transparencies, about the inevitability of position. It is what Bakhtin is telling us when he says:

Aristotelian poetics, the poetics of Augustine, the poetics of the medieval church, of the 'one language of truth,' the Cartesian poetics of Neoclassicism, the abstract grammatical universalism of Leibniz (the idea of 'a universal grammar'), Humboldt's insistence on the concrete — all these... give expression to the same centripetal forces in sociolinguistic and ideological life; they serve one and the same project of centralizing and unifying the European languages.\(^2\)

It is also the drift of Gramsci's admonishments, when he suggests that there are hegemonic and subaltern cultures and that intellectuals and theories are either organic to the one or to the other.\(^4\) From Bakhtin and Gramsci it is but a small step to those formulations which couch the same concepts in words more congenial to us and distinguish overtly between majority theories and minority theories.\(^5\)

In adding my own quibblings to the great ongoing conversation about ethnicity and literature, I want it to be clear from the outset that I consider ethnicity a critical category, and one which will most probably, in the not too


\(^5\) See Nancy Hartsock, "Rethinking Modernism: Minority vs. Majority Theories," *Cultural Critique* (Fall 1987): 187-207. Hartsock's article is essentially about feminist literary theory and its foundations, but the majority/minority distinction would evidently be useful for ethnic literature.
distant future, inform our descriptions of literary texts and the theories and the discourses we recur to in talking about them. But I want to be careful, at least as much as the circumstances demand. I will therefore begin by stating that the dimension of most direct relevance for this category, history, is for me one whose conceptual horizon sets limits for all literature. Whatever the merits of metaphysics and ontology and the criticism they have spawned in the last two decades, we do not, in my opinion, need to trouble ourselves with ontological and metaphysical issues. Literature is a post-lapsarian enterprise. Its simplest metaphor is Babel, hence history and society. To be more exact, let me specify that I do not mean this socialness in any naive-realism, word-for-thing way. I am not implying that literature ‘is a product of’ or ‘reflects’ the ‘world’ or ‘reality,’ as the slogan went some time ago, though I would not, in the long run, want to quarrel too strenuously with the philosophical or literary conceptualizations those locutions so awkwardly and so unfelicitously convey. I think we approach that problem with sufficient sophistication the moment we realize how great a shift in emphasis we have effected by substituting the terms ‘reality’ and ‘world’ with the terms ‘history’ and ‘society.’ These two entities pertain differently to literature’s basic material. The language of a writer is never raw or wholly idiosyncratic. When we read the page it appears on, it has already been used by other speakers, literary and ‘real-life,’ and the intonations, the ideologies they have imbued it with resonate in the text, cannot easily be abolished or circumvented. Language, Bakhtin has contended, is ultimately speech — the speech of the priest, the pedagogue, the scribe, the peasant, of the court of law as well as the market place. It is, to quote Kenneth Burke, another great critic who reached astonishingly similar conclusions, ‘forensic’ in nature. The aesthetic literature houses, be it high or low, modern or ancient, is not immune to, cannot bypass these sedimentations of the social. We can distill, purify language to no end, but if readers understand it, it will be thanks to the social memory, the past they discern in each of the words. A work of literature will therefore shed light on the peculiar groupings of a society, and the relationships it contemplates between the various groups (some of the voices ensconced within a style will be privileged). By the same token, the description of a society, of its speakers, will permit us to presage the kind of language and the kind of internal cohesion and divisions that contribute to the making of a literature or a text.

This is important. Representation, mimèse have been perhaps the major bone of contention of the criticism of ethnic and emergent literatures. Partly in reaction to the real tendency by readers, especially those of social science extraction, to treat the texts as if they were just archival sources or straight documentation, one is tempted to decry the autobiographical or generally referential qualities of ethnic writers and the writers of new non-European states, which can appear derivative at best, nineteenth-centurish at worst. Yet underlying such a response are a number of critical value-judgments. The belief that the peculiar semanticization of form typical of European modernistic writing should be the bench-mark of all classifications, does not go by itself, would also require some backing up. Realism may be one of the aspects of ethnic texts and of emergent literatures, but mere recourse to realistic modes should not retrodate anyone. If a Dylan Thomas is not writing thirteenth century poetry in those works in which he employs terza rima or revives the sestina, a Frank Paci is not necessarily placing himself before modernism (or post-modernism) when he proclaims "honesty" and "plain speaking" the first requisites of a writer of immigrant themes.7 The historical situation of the writers is different, and so are the works.

Elsewhere I have called this the 'question of the corpus.' In commenting on an old dictum by Northrop Frye, which berated Canadian critics and Canadian writers for their habit of always 'taking their pulse,' of arriving at a definition of Canadianhood by counting heads, by surveying the body of writings empirically at any one particular time, I pointed out that counting, reporting is also one of the tasks of the critic, and especially today and in Canada.8 The appropriation of language by new speakers will generate new works, which in turn will alter the dynamics and the structure of the whole, of the array of poems, plays, novels and other genres that is literature (or Canadian literature). Vice versa, it is possible to argue that the tensions which, in socially plural nations such as Canada, for better and for worse, are the staple of the daily news, bear irrefutable resemblance to the predicament lurking within criticism. The polemics about the decidability or indecidability, the relativism or the fixedness of meaning, which are current coin in critical discourse, are a version of the discomfort scientists and social scientists experience when they ponder notions such as ideology, order and disorder and try to arrive at some consensus about what is invariable and predictable in societies and what is variable and unpredictable.


This and no other is the lesson to be derived from the reciprocity Tartu School semiotics has postulated between primary and secondary modelling systems or between text and culture. According to Lotman and his colleagues, language constitutes the base for myth, religion, art, behaviour, but these — the secondary modelling systems — impinge on language. Society can be approached as if it were a text, or an aggregate of texts but the text is a "model of the world," and as such is traversed by borders, demarcation lines, much as societies and cultures are. Changes in either of them — literature or society — can occur by the appearance of new elements or by the transformation of the rules whereby the existing elements interconnect. Regardless of where one starts — text or culture and society — one can quickly get to the opposite side: there are no one-way streets.

The assumption or hypothesis I shall be exploring is only an extension of this first much larger axiom, albeit a fundamental extension. It can be expressed thusly: ethnic literature is in our historical period one of the literary discourses that embody the complicity between history and literature emblematically. Its texts are therefore of the epitomizing sort; critical exempla, parables of the times, they offer literary studies about self-images. One reads ethnic poems or fiction or theatre not out of sociological duty, to learn about one's neighbour or about other countries. One reads them also because of what one learns about how literature and criticism operate.

To fully describe the history that is summoned by ethnic texts, we would have to rehearse a long repertory of issues, which cannot be done here. In its concrete, everyday manifestation, ethnicity could be defined, perhaps too commonsensically but not improperly, as the process by which individuals identify with a group, a group that ascribes to itself or has been ascribed by others certain characteristics, and that is seen as occupying a certain position when compared to other groups. Even an ultra-concise and summary definition such as this, however, is not devoid of shadows and ambiguities. Depending on the theory and the ideological strings attached

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to it, identification can be voluntary or involuntary, can be maintained or not maintained, and, by virtue of internal or external pressures, can exist over a longer or shorter time-span. The size of the group will determine its perspective, for instance. The group itself will be larger and its borders' durability more stable if culture and/or language hold it together, smaller and of different consistence if it is based primarily on kinship or on strictly genealogical relationships. Groups can also occupy a specific intranational territory or can be dispersed over varying topographies, can be autochthonous or assembled through immigration, can represent the majority or a minority within a society. Non-dominant groups can interact with dominant groups via several mechanisms, such as assimilation; amalgamation, multivariate assimilation, pluralism, modified pluralism, conflict, de-assimilation, etc. Theoretical and meta-theoretical premises always, again, govern the choice or the emphasis. Location within the global geopolitical system is another factor: Western ethnicity follows social and political exigencies unlike those of Third World ethnicity. Stress some element in the wrong context, and the whole picture becomes distorted.

The key to all of this is the two notions of identification and group border and the very special imbrication they presuppose. As dictionaries will indicate, the adjective 'ethnic' condenses in itself two semantic fields: one inherited by derivation (its root coming from _ethnos_, Greek for 'race' or 'group'), the other — the meaning of 'pagan' or 'heathen,' hence 'foreign' — acquired by etymological sedimentation. In a first sense, then, ethnicity is a condition everyone shares by the mere fact of being born. In a second, though not secondary sense, it is a categorization occasioned by status, by the fact that some groups are hegemonic and some subordinate. The existential is conjugated with the social.

If we stay within Western perimeters, the history ethnicity brings to literature will be inevitably coloured by this ambivalence. The existential features have been well tended to both by those theorists who have confined their research to immediate chronologies and those who have worked within longer durations. Revivalist interpretations attribute the return of ethnicity to the demise of the universalistic philosophies and the great class-centered ideologies that had accompanied the rise of industrialization, modernization and the state, and to the parallel and sudden reemergence of more particularistic, anti-technology, anti-bureaucracy attitudes. In other words, recent ethnicity aided and abetted, and was aided and abetted by, the movement which, most vociferously in the late sixties and early seventies, rejected unlimited growth and sought to resurrect ecological, tribal, small-group-centered modes of life. The eighties and the wisdom that comes from hindsight have dampened some of the early enthusiasm by diluting historical responsibilities, but have magnified the conflict with
industrialization, modernization or the state. Whereas the salience of ethnic identification is now seen to be governed by contingency, the dynamics triggering ethnicity as a phenomenon are built-in to the organizational structure of society. The attractiveness of ethnicity lies also in the way it counters (or encourages the countering of) the excessively abstract, impersonal solidarities modern life inflicts on men and women. One does not have to be convinced that there are 'selfish' or 'nepotistic' genes, which is how sociobiologists have explained ethnic identification,\textsuperscript{11} to appreciate that the latter rehabilitates the concrete, the local. Among the spate of ideologies that have pleaded on behalf of the particular, ethnicity in its existential variation stands for that which is tangible, verifiable, experiential, and whose ultimate frontier is the body, the somatic, the colloidal. Or, to express it in the more Manichean dualities proposed by social scientists, ethnicity is the most conspicuous ripple in that ancient and probably permanent struggle pitting options against roots, rational choice against involuntary choice, or the state against community.

Discussions of this dimension of ethnicity tolerate a number of intellectual swerves, all of them explored and more or less inevitable in our cultural climate. Does ethnicity pander to conservative instincts? Are universalist attitudes inherently progressive? Is our ethnicity like or unlike the ethnicity of the past? My own feeling is that these are perplexities which cannot be answered unilaterally, unceptically. It is difficult today to think of universalism and the cultural heredity of the Enlightenment as fully positive principles: one would have to disregard the critiques of the Frankfurt School, of Freud, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida, to recall only some of the more influential names. Nor is it any easier to think that universalism is willy-nilly forward looking, even if we were to agree that history marches on vectorially, without hesitations, or that adjectives such as 'progressive' or 'conservative' have not been proven to be inextricably polysemous and almost hopelessly controversial by philosophy, the social sciences, and history itself. One would have to believe that homogeneity is a neutral, value-free ideal or that the types of social organization that favour it over and against the everyday heterogeneity of human interaction are somehow inherently good or even more democratic. Both universalism and particularism have diurnal and nocturnal sides: the quest for identity can exacerbate the ethnocentrism within us; the nightmare of the legal rights that bureaucracy and modernization grant the individual is anomie. Both

probably correspond to basic aspirations of the human psyche, and though historical periods may overestimate one at the expense of the other, it would seem more reasonable to envision them as opposites with which the human species must contend (or learn to contend) contemporaneously. Above all, it would be a deplorable impoverishment of the notion of society and societal organization to label universalism 'modern' and forms of particularism such as ethnicity 'pre-modern.' Quite aside from the contestable linearity or the view of history (the state is as old as civilization; there have been no greater champions of universalism than the world's greatest empires) that underwrite such terminology, research has, again, shown that modernization actually instigates particularistic responses. We must disengage modernism and modernization from modernity, which is a concept of wider range and can embrace at once modernism and its contrary.

Existential ethnicity should perhaps be conceived as a kind of reminder. In the Western world, where technology is an irreversible reality and in which identity does not always require secession from a nation state or the pursual of territorial claims, the ethnic is the individual at the threshold between citizenship and loyalty to the biological or cultural group. Rather than a refusal of principles we could not and should not do without — human and civil rights, the notion of the person — the accentuation of the negative, contestatory pole of ethnicity is a tactical move guided by the intent to salvage one of those facets of life that modernity most easily lets sink into oblivion.

But if ethnicity is a reminder, it is also, and on this there can be no equivocating, the reminder of a gap. To incorporate the social in the notion of ethnicity is to introduce in it deep incongruities. Not all those who erect their bulwark against modernization on the existentialness of lineage or culture do so from the same position or at the same cost. We should not forget that, whatever the processes by which socialization takes place today, some ethnicis live them from a minoritarian position. That is, tragically. It is they who are called upon to change, to become acculturated or to assimilate. By contrast, no matter how strongly members of the dominant group react to the proddings of particularism, socially they remain unaffected, since their culture and language are the cement holding the state together. And in reality, members of dominant majority groups only rarely categorize themselves as ethnics: social-wise, status-wise, they have no values to be 'foreign' to. Thus only minoritarian ethnicity will retain both social and existential features and will not incur in contradiction. Thus, too, when ethnicis occupy this slot, they will not only underscore (and/or articulate correctives for) the abstraction of universalist attitudes, of those norms which they are nonetheless bound to observe, but they will also reveal these attitudes to be frequently no more than screens for the privileges accruing to dominant groups. By their very presence, they will expose the social
concurrences linking individuals from such groups to the technology, the
bureaucracy they decry existentially.

The ambivalence of ethnicity and the issues gravitating around it filter
into literature in many guises. Most directly, through thematic structure. In
Frank Paci’s novels, for example, the protagonists are young upwardly
mobile Italian Canadians who detach themselves from family and
neighbourhood to attend university but whose trajectory as characters
reaches its apex just as they begin their de-acculturation phase and start to
reflect upon the values they left behind. The plot touches all the levels of
the debate on ethnicity. The heroes and heroines, who are often teachers or
seminarians, or Ph.D. students, become entangled in some of the more
cerebral and abstruse subjects in the university curriculum (philosophy of
language, logic, theology). And they all suffer some sort of malaise: in *The
Father*¹², Stephen, who has a paralyzed hand, is always uneasy about his
body; Marie, in *Black Madonna*¹³ will so struggle against her mother and
her way of life, particularly in eating habits, that she will develop anorexia.
For both the return to the parents’ heritage has as consequence the
rediscovery of the body and the physical: Marie prepares her trip to Italy by
indulging in the diet she had first proscribed; Stephen finally sets foot in his
dead father’s bakery and will be allowed to mix the dough, as he had always
wanted to do, even when he had sided with his mother and pushed for the
automatization of the production of bread and for more efficient (and less
personalized) distribution services.

Portraits of parents, uncles, grandfathers, ancestors in general, teem in
Italian-Canadian poetry and theatre. They are at once the totems, the great
genealogical, physical body the speakers interpose between themselves and
the world and the cultural ambit by which they identify themselves.
Biographical and confessional in tone, like all ethnic literature, Italian-Canad-
ian literature (which I have chosen as my textual frame of reference), is in
some way an ethno-history. Its authors often also act as the memory of the
group: they are scribes who give voice to those who have lived or live in
silence. By their mediation, because they managed to master a language, an
experience otherwise lost, left unsaid, is communicated. It is not by chance
that Marco Micone’s *Gens du silence*¹⁴ is one of the first Italian-Canadian
plays to be staged in Canada.

But then these are only one of the conduits by which history inscribes itself
in ethnic literature. Some extratextual reality will intrude on the textual


arbitrarily, before the book is written or read. Not always, but frequently enough, the author's name will colour interpretation. Whether the writer writes about ethnic themes or not, to recognize him or her as ethnic is to bring to bear on his or her work the fore-knowledge arising from the world of group relations. It may be the stereotypes that circulate on each group or the more sophisticated — conscious or unconscious — ideologies that attach to group allegiance or the more profound sensitivity to history that an understanding of the dynamics of ethnicity helps to induce or to bolster: a preliminary signature, which the individual author may or may not acknowledge or may acknowledge wholly or in part, is nevertheless constructed, and it would be a mistake to minimize its impact.

Also not to be minimized is the impact of borders, a notion that quickly comes into play here. The attribution and/or adoption of a social identity confers on the author a certain insidership, hence an authoritativeness. And the reader's own position will depend on his/her identification with or distancing from the writer's background: one may feel included or excluded from a text, especially, as happens more and more often nowadays, should the author decide to transfer on to the form the perspectivism that goes with group identification and group status (if s/he exploits in the book, by filtering them on the structure or the content, the opportunities that point of view — his or hers, the characters', the readers — opens up as a device and as an epistemological strategy).

Another portion of history enters the text through language and its vicissitudes — institutional and otherwise. Chronologically, ethnicity appears onto the social and intellectual scene in a period when the advent of organizations such as the British Commonwealth and the consolidation of English, French, Spanish, and Russian as vehicles of communication had already severely strained the linkages between linguistic expression, culture, the state and literature. The emergence of the group as a unit introduces a pull in another direction but does so with a vengeance: in countries where ethnicity is a product of immigration it superimposes a plethora of supplementary potentialities on the relations between a given nation and the supranational language it has chosen as official, vehicular language. Italian-Canadian literature exists in English, Québécois-French and Italian. Along with Canadian literature, a description of its intertextual scope or ground would have to list Canadian literature in English, Québécois literature, Commonwealth literature, the literature of the 'francophonie,' literature in Italian written in Italy, literature in Italian written outside of Italy, the literature of other Canadian ethnic groups, the literature of ethnics of Italian origin anywhere on the globe (Italian Americans, Italian Argentinians, Italian Australians, and so forth). The intra-national is combined with the inter-national.
Where does a literature of this cast belong, pedagogically, theoretically? When it is written in the language of the land of origin of the author, ethnic literature could be catalogued under the heading 'literature of exile' and technically should be housed in those disciplines whose task it is to study the literature produced in that language. But this solution is only partially satisfactory. Undertaken by design, as an option willfully conceived and willfully pursued, writing in Italian in Canada, where one's audience can be less than the proverbial twenty-five readers, would be as extreme a literary act as that of the writer of any avant-garde cénacle working primarily with his/her fellow adepts in mind. It would not in Italy. Objections of analogous tenor apply as readily to the classification devised by English departments in Britain and North America, which teach the literature of African, Caribbean, Asian nations, the U.S., Canada, India, Australia and justify that annexation on the basis that they are all literatures written in English. Language may capture the similarities between Nigerian and Australian literatures but not the difference. For this, culture would seem a more appropriate criterion.

The reassessment of the role of the cultural in the reflection on literature is one of the more visible outcomes of the historical events that have brought about the resurgence of ethnicity. Glotto-centric approaches do not simply misapprehend and underrate the input of non-linguistic sources. Decolonization, the changes in the demographic composition of many new countries through continuous migration, the influx of wave after wave of immigrants, have created a new breed of individuals, a new subjectivity and hence new virtualities, new categories of discourse. Sociological definitions of the effects of mobility would probably be centred around the notion of multiple identity. I would rather draw attention to the concept — disemia — recently minted by some semioticians to refer to situations in which communication builds upon sign systems of different order. Ethnicity is active disemia, disemia congenital to one's biography and behaviour, historically and institutionally overdetermined. What Marco Micone, who writes in Québécois French, and Mary Di Michele, who writes in English, and Maria Ardizzi, who writes in Italian, have in common among themselves goes beyond legal status, which they share with writers of any other Canadian ethnic group, or language-use, which they share with English-Canadian, Québécois and Italian writers. The latter is a very intricate issue; Italian-Canadian authors are on occasion trilingual or quadrilingual, if the Italian dialects are added; not so members of majority groups, one of whose privileges is that they are not subject to diglossia. The most proper

denominator could be said to be a hodge-podge of customs, the doing, the
knowing, we consign to the rubric ‘culture,’ but it is also more than that. Up
to now, literary criticism has carried out its role — intellectual, institutional
— on the largely unexamined premise that literature, culture, territory and
language coincide. The literature emerging in Africa, in Asia, or being
written by ethnic authors in Canada and elsewhere, is a literature of
non-coincidence: the individuals who give birth to it, straddle, together with
diglossia, a bifocality made of asymmetrical competences. Their culture of
origin often differs from the language they write in. A discrepancy, large or
small but there somehow, keeps linguistic enunciation, literature, culture,
territory, always out of synchrony. The intermixing of the various levels —
text, nation etc. — is much more complex than when ethnicity is not
involved.

It goes without saying that the encroachments by history on content,
interpretation, and language locate ethnic literature within the literary history
of the century, emphatically.

Let’s start with some of the themes. In as much as they are wittingly
espoused and expressed, they are far from being a reiterion of traditional
material. On the contrary, they belong squarely in the thick of the twentieth
century literary fray. To retrodate them would be to deny the polemical
charge that animates them. We can see this if we compare ethnic literature,
in the form it is represented by Italian-Canadian writers, with its most
natural touchstone, modernism.

Although exile and remembering are great modernist topoi, auto-
biographical directness, confessionality, are not what modernist poetics and
its many offshoots have recommended. Stylistically, irony, the objective
correlative, the dramatic monologue — not lyricism — are the more usual
prescriptions. Edward Said has remarked that while the great writers of the
eye decades of the century expunged parenthood (especially fathers) from
their poems or novels, to the extent that they celebrated the Western
tradition, they were still, technique notwithstanding, writing about filiational,
genealogical bonds.16 It is an enticing gloss: one need only recall the
politics of the various Eliots or Pounds or D.H. Lawrences or their pages
against modernization to have instant corroboration. But by slightly altering
the angle of approach it soon becomes evident that the losses in Said’s
exegesis cancel out the gains. What is most noteworthy in such tutelary texts
of modernism as Four Quartets, some of whose lines today sound to us as if
they could have been written by an ethnic poet, is the effort to muffle, to
make more muted the nostalgia pervading it. A reading that fingers too
forcefully on the concealed tropology misses the literal gist of the operation.

The 'Western tradition' is a supra-historical domain, which like other constructs has had and still has, as well it might, its impact on history and reality, but whose corporativistic rationale should also not be ignored. In this respect, the image proposed by the Italian critic Giacomo Debenedetti is perhaps less oblique and less astute but closer to the target. The archetypal prefiguration of the twentieth century in Debenedetti's meta-history is traced back to those scenes of Wagner's Der Ring trilogy where Wotan is banished and Siegfried breaks the spear with the runes, with the tribal words on it. Modernist literature is the literature of orphans who are "looking for the... new hieroglyphs which may... guarantee wisdom, the sense of one's destiny." 17 In his explorations, the writer can no longer "say 'I' as his/her father did," but delegates to the new signs, to the new runes individual talent experiments with, the task of speaking for him or her (Debenedetti, 61). It is twentieth century literature in its entirety Debenedetti is talking about. But he talks about it as literature, not just as new literature. And literature, we have long since learned, has also organizational constraints to abide by. The empowerment and abrogation modernism enacts, by themselves events of vast historical amplitude, have to do with literary discourse as an institution rather than simply with language or discourse tout court.

For an Eliot, the family album poetry we find in ethnic literature would have been an embarrassment without some additional, sublimating, redeeming other feature that rendered it literary, that enhanced its literariness. Joyce's program of "exile, cunning and silence," 18 Gide's exhortation to "détachez-vous," 19 are eminently aesthetic or aestheticistic gestures no less than gestures of freedom. They are also a simulation. To voyage out, as the generation of Joyce, Gide, Pound and the writers of the the Lost Generation did, is to install oneself in a larger replica of Proust's cork-lined room, to indulge in the asceticism of the trade. It is willed, self-induced outsidedness, professionalized exotopy. A strategy, the separation the modernist so carefully prepares, so painfully carries out, has only one function: to create the premises for the book. And, that being its finality, it could not but end, as a literary journey must, into an equally simulated and simulatey home, the great nation unto itself that is literary tradition. The alpha and omega of modernism is the métier, whose metaphorical equivalent is, territorially, the Republic of Letters, that locus


19 This is Angèle's advice in Le Prométhée mal enchâinté. See André Gide, Romans, récits et soties, œuvres lyriques, ed. Maurice Naudeau (Paris: Gallimard 1958) 337.
amoenus conceived by writers for writers, in which nostalgia can be transfigured, made more palatable by art, by a more phantasmatic past populated with masters and precursors, rather than relatives. The coda to the program Stephen Daedalus advocates in The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is the phrase pronounced by the same Daedalus in Ulysses, according to which "history is a nightmare from which [we must try] to wake up" — history, but not literary history (and especially not in Ulysses, a book in which the nostos and the algos are once again aptly suffused under layers and layers of literary revisitations, stylistic reminiscences). There does not have to be any critical naiveté in the belief that the period Said is seeking to reinterpret is also, as we always thought it was, the phase of literature which negates history and exchanges it for literature, in which literature is transmogrified into an alternative to and a refuge from history.

If modernist affiliation (or consent) implies but also replaces filiation (or descent), to borrow from the nomenclature Said and other critics have made available to us,21 if the terms can be reversed with ethnic texts, then, the diffidence towards history, the forgetfulness encouraged by Daedalus irrevocably interlocks with its antithesis. "[Y]ou must never forget," cautions Antonino Mazza in a poem entitled "Canadese,"

what you are... never!
because when you do, they'll remind you.22

The vigilance of the writers who can have no history other than by and through the designation of the objects of their remembrance may have been overshadowed by modernism but it is an attitude no less actual, no less rooted in the culture of this century.

Ethnic literature historicizes the aesthetic, and it is the historicizing, the reimmerging of the literary back into the historical which is its aesthetic gesture. For the ethnic writer, voyaging, homelessness, separation, multiple subjectivity, identity as something of provisional, vulnerable salience, whose content must always be constructed — these qualities of modernity are not extraordinary events, choices whereby to exalt individual will, but the prose

20 James Joyce, Ulysses (New York: Random House 1961) 34.
21 Said proposes and enlarges the filiation/affiliation dichotomy in The World, the Text, and the Critic. The consent/descent variant appears in Werner Sollors’ Beyond Ethnicity (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1986). What I find most striking about these terms is that they echo directly the dyads (civism/community, roots/rational choice, etc.) through which sociologists and anthropologists now frequently approach history. There is a move to bring literary history closer to alternate conceptions of history.
of everyday life, the proof of the force of history. Ethnic writers do not have to create borders, or some sort of exclusion, of exceptionality for themselves. Such ruses are unnecessary. The aims and goals of modernism, and the limits and freedom they imply, are inherent to their being. The flotsam and jetsam of history, they can get by just by naming. Understatement, to downplay all literary heroism, is their destiny, and perhaps their mandate.

This is why writing 'honesty' and 'plain speaking,' to again quote the novelist Frank Paci, can be appropriate enough strategies. This is why, too, Antonio D'Alfonso can say that the eighties in Canadian literature are a "decade of the essence, a going towards the roots of it all" (and the double sense of the term 'roots' should not be lost upon us). The texts themselves assume publicly the everydayness ethnicity brings to literature. In Caterina Edwards' The Lion's Mouth, a woman of Venetian origin living in Edmonton is attempting to write a novel which has as protagonist a Venetian man she fell in love with during her many trips to Italy. She has written about him before but always by transforming him in ways which now seem to her false and stultifying. When she finishes the new draft we cannot know whether she has been faithful to her character or whether she has once more arranged his life to suit her present state of mind, as she did on previous occasions. The book is about memory, exile and how they affect the writing of fiction. It would be the perfect implementation of Daedalus' program, were it not for the narrator's aesthetics. The separation, the remembering does not lead to the other homeland that language, style and the tradition are for Joyce. The narrator of The Lion's Mouth has very little patience with the view of language "as simply language" words for her are a medium, "things to be wrestled with, to be forced into the proper order so that they approximate what [she is] interested in expressing" (Edwards, 48). Just as ethnic revivals are often precipitated by the excessive intrusion of the technological and bureaucratic elements of modern life, making ethnicity parasitic on modernization, so in Italian-Canadian literature modernistic topics and devices are turned against modernism (or its post-modernistic aftermath). The marks of modernism — the lower case letters, the lack of punctuation in poetry, for example — appear in contexts whose objective is the reducing, the cutting down to size of the modernist ethos. Self-reflexiveness, the text declaring its own textuality, is a device by which to give more prominence to the confessionality, the autobiographical side. Qualities associated with art and artiness are not such a boon in Italian-Canadian literature. More


often than not, they are a further sign of alienation. "[T]he plain truth is", writes Mike Zizis,

my Italian Heritage
has only made me House Broken

and now I go on paper (in Di Cicco, 53)

He is echoed by Saro D’Agostino:

And still he goes to Mass
every day and still he prays
for those who ended up alone

while I, escaping to words
earned nothing;

still trying to say
I love you father
through a senseless English poem...

Poetry at best
leaves me cold...

I should leave poems
and this language and
I should blow up
all the subdivisions
he carried cement for...

I am sorry for these songs. (in Di Cicco, 58, 71)

More explicit yet, Pier Giorgio Di Cicco dates Italian-Canadian poetry by inserting it in the chronology of twentieth century literature:

an apple is a kiss, a friend is a smile,
and these things are not poetry —
I leave it to the post-modern to see a coded
transform for the song in their lungs.25

As might be expected, at its point of most heightened self-awareness
Italian-Canadian anti-modernism will shade off in the deliberate adoption

of those very traits which the great writers sought to expunge from their work. And since these are among the stereotypes of Italianhood, the double calculus of ethnicity follows suit. In Italian-Canadian writing ethnification, which identifies various traits as being 'alien,' 'foreign,' automatically binds modernism to dominant, majority groups. Here too the crucial lines are by Saro D'Agostino and Pier Giorgio Di Cicco. We read in a poem entitled "Canadian Poet":

I am sentimental, we
no longer speak to each other
To him, a palm
bleeding under the snow
would indicate poor health
a need for exercise, proper
diet. (*Roman Candles* 67)

It is a reply to a "thin northern acrobat" whose "feats of poetry" are, D'Agostino states,

5BX plans
for leaving fine imprints
on this endless snow, as if
to ornament our mere survival. (*Roman Candles* 66)

Di Cicco expresses his misgivings in a different tone, but just as precisely. He writes in "The Happy Time," now included in the collection *Virgin Science*:

Sentimentality is what the proud fear,
so they never get to the outrageously beautiful.
This is my only grief in a Protestant
country — they have no talent for metaphysics. (*Virgin Science* 5)

And in "For My Italian Canadian Friends," also from the same collection:

That's what I have
in common with these boys, the rash taking-for-granted, their graces strewn behind them,
while the Scottish keep it at arm's length lest they
should be unworthy.
Life is one foolishness or another. Sentimentality is
choosing. (*Virgin Science* 14)
The "choosing" of sentimentality, the acceptance of it, and of the debased literariness and the subalternity it is associated with as a literary and perhaps moral program in Italian-Canadian poetry, is, at present, the most compelling attempt at formulating an ethnic poetics in Canada.

The ethnic reappropriation of signature can also find profitable chiaroscuro in the modernist penchant for irony and self-effacement. The objectivism of Eliot, of Joyce, of the great masters is the literary antecedent of the philosophically-inspired structuralist and post-structuralist insistence on the 'death of the author.' It is a measure of the critical suggestiveness of minority discourses that they revive the problematics of signature in a non-trivial manner.

To be sure, the author can never again be the 'genius,' the individual who is who s/he is by virtue of his/her personal, private eccentricities. Signature, the possibility thereof, will instead be determined by position. Moreover, minority discourses are not coterminous: we now know enough about them to realize that as they can be distinguished from majority discourses, they can be distinguished amongst themselves. The visibility gender affords, to mention one feature, is experienced only by some ethnics. In turn, ethnicity unfolds in time and has a duration that is not typical of femaleness. We do not think of women or blacks as first generation or second generation or third generation. Identity maintenance is an issue that does have some pertinence with gender or race; salience, questions of degree and temporality (there is such a thing as 'symbolic ethnicity') do not. And neither are some of the other parameters we must invoke: group identity, nationhood and territory are of secondary import in any canvassing of the connection between women and literature. On the schedule of priorities they would figure after many other topics. Whence the discrepancies in criticism too. For feminists, language is a singular, monolithic entity, a sign-system intrinsically male-oriented. For ethnics language exists only in the plural, is the form of expression of a speech-group (individuals speaking Italian, Spanish, English, French, their dialects).

Nonetheless, on authorship and why it should be minority discourses that resuscitate it at this particular time, there is across-the-board consensus within the minoritarian field. After having noted that "what is finally written is, whether consciously or not, written by the whole person,"26 Sandra Gilbert, an American critic, puts it in these words:

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[H]ow, after all, can you shape a canon that would allow you to make meaningful inferences about, say, gender and genre without having recourse to authorial signatures? ... Those of us who haven’t had a history—for instance, women—would prefer to recover that history before we celebrate its demise! And besides, who really profits from the death of the author? _Cui bono_, as the old adage would have it? Why of course it’s the priestly critic, the one whose textual _jouissance_ exhibits his (and I use that pronoun advisedly) hegemonic power, his exuberant skill with arcane terms and themes! (in Graff, 118-120)

Gilbert’s protestations close the circle and bring us back to modernism. It is legitimate to suspect that it is the writers who have no trouble placing themselves in history, because it is their history which has distributed identities to everyone else, who are uninterested in matters historical and who must simulate borders by heavily investing in the formal ingredience of literature to regain some sort of identity (or who fail to recognize that such a disavowal of history and such compensatory strategies, insofar as they are compensatory, are _their_ history, not universal history).

As for language and its criss-crossings with culture, comparable considerations obtain. The more influential precepts condemn, as it were, the modernist writer to style. By abiding by Mallarmé’s and Eliot’s injunctions to envisage oneself in the role of purifier of the words of the tribe, no less than by following Pound’s exhortation to always "make it new," one commits oneself to a very specific practice: linguistically, one’s task is to deviate from the norm, to invent an idiolect, a personal language within the language for himself or herself. The polyglotism one will have picked up, if one is a Joyce or an Eliot or a Djuna Barnes or a Gadda, will be subordinated to that primary imperative, as are all other qualities. These inconveniences, these solicitations and doubts can haunt the ethnic writer too, but they turn up first of all on the level of language _qua_ language.

I have already observed that to write in Italian (or German or Ukrainian etc.), where the majority of the public is non-Italian (or non-German, non-Ukrainian etc.), can be quite a radical literary project: cut off from its communicational circuit, language becomes almost pure inscription, unspeakable speech. A second and perhaps clearer example in Italian-Canadian literature are those texts which contain some untranslated Italian. This apparently innocuous expedient, now known in Italian-Canadian criticism as the device of the ‘stone’ (after a phrase by Mary Di Michele who, during a reading, explained that the Italian words in her poems were like little stones she had dropped in the flow of the English), gives substance to a number of the potentialities of ethnic literature. The clash of languages exposes the linguistic, the textuality of the text. By inserting gaps within the work, it situates the author and the reader, who are insiders or outsiders or both. The unintelligibility that may ensue for readers will have the same
structural function obscurity has in modernist or post-modernist literature. It is a component of the text, a cause as well as a result. Except that now it occurs before or in spite of the style, is prompted not by any violence done to language but to the most normative of means: the simple use of speech forms. Whereas the obscurity of a modernist poem or short story or play points to the difficulty in constructing worthwhile meanings or in deciphering a world always more ambiguous, ethnic unintelligibility puts the reader face to face with existing social conditions, the reality, the history which are the author's and the characters’ and which preside over their enunciation, their linguistic, expressive options (i.e. the world of pluralism, of bi- or plurivocality, of bi- or pluri-focality).

This basicness, this focusing of language before it becomes style or any other aspect of the text is the ultimate sign of subalternity. Ethnic writers may be able to translate themselves (various Italian-Canadian writers do) and may borrow each of the languages at their disposal as the occasion demands. Between them and the language they use there will, nevertheless, always be some sort of slippage, however minuscule it may become with the passing of the generations. Unlike the other diasporic groups who claimed territories and founded nations and kept and propagated their language against indigenous speech-forms, unlike the decolonized individual, who can, slowly but surely, bend the language imposed on him/her to reflect local linguistic and cultural characteristics (there is a Nigerian English or an Indian or a Filipino English), institutionally they in the end possess no language. Ethnic literature makes art out of the precariousness, the antinomies concomitant to, emanating from subalternity. In doing so, it performs an invaluable function. If some of the great works of the century have been about the impossibility to say, about the scandal that inhabits textuality as such, literary ethnicity proves that even the reverse of the high canon, even a minimalist poetics moderately optimistic about its chances to name, to arrive at some sort of meaning, is not devoid of tension, of pathos.

Stretched as far as it will go, any pondering of ethnic language — or of ethnic signature or genealogy or disemia or sentimentality — will come to rest finally on ground that is blatantly epistemological. In opposition to modernist and post-modernist objectivism, which stresses the cognitive value of outsidedness, ethnic duality reinstates insiderness. An Eliot, a Joyce, being inherently inside, being endowed with, as it were, too much history — the history of the dominant class or the dominant group — responds by moving towards the margin. A Di Cicco or a Di Michele or a Micone, who is marginalized by history, will seize upon every bit of identity s/he can get. The Italian in the English or in the Québécois French discloses a discrepancy vis-à-vis majority language and culture but at the same time it is there to signal a specific competence: sometimes, and especially in fiction, the
authorial voice is the voice which, if required, can translate the characters’ foreign vocabulary. Ethnicity stands to the literature of Western societies as the studies written about Africa or Asia by African or Asian anthropologists or about women by women do to the social sciences or to anthropology. That some authors slant their approach to their material to also favour participation merely confirms the primacy of position as a principle: the knowledge the various perspectives produce, although always different, is always knowledge.

Perhaps, to assuage the fears of those who wonder if these epistemological correspondences are not, in part, the reason why ethnic literature is often read by anthropologists or sociologists for its documentary content, it may be worth adding that, as with language, ethnics can choose several epistemological options from the spectrum between pure participation and pure detachment. They are under no coercion to maintain, statically, any single position. Italian-Canadian writers can be ‘within,’ to some degree, or ‘outside,’ to some degree, when they write in Italian or in English or in French, depending on which language they identify with (which may be all three), or both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ when they writes in English or French about Italian-Canadian topics and when they deploy some Italian in the English or the French: in this last instance they can shift between partial participation and partial detachment in the same text. Only full positions are denied to them. Differently from the modernist, who can never impersonate identity, the ethnic writer can never espouse straightforward distance. Differently from the social scientist, who must remain faithful to one method and is, of course, untouched by the problem of aesthetic intention and how it affects choice of perspective, s/he is stuck with a poverty which is the other side of richness. Participation, insidership are, thus, accentuated because they are possible options and because the social sciences or literature and literary studies as a whole have until recently judged them negatively, deeming them to be the source of inferior works of art or inferior manifestations of scientific inquiry or critical programs.

Each of all of these areas — themes, authorship, language, culture, epistemology — would deserve more in-depth coverage. But before closing, I would like to at least broach the one question my argument has been continuously postponing.

Where does the emergence of minority discourses leave literary studies? From which angle, with which critical wherewithal is ethnic literature best approached? My opinion is, as I have stated at several reprises, that the differentia specifica of ethnic texts is to be found in the directness with which they pre-empt and/or accommodate the historical. This, for me, is the one and final litmus test of the various methods and theories. At the moment I do not believe that the implications of ethnic literary strategies have been
or are being adequately ministered to by literary theory, despite the otherwise valuable and stimulating contribution of individual theorists and critics.

The most telling case in point, precisely because of its many attractive features and the sympathy it elicits, is undoubtedly Itamar Even-Zohar’s polysystem theory. The postulate on which it hinges — that a semiotic system is "rarely a uni-system" but is necessarily "a heterogeneous, open structure," "a multiple system, a system of various systems, a polysystem, iso-morphic with... the social system" — fits well with the pluralism ethnicity entails and/or promotes (Even-Zohar, 300). The typologies of literary forms (dominant and subordinate, primary and secondary, central and peripheral), of the contact between items (only a particular stratum may be involved, the needs of the target literature, the prestige of the source literature influence the exporting and the importing etc.) certainly illuminate better than any other available theoretical apparatus the processes by which ethnic literature intertwines with the literary system as a whole. Still, minoritarian discourses — the literatures of gender, race and ethnicity — cannot be defined on purely literary, intrasystemic grounds: they send back neither to form as such nor to genres or styles for accreditation, but, rather, to historical phenomena: to people, groups, societies. Studied from the perspective of strictly literary processes ethnic themes would be an example of belated or misguided epigonism, the transplanting by a dependent system of aspects no longer actual in independent systems, a type of conservative secondary literature. Without some reference to history and the circumstances of ethnic writing, to its anti-modernist bias, the justification of the themes and their function within literature, hence their novelty, would be misrepresented. In a similar vein, not all the literature that the criticism of ethnic literature or the literature of gender or race assigned to the mainstream would be mainstream by strictly literary standards: the first question — about the stream — has to do with social or cultural status and language use, the second — about standards — with structural, formal composition, and with modes of reception. But paying no heed to the first would mean downgrading much that is vital in contemporary literature and probably will be for a good portion of its future. Given that the external, the historical can be drawn into the text, the collusions that literature establishes with it are literary and criticism must be prepared to face up to them.

Polysystem theory treats history as one more sub-set in a larger mega-system that would house both literary and non-literary realms. The difference of history is, if not annulled, much diluted. It is a hitch polysystem theory inherits from its precursors. Strangely, Even-Zohar, who makes no
secret of his indebtedness to Russian Formalism and Prague School Structuralism, never submits their hypotheses to analysis. He thus overlooks one of their more suggestive contradictions. In "Problems in the Study of Literature and Language" Roman Jakobson and Jury Tynianov tell us that the "immanent laws" of literature can help us adumbrate and portray the form "of each specific change"; they maintain that neither the "chosen path" nor the "tempo" of the evolution, hence neither its direction nor its timing, can be studied but by proper monitoring of "the correlation" with the extra-literary series. 28 However, these two realms — the literary and the historical — are not such that they could be easily subsumed under a larger meta-domain, with strict rules regulating its functioning. Tynianov and Jakobson, who do concede that an "indeterminate equation" threatens the laws of evolution, attribute it to the number of items of the literary system, which "do not specify a unique solution" (291). The unpredictability of the 'when' of the change is never mentioned.

The major drawback of polysystem theory is, then, its failure to allow for the randomness within history and the historical, for that which does not easily lend itself to systematization. Topics of cultural discourse, gender, race, ethnicity acquire, lose, reacquire salience; they are situationally-governed. In any particular environment any particular development may affect individual allegiance to the positions and the concerns that each of these phenomena vehicle: economic recession, a tightening or a loosening of price-controls by any of the multinational petroleum cartels, the election of a conservative government, the reaction of majority groups may cause all the concern with ethnic identification or feminism or affirmative action to subside for some time. Polysystem theory admits that the literary system is at once 'autonomous' and 'heteronomous' with respect to other systems, but considers the 'otherness' systematic and conflatable into larger systems. One wonders how that can happen if one does not drop those characteristics of one system that are incompatible with characteristics of other systems, or, with history, the features most vulnerable to the vagaries to chance and the unforeseen. And, as regards to intrasystemic relations, how can the local, autonomous character of individual systems (which deploy "concurrently different options") be preserved if the systems coalesce into "one structured whole" and if the "multiplicity of intersections" merely increases "structuredness?" (Even-Zohar, 291) Would not the 'poly' in 'polysystem' merely signify that there is diversity in quantity but not in quality?

When it comes down to it, then, Even-Zohar's main preoccupation is disorder, and how to expunge it or to limit its theoretical input. His is the classical view of science, in which scientific nomos is equated with stability, regularity and the repeatable. Translating this into the parlance of social or literary discourse, we could, I think quite accurately and relevantly, say that, since stability and regularity are guaranteed by independent systems — hence by the groups which do not have to be acculturated, which have nothing to offer resistance to, or by the literature that exports rather than imports, which decides the form change will take — polysystem theory is a majority theory, a theoretical equivalent of simplified federalism. Judging by current events, science and the social sciences seem now to be working towards alternatives that do not sweep disorder under the carpet, that accord disorder a function, often creative but certainly not one to be circumvented or abolished. This is how Edgar Morin explains it in a text about the organization of complex societies:

In modern societies, which are in a state of permanent evolution, the norm is established by dominant tendencies — the tendency towards industrialization, the tendency toward urbanization. These will no longer be opposed by 'reactionary' tendencies in the classical sense. Rather they will be opposed by ambiguous countertendencies oriented towards the past and towards the future — neonauturism, neoaarchism, neotribalism. Modern society is sensitive not only to exterior occurrences, the incitations coming from the eco-system or from other societies, hence demonstrating that it can assimilate and develop any new elements derived from outside its ken. It gives rise to its own events and its own slippages, by virtue of the extremely loose integration of the items composing it. It is characterized by a permanent instability, so that the play of social complementarities is at the same time a play of oppositions. Its oscillations, its pendular rhythms, notably exemplified by economic recessions, create by themselves, if aggravated by other unfavourable conditions, sociological crises. Since modern society is weakly organized on the cultural level, the implacability of its norms and its taboos will be equally weak: pockets of anomic, of marginality, of originality are more or less tolerated and constitute areas which may propitiate schismogenesis and morpogenesis.29

The research on ethnicity is in many ways a chapter of or an appendix to the debate on complexity. In literary criticism we must learn to deal with the dialectic between stability and instability, order and disorder, with phenomena whose emergence and/or disappearance may perturb theoretical neatness by implanting into it a point de flûte, an escape-hatch, but which nonetheless collaborate to and sustain, as unhomogenized disorder, the

organization, the continuance of the whole. We must somehow be able to acknowledge the presence of minority discourses without normalizing them, without assimilating them to the criteria of majority discourses, even when they rely on majority discourses for some of their literary features. We must do this not because of any facile exaltation of disorder and anarchy, either social or literary, but for reasons of fairness, to do justice to all texts. This must be part of the ethics of the critic, out of the conviction that without that fairness we have only heavy-handed and heavily-biased ideology — social, literary and theoretical. Having cited Bakhtin at the beginning, let me end with another quotation from him:

[A] unitary language gives expression to forces working toward concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization, which develop in vital connection with the processes of sociopolitical and cultural centralization... But the centripetal forces of the life of language, embodied in a 'unitary language,' operate in the midst of heteroglossia. At any given moment of its evolution language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word but also ... into languages that are socioideological languages of social groups.... Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward.... Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear (271-72).

Carleton University
Canadian Minority Writing and Acculturation Options

"Would you tell me please, which way I ought to go from here?"
"That depends, a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat. "I don't much care where" — said Alice. "Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat. (Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland.)

Racial oppression presupposes that the dominant group has the power to oppress and the subordinate group has fewer resources to resist oppression. In this sense, the terms majority/minority groups in the context of race relations are defined by unequal power rather than numeric differences. Minorities are groups which are in a subordinate position, dominated by groups which have the power to subject them to unequal treatment. Conversely, a majority group is the group that has the power to dominate. (B. Singh Bolaria and Peter S. Li, Racial Oppression in Canada 15.)

A failure to make explicit the societal basis of social science may create the illusion of having established universal truths... The danger is ethnocentrism... Ethnocentrism may lead to a distortion of reality in that one's own culture-bound perspective is taken as universally appropriate. (Robert C. Gardner and Rudolf Kalin, A Canadian Social Psychology of Ethnic Relations 6.)

Acculturation may be roughly defined as cultural change (on the individual and group level) which results from the meeting of different groups in a multi-ethnic society (Berry, "Finding Identity," 223). In Canada, if we assume that some form of ethnic pluralism is likely to continue for the immediate future at least, acculturation is now, and will continue to be, a national fact

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1 I am indebted to M. Gordon's Assimilation in American Life for the use of this quotation. I would also like to thank Francesco Loriggio, Ben Jones and Lindsay Mann for their helpful comments on this paper.
of life. And given the close connection between acculturation processes and the specific characteristics of a particular society, the discussion of this topic, even from a literary perspective, leads to a great many related questions. A full consideration of acculturation in Canada would thus need to look closely at a number of different areas and consider, for example, identity issues, attitudes regarding ingroups and outgroups, social structures, and available social and cultural options. The aim of this paper, however, is much more limited. In it I wish to examine how some of these relevant issues relate to one area of Canadian literature, namely Canadian ethnic minority writing. And within this area I am more interested in establishing a conceptual framework, an approach to the issues, than in attempting an overview or a comprehensive treatment of this large and diverse body of literature. Such a framework will allow us to examine better how Canadian minority literature (its writers, readers, and texts) relates to the sociological, psychological, and cultural forces (diachronic and synchronic) which are salient in Canadian acculturation processes.

The relation of acculturation to assimilation, another term commonly used in describing intergroup relations in a society, depends on the way the latter term is understood. To put it another way, one's view of acculturation is related to the teleological assumptions implied in the model of assimilation being used. Thus for example, Milton Gordon's well known assimilation model for the United States separates cultural assimilation ('acculturation') from the various components of structural assimilation and posits three distinct paths (teleologies): Anglo-conformity, amalgamation (i.e. melting pot), and pluralism. In each of these paths, the nature of acculturation is to be seen differently.

Gordon's distinction between cultural assimilation and structural assimilation is an important one since it allows us to analyze more clearly the different kinds of processes which are involved. Yet at the same time the analytic distinction between culture and structure does not imply that culture and acculturation occur independently of the structures of society. To speak of acculturation options, therefore, whether for individuals or for groups, is to speak not just like Alice in my first prefatory quote (free to take whatever road she wants), but also like Boloria and Li in my second prefatory quote. In other words, the two discourses may be distinct and yet be part of the same interrelated system. In acculturation, it seems to me,
ethnic cultural features, whether considered subjectively or objectively, are acted upon not merely by the existential difference of the 'other,' but also by the instrumental forms in which the culture is found.

For the ethnic diversity of Canadian society, therefore, the discussion of acculturation and ethnic identity also needs to take into account, at the very least, questions of status and power since these areas are an important part of Canadian social structures. In other words, the study of acculturation also involves a consideration of the interplay between dominant ethnic majority status (itself differentiated historically, regionally, by sub-group or by sector) and subordinate ethnic minority status (also differentiated in a variety of ways). In Ontario, for example, the ability of non-Christians to choose their days of work depends not only on their cultural beliefs but on the structural environment of the dominant core culture. Indeed, one problem with Canadian multicultural policy, if I may use it as a general example on this point, is that it has on the whole tended to see culture (and hence ethnic identity), as something separate from Canadian social structures. The result has been the restriction of culture to 'song and dance routines' which are often seen by minority participants as instrumentally innocuous and culturally limiting.

Literature, insofar as it is a cultural activity, obviously has a close relationship to the acculturation dynamic. Writers and readers are participants in acculturation processes, and literary texts can very often be seen to reflect or incorporate their acculturation options. This is particularly clear in Canadian ethnic minority writing, that is, in that part of Canadian literature which arises from and reflects Canadian ethnic minority experience in its broadest sense (whether immigrant, aboriginal, or third plus generational, in official or non-official languages). That minority writing should put a high salience on issues of acculturation is not surprising since to a large extent minority enculturation, unlike majority enculturation, takes place in contrast to dominant cultural norms, at least insofar as minority identity boundaries are concerned.

4 For further discussion of the terminology being used here and the distinctions between majority and minority, see Padolsky, "The Place of Italian-Canadian Writing." You will note that I am excluding from my scope minority situations of the dominant groups, i.e., English-Canadian writers in Montreal, Acadian, Franco-Manitoba writers, etc. These are interesting cases from a number of perspectives, but I would distinguish them from the situations of ethnic minority writers per se.

5 Cf Kalles, 82: "For members of the dominant ethnic collectivities, the processes of enculturation and acculturation may, to a large degree, tend to be mutually reinforcing phenomena. Hence, the line between the actor's ethnic and national identities may blur, and ethnicity may become salient in only a few situational contexts. Alternatively, for members of ethnic minorities, the processes of enculturation and acculturation may generate opposing (push and pull) forces. In this context, ethnicity may be rendered
The close relationship between acculturation and social structure outlined above suggests that discussions of this subject in related disciplines such as sociology or social psychology should be able to offer considerable insight in a literary critical context as well. Sociology is no substitute for literary analysis (from whatever perspective), but there is no reason why sociological or social psychological models cannot be adapted to serve literary critical purposes. And indeed, this is what I am going to try to do in the rest of this paper. My basis for doing so, as I stated above, rests in the affirmation that Canadian writers and readers, as part of Canadian society, bring to the literary text implied or explicit positions on acculturation issues and that these positions (attitudes, judgments, expectations, etc.) are centrally relevant to the literary analysis of minority writing. To put it another way, I am arguing for the centrality of performative, behavioural, and instrumental factors in the relationship between readers, writers, and texts and justifying the theoretical applicability of sociological models to literature on this basis.\(^6\) A full consideration of the theoretical implications of this issue is of course not possible here.

What we require, then, in the consideration of acculturation and minority writing, is a way of describing the variety of acculturation options that writers and readers bring to minority texts and a way of analyzing the literary implications of these acculturative positions. A preliminary version of such a descriptive model is presented in Figure 1 below. The model is derived from a number of Canadian sociological and social psychological studies and in particular from those of Berry, Driedger, and Kallen. Using elements from each of their models, I have attempted to portray here in one figure a wide range of issues relevant to Canadian minority writing: cultural and structural elements, voluntary and involuntary factors, synchronic and diachronic aspects, and majority/minority, ingroup/outgroup relationships, all seen in terms of the literary ramifications they generate. The literary model which results should perhaps best be seen as an available range of analytic options. By means of the model one can clarify where particular literary cases fit and with regard to which aspects. The validity of the model, of course, depends on how well the analytic structure fulfills this need. At this point, all I would wish to claim is that the model does seem to handle

\(^6\) Needless to say, the application is not to be seen as merely one-sided since the results of literary analysis based on these models may very well affect how the models themselves are perceived. Further, in forming my own descriptive model, I have adapted and changed the social science models in order to fit them better to the context of literature. The problems, theoretical as well as practical, involved in this interdisciplinary venture, could easily form the basis of another paper.
most minority literary examples and that most positions on the grid can indeed be represented, though undoubtedly some adjustments will need to be made in the future. It should also be noted that what is presented here is not to be construed as a general model for the study of acculturation and literature that can be applied without adjustment to other literatures or other times. As my third prefatory quote by Gardner and Kalin reminds us, analyses (whether in social science or literature) tend to be culture-bound and should be extended outside their immediate contexts only with great caution.

The pattern shown in Figure 1 describes the variety of acculturation options available to Canadian minority ethnic groups and individuals as reflected in Canadian minority writing. The positions in the Figure are thus located with reference to both the ethnoculture of the old ethnicity (both social and cultural) and the dominant ethnoculture(s) of Canadian majority collectivities (again both social and cultural). This fundamental relationship reflects the fact that Canadian ethnic minority identity and hence minority acculturation options find their dynamic between the ethnicity of the minority group (with its history, social structures, culture, literature, etc.) and that of the dominant majorities in Canadian society. Note also that the acculturation options displayed in the Figure are intended as descriptive, not normative, categories. No judgment is being made about which position is ‘best’ in the grid.

The Figure has three axes. The first is that between the centre and the periphery. Since we are attempting to describe ethnic minority writing, the core is that of the minority ethnoculture and the dominant ethnic collectivity/ties are seen as an encompassing or containing periphery. If we were describing dominant majority conditions, these two positions would presumably be reversed. In this sense, the Figure is an interesting comment in itself on the decentering which results when you see from a minority perspective. ‘Normality,’ of course, would put the dominant view at the core. The radial axis, from centre to edge, may be seen to some extent both synchronically and/or diachronically. Thus the power/status relationship, the interplay between majority and minority aspects can be seen as a permanent and hence synchronic fixture as long as there is a multi-ethnic situation. This can be found in, for example, the majority reception responses depicted in the outer ring, or in the very location of elements throughout the pattern.

At the same time there is a general and crude diachronic movement from past to present (or future) as we move out from the core. This is an attempt to capture the diachronic arrow movements used in Kallen’s model (80) and to do justice to the facts that acculturation, after all, means change, and that change takes place over time. Thus, for example, the movement from traditional to transitional to full assimilation might be equated roughly with generational developments over time and thus with immigrant, second
Figure 1 CANADIAN ETHNIC MINORITY WRITING AND ACCULTURATION

Dominant cultural norms: language(s), national myth, values (traditional to modern), religion, acculturation to North American culture generally.

Dominant literary policies/practices: majority literary canon (the "mainstream"), critical theory and practices, forms, genre functions, thematics, writer-audience relations, audience expectations.
generational, and third plus generational writers, *all other things being equal*, which of course they are not always, either for groups or for individuals.

Yet as Gordon argued (75), there is a need to explain the relationship between the various assimilative processes, and to respond to the fact that there does seem to be a pattern in the order that assimilation takes place, even if we do not believe in a linear version of assimilation. But the diachronic factor here, though important, can only, it seems to me, provide a tentative if logical descriptive structure. It does not follow that empirically, in all cases, acculturation *must* proceed exclusively according to that logic. That is a matter for empirical study. Note also that, unlike Kallen’s model, both ethnocultural core and enclosing dominant periphery contain both cultural and structural features. This reflects the fact that from a literary perspective, both aspects need to be taken into account whether in the old or new ethnocultural situation. And this also fulfills the requirement, noted earlier, that both factors be considered together, not only at core and periphery, but at all positions represented between them.

The remaining two axes, vertical and horizontal, represent the Berry acculturation attitude types regarding degree of attachment to ingroup identity and outgroup relationships: integration, assimilation, separation, marginalization. At the same time other aspects of the Driedger and Kallen category descriptions (for example, voluntary/involuntary; traditional/transitional) have been built in. As in Berry’s model, the basic acculturation options have to be understood not as rigid positions but as a kind of sliding scale of attitudinal responses whose variations can be represented very crudely here by the positioning within each segment. Thus the differences

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7 Berry’s four categories (see 228) are derived from answers to two (sets of) questions, which in distilled form are the following: 1) “Is it considered to be of value to maintain cultural identity and characteristics?” 2) “Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with other groups?” The four options can thus be crudely summarized: 1) Integration: where both answers are in the affirmative; 2) Marginalization: where both answers are negative; 3) Separation: ingroup affirmative, outgroup negative; 4) Assimilation: ingroup negative, outgroup affirmative. Berry has worked with these categories for a number of years and, as he points out (228 ff.), they have been “operationalized” and “validated” in the field.

8 In particular, Driedger’s model (170) stresses the importance of choice and of the potentially conflictual nature of both options and power relationships. The Kallen model (80) also points to the importance of power relationships and boundary maintenance factors, and provides a number of useful features: diachronic and synchronic dimensions, the notion of an ethnocultural core, and a useful breakdown of elements and terms which I have drawn heavily on in my own diagram and table. Though I wish to acknowledge my debt to both these models for aspects of my analysis, I also differ in significant ways which should not be attributed to either of these scholars. It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into these differences here.
between 'traditional,' 'transitional,' or 'full' (apparent) assimilation, for example, are shaded rather than absolute differences.

Table 1 below outlines briefly some of the literary characteristics (and social and attitudinal contexts) which may be assigned to each of the divisions and subdivisions within the four main Berry categories as used in Figure 1. These are intended only as examples to illustrate the concept and not as comprehensive lists. The description under "Cultural Pluralism," for example, could have been much expanded and no doubt argued and clarified. The particular list of characteristics I have supplied indicates some of the ways (both literary and attitudinal) in which this type of minority writing (writers/readers) gives importance both to ingroup identity concerns and to maintaining outgroup relations in a pluralist majority response context (i.e., "Integration"). At the same time these characteristics locate this attitudinal position with reference to two other positions I have introduced into the Berry Integration category — one a more tradition-oriented position ("Traditional Integration") and one a more activist position ("Instrumental Pluralism"). In similar terms, I have also attempted to clarify variations in the other three Berry categories by introducing a three-part structure to each. The Table may at first glance appear somewhat cryptic since space does not permit me to explicate each category and since literary examples have not been included. The discussion below will I hope serve to clarify many of these categories as more examples are considered.

It is not possible to run through all the variations shown in Figure 1 but I would like to point out some of the most widespread features. Thus for example, categories closest to the core are most similar (e.g. traditional assimilation, traditional integration); categories closest to the periphery are most clearly differentiated (instrumental pluralism, full assimilation); and categories diagonal to each other are of course most contrasted. In part this is due to the nature of double axis depiction but it also reflects the impact of dominant society on the minority acculturation options, a point noted also by Berry. Further, though majority reception responses are important everywhere on the grid, they are particularly salient on the lower (negative) areas of the Figure since this is where majority power tends to determine which issues count regardless of minority attitudes. Thus, for example, a writer or his/her works may be 'segregated' in majority structures (publishing houses, bookstores, granting agencies, university courses, etc.) or majority readers' attitudes regardless of the self-ascribed acculturation attitude of that writer. Bharati Mukherjee's introduction to *Darkness* might be cited as an

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9 Note that Berry, "Social and Cultural Change" (260), also uses a three part scale ("traditional," "transitional," and "acculturated") to indicate the degree of acculturation. My own subdivisions have been chosen mainly for their literary applicability.
### Table 1: Acculturation Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integration</th>
<th>Assimilation</th>
<th>Separation</th>
<th>Marginalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instrumental Pluralism:</strong> As in Cultural Pluralism but with instrumental mobilization in social, attitudinal and cultural areas; subversion of dominant myths, forms, language, canon; minority structures; transcultural interest.</td>
<td><strong>(Apparent) Full Assimilation:</strong> Acceptance of dominant cultural forms, languages, institutions, etc.; low ethnic salience but with the potential for higher salience still there (hence the use of “Apparent” in the heading); “universal,” “general,” “Canadian” characteristics and affiliations.</td>
<td><strong>Exile Migrant:</strong> Dominance of old ethnicity and literature, forms, ideology, etc.; old audience/old world reception; minimum impact of new contexts; links to traditional categories in Canadian ethnic minority community.</td>
<td><strong>Individual Marginalization:</strong> Voluntary or involuntary, with or without dispersal, breakup of community; loss of contact with community, language, culture, audience; non-acceptance by dominant groups; high acculturative stress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Pluralism:</strong> The centrality of ethnic minority concerns; assertion of self-defined ethnic identity; symbolic ethnicity; language “stones”; both ingroup and outgroup audience; balance of national and intergroup focuses.</td>
<td><strong>Transitional Assimilation:</strong> Fewer ethnic symbols and less salient ethnicity than in Traditional Assimilation; tendency to use dominant forms, theories, language(s), etc.; intercultural focus with bias to national coherence; tendency to individualism, universalism, rejection of group praxis.</td>
<td><strong>Voluntary Separation:</strong> Non-official language writing in Canadian context; ingroup forms, themes, audience; high salience of ethnic identity, boundaries; usual focus traditional, old ethnicity.</td>
<td><strong>Group Marginalization:</strong> Community breakdown, loss of minority culture, language, etc.; highly salient instrumental minority issues; low status and power; severe acculturative stress; low level of literate expression, cultural aims of recovery of forms, traditions, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional Integration:</strong> As in Traditional Assimilation but with assertion of self-defined identity; self-justification in pluralist terms; a pluralist bias on Canadian commonality; participatory role in dominant forms, genres, etc.; strong ingroup audience relations.</td>
<td><strong>Traditional Assimilation:</strong> Selective enculturation, adapted ethnic symbols, adherence to core cultural values; ethnic language retention or loss; use of traditional forms, themes, etc.; link to ingroup audience; Old/New World dualities.</td>
<td><strong>Involuntary Separation (Segregation):</strong> Outgroup exclusion highly salient; high salience of Instrumental concerns: race, class, Visibility, prejudice, discrimination, etc.; possible wide range of self-selected acculturation positions: assimilation to integration; traditional language retained or lost.</td>
<td><strong>Ideal Extreme Marginal:</strong>* Non-specified rejected minority individual with only residual or confused group identity, i.e., almost a &quot;participant&quot; of categories rather than groups; confused or nil ethnic salience; non-specified minority perspective; official language only.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
eloquent statement on precisely this situation.

Like any model, the positions represented can be related to both 'ideal' and 'real' factors, i.e., they are analytic elements derived generally from a view of the whole. Thus though we might wish to equate positions on the grid with the general thrust of particular writers, texts, readers' expectations, or groups of these, the model allows for differentiations for any particular case. For example, we might wish to place various aspects of Indian-Metis writing somewhere in the Marginalization category, Ukrainian-Canadian Ukrainian language writing in the voluntary separation category, 'visible minority' writing generally in the segregation category, etc. In a sense this would be both a judgment on reality and an interpretation of the grid. At the same time, however, this does not prevent us from pointing out that for any particular case, it or elements of it may represent other positions on the grid. Michael Ondaatje, though 'visible,' is hardly segregated; the acculturative implications of *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* are somewhat different from those of *Running in the Family* or *In the Skin of a Lion*.10 The same can be said for various elements and aspects of literary analysis for any given writer, reader, or text. Let me illustrate the particulars of the model now by looking very briefly in turn at a few sample issues involved in each of these three literary elements.

**WRITERS**: From the authorial perspective, what the model shows are the implications flowing from acculturation decisions. Thus the writer's decisions on language, audience, theme, form, genre, etc. will consciously or unconsciously place him/her in various positions in the relationship between ethnic core and majority society, thereby establishing his/her version of ethnic minority reality. Take for example the question of language (which will be my primary illustrative area here). For those writers whose core cultural language is a non-official language, the decision to write in that language tends to imply a number of acculturative consequences: 1) restriction to minority audience or Old World society (traditional, separation or exile positions); 2) maximum distance from dominant group reception; 3) minimum cultural distance from traditional sections of minority audience; 4) related repercussions on form, genre, theme, etc. How the writers handle these implications may vary in individual cases but the acculturative impact of this language choice clearly applies to a whole range of Canadian minority writers; some examples include Mennonite writers writing in Low German,

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10 Cf. Berry: "... the model allows for shifts between the various orientations over time, and in different domains of life: youth may prefer assimilation, their parents integration, while others in political movements may seek separation; moreover, there may be assimilation in food preferences, integration in identity, separation in social relations, and marginalization in religious beliefs" (238).
Pakistani-Canadian writers writing in Urdu, Ukrainian-Canadian, Hungarian-Canadian, Italian-Canadian, and other European-Canadian writers who see themselves mainly in the exile or voluntary separation areas of the grid.

Translation, or bilingual publication, of course, have in recent times offered a pluralistic optional overlay to this basic language choice. Yet it is important to remember that translation is not equivalent, in terms of acculturation, to writing in the official language. And even in this case, the writer still has to choose on other grounds which acculturation option(s) he/she wishes to embrace. Thus Josef Škvorecký, for example, might still be considered primarily as an exile writer, even though his novel *The Engineer of Human Souls* was able to reach out successfully in the current ‘multicultural’ era to a broader Canadian audience (reception: pluralist) even winning a Governor General’s award in the process. Nevertheless, Škvorecký’s attachment to the exile acculturation option is evident not just in his choice of writing language (Czech) but also in his concentration on Czechoslovakian place, his view of Old and New World differences, and so on. This becomes obvious if we compare his case with that of Henry Kreisel, who decided from the day of his arrival in Canada (at the internment camp) that he would write in English, whatever the cost to himself as a writer, and whose different choice of options (traditional assimilation?) is reflected in the way he treats the interrelation of Old and New Worlds in *The Rich Man* and *The Betrayal*.

It is also worth noting that the non-official language option for the writer may very often have more to it than an official/non-official aspect. Thus Mennonite, Pakistani-Canadian or Italian-Canadian writers, to return to a few examples referred to earlier, may find their core language ‘home’ in a minority ethnoculture within the social world of the old ethnicity (Low German/High German, Punjabi/Urdu, Friuli dialect/Italian) and this language situation further complicates the Canadian acculturation situation for the writers even on a non-official language basis.

What about the implications when a minority writer does use one of the ‘official’ languages? For those minority groups with a historical non-official language background, this option represents to some extent a movement away from old ethnocultural core and into the language of dominant group culture. But we should also note the following points. 1) In some cases (group marginalized, some involuntary segregation groups, third generation assimilated, etc.), this does not necessarily represent a voluntary decision for the individual writer. 2) As before, the language option alone can represent a variety of positions: it may reveal a desire to join and be part of the dominant culture (transitional assimilation: Mary Meiff’s *A Dialogue of Masks*); it may reveal a desire to justify the role and culture of the group (traditional integration: Vera Lysenko’s *Yellow Boots*, Laura Salverson’s *The*
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*Viking Heart*); or it may even be used tactically in garnering political support for an exile position (cf. Jan Drabek's novel *Report on the Death of Rosenkavalier*). 3) The official language option is not exclusively an either/or decision. Minority language elements (syntactic, semantic, or even phonological) can be left in a basically official language text as a culturally pluralistic integration tactic (i.e., the use of symbolic or existentially real linguistic ('stones') as ethnic markers): examples that could be cited include the poetry of Kristjana Gunnars or A. M. Klein, or Armin Wiebe's novel, *The Salvation of Yash Siemens*. In this regard, an indication of the nature of the writer's acculturation option (for example, separation or integration) might be indicated by the degree of translation provided for the dominant or other-group reader. We should also note that minority language elements can also be used (the case of Richler comes to mind) purely as descriptive 'local colour' features to aid characterization, theme, etc. in an otherwise assimilative authorial perspective.

There are a number of Canadian minority writers for whom the language of old ethnoculture is English or French. For these writers (South Asian, West Indian, African, etc.) the acculturative options regarding language are to be found in the areas of dialectal or sociolinguistic features or on various other factors related to the texture, level, and intertextuality of literary language. Examples of these situations would include writers such as Austin Clarke, Cyril Dabydeen, Rienzi Crusz, and Dany Laferrière.

Finally, we should note that the dynamic between the two dominant official Canadian languages, English and French, can also have implications for minority writers and their linguistic acculturation options. Thus immigrant writers in Montreal (such as Marco Micone or Dany Laferrière) reflect their acculturation options not only in the terms we have already been examining, but also in their reaction to the politics of language within Quebec, within Canada, and in North America. The best general example of this situation is the Montreal Italian group, where we find writers working in Italian, English, French, and even Italian dialect. Playwright Marco Micone has even used all four in the same work! This highly complicated linguistic situation obviously has implications in a variety of acculturation areas.

This brief discussion of the writers' language choices and acculturation implications shows above all the complexity of issues that may be in play. The writer's choice of language obviously has an impact in a great many ways, including the writer's sense of individual and group identity, the sense of audience, the intended social and cultural role, the intertextual world in which the writer perceives himself/herself to be writing, and so on. All these carry acculturation implications that need to be discussed in the context of the works and their audience. The acculturation model being outlined here
may thus prove to be a useful analytic tool in that it allows us to describe and define this network of issues with reference to both literary and social contexts.

The same can be said of areas other than language relevant to the discussion of the authorial presence. Thus, for example, the perception that the authorial stance is directed primarily at a dominant cultural audience would, assuming some form of positive reception, represent acculturative options somewhere in the top of the grid, and critical analysis of evidence of this stance could attempt to determine where, with regard to which features, the author should be placed. To take an obvious example, one major difference between Toronto minority writers Matt Cohen and Joy Kogawa, both highly successful, lies precisely in this area of acculturative options. Cohen’s (early) works (for example The Sweet Summer of Kitty Malone) reflect in a number of areas (theme, subject, characters, etc.) a highly assimilative authorial stance while Kogawa’s works (for example Obasan) represent an equally strong instrumental pluralist (integration) stance. At the same time, shifts in acculturative stance can also be noted. Thus Cohen’s more recent writing (for example, The Spanish Doctor and Nadine) would seem to indicate a turning away from an assimilation position and an increase of concern for his (Jewish-Canadian) ethnic minority identity.

Authorial choices regarding form and genre can also be seen in terms of their acculturation implications. A good example of this is the difference between the two Icelandic-Canadian writers W. D. Valgardson and David Arnason. For Valgardson, as we see in his article “Personal Gods,” the justification for continuing to write in traditional, mainly realistic forms and genres comes from their perceived emotional impact on his desired (Icelandic-Canadian and rural Manitoba Interlake) audience. This attachment to a traditional audience is clearly a reflection of Valgardson’s acculturatively integrative position, a position which is confirmed by other features found in his writing. For Arnason, on the other hand, the use of post-modernist forms reflects an acculturative stance in the assimilation area of the grid, a stance which can be traced in a variety of other areas in his case as well. We should note, by the way, that it is not the form or genre itself but the writer’s acculturative option which is the primary determinating factor. Chilean writers in Canada reflect their strong links (exile separation) to their ethnocultural community by writing in avant garde non-traditional forms. Choosing traditional realistic forms or genres might, in their case (and this is purely hypothetical since I know of no such writers), represent an assimilative acculturative stance.

READERS: Acculturation issues are as important for the minority audience as they are for the minority writers. Again the questions that arise
are very broad and highly complex, since the reader's response to the minority text involves not only his/her network of acculturation options but his/her perception of the authorial acculturative perspective as implied in the text. And since the nature of both reader's and writer's acculturative positions will vary not only on an individual basis but also on the basis of feature, of group history, of minority status, of intergroup relations, and so on, this leads to a large number of variables.

Among the most obvious areas of acculturative impact is the reader's most basic option: what text to read. Language, authorial group affiliation, theme, genre, form — all these imply acculturation attitudes and expectations which are very often put into play before the book itself is even opened. In the actual 'confrontation' with the text, then, what presumably occurs (insofar as acculturation is involved) is a kind of ongoing comparative analysis, conscious or unconscious, of the reader's positions with those of the implied author.

One important distinction to begin with is whether or not, regardless of acculturation attitudes, writer and reader share ethnic group affiliation. Let us look first at an example where this is the case, using the issue of representativeness (only one of many issues that might have been chosen) to illustrate what is involved. Just as writers at times (when it is a question of ethnic minority status) consider whether and to what extent they do, should, or should not represent the concerns and issues of their ethnic minority group or status, so on the other side the reader's response to the text addresses the same questions.

A good working hypothesis might be to assume that on the whole reader expectations tend to correspond to the acculturation options consciously or unconsciously adopted. Thus, for example, a South Asian-Canadian reader with a traditional (or other) integration position might be expected to be much more positively responsive to Rienzi Crusz's poetry than to Michael Ondaatje's (cf. Arun Mukherjee's attack on Ondaatje). On the other hand an assimilative Jewish-Canadian reader might feel more at home in Matt Cohen's Ontario novels than in Seymour Mayne's poetry. Yet it would be wrong to underestimate the complexity of the reader's relation to the issues. Very often there may be a mixed response due to a variety of competing features. Thus for example Adele Wiseman's sympathetic (traditional assimilation?) portrayal of Jewish-Canadian minority experience in The Sacrifice may be preferred by traditional or culturally pluralist positioned readers over Richler's satiric, somewhat rejectionist and assimilative perspective in Son of a Smaller Hero and Duddy Kravitz. But at the same time, the Richler novels may appeal to such a Jewish-Canadian reader's presumed anti-lower grid feelings (i.e. anti-ghettoization or marginalization), not to mention the reflected positiveness of Richler's acceptance by
dominant cultural institutions. And lastly, we should note that the reader's expectations regarding literary form, genre, and their functions may also form part of his/her perception of what is representative of the group culture for these too are seen against the interplay of core ethnicity, acculturation options, and dominant cultural norms. And as we noted before (the Valgardson reference above), an evaluation of an intended audience's expectations in this area can be an important factor from the writer's point of view.

The case where the minority reader does not share ethnic group affiliation with the writer/text raises equally interesting but somewhat different acculturation issues. If the case of shared ingroup status involves a comparative analysis of reader/writer acculturative attitudes on ingroup identity, status, and culture, then the case of responding to outgroup minority texts brings into play a whole range of cross-cultural comparative issues. Since these too will vary by individual as well as by group, we can only look here at the general lines of what is involved. For if acculturation attitudes centre on the relation between ethnocultural core and dominant society, the areas of reader response also can be related to these two reference points. For example, for those readers whose focus is strongly on their own ingroup attachments (the integration-separation side of the grid), one would expect a range of responses from indifference to other group experience (voluntary separation) to a strong interest in parallel experiences, common instrumental issues, pluralistic aims, etc. (integration). Or conversely, those who are marginalized or who see themselves on the assimilation part of the grid will tend to put a lower emphasis on ethnic identity and respond more to dominant cultural features, if they are present to any degree in minority texts. Traditionalists (of whatever stripe), on the other hand, may react to other minority group texts on the basis of Old World rivalries (for example, Indian-Pakistani, Jewish-Ukrainian, etc.) or may be sympathetic because of perceived historical parallels (the Holocaust/Japanese-Canadian evacuation, etc.). Similarly, issues of discrimination may predispose readers from marginalized or involuntary segregated positions to texts perceived to have been written from similar perspectives. In sum, as in the case of writers, the relation between reader and writer/text, whether group affiliation is shared or not, is a complicated one that brings into play the whole range of acculturation attitudes that may be held.

TEXTS: The implications of acculturation options on the literary text depend, of course, on how we view what a 'text' is and on the degree to which reader, writer, culture, and society are seen to be involved in the 'text.' But since we have already looked, however briefly, at some of the implications for writers and readers, I would like to consider here some of the thematic and other textual aspects to the acculturation question.
Not surprisingly, given the salience of acculturation issues for minority writers and readers, a great many Canadian ethnic minority works focus directly and thematically on acculturation. Thus John Marilyn's *Under the Ribs of Death*, to give just one example, portrays a main character, Sandor Hunyadi, whose experience in the novel constitutes a veritable exploration of acculturation issues. Marilyn's own ideological perspective should probably be termed one of traditional integration yet Sandor must undergo a number of hard lessons before he too comes to a similar acculturative position in the end. Along the way he moves from a transitional assimilative position (name change, ethnic self-hatred, preference for English, attachment to the material values of the majority reference group, etc.) to a deeper understanding of the meaning of his group identity and values. Part of the process of this experience, as Marilyn portrays it, is the reaction, the response of the majority English Canadians, with reference to whom Sandor is attempting to assimilate. Thus Sandor's rejection by both Eric's mother and by the downtown businessman who first interviews him together represent the cultural and economic response to Sandor's assimilative acculturation attitude. What he finds out, and what Marilyn shows us, is that it is not enough to remake your ethnic self-identity. The success of an acculturation option (as our model shows), also depends on the reaction of the dominant cultural group. This point is only one rhetorical thrust of this *Bildungsroman* but it is not an uncommon one in minority texts. And the use of the *Bildungsroman* genre by Marilyn, by the way, does raise the question as to why this genre of novel is so common in Canadian minority writing. Is it the fact that the enculturation process for Canadian minorities is such an acculturatively conflictual experience?

Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* is an even more interesting example in which a range of acculturation issues is explored by means of a variety of characters. Thus Stephen, who rejects the language, food, and values of his Japanese-Canadian culture and who embraces wholeheartedly the majority culture (he even has a French girl friend), represents an assimilative position. Obasan, the enclosed silent territory of the old Issei ethnic core of Japanese-Canadian ethnic identity, represents a classic case of involuntary segregation. Aunt Emily, the Nisei word-warrior and activist advocate of Canadian justice for Japanese Canadians, represents a good example of instrumental pluralistic integration. And Naomi, the protagonist of the novel, begins as a 'Group Marginal' (community breakdown, acculturative stress, etc.) and moves through the course of the novel to the position near that of Aunt Emily (at the end she puts on the latter's coat), a position which entails speaking for the silent Obasan as well (combining words and silence, water and stone in terms of the novel's system of imagery).
Even the formal, structural, and generic aspects of this novel underline its acculturative options. Thus the combination of historical documentary and fictional autobiography may be said to put together social history and psychological analysis with an instrumental (pluralist) aim. That is, the key impact of the novel is that it lets you feel (fictionally) what it is like to be a minority member caught in the grip of (real historical) majority power. Furthermore, the novel's structural movement of forced analysis into the burden of the past serves both as a freeing psychological healing for the protagonist and a plea to examine this past for the rest of us. In sum, what Ohasan shows us is that the relation of acculturation to minority texts is not merely one of theme, character, or plot. Instead, it also takes us into the social arena, into the discourses of rhetoric, of politics (the redress issue), of social issues such as discrimination, class, justice, and morality, and of the general power relationship between majority and minority groups in Canadian society. Like Rudy Wiebe's 'aboriginal' novels, George Ryga's play The Ecstasy of Rita Joe, and a great many other minority texts which could be mentioned, in its literary handling of acculturation issues, Ohasan both illustrates and enacts the point of contact between culture and society, between literature and the world.

By way of conclusion, I wish to make two general points. The first is that the conceptualization of minority acculturation options as we have been discussing them underlines the commonality of Canadian ethnic minority literature. The positions outlined above can be and are highly differentiated but the choices available are always minority. This accounts not only for close parallels (writer, reader, text) for texts we might want to place in common positions (for example, those of Mukherjee, Clarke, Kogawa, Maria Campbell, etc.), but also for a general consciousness of the whole pattern of acculturation options and of the differences between minority and majority situations in Canadian culture and society. To put it another way, minority writers and readers, regardless of their positioning in the grid, are more likely to be aware experientially of the nature of acculturation for minorities than majority writers and readers. It is this which in my view contrasts, for example, the sympathetic portrayal of aboriginal situations in the works of Ryga, Wiebe, Suknaski, Gunnars, Valgardson, etc. with the equally sympathetic (but majority) portrayals of the aboriginal situation in Laurence or Roy. Morag Gunn, in The Diviners, does share a commonality (initially) with Skinner Tonnerre but it is on the basis of class, not ethnicity or minority status. When it comes to issues of racial discrimination, Morag (and here Laurence is being highly sensitive to her own majority status) does not feel she has the right to comment. One can contrast this with the instant recognition, with all that this implies, of the similarity of situation between Naomi and her Indian students in Kogawa's Ohasan.
An interesting aspect of this shared commonality is the question of how it functions in critically negative environments. Thus, for example, is there a difference in how Valgardson portrays the Ukrainians and Indians of the Interlake district of Manitoba and how he treats British-Canadians in his stories? Or, to take another example, is there a difference in the critical treatment of minorities and majorities in Austin Clarke’s novels and stories? Is Clarke’s critical perspective on Jewish, German, Slav, or aboriginal characters tempered or at least measured by an awareness of minority commonality? Is his perspective on majority figures measured by an awareness of the dominance implied by membership, however peripheral, in the Canadian majority collectivity?

My concluding remark, the obverse of my first point, has to do with our perception of the dominant majorities in this model. Just as we need to remember the commonality in the diversity of minority acculturative positions, so too we need to remember the diversity of response positions implied in the encompassing majority collectivities. Not all British-Canadians or French-Canadians are assimilationist or rejectionist. Further, it is important to remember that the nature of majority responses is dependent not only on the perception of the particular minority group in question but also, as I noted at the outset, on a variety of factors having to do with internal majority characteristics: sector, region, time period, etc. And included in these differences are the variations between British-Canadian and French-Canadian groups, which constitute, as we all know, the dominant nexus of issues in Canadian interethnic relations. To put it in literary terms, the cultural and social impact of the dominant Canadian majorities on Canadian minority writing can vary between that reflected in the range of works from l’Abbé Groulx to Gabrielle Roy, or from Ralph Connor to Margaret Laurence, and must take into account the implications of a social context which produced majority writers as diverse as these. In this sense, the range of majority response positions described in this discussion is as important for the understanding of minority writing and acculturation as the minority acculturation positions are themselves. 11 Taken together, we can perhaps begin to study and understand the way in which acculturation affects Canadian ethnic minority writers, readers, and literature in general.

11 The corollary of this point is that the nature of majority ethnicity and status must also be studied and then be taken into consideration in the discussion of minority writing. I have touched on this aspect only briefly here (for example, in the list of items that make up the dominant collectivities in the Table), but I have discussed it more fully elsewhere: Padolsky 148 ff.; also "Cultural Diversity and Canadian Literature: A Pluralistic Approach to Majority and Minority Writing in Canada," unpublished paper delivered to the Ninth Biennial Canadian Ethnic Studies Association Conference, Halifax, N.S., October 14-17, 1987. Much more work remains to be done in this area.
Works Cited


The Fictionalization of the Vertical Mosaic: The Immigrant, Success and National Mythology

In the years since the publication in 1965 of John Porter's *The Vertical Mosaic*, the relationship between ethnicity and socio-economic stratification in Canada has become a commonplace for students and researchers in Canadian ethnic studies. Considerably less attention, however, has been paid to the relationship between the vertical mosaic and cultural expression. In an article first published in 1963, "The Dodo and the Cruising Auk: Class in Canadian Literature," Robert McDougall argued that Canadian writers in general reflect Canada's elitist class structure, both in their own genteel backgrounds and in their failure to come to grips with the issue of class in Canada. According to McDougall, "Our literature shows what can only be described as an abnormal absence of feeling for class and of concern for what the class structure can do in a developing society to make or mar the life of the individual... class is not a central issue in any significant part of our fiction."1 Much has changed in Canada since Professor McDougall wrote these words, not the least of which has been the coming of age of multiculturalism and of ethnic literature in Canada — developments which have had and are continuing to have a significant impact on our cultural imagination.2


If the relationship between ethnicity and class is as entrenched as Porter suggested, it would seem logical that the tensions and frustrations inherent in ethnic experience in Canada would be expressed by writers who portray this experience; and that furthermore, these writers would bring to Canadian literature the very sensibility McDougall found glaringly absent in 1963 — one profoundly aware of the power of a class structure, composed of a complex amalgam of economic status and ethnicity, to ‘make and mar’ the lives of individuals. However, one wonders just how this awareness has been expressed in literature, particularly if one is interested in delineating the Canadian sensibility within a North American context.


Students of American society are well aware of the significance to the American cultural identity of the intertwined mythologies of the promised land and the dream of success and of how these mythologies, along with certain other elements in the American experience, have worked to promote American faith in upward mobility and in the melting pot. They are also well aware of the role that literature, both belles lettres and popular, has played in creating and perpetuating, critiquing and modifying this mythology. Much less has been written about if and how the inevitable clash between Canada's own particular vision of itself as a land of opportunity (albeit perhaps a more modest vision than that cherished by Americans), and the harsh realities of the vertical mosaic reverberated through the Canadian cultural imagination, helping to shape a sense of identity and of the possible, both for the nation as a whole and for the individuals within it.

The points of departure for this study, then, are three interrelated questions and my perception that these questions, and particularly their interrelationship, have not been widely or fully addressed in Canada. First, has the real-life vertical mosaic had an impact on the ethnic voice in Canadian literature? This essentially historical and sociological question raises the second question, a profoundly literary one, part of it framed recently by Robert Kroetsch when he asked, "...is there, at the point where literature and ethnicity meet, a characteristic narrative structure..." and more generally by Eli Mandel in an earlier exploration of the ethnic voice in Canadian literature. My version of this question is the broad one:


through the narrative structures, and thematic preoccupations of their work, have writers who depict ethnic experience in Canada created a recognizable Fiction of Ethnicity — a set of structural, thematic and stylistic conventions that constitute a tradition or genre, a cultural artifact — that reflects in some way the reality of ethnic experience in Canada and at the same time predisposes us to perceive that experience in terms of these conventions? Assuming that they have created such a Fiction, my third question concerns the connection between this fiction and the place of ethnicity in Canada’s cultural imagination. Has this Fiction of Ethnicity become an element of the Canadian cultural ethos that in some way mediates the tensions between high expectations and limited opportunities that would seem to be a feature of ethnic experience in the vertical mosaic? I do not intend to make a foolhardy attempt to answer each of these admittedly broad and intangible questions in turn, thoroughly and methodically. Rather, I will explore the second, literary question, focusing on the point where it intersects with the other two — the sociological and the broadly cultural — because I strongly suspect that this is a point of illumination for both the social scientist and the literary critic, as well as for the cultural historian.

Where is this point of illumination? Agreeing with Mandel that the ethnic voice is essentially schizophrenic (a condition that is ‘a form of psychic anarchy’ brought on, he uses R.D. Laing to explain, by an “involuntary attempt of the self to free itself from a repressive social reality”) (58), and with Kroetsch’s closely related point that the narrative of ethnicity grows out of a number of binary patterns, I find it in one of these binary patterns that Kroetsch identifies — the “extreme tension between ideas of success and ideas of failure” (66). What I will call the success motif is the point of intersection between literature and the sociological construct of the vertical mosaic and is very near to the structural and thematic centre of the Fiction of Ethnicity. The success motif is also the point at which the Fiction of Ethnicity intersects with cultural mythology, both mirroring and evoking some of the deepest anxieties within the Canadian psyche.

Though broadly based on a wide reading of literature in Canada that deals with immigrant and ethnic experience, my discussion will draw primarily on an analysis of seven novels: Henry Kreisel’s The Rich Man;

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John Marlyn's *Under the Ribs of Death*; Frank Paci's *The Italians* and *The Father*; Mordecai Richler's *Son of a Smaller Hero* and *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*; and Adele Wiseman's *The Sacrifice*. All of these novels deal with the dilemma that upward mobility poses for immigrant or ethnic characters and consequently can be seen as "literature existing at an interface of two cultures, a form concerned with defining itself, its voice, the dialectic of self and other and the dualities of self creation, transformation and identities" (Mandel, 65).\(^\text{10}\)

The situation implied here of being caught between two worlds, and the process of either coping or extricating oneself is a difficult and painful one, whether viewed from a psychological, sociological, or literary perspective. All three perspectives meet, however, at the center of the pain, which is a crisis of identity for the dislocated immigrant (and his children), no longer who he once was, though not yet the authentic New World self that he wants to create out of his North American experiences. This crisis of identity, both personal and communal is also a crisis of language, engendered by a complex gap between perception and expression.

It has been suggested that the way out of this painful impasse (whether it is viewed as a psychological, sociological, or literary problem) is an act of imagination — fictionalizing, mythmaking (see Mandel, 61). Or as Robert Kroetsch puts it, "In ethnic writing there is often an attempt at healing by the rewriting of myths." He then suggests that the myth most commonly retold is "the garden story" (69). That this would be so is not surprising when one considers how deeply entrenched the image of the New World as a promised land, a paradise, a panacea, is in the imagination of western civilization.\(^\text{11}\) From the age of exploration and even before, the New World has been a repository for Europe's dreams, both spiritual and material, and a significant element in the New World's magnetism for the immigrant has

\[\text{10 While these novels seem to me both representative and skillfully written examples of literature about immigrant and ethnic experience in which the success motif is central, they are by no means the only examples. One can also see this preoccupation in the work of Austin Clarke, Bharati Mukherjee, Cyril Dabydeen, Rohinton Mistry, Guy Vanderhaeghe, and others. However, my choice of these seven novels is based to some degree on their being among the first wave of literature by second-generation writers, and they might, therefore, be seen as representing a formative phase in the development of Canada's "Fiction of Ethnicity."}

\[\text{11 This idea has been discussed by a number of cultural historians. It is particularly emphasized in Howard Mumford Jones, *O Strange New World, American Culture: The Formative Years* (New York: Viking Press 1965).} \]
been the potent mythology of North America as the New Eden. Inextricably tied up with this mythology, particularly as it relates to the immigrant experience (which is, after all, as Margaret Atwood and many others have pointed out, perhaps the quintessential North American experience), has been the dream of success, and of course its mirror image, the nightmare of failure. If one decides to leave one’s home for the Promised Land, one is inevitably going to feel obligated to find it. Whether envisioned as the place to build the perfect society, or to find personal wealth and ease, the New Eden inevitably demands that those who enter it prove their worthiness by succeeding.

Nor is it surprising that one looking for "the characteristic narrative of the ethnic experience" would find binary patterns (Kroetsch, 65). The immigrant sensibility, informed as it is by a chasm between old and new, there and here, past and present self, perception and language, and by an awareness of having, by virtue of migrating, suddenly become "other" as virtually fated to experience the world as essentially binary. The binary pattern of success/failure, then, is, not surprisingly, integral to the structural framework of ethnic fiction, a pattern that grows out of the complex psychic and social significance of immigrating to the edenic New World; and it is a binary pattern that is made up of a number of interrelated themes, themselves developed as polarities. The three most important of these themes in the context of attempting to illuminate the relationship between the vertical mosaic and the Fiction of Ethnicity are the conflict between ethnic identity and social mobility; the symbiotic interaction between victim and oppressor; and the gap between illusion and reality. Exploring these interrelated themes as they are developed in the novels mentioned above.

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13 For an interesting discussion of the dynamics of becoming "other" see Roxanna Ng, "Constituting Ethnic Phenomenon: An Account From the Perspective of Immigrant Women," Canadian Ethnic Studies XIII.1 (1981): 97-108. Also Werner Sollors, Beyond Ethnicity, particularly Chapter 1.
will, I hope, partly delineate the nature and significance of the success motif in the Canadian Fiction of Ethnicity and thereby, to some small degree, in the Canadian imagination.

PART 1: THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ETHNIC IDENTITY AND UPWARD MOBILITY

George Woodcock has suggested that it would be only a mild metaphorical exaggeration to call Canada "a land of invisible ghettos" (Mandel, in Isaiv, 59). The fictional landscape that emerges from a reading of Canadian ethnic literature is indeed such a land, a complex, often psychically dangerous maze of interlocking microcosms whose real, but invisible boundaries separate their inhabitants from one another by means of a complex set of conventions that are based on a subtle blend of ethnicity, wealth and class. In the opening pages of Son of a Smaller Hero, Mordecai Richler establishes the central conflict between the aspirations of the protagonist, Noah Adler, and his ethnicity. He does this through a vivid, poetic description of the dimensions and contours of the Jewish ghetto in Montreal, a ghetto that "has no real walls and no true dimensions. The walls are the habit of atavism and the dimensions are an illusion. But it is a ghetto that exists all the same."14

Through his description of the ghetto's geography, Richler makes it clear that the ghetto generates an enormous energy directed toward 'moving up.' The milieu of St. Lawrence Street, "the aorta of the ghetto" where most of the working class Jews "do their buying and their praying and their agitating and most of their sinning" (14) is florid, vibrant, but unsavoury:

Every night St. Lawrence Boulevard is lit up like a neon cake and used up men stumble out of a hundred different flophouses to mix with rabbinical students and pimps and Trotskyites and poolroom sharks. Hair tonic and water is consumed in back alleys. Swank whores sally at you out of the promised jubilee of the penny arcades. Crap games flourish under lamp posts. You can take Rita the Polack up to the Liberty Rooms or you can listen to Panofsky speak on Tim Buck and The Worker... (15)

Conditions improve on the five streets between St. Lawrence Boulevard and Park Avenue. Here is the slightly more respectable business centre where "the aspiring" who "own haberdashery stores, junk yards, and

14 Mordecai Richler, Son of a Smaller Hero (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart 1969, originally published by Andre Deutsch 1955) 14. All further references to this work appear in the text.
basement zipper factories" sell the goods "cut or pressed by their relations below St. Lawrence Boulevard" (15). Still further on "above Park Avenue" in Outremont "a mild" neighborhood, live "the employer and professional Jews" who "own their own duplexes belong to the Freemasons, or, failing that, the Knights of Pythias and send their sons to McGill." But they too return to St. Lawrence Avenue to shop "where the Jews speak quaintly like the heroes of nightclub jokes" (15).

This reference to the quaint language of the immigrants who become heroes of 'jokes' is an interesting one, because in its juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory attributes, the heroic and the comic, it embodies the ambivalence of the upwardly mobile toward their ethnicity, an ambivalence that may be very near to the mainspring of ethnic humour;15 it is an ambivalence that is profoundly centred in language, and urban geography, and one that is a recurring theme in ethnic fiction. Drawn to their Montreal roots (perhaps partly because it is difficult to move beyond the outer margins of the 'invisible ghetto'), to the heart of the ghetto where the inhabitants, largely immigrants, cannot even partially hide their Jewish identity, but must proclaim it with every word they speak, the upwardly mobile Jews come face to face with their former selves. That encounter is painful, stressful, because it plays on their profound anxiety about whether that self is loveable and admirable, or laughable, a joke. This ambivalence is also depicted in Under the ribs of Death, perhaps most vividly in a scene where Sandor Hunyadi, the young protagonist, deeply ashamed of his Hungarian roots, goes with his family to meet a group of newly arrived immigrants:

Sandor turned pale at the sight of them. They stood there, awkward and begrimed, the men in tight-fitting, wrinkled clothes, with their wrists and ankles sticking out, unshaven and foreign looking, the women in kerchiefs and voluminous skirts and men's shoes... exactly the way his grandmother looked in that picture in the front room. The kinship was odious. He knew how hard it was for his parents to change their ways. But they were changing. They used tinned goods sometimes at home now and store bought bread when they had enough money. English food was appearing on their table, the English language in their home. Slowly, very slowly they were changing. They were

becoming Canadians. And now here it stood. Here was the nightmare survival of themselves mocking and dragging them back to their shameful past.¹⁶

Though the boundaries and subtle graduations within the ghetto are somewhat less clearly delineated in Under the Ribbons of Death than in Son of a Smaller Hero, and its inhabitants a mixture of ‘foreigners’ rather than a concentration of a particular group, the ghetto is nevertheless a very real entity in Marlyn’s novel, one that engenders in the young Sandor a fierce determination to escape. "Some day he would grow up and leave all of this," he vows to himself as he surveys the squalor of Henry Street... leave it behind him forever and never look back, never remember again this dirty foreign neighborhood and the English gang who chased him home from school" (17). He continually urges his father to change their Hungarian name to an English one. "We’d be like other people, like everybody else. But we gotta change it soon before too many people find out" (24). Later he confides in his Uncle Janos, who is more sympathetic to the materialistic ethos of North America than Sandor’s father, "some day I’m going to make a lot of money" (85).

The other most notably on-the-make character in ethnic fiction and one who therefore invites comparison to Sandor, Duddy Kravitz, is less obsessed with obliterating his ethnicity than with being able to move with it beyond the boundaries it seems to set for him. Indeed, Duddy exploits his ethnicity in his drive for wealth. This he does, quite literally, through his Bar Mitzvah films, which, in the hands of his pretentiously artsy, and boozily unreliable WASP filmmaker become self-consciously anthropological studies of tribal rites that objectify that ethnicity and at once, paradoxically, both universalize and trivialize it. That Duddy is able to use his ethnicity in this way is not because he is any more unprincipled than Sandor. (For example, Sandor brazenly charges his friends a fee to look through a toy kaleidoscope his uncle gives him. And later, as a young adult, he shows himself willing to sell his uncle to the devil, for money, when he urges Janos to marry the wealthy Fraulein Kleinholtz, a grotesque character, strongly suggestive of the folktale’s evil witch.) Rather it is because Duddy’s ethnicity, nourished by a more extensive community with a stronger identity than the one that has shaped Sandor, has enabled him to develop greater personal flamboyance.

¹⁶ John Marlyn, Under the Ribbons of Death (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart 1986, originally published 1957) 77. All further references to this work appear in the text.
and confidence than the rather sullen Sandor, and an imaginative, if perverse, caste of mind, open to all possibilities in the struggle to succeed.

A sense of the ghetto as a geographic entity that engenders in many of its inhabitants a strong desire to escape is also present in Adele Wiseman’s *The Sacrifice*. This is generally projected through the secondary characters of Chaim Knopp, the shoichet, and his son Ralph, rather than through the main character, Abraham, and his son Isaac, largely, perhaps, because the struggles of the latter (insofar as one can make such a distinction) are more spiritual than material. Chaim, like Abraham and his family, still lives in ‘the flats,’ the older immigrant centre of the Jewish ghetto, whose heart is the old white synagogue, which is close enough to Chaim’s home for him to walk to it on holy days. His son Ralph, on the other hand, has succeeded in moving to ‘the heights’ because he owns a factory.

In the context of Ralph’s ascent to ‘the heights’ it is noteworthy that the image of urban geography presented in this novel and several others is a vertical one, disturbingly reminiscent of the structure of Dante’s inferno. The ghetto’s centre is at the bottom of something, perhaps a pit, and each remove up from that bottom level is a successive move away from ‘pure’ ethnicity toward assimilation and success, envisioned (albeit ultimately ironically) as existing somewhere at the top, in wealthy ‘English’ or blandly ‘non-ethnic’ neighborhoods. Indeed, as seen through the eyes of Sandor Hunyadi, who gains entry there briefly (appropriately enough) to mow the green lawns of the wealthy, this land at the top is a paradise "... that lay smiling under a friendly spell, where the sun always shone, and the clean-washed tint of child and sky and garden would never fade" (64.)

In addition to being symbolized in urban geography, tension between ethnicity and upward mobility, not surprisingly, is very often presented in ethnic fiction as part of a generation gap. Upwardly mobile second and third generation sons and daughters not only feel isolated from their immigrant parents and grandparents because of the sometimes sharp differences between their customs and Canadian ones, and because of language barriers that make it difficult for them to communicate with each other, as in Frank Paci’s *The Italians* and *The Black Madonna* in which the second-generation characters, Bill, Lorianna and Marie, literally cannot talk with their parents about complex subjects; often, second-generation characters are also so deeply ashamed of their parents that they refuse to acknowledge them because their parents’ blatant ethnicity poses such a threat to their fragile ‘Canadian’ identities. Wiseman portrays this in *The Sacrifice* through Ralph
Knopp who, when he is with a 'goy' friend and unexpectedly passes his father, the latter dressed as a shoichtet, pretends not to know him.

This need of the child to reject his ethnicity, as embodied in his parents, particularly the father, is often presented in ethnic fiction as an act of unnaming and renaming: the psychic dislocation that the younger feels is intimately related to the conflict between mobility and ethnicity. Maria Barone becomes Marie; Stefano Mancuso becomes Stephen; Duddy Kravitz becomes Dudley Kane; Sandor Hunyadi becomes Alex Hunter, who fantasizes that his real father is not Joseph Hunyadi, but an English lord (19).

Of course not all of the inter-generational tensions in ethnic fiction are mediated through quasi-patricidal fantasies. Another common pattern is that of having stylized characters, sometimes dangerously close to being caricatures, represent each generation and preside over the successive sections of the ghetto as spokesmen for the particular blend of spiritual and material values that permeates each stratum. The conflicts among these characters embody the conflicts inherent in the process of assimilating and the closely related one of succeeding. For example, such are the complex tensions between Melech Adler, immigrant patriarch, founder of the family scrapyard business, and his sons and grandson, Noah, the protagonist in *Son of a Smaller Hero*. And those in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* between Duddy's grandfather, Simcha Kravitz, proud patriarch, repository of the family's spiritual heritage, and Benjy, his wealthy businessman son, ostensibly impotent, unable to produce an heir despite (or perhaps because of) having reached the heights of the upper level, where he lives in a mansion modeled after the country estate of an English gentleman; and with third-generation Duddy himself who, as a son of the 'failed' brother, Max, combination cab driver and pimp, is obsessed with the North American dream of material success; consequently he is incapable of fully grasping the spiritual nature of the Edenic vision underlying his grandfather's admonition that "a man without land is nobody."

This interaction between generational conflict, urban geography and the tension between ethnicity and upward mobility is also at the structural and thematic centre of Paci's three novels. In *The Father*, the interplay of these elements is developed through a series of interlocking and conflicting

17 Frank Paci, *The Italians* (Ottawa: Oberon Press 1978); *The Black Madonna* (Ottawa: Oberon Press 1984); *The Father* (Ottawa: Oberon Press 1984). All further references to these works appear in the text.
binaries. The Mancuso family, a kind of collective character in the novel, and a central one, is presented through a series of dyadic conflicts between husband and wife, father and son, brother and brother. These conflicts grow out of the more fundamental dualities between heart and mind, spirit and matter, communalism and individualism, that are basic to the gap between the old world and the new and between the West End Italian neighborhood where the Mancusos have their first bakery, and the more prosperous district to which they eventually move.

The relationship between Maddelena Mancuso, an educated, sophisticated urbanite from central Italy, and her husband, Oreste, a simple, warm-hearted baker from the agrarian Abruzzi in southern Italy, is torn apart by the tensions generated by these fundamental dualities. Oreste, the man of the heart, the communal man, enjoys the idyllic life of baking bread for his friends and neighbors in the west end 'ghetto' — the new-world re-creation of the old world village. In contrast, Maddelena wants to 'get ahead.' She adapts well to Canada, learning, through reading, to speak an English that Stephen recognizes as being 'better' than that used by his teachers. She also takes business courses that eventually enable her to transform the old bakery, with its stone oven just like the one that Oreste had used in his Abruzzi village, into an efficient city-wide operation that replaces Oreste's skillful, caring hands with machines, the stone oven with large 'automated' ones of chrome and steel.

The Mancusos' two sons, the studious Stephen, the main character from whose point of view the story is presented, and the rebellious Michael, inherit and further symbolize the duality embodied in their parents' relationship. Michael, though resembling Maddelena physically, is, with his emotional nature, Oreste's spiritual son. In contrast, Stephen, though resembling Oreste, is, with his detached, rational nature, Maddelena's spiritual offspring. This conflict-producing and potentially crippling inheritance turns both sons into fractured, tortured beings, particularly Stephen, whose spiritual deformity is symbolized in his withered hand. Indeed, the entire novel could be read as a chronicle of Stephen's spiritual journey toward wholeness or salvation. He falls from innocence early in the novel in a thinly veiled garden-of-Eden scene in which he is injured, marked for life, while stealing fruit from a neighbor's apple tree. Both his symbolic deformity and his struggle to find himself and some kind of inner peace are intimately tied up with second-generation immigrant experience; and this experience, entailing as it does a wrenching break with the past, and an intense need to reconcile the disparate elements in one's being in order to discover or create one's identity within the sterile, potentially destructive
North American materialistic/rationalistic ethos, is an apt prototype for the universal Odyssey of the human spirit expressed in the myth of the garden. Particularly interesting is the relationship in *The Father* between, on the one hand, the dualities inherent in the garden myth — particularly good/evil, paradise/exile, body/spirit and, on the other hand, the ethnic ghetto and upward mobility. Albeit with some ambivalence, the ethnic ghetto symbolizes the positive side of this duality, the territory beyond it, the negative. Oreste's feeling for his work and his West End 'village' is a deeply religious one. His baking of bread and making of wine are religious rites which he conducts garbed in his baker's 'whites' — a miracle similar somehow though reversed, to the miracle of transubstantiation presided over by the robed priest. Both 'miracles' transcend time, uniting past and present, body and spirit. Like the priest who initiates the young Stefano, as altar boy, into the mysteries behind the altar, Oreste takes the young Stephen into the bakery to witness the mystery of bread making.

Oreste explained a few details about the nature of the dough and how it had been left to rise during the night... Stefano smiled and stood to the side. Oreste took out a white paper cap from his back pocket and put it on. Stefano saw his father turn his face away for a moment, as if he had something in his eye. Then he made the sign of the cross ... The oven is the most important part of the bakery, Stefano. This is an old oven made of bricks, see. The stone inside is important for the taste. We make our bread just like the Romans did thousands of years ago... People were making bread before they could write.

Later, Oreste shows Stefano who "listened in awe," (37) how he makes his special bread — bread so much a reflection of himself that it has his name: "Orestepan."

See how it's done, Stefano... You have to touch it a certain way. With the heel of your palms. Then the fingers. Add a little flour. Don't let it get too pasty. But just right. There, see. There's nothing better in the world to eat than bread. We keep the first loaf to remind us of the care we put into it. (40, 41)

Oreste also explains to Stefano that part of the secret of his bread is his own happiness ("Bread can't grow... under the hands of a sad man"), and knowing the people he bakes for: "I couldn't make bread just for strangers. You gotta care about what you do, Stefano. You can't care for the bread if you bake for... strangers" (60).

Thus, as the village baker of the West End, Oreste lives an almost idyllic existence in which the miracle of breadmaking unites him with his surround-
ings. Like the pre-war Abruzzi village that he was forced to leave by the war, the West End Gemeinschaft neighborhood is, for Oreste, a kind of Eden. But he senses the possible intrusion of disruptive forces when he curses Canadian bread, so unlike his own. "Crust is the soul of bread, figlio mio" he tells Stefano. "Never forget. In this country they don't believe in crust... they don't know bread at all in this country" (40).

Oreste's sense of the significance of this difference between his bread and the soulless "soft mushy rolls" produced in the new world foreshadows both his gradual exile and destruction and that of the West End — a destruction brought about by his wife's 'success' and by 'the devastation of urban renewal.' Nor does Paci provide any hopeful hint of paradise in the efficient machines and the "apartment houses and parking lots" that replace the baker and his village (134). Indeed, it is only when Stefano/Stephen, despite his Ph.D. in philosophy and his crippling cerebral approach to life, at last returns symbolically to his father, and all that he represents, that the reader glimpses a positive resolution to the fundamental conflicts that have fragmented the Mancuso family and Stephen's soul. This occurs in the novel's final scene in which Stephen goes to the modern Mancuso bakery to bake bread as his father once taught him to do:

He held the dough in place with his deformed hand. With the heel of the palm of his other hand he flattened the tough dough outward, then folded it, and kneaded it again... In the silence of the huge automated bakery he began to whistle... The next day he was scheduled to fly back to Toronto and resume his teaching duties, but today he was a baker carrying on his father's work... Then he rolled six long sticks of dough. On top of the loaves he formed the initials of his father, his mother and his brother... That was his family. (193)

This mystical, transcendent rite of bread making provides him a moment in which he is able to reconcile family conflict, particularly with his father, and thus the warring dualities in his nature — dualities that reflect the larger conflict between his ethnicity and 'success' in the new world.

But even this convincing, personal resolution of the conflict between ethnic identity and social mobility is momentary, fleeting, and does not fully remove the intangible psychological and social barriers to the full acceptance and 'complete success' that often continue to elude the ethnic character, even when he is able, as Stefano/Stephen is, to move beyond the ghetto that
gave meaning to and yet limited his father’s life in the new world.18
Richler’s farcical humour and sometimes biting social criticism depend in
large measure on the difficulty his characters have in crossing intangible but
real social borders — barriers of class and ethnicity that reinforce the
physical boundaries of the complex succession of territories constituting his
fictional Montreal. The incongruity between his scrappy Jewish protagonists,
particularly Duddy Kravitz and Joshua Shapiro, and the superficially genteel
WASP world that they blunder through, in picaresque fashion, without
having mastered its social conventions, is at the thematic and structural
centre of The Apprenticeship and Joshua Then and Now. Like Saul Bellows’
The Adventures of Augie March, these novels grow out of a binary sensibility,
one that views the physical and social space beyond the loved and hated
ghetto as a foreign land where if one enters, one is not only, of necessity, an
adventurer, but also, almost inevitably, a heathen.19 While the insipid Wasp
elite, embodied in characters like the bloodless Professor, Theo Hall in Son
and in the seamless Mr. Calder in The Apprenticeship20, may be attracted to
the exotic vitality and directness of a Noah Adler or a Duddy Kravitz, it is
an attraction that fades when the latter transgress certain, largely unspoken,
rules. For example, the wealthy Hugh Calder cools toward Duddy when the
latter takes advantage of their friendship to make a deal with Calder for his
ghetto friend, Cohen, the scrapyard dealer:

‘I suppose, Mr. Calder said, pushing his plate away, ’that I should have expected
something like this from you. I had hoped we were friends.’
‘Sure we are, Duddy had replied, blushing. But friends help each other.’
... I expect, Mr. Calder has said, that you’re earning a good commission on this.’

18 The marginality of the second-generation has often been pointed out in sociological studies
of ethnicity. The particular way in which this ambivalence is reflected in the work of second-
generation writers in the United States is discussed by Werner Sollors, "Literature and
(Cambridge: Harvard UP 1980) 647-665. The types of stances he discusses seem at least
partially applicable to second-generation ‘ethnic’ writers in Canada.

19 That the Greek root of ethnic, éthnikós, was used to mean ‘heathen,’ a meaning that has
continued to haunt the word’s scholarly uses with its negative connotations, seems relevant
here.

1970, originally published by Andre Deutsch 1959) 112. All further references to this work
appear in the text.
Something had risen in Duddy’s stomach. His eyes filled. ‘I look after myself, he had said. ‘Why not? Why not, indeed?’ … White men, Duddy thought. Ver gerharget. With them you just didn’t make deals. You had to diddle... He’s offended, Duddy thought, but he made the deal all the same. Two-fifty more a ton, sure. I suppose he wanted me to play golf with him for eighteen years first or something… (227)

Similarly, though Marilyn’s tone is not, like Richler’s, humorous, Sandor Hunyadi in Under the Ribs of Death finds that his ethnicity prevents him from crossing certain invisible boundaries. When he attempts to move beyond the North End, and get a job with an ‘English’ firm (Crown Investment “est’d 1705”), Sandor finds that his interviewer is interested not in his business knowledge and experience, but in his family background:

‘Hunter,’ he said reflectively. ‘Any relation of Colonel Hunter?’… For the next few minutes, Alex found himself facing a leisurely barrage of questions... The questions grew more personal... At the mention of Selkirk Avenue, he thought he detected a flicker of expression in the man’s eyes, too transient to be interpreted. At the next question, framed in the same courteous, almost off-hand manner as the others, he felt the colour mounting to his cheeks. He cleared his throat.

‘Hungarian,’ he said. (136)

Like Frank Cowperwood in Theodore Dreiser’s three volume exploration of the ‘dream of success’ in America, Stefano Mancuso, Duddy Kravitz and Sandor Hunyadi develop early a sense that they are set apart, that theirs is to be a unique destiny. Stefano, made exceptional in childhood by his withered hand, wants first to become a priest, then later, his faith shaken, a thinker, a seeker of truth, and is isolated from his peers by his seriousness and his intense intellectuality. Duddy Kravitz, on the other hand, has an equally intense yearning for money, land and prestige. As a young boy, “Duddy wanted to be a somebody... Not a loser, certainly…” (62). Later, with grim confidence, he tells his fellow waiters at a resort hotel where he works in the summer, “If you want to bet on somebody, bet on me” (95). Sandor, too, has a dream of becoming somebody ‘who mattered’ — a businessman with an English name. Dreiser’s Cowperwood takes as his role model the black grouper, a sinister fish who feeds off the smaller fish around him and, unfettered by ethnicity or scruples, he achieves most of his financial and romantic dreams. For the protagonists in Canada’s Fiction of Ethnicity, success is never on such a grand scale, and even when they do achieve their material goals, as Duddy does, the reality of that success is more question-
able than in Dreiser’s admittedly ambivalent portrayal of Cowperwood. This gap between the ethnic protagonists’ yearning reach and his ultimate grasp is a function of three things: the physical and social distance between the ethnic character’s world and the world where ‘success’ on Canadian terms is possible; in short the vertical mosaic; the concomitant absence of mentors, role models who can span the distances between the various levels of the mosaic and thereby, like Dante’s Virgil, guide the success-bound traveller on his upward journey; and ultimately an underlying ironic questioning of whether such movement is really up toward paradise, or down toward the centre of the inferno.

Stefano/Steven Mancuso, early realizing the inadequacy as mentors of his father, the ghetto/village baker and of Father Kiley, the village priest, has no role models until, as a graduate student, he happens upon the work of a linguistic philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein. He adopts not only Wittgenstein’s cool rationality, but also his personal affectations. Just as Wittgenstein ultimately proves inadequate as a model for Stephen in dealing with the interrelated problems of trying to develop a balanced identity and of finding love, so too do the role models chosen by Duddy and Sandor prove inadequate guides in their quest for success. Sandor, rejecting his father’s lofty humanism, wants to be like Mr. Nagy, the warped and unfeeling North End realtor/landlord whose obsession with making and hoarding money not only leaves him alone in squalid surroundings, but ultimately destroys his humanity:

... there was something about him, in the way he sat there, his body tensed as though ready to spring, his hands with their thick yellow nails, half-closed and twitching on his knees — something in the moist red lips and white glistening teeth that reminded [Sandor] of an old, lean and hungry wolf. One could almost hear those teeth cutting through bone and tissue, and hear them crunch as they bit into their victim. (119)

Sandor/Alec himself is ultimately Nagy’s victim, not only because Nagy refuses to will him his business, choosing instead to build a mausoleum to himself, but at a more profound level, because Sandor is so thoroughly deceived by Nagy, and the North American materialism he represents. Sandor has also been captivated as a youth, when he was despairing of ever being able to leave the “howling chaos” of Henry Street, by the hero of an

21 For a thorough discussion of this ambivalence and other features of Dreiser’s interest in success and failure, see Alfred Kazin and Charles Shapiro, eds. The Statue of Theodore Dreiser: A Critical Survey of the Man and His Work (Bloomington: U of Indiana P 1965).
Horatio Alger novel and, though he questions the uncompromising morality of Alger's heroic street urchin, Sandor is thrilled and renewed by what he perceives to be Alger's message:

He stood there filled with wonder that there should be such a book, giving him back his own dreams, his own secret longings that had stirred within him so long... The great ones in this book were the doers, the men of wealth and power, the men who counted... And one had only to work hard and devote oneself wholeheartedly to the things they believed to become one of them... When the time came he would get a job with Mr. Nagy. He knew now how to ask for one. (111)

Not until the end of Marilyn's novel, when the shining world of big business has collapsed into the squalor of the Great Depression, does Sandor have reason to question the reality of Ragged Jack's fictional climb, or Alger's efficacy as a mentor.22

Duddy Kravitz also feels the need for a guide on his journey to success. "You've got to start operating... he tells himself... But where does a guy start... Where and how?" Though he later becomes obsessed with self-help books, Duddy's first inspiration is 'the Boy Wonder,' drug-dealer, gambler, racketeer and hero of a modern folktale of the ghetto perpetuated by Duddy's storytelling father, Max. Raised on a continuing saga of the Boy Wonder's remarkable feats and exploits, and with the hope of being allowed to meet him and get his advice someday, almost as a right of passage, Duddy "... likes to think... that point for point he was a lot like the Boy Wonder before he had made his name" (62). Later, Duddy is surprised to find that the Wonder's reputation as a hero does not extend beyond the borders of the ghetto, and that in the Patrician world of Hugh Calder, being connected with Jerry Dingleman, gangster, is no asset.

The lack of appropriate role models, and the related floundering and sense of malaise at the community level is also an important theme in Son of a Smaller Hero, where Richler notes that "the aspiring walked without

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22 For a convincing re-evaluation of the nature and intent of Alger's fiction, see Gary Sharphorst, Horatio Alger, Jr. (Boston: Twayne Publishers 1980) in which the author argues that the values promulgated by Alger, far from constituting an apology for unfettered capitalism, were based on a liberal humanitarianism that prompted him to criticize the economic assumptions of the gilded age as morally bankrupt and to urge young American manhood to uphold the ideals of honesty and community extolled in an earlier agrarian era. If this is so, as Marilyn suggests by pointing out Sandor's impatience with the overscrupulousness of Alger's characters, Sandor, like the cultural historians who have perhaps misrepresented Alger to subsequent generations, read his mentor selectively.
certainty, pompous and ingratiating by turns" (17). When Noah declares himself to be in search of the meaning of life and his place in it by moving away from home and into an apartment outside the physical boundaries of the ghetto, he is courted by a series of would-be mentors, both inside and outside the Jewish community, but none proves adequate to the task. The WASPY professor Hall is a weakling, a phony, but so too is old Melech Adler, whose stern orthodoxy masks his own old-world sins and Noah's maternal grandfather, a respected Chasidic teacher (the more so in his mother's colored remembrances), is dead. Indeed, the central event in the novel, the death of Noah's father in a supposedly heroic attempt to rescue the Torah from fire, was nothing of the sort, and his posthumous elevation to community hero, celebrated even by the goyim, suggests a loss of vitality and integrity in the Jewish community that precipitates Noah's quest to become just "a human being" (203).

Thus whether their quest focuses on the largely spiritual goal of integrating the disparate elements that constitute their lives, or the material goal of achieving wealth to prove their worthiness, the protagonists in Canada's Fiction of Ethnicity have few effective guides and although those whose goals are spiritual seem ultimately closer to reaching them than do those who are bent on material success, the journey to either is tortuous, complicated by the complex physical and social barriers that make it difficult for immigrants and their children to find paradise in the New World.

PART II: VICTIMS, OPPRESSORS AND IDENTITY

The binary pattern underlying the delineation in Canada's Fiction of Ethnicity of urban geography, evident in the ambivalence toward the ghetto (squalid, shameful, but comfortable — home) and toward the affluent neighborhoods (shining, seamless, but cold, lonely and perhaps ultimately masking a spiritual sterility, if not death) that surfaces again and again in the work of Richler, Marlyn, Paci and others, is reinforced by a closely related ambivalence toward both the victim and the oppressor in the struggle to succeed. When the ethnic protagonists in the struggle ask themselves, as they inevitably do, why Henry Street is their lot and why they find it so difficult to move beyond it, they find the answer either in an outside villain or in
themselves and they often entertain both possibilities simultaneously. When the aspiring twelve-year-old Sandor Hunyadi gets his first real job and a chance to move, albeit only briefly and as a menial, into the pastoral world of the 'English' suburbs, he both resents and loves the haughty sensibility he encounters there, one that puts him in his place:

Very leisurely she (his prospective employer) lowered the plump, jewelled hand which held the letter and looked out across the lawn, her gaze sweeping past him to return slowly and settle upon him, in an unexpected, careless way, Sandor thought, an insulting way, subjecting him to a long scrutiny from head to toe and back again several times, but without the flicker of an eyelid or the faintest expression of interest — much as he himself, he felt, might look if he should happen to glance absent-mindedly at a fence post. And yet in spite of this he could not help feeling that there was something in her manner which was appropriate and fitting, something which caused his resentment to fade and filled him again with pride; he was going to work for her, and so in a sense he belonged to her house and some of this splendid high arrogance of hers would be his too. This is the way it should be... This was how the English should act... dignified and cool eyed and distant. (65)

That Sandor has internalized the 'English' attitude toward him as a 'foreigner,' a 'Bohunk,' despite his resentment of it, and that it has become part of his psychological make up as an adult is obvious at crucial points in his struggle to succeed. After experiencing the polite cruelty of discriminatory hiring practices that make it ever clearer to him that his territory must remain the North End, where he seems fated to "mark time, working for one small hole-in-the-wall outfit after another, crawling around through slums, spending himself in dreary quarrels over leaking roofs and plugged drains and rent..." (183), Sandor blames himself: "He felt it again and was surprised that it should be the same, the same uncoiling disgust, the revulsion he could not bring himself to direct outward, but must turn it upon himself" (137).

This vision of himself as one who deserves to be a victim extends even to his distrusting the judgement and worth of the few English Canadians he meets who do not discriminate against him. When he is unable to find evidence of prejudiced attitudes in Lawson, a younger-generation business-

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23 Eli Mandel (cited above) discusses this ambivalence perceptively using Sartre's figure of the whirligig to describe it as "... an opposition in which the opposing forces endlessly turn into one another and in which an endless oscillation between them appears to be the only mode of existence for the individual so trapped" (59).
man who extols Canadian rather than 'British' solidarity, Sandor comes "... to believe that Lawson was in some indefinable way inferior to those who harboured such feelings — as though the mere fact of Lawson's friendship with someone foreign-born was a flaw in his character, an indication of weakness" (175).

This preoccupation with victimization so important in Marilyn's insightful portrayal of the second-generation ethnic character is also a dominant theme in Frank Paci's novels, indeed, in Italian-Canadian writing generally. Paci's fictional landscape is dotted with maimed and crippled characters whose injuries, like Stefano Mancuso's crippled hand, highlight the motif of immigrant as victim and symbolize the price of entry exacted by the New World: Oreste Mancuso, victim of the second World War, alcoholism and the demise of the West End neighborhood, is killed in a car accident; Alberto Gateano, stoic, largely unappreciated patriarch in *The Italians* loses his right arm in a bizarre accident at the steel plant where he has worked faithfully since coming to Canada as a young man; displaced peasant mother, Assunta Barone in *The Black Madonna*, is killed, horrendously dismembered when she is hit by a train. Paci's depiction of these victims — usually members of the immigrant generation, often voiceless in the Canadian milieu, misunderstood by their Canadian-born children — focuses not so much on the underlying causes of their victimization, nor on the subtle psychological or inter-ethnic dynamics of it, but on their children's coming to grips with it as one of the inescapable elements in their own lives. Richler's exploration of the dynamics of the victim/oppressor relationship, however, encompasses, perhaps even emphasizes, its role in interethnic relations.

Just as Marilyn lays bare Sandor's need for his oppressors, 'the English,' as scapegoats for his own weaknesses, but more profoundly as a kind of perverse conduit to the wealth and prestige that he can only experience vicariously by being associated, even as a lackey, with them, Richler dissects, even burlesques, the Jewish need for the *Gejim*, not only for their value as scapegoats, but also for the indispensable role they play in helping to create and maintain Jewish identity. The boundaries that demarcate the various ethnic and class-based territories in Richler's fictional landscape are

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revealed, not only as barriers to mobility, but as essential ingredients in the complex symbiosis between inter and intra-group relations. "There is the kind of Jew," Noah, in *Son of a Smaller Hero* tells his shiksa mistress, Miriam, "who gets the same nourishment out of a Goy as the worst type of communist gets from a lynching in the south. Take the Goy away from him and you're pulling out the thread that holds him together" (168). Richler's characters illustrate this point by drawing nourishment from the Goy oppressor in a variety of ways.

While Noah and his gang of childhood friends are humiliated by the segregation they encounter at Laurentian resorts, their elevation to heroic status, if only for a night, depends on the existence of the sign, "This Beach is restricted to Gentiles," which they steal and replace with, "This Beach is Restricted to Litvaks" (54, 56). The wealthy Mr. Cohen, one of Duddy Kravitz's would-be mentors in *The Apprenticeship*, uses the Goy more reprehensibly to justify his sharp business practices, and the spectre of anti-Semitism to assuage Duddy's guilt over his part in his epileptic employee's accident:

'My attitude even to my oldest and dearest customer is this,' he said, making a throat-cutting gesture... A plague on all the goyim, that's my motto. The more money I make the better care I take of my own, the more I'm able to contribute to our hospital, the building of Israel, and other worthy causes. So a goy is crippled and you think you're to blame. Given the chance he would have crippled you,' he shouted, 'or thrown you into a furnace like six million others.' (226)

In *Son of a Smaller Hero*, Noah's rich uncle, Max, uses a variation of the same argument to justify blatantly distorting the facts and significance of the death of his brother, Wolf Adler, for the sake of enhancing the profile of the Jewish community, reaffirming group solidarity and improving his own political prospects: "Do you know what would happen if the so-called true story of Wolf's death got out? The anti-Semites would have a ball. It would prove to them that the Jews only care for money. That they'll even die for it" (191).

When Noah wants to tell the truth about his father's supposedly heroic death, Max accuses Noah of being "the biggest goddam anti-Semite I've ever met" (191), thereby conjuring up the presence of the goy within the group as a means of exerting social control.

But it is not only businessmen/politicians with questionable ethics who use the presence of the oppressor for their own purposes. Panofsky, the idealistic communist in *Son*, another contender for mentor to Noah, is a
variation on the type of Jew identified by Noah as one who "claims all the famous dead and flings them into the faces of prejudiced persons like bits of coloured paper" (168). For Panofsky, the inefficacy of all of history's Jewish heroes against the intractable anti-Semitism of the Goyim is testament to the truth of Marxism and the necessity of the revolution, and, of course, provides the basis for his particular interpretation of Wolf Adler's death:

We discovered cures and it didn't help and we made for them philosophies and they chased us away and invented so they'd take the invention and deport the inventor and we made beautiful pictures and books and they weren't ours and even money — which is the cheapest of things — they wouldn't let us keep. Always tenants, never landlords. Anyway, now newer ones are already back there in that fertile land making believe that history goes backwards... But you go talk to the Goyim. You go if you want and tell them. Marx and Spinoza, tell them Trotsky too, tell them Einstein and Freud, tell them... that a small man died for nothing in a fire... and made for us a smaller hero than we usually put up. (155)

A highly ambiguous event at its centre, one that lends itself to a variety of interpretations and uses, and a remarkably enigmatic character the catalyst of that event, Son of a Smaller Hero unites the theme of the quest for identity with that of the uses of history. Indeed one could read the novel as an exploration of the use of history as a weapon, not only in a war of competing ideologies, but of competing identities and in the related struggle to succeed in an urban vertical mosaic where ethnic and class boundaries and identities sustain each other in a paradoxical process that both nourishes and destroys individuals. The binary sensibility that renders a fictional ghetto at once hated and loved also expresses an ambivalence toward the historical interpretations of heroism and culpability that shape and sustain group identities. 25

An awareness of the significance of language as creator and purveyor of these events and identities is inherent in the novel's structure, made up, as it is, of chapters that carry the names of various characters who present therein their interpretation of the central event, and in the characterization of Wolf Adler. Wolf, though seemingly superficial, is a man who goes to

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great lengths to keep his inner self inaccessible by writing his diary in a private code. Ironically, however, once deciphered, the code reveals not depths, but surfaces, or as George Woodcock puts it in his introduction to the novel, "a secret life of terrifying banality" (x). Wolf's deciphered diary is a minute record of how many steps he walks each day, the average number of steps in a trip to the toilet, the number of hours wasted yearly in sleep. Through this graphic discrepancy between medium and message, Richler suggests a troubling confusion, an unsettling facelessness at the core of Jewish identity. "He died a Jew," (153) says the Rabbi at Wolf Adler's funeral as he extols the heroism of the departed, yet Wolf Adler has been variously presented as victim, scoundrel, and insipid weakling as well as hero. The question of who his father and the quintessential Jew really is, if indeed the latter exists, haunts Noah's avowed quest for his own identity, for "some knowledge of himself that was independent of others" (198). And it is a quest that necessitates a journey through labyrinths and mirrors, complicated as it is by the seeming dependence of ethnic identity on victims and villains, the difficulty of distinguishing between the two and Noah's own ambivalence — his nostalgic longing for something that "one could wholly belong to" uncompromised by "buts and parenthesis" (169) and his equally fierce determination to discover himself per se, independent of any group dynamics.

It is interesting to note at this point that Noah, in quest of identity, like his counterparts in other fictions of ethnicity, including those whose search is more directly linked with achieving material success, requires the assistance of a Beatrice. The protagonist's love affair, even marriage, with a shiksa is an inevitable and integral element in Richler's fictional world. The non-Jewish woman becomes a link not only to the world of tender and erotic emotion, but also to the physical and social territories beyond the ghetto, and a symbol of both rebellion and success. Noah is irresistibly drawn to Professor Hall's wife, Miriam; Duddy depends heavily, for both emotional and practical support on Yvette, though interestingly, he discounts somewhat her potency as a shiksa because she is French Canadian rather than Wasp.

Similarly, Paci's characters, both male and female, are frequently dependent on their lovers, often, but not always, non-Italians. In The Father, Stefano Mancuso depends on Anna, his passionate Ukrainian-Canadian girlfriend, to put him in touch with his own emotions and to help him integrate his mind and heart, thereby coming to grips with his ethnicity. Marie in Black Madonna is drawn to and marries the cool, Wasp, Richard as part of her effort to free herself from the powerful influence of her
mother. Sandor Hunyadi in *Under the Ribs of Death* depends on Mary Kostaniuk, whom he eventually marries, as his link to human warmth and, ultimately, for his salvation. Often these relationships are positive, humanizing forces in the lives of the troubled and driven ethnic protagonists; but also, often, as with Noah’s relationship with Miriam and particularly as with Duddy’s relationship with Yvette, they are based on the same ambiguous victim/oppressor dynamic that underlies the conflict between ethnic identity and upward mobility.

The fuzziness of the distinction between victim and oppressor, hero and villain, is also dramatized again and again in other ways in Canada’s Fiction of Ethnicity. Though open to less sinister interpretations than Wolf Adler’s supposed attempt to rescue the Torah, Isaac’s motivations for a similar act in *The Sacrifice* — rescuing the Torah from a burning synagogue — are also unclear, even to himself, thus rendering indeterminate the final meaning of the act and his subsequent death. But the moral ambiguity of the world depicted in *The Sacrifice* is most dramatically captured in the central event of the novel — Abraham’s ritual murder of Lahia. Abraham is a classic victim — of East European pogroms in which two of his sons were killed, of the immigrant experience itself which requires him, a man well into middle age, to make enormous adaptations to bridge the gap between life in an old-world shetel and life on a North American frontier city: "dance to the tune of the stranger." Yet Abraham also becomes a knife-wielding murderer who slaughters the irritating, but nevertheless largely innocent Lahia in a bizarre, mad attempt to right moral imbalance through the ancient ritual of sacrifice.

Profound moral ambiguity is also at the uncertain centre of the universe depicted in *Under the Ribs of Death*, again dramatized through the interplay of victim/villain characters whose actions can be variously interpreted depending on who is viewing them and in what light. This interplay is often within the ethnic ghetto, but at the same time it is always set against the broader context of the same interplay between the powerful ‘other’ — the ‘English,’ the Goy, the ‘stranger’ — and the ethnic characters. Sandor is clearly a victim of Mr. Nagy’s obsessive, small-minded avarice, but Nagy too, Hungarian immigrant, has been the victim of the stereotyping and discrimination that Sandor encounters when he tries to do business outside the North End. And victim Sandor becomes villain as the unfeeling landlord who evicts poor tenants from Nagy’s squalid properties when they are unable to pay the rent. Sandor’s Uncle Janos is also a victim, of an unhappy marriage to Fraulein Kleinholtz, yet he is guilty of having lied to her in order to marry her for her money. Even the nearly unrelentingly villainous
Fraulein, ugly, grasping, witchlike, becomes a victim when she tells her own story of having been deserted by her first husband. And, at the novel's end, one must once again wonder about Sandor and whether he is a victim of the vertical mosaic, or of his own gullibility, his own willingness to be seduced by the materialistic world that collapses around him during the Great Depression.

Moral ambiguity is similarly dramatized in Paci's work. Assunta Barone in The Black Madonna is another classic victim — of extreme poverty in Italy, of the new world, to which she has been unable to adapt and to which she has, in large measure, lost her children; and yet she is also guilty, albeit unwittingly, of tyrannizing her children, distorting their lives, and her final victimization — her severe depression and death, perhaps suicide — leaves them a potentially crippling inheritance. To draw on another example, Jacob Grossman, the central character in Henry Kreisel's The Rich Man also inhabits a morally ambiguous world in which he is both victim and villain: victim of the vertical mosaic as an immigrant in Toronto, where he has never been able to move beyond a menial factory job; of the gulf between the old world and the new, particularly of the promised-land mythology long a product of that gulf, and most of all, of the conditions in Europe that produced the holocaust. Yet all of these elements of his victimization converge, turning him into a kind of passive villain, who deceives his family with false hope when their need is incalculably dire.

But perhaps the most vivid exploration of the moral ambiguity that makes it impossible to distinguish victims from villains, and certainly the novel most satirically critical of the type of ethnic identity that depends on embracing victimization is The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz. The chief embodiments of this ambiguity are The Boy Wonder, the epileptic, Virgil Roseboro and Duddy himself, and their interaction with each other. As a ghetto folk hero, a St. Urbain Street boy who made good, the Wonder is a palpable presence for Duddy from his childhood, though the Wonder doesn't actually appear until midway through the novel. Magnified and transformed by the power of the word, Jerry Dingleman, 'the boy wonder,' is a man who, like Wolf Adler in Son, is a chameleon. An unscrupulous drug dealer who uses the young and admiring Duddy to smuggle cocaine across the border for him, the Wonder is also 'a God-fearing man' who 'didn't smoke or drive his car or place bets on the Sabbath' (131). Made incredibly wealthy by various

seedy deals and underworld manoeuvres, reputed to be visited by "three or four girls at a time" and to have a taste for "some dirty specialties" enhanced by "incredible films imported from Europe, books of photographs, amazing statues," the Boy Wonder is nevertheless community minded, one who "remembered well his own early hardships, and... liked to lend a helping hand" (131). In this humanitarian spirit, the Wonder sets aside Wednesdays ("known to his inner circle as Schnorrer's Day") to listen to the stories of a series of 'supplicants' seeking various kinds of favours.

But the Wonder is not just a kind of Robin Hood villain/benefactor. He is also himself a victim of polio, a cripple, whose legs were "twisted and useless" and is therefore confined to a wheelchair. However, Jerry Dingleman's misfortune turns him not only into a pitiable victim, but also into a kind of monster:

Polio wrought immense physical changes in Jerry Dingleman. At thirty he was no longer a handsome man. His shoulders and chest developed enormously and his legs dwindled to thin bony sticks. He put on lots of weight... The bony head suddenly seemed massive. The grey inquisitor's eyes, whether hidden behind dark glasses... or flashing under rimless ones, unfailingly led people to look over his shoulder down at the floor. His curly hair had dried... But the most noticeable and unexplained change was in the flesh of his face. After his illness it turned red and wet and shiny. His teeth, however, remained as white as ever and his smile was still unnervingly fresh... The smile that somehow retained an aura of innocence made those who feared or disliked the Boy Wonder resent him all the more. (133)

Richler thus portrays The Wonder as an enigmatic presence about whom "little was known for certain" (134), a combination of 'hero, villain, victim, monster,' ultimately undecipherable.

Considerably less enigmatic than the Boy Wonder, Virgil Roseboro is an innocent, one whose essential goodness and devotion make him a natural target for schemers like Duddy. Paradoxically, however, his culpability lies in his innocence, which inspires evil. Being an epileptic as well makes him doubly the victim and not only the catalyst/victim for Duddy's most depraved act in his desperate attempt to succeed, but also the chief vehicle for Richler's satire of victimized ethnicity. An aspiring poet, Virgil decides to publish a newsletter for epileptics which, with its selective use of history and heroes, or didactic literature and emotion-laden rhetoric to rally solidarity and spark political activism, is a black parody of typical organs of ethnicity and minority status that depend for their existence on the very victimization they attempt to fight. Virgil's "The Crusader" with its series on "Famous
Health Handicappers Through History" and its "fighting editorial" advising "health handicappers to take a leaf from the book of the negroes, Jews and homosexuals" and "organise to protect themselves," and its Personals Column, where desperate pleas for companionship bear testimony to the deep human need for a community, even if it be a community of victims, apes, in both form and substance, many an ethnic periodical (269-273). However, though Richler's satiric intent is obvious, its force is softened somewhat by an almost grudging empathy for the victim and his needs.

Duddy himself is an embodiment of this same ambivalent tone. Though one is inclined to read Duddy's declaration that "all I needed was to be born rich and I would have grown up such a fine regular guy... a regular prince among men" (298) as dramatic irony, he is, nevertheless a complex combination of qualities, including those of the victim and picaresque hero as well as the unredeemable scoundrel. That Duddy is the latter is revoltlingly clear by the end of the novel when, desperate for the $2,200 that will finally seal his claim on the Ste. Agathe land he has been pursuing so relentlessly, after contemplating the going price for blood and bodies, and asking himself, "Was there anything valuable he could steal?" (297) Duddy forges the signature of the now paraplegic Virgil. Virgil, who is the victim of an accident for which Duddy is at least partially responsible, is totally dependent on this money for his livelihood. Thus Virgil's naive admiration of Duddy's entrepreneurship, his praise that "Duddy can do anything" (304), becomes an ironic comment on the depths of Duddy's depravity, just as Duddy's self-satisfied question, asked earlier of Yvette, "What's your opinion of Duddy Kravitz now?" (220) is laden with dramatic irony, since by the end of the novel Duddy has proven himself the equal of the Boy Wonder, and thereby horrified and disgusted the very people he thought he would please most, Yvette, and particularly his grandfather.

Another key element in the profound irony of Duddy's ultimate 'victory' is that he has won it, not only by preying on others, particularly Virgil, but also by taking advantage of the victimization of his own people, since anti-Semitism prompts the Ste. Agathe farmers to sell to Duddy, who uses Yvette as his front, rather than to Jerry Dingleman, the Jewish wheeler dealer.

But if Duddy uses his group's victimization for his own ends, he too is nevertheless a victim. Despite his justified revulsion toward Duddy's methods of acquiring the land, and toward Duddy's materialistic plans for exploiting it, Duddy's Zeyda, with his constant peasant's refrain that "a man without land is nobody" and his immigrant's desire for his progeny to do well, bears some responsibility for Duddy's misguided obsession. So too does Max, Duddy's jovial, storytelling father. With his admirable family-man qualities
— his love for his dead wife, his seemingly genuine parental concern for the welfare of his sons — existing alongside his shocking amorality as exemplified in his seedy career as a pimp and his constant elevation of the Boy Wonder to the hero of the ghetto, Max is a caricature of Jewish fatherhood. His own distorted perceptions nurture distortions in his son, also a caricature, of the aspiring younger generation. Like the seemingly faceless and weak Wolf Adler, Max suggests ineptitude, confusion, even decay at the centre of ethnic identity — a centre that 'will not hold.' Duddy's obsession, his amorality, which exists alongside his sterling devotion to family, as exemplified in his efforts to extricate his brother from a difficult situation, and in his willingness to travel to New York to help his cancer-stricken Uncle Benjy, has been nourished by his personal and collective inheritance, and by the gap between the immigrant ghetto and the elusive North American dream of success. And Duddy is a victim of both his inheritance and that dream.

Despite this obvious burlesquing of the immigrant experience, Richler's tone, like that of the Fiction of Ethnicity generally, remains ambivalent throughout Duddy's climb from ghetto boy to land owner. Indeed, in his depiction of Duddy, Richler projects some of the same admiration that Max infuses into his tales of the Boy Wonder. Duddy, despite his seemingly boundless capacity for exploitation, moves through Richler's fictional landscape with a kind of picaresque charm. This is apparent for example, in Duddy's adventures as a waiter, in which he shines as a kind of topsy turvy Jewish version of the Algerian hero. It is also apparent in the confrontation between Duddy and his rich uncle, Benjy, who has chosen the genteel Englishman as his model, rather than the underworld operator from the ethnic ghetto. Benjy accuses Duddy of being "a pusherke ... a little Jew Boy on the make. Guys like you make me sick and ashamed." When Duddy counters with the impassioned comment that "You lousy intelligent people, you lying sons-of-bitches with your books and your socialism and your sneers, you give me a long pain in the ass" (240), one feels Richler's ambivalent sympathy with Duddy for his perverse authenticity. In this scene, Richler not only reveals his ambivalence toward these characters and the aspects of group identity that they represent, but also dissects the ethnic sensibility produced by the dynamics of the vertical mosaic, what one of Richler's characters calls the "ghetto mentality" (223). Each pose — Uncle Benjy's as the imitative colonial sycophant and Duddy's as the amoral

hustler — is a reaction to the paradoxical but potent juxtaposition of the limitless possibilities in New World fantasies, with the limits, both tangible and intangible, inherent in the vertical mosaic. Like characters in other novels of immigrant and ethnic experience, both Benjy and Duddy must pay a price for whatever degree of 'success' their respective strategies effect and that price involves an inter-related loss of their integrity, their ethnic identity and even, it is sometimes implied, their humanity.

PART III: THE GAP BETWEEN ILLUSION AND REALITY

In addition to exploring the subtle symbiosis between victors and victims in the struggle to realize New World dreams and the way in which the dynamics of this process obscure the distinction between the two, writers who depict immigrant and ethnic experience in Canada also explore the related and equally ambiguous dynamics between illusion and reality, laying bare the particular susceptibility of the 'ghetto mentality' to blurred perception and dramatizing the tragl-comic effects of mistaking illusion for reality in the vertical mosaic. The dramatic irony so often underlying the plot in ethnic novels, like the ironic tone that often dominates them, both depends on and highlights the gap between illusion and reality, surface and essence which the ethnic protagonist fails to see, often until it is too late, sometimes never.

Such dramatic irony is central, both structurally and thematically to Son of a Smaller Hero, in which the characters, (including minor ones such as the assimilated Goldenbergs whose seemingly idyllic suburban routines mask dark traumas, and major ones, such as Noah's grandfather, Melech Adler, whose stern patriarchy hides an Old World love affair), lead lives of self delusion. And of course the novel's central event, the supposed heroic death of Wolf Adler bears ironic testimony to the power of myth and tradition to transform a private illusion into a public one that then further nourishes private deception. This dynamic and ironic interaction between illusion and reality is also central to The Apprenticeship, in which Duddy, despite Richler's ambivalent portrayal of him, is ultimately the butt of bitter dramatic irony that reveals him as incapable of perceiving the nature of his actions. When he triumphantly surveys his land at the end of the novel, Duddy, in his driven pursuit of his grandfather's pastoral vision, has become an agent of destruction: not 'a somebody' as he had intended, but a man beyond community, a nobody.

In Under the Ribs of Death John Marlyn also uses irony to dramatize the interplay between illusion and reality as a powerful element in immigrant
and ethnic experience. In the novel as a whole, as much as in the philosophical argument between Sandor's father and the barber, Mr. Schiller, "the question of the nature of reality is under discussion" (127). And ironically, it is Sandor who asserts in this discussion that "I just believe in things the way they are" (128). As John Roberts points out in an article discussing Marilyn's use of irony, Sandor must 'deceive himself' over and over again since the price for the success he craves is that he "abandon his organic identity."

But deception is only possible in a world where differing versions of truth exist or can be created... Irony is intrinsic to a problematic reality... It embodies a contradiction between the human desire for ultimate truth and the realization that no truth exists... Although Marilyn utilizes irony to illuminate this world of shifting perspectives, he does so not to prove that reality is unknowable, but to warn against the pitfalls in the process of unmasking it.28

The experience that Sandor undergoes in 'unmasking' a series of inter-related illusions is, not surprisingly, the process of his growing up, of his journeying from an innocence that makes it difficult for him to determine which road leads to paradise and which to the inferno, to a knowledge, or at least: wariness, that comes from his having been scorched by the infernal flame that he finds at the core of what he thought to be paradise.

As a child, unable to see beneath surfaces, Sandor assumes that changing his name will obliterate his ethnicity, just as he naively supposes that his Uncle Janos "is a foreigner no longer" (79) once he is transformed by a haircut and new clothes. Similarly, he assumes that his friend Eric, being "rich and English" cannot be anything but happy, despite his eyes that were "an old man's, grave and deep set and sad" (70). The sharpness of the contrast Sandor encounters between his Henry Street world and Eric's wealthy suburb unsettles somewhat his sense of reality. Contemplating the pastoral expanses of Eric's garden, Sandor reflects that "In a little while it would all be over... and he would be back on Henry Avenue. In a few days the things he had seen here would grow unreal and would begin to wonder if he has imagined them" (67). But after secretly scrutinizing the splendid interior of the home of one of his employers, Sandor decides that "This was it... the real thing. Comfort, wealth and beauty" (68). And this contact with

what Sandor decides is 'the real thing' is, for him, a kind of epiphany that solidifies his previously inchoate longing into a commitment to realizing the North American dream of material success. He is immediately drawn into "dreaming of the future... a future now so immeasurably widened and filled with things to possess" (68) and "Sandor raised his head. It was true, a vast gulf separated this world from his, but he had spanned it: in one stride had crossed over to taste, to see and forever invest his dreams with the vision of it. He laughed at the magnitude of his achievement" (74).

As Sandor journeys toward this dream, this new world paradise symbolized for him in Eric's garden, he continues to be deceived by surfaces: Nagy seems to him to be the epitome of success because he has a business — he works at a desk in an office, unlike his father, a janitor; later, he is "lured by a dream of splendid affluence" in which he sees himself "living next door to Eric" into thinking that his family could all be happy if his uncle married for money a woman he does not love. But Sandor experiences the shattering of each of these and other related illusions until he is, ironically, back once again in Henry Street, shorn of his modest financial gain, his faith in the dream of success. Though the novel's ending is sufficiently ambiguous to leave one wondering about the degree to which Sandor has "unmasked reality," it seems clear that, unlike Duddy Kravitz, he has gained some insight from his journey, that he is at least beginning to suspect that reality is somehow to be found in familial and communal relationships rather than in a 'success' that is measured in possessions.

Like Marilyn's Sandor, Frank Paci's second-generation Italian characters are compelled to grapple with competing, and therefore problematic realities, and destined to "encounter pitfalls in the process of unmasking" truth, or at least some workable version of it. Paci depicts this process with a sensitive, gentle irony that allows the reader to see through his characters' self deception, while sympathizing with them. For example, all three of the children in The Italians — Lorianna, Aldo and Bill — are seduced by illusions: as a result, each of them develops a distorted, unbalanced personality. All seek in illusion a means of escaping some aspect of life,

29 Roberts reads the ending as a positive one. I have elsewhere discussed it as an example of the overall bleakness of the fictional depiction of urban ethnic experience on the prairies. See T. Palmer, "Ethnic Response to the Canadian Prairies, 1900-1950: A Literary Perspective on Perceptions of the Physical and Social Environment," Prairie Forum XII.1 (Spring 1987): 49-74.
usually non-material, that they find difficult. Lorianna seeks to escape her own sexuality, despite her marriage to the passionate Lorenzo, through a highly personal religious asceticism. Aldo, too, seeks refuge from the strain of interpersonal relationships including sexual ones, and from his physical limitations, in the priesthood. Bill, on the other hand, is drawn to the dream of being a hockey star for the NHL, partly to escape intellectual demands, but primarily to escape his ethnicity. Indeed, for all three, the 'burden' of their ethnicity is a key element in the nature of the illusions that seduce them and in their need to escape. Aldo, for example, "Frail from birth... had shunned the team sports that served as a melting pot for the Italian and Canadian kids in his neighborhood... It had been difficult for him to make friends with the Canadian kids and the Italian kids taunted him" (62).

As well, for all of them, the competing realities in their lives are the products of the various contrasting binary patterns that are intrinsic to the immigrant experience: the gap between Old World and New, European parent and North American child, the English language and the Italian, and between the various geographic spaces and socioeconomic levels within the vertical mosaic. Their escapes from these tensions prove illusory for all three of them; like Bill, who finds that even though "He thought he had escaped their [his parents'] world for the time being by imagining himself doing all sorts of incredible feats in national league games... it always managed to intrude" (49), they must all ultimately face both their personal inadequacies and their ethnicity before they can 'unmask reality.' For Paci, in *The Italians* as in *The Father*, the unmasking consists in coming to understand and practice the principle of the golden mean, of being able to avoid crippling extremes that result from cutting off one part of oneself from another, whether it be by divorcing mind or body from heart, public identity from private, or ethnicity from Canadian identity. In *The Father* Stephen "wants to understand the real world," but he *assumes* that he will find it in logic, not poetry, the mind, not the heart (110). The novel traces the growth of his capacity to feel and understand a broader reality. As Father Sarlo tells him, "the longest yard in existence" is the distance from "forehead to chest" (94) and the journey required to bridge this distance and the related distances between the various polarities that fragment immigrant and ethnic experience is, for Paci, the journey from illusion to reality and from an identity in crisis to one that is whole.

Apart from Marilyn, Paci, Richler, and Wiseman, examples I discussed above, the novel that dramatizes most starkly the potential for tragedy inherent in the gap between illusion and reality is Henry Kreisel's *The Rich
Man. Here the promised-land mythology comes full circle in the return home to Europe of Jacob Grossman, an Austrian Jew who had emigrated to North America, eventually settling in Toronto, thirty three years before the story begins. However, Kreisel scrutinizes both halves of the myth — the immigrant finds streets of gold in the Edenic New World, and the immigrant eventually returns in triumph, bearing gifts to his admiring and envious old-world family and friends, thereby, fortifying their idyllic vision of ‘America.’ Dramatic irony permeates every aspect of this novel — an irony that is grounded not only in the discrepancy between Jacob’s poverty and his pretensions, but also in the interplay between the setting, Austria, 1935, and the reader’s knowledge of subsequent events. And it is through this irony that Kreisel, like Marilyn and Richler, illuminates the interplay between illusion and reality that permeates immigrant experience, the role of cultural mythology in this interplay, and its consequences in the lives of individuals.

The Rich Man is, of course, an ironic title because Jacob is in fact a poor man who lives “in one of the poorer districts of Toronto” (14) and who has worked for over thirty years at the same job as a presser in a garment factory. As Jacob views New York harbour from the ship’s upper deck when he begins his mythological return journey, he recalls that when he arrived there over thirty years before, he was obliged to view the harbor from the steerage deck: the situation is one that should fit perfectly into the promised land mythology, except that when Jacob “first set foot on the New World” he discovered “to his great disappointment that the streets were paved with stone and not with gold” (26). Indeed, Kreisel’s description of the factory where Jacob has worked for most of his adult life suggests that not only has he failed to find the paradise symbolized by golden streets, but has, in fact found, like Alberto Gaetano in The Italians, a kind of inferno, a satanic mill, where he works in “the hottest part” daily assuaged by “the steady vibrating hum of whirring... machines” and the “stale smell of cloth mingled with the steam of the Hoffman presses and the sweat of hundreds of workers....” Here Jacob has not “made a name for himself” as the myth would have it; rather, he is known to the factory managers by his time card number, “No. 1003” (15).

Nor is Jacob truly at home in the New World. His outsider’s alienation and discomfort as well as his subordinate status is graphically revealed in the obsequious manner he adopts when asking for a leave of absence from work, and in his halting, broken English:

Jacob Grossman went shyly into the office. He walked slowly to the chair which the manager offered him and sat down clumsily... He was thinking hard trying to find the
right beginning. He stammered a few words and then he was quiet... 'I wished I could talk in Yiddish mit you Mistah Donken. It is not good for me to talk in English over serious t'ings.' (17)

But Jacob is able to escape from this soul-destroying reality through illusions that re-shape his life's story into a narrative congruent with the promised-land mythology. Through hard work, he and his wife have been able to put their son through medical school, so Jacob has begun to realize his dream of success through him. He has also, through letters home over the years, misled his mother about his work and his financial situation. But the return trip itself is the key element in Jacob's self deception. It allows him to escape the position and identity imposed on him by the vertical mosaic since it provides him with an audience, people who, abetted by the combination of myth and Jacob's deception, see him as the rich man, the fulfillment of their European dreams of the New World.

The very act of preparing for the return journey brings Jacob closer in his own mind to being his family's 'rich American uncle.' In a scene strongly reminiscent of a key scene in The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic novel about the power and elusiveness of the American dream of success, in which Gatsby displays for Nick, with an almost religious intensity, his closet filled with expensive shirts, we see Jacob laying out on his bed all the gifts he has purchased for his European relatives. This act begins his illusory transformation from poor immigrant to rich man:

A feeling of achievement and great satisfaction came over him as he looked at the paper-wrapped parcels on the bed. Tenderly he picked them up, took off the paper, and laid all the things he had bought gently on the bed. And then he looked at the gifts spread out before him, almost covering the whole surface of the bed, and he felt that this was one of the moments he would long cherish and remember, for here, tangible and real, was part of a dream materialized. He would come back to visit his mother and his sisters like a merchant arriving after long travels in foreign lands, bearing great gifts... (24).

But just as Jacob gradually 'unmasks' the reality of life for poor Jews in the Vienna of 1935, he too is unmasked when tragedy strikes his sister's family, and he is unable to offer even minimal assistance, since he has spent all his money fulfilling the demands of an illusory mythology. Ironically, he leaves Vienna after having to work very hard to destroy the illusion he has created by convincing his relatives, first, that he is not a rich man, but a poor one, not simply hard-hearted and selfish; and second not to tell his old mother the truth about him. He wants to spare both his mother and himself
the pain of parting with an illusion that they both need to give meaning to their lives. Jacob's deep sense of "anguish" (203) at his inability to provide the help his relatives so desperately need underscores the inadequacy of the promised land mythology, come full circle, to encompass either the North American immigrant experience within the vertical mosaic, or the Old World's long experience of human depravity. Indeed, it may at times, unwittingly, help to perpetuate both.

CONCLUSION

The vertical mosaic is a pervasive presence in Canadian literature dealing with immigrant and ethnic experience, particularly in the city. It is present most obviously in the fictional urban landscape, complex, tense and above all, non-egalitarian, that is created again and again in this literature: it is present in the crisis of identity that the immigrant and ethnic characters inevitably experience as they discover that 'moving up' often requires them to significantly modify, even obliterate their ethnicity. The vertical mosaic is also present in the fiction's preoccupation with and shifting assessment of victims and oppressors, heroes and villains, and with the broad gap between illusion and reality that the characters must inevitably struggle to bridge in the process of adapting, both physically and spiritually, to the New World. In short, Canada's Fiction of Ethnicity, a divided soul at the centre of its binary sensibility, is anxiously preoccupied with the dynamics of success and failure, a preoccupation fuelled not only by the promised land mythology that has for centuries provided a framework of meaning for immigration to the New World, but also by an encounter with the reality of the vertical mosaic — an encounter at times sufficiently traumatic to turn the mythological paradise into an inferno.

But that Fiction is not a simple, unambiguous victim's whine about the unfairness of it all. It is, rather, a critique, albeit at times somewhat ambivalent, of the rags-to-riches mythology that was a strong strand in 19th and early twentieth century American culture, and perhaps to a considerable degree, Canadian as well. 30 Whether adopting a humorous tone or a profoundly disillusioned one, writers of the urban ethnic experience use irony to both distance themselves from their characters' struggle and at the same time to come scorchingly close to it as they dissect the dynamics of

upward mobility in Canada and the nature of success, ultimately rejecting it, though not without some regret, on the grounds that not only is the price too high, but also, the reward is illusory.

In depicting the vertical mosaic from a perspective other than that of the genteel mainstream and dramatizing its power to 'make or mar' the lives of individuals, immigrant and ethnic writers bring a new and important dimension to Canadian literature. However, the Fiction of Ethnicity that emerges from these novels, and other literary forms as well that explore immigrant and ethnic experience, is in some significant ways oddly congruent with that older genteel literary sensibility, in its divided loyalties, its anxious preoccupation with victimization and in its ambivalent rejection of the American dream.31

Like the sensibility behind the Fiction of Ethnicity and the often tortured characters it creates, the Canadian cultural sensibility is that of a divided soul, a colonial mentality habituated to fearing its landscape and to defining itself against a more powerful cultural ethos that it both admires and despises, because its negative identity depends on it, while its emergent positive identity, constantly in history's shadow, must, like Noah Adler in Son of a Smaller Hero, struggle mightily to gain 'some knowledge' of itself "that [is] independent of others." As a "literature existing at an interface of two cultures... concerned with defining itself, its voice, the dialectic of self and other and the duplicities of self creation..." (Mandel 65), Canada's Fiction of Ethnicity, as well as exposing the divided soul of the immigrant, also mirrors and evokes some of the deep anxieties already very familiar to the English-Canadian sensibility.

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31 For a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of attitudes toward ethnicity as expressed in Canadian fiction, see Terrence Craig, Racial Attitudes in English-Canadian Fiction, 1905-1980 (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP 1987).
L'Acadie: Une mémoire.

Ce titre m'est venu à la lecture d'une entrevue qu'Antonine Maillet accorda, en 1982, à Liano Petroni, professeur à l'Université de Bologne: "Pour moi, l'Acadie sans la mémoire n'existerait pas," affirme-t-elle. Cette conviction expliquerait fort bien le projet littéraire auquel s'est employée Antonine Maillet, celui de vouloir récrire l'histoire de son peuple. Elle expliquerait également l'existence de la littérature acadienne orale événement, mais aussi celle de la littérature écrite, au moins jusqu'à ces toutes dernières années.

Parler de littérature acadienne, c'est d'abord évoquer le nom d'Antonine Maillet, la plus connue des écrivains acadiens; celle qui avec la Séguine, en 1971, et Pélage-la-Charrette, prix Concourt 1979, a donné à notre littérature ses lettres de noblesse; celle qui a exercé sur les jeunes auteurs une influence qu'il est encore difficile d'évaluer; celle qui a contribué plus que quiconque à faire connaître l'Acadie au Canada et à l'étranger, de même qu'à redonner aux siens fierté et confiance. Mais parler de littérature acadienne, c'est aussi dire qu'il existe plusieurs écrivains en Acadie qui méritent d'être connus et reconnus.

Nous n'en sommes plus, heureusement, aux jours où l'on se demandait si la littérature canadienne-française, puis la littérature québécoise existe. Aujourd'hui, la plupart des critiques redéfinissent la littérature, le champ littéraire, en ne le restreignant plus seulement aux chefs-d'œuvre ou à quelques genres. Ainsi le directeur général de l'Union des écrivains du Québec, Michel Gay, plaide en faveur d'une "vision généreuse" de la littérature; il écrit, en 1987:


Litératures of Lesser Diffusion/Les littératures de moindre diffusion
Towards a History of the Literary Institution in Canada: 4th Conference
ISBN 0-921490-05-4/102502.00
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... une littérature n'est pas faite que de romans et de recueils de poésie; une littérature n'est complète que si elle comprend des ouvrages de tous les genres: des œuvres de fiction, des essais, des livres scientifiques.²

Se basant sur son expérience comme professionnelle de recherche au *Dictionnaire des œuvres littéraires du Québec*, Lucie Robert soutient:

... que la littérature ne peut pas être réduite aux grands auteurs et aux grandes œuvres, et que son étude doit rendre compte tout autant des œuvres ratées, mal écrites, qui ont été éditées et lues à une époque donnée.³

On le voit, la littérature est bel et bien en train de perdre sa pureté idéale pour s"affirmer comme tributaire d'une insertion historique et sociale."⁴ Ajoutons que depuis quelques années, au Canada comme ailleurs, on s'intéresse à l'émergence des littératures mineures, des 'littératures de moindre diffusion,' ainsi qu'en témoigne ce présent colloque.

Voilà qui est fort encourageant. Mais nous ne sommes pas dupes; cette ouverture à un sens plus large du terme littérature ne signifie pas que la légitimation et la reconnaissance des littératures mineures ou régionales soient acquises. Pour m'en convaincre, quant aux littératures des francophones hors Québec notamment, il faudrait m'assurer qu'ils sont rares les chercheurs et les intellectuels qui croient ou oseraient écrire, comme l'a fait Maurice Lemire, en 1982: "Il ne reste que des vestiges [d'autres diraient des éléments folkloriques] de colonisation française en Amérique, en dehors du Québec."⁵

Cette phrase, elle m'est restée dans la gorge, elle a vraiment trop de connotations qui rappellent "les quelques arpents de neige" de Voltaire. Elle ne nous empêche cependant pas de croire en l'existence d'une littérature acadienne dont je vais vous retracer la marche vers l'institutionnalisation, une marche lente et difficile, mais de plus en plus certaine.

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³ Lucie Robert, "Institutions, forme institutionnelle et droit," dans *L'Institution littéraire*, sous la direction de Maurice Lemire, Québec, Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture/ Centre de recherche en littérature québécoise, 1986, 18.
ACADIE MYTHIQUE...

En racontant la fondation et les débuts de Port-Royal, le premier poète de la Nouvelle-France, Marc Lescarbot, a peint l'Acadie comme un paradis, comme une terre promise. Malgré quelques appels à plus d'objectivité, par le missionnaire Pierre Biard entre autres, ce mythe littéraire créé par Lescarbot sera repris par tous les essayistes français du XVIIᵉ et de la première moitié du XVIIIᵉ siècle.Destinés pour la plupart soit à attirer des colons, soit à expliquer le peu de succès des colonisateurs, ces textes font état de l'ambition française: établir en Amérique une France nouvelle, plus belle que l'ancienne, et conquérir à Dieu tout un continent. Les Français, c'est bien connu, durent renoncer à leur rêve de grandeur et les Acadiens à leur paradis.

De la déportation et de l'exil forcé des Acadiens à partir de 1755, du retour d'un certain nombre d'entre eux après 1766, du siècle de silence qui suivit, il n'existe pas de récit ou de chant littéraire acadiens, écrits, qui soient connus; nous retenons ceux qui proviennent d'auteurs étrangers: le roman Jacques et Marie (1866) du Canadien français Napoléon Bourassa, le poème Évangéline (1847) de l'Américain Longfellow.

Et ce n'est que le long du rivage brumeux
Où, triste, l'Atlantique abat ses flots houleux,
Qu'on rencontre certains paysans d'Acadie
Dont les pères fuyant l'exil, vers la patrie
Toujours vivante en leurs souvenirs
Ont ramené leurs pas errants, pour y mourir.6

Par ailleurs, durant leurs années d'exil et leur siècle d'isolement, les Acadiens ont conservé et développé leur littérature orale, réputée d'une grande richesse. L'Acadie devenait mémoire. Il est indéniable que le souvenir d'une Acadie-paradis perdu, que les tragiques événements de 1755 ont puissamment marqué la psyché des Acadiens et, forcément, leur littérature.

... ET IDÉOLOGIQUE

C'est à partir de la création du collège Saint-Joseph, à Memramcook, en 1864, et celle du premier journal francophone des provinces Maritimes, le Moniteur acadien, en 1867, que nous pouvons suivre le développement d'une

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6 Henry W. Longfellow, Évangéline, traduction par A. Bollaert, [s.l.], 1911, 127.
littérature écrite, proprement acadienne. En effet, à peine leurs études collégiales terminées, de jeunes Acadiens vont affirmer leur présence, d’abord et surtout, au Nouveau-Brunswick; ils vont travailler au rassemblement des leurs, puis donner les premiers ouvrages écrits par des gens nés en Acadie.

Pendant plus d’un demi-siècle, les journaux, les chaires et les rassemblements nationaux, petits et grands, seront les seuls véhicules dont ils disposent pour diffuser et vulgariser l’idéologie qu’ils édifient, une idéologie qui se démarque peu de celle de leurs anciens maîtres et guides, professeurs et curés venus du Québec. Nous la résumerons ainsi: l’Acadie a connu un passé glorieux avant le ‘grand dérangement,’ les déportés ont été héroïques; or, les Acadiens d’aujourd’hui ne sont pas moins valeureux que leurs pères. Donc, s’ils restent fidèles aux traditions, à la langue et à la foi des ancêtres — la Providence aidant — la survie nationale est assurée. L’Acadie a été et reste promise à un bel avenir.

Ces jeunes chefs de file s’adressent à des auditeurs et à des lecteurs dont la formation scolaire et sociale, est-il besoin de le souligner, est réduite au plus strict minimum. Ces récepteurs écoutent ou lisent les discours ou les essais nationalistes pour ce qu’ils représentent, soit une première prise de parole, et pour ce qu’ils leur apportent de connaissance, d’espoir, d’encouragement mais non pas pour ce qu’ils pourraient être esthétiquement.

Les auteurs sont eux-mêmes guidés par le sentiment d’urgence, de nécessité patriotique et fort peu par celui de la gratuité. Ce qui, d’une part, donne des œuvres "pauvres de style, mais fortes d’une imperturbable volonté de vivre," ce qui, d’autre part, n’empêche pas certains de ces auteurs, tels Pascal Poirier et Philèas-F. Bourgeois, de parler de littérature acadienne naissante.

De fait, une littérature a commencé de se développer, un peu à la manière de la québécoise un siècle plus tôt, "grâce aux journaux et aux discours des chefs politiques et religieux, et sous le signe du nationalism." Elle connaîtra à peu près la même évolution que la littérature du Québec,


8 René Dionne, "C’est le temps de la littérature régionale," dans L’État de la recherche et de la vie française dans l’Ouest canadien, Annette St-Pierre, éd., Saint-Boniface, n° 9, CEFCO, 1982, 3.

mais toujours avec un décalage de cinquante, parfois cent ans, et cela jusqu’aux années 1970.

À partir de 1930, on assiste à la diversification des genres littéraires avec la publication de romans, de pièces de théâtre et de recueils de poésie, mais l’histoire demeure le genre privilégié. Ce qu’il convient ici de signaler, et de regretter, c’est que tant dans les publications plus proprement littéraires que dans les essais historiques, les auteurs n’ont pas su renouveler le discours nationaliste ou nationalitaire. Ils restent accrochés à une idéologie, édifiée à la fin du XIXe siècle, qui leur a permis tout juste de survivre jusqu’au milieu du XXe siècle.

TRANSFORMATIONS SOCIALES...


Dans la foulée de la contestation étudiante en Europe, en Amérique et au Canada, un certain nombre de jeunes universitaires acadiens rejetten l’idéologie nationale, dite officielle, qu’ils tiennent responsable de la situation inacceptable dans laquelle vivotent les Acadiens; ils exhortent ceux-ci à sortir de leur peur et de leur silence pour revendiquer leurs droits. Les débats nationaux lancés sur la place publique sont repris ou prolongés par les chansonniers, les cinéastes et les artistes. L’Acadie vit une nouvelle prise de conscience collective.

Parallèlement à ce réveil des années 60, et le précédant quelque peu, un autre mouvement voit le jour dicté également par l’examen d’une situation alarmante, à savoir la perte des traditions populaires, le danger d’oublier sa littérature orale, sa petite histoire. Ce mouvement de récupération du patrimoine rejoignait, lui aussi, les attentes de lecteurs acadiens pour qui la mémoire du passé reste toujours garante de leur survie comme peuple.

Recueillir et transcrire les contes, les légendes et les coutumes devint le projet d’Anselme Chiasson, de Catherine Jolicoeur et d’autres folkloristes. Antonine Maillet s’inscrira dans ce vaste mouvement, à sa manière bien sûr et comme écrivain; elle fera bellement passer l’Acadie de l’oral à l’écrit. Livre après livre, elle va restituer aux Acadiens une image d’eux-mêmes et de leurs ancêtres, peindre leur joie de vivre et leurs angoisses, consigner
faits, gestes et coutumes, en un mot, elle va faire revivre le passé de l’Acadie-mémoire.

Au tournant des années 80, après une courte pause — le temps d’évaluer la situation et de reviser son orientation comme écrivain — c’est de nouveau l’éclosion littéraire et ce dans tous les genres. Toutefois, la production littéraire est marquée, de façon générale, non plus par le combat nationaliste ou l’engagement politique, mais soit par des préoccupations formelles ou philosophiques, soit par l’exploration de l’imaginaire, ou par l’ouverture sur d’autres milieux et sur d’autres thèmes dont l’amour, le corps, la ville, le quotidien. Les poètes sont toujours les plus nombreux et, si l’on excepte quelques romanciers (Jacques Savoie, France Daigle), ce sont eux qui, comme groupe, offrent encore les œuvres les plus valables.

... ET LITTÉRAIRES

Les mouvements de contestation et de récupération marquent l’arrivée d’une nouvelle génération d’auteurs et de lecteurs. Depuis quelque vingt ans, en effet, on assiste à une effervescence sans précédent de la littérature et à la mise en place progressive de l’institution littéraire en Acadie.

Ce fut d’abord dans de longues nuits de poésie et dans les journaux étudiants — nécessité oblige — que les jeunes contestataires prirent la parole. Et si plusieurs de ces textes ont été recueillis, si aujourd’hui la littérature acadienne est devenue visible chez elle et ailleurs, si elle se manifester avec autant de vigueur, c’est grâce, dans une très large mesure, à la fondation, en 1972, de la première maison d’édition en Acadie. À ce propos, voici quelques statistiques sur la publication de romans, de pièces de théâtre et de recueils de poésie, elles sont assez éloquentes.

De 1958 à 1972, la production littéraire est assurée par deux auteurs seulement: Antonine Maillet dont on connaît l’oeuvre, et Ronald Després, le premier poète et romancier à mettre l’Acadie sur la voie de la modernité. Ils sont tous les deux publiés au Québec.

De 1972 à 1979, les Éditions d’Acadie, à elles seules, lancent 16 publications de 13 nouveaux auteurs. Quelques-uns se sont fait connaître immédiatement en dehors des provinces Maritimes; je pense à Léonard Forest dont l’oeuvre rejoint, par le ton et par l’écriture, les meilleures publications au Canada français; je pense à Raymond LeBlanc et à Herménégilde Chiasson, poètes engagés qui rendent compte de la difficulté d’être et de vivre en Acadie, mais dont les propos ont une portée universelle, je pense au dramaturge Laval Goupil, au chansonnier et poète Calixte Duguay.
Dès 1978, les écrivains sentent le besoin de se regrouper en une association; ils publient un bulletin d'information à l'intention de leurs membres dont le nombre s'élève à 75 en 1980; ils organisent régulièrement des ateliers pour fournir aux auteurs l'occasion de réfléchir sur leur écriture. Une seconde maison d'édition est fondée en 1980, celle-ci destinée exclusivement à la publication de la première oeuvre d'un écrivain acadien; elle a publié, à ce jour, 10 nouveaux auteurs (retenons les noms de Dyane Léger, Gérald LeBlanc, Rose Després, Huguette Bourgeois). La même année paraît une revue de création littéraire Éloizes, au service elle aussi des vigoureux naissants. L'association Théâtre-Acadie offre, lors de ses festivals (elle en est à son cinquième), des activités de perfectionnement en théâtre. Depuis 1979, le prix France-Acadie couronne annuellement des œuvres de bonne qualité.

L'on ne pourrait vivre de sa plume en Acadie (à moins d'être bon chômeur ou bien subventionné), mais l'on peut aujourd'hui se faire publier assez facilement en Acadie. Et le fait d'avoir maintenant plusieurs maisons d'édition qui se feront concurrence peut être un gage de meilleure qualité. Cependant la mise en circulation, la promotion et la vente des livres demeurent un grand problème: on a une production littéraire importante pour un bassin de population de 260,000 et il n'existe aucun réseau de diffusion.

Autre problème sur lequel je glisse un mot, celui de la critique. Celle-ci est pratiquement inexistant. Les journaux et la radio se contentent la plupart du temps d'annoncer les nouvelles parutions, de rendre compte des lancements ou de reproduire les communiqués de presse, élogieux évidemment.

La critique, elle se fait presque exclusivement à l'université; et l'enseignement de la littérature acadienne, il se donne surtout à l'Université de Moncton. On peut dire qu'à cette université, l'institution d'un programme d'enseignement et de recherche s'est fait à un bon rythme. En deux ou trois ans, on est passé d'un cours sur l'enseignement de la littérature écrite et d'un cours de folklore en 1973, à quatre cours de littérature écrite et deux de folklore au niveau du baccalauréat, en plus de créer un séminaire de littérature au niveau de la maîtrise. Six thèses en littérature acadienne ont été soutenues à l'Université de Moncton, depuis 1975.


Toutes ces recherches sur la littérature acadienne débouchent actuellement sur un vaste projet d'édition et de réédition de textes acadiens. Plusieurs professeurs du Département participent à ce projet interdisciplinaire entrepris par la Chaire d'études acadiennes.

C'est principalement grâce aux professeurs de français que le ministère de l'Éducation du Nouveau-Brunswick a mis sur pied un programme d'étude de textes littéraires acadiens. Et c'est également un professeur du Département d'études françaises qui a été le maître d'oeuvre de l'excellent livre scolaire sur les sciences humaines qui vient de paraître, livre destiné aux élèves de la neuvième année, *les Maritimes: trois provinces à découvrir* (1987).

La littérature acadienne est donc de plus en plus visible en Acadie, de plus en plus étudiée et, à mon avis, de plus en plus exportable. Mais comment est-elle reçue au Canada et à l'étranger? Il y aurait une enquête à faire sur la part réservée à la littérature acadienne dans les cours de littérature canadienne-française qui sont au programme dans diverses universités. Le colloque international sur la réception des oeuvres d'Antonine Maillet, qui aura lieu en octobre 88 à l'Université de Moncton, permettra de faire un premier sondage sur l'intérêt accordé à la littérature acadienne de même que sur sa diffusion. En dehors des provinces Maritimes, il est fort peu probable que des cours portent uniquement sur la littérature acadienne.

Ce qui m'amène à parler de la légitimation de la littérature acadienne et de son autonomie. Disons tout de suite que, jusqu'à ce jour, et les écrivains et les chercheurs se sont peu souciés de légitimer la littérature acadienne; ils affirment son existence. Tous ont volontairement évité les comparaisons et les écrivains, surtout, ont ignoré les normes venant de l'extérieur: ils réclament tout simplement le droit à la différence. Cette attitude est en parfaite continuité avec les opinions exprimées par la première génération d'auteurs et d'orateurs du XIXe siècle.

Évidemment, cette volonté d'affirmer son autonomie ou son appartenance à une culture et à une littérature acadiennes peut créer des problèmes, voire desservir certains écrivains. Dans les premiers tomes du *Dictionnaire des oeuvres littéraires du Québec*, par exemple, on peut lire des
comptes rendus sur des volumes acadiens de Pascal Poirier, d'Antoine-J. Léger, de Napoléon-P. Landry, de François-M. Lanteigne et d'autres. Mais dans le dernier tome, qui couvre les années 1970 à 1975, seuls sont étudiés les ouvrages d'Antonine Maillet, de Léonard Forest, de Calixte Duguay et d'autres Acadiens vivant ailleurs que dans les provinces Maritimes. On n'étudie pas les publications d'Herménégilde Chiasson, de Raymond LeBlanc, de Melvin Gallant, etc.; en un mot, de ceux qui refusent l'étiquette québécoise parce qu'ils tiennent à être connus et reconnus comme écrivains appartenant au corpus de la littérature acadienne.

Ils sont donc un peu perdants ou défavorisés par rapport aux auteurs acadiens qui se sont installés au Québec ou ailleurs. Mais établir son autonomie, cela se paie et ce n'est certainement pas la première fois que les Acadiens s'en rendent compte. Et comme je les connais, je parie qu'au lieu de les décourager, cette situation va plutôt les stimuler à continuer de s'ouvrir tout en restant eux-mêmes.

Je termine avec ces paroles d'Herménégilde Chiasson prononcées en 1980; elles illustrent bien qu'après une période de contestations et de revendications, les auteurs contemporains affirment leur foi non seulement dans l'Acadie, mais dans leur littérature:

Oui, le pays se réve et c'est ce rêve que nous avons payé cher pour apprendre que les rêves ne finissent jamais et que personne ne peut nous les arracher. (Le sentiment d'originer, d'appartenir, d'habiter le rêve que nous sommes seuls à partager et qui a rempli nos bagages depuis notre arrivée.)

Il y aura toujours une Acadie. Près de quatre siècles après et dans des conditions indescriptibles, nous nous sommes arrangés pour être là avec vous avec nos chansons, avec nos paroles malaisées, avec notre besoin de partager l'avenir. Ceux qui nous reprochent notre tolérance, notre faiblesse et notre patience n'ont tout simplement pas encore compris.12

Université de Moncton

LA LITTÉRATURE ACADIENNE - BIBLIOGRAPHIE SÉLECTIVE

HISTOIRE, SOCIOLOGIE, GÉOGRAPHIE, ÉCONOMIE, ÉDUCATION


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**LITTÉRATURE, LANGUE, FOLKLORE**


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STEVEN TÖTÖSY de ZEPETNEK

Literary Works by German-Speaking Canadians and Their Critical Appraisal: A Selected and Annotated Bibliography with an Introduction

INTRODUCTION

The term "German-speaking Canadian" denotes a distinction from the more often used "German Canadian" and "German-Canadian literature." It is an important distinction because of the obvious differences in the historical, cultural, sociological, literary, etc., backgrounds of the various "German-Canadian" groups who produced literary works. The German immigrants who emigrated to Canada from the German Federal and Democratic Republics (BRD and DDR) after the Second World War are appropriately called today "German Canadians." The designation becomes more complicated with Mennonites from the former Russian Empire, with the Donauschwaben from Hungary, with the Swiss and the Austrians, and with the Transylvanian Germans, to name a few other "German-speaking" groups. In the critical literature the designation "German-Canadian literature" has been accepted perhaps because of the evident larger body of literary works produced by immigrants from the BRD and DDR.¹

German-speaking Canadians' literary activity began early in Canadian history. Literary production manifested itself following several waves of immigration which began in the eighteenth century. In the following, these waves will be enumerated with subsequent selected indication of their literary activity.²

¹ A taxonomical evolution is observable, however. For example, Hartmut Fröschle wrote "Die deutschkanadische Literatur: Umfang und Problemstellungen" (1981) and "Die deutschsprachige Literatur in Kanada" (1984).
² This brief enumeration is based on Fröschle (1976, 1981, 1984) and Bösenstein (1976).
1) "Lunenburg Germans," i.e., German military troops settled by the British after 1749. *Mainly didactic and liturgical texts.*

2) German soldiers and German United Empire Loyalists discharged from British service, settled mainly in Upper Canada, but also in Lower Canada and the Atlantic provinces. *The works of Johann Gottfried Seume. Travel-literature, such as the works of Baroness Riedesel and A.A. Du Roy.*

3) Pennsylvania Germans who immigrated at the end of the eighteenth century and settled mainly in Upper Canada (South-western Ontario). *Pensilfaanisch dialect literature, minor genre literature such as anecdotes and poems, and "Zeitungsbriefe" published in the "Pensilfaanisch Deitsch Eck."*

4) The "reichsdeutsche" immigrants after 1820, mainly settled in Upper Canada. *The works of John A. Rittinger alias "Joe Klotzkoop," Heinrich Rembe, Eugen Funcken, Emil Querner, etc.*

5) Russia-German emigrants, including the Mennonites, who immigrated after 1874 and after the 1917 October Revolution. *Religious/didactic texts. Works by such as Fritz Senn, Arnold Dyck, Jakob H. Janzen, etc. [Also the German-Canadian F.P. Grove.]*

6) German-speaking refugees from the National Socialist regime in the 1930s, including the Sudeten Germans, settled mainly in Western Canada. In this period, between the First and Second World Wars, also other groups immigrated. *The works of Else Seel, Hermann Böschenstein [also Boeschenstein], Carl Weiselberger, etc.*

7) Large numbers of German-speaking refugees (political and/or economic) who arrived after the Second World War, including East-European German-speaking immigrants. *Mennonite literature, Low German dialect literature (also Mennonite), works by such as Valentin Sawatzky, A.W. Friesen, Gert Neuendorff, Jakob Goerzen, Kounrat Haderlein, Walter Bauer, Ulrich Schaffer, Walter Roome, Anton Frisch, Gertrude von Nusenow, Franz Moos, Rolf Windhorst, Henry Kreisel, etc.*

This bibliography is focussed on titles which will aid the scholar interested in more in-depth research. In the annotations it has been taken into account that this bibliography might be useful not only to scholars with a knowledge of German but also to scholars who are studying the wider aspects of Canadian ethnic minority writing and would like to include the perspectives of German-speaking Canadian authors into their work. Another criterion for selection in this bibliography was to focus on canonized and the more prolific German-speaking Canadian authors and those who published in monograph form. In criticism, works useful for the study of literature and literary life in the sense of systemic/institutional approaches to literature have been given preference.
Works of and about F.P. Grove, H. Kreisel, and R. Wiebe have not been listed here because of space constraints and because bibliographies about these authors are more easily accessible elsewhere than the here selected titles — i.e., in bibliographies of English-Canadian authors. M.A. and Ph.D. theses have also not been listed here; these have been compiled in several bibliographies published previously and are listed under the bibliographies below. Recent Canadian-Mennonite works and secondary literature can be found also in H. Loewen's article in this issue.

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**ANTHOLOGIES**


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Epp, George K. Unter dem Nordlicht. Anthologie des deutschen Schriftums der Mennoniten in Kanada. Winnipeg: The Mennonite German Society of Canada 1977. Contains an introduction in German and English and, in addition to literary texts (17 authors of poetry and 14 authors of prose), a list of Mennonite authors with their biographical data and publications.

Fröschle, Hartmut, ed. Nachrichten aus Ontario: deutschsprachige Literatur in Kanada. Hildesheim/New York: Olms 1981. Includes an essay by Hartmut Fröschle, "Die deutschkanadische Literatur: Umfang und Problemstellungen" (1-12). This anthology is subdivided into sections of poetry, prose, the essay, biographical data on the authors of the selected texts, and a short list of critical articles. The following German-speaking Canadian authors are represented: Bauer Walter, Bauer Wilhelm, Beissel, Böschenstein, Cardinal, Dyck Arnold, Dyck Hedwig, Dyck William, Friesen Abram, Friesen Gerhard (Fritz Senn), Friesen Isaac, Frisch, Fröhlich, Goerzen, Grossmann, Haderlein, Harder, Heyde, Hogrebe, Janzen, Kebschull, Klassen, Kleer, Krause, Kroeg, Kroeger, Kully, Loeb, Loewen, Lohrenz, Luetkenhaus, Mauer, Mohl, Moos, Morstein, Neundorf, Nusenow, Oesen, Ompeda, Pohlkamp, Potitt, Roome, Roosch, Sauder, Sawatzky, Schaefer Ewald, Schaefer Ulrich, Seel, Stieger, Toews, Ullmann, Unruh, Weiss, Weisbelberger, Werneth, Wiebe, Windthorst, Wolf.


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anthology contains mainly poetry with few examples of prose. The following German-speaking Canadian authors are represented: Funcken, Rembe, Querner, Maaß, Böschenstein, Kaestli, Kretz, Pohlkamp, Stieger, Ompotca, Frisch, Bauer, Seel, Friesen, Epp, Klassen Johann P., Peters, Klassen Peter Johann, Goerz, Unruh, Ens, Peetasch, Sawatzky, Janzen, Senn (Friesen), Friesen Abram, Goerzen, Eby, Moyer, Schantz, Schumacher, Sauder, Neufeld, Janzen J.H., Stern, Thiessen, Strasser, Rittinger.


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**CRITICISM**


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Inc. Toronto: U of Toronto P 1981. 167-71. This article contains an English abstract.
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---. ed. *The Old World and the New: Literary Perspectives of German-speaking Canadians*. Toronto Buffalo London: U of Toronto P 1984. This volume contains articles about the works of Seel (Symington), Grove (Riley), Bauer (Hess), Mennonite literature (Loewen), Kreisel (Güttler), Weiselberger (Riedel), Wassermann (Seliger), Schaffer (Liddell), Boschenstein (Arnold), and an introduction to German-Canadian literature (Riedel).


Leaving Home: Canadian-Mennonite Literature in the 1980s

Canadian-Mennonite literature had its beginnings among the Russian-Mennonite immigrants. Emigré writers such as Jacob H. Janzen, Gerhard Loewen, Arnold Dyck and Fritz Senn, to name the most outstanding among them, had several things in common: they all had received their education in pre-World War I Russia; they immigrated to Canada in the 1920s; they wrote in both High and Low German; and in their works, both prose and poetry, they lamented the loss of their homeland.

While Russian Mennonites had begun to write creative literature toward the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, a case can be made for the view that had it not been for the destruction of Mennonite life in Russia, the creative impulses among the Russian Mennonites might not have broken forth to the extent that they did. When the Mennonite world in Russia crumbled in the upheavals of World War I and finally vanished in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1917, the Mennonites not only had a story to tell, but they also found a literary voice to tell their story of loss and suffering.

The first most outstanding Mennonite writers in Canada were Arnold Dyck and Fritz Senn who wrote in High and Low German, and the novelist Rudy Wiebe who startled the Mennonite reading public with his Peace Shall Destroy Many (1962), written in English. Both Fritz Senn and Arnold Dyck are backward-looking, lamenting in their poetry and prose the loss of a world and way of life as they had existed in the past and in another country. The haunting lyrics of Fritz Senn’s "Hinterm Pflug" (Behind the Plow) poems, for example, are no doubt the best poetry written in German that Mennonites have produced. Scenes and symbols of village life, work, and suffering evoke images and moods of memorable beauty and pain. Arnold Dyck’s only novel in High German, Verloren in der Steppe (Lost in the Steppes), describes in minute details the physical world of the Russian Mennonites around 1900, and the longings of its youthful protagonist, Hans Toews, to become an artist. This highly autobiographical novel, written in
Canada in the 1940s, points symbolically to the need to recreate the lost Russian homeland in another time and place — Canada.

In Rudy Wiebe's early novels, *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962) and *The Blue Mountains of China* (1970) the Mennonite world as it existed in Russia and among the Mennonite pioneers in Canada is in the process of disappearing. Here Mennonites are confronted by new realities and problems, Canadian pluralism, non-Mennonite traditions and values, the English language and ways, and material prosperity. After the loss of their old homeland and values, the characters in Wiebe's novels are in search of a spiritual homeland. Thom Wiens in *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, for example, realizes that it is impossible to preserve the old ways, including the German language and culture, in a new country like Canada. With the benefit of its historical and spiritual resources the Mennonite community in Canada will have to adapt creatively to the new reality around it and create a spiritual homeland in which to preserve and nurture its members. Similarly, John Reimer in *The Blue Mountains of China* turns his back upon the past and seeks to fashion a new Mennonite spirituality out of a new understanding of the Gospel and Mennonite history. As Reimer says to old Jacob Friesen at the end of the novel, Mennonites are still trying to find their home, "and it isn't anywhere on earth" (227). The spiritual home of Mennonites, according to Reimer, is the church, "a new society that sets all the old ideas of man living with other men on its head" (215).

With the early Canadian-Mennonite writers the theme of home or loss of a homeland predominates. In these works the homeland is perceived as a geographic, physical, real place. Its destruction and loss is lamented, but in the memory and imagination it continues to exist and to exert a powerful influence on the mourners. In Rudy Wiebe's earlier Mennonite novels there is an attempt to come to terms with the vanishing or largely lost past and an endeavor to recreate a spiritual home which in a real sense is closer to the ideals of the Mennonite forebears than the life Mennonites had developed in Russia and subsequently in Canada. In both the German and English writings of Canadian-Mennonite authors, the characters, however much they may struggle against the stifling atmosphere and limitations of their home environment, remain an integral part of the Mennonite community.

In the 1980s a new generation of poets and novelists has emerged which is no longer as committed to the Mennonite community and values as the older generation had been. These young writers, some of whom are no longer practicing Mennonites, are asking new questions, raise issues not raised before, and often startle their Mennonite readers with their language and attitude. Their prose and poetry reflects a leave-taking, a certain declaration of independence from their traditional community. While these
writers are still wrestling with their Mennonite tradition and values, their independence from the Mennonite institutions enables them to chart new courses, develop new themes, and to appeal to a reading public beyond their community.

Of the more important published writers of the 1980s are Rudy Wiebe, Al Reimer, Patrick Friesen, Sandra Birdsell, Di Brandt, and Audrey Poetker. There are other writers of note, but it is the works of these novelists and poets in which the theme of leaving home takes on major proportions. My treatment of these writers will of necessity be cursory and indicative rather than detailed and exhaustive.

With the publication of *My Lovely Enemy* (1983), Rudy Wiebe shocked the Mennonite public as never before. In 1962 when his first novel appeared Wiebe was forced to resign as editor of a Mennonite magazine; now, more than 20 years later, some Mennonites wondered aloud whether Wiebe was still a Christian. No wonder, for here is a novel in which the ex-Mennonite, Professor James Dyck, breaks all the rules in the Mennonite moral books. Dyck is a married man who apparently loves his wife and family and who at the same time has a continuous affair with another woman without visible regrets or feelings of guilt.

There is more in *My Lovely Enemy* to which Mennonite readers objected. Not only does the protagonist engage in sex outside his marriage and expresses many un-Mennonite views concerning religious and theological issues, but he also comes close to being blasphemous as far as Mennonites are concerned. In a hotel room, with 'the other woman' at his side, he converses, even argues, with Jesus about love, sex, Jesus' manhood and possible temptations. Moreover, the novel questions the validity of the Christian Church's age-old neo-Platonic tradition with regard to the relationship between the physical and spiritual aspects of life, and wonders whether the spiritual is superior to the physical or material.

While Wiebe's novel is complex and moves on many levels, dealing symbolically and metaphorically with the deeper issues of religious faith and life (Redekop), there is no doubt that many Mennonite readers see this work as a blatant disregard, even rejection, of many important Mennonite-Christian assumptions and values. Certainly James Dyck, whatever his past connection to a Mennonite community, is no longer a part of the faith and ethics of his former church. Indeed, Professor Dyck at the end of the novel, when asked by his mother to say something, does not mention anything about re-establishing his Mennonite connections or 'coming home.' The past for James Dyck remains 'irreversible;' he merely yearns for love and oneness with the persons who are close to him, finding fulfillment and meaning in this oneness. As the novel concludes: 'So for a time he looked at each of those who were, the people he loved and who loved him, and he
prayed to see them all at once and know them all, not distinct and separate, even himself, but all one" (262).

Another important work of the last decade is a first novel by Al Reimer, *My Harp is Turned to Mourning* (1985). Written by a professor of English and a member of the Mennonite church, this novel deals with the Russian-Mennonite world prior to and during World War I. The war, the Revolution of 1917, and its aftermath destroy an existence in which Mennonites had been rooted for some 130 years. Like Arnold Dyck's Hans Toews in *Lost in the Steppe*, the protagonist Wilhelm Fast endeavors to become an artist. Unlike Hans Toews, however, who leaves his closed community in order to re-establish himself as an artist in another environment, Wilhelm Fast experiences the destruction of his world with no hope of ever finding a new home. He destroys his art — "all his sketches, drawings and paintings" — thus symbolically acting out the destruction of his own existence and that of his people (412). As Fast and his wife emigrate to Canada, the old world and the Russian past remain mere memories. There is not even a suggestion that they will re-establish the old homeland in Canada. With reference to the Fast's now in Saskatchewan, the novel concludes, "While they agreed that they would probably never feel completely at home here, they had never regretted turning their backs, along with so many others, on their old homeland" (436). All they had was each other. "Their love for each other had brought serenity and purpose to their lives, and they thanked God for it" (436). Not only is there no regret about leaving their former home, but there is also no hint at finding solace and strength in the institutions and values of the past. Like James Dyck in Wiebe's *My Lovely Enemy*, Reimer's protagonists find contentment and fulfillment within love and in their own hearts: "The disturbing ghosts from the past that sometimes haunted their dreams made them cry out and cling to each other in the dark. But with dawn's budding they would rise together to face the inexorable light that swept them forward from day to day" (436).

Patrick Friesen's narrative poem *The Shunning* (1980) tells the tragic story of Peter Neufeld's alienation and expulsion from his Mennonite community. Unlike Wilhelm Fast, Peter Neufeld does not find the love between himself and his wife Helen sufficiently strong to enable him to survive his expulsion from 'paradise.' Using the Bible and pious God-talk, the leaders of his home community drive Peter to dispair and eventually suicide. While pride (Peter's) is at the root of Peter Neufeld's downfall, causing him to oppose the church and its rules, there are many factors which contribute to his death, including betrayal (30, 33, 43), violence (36), and various attacks from all sides. Ironically, his 'paradise' is filled with serpents (16, 26), and the sun, the usual bringer of light and warmth, cannot enlighten and warm closed and cold hearts. "All this light he said/all this
cold light” (39). Already in an earlier poem, included in *bluebottle* (1978), Friesen called his "brethren" "stiffnecked mennonites" who sing their "amazing grace" and at the same time are "idle worshippers" (15). No help can be expected from such brethren and spiritual fathers.

In another collection of poems, *Unearthly Horses* (1984), Friesen continues to rebel against his Mennonite tradition. The so-called "pa poems" register the narrator’s growing independence and opposition to aspects of Mennonite patriarchy. Almost humorously, this independence and rebellion begin shortly after the narrator’s birth, to the great surprise of his father. "pa dropped the baby/when he heard it speak/scared as hell to hear the young one talk/thinking of the devil/and the tongue that can take you anywhere” (15).

The father who punishes his rebellious son is both a Christ figure and a "one-eyed monster" (18). The father’s "Goddamned love" almost kills the child (19), but the son will not submit to the demands of his stern yet weak parent, for he must be true to himself: "think of me as lost,” he says, "living/with one foot in the shade/trying to be true and double-crossing you every step of the way/it's something to live with” (21). Yet leaving home is difficult for both the child and his parents. The parents grieve over their "lost son" and the son, as he removes himself from his home, is left with painful memories:

```
I was alone
you know how it is
when you're haunted...
I was alone once
I was the wonder mother's last joy
before I crossed the threshold...
can you believe that all these years
I felt the burden of your love?
that I am a child of god
with no way to tell you?...(64-65)
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I was dreaming the impossibility of love
the perfection of memory... (73)
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And again later:

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father standing on the stone
learning to be alone
I was dreaming his broken love
how he curled fingers around his pain
and held it until the end
I was dreaming the impossibility of love
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the hello
hello
good-bye. (73)

Like Patrick Friesen’s narrator who startled his father when he began to speak, Di Brandt, another Winnipeg poet, also became a ‘rebel/traitor/thief’ by speaking and asking many questions which her parents could not answer. *Questions i asked my mother* (1987), Brandt’s intensely autobiographical poem, deals with a southern Manitoba Mennonite community which the poet leaves behind. Similar to Pat Friesen, she writes in the Foreword to this collection, "learning to speak in public to write love poems for all the world to read meant betraying once & for all the good Mennonite daughter i tried so unsuccessfully to become."

The poet’s father is annoyed at his daughter’s wish to learn grammar and to write. "Where i come from," he objects, "the reason you learn to read is to understand God’s Holy Word. I only went to school 7 years & it’s done me okay what are you going to do with all this hifalutin education anyway" (4).

The poet asks questions about Mennonite religious faith and morality, the role of women, and the human body. Her father says: "everything you say has this questioning tone i don’t think you’re really interested in grampa or your faith what you really want is to make trouble for mom & me" (5-6). And her mother says: "you’re asking me something i can’t tell you… now help me punch down the dough" (7). The poet internalizes her quest, knowing that "someday i will find out i will find out everything" (7).

Questions about the female body and physical beauty are especially troubling to both the parents and their young daughter. Having strayed with her mother into an art gallery and seen "naked women in various poses" (11), the young girl hoped to speak about this experience at home. But her mother "never mentioned the room full of naked women… there/didn’t seem to be any words for it but it stayed in my memory as a kind of promise touching some deeper hunger than i had/known untouched by more familiar shades of sin" (11).

Like Patrick Friesen’s mother who loved to dance in her private hideout (*Flicker* 3), Brandt’s mother also enjoyed the natural pleasures of life, although she too had to enjoy them in private: "my mother found herself one late summer/afternoon lying in grass under the wild/yellow plum tree jewelled with sun light" (15). Later in winter she remembered the joy and freedom in nature: "she was listening to/herself in the wind singing" (15).

For Mennonites there is nothing more sacred than their relationship to Christ and nothing more sinful than sexual irregularities. For the more fundamentalist Mennonites ‘testifying’ of Jesus and salvation is the height of religiosity; speaking of sexual failings or encounters is frowned upon. Brandt in a daring poem, ‘testimony,’ combines these two aspects, shocking
her Mennonite readers with her parody of pious Jesus-talk and patriarchal norms:

they shake their heads in disbelief
but it's true i found jesus at last
... he was the world's greatest
lover he was so gentle & rough his
lips & his tongue & his soft hairy
belly... he filled up my
aching my dark, gaping void... oh
yes i was lost & then i was found
while the dew was still on the roses...
i'm saved brothers and sisters
jesus saved me. (35)

In another part of this collection the poet speaks of her "contradictory/most treacherous false heart of hearts," of "independence" and "our new vision" (46). "[W]hat i want," she exclaims, "is the old promises/all the ironies swept away" (46). At the end, in a poem "for les," her artistic husband, the poet is "looking/away into distant nonexistent horizons/i am reading Paradise Lost/listening for/cries of birds & sleeping children i am /thinking veiled thoughts of secret lovers..." (45).

Like James Dyck and Wilhelm Fast, the narrator in Brandt's poems finds her new home not in the traditional religious-ethnic Mennonite community, but in human love and the poet's imagination. The Mennonite past provides the poet with images and themes, but the values and practices of her parental background are superceded by new ones or none at all.

Sandra Birdsell, originally of Morris, Manitoba, is the author of two collections of stories, Night Travellers (1982) and Ladies of the House (1984). The stories, while complete in themselves, revolve around the lives of a Canadian family, half Mennonite and half Métis. We learn that when Mika, a Mennonite, married Maurice Lafreniere, her Mennonite community in southern Manitoba failed to accept him and at the same time rejected her. The several children in the Lafreniere family grow up with the tensions which result from the proximity of the two traditions.

In one of the stories, "Night Travellers," Mika's father learns that his daughter is having an affair with another man. One night as Mika passes her parents' house on her way to James, the other man, her father confronts her with remarks about what he might tell the elders of the church and that as a community they are concerned about her wayward ways. Mika replies defiantly: "Look, Papa, you know they don't accept Maurice... they don't invite him into their homes. They don't really accept me, either. So, if you feel it's important to tell the elders, tell them. I don't care." (82).
Her father then speaks of God's forgiveness, sin, and death. Mika counters that it is *her* sin and *her* death: "Leave me be" (83). "She walked away swiftly, and then faster until she was running from him... she wouldn't stop running until she was home, safe, behind the door" (87).

But her father follows her, telling her that she is causing her parents much sorrow. Mika is to think of her soul and eternity. She exclaims, "Eternity? Eternity? Papa, I've spent all my life preparing for eternity. No one tells me how to live each day. Right here, where I am." (88). Nevertheless, Mika agrees not to see the man again, not because she is afraid of eternity, but because she cannot have the man anyway. Even "if I could have him," she reflects, "I wouldn't want him." (89). Mika feels empty, barren, but at peace after this encounter with her father. However, it is not the peace of security, home, and religious faith, but the peace that comes from resignation to the inevitable reality of life.

Audrey Poetker's first collection of poems, *i sing for my dead in german* (1986), moves the reader deeply. These poems express a young woman's feelings and experiences with regard to her body, grief at the death of her family relations, and issues related to Mennonite life. Poetker deals with themes and subjects traditional Mennonites did not even discuss, let alone practice: extra-marital sex, triangles, abortion, adultery, 'the other woman,' and making love in the backseat of a car. In her description of, or allusion to, lovemaking and human genitals, Poetker, like Brandt, is frank and uninhibited, something that is seldom found in earlier Mennonite writers. Brandt shocks and angers her Mennonite readers deliberately; Poetker may no doubt alienate her Mennonite readers with her frankness and vivid images, but she does it without malice.

In a poem "for Grandma Wiebe" Poetker writes about a woman who felt like leaving her husband, but did not because of the many children she bore: "she’s wanted to leave him/so many times/but lost the reasons/in the years/each child another gold ring/to weigh her down/to the flat earth" (34). In a "Father's Day Poem" she speaks of her inability to communicate with her father:

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  halfway up the stairs
  i turn around
  dad's in the living room
  i give him the paper
  thank-you he says
  i go upstairs & cry
  into my pillow. (17)
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And again in the same poem:
What can I say
when you don't listen
or don't want to listen
or pretend not to listen
as you & your father & his
perpetually sinned against
storybook fathers...
you say well let's discuss
it then steal my words
& shoot them
back into my face. (18-19)

This attempt and the apparent failure to communicate with her father and grandparents ends with the lines in a poem "for Grandma Wiebe": "grosmama i say grosmama/but can't remember the low german word/for love" (21). It may be characteristic of Mennonite lack of sentimentality that there is no Low German word for love — at least not one that is generally used (Mennonites say, Etj si di goot — I'm good to you). All the poet can do to express her love for the dead is to sing for them in German. These German songs may be symbolic and reminiscent of Mennonite past solidarity and community, something that is rapidly disappearing. Can that love for and memory of a vanishing existence not be adequately expressed in another time, place and language? Perhaps not in the fullest sense.

It would be simplistic to suggest that all Mennonite literature of the last years is preoccupied with rebellion against traditional Mennonite norms and values. Nevertheless, we do find that much of this writing is a coming to terms with the Mennonite tradition. There is, moreover, a new tone in the works of the young Mennonite writers. To be sure, earlier writers were "witnesses and critics" — as Rudy Wiebe called writers — and they often found themselves on the edge of Mennonite society, but those writers and their characters remained part of their Mennonite community. Most of the younger writers, on the other hand, are not only non-practising Mennonites, but they also raise questions and issues which earlier writers either did not think of or did not dare to raise. The tone in their works is often defiant, and the language and images are at times provocative, even shocking. There is, it seems, a deliberate attempt to leave behind a way of life which according to these writers is antiquated or inadequate in today's society. These writers probe and expose religious and ethical values that either have outlived their usefulness or stand in the way of these writers' pursuit of truth and a richer human experience.

In their declaration of independence from the traditionally limited and often stifling Mennonite community, these writers often exaggerate past Mennonite negation or rejection of all art forms (Mierau). Some of them seem to believe that a provocative language and crass images are the only
means of changing their elders’ attitude toward art and literature, although there is some doubt whether they are trying to do this. These writers sometimes overstate their case and make pronouncements rather than write good literature.

Yet the tie to their community had to be cut no doubt. The comforts of home often limit artistic talents, hence they have to be left behind. The creative writer needs the freedom and independence to develop his artistic sensibilities and skills. The writer, however, also requires the tension that exists between the community and the past on the one hand and the artist’s desire and necessity to be free and creative on the other.

There are indications that Canadian-Mennonite literature is coming of age and beginning to contribute to Canadian literature in general. While such writers as Rudy Wiebe and Al Reimer remain active members of their Mennonite communities, they are sufficiently independent to write works of maturity and artistic value. Both Wiebe’s My Lovely Enemy and Reimer’s My Harp is Turned to Mourning rank among the best novels written by Canadian-Mennonites in the last ten years. These writers interpret Canadian-Mennonite, indeed human, experiences within the context of modern life and portray the changing Mennonite world both realistically and convincingly. The characters of their novels know that in the real world there is no turning back and seldom a ‘paradise regained.’ Yet while the protagonists in these novels have to find or create a new centre of existence for themselves, they are guided, at least in part, by the values of their former community.

Patrick Friesen and Sandra Birdsell are also evolving into writers of note. While they are not formally connected to a Mennonite religious community, they draw their themes and images from that tradition. Their characters suffer because their communities have either expelled or shunned them. In Friesen’s poetry there is an emphasis on a father’s love from which the son removes himself in order to find a voice as an individual and artist. Birdsell’s characters, most of them women or young girls, are aware of their background, but in the world in which they live they have to fend for themselves without the support of that tradition.

Brandt and Audrey Poetker have just begun to publish their work. There is an impatience, even a rebellious mood, evident in their poetry, especially in Brandt’s verses. Their poetry shows promise, but only time will tell whether the promise of their early work will find fulfillment in sustained literary quality — especially after their questions, the questions they asked their mothers and fathers, have been answered.

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Inuit Literature in the South

Most Canadian readers are vaguely aware that such a thing as Inuit literature exists; when asked about it they will very likely mention legends, and when prodded will suggest that perhaps there are also traditional songs. Few are aware of how highly developed the literature of the oral tradition was or how much of it has been preserved by ethnologists like Diamond Jenness, Knud Rasmussen and Paul Emile Victor. Fewer still are aware that since the turn of the century there has been a growing literature in the written tradition as well. Much of this work is in Inuktitut, in one of the dozens and dozens of community newspapers and magazines that have been published in northern settlements, but a substantial number of books, articles, stories and poems have been published in English as well.

Canada's Inuit are a relatively small group of people. They all speak the same language, with about six major dialects, but they are strung out over thousands of miles of coastline and it is only in recent years that it has been possible for them to have regular contact with one another. Prior to satellite communication and improved air travel, the only way Inuit from one community had contact with people from other areas was in hospital in the south. The dialectical differences apparent in written Inuktitut were further aggravated by the fact that missionaries had introduced a number of different orthographies, so manuscripts and periodicals in the native language had a very limited audience. English tended to become the language of written communication even between Inuit who were fluent in their own tongue.

Inuit literature in English varies greatly in form, content and quality. From the oral tradition, there are song-duels and incantations, legends and creation myths, accounts of white explorers and historic migrations, epics and tales of murder and revenge. In the written literature there are dozens of autobiographies, collections of memoirs and stories, essays on land claims, education and politics, satiric poems, songs, parodies, romantic ballads, novels, plays and religious chronicles. Some of these latter works are translations from the Inuktitut while others are written originally in English.
The language, too, varies greatly and can be elegant and beautiful or wooden and inaccurate; it can be classical diction or colourful 'Eskimo English' as it is spoken in the settlements.

Anyone concerned with fostering Inuit literature in Canada is faced with two basic problems; how to encourage Inuit writers, and how to open the material up to English readers. The first problem, that of encouraging Inuit to write and to write well, is a question best dealt with by those within the culture, although help can be offered from outside. At the moment, the Inuit Cultural Institute in Eskimo Point is primarily responsible for publishing material in English and Inuktitut, such as their "Autobiography Series" and their "Cultural Series." The Culture and Linguistics Section of Indian and Northern Affairs still fosters the arts and publishes the quarterly magazine Inuktitut. Individual Inuit associations, such as the Labrador Inuit Association and the Kitikmeot Inuit Association, publish books and newsletters, as does the Inuit Literature Society in Iqaluit and various educational institutions such as the Kativik School Board in northern Quebec and the Department of Education of the Northwest Territories. Religious groups also provide encouragement and publication opportunities for Inuit authors.

The development of a standard Inuktitut orthography, the improvement of syllabic typewriters, the development of computer programs and the Mactitut software that allows material to be easily typed and edited in either orthography, and the dissemination of word lists and dictionaries, have all made it easier for Inuit authors to produce substantial works in their own language. Improved education, increased interest, and the expanded availability of trained translators, have all made it easier for them to publish their works in English also. Given that there are less than 30,000 Inuit in Canada, the greatest encouragement to Inuit authors is, surely, to expand their market by making their works attractive and available to the English reading public.

The question of how to open Inuit literature up to English readers is a complex one. Like native art, native literature is ghettoized and boxed into a special category that is sometimes labelled "children's literature," "anthropology," "primitive or folk," or "Amerindian." All of these labels have attracted some people who might otherwise not have paid any attention to the works, but beyond a certain point these labels prevent the works from being judged and appreciated as real works of art. In many cases, Inuit artists and writers are rigidly limited in their subject matter because the buying and reading public are interested only in stereo-typical depictions of natives as smiling hunters and carvers, living in igloos, untouched by the difficulties of modern life. A carving of a skidoo or a story about a drug-bust in Cape Dorset is considered offensive, regardless of how perfectly crafted or interesting it is, because it shatters the Walt Disney illusions most non-Inuit have of these people.
Even the traditional material, such as the poems collected in the early contact days, is given a veneer of respect but is not regarded with any sincere critical attention. Marshall McLuhan in the 50's and Rudy Wiebe in the 60's struggled to have Inuit poetry recognized as serious literature rather than as an anthropological curiosity, but the result backfired somewhat in that suddenly all Inuit poems were regarded as sacred, unspoiled flowers that were simply to be admired in a passive way, never subject to the intense light of criticism. As Rasmussen pointed out, these poems are sturdy Arctic plants not fragile hot-house blooms, and are well able to stand up to the keenly sensitive scrutiny of a literary critic.

If Inuit literature is to take its rightful place in the corpus of Canadian writing, a number of things have to be done, and foremost is documentation. Basic bibliographic work has been accomplished but it is incomplete and every day becomes more and more outdated. Once we know what exists, we need to know its origins; who wrote it, where it was written, what language it was written in, what dialect, which orthography, who the translator was if there was one, when it was first published. We need to see Inuit writers as individuals with names and histories, not as anonymous Eskimos with, at best, a tribal affiliation.

We have to find out where these works are available in libraries, and we need to tell librarians how to list works so that the names come in the correct order, the languages and orthographies are identified, and there is some indication of the contents. A great many books by Inuit have never made it onto the shelves because a clerk did not know how to list a title that appears first in syllabics or a Moravian script. Complete runs of Inuit periodicals should be collected and copied by xerox or microfilm for distribution throughout the north as well as to the major centres in the south. If people cannot find the material, they cannot read it, and if they cannot read it they will not develop an appetite for more.

The second major step in making Inuit literature attractive to English readers is to subject it to the same academic attention that we give literature by English-Canadian or French-Canadian writers. Critics writing about Inuit poetry stress the magical and ritualistic aspects of the work and imply that we cannot hope to understand what the poet is saying. There will always be elements of Inuit poetry that will never be understood, just as there will always be elements of Old English poetry or Sound poetry that will never be fully explored, but the poems and the legends did not appear out of thin air. The traditional works, like the modern ones, were crafted by individuals working with linear narrative patterns and predetermined repetitive structures, and most of the poems do make sense if the reader takes the time to work at them and think about them. There are universal elements
in the works that can be understood by anyone with an ounce of imagination.

Academics and critics must accept the fact that Inuit literature will be hard work at times, just as understanding or teaching Milton or Donne is sometimes hard work; cultural obscurities abound in even the most modern stories and poems by Inuit writers. However, the literature did not emerge from a vacuum any more than the culture did and there are ties and links to the old oral tradition as well as to the literature introduced with European contact. To fully understand an autobiography by a middle-aged Inuk, it is likely that a reader will need to have a basic knowledge of the legends of Sedna or the epic hero Kiviok, as well as a familiarity with the works of Dr. Seuss and the Marvel comics that were used to teach English to Inuit patients in the Moutain Sanatorium in Hamilton. Such background research will only appeal to a limited number of academics, but that is the case with all English literature and sharing this information is the reason we publish in academic journals.

The third major step that academics must make to open the world of Inuit literature to non-Inuit readers is to work as much as possible with Inuit colleagues and students. The opportunities for such work are obviously limited to universities that have connections with the north or have special programs for native people; Memorial, McGill, all universities in Alberta, Ottawa, Carleton, the University of Western Ontario, Laval, and the University of Manitoba, all have Inuit students enrolled, but there is probably not a university in Canada which does not send at least one academic into the Arctic each summer. Inuit teachers and teaching assistants are willing and anxious to learn from colleagues in the south but often academic findings are written up in obscure jargon that is inaccessible to those from outside the discipline, never mind those from outside the culture. Geologists, zoologists, linguists and literary critics alike should be making a special effort to increase the value of their work to lay people in general, not just to the academic community.

By teaching native students how we approach and analyze literature, we give them the tools they need to explain their culture and literature to us. Contrary to popular belief, most Inuit do not resent or resist the involvement of non-Inuit in their cultural development. They welcome sensitive teachers, editors and critics, particularly those who are prepared to work themselves out of their jobs by producing Inuit teachers, Inuit editors and Inuit critics.

A delighted Inuit student once compared learning to read and write to being caught in a river that starts off as a small trickle but soon grows and grows until it is a huge cascade. My experience working with Inuit literature in English has been very similar in that, fifteen years ago, I had a handful of books and magazines by Inuit writers and no idea that I was about to be
swept away by a torrent of print from Canada, Alaska, Denmark, France, Greenland and Belgium. The experience is exciting and breathtaking and not the least bit unpleasant. Works by Inuit authors are an important part of the Canadian literary mosaic but they need the documentation, criticism and encouragement accorded other minority literatures in Canada if they are to continue to flourish and grow.

University of Alberta

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**SECONDARY LITERATURE**


Native Voices in English-Canadian Literature: Ancient and Contemporary

In the history of official English-Canadian literature, the Indian has long served as the white man's totem. Leslie Monkman, in A Native Heritage: Images of the Indian in English-Canadian Literature, has traced the portrayal and use of the aboriginal figure by non-native writers and has concluded:

In each era of Canadian literary history, writers have turned to the Indian and his culture for standards by which to measure the values and goals of white Canadian society, for patterns of cultural destruction, transformation, and survival, and for new heroes and indigenous myths.¹

By now, Monkman's thesis is well known. A corollary of Canadian history, Canadian literature has mirrored white culture's struggle for civilization in a fearsome landscape. Here the Indian has stood in a variety of ambivalent poses, as the savage antagonist and foil to white desire for settlement and Christianity in the likes of early narrative immigration poems and conversely as romantic symbol of freedom in nature for later writers antipathetic to the values and virtues of civilization. The 'red' man in literature, then, has been 'the other' by which white culture could achieve its authority, measure its objectives and even critique itself.

The white man's Indian and the white man as Indian are two important, if simplified, features of mainstream writing. The latter is theatrically illustrated by the Grey Owl phenomenon of the nineteen-thirties when Archie Belaney, a British immigrant, assumed the persona of an Ojibway Indian and as writer, speaker and conservationist enchanted Canadian audiences and readers who believed him to be an authentic Indian and embraced him as a national hero. The appropriation of the Indian by white culture through Grey Owl is on one level an expression of a popular

¹ Leslie Monkman, A Native Heritage (Toronto: U of Toronto P 1981) 3.
imagination informed by a history of conquest. On another, it suggests a
desperate, mythopoeic longing on the part of an immigrant population for
an ancestral past in a new land, a longing which is continuous in white
fictionalizing, as writers continue to people their visions and shape their
fictions through an aboriginal heritage. Monkman explains:

Red heroes fill the vacuum created by the absence of white aboriginal traditions on this
continent, and the dream of a distinctive national literature focuses on the history and
heritage of the red man. In Indian myths and legends, white writers find a new
understanding of the landscape and its gods and discover rhythms, images, and
structures that enable them to communicate in a new and powerful idiom. (5)

The white writer as red shaman is most strongly felt in contemporary
writing on the Western prairies. Here a relatively recent history of multi-
cultural immigration and direct meeting between newly arrived whites and
surviving Indians in a slow-to-develop industrial environs has insisted on
communication. Articulating West, prairie writers such as the late George
Ryga and Margaret Laurence, Sheila Watson, Rudy Wiebe, W. O. Mitchell,
Andy Suknaski, Eli Mandel and Robert Kroetsch know in their art not only
the native as hero or victim, as illuminations on white society and its
institutions, but his art forms and cultural heroes as their own, and their
mutual experiences as paradigms for regional or national Canadian culture.

Bernard Selinger assesses prairie writers in just this way when he outlines
their meeting of the native in fiction on mutual ecological prairie ground
and applauds them for absorbing the "rhythms and values as indigenously
fashioned by centuries of prairie Indian experience with the land." By so
doing, claims Selinger, white prairie writers have given the West the
"opportunity to lead the rest of the country into a more creative,
ecologically-minded way of being." And when Robert Kroetsch suggests a
paradigm for Canadian culture in the central symbol of Sheila Watson's
Indian-inspired The Double Hook, which is "the total ambiguity that is so
essentially Canadian... two solitudes, the bush garden... the pattern of equally
matched opposites" he is including in these polarities, suggests Leslie
Monkman, the interface between red and non-native cultures (164).

Unfortunately for the Native people, "the pattern of equally matched
opposites," the double hook eulogized by non-native writers and critics has
failed to materialize. If, in the ironic words of Midnight Sun, the native as
alcoholic has been a profitable "natural resource" for mainstream culture,
providing thousands of jobs for whites in the liquor trade, treatment

facilities and correctional institutes,\(^3\) he has been equally a natural resource, however unintentionally, for white authors. Margaret Harry's outrage at the invisibility of Indian writers and the indifference of white readers to Native writers, who cannot get published without 'white' market appeal, has, in the recent past, at least, been well taken: "For most English-Canadian authors and readers, the Native peoples of Canada are either invisible or stereotypes; what the Indians and Inuit have to say for themselves is suppressed or ignored." She rightly asks: "Where are the Indian and Inuit writers?"\(^4\)

That the Indian will no longer accept his role in mainstream society as cultural artifact, museum Indian and fictional totem, that his voice is becoming increasingly vehement was dramatically illustrated prior to the Winter Olympics held in Calgary in February 1988. The exhibit of Indian treasures, collected world-wide by the Glenbow Museum, "The Spirit Sings," drew Indian leaders from across the country who protested not only the imperialistic display of their material culture, but the lack of government action over the unresolved land claims of the Lubicon Lake Indian band in Alberta. The tone of Mohawk Chief Billy Two Rivers's protestation of unfair treatment: "We gave you this land. We gave you passage... now that you are the dominant society, you're behaving as the savage"\(^5\) is one that has been adopted by contemporary Native leaders, who as political activists, speechmakers, and writers are attempting to sound pan-Indian grievance wherever they can make themselves heard and read. Nonetheless, Native literature, whether politically or aesthetically motivated, finds its expression at the periphery, largely via small presses, academic journals and special anthologies of native writing. There is, however, a reclamation of a Native literary tradition well under way in the cumulative interest and support of professional folklorists, literary critics and sympathetic non-white writers whose best motive may very well be that demanded by Alvin Wanderingspirit in the Glenbow protest, that is "to share the shame."\(^6\)

One significant and useful work in the field of Native literature has been Penny Petrone's *First People First Voices*, an edited selection of writing and speeches by Canadian Indians from the 1630's to the 1980's. Included in this volume are pieces by some of Canada's most visible contemporary authors such as Chief Dan George, Duke Redbird, Basil Johnston, George Kenny,


\(^6\) Ibid. 1.
Rita Joe, Midnight Sun, Daniel David Moses, Alanis Obomsawin and Lenore Keeshig-Tobias. More importantly, this volume is an invitation to mainstream culture to appreciate the oral/aural origins of a native literary tradition. The reproduction of speeches from a variety of sources, including the Jesuit Relations is a tribute to the orality of Native culture and the rhetorical abilities of Native speakers. The eloquence of the ‘savage,’ first noted by missionaries and explorers, is recorded here (and in earlier works such as Kent Gooderham’s I Am An Indian) as rhetoric of high classical order. Even in translation, a short speech such as that by the Montagnais chief, Capitanal (1615-34), responding to Champlain’s complaint about the Montagnais trading with the British, is an example of a disciplined appeal to the pathos, ethos and logos of traditional rhetorical art. Capitanal establishes his ethos carefully as he begins his speech, strategically assuming an inferior status, and insinuating a subtle emotional appeal in his veiled reference to the fact that his father had been killed at Champlain’s side in a raid against the Iroquois.

I am a poor little animal, crawling about on the ground; you Frenchmen are the great of the earth, who make all tremble. I do not know how I dare to talk before such Captains. If I had some one behind me who would suggest what I ought to say, I would speak more boldly... I am bewildered; I never had any instruction; my father left me very young.... 7

Employing a number of tropes, including metaphor, that frame of mind and figurative construction that characterized not only Aristotelian rhetoric but Native speech makers in their councils, Capitanal demonstrates the consummate skill of the Indian rhetorician. The study of the rhetorical Indian, however, is not without its dangers for the contemporary student. In mainstream literature, the Indian has tended to be presented in this very way. Kept at arms length as external and rhetorical, he has been a convenient dramatic figure for white culture’s objectives. This danger is minimized when contemporary speeches, which are not filtered or censored through translation, or coloured with the white historical bias of the romantic aboriginal as outsider, are juxtaposed with ancient voices. For example, the passionate insistence of a speech like that of Mary Two Axe Early’s, demanding rights for Indian women and presented to the Minister of Indian Affairs in 1979, is undeniably the projection of an authentic Indian personality; at the same time, Two Axe Early’s performance as a rhetorician is clearly a tour de force of traditional rhetorical structures and devices. Beginning with logical, intellectual appeals to an educated

7 Penny Petrone, ed. First People First Voices (Toronto: U of Toronto P 1983) 5.
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audience, the speaker shifts into a dramatic metaphor of rape, and a rhetoric of cohesiveness in her balanced, parallel exhortations:

Fourth, we are stripped naked of any legal protection and raped by those who would take advantage of the inequities afforded by the Indian Act. Raped because we cannot be buried beside the mothers who bore us and the fathers who begot us. Raped because we are subject to eviction from the domiciles of our families and expulsion from the tribal roles. Raped because we must forfeit any inheritance or ownership of property, raped because we are divested of the right to vote... Raped because we are unable to pass our Indianess and the Indian culture that is engendered by a mother to her children. Raped because we live in a country acclaimed to be one of the greatest cradles for democracy on earth offering asylum to Vietnam refugees and other suppressed peoples while within its borders its Native sisters are experiencing the same suppression that has caused these peoples to seek refuge by the great mother known as "Canada." 8

Two Axe Early's inclusion and repetition of the phrase "the great mother known as Canada" is also a striking reminder of the fundamental orality of Native cultures and the astonishing persistence of its communal memory. The language of treaty-making of Alexander Morris's rhetoric of paternalism in 1873, when he coined such phrases as "children," "father," "great mother" and that archetypal phrase of trust for the Native imagination, "as long as the sun shines and the rivers flow" has survived even to the present day.

The oral literature of the Native peoples includes not only speeches but songs, chants, and narratives: folktales, legends and myths that were collected, transcribed and translated in Canada by the Jesuit fathers and later by anthropologists, sociologists and folklorists. Scores of anthologies of the narratives of the eleven cultural areas of North American Indians exist today, and, as literature, have been a primary interest of folklorists who, typically, describe and index Native folklore under such motif headings as creation myths, trickster tales, test and hero tales, journeys to the other world, and animal wives and husbands.9 Although Canadian Native writers and visual artists such as Carl Ray in Sacred Legends of the Sandy Lake Cree or Norval Morriseau in Legends of My People have sought to reclaim the spiritualism of the tribal story-telling they are familiar with, as well as the scatological humour that reformist Christianity in the past has excised, the world view of the Cree or the Ojibway that informs these narratives remains difficult to re-invent. Without the full knowledge of the culture systems that

Indian folklore reflects, the reader is faced with a transcribed oral literature that need stand on its own and to some degree, is left with Diamond Jenness's original assessment of it for white European readers:

Our psychological background does not permit us to adopt the attitude of the Indian and to look for supernatural interferences in the most pedestrian events... most of us have outgrown the stage of enjoying mere anecdotes and prefer literature of a less superficial character. Doubtless certain animal tales are suitable for children, and some of the traditions provide excellent material for a writer of romances who can select what he pleases and build up the remainder according to his fancy.  

Although Native folklore as literary genre and art, if studied at all, is indeed usually relegated to the paraliterary field of children's literature, an interesting new development in the methodology of the folklorist, that of ethnozoetics, predicts exciting new possibilities. In translating the spoken narratives of the Zuni Indian to the printed page, Dennis Tedlock in Finding the Center: Narrative Poetry of Zuni Indians determined that no orally presented speech is in prose form. Folklorist Pauline Greenhill explains: "Tedlock] maintains that people speak in poetic lines, not sentences, and he distinguishes such lines by pauses in speech." Insisting on ‘total translation,’ then, on the inclusion of both sound and silence in spoken literature, Tedlock upholds poetry, not prose, as the most appropriate written medium for native narrative:

The spoken narratives of the Zuni Indians (like those of other tribal peoples) are events, not just verbal descriptions of events. They sound like poems and plays, but because they are spoken rather than sung or chanted they have always been treated in translation as if they were equivalent to written prose. If one 'listens' only for meaning (in the ordinary sense), it is easy to fall into this trap; but if one listens to the sounds (with more than the narrow phonetic ear of the linguist) and to the intervening silences, it becomes clear that what has been widely called 'oral prose' is in reality

11 George Cornell has recently argued that Tedlock's methodology remains an imposition of Western literary forms on native American oral traditions, and that a genuine appreciation of oral narratives can only be fully appreciated by a thorough understanding of cultural systems. See George L. Cornell, "The Imposition of Western Definitions of Literature on Indian Oral Traditions," in Thomas King, Cheryl Calver, and Helen Hoy, eds., The Native in Literature (Downsview: ECW 1987) 174-87. One useful text that includes Ojibway narrative in a larger exploration of Ojibway culture is Basil Johnston, Ojibway Heritage (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart 1987).
dramatic poetry. Indeed, there is ample reason to believe that 'prose' has no existence at all outside the written page.¹³

With appropriate aids to reading, including instructions that loud words and passages are indicated by CAPITALS, soft ones in parenthesis, lengthened vowel sounds indicated by ____ etc., Tedlock begins his transliteration of Andrew Peynetsa telling the tale of The Boy and the Deer. "Eeso" has the affect here of "ah yes" and is the audience's standardized response in the spoken narrative tradition.

THE BOY AND THE DEER
by Andrew Peynetsa

Zuni

SON’AHCHI.
(audience) Ee—so.
SONTILO—NG AGO.
(audience) Ee—so.
THERE WERE VII-LAGERS AT HE’SHOKTA
and
up on the Prairie-Dog Hills
the deer
had their home. (Shaking the Pumpkin, 95)

The reshaping and revocalization of traditional myth and legend is also the province of a new generation of Native writers. Finding their roots in a Native literary heritage, some of these authors weave intriguing tales of such cultural trickster heroes as Coyote and Raven in popular English idiom, with a slight nod even in the direction of the postmodern writer and his concerns with the fictiveness of fiction. In "Coyote Meets Raven" Peter Blue Cloud brings Coyote to visit British Columbia where he meets Raven in a contest for authority and power. While this tale is clearly in the realm of the fabulous where, for example, the animal transformation mythology of native belief holds sway: "On the second night Coyote began growing bored and decided to leave his body and travel around. He left his gambling

concentration in a hollow hallucination of empty skin and took off, the tone is tongue-in-cheek, the perspective that of the fictionalizer making his reader acutely aware of the art of fiction-making itself. Similarly, Bill Reid and Robert Bringhurst in "The Raven and the Big Fisherman" conclude a suspenseful, bawdy tale of Raven’s greed and sexual chicanery with a fictional signpost about fiction: "Then they paddled him [Raven] far out to sea where they dumped him overboard, into the next story." The distance of these writers from fictional form and subject is obviously also that of the semi-acculturated, a theme that George Kenny explores through Native legend as subject in a narrative that is more closely modelled on the short story form of white fiction writing. In "Soft and Trembling Cry" a thirteen-year-old Ojibway girl, culturally influenced by both a white urban lifestyle and Native ways, is sent by her Kokum (grandmother) into the forest to kill the Death-bird who, if left alive, will predict a family death. When she and her brother shoot — and miss — the awesome black bird, both she and the reader are left in a desperate ambiguous vacuum, wondering at the prophecy of the Death-bird, and the authenticity of native belief as fact or fiction.

The struggle of these contemporary Native artists is, clearly, not only to force the mainstream official literary culture to acknowledge their presence, but to settle on literary genres that are natural to their experience and creative sensibilities. Not surprisingly, autobiography, memoirs, reminiscences and retrospectives, genres that inevitably spring into place as a culture moves from orality to literacy, are favoured. The more sensational of these, such as Maria Campbell’s life as a Métis, Half Breed, command a wider reading audience than quieter stories of personal success, such as Eleanor Brass’s I Walk in Two Worlds or retrospects on a vanished life, such as Beverly Hungry Wolf’s The Ways of My Grandmothers. All, however, contribute to realizing a Native point of view.

14 Peter Blue Cloud, "Coyote Meets Raven," Earth Power Coming: Short Fiction in Native American Literature, ed. S.J. Ortiz (Tsaile, Ariz.: Navajo Community College Press 1983) 120.
17 For an exploration of the nature and function of autobiography and biography for native women, see Barbara Godard, "Listening for the Silence: Native Women’s Traditional Narratives," Thomas King, Cheryl Carrier, and Helen Hoy, eds., The Native in Literature (Downsview: ECW 1987) 133-58.
A second favored form for contemporary Canadian-Indian authors is that of poetry. In an early collection, Many Voices: An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Indian Poetry (1977), David Day and Marilyn Bowering quite rightly stress the eclecticism of theme and technique amongst Native poets writing today. Outside the mainstream, these poets are individually subject to a variety of influences, yet all are distinguishably native in voice. The more traditional of them unearth Native songs and chants or weave native mythology, custom and religion into verse. The more modern experiment with the likes of imagistic, found, and concrete poetry. Themes of social protest, melancholy displacement and collective grief re-occur and a Native transcendentalism — a mystical merging of the self with nature — is ever-present in increasingly sophisticated verse forms and techniques. Chief Dan George's apparent simple lyricism, for example, in this second stanza of a four stanza poem

0 cloud
for the blood
in my body
I thank Thee. 18

is eclipsed, at least for non-native readers, by the metaphoric synthesis of body, river, land and season in "Some Grand River Blues" by Daniel David Moses.

SOME GRAND RIVER BLUES

Look. The land ends up
in stubble every
October. The sky
today may feel as

empty. But just be
like the river-bend
and reflect it. Those
blues already show

through the skin inside
your elbow — and flow
back to the heart. Why
let a few passing
Canada geese up
set you? Just remind

18 Chief Dan George, My Heart Soars (Surrey: Hancock House 1974) 35.
you yourself how the land
also reigns. Don't

despair just because
they're already too
high to hear. Your heart
started beating with

their wings the moment
you got sight of them
— but that's no reason
to fear it will still

when they disappear.
Look away now. Let
loose. See? The river's
bending like a bruise. 19

Notably, several of the rising stars among the new generation of Indian poets fit easily into mainstream development. Narrative poetry, while natural to the native as storyteller and rhetorician and magical in the hands of Micmac poet, Rita Joe (whose eulogies to a lost Indian past in Poems of Rita Joe recur in spirit and theme in the work of younger poets) has a special presence in contemporary prairie poetry. Anecdotal poetry of conversational tone and folk idiom characterizes the work of Andy Suknaski who, suggests critic Stephen Scobie, "has had an immense influence upon the development of prairie poetry..." 20 The work in this vein of the Blood poet, Makweeneski, in Alberta, is extraordinarily vital, as in the following ironic and subtle comment on Indian affairs in "Old Buddy."

Hey Buster!
Where you been you ol' son a bitch!
where's you whiskey?
Ol'lady t'rew me out
on a count a my trinkin',
she say I gotta choose what
I luf more, her or da boddle,
Crazy woman!
Hell, you look like Big Susie
she ran over you.
Gimme a trink

An' I'll sink you a real goot
forty-niner.

Hay ya hay ho!
If you really luf me
hon-ey,
hay ya, hay ho!
Bring back
Six pack!
hay ya hay ho!
and I'll take you home
in my one eyed ford
hay ya
hay ho!

Gimme nudder trink
an' I'll tell you goot story
'bout when Blackjack an' me
sto' a car an' Big Susie
she drive
all a way to Crow Indian Day's
an' Big Susie she find nudder guy
an' we gotta find nudder way home.

By Golly! 'tsgoot to see you.21

Feminism, too, provides a space for Native writers. Kate Shanley, an
American Indian raised on the Fort Peak Reservation in Montana, in
"Thoughts on Indian Feminism"22 worries about the tension between being
a feminist and an Indian woman because, among other things, Indian
women are committed to pursuing the goal of tribal and racial sovereignty. Indian
authors, however, who write eloquently or satirically about the plight of
Indian women or from a female perspective and sensibility can command, at
the very least, a feminist audience. Thus works by Canadian natives, Emilie
Gallant, Lenore Keeshig-Tobias and Midnight Sun are included in the
anthology A Gathering of Spirit: Writing and Art By North American Indian
Women and Eleanor Crowe's striking imagistic poem of maternal despair
over racial genocide, entitled "Shadows" is anthologized.23 In the spirit of

22 Kate Shanley, "Thoughts on Indian Feminism," A Gathering of Spirit: Writing and Art by
23 Eleanor Crowe, "Shadows," Many Voices: An Anthology of Contemporary Indian Poetry,
contemporary feminist scholarship that continues to recover feminist texts, written within and without the mainstream, there has even been some attempt to reclaim the ancient voices of Indian women. Anne Cameron in *Daughters of Copper Women* retells the oral tales of the Secret Women's Society of the Nootka Indians of Vancouver Island and discovers quite a different body of Indian legend and myth from that of traditional patriarchal collections.

Native theatre, too, is also enjoying something of a renaissance. As Sadie Worn Staff of Spirit Song Native Indian Theatre Company has pointed out, dramatic expression is not new among Indian people. "Storytelling and pow-wows have a strong dramatic element, and the masks and screens used in potlatches are undeniable evidence of powerful staged events." This ancient native tradition of dramatic staging is currently finding its way onto the Canadian mainstage, largely in the interest of social protest, and as an affirmation of cultural identity. *N̓ω Xyú* (Our Footprints), for example, is an eighty minute play tracing the history of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en people of northwestern British Columbia, who were in 1988 fighting the biggest land-claims court battle in Canadian history. Written by non-native David Diamond in collaboration with the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en Tribal Council, *N̓ω Xyú*’s theme is that of Native land rights. Reputedly well received by non-native audiences, the play's troupe, Vancouver's Headlines Theatre, was scheduled to perform in thirty-one locales across Canada in the spring of 1988. Three experimental Native plays, which are anthologized in *The Land Called Morning: Three Plays*, and which have been performed by Native actors in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Alberta, are also issue-oriented, with dramatic emphasis on such themes as the plight of Native youth and Native land claims.

In conclusion, it is clear that in Canada today, there are some pressures from within the Native community, and to a limited degree, from within the academy, to unearth and promote a Native 'literary' tradition as a separate aboriginal literary system. At its most extreme, the plea for sovereignty, echoed here in the words of writer/journalist Vye Bouvier about Native theatre, insists even on linguistic independence:

Theatre about native people without any native involvement is now history. Theatre about native people with involvement from only one native person is becoming history. Theatre about native people written by native writers including one or two native actors


is the native theatre of the present. The ideal would be a native theatre company doing plays about the white community in a native language.26

At the same time, the work of contemporary Native writers who are experimenting with the literary and dramatic forms of the majority culture is beginning to surface in the artistic mainstream. Indeed, there may even be a remarkable reversal occurring as a new appreciation of the orality of Native culture develops, a movement which, in Marshall McLuhan’s mythic and tribal global village with its attraction to the values and perceptions of pre-literate societies, seems willing to accord the Native speaker and performer a new status. In any case, the company that presents Nô Xyâ has been invited to perform in New Zealand and Australia; the storyteller Wes Fineday, Keeper of Stories, from the Sweetgrass Reserve in Saskatchewan, who has performed the oral traditions of his people, the Cree, in Europe, has had his recent book Cree Oral Traditions translated into Swedish; and other new texts reproducing Native story-telling, such as Freda Ahenakew’s Stories of the House People, are, at the very least, obvious tributes to native oral narrative.

To date, however, in Canada there is no single Native author who has joined the mainstream as canonized poet, short story writer, dramatist or novelist of Canadian culture. Basil Johnston, an Ojibway member of the Cape Croker Indian Reserve in Ontario, is a remarkable humorist whose comedies of reserve life and satires on Indian-White relations in Moose Meat and Wild Rice are deserving of high praise, although one suspects that Bill Kinsella’s white man’s Indian as comic butt and ethnic joke in his several fictions of natives in Alberta remain more acceptable to the non-native majority.

If the invisible Indian has only managed to cast his/her silhouette on Canadian writing today, only time remains before he/she emerges as a full figure of equal and excellent voice. The Montana writer James Welch has proved the potential brilliance of Native fiction in the United States in such minor classics as Winter in the Blood, The Death of Jim Loney and Fool’s Crow, novels that are both significant pieces of Indian writing and beautiful, profoundly moving, fictionally innovative visions of human life. As Canadian society moves towards its multi-cultural ideal and recognizes the Indian as legitimate author of his/her own fictions, and as Native writers complement

their oral traditions of rhetorical speechmaking and storytelling with the written word, a Canadian writer of Indian ancestry is sure to follow suit.  

Black Writing in Canada: The Problems of Anthologizing and Documenting

I would like to point out that the proper title of this paper should have been "Literary Writings by Blacks in Canada: Anthologizing and Documenting." This paper, based upon my experiences, eventually resulted in the publication of Other Voices: Writings by Blacks in Canada and The Bibliography of Literary Writings by Blacks in Canada, the former published in 1985 and the latter in 1986.

First, I would like to give you some biographical details I consider relevant to this topic. I was born in Tobago, the smaller of the two islands that are now referred to as The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Like all other emigrants from this country, I was subjected to the familiar pattern of colonial education — that included the reading and studying of works by the Great Masters of the English literary tradition. Pridefully, I committed to memory hundreds of lines from Chaucer, Shakespeare, the Victorian and the Romantic poets and others of this ilk.

Let me say at this point that I have benefited greatly from this literary grounding. The unfortunate thing, however, was that I never once stopped to question the relevance of such unknowns as the joys of spring, the glories of summer, the fulness of autumn and the trials of winter. Moreover, I never once recognized the significant absence of any material that sprung out of the immediate environment that had bred and nurtured me — the landscape of my consciousness.

It is not surprising, therefore, that, after my arrival in Vancouver as an adult student several years later, I elected to write my B.A. thesis on Joseph Conrad. Eventually, I was introduced to James Baldwin's work by one of my professors, but was forbidden to use him as the focus of my thesis. Baldwin, you see, had not proven his worth as a writer as yet; moreover, he was still alive. After a while, however, I agreed to discuss Baldwin's and Fitzgerald's writings, with special emphasis on the American Dream/Nightmare theme.

At this point of my education, I had not read any books written by my fellow West Indian writers — books which had been published during the...
literary renaissance of the forties and fifties. What was more ironical was the fact that some of these very writers had previously been my classmates; for example, Ian MacDonald and V.S. Naipaul. My awareness of the wealth of literary writings by West Indians was delayed until my coming to Montréal to work at McGill University in 1964. Not much later, I chose to write my doctoral dissertation on the works of Wilson Harris, a Guyanese writer who had immigrated to England and still lives there now.

It was at this time a proposal that Caribbean literature be added to the curriculum of the English Department was approved. On my reading list, I included a work entitled *When He Was Young and Used to Wear Silks*, a novel written by Austin Clarke, an immigrant from Barbados, published by Anansi Press, Toronto, in 1971. This indeed was my first contact with literary writings by Blacks in Canada. A collection of essays, this work dramatized the plight of young men and women who had been lured to the shores of Canada by the powerful dream of success, but were experiencing the inevitable disillusionment of the cold reality of life in Toronto, instead. Ironically, however, the thought of investigating the state of literary writings by Blacks in Canada never occurred at that time.

Later, when I was invited as a part of the Canadian contingent to submit a proposal for a paper to be presented at the Colloquium of the Second Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture at Lagos, Nigeria, I chose to approach my discussion of Black-Canadian culture by way of relevant statements on arts and culture made by West Indian writers living outside of Canada. It was then that I was asked why I had not mentioned any Canadian writers. My answer was that there was no information in the libraries on the state of such literature and Austin Clarke was the only Black writer of whom I was aware. At this point, I was challenged by Dr. Hutson to undertake an investigation into such literary works. Little did I realize that this remark had struck a spark of interest that would never die.

As editor of literary submissions to the Lagos Festival, I had come into contact with writings by such people as Gloria Wesley-Day, Dionne Brand, Charles Roach and others — writings which were soon to be published by recognized Canadian presses, they were nevertheless, reluctant to submit their manuscripts without the proper guarantees of copyright protection and adequate royalties. Unfortunately, since I was unable to offer such guarantees, the project proved to be abortive.

Around this time, Ms. Judy Young of the Multicultural Section of the Secretary of State, on Mr. Gil Scott's advice, came to McGill University to consult with me on ways of assessing the state of ethnic writings in Canada. My suggestion was that the announcement of a comprehensive Anthology of such writings should attract these unknown writers and provide an opportunity for such a survey. This, however, was overruled in favour of
individual surveys by a representative of each ethnic group. Eventually, I was awarded the contract to carry out such a survey. The works which I mentioned at the beginning of my paper were direct off-shoots of this survey. Not only did I discover that there were Black writers who had actually published their work, but that there were several people who had written quite a lot but who, in their frustration, had put their work into storage. Moreover, most of the published works, I discovered, had been published privately.

Eventually, in 1978, *A Survey of Literary Writings by Blacks in Canada* was submitted to Ms. Judy Young — the findings of which were to be used by the Federal Government for their own internal purposes. It was hoped that such information would assist them in selecting speakers for lecture tours, writers for workshops and such. In addition, I had added three recommendations. The first was that I should undertake the preparation of a more academically prepared version of my findings, which would then be made available to the public at large through libraries and other sources of information. I argued that it would serve as a valuable source of information for all students of Canadian literature and culture.

The two other proposals were as follows: an Anthology, which would include works by the best writers and by those who showed great promise. I suggested that such a work could be used in schools throughout Canada; a Conference of the Black Artist in the Canadian Milieu, which would not only enable Black artists to meet one another and share each other's expertise, but would also allow them to exhibit their work to the Canadian public at large, to take orders and to meet with representatives of the various governments and of the publishing and production worlds.

With the help of Government financing, the three projects have been realized. Unfortunately, however, the hope that such a Conference would be held every three years could not be fulfilled, due to the lack of funding.

There were, indeed, other incentives for my pursuit of these projects. In 1977, at a symposium on Caribbean Literature and the Performing Arts, sponsored by the Canadian Caribbean Association of Winnipeg, I listened to a group of concerned parents and instructors complain about the scarcity of, and the need for, literary works which could inform their young ones on their cultural background and also on the experiences of those Blacks who were born in Canada or who had come here before them. On another occasion, a student who intended to do a comparative study of literature written by various ethnic groups on Canada came to me for assistance. To my embarrassment, I was forced to confess my ignorance of Black writing in Canada.

These, then, have been some of the happenings that inspired me to embark upon to continue my research. There have been many obstacles. One
argument that has been repeatedly put forward to me was the fact that it was not commercially viable. True enough, writers of all ethnic groups have had their works rejected because of questionable commercial viability. What worried me most, however, was the suggestion that West Indian, African and Black-American publishers might be more favourable. One has to pause and carefully consider what the true intent of such a statement is. One possible argument could be that Canadian readers and audiences would not be interested in such literature. Such an argument could be legitimate if the settings of these works happened to be outside of Canada — although this premise is completely subverted by the popularity of literature written by American, British and European authors and, moreover, by the success of plays staged by, performed by and sometimes written by Blacks in Canada, even when life in the Caribbean, Africa and such places is dramatized.

Certain questions arise here. Is work written by Blacks in Canada of an inferior quality to those written by others? This does not seem to be the case, especially when one considers the success of Blacks in other fields of endeavour. Are there, then, other reasons, unknown to us, for the reluctance to handle such material? Is the argument that Blacks are by nature not equally gifted as whites still prevalent today? If not, why then should one’s work be rejected when it is described, on the very rejection slips, in such favourable terms as a work of ‘much merit,’ an ‘ambitious and intelligently written piece of work,’ and ‘a fascinating approach to the problems of identity and security’ which were ‘fully explored’?

Blacks in Canada do form one of the important sections in the Canadian multicultural mosaic. They are richly talented and highly productive people of various regional and ethnic origins. The majority of us belong to one of two nationally recognised ethnic and linguistic groups, the French and the English. The similarities of the colonial experiences of Canada and the countries of our origins are obvious. English-speaking Blacks, who are in the majority, share a common literary heritage with most English-speaking non-Black Canadians. A similar relationship can be found between the literary heritage of the Blacks of French tongue and the non-Blacks of French-speaking areas of Canada.

The reality is, however, that despite such obvious parallels in literary experience and despite the expressed desire of the Canadian government that minority ethnic groups remain visible and not be melted into one faceless Canadian mass, one finds that the creative output of Blacks in Canada is yet to be fully recognised, made available and properly assessed.

One other thing that considerably slowed the progress of my research was the fact that very few works by Blacks in Canada had been published by recognised publishing companies. There was no readily available source of information about the works for which I was searching. Even less readily available was information on the authors themselves. As a librarian at the
University of British Columbia library informed me, writers are never classified by colour in Canada. What she failed to realize was that Blacks in Canada are the only group whose works were not classified under the appropriate ethnic heading in the reference books, despite the fact that there was a heading for Black-American writers' works.

Faced with this problem, I sought advice from other sources. Eventually, one librarian suggested that there was a book-seller whom she believed to be one of the best sources of such information. This person eventually proved to be the key to the successful gathering of relevant information. He also gave me names of other important Blacks in Vancouver who might be valuable contacts. I am indeed most grateful to those many people who not only guided me to proper contacts, but also helped to make my stay in the various places happy ones.

One other problem which I had encountered early in my preparation was the belief expressed by some of my generally trustworthy colleagues that there were no significant Black population west of Toronto or east of Montreal (except for Halifax in the latter case). Since I had attended U.B.C., I knew that this was not true of Vancouver and Winnipeg; but I thought it to be true of the other provinces. This eventually turned out to be untrue of other places like Edmonton and Calgary. In fact, one of my best sources turned out to be Phil Fraser of Edmonton, who had won cinematic acclaim and awards for his film, "Don't Shoot the Teacher."

One of the most surprising obstacles in my way — one that is most ironical — was the reluctance of Blacks themselves to provide samples of their work for possible publication. I eventually discovered that this attitude was a result of the fact that they had been frequently duped by people who came full of promises, but delivered nothing.

Another disturbing development was the response received from people from whom I had solicited material for the planned Anthology. Several people demanded to be paid according to the going rates suggested by the Writer's Union. Others wondered whether it would be safe to send their material to me when there was the possibility that I may use it for my own benefit. Temporarily distressed, I then stressed the fact that the project had been undertaken on behalf of all Black writers in Canada and that such attitudes were most counter-productive.

Fortunately, I was able to complete the Anthology of Black Literary Writings. Over fifty people (poets and short story writers) eventually submitted work, from which writings by forty three writers were selected. Of these writers, twenty-two were women and twenty-one men. Of these, only seven were originally born in Canada. The majority, thirty-one, had come to Canada from the Caraïbes — eighteen from Trinidad and Tobago, nine from Jamaica, two from St. Vincent, one from British Guiana (Guyana today) and the other from Barbados. Three of the remaining writers had
come from the U.S.A, one from the United Kingdom and the other from Africa. It is interesting to note that the majority of them (22) then lived in Ontario, mainly Toronto; eleven were residents of Montreal; five lived in the Maritimes; four in the Prairies and two in British Columbia.

In compiling the bibliography, I frequently had to write more than one letter to various writers. The information I received was carefully checked by consulting the various journals in which the work was supposed to have been published. Very often, especially in the case of the more prolific poets, the listed number of the journal turned out to be wrong. In other cases, the journal was unavailable. As in the case of the Anthology, editing and proof-reading proved to be a major problem, since most of this had to be done by telephone.

In addition to all these obstacles, I experienced great difficulties in both convincing the multicultural representative and my publisher that I should continue with the publication of my findings. In the former case, it was suggested that it should be a part of a larger work that would include all reports turned in by the representatives of the various ethnic groups. In the latter case, there seemed to be much greater interest in the Anthology, which had already been published, even though I argued that the Bibliography was the more important of the two. Again the ominous presence of commercial viability seemed to have intruded upon the scene, but it was finally ignored.

I would like to end this paper with a few observations as to the future of Literary Writings by Blacks in Canada. It must be realized by the governments, federal and provincial, by the publishers and production companies, and, more so, by the Black writers and artists themselves, that the cultural needs of Canadian Blacks can no longer be ignored. Like all the other pieces of the Canadian mosaic, Blacks need to be recognised as a viable part of the Canadian community.

Today, when many literary works are being re-examined in terms of the cross-cultural imagination and when there is a rapidly growing demand for more Canadian content on radio and television, the Black artist needs to be involved. An authentic literary history of Canada cannot be written without the inclusion of the contributions made by Black writers. The Bibliography lists the titles of all literary works published by Blacks living in Canada, as well as those who once lived here but no longer do so. The writers who have contributed to the success of the Anthology represent a cross-section of the Canadian Black community, including writers from almost every province and including those born to families of long-standing Canadian residency, as well as those who came as immigrants during the recent and not so recent past. Their writings reflect the richness and variety of their different cultural and geographic backgrounds, as well as their different literary influences. Indeed, it will be noticed that the term, 'Black writer,' includes not only the
sons and daughters of Africa, but also Afro-Asians and others of the diaspora. These are the people, who together with all the other ethnic groups, will eventually become the voices of the Canadian cross-cultural imagination.

"We — mankind — are a conversation" a German philosopher once wrote. "The being of man is founded in language." Nations, indeed, have been founded upon the rock of language, but many have been undone through language. For too long now Blacks have allowed themselves to be undone by language. It is time today that they should strive to restructure their lives in their own image through language. The Black writer in Canada must stand and be recognised for what he/she is — a true artist, as dedicated and talented as any other in this country. For only in this way can he/she fulfill his/her responsibility in the shaping and the promotion of this country in the eyes of all peoples of this world.

McGill University

References


La littérature haïtienne-canadienne: Naissance d’un nouvel espace littéraire?

Dans une étude sur la réception de l’œuvre d’Aimé Césaire au Québec que je faisais paraître il y a quelques années, j’annonçais mon propos de la façon suivante:

S’interroger sur la fortune de l’œuvre de Césaire au Québec sous l’angle de la réception critique ou de la réception, c’est d’entrée de jeu réfléchir sur un vocabulaire qui, pour être issu de l’étude des littératures européennes, peut s’avérer fallacieux lorsqu’il est appliqué sans discernement à des littératures qui ne partagent pas tout à fait leurs traditions et leurs ressources.1

Toute proportion gardée, cette réserve s’applique pertinemment au sujet des réflexions qui vont suivre. Une ‘littérature haïtienne-canadienne’ répercute d’office la terminologie thématique de ce colloque qui a pour objet (et je cite la lettre d’invitation) la ‘voix ethnique’ des ‘autres littératures canadiennes.’ Ainsi donc, une tentative méritoire d’inclure (et je cite encore) "la voix des immigrants venus des Caraïbes" parmi celles des immigrants originaires d’Allemagne, d’Italie, de l’Ukraine, et même de la Finlande, implique l’identification de l’altérité caraïbéenne sous un vocable qui, tout en étant de convenance, peut sembler fallacieux, ou du moins prématuré, quand il ne fait pas effet de paradoxe...

Pourtant, nier l’existence d’une littérature haïtienne-canadienne ne revient pas à occulter la présence d’une voix haïtienne dans les lettres canadiennes. Celle-là existe bel et bien.2 Fort conscient du paradoxe de l’inexistence ou de l’existence précaire ou putative d’une littérature

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I

L’insertion historique d’écrivains d’origine haïtienne dans l’institution littéraire au Canada se fait en contrepoint des schémes classiques de la littérature dite ‘ethnique’ en Amérique du Nord. Elle n’accompagne pas, et elle ne suit pas l’arrivée d’une masse d’immigrants. Si, pour le cas haïtien, comme le démontre Paul Dejean dans son étude, Les Haïtiens au Québec, cette migration ne se manifeste quantitativement que vers la fin de la décennie soixante, les premiers écrivains haïtiens à être publiés au Québec remontent, au moins, à la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Dantès Bellegarde, historien et essayiste, publie en 1941 chez Bernard Valiquette, à Montréal, Haiti et ses problèmes, un recueil "composé en grande partie d’articles" (7) parus dans des journaux en Haïti.


renforcer l’apport institutionnel canadien à la diffusion d’une littérature d’abord ‘haitienne.’

Par ailleurs, la fondation de maisons d’édition, comme Nouvelle Optique, Collectif Paroles et CIDHCA, à Montréal, par des intellectuels haïtiens-canadiens accélère le rythme de publication. Au cours des vingt dernières années, René Bélance, Suzie Castor, Georges Castéra fils, Gérard Pierre-Charles, Ghislain Gouraige, Roger Dorsinville, Laënnec Hurbon, Paul Laraque et d’autres poètes, romanciers et essayistes sont édités par l’une ou l’autre de ces maisons.

De ce phénomène institutionnel, à son stade premier, un constat se dégage: ces auteurs publiés au Canada n’y habitent pas et leurs œuvres interpellent un vécu non-canadien. La diffusion de leurs œuvres par l’institution québécoise ne se différencie pas des pratiques générales de l’industrie du livre au Canada (revues, journaux, librairies) orientée vers le marché national ou régional; sauf exception de Leméac qui diffuse dans le monde international francophone. La diffusion en marge de l’institution conventionnelle assumée par les maisons haïtiennes-canadiennes a recours au marché des communautés migrantes haïtiennes établies en Amérique du Nord, en Europe et en Afrique. Celles-ci sont rejointes par l’entremise de revues et journaux de l’émigration tels que Collectif Paroles, Haïti Observer, Haïti Perspectives, Présence Haïtienne, Nouvelle Optique, Haïti en Marche, etc., d’inégale longévité et teneur intellectuelle; et par des librairies consacrées au livre haïtien (Discomini, à Montréal, Haitian Book Centre à New York). Tant que dure le régime duvalieriste en Haïti, de 1957 à 1986, ce marché se circonscrit à l’espace extérieur d’Haïti. Depuis le renversement du régime, une maison comme CIDHCA met à profit la libre circulation des idées acquise pour orienter l’essentiel de sa production vers le marché intérieur de l’île.

Un second constat, d’autre part, résulte inversement de l’immigration au Canada d’écrivains d’origine haïtienne dès le début des années soixante. Cette première génération est composée d’écrivains exilés fuyant le duvaliériste. Ils arrivent au Canada après leur apprentissage littéraire en Haïti et se regroupent autour du mouvement "Haïti Littéraire" dont la fondation remonte au pays d’origine. Anthony Phelps, Serge Legagneur, Davertige, Roland Morisseau, Jean-Richard Laforest et, dans une certaine mesure, Émile Ollivier se retrouvent donc à Montréal et poursuivent des projets de renouveau littéraire visant à se démarquer d’une tradition indigéniste dominante dans les lettres haïtiennes depuis les années trente, dans la foulée de la première édition de l’étude de Jean Price-Mars, notée plus haut, Ainsi parla l’oncle. Ils publient surtout chez Nouvelle Optique, mais Phelps, Ollivier et Davertige sont édités indifféremment en France et au Québec.
À quelques exceptions près (un conte de Phelps, *Et moi, je suis une île*; un recueil de nouvelles d’Ollivier, *Paysage de l’aveugle*), leur abondante production articule une vision, selon le mot de Phelps, "de la privation de la Terre natale," une littérature d’exil, tournée vers le pays d’origine. Même lorsqu’elle se module dans un clivage Haïti-Québec chez un émule du groupe, comme Jean Civil par exemple (*Entre deux pays*, recueil de poésie paru en 1979), la littérature produite par cette première génération, relayée par d’autres émules tels que Franck Fouché, Liliane Dévieux, Raymond Chassagne, St-John Kauss et Claude Pierre, reste figée dans l’évocation de la terre d’origine.

II

Dans le deuxième temps de notre analyse, qui interroge une seconde génération d’écrivains haïtiens-canadiens, une esthétique nouvelle caractérise des œuvres diverses dont le point commun est l’expérience vécue en terre canadienne. La mieux connue de ces œuvres est sans doute le *best seller* de Dany Laferrière, *Comment faire l’amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer* (Montréal, VLB, 1985). Ce ‘roman’ a été porté aux nues (!) par une certaine critique journalistique montréalaise dont la complaisance semble en passe d’être doublée par celle de Toronto (à en juger par l’éloge que fait Wayne Grady de l’édition anglaise, dans la revue *Books in Canada*, mars 1988).

Pourtant ce ‘roman’ n’a d’”haïtien” que le lieu de naissance de l’auteur et de ‘canadien’ que les bars de la bohème, à Montréal, ou encore les ‘rondeurs’ imaginées par l’auteur des étudiantes de l’Université McGill. ... Contrairement à une affirmation de Wayne Grady (*Books in Canada*, mars 1988, p. 39), Gérard Étienne, et non Dany Laferrière, est le premier romancier haïtien-canadien à investir l’espace imaginaire montréalais en y campant une présence haïtienne. *Un Ambassadeur macoute à Montréal* (1979) et *Une femme muette* (1983), publiés chez Nouvelle Optique, traduisent un vécu qu’allégorisait Ollivier, dans *Paysage de l’aveugle* (1977), et qu’esquissait poétiquement Phelps, dans *Et moi, je suis une île* (1973). Mieux, ces romans proposent une solidarité entre des laissés-pour-compte de races différentes dont la commune condition d’exploitation économique, politique ou sexisté transcende les frontières de la couleur de la peau. L’ironie, amèrement notée par la critique haïtienne et curieusement occultée par la critique québécoise, en ce qui concerne la fable, dite "romanesque," de Laferrière est qu’il fonde les relations sexuelles de ses personnages précisément sur un niveau que je qualifierais de "mystique de la couleur de la peau." Dès lors s’agissent fantasmes, mythes, stéréotypes sous fortes

5 Dans Collectif paroles, no 25 (1983), 36.
pulsions libidinales, pour ne pas dire sadomasochistes, dont seule la veine humoristique semble avoir retenu l'attention de la critique québécoise (serait-ce parce que les Marcotte, Martel et Bombardier sont nommément interpellés et objets de flagorneries dans le "roman"? !).

Par ailleurs, il est un théâtre prolétarien et féministe en langue créole qu'inaugure Madeleine Bégon. Déblozay, jouée en 1987 à Montréal, est le développement sous une forme dramatique et réaliste des récits monologués, issus de la tradition orale créole, par lesquels l'auteur se fait d'abord connaître. Ces différents genres littéraires pratiqués par Madeleine Bégon reflètent le présent de la masse migrante haïtienne-canadienne installée dans les quartiers populaires de la communauté urbaine de Montréal. De cette masse ouvrière ou (plus souvent) chômeuse, dont l'arrivée au Canada est située par Paul Dejean au tournant des années soixante-dix, Madeleine Bégon se fait le porte-parole (dans toute la force du terme) en langue créole. La facture réaliste du vécu migrant besognant ou non dans la domesticité, les industries de services (taxi, hôtellerie) ou les manufactures, telle que modelée dans l'œuvre de Bégon, pourtant ressasse des contingences urbaines qui ne seraient pas spécifiques à Montréal, au Québec ou, encore, au Canada. Le chômage, l'isolement, le racisme et d'autres spécificités de l'expérience de la migration se retrouvent également à New York, Chicago ou Miami, pour ne nommer que ces villes peuplées d'immigrants, dont les Haïtiens. Déblozay ne se distinguerait donc pas fondamentalement d'une pièce telle que Pêlin-Têt du dramaturge haïtien Frankétienne. Jouée en 1978, l'action se situe dans un ghetto de Brooklyn, les personnages sont des prolétaires immigrants haïtiens; ils s'expriment en créole. Pourtant, Frankétienne n'avait qu'"imaginé" Brooklyn puisqu'en 1978 il n'avait jamais encore voyagé à l'extérieur d'Haïti.


l'enfermement ethno-sociail décrit dans des essais7 et maintenant dans l'"anti-dédicace" au lecteur absent ("À toi/ qui geins sous le Tropique/ ces vers/ ne sont pas dédiés"). Cette absence due à la géographie ("Tropique") et à l'ordre social oppressif ("geins") dont se démarque le poète renvoie à l'historique dilemme du créateur haitien francophone privé d'audience en regard de la masse analphabète créolophone, tout en prenant le contre-pied des fameux atermoiements du poète Léon Laleau ("Trahison," 1931) n'arrivant pas à réconcilier la langue venue de France et l'âme issue du Sénégal. Cette prise de conscience de l'absence du lieu naturel d'origine ("Tropique") et de partage (le "toi" communautaire) ouvrant le recueil, d'une part signale l'insistance du lieu vécu, existentiel, de la parole poétique articulée en métropole, la ville produite des artifices technologiques que tout créateur au siècle de la modernité semble devoir confronter; et, d'autre part, elle balise le recours à l'expression verbale, l'obligeant à la modestie et à la lucidité dans l'effort de communication recherchée auprès de l'Autre.

On ne s'étonnera pas à la lecture de retrouver ce souci de modestie réitéré sous forme de leitmotiv tout au long du recueil, établissant dès lors un équilibre constant entre le dire référentiel et la réflexion sur les limites du dire. Le caractère réflexif domine dans l'acte poétique à la manière d'une pièce de jazz moderne où la liberté fondamentale à la création (l'improvisation) chez un Davis, Coltrane ou Mingus est toujours informée et contrôlée par une ligne mélodique bouclée symétriquement. Pour Des Rosiers, tout élan passionné vers l"ailleurs" ("Mykonos"), le corps féminin ("Blues for Francine"), les pulsations urbaines ("Métopolis Opéra"), les cieux ("Machines"), sources d'épanchements lyriques pour les romantiques d'un siècle précédent, est questionné moins par ce qui s'annonce comme "sentiment" dans l'avant-propos ("l'effet d'exil, comme une errance en soi qu'un nuage d'encre jamais ne tarira") que par la réflexion. La lucidité commandée par les limites du langage fera donc dire au poète, rythmiquement, que le poème est "éphémère" (p. 29), "le Verbe se dérobe" (p. 38), "toute parole tue" (p. 39), "vain... mon poème" (p. 65), "le mot s'empale" (p. 69).

La lucidité, comme constante, se distingue de plus dans la forme, la facture de l'œuvre, l'espace aéré de la graphie, le caractère matériel, tangible, d'un art concret reflétant les acquis du modernisme dans les arts visuels. L'ampleur donnée au blanc de la page met en relief la valeur des mots, même fragiles dans l'insertion réduite: les illustrations, l'espace des vers, les phrasés, les contours volontiers géométriques imposés à la typographie sont autant d'éléments conviants à une participation tactile,

7 Tel que "Mourir est beau: La pulsion de mort dans l'inconscient collectif haïtien," Dériver, nos 53-54 (1986-87), 209-228.


Poésie se voulant lieu de création dans "le territoire de la langue," pour reprendre la très belle expression de Robert Berrouet-Oriol, il n’est fait qu’un seul emprunt à la langue vernaculaire haïtienne ("gaguère," p. 35). Celle-ci n’ayant pas droit de cité dans la métropole est remplacée par la langue anglaise dans un vécu bilingue ("Blues for Francine," "Baby Alone in Babylon") avec prégnance d’ironie. L’ironie qualifie la ville identifiée "Babylone" puisque cette seule résonance biblique, dans un recueil qui ne contient par ailleurs aucune référence aux divinités binares chrétienne-voudou, a pour fonction de cadrer l’aliénation du culte rastafarien issu de l’Occident ("babylonien" selon son vocabulaire) qui campe la foi dans une Abyssinie mythique et dieu dans l’occultation du Négu. Finalement, une seule référence à la géographie d’Haïti (le fleuve Artibonite) a pour effet certain de démarquer le vécu en métropole du fantasmé, surtout lorsque cette unique référence est juxtaposée à la panoplie internationale des métropoles citées ici et là (New York, p. 91; Vienne, p. 84; Venise, p. 69; Tokyo, p. 78; Dakar, p. 78).

Métropolis Opéra paraît comme architecture non point de l’imaginaire absolu, à la manière surréaliste dont l’influence est si lourdement présente dans une certaine esthétique haïtienne, mais comme palimpseste au centre de la culture métropolitaine. "La paix de la langue" (p. 32) est seule signifiante dans la ville anonyme, traversée de bruit et de fureur. Le poète qui y habite reflète la problématique des contraires qu’il ne saurait occulter ou banaliser par le folklore des "origines" ou par le saut dans la littérarité. D’une part, l’inscription dans le réconfort de la tradition insulaire ethno-

sociale lui paraît fausse, parce qu'elle ne sourd pas de l’expérience vécue en métropole; d'autre part, l'assimilation à la tradition universelle, sans réflexion, est également fausse parce que désincarnée.

*Métropolis Opéra*, qui s'annonce dans la filiation de l'expressionnisme et dont les accents sont écho à l'errance chez Joyce ou Eliot, quand ce n'est pas Dos Passos (*Manhattan Transfer*) pour l'effet de synesthésie, s'ancre néanmoins dans une appartenance particulière, celle de la nouvelle esthétique d'écrivains et artistes d'origine haïtienne oeuvrant en métropole. Cette jonction est remarquablement accomplie dans le poème-titre ("Métropolis Opéra") qui clône le recueil. Il est dédié à Jean-Michel Basquiat, dont une note en bas de page dit qu'il est "peintre new-yorkais d'origine haïtienne, star post-moderne de la nouvelle figuration expressionniste" (p. 83). L'accouplement symétrique Lang-Basquiat fonde l'échéance de la recherche de la réconciliation des contraires qui traverse l'esthétique de l'oeuvre. Là où une lecture superficielle peut laisser croire au rejet absolu de l'appartenance originelle ("je ne retournerai point/sous la tièdeur des vérandas," p. 67) ne fait que masquer en définitive le temps premier d'une dialectique livrant à son terme l’harmonie achevée des très beaux derniers vers de "Métropolis Opéra":

> sur la toile lors
> la caution d'une parole d'épousailles
> fibre de lumière pour enjamber
> l'espace d'ici et le temps de là-bas (p. 91)


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naissant de l'être-dans-le-monde métropolitain mâtiné des Antilles et de l'Amérique.

J'aime croire que l'œuvre de Joël Des Rosiers annonce le temps fort d'une littérature haïtienne-canadienne qui évacue l'ethnicité en mettant l'accent plutôt sur l'écrivain en situation avec les mots, principe premier de toute écriture.

Université McGill
Naïm Kattan, *le discours arabe*, and Empty Words

Most Canadian literati associate Naïm Kattan's name with the Canada Council and would probably agree with the appellation chosen for him by Jacques Godbout (in a 1976 review), "la fée des bourses [à Ottawa]" (12).¹ Kattan's role as a federalist bureaucrat entrusted with the promotion of 'Canadian literature' has angered some Québec writers and critics, who have taken their revenge by refusing Kattan a place in their ranks. For example, the *Dictionnaire pratique des auteurs québécois* published in the same year as Godbout's review, makes no mention of Kattan's literary creations, classifying him only as "critique littéraire" (369). Listing Kattan's name in the *Dictionnaire* but stripping him of his credits is a cunning and backhanded way of 'acknowledging' him as a Québec writer.

English Canadians have also applied labels to Kattan. A 1979 article in *Saturday Night* revels in the irony of its title, "Our only Arab-Jewish-French-Canadian Writer" (Anonymous 9). Another review in English describes Kattan's first novel, *Adieu Babylone*, as "a Portrait of the Artist as a Young Iraqi Jew Trying to be French" (Spettigue 512).

These examples notwithstanding, English Canada has been kinder to Kattan, the writer. He fares better in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* which introduces him as an essayist, novelist, and short story writer and presents a comprehensive view of his career in Canada. More taken with the idea of the Canadian mosaic, English-Canadian critics have adopted Kattan as the very model of cross-culturalism. Hence the title of I.M. Owen's review: "Why an Arabic-speaking, Baghdadborn Jew is a perfect guide to the modern Canadian experience" (5) or Wayne Grady's assessment: "Though cosmopolitan in content, Naïm Kattan's short stories explore a familiar Canadian duality: the plight of the stranger in his own land" (9).

¹ This article will appear, in a revised version, in *Canadian Literature*.
Somewhere between these two extremes, i.e., Kattan the devoted bureaucrat and Kattan the perfectly assimilated Canadian writer, there is Kattan the marginal writer. My use of the term ‘marginal’ obviously reflects the reception of his works in both French and English Canada. Despite the volume of his publications very few have attracted critical attention. It is his life and institutional role which has been of interest. In classifying Kattan as a ‘marginal’ writer, I also refer to his deliberate position vis-à-vis the Canadian literary institution — that of existing on the periphery.

One might ask how it is possible or why it is even desirable for any writer to be ‘deliberately’ peripheral. The answer, to be deciphered through the maze of Kattan’s life and career, provides interesting insights into certain detrimental aspects of literary interference.

Let us begin with Kattan’s choice of literary languages in Canada and elsewhere. Although English Canadians have found more of an affinity with Kattan, he insists on writing in French. As a result, his most receptive audience is forced to reach him through the barrier of translations — this, in spite of the fact that Kattan received equal training in both languages: "J'avais le choix entre le français et l'anglais comme deuxième langue, c'était à parité. J'apprenais autant l'anglais que le français et j'ai choisi le français parce que pour moi l'Occident libérateur était francophone" (Allard 13). For Kattan, English has always been associated with the British occupation of Iraq, while French created an illusory link with freedom and ‘authentic’ self-expression. That is perhaps why to this day, his choice of literary language remains firm: "It was so painful for me to change from writing in Arabic to writing in French — and it cost me 15 years of silence — that I don’t think I will ever be able to make a change again. I am satisfied writing in French, since there’s a public for what I say in that language. I can write in French without feeling that I am exiled" (Simpson 36). What goes unnoticed by Kattan’s interviewer, who is intent upon fitting him into a ‘Canadian’ pattern, is the allusion to his mother tongue, Arabic. This closing statement of the interview reveals, if only indirectly, the essential in understanding Kattan — what I will call the need to exist on the margins.

Although born into the Jewish community of Baghdad and educated both in Hebrew and Arabic, he opted for Arabic and its literary heritage. Even today, he boasts of his ability to recite the Koran better than his Muslim compatriots. His first short stories and critical pieces were published in Arabic: "...Je me suis rendu compte que pour moi ce qui comptait c'était écrire en arabe. C'était de ma langue maternelle que j'étais fier" (Allard 12).
This duality of vision is even reflected in his name, which is at once Arabic and Hebrew.²

Kattan's insistence on Arabic might appear as a first step towards integration into the mainstream of Iraqi life. Yet, we must recognize the extent to which this decision placed him on the periphery of two linguistic and literary systems. His accent in Arabic always singled him out as an outsider among Muslims, while his refusal to write in Hebrew made him a stranger to his Jewish culture. In the opening chapter of Adieu Babylone, Kattan's semi-autobiographical novel, the reader glimpses this clash of identities. The protagonist's Jewish friend, Nessim, insists on communicating with the Muslims in his own dialect of Arabic. In contrast, the protagonist chooses silence, before arriving at another solution: "Je choisis un moyen terme. Mes mots n'étaient ni ceux des juifs ni ceux des Musulmans. Je m'exprimais en arabe littéraire, coranique" (Adieu Babylone 12).

This same tendency to choose the position of the outsider prevailed during his stay in France. When finally liberated from the language of both oppressors, i.e., Arabic and English, he continued to write and publish in Arabic. In Canada, once again, he chose to move against the tide and became an anomaly in the Jewish community of Montreal. Recalling an incident in his early years in Canada, he points to his own tragic flaw:

Il y avait quelqu'un qui m'a dit... De quelle nationalité vous êtes? Je lui dis irakienne. Alors il me dit: oui, mais c'est quoi ça Irakien, vous êtes Musulman? Je dis: non, alors il me dit: vous êtes de nationalité juive? Je dis: Ce n'est pas une nationalité, il me répond: Il fallait le dire, pourquoi vous n'allez pas chez vous? Il fallait, et c'était un choix à l'époque, me dire que j'étais refusé par tout le monde ou me dire c'était ma chance d'appartenir à personne. (Allard 24)

The only mould into which Kattan's affinities can be fit is that of a cross-cultural man. The title of his most recent novel, La Fortune du passager, aptly emphasizes his vagabond spirit. The historical necessity of wandering across cultural barriers becomes clear in the light of Kattan's biography. But its implications for his literary endeavours still remain obscure.

While writing in French and identifying with its literary traditions, Kattan refuses to suppress a past closely linked with Arabic and Hebrew. He claims that his style of writing, which leaves much to the imagination of the reader, is derived from Arabic narrative techniques. Quite often essential details

remain unsaid. In *Adieu Babylon*, for instance, the protagonist is never named and although we recognize an autobiographical speaker in the text, he remains a shadowy figure throughout. This creates a sense of distance not usually associated with biographical narratives.

Kattan attributes this style of composition to what he calls *le discours arabe*; in the above-mentioned interview in answer to a question regarding the prudish air of his texts, Kattan explains:

> Je ne peux plus dire à cet égard que je suis tout à fait Arabe. Il y a deux aspects de ce discours arabe qui expliquent un peu peut-être mes écrits. D'abord on parle beaucoup mais l'essentiel, ce qui est le plus fragile, quand il est encore fragile en nous, on ne le dévoile pas parce qu'on a honte de cette fragilité... Dans le discours arabe, il y a beaucoup de mots, les gens parlent beaucoup mais l'essentiel est très peu dit... le deuxième élément dans le discours qui vient de mon enfance et qui est de ma culture, c'est de dire aux autres ce qui leur fait plaisir, même si c'est pas tout à fait vrai. (15)

The crucial elements in this description, at least in so far as it applies to Kattan's texts, are the cryptic and highly codified nature of language. There is a strong sense of the alien and the unutterable in *Adieu Babylon*, very little dialogue, and the characters are barely outlined and are not introspective. To borrow Kattan's own words, the essential is never said.

Some of this effect can be attributed to cultural differences. Kattan himself encourages this type of interpretation through the notion of *le discours arabe*. Some critics have taken the same route. For instance, Spettigue speaks of "cultural differences difficult for Westerners to understand," which then develop into communication barriers between author and reader:

One does not question the authenticity of the representation; but the result is to deepen the shadow-effect. All seems disembodied, unreal, except in moments of sordid and commonplace reality... Socially and politically we are filled in on the current movements, journalistically, and this helps, but at the same time it reinforces the feeling that with the protagonist we inhabit a world of shadows... It is not that *Farewell, Babylon* is unconvincing at all, but that it is exile literature, essentially colonial, recording marginal people for whom everything important happens somewhere else. (510)

What creates the 'shadow-effect' in *Adieu Babylon* and Kattan's other works of fiction is not merely a function of his exile. In fact, his thematic preoccupation seems to be immigration rather than exile. I would suggest that the roots of this narrative unease are in Kattan's medium of expression. This is not to say that by choosing French he has denied himself and his creative works accessibility to Western audiences. My contention is that
Kattan’s very understanding of the way in which language functions forces him onto a position of permanent marginality.

In his essay *Le Rêle et le théâtral*, Kattan outlines the differences between Eastern and Western cultures in terms of their relationship to ‘reality.’ Following Hegel’s footsteps, he argues that for the Semites there exists no mediation between man and nature — or as he puts it between man and reality. In the West, on the contrary, man achieves the same relationship through the theatrical and the illusory. In a passage reminiscent of early German Romantic thought, he explains his understanding of the East-West dichotomy in the following manner:

"...C'est l'homme qui établit une alliance avec Dieu pour sinon contrôler la nature, du moins prévenir sa menace. Cette forme de rapport se manifeste dans la langue elle-même. Dans la langue hébraïque et dans la langue arabe, il n'y a pas de séparation entre les mots et les choses. L'objet vit parce qu'il est nommé. (16)"

On the level of linguistic and poetic expression, Kattan implies that Semitic languages have an immediate power of evocation which the West cannot grasp or recreate because of its own preoccupation with modes of mediation. Kattan's notion of *le discours arabe* is obviously based on the same theory: what appears as unspoken and implicit to the Western readers of his novels would have much clearer and more concrete significance for an Arab reader.

Kattan’s approach to Semitic and European languages is open to challenge, as were the Romantic theories of the origin of languages, to say nothing of the ‘Orientalist’ vision embedded in it. I am not inclined to agree with Kattan’s philosophy of languages. Nor do I think that these formulations explain his own style of writing. In other words, the remnants of Arabic rhetorical devices in his literary creations are not alone responsible for the barrier between Kattan and his readers. But I do find that they point towards an understanding of Kattan which is, unfortunately, only implicit in a few of his works.

Although in his essays and interviews Kattan proclaims that it is his Judeo-Islamic heritage which informs his writing, he does not fully articulate the extent to which this linguistic and cultural heritage is fragmented from within. Throughout *Adieu Babylone*, the protagonist speaks of linguistic exile in his own homeland. He may not feel alienated from his community, but even in the early days of his childhood his accent singles him out as a member of a minority. To belong, he must imitate the accent of his Muslim compatriots. That is to say, for the protagonist, as for the young Kattan, the most conventional form of speech becomes a mark of internal exile.

When Kattan assures us that he considers Arabic his mother tongue, we must understand the statement in its proper context. Not only did he learn Hebrew and Arabic simultaneously at school, but also he mastered the
transposition of the two. In this process, both languages are forced to undergo such transformations that ultimately they exist in complete neutrality. In fact, they create a new linguistic system.

In a chapter of Adieu Babylon, the narrator describes the use of Hebrew alphabet for writing Arabic (129). This cryptic language, Suki, creates a bridge between the two languages. At the same time, however, it empties both of their internal logic of significance. For the Jewish teenagers who are employed by Muslim officials to decipher documents written in Suki, the language offers a glimpse of power. Like the narrator, Kattan himself does not further reflect on this simultaneous process of mutilation and conflation. But his sensitivity to the emptied-out medium surfaces in one of his short stories, "Le Gardien de l'alphabet."

The protagonist of this story, Ali Souleymann, leaves his homeland, Turkey, at the time of Atatürk's reforms, to find support for the preservation of the sacred alphabet of his language. He believes that the Latin script which has been chosen to replace Arabic threatens the very identity of his nation. Ironically, his convictions take him increasingly further away from his own land. He reaches total exile in Edmonton where he diligently rewrites new texts in the old alphabet. His zeal gradually robs him of his original goal; he copies and catalogues texts without ever reading them.

Like the protagonist of Adieu Babylon, Ali Souleymann is estranged from the language he desperately wants to preserve. When he approaches Arab scholars for support, they ridicule his accent in Arabic and dismiss his proposals for change. Both protagonists suffer from a cultural alienation which is rooted in their medium of communication. The mother tongue itself is a vehicle for fragmentation of the self. In "Le Gardien de l'alphabet," this linguistic disorientation is accompanied with physical exile. The more fervent Ali Souleymann becomes in the preservation of his alphabet, the further he is removed from his own language and culture.

This analysis can also be extended to Kattan's own situation of the permanent migrant. Like the characters of his fictional works, he too is alienated from his mother tongue. In his interview with Allard, Kattan narrates an episode which is symptomatic of his linguistic dilemma:

Il y a deux ans, il y a un Musulman, en Israël, qui a lu Adieu Babylon et a décidé d'en traduire un chapitre en arabe. Il l'a fait et me l'a envoyé après. Et j'ai lu Adieu Babylon qui se passe dans un pays arabe traduit en arabe. C'était une expérience très dure et très étrange. Dure tout de même parce que je ne m'y suis pas reconnu, écrit dans ma langue maternelle. (Allard 16)

The impossibility of recognizing himself in Arabic points back to the linguistic void in which Kattan has maintained his mother tongue. It would be interesting to examine Kattan's reaction to a French translation of one
of his Arabic short stories. No such experiment has been done, but it is likely that he would once again fail to recognize himself in translation, for he can only feel at home in a language when its signifying system is challenged from within. What he resists is the possibility of being firmly placed in one linguistic system — that of the empty shell being filled in: "J'ai opté pour une langue que j'invente à chaque moment. J'ai choisi un lieu que je dote de présence en y inscrivant mon invention" (Le Réel 188).

French in Canada has provided Kattan with the type of continuous linguistic conflict he has come to know intimately and which he has manipulated into an art. As he concludes in Le Réel et le théâtral, he can only survive on the border, not within, given languages and cultures: "Si j'accepte d'être un homme partagé entre la communion et l'attente c'est que je rejette la division de l'être, je refuse de vivre simultanément dans deux mondes" (188).

Kattan may not be torn between two cultural spheres, he certainly does not seem so in Canada, but he is a man who has forever lost his orientation. Or more accurately, he has made disorientation a conviction: "Je n'accepte pas la fixité des lieux sûrs et le confort des certitudes" (Le Réel 188). In Canada, Kattan has carved out an image for himself — that of "le gardien de l'alphabet." But that image is deliberately open-ended. Like the empty alphabet, one may read into it anything one wants.

As a man of letters, Kattan brings to Canada an archetypal example of the marginal refusing to be integrated into the whole and striving to undermine the stability of the entire system. Kattan has not yet succeeded in creating a Canadian equivalent to Suki. In the first part of this paper I referred to certain detrimental effects of literary and linguistic interference; it should be clear from my discussion, however, that were Kattan to fully develop this Canadian Suki, these effects would not appear detrimental. Were he to realize this challenge in a systematic manner, he would perhaps exercise far greater influence on the Canadian literary institution than he does now as the director of the writer's division of the Canada Council

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Some Notes Towards the Writing of a History of the Ukrainian Literary Institution in Canada

On 30 December 1898 an Alberta-Ukrainian farmer named Ivan Zbura composed a 111-line poem titled "Kanadiiski emigranty" (Canadian emigrants). Written in simple rhymes, it celebrated the superiority of life in the New World over that in the Old Country, where the peasant's lot was said to be 'as bitter as horse-radish.' When the poem subsequently appeared two months later in the Jersey City newspaper, Svoboda (Liberty), it simultaneously announced the birth of a Canadian poetry written in Ukrainian, and the sprouting of an overseas branch of Ukrainian belles-lettres.1

Although Ivan Zbura never seriously pursued his literary inclinations, his lead was soon followed by other aspiring Ukrainian writers in Canada. In 1900 the short story "Z hlyby ny propasty" (From the Depths of the Abyss), by Sava Chernetsky, became the inaugural work of immigrant prose-fiction, while a decade later the first indigenous plays were written for the Ukrainian Canadian stage by Jacob Maydannyk and Ivan Bodrug. By that time, pioneer Ukrainian authors were well on the way to establishing one of Canada's most vigorous and enduring ethnic literatures, which is now, somewhat

1 See the fragment reproduced in Slavutych, Y. ed. Ansolohiia ukraiins'koi poezii v Kanady, 1898-1972. A partial translation can also be found in Yar Slavutych's essay, "Expectations and Reality in Ukrainian Pioneer Writing." Identifications: Ethnicity and the Writer in Canada ed. J. Balan, 15. It is suggested in the above article that Father Nestor Dmytriw's fictionalized sketches about the life of Ukrainian-Canadian pioneers — printed in the United States in 1897 under the title Kanadiiska Rus' (Canadian Rus') — should be considered to have inaugurated Ukrainian writing in Canada. However, since the author was an American resident on a visit to this country, his prose narratives more properly belong to those works about Canada by Ukrainians.
amazingly, entering its ninth consecutive decade as a New World cultural phenomenon.

Actually, the roots of Ukrainian-Canadian literature can be traced back to the villages of late nineteenth-century Western Ukraine. For the Galician and Bukovynian peasants who settled on the prairies in 1892 brought with them a vibrant oral culture, which they spontaneously adapted and enriched with Canadian themes to produce a hybrid folklore. This oral legacy — embracing anonymous songs, sayings, and anecdotes — provided much of the impetus behind the initial flowering of a written literature in the Ukrainian language. That the first anthology of creative writing by immigrant authors was a collection of folk lyrics entitled Pisni pro Kanadu i Avstriiu (Songs about Canada and Austria) — compiled in 1908 by Teodor Fedyk — bespeaks the fundamental debt that Ukrainian-Canadian literature owes to the oral tradition.

The impact of this landmark volume can be gauged from the fact that it eventually went through six editions, the final, expanded version (in 1927) running 139 pages and containing thirty songs by fifteen authors. In its various incarnations the book is said to have sold some 50,000 copies in all, having acquired in the course of its long publishing history the title Pisni immigrativ pro Staryi i Novyi Krai (Immigrant songs about the Old and New Land).^2

The oral tradition has continued to inform the works of successive generations of Ukrainian Canadian authors. It figures prominently, for instance, in Illia Kiriak's epic novel, Syny zemli (Sons of the Soil), which appeared in three volumes during the Second World War. More recently, it has provided a fertile source of inspiration for the Saskatchewan poet, Andrew Suknaski, whose verse narratives incorporate the quirky speech and the colourful tales of the pioneers as well as their Canadian-born children.^3

However, it is questionable how much longer Ukrainian writers will be able to go on tapping the native treasury of proverbs, folksongs, and stories — at least in their natural form. Since the social and linguistic basis of a living Ukrainian folk culture has virtually disappeared from the rural bloc

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^2 Since the total number of Ukrainians in Canada in 1927 was probably less than 200,000, a press run of fifty thousand copies seems rather inflated. It is cited in Mykyta Mandryka's History of Ukrainian Writing in Canada, which is not known for its accuracy or scholarly objectivity.

^3 The three volumes of Syny zemli were published by Trident Press of Winnipeg between 1939 and 1945. A brutally abridged and clumsily translated version of it was published in English by Ryerson Press of Toronto in 1959, and has since been reprinted twice by Trident Press. For a discussion of the Ukrainian elements in Andrew Suknaski's poetry, see my essay "Voices from the Canadian steppe: the poetry of Andrew Suknaski," Studium Ukrainica IV (Ottawa: U of Ottawa P 1988).
settlements of Western Canada, books are rapidly becoming the only repository of the oral legacy in the New World. For a long time immigrant communities on the prairies, by virtue of their cohesiveness and relative isolation, were able to preserve many ancestral customs and values. But now the Ukrainian-Canadian village has become part of the global village, with all of its social and cultural ramifications.

A not insignificant amount of research has been done on Ukrainian folklore in Canada, most notably by J.B. Rudnycky and Robert (Bohdan) Klymasz. Not surprisingly, much of the effort to date has been concentrated on the compilation of documentary materials, before they disappear along with the generation that still remembers the old ways. Although some collections of folk literature have been made available in various books and journals, there are many sources which have not been published or described even in summary fashion. Furthermore, no one has yet attempted to examine the long and close relationship between the oral tradition and Ukrainian-Canadian belles-lettres. This is but one of the many tasks still waiting to be performed by an ethnographer or qualified literary specialist.

Initially, the creative efforts of all New World authors had to be sent for publication to the United States, where Svoboda had successfully been launched as far back as 1893. Because Canadian presses lacked the necessary fonts they couldn't be employed for Cyrillic printing jobs, though at least one effort is said to have been made to use the Latin script for rendering Ukrainian. The founding of a Ukrainian printery in Winnipeg in the fall of 1903 removed this technical barrier to literary expression, making it possible to issue the newspaper Kanadiisky farmer (Canadian Farmer) the following year, and soon after, the first books and pamphlets.

A number of similar operations were subsequently established in Winnipeg and Edmonton in the course of the next decade, some of them succumbing to financial difficulties before they really got off the ground. However, with the help of patronage from political and religious groups interested in having a vehicle for their ideas, pioneer Ukrainian publishers were in time able to achieve a measure of economic stability. Newspapers, almanacs, and specialized journals then started coming out with increasing

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4 One extensive body of tapes that has not yet been transcribed for easy access is the research done during the early 1970's by field-workers for the Canadian Ukrainian Youth Association as part of Project S.U.C.H. (Save the Ukrainian Canadian Heritage). For a discussion of some of the problems in the handling of the folkloric materials see: Wyczynko, Olha, Bowdlerization of Ukrainian Letters, Slavistica No. 86 (Toronto: Ukrainian Language Association 1969) 13-14.

5 This apparently occurred in 1902 in rural Alberta.
regularity, and as they proliferated it became desireable to fill them with something more than just journalist copy and advertising.

Thus, on the pages of the pioneer press there began to appear the poems and stories of immigrant authors, along with the classic works of Shevchenko and Franko, and popular works of nineteenth-century Ukrainian literature. In this manner both a platform and a forum was created for the talents of would-be writers, at the same time setting the stage for the related development of reviewing and the critical discussion of belles-lettres. It is impossible to underestimate the importance of the early periodicals for stimulating creative activity, since they provided an immediate and accessible outlet for people who wanted to write. Indeed, Ukrainian-Canadian newspapers and serials remain to this day major venues for new writing and criticism, having played a key role in the development of New World Ukrainian literature from the moment of its inception.

Although book publishing was for obvious reasons initially devoted to secular and religious texts of a practical nature, the issuing of Songs about Canada and Austria revealed that by 1908 there was a market for printed material that was not strictly utilitarian. The enthusiastic response to this anthology undoubtedly encouraged the publication of a similar collection the following year, when Paul Crath’s (Pavlo Krat) equally successful Sotsialistychni pisni (Socialist Songs) came out in the first of its many editions. Other literary titles then started to roll off the increasingly active presses, including Canadian editions of Old World authors, and translations from various languages. Many of the books from this ‘incunabula’ phase are now difficult or impossible to find, having been modest efforts produced on cheap paper that are today falling apart.

Notwithstanding the multiple reprints of the earliest collections of songs, and the relative success of individual works like Sons of the Soil, indigenous creative writing has always accounted for only a small percentage of the Ukrainian books ever put out in Canada. With the exception of Ulas Samchuk, who emigrated in 1948 and had begun his publishing career in Ukraine, no immigrant author has been able to survive on literary income alone. Indeed, the printing of most belletristic volumes has been paid for by the creators themselves, though some have managed to cover the cost of their collections through individual and institutional sponsorship.

With books there came itinerant booksellers and then the first permanent bookstores, starting with Winnipeg’s Rus’ka Knyharnia, founded in 1906. They in turn initiated some of their own publishing ventures to meet consumer demand, since imported texts were not always available or suited

6 A Ukrainian-English dictionary and a prayer-book were among the first books to be published in Canada.
to the needs and tastes of immigrant readers. Winnipeg and Edmonton became the chief centres of the pioneer Ukrainian book trade, and the latter city still boasts having the best-stocked knyhnia outside the borders of Ukraine. Besides having provided local book-lovers with a place to shop and to socialize with kindred spirits, these institutions also reached rural readers through the mail order services that were an essential part of their operations. Thus, along with the newspapers, they helped to create a web of intellectual community, particularly among the emerging New World intelligentsia of teachers, professionals, and clergymen.

Besides individual customers, booksellers also served an extensive network of reading societies and libraries, which sprang up in urban ghettos, rural communities, and even in remote company towns. These associations were frequently started by political or religious organizers as part of a recruitment strategy and to promote immigrant 'enlightenment.' Such bodies often sponsored concerts, plays, cultural and social activities, and thus library-based groupings often became the nucleus around which National Homes and Prosvita halls were later built.

In the early part of this century reading societies, or chytalnia's, played an especially important role in the socialization of illiterate immigrants. The need for chytalnia was revealed in 1916; a study undertaken in several Ukrainian-Canadian settlements found that 48% of the men and 70% of the women were unable to read or write in any language. Furthermore, a large percentage of those who were trained in literacy skills had only the most rudimentary of educations, frequently acquired on an informal basis in the Austro-Hungarian army, or at the hands of a village cantor. Obviously, pioneer-era authors faced a major problem in trying to establish a viable literature under such conditions, and it is a tribute to their determination and resourcefulness that Ukrainian belles-lettres took root so quickly in the new land.

Somewhat ironically, the widespread lack of schooling among the immigrants was probably a key factor behind the incredible flowering of Ukrainian-language theatre in Canada during the first half of this century. And while plays brought over from the Old Country always remained the staple dramatic fare presented in most community halls, original scripts were

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7 The first mail order bookstore was founded by Apolinary Novak at the beginning of 1909. Called Ukrain'ska Knyhnia, it carried a selection of titles imported from the Ukraine.

8 At meetings of reading societies those who were literate would read aloud from books and newspapers for the benefit of non-readers. Such bodies also served as discussion groups and therefore as vehicles of socialization, often serving as the springboard of other political and cultural activities.
also produced by local theatrical groups as soon as they became available in the teens and twenties.

Most of the indigenous works for the Ukrainian-Canadian stage were written between 1910 and 1942, when twenty-six playwrights authored over 100 new plays, more than a third of which were set in Canada. A few of these even managed to find their way into the repertoires of companies in Western Ukraine, marking one of the rare occasions when immigrant literature reached an audience in the homeland. Among the more prominent playwrights active in the hey-day of Ukrainian amateur and semi-professional theatre in Canada were Dmytro Hunkevych, Semen Kowbel, Oleksander Luhovyi, and the ill-fated Communist militant, Myroslav Irchan. The latter made the mistake of moving to Soviet Ukraine in 1929 and was liquidated in the Stalinist purges; he has since come to be regarded as one of the most important minor writers of the Ukrainian cultural renaissance of the twenties.\(^9\)

Just as the interwar immigrants energized and reshaped many of the institutions founded by their predecessors, the Ukrainian refugees who came after the Second World War altered many of the existing cultural and political structures. For instance, Ukrainian-language theatre was in serious decline when the ‘Displaced Persons’ (DPs) arrived from post-war Europe, but the newcomers succeeded in partially reviving it, at least in central Canada. There, experienced theatre people among the expatriates mounted traditional Ukrainian plays as well as translations from the modern European repertoire. A handful of original works was also produced after this immigration, primarily in the form of cabaret-style revues. Nevertheless, the emigres were unable to prevent the continued decline of the Ukrainian-Canadian stage, and by 1970 theatrical presentations had become sporadic events confined largely to Toronto and Winnipeg.

Of perhaps greater significance were two movie dramas, Maria and Nikoly ne zabudu (I Shall Never Forget), ambitiously conceived and made in the 1960s by Canukr productions of Oshawa. Based on the wartime struggles of the highly-politicized DPs, these feature-length films reflected an effort to keep pace with changing times by utilizing a contemporary medium. While movies are obviously too expensive to have any real potential as an outlet for Ukrainian-language writing in Canada, this short-lived attempt to start

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9 Irchan was then rehabilitated by the Soviet literary establishment during the Khrushchev thaw of the late fifties.
an indigenous cinema is only slightly more quixotic than the New World literary endeavour as a whole.\(^{10}\)

Interestingly, every wave of new arrivals has tried to modernize immigrant culture so as to keep it relevant, including a recent group of dynamic young Ukrainians who migrated from Poland in the late 1970s. They have been behind the establishment of an avant-garde theatrical troupe and a similarly unconventional literary-artistic magazine, but as yet it is too early to speculate about the ultimate impact of these ventures.

Some of the features of the Ukrainian literary institution in Canada should by now be apparent from the above sketch of its development, which has been characterized by fairly consistent growth and a steady movement towards greater sophistication. Essentially, each generation of immigrants has made a distinctive contribution to the evolving literary culture and tradition and in the process transforming Ukrainian-Canadian belles-lettres from a cottage industry to a semi-professional activity.

Of course, to speak of a Ukrainian-Canadian literary 'tradition' implies the existence of a substantial body of writing, exhibiting a degree of continuity and aesthetic progression through several distinguishable phases. It also assumes the functioning of a historical and critical component within the broader creative process, whereby writers can consciously draw on or reject the achievements of both their peers and their literary antecedents. As yet, the sense of such a tradition is extremely vague when it comes to Ukrainian-Canadian literature, but an awareness of it has now been propagated for almost fifty years.

Indigenous literary criticism seems to have originated in the teens and twenties, evolving from the occasional reporting on plays to more formal discussions of Ukrainian authors and their works. The pioneering critic as such is said to have been Zygmund Bychynsky, who edited Kanadiiysyi farmer in 1908, before teaching in Alberta for a year. Although he subsequently moved to the United States he retained his literary connections with Canada and thus continued to nurture immigrant writing from the other side of the border. Besides editing the first Ukrainian-Canadian calendar, Poselenets' (The settler), and translating the novel Ben Hur, he assisted the early writers Teodor Fedyk and Dmytro Rakaiovsky in their publishing endeavours.

When other, better-educated immigrants arrived after the First World War, they perceptibly raised editorial standards and the overall level of literary culture. By means of lectures and popular articles people, like the

\(^{10}\) Two feature-length Ukrainian "tafki" were also shot in North America during the 1930's but these were film versions of the classic operettas, Natalka Poltavka and Zaporojets' za Dunaien.
writer Mykyta Mandryka and the teacher Volodymyr Kupchenko, elevated the public appreciation and knowledge of mainstream Ukrainian literature. However, these amateur 'scholars' and 'critics' can most accurately be described as enthusiasts or 'knyholubi,' whose primary role was popularizers of Ukrainian books and authors. Their essays served a useful purpose because they were not beyond the reach of ordinary readers, but by the same token were not distinguished by their originality or grasp of theory.

Critical activity again took a giant leap forward in the wake of the Second World War when a cadre of academics, editors, and professional writers suddenly appeared on the scene. With their educational polish and sophistication the emigres soon emerged in the forefront of Ukrainian-Canadian society, filling the vacuum that was opening up with the demise of the now aging pioneers. Not surprisingly, literary life took on a new complexion under the influence of the refugees, with Toronto coming to rival Winnipeg as the most important centre of Ukrainian-language publishing in Canada.

As products of modern European culture and survivors of an era marked by depression, famine, war, and totalitarianism, the newcomers were a very different breed from the 'old Canadians,' whom they sometimes viewed with patronizing disdain. Still, a handful of emigre intellectuals began to take an interest in the achievements of those who had preceded them, intrigued by the 'hyphenated' Ukrainian identity that had begun to coalesce between 1939 and 1945. For community involvement in the Canadian war effort had fostered a sense of self-awareness and ethnic pride, as had the commemorations around the fiftieth anniversary of Ukrainian settlement in Canada.

In fact, it was the latter occasion which seems to have prompted research into the history of Ukrainian-Canadian writing, the landmark work in this regard being the 1941 collection, Antologizia ukrainski koho pys'menstva v Kanadi (Anthology of The [sic] Ukrainian Literature in Canada). Compiled under the editorship of Mykyta Mandryka and containing extensive biographic and bibliographic information, it was identified as "Volume One" but unfortunately no other installments ever followed it into print. The next gathering together of immigrant writing only occurred seventeen years later, when Peter Krawchuk's Poety Kanady (The Poets of Canada) was issued in the Soviet Ukraine under the aegis of the Khrushchev thaw.

Krawchuk subsequently edited a second anthology in 1971 and is also the author of three monographs on various aspects of Ukrainian Canadian literature.11 A member of the interwar generation and a leading figure in

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11 This includes a book on Myroslav Ichen which is not cited in the accompanying bibliography.
the pro-Soviet wing of the Ukrainian community, his otherwise interesting books are severely undermined by their blatant Communist bias. In 1968, Mykyta Mandryka (who belonged to the nationalist camp) attempted to produce a more comprehensive history of Ukrainian writing in Canada, but it, too, is seriously flawed by its political partisanship, inaccuracies, and lack of objectivity.12

It was during the 1960s that Michael Marunchak and Yar Slavutych of the postwar immigration began the more systematic and intensive study of the Ukrainian literary institution in Canada. While they have significantly expanded the scope and depth of investigation with their ongoing efforts in this field, much basic research remains to be done before it will be possible to obtain a detailed understanding of Ukrainian-Canadian literature.

For example, to date no one has examined the development of Ukrainian literary scholarship and criticism in Canada. The above account is only a sketch based on my superficial knowledge in the area and sources that do not inspire a great deal of confidence. One suspects that it, along with other extant summaries of the history of Ukrainian-Canadian literature, will eventually have to undergo substantial revision after more primary research has been completed.13

Notwithstanding the short-comings of the available articles and books on Ukrainian writing in Canada, they have succeeded in establishing Ukrainian-Canadian literature as a subject worthy of further exploration. And while the quantity of works in the area (mostly in Ukrainian) may, at a glance, seem to be impressive, they barely scratch the surface in terms of defining and describing this particular literature 'of lesser diffusion.' To that end, the assembling of anthologies must be regarded as an essential first step in the critical process, since such compilations not only help to promote the cataloguing of works and writers, but provide a first glimpse of the larger picture.

Fortunately, the anthologizing of Ukrainian writing in Canada has been continued by Yar Slavutych and more recently by Oleksa Hay Holowka, and consequently a better sense of the totality of Ukrainian-Canadian literature is slowly beginning to emerge. But so far, access to Ukrainian-language texts has been largely restricted to native speakers and Slavonic specialists, since only a small number of works have appeared in translation, and these almost

12 See, for instance, his curt dismissal of Myroslav Irchen.

13 A case in point is my entry on Ukrainian writing in Canada in The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, which is still largely based on the work of the older generation. Having gradually assembled a fairly respectable library in the field, and begun some of my own investigations of different topics, I am evermore aware of the inadequacies of the sources cited in the bibliography included with this paper.
exclusively in English.\textsuperscript{14} Watson Kirkconnell deserves credit for being the first to address this problem, albeit in a token way, having produced English versions of a few poems by Ukrainian immigrant authors in the course of his work on ethnic literatures.\textsuperscript{15} Michael Luchkowich also deserves mention for his rendering of \textit{Sons of the Soil}, which Ryerson Press published in an abridged form in 1959.

The first English-language anthology of Ukrainian writing in Canada finally appeared in 1987, when the post-1945 era was covered in \textit{Yarmarok}, co-edited by myself and the late Yuri Klynovy (Stefanyk). As such, it marks the beginning of an attempt to integrate Ukrainian-language writing into the body of Canadian literature, the pioneer and interwar periods remaining to be dealt with in subsequent compilations. It is, of course, crucial that non-Ukrainian critics and historians gain entry into the Ukrainian-Canadian literary subculture, as they have an important contribution to make in terms of its elucidation and assessment.

The fact that Ukrainians have lagged behind other groups in issuing collections of immigrant writing in translation gives them a certain advantage because they have the benefit of the experience of earlier ‘ethnic’ anthologies. In fact, it would be very useful to develop a co-ordinated strategy in the editing of such books, since the acceptance of some common principles now would greatly facilitate the eventual comparative analysis of minority language literatures in Canada. With this in mind, I would like to make the following suggestions, which specifically apply to New World belles-lettres produced in the non-official languages.

First, it should be recognized that immigrant writing, like colonial literature in general, often has extra-literary value. It may be of historical, ethnographic, or sociological interest, even if it is of dubious aesthetic quality. Thus, while it may enhance a community’s self-image to publish only the ‘best’ of its literary achievements, such an approach does not necessarily serve the interests of either literary or ethnic scholarship. Besides putting the cart before the horse, it could ultimately discourage the translation of less-polished work which is nevertheless of use to specialists. For this reason, inaugural anthologies should attempt to offer a broad cross-section rather

\textsuperscript{14} I am unaware of there being any French renderings of Ukrainian-Canadian works. However, a small number of immigrant authors have had some of their writings translated into other languages.

\textsuperscript{15} The first work of Ukrainian-Canadian literature to appear in English was a long poem by Michael Gowda, "To Canada." It was translated by E. W. Thompson (undoubtedly with the help of the author, who was frequently employed as an interpreter) and published in 1905 in a Boston newspaper. This, however, seems to have been an isolated incident.
than an exclusive slice — especially since editors can present a distorted picture by virtue of their prejudices and loyalties.

Next, I would argue that some priorities should be established to aid in the selection of works for anthologization, as it is both impractical and unnecessary to make absolutely everything available in translation. This is particularly the case with authors who are obviously minor figures in a literary subculture, yet deserve to be represented because they provide a context by which to judge and situate the more outstanding talents.

For example, undistinguished pieces that register a response to a writer's Canadian experience, or express an attitude to the homeland, should be translated sooner than mediocre works on the more general themes of literature (i.e., love, death, truth, etc.). Poems and stories that deal with the New World environment should also be given precedence, to help determine if there are any cultural peculiarities among immigrant groups in their feelings towards Canadian nature. Of course, the purpose of focusing on the latter would be to test the paradigms developed by Atwood, Frye, and Jones, as not all newcomers may share what seems to be the European view of the Canadian landscape.

Literature exploring inter-ethnic relations would likewise be of greater use than insipid meditations on the meaning of life, as would poems and stories that say something about gender politics, since they may be of value for feminist research. Of course, not every writer will have written on these subjects, and works that are striking for other reasons should not be ignored in the selection process. It's just that with the lesser literary lights of a community, even doggerel on certain topics can be of some worth to critics and historians.

Similarly, it would be helpful to standardize the contributors' notes included in ethnic anthologies, so that it will be possible to develop a profile of each minority group's writers, and where they settled in Canada.16 Besides a complete bibliography of published works, relevant biographical details should be provided, such as occupation, level of education, and immigration history, as well as a list of known pseudonyms. Ideally, critical writings — by or about the author — and any translating activity should also be recorded, along with other information that might assist critics working on a particular individual.

Finally, anthologies should contain somewhere the source and original title of every work reproduced in translation in order to facilitate the location and comparison of texts in the case of unilingual compilations. If these criteria were met by all collections of ethnic literature they would be

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16 Information on the latter will undoubtedly yield some interesting results in terms of the regional characteristics of ethnic literature.
of great benefit to scholars working in the field, and would hasten the time when it will be possible to prepare a general account of immigrant writing in the non-official languages.

In the case of smaller immigrant communities with a compact or finite literature in the native language, summary anthologies, if well-prepared, could serve as a primary reference for all subsequent critical endeavours. However, because of the sheer bulk and the sustained nature of Ukrainian-Canadian belles-lettres, a comprehensive bibliography is an essential undertaking in the documentation of Ukrainian-language publishing. While Yar Slavutych has made a useful start on assembling such a catalogue, his compendium is deficient in ways that will need to be addressed by further research.

To begin with, his list is unfortunately restricted to books published in Canada, giving an incomplete picture of the output of immigrant authors who have had works issued in the Ukraine and elsewhere. He also fails to include information that would shed light on the broader literary culture, such as details about edition size and features of graphic design. The latter, for instance, would be invaluable for a study of the evolution of the Ukrainian-Canadian book trade, while the former would assist in gauging the audience that immigrant writers have been able to reach with their creative efforts.

Besides original poetry, essays, plays, short and long fiction, a definitive bibliography should also cover other types of writing, including literary memoirs, biographies, critical studies, and translations produced by Ukrainian writers in Canada. Travelogues, immigrant autobiographies, and non-fictional works aimed at the general reader similarly fall within the legitimate interest of those studying Ukrainian-Canadian letters. Finally, in addition to reference books such as dictionaries, grammars, and collections of anecdotes and proverbs, there should be separate sections on Old Country literature and translations that appeared in Canadian editions. These form an integral part of the intellectual context in which immigrant authors worked and provide an indication of public tastes and needs, if only as perceived by the publishers.

How-to books, technical manuals, scholarly texts, polemical tracts, political and theological literature could then be dealt with in a companion volume devoted to other books written or published in Canada. A complete
bibliography, if properly done, could serve as the basis for a history of Ukrainian-Canadian printing which in turn would comprise a key chapter in any overview of immigrant literary development. A detailed bibliography of New World belles-lettres would further make it possible to quantify the literature to be studied, as well as permit some statistical breakdowns according to genre and publishing patterns.

The final major task which needs to be performed as a preliminary step in documenting the Ukrainian literary institution in Canada concerns the identification of all the creative and relevant writing scattered throughout a host of periodical publications. This would not only involve noting the poems and stories produced by immigrant authors but would require the listing of critical articles, reviews, obituaries of writers, and reprinted works from the Ukrainian literary tradition. While a tedious and rather daunting chore, such a survey is absolutely crucial, since much New World writing has never appeared anywhere else but on the pages of the press. Moreover, there is much to be learned from a careful sifting of newspapers, calendars, and journals, which in many cases record what little information is still available about a particular work or author.

Thus, three 'mega-projects' await the attention of anyone interested in contributing towards the writing of a serious history of Ukrainian literature in Canada. And although some useful work has already been done on each of these endeavours, the documentation, study, and integration of Ukrainian immigrant belles-lettres is still in the early stages. Since the ground that needs to be covered is quite substantial, many more hands need to be recruited to this field of study. Presently only a small number of people are engaged in research in the area, none of them on a full-time basis. Lecturers on both Canadian and Ukrainian literature could be of great assistance in this regard by encouraging gifted students with a grasp of the language to consider working on any aspect of New World writing.

There are many fundamental questions that need to be answered in connection with Ukrainian-Canadian literature. First and foremost is its relationship with the mainstream Ukrainian literary tradition, especially as the latter has evolved in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To what extent has immigrant writing mirrored intellectual and cultural developments in the homeland and manifested independent features in the course of its ninety-year Canadian history? Similarly, have Ukrainian-Canadian authors contributed any works that are unique or of lasting quality to the ancestral tradition, or is their legacy a mere footnote that is chiefly of interest for what it records about life in the diaspora?

It would be very useful to have some linguistic investigations into the literary Ukrainian language in Canada, looking at such things as orthography, dialectal characteristics, and the influence of English. This is an area where Soviet-Ukrainian scholars could play a most helpful role,
since their ears will be better tuned to the peculiarities of New World Ukrainian. Indeed, literary critics from Ukraine have an important contribution to make to the entire study of Ukrainian-Canadian letters, especially if they are able to shake off some of the ideological dogmatism that has plagued much of Soviet scholarship until now.

It could also be revealing to compare Ukrainian writing in Canada with that of kindred communities in the United States and South America, both of which have produced a fairly extensive literature over roughly the same period in time. However, of more immediate concern are the contrasts and similarities between Ukrainian and other minority-language literatures in Canada. This is why the preparation of translations must proceed as quickly as possible, for any understanding of Ukrainian-Canadian literature will have to be in part determined within the context of Canadian writing as a whole.

Of related interest is the interaction between ethnic authors and the mainstream literary culture of Canada, which in the Ukrainian case seems to have begun when Paul Crath (Pavlo Krat) and Florence Randall Livesay collaborated on the landmark volume, Songs of Ukraina (1915). Similarly, several immigrant authors have now rendered a variety of works by both better and lesser known Canadian writers, Borys Oleksandriy’s 1972 anthology, Poezia/Kvebek: Vid Sen-Deni-Garneau do nashykh dniv (Poetry/Quebec: From Saint Denys-Garneau to our times), being a remarkable achievement in this regard.

Of course, a whole new dimension has also opened up in terms of the Canadian-born writers who work in English but are of Ukrainian descent. Vera Lysenko was the first to succeed in crossing the linguistic Rubicon with Men in Sheepskin Coats (1947), though at the time she was attacked by many Ukrainians for what were considered to be her Communist views. Since then, a small army of Ukrainian Canadians have made their mark on the literary mainstream, among them George Ryga, Myrna Kostash, Ted Galay, Andrew Suknaski, and most recently, Janice Kulyk Keefer. This development deserves consideration in the larger history of Ukrainian letters in Canada, but falls outside the scope of the present discussion, which is focused on writing in the ancestral language.

It is noteworthy that not a single immigrant author from Ukraine has been successfully able to make the transition to writing in English or French, as is the case with such well-known figures as Frederick Philip Grove, Henry Kreisel, and Robert Zend. Nor has any Ukrainian-language writer born in Canada made a notable contribution working in their mother tongue, and while this may yet change, any such individuals are bound to be the exception to the rule. Writing in Ukrainian seems to have been almost

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18 As yet there have been no authors who have established themselves in French.
entirely an immigrant phenomenon, though attempts are still being made to
extend the tradition into the next generation.

There are ominous signs that the creation of an indigenous
Ukrainian-language literature may be slowly coming to an end, due to the
relentless statistical decline of fluent speakers and active readers. Some
eighty percent of ethnic Ukrainians are now born in Canada, and while a
sense of community is still fairly strong, a working knowledge of the
ancestral language is rapidly becoming the preserve of a small and
highly-educated elite.

The influx of young Ukrainian refugees from Poland has injected some
new blood into the literary milieu, but the newcomers (approximately 1200)
are not sufficiently numerous to reverse the overall trend toward the
eventual disappearance of a Canadian literature in Ukrainian. The bilingual
school system, while perhaps increasing the size of a potential audience for
Ukrainian writing, does not seem likely to contribute significantly to its
continued development in Canada. With the dramatic changes currently
taking place in Soviet Ukraine it is still possible that Ukrainian-language
literature in the New World may yet get a new lease on life. This could
result from either a large wave of immigration, or as a side-effect of the
national and linguistic revival presently under way in Ukraine. Meanwhile,
there is much work to be done on what has already been accomplished in
the realm of Ukrainian-Canadian belles-lettres, and much to be gained by
taking on the challenges that this labour entails.

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A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CRITICAL SOURCES ON UKRAINIAN-
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Art of Intrusion: Macaronicism in Ukrainian-Canadian Literature

The primary and most crucial aspect of any literary tradition is its use of language as a form of artistic expression. The encounter of two literatures sometimes marks the triumph of one literary language but never without some degree of impact, penetration or influence on the part of the losing party. In practice, languages and literatures in contact situations always set the scene for mutual exchange, divergence and innovation.¹ This process is clearly characteristic of Ukrainian-Canadian literature in English² where macaronic features serve to bridge the old and the new in ways that are fresh and extraordinary.

Due to a host of acculturative factors,³ most writers of Ukrainian descent who are born in Canada tend to write in English. Like George Ryga, they prefer to use their Ukrainian entity as "merely the mood or coloration through which I will view things. It is certainly not linguistic."⁴ Vera Lysenko, Canada's first major writer of Ukrainian descent to work in English, betrayed strong ties to her mother tongue in both her novels. In

¹ In this regard, see, for example, George G. Grabowicz, Toward a History of Ukrainian Literature (Cambridge: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute 1981) 98-100.
² Macaronism, as one of the literary dynamics of contact situations, was also noted by Roman Jakobson in his study of a "Medieval Mock Mystery (The Old Czech Unguentarius)" published in Studia Philologica et Literaria in Honorem L. Spizer, ed. A.G. Hatcher and K.L. Selig (Bern: Francke Verlag 1958) 255.
³ The major branches of Ukrainian-Canadian literature are noted in Danylo Struk, "Ukrainian Emigré Literature in Canada," Identifications: Ethnicity and the Writer in Canada, ed. Jars Balan (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta 1982) 88-103.
⁴ For a recent survey, see W. Roman Petryshyn, ed. Changing Realities: Social Trends among Ukrainian Canadians (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta 1980).

George Ryga, as quoted in Jars Balan, 153.
Yellow Boots (1954) Lysenko digresses into an etymological excursus on the names of the months in Ukrainian and concludes: "What lovely names! Each a picture! The poetic peasant fancy which has bestowed on each month its special quality pleased Lilli." In her second novel, Westerly Wild (1956), Vera Lysenko fixates on the surname of one of her characters, Jenny Kapusta (kapustra = cabbage), and, with tongue in cheek, composes a "Song of the Cabbage" for Jenny to recite as a poem in thirteen lines. The concealed but obvious link between surname and poem constitutes a kind of veiled, private joke that, in the absence of any comment or clarification from the author, goes unnoticed by the monolingual reader. Another novelist, C.H. Andrusyshen, writing under a nom de plume – C.H. Andrus, makes similar use of Ukrainian for covert purposes; unlike Lysenko, however, Andrusyshen openly declares his use of Ukrainian for cryptic purposes but without identifying the mysterious language by name.

On the whole, Canadian writers of Ukrainian descent emulate their colleagues of non-Ukrainian background and use Ukrainian only sporadically for local colour or when absolutely necessary. Personal names, everyday expressions, and words relating to various facets of Ukrainian folk culture are the main categories in this regard. Occasionally, the issue of language itself appears as a narrative motif in the form of a language barrier situation. In rare instances, a single, isolated Ukrainian word intruding into an otherwise English-language prose narrative, can have an arresting impact on the reader who, for example, in Janice Kulyk Keefer's short story, "Red River Cruise," is startled by the sudden interpolation of the Ukrainian

5 Vera Lysenko, Yellow Boots (Toronto: Ryerson Press 1954) 79.
6 Vera Lysenko, Westerly Wild (Toronto: Ryerson Press 1956) 213.
7 While she avoids interpolating Ukrainian textual matter, Lysenko is more generous in regard to other languages: in Yellow Boots she reproduces a six-line lullaby from the Japanese original (260), and in Westerly Wild (215), the author quotes a couplet in German.
9 Canadian writers of non-Ukrainian descent who have "Ukrainianized" their works with such incidentals include Margaret Atwood, Pierre Berton, Margaret Laurence, Gabrielle Roy, William D. Valgardson, and others.
10 Typical, in this regard, is Ray Servylo’s short work, Accordion Lessons (Vancouver: Pulp Press 1982), the winning entry in "the fourth international three-day novel-writing contest," 14-15, 23, 30 and 42.
pejorative, ‘bunyak,’ (which in the vernacular can mean anything from rascal to bastard) in a manner that differs quite significantly from Andrew Suknaski’s controlled use of the same Ukrainian word in his poem, “Centennial Barber Shop.” Similar macaronic phenomena obtain in works created for the non-immigrant, mainstream stage in Canada such as Cruel Tears (1977), Paper Wheat (1982), and Ted Galay’s dramas — all reflecting aspects of the Ukrainian experience on the prairies. Interestingly, in Galay’s After Baba’s Funeral (1983) only the deceased ancestors speak exclusively in Ukrainian, underlining thereby the dead-language status of spoken Ukrainian, at least insofar as the playwright is concerned. In Paper Wheat, Ukrainian dialogue spoken by the play’s Ukrainian immigrant, Vasil Havryshyn, descends into futile babble that in itself, however, provides a spring for fun and hilarity.13

In addition to prose and dramatic dialogue, poetry provides a third and the most productive vehicle for macaronic verbal behaviour.14 Its special focus on formal aspects of literary composition make poetry an ideal forum for linguistic experimentation. In this connection, it is interesting to note the dominance of poetry in the birth and subsequent development of modern Ukrainian literature and the seminal role of humour in this process.15 A parallel phenomenon is characteristic of Ukrainian-Canadian literature in English as reflected in the works of two poets, Maara Haas of Winnipeg, and Andrew Suknaski of Regina. For the former writer, macaronicism constitutes a major comic device as shown in her groundbreaking work, The Street Where I Live (1976). Haas, for example, delights in manipulating personal names. Some names (such as Xenia) escape macaronic play; others, like Veedma, represent onomastic neologisms whose meanings in the original language are revealed contiguously in English. The resultant tautology with its threat of tedium is hidden from the monolingual

15 Note, in this connection, Ivan Kotliarevsky (1769-1838) and his poetic travesty of Virgil’s Aeneid, as well as Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861) and his collection of serious poetry, Kobzar.
reader while other moments or onomastic macaronicism are readily revealed with the help of epithets as in "Mrs. Onion, the Widow Siboolka," "Horbaty the Hunchback," "Yolop dummy," and "mamoochka, little mother" (29, 40, 45, 111). Tautological extensions also obtain, as in the case of Mrs. Holub who "is like a mourning dove with a bent wing [...] peck, peck, peck peck," and Percival Pshawkraw whose surname surfaces unobtrusively eight lines later in English translation as "dog's blood" in the form of a curse voiced by one of the book's many characters (77-78). Shmarkaty Kapusta, another onomastic neologism, provides a special opportunity for extended macaronic word play, which in contrast to Vera Lysenko's focus on the surname, Kapusta, noted earlier, concentrates instead on the first name, Shmarkaty (= 'runny nose'), and the alliterative suggestiveness of its initial cluster, shmark. First, Haas clarifies the meaning of shmarkaty by means of a macaronic tautology: "Kapusta who is always/ Shmarkaty with a leaky nose"; then she uses shmarkaty again twice in one line but in two different ways: "Shmarkaty is eating shmarkaty doughnuts from/ a greasy bag" (35, 37). The initial use of shmarkaty preserves its onomastic function while the second instance of the same word shows its transformation into a neologistic epithet in English. Other examples of this writer's intimate knowledge of vernacular Ukrainian include her epithetical expression, 'monkeyfaces,' which Haas borrows from Ukrainian (bila mavpa) and uses metaphorically in reference to "painted women" (87).17

Other macaronic moments in Haas' novel include her efforts to mimic the phonological and syntactic aberrations of immigrant speech (17, 48), including commonplace phrases like "bad weather" which in Haas is transformed into "bed wedder" with the help of the paranomastic metathesis of vowels sounds (bad/bed) and consonants (weather/wedder) (68).

In general, Haas transforms the bilingual encounter into an extended comic device, as shown in the following excerpt:

The marble clock with gold cherubs laughing,  
shows already half-past three, and still no one comes.

Is not fonny, says Father Mashik, shaking his  
finger at the laughing cherubs.  
Today is my first vedding in the big city choorch.

Solemnly, he smooths the black gown over his

16 For her use of Veedma, see Maara Hass, The Street Where I Live (Toronto: McGraw-Hill 1976) 73; see also page 32 for similar use of choni devil and page 40, perenav quilt.

17 Note, in this connection, the Canadian setting for a short story entitled "Bila Mavpa" by the early Soviet Ukrainian writer, Myroslav Irchan.
stomach shaped round and firm like a heavy potato dumpling.

The marriage candles are ready for lighting.
The blue velvet cushions to kneel down, are waiting.

And the jewelled crowns to sit on the head of the bride and groom, are like everything else, waiting and watching.

God is vatchink, Bishop is vatchink, says Father Mashik, mournfully.
Whole parish she is vatchink poor village priest greenhorn in new country.

Father Mashik's twinkly blue eyes behind the goldrim glasses are not so twinkly.

With sad eyebrows, he looks at the suffering Christ above the altar.

I am eskink, only, you should keep your hend on da jewells crown, Dear Jesus, so they are not fallink off da heads, to make fool.
... The name of da Fahder, da Son and da Holy Ghost.

AMEEN

Mother to Jesus, vehr is heppy groom for confession? (16-17)

In contrast to the above, Andrew Suknaski uncovers other, more serious dimensions of macaronicism. His balladic poem, "The First Syrota,"
for example, is rendered totally in a kind of pidgin English that is completely bereft of the antics that characterize many of Maara Haas's writings. In the following excerpt, Suknaski disturbs the norms of literary English but maintains a tense and sombre tone throughout:

fahderr vent vay somvorr vonc
day vahzzeh varry poorr
he vent vay vork forr vile
sommeh nunz  dey commeh geev herr food
starrink tell err bout chrrist

all deem storry

fahderr commeh bek hom
ketch herr prayink
he startt beatink herr
tole herr forget evrytink
nunz telleh herr
she say 'noh!'
she be likkeh dem beauteeful storry
soh he puteh lohgz een fireplec
ven good firre goink
he drehgeh herr cross florr
'you noh stahpeh behleevink
i trop you een firre!'
she noh frraid noh say nhottink
he puteh herr clohc to fiemz
she feeleh nohtink
he trroph herr cross florr

nexteh he boilink beeg pot bearrr fet

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he puteh herr een...
she noh cryeh

by ghalley he tekkeh heez ehx (36-37)

In general, Suknaski is careful to translate, paraphrase, define or otherwise clarify all Ukrainian loanwords. On occasion, he uses a strong functional slot that succeeds in carrying this use of Ukrainian without any interpretive support: a poem, "A Letter to Mykola," closes with "liubov" (32), and in "Old Country Alcoholic Orphan" he makes repetitive use of a four-line refrain in Ukrainian with no explanatory comment (123-124). Elsewhere, Suknaski's macaronism takes on pronounced, onomatopoeic features, as shown, for example, in his conversion of the suffix -kan (from Ukrainian hurakan) into gone and, similarly, of -ala (from vidlitala) into allah (120-122).

In conclusion, then, macaronism in Ukrainian-Canadian literature can be characterized as a unique and highly distinctive literary feature that obtains exclusively as a product of the Ukrainian community's experience in

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19 See, for example, 15, 16, 19-21, 25, 29.
Canada. As shown above, this phenomenon operates on various levels; and it can remain submerged and obscure — unless the reader is sufficiently bilingual to detect and appreciate the macaronic element when it appears. Its full potential was defined by the master herself who was the first in Ukrainian-Canadian literature to recognize "the language barrier as a technical device to unearth the larger universal truth" (Haas, 135).

There can be no doubt that macaronicism constitutes a dominant component in the poetics of ethnicity in Canadian literature. Insofar as Ukrainian-Canadian literature is concerned, there remains the need to explore and distinguish the nature of macaronicism as found in related forms of literary expression (such as Ukrainian-Canadian literature in Ukrainian and Ukrainian-Canadian oral lore) vis-à-vis Ukrainian-Canadian literature in English, as discussed here. Other 'literatures of lesser diffusion' in Canada also require investigation in order to determine the manner in which macaronicism obtains as a creative, aesthetic literary act from a comparative point of view.

*Canadian Museum of Civilization*
Forging an Identity: Finnish-Canadian Perspectives in English-Canadian Literature

Czeslaw Milosz, in his Norton Lectures at Harvard in the early 1980s, said that he came from a blank spot on the European literary map.¹ This paper is about a blank spot on the Canadian literary map — that inhabited by Finnish-Canadian writers.

I have located three houses on this map, and one hotel. The first is an old house in Ottawa which is all boarded up. The inhabitants are pre-Depression Finnish poets, playwrights, perhaps even a couple of novelists, whose works — all in Finnish, a language which I as a third-generation Finnish Canadian am only now learning — are deposited in the National Archives. No one has done any research on them, apart from a doctoral student from Finland who is writing a dissertation on North American Finnish immigrant literature.

The second house is in Toronto, where a group of recent Finnish immigrants are writing short stories and poetry which they publish in the periodical Kanadan Suomalainen, but again mainly in Finnish. As educated young Finns from a country with a lively modern literary culture — well supported by government money for publishing ventures and literary prizes, and by the media and a large reading public — they naturally feel more comfortable writing in Finnish. But they are really part of the modern Finnish literary tradition and know little about Canadian literature. When these Torontolaiset received a Secretary of State grant about three years ago to compile an anthology of Finnish-Canadian writing in their mother tongue, they received so few submissions of literary merit that the project is still on hold.

The third house is in the West, where three young second or third generation writers are publishing in English: Ernest Hekkanen, Brenda

Niskala, and — I would like to say Nancy Jokikorpela, but my grandfather
changed his name to the Swedish-sounding Mattson. There may be a fourth
house hidden somewhere in northern Ontario, where the majority of some
52,000 Finnish Canadians live, but if so it has no telephone or mailing
address.

The hotel is on the outskirts of a blank spot somewhere in the West,
where at least four non-Finnish Canadian writers have come to stay for a
while. Nellie McClung stayed there in the 1920s while she wrote Painted
Fires about a Finnish maid. In the 1980s Ken Mitchell and Andreas
Schroeder stayed long enough to write a play, The Shipbuilder, and a novel,
Dustship Glory, about the same historical character — Tom Sukkanen, who
built a massive iron ship on the Saskatchewan prairie in the 1930s, with the
wild intention of sailing back to Finland via the South Saskatchewan River
and Hudson’s Bay. Jack Hodgins checked in at the hotel to write a couple
of short stories featuring Finnish characters in his 1983 collection, The
Barclay Family Theatre. (Barbara Sapergia has also written a play, Lokkinen,
which I will not be discussing.)

This is an odd and rather artificial ‘Group of Seven’ I have brought
together for this paper. I have done so because I myself am in the process
of forging an identity as a Finn, a Canadian, and a writer — and because I
was invited to present a paper at a summer conference in Finland on the
topic of Finnish-Canadian writing. I had hoped to go there with a long list
of writers, but my bibliographic searches and Finnish grapevine turned up
very few Finnish authors, so my list is fortified by other Canadian writers
who "have a thing for Finns" — the phrase is Brenda Niskala’s. Later in this
paper I will examine their portrayal of Finns from the perspective of a
reader who knows the Finnish-Canadian culture intimately.

As Francesco Loriggio pointed out in his paper two days ago,
examinations of ethnic literature often start from such extratextual details
as signature. Indeed, it was the signatures of Hekkanen and Niskala that
drew me to them, and the names of the characters in the works by the

2 Statistics Canada (1981 Census); one of these writers is Elizabeth Kouhi, author of
Round Trip Home (Moonbeam, Ont.: Penumbra 1983), who lives in an apartment in
Thunder Bay.

3 Nellie McClung, Painted Fires (Toronto: Ryerson 1925).

4 Ken Mitchell, The Shipbuilder (Ms. obtained from author 1985).

5 Andreas Schroeder, Dustship Glory (Toronto: Doubleday 1986).


7 Reunion of Sisters II, Kuopio, 1987, jointly sponsored by the University of Kuopio and
the University of Minnesota. The Center for Finnish Studies at the latter is publishing
the proceedings of the literature workshop.
non-Finns: Helmi Milander the maid, Tom Sukanen the shipbuilder (whom my father knew, having been born in a sod hut on the next quarter section), and Eli Wainamoinen the artist, a name which resonates for all Finns. Väinämöinen, one of the three main heroes of the Finnish national folk epic Kalevala, is a wizard and singer, the first man on earth (born at the age of 700 years) in the Finnish version of the creation myth.

In this ‘Group of Seven,’ what was at first dismaying to me as I searched for Finnish needles in the CanLit haystack was that the non-Finnish writers are far better known than the Finnish Canadians. But of course Hekkanen and Niskala are in the early stages of their writing careers. What seemed further dismaying was that these two writers hardly use Finnish themes at all in their works. Niskala, for instance, has only one poem in her only collection of poetry, Ambergis Moon, that deals with the ethnic dimension of her life. A second/third generation Finn who was brought up near the same Finnish block settlement where Tom Sukanen built his ship, she is very much aware and proud of her Finnish heritage, though she has no connections, literary or otherwise, with modern Finnish culture. During her undergraduate studies in sociology at the University of Saskatchewan, she did some demographic studies of her home community. She also played a vital role as intermediary between the Finnish farmers she knew so well and, by turns, Ken Mitchell and Andreas Schroeder, who were researching the Sukanen story. In her own poetry, however, she transforms her Finnish farming community into a generic prairie community.

She is in fact a mainstream prairie writer who draws a picture of the hard life on the farm, the difficulty of both men’s and women’s work, the problems of a daughter whose father withholds his love, the peace and beauty of the prairie landscape, the captivity and courage of those who stay on the farm. In only one poem, "Déjà Vu: Operation," does she refer to her ethnic heritage — a Finnish grandmother performs a cupping on her young granddaughter:

in a steamy sauna
by coal-oil lamp flickering
the healer spreads her tools...
over the razor cut
on the sweat-moist skin
of the young girl’s neck
she cups a bull’s horn
in the heat the hollow
draws out the bad blood. (36)

Brenda Niskala, Ambergis Moon (Saskatoon: Thistledown 1983).
But one poem does not make a writer an ethnic writer. Though Niskala’s signature is Finnish, her identity as a writer is Canadian.

Niskala’s book is divided into two parts: the second half concerns the problems of a modern urban woman, born on the farm, who ‘Can’t Go Back’ to her former life picking chokecherries with her mother. I could stretch a point here: berry-picking is an important cultural activity (in the widest sense of the term) for the Finns, and is often used as a metaphor or symbol in Finnish literature, so I am tempted to identify a Finnish consciousness behind this poem. But since most prairie farm people have picked chokecherries, if only to spit them out, I would simply be distorting Niskala’s poem in a misplaced zeal to find what I was searching for. The poems in the second part of her book explore generational differences, and the speaker forges her identity as a modern woman, with several poems having a feminist sensibility. Niskala writes strong and subtle poetry, even if she does not deal with ethnic themes — alas and hooray.

Niskala is a lawyer who for several years practised in northern Saskatchewan among the Indians and Métis. She is married to a Métis, and they have two small children to whom they speak only Cree — she told me in a telephone interview that she now knows more Cree than Finnish, and her recent poems concern Indian and Métis culture. I identify with Niskala on the personal level as a Finnish-Canadian sister. Equally important, however, is my sense of connection with her as a prairie writer. We have a common identity in both worlds.

The other Finnish-Canadian writer I have contacted while researching this paper is Ernest Hekkanen, a self-described Finnish-Irish-American-Canadian writer who lives in Vancouver, working as a carpenter and writing at night. On weekends he retreats to Mayne Island, where he first met his mentor, Alexander Mikkonen, and finally lived with him for a year.

Since I am particularly interested in the interplay between history and literature — which will be my focus in discussing Schroeder, Mitchell, and McClung, and which is very important in my own poetry — I would like to quote Alexander Mikkonen: "History is an elaborate disguise. It is totally transparent, but it can hide one’s nakedness extremely well." Literature, too, can be an elaborate disguise: it can reveal something about the identity of authors and of their characters, but it can also hide much.

Hekkanen quotes Mikkonen in his preface to Medieval Hour in the Author’s Mind,9 his first collection of short stories. In the preface to this volume, Hekkanen pays tribute to Mikkonen, explaining an obsession and influence which lasted several years. Mikkonen was a forger, printmaker, cartoonist, fiction writer, philosopher, and inventor. Born in Latvia in 1908

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9 Ernest Hekkanen, Medieval Hour in the Author’s Mind (Saskatoon: Thistledown 1987).
to a Polish mother and Finnish father, Mikkonen knew nine languages. He moved around Europe, then to Brazil and finally Canada, travelling with forged documents and plying his trade as a counterfeiter and art forger. He was arrested in Montreal in 1958 for counterfeiting and sentenced to 20 years in prison. He had just mounted an exhibition of his art entitled "Counterfeit Man, or Forging an Identity." After eight years he was released from prison and retreated to Mayne Island, where Hekkanen first met him.

A fascinating character, this Mikkonen: you can understand why Hekkanen was so obsessed with him. But in fact, Mikkonen is an elaborate and convincing forgery, a fiction in the author's mind presented as authentic biography. If you are a Finnish-Canadian writer with no Finnish mentor, you simply make one up, and play with the literary forms of preface, biography, and autobiography. In doing so, Hekkanen is forging his own identity — in both senses of the word — as a Canadian writer.

Like Niskala, Hekkanen is really a Canadian writer who happens to have a Finnish signature. His early stories are very much in the mainstream of North-American fiction — mostly stories of teenage boys growing up and having trouble with their father, girls, drinking, and so on. He doesn’t entirely ignore Finnish themes, though: one early story deals with the relationship between a Finnish father and his son and ends in a sauna scene, where the boy, urged on by his guilt-ridden father, uses the vihta as a whip on his father’s back. (The vihta is a switch of birch, oak, or even cedar boughs which Finns soak in hot water and hit themselves with in the sauna.)

Apart from his preface and the short story about Mikkonen, there is only one other story in *Medieval Hour* which has some Finnish overtones. "The Aviarium: Fantastikka" is in the folk tale tradition, set in an indeterminate time on an island fishing village. An old fisherman, Jaikolas, catches a magic egg in the sea and brings it home to his wife, Yaitta. She doesn’t want it in the house, but he persuades her that it will bring them riches. One night, the egg floats through the air, embedding itself between her thighs, and she hatches/gives birth to a son, Laikssa, half-human and half-bird. He grows at a prodigious rate, learns to fly, and helps his father to fish. Their enormous catches raise the anger of everyone on the island, whose catches have diminished proportionately. Laikssa becomes even more dangerous to the island people when he enchants the children with stories of how they too can fly. The story ends as Laikssa flies away with the village children on his back, taking them toward a new vision where "light will be the law, and you will lose yourselves to motion" (139).

While this story has Finnish-sounding names for the central characters, it is not really a Finnish story at all, but a visionary legend based on world-wide folk traditions. It explores the conflict between the old fisherman and an earthbound, unimaginative society. Hekkanen's other stories in this volume make the point that the artist or writer is an oddball in a materialistic and unimaginative mass culture. As a Finnish-Canadian writer in English, I sometimes feel like I am half-bird, half-woman myself.

Another of Hekkanen's stories, "The Mime," concerns a monk who appears out of nowhere in a modern South Dakota town. A swarm of flies hovering over his shoulder forms messages and images for the curious but hostile townspeople — but the monk does not translate the messages; he only mimes. Taking the liberty of interpreting this symbol from an ethnic point of view, I see the swarms of messages as metaphors of the Canadian 'literatures of lesser diffusion' which remain untranslated.

Hekkanen's stories invite such speculation. He writes about the private, interior obsessions of the individual captured by a hostile society and trying to escape. This is a volume of modern allegories set in the realm of myth, with either magical characters or fantastic incidents which happen to ordinary people. His is the Kafkaesque vision of a modern medievalism in which forces are at work to confuse, upset, and even destroy the individual. Clark Blaise, in a very positive review of *Medieval Hour*, says that Hekkanen is concerned with the "interpenetration of dream and reality, the dreamer becoming the dream, the artist his object."  

Hekkanen told me he has not read any Finnish folklore or mythology but knows something of other world folklore traditions. He had not heard of *Kalevala* before I mentioned it to him, and has never been to Finland, though he would very much like to go. He feels, however, that he may have some "archetypal Finnish behaviors and ways of thinking and perceiving the world" which he picked up from his Finnish father and grandfather. He is interested in his Finnish heritage, but not to the point of pursuing it actively at this stage in his life; his view is that Finns are "highly into fantasy," a belief he picked up from long discussions with an Inuit potter who had spent a year in Finland and had told him about Finnish art and customs. Hekkanen eschews labels, considering himself an eclectic writer who doesn't want to be pinned down to any particular style or theme. He is simply a

11 In his second collection, *The Violent Lavender Beast* (Saskatoon: Thistledown 1988), Hekkanen is more rooted in ordinary events and has included only one token Finnish character.

writer, not necessarily a Finnish-Canadian writer except by accident of birth and emigration from Washington State.

My own book of poetry, *Maria Breaks Her Silence*, is clearly an ethnic book, a poetic biography based on the life of a woman whom I discovered while working on a history of *New Finland, Saskatchewan*. Uusi Suomi (New Finland) was where my grandparents homesteaded, where I spent all my childhood summers, and where my parents grew up speaking only Finnish until they went to school, learned English, and memorized Tennyson and Longfellow by heart. They were literally beaten for speaking their mother tongue — is it any wonder they used Finnish in our Edmonton home only as a secret code? Even though I do not speak much Finnish, however, I feel very much part of the culture and have incorporated many of its details in my book.

I discovered Maria only by accident, through studying genealogies. Maria Nahkala travelled from Kauhava, Finland, to Michigan to meet the husband who had abandoned her. When he died in a mine accident, she travelled by train with her two small daughters in February 1891 to Assiniboia Territory. There she met and married her second husband, David Kautonen, who founded the New Finland colony in 1888. He is remembered by the Finns there; she is not, though after Kautonen's death, she married the second pioneer in New Finland, J.K. Lauttamus, when she was 81. Kautonen and Lauttamus are remembered as the founding fathers; I wondered why Maria was not remembered as the founding mother. Every feminist hair on my head stood on end as I thought of the many peasant women who, like Maria, left no letters, diaries, photos — no documentary evidence to prove to historians much beyond the fact that they existed. As she gradually took shape, she became mentor and muse as well as subject.

The background elements and the basic details of her life are all true, but I have had to imagine her into being, speculating that she and all three of her husbands knew each other in Kauhava. Those looking for the historically accurate Maria will be disappointed, but they will not find her elsewhere either. What they will find is a plausible life which historical methods cannot possibly recreate. In the manuscript, I am much more interested in exploring her inner life than in presenting historical facts, though the elements of Finnish immigrant culture in North America are all accurate. I have also avoided sentimentalizing her into the ideal pioneer. I know from working on the history book and from going to New Finland every summer how many illegitimate children, eccentrics, wife-beaters, crazy bachelors, moody


husbands, and mentally ill women lived there — sometimes hidden by their families, more often tolerated by the community. I do present Maria as a positive character, but not as one who is perfect and long-suffering.

I now turn to the four non-Finnish writers, none of whom need the kind of introduction here that I had to give them when I presented this paper in Finland. What I am interested in is how they have portrayed Finnish characters, with what degree of fidelity to Finns as I know them and to Finnish-Canadian history and culture (which have been well documented). In terms of fidelity and sensitivity to Finnish culture, I would give top marks to Schroeder and Hodgings, a passing grade to Mitchell, and a fail to McClung. Mitchell and McClung have their hearts in the right place, but unfortunately they fall prey to romanticism, our dear Nellie to the degree of Harlequinism.

She does get some elements right. The central character of *Painted Fires* is the maid Helmi Milander, who emigrates from Finland to Minnesota and then to Winnipeg — a very common historical pattern of emigration. McClung’s portrait of the Finnish maid is a stereotype that one finds in much Finnish-American literature\(^\text{15}\) — strong, hard-working to a fault, smart, clean, and beautiful — and of course fiery and bad-tempered when she is crossed. Working in a Winnipeg hotel, she hits a British dishwasher over the head with a tray for not doing the dishes well enough. Walking on a rural road on the outskirts of Winnipeg, she gives a young man trying to accost her “a body blow which sent him rolling down the hill to the stream below” (23). McClung’s characterization is no doubt based on observation (she often had a Finnish maid) and for the most part representative of Finnish maids in general: historical documents and my own conversations with Finnish women who worked as maids confirm that they were indeed highly valued in this role. Helmi’s fiery temper makes for a better story, and it is not necessarily a negative quality. McClung admired strong women who would fight for what they believed in; she was that type of woman herself.

But McClung’s purpose in the novel, besides writing a sentimental romance, is to write social commentary about the plight of young immigrant women. She puts Helmi in a “Girls’ Friendly Home” run by a church group whose board is all male, but she seems reluctant to write the plot details that would make Helmi pregnant, the condition of so many girls in such homes. Instead, Helmi is befriended by a rich and bored young doctor’s wife who gives her English lessons — and sends her to the Shanghai Chop Suey House to get ‘medicine’ for her. Helmi is arrested in a police raid for

\(^{15}\) As pointed out by Jane Piirto in her paper at the Kuopio Reunion of Sisters conference on the image of the Finnish woman in Finnish-American literature (Center for Finnish Studies, University of Minnesota, in press).
possession of opium. McClung may have sympathy for the weak and voiceless, as long as they are white; she shows no reluctance to perpetuate the racist stereotype of the 'Chinese opium den.'

Helmi, the strong and hot-tempered Finnish girl, is not an underdog who lies down meekly to be kicked. When she is arrested, she knocks the Police Inspector down the stairs and breaks his arm. (Throughout the novel she has a penchant for hurling people, usually men.) The magistrate who sentences her to a year's stay at the Girls' Friendly Home says she was "kicking like a wild steer and snapping like a mud-turtle... Finns are naturally red, you can't trust them" (61). Here McClung uses irony to subvert the stereotype that all Finns are Communists; the speaker is not to be trusted as authoritative.

Helmi spends only three months in the Girls' Friendly Home, but her time there is to me the most interesting part of the novel, for it gives McClung the chance to criticize and satirize the running of such homes. McClung's purpose of social reform is clear in the following passage when she as narrator reacts to the condescending and cruel treatment girls in trouble were given:

The Girls' Friendly Home had been built by Christian people. The men who sat on the Board were convinced that they were doing a noble thing. Faithful women sewed and baked and sold tickets to maintain it. O God! O God! What cruel things are sometimes done in the name of Thy compassionate Son! (80-81)

The last two-thirds of the novel sink deep into romanticism and sentimentality. The story is familiar to students of Canadian literature: Helmi escapes to a coal mining town in Alberta, works in a boarding house, meets her true love, is separated from and reunited with him, lives happily ever after — and even becomes rich from a coal seam on their property near English River in the Alberta foothills. And of course they have the English garden which Helmi has longed for — or should I say McClung. True Finns even to this day almost never plant flowers; they just let the yards around their houses grow wild and natural. Nor would a Finnish maid take comfort in a Golden Book of Methodist religious sayings given to her by the CGIT in Winnipeg. Nor would she dream of being a fairy tale princess — Finnish folk tales do not have royal characters. Nor would she be without work and homeless when she went alone to Edmonton. There was a well-known Finnish boarding house there, which she would have known about either through the Finnish 'fist press' — the handwritten newspapers which Finns
circulated throughout Finnish communities in North America — or one of the many Finnish newspapers which flourished at the time.16

Helmi ends up being thoroughly Canadianized, which for McClung means Anglicized. McClung does make a few attempts to use Finnish vocabulary, but there is no richness of Finnish or ‘Finglish’ or Finnish culture beyond the expected stereotypes. She reveals something of Finnish-Canadian history, but more about the British-Canadian attitudes of her time toward all immigrants with non-British accents.

Ken Mitchell is much better at portraying a historical Finn in his play *The Shipbuilder*, performed most recently to good reviews in 1985 in Saskatoon. The play was also translated into Finnish and broadcast on Finnish radio, to many enthusiastic reviews, in 1984. Mitchell presents Sukanen as a ragged, dirty, bearded bear of a man called Karhulainen, which means bear-man; Mitchell no doubt knows the importance of the bear in Finnish folklore. Dressed in gopher skins and leather, wrapped in binder twine, Karhulainen wields two hammers at the anvil like a modern Ilmarinen, though Mitchell does not make the connection which every Finn would know — Ilmarinen is the second of the three main *Kalevala* heroes, a wizard and blacksmith who forges the Sampo, a magic mill that grinds out endless supplies of grain, money, and salt. But Karhulainen does have a touch of the Finnish magic: he knows the secrets of steel, plants his barley according to the phases of the moon, in the moonlight. He is also an inventor who has built a sewing machine, a wheat puffing machine, a clock, a violin, and stainless steel dentures for himself. All these details are true to the real Tom Sukanen, whose strange story fills many files of newspaper clippings.

Mitchell draws him as a rugged individualist who doesn’t cooperate with his neighbors, the ultimate sin on the prairies. In fact, the theme of the play is the struggle between the individual and his surrounding society, represented on stage by a chorus in the Greek manner. In the last scene, Karhulainen is carried away by a crowd of townspeople and RCMP officers who will take him away to the mental hospital in North Battleford, where Sukanen died in 1943. As one of Mitchell’s characters says, it is “a looney-bin, chock-a-block with basket cases. They’re stuffing them in broom closets, the bloody depression’s drove half of Saskatchewan right around the bend!” Mitchell’s point — the same point made by Schroeder in his novel — is that it is just as insane to try to farm on the prairie in the middle of dust storms and drought as it is to build a ship to sail back to Finland.

Both Mitchell and Schroeder were alive to the potential in the story of Tom Sukanen. Schroeder says in his preface to Dustship Glory that when he saw the hull of the Sontianen as he was driving across the prairie near Moose Jaw, "every story-telling gene in my body immediately stood to attention" (v). Mitchell and Schroeder assign mythical proportions to Sukanen's folly: he symbolizes all the crazy, obsessed farmers who tried to conquer the harshness and enormity of the prairies. There are other such figures in Canadian prairie writing, most of whom are either swallowed by the prairie or alienated from society or both. They do not achieve successful integration with either the land or the people around them. If they have families, their wives and children suffer from the husband's obsession with endless and demoralizing work. In this sense, Mitchell's play and Schroeder's novel fall into the mainstream of prairie writing; both also make extensive use of the common Canadian image of the prairie as a sea.

Both writers were intrigued, even obsessed themselves, with the story of the Finn Sukanen. They present a stereotypical view of Finnish immigrant men: hard-working, bad-tempered, Bolshies or Commies, silent loners or wild drunkards who hang around the Finn Hall spouting Communist propaganda. The only way in which the Sukanen character does not fit the stereotype is that he does not consort with other Finns, does not even drink with them.

But the fact that Sukanen is a Finn is simply a given of history; both writers have done the research necessary to give their works an authentic texture. They have interviewed Finns in the area and incorporated Finnish and 'Finglish' into their works. Here is Schroeder's Tom, roaring at a bunch of town drunkards who have come to mock him. As he throws burning coals at them from his forge fire, he yells, "Damn-it bastards! Saatanan varkaita! ... Stink-it seagulls! Perkelen bummit! You just be fly-it home, yah! Run-it gone like rats! Go drown-it you in hell, pakana! No room for you in this!" (5). Throughout the novel, Schroeder's version of 'Finglish' is based on careful listening to Finnish immigrants' speech patterns. Mitchell's use of Finnish and 'Finglish' also rings true, though it is not as extensive in his shorter piece of writing.

I appreciate the fact that by not providing glossaries or translations, both writers challenge their audiences to confront this foreigner. But if Sukanen had spoken Polinglish or Norwenglish or any other hybrid language, they would have done their research just as well, and the character would still have suited their storytelling purposes. This is a Canadian story they are telling, not essentially a Finnish story. They have co-opted Sukanen's story as part of their Canadian heritage, and they have a perfect right to do so.
Schroeder has been quoted as saying that "he knew that bugger better than anybody who was left around, anyway, even the relatives." He convinces me in the novel, and when I asked him about this point, Schroeder made a perceptive comment. When people are as idiosyncratic as Tom Sukonen, first of all the neighbors tend to shy away from them. Secondly, a local mythology builds up around them, and neighbours and relatives just repeat the same true stories and tall tales over and over. Schroeder found in his research that Tom's neighbors and relatives really did not make the effort to get to know him. As Schroeder said when I interviewed him,

What's interesting is that people who are really dramatic — angels, criminals, outcasts — are usually not very well known apart from their claims to fame. The dramatic stories usually suffice to give others a handle on them, so they dig no deeper. These characters get short shrift in terms of real understanding from the surrounding society.

History, especially oral history, can indeed be a disguise. In Sukonen's case, local mythology has subverted history by romanticizing him. Newspaper files and people's memories are no more accurate about the 'real' Tom Sukonen than Schroeder's novel is, but the novel captures his essence in a way that the oral or written historical record cannot.

In my interview with him, Schroeder said, "I cared for Tom so much and lived with him for so long that I felt I had the right to make assumptions on his behalf." I agree; it is not only Finns who can tell Finnish stories. Rudy Wiebe and George Ryga can be cited as two more of the many Canadian writers whose works cross cultural lines successfully. As long as their stories are told with respect for and sensitivity to the 'other' culture, they can broaden our understanding of the multicultural dimension of our country. Canadians may eventually see yet another interpretation of Tom Sukonen, as Philip Borsos plans to make a movie based upon Dustship Glory.

Both Schroeder and Mitchell have used the basic outline of Sukonen's story but have embellished it to suit their purposes. Mitchell makes his character an anarchist, not a Communist or Bolshevik, who rode the train to Petrograd in 1917 to see Lenin and to help build a soviet. After becoming disillusioned, he emigrates to America and works in the Boston shipyards, falls in love, and moves to Minnesota with his wife to farm. They have a daughter whom he loves dearly, but he beats his wife, feels guilty, and leaves, walking the 1,000 miles to Saskatchewan where his brother is homesteading.

17 Quoted by Allen Twigg, "Weighing Anchor on a Different Kind of Prairie Schooner," Quill & Quire (April 1986): 35.
The Boston part is likely a plausible fiction; the Minnesota farming, wife-beating, and marathon walk are true.

Schroeder uses most of these details as well, but he has more psychological insight into Tom's character. He does not make him a political figure, Communist or otherwise. In speaking of Suukanen's Finnish background, Schroeder focuses on his family life, his hatred of his clean and pious mother, and his destructive and antisocial tendencies. For instance, the young Suukanen burns various household items as firewood, thinking in a child's way that 'wood is wood':

At age three, when ordered to fill the stovebox, he considered the snow-covered walkway to the woods, noticed a lot of unused wood more conveniently at hand, and filled the box with twelve priceless carved figurines from the wooden crèche under the Christmas tree, various wooden toys he no longer cared for, wooden spoons and ladles from his mother's kitchen, and his brother Aleksis's crib, which the baby was fortunately not sleeping in at the time. (17-18)

I see Schroeder's young Suukanen as a Kullervo figure, an awkward, destructive, and antisocial character in *Kalevala*, though the connection is archetypal rather than intentional. Schroeder said he heard about Kullervo only after the novel was finished, but resisted the impulse to include any such literary allusions. He wanted to write the story clean and simple, since Tom was totally unselfconscious of his mythic status. In Schroeder's view, the less literary engineering, the better the story and the more true to the character.

Schroeder's chapters on Suukanen's time in Minnesota are much more detailed than Mitchell's, and much more terrifying from a woman's point of view. He marries a *maijahousut*, a strong woman who lets him into her bedroom only to conceive children; once she is pregnant he cannot sleep with her anymore. She will not let him near the children, cutting him off from both family and conjugal love. In desperation, he beats her so severely that she breaks her back. Fleeing to Saskatchewan, he becomes the worst sort of misogynist, a man who will not let any woman near his seed grain, his animals, his machinery, or his precious ship. As a woman neighbour says,

The truth is, Tom Suukanen hated women... Whenever anything went wrong, if fires broke out or equipment broke down, he'd look among the women for the culprit. If an animal disappeared, he was sure some woman had stolen it. If someone got sick, naturally some woman had caused the infection... Once, he had built one of his more bizarre inventions, a huge man-size tricycle that didn't have any pedals... Anyway the

18 Literally, "Mary in pants," a common term for the Finnish "lumberjanes" in the Michigan and Minnesota woods.
silly thing wasn't working for some reason... and he went around in all seriousness complaining to everyone that some woman had urinated — yes, peed! — into it! (29)

He is much more than an obstreperous Finn and woman-hater: he is a misanthropist. To him, the earth is inhabited by "miserable little people scrabbling around, everybody pushing and falling and scrabbling ... like maggots on a round ball of shit" (23). He himself is a stubborn survivor who will eat grasshoppers, rotten horsemeat, gophers — anything to stay alive.

Schroeder's character is a misanthropist and misogynist for whom love is not important, whereas Mitchell's Karhulainen is a romantic character still obsessed with his first love in Finland, Anna-Marie, after whom he names his daughter and his ship. Schroeder's ship is called by its true name: Sontianen — shit beetle.19 Schroeder has a powerful scene explaining why. Sukanen has just survived a prairie tornado which has knocked him unconscious for several hours. When he comes to, he sees a dung-beetle and teases it, tries to kill it. He finally places it in the centre of a circle of fire and watches it struggle:

The beetle moved back towards the middle and waited. As the flames began to burn down it resumed its clockwise inspection. Tom filled in one half of the circle with larger bits of thistle, backing the beetle into the other half... The beetle reared again, weaving frantically on its hind legs. Tom watched without expression. Suddenly it plunged into the dirt at its feet and began to dig. Tiny spurs of dust sprayed up as fiercely as if a miniature thrasher were discharging chaff. The long black body seemed almost to melt into the soil. A minute later it was gone.

Tom stared down at the hole for a long time and then, without warning, he grinned. "Little cretin," he murmured again.... (144)

Tom identifies with the beetle and names his ship after it. Note also in this passage the metaphors of beetle as thrasher and dust as grain. In countless passages, Schroeder builds up an image pattern of the prairie dust farmer as a beleaguered but admirable survivor.

Schroeder's Sukanen is by turns an animal and a machine with superhuman strength whose arm pumps up and down like a steam piston when he is hammering. Neighbours call him "a cloven hoof," "an unclean spirit," "a limb of Satan," "a devil's messenger." All of this is sheer imaginative force; whether or not the character in the novel is exactly like the historical character is unimportant. As a Finnish Canadian I do not identify with him, though I have known other inventive and stubborn Finns like him; as a reader I applaud him. Schroeder's Sukanen is far more convincing and disturbing than Mitchell's Karhulainen, because less

19 Finnish school children still use the epithet to this day.
sentimentalized. He is simply obsessed because he is obsessed, not because he is trying to get back home to an old love.

Schroeder's writing is strong, poetic, and persuasive. For instance, his descriptions of the ship and the man have a mythological force:

A large ship lay in several sections amid log and timber supports like a great beached whale, struck broadside by the full blaze of the late afternoon sun. Her tarred bulwarks glowed a liquid amber, and her smokestack shimmered like molten brass... At a flaming forge, a wild-looking man with hair flying and a short-handled sledgehammer in each hand was beating a complicated tattoo on a thick sheet of steel... His bare chest and shoulder gleamed with sweat, and his face was expressionless with soot. (2-3)

The sound of his hammers rings throughout the novel with a shifting, contrapuntal rhythm, in a "tempo oddly primal and foreign, yet formal too, as if accompanying a ritual long since forgotten or lost" (129). Schroeder uses multiple voices and points of view — we hear the first-person reminiscences of eight different 'interviewees,' the dialogue of a host of other characters (each with an individual Canadian speech pattern), and the bureaucratic voices of court, police, and hospital records. He also develops a rich texture of images: dust, animals, shit, stars, fire, light, sea, strength, devils, machines, insects, and astrology.

Dustship Glory is an important novel — but not because it is about a Finn. Rather, its importance lies in its evocation of the prairie landscape and society of the dirty thirties, with rich descriptions of dust storms, grasshopper infestations, and people's desperation with themselves and with Sukanen.

Jack Hodgins, too, has story-telling genes that stand at attention when he observes and talks with the Vancouver Island eccentrics who people many of his books and short stories. There are substantial numbers of Finnish loggers and miners on Vancouver Island, so it is not surprising that two stories in his collection The Barclay Family Theatre have Finnish characters whom he draws with knowing irony in "The Concert Stages of Europe" and passionate subtlety in "More Than Conquerors."

"The Concert Stages of Europe" features a teenage boy whose ambition in life is not to be a pianist (as his mother wishes) or a logger (as his father wishes) but a Finn. A sly comment on the search for identity, the story gives Hodgins a chance to play with ethnic stereotypes. Young Barclay Desmond has heard about Finns:

Being a Finn, I'd been told, meant something very specific. A Finn would give you the shirt off his back, a Finn was as honest as the day is long, a Finn could drink anybody under the table and beat up half a dozen Germans and Irishmen without trying, a Finn was not afraid of work, a Finn kept a house so clean you could eat off the floors. (6)
When he meets the new neighbors, the Korhonens, his stereotypes are confirmed, and he also discovers that "Finnish girls were blonde and beautiful and flirtatious, and Finnish boys were strong, brave, and incredibly intelligent" (6). Barclay visits the Korhonens regularly and is eager to master the art of being a Finn:

I walked over to their house every Saturday afternoon and pretended to read their coloured funnies. I got in on the weekly steam-bath with Larry and his father in the sauna down by the barn. Mr. Korhonen, a patient man whose eyes sparkled at my eager attempts, taught me to count to ten — yksi, kaksi, kolme, nelja, viisi, kuusi, seitsemän, kahdeksan, yhdeksän, kymmenen. I helped Mrs. Korhonen scrub her linoleum floors and put down newspapers so no one could walk on them, then I gorged myself on cinnamon cookies and kala lootta and coffee sucked through a sugar cube. If there was something to be caught from just being around them, I want to catch it. And since being a Finn seemed to be a full-time occupation, I didn’t have much patience with my parents, who behaved as if there were other things you had to prepare yourself for. (6-7)

Hodgins’ story focuses mainly on two of these other things — learning to play the piano and entering a radio talent contest — the first of which causes endless boredom and the second acute adolescent embarrassment. Exploring things Finnish is thus not Hodgins’ central aim here; rather, Finnishness represents the exoticism to which the boy would prefer to escape, exasperated as most young teenagers are with their own families. Nevertheless, Desmond’s stereotyped Finn fits the labels which Finns have been given in the wider North American society.

"More Than Conquerors" is a much more complex story centred on a Finnish painter who emigrates to a small town on Vancouver Island and finally, in his seventies, has a major showing of his life’s work. He is a divided man, an immigrant who at the same time wants and disdains acceptance by Canadians. He and his devoted wife, Sylvi, have agreed to talk only in English, as he reminds her when she lets an untranslated Finnish phrase slip out:

They had done everything possible to eliminate any trace of an accent. If he had been Italian, he said, if he had been Spanish or Hungarian or English he would have worked hard to hold onto a foreign accent. It would have been a help to an artist. But not Finnish. A Finnish accent, he said, was something these people expected to hear in the logging camps. A Finnish accent was for fellers and bunkhouse cooks. It could only hurt an artist. It was better even to sound Canadian. (107)

Here, Hodgins reveals something of the hierarchy of Canadian attitudes toward immigrants. At the top are the sophisticated exotics, and at the bottom are the Finns and other unacceptable ethnicities. Hodgins knows about
Finland what most Canadians do not: had Wainamoinen remained in Helsinki, he would long have been an artistic hero in a country which occupies a blank space on the European map. "Back home they would say, 'Miksi Sina olet nunn bidas.' What took you so long? Here there were some who said, 'Are you sure you're ready?' and 'Is there any point? When you know that few really care?'" (127).

Finnishness is thus quite important in the story, for Hodgins is drawing a contrast not just between the young, materialistic society of western Canada and the old, artistically sophisticated society of Europe, but between mainstream and marginal European cultures. In other stories in *The Barclay Family Theatre*, he further explores the theme of the difficulty of social interaction between Canadians and those of other cultures — Japanese, Irish, Russian.

Like Schroeder and Mitchell, Hodgins does not make it easy for his Canadian audience to pick up Finnish cues. He exploits the heroic and magical lineage of Wainamoinen in a subtle way, with no didacticism, explaining his name just enough to make it clear that he is named after a hero. Both Hodgins' and Wainamoinen's audience can go about their ordinary business, "completely oblivious to the fact that his name, if nothing else, should be enough to give pause on a day like this. You didn't have to ride a Viking ship to save the land of heroes. His namesake would have understood that. That there were other ways." (107) But Finnishness is only one of a complex of elements in "More than Conquerors." The Wainamoinens are one of three equally important couples whom Hodgins juxtaposes on the day of the art exhibition. Many things divide the Rootes, the Paynes, and the Wainamoinens — culture, age, social class, perspectives on the world. Gladys and Carl Roote are earthy, passionately in love, rooted on the lowest level of the house Wainamoinen owns. Carrie and David Payne, who live on the middle level of the house, are suspended in pain at the death of their daughter. To David's pain is added a growing revulsion for his wife and her vain belief in the physical resurrection of their daughter.

Eli is at times nervous about his exhibition, at other times angry with the provincialism of the townspeople. As much as he may want to be recognized by Canadians as an artist, he will not paint the calm and pretty pictures that they expect. For him, "Art was an act of violence, not a sedative. Each work must begin as an assault on the pure canvas and end as a shock to the viewer's sensibilities" (107). Yet at other times he is almost convinced that he has transcended the world of those who live below him, in the house and in the town:

Wainamoinen himself suspected that he might become one of the immortals, that if he let go altogether and released all the talents welling within him he would quite likely
soar well above the world of ordinary men and find himself in some kind of timeless place of spirit and harmony. (106-07)

Hodgins connects the three couples by exploring their varying possibilities for transcendence, escape, or even immortality — art, love, religious belief, withdrawal, submissive devotion. "More Than Conquerors' leads into realms of complexity that are far more important than its ethnic dimensions. My brief examination of the story shows the limitations of a strictly ethnic approach.

Sitting in this conference room for the last couple of days, I have been reassessing my own perspectives, personal and critical, on ethnicity in literature. I realize that the best of the writers who incorporate it in their work pay as close attention to the cultural elements they use as they do to all the other elements by which literature is evaluated: characterization, structure, tone, imagery, diction, and so on. For the writer, ethnicity is merely one possible subject, which can be in the foreground or background. The best writers know their subject well, write about it with sensitivity, and integrate it with all the other elements in their work rather than just tacking it on — as McClung does. Critics who comment on ethnic literature must also get their cultural facts straight, lest they make the kind of statements that Geoff Hancock does in an otherwise perceptive review of Dustship Glory, mistakenly connecting Schroeder's novel to "the old Finnish sagas" and "Scandinavian voyageurs." Finns were neither Vikings nor Scandinavians; their folklore tradition is quite distinct from that presented in the Norse sagas.

I have also been thinking about the parallels and divergences between my book and other ethnic writing (which was not something I thought about while the poems were emerging). I realize that it is quite different, say, from the literature which Tamara Palmer and others have discussed. I do not think the book is didactic. If Canadian readers miss or are puzzled by my references to Finnish culture, I do not worry about that; I know the Finns will pick them up. I certainly had the sense of writing for a double audience, but the book presents no conflict at all between the dominant Canadian culture and Finnish culture — unlike Schroeder's, Mitchell's, McClung's, and Hodgins' work. The Finns I am writing about simply did not care whether the Englantiäiset paid any attention to them. The first generation of Finnish immigrants to 'America' (their generic word for Canada and the United States) either stayed in their Finnish block settlements around the Great Lakes and throughout North America or travelled freely among them.

At least until the 1950s, when centralized schooling and TV brought them into closer contact with the larger society, they had their own sauna culture and hall culture (either a red socialist hall or a white conservative hall, or a temperance hall or union halls sometimes all four if it was a thriving mining town in northern Ontario or the Copper Country of Michigan). In the halls they had dances, gymnastics displays, political and union meetings, lectures, debates, and usually a lending library and reading room. While they were not prolific writers, they were passionate about amateur theatre, presenting at least two plays per year and sometimes as many as two per month—translations from the British and European repertoire, Finnish plays, and some they wrote themselves. The Finns in Uusi Suomi did not need the Moosomin Opera House 20 miles away, and the British society of Moosomin was totally unaware of their culture. It was this first-generation Finnish culture which I chose to write about, and I have tried to present it as accurately as possible. But I know the book will be judged on the quality of the poetry, not on its subject matter.

My examination of this small group of writers from an ethnic perspective has led me to several conclusions—some admittedly narrow, others wider ranging, none definitive—about Finnish-Canadian society, the relationship between history and literature, my own quest for identity as a writer, and the nature of Canadian literature today.

First, some thoughts about the small number of Finnish-Canadian writers. It is not surprising there are so few, considering that in 1981, people—of Finnish background formed only 0.22% of the Canadian population.21 Demographics also reveal that well over three-quarters of the original Finnish immigrants were domestics or labourers; the Finnish intelligentsia who were part of a lively literary culture at the turn of the century were not inclined to emigrate, and those who did settle in Canada were not inclined to publish except in Finnish newspapers. Second and third generation Finnish Canadians have now been almost totally assimilated into the larger Canadian culture, and the writing of Hekkanen and Niskala is far more Canadian than Finnish. My consideration of their work emanated from my own search for Finnish-Canadian writers, but ulterior purposes can lead to rewarding discoveries of so-called marginal writers. Hekkanen and Niskala are marginal not because they have Finnish names, but because they are new writers living in what Dick Harrison has called the "twice-colonial"22 area of western Canada. Whether or not they ultimately become part of the

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literary canon, whether or not they fit into any ethnic schema that I may have originally tried to impose on them, their writing is an essential part of the literary fabric of the West. Their work says simply, 'Take me for what I am, not for what you want me to be.'

Second, the character of the Finn presented by Schroeder, Mitchell, Hodgins, and even McClung has a pretty good basis in reality. The Finns even have a word for the characteristics of Tom Sukanen, Eli Vainamoinen, and Helmi Milander: sisu. A cliché in Finnish, it means idiosyncratic, strong, hard-working, persistent, stubborn, even obsessive. The typical Finn, here and abroad, is proud to have sisu, speaks the word often, and would recognize it in these characters.

Third, Canadians who have no Finnish blood can indeed do justice to Finnish-Canadian history. Though not all Finns would agree with me, Schroeder and Mitchell have the right to use Sukanen's story as they wish. Finnish-Canadian history is their history too. And since they are writing literature, not history, they also have the right to imagine what is not documented, and to take plausible liberties with what is. All that members of an ethnic group can reasonably expect of a writer is that the essentials about their culture not be distorted.

Fourth, I have discovered that while Maria Breaks Her Silence is clearly an ethnic book on a Finnish-Canadian historical theme, I am above all a Canadian writer. My strongest bond is not to Finnish writers, whom I cannot read, but to other Canadian writers — and not just those who have some connection with my own ethnic background. Joy Kogawa's Japanese Canadians, Andy Suknaski's Ukrainian Canadians, Kristjana Gunnars's Icelandic Canadians, Caterina Edwards's Italian Canadians, Fred Wah's Chinese Canadians, Gabrielle Roy's and Roch Carrier's French Canadians, Alice Munro's and Robertson Davies's English Canadians, Margaret Laurence's Scottish Canadians, Maria Campbell's Métis, Rudy Wiebe's Mennonites — and the Métis and Indians whom he writes about so powerfully — these are all my people too, part of my history and culture.

Finally, I believe that this is a time in Canadian literary history very much like the flowering of Finnish cultural nationalism in the mid-19th century, when Finnish writers and artists, inspired by Elias Lonnrot's publication of the folk epic Kalevala in 1835, gave artistic voice to the deep desire for Finnish nationhood (finally achieved in 1917). Finland is literally a nation inspired by a single book. But Canadian writers will never have a rediscovery of their common roots in folk tradition. We have no ancient stories to be gathered and compiled by a Canadian Lonnrot. We are a new country of immigrants who have a rich and many-layered culture. In such a culture, non-Finns feel free to write about Finns, Mennonites and Ukrainians to write about Indians, and the very few Finnish Canadians to write about their
contemporary culture or their Finnish roots or the world of myth and allegory — as they wish. There are no ethnic or cultural imperatives. Perhaps we are lucky not to have a cultural monument such as Kalevala, which has constrained rather than inspired some contemporary Finnish writers.

If I have been unable to find a strong Finnish-Canadian literary tradition, I am not dismayed. I mistrust ethnocentrism anyway. I have found something far more valuable, and Finnish Canadianism is a small but essential part of it. We are forging our identity, not in a counterfeit way as Alexander Mikkonen does, or as Francis Cornford does in Davies's What's Bred in the Bone, but in the spirit of Ilmarinen. The Sampo we have forged is an endlessly exciting and rich literature from the variety and multiplicity of our peoples and our interests.

It is important not just that we have a rich multicultural identity but that we explore and use it. As Malcolm Ross says in The Impossible Sum of Our Traditions, 

This Canada is a country of immigrants, scattered in uneven pockets through our cities and on the land over vast reaches of space — British, French, German, East European, Jewish, Italian, Asian, each with a distinctive cultural inheritance... It is by looking behind and beyond the traditions of our two founding peoples — the French and the British — that we become what we are, accepting, retaining, and yet transcending by re-inventing the varied traditions which we inherit. (195)

We explore the traditions of all our peoples, past and present, but are not circumscribed by them. We continue to 'uninvent' and 'reinvent' them, and in doing so define and recover ourselves, taking what we need from where we are. In Ross' words, "The Canadian writer, in the Maritimes, in central Canada, in the West shapes his myth and metaphor out of what is at hand" (177-178). The writers I have been considering have been going through just such a process.

In Finland I discovered a new word for this identity, in the 1985 Kalevala issue of Form/Function Finland, a design magazine. In typically Canadian fashion, I feel free to describe my country's literature by co-opting a Greek word from a book published in Britain on the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto. The word is heterotopia — defined as a "concept of order in which fragments of a number of possible coherences glitter separately without a common law." 


Canadian literature is a heterotopia of differences and therefore a utopia of possibilities. The seven writers I have discussed are above all Canadians, exploring whatever aspects of our country's history and present culture intrigue them. They may wear many elaborate disguises, but their very habit of doing so reveals them as Canadian writers down to the skin.

*University of Alberta*
Literary Language and Ethnic Sensibility: A Case Study in Chinese-Canadian Fiction

According to whether Chinese or English is used as their literary language, Chinese-Canadian writers can be divided into two major groups. Unless we could assume that language is a transparent, neutral medium, which it is not, we could not avoid considering these questions: How do the works produced by one group differ from those created by the other? What are the dynamics underlying the simultaneous distinction and unity of the two bodies of texts, i.e., one in Chinese and one in English, within the framework of Chinese-Canadian writing? And what is the relationship between the language in which a text is written and the ethnic sensibility it reflects? These are very complicated questions to which I cannot do justice in this short paper. What I propose to do here is to compare the following works by Chinese-Canadian authors: Four short novels by Yuen Chung Yip (The Tears of Chinese Immigrants, The Vagabond, The Warm Flow of Love, and Foreign Offspring), all originally written in Chinese, and four short stories by Weyman Chan ("Mee Wai," "Another Man's Shoes," "Night of Transgressions," and "Getting to Know You"), all written in English. Then, on the basis of my analysis, I shall venture some hypotheses in the hope of provoking further discussion.

The common ground shared by Yuen Chung Yip and Weyman Chan, which provides a rationale for this comparative study, is not so much their ethnic origin as their ethnic sensibility. Both of them deal with the life of Chinese Canadians as a minority group, and both take up issues such as racial relations, the self-definition of Chinese Canadians, and the negative

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1 To simplify the discussion, I leave French and other languages out of account. If the argument in this paper is valid, there is no reason why they could not be applied to languages other than Chinese and English.
aspect of Chinese tradition; but the ways they handle these subject matters differ considerably.

Let us first look at the ways Yip and Chan each treat the racial relations between the Chinese and other ethnic groups, particularly the Chinese-white relations. In Yip's *The Tears of Chinese Immigrants*, the hero, Charlie, is subjected to racial discrimination on a number of occasions, but he is convinced that racial biases can be overcome "with a good dose of patience" (93). Acting on this belief, he refuses to move out of an apparently predominantly white neighborhood to escape white racism; instead, he befriends his hostile neighbours and eventually wins their friendship. An especially significant aspect of racial relations is interracial marriage and relationships. In *The Warm Flow of Love*, Yip portrays two Chinese-white relationships which culminate in happy marriages. The first is between the heroine, Xie Muzhen, a high school English teacher from Hong Kong, and Darwin, a radio reporter with a degree from Columbia University. The second is between Brown, a Chinese youth orphaned at an early age and brought up by a pastor, and a white girl who has won the laurel of a beauty queen. In both cases, the white person takes the initiative and breaks whatever reserve the loved one may have. Explicit disapproval of mixed relationships comes from both the whites and the Chinese (e.g. Muzhen's mother), but love conquers all, rather easily, and reason triumphs in the liberal-minded whites. The story is obviously idealized and, one may even say, simplistically optimistic.

Chan's characters suffer from white racism, too, but their reactions are different from Charlie's in *The Tears*. For example, in "Night of Transgressions," Gerald as a child at first

did not know why the other children didn't play with him. Once though, some older kids called him bastardt and threw rocks at him, hitting him on the back enough times so that he walked with his head down, in defense, for years afterwards. And he understood at that moment — just as the rocks flew at him — what his mother had been meaning to get into his head when she told him at night, "Be strong. Don't hit back..."

But later on, when he was kicked in the stomach by a white schoolmate, Manfred Hoffman, he vowed to get even with him. Two weeks later, with the help of his friends, he managed to trap Manfred, who cried and wanted to go home:

Gerald waited calmly, not only smiling, but laughing, knowing that this was all he wanted to see from Manfred, shame and cowardice. Yet his hands were still fists, he could fight and haul out screams of blood and bruises from Manfred if he wanted to.
He wanted to, he was already peeling off his shirt to beat Manfred. Back then, even young boys took their shirts off to prove a point.

Whether Gerald actually hit Manfred or not is not important. The fact that as an adult he can recall the experience vividly proves that it has become irrevocably part of his ethnic experience as a Chinese Canadian and thus enters into the formation of his personality. One may say, "Boys are boys." True. Gerald the boy found it hard to exercise the kind of self-restraint his mother, as well as Charlie in The Tears, suggest. Gerald was caught between acting according to certain Chinese precepts and following his own gut feeling. When Gerald's childhood experiences of racism are placed in the context of his life as a whole and related to his adult behavior, they become entwined with the more complicated issue of his self-definition as a Chinese Canadian.

Chan's treatment of interracial marriage is more subtle than Yip's. In "Getting to Know You," Tom, a college student of Chinese origin who narrates the story, tells his white friend that his sister married a German fellow. Then the dialogue below ensues:

"Really!" cried Marta. "I can imagine how it went over with your parents."
"It didn't. But she's been married more than once."
"Well, did she do it right the first time?"
"You mean marry a Chinese? No. The first was white. I don't know what nationality..."

In fact, the first man Tom's sister married was Chinese, and he has never told anybody about this. In the above passage Tom construes Marta's enthusiastic reaction to the news of his sister marrying a German as implying that she marries above her racially. This judgment of Tom's leads him further to interpret his friend's question as to whether his sister married right the first time as suggesting, perhaps ironically, that her sister should 'stick to her own kind,' i.e., marry a Chinese. Although Tom does not like his sister's first husband, he does not want to leave the impression that when his sister married a Chinese, of whom his parents seem to have approved, the 'right' marriage turned out to be a failure, while the 'wrong' marriage with the German fellow is apparently doing well. By claiming that his ex-brother-in-law is a white man instead of a Chinese, Tom seems to want to neutralize any possible racist innuendoes his white friend might intend. Whether or not Tom is fully justified in making the above suppositions, he is clearly portrayed as insecure about his position in Chinese-white relations.

How do the Chinese in Canada view themselves? How do they define their identity as Chinese Canadians? On these crucial issues Yuen Chung Yip and Weyman Chan again express different visions. Yip depicts many of
his characters simply as exiles from the homeland. His *The Vagabond*, which could also be translated as *The Exile*, is a story about a Chinese youth wandering through Canada in exile. Most of those characters who are already settled in Canada are, however, oriented towards China. They reveal different aspects of the "sojourner mentality" (see Con et al., 6). Reflecting the immigration patterns of early Chinese Canadians, characters like Uncle Liang in *The Tears* and Huang Bingshi and Huang Pincai (George Huang), father and son, in *Foreign Offspring*, are lonely laborers who come to Canada with the purpose of making enough money to return to China eventually and who have to suffer forced separation from their wives and children for dozens of years on end. As a consequence both of Chinese cultural tradition and of white racism (see Chang, "Sojourner"), these people occupy a marginal position in Canadian society, and this in turn prompts them to view themselves as Overseas Chinese rather than Chinese Canadians. In Yip's works, his characters' extensive involvement, emotional or otherwise, in the politics of the old country contrasts significantly with the scanty references to sociopolitical developments in Canada. In *The Warm Flow of Love*, the story ends with a happy marriage between the heroine Muzhen and Darwin, with her pledge, supported by her husband, to work for five or six years in Canada to save enough money so that she could return to Hong Kong one day to open a school.

If ever oriented towards Canada, Yip's characters show many features characteristic of first-generation immigrants. The reality of racial inequality prompts them to struggle for acceptance by mainstream society and for the enhancement of the social status of Chinese Canadians as an ethnic group. One avenue leading to the realization of these goals is education, as one character in *The Tears* argues:

Why can immigrants of other national origins grab high positions in society while we can't? That's because our education is too low and nobody takes us seriously... "This isn't discrimination; it's a competition in knowledge... In recent years, the Canadian-born Chinese have already made great strides in society. Why can't the newcomers follow suit, learn something from their examples? That's the only way to enhance our image and win respect from other ethnic groups. (43)

Chan, on the other hand, deals mostly with Canadian-born Chinese. His characters are more integrated with mainstream society. One indicator of this is their language status. If for Yip's characters, learning to speak good English means a step towards integration, then for Chan's characters, English has become the superior language and the 'mother tongue' is being gradually lost. For them, self-definition cannot be simply reduced to gaining acceptance from the dominant white population; rather, it becomes a complex question of finding one's own identity in Canadian society while
being caught between ambivalent feelings about one's ethnic heritage and the desire for acceptance by white people. A case in point is Ronald in Chan's "Another Man's Shoes." Ronald is a young shoe salesman at a department store. When he first came to the shoe department, the two old ladies who had worked there for dozens of years found him too "soft, Chinese," and "lack[ing]" in "enterprise" (6). Gradually, as they have tutored him into a "competent" salesperson like themselves, Ronald has come to take on their values and biases. One day, when a customer's child bursts out crying, he deals with the situation rather unsympathetically. He tells the mother, "I know your daughter is upset. But I don't want our customers to be frightened off" (8). He says that because "he assumed that this was what the ladies" [i.e. his senior co-workers] "would have him say" (8). Ronald's apprenticeship and acculturation at the department store threatens his independent personality.

Ronald's attitude towards other ethnic Chinese is clearly ambivalent. On the one hand, as he begins to attract more and more oriental customers, he feels rather proud of himself. He even speaks to them in two Chinese dialects "just to impress his co-workers" (8). On the other hand, he feels embarrassed and resentful in the presence of those Chinese customers who wear cheap and tasteless clothes and act unelegantly. At least on this point, he will acquiesce in his co-workers' racist contempt for those oriental customers. Ronald's ambivalence towards other ethnic Chinese comes to a head when a Chinese couple approaches him with a problem. This awkward, ill-dressed couple claim that they were talked into buying shoes a size too small at a reduced price by one of his fellow workers, and now they want to trade them in for a larger pair. Ronald remembers that his co-worker "admitted to hooking her sucker" (10). During a brief confrontation with his customers, Ronald's mind becomes a battlefield for conflicting values and rival feelings. At first, he "felt a resentment towards the couple stir inside him" and he "winced at the stupidity" of their dress (10). This is not just a matter of innocent vanity. In this elderly Chinese couple he sees "the same mould that had shaped his parents" (10). He hates the frugality they practice in order to save for a rainy day. At the immediate level, he sees the injustice of his co-worker's trick but wants to stick to the store's policy of not refunding sales items. Then, as he yells at the Chinese couple and builds up his anger and despair, another aspect of his being, perhaps long repressed, is brought up to the surface.

But suddenly, all of that was gone. He saw himself in a hot, steaming laundry, his hands cracked red from detergent. His head was full of the war of customer complaints, dirty linens, creased collars. Threats in a foreign language, exploding like bombs. Ronald returned to himself, overhearing the woman's words as if they came
from inside him, as if his body was a huge brass bell that cried from an elemental tone that she'd struck in him. (10)

But, as the woman finds her anger after suffering one injustice after another, the argument quickly turns into a personality conflict. The story ends with Ronald turning away from the Chinese couple to serve another customer. The conflict within Ronald as he seeks to define his identity as a Chinese Canadian remains unresolved. His identity crisis is aptly summed up in the title of the story: "Another Man's Shoes."

Criticism of the negative side of Chinese tradition is another point shared by Yip and Chan. In The Tears, Yip launches sharp attacks against gambling and patriarchal tyranny among Chinese Canadians. For instance, Zhenfang's father treats her like a domestic slave. Not only does he refuse to let her finish high school, but he also tries to force her into a marriage with the degenerate son of a "community leader," purely for his own selfish ends. He tells Zhenfang: "I'm your father. I call the shots here. You've gotta listen to me" (39). But Zhenfang does not give in; she eventually revolts against her father by running away from home.

Compared with Mee Wai in Chan's story, Zhenfang is fortunate in being able to find a solution to her problem. Mee Wai is the wife of Chang Liu Chin, a chef in a Chinese restaurant. She grew up in a village in southern China and was brought to Canada by Liu Chin for their marriage. The story opens with a description of a routine day in her life as a domestic 'slave' when she is "eleven years and eight months into her residency" in Canada (12). Here is a passage that reveals Mee Wai's thought:

She thinks at one time she did enjoy her role, this steady flow of hours from the first ashtray or newspaper picked up to that final twist of the finger that turns off the nightlight and puts tomorrow forward, in reach after only so much as a brief closing and opening of her eyes. (12)

Yet Mee Wai's endless toil hardly earns her the appreciation she so richly deserves. Instead, Liu Chin "enjoyed mocking her intentions, perverting them. "You don't do enough around here," he'd say to her. 'Your work isn't worth the rice you eat. You're my wife so do as you're told'" (14, emphasis added). Notice here that Liu Chin's male chauvinism comes close to being a form of sadism. His arrogant exhortation that "You're my wife so do as you're told" bears striking similarity to Zhenfang's father's assertion, "I'm your father. I call the shots here. You've gotta listen to me."

Although patriarchal domination of women in Chinese families is a theme common to both Yip and Chan, the two authors present two different kinds of reaction from their women characters. Zhenfang chooses to revolt against her father and break away from her oppressive family. Mee Wai, on
the other hand, is so dependent on her husband financially, socially, and psychologically that she can only protest with an apologetic smile and, so to speak, rebel on her knees. If she ever asserts her independent personality and resists Liu Chin’s oppression, she is always alarmed by her own boldness and feels guilty afterwards. The story closes with Mee Wai’s thought about the emotional as well as physical insecurity that will always be a major fact of her life. But one thing she knows for sure: “she would never go too far. She will always come back down, and make it up to him in the end” (15). Mee Wai has so much internalized the patriarchal values of traditional Chinese culture that she has simply lost the capacity to fight for her dignity and rights as a woman. “Mee Wai” is thus a tragic story beneath the appearance of a domestic melodrama.

From the analysis above, it is easy to see that Yuen Chung Yip and Weyman Chan differ considerably in their ethnic sensibility and in their ways of handling similar ethnic themes. How can these be related to the fact that they write in different languages? What is of interest here is not the intrinsic properties of the languages in question, but rather the sociological implications of the specific choice of language made by the two authors. First of all, it seems safe to say that their respective choice of language reflects their differences in educational background. Yip grew up and received most of his education in China, and Chinese is for him a language to which he feels emotionally close and in which he can be fully articulate. This is a situation typical of writers who are first-generation immigrants. Chan was born in Canada and has an education that one may expect of Canadians in general. English is the only language which he has worked on systematically and in which he can be articulate in writing. Like other first-generation native-born Canadians, for him the ‘mother tongue’ spoken by his parents is basically an oral language. The basic language orientations of the two authors must have played a significant role in the shaping of their respective cultural values at an impressionable formative stage of their lives. The same linguistic orientations also determine to a large extent the literary tradition in which the two authors write. Not surprisingly, Yip’s work owes much to the influence of Chinese literature, and it is possible, in fact, to regard his work as so-called “overseas Chinese literature” (see Chang, “Introduction” 18-20). Chan’s fiction, on the other hand, is very much in tune with the trends in contemporary Canadian literature. An interest in the psychological analysis of characters, a lively and sometimes wry sense of humor, a touch at once ironic and sympathetic, and a tendency to explore ethnic themes in the light of the universal problems of modern man, “such as alienation, loneliness and the existential quest for identity,” “which have been major preoccupations of modern writers generally” (Kroetsch et al. v) — these features of Chan’s fiction situate him somewhere close to, if not right in, the mainstream of Canadian literature.
If we examine the language-work relationship from the perspective of the audience, the issue becomes further complicated. As it is well acknowledged in contemporary criticism, the meaning of a work is closely related to its reception by a historically specific audience. But how does the situation of the audience affect the reception of Chinese-Canadian works? For the purpose of this paper, we can divide Chinese-Canadian readers into three groups, those who read only Chinese, those who read only English, and those who read both (this group includes those who mainly read Chinese and those who mainly read English). Obviously, to those who read only one of the two languages, works in the other language are inaccessible unless translation is provided. If a work is not available to a certain readership, then, as far as that readership is concerned, it does not exist; for the author’s voice cannot reach them and therefore cannot have any effect on them.

The situation of the bilingual readers is rather complex. Apparently they switch their “horizon of expectations” (Hans Robert Jauss) according to the language in which a work is written. If a work is written in Chinese, then they may reasonably expect certain typical features of Chinese culture and literary tradition. The same goes for works written in English. Here we are assuming a perfectly balanced bilingual and bicultural audience. In most cases, however, bilingual and bicultural readers have one language and culture which is relatively stronger, and it is very difficult, if not impossible, to effect a neat switching of horizons. Rather, the two horizons are bound to interact with each other, thus making the reader’s mind a battlefield of two distinct sets of values and norms. The result may be some temporary truce, uneasily maintained. If this is true, then one’s appreciation of the two bodies of Chinese-Canadian literary works in a comparative light must be constantly altered in the light of one’s changing reading as well as social experience.

To sum up, a literary language carries with it a wide range of sociological implications, from the author’s sociohistorical background to the reader’s “horizon of expectations” to the literary tradition(s) of which it is a part. This comparative analysis of Yuen Chung Yip’s Chinese work and Weyman Chan’s English work suggests that the choice of language made by Chinese-Canadian authors is significant because it bears on their ethnic sensibility and substantially affects the production and consumption of their work.

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South Asian Literature in Canada

Is there a South Asian Canadian Literature? Let us first consider what is called 'South Asian Canadian Literature,' that is, the body of work to which this term is sometimes applied, and then, consider the question as to whether such a literature in fact exists: to what extent does it have a unity, a self awareness as South Asian, as Canadian, literature.

First the nomenclature. The term South Asian is perhaps a little unfortunate: a scholar's disinfected, neutered shorthand, definitely not a literary term. In fact it is a painful term from the literary point of view, for behind its whitewash lurk memories, the pain and anguish of separation, partition. South Asia refers to the Subcontinent — India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. South Asians have come to Canada from these countries, but more recently also from East and South Africa, the Caribbean countries, Fiji, and elsewhere. Many speak only English or an Indian dialect, some speak both and perhaps a third language like Kiswahili. Most come from a former British Colony.

Elsewhere I have called this meeting of cultures here in Canada, and more specifically, of literatures, "A Meeting of Streams."1 But this meeting did not begin with the arrival of planeloads of refugees to Canada in the 1970s. Before that there were planeloads to Britain, in the 1960s. This meeting is the prologue to our colonial past, it began with the presence of the British in our countries. Going to London was an important pilgrimage in the colonies. It brought status. There were many Dick Whittingtons where and when I was growing up. Knowing English brought status. (One is reminded of the terms 'black Englishman,' or 'brown Englishman' that were used pejoratively then.) Knowing English still brings status, of course, but now the role of the U.S. must also be considered. For many South Asians, therefore, at least for those who grew up in the colonies, this arrival in Canada, or the U.S., or the U.K., was a tryst with destiny (to turn around

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1 M.G. Vassanji, ed. A Meeting of Streams: South Asian Canadian Literature (Toronto: TSAR 1985).
Nehru’s phrase). Not only for the potential Dick Whittingtons with dreams of London and New York and Canada nurtured by schools and libraries, but also for those who left en masse after independence because the expectations and dreams and attitudes, even the identities which their former rulers left them with now put them at odds with their new governments. Where else to go but London, or failing that, Canada, the U.S., Australia? Most of the Asians expelled from Uganda chose not India or Pakistan but these Western countries to go to; and many of those who did choose the land of their ancestors fled from it as soon as they could. And once these Ugandan Asians had broken ground in Canada, the rest of the East African Asians followed.

I have indulged in this bit of history to emphasize that the world of the South Asian — here I mean the immigrant — is a large one, a geopolitical world, and national boundaries are sometimes less real and more arbitrary for him than for someone reared within them. A trivial point, perhaps, but one often overlooked by patriots new and old, and one that has important consequences when one comes to discuss the audience of a writer, and his or her literary identity. The point is essential to me in this discussion because we are considering a national boundary, Canada. Within that boundary the writing of South Asians raises the question: can a body of writing be naturalized together with the writer?

We can try to answer this question from the evidence of the writing. Instead of asking how this writing views itself in the world, one could ask how it is viewed from the outside, not by the politicians or the citizenship judges but by the literary establishment. One answer may be provided by the *Canadian Encyclopedia* which relegates most Asian writers to the ghettoized category ‘Ethnic.’

In Canada literary writing by South Asians is extensive. It falls broadly into three main categories: Punjabi, Urdu, and English. Although there are some attempts at translation, these three groups are essentially independent with minimal and only formal interaction. According to a survey conducted a few years ago, more than 3,000 poems had been written in Punjabi by seventy-five poets. Plays have been written and successfully performed, short story collections and novels have appeared. From a formalist or high literary point of view the quality of these works varies from simple emotional outbursts to the kind of works taught in colleges and universities in Panjab. The other side to this issue is that Punjabi has a very strong oral tradition and this gives the Punjabi writer, and especially the poet, a size of audience that an English poet in Canada may well envy.²

² See the discussion of Panjabi literature by Surjeet Kalsey in *A Meeting of Streams*, cited above.
A dominant thematic strain in the poetry is what may be described as the Punjabi-Canadian theme—the response of Punjabi writers to life in Canada, beginning with a look at the reasons for the immigration and the relationship that develops between the immigrant and his homeland on one hand and his new country on the other. For example, in one poem the emigration of a young working-class man is compared, ironically, to the exile of the Buddha. Unlike the Buddha, who left the splendour of a princely life in search of spiritual enlightenment, the young immigrant abandons a life of poverty in search of livelihood and thus reverses the Buddha theme. The hermits he meets on the way (the Buddha met hermits and other characters on his way, from whom he learned in one way or another) are the contractors in British Columbia who take him in wagons to pick berries, and the enlightenment at the end of the road is only too transitory and short-lived: the meagre paycheck.

I'll come home very soon
or apply for your immigration
very soon
so that with your own eyes
you can touch that holy tree
under which doing penance
I've found the path to salvation
from hunger.  

The world of the poet is bleak, cold, technological, impersonal, racist. The image of the new world is often dystopian,

We
like machines
ring like alarm clocks.  

At other times it is fragmented and alienated,

A waxen horse
with one leg broken
.............
A wooden owel
in a crowded city.  

3 From "Siddhartha Does Penance Again," by Surjeet Kalsey in A Meeting of Streams.
4 From "This Is the West," by Sukhinder.
5 From "Wooden Owel, Waxen Horse," by Ravinder Ravi.
There is a good deal of protest poetry — protest at the conditions back home, and at the conditions here: poverty, racism, working conditions. An interesting development is the protest against technology, seen as cold, impersonal, equated with the climate and the white Anglo-Saxon culture here. For many poets the incident of the Komagata Maru, in which a shipload of Punjabi immigrants was turned back for reasons that appear to be mostly racist, and which came to a conclusion in a clash with the police near Calcutta when many of the passengers died, has become a symbol of their position here: a symbol that is both Canadian and Punjabi; and since the incident took place in 1914 it has acquired the force of myth.

There is also feminist writing, and experimental writing: concrete poems to bring out the cold and technological, absurdist fiction to show the meaninglessness of it all.

Unlike Punjabi, whose early literature is oral, religious, and mystical, Urdu literature comes from a courtly tradition. Literary Urdu, with infusions of Persian and Arabic, was traditionally accessible to the educated, the rich, the ruling classes. Today, with public education more readily available, and national identity and cultural survival very much in the public consciousness, Urdu is more accessible, especially in Pakistan. Even so the first language of many Urdu speakers is often Punjabi or something else. Thus, Urdu keeps the status it has always had — a cultured, polished, literary, official language. Prominent Urdu poets in Pakistan are national heroes.

One can imagine, then, the plight of a few, isolated Urdu poets in Canada. They belong more to a global Urdu literary world. Many important Urdu poets have left their homelands and gone abroad into exile, so the literary public in Pakistan and India is used to hearing from writers living overseas. In this international context an Urdu-Canadian writer is a very lonely figure.6

There are two points that should be emphasized about Urdu and Punjabi writing in Canada: First, the writers retain identities as Punjabi or Urdu writers, seeking legitimacy, when they can, from their homelands. Second, they are all from the older, or first generation of immigrants. The second generation among the South Asian communities, as far as we can tell, has no interest in learning the language, much less in writing it. Given this situation, Punjabi literature — fascinating and alive as it is — does not have much chance of making it into the following generations. Of course, if large numbers of fresh immigrants keep coming, interesting, perhaps unpredictable, things could happen. But barring that unlikely possibility, it seems to me that this episode of Punjabi and Canadian literature will end. It is

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6 Urdu literature in Canada is discussed by Nuzrat Khan in A Meeting of Streams, cited above.
fascinating, worth perserving, but a closed book. This is not to say that it
will not have any influence on the Punjabi-English writing of the future.

Writing in English is obviously what will have the greatest and most
direct impact on what is most often meant by Canadian literature — the
mainstream. There is a considerable quantity of work in this area. Fiction
writers like Mukherjee, Bissoonlath and Mistry have all been published by
big publishing houses. In addition, there are writers published by the small
presses, with mostly poetry and short story collections, and there are
individual pieces in small magazines.

Many writers have no choice but to write in English since they speak only
English or have been brought up to be literate only in English. Other
writers, like those in India and Africa are able to make a choice. There is
also the important choice of audience — these authors write primarily for
the English-speaking world. Wole Soyinka, the Nigerian writer, in a recent
interview, complained that Ngugi, the Kenyan writer, was doing him,
Soyinka, and others like him, a disservice by writing in Kikuyu, which is used
by a relatively small number of people. Soyinka has a point, but Ngugi also
has a point, and he does translate his work. The writer working in English
is aware, or makes himself aware, of the English tradition in writing. Even
the title of Achebe’s celebrated Things Fall Apart, a very African novel, is a
famous line from an English poem by Yeats. We can see that the world of
many of today’s writers is a large one. Even the examples of African writing
in a discussion of Asian writing in Canada illustrates the international nature
of this literary system. Ultimately, of course, we all have a particular world
we write about — be it Dublin, Manawaka, Port of Spain, Limuru outside
Nairobi, or Bombay. Ultimately, the writer manifests his/her trust in the
readership and expresses a certain expectation of it.

Understandably, fiction and poetry address two different aspects of the
South Asian Canadian experience that might be called the public and
the private. Concerning fiction I would like to focus very briefly on one
theme, that of the writer as preserver of the collective tradition, which I
have previously amplified in an article called “The Postcolonial Writer as
Mythmaker and Folk Historian”: Ondaatje’s Running in the Family is an
account of the writer’s return to Sri Lanka and his encounters with his
past. Ismail Dewji’s short piece “From a Wayfarer’s Notebook,” similarly
consists of real and legendary accounts of early Indian settlers in East Africa.
Ladoo’s novels recreate the lives of the first Indian indentured labourers in
the West Indies. In these examples from Canadian writing it can be argued
that the writer as mythmaker creates Adam and stipulates a year zero, the

7 Third World Book Review 2.7 (1987).
8 A Meeting of Streams.
events leading from which give meaning and coherence to his life and time. Rushdie's Aadam Sinai and Achebe's Okonkwo are surely two famous postcolonial examples of such Adam-figures. In other works, however, the past is evoked in specific historical events (as in Ngugi's recreation of the Mau Mau struggle) or in evocative scenery and imagery, as in the stories of Cyril Dabydeen and Clyde Hosein.

This need to recreate, mythify, and explain can be traced to two not unrelated factors: the rapid disappearance of a way of life, which was often held, in place, and static, by the colonial government; and the rapid and continuing modernization of the Third World. Whether the writer stays in his homeland or emigrates, his life has been renewed, and he attempts to understand the past, and from it the present. Of course, it is often his own childhood (and private mythology) that the writer first recreates; but so rapidly has his world transformed that he cannot but reflect larger geopolitical movements. The main factor in these changes in recent years was of course independence from colonial rule, and it lurks in the background in numerous postcolonial novels.

Poetry is more personal, of course. It shows a strong identification with otherness, alienation, and difference, as Rienzi Crusz's persona the Sun-Man and the title of his book, Elephant and Ice, illustrate. That there is no naive longing for the physical homeland indicates the sophisticated level of this poetry. The case of Uma Parameswaran's long poem, Trishanku, illustrates how the poet sees herself in Canada. A line in the Bhagavata Purana reads,

Slowly passes the lovely night in winter
embellished by the moon, decorated with three watches
and ornaments with the constellation Trishanku.

In Indian mythology Trishanku, the constellation Orion, is a king elevated by the sage, Vishvamitra, to heaven in his mortal body. The gods reject him and attempt to cast him back to earth. As a compromise, Trishanku is left suspended, head downwards, between heaven and earth, a constellation ornamenting the winter skies.

As an analogy to the myth, the poem, Trishanku, is a constellation of voices, organized around a principal configuration of three. It weaves, by means of these narratives, a network of lives that retain irradically the elements of their past in Madras, but which are committed to a Canada uncertain about its reception of them. The result is a moving poetic description of South Asian Canadian mental states in a quintessential South

9 Uma Parameswaran, Trishanku (Toronto: TSAR 1987).
Asian Canadian poem, in which the writer consciously makes use of the elements of both traditions.

The writers I have discussed here are united by being South Asian immigrants in Canada and coming from a former British colony. All of these facts are reflected in their writing. But does this sharing of common themes from the post-colonial experience and from immigration mean that we have an identifiable literature?

In Punjabi writing, it seems to me, we do have a literature, or are close to having one. There is a mythology, a history in Canada; there is a large number of writers and an audience responsive to them. Writers share a tradition and follow paradigms, and also practice experimental writing, but will this continue? In my opinion, this writing will soon come to an end with this generation of immigrants. It will influence Punjabi writers of the future who adopt English as their literary medium.

In English writing, particularly fiction, there is as yet no such thing as South Asian Canadian literature. We suffer from the Canadian problem — sparseness of population and isolation. There appears to be no cross-cultural movement in the writing; no borrowing, no cross-reference as South Asian and as Canadian. The world of the fiction writer is larger than national boundaries. Thus Dabydeen is more aware of Naipaul and Selvon in his fiction than of national identities. He appears in an anthology of Caribbean literature published in English, and in Canada is included in two official bibliographies, as a black and as a South Asian Canadian writer. Dabydeen illustrated the flexible attitude towards boundaries.

In poetry the situation is different. Canada is ever présent and more immediate. Most of the poets — Crusz, Dabydeen, Parameswaran, Weerasinghe, Sugunasiri, Bannerji, and others — do make use of their backgrounds, their memories, and in some cases literary traditions. Dabydeen feels comfortable referring to Crusz. And Crusz has such a powerful and haunting voice that he has influenced others. Nevertheless I do not think that this is enough to continue this literary development. The Sun-Man of Rienzi Crusz could have more impact on Sri Lanka, and is less likely to influence the next generation of hockey-playing South Asian Canadians.

To conclude, in English we have many individual Canadian writers of South Asian origin plying their individual trades, but no South Asian Canadian literature in the sense I have defined it.

Toronto

10 Lorris Elliott, ed. The Bibliography of Literary Writings by Blacks in Canada (Toronto: Williams-Wallace 1986); and Suwanda H.J. Sugunasiri, ed. The Search for Meaning: The Literature of Canadians of South Asian Origin (Ottawa: Secretary of State 1988).
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EDWARD MOŻEJKO

Ethnic or National (?): Polish Literature in Canada

Let us start with some basic methodological clarifications. The proposed examination of minority writing in Canada\(^1\) is to take place within the theoretical framework of what is often defined by scholars as the literary institution. This concept, however, when applied to Canadian cultural conditions, has a somewhat specific meaning. It is clear, for example, that the writings of Cz. Miłosz or V.P. Aksenov, who live in the United States, are not considered to be a part of American literature. They are viewed there as émigré writers of Polish and Russian literature, respectively. Yet their compatriots living across the border in Canada have acquired a different status and are often discussed as Canadian writers. True, this status is 'hyphenated,' by such qualifications as Ukrainian-Canadian, German-Canadian, Italian-Canadian, but it is not to be denied. It is interesting to ask the question: what makes this treatment of writers in two neighbouring countries so different? To answer it, one should move from the level of strictly literary-critical considerations to a wider notion of cultural policy. It seems to be obvious that the idea of multiculturalism adopted by the Canadian government as part of its internal policy, opened the possibility of including into its cultural space the activities of ethnic groups other than English and French. In the Western world this probably constitutes a unique example of government intervention which has its immediate repercussions in the sphere of culture. The adjective 'Canadian' (for example, 'writer,' 'artist') is no longer reserved, so to speak, for those who function in two official languages, but can also be used in relation to the representatives of

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\(^1\) What I am referring to is the collective project of writing a history of the literary institution in Canada, initiated by Professor M.V. Dimić, Director of the Research Institute for Comparative Literature at the University of Alberta. The other members of the initial group are Professors E.D. Bidgett, I.S. MacLaren, S.C. Neuman and A. Purdy. The project intends to attract and involve scholars from universities throughout Canada.

*Literatures of Lesser Diffusion/Les littératures de moindre diffusion*  
Towards a History of the Literary Institution in Canada: 4th Conference  
©University of Alberta, Research Institute for Comparative Literature
other ethnic minorities. With regard to literature, the adjective 'Canadian' invites a comparison with the adjective 'Soviet' but, of course, without all its ideological ballast or negative connotations: to 'Canadian literature' belong all those writers who live and create in Canada. Consequently, thanks to the official cultural policy of the Canadian government, some writers enjoy, as it were, a double status: those who immigrated to Canada belong to the national literatures of their origin and at the same time they are included into a multiethnic Canadian literary life and, in a broader sense, into a multicultural system of aesthetic values.

It is here that the specificity of the Canadian literary institution becomes so evident and interesting. The Canadian literary institution includes not only production, transmission, consumption of artifacts or such components as the function of publishing houses, the media, schools, universities and so on in the dissemination or diffusion of literature, but it incorporates intentional, conscious and expedient efforts on the part of the official authorities to bring about a multiethnic concept of Canadian literature. This effort is not devoid, one could argue, of a certain political manipulation.

This literary situation seems to be favourably predisposed for an analysis in terms of the structuralist conception of literature as a system. In a most abbreviated summary such a methodological approach implies that any national literature in the course of its evolution cannot be treated as a homogeneous entity but rather as a heterogeneous open system, ready to assimilate or to accommodate within itself other sets of aesthetic values, or, in short, other systems and subsystems, and as such, it should be looked upon as a polysystem.2

This theoretical stand envisages a number of possible invariables of interaction between independent, established national literary systems (like for example, French and Russian) or strong and weak artistic national systems (for example, a case in point is the relationship between Russian and Bulgarian literature in the nineteenth century). In short: the artistic boundaries of literature are viewed to be flexible and subject to continuous change. Singular national literatures taken in their isolation are no exception either: indeed, the literary polysystem assumes the existence of a dynamic dichotomy of canonized vs non-canonized systems, that is, 'high' and 'low' types of literature which remain in constant interaction. Some elements of the secondary (non-canonized) system 'infiltrate' the artistic values of the primary system and the latter may adopt non-canonized texts and elevate

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2 The concept of literature as polysystem was developed by Ilmar Even-Zohar in his book Papers in Historical Poetics (the Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, Tel Aviv University Series: Papers on Poetics and Semiotics, ed. B. Hrushovski and I. Even-Zohar, Tel Aviv: 1978) particularly 7-8, 11-20, 28-38, 54-62.
them to the rank of canonized, privileged status. One may take as a case in point, for example, some genres of science fiction or detective stories.

What seems to be of particular importance here is the implicit suggestion that if analyzed through the prism of the above mentioned theoretical scheme of opposing aesthetic tendencies or types of creativity, national literature emerges as a significant factor serving the preservation of cultural heritage.

Considering the multinational character of the Canadian cultural fabric, the concept of a polysystemic approach to Canadian literature, written in two major languages, and its relation to or relationship with literatures of so-called ‘lesser diffusion’ deserves to be subjected to a more serious testing. It is my intention to examine this question, taking as an example the presence of Polish writing in Canada. In doing so, I would like to make two preliminary comments: first of all, I feel indebted to two remarkable Polish poets, Professor B. Czyzykowski of the University of British Columbia and F. Śmieja of the University of Western Ontario, for their friendly assistance. When requested, they readily put their pioneering research in this area at my disposal and thus made my task easier. Although our methodological approach differs considerably, I would like to acknowledge that their studies constitute a valuable factual groundwork which has provided indispensable leads and hints with regard to the material which in this case ought to be taken under closer critical examination. Their preliminary reconnaissance allowed me to take a somewhat broader overview of the problem and to move, I hope, its explication one step further. Secondly, it should be noted that the interest in Polish-Canadian writing is of very recent date. Apart from the above mentioned papers by B. Czyzykowski and F. Śmieja, only one more contribution could be verified so far, namely, by L. Kos-Rabczewicz-Zubkowski who gave a short discussion of Polish writers living in Canada in his book The Poles in Canada. If compared to the large number of publications treating the Polish immigration to Canada in

3 Professor Bogdan Czyzykowski's study "Polish Writing in Canada" was recently published under the title Polish Writing in Canada: Preliminary Survey (Ottawa: Secretary of State 1988) 59 pp. As far as Professor Florian Śmieja is concerned his article "Pisarze polscy w Kanadzie" (Polish Writers in Canada) appeared in Echo Tygodnia, 157, 158, 159 (1985), a Polish weekly published in Toronto; it is also to be printed in the Proceedings of the Congress of Polish Culture Abroad, held in September of 1985 in London, England. An abbreviated and preliminary version of this paper appeared in English under the title "Notes on Polish Canadian Creative Literature," Polyphony: The Bulletin of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario. Special Issue: Poles in Ontario VI.2 (Fall/Winter 1984): 105-109.

4 Ludwik Kos-Rabczewicz-Zubkowski, The Poles in Canada (Ottawa: Canada Ethnica Series VII 1968) 142-149.
general, research devoted to our particular area of interest here is clearly disproportionate; but it would be grossly misleading to take it as a negative indicator suggesting that the topic is irrelevant or unimportant. In fact, even what we have included up to this stage in our analysis points to the existence of a vast and diverse wealth of material, fascinating by its richness and, in my opinion, worthy of a book-length study.

In the final introductory note, I would like to emphasize that in this article I have confined myself to the generic and partly thematic analysis of the subject only. This limitation, I hope, will allow a clearer comparison with the parallel development of the Canadian mainstream literature written in English and French, and create a point of departure for a more complete discussion of this topic in the future. To engage in a more complex multilevelled analysis of formal and artistic features of Polish-Canadian literature at the present time, when some basic patterns of its evolution remain unknown, seems to be premature and would go far beyond the permitted size of this paper.

**MEMOIRS AND DIARIES**

The earliest manifestations of Polish writing in Canada can be considered to be memoirs. If the historical investigation holds true that Polish immigration to Canada experienced three waves of influx: that is, (1) Polish immigration prior to 1914, (2) the so-called second wave between 1919-1939, and (3) the third wave since the outbreak of World War II to the present time, then it can be said that memoirs are the only genre which faithfully accompanied all three periods. It is uncertain how far back in time the chronology of writing Polish memoirs in Canada goes. One can assume that the first more
complete and systematic description of the vicissitudes of Polish immigrants in this country (by the Poles themselves) dates back to the beginning of this century. One such collection of memoirs was written by Józef (Joseph) Samulski and published under the title Pamiętnik emigranta polskiego w Kanadzie (The Memoirs of a Polish Emigrant in Canada), 7 Samulski was born in 1891 and emigrated to Canada as a teenager in 1910. His book covers the period from 1910-1926. It is not the first example of Polish-Canadian memoirs (see W.I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki), but it no doubt exceeds others in its vividness of presentation and the scope of its thematic breadth. Samulski was not what one would call a typical immigrant. He stemmed from a rather well-to-do peasant family in the Poznań district of Western Poland which was under German rule. He left the old country for three reasons: he wanted to avoid military service in the German army; he was no doubt inspired by a strong sense of adventure; and he did not intend just to earn money in order to survive, but to grow rich, if possible, and to surpass in that the relatives he left behind. These characteristics, it seems, allowed Samulski to preserve a sober distance to the described events and to his own lot in the new country. As a result of such an attitude, he gave a vivid panorama of Canadian life in the first thirty years of this century. Samulski worked in various silver, gold, and copper mines of Eastern Canada; he operated a coal-mine hoist, casually served as an interpreter for the police and at one point took up the job of a cook. Samulski's desire to become rich never materialized, but Canada definitely satisfied his quest for adventure.

The closer we move towards the midst of the century, the more dramatic grows the air of the memoirs of Polish Canadians. Quite a few of them contain a shattering account of a tragic odyssey leading through the Soviet concentration camps in Siberia and Kazakhstan to Persia, Palestine, then later to England and eventually to Canada. 8 One particularly startling record in this respect was left by Father Lucjan Królikowski, who described in

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8 For example, Marissa Janowa, Ciemna droga do Kanady (On A Thorny Road to Canada) in B. Heydenkorn, ed. Pamiętniki imigranów polskich w Kanadzie II: 43-60; see also Henryk Piasecki Znad Niemna przez Syberię do Kanady (From the Riverbend of Niemen, through Siberia to Canada).
Skradzione dzieciństwo (Stolen Childhood) the sufferings of Polish children who were deported to various regions of the Soviet Union for the purpose of divesting them of their national identity but who were saved and later settled in Canada.

Regardless of when the memoirs were written, whether in the early or later stages of Polish immigration to Canada, they all bear some common characteristics and thematically can be divided into the following categories: 1) Memoirs describing the misery of life in the old country (shortage of land, large families), travel to Canada and the description of difficult beginnings (work on farms, mines, grubbing up forests, severe weather conditions, etc.). 2) Memoirs recalling either World War I or II and the winding road to Canada with some longer or shorter stops in other countries and then the hard period of adaptation to new conditions of life. 3) Memoirs devoted entirely to new life in Canada and providing a detailed picture of labour relationships, social conditions, economic hardships, cultural life and ethnic diversity; the latter component not unknown, for instance, in two other types of memoirs, gives at times a very valuable insight into the Polish perception of other national groups.

Polish-Canadian memoirs have been printed in both Canada and Poland. There exists, of course, a difference in putting stress on the kind of material that is published in both countries. While in Poland the clear preference is for older manuscripts, we observe in Canada a tendency to favour chronologically later texts, written primarily after World War II. To be sure, it is not aesthetic considerations that dictate these differences. They are determined by political circumstances. Authors of the more recent memoirs take a definite anticommunist stand and their memoirs are permeated with highly critical depictions of the SovietUnion which, of course, cannot meet the acceptance of a censor.\footnote{In fact, it is noteworthy that the theme of the “gulag” entered Polish literature in general and Polish memoirs, published in Canada and elsewhere, in particular, long before the publication of A. Solzhenitsyn’s story One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich. However, the reception of this theme as fact was rather sceptical in the West, at times even unfavourable.}

Regardless of where they are published, memoirs are most often treated as sociological material; however, one cannot deny the fact that many of them display features of high artistic qualities and values; as such, they belong to literature. We can even go as far as to say that in the case of Canadian-Polish writing, memoirs can be perceived as a genre which grows exclusively out of Canadian experience and reality. Neither Polish poetry nor prose created in this country can demonstrate the same intensity of representation referring to the not-so-distant Canadian past. The following
should also be noted: Polish memoirs in Canada reached such an intensity of practice and degree of development that there arose the need for institutionalization. In 1969 the Memoirism Friends Association (Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Pamiętnikarstwa) was founded, and in 1971 the first issue of the quarterly *Polish Memoirism* appeared (B. Heydenkorn, *Past and Present*, 193).

Before we go on to discuss other aspects of our topic it appears appropriate to make reference to yet another type of creative verbal activity which possesses the element of Canadian authenticity: oral literature, mainly poetry. Edward Ożóg, a graduate of the University of Ottawa, has gathered interesting material which demonstrated that Polish oral literature has been "transplanted" to Canada and became an important source of information about early Polish settlers, their "hard life, depression, nostalgia and finally their integration" and assimilation into new society.

**POLISH POETRY AS A CANADIAN PHENOMENON**

While analyzing the question of Polish literature in Canada one cannot overlook the fact that its beginnings and specificity are tightly bound up with past patterns of immigration. The third wave of Polish émigrés' influx to Canada, which occurred shortly after the end of World War II, differs considerably from the preceding ones in its social structure, educational profile, and intentions. They came to Canada not of their own volition but forced by the new geopolitical map of Europe. They came in defiance of or as protest to a political system which was forcefully imposed on Poland by a foreign and hostile power. These were not illiterate peasants looking for the improvement of their economic lot, but soldiers who had the experience of six long years of bloody war behind them in which they fought on the side of the Western Allies in the Polish armed forces abroad and for whom the war proved to be a bitter disappointment. Most of them had some education: a high school diploma, to a lesser extent — a university degree or some sort of professional schooling. These were people from all walks of life, including painters, sculptors, journalists, academics, and writers. Among the latter category, a few notable poets and prose writers decided to make Canada their permanent home. Worth mentioning are the following names: Adam Tomaszewski; Bolesław Pomian Piątkowski; Wacław Liebert;

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10 The information and the quote comes from Professor F. Śmieja's paper. E. Ożóg wrote his M.A. under the supervision of the late T. Krukowski, Professor of Polish at the University of Ottawa. See Professor Śmieja's review of E. Ożóg's study in *Związekowiec XIV.3* (1985).
Bohdan J. Ejbich; Izabella Lutosławska-Wolikowska; Wacław Iwaniuk and many others; somewhat later, in the mid-fifties or early sixties a younger group of poets, who made a ‘stop-over’ in Western Europe to complete their university degrees, arrived in Canada to take up positions as academics at various universities. Thus, Danuta Bieńkowska became a professor of Polish language and literature at the University of Toronto; Florian Śmieja, a professor of Spanish at the University of Western Ontario (London); Bogdan Czaykowski and Andrzej Busza accepted offers from the University of British Columbia in the departments of Slavonic Studies and English respectively; Vladimir (Włodzimierz) Krysiński joined the Comparative Literature Programme at Carleton University in Ottawa and later the Comparative Literature Programme, now department, at the Université de Montréal. One of these young poets, Janusz Ihnatowicz, who came to Toronto in 1951, chose to become a priest and theologian.

If we are to ask the question, who among the Polish-Canadian poets occupies the most prominent poetic stature, the name of Wacław Iwaniuk comes immediately to mind. Born in 1915, he began his literary career in pre-war Poland. His first collection of poetry, Pełnia Czerwca (The Fullness of June) appeared in 1936; the second — in 1938, under the title Dzień Apokaliptyczny (Apocalyptic Day). As a poet, Iwaniuk went through a long creative evolution from lyrical reflections about nature (in which he contemplates its fantastic, miraculous powers and elements), apocalyptic motifs linking him clearly, for instance, with Milosz through a confrontation with history as a result of the war experience — to expressing a deep sense of isolation, inadaptability to the new Canadian environment and finally, if not a gradual reconciliation then some sort of accommodation with it. The latest evolution seems to be of particular interest to our present topic. In the past decade or so, Iwaniuk began to publish in English. Dark Times (1979) gives a cross-section of Iwaniuk’s poetry in English translation; the

11 Unlike other quoted writers, Lutosławska-Wolikowska came to Canada as an established and quite well known author with a prolific literary output. One of her first books was a novelized memoir Bolszewicy w polskim dworze (The Bolsheviks on a Polish Estate) (Warszawa: Perzyński, Niklewicz i Ska 1921). Her novel Córka (The Daughter) appeared after the war (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Eugeniusza Kuthana 1946). While in Canada, she published Roman Dmowski: Człowiek, Polak, przyjaciel (Roman Dmowski: Man, Pole, and Friend) (Chicago: Komitet Wydawniczy Stronnictwa Narodowego 1961).

12 Other collections and books by W. Iwaniuk include: Czas Don Kochota: Poezje (The Time of Don Quixote) (London: Wydawnictwo Światowego Związku Polaków z Zagranicy 1946); Dni białe i dni czerwone (White Days and Red Days) (Bruxelles: Klon 1947; Dziennik z podróży tropikalnej i wiersze o wojnie. Poemat z lat 1939-1945 (Diary From a Tropical Journey and Poems about the War: A Poem From the Years 1939-1945) (Toronto: Konfraternia Artystyczna Smocza Jama 1951); Gorące noce. Poemat (The Bitterness of Night) (Paris: Instytut Literacki 1951); Pieśń nad pieśniami. Poemat
collection *Evenings on Lake Ontario* (1981) which has a significant subtitle *From My Canadian Diary* is Iwaniuk's first attempt to write in English. It is an interesting and in many ways revealing experiment. First of all, it indicates the poet's desire to become part of the Canadian literary landscape and a clear departure from the attitude of isolation. In doing so, he brings into Canadian literature a peculiar experience, full of contradictions, both ironic and serious, disapproving and approving of the existing situation in which, as he claims in one of the poems, "those who survived are themselves again" ("Post Scriptum"). In the opening poem of *Evenings on Lake Ontario* we read the following lines:

My fascination with Canada has been long and stable  
The country is enormous but its brain is still growing.  
The people, Canadians, are not as Canadian  
as the Greeks are Greek.  
We are all clients of war

Yet in another poem we find a distich which moves the reader by its sincerity and lyrical tone:

I wasn't born here, I don't know the splendour of this land,  
but my voice trembles when I speak of it.

Iwaniuk's poetry is a fascinating testimony to our epoch, encompassing both a profound sense of history which has its roots in the long tradition of European culture and the motif of lonely existence in modern North American civilization. "By confronting continental historicism" suggests one critic, "with an environment devoid of any historical sense" Iwaniuk has universalized the problem of alienation of a contemporary émigré.\(^ {13} \)

Let us now turn our attention for a while to a group of poets who began their literary careers in Great Britain in the early fifties and later continued them in Canada. I refer specifically to the following names: Bogdan Czykowski, Florian Śmieja and Andrzej Busza. All three of them belonged

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13 Maja Elżbieta Cybulskia, *Wacław Iwaniuk. Poeta* (London: Oficyna poetów i malarzy 1984) 125 pp. This is so far the most comprehensive study of W. Iwaniuk's poetry.
to a poetic group "Kontynenty" (Continents), formed in London (England) in 1959 but in fact existing since 1955 when the first issue of the periodical Merkuriusz polski nowy... (New Polish Mercury...)
was published. The composition of the group fluctuated and it eventually fell apart in the early sixties. Out of seven or eight members, one returned to Poland, three made their home in Canada and the rest remained in Britain. The "Kontynenty" group never created a coherent or homogeneous aesthetic programme. The only common denominator they had was language. Consequently, each of them spoke in his own poetic voice.

The oldest among them, Florian Śmieja, has so far published six collections of poetry, three of them in Canada. His poetry shows a broad range of sensitivity, linking in a masterly manner the concreteness of daily happenings with subtle philosophical reflection. In fact, the latter emanates, as it were, from juxtapositions of concrete external objects and events: the intellectual depth of his poems is neither preimposed nor dependent on any explicitly overt effusion of feelings which would conclude a poem. Śmieja’s poetic world is real and yet tempting by its pensiveness. Irony, present in almost all of these poems, is combined with a distinctly creative discipline which disallows verbosity. In general, Śmieja strives to achieve authenticity.¹³

It is not easy to write about the poetry of Bogdan Czykowksi. According to Cz. Mifosz, Czykowksi has "best expressed the predicament of a poet in exile." Indeed the author of Point-no-Point faced this issue in both his early poetry and criticism. For Czykowksi, a poet is born into a language and has no choice but to accept such a condition:

I am a poet (I need to name myself)
Language is my chain
Words are my dog-collar
I was born there.
(I would prefer to be born simply in grass).

But unlike many other poets in his condition, Czykowksi does not indulge in self-pity and goes far beyond the linguistic dilemmas or national obsessions. What he tries to accomplish is to turn what is generally seen


as the negative into a positive, creative attitude. Hence the reassuring, refreshing mode of this poetry.

Nature and man seem to preoccupy Czaykowski's poetic imagination with a particular intensity. Man is placed against the background of a fantastic world of nature which at times comes close to surrealistic imagery. Is this an expression of alienation or a longing for another, more promising setting? No clear answer is given and the poet seems deliberately to intrigue, to keep the reader's fantasy in suspense. It can be said with certainty however, that Czaykowski invokes a pantheistic vision of the world and ties it with ultimate questions of death and, as he admits himself, nuclear annihilation.

Finally, the youngest author of the Kontynenty group, Andrzej Busza, strikes yet another tone: his poems are transmutations of personal experience, of love, metaphysical awe and anguish, the human predicament, and the paradoxes of life, into highly cultural idiom, where emotion is conveyed through the intensity of symbolic values juxtaposed in the unfolding of the imagery rather than in more direct ways... (Czaykowski, 37-38). And in this, I would say, he is somewhat akin to B. Czaykowski: Busza's poetry captivates by its contrast, that is, a fusion of biological sensuality with the sense of transitoriness.

All the above discussed poets make up the recently published anthology Seven Polish Canadian Poets. The appearance of this volume marks in itself an astonishing development: for the first time Polish poets living in Canada have declared themselves to be also Canadian poets. This self-determination was made possible and inspired by the existing policy of multiculturalism. In his foreword to the anthology, Z. Folejewski rightly points out the consequences and complexities of this situation:

In this multinational nation of ours the concept of national Canadian literature is still in the process of crystallization. Even in professional circles it still often means literature in English, while literature in French is hyphenated as French-Canadian. Scholarly research concerned with a comparative study of works written in official languages is still not at a very advanced stage. Naturally, it is harder still to fit in works in unofficial languages. This does, indeed, create a challenging problem of putting together the Canadian literary 'Mosaic,' 'Polyphony' or whatever other symbolic term we wish to use to indicate the complexity of our national literary scene.

By speaking of a Canadian literary "Mosaic" and "our national literary scene" Folejewski clearly suggests that poetry, and literature in general

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17 Ibid. 9.
created in unofficial languages, should be ‘integrated’ and become a part (at least its best achievements) of the national literature. It seems that without implementation of this principle the policy of multiculturalism itself would remain a dead concept.

To close our discussion of poetry, it should be mentioned that the number of Polish artists living in Canada has been considerably strengthened by the recent wave of Solidarity emigration among which we can find a number of talented poets, such as, for example, Edward Zyman, Grażyna Brakoniecka, Maciej Piotr Prus (also a prose writer), Magdalena Czyżycka, Krzysztof Kasprzyk, and Marek Kusiba, who will certainly contribute to the richness of Polish-Canadian poetry. It is worthy of noting that, outside Poland, Canada now has the largest concentration of poets writing in Polish.

PROSE AND OTHER GENRES

In comparison with poetry, Polish prose writing in Canada lags far behind in both scope and quality. Two Polish writers created some sort of national mythology about Canada: Arkady Fiedler with his travelogue Kanada pachnąca łybicą (Canada Smells of Resin) and Melchior Wańkowicz by writing his novel Tworzywo (1954), translated into English as Three Generations (1973). The former concentrated on the exotic, and described Canadian forests, the danger of travel in remote parts of the country (it was written in 1937), hunting, and the encounter with Indians. Canada is the land of adventure, enchanting with its intact tracts and exoticism. Wańkowicz, on the other hand, displayed a much more profound understanding of Canada which he depicted as a land of settlers who toil and sweat to create for themselves, and their children, a better future. Indeed, he caught the spirit of this country as few foreign writers did. He traced this theme through three generations of Polish settlers which he projects to the reader as a great success story. But neither A. Fiedler nor M. Wańkowicz stayed in Canada longer than it was necessary to gather material for their books and they can hardly be considered as Polish-Canadian writers.

The main corpus of Polish literary prose-texts in Canada was produced, as is the case with poetry, by those who arrived here immediately after the end of World War II; but they have never gained the same artistic significance as poets did. Among the early arrivals one should mention, however, Adam Tomaszweski, the author of memoirs (Młodość została nad Obrą (My Youth Remained on the Obrą Rover), Gorko pachnąca piołuny (The Bitter Smell of Wormwoods)), travelogues and essays devoted to the North American continent and his adopted city — Toronto (Toronto, Toronto, Trans). Not without original traits is the prose of Wacław Liebert, especially his short stories under the title O miłości i tak dalej (About Love and So On) which received first prize from the Ontario Arts Council.
Apart from the above mentioned writers, closer attention ought to be given to Andrzej Brycht and Ryszard Bugajski. The former came to occupy a very reputable position of being recognized as one of the most talented prose writers in post-war Poland, the latter made his name known first of all as a film maker (director) whose movie *Przesłuchanie* (Interrogation)\(^\text{18}\) remains, to date, the most staggering settling of accounts with the Stalinist regime. I would like to dwell on Brycht. After a rapid, even glamorous literary beginning in Poland, and clear flirtation with the regime, Brycht surprised everyone when, during a cruise in the Mediterranean, he left a Polish ship and declared himself to be an émigré writer. Shortly after his defection, he made his way to Canada. "A soldier and miner in his youth, and later a heavyweight boxer" (Czyżkowski, 9), Brycht wandered across Canada, accepting all kinds of manual jobs, including one as a truck driver.

In 1978 Brycht published his first 'Canadian' novel *Zoom* (a translation from the Polish), which had a moderate success. As it deals with some psychological and religious problems, *Zoom* no doubt brings a new vein into Brycht's excessively realistic writing but it cannot be taken as a major break-through. Evidently, Brycht is quite disappointed with his Canadian experience and, as in the past in Poland so in Canada today, he suffers from inadaptability. His most recent novel *Hubris* is set in North America and contains unequivocal, malicious condemnation of this continent. No wonder Brycht could not find a publisher in Canada; but the manuscript was accepted by the editor of a Polish literary monthly *Twórczość* in 1984.\(^\text{19}\) Whether this is a prelude to Brycht's return to Poland is a question which only time can answer.

**CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

This paper, I hope, gives sufficient evidence and reason to pose the question, what is the nature of the relationship between Canadian literature and its Polish counterpart which evolved out of Canadian experience and history? How has this relationship been shaped from the point of view of a polysystemic methodology? I must admit that I do not have answers but two very basic preliminary observations can be of help to answer the question implicit in the title of this paper.

1) On the thematic level, Canadian 'content' permeated Polish-Canadian literature quite a long time ago, and vice-versa the Polish theme, exactly through its literary Polish intermediary which acquired the status of so-called

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'ethnic literature,' as well as through other 'neighbouring' creative linguistic codes (for example, Ukrainian, German, etc.), 'entered' the Canadian literary space. In spite of such a 'reciprocity,' the relationship between Canadian literature of the mainstream, written in the two official languages, and Polish-Canadian literature, has rested on the vertical principal of hierarchical order. That is, no matter what kind of texts are produced by Polish-Canadian writers, or other ethnic writers for that matter, regardless of their artistic quality, they are treated or perceived within the accepted system of multiculturalism with two dominating languages as texts of secondary significance because they are products of a subculture which, out of necessity, are aimed at the creative ambitions and artistic tastes of a minority group. In this respect Y. Lotman's views on semiotics of culture\textsuperscript{20} may further help to clarify the issue. By speaking of inner and outer points of view in culture, Lotman suggests that those who represent the inner point of view of the culture bearers situate themselves in the centre of the culture. They speak of themselves as 'we' and perceive others as strangers and denote them as 'they.' As Irene Portis Winner rightly points out, in this treatment ethnic culture is understood as a subset of culture in general. Ethnic culture is based upon the concept of ethnic identity which flows from the universal situation that a culture is pluralistic, composed of ever-changing, inter-related subcultural systems. Just as the members of one culture see themselves as distinct from those of another culture, the members of a particular subculture distinguish themselves as 'we' as opposed to 'others' representing other subcultural units. Such distinctions and self-identifications are based upon fluid and changeable significant and subjectively determined differences that define ethnic boundaries, the content of ethnic identities, as well as the members of ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{21}

In this respect, Canada with its officially legislated policy of multiculturalism can be considered to be an exemplary micro-world of cultural interrelation of two major cultural systems (English and French) with various subcultural systems. Up till now, however, this relationship has not been as dynamic and mutually fertile or inspiring as one would have wished it to be. And here I come to my second comment.

2) For a long period the above mentioned interrelationship between diverse cultural and subcultural systems remained, even on its most


elementary thematic level, in a state of inconvenient neighbourhood, or at best, in a relationship of ‘peaceful’ coexistence rather than meaningful structural interaction. It seems to me that much blame for this is to be laid upon some terminological labels and deeply entrenched clichés.

Certainly, in the context of Canadian cultural configuration, more than one factor contributed to this mutual isolation between what is considered to be the primary literary system and its multilingual subsystems, the most negative in my view being the use of the term ‘ethnic literature.’ While it is a convenient label, it is misleading in more than one way. It contains a hidden and depreciating value judgement which has, for instance, little to do with the aesthetic appreciation of literature and as such should probably be removed from our critical vocabulary. Not so long ago, the Polish critic (shall we call him ethnic because he lives in Canada?) Adam Lubiecz wrote the following:

To me the adjective ethnic (as applied in relation to literature — E.M.) has a clearly pejorative connotation, even in a sense an offensive one, as has the qualification ‘ethnic Canadian’ or ‘ethnic Canadian groups.’ It suggests a certain defect, some sort of incompleteness which typifies those who belong to this category of people; this implies that they are ‘incomplete’ Canadians, operating and acting on the peripheries of the main stream of Canadian life. In short, they are of secondary importance.22

For example, I have reason to believe that many Polish writers in Canada remained uninterested in establishing any closer relations with the literature of their adopted country as they feared being labelled ‘ethnic.’ It should be noted here that, with a few exceptions, almost all of the above discussed writers have enjoyed the privilege of being published in Poland, not only in literary periodicals, but also by publishing houses; and collections or anthologies of their poetry appeared in the country of their origin throughout the sixties, seventies and eighties. Some of them were recognized for their important contribution to the evolution of modern Polish poetry and their poems have been translated into quite a few foreign languages. Obviously, in these circumstances the prospect of breaking into the Canadian literary system or ‘market,’ only to be acknowledged or qualified as an ‘ethnic’ writer, was not particularly exciting to say the least. Apparently, Waclaw Iwaniuk expressed indignation when someone suggested that he was an ethnic writer. My point is to demonstrate the intricate, complex relationships which may arise in the process of continuous interactions of modern literature. To discuss Polish-Canadian literature in terms of ‘ethnic’ writing and its relation to major Canadian literature

(English, French) is, I think, of little explicatory value because what we are dealing with is not necessarily a subsystem vs. system, but two primary systems trying to find some sort of accommodation in quite unusual cultural and historical conditions of the existing and officially accepted policy of multiculturalism. It should be made clear, however, that within Canadian cultural realities literature written in Polish or any language other than English or French will function as a subsystem. At the same time, this literature may belong to a primary system of the language from which it derived. Consequently, in answering the question formulated in the title of this paper, one could say that Polish-Canadian literature is, in a sense, both national and (if we are to preserve the traditional nomenclature) 'ethnic.'

In this connection, I would like to make yet another comment with regard to the formulation, 'literatures of lesser diffusion,' which is the title of this conference. While I find it more acceptable than the term 'ethnic,' I think that it too has its flaws, especially when applied strictly within the Canadian literary system, because it may unintentionally push some important literary phenomena into the shadows created in languages other than English or French. What does 'literature of lesser diffusion' mean? It implies, of course, literary texts which are produced within lesser known and popular languages. But what happens if a writer who belongs to a 'literature of lesser diffusion' (and I am talking here about a Canadian context) wins international recognition and many awards, as is the case, for instance, with Waclaw Iwaniuk? Does he automatically move to the category of 'broader' or 'greater' diffusion? In discussing this question, one should not lose sight of the fact that Canadian literature itself (that is, English and French), if analyzed on an international level, would be qualified as a 'literature of lesser diffusion.' To create within such a literature the above term may suggest that we are dealing with totally marginal if not irrelevant literary phenomena, while in fact, in some instances, the reverse might be true. In short, any criteria based solely on linguistic qualifications within the Canadian cultural fabric may at times be dubious if not misleading.

It is easy to expose flaws but much more difficult to find acceptable solutions. I wonder, however, whether as simple a term as 'literature of national minorities' would be more adequate than the two categories (that is, 'ethnic' and 'literatures of lesser diffusion') used in the current debate?

What we observe today is a strong pressure exercised by literatures of national minorities to break the existing wall between the so-called minor and major literature, and thus to find a more equitable place within Canadian culture. It is obvious that the mainstream of Canadian literature published in two major languages will preserve its privileged position on the national scale. At the same time, however, it should become more open to its third, so to speak, dimension, that is, literature written in other unofficial languages of Canada. In doing so, it may find an unexpected source of
inspiration and artistic enrichment. The Polish example is, in this respect, quite interesting. Apart from W. Iwaniuk, who began to stress his Canadian identity, other poets seem to be moving in similar directions, that is, to find some kind of acceptance within the Canadian literary landscape, to break into its mainstream. It is not a vain desire, but an expression of a sense of belonging to a country which one considers to be one’s own. Having been accepted elsewhere, they want to overcome the obvious paradox of being totally ignored in their own, albeit adopted, country. In his collection of English poetry entitled Not A Tourist, F. Śmieja writes the following:

Looking at the sun setting in rich crimsons
at the black squirrels fearless on the road
surveying fertile fields and live pastures
I say to myself: no tourist am I,
a bird of passage without a nest of my own,
I do not merely journey with a cold lens.\(^{23}\)

If not translating, some of these poets try to write in English (for example, A. Busza) and eventually they may be classified as bilingual writers. Their contribution to modern Canadian literature should not be lightly discarded, as the assimilation of their poetic experience may open new formal and thematic possibilities. In commenting on the contribution that W. Iwaniuk may bring with his poems into Canadian poetry, Z. Folejewski wrote the following:

There is an unusual depth in his perhaps somewhat one-sided exaggerated sense of history and personal integrity. There are themes, motifs that add new dimensions and forms that enrich the scope of Canadian poetry. Ellipses, alliterative semantic stress, condensed metaphors, and other devices of the Polish avant-garde can occasionally reach a unique degree of intensity.\(^{24}\)

To conclude, I would like to emphasize that this is certainly true of literary values contained within other national groups which may be assimilated into the mainstream of Canadian poetry. And this may only mean a further enrichment of its artistic diversity.

University of Alberta

Language and the Literary Institution:
Hungarian-Canadian Examples

Language is the basis of social interaction which, in its turn, is the basis of social structure. This is the elevated theory on which my paper relies. Pedestrian truth as it may be, the evolving interest in Canadian multilingual literature brings home the message that pedestrian truths can indeed be complex.

Consider this fact: up to the present time, half a dozen reports commissioned by the Secretary of State Multiculturalism prove the existence of Canadian literature written in the Hungarian, Spanish, Polish, Italian, Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati and Sinhalese languages. By country of origin, these reports deal with Canadian authors born in Hungary, Poland, Italy, India, Pakistan and seven Hispanic countries, namely: Spain, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador and Puerto Rico (which is, by its official status, not a country). More studies are upcoming. These reports confirm that it is not unwarranted to talk about a Canadian national literature written in dozens of languages. To my knowledge, however, most of these reports (including my own on Hungarian-Canadian literature) are biographical or work-centered and only briefly deal with institutional matters. The evident practical barrier that the different languages represent isolates these Canadian literatures and makes their individual institutional structure almost inaccessible to 'outsiders.' Each of the cultural groups from which these literatures stem, and for which they are written, has its own network of literary institutions: publishers, newspapers and media, and furthermore, the grapevine — that is, oral information about literary life which is one of the most important aspects of any literary institution. All of these mini-structures based on as many languages are unexplored, unmapped terrae incognitae.

The paradox of this isolation and ignorance is the more amazing as Canada's multilingual literatures seemingly have so many relations. In my recent book on Hungarian-Canadian literature, I suggested a pentagonal model to illustrate these relations, tying any Canadian literature to:

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-world literature,
-the literature of the country of origin,
-the national literature of the new country,
-the other immigrant literatures of the new country,
-and, the literature of the same language group produced in other countries.¹

The problem, however, is that language is a decisive factor in the consideration of each of these extensions. Language is, of course, a means of identification which is an extremely important symbolic action for the immigrant. As long as we only talk about the individual usage of language, this is quite obvious. Identification is, however, a prerequisite of the existence of language-based institutions as well.

In the case of Hungarian-Canadian literature, experience shows that a strong division exists in its self-definition with regard to language. Briefly, this can be summarized thus: once you write in English, you may be a Canadian writer of Hungarian origin, but not a Hungarian-Canadian. This is a common wisdom within the group, and an emotional one at that, countering logical arguments. By definition, there exists a Hungarian-Canadian literature in the English language. It has produced classics such as John Marlyn's Under the Ribs of Death² and boasts experts like the librarian-critic John Miska. This offshoot, however, has never been accepted by the Hungarian community as its own. (By the way, this rejection also characterizes the culture of origin — Marlyn's novel, unlike Anglo- or French-Canadian ones, has not been translated and published in Hungary.) This mentality is also evident in the reading preferences of the group. The only remaining Hungarian book dealer in Toronto keeps nothing more than token supplies of the few Hungarian-Canadian publications which have been written, or translated, into English, since its customers are simply not interested in them. This reliance on language is exploited by the country of origin which has, after decades of rejection, eventually found it best to claim her émigré writers as her own, but discourages hyphenation, allowing perhaps such liberty in defining Hungarian-Canadian literature as 'Hungarian literature written in Canada.'¹

A crucial aspect of the literary institution is the reading public. How sizeable is this among Hungarian Canadians? According to the 1981 census, there were 116,395 Hungarian Canadians living in Canada.³ Of these, 83,275

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¹ George Biziray, Hungarian-Canadian Literature (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1987) 6.
² John Martyn, Under the Ribs of Death (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart 1957).
identified themselves as Hungarians by mother tongue, and 34,235 still used Hungarian as their primary everyday language of communication. The current literary segment of the community numbers 65, meaning that roughly 1 out of every 527 persons who actively use the language has published poems, short stories, or novels in his mother tongue, in periodicals, anthologies, or books. (Many of these publications appeared abroad, probably indicating, if indirectly, the particular difficulties of publishing Hungarian works in Canada, whether real or imagined.) The rate of active, practised literacy is not only impressive, it is also disproportionate. We may deduce that there are hardly enough per capita readers for each writer. Yet, Hungarian-Canadian authors apparently never cease to wonder why their works are not more widely read. (I'll leave the question of quality and general interest out of this discussion).

While some of these authors may bear a grudge against the (supposedly) indifferent Hungarian-Canadian reading public, the confines of this circle provide virtually the only comfort and acknowledgment to them. The size of the local group itself is essential for the continuous literary activity of Hungarian-Canadian authors. From the years between 1951 and 1985, I was able to identify 76 writers (some of them now deceased) who resided in this country and published with some regularity in the traditional genres of belles lettres in Hungarian. Out of these 76 writers, 32 reside, or resided, in Toronto or its vicinity within a 100 km radius. Although I was unable to find sufficient personal data about 23 of the 76 writers, we may assume that some of these were also Toronto residents. At any rate, with 32 authors out of 76, Toronto takes a 42% share of the concentration of Hungarian-Canadian authors in this country. This share corresponds to the relative concentration of Hungarian Canadians in the Toronto area. According to the 1981 census there were 35,050 residents in Toronto and four other urban centres in the vicinity (Guelph, Hamilton, Kitchener and area, St. Catherines-Niagara) whose mother tongue is Hungarian. Relative to the national total of the same category (quoted above), the ratio of this group is 42%.

Even more striking are the publishing statistics. According to my data, between the early 1950's and 1985 129 volumes of Hungarian-Canadian literature were published, several of these not in Canada but in the United States or overseas. However, out of the 129 volumes 83 (or 64%) were published in Toronto or its vicinity. Counting only the volumes published in Canada, the percentage is even higher: 73%, that is, 83 out of 113.

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5 Census, table 6.
While the role of Toronto in the development of Hungarian-Canadian literature is overwhelming, this segment of Canadian literature is in all conceivable respects an urban phenomenon. Aside from a few writers living in Toronto's rural surroundings such as Ennismore and Stouffville, all other Hungarian-Canadian authors of the post-war decades reside/d in cities: six in Montreal, four in Ottawa and Winnipeg each, two in Calgary and Vancouver each, and one in Kingston, London, and Saskatoon, respectively. At the same time, not more than 60% of Canadians whose mother tongue is Hungarian currently live in the eight cities where their authors reside/d (one can but assume that the percentage was about the same in previous decades). There should surely be reasons for such strong concentration of the Hungarian-Canadian literary institution. If statistics do nothing else but verify the obvious, so will the sociological speculations below, at least to some extent.

Since Hungarian-Canadian literature is a post-World War II phenomenon, its evolution coincided with the arrival of the 'displaced persons' of the war in the early nineteen-fifties, who were soon followed by the mass immigration of the refugees of the revolution of 1956. To make the picture complete, we should note that the immigration from Hungary has been going on, although on a small scale, since the early 1960's. The whole post-war Hungarian immigration made Toronto the city of the largest Hungarian concentration in North America.

How does the size of the community contribute to the development of literature? It is a seemingly unsophisticated but by no means irrelevant assumption that statistical probability may have something to do with the manifestations of the literary talent, inasmuch as there is an increased chance of literary ambition among a larger number of population. While this assumption is just too obvious indeed, one can demonstrate that a significant concentration of one nationality results in a more complex organizational infrastructure, which in its turn is related to four interconnected phenomena:

1. In a larger community, the writer may find more encouragement and feedback from his friends, readers, or audience. For all their uniqueness and integrity, the three truly significant Toronto poets: George Faludy, Ferenc Fáy (d. 1981), and Tamás Túz, were/are symbols in the eye of the local Hungarian community.

2. More heterogeneousness of a community (which is predictably correlated with its size) means a higher statistical chance that a writer eventually finds readers or audience who share his specific values, whether he is an experimentalist, a moralist, a source of entertainment, of nostalgia, and so on.

3. In a larger group, there is a greater probability for the demand that literary consumption be institutionalized. Consequently, publishers (of journals and books) may be able to make a living. Also, book distribution
(through bookstores and libraries) contributes to the feeling in the individual writer that he is doing something socially meaningful.

4. If there is a certain number of writers who find either shared cultural interest, or a shared economic or political interest, with each other, they may establish a formal or informal writers' association. Through acknowledged self-representation, such associations may receive societal support, such as government grants for anthologies or individual publications. In the late 1970's and early 1980's a Canadian-Hungarian Authors' Association had its headquarters in Toronto. It had over thirty members from the whole country, but mostly from the Toronto area. Between 1977 and 1983 the Association published five anthologies of its members' writings.

Clearly, there is a correlation between demographic, lingual, and institutional factors generating the development of the literature of a given Canadian cultural group. Beside the size of the nurturing community, however, the density of this community is another significant factor. Early 20th century rural forms of Hungarian-Canadian writing were also produced in tightly knit, albeit small, Hungarian communities, notably at Békevár, Saskatchewan (now called Kipling). If it is true that many immigrants tend to share a feeling of loneliness and alienation in the acculturation process, then the individual will probably feel little inclination to express himself in mother-tongue writing if he is isolated from others who use the same language and whom the writer perceives, maybe erroneously, as potential readers. In short, both the size and the concentration of a cultural group are directly correlated with the development of its literature in the mother tongue.

No research has been conducted as yet about the Hungarian-Canadian literary institution. When I prepared my report, however, for the Multicultural Directorate ten years ago (which later formed the basis of my more recently published book), I approached fifteen Hungarian-Canadian authors with a questionnaire and interviewed each of them. Some of their answers are directly, if only subjectively, related to their experience with the literary institution of their group — occasionally, also with the Canadian literary institution. (Again, the use of language is instrumental in the evaluation of both attitudes.) No updating of the original interviews has taken place since. Consequently, the following references by the authors to the literary institution may not entirely reflect the present situation.  

7 Text of the questionnaire and the tabulation of the responses appeared in my book on Hungarian-Canadian literature, 79-84. In the tabulation, totals of answers occasionally do not agree with the total of respondents, as more than one answer was accepted to certain questions.
We can divide the full sphere of references to the literary institution into a more limited and a wider sphere. The former refers primarily to the situation within the respective language group (Hungarian-Canadian, as the case is); the latter, to the authors' attitude (or, if generalized, the group's attitude) toward the Canadian literary institution. The role of heritage languages in the former group is the more obvious, as language is the primary factor of group cohesion. In the latter relationship, the opposition of ancestral (Hungarian) and official (English and French) languages is the criterion that determines the value and relevance of responses.

Among the intra-group aspects, the effect of the mother-tongue institutions on the author is particularly striking. Thirteen authors read the Hungarian language press regularly, although these publications come mostly from Hungary, secondarily from countries other than the North American ones, and only in the third place are they printed in North America. Group solidarity among the authors is highly developed: fourteen kept in regular touch with other North American Hungarian writers, although only six felt that they belonged to some (informal) literary group, and only four had regular contact with (periodical) publishers. On the other hand, when the question of group solidarity became interconnected with an inquiry into the author's artistic integrity, they gave responses demonstrating a tendency toward dissociation from the group — a tendency that traditional literary criticism would label as 'artistic individualism.' Only five respondents identified their artistic aims with those of any Hungarian, Canadian, or other literary group or movement; this number almost coincides with those who associated with literary groups. To the question: "[Primarily] for whom do you write?" six authors answered that they wrote for themselves, five for "all Hungarians" in the world, four for "everyone" (notwithstanding the language barrier); only one wrote for "emigrant Hungarians," and none for Hungarian Canadians specifically. While all respondents agreed that North America's Hungarian community was ideologically heterogeneous, this (potentially conflict-laden) circumstance did not, in their admission, influence their literary activity.

Only one question was directly related to institutional values of the Hungarian-Canadian writers' community. Respondents were asked to rank three traditional functions of literature. The majority regarded the moral function of literature as the most significant, followed by communication, and enjoyment. Obviously, the wish to bequest the inherited values, and secondarily, the acquired experience, far outdid the attempt to cultivate 'pure' literature, or gain success through entertainment. One may but assume that this order of priorities reflects a traditional view of the functions of literature which may be the opposite of the priorities of the North American reading public. Control data to corroborate the conjecture are nonexistent, however.
As we have seen, the responses Hungarian-Canadian authors to the often interrelated questions show an erratic pattern, revealing a good deal of contradictions and confusion about the self-definition of both authors and their group. Cohesive trends are counterbalanced by responses indicating unwillingness to take sides. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of writers regarded criticism as an important receptive and moderative institution. This appreciation of criticism referred to a hypothetical institution, however, since all but one respondent found no established Hungarian-Canadian literary criticism existing to give them credit and feedback. Sources of criticism were given as other writers, family members, and random individual opinions of community readers, in this order. Again, no control data are known to me to determine whether a healthy and influential critical institution does (or can) exist in the literary life of any Canadian language group.

As it has been mentioned earlier, the group does not function and interact as a self-sufficient entity only, but has developed various ties with other groups — notably, the mainstream Hungarian and Canadian literary establishment. A major dilemma of these infrastructural group contacts is the hypothetically easier access to publishers in Hungary than in Canada, because of the generally shared use of the same language with the country of origin. Roughly half of the interviewees had already published in Hungarian journals and periodicals by 1979, and even those who had not, would have liked to do so, with one exception. Interestingly, the majority of the authors also tried their luck in the Canadian media. They also attempted writing in English, although very few individual bibliographies demonstrate success in publishing anything in English.

Responses to the questionnaire prove that individual Hungarian-Canadian authors have repeatedly tried to identify with the two major groups that they can logically belong to (that is, the Hungarian and Anglo-Canadian literary institution), although as a collective they were not entirely successful with the first group, and failed with the second. Beside the natural desire to communicate with a reading public, also success (implicitly assuming recognition beyond the confines of the cultural group) was somewhat important among the ambitions of most authors. Satisfaction with one's work and social prestige attained through literature appeared in equal proportion as the main indicators of success. Four authors made no secret of the fact that material aspects did, in principle, also have some weight.

Did the Canadian literary establishment appreciate the zeal of Hungarian-Canadian authors to participate? Responses to questions inquiring into publishing conditions prove very minimal appreciation. Of the fifteen writers (all but one of whom had one or more volumes in press or production at the time of the interviews) only one received a publication grant; two received subsidy from their publisher (probably Hungarian-Canadian). All but one
stated that lack of funds prevented them from publishing more of their works. Two respondents categorically and three conditionally, believed that the Canadian government should support their publishing and/or creative activity. A measurable distrust of the chance of being fairly represented by organizations appears from responses to a question about the kind of government support. The authors stated that grants should be awarded directly to individual writers or publishers with good manuscripts on hand, but not to (cultural or social) associations. In spite of their failure at participating in the institutionalized Canadian literary scene, Hungarian-Canadian writers felt, by a slight margin, that they would be able to contribute to Canadian literature, the limited diffusion of their mother tongue notwithstanding.

As we have seen, the modest success of the Hungarian-Canadian authors at establishing literature as an institution within their cultural group was by no means matched with the recognition of the Canadian literary establishment. If nothing else, the much more distinguished success of the same authors at creating a quantitatively and — even more importantly — qualitatively impressive literature, makes Canada’s cold shoulders very hard to take. The result is that linguistic in-breeding is still the only form of artistic expression available to these authors. They even enjoy some protection within the confines of such a narrow circle and may find comfort in the occasional favourable review which appears in the Hungarian-language press. If anything is printed about their works in the Hungarian-Canadian press, it is likely to be appreciative. Naturally, some of them deserve this appreciation, while others would need genuine criticism, guidance or even discouragement. At any rate, with no alternative, our authors — who are tied to their language amidst a confusing system of encouragement and rejection — will certainly stay within the strictures of the literary system of this language group.

While the average Hungarian-Canadian author — the ‘ideal type’ — may have stopped wondering about the paradoxes of Canadian literary life or would never comprehend them anyway, it is still worth mentioning at least one, super-paradox. With this, we have arrived at the other side of the issue: the place of Hungarian-Canadian literature vis-à-vis Canadian institutions.

The essence of this paradox is the conflict between enlightened pioneering governmental plans and the rigidity of existing institutions. While it is not my intention to compare the wisdom of the federal government to the idealist rationalism of Frederic the Great, Peter the Great, Joseph II of Austria, Portugal's Marqués de Pombal, or Denmark's Struensee, nevertheless, I think there is at least one similarity between the two. Like Europe's enlightened rulers and politicians, Canadian multicultural policy established ideals which were far ahead of the contemporary state of public
consciousness and provided opportunities whose implementation often has, or will be, stranded on the pettiness and/or inflexibility of Canadian cultural institutions.

Consider multilingual national literature. The Multiculturalism Directorate has, for a number of years, supported different Canadian literatures with translation and publication grants, through aid for promotion and distribution, by making it possible for writers to meet amongst themselves and with their readers. As early as 1978, it helped the Hungarian-Canadian community establish a Chair of Hungarian Studies at the University of Toronto to disseminate knowledge about Hungarian language and literature in Canada. In 1984 at a conference in Ottawa, the idea was conceived that Canadian national literature should be re-written to include the existing literatures of all cultural language groups.8

Were these generous, and often expensive, steps successful? Success can hardly be measured by the attitude of the reading public. Alas, this attitude is as unpredictable as it can be. Measuring success by its impact on two major institutions: the publishing and information media and the academy, the answer is rather negative. Two decades after launching multiculturalism and (implicitly) multilingualism, the mainstream Canadian literary establishment has not shown any convincing signs of change. It is questionable whether the universities, as so-called depositories of human resources where scholars of all languages can be found, have fared better.

Clearly, if you do not write in English or French, you are still not a Canadian author. At the present time, there are no journals, handbooks, or other sources which would provide balanced and up-to-date information about the developments of different Canadian literatures and their institutions (such as: which newspapers regularly publish literature, who are the publishers, associations and their officers, or the literary experts). One may, of course, recall that the 1983 edition of the Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature actually printed several articles on individual ‘ethnic’ writers. The criterion, however, was that these writers wrote in one of the official languages. According to the Companion, Hungarian-Canadian literature consisted of four authors: George Jonas, John Marlyn, and Robert Zend — all three wrote in English — and the widely translated George Faludy. This same Hungarian-Canadian literature, like the Polish-Canadian, was not acknowledged with an individual entry in the 1985 edition of the Canadian Encyclopedia, which did print articles on German, Italian, Jewish, and Ukrainian-Canadian literature, to name a few. Once a selective cultivation starts, it is perpetuated and eventually canonized by other

8 Proceedings of this conference were published in Canadian Literature, Supplement 1: AIPart (May 1987).
publications. Three anthologies of multicultural Canadian literature in English translation, published in the 1970's, have invariably printed pieces by Faludy, Jonas and Zend only, implying that no other Hungarian-Canadian writers deserved general public attention.  

Another institution which is concerned with literature is the academy. While at several universities individual courses deal, at least partially, with the literature of selected cultural groups in Canada, courses that discuss major literary achievements in several non-official languages exist only as exceptions.  

Among university disciplines, Canadian Literature would be the most natural to study the non-English/non-French literatures. Unfortunately, university calendars normally do not include detailed course descriptions. Therefore, it is impossible to find out without extensive inquiry how many of the currently offered courses have multicultural components. If Canadian Literature has lived up to logical expectations, fine. If not, however, as an academic discipline it has no defense against a charge that it still only represents an arch-conservative, pre-multicultural attitude towards its subject matter.  

Comparative Literature, while less frequently found in university curricula than Canadian Literature, could be a substitute for the latter in assuming the study of multilingual Canadian Literature. Comparative Literature, however, has its own identity problems. Its traditional canon, rooted in the literature of hardly more than half a dozen European countries plus the United States, is clearly unfavourable towards accepting the degree of pluralism that multilingual Canadian literatures pose. Today an opposite tendency: denial of canons and assertion of value relativism is rampant in our field. It is ethically questionable, however, whether the desire to study Canadian literatures comparatively should exploit the present anarchy. The integration of multilingual Canadian literatures into the field of Comparative Literature should happen without compromising general aesthetic norms.  

Last but not least, we should examine the disciplines which have so far made the best use of Canadian literatures in non-official languages: namely, those extensions of both history and social science that focus on the process of immigration to, and settlement in, Canada. Unlike history and sociology in general, Canadian immigration and ethnic studies have extensively explored immigrant literatures in search of pertinent references. Though appreciative of the pioneering effort of our colleagues in history and  


10 Professors Padolsky (University of Ottawa), Palmer and Rasporich (University of Calgary) have informed me that they teach such courses.
sociology who first called academic attention to Canadian multilingual literature, the study of this literature cannot be integrated into ethnic studies. There are too many methodological and value differences between literary and socio-historical studies as we know them in their present form. Let me provide three examples.

In ethnic studies, we often encounter the term ‘immigrant experience’ or ‘Canadian content.’ From the perspective of these disciplines, the two terms refer to interesting content data: events, characters, or settings. For most literary scholars, however, the same plot elements may appear as pedestrian, self-evident platitudes. That is not to say that literature does not carry social information. However, this information should be sought beyond the obvious phenomena. How and when irony as one form of alienation from the traditions and institutions of the old country appears in the development of any given Canadian literature is one such example of socially valid literary evidence. Hungarian tradition, for example, has long revered folk literature, yet in the 1970's the Hungarian-Canadians, László Kemenes Géfin and György Vițész, repeatedly mocked folksiness in their poetry, thereby distancing themselves from the tradition. How and when the awareness (possibly latent) of aesthetic quality appears as a notion in any Canadian literature, and how this phenomenon is correlated to the evolution of this literature as an institution, may be yet another example. A good knowledge of language and cultural tradition are indispensable for such analyses.

Also unacceptable from a literary point of view is the indiscriminate use of the term ‘ethnic’ in socio-historical texts to denote non-English/non-French-Canadian literatures. On previous occasions I have repeatedly taken issue with this term, suggesting to reserve it only for the earliest stage of any Canadian literature, but never use it to denote the whole body of Canadian literature written in non-official languages. In my aforementioned book, I also suggested certain criteria to determine whether any literature was still in its ethnic phase or had developed into a more complex, historically and aesthetically self-aware institution (Hungarian-Canadian Literature, 11-13). As useful as ‘ethnic’ is as a historical category, aesthetically it denotes a naive, primitive, shapeless sort of writing which is an embarrassment to all but socio-historians.

Finally, there is a tendency among socio-historians to separate the history of the immigrant cultural groups from their overseas background. My understanding is that this tendency is not a dominant one, but official

11 Cf. e.g. “How Long Is An ‘Ethnic’ Ethnic?” (unpublished paper, read at the Conference on Central and East European Ethnicity in Canada, University of Alberta 1983); AlPan, 112-3; cf. also Hungarian-Canadian Literature 13-15, with reference to Hungarian-Canadian literature only.
multiculturalism shares it. As a literary scholar, however, I cannot imagine writing about Hungarian-Canadian literature without implicitly writing about Hungarian literature and culture at the same time. Immigrant cultures cannot be torn away from their organic historical context — their past — or we will never be able to appreciate their evolution in the new country.

Clearly, the history of the literary institution in Canada should be based on research, not personal observation. It is time, however, that some institutions undertake the enormous task of sponsoring and producing such an integrated history. By all indications, Canadian literatures written in languages other than English or French are as much first-generation phenomena as is immigration. For example, after spectacular development in the 1960s and 1970s (in this latter decade, 56 individual volumes by Hungarian-Canadian writers were published, not to mention anthologies), the past ten years have resulted in considerable stagnation in Hungarian-Canadian literature. Perhaps it is doomed eventually to wither away along with that of other cultural groups. Would it not be a pity if these small worlds perished unrecognized?

University of Toronto

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

English

1. Critical surveys and bibliographies


2. Representative anthologies

Hungarian

1. Critical surveys


2. Representative anthologies


Italian-Canadian Writing: A Polysystem

Italian-Canadian writing is part of several systems which can be described in historical, social, literary and linguistic terms. Italian-Canadian writing has close ties with immigrant culture; this includes the specific experiences of Italian immigrants and the general history of world migrations. Thus this literature can be approached by way of the social sciences of literary anthropology, or the sociology of literature, or ethnic studies. In terms of the literary systems, Italian-Canadian writing can be examined as a new literature that is being evaluated by both readers and critics. In the context of Canadian literatures, Italian-Canadian writing can be explored in the light of contacts and interference with English, French and Italian literatures. In the systems of world literatures we could consider if there is an Italian literature outside of Italy.

In order to get some sense of Italian-Canadian writing in terms of polysystems theory we will briefly consider two aspects: the social-literary dimension of critical recognition, and the cultural context of the immigrant experience and oral folklore. We must also keep in mind that Italian-Canadian literature has been written and published in English, in French, in Italian and in some dialects, and thus has a linguistic complexity that would seem to lend itself to a polysystems approach.

RECEPTION

As a recognizable body of writing, Italian-Canadian literature did not exist before 1978. That year two books appeared: Pier Giorgio Di Cicco's Roman Candles: An Anthology of Poems by Seventeen Italo-Canadian Poets, and Frank Paci's novel, The Italians. The initial shock of disbelief over the publication of these books soon gave way to serendipity with the realization that a distinguishable body of work was being produced, writing that was speaking for a group of people who, up to that time, had remained silent and invisible in mainstream Canadian society. It is no small irony that in Québec Marco Micone produced the play entitled, Gens du silence (1979) to
describe these people. We soon discovered that there were writers of Italian background scattered across the country: Dino Minni was publishing in Vancouver, Alexandre Aimplimozi in Winnipeg, Caterina Edwards in Edmonton, Frank Paci in Sault Ste. Marie, Di Cicco and Mary di Michele in Toronto, Antonino Mazza in Ottawa, Filippo Salvatore and Antonio D’Alfonso in Montréal, and many others. Some of the writers were selfconsciously exploring questions of ethnic duality, retelling stories of immigrant experiences and contributing to English and French literatures in Canada and to Italian literature as well.

Several of the writers included in Di Cicco’s Roman Candles soon published books of their own. The most notable are Mary di Michele with Mimosa and Other Poems (1981) and Mary Melfi with A Bride in Three Acts (1983). Before critical recognition came self-recognition among these writers. In an interview Frank Paci explained his motivation for writing about his Italian immigrant origins:

Yes, there was a need to preserve the accomplishments of my parents, with the accent on "serve." I had the voice which they didn’t have. It’s this very sense of preserving that acts as a catharsis, because as you’re writing the story of your parents you’re also coming to terms with your background and defining yourself in a historical context.1

This novelist followed The Italians with two other novels, Black Madonna and The Father. In Québec Marco Micone followed Gens du silence with Addolorata and Dèjà l’agonie. In Toronto Maria Ardizi brought out three Italian novels: Made in Italy (1982), Il sapore agro della mia terra (1984), and La Buona America (1987). Many books of poetry appeared. Di Cicco’s last book, Virgin Science, is his fourteenth volume. Many young writers also began to publish in new literary magazines: Vice Versa, Il Caffè, Gamut International, Anthos, as well as established reviews, The Canadian Forum and Canadian Literature.

A large number of books published in a short time seemed to create an instant Italian-Canadian literature. In typical Canadian fashion we began defensively to document this growing phenomenon in a minority literature. We produced bibliographies and collections. Various anthologies appeared: Tonino Caticchio’s La poesia italiana nel Québec (1983), a bilingual Italian-French collection; Caccaia and D’Alfonso’s Quêtes: Textes d’auteurs italo-québécois (1983), and Caroline Di Giovanni’s Italian Canadian Voices: An Anthology of Poetry and Prose (1946-1983). We gradually began to convince ourselves that an Italian-Canadian literature did truly exist. The critical reviews of many of these volumes were quite positive.

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Slowly a body of criticism was building around this literature. In May, 1981, I presented my first paper on Italian-Canadian writing at a conference in Halifax. A year later I published the first article on this topic in Canadian Ethnic Studies. Other articles and reviews followed by a variety of critics. In 1984 there was a conference in Rome, Italy, on "Writing About the Italian Immigrant Experience." In Vancouver, W.H. New, editor of Canadian Literature, devoted issue number 106 (1985) to Italian-Canadian writing. In the Fall of 1985 a book appeared, Contrasts: Comparative Essays on Italian-Canadian Writing. In September, 1986, a conference on Italian-Canadian writing was held in Vancouver which lead to the founding of the Association of Italian-Canadian Writers. In March, 1988, a second conference of Italian-Canadian writers was held in Toronto. There were many smaller meetings, symposia, readings and book launchings across the country. Articles on a variety of aspects of this writing were published by academics: Sante Viselli, Francesco Loriggio, Sherry Simon, Linda Hutcheon, Enoch Padolsky, Richard Cavell, Alexandre Amprimoz and Giovanni Bonanno, and by critics: Robert Billings, Louise Longo, Jean Ethier-Blais, Jean Royer, Gilles Toupin, David Homel and Jean Blouin. Critical reviews appeared in English, French or Italian and matched the linguistic diversity of the writing itself.

This writing began to have an impact in the broader systems of the social sciences. In the late 1970s Italian-Canadian historical studies had developed at the University of Toronto as an outgrowth of the Ethnic and Immigration Studies Program. With the development in creative writing Italian-Canadian Studies could no longer be limited to immigration history and sociological studies of minority communities, but had to consider the arts as well. In many instances Italian-Canadian writers were reconstructing a forgotten past; they were trying to write an unwritten history. As members of the Italian community the writers began to tell the story of this community and to move beyond the disciplinary boundaries of academic histories. We began to see that the interference between the literature and the history is so profound that one cannot be fully understood without the other.

Italian-Canadian writing has been given some modest institutional recognition. Texts by these authors are used in some university literature courses, and students are writing masters theses on this new literature. All of these developments can only enhance the critical recognition of all the other literatures of lesser diffusion. These new literatures will take Canadian writing beyond the walls of the garrison mentality, beyond the thematics of survival and beyond the maze of English and French cultural politics.

CULTURE OF IMMIGRATION

The critical reception of Italian-Canadian writing since 1978 is only part of the story. During this ten-year period the earlier history was gradually uncovered, an unrecorded story partially lost in the great migrations to the New World. This culture of immigration is a system that includes both oral and written texts, both lost and extant materials. During this early period we have Italian texts, such as Francesco Giuseppe Bressani's Breve Relatione (1653), A.A. Nobile's An Anonymous Letter/ Una Lettera Anonima (1885), and Antonio Gallenga's Episodes of My Second Life (1884). In Toronto Francesco Guaitieri published a brief history of Italians in 1928 entitled, We Italians: A Study in Italian Immigration in Canada, which lists four collections of his poems on the back: Songs of Solitude (1920), The Swing of the Soul (1923), Harbors (1924) and The Sonnets of Triumph (1925). All of these books have disappeared. In Montréal Liborio Lattoni was writing and publishing poems in Italian, but the only examples of his work that we now have are three poems in English translation in Watson Kirkconnell's 1935 anthology, Canadian Overtones.

We are more fortunate with books from the 1940s and 1950s. Mario Duliani's La ville sans femmes is an account of his experiences in internment camps during World War II, and came out in Italian translation in 1946. Duliani also published a number of plays in French and introduced the plays of Pirandello to Québec theatre. His contribution to the history of Québec theatre and writing has yet to be examined in any detail.

In 1958 Elena Albani was the first Italian-Canadian woman to publish a novel, Canada, Mia seconda patria. Elena Albani was the nom de plume of Elena Randaccio who later brought out two more novels: The Sound of the Harp, in English (1976) and Diario di una emigrante, in Italian (1979). Other Italian language books include: Ottorino Bressan's Non dateci lenticchie (1962), Gianni Bartocci's In margine a Gauguin (1970), Giovanni Di Lillo's Il fuoco della pira (1976), Gianni Grohovaz's Per ricordar le cose che ricordo (1974). The better known book from this time is Guglielmo Vangelisti's history, Gli Italiani in Canada (1956).

Despite these and several other volumes by Dino Fruchi, Camillo Carli, Camillo Menchini and other writers, Italian-Canadian authors were not very well known. These writers, scattered around the country, worked in isolation and were often unaware of one another. Though using Italian they were writing outside any Italian literary context. They were not part of what was then regarded as Italian literature and they were not part of Canadian literature either. If they were part of a tradition it was the fragmented culture of immigration. The absence of a conscious cultural context is exemplified by the obscurity of their works, volumes such as Baldassare Savona's collection of poems, Tristezza (1961). The title means bitterness and
the poems lament the absence of any culture or literary life for Italian immigrants in Canada. After its publication in Toronto the author disappeared back to Italy.

In contrast to Savona's disappointment with Canada there is Mario Duliani who, despite his internment camp experiences during the war, defends Canada in his book, *La ville sans femmes*. Duliani's French works also received much more attention than those of the Italian language writers. *La ville sans femmes* was published by Société des éditions Pascal of Montréal in 1945, the same publisher and the same year as Gabrielle Roy's *Bonheur d'occasion*. The back cover of Duliani's book has a publisher's notice advertising the publication of Gabrielle Roy's first novel. Since Duliani was a journalist in Montréal he was probably better known in Québec at the time than Roy. Duliani's case simply contrasts the almost total obscurity of the other Italian-Canadian writers that I mentioned.

These individual writers do not see themselves as part of any literature. They are simply trying to chronicle the experience of immigration. While they are not conscious of contributing to any literature they are aware of being part of the long history of Italian migration. The small audience for these books were other immigrants, the same readers who subscribed to the Italian language papers in Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver.

Italian language papers, *La Verità, Il Cittadino Canadese, L'eco d'Italia, Il Corriere Canadese*, and others, indirectly supported Italian-Canadian writing, although most did little to directly encourage creative writing. Italian newspapers in Canada have always been concerned with political and economic issues, with social problems and with sports, but not with culture. Culture has always been seen as high culture, that found in the museums and art galleries in Italy, and not that found among immigrants of peasant origins. Until recently, therefore, the oral traditions of these immigrants have been ignored.

Italian language writing in Canada was only discovered with the development of English and French writing by Italian-Canadian authors. These younger writers, all born in the 1940s and 1950s, were educated at least in part in Canada and published in one of the official languages. They were not dependent on a small ethnic audience but were addressing the general reader in Canada. In the process of discovering themselves they also discovered the literature of the earlier Italian language writers. The forgotten books of Elena Albani were resurrected and parts of Duliani's novel were translated into English. The growth of French and English writing among Italian-Canadians also encouraged new Italian language writers: Romano Perticarini in Vancouver, Maria Ardizzi in Toronto and Elettra Bedon in Montréal. The different languages and literary systems supported one another because many writers were bilingual or trilingual.
The different strains of Italian-Canadian writing came together: the older generation, the English writers, the French writers, and the new Italian language writers. The question is often asked, what unites this writing in three languages into a literature? There are several elements which make this a recognizable body of writing, a system. All the authors share an Italian background which is reflected in the texts. Much of the writing deals with the situation of Italians in Canada. This may involve the experience of immigration and adjustment, the ethnic duality, the conflict between parents and children, or between men and women due to different cultures. Themes and motifs in many works reflect the folklore from Italian rural, peasant culture. The patterns in the works often deal with migration or reverse migration, that is, the return journey to Italy. The problems of finding an Italian culture in Canada is sometimes explored in questions over the use of languages: English, French, Italian, Italian dialects, education, self-determination and the position of women. The authors consciously reject the negative stereotypes of the Italian often projected in the American media. These are not seen as part of the common experience of Italians in Canada. Since the works try to honestly depict the lives of immigrants they tend to be in the realist tradition of narrative and drama. There is little experimentation with style, but the use of language often shows a consciousness of different linguistic codes. The radical aspect of these authors is that they are speaking for an immigrant population who never had a voice; they are in fact giving these people their own voice in three languages.

Let us look briefly at some of these elements and see how they can be examined through a polysystems approach. We can begin with the return journey. The return journey to Italy has been both a thematic preoccupation in the texts and an actual historical event in the lives of many Italian-Canadian writers. As an actual event the return trip to Italy stimulates many writers to focus on aspects of the Italian immigrant experience. Novelist Frank Paci explained this important episode in his own self-discovery as a writer:

In 1972, twenty years after my family had emigrated, I went back to Italy — my first and only trip back so far. I didn't realize it at the time, but this trip was the catalyst that finally made me see that I had to come to terms with my Italian background before I could write about anything else... The trip dramatically impressed upon me the wide gulf between the Canadian and the Italian cultures and the depth of my heritage, which I had been too naive and stupid to appreciate. The trip also made me appreciate my parents... When I started to write The Italians I had in the back of my mind to celebrate my parents and others like them, to thank them for what they had done. This opened up a wealth of deep feeling that I had never handled in the other books. (Minni 6)
We find similar testimonies from other writers: Mary di Michele, Marco Micone, Filippo Salvatore, Antonio D’Alfonso and Dôre Michelut. These people had been raised in Canada and had been educated in the English or French culture, yet as writers they found it necessary to seek out the culture of their Italian origins. The first return trip to Italy and all that it represented spiritually, psychologically, culturally and linguistically becomes almost a rite of passage for these writers. Mary di Michele tells us about the changes her first trip brought about. "Because of my very intense and detailed childhood memories my body remembered things that I did not consciously remember... My Italian identity started to come out more and more. By the end of the summer I started to dream in Italian.”

This intense experience of the reverse migration is reflected in di Michele’s collection of poems, Mimosa and Other Poems (1981) and in many other poems on the Italian connection.

The return trip caused Pier Giorgio Di Cicco not only to write about the Italian-Canadian duality but to seek out other Italian-Canadian writers. The result was Roman Candles, the first anthology of Italian-Canadian writing, that encouraged further writing and publishing. In the Preface of that 1978 volume Di Cicco tells us,

In 1974 I returned to Italy for the first time in twenty-odd years. I went, biased against a legacy that had made growing up in North America a difficult but not impossible chore (or so I thought). I went out of curiosity, and came back to Canada conscious of the fact that I’d been a man without a country for most of my life. And I became bitter at the thought that most people carry on day after day deeply aware that they do so on the land upon which they were born. It became clear to me that they had something immediately and emotionally at stake with their environment. And that phenomenon was something I had had to construct at every effort to feel relevant in an English country.

Is Pier Giorgio Di Cicco expressing a form of nostalgia here? It is a sentiment that appears in many of his poems — a longing for Italy.

This desire to re-establish the link with Italy is expressed in many, many texts by Italian-Canadian writers. It occurs so often that it can be described not just as a major theme but as an obsession. Elsewhere I have examined the structure of the return journey in Maria Ardizzi’s Italian novel, Made in Italy, in Frank Paci’s Black Madonna, in Caterina Edwards’ The Lion’s

Mouth, Dino Minni's short stories and in several other texts. Are these authors expressing a form of Italian nostalgia in these Canadian works? Nostalgia is a word with many meanings in Italian. It is a word that occurs very often.

FOLK CULTURE

When we examine the basis of this preoccupation with Italy as the first and ultimate home, we find that the sources are in Italian folk culture, especially as expressed in folk music. The themes and songs of nostalgia are from the music of the rural, peasant culture because it is from these people that the immigrants have come for the last hundred years. Italian-Canadian writing has links with this oral tradition and little or no link with the elite literary tradition of Italian cities.

The Southern Italian peasants have a long history of migration to other parts of Italy, to Northern Europe and to North and South America in order to find work and a better life. Among these people there developed a culture of the migrant worker and of the family he left behind. A whole repertoire of traditional songs and stories evolved about the feelings and the experiences of temporary migration and of permanent emigration. Often there was the element of death in the background.

In a typical song, which is often a poem put to music, the speaker promises his sweetheart, or his wife, that he will return, or he promises his mother that he will come home, or he promises Italia (more often his paese or hometown) that he will be back. In many songs the three overlap and merge; a love song to a sweetheart could be a love song to a mother, and a love song to a mother becomes a song to il paese, the hometown. In Italian the word, nostalgia has all of these associations and many more.

The popular song, "Terra Straniera," begins as a love song to a girl back home. It addresses her beauty, her hair, her eyes and her kisses. The song then addresses the old mother of the emigrant, and ends with a declaration of love for "Italia mia." The final lines of the refrain combines these three loves:

Mamma, moriro di nostalgia
L'amore del paese e della Mamma
E un gran fiamma che brucia mio cuore.

These traditional themes and structures are part of the culture and history of the Italian immigrant. Italian-Canadian writers have had to deal with this culture, now almost lost, and with the history of a people, now almost forgotten. Italy has changed; the economic miracle of the European Economic Community has made emigration from Italy no longer a dire necessity but just another alternative. Italy too has become Americanized so that North American rock and roll music has diminished the tradition of popular bell canto of Italian folk music. This culture is kept alive by many of the fifty million Italians outside Italy.

In Canada this culture of the immigrant has come out in the work of Italian-Canadian writers and has become part of Canadian literature. We can see this in an early poem by Pier Giorgio Di Cicco,

**Donna Italiana**

Lady, I cannot help myself in you. There is the
song of three thousand years, of little old men with the
eyes of saints, they walk on the hillsides in the mid-day heat,
ghosts, wishing me well. They are my grandfathers and my
great-grandfathers,

and the ancient men that kept my ribs burning at Monte Cassino, in the
air above my brother’s corpse, in the shelled house in Arezzo, in

Rimini, where I sat spread-eagled on the sand; they kept the ribs
burning through the cold Montreal nights...

... Only you persuade me that the hills were white. Only you
persuade me that the ribs burn less and only when a woman is

the country that I love.

Like the love song, "Terra Staniera," this love poem appears to be addressed
to a woman, but instead the love object is Italia. Without the rhetorical
hyperbole of the Italian song, it is a Canadian love poem to Italy. I cannot
imagine someone writing a love poem to Canada with such intimacy.

The Di Cicco poem demonstrates another aspect of this nostalgia
tradition; with the longing to return home there is always the suggestion of
death. Immigrant songs like "Terra Straniera," show that among Italian
immigrants the nostalgia for home has been expressed in a tradition of
bitter-sweet literature and music.

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6 *The Tough Romance* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart 1979) 68.
Terra straniera quanta malinconia
Io penso la notte ed alla mia casetta
Alla mia vecchietta che sempre aspetta
Mamma, moriro di nostalgia

This classic song by Narciso Parigi opens another Terra Straniera, a Canadian play by Caterina Edwards in which all the immigrant characters plan to move back to Italy. This drama is a recent contribution in the long tradition of music and literature that expresses not just a nostalgia for Italy but an obsession with returning home. This preoccupation with il paese is clearly articulated in many immigrant songs: "Torneraì," "La portì un bacione a Firenze," and "Canto del Emigrante" which also associates death with nostalgia:

Emigrante per un sogno d'amore
credevo di morir di nostalgia
tornare finalmente da te.

This association is a powerful undercurrent that determines the focus of the love song. This is the bitter edge in the many songs devoted to mamma: "Oì cara mamma," "Mamma mia vientì incontro," and others.

In the most famous "Mamma" song by Luciano Tajoli the words of the refrain are, "Sei tu la vita e per la vita non ti lascio mai piu." Love of mamma and of home are equated to life itself. Exile can be death, the absence of these from life. Death is in the mind of the immigrant; there is the fear of dying away from home, of being lost and forgotten. The happy return home can mean coming to the end of the journey, like Odysseus. It can mean the end of the immigrant’s journey, but also the end of the journey of life. Coming home can mean to embrace death on familiar ground.

The happy songs of nostalgia of the 1950s always had this bitter edge. Now this dark side has come out in the writing of Italian-Canadian authors. In Caterina Edwards’ Terra Straniera, Lucio goes home to die; in Maria Ardizzi’s Made in Italy, Vanni dies back in Italy. In Marco Micone’s play, Déjà l’agonie, the immigrant father takes his Canadian-born son back to the home village only to find it a ghost town. The death of the father and mother precede the act of reverse migration of Marie Barone in Frank Paci’s Black Madonna.

A brief review of the social history of Italian immigrants will give the context for this association between death and nostalgia. Most Italian-Canadian writers of this generation grew up in the 1950s and 1960s and heard the many Italian songs of nostalgia on radio, records, film and television. The words and themes of these songs added to the strong Italian
sentimentality about the home town, grandparents and other family. As these writers grew older and became partially assimilated into the mainstream of Canadian society they may have lost the consciousness of this experience but it remained on the subconscious level. The statements by Mary di Michele, Frank Paci, Pier Giorgio Di Cicco and others suggest that the images of Italy, the oral folk culture, are powerful interferences in their work.

The tradition of the return journey and the image of mamma have been incorporated into Canadian writing by Di Cicco, Dino Minni, Amonino Mazza, Frank Paci and others. Italian women writers have been ambivalent on this subject. Mary Melfi rejects the traditional view of women found among immigrants. Mary di Michele can choose to follow the structure of the return journey in a poem about her great-grandfather, but uses irony to undercut it. "A Streetcar Named Nostalgia" recounts how the grandfather emigrated to Canada to work, but hurried back to Italy. But forty years later, when Mary is eventually born, the family must again emigrate to Canada.7 In another poem di Michele subverts the values of life and death, and sees returning as a kind of death for a woman. "How to kill your father" deals with the return trip to Italy.

You are alone on the highway to the sun. 
Your north american education 
has taught you how to kill a father, 
but you are walking down an Italian 
way, so you will surrender 
and visit him in the hospital 
where you will be accused 
of wishing his death 
in wanting a life 
for yourself. (di Michele 36)

Di Michele’s return trip to Italy makes her realize that she must free herself from the old order both as a woman and as a writer. The metaphor of killing the father is appropriate; for a man it would be the death of the mamma. It suggests that a new order must be found, a new accommodation between the old world and the new. In trying to deal with inherited themes and structures Italian-Canadian writers have had to translate them into English-Canadian or French-Canadian codes. This may involve finding a new language or languages in order to give a voice to the once voiceless immigrant.8

This brief examination of Italian-Canadian writing has tried to demonstrate how a polysystems approach can help to structure the analysis of various systems that are in operation in this minority literature. The reception of this writing in Canada, the peculiar culture of immigration, and the inherited folklore of the old country all play a role in determining the nature of this literature, but are only some of the systems in a complex of systems. The interactions of these systems have parallels in the development of other ethnic minority writing in Canada.

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Chilean Poetry in Canada: Avant-garde, Nostalgia and Commitment

BACKGROUND

Most of Chilean poetry in Canada has its origins in the wave of refugees and immigrants that came to the country in the seventies following the military coup in Chile. One exception is Renato Trujillo, who came to Montreal from the United States in 1968, and who published *Behind The Orchestra* with Fiddlehead in Fredericton (1979). The other is Ludwig Zeller, a poet with surrealistic allegiance and a visual artist who has lived in Toronto since 1970, and who had a well-established name in Chilean and Latin American poetry before he settled in Canada. One of several books he published in Canada is *In the Country of the Antipodes* (1979).

Most of the poets of this 'new wave' who came to Canada after 1973 were already writing poetry in the middle to late sixties and early seventies as a part of what has been named afterwards as "promociónes poéticas emergentes." This group is or was represented in Canada by Gonzalo Millán and the School of Santiago to which belong Naím Nómez, Erik Martínez, and Jorge Etcheverry. To the work of these poets and that of numerous others, more has been added during the different stages of the development of Chilean literature in Canada by Claudio Durán, Manuel Aránguiz, Manuel Jofré, Luis Lama, Francisco Viñuela, Nelly Davis, Tito Alvarado, Alberto Kurapel, Jorge Cancino, Elfas Letelier and Alfredo Lavergne. This poetry has passed through several stages. For these poets, poetry implies reading and performance, as forms of expression and ways of developing. Since it has had a relatively important role in Chilean culture, starting around 1977-78 a series of events and collective readings were held in the Chilean community, heavily marked then by the proximity of the

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1 A term coined by the Chilean poet Waldo Rojas and used by Gonzalo Millán for the poets writing between the mid-sixties and now.
Coup, solidarity work, and the sense of isolation in the Canadian environment. The events staged within the framework of solidarity were well attended and sometimes emotionally received. The main part of the spectacle was usually poetry and it dealt with themes according to the setting, but there was also space for more complex texts that were surprisingly well received in spite of their complexity. One of the first events of this nature was the "First Congress on Literature and Political Reality," held in Montréal at a facility of the CSN in 1978. A symposium held in Toronto in 1985, "Encuentro de Escritores Chilenos," which featured poets, writers, and academics living in Canada and other countries including Chile, marked the end of this stage, although this kind of activity, i.e., readings related to solidarity with the Chilean or Latin American peoples, has continued at the local level. The plebiscite in Chile may have an impact on the committed aspect of the Chilean literature in Canada, including the poetry, since at least, theoretically, the hardest forms of the Chilean exile are over.

A second stage with respect to readings and performances of poetry, either 'pure' or mixed with other cultural forms such as cinema, folklore, occasionally prose and papers, was the inclusion of Chilean poets in events with an institutional link. A third stage is marked by individual participation in readings in the space open for poets in general. In this context, the poet is still seen as a Chilean poet and the expectations of the public are still focused more or less on the 'committed' themes, or the 'exotic' (minority, ethnic) ones, but the poet, nevertheless, participates also as a member of the literary ambiance of the city or region.

In a parallel way there has been an evolution in diffusion through the printed media (we deal here with the Chilean one). Apart from the operation of the publishing house of Ludwig Zeller, Oasis, and the one-issue enterprises like Manuel Jofrés' Aguila Fresca and short term initiatives like Les Éditions de la Maison Culturelle Québec-Amérique Latine that published two books of poetry, one of them important in Chilean poetry as a whole (La Ciudad by Gonzalo Millán), there is a publishing house, Ediciones Cordillera, which has had a more permanent role to play. In a parallel way with other publishing houses of the Chilean diaspora, Cordillera was born out of the dual need to develop and preserve Chilean culture in a new environment and to promote solidarity within a cultural framework. These needs were responded to between 1981 and 1985 with the

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2 This would be like Harbour Front, Le Salon du Livre de L'Outaouais, and the North-South encounter in Toronto.

3 Examples are L.A.R. first in Spain, now back in Chile; El Maitén, operating in the U.S.; and Libros del Meridion in Spain.
publication of four bilingual books, among other publications. This accomplished the purpose of bringing Chilean-Canadian poets to the attention of a Canadian readership. At the same time, this aided the maintenance of Chilean culture in Canada. These books have been the source of material for anthologies published in Chile and abroad. As Chilean poets in Canada and elsewhere started to publish again in Chile, Cordillera began the publication in Chile of a general magazine of poetry and poetic theory and criticism: *El Espíritu del Valle*.

**TRAITS AND TENDENCIES**

In spite of the fact that there have not been many studies of Chilean poetry in Canada because few literary critics or intellectuals came here from Chile, some work has been done, mainly by the writers, some of whom have an academic background.\(^4\) In the Chilean environment as a whole, the poets have been regrouped either as members of the generation of the sixties (Santiago del Campo), the new generation or the young Chilean poetry (Soledad Bianchi), or the emergent promotion (Gonzalo Millán). Literary criticism has been limited to Chilean critics, to Gonzalo Millán, and to the School of Santiago (Etcheverry, Núñez, Martínez).

In general, three tendencies can be distinguished in the abundant production of texts by Chilean poets in Canada. These traits are seldom present in a pure state. A given text is usually a composite of common (usual, expected) poetic features. In general terms, there is a ‘committed text,’ the form of which tends to be one of traditional verse, usually devoid of ambiguities and imprecision, since the most important element of this poetry is the delivery of a message. The theme of these poems is generally the state of things in Chile, and it tends to focus on former times and spaces. Its axiological framework will be *manicheist* (a term used by the official Chilean critics in Chile to describe this kind of production that flourished widely because of the Coup, having nevertheless a permanent representation in contemporary Chilean poetry as a whole since the *Canoa General*). Here, the poet is a vehicle of the people in their yearning for justice and freedom:

\(^4\) The work of Naín Núñez should be mentioned, i.e., his introduction to his anthology *Chilean Literature in Canada* (Ottawa: Cordillera 1982); *Identidad y Esilio: Escritores Chilenos en Canada* (Santiago de Chile: Ceneca 1986); my own note on “Chilean Poetry in Canada,” *ViceVersa* (Dec/Jan 1985); the interviews by Gonzalo Millán of Jorge Etcheverry and Naín Núñez, “La Escuela de Santiago: Jorge Etcheverry-Naín Núñez,” *Contemporary Poetry IV.4* (1982), updated and in Spanish in *El Espíritu del Valle* II-III (Santiago: 1988).
Platform of the verse

The workers
awaken the poet
they topple him from his branch
with a soft whistle
or with a bullet of blood
shot through the core of his soul
Then the poet
bird on a stage of sun
now without a branch
and falling
opens his eyes like two thunderbolts
and flies.
Bear the full weight of creation,
the poet
over the earth,
flies.

Humanism is also present in this kind of text: the axiological 'good' of the poetic speaker encompasses the whole of humanity, a trait present in all committed poetry. There is a tendency to have a 'lyric voice,' but also to address men as a universal, or more or less generic entity, either as a positive or a negative subject:

Man

A man writes
and the sun smiles
A man thinks
and the hangman trembles
A man looks straight
and hate draws back
A man sings
and the path is made singing
A man speaks
and the future is with all

The axiological scheme is valid beyond the original space, spreading (or existing) everywhere:

The Multinational

In this place
insecurity is earthly
without monastic complications

In this place
the chaos is general
even if some are in control

In this place
depression is routine
huddled up in the temples

In this place
crisis has its graphic
in our pockets and consciousness

In this place
the capitalist doesn't improvise
neither does he call a truce?

This kind of poetry has been mainly produced as an appeal to two kinds of public: one, the committed Chilean exile or refugee, interested and aware of the political circumstances in Chile and abroad, and with a more or less socialist ideology, and two, members of the Canadian public who are sensitive to this problem. Given the expectations of the Canadian public, this kind of poetry could easily be identified (as the testimony in narration, quite abundant in Chilean post-Coup literature) with Chilean literature.

The poetry of nostalgia is the one which focuses on reminiscences about former space and time, and which states the present ones as degraded with respect to the former ones in a typical manifestation of ‘illo tempore.’ This is also a poetry of comparison. The degree of acceptance of the new world and its accommodation with the former one vary as does the combination of its basic subjects with elements of the committed text and the avant-garde characteristics at the level of expression. This text is thus more lyrical, the ‘personal’ feelings and anecdotes predominating since it is basically a matter of the position of the ‘self,’ explicitly and intentionally:

7 Alfredo Laverage, Cada Fruto (Montréal: Éditions d’Orphée 1985) 15; poem translated by J. Etcheverry.
Introduction

How much, my ex and post-city
almost mine now in this part of yourself
when the guttural silence plunges
in your very entrails
I go for your silence, then
I miss the voices, the faces are dark
In the day the rain falls by the corridor
of my memory, and a heavy dread.
City, tell me that
you still have ground for me
that my cells are still lying
in my forefathers’ grounds.
Santiago,
I carry your monuments on my skin
nevertheless, the old corners are gone
from me like birds in winter.
The yellow flowers of the hills are there
but, I don’t see them as an enclosure.
Where are you hiding, Santiago?
Where are you really
in which boulevards,
or streets or mountains
are you hiding from me?
Santiago
when the fog rolls
over the snow and then my eyes remember
What does not exist

In this kind of poetry there is an implicit or explicit confrontation of spaces, the space of the ‘here’ and ‘there.’ It can be assumed that it is the second stage of the development of this poetry in which the poet focuses on the theme of the ‘there’ as the place were the main conflicts and events were played, and that acquires the dimensions of the ‘committed’ because of the (socio-political) circumstances. Nevertheless, as previously pointed out, there is not necessarily a progression (from one stage to another), but rather a focus on a definite trend. In the poem quoted above, the images of the new environment appear. The same is true of poems by Gonzalo Millán:

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8 Claudio Durán, Santiago (Santiago: Tamarces 1986) 3.
Wheel of Summer

I've been here for years, he says
almost resigned
like a wheel (of summer)
turning on the spot,
skating on the ice.

But the term of comparison, as it was mentioned, can be implicit, as in "Portable Typewriter":

So, on a typewriter
carved out of a cake
of toilet soap
he writes with
recalcitrant fingers:
"There are beautiful butterflies
in Costa Rica
and in Canada, snow,
immense forests and lakes." (Chilean Literature in Canada, 69)

The 'ground' from which the poetic speaker utters his statements is his being from somewhere else, even if there is no indication at the level of language or explicit meaning. What remains is the 'marginal' and always productive, view of reality, or the confrontation of it and the situation of being in the middle of two different spaces, no longer being among the meanings and values of the former, original space, but not living allegiance to the new one.

The result may be the folding of the 'I' upon itself, where the finite character of the individual and the menace of alienation appear, as in this poem by Manuel Aránguiz:

Poem 4

He who writes
is not up to date in anything
He has tired of searching for his face
in the newspapers.
At times
He recognizes himself in the hand
that approaches

and he closes his eyes. (Chilean Literature in Canada, 7)

The guidelines of form and content of this kind of poetry originated in Chilean poetry written around the sixties and called ‘the Poetry of the Lares’ (Roman household deity, also home). Another way of dealing with the situation of origin of the texts — namely being in a middle land that can turn into a no-man’s land — is by the incorporation, or the attempt to do it, of the different discursive segments that refer or iconize or represent or go with different aspects of the subjective/objective reality. The group of texts and authors that represent what I call the ‘avant-garde’ have chosen that way. To state this does not imply a conscious or coherent choice, since it appears that only the School of Santiago and Gonzalo Millán have stated a certain methodological conception of their writing. There is a programmatic side to the first book of Gonzalo Millán published in Canada that makes it partially a meta-poetic text. In 1979 Millán wrote and published a book-poem in Spanish called La Ciudad (The City), in which this tendency of the Chilean avant-garde towards the meta-poetic or meta-fictional, is present. The poem relates the story of the dissolution and destruction of the city of Santiago in the days of the Coup and its final mythological reversal. But at the same time, this book represents research in language that parodically uses the structure of the language textbooks used in Canadian or American universities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Were the streets damp?</td>
<td>No, they were dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was cold?</td>
<td>No, it was hot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was it winter?</td>
<td>No, it was summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What time was it?</td>
<td>It was late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the house dark?</td>
<td>No. It was lighted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was the color of the car?</td>
<td>Grey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many cars were there?</td>
<td>Two. 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another element of the writing of the avant-garde, programmatic or not, can be summarized as the indetermination of genres, mainly of prose and poetry, while some texts contain elements of theatre as well. That is the case in Teatro en Pie de Guerra by Alberto Kurapel, that combines graphic elements, i.e., a return ticket to Managua on Delta Airlines. The book originated in a trip to Nicaragua and the graphic description effectively functions as a prologue. There are dialogues and quotations from news items and song lyrics, and from Joyce, Kandinsky, Tomás Borge, Sartre, Cardenal: the usual poetic language, all of this creating a universe out of fragments

---

linked by a sort of thematic thread, at times implicit or given by the context, at times conducted by the lyric voice(s).

The fragmentation, the inclusion of different discursive segments, together with the multiplicity of voices, the linguistic incrustations of other languages and the meta-poetic elements, are also present in the writing of the School of Santiago, written by Naín Nómez, Erik Martínez and myself. This group structured a program before institutional sanction at least in Chile. This type of poetry sometimes appears in Chile, written by the new poets, as Naín Nómez describes:

The kind of poetry we used to do was all of a sudden too hermetic, with lots of surrealistic influence, with few anecdotal elements and scarce satirical ones. What it was there in that sense was a coming back to the avant-garde, but evolved. We feed a continuity with a tendency that never disappeared, but submerged itself... to come back under new shapes with others, Gonzalo Rojas, Raúl Zurita and many others we could name, Etcheverry, Barrientos, Tomás Harris etc.\textsuperscript{11}

He states the difference from the most recent Chilean avant-garde in the following terms:

... one of the basic differences in our group consists in our being aware of were we came from, of the tradition to which we belong. On the other hand, the younger poets prefer to believe that they depart from zero and they deny their affiliation with a poetic tradition... Despite our use of different languages and forms, that confound the frontiers of prose and poetry, lyrics and epic, we appear as more traditional... The younger poets are more interested in experimentation. (Millán 59. Translation mine.)

This kind of analysis sometimes confounds the critic. I describe my own writing in the following way, and it seems that it can be applied to the two other writers as well, even if Martínez shows a tendency to a more traditional poetic form:

I recall, for instance, a poem entitled "A Caucus of Quail." First, there is a conversation between friends, then a girl appears, this is followed by an imprecation against poets who write poems with well defined themes, a mention of the proletariat of the Third World, a dinner at my home, the distinction between Ethnic groups and allusions to the luxury of the developed countries, a voice which praises poverty as an authentic way of life, an allusion to the customs of immigrants, a mention of Chileans and what is happening to them in their countries of exile, of multitudes who attack Parliament Buildings and that all these things concern us, but we are walking in a

street, and finally there is an attempt to lay the foundations for this type of poetry together with an allusion to the need of hiding the self of the speaker.12

The poetry of Erik Martínez in Tequila Sunrise plays with the traditional shape of the poem and the 'detachment' or collusion with its content, creating an iconic object that refers to a reality in which the permanent features are isolation and alienation, even the physical possibility of encounter being denied for an amplification ad absurdum of the anecdote:

_A Man's Apparent Calm Before Going to a Party_

I go along looking in mirrors as I walk towards the subway behind a fat lady dressed in an overcoat and hat
half lizard (below), half bird (above).
My body is like a sealed box
a strongbox I must drag along
balancing on crutches,
I feel I need to take a downer immediately.
I would like to know what motivates people,
but I am trapped in that transparency
that hides behind the mirror of my gaze:
I spy on myself, watch myself,
I see myself walking but I hear nothing
Around me the characters are not coherent.
During the party I ask a woman to dance.
She scratches my face.
Take your hands off me, you ass! she screams.13

The poetry of Luis Lama includes prosaic narrative elements in paragraphs of poetic prose in which the mythical, pop culture and contemporary concerns of industrial society are often present. His work, as in the case of some of the Chilean poets in Canada that belong in general to the avant-garde, goes beyond the accepted format and thematics of lyric poetry:

_The Galaxy Man_

The Galaxy Man walked among us and found his light. Of the night, the morning made an eve of marvels for everyone and none among them wanted to oppose to

that destiny his own. The suns hounded her, burning her back; that green and coffee spring, and there were whole wind mists that surrendered to her swaying and the moons greeted her all and a sun shut itself to coal and stone, to milk and to sea, and in the wind they married with her burnt skin.
I didn’t say no in that twilight, marked by rifle bullets. No, I didn’t say yes, in that twilight marked by rings of silence and surrenders. I asked if the Galaxy Man had arrived, they told me yes. Beings without hands or heads brought him to my presence to ask him what we could do with the world at this time and he said, "leave it abandoned to its space." In this canyon more messages did not appear. A child, cut jugular wide open and bloodless, came closer, struck dumb to talk to him and sparks and fire penetrated the universe of gold and stone and wallowed in burning lava, a moan diluted the silence. "The children of the suicides are born dead." I didn’t want to look further or listen. It was too much for my young heart.¹⁴

Since some of this text production does not meet the expectations and conventions of the Canadian cultural environment, which mainly lacks an avant-garde, the outlet for this tendency will continue to be mainly through publication by the authors or groups interested, generally outside the commercial circuit. This has been the case of Ediciones Cordillera (to a certain point, since its publications are usually reviewed in the USA, Chile and in general the Hispanic world), Split/Quotation, Oasis Publications, Aguila Fresca and Poésie Postale. Nevertheless this production eventually finds a place in magazines like Anthos, Carleton Literary Review, and Vice/Versa, for example. It also finds a place, for the moment limited to Gonzalo Millán and the School of Santiago, in the poetry of Chile, although mostly the more avant-garde writings.

There is another factor that may reinforce this connection between Chilean poets in Canada and the ones in Chile: One of the most important Chilean magazines of poetry is a joint enterprise between poets living in Chile and in Canada and published in Chile by Ediciones Cordillera.

In conclusion, in view of the fact that Chilean exile/immigration was fortuitous and will not increase, linked as it is with the political situation in Chile that has changed after the plebiscite, that the Chilean community is small and cannot constitute an ethnoculturally and linguistically differentiated market, and that by the second generation there will not be

Chilean-Canadian text production in Spanish, I think Chilean literature in Canada will not consolidate its characteristics long enough to be considered an ethno-cultural literature of Canada.

Ottawa

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Critical literature
CONCLUDING PANEL

Joseph Pivato:

The studies gathered here are only a selection from the research being done in ethnic minority writing in Canada. Even as we discuss the essays presented here, new works are being written and published by minority writers. We could not possibly deal with all of them here, just as we could not deal with every minority group in Canada in this space. I list some of the new titles at the end of this paper just to give some idea of the original work and the studies that are now available.

This conference and the subsequent proceedings demonstrate several things:

1) The value and validity of ethnic minority writing as an area of study in itself, aside from its contribution to Canadian Literature and Canadian Studies.

2) Ethnic minority writing is a growing body of literature that will be with us for a long time, rather than a passing phase in the rapid development of Canadian culture, or a temporary phenomenon due to Canadian immigration policies and institutional multiculturalism.

3) The role of ethnic minority writing as a bridge between Canada's North American culture and the diverse cultures and traditions of other countries.

4) The potential this body of writing has for opening up the study of literature, both mainstream and minority writing, to a wide variety of approaches and methodologies — the polystem.

5) The need to do a great deal more work in this area in order to better understand the history and institution of literature in Canada, the diversity of Canadian culture, the nature of literature and to better understand ourselves.

We also see how little has been done in the study of minority writing in Canada. Many of the contributors to this conference have produced studies and bibliographies on different minority groups: Lorris Elliot documented Black writers, Jars Balan did Ukrainian writers, George Bisztray Hungarian writers, M.G. Vassanji did South Asian writers, etc. Several researchers not included here have documented other groups: Agnes Grant has studied Native literature, Thomas King and Helen Hoy have looked at the Native in literature both as author and subject, Michael Greenstein has devoted his work to Jewish-Canadian literature, and Andrew Machalski surveyed Hispanic writers. Nevertheless, we all realize that many ethnic minority
writers have yet to be studied and that many minority groups have yet to participate in the institution of Canadian literature. We hope to change this situation in the near future.

One bright light in this general state of benign neglect is the Institut Québécois de recherche sur la culture with Denise Helly, Anne Vassal and their colleagues, which is studying the writing and culture of ethnic minority groups in Québec. Pierre Nepveu and Simon Harel have recently produced detailed studies of this literature and its relation to Québécois writing. Scholars in English Canada have a big challenge to meet.

One of the immediate effects of the growing awareness of ethnic minority writing is the re-evaluation of Canada’s mainstream English and French writing. In the 1970s Canadian critics and anthologists were moving quickly to establish a canon of texts for Canadian Literature. Now, however, any attempt to compile a list of the basic texts must be called into question. In trying to understand Canadian writing we must now question all our assumptions very carefully. There are many diverse voices that must be heard in the writing that comes from Canada. This change in critical perspective is indicated in several phenomena: the rediscovery of Joy Kogawa’s _Obasan_ (1981) as an ethnic text; the search for a native text by a native author; the sensitivity to visible minorities. Among native writers we now have Beatrice Cullleton with _April Raintree_ (1984) and Tomson Highway with _The Rez Sisters_ (1988). Among Black writers we now have Neil Bissondath in English and Dany Laferrière in French. _The Tears of Chinese Immigrants_ (1990) by Yuen Chung Yip has just been translated into English. The list of names and titles goes on and on. It is now clear that our reading, study, understanding, teaching and writing about literature in Canada must include this ethnic diversity.

**RECENT PUBLICATIONS IN ETHNIC MINORITY WRITING**

**ANTHOLOGIES**


BIBLIOGRAPHIES


LITERARY STUDIES


Francesco Loriggio:

Growth, development, innovations, tell us all the same thing, in different degrees and according to different registers. And that is, that evolution can be broken down into phenomena of disorganization and organization; that the disorganizing elements can, under certain conditions, be the very elements that produce growth, development, evolution; that the reorganizing capacities may themselves move in the direction of complexity. (For reference see my article, Morin 435)

It is this creative role of disorder — of what cannot be disposed of on the basis of the rules of the dominant tendencies — that Even-Zohar fails to grasp. Why it should be difficult, historically, for anyone living in Israel, in a country of precarious nationhood, to transcend polysystem pluralism, I do not want to speculate on here. Let me simply, for the moment, note that there is within Russian Formalist poetics sufficient conceptual material that would permit us to give more credit than is usually given to the perturbatory components. In the works of Tynianov and of Sklovskij, change takes place through the intervention and/or reevaluation of junior series, of series previously lying at the periphery of the overall system and often corresponding to the more demotic and democratic levels of taste. But if this is so, then distinctions such as the one advocated by Even-Zohar, which separate primary and secondary systems, become very shaky. Tynianov observes that archaistic forms can be as effective catalysts of change as the fully novatory postures. While for Even-Zohar, the former would be epigonic and thus to be relegated to secondary systems, for Tynianov they would be primary, since they are constructive, they do produce or induce shifts in the existing order (See for this J. Tynianov, Archaisty i novatory (Leningrad, 1929). I have consulted the Italian translation, Avanguardia e tradizione, traduzione di Sergio Leone, (Bari: Dedalo, 1968), especially 23-60). Needless to say, such ambivalences would be even more clearly detectable here in Canada. The negative reaction of universalist, “progressive” sociologists and historians from the two founding groups to the idea of multiculturalism (which has been generally explained in terms of party politics, as a tactical expedient of Trudeau-style liberalism, and not for its value as a concept)
goes hand in hand with the search for the unifying features of Canadian literature in literary criticism, undertaken in Canada primarily by Frye's archetypalism and thematicism. Both social scientists and literary critics are animated by the same obsession: nation-building. Both have turned nation and nationhood into moral imperatives whose validity is self-evident, requires no analysis. The discussion on ethnicity seems, instead, to suggest that it is only by debating these criteria, by accepting their historicity, their partial, more limited role in a theory of society that the relevance, even the moral relevance of the concepts of nation and nationhood will become fully apparent. Within the specific area of criticism, the seventies and the eighties prove that no adequate history of Canadian literature can be written without first addressing these issues: the anthologies and collections of essays on "Canadian Literature in English" or "Québécois Literature" or "Italian-Canadian Literature" or "Ukrarian Literature" etc. are necessary to obtain a sense of local developments but the overall picture is much more complex, must be etched out with theoretical tools which we do not yet possess. The first and most urgent step towards the proper theoretical attitude consists in realizing that to pose these questions does not make one less 'patriotic' than one's neighbour, that one is simply trying to understand what it means to live (and to live in Canada in particular) or to think about literature (and Canadian literature in particular) at the end of the twentieth century.

Enoch Padolsky:

In thinking over the many interesting papers we have heard over the last three days, I would like to draw attention to three general issues that seemed to me to have been raised in a number of the presentations.

1) Many of the papers dealing with individual minority literatures led to a discussion of the diversity and similarity of situations to be found in all the different minority literatures being produced in Canada today. Several speakers noted the importance of cross-cultural comparisons and what they had to offer in the study both of a single group of writers or of minority writing in Canada generally. This seems to me to be an important point to stress, central in fact to the very focus of this whole conference, for only in looking across the various literatures can the larger Canadian pattern be understood. A great deal of detailed work remains to be undertaken in this area.

2) The second issue pertains to the relationship between literature and society in the field of ethnic minority writing. This is of course central to the theoretical framework for the conference and was addressed in a thought-provoking way by Jose Lambert both in his keynote address and his
concluding remarks. I find myself in agreement on a great many of his points regarding theory and terminology and the need for an open system which will allow us to take into account as many different factors as possible in the consideration of this body of literature. What I would add, however, is a reminder that our approaches to theory and terminology, however careful we may be, tend to be culture-related if not culture-bound. There is thus some danger of ethnocentrism when moving from a theoretical position, developed mainly in the context of European-based literatures, to one which applies to a North American, and in particular, a Canadian context. For Canadians, as for others, language is not just a neutral terrain but a champ de bataille on which fierce battles are fought. Terminology, in the Canadian context, is always political, performative, socially defining. The academic association which was formed to further the comparative study of English-Canadian and French-Canadian literature (and by all these terms I am already implying a political position) argued long and hard on the title for the organization (in both languages). The final outcome — The Association for Canadian and Québec Literatures/Association des littératures canadiennes et québécoise — can be seen, even with reference to singular or plural usage, to carry precisely this highly performative dimension.

The same is obviously true in the whole discussion of what terminology to use for the literature(s) we have been discussing at this conference. "Literatures of lesser diffusion" (conference title), "ethnic literature" (Lorigio and others), or "ethnic minority literature" (my own preference), this diversity of terminology is thus not a dispute about which terminology is descriptively and neutrally most fitting, though this is perhaps part of the question. Rather it is at the same time a debate about Canadian society and the place that minority writing, and minority groups generally, to use my terminology here, have within it. Many of the speakers at this conference have reacted, even emotionally at times, to this level of language and have, in their titles and in other ways, implied positions with social, political, or other instrumental dimensions. Examples of titles that display this element include: "The Literature of German-speaking Canadians" (Riedel), "Finnish Canadianism in English Canadian Literature" (Mattson), and "Ethnic or National (?): Polish Literature in Canada (Možejko).

3) The centrality of the instrumental and the performative thus brings us back to the basic network of issues regarding minority/majority relations within Canada and their implications for Canadian minority literature. Using Tamara Palmer’s analytic framework (success/failure) as a paradigm, we might rephrase this issue by asking whether minority writing will be able to break out of its present binary opposition (ethnic vs mainstream) and change the nature of the Canadian literary institution without losing entirely its own identity, its own concerns, its particular modalities, and its international
connections, where these apply. As I argued in my own paper, this is fundamentally a question of Canadian acculturation dynamics, and involves both the acculturation options of Canadian minority writers and readers, and the range of responses from Canadian majority society. And a number of papers, I might add, have exemplified the way in which these issues arise in specific literatures or in general. Thus Nancy Mattson’s presentation, to give one example, dealt both with majority depiction of Finns in Canadian literature and with the emergence of Finnish-Canadian voice in contradistinction to exile Finnish writing in Canada. And both George Bisztray and Francesco Loriglio, in the course of their papers questioned the current Canadian institutional rigidity in the way Canadian minority writing is taught, funded, critically treated, and so on. The conclusion we need to draw in this regard, then, is that not only is there a great deal of work to be done of a cross-cultural and trans-cultural nature within the field of Canadian minority writing, but also that we will have to bring into the discussion the whole range of issues regarding majority and minority relations in Canadian society and their impact on Canadian ethnic minority literature.

Milan V. Dimić:

Papers presented at the conference and discussions which have taken place during the sessions, in smaller groups, and at this Round Table, displayed a considerable variety of methodological approaches. For all that, there has been a remarkable unity of purpose and genuine desire to contribute to a sober examination of the ethnic minority writing and its institutional underpinnings. This examination has been enhanced by the evident empathy for the position of minorities, but without acrimony towards the more privileged groups. There has been also a constant and good-humored use of English and French, a practice which cannot be taken for granted especially when dealing with this topic.

Concerns have been expressed about connotations and imprecisions of our terms (‘lesser diffusion,’ ‘ethnic,’ ‘ethnic minority,’ ‘national minority’) and certain aspects of the Polysystem Theory. Although I am personally convinced that these concerns about the theory are largely the result of misunderstandings and of the conflation of the scientific and common meanings of crucial terms,¹ the research team is aware of the need to

¹ Since this debate had taken place, I. Even-Zohar has offered replies to most objections raised about the Polysystem Theory during this conference and, of course, in many other contexts. Cf. particularly I. Even-Zohar, “Introduction,” Polysystem Studies Special Issue Poesis Today 11.1 (Spring 1990) 1-7 and “System, Dynamics, and Interference in
consider this and any alternative model as tentative and heuristic. For the
time being, we are satisfied to preserve a general direction for our research;
later on, final decisions and a consensus about the exact methodology of the
project will become mandatory. The example of the work pursued by our
colleagues at Laval University in Québec clearly demonstrates that this is an
attainable goal.

This conference has confirmed that in ethnic writing, inspiration is
frequently not exclusively literary, but historical, social, and cultural: to bear
witness and express a unique experience. Therefore, we are well aware of the
fact that a purely aesthetic evaluation or a simple placement on the grid of
the polysystem are one-sided and that they impoverish the texts under
scrutiny. Moreover, the use of both the heritage languages and those of the
two major groups so as to express fairly similar insights has also shown that
while of decisive importance, the choice and practice of a language is not the
only index of a culture and of its values. In general, to hear these ethnic
voices means to allow them to express their subjectivity, without reducing
them to the position of a simple object of discourse. Without abandoning
the hope of a coherent scholarly discourse, we hope therefore that ours will
be the result of continuing dialogues. They are meant to create an
intersubjective space broad and varied enough to encompass without
violation the different voices in their commonality and particularity.

I should like to thank all those persons and institutions which have made
this conference possible. We are greatly indebted to Joseph Pivato for his
scholarly contribution to its preparation. Last but not least, I must thank all
participants for their uncommon friendly enthusiasm, patience with our
plans and limitations, and for their willingness to give us the benefit of the
doubt and to continue to support the project of a history of the literary
institution in Canada. This help is indispensable!

Culture: A Synoptic View," ibid. 85-94.
HOLIC * HILAC
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4) Joseph Pirato in collaboration with Steven Totósy de Zepetnek and Milan V. Dimić, eds. Literatures of Lesser Diffusion / Les littératures de moindre diffusion, 1990. 319 pp. Individual $15.00; Institution $25.00

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