Women’s Writing and the Literary Institution / L’écriture au féminin et l’institution littéraire

Edited by / Édité par

C. POTVIN and J. WILLIAMSON
in collaboration with
S. TÔTÔSY de ZEPETNEK

Research Institute for Comparative Literature

University of Alberta
1992
HOLIC * HILAC

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À LA MÉMOIRE DE ANN MUNTON ET TOUS LES EXILS
QUE LA LANGUE REDOUBLE
The editors of this volume wish to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the University of Alberta Conference Fund, the Office of University of Alberta Vice-President Dr. Peter Meekison, the University of Alberta Departments of Comparative Literature and Film Studies, English, and Romance Languages for their support of the Conference and the publication of the Proceedings.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLAUDINE POTVIN</td>
<td>Préface: Le champ &quot;restreint,&quot; malgré elle</td>
<td>i-iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JANICE WILLIAMSON</td>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>v-viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAMELA BANTING</td>
<td>Body Inc.: Daphne Marlatt's Translation Poetics</td>
<td>1-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAROLINE BAYARD</td>
<td>Le postmodernisme au Québec: pression franco-américaine ou ressourcement de l'imaginaire?</td>
<td>21-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOUKY BERSIANIK</td>
<td>Le portique des noms propres (Deuxième partie)</td>
<td>43-48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLAUDINE BERTRAND</td>
<td>Mémoire et écriture de femmes: pratique de l'atelier littéraire</td>
<td>49-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAULINE BUTLING</td>
<td>&quot;Hall of Fame Blocks Women&quot; — Re/Righting Literary History: Women and B.C. Little Magazines</td>
<td>53-68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOUISE DUPRÉ</td>
<td>La critique au féminin: réalité et utopie</td>
<td>69-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAROLE GERSON</td>
<td>The Business of a Woman's Life: Money and Motive in the Careers of Early Canadian Women Writers</td>
<td>77-94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARBARA GODARD</td>
<td>&quot;Petticoat Anarchist?:&quot; Joanna Wood, the Sex of Fiction, the Fictive Sex</td>
<td>95-125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents / Table des matières

LALAGE GRAUER
Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear: The Life and Adventures of Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney 127-138

MARY LU MACDONALD
The Montreal Museum, 1832-1834: the Presence and Absence of Literary Women 139-150

CLAUDINE POTVIN
Jovette Marchessault, autodidacte: en marge de l'institution littéraire ou les limites de la marge 151-159

LUCIE ROBERT
Alphonse Moisan ou Emma Bovary? Le choix dououreux d'Émilie Bordeleau 161-171

BECKI ROSS

FERNAND ROY
Laure Conan et l'institution littéraire: d'Angéline de Montbrun à La Sève immortelle: rupture malheureuse ou étonnante continuité? 189-198

CHRISTL VERDUYN
Une voix féminine précoce au théâtre québécois: Cocktail (1935) d'Yvette Ollivier Mercier-Gouin 199-209

ANN MUNTON
The Double Exile: Daphne Marlatt's Writing 211-217

JANICE WILLIAMSON
"I Peel Myself Out of My Own Skin": Reading Don't: A Woman's Word 219-235
Préface: Le champ "restreint," malgré elle

Les essais réunis ici témoignent d'une réflexion d'ordre féministe sur le littéraire et interrogent en ce sens l'écriture au féminin et l'écritrice dans son rapport à l'institution. Dans cette perspective, il semble bien que toute considération sur l'écriture des femmes soulève nécessairement le débat des instances de production et de légitimation d'une part et des modes de réception de l'autre. En effet, faut-il encore se demander si les textes écrits par des femmes sont publiés, lus, répertoriés, commentés par la critique journalistique, discutés par l'Académie, enseignés, distribués, véhiculés, lieux de discussion et de recherche, objets de publicité? La rencontre qui a eu lieu en novembre 1989 à l'Université de l'Alberta autour de ce sujet a montré la pertinence de ces questions pour les écrivaines, les chercheuses et les professeurs, tout comme la parution actuelle des Actes permet encore d'éclairer ce même sujet.

La publication des Actes du sixième colloque organisé par l'Institut de recherches en littérature comparée / Research Institute for Comparative Literature sur "L'écriture au féminin et l'institution littéraire," dans le cadre de son projet "Vers une histoire de l'institution littéraire au Canada / Towards a History of the Literary Institution in Canada" (HOLIC/HILAC), répond au besoin de continuer une (re)lecture critique et théorique du discours (au) féminin inscrite dans le désir de (re)nommer une certaine langue, celle des mères et celle des pères, afin de réapprendre l'économie de la grammaire des sexes pensée à l'intérieur des codes et des normes définis par le centre. De fait, les communications tendent à montrer que, à plus d'un titre, la littérature produite par les femmes reste encore en grande partie ignorée ou mal comprise par le discours institutionnel qui l'informe et la nourrit et par la critique qui la parle ou l'oublie. De plus, ces phénomènes sont bien sûr à replacer dans les "limites" institutionnelles elles-mêmes et doivent être analysés comme tels.

En 1978, dans son ouvrage sur L'institution de la littérature, Jacques Dubois plaçait encore l'écriture au féminin dans les littératures proscrites, littératures qui ont fait l'objet de censure particulières et qui, par conséquent, se sont vues exclues des mécanismes de reconnaissance et de

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consécration. Contre-littérature donc, jusqu’à un certain point, le discours féminin:

a été barré en littérature comme ailleurs. Mais, de plus, on peut suspecter que, même là où des femmes écrivains ont émergé et ont parcouru, de G. Sand à S. de Beauvoir, les étapes successives du cursus de la consécration, elles n’ont pu y parvenir qu’à la condition de ne pas occuper les positions les plus centrales et de ne pas pratiquer les genres culturellement les plus dotés. L’histoire de leur minorisation singulièr reste également à écrire.1

La critique au féminin est unanime sur le dernier point. Par contre, la remarque antérieure omet de replacer le contexte "involontaire" de la marginalisation des écrivaines en fonction de ces codes institutionnels établis. C’est demander aux femmes qui écrivent d’occuper deux espaces à la fois: celui de la marge ou de la périphérie ainsi que celui du milieu. Il leur faut dans tous les cas tenter de faire leur chemin jusqu’au centre afin de consacrer un répertoire différent comme le soulignent les théoriciens du polysystème à propos de la canonicité.

Un texte de fiction de Louky Bersianik ouvre la présente collection. Au lieu de reprendre l’essai sur la critique qu’elle avait présenté lors de la conférence, fort intéressant mais déjà publié ailleurs, l’auteure a choisi d’offrir un texte inédit qui sert merveilleusement de commentaire au thème du colloque. Le récit met en scène la figure des Cariatides, lesquelles soutiennent depuis des siècles l’édifice de l’Erechthéion, symbole du pouvoir patriarcal occidental, du savoir et des institutions mâles. Ainsi, dans "Le portique des noms propres," un groupe de femmes s’occupe à nommer ces statues de pierre antiques, ces géantes de marbre, et les exhorte à quitter ce monument qui les a toujours maintenues dans l’anonymat, la rigidité, le silence et la servitude.

Or, dans "Le portique des noms propres," il faut nommer d’abord, donner un nom qui nous appartienne en propre ensuite, une reconnaissance, une autorité. Sortir du (nom) commun des mortels, soit identifier, inscrire la lettre, la signature. La voix, la parole, les mots de femmes confèrent ainsi aux statues de pierre le souffle, le mouvement, le regard pour que leur corps bouge, pour que leur langue parle. Les Cariatides, écrit Louky Bersianik,

quittent le portique de l’Erechthéion qui s’effondre comme au ralentit. Cette incarnation abolit la solitude effroyable de cette acropole désertique, anéantit la distance qui les tenait éloignées, ignorantes l’une de l’autre, inaccessibles l’une à l’autre, bien que très proches.

Le rapport des écrivaines à l’institution littéraire se définit dans les mêmes termes de distance/proximité, rejet/accès, anonymat/reconnaissance. Si les femmes éprouvent tant le besoin de se réunir pour se donner des lieux d’écriture, de diffusion, de recherche, etc., c’est sans doute que l’institution ne leur en a accordé que très peu dans le passé et qu’elle en discute encore les possibilités dans le présent. Les femmes ont longtemps écrit dans la solitude, on l’a souligné à maintes reprises ; elles ne s’expriment pourtant bien souvent qu’entre elles, comme si leurs fictions ne concernaient pas tout à fait le littéraire et les professeurs de littérature. Les colloques sur l’écriture au féminin le montrent bien et les cours dits “de femmes” ou “sur les femmes” semblent s’adresser exclusivement aux étudiantes. Le colloque a montré à nouveau que l’écriture au féminin doit élaborder sa propre théorie si elle veut se tracer un sentier où les signes s’échangeraient sur un mode autre, autorisant de la sorte une géographie sans frontières, un texte lu partout et par tous.

Une fois “nommée,” il s’agit donc pour l’écrivaine se placer dans une position, sinon centrale, du moins visible. Quitter le portique lui permettra alors de pénétrer une aire de jeu dorénavant ouverte, le lieu où ça se passe, le lieu où l’on en parle. D’où la nécessité pour les femmes qui écrivent de se rapprocher les unes des autres, d’où l’importance de ces rencontres, universitaires ou pas, où le privé rejoint le politique, le fictif s’installe au cœur du réel et vice-versa, l’institutionnel se trouve simultanément confirmé et contesté. D’où le désir de se dire encore et encore.

Dans ce contexte, du côté francophone et québécois, on trouvera dans ce livre une série d’articles où l’on discute les écritures au féminin à partir de multiples points de vue. Les auteur(e)s y traitent de la loi, du littéraire, des formes canoniques et de la déconstruction (Robert), de la difficulté de l’écriture et du rapport des femmes à la mémoire (Bertrand), du rôle de la critique journalistique dans la diffusion de la littérature des femmes (Dupré), de la mythification du langage et du lien entre le sujet d’écriture et l’idéologie (Roy), des questions de réception et de la nécessité des lectures féministes (Verduyn); du postmodernisme, de l’historicisme et du pluriculturalisme (Bayard), enfin de la problématique de la marginalisation (Potvin).

L’ensemble des questions soulevées dans ces interventions nous étaient apparues fondamentales au moment du colloque et constituent toujours des préoccupations importantes pour la critique au féminin, la seule qui, comme le signale Lori Saint-Martin:
tient compte des conditions de production et de réception des textes de femmes; fait, entre condition féminine et forme romanesque, les liens qui s'imposent; fait avancer les débats sur le pouvoir, les valeurs, les rapports entre les femmes et l'institution. Elle seule tient compte explicitement de la différence entre les sexes, donc des questions de gender. Elle seule prend vraiment au sérieux l'écriture des femmes.  

La place des femmes et de leur écriture est loin d'être assurée et reconnue dans l'institution littéraire. Bien souvent exclues pour un grand nombre de raisons partiellement discutées ici, les écrivaines se voient malgré tout, malgré elles, tour à tours consacrées ou ignorées, dans tous les cas "restreintes" à un canon établi par d'autres. Effets de mode, cela va de soi. Questions de goût. On se demande toutefois quelles auteures sont vraiment "à la mode," à partir de quels critères et en fonction de quels juges ou de quelle cour. Bref, le problème reste entier puisqu'en général, il n'y a pas d'appel possible.

*University of Alberta*
Preface

When Claudine Potvin invited me to edit the anglophone proceedings of the conference she had organized, I was pleased to continue the process of what had been a very productive and convivial occasion while collections such as this cannot be considered representative of the diversity of women active in shaping and transforming the literary institution, they offer, through various lenses, intriguing partial glimpses of "Women's Writing and the Literary Institution."

It is a pity that the informal dialogues and round tables which occurred during the conference itself could not be reproduced here since these conversations and interventions provided something of an ongoing extension of the individual presentations. Some of the discussion as I recall focused on: the politics of address and response; the status of the popular in women's writing and reading; feminist cultural criticism and social change within the dinosaur university; the relative racial homogeneity of the participants, audience and presentations; and the multiplicity of feminisms sheltered under an umbrella called "feminist literary criticism."

The women writers represented in these essays range from historical to contemporary, popular to belles lettres. The historical recovery of early women writers is accomplished by Carole Gerson, Barbara Godard, Lalage Grauer, and Mary Lu MacDonald. The critical approaches vary from psychoanalytic to new historical, archival to theoretical.

Two seventeenth-century women are recuperated from obscurity and read within an historical framework by Lalage Grauer in "Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear: The Life and Adventures of Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney." In focusing on the translation effects when "uprising" is experienced as "massacre" in the accounts by two women settlers of their capture, Grauer begins her analysis of the generic conventions and ideological work of this captivity narrative within the colonizing history of the United States and Canada. Grauer documents the ghoulish phantasms of the early popular press which rival the excesses of current tabloid journalism. Her analysis untangles the conflation of "helpless victim-heroine" and "conquering pioneer-heroine" within a feminist reading of another colonial context, E.M. Forster's Passage to India. In her concluding remarks, Grauer uncovers "narratives [which] reinscribe traditional paradigms and
discourse of the feminine, [and...] also represent the self-assertion of women writing."

Mary Lu MacDonald documents the publication and reception of the Montreal Museum, "the first periodical in British North America specifically intended for female readers by a female editor." Between these early nineteenth-century pages, the female reader is schooled in the notion of literature as moral training. MacDonald with its emphasis on nationalism and "moral instruction," notes how the periodical affirms the ideal of the submissive wife in the bourgeois feminine private sphere while simultaneously advocating more education for daughters. Stories tend to focus on the middle class at "home," but at least one extends across national boundaries in a fictional account set in the West Indies where slavery is interpreted as genteel rather than exploitative, a white-washed construction which leads to the protagonist's "heartfelt gratification." MacDonald outlines the difficulty women had in developing an income through professional writing during this period but suggests that "although they were few in number, [educated women]... were indeed literary women in the Canadas in the early 1830s."

In her "archeological" and ongoing research into the careers of early Canadian women writers, Carol Gerson has documented "more than 500 Canadian women who authored an English-language book of fiction or poetry before 1940." Her examination of the material conditions of women writers notes that "while women were implicitly excluded from the academic and political networks and honours that conferred a portion of an author's literary value, writing offered a fairer chance to achieve economic equality than teaching, for example, where a woman was lucky to earn half the salary of a man." Gerson's concluding remarks about Marjorie Pickthall, L.M. Montgomery and Madge Macbeth suggest the complexities of concerns motivating professional women writers in the decades before 1940.

Barbara Godard contributes an extended study of Joanna Wood, a writer mentioned by Gerson as the highest paid contributor to Canadian Magazine in the year 1898-99. Godard situates Wood within a repertoire of "selected quotations from contemporaneous texts ... [in order to reconstruct] the debate on the emergence of the 'new woman' as it echoed from England and Europe." Within this voluble echo chamber, Godard analyses Wood's novel The Untempered Wind which "exposes the paradoxes of the discourse of purity and gentility dominant in Canada in the 1890s."

Like the historical essays in this collection, those which discuss contemporary writing take broad sweeps through genres and authors or tend towards a narrow focus. My own essay is autobiographical and takes up issues of propriety and transgression in a personal and critical response to an autobiographical incest narrative by prairie writer Elly Danica.
Two essays analyse contemporary periodicals: Pauline Butling, whose essay I discuss below, analyses the representation and contribution of women within the male-dominated history of the B.C. little magazine. Becki Ross's essay documents and analyses recent Lesbian periodicals.

Ross tracks the melodious sounds of "Lesbian speech" in English-Canadian periodicals from 1973-1988. She positions her work firmly within the Lesbian-feminist activist context from which it emerged and speculates "on the promise of Lesbian publishing not only to contribute to the dismantlement of institutionalized heterosexuality, but to further the emergence of political praxis planted firmly in feminist, anti-racist and socialist soil." Her active research, which amounted to inventive sleuthing, alerted Ross to the ephemeral nature of recent Lesbian periodical publishing where few articles have been reproduced in book form. Ross extends our understanding of sexuality and the Canadian state in a commentary which takes an anti-censorship position in analysing how Lesbian and Gay publications are targeted in legislation made possible through anti-pornography initiatives by radical and liberal American and Canadian feminists. She notes how state intervention in publishing creates "another closet...between the covers of Lesbian publications." In her commentary on the withdrawal of funding for Lesbian and feminist Canadian periodicals, she points to the tenuous material conditions which enable their production.

The single Anglophone contemporary writer Daphne Marlatt figures often in this collection of essays. Marlatt's work is made central for a number of reasons. First, her ongoing work on behalf of women writers as editor, organizer, teacher and writer makes her contribution to the literary institution more varied than others. Second, her numerous and accomplished writings have managed to evade most national prizes — the central role she plays within these proceedings may in part be a recuperative response to relative official neglect. Third, her own writerly genealogy through women modernists, the West Coast TISH group, and later, Anglo-American and French feminism offers rich critical ground for a repertoire of literary and cultural readings. Fourth, her West Coast location and poetics may make her regionally appealing for critics gathering in a western Canadian university. Fifth, the innovative and experimental forms of Marlatt's writing coincides with traditional literary approaches to the avant garde. Sixth, her poetic readings and political activism allies her with other Lesbian writers who ensure that female sexuality is not reduced to a dominant heterosexual desire. And (a provisional) finally, Marlatt's own search for an understanding of the language and identities of the colonial female subject mirrors the experiences of a number of the contributors.

Pauline Butling points out that Marlatt's "editing 'career' is striking for its range and visibility" during three decades as editor of six literary magazines. In her essay, Butling explores the marginalization of women in
the historical record of BC publishing and asks: "How well were women writers served by the institution and to what extent have the activities of women become part of the historical record?" Butling's research suggests that in B.C. little magazine publishing, "changes in the content and editorial structure do not occur until the whole system of patriarchal values is challenged and undermined in the late seventies and eighties."

Pamela Banting posits "translation poetics" as an alternative to readings of representation. Franco-Ontarian's Lola Lemire Tostevin's critique of the ending to Marlatt's novel, *Ana Historic*, provides Banting with an opportunity to see how Marlatt can "excavate and translate the pictogrammic, ideogrammic and phonetic elements of language and incorporate the body's lesser-analyzed signifying resources of gesture, performance, hysterical practice, and lovemaking." This ambitious critique of a feminist deconstruction leads not to infinite regress but to a productive re-evaluation of Marlatt's writing project.

Ann Munton's reading of the gaps and fractured writing in two of Marlatt's travel narratives alerts us to her interest in understanding contradiction. In revisiting Marlatt's Penang colonial childhood of *In the Month of Hungry Ghosts*, Munton reads a "garden of broken words [which] becomes the seedbed of future language." In "all the resonances sounded" through *How Hug a Stone*, Munton connects personal stories, Celtic mythology and etymology. Munton's exploration of paradox in Marlatt's "fruitful breakdown" and "mutter of stone," uncovers a "shape of the "transformative/sinuous sentence" and returns the reader to the "stone circle of Avebury, womblike enclosure of burial mounds, [which] is both death and rebirth."

* * *

Ann Munton introduces her essay with a commentary about how misreading pronouns in Daphne Marlatt's text leads her to see again how "graphically ... vision and voice are inter-related." The "minor operation" Ann writes about in her essay became a prelude to her tragically premature death. This volume is dedicated to Ann's critical vision which we celebrate, and to her voice which we sadly miss.

*University of Alberta*
PAMELA BANTING

Body Inc.: Daphne Marlatt's Translation Poetics

In the language I speak, the mother tongue resonates, tongue of my mother, less language than music, less syntax than song of words, beautiful Hochdeutsch, throaty warmth from the north in the cool speech of the south. Mother German is the body that swims in the current, between my tongue's borders, the maternal loversoul, the wild tongue that gives form to the oldest the youngest of passions, that makes milky night in the French day. Isn't written: traverses me, makes love to me, makes me love, speak, laugh from feeling its air caressing my throat. My German mother in my mouth, in my larynx, rhythms me. (Cixous 22)

Daphne Marlatt's recent texts can be read as translative acts which research and incorporate the pictogrammic, ideogrammic, and phonetic elements of language, as well as the resources of gesture, performance and hysteria.1 The three phases of the present paper work to clear ground for such a reading. The paper begins from a critique of Lola Lemire Tostevin's article "Daphne Marlatt: Writing in the Space that is Her Mother's Face," published in the special Marlatt issue of Line, as just one example (though a particularly apt one) of how a representationalist reading fails to account adequately for Marlatt's poetics. In the process, I point to ways in which representationalism and essentialism are inextricably entwined. My detailed examination of Tostevin's argument is intended not to pillory it but rather to demonstrate with precision some of the intrinsic limitations of representationalist aesthetics and to propose a theory of "translation poetics" as an alternative to these highlighted misprisions. The second phase of the paper discusses some specific problems and gaps within feminist poststruc-

1 Writers such as Fred Wah, Nicole Brossard, Gail Scott, Smaro Kamboureli, Robert Kroetsch, Lola Lemire Tostevin, George Bowering, bpNichol, Frank Davey, and various poets publishing with Underwhich Editions also work out of a poetics of translation between and among different signifying systems. My articles on Fred Wah provide a detailed discussion of how his translation poetics excavates the pictogrammic, ideogrammic and phonetic elements of language (cf. 1987, 1988).

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turalist criticism at large which may be addressed by translation poetics. I would suggest, for example, that translation poetics offers new ways of analyzing writers' relationships to language, writing and speech, reconfigures the relations between and among different kinds of semiotic practices, and allows us to rethink memory and even the body. Translation poetics overlaps with, differs from and challenges general grammatological and poststructuralist poetics. The paper concludes by reconfiguring the feminist and poststructuralist aspects of Marlatt's work as part of her translation poetics.

Lola Tostevin criticizes Marlatt for what Tostevin frames as a nostalgic desire for origins. She holds the view that Marlatt's double recourse to the maternal body and to the roots of words is reductive, regressive and essentialist. Her article attempts to draw attention to what she perceives to be the impure elements in Marlatt's writing, namely, an imagined nostalgia for origins as represented by the use of etymologies, traditional symbolism, the maternal body, and utopianism. Unfortunately and ironically, Tostevin, beguiling herself with the etymology of "etymology," ends up misreading, reducing and essentializing Marlatt's work. She writes:

Wordplay, the etymological breakdown of words, the story of language within language, has allowed many women to establish a newly found intimacy with language. Granting a word an ultimate definition, a final authority in its most ancient meaning, posits an origin, a truth, with which some women have felt comfortable. (35)

Etymology has allowed "many women"/"some women" such as Marlatt (though not Tostevin herself, the suggestion is, who allies herself with the French poststructuralists) to bed down in a "comfortable" "intimacy" with patriarchal authority and truth. Tostevin's sexual and gender metaphors cross (and double-cross) one another as she proceeds in the next paragraph to question this etymological impulse by framing it as a "search" for the lost or repressed mother and furthermore by describing this search for the maternal as filiation:

This genealogy, the filiation of a direct line leading back to a fundamental original signification, parallels the search for the lost mother on which traditional Western philosophy and literature are based and contradicts the open-endedness and new beginnings of l'écriture féminine which attempts to displace and exceed authority, truth, and the illusionary essence of origins.

Tostevin employs the French rather than the English form of "filiation" in part to indicate that she is working from within the system of the French poststructuralist critique elaborated by such figures as Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Hélène Cixous, for example, all of whom she invokes in her article. She uses the French term to direct the
reader to the inference that women writers' search for the absent mother is allied, paradoxically, with the very phallogocentrism which they are trying to evade, a phallogocentrism which is successfully deconstructed by the French critics and, by implication, Tostevin herself in her article.²

The bilingual Tostevin positions herself as speaking the "languages" of both the French and the Canadian critical milieux. However, yet another paradox imposes itself on her critical narrative when she finds that the problem with "Marlatt's theory" is that it "differs" from that of Cixous:

Marlatt's theory differs from Hélène Cixous' theory of écriture féminine which also emphasizes textual play and language as presence, but which does not maintain a source, does "not say originary, because obviously there is no origin" [Conley 130]. If each of Marlatt's books is an additional ring in the progression of a dynamic circular chain that grows and moves from past to present, each book also conveys a nostalgia for a source, an origin.... (35)

The context surrounding the particular phrase quoted from an interview with Cixous by Verena Andermatt Conley has to do with the provisionality of words and terms (libido, economy, masculine and feminine, écriture féminine) and with how Cixous can use these various "linguistic instruments" without enclosing herself within their various systems (Conley 130-31). Therefore it actually runs counter to Tostevin's purpose of pointing out the lapses in Marlatt's work. That is, if French feminist Hélène Cixous can be permitted the use of certain key words without being entrapped in the various systems they carry with them, then surely Canadian feminist Daphne Marlatt may be permitted a similar license. Instead, the impression Tostevin leaves us with is that to differ from Cixous is merely to dream comfortably on the couch of nostalgia rather than that of analysis.

Despite her strenuous critique of Marlatt, throughout her article Tostevin makes a few positive remarks about the aesthetic and feminist merit of Marlatt's work and her generosity toward other writers. Surprisingly, though, she chooses for the most part to borrow her praise from other critics. She quotes Frank Davey's statement from his 1974 book, From There to Here, that Marlatt's Rings is "a book whose linguistic structure is 'one of the most

² The English term "filiation" refers, somewhat vaguely, to "the condition or fact of being the child of a certain parent." The word's use in law is more specific. In law, "filiation" is "the assignment of paternity to someone, as a bastard child." It is perhaps needless to add that the verb 'filiate' derives from a Medieval Latin term meaning "to acknowledge as a son." It is worth noting too that the third meaning of the word set down in The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language 1971 edition is "the act or fact of forming a new branch, as of a society or language group; expansion or division." The act of forming a new branch of a language group is precisely what I am arguing Marlatt is engaged in in her poetry and poetics.
beautiful in our literature” (Tostevin 33). She relies on his words to make
the point that "The phenomenological method of Frames results in some
extraordinarily elaborate and detailed evocations of consciousness” (32).
Quoting Laurie Ricou, she writes that "There's little doubt that 'Marlatt is
convincing'” (33). She also counts on this male critic to say that Touch to My
Tongue is "the most overtly feminist of Marlatt's books” (36). She concludes
her article with the compliment that, despite the contradictions within her
work, Marlatt's "main story has remained that of language, and few people
in Canada tell it so well" and with an allusion to "the generous dialogues"
Marlatt has had "with so many writers during the last twenty years" (39).

A much more serious problem with her article than the curious
secondhand praise, though, is that she makes little attempt to consider the
effects of Marlatt's feminist aesthetic. The issue for Tostevin seems to be
(and the use to which she employs the quotation from Cixous is telling)
whether or not the word "origin" or any of its synonyms appears in Marlatt's
texts or her statements about her poetics. For example, while Tostevin
concedes that "Much of Marlatt’s use of etymology proliferates meaning" she
does not illustrate or analyze this proliferation but moves immediately,
without so much as a comma's pause, to complain "but more and more her
work relies on originary/original meaning" (35). She then quotes a passage
from Marlatt's poetic essay "musing with mothertongue" dealing with
etymology. Here is the quotation as Tostevin reproduces it:

hidden in the etymology and usage of so much of our vocabulary for verbal
communication (contact, sharing) is a link with the body's physicality: matter (the
import of what you say) and matter and by extension mother; language and tongue;
to utter and outer (give birth again); ... to relate (a story) and to relate to somebody,
related (carried back) with its connection with bearing (a child); intimate and to
intimate; vulva and voluble.... (35)

Tostevin elides several of the clauses which deal most specifically with the
linkages between language and the body. Her point in citing this quotation
seems to be that it includes the word "etymology" and appears to link the
tracing of word origins with a parallel regression back toward the figure of
the mother. But here is the full paragraph from Marlatt's text:

hidden in the etymology and usage of so much of our vocabulary for verbal
communication (contact, sharing) is a link with the body's physicality: matter (the
import of what you say) and matter and by extension mother; language and tongue;
to utter and outer (give birth again); a part of speech and a part of the body; pregnant
with meaning; to mouth (speak) and the mouth with which we also eat and make love;
sense (meaning) and that with which we sense the world; to relate (a story) and to
relate to somebody, related (carried back) with its connection with bearing (a child);
intimate and to intimate; vulva and voluble; even sentence which comes from a verb meaning to feel. (1984, 46; my italics)

What Tostevin removes from the quoted passage are the body parts. With these parts excised, the body is present only in a more abstract sense and the passage then seems to valorize a model of communication constructed upon serendipitous connections between language and the maternal body. However, the passage in full deals not with originary meaning at all but rather with constructed, phenomenological, lived reality, with connections between the materiality of language and the physicality of the body, neither of which — language or body — Marlatt privileges as the origin of the other. Moreover, the linguistic model implicit in the passage is not one of the communication but rather of translation, as we shall see.

Although it is indeed the case that, as Tostevin writes, "Touch to My Tongue is nevertheless centred in traditional symbols of the feminine, making it difficult to disassociate them from overdetermined associations" (36), surely it is the task of the critic to make the effort to distinguish Marlatt's use of these symbols from their patriarchal connotations and to discover whether or not they do retain their patriarchal function within the context of the lesbian feminist text. In failing to address these possible differences, Tostevin contradicts her own concluding remarks that "It would seem more vital than ever that in our newly created spaces we discover not only the multiple differences that exist between men and women, between women and women, but perhaps more importantly, within each woman" (1989, 39; my italics). Does it follow that if a woman writer employs symbols drawn from patriarchal tradition her use of them will be traditional? Even if her symbolism were in fact conventional, would the text as a whole then necessarily recuperate or reinforce traditional structures and values, assuming that symbols do not perform the entire work of which a text is capable?

Tostevin invests heavily in what she perceives to be the aims of the poststructuralist enterprise. However, other critics working in and with problematical poststructuralist texts have produced complex and satisfying solutions to similar problems, which she might have drawn upon. To select just two, there are the examples of Paul de Man's discussion of Walter Benjamin's use of conventional symbology in his essay "The Task of the Translator" and Réda Bensmaïa's illumination in The Barthes Effect of Roland Barthes's use of ancient rhetorical terms, neologisms from Latin and Greek roots, foreign words, and other obscure devices. De Man, dealing with the problem that Benjamin's text "seems to relapse into the tropological errors that it denounces," suggests the following: "Whenever Benjamin uses a trope which seems to convey a picture of total meaning, of complete adequacy between figure and meaning ... he manipulates the allusive context
within his work in such a way that the traditional symbol is displaced in a manner that acts out the discrepancy between symbol and meaning, rather than the acquiescence between both" (89). Bensmaia demonstrates that Barthes uses "preciously ambiguous' semes" not to reify old signifieds but rather to float them, to summon other codes:

But contrary to what would occur for the concepts of a philosophical system, for example, the semes are never taken up in order to define or exhaust them.... As the words ... are selected and scrutinized, the discourse is produced as a "translation" of these words in an "other site" and as an unfolding of all their potentialities. (20)

I will return to the issue of discourse produced as a translation in another site later in my discussion of Marlatt's etymological work.

Moreover, Cixous, more than any other of the French feminists, has been charged (wrongly, I think) with the same kind of essentialism and nostalgia for origins that Tostevin is troubled by in Marlatt.3 Toril Moi, for one, levels the same accusation against Cixous that Tostevin marshals against Marlatt, namely, that her "global appeal to 'woman's powers' glosses over the real differences among women, and thus ironically represses the true heterogeneity of women's powers" (125). The strategy of Moi's essay is to compare points of convergence and divergence between Cixous's thinking and that of Derrida. The convergences are duly noted and applauded while the divergences are dutifully described as regressions — moments of biological determinism and essentialism. But what is missing, by her own admission, from Moi's analysis (as from Tostevin's) is the kind of closer investigation of Cixous's work that will, as Moi concludes, "confront its intricate webs of contradiction and conflict, where a deconstructive view of textuality is countered and undermined by an equally passionate presentation of writing as a female essence" (126). It is ironic indeed that both Tostevin and Moi sacrifice plurality in order to plead for différence. Tostevin compares Marlatt to Cixous and finds the former lacking. Moi compares Cixous to Derrida and locates "lack" in Cixous. This regression toward the source as represented by either Cixous or Derrida differs not at all from what Tostevin argues is the effect of tracking etymological associations in the dictionary.

This controversy within feminist critique over essentialism and biologism in the work of important women writers indicates a series of untheorized gaps pertaining to the relations between corporeal and linguistic substances.

3 As I am attempting to show, Tostevin's charge is more generic than specific to Marlatt. My article "The Body as Pictogram: Rethinking Hélène Cixous's écriture féminine" analyses Moi's critique of Cixous at some length.
This theoretical hiatus causes us to misread the colloquy between the body (specifically, the body gendered as feminine) and, for example, metaphor and symbolism, between the body and the archive or the dictionary, and between writing and speech in the practices of *écriture féminine* and writing the (m)other tongue.

Much of the feminist criticism published during the past twenty years has examined how women writers incorporate certain female body metaphors, especially maternal metaphors, into the structure of their texts. However, I would suggest that the exchange between the text and the body gendered as female is a form of translation — intersemiotic translation. Roman Jakobson defines intersemiotic translation as an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs from nonverbal systems (Jakobson 261). I would add that translation between bodies and texts occurs bidirectionally. That is, not only does the verbal system of the text incorporate the signs of the nonverbal system, the body (menstruation, childbirth, lactation, orgasm, hysteria, etc.), as images or narrative "material." The body, organized (incorporated) by language, but always also retaining its "flesheness," never wholly absorbed, mastered, expressed, or mimed by language, mothers its own tongue. The body, to borrow Elizabeth Grosz's formulation, "its epidermic surface, muscular-skeletal frame, ligaments, joints, blood vessels and internal organs, as *corporeal surfaces* on which engraving, inscription or 'graffiti' are etched," is also the place where inscriptions "coagulate corporeal signifiers into signs" (Grosz). If the body is the locus where desire is inscribed, it also writes, speaks, gestures, signs, sighs, and sings back. The body translates. Hysterical fantasies, for example, can translate themselves into the motor sphere, there to be staged in pantomime (Mahony 466). And, as in even the most traditional forms of interlingual translation, this intersemiotic translation alters the "original."4 The "original" (body or text) cannot be restored as such on the basis of the translation alone. Both the corporeal and the textual imprint, act upon and irrevocably change one another.

These remarks about the body as translator and the connection with the preceding critique of Tostevin’s article will become clearer as we proceed for an interval through a double reading of Cixous and Marlatt. Barbara Freeman, in her article "Plus corps donc plus écriture: Hélène Cixous and the Mind-Body Problem," addressing the issue of essentialism in Cixous, analyzes brilliantly Cixous’s rhetorical deployment of the body. Freeman convincingly demonstrates that "At the very moment that Cixous's critics accuse her of employing the body in order to ground sexual difference

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4 Because I have argued that neither text nor body precedes the other or functions as the original of the other, I cannot subsequently use the term "original" in this sense without placing it in quotation marks.
outside of language, they themselves do exactly what they ascribe to her; conceive of the body as if it were "a universal, biological given," and thus in "essentialist terms" (61) and "Anatomy, the body, can no longer mean what Cixous’s critics take it to mean once its priority in relation to the text has been called into question" (66). Cixous’s contribution, neither essentialist nor anti-essentialist, is to corporealize the text and metaphorize the body such that neither term can be accorded the original or source (or, I would add, source text) of the other. Body and text are co-constitutive. Freeman interprets Cixous’s notion of a feminine "essence" as "non-essentialistic in that, identical to that which destabilizes any notion of essence, it is able to inscribe (or invent) a possible non-essential feminine specificity" (68).

Against Domna C. Stanton’s argument in "Difference on Trial: A Critique of the Maternal Metaphor in Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva," Freeman asserts that there is a difference between metaphor as a collapsing of difference into sameness and metaphorization as a textual strategy:

What I am calling Cixous’s "corporealization of the text" does not assert a likeness between two terms, but rather functions so as to locate difference where none had previously been seen to exist. To say, for example, "the mother is also a metaphor" is not to imply a similarity between the maternal body and rhetorical trope, as Stanton would have it, but rather to displace the opposition between body and text and to locate each as already within its other or opposite. While metaphor may (or may not) assert similitude, metaphorization as a strategy insinuates difference; for if the "mother" is a "metaphor," so too the "metaphor" must also be a "mother." Here the copula is employed so as to undo, not affirm, copularity, for through the metaphorical process the identity of both terms [is] displaced and undone. (70)

Domna Stanton surveys extensively the work of Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva, but she fails to analyze the textual strategies of these writers and fails also to re-examine metaphor in the light of the work it can perform within poststructuralist texts. Instead she shops through the works for short guilty phrases and culpable individual terms ("the essence of femininity," "rebeginning," "the Mother goddess," "woman-voice," etc.). Except for block quotations, she seldom quotes an entire sentence from any of her three subjects; her critique amounts to little more than synonym detection in a large number of texts. When she proposes metonymy as a possible alternative to metaphor, her solution is unconvincing (and conventional, authorized by the masters) because the reader suspects that, following Stanton’s own methods, a similarly reductive definition of metonymy could be found and supplemented by a survey of individual words and phrases. Stanton’s failure to acknowledge the value of the physical, textual work performed by writing ultimately dismantles her argument. Although she assumes an ostensibly poststructuralist stance, her devaluation of writing and
her reliance on the conventional interpretation of metaphor reveals that
stance to be no more than a posture exercise. She is working from within a
rhetorical, rather than a writerly, landscape of signs.5

While Lola Tostevin’s endeavour to open up discussion of apparent
contradictions within Daphne Marlatt’s writing and poetics is, in some
respects, useful, her assumption that Marlatt’s use of etymologies and of
lesbian and maternal bodies is a recourse to "origins" and essentialism is not.
Moreover, this assumption leads her to impose upon Marlatt’s writing the
very expectations and standards that Tostevin herself argues against in
advocating the pluralization of differences. Paradoxically, her attempt to
purge Marlatt’s writing of metaphysics imposes upon it an aesthetics of
purity, unity, coherence, clarity, and the logic of non-contradiction. The
ending of Marlatt’s novel Ana Historic will be unsatisfactory to "some
readers," Tostevin contends: "Because the formal strategy of the novel so
brilliantly subverts cohesion and narrative syntax and is not bound by master
plot or one heroic voice — on the contrary, the narrative voice embodies
many voices — its climax, both literal and literary, is unexpectedly
conventional in its utopian vision" (38). At this point, near the climax of her
own article, Tostevin, who had earlier distanced herself from "many women"
and "some women," now inscribes herself under the rubric "some readers." 
Tostevin formulates herself, in other words, as a textually constructed,
though gender neutral, subject. It is of some significance that, after initially
subsuming her personal voice to those of other critics such as Davey and
Ricou, this climactic revelation of her presence in the text as a non-gendered
"reader" coincides with the point at which she argues that sexuality, pleasure,
women’s imagination, and utopian visions are limited solutions to complex
social problems. Ironically, that is, the climax of her argument for the
pluralization of differences between and within women coincides with the
apparition of a non-gendered subject.

Several additional questions and issues emerge with regard to Tostevin’s
critique of Ana Historic. In the first place, if the formal strategy of Ana
Historic subverts narrative conventions, then, logically, part of its subversion
may well extend to claiming the right to subvert what is conventionally

5 It is not my wish simply to draw attention to the logical throwbacks in Tostevin’s, Moi’s
and Stanton’s work and to insist in turn, as each of them does, that these logically
inconsistent, impure elements be discarded. Rather, my point is that if we are in the
process of moving between systems, between modernism and postmodernism, rhetorical
and poststructuralist interpretations, we need to rethink not only such questions as binary
oppositions, questions of origin, essentialism, and biological determinism but our
aesthetic, rhetorical and critical practices as well. We must not be content simply to spot
the synonyms for "origin" or "body." Instead, we must pay increased attention to and
revise our thinking about the physics and labour of textual work.
thought to be the subversive by providing an "unexpectedly conventional" climax to an otherwise deconstructed narrative. Secondly, is the climax in fact utopian? More generally, is "a writing of jouissance which cultivates, culminates in the pleasure principle and evokes the imaginative power of women writers" utopian (Tostevin 38)? If so, by whose standards? Is Tostevin’s own isolation and privileging of a single narrative climax in Ana Historic consistent or inconsistent with her valorization of subversion and the deconstruction of master plots? Is not the expectation and requirement of a single climactic event one of the primary master plots? Although Tostevin states that "When Marlatt writes, ‘mouth speaking flesh. she touches it to make it tell her present in this other language so difficult to translate. the difference,’ it is evident that she is referring to the difference, keeping it within the traditional concept of binary opposition" (38), it is not at all evident that Marlatt is referring to binary opposition rather than to Derridean différence and to the act of translation between the body and language.6

In short, contrary to Tostevin’s argument for a deconstructive writing practice, she herself imposes an aesthetic derived from a rhetorical, logocentric and metaphysical critical tradition. Thus she misrepresents and falsifies the deconstructive project she positions herself to speak for and legislates for the very nostalgia she would excise in Marlatt.7 Furthermore, she ignores the aesthetic or textual effects of Marlatt’s writing strategies.8

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6 For further discussion of the translation poetics of Ana Historic, see my article "Translation A to Z: Notes on Daphne Marlatt’s Ana Historic." See also Janice Williamson’s article "It gives me a great deal of pleasure to say yes: Writing/Reading Lesbian in Daphne Marlatt’s Touch to My Tongue."

7 Tostevin’s strictures and the demands she attempts to place upon Marlatt’s texts are a demand for purity, logical purity in this case. Whenever the cry for purity arises, however, one must ask exactly what it is that, by contrast, is deemed unpure. In the context of Tostevin’s argument, the phrase "the Space That Is Her Mother’s Face" figures as a synecdoche for the mother’s body.

8 Dennis Cooley’s article, "Recursions Excursions and Incursions: Daphne Marlatt Wrestles with the Angel Language," in the same issue of Line as Tostevin’s piece, does perform a close reading of important aspects of Marlatt’s use of language. Similarly alert to the apparently contradictory streams in her work, Cooley reconciles the contradiction first by accepting that "[Marlatt] wants to write this way ... and she chooses to do so for good reasons" and then by considering some of these reasons. For example, he finds that Marlatt’s writing "derives from a phenomenological and not particularly from a structuralist or poststructuralist base" (71). Cooley casts Marlatt’s fascination with etymology as combining “her interest in origins and in reflexive writing within a system. They announce further an engagement in a textual world, and not in any way direct or raw experience, the dictionary presiding over them” (72).
At this point, let me offer some alternative interpretations of Daphne Marlatt’s poetics and raise some questions about the interpretation of feminist poetics in general. Her concept of metaphor, for example, is very close to that of Cixous as outlined above. In conversation with George Bowering almost twenty years ago, Marlatt discussed metaphor not as a reduction of two terms to a single one but as multiplicity simply there, to borrow a phrase from Steveston. She said:

Metaphor has to do with the way things both are & are not themselves, are other things. The way we usually refer to it is: you have a discrete thing over here, you have a discrete thing over there, & there’s an invisible bridge which is the metaphor. I don’t understand that. Anything can be anything else, depending on one’s point of view, one’s specific vantage point. (Bowering 1979, 43)

American poet Charles Olson — for whom in the summer of 1963 Marlatt wrote a paper on etymology which would turn out to be a lead in to "all the writing I would subsequently do ... it opened up language for me" (Marlatt, quoted in Wah’s "Introduction" to her Net Work 8-9) — theorizing the poem as an energy transfer rather than the interposition of the individual as ego, criticized various rhetorical devices which force us to "partition reality" and thereby isolate us from what he saw as the active intellectual states, metaphor and performance. Simile, for him, was anathema. In the essay "Human Universe" he wrote: "All that comparison ever does is set up a series of reference points: to compare is to take one thing and try to understand it by marking its similarities to or differences from another thing" (164). The trouble with such classification is that it only ever accomplishes a description. Description robs things of their particularity and their "thingness" and robs us too of our experience of them. As a remedy to this kind of verse-making, Olson imported the idea of "proproception," the sensory reception in our bodies to stimuli arising from within, from physiology into his poetics of projective verse. As Fred Wah says in his introduction to her "selected" volume Net Work, Marlatt is one of the most disciplined proponents of proprioceptive writing (15). Her understanding and use of metaphor is informed by Olson’s body-oriented, proprioceptive poetry and poetics and must therefore be considered in that context.

Secondly, an alternative to conceiving of Marlatt’s work with etymology and mythology as essentialist might be to cast it as an inscription of "the proper name effect."⁹ In Greek mythology, the nymph Daphne chose to be

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⁹ For amplification about the proper name effect, see Derrida’s Signéponge/Signusponge 24-36 and The Ear of the Other 50-53, 76-77. See also the "Roundtable on Translation" in the latter volume.
metamorphosed into a laurel rather than be sexually assaulted by Apollo. If a writer's name were Daphne, it would be almost mandatory for her to explore the complicity of that name both with gender relations and with mediations between women and the natural world, not to mention the name's duplicitous implication with poetry and poetics.

However, any examination of etymology as a sign of the proper name or signature effect would have to confront the extent to which for the woman writer the proper name effect is deconstructive and the extent to which it is complicit with patriarchal practices. That is, are the effects of raising the signature into the text the same for writing subjects configured as feminine as for those configured as masculine? Does bleeding the proper noun into the common noun function to inappropriate even as it appropriates, as Derrida suggests? Or, for the woman writer, is this intralingual translation and erosion of her proper name just more of the (logic of the) same? In the following passage, Derrida describes the net gain possible in the recuperation of the proper name:

By disseminating or losing my own name, I make it more and more intrusive; I occupy the whole site, and as a result my name gains more ground. The more I lose, the more I gain by conceiving my proper name as the common noun.... The dissemination of a proper name is, in fact, a way of seizing the language, putting it to one's own use, instating its law. (1985, 76-77)

Does the woman writer raise her signature into the text in order to purchase real estate there, to "occupy the whole site," to gain "more ground," or is she trying to claim additional territory and simultaneously to decolonize territory traditionally designated as female, territory Marlatt, for example, refers to as a "sensorium." As she says:

For instance, if I talk about our sexuality as a hidden ground, then I have to make a distinction between ground that is laid out, gridded, cleared for use, dry land versus unmapped, uncharted, untamed land that is wet and swampy and usually discarded. So there is a difference within the landscape metaphor. (Williamson 1985, 27)

What degree of "properness" can we assume adheres for women to the proper name? For women, property (ground), propriety, naming, and language have always been extremely problematical. To what extent is the strategy of "The more I lose, the more I gain" for women a practice of self-denial and self-abnegation which has proven ineffective in our individual and collective struggles for equality? To what extent might feminist writers' experiments with etymology and mythology represent not a return to origins or an impulse toward a masculinist version of essentialism but perhaps an "improper" version of the proper name effect, one which pays homage not
only to the differences among women but to both the differences and the similarities within our collective inheritances at once?

In questioning the degree of applicability of Derridean textual practices to the analysis of women's texts, Linda Kintz's article "In-Different Criticism: the Deconstructive 'Parole'" is helpful. Kintz argues that Derrida's deconstruction is of, by, and for the white male subject, and she charges that Derrida's caution to women not to reproduce the dialectic of sex "anchor[s] his theory to a dialectic that appears to be unsusceptible to transformation" (132). According to Kintz:

Derrida's brilliant readings have been centred on a Subject who is male, white, European; then that critique of subjectivity has been generalized, like a metaphor that substitutes the genus for the species. The Subject, the general term, covers the more limited one, the male of the dominant class, but it claims universality, a pattern or experience characteristic of all human beings. The deconstruction of the Subject has thus been generalized to cover all subjects, even those who were never included in that core group of Subjects. We have gone from Subject to subject, with no pause for gender differentiation, or for race and class distinctions. (115-16)

Kintz diagnoses Derrida's concern that women speaking like men will perpetuate the dialectic as his failure to "factor in gender or colour as disruptive and inappropriate threats to the specular dialectic" (131). Like Barbara Freeman and Naomi Schor (whom Freeman quotes), who think that "playing off 'essentialism' and 'anti-essentialism' as antagonistic and mutually exclusive may not lead feminist theory in productive directions" (Freeman 69), Kintz concludes that it is possible and desirable to work on more than one project at a time, even apparently oppositional or contradictory tasks. As Kintz proclaims:

We must take seriously, even as we work to undermine them, the effects of gender differentiation, which is "translated by and translates a difference in the relation to power, language, and meaning" [sic] ... But what we are beginning to notice is that there are (at least) two dramas of subjectivity, and if we keep at it, if we keep refining our terms, we may find a way to talk about activity that is not simply an analogy for masculinity. Because we are past the time when women need to be shown our absence from history and language, we might carry on a project that is a dialogue — a continuing dream of utopian indifferentiation, of "incalculable choreographies," while we also take the time to find ways to theorize our activity as culturally constructed, gendered subjects, speaking bodies, real fictions. Such a dialogue may help us theorize what metaphysics has always missed: "le moi corporeal." (132-33)

My point is that in our critical practice we must continue to search for ways of talking about feminist writing strategies which do not simply invoke or reproduce monological models of textual "activity" the way Stanton
reproduces traditional assumptions about the functions of metaphor and applies them wholesale to Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva and the way Tostevin reproduces strictures about essentialism with regard to Marlatt's work. Gender must not be elided in or by rhetorical, deconstructive or reader-response methods of interpretation. As Julia Kristeva notes (in the sentence misquoted in the passage from Kintz's article above), "Sexual difference — which is at once biological, physiological, and relative to reproduction — is translated by and translates a difference in the relationship of subjects to the symbolic contract which is the social contract" (Kristeva 21). Gender is a function of the translation between various discourses (power, meaning, sexuality) and the body; and the gendered body translates in reply. The subject that is translated textually is also translated sexually. Or, in Grosz's metaphor of inscription and reinscription: "As well as being the site of knowledge-power, the body is thus also a site of resistance, for it exerts a recalcitrance, and always entails the possibility of a counter-strategic reinscription, for it is capable of being self-marked, self-represented in alternative ways." We must not attempt to censor this translation, this reinscription, this "mouth speaking flesh," simply because we have yet to learn how to decipher its significations and how to respond.

Marlatt's archaeological project is to recover and reappropriate the gendered body from under the weight of the dictionary, that archive which regularizes and legitimates our use of language. Through her archival, etymological excavations she tries to re-collect and re-member lost body memories. In "musing with mothertongue," she writes: "if we are women poets, writers, speakers, we also take issue with the given, hearing the discrepancy between what our patriarchally-loaded language bears (can bear) of our experience and the difference from it our experience bears out — how it misrepresents, even miscarries, and so leaves unsaid what we actually experience" (1984, 47). For her, etymology is "almost like a racial memory, verified in the recording of the relationships of words to various civilizations" (Williamson 1985, 27). The memory encoded in etymologies is a function of successive generations' experiences of language, body and world. We are born into language, as language is born in us:

the beginning: language, a living body we enter at birth, sustains and contains us. it does not stand in place of anything else, it does not replace the bodies around us. placental, our flat land, our sea, it is both place (where we are situated) and body (that

10 See by contrast Tostevin's narrative account in her book 'Sophie' of her attempt to speak — literally and in person — to Jacques Derrida about the absence of both woman and women from his theoretical discourse (43-48).
contains us), that body of language we speak, our mothertongue, it bears us as we are born in it, into cognition. (Marlatt 1984, 45)

Unlike official linguistic accounts of language, Marlatt’s experience of language tells her that signs are not split into signifier and signified. Our “mothertongue,” as she calls language, does not “replace the bodies around us”; it does not substitute words or syntactical units for our experience of others and of the world. Rather, mothertongue/language is part of our continuous relation to our world, at once both mind and body, cognition and feeling, self and Other. As she asks:

where are the poems that celebrate the soft letting-go the flow of menstrual blood is as it leaves her body? how can the standard sentence structure of English with its linear authority, subject through verb to object, convey the wisdom of endlessly repeating and not exactly repeated cycles her body knows? or the mutuality her body shares embracing other bodies, children, friends, animals, all those she customarily holds and is held by? how can the separate nouns mother and child convey the fusion, bleeding womb-infant mouth, she experiences in those first days of feeding? what syntax can carry the turning herself inside out in love when she is both sucking mouth and hot gush on her lover’s tongue? (47-48)

She juxtaposes women’s physical experiences and body memories against linguistics and against the kind of memory associated with writing as that term has been patriarchally conceived — writing as men’s expression of their interaction with the world.

Throughout Marlatt’s poetic essay, the body, lingering imprints and residues of embraces, and the presence of the Other (writer, reader, lover) in the text supplement writing understood as tangible, material, black marks on the page representing the rhetorical use of the voice and thereby supplanting the rest of the body and its signifying potential. The tongue, the organ which, as she says, “touches all the different parts of the mouth to make the different sounds,” is also a major organ in making love (Williamson 1985, 28). Lovemaking, then, is a form of organ speech just as poetry is a form of verbal speech. Desire is not contained in language, nor is desire expressed through language. According to Marlatt, desire "moves through your body at the same moment as it moves through the language." In the words of phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose work has also been influential in shaping Marlatt’s poetics, "all corporeality is already symbolism" (98).

Etymology is for Marlatt a source of delight, inspiration, historical information, memory, and collaboration with her lover, as this excerpt from one of her letters to Betsy Warland demonstrates:
anyway i discovered that, as the Weekley Etymological Dictionary notes, "lust" has developed "peculiar" & negative connotations only in English because the Latin in the Bible was early translated into the "lusts of the flesh." in other languages lust has life-affirming senses: Old Norse lust, sexual desire; Gothic lustus, desire; Latin lascivus, wanton, playful; Greek ἁλαζισθαι (isn't that a lovely sound?) to yearn: Sanskrit, lasati, he yearns, & lasati plays. there's a quote from Francis Bacon in the Webster's 3rd Internat.: "the increasing lust of the earth or of the planet" which is the closest i found to "fertility of the planet." an intense longing, a craving, is one of its other senses. (1989, 30)

As Marlatt remarks in conversation with George Bowering about her novel Ana Historic, "the trouble with writing fiction is that it replaces memory. You may remember it until you write about it, and then the writing itself replaces the actual memory" (Bowering 1979, 96-97; my italics). Her etymological archaeology is not a privileging of origins but rather, through the process of writing, a kind of deconstruction of the text and reconstruction of lost memory tissues and, by extension, a construction of new bodies.

In other words, just as the word "lust" has acquired its present meaning because of a Christian translation and appropriation of the term, writing for Marlatt is part of a translation process which radically alters memories, both forgotten and recalled. In "musing with mothertongue" she describes the woman writer's place as "that double edge where she has always lived, between the already spoken and the unspeakable, sense and non-sense." As she realizes, writing from this double edge, "risking nonsense, chaotic language leafings, unspeakable breaches of usage, intuitive leaps" (48), simultaneously releases life in "old roots" and inscribes a new old mother tongue. This translation of the old roots is both possible and necessary because in its common usage even the very word "mother tongue" implies a language which has been alienated, superseded or annulled by another. As Kaja Silverman observes, the term "mother tongue" attributes to women sole knowledge of that language within which lack can be experienced and known (20-21). Theorists of the process of the subject's entry into language routinely posit this entrance into signifying systems as a choice between meaning and life, significance and insignificance. They are more than willing to surrender or abandon the presymbolic or semiotic in the Name of the Father (i.e., the symbolic, the native language). However, for Marlatt, meaning is always already constituted in the sonorous envelope, the eye contact and the gestural hieroglyphs of the "mother tongue." Here the word "tongue" becomes inadequate: this domestic vernacular pervades the whole body and actually blurs the boundaries between two bodies. Furthermore, this bond with the mother and the feminine more generally need not, should
not and in fact cannot be irretrievably renounced, forfeited or signed away
in negotiating the social contract.

Marlatt does not write "in the Space That Is Her Mother's Face." She
writes in the spaces between and among languages. Translating from a
source language — the mother tongue as native language, the vernacular —
which is never entirely pure or unitary, into a target language — often
notated as the (m)other tongue — which does not exist as a language
separate unto itself either, the feminist writing practices which engage both
Cixous and Marlatt, écriteur féminine and writing the (m)other tongue,
involve the exploration of writing as a process of translation into a language
which emerges only in the act of translation. Such writing inscribes an
"interlanguage," a separate, yet intermediate, linguistic system situated
between a source language and a target language and which results from a
learner's attempted production of the target language (Toury 71). Patriarchal
discourse structures the very ideas of "woman" and "mother." Therefore, as
Jane Gallop urges "The question of language must be inserted as the wedge
to break the hold of the figure of the mother. Écriture féminine must not be
arrested by the plenitude of the mother tongue, but must try to be always
and also an other tongue." The (m)other tongue is a composite that is no
one's mother tongue and can only be comprehended in two languages at
once (328-29).

Écriture féminine and writing the (m)other tongue excavate and translate
the pictogrammic, ideogrammic and phonetic elements of language and
incorporate the body's lesser-analyzed signifying resources of gesture,
performance, hysterical practice, and lovemaking. There are more ways of
relating to mothers and to bodies than patriarchy has dreamt of. Like poet
Di Brandt, we ask questions of our mothers and fathers. Like Brandt and
Cixous, we listen in so many languages, hear in other ones. And we translate:

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 acknowledging in myself the rebel traitor thief the one who asked too
many questions who argued with the father & with God who always took things
always went too far who questioned every thing the one who talked too often too
loud the questionable one shouting from rooftops what should only be thought
guiltily in secret squandering stealing the family words the one out of line recognizing
finding myself in exile where i had always been trying as always to be true
whispering in pain the old words trying to speak the truth as it was given listening
in so many languages & hearing in this one translating remembering claiming my
past living my inheritance on this black earth among strangers prodigally making
love in a foreign country writing coming home. (Brandt, "Foreword")
Works Cited


Caroline Bayard

Le postmodernisme au Québec: pression francophone-américaine ou ressourcement de l'imaginaire?

Une sorte de jeu laconique avec la représentation, un peu à la manière de l'hyper-réalisme, serait peut-être une des manières exactes de faire voir l'énigme qu'est le rapport québécois au réel. (Monique Larue, citée par Beausoleil 20-21)

Les débats sur le postmoderne seraient plus clairs si on désignait par postmoderne la remise en question des fondements théoriques de toute l'orientation moderne de la pensée, par postmodernisme le fait que certains puissent douter de la valeur libéraliste du modernisme et par postmodernité le déclin de l'héroïsme de la vie moderne. (Descombos 173)

Un inventaire provisoire du postmodernisme littéraire au Québec demeure à faire. La tâche n'est pas simple, d'une part parce que peu de critiques s'accordent sur le sens à donner à ce terme, ensuite parce qu'il en a recoupé d'autres, dont le féminisme avec lequel il a déterminé de curieuses intersections,1 finalement parce que du point de vue générique, il ne s'est pas

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cantonné dans le domaine de la "fiction" (à l’instar d’une large partie de la critique anglo-saxonne) mais a largement déborde de telles limites.

Parce que les genres ont subi, au Québec spécifiquement, quoique pas exclusivement, de sérieuses secousses, il serait imprudent de limiter un examen du postmodernisme littéraire au roman seul. Un tel geste occulterait un vaste corpus qui s’est délibérément situé sur le terrain de la postmodernité et qui a inclus des œuvres dramatiques (on pourrait mentionner ici les textes de Jovette Marchessault et Normand Chauvette) autant que poétiques (et ici les écrivains des Herbes Rouges et de la Nouvelle Barre du Jour entreraient en jeu). La présente étude ne vise pas à délimiter les rapports ambigus du féminisme et du postmodernisme (ce que d’autres ont fait mieux que moi), mais simultanément, il lui sera difficile de se dégager de cette lourde problématique. Disons que cette dernière constituerait un horizon de référence qui demeurera inocutable quoique non-primordial. Deuxièmement, elle ne prétendra pas à l’inventaire — fût-il rapide — de la question, la place et le temps manquant ici. Elle se voudra plutôt une radiographie des effets de ce paradigme sur le terrain de la littérature, en 1989, soit très franchement, dans le dernier souffle d’une décennie précédant le millénaire.

La première constatation que le sujet impose, surtout sur le terrain de la métadiscursivité c’est que le postmodernisme aura tissé autour de lui un réseau de contradictions, d’oppositions et de différences. À la fois au niveau de l’interdisciplinarité des discours et au cœur même de la critique littéraire. Pas de consensus, des cultures plurielles plutôt dirait l’ethnologue soucieuse d’observer les différentes approches, des hétérogènes avouerait le critique avide de passe-passe rapide et efficace. Si on se situe strictement sur le terrain de la littérature québécoise des quinze dernières années, on se retrouve ici aussi au confluent d’une lourde problématique. Non seulement par rapport au féminisme mais aussi par rapport au maniement critique de ce paradigme. De Pierre Nepveu à Patricia Smart sans oublier de noter les perspectives établies par Janet Patterson, Maroussia Ahmed et Barbara Godard, le moins qu’on puisse dire c’est que nous adresses cette problématique à partir de lieux forts différents et avec des outils plutôt disparates. Et les écrivains-nes dans tout cela? Ils et elles sont plus prudents. Leur circonspection serait même particulièrement marquée par rapport à de telles


3 Nombre de textes de la génération dite "de la modernité" n’ont jamais reçu d’appellation générique. On pourrait citer ici leurs auteurs: Madeleine Gagnon, Carole Massé, Louise Cotnoir, France Théorêt, François Charron, Claude Beausoleil, André Roy, Normand de Bellefeuille.
notions. Louise Dupré dans *A/Mazing Space* et Madeleine Gagnon dans *Modernité/Postmodernité du roman contemporain* nous parlent certes d'écriture postmoderne mais elles le font avec une prudence qui se retranche de manière un peu distante en deçà de la critique académique, hors champ, dans l'au-delà de l'aparté des créateurs souriants, mais sceptiquement amusés.

Une telle vigilance par rapport à ces appellations contrôlées du discours universitaire n'est du reste point imitée par les éditeurs, opérateurs essentiels des entreprises de légitimation puisqu'à l'Hexagone on n'hésitera pas en 1986 à qualifier *Le Désert mauve* de "certainement premier roman postmoderne écrit au Québec" (voir commentaire placé sur la couverture). Une telle assurance se voudrait — je suppose — communicative, mais en fait sur un terrain aussi miné que le postmodernisme, elle prend plutôt l'allure d'une fragile fanfaronade. J'avouerai, pour reconnaître le lieu de ma propre énonciation, que sur ledit terrain, j'ai quant à moi autant d'assurance que Sabine Azéma dans le film récent de Bertrand Tavernier, *La vie rien d'autre*; je me déplace moi aussi sur un terrain creusé d'obs — déjà éclaté et à retardement. Sauf que nous ne sommes pas en 1919 et que je ne cherche pas un cadavre, même symbolique.

Comment commencer à appréhender ce terrain du postmodernisme dans la littérarité québécoise? Comment en retracer les contours? Et pourquoi parler de pression franco-américaine?

Pour revenir dix ans en arrière, disons qu'il est un détail occulté qui m'a longtemps fascinée. Un des topos théoriques importants de ce postmodernisme a été commandité (ou à tout le moins provoqué) par le Québec. Lorsqu'on lit *La condition postmoderne* (1979) de Jean-François Lyotard, on l'oublie souvent. C'est à la demande d'une des instances légitimatriques du Québec que ce rapport fut écrit. Lyotard le note en passant, sans plus. Du reste, cet important moment théorique est-il dédié à une très hexagonale instance. L'ironie de l'occultation ne devrait cependant pas passer inaperçue. Ou tout au moins il est curieux que l'intelligentsia québécoise ne lui ait pas accordé d'attention. L'impulsion de ce "Rapport sur le savoir" a

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4 Cf. Suleiman. Voir sur la *commentaires* sur "The Crisis of Naming" (265) et ses références à Roland Barthes, "to read is to struggle to name ... the question is, does our naming make any difference?" (256).

5 Voir son commentaire "c'est un rapport sur le savoir dans les sociétés les plus développées qui a été proposé au Conseil des universités auprès du gouvernement du Québec à la demande de son Président" (9).

6 "Tel qu'il est, nous le dédions à l'institut polytechnique de philosophie de l’Université de Paris VIII (Vincennes), au moment très postmoderne où cette université risque de disparaître et cet institut de naître" (Lyotard 9).
trouvé origine au Québec. C'est une dette et une ascendance qui devraient mériter mieux que les trois très laconiques lignes du philosophe français. Ajoutons aussi qu'entre cette méditation philosophico-théorique dont l'importance n'a échappé à personne des deux côtés de l'Atlantique et les convulsions littéraires de ce terme il y a l'espace d'un océan. Les américains ou plus spécifiquement l'univers de la littérature anglo-saxonne n'ont pas attendu Lyotard et les subséquentes altercations provenant de l'autre côté du Rhin pour se situer par rapport au postmodernisme. Entre Irving Howe, David Lodge, Inhab Hassan, Terry Eagleton, etc., la question a fait couler beaucoup d'encre. Je me contenterai de vous renvoyer aux travaux de Susan Suleiman, Linda Hutcheon, Douwe Fokkema et Matei Calinescu sur ces questions. Pour simplifier grossièrement, on pourrait dire que la critique anglo-américaine d'un côté et les philosophes européens de l'autre s'en sont donné à coeur joie. Mais où cela nous laisse-t-il en ce qui concerne l'écriture littéraire au Québec? Plutôt que de discuter l'appartenance ou la non-appartenance de certaine écriture par rapport à ce champ discursif là (Aquinn postmoderne ou pas? Oui nous assurons Patricia Smart (268, 269, 270, 274, 287) et Janet Patterson, certainement pas répond André Baudet (45-46) pour qui l'auteur de Neige Noire est le père de la modernité québécoise, celui qui nous a faussé compagnie lorsque les choses ont commencé à mal tourner pour ladite modernité)... ce qui n'avancerait guère la problématique présente ni ne déminerait le terrain, j’aimerais essayer d’établir une très provisoire radiographie de cette problématique au Québec, de sa lente insertion dans le discours critique sur la littérature.

Culturrellement parlant, deux pulsions me semblent sous-tendre la présente décennie, procédant de circonspections différentes et opérant parfois à partir de dispositions contraires. La première procède du rappel de Pierre Népveu de "repenser le mode d'être de la littérature et de la culture québécoise" (10) de le déplacer d'un cadre étroitement national vers un territoire imaginaire pour employer la terminologie de Michel Morin et Claude Bertrand, ou je dirais quand à moi vers un imaginaire conceptuel et rhétorique plus marqué par sa contemporanéité, voire son occidentalité que par sa géopolitique particulière.

La deuxième pulsion surgit, quant à elle, de l'exaspération de l'intelligentsia québécoise face aux pressions théoriques franco-américaines. On en retrouvera de nombreuses traces entre 1984-88 mais l'expression la

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8 Les articles d'Habermas cités pourraient constituer l'essence de telles altercations.
plus percutante en revient à Laurent Michel Vacher lorsqu'il suggérera qu'être intellectuel en 1984 c'est peut-être aussi "ne pas s'engouffrer précipitamment dans la dernière combine new yorkaise ou parisienne" (31).

La dernière combine de Paris et New York? ... disons qu'au niveau de la critique littéraire, de telles tentations ont fait florès au Canada anglais comme au Québec depuis plusieurs décennies. Nous pouvons donc garder à l'esprit la mise en garde de Vacher tout autant que l'ouverture que nous offre Nepveu et l'une et l'autre pourront fonctionner comme d'utiles rappels.

Ce qui a arrêté mon attention depuis plusieurs années, c'est l'hésitation des métadiscours littéraires au Québec à situer leurs objets (la littérature) dans le champ de la postmodernité. Sur le terrain, une observation minutieuse de ce paradigme confirme cette impression de flottement généralisé. Par opposition — en particulier aux métadiscours esthétiques (je pense ici aux nombreux travaux de René Payant et de Chantal Pontbriand), voire politiques (Arthur Kroker et Daniel Salée), l'indécision parle aussi. Elle trahit un malaise, un "mal d'être" par rapport à des paradigmes, à des besoins qui eux circulent déjà depuis une décennie dans les milieux de la performance, de l'esthétique, de l'architecture.

Comment identifier ces nouvelles pulsions du postmodernisme? Citons rapidement le renouveau historiciste (cf. Payant) souligné par Craig Owens ou ce que Payant dénomme l'iconographie historiciste, le retour en force de la culture populaire nord-américaine noté par Fredric Jameson ("The Last Vegas Strip, The Late Show and Grade-B Hollywood films" 64), avec la nostalgie, le rétro que de tels besoins appellent, les pressions des hétérogènes et des tribalismes analysées par Michel Maffesoli (93-127) avec le retour de nouvelles socialités, de polyculturalismes, l'effacement des narcissismes et des individualismes tant prônés par la précédente décennie, de Christopher Lasch à Gilles Lipovetsky, au profit cette fois de ce que Maffesoli dénomme la proxémie (151-82). Cette circulation d'un nouveau capital symbolique est mal appréhendée au Québec, les métadiscours vont attendre une décennie plus à s'en emparer, à les démonter. Ceci est d'autant plus curieux qu'au niveau de la création littéraire, nombre de textes de Louky Bersianik, de Yolande Villemaire, de Jacques Poulain et Claude


10 Chantal Pontbriand, éditrice du magazine de critique d'art et d'esthétique Parachute aura fait d'importantes contributions à la problématique du postmodernisme. On pourra aussi consulter l'intéressant Performance: textes et documents (1981), édité par elle-même et qui regroupe nombre d'interventions canadiennes, américaines, européennes fort pertinentes au postmodernisme.
Beausoleil auraient pu inciter les critiques à poser certaines interrogations. Mais ils semblerait que l'ombre portée de la grande modernité empêche une réflexion métadiscursive sur de telles pratiques.

Et pourtant ces interrogations furent fréquemment posées dans le champ de la culture européenne comme dans celui de la critique américaine au cours de la décennie précédente. Du côté de la critique, de la métadiscursivité théorique, de telles attentes circulent assez mal au Québec jusqu'à une date que je fixerai vers 1985. Regardons quelques points de repères rapides. Le colloque Nicole Brossard en février 1983 ou à la question partie de l'assemblée: Comment situer les textes de Nicole et ceux des femmes à la *NBJ* par rapport à une problématique postmoderne ... le silence tombe. Dans l'épaisseur et le malaise qui s'en dégagent, on pourrait conclure qu'il y a une quasi-indécence à soulever la question. Il semblerait que le grand dégel — du moins dans les milieux littéraires — se situe circa 1985, l'année de la parution de l'Impureté, publication qui coïncide avec le passage à Montréal de Scarpetta et l'organisation d'une table-ronde au cours de laquelle René Payant — très lucidement — renvoie la balle à Scarpetta; sa méditation sur les postmodernismes américain et européen occulte totalement les développements québécois. Les écrits de Payant rassemblés en 1987 dans *Vedute* et les travaux de *Parachute* avant et après 1985 constitueraient par eux-mêmes une réplique à l'indifférence de Scarpetta. Mais de telles réponses ne pallieront pas aux réticences de la critique littéraire et de la théorie entre 1975 et 1985. Ce sont sur elles que j'aimerais me pencher quelques instants.

D'abord, une reconnaissance des mérites possibles de la circonspection. Si jauge d'un texte à l'aune d'un moule théorique pré-établi inspire la méfiance chez les critiques, pourquoi ne pas s'en féliciter? À quoi sert d'étiquetter méticuleusement un corpus et de répartir ses composantes en catégories dûment et explicitement séparées sous le très péremptoire cachet de ce que Susan Suleiman appelle les appellations contrôlées.

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Je répondrai à cet argument en disant que la pluralité des discours sur/du postmodernisme et leur interdisciplinarité a généralement incité les commentateurs culturels nord-américains et européens à une mise en situation de leur corpus. Il n’est que de regarder les sous-titres de plusieurs publications récentes pour noter ce que Payant lui-même avait noté comme "une transformation fondamentale" (21) opérée à partir de greffes et d’ajouts sur/dans des discours traditionnellement séparés; l’histoire de l’art, les sciences humaines, la psychanalyse. Certes, le postmodernisme n’est pas le premier à prendre acte de ces jonctions et métissages mais il en profite libéralement. Les sous-titres de livres récents publiés par exemple par Michel Maffesoli, Arthur Kroeker, Raymond Federman ou Linda Hutcheon sont là pour éayer un étoïlement en filigrane vers d’autres champs discursifs, d’autres ères épistémologiques. Avant même l’incipit, dès le titre franchi, lectrices et lecteurs notent ce piqué net sur l’hétérogéné des textualités.


Et finalement de la prudence de Ginette Michaud en 1985 (voir son article qui pose le point d’interrogation: "Récits postmodernes?" aux précautions théoriques du très récent L’Écologie du réel (1988) de Pierre Nepveu, si le point d’interrogation a disparu, le glissement au niveau interprétatif de ces discours continue. Le feuillet de Nepveu est subtil, dans l’effleuré du théorique (qui révèle une admirable maîtrise de son champ) autant que dans l’éblouissante multiplication de ses exemples — pour trouver une analyse aussi attentive du champ de la fiction québécoise des quinze dernières années, on ne pourra faire mieux que les quatre derniers essais de son livre (155-210).

Au niveau terminologique et surtout rhétorique, parler d’écriture migrante ou transculturelle (214), d’esthétique de ritualisation (214), de pluralisme (215), de dérive (217), d’un ici archéologique (219), c’est sans doute éviter les écueils posés par la pluridisciplinarité du postmodernisme

12 On ne pourrait fournir de références exhaustives sur cette tendance mais il serait néanmoins plausible de suggérer que le sous-titre a ici pour fonction d’étalir le champ découpé par le titre et de lui fournir un rayonnement interdisciplinaire explicitement étayé sur de plus vastes domaines (cf. Maffesoli, Trachtenberg, Ihab Hassan, Sally Hassan, Hutcheon, Thiher).
et, simultanément ceux posés par ses conflits intra et internationaux. Mais c'est aussi refuser l'occasion de se situer et de se démarquer par rapport à Hassan, Jameson, Russell, Lyotard, Welsch et Eco, de poser des jalons à une certaine distance de Maffesoli et Baudrillard et surtout de placer de telles problématiques discursives dans le champ de la francophonie nord-américaine. Tôt ou tard, il serait utile de se situer par rapport à ces deux ombres portées qui éventuellement acheminent leurs profils sur les productions culturelles du Québec.

René Payant et Chantal Pontbriand auront lucidement situé leurs travaux par rapport à ces deux ombres portées. Mais à tout prendre, leurs analyses ne font que frôler de près le champ de la littérature et nous laissent, à nous lecteurs, critiques, sans cartographie précise de la grande métadiscursivité du champ québécois.

Où donc se tourner dans ces complexes labyrinthes culturels où nous ne disposons même pas (à l'instar de la Grande Sauterelle de Volkswagen Blues) d'un guide approximatif et pittoresque, "The Oregon Trail Revisited" ou les "Sentiers obscurs du postmodernisme"? Sans privilégier une chronologie scolaire et myope, peut-être conviendra-t-il de revenir en arrière sur les années qui ont précédé le surgissement du postmodernisme. En un tel lieu, il sera bien sûr difficile de faire l'économie d'une évaluation de la modernité. Une lecture attentive des méandres, polémiques et questionnements qui fusent à travers la NBJ et les Herbes Rouges... le pain est lourd sur la planche.

1983-84 sont sans doute des points charnières dont il conviendrait de prendre acte. On ne devrait pas faire l'économie des prises de position marquées par André Beaudet, Line McMurray, Gordon Lefebvre, Laurent Michel Vacher, André Roy et Louise Dupré, quelles que soient les tensions qui les divisent sur plusieurs questions. Des moments marqués par le colloque "Vouloir la fiction" le 29 février 1984, ou le numéro spécial Intellectuelle en 1984? ou "Qui a peur de l'écrivain?" (no. spécial des Herbes Rouges [1984]). Les tracés sont peu convergents et le temps n'est pas à l'homogénéisation des discours. À noter cependant... des coincidences et de brefs consensus sur certains points. La fatigue de la modernité est un de ces moments — sinon consensuel — du moins majoritairement posé. Ce sera du reste le titre de la communication d'André Beaudet ce même 29 février 1984 et le recul opéré par Carole Massé sur cette notion lui confèrera une

13 Sur l'ère internationale, le conflit Lyotard-Habermas aura longtemps dominé le champ (cf. Rorty). Au sein d'une même culture linguistique (pour ambigu et inadéquat que soit ce terme!), soit l'inter-nationale, on pourra profiter des méditations de Craig Owens sur ces problématiques dans October, op.cit. Dans une ère plus hexagonale, on notera les "différends" entre Scarpetta et Lyotard dans L'Impureté (1985, 28, 43).
Le post-modernisme au Québec / 29

perspective rarement accordée à ce paradigme. L’auteur de Dieu en effet, ne se replie pas sur un mouvement théorique qui irait de Rimbaud à Tel Quel mais situe la modernité carrément au lendemain des Lumières en rappellant qu’elle "aura bientôt deux cents ans avec Hegel, les Impressionnistes et les Poètes maudits et que dans ce courant-là, s’assurer de son inscription revient peut-être aussi à se constituer une épitaphe (Massé 69-77). Il est des actes de courage dans ces processus qui prennent acte — "achoppements" — le terme est de Louise Dupré (1985, 50-51), des tics de la génération précédente, de sa doxa ou de sa "quinciaillerie convenable" (Dupré encore [1985, 50]). Mais cette fameuse autopsy (sic) de la modernité comme dira Jean Royer (81) cette distanciation par rapport à son illisibilité (Dupré 1985, 50) n’est pas dépourvue de tirailllements. Voir pour preuve la distance entre l’exposé d’ouverture de Nicole Brossard et ses paroles lors de sa clôture. Initialement, elle avait posé la modernité comme "accélération … ultime précision de la littérature, sa perte, soit sa science radicale" (Brossard 1985, 29). Après quatre heures d’âpres débats sur cette question, elle reconnait — à regret? — qu’il faudrait peut-être changer de l’expé en de réseau imaginaire" (Brossard 1985, 89).

Ce qui compte dans ce processus critique qui est aussi une auto-critique, c’est peut-être moins le fait que plusieurs, Line McMurray, André Gervais, Sylvie Gagné, en appelant à la postmodernité réclament le besoin d’une reconnaissance des formes du passé, de l’histoire, mais que la contextualisation de manques, d’épuisements, de ratages ait été faite (Gervais 54, McMurray 85). C’est aussi une décennie qui est soumise au très sain examen minutieux, autant qu’impitoyable, de ces grippages et échecs théoriques. Il serait difficile d’imaginer l’intelligentsia canadienne anglaise aux prises avec de telles interrogations sur ses motivations, ses échecs.


C’est cette mise en situation de ce que Gordon Lefeuvre appellera le suicide des avant-garde (107), ce besoin de bilan pour surplomber le présent que je trouve salutaire théoriquement courageux, lucide jusque dans sa vul-

14 Cette conférence se tint à Vancouver en 1983. Elle rassemblait de nombreux écrivains qui ont centré leur communication sur le thème-titre de la conférence. Parmi eux, on notera la présence de Sharon Thesen, B.P. Nichol et George Bowering.
nérabilité. C'est aussi une analyse conjoncturelle de l'imaginaire québécois et de ses productions culturelles ... à l'aube de l'exercice du pouvoir par le PQ et de l'échec référendaire (Yanacopoulos 57-70). C'est aussi difficile et dangereux exercice que la pensée féministe inféchit considérablement les interventions de Louise Dupré et d'André Yanacopoulos m'apparaissent essentielles par rapport à ces instances parce qu'elles situent les complexes rapports du féminisme par rapport au projet national et ses apories (cf. Dupré 1985, 135-149; Yanacopoulos 57-70).

À la veille de la dernière décennie du siècle, on ne peut que saluer le courage d'une telle lucidité et surtout sa volonté d'auto-critique.

À travers les rides du formalisme et les tics engendrés par l'autotélisme de la modernité, comment retracer le ressourcement présent? Qui le dit? Où le chercher? Quelles modalités prend-t-il? Si Line McMurray et André Gervais, "il faudrait peut-être parler d'une postmodernité" (85), "nous sommes paradoxiquement en état de postmodernité quand ... de tous bords de l'Atlantique ... l'éternel retour est sournoisement ou non demandé" (54), en lancement le concept, ce dernier ne sera pas repris par d'autres.

J'en déduirai, dans mon état présent, que ce ne sera pas tant à partir des métadiscours mais des pratiques qu'on pourra en observer les effets, les interrogations. Et comme je l'ai déjà mentionné, de telles pratiques n'auront pas attendu les convulsions théoriques de la NBJ et des Herbes Rouges pour se manifester ou, fait plus significatif encore, n'auront pas nécessairement surgi dans ces lieux-là.

Pour essayer de cerner ces manifestations (sans les décontextualiser par rapport au contradictoire postmodernisme occidental), il est évidemment tentant de comparer ces productions à d'autres surgies de l'Europe et de l'Amérique du Nord. En ce qui concerne cette nouvelle sensibilité, l'Histoire est évidemment la grande survenante. Non que les critiques tombent nécessairement d'accord sur sa réinsertion, ou son exclusion, mais il n'en reste pas moins qu'elle constitue un paradigme obsessif. Si le sujet et l'Histoire

15 Il faudrait du reste inclure dans cette réflexion sur le rôle de l'intellectuel le texte de Robert Hébert, "Hypothèses loconiques sur un lieu en temps de paix" (113-34) qui évalue l'ambiguïté de la "nouvelle classe" issue de la décennie précédente, celle qui se sera constituée autour de l'avant-garde littéraire et des représentants des sciences sociales.

16 "De telles œuvres reconnaissent ne pas pouvoir rompre avec le passé en ignorant. Si elles cherchent à le dépasser, ce n'est pas en le réprimant ou en l'oubliant comme le proposait l'idéalisme des avant-gardes ... mais plutôt en opérant une sorte d'anamnèse, au sens de la thérapeutique psychanalytique — quant au passé que le présent interroge comme son matériau, pour comprendre sa complexité issue de l'histoire..." (Payant 355-63) et "réappropriation qui fragmente l'histoire en zones locales et singulières. Autrement dit, elle fait de l'histoire son matériau et non sa cause" (419). On pourra regarder également son "Métamorphoses d'histoire" (495-98). On pourra aussi consulter Thiher
avaient été les grands perdants de la modernité de l'aveu explicite des écrivaines (Dupré 1986, 357-58; Théoret 361-66),17 autant que des métadiscours critiques, tous deux firent un retour en force avec les textes féministes de la mi-décennie (1975). Mais on ne peut revisiter un passé dans une culture comme on le ferait dans une autre (outre que ces passés sont différents, les étiquettes de l'hôte comme de l'invitée différaient d'une culture à l'autre). Cette visite ultérieure que l'écriture postmoderne va faire à son propre passé, cette fréquentation de son musée imaginaire va donc opérer à l'intérieur de modalités particulières.

Observons de plus près le paradigme dénommé Histoire. Dans une certaine mesure, la modernité québécoise s'en était délestée. D'une période allant de 1965 (date du lancement de La Barre du Jour) jusqu'en 1975 (date de parution de L'Amér), l'effet du réel, le vécu, le subjectif et avec lui le lest du référent avaient été jetés par-dessus bord.18 Mais diachroniquement parlant, cette modernité aura été brève par rapport au siècle qui l'avait précédée. Et il ne viendrait à l'esprit de personne de nier que de François-Xavier Garneau, en passant par Lionel Groulx et en aboutissant à des groupes tels L'Hexagone ou Parti Pris, le capital symbolique de ladite Histoire n'ait été riche en legs, héritages, textes et codiciles. Les lectures que feront des américains comme Alan Thiher, des canadiens anglais tels Linda Hutcheon ou des allemands tels Andreas Huyssen, de ce paradigme par rapport aux littératures examinées sont admirablement pertinentes à la richesse de leur corpus (et dans le cas de Thiher comme celui d'Hutcheon, elles incluent un corpus latino-américain et italien également ... mais de telles analyses sont difficilement applicables à la fiction ou à la poésie québécoise. Ces dernières ne revendiqueront pas le passé

(226-27). Ses commentaires sur Günter Grass et Peter Chotjewitz (190-92, 200, 240), "retrieving the past" dit Thiher avec de fortes implications écologiques et politiques. Umberto Eco a aussi des réflexions intéressantes sur ces questions (1-13) à ajouter sur cette question le chapitre 9 de Huyssen ("The Search for Tradition: Avant-Garde and Postmodernism in the 70's").

17 Voir particulièrement: "Modernity explores the text for the text's sake. Later the text/sex association seeks to inscribe the speaking subject, but always reducing it to a body, a textual presence abstracted from its History. The speaking subject [in formalism] has no social inscription, no individual history and belongs to no nation, generation, or gender/genre. ... Formalism ... tended to make literature aseptic" (Théoret 362). Sur cette question, on pourra aussi consulter le no de Voix et Images 40 (automne 1988), qui contient un dossier sur France Théorêt et examine ces questions du sujet-femme et de l'histoire oblitérées au cours de la décennie 1965-1975.

comme Margaret Atwood, Andrey Thomas, Robert Kroetsch, George Bowering & Al ... auront choisi de le faire.

Nous opérons dans une autre demeure, dont les greniers à trésors sont différents. Pas de tradition réaliste contre laquelle s’insurger, pas de Balzac ni même de Mordecai Richler. Ce ne sera donc pas une remobilisation, une ironie évocation au deuxième degré de personnages historiques (comme le Riel de Rudy Wiebe ou le couple Windsor pour Timothy Findlay) qui seront significatives, quoique ce genre de retour ironique soit pratiqué aussi par Jacques Poulain et Claude Beausoleil, mais la déchirure, le "pas au-delà" pour reprendre l’expression de Blanchot n’y sont pas présents. Certes, de tels textes profitent des acquis de la modernité. Entre autres sur son plan générique: *Une certaine fin de siècle* de Beausoleil est simultanément un carnet de voyage, une biographie confessionnelle, une méditation sur la culture occidentale, un ironique retour sur le poète maudit d’une autre fin de siècle et une satire des années 1950 qui paradoxalement s’en fait aussi la fétichisation stylisée.19 Si Beausoleil réintroduit un lyrisme occulté par la Modernité ("nous reviendrons comme des Nelligan" 47-50), il lui sous-tend un autre texte, celui de la culture populaire, de la télévision et de sa mystique sportive ("La partie supplémentaire" 206-13), du texte de l’adolescence, mais revue et corrigée, sentimentalisée dirais-je, presque cinématique avec ses effets de flous, de noirs et blancs, d’auto-réflexivité; car finalement, c’est bien un homme de quarante ans qui projette avec tendresse le petit garçon maladroit qui mange des chips dans la cuisine, le vendredi soir, pendant la partie supplémentaire. Le jeu est double et procède de ce que les critiques du postmodernisme ont dénommé "the forked tongue of post-modernism, the divided issue of two voices simultaneously and independently delivering a contradictory message as in Barthes’s fugues which chants ‘this is no art ... I am art’" (cité de Barthes 181).

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19 En ce qui concerne la jonction de genres disparates dans les rouages d’un même récit, on pourrait arguer qu’elle est une des "veines littéraires" de cette fin de siècle. Les textes d’écrivains anglais contemporains Bruce Chatwin, Jonathan Raban, Garvin Young en fournissent de très pertinentes illustrations, tous trois excellant dans cette adjonction du carnet de voyage à la méditation ethnologique, à la critique acerbe sur leur culture d’origine, et, ultimement à la confession biographique — métaphysique (tous trois étant ironiquement conscients des aléas de ce genre littéraire). En ce qui concerne la stylisation et la fétichisation du récit, on pourra se référer à Habermas: "The postmodern response to the modern consists of recognizing that the past ... must be revisited ironically, in away which is not innocent. For me the postmodern attitude is that of a man who loves a woman who is intelligent and well-read: he knows he cannot tell her: ‘I love you desperately’ because he knows ... it is a live out of Barbara Cartland. Yet there is a solution. He can say: As Barbara Cartland would say, I love you desperately" (1981, 3).
LE SCAPHANDRIER ET LA NOMADE

Comment retracer les nouveaux instincts de cette postmodernité au Québec? Parmi les autres acquis de la modernité qui ne seront pas abandonnés, il faudrait mentionner l'auto-réflexivité, la pratique de la mise en abîme discursive, les jeux de miroir, le ludisme citationnel, mais étais sur une anamnèse bien particulière. Je perçois dans cette dernière deux mouvements pas nécessairement complémentaires, ni obligatoirement simultanés. Le premier serait certes une réactivation verticale, synchronique du passé. Jacques Poulain l'a, à sa manière, dénommé le "complexe du scaphandrier" (135-47). Mais c'est une réappropriation interprétative, le passé y est déchiffré... autant que soumis à l'aune d'une herméneutique ironique et didactique. L'écriture féminine va du reste inféchir cette quête du scaphandrier avec des visées téléologiques (voir là-dessus le projet d'une archéologie du futur de Louky Bersianik (49). L'Eugénienne et Pique-nique sur l'Acropole joueront le rôle de tels déchiffrements et par eux les traditions judéo-chrétienne et hellénique en prendront abondamment pour leur compte. Mais de tels textes tracent aussi un projet, une volonté utopique au sens étymologique du terme: retracer ce qui n'existe pas encore. Allégories que de tels textes? Oui, au sens que Craig Owens donne à ce terme. C'est à dire... une lecture consciemment anachronique d'un héritage textuel, une déconstruction qui se veut aussi, lucidement, dépossession. Le champ référentiel — en l'occurrence la femme, le sujet-femme n'y est ni mis entre parenthèses ni entre point de suspension mais problématisé. La femme "sujet" fait problème et A/MAzing Space (cf. Théorêt, Scott 367-73) illustré éloquemment cette problématique. Dans un genre moins didactique, mais tout autant travaillé par des anamnèses ré-interprétatives télescopant des chronologies différentes, on pourra examiner les textes de Jacques Poulain et spécifiquement ses deux derniers (Les grandes marées, Léméac, 1978, et Volkswagen Blues, 1984). Sauf qu'ici, la réappropriation demeure irrésoluble (les carnets de route de l'Oregon Trail Revisited sont indécodables, indécidables, les traductions de Teddy imparfaites autant qu'inutiles, c'est la poubelle qui en hérite).

Les visées téléologiques d'une certaine écriture féminine se trouvant ici décimées, l'avenir demeure encore plus indécidable que le présent. C'est du

20 Si le concept d'anamnèse est un des dénominateurs communs de la postmodernité occidentale, il n'en demeure pas moins que ses développements au Québec ont pris des directions autres que celles amorcées dans le reste de l'Amérique du Nord (le Canada et les USA ayant de même entre eux démarqué de sérieuses différences). Un rapport différent au paradigme dénommé Histoire et des tensions également différentes à un autre paradigme que je pourrai dénommer espace, territorialité, voire géographie expliquent en grande partie ces contrastes (cf. Bayard 1990).
restes en ce lieu que postmodernisme et féminisme risquaient de se fausser compagnie. L'héritage des Lumières, la notion de progrès font mauvais ménage avec les relativismes, les hétérogènes d'une fin de siècle qui prônera les petits histoires à la profondeur d'une archeologie, à l'intentionalité d'une utopie. Les projets de l'écriture féminine découvrent les textes de Nicole Brossard et de Louky Bersianik ne trouvent pas de prolongements, ni de parallèles possibles dans le postmodernisme des récits de Poulain. On ne peut pas retrouver ce passé, même en dormant sur la tombe de Pauline Johnson découvre la Grande Sauterelle,21 on ne trouve jamais un frère même si on le revoit, retracer des pas oui... mais finalement à quoi bon, les anamnèses, c'est connu "sont dangereuses, elles aggravent l'état d'un patient" (Poulain 1984, 288). Que fait-on dans ce cas? On erre, par les sentiers de l'Amérique, on chante des airs oubliés, on se remémore des cultures passées et enfouies dans l'oubli, on revisite de multiples galeries imaginaires peuplées d'hétéroclites personnages.22

Ironic de l'effet — histoire aussi — que Daniel Laferrière dans Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer (1986) pose doublement; d'abord parce qu'on ne peut pas la prendre au sérieux, ensuite parce qu'elle ne nous prend pas au sérieux. Comme le dit le narrateur-auteur "l'Histoire ne s'intéresse pas à nous et nous on ne s'intéresse pas à l'Histoire" (33).

Affirmation du reste promptement et effrontément contredite par la sereine affirmation: "C'est ici que se joue le sort de la civilisation judéo-chrétienne, entre deux nègres dragueurs en (sic) chômage" (33). Les fantasmes (phantasmes écrit toujours Laferrière) sont aussi sexuels que textuels (la modernité en filigrane?) et la Remington du narrateur "produit du texte" autant que les femmes qui traversent sa chambre. La fringale de culture(s) et de corps (la Remington a aussi ses sienes, elle a appartenu à Chester Himes) qui ponctuent le jazz de Parker et les Sourates coraniques démonte de multiples intertextes (culture américaine/texte sacré/textes féminins même, ou plutôt la "réception de ces derniers").23 Ce faisant, avec bouffonnerie et sens de l'outrage, cette fringale réécrit l'histoire et sa saveur

21 En fait, c'est en 1984 Pauline Johnson et le grand chef Thayendanegea qu'elle choisit de dormir (Poulain 1984, 81-88).


Vulgaire cette récente fiction? On a pu l'en accuser. Ses registres n'étaient pas précisément de ceux auxquels la décennie précédente nous avaient habitués (on pourrait la comparer avec French Kiss, Neige Noire, l'Hiver de force, textes disparates mais issus de l'énergie de la modernité et concéder que les tonalités aient viré). La quétainerie ne fait plus peur à personne. Suggérons qu'elle serait presque de mise et portée à la boutonnière dans La vie en prose, Une certaine fin de siècle, Volkswagen Blues ou Une histoire américaine de Jacques Godbout.

Mais ce sera une quétainerie sophistiquée, un maniérisme amusé, tous deux placés dans le subtil creuset des artisans du texte (Poulain et Villemaire sont aussi des "routiers" de l'effet littérature). Ils ont aussi — en plus une bonne dose d'insolence dans leur sac. Quand Jameson parlait des mirages du Las Vegas Strip et de mauvais films, il n'avait pas pensé à la littérature québécoise, mais l'iconographie médiatisée et multipliée à l'infini qu'il analysait aura reçu ici, sous la pression de ce certain hyperréalisme dont parle Monique Larue, une subtile transformation. Les sourates de Laferrière, les télescopes de Villemaire et les errements géographiques des héros/héroïnes de Poulain déclenchent à mes yeux ce deuxième mouvement que je dénommerai celui de l'histoire horizontalisée, spatialisée, éclatée vers l'immensité d'une géographie que des générations précédentes n'avaient pas eu le goût ou le loisir d'explorer. Je pourrai aussi l'appeler l'effet-Amérique. Pierre Nepveu a noté récemment cette dérive de la textualité québécoise vers le Sud (Nepveu 1988, 214-218, 231, 234) dans les années quatre-vingt, ce passage, du syntagme-hiver de Vignault-Miron, à la tropicalité, au désoeuvrement en extase, commencés chez Aquin, développés en partie chez Brossard, voir Le Désert mauve, et parodiés à fond, jusque dans ses présupposés ethno-culturels, chez Laferrière.

Cet effet-Amérique, si présent aussi dans le récent Une histoire américaine de Godbout et le Volkswagen Blues de Poulain, incitent les lectrices et les critiques à placer en exergue de ces fictions quelques récentes méditations Baudrillardiennes. Sauf que curieusement, le texte de Poulain est un subtil

24 Voir Eco sur le concept de maniérisme (7). Mais l'humour est une composante qu'Eco ne discute pas dans cet article.

25 Jacques Poulain avec Volkswagen Blues fournit une éloquente réponse à la lecture de Baudrillard, pour ne pas dire un subtil démantèlement de ses affirmations. Baudrillard: "Pas d'oasis, pas de monuments, travaillant indéfini du minéral et des autoroutes.... Pourquoi les déserts sont-ils si fascinants? C'est que toute profondeur y est résolue — neutralité brillante, mouvante et superficielle, défi au sens et à la profondeur, défi à la nature et à la culture, hyper-espace intérieur, sans origine désormais, sans références" (241-41; c'est moi qui souligne). Dans Volkswagen Blues, on notera le musée de Scott's
déplacement de celui de Baudrillard et que le romancier concrétise ce que le théoricien français rate, ou occulte dans sa lecture de l’effet-Amérique... intéressant infliéchissement québécois de la superficialité un peu rapide d’un certain postmodernisme français.26

On pourrait aussi ajouter que le grand rêve de l’Amérique est retrouvé en morceaux irrécollables, inajustables, par les personnages de Poulain passionés d’Histoire... mais d’Histoire que revient sous forme de micro récits, de réappropriations fragiles, poignantes et fragmentées en zones locales (L’Héraut). C’est un grand rêve qui fonctionne aussi sous le mode de fantasmes critiques, outrageants, follement irrespectueux des poncifs politiques, nationaux, "progressistes" voire féministes, de tout l’arsenal des "refus globalistes" taquinés féroce ment par François Benoit et Philippe Chauveau. L’outrance la plus efficace au niveau de telles explorations postmodernes c’est celle de Dany Laferrière dont le narrateur confesse avec une désarmante simplicité: "C’est simple je veux l’Amérique" (Laferrière 29), et prétend ré-écrire le chef d’oeuvre noir de l’Amérique. Mais cette négritude qui se veut québécoise (de quoi donner des frissons à Lionel Groulx et d’agréables secousses aux survivants de Parti Pris... quelle justice poétique!) a aussi la splendide impudence de conseiller à James Baldwin "d’aller se rhabiller" (Laferrière 89).27


Que conclure de ce rapide tour d’horizon sur la métadiscursivité autant sur la fiction et la poésie? Je suis moins certaine que René Payant ne semble

Bluff sur l’immigration vers l’ouest (197-200), le musée de Fort Laramie sur l’histoire amérindienne (201-08), les documents de la librairie de City Lights peuplées de fantômes de James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway et Scott Fitzgerald (263-72).

26 Pour une lecture acerbe de ce qu’il dénomme la superficialité de Baudrillard, voir Hughes (29-31).

l'être, lorsqu'il nous confie que le postmodernisme n'est ni affaire de style, ni productions de nouveaux objets. Il me semblerait plutôt qu'il aura participé au premier et favorisé l'éclosion de nombreux deuxièmes. Mais je le rejoindrai sûrement lorsqu'il énonce que ce même postmodernisme aura changé et déplacé nos systèmes évaluatifs, interprétatifs. Et j'ajouterai que ceci fut accompli à la fois par le scaphandrier et la nomade de l'effet-Amérique. Ces deux dernières images constituereraient peut-être à mes yeux la plus originale réponse aux grandes ombres portées, l'américaine et la française. Si pressions ces dernières firent ... il leur faudra un jour accuser réception des explorations de ce scaphandrier et de la nomade. Ce serait peut-être la meilleure réponse à l'occultation de Lyotard (1979).

La métadiscursivité, au Québec surtout, mais aussi ailleurs, dans ses sentiers théoriques et critiques a une certaine distance à couvrir avant de rattraper les problématiques posées par ces écritures. Quant aux multiples écritures féminines, si elles se feront compagnes de route avec ces écrits nomades, il m'apparaît moins assuré qu'elles le fassent très longtemps. Je découle des pactes temporaires et d'épisode complexes plus que de solides alliances. Mais cela, déjà, est un autre récit.

*McMaster University*
Le post-modernisme au Québec / 39


Le portique des noms propres
(Deuxième partie)\textsuperscript{1}

Le nom de Figue à la douce figure au génie amarante et blanc

Aphélie au bleu regard parle aussi de sang à la sienne. Elle croit que sa statue a le génie du sang. Un peu comme elle, autrefois, Aphélie....

— Tu connais. Le versement anachronique. L'écoulement à contretemps. Sang de femme si souvent versé par celui qui s'est dit l'homme en face d'elle, existence encombrante. Par un ambitieux comme père ambitieux. Par un maladroit comme mari maladroit. Par un amant. Par un frère. Par un inconnu comme propriétaire inconnu. Par un banal dispensateur de violence indispensable. Sang de femme écoulé comme une marchandise. Le sang se fige hors de soi et prend quelque part la figure du meurtre. Hors de soi c'est un sang étranger.

— Étrange pour elle le sang de l'égorge, dit cette autre naissante.

— De l'écorchée vive, de l'enterrée vivante, dit Aphélie. Mais familier, fidèle à lui-même, transfuge heureux le sang de la donneuse. Qui ne trahit rien d'autre que sa joie de passer dans le camp des étranges et terribles femmes bien que non étrangères, bien que non terrifiantes.

De la femme à la Cariatide se transfusent les mille affluents du sang rouge d'Aphélie, faveur érotique aux itinéraires impensables conçus pour les voyages au long cours. Au cœur de la Géante commence la croisière silencieuse des globules sanguins étrangement familiers, petits navires longtemps inerces qui n'avaient jamais navigué peut-être. Fruits charnus échappés de Barbarie et voguant dans l'eau rouge au gré des courants. Clyto aux mouvements jaune paille au clitorivage heureux reconnaît sa fille ancienne mais elle a perdu le

\textsuperscript{1} Extrait du roman en préparation: \textit{Vers une archéologie du futur.}

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nom de tous ses enfants. De celle-ci surtout. Perdue à jamais pour elle. Et la blessure profonde de cette perte profonde était cette veine à peine apparente dans le marbre blanc.

— Fille de Clyto, dit Aphélie, ton visage est la douceur même et je te nomme Figue. Comme si tu étais soudainement mon bon génie.

Figue à la douce figure, au génie amarante et blanc. Fille au cou de calcite poli, légèrement marqué…. Figure marquée au cou comme celle de Clyto. Au même endroit. Cette fille regarde Aphélie. Et ce regard qui interroge coule en mauve le beau regard posé sur elle.

**Le nom de Sélecta la délectable à la lueur violette**

**Edith aux gestes précis** apprend qu'elle s'adresse à la soeur de Figue. Et que cette soeur avait tout perdu, jusqu'à l'idée de pleurer. Elle lui parle de larmes non versées qui ont repris leur cours aujourd'hui. Et leur valeur indiscutable. Elle l'inonde de la pensée de cette mer salée électrisante qui rend luminescente et palpitante sa statue.

— Il était une fois dans une autre dimension un amoncellement de larmes prêtes à se répandre sur le versant du cœur. Il était une fois de la cyprine encore en latence prête à monter comme un lait de géante. Fille de Clyto, ton nom est Sélecta la bien-aimée la délectable. Et ta lueur est violette.

Sélecta se met à vivre. Elle s'y met doucement. Avec soulagement. Tremblement des cils. Se met à vivre entière et exacte sur la lumière même, comme aile qui se fait jour et lucidité. Et qui dessine des gestes avec précision comme écriture sumérienne. Là où des mains soudain sont apparentes.

Un ancien noyau de souffrance au creux de ces mains fait son fruit indolore et savoureux. Sélecta se remet à contempler les restes du temple d'en face, celui qu'elle a contemplé pendant des siècles sans le voir. Pas un seul dieu, pas un seul père n'y est assassiné. Ils n'existent tout simplement plus. Peut-être depuis très longtemps. Même sa haine ancienne ne trouve en elle aucune mère à abattre, aucune soeur ennemie. Ni sa passion, de frère à aimer plus que tout. Son cœur est vide et pur comme un pur objet de cristal reflétant le Parthénon sur tous ses angles.

Elle se met à lécher ses mains et s'étonne qu'elles n'aient pas le goût du Sang. Seulement le goût des fruits de la terre. Ses mains qui, dans l'instant
où elles apparaissent, n'ont plus rien de tragique. Elle les donne à goûter à Édith dans un geste d'une grande précision.

**Le nom de Brizi au feuillage vert au souffle vigoureux**

*Epsilononne aux longues jambes* nomme sa Cariatide: *Brizi*, et lui transmet l'art de soulever sa poitrine régulièrement. Elle lui enseigne le rythme des profondeurs qui se joue en surface.

*Brizi* commence par expirer longuement, de cette interminable respiration qu'elle tient en suspens depuis le jour où le ciseau du sculpteur antique lui a coupé le souffle, la rendant compacte et imperméable au flux de l'air. Et inerte. Une chose que l'on martèle jusqu'à ce qu'elle ait pris la forme voulue. Une chose que l'on s'échange entre soldats comme butin de guerre propre à tous les usages.


— *Brizi* au feuillage vert, au souffle vigoureux, dit *Epsilononne*. Je te nomme la bien-nommée, dit-elle encore, tandis que *Brizi* expire joyeusement pour la deuxième fois, et tandis que *Brizi* recommence à respirer pour elle, rien que pour elle, à se lover autour des spires de sa jeune respiration, et tandis que *Brizi* recommence ainsi jusqu'à ce que cette spirale de vie la situe dans notre galaxie. Une flûte enfin vivante dont les notes viennent de rencontrer leur second souffle. Pour une seconde éternité.

**Le nom de Crizi au choc innombrable aux joues orangées**

Sa soeur *Crizi* est réanimée par *Xanthippe à la fine main*, qui l’a bien connue jadis.

absents quoique visibles. Tu n'étais qu'une apparence minérale. Et tes yeux que la peau vide et desséchée d'un raisin de Corinthe.

Crizi fait de grands efforts pour s'affranchir de son esclavage de pinacle. Sa mémoire a effacé toute trace de la barbarie qui la rendit autrefois chose et autre de celui-ci et de celui-là.

— Crizi aux joues orangées, dit Xanthippe avec tendresse. Je n'ai pas oublié tes crises de colère quand tu te révoltas contre ton sort. Aujourd'hui, tu rapatries tes nerfs. Et tu reçois pour y répondre le choc innombrable des excitations qui assaillent ton corps de vivante sans le blesser. Qui ne font que le piquer aux extrémités pour t'avertir qu'il est bien vivant. Que lui donner la piqûre de la vie, la drogue au cœur qui s'ébranle. Nouvelle battue en forêt de fibres, qui ne s'arrêtera plus.

**Le nom de sandra la laconienne à la parole bleu de nuit**

*Ancyl aux longs cils berce une captive dont les dents de prophète se mettent à moudre des sons de crédibilité. Clyto reconnaît sa rivale, mais ne peut la nommer.*

— Salut à toi la Laconienne, dit Ancyl. Te souviens-tu que ton peuple était célèbre pour la précision de sa langue? Le sens de ses paroles n'était jamais évident, il fallait le découvrir et alors elles disaient plus encore que ce qu'elles voulaient dire. Toi et tes soeurs vous en êtes les signes indéchiffrés mais non indéchiffrables. Et toi, par surcroît, il paraît que tu prophétises.

— Mais personne ne me croit.

— Tu te souviens de cela!

— Que de cela.

— De rien d'autre?

— Que des cendres mortes dans ma bouche.

— Ne serais-tu pas une princesse troyenne? Que t'est-il arrivé dans la nuit des temps?

— Peut-être qu'un jour un jeune homme très amoureux à qui j'aurais refusé un baiser s'est-il approché de moi, m'a-t-il ouvert la bouche et y a-t-il craché
Le portique des noms propres / 47

son dépit. Peut-être était-ce un rêve? Je ne saurais le dire. Dès mon réveil,
j'ai constaté que l'intérieur de ma bouche avait perdu le sens des saveurs.
D'abord des charbons ardents, puis des braises, puis ces cendres mortes....

— Je te nomme Sandra à la parole bleu de nuit rendue intelligible, dit Ancyl.
Puissent les sons articulés de ta bouche ne plus se heurter au mur du doute
et du mépris.

Les Géantes de marbre s'incarnent sous nos yeux soudain sont incarnées
d'un bout à l'autre d'elles-mêmes. Elles émergent de leurs vêtements de
pierre en chair et en cheveux, chair lisse et cheveux fluides, elles émergent
avec leurs tendres flots de poils lisses et fluides, et leurs vêtements de pierre
se brisent sur la pierre.

Cette incarnation abolit la solitude effroyable de cette acropole désertique,
anéantit la distance qui les tenait éloignées, ignorantes l'une de l'autre,
inaccessibles l'une à l'autre, bien que très proches. Leur coeur de chair
cogne maintenant contre de la chair. Avertine entend cette cognée et peut
à peine le supporter. Le bruit est sourd, le roulis de ces moteurs
en marche, ces moteurs sont puissants, elle peut à peine ... moi c'est les
cœurs, pense-t-elle avec angoisse.

Couvertes de chair et de sang, les Géantes de marbre quittent le portique de
l'Érechthéion qui s'effondre comme au ralenti. Le bruit est sourd. Il est
strident. Il rassemble des millions de cris de tous les temps, et les retransmet
en accéléré dans l'aigu. Dans l'instant même.

L'instant d'après, les noms propres s'élançant du portique, quittent cet
effondrement, fuguent et planent au-dessus du temple, les noms nouveaux,
nus et lisses, résonnent aux oreilles aux quatre coins de l'Acropole et de la
cité endormie et aux quatre coins du monde, d'abord en un seul bloc, puis,
articulés, comme les maillons d'une seule chaîne, et enfin comme des unités
personnelles et vibrantes.

CLYTOFIGUESÉLECTACRIZIBRIZISANDRA
CLYTO-FIGUE-SÉLECTA-CRIZI-BRIZI-SANDRA
CLYTO FIGUE SÉLECTA CRIZI BRIZI SANDRA

Les autres noms propres se mélangent amoureusement, formant d'abord une
liane, puis une chaîne, puis des grappes où s'accrochent treize noms de
femmes couvrant les trois dimensions de l'espace et les trois dimensions
du temps, et enfin se donnant chacun un blanc entre eux pour exister sans
se nuire, sans se confondre.

AVERTINE
APHÉLIE-XANTHIPPE
ADIZETU-ANCYL
ÉDITH-EPISOLONNE

AVERTINE-APHÉLIE-XANTHIPPE-ADIZETU-ANCYL-ÉDITH-EPISOLONNE

AVERTINE
ÉDITH-SÉLECTA
ÉPISOLONNE-BRIZI CRIZI XANTHIPPE
ANCYL-SANDRA
ADIZETU

AVERTINE
ANCYL BRIZI CLOTO ÉDITH FIGUE SANDRA
ADIZETU CRIZI EPSILONNE
SÉLECTA XANTHIPPE
APHÉLIE

Les Cariatides saisissent les femmes qui leur ont insufflé la vie et les
emportent loin de ce lieu dangereux en train de disparaître avec fracas. Pour
qu’aucune femme en cet instant ne disparaisse. Sous leurs pas souverains
jaillit une fontaine, puis une autre, puis un laurier rose.... L’immuable,
l’aride Acropole d’Athènes est secouée par cette croissance soudaine, par ces
cries ces noms inouïs, par ce saisissement, par l’eau de ces fontaines. Et ce
qui a commencé comme l’histoire de la magie des mots et dans la joie de
nommer ce qui n’a pas de nom, ce qui a commencé sous les vastes portiques
ouverts à la fuite calculée, quand on brûle tout derrière soi ne gardant que
le son de son nom dans les oreilles, ce qui a commencé se poursuit comme
un conte d’enfant noire enchantée. De nommer elle aussi ses amies au matin
d’un long voyage encore inconcevable.

Verchères, Québec
Mémoire et écriture de femmes: la pratique de l’atelier littéraire

Depuis cinq ans, je chemine avec différents groupes de femmes et je fais une démarche particulière auprès d’elles. Ainsi je puis mesurer leurs difficultés en même temps que leur désir inébranlable. Et si j’ai choisi de parler d’elles, c’est pour rendre compte de toutes ces femmes qui ont écrit, de celles qui n’écrivent pas encore mais qui se cherchent et de celles qui sont encore silencieuses ou qui n’ont peut-être pas trouvé les mots pour le dire, après de multiples essais ponctués d’incertitudes, d’hésitations, de craintes et de pages entassées qui ne seront jamais imprimées. Pour d’autres encore, la vie privée aura eu raison de ce qui apparaissait prometteur. Aussi j’ai eu du mal à considérer ces pertes. Toutefois, disons que d’une manière générale, j’aurai été l’accompagnatrice de ces femmes dans les différents moments ou étapes de développement de la création. J’aurai parcouru avec elles le chemin les conduisant d’un point à un autre, telles des voyageuses faisant des haltes, mais sans qu’aucune pression ne soit exercée dans le but de leur faire atteindre un quelconque sommet. Certaines se sont arrêtées en cours de route, d’autres auront continué en vue de trouver leur propre voie et se seront rendues à la publication. Toutes auront été transformées, mais celles qui se sont arrêtées ne se soustrairont plus désormais et trouveront des moyens de laisser leurs traces et d’affirmer leur être de femme toujours en devenir.

Dans le cadre de cette communication, je n’ai pas l’intention de présenter un point de vue qui se voudrait exhaustif mais je voudrais insister sur quelques points susceptibles de donner un éclairage peut-être nouveau sur des notions comme mémoire, histoire et leurs rapports à l’écriture qui par

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*University of Alberta, Research Institute for Comparative Literature
la récurrence et l’impact qu’ils ont eus sur moi, m’ont conduite justement à m’interroger plus profondément.

Mais revenons-en maintenant au problème que je voudrais poser: il s’agit essentiellement de savoir pourquoi des femmes éprouvent tant de difficultés à écrire. Je vais tenter ici d’esquisser une réponse ou du moins un chemin à suivre pour s’éclairer sur cette question. J’ai été amenée à me demander si ce n’était pas parce qu’elles n’arrivaient pas à établir un rapport avec l’histoire et par conséquent avec la mémoire? Mais en quoi ce rapport est-il primordial? Et en quoi l’absence de celui-ci peut-elle agir comme frein à l’écriture?

J’ai posé l’hypothèse suivante: que si la femme était absente de l’histoire, elle se sentait par le fait même niée dans son existence propre. Et si elle voulait créer comment pouvait-elle s’imaginer et se représenter elle-même, si elle tenait compte au moins du poids de cette négation, ou de ce qui n’est pas nommé, ni reconnu. Ce qui reviendrait en réalité à s’identifier à ce qui n’existe pas, c’est-à-dire à l’existence mnémonique-historique. Mais si nous suivons ce chemin, ne finira-t-on pas par croire à la non-réalité de la femme qui paradoxalement arriverait à être, du fait qu’elle osérait se produire elle-même à partir du manque-à-être auquel elle a toujours été acculée. Mais qu’advient-il alors du rapport à la mémoire?

Il est un fait que la mémoire assure un fondement, un point de référence, une base à partir de laquelle il est possible de se constituer une identité. Il est bien évident que naître sans mémoire c’est naître sans identité. Si cette mémoire n’est pas assurée, les femmes sont livrées à un chaos, à un vide. C’est la première expérience à laquelle elles sont confrontées. C’est comme si notre mémoire avait été vidée de son contenu. Expérience d’autant plus difficile que prendre la parole devient alors au sens littéral du terme, prendre le risque de se confronter à ce vide, d’y sombrer et d’éprouver plus profondément encore le sentiment de perte, le sentiment de n’être rien. On comprend que dans ses conditions, elles hésitent fortement avant d’écrire. Elles craignent surtout de ne pas être entendues. Mais ne leur faudra-t-il pas prendre néanmoins ce risque du vide, de la chute libre en elle-même, si elles veulent se faire exister, surmontant leur "complexe d’Icare" (fear of flying). Et si elles le prennent ce risque, c’est alors qu’elles seront amenées peu à peu à produire leur propre identité qui à la différence de l’homme, procéderait peut-être d’un manque à être fondamental qui les prive d’identité culturelle et d’existence historique. C’est du moins là une hypothèse qui me semble valable. Mais admettons qu’elles le prennent ce pari du risque, leur cheminement pourra se traduire alors par une lente conquête de leur devenir mnémonique-historique. Mais qu’elles seront les principales phases ou étapes de cette conquête? J’en conçois au moins quatre.
La première étape, dite de l'écriture chaotique, serait justement liée à la reconnaissance de ce manque qui est indissociable de sa production dans l'écriture. Car il n'est pas seulement question de prendre conscience de ce manque mais de le penser dans la réalité de l'écriture en le faisant ici advenir. Ce qui est déjà lui faire subir une certaine métamorphose. Cette opération revient en fait à nous mettre à distance des images fabriquées par l'univers masculin.

Car on pourrait vraiment dire ici que tant que l'écriture n'a pas procédé à une reconnaissance pleine et entière du manque, qui néanmoins la fait être femme, elle se pose encore par rapport à une certaine forme établie qu'elle n'ose pas transgresser ou franchir et qui est toujours là, qui la guette et qui l'épie. La femme qui écrit s'en sait inéluctablement toujours redevable. Voilà pourquoi d'ailleurs son écriture pourrait ici rester fondamentalement hésitante. C'est qu'elle n'arrive pas encore à se poser elle-même. D'où son balbutiement. Mais c'est un peu comme si elle n'avait jamais pris le risque d'aller jusqu'au bout de ce balbutiement, en toute liberté, en toute légitimité. Or, c'est seulement lorsqu'elle cessera de se déterminer par rapport à ce qui lui est extérieur qu'elle reconnaitra profondément ce qui l'anime, c'est-à-dire ce qui s'impose à elle du sein de ce balbutiement comme sa loi exclusive, sa nécessité intérieure qu'elle pourra conquérir ce que l'on pourrait appeler peut-être sa propre identité.

En réalité, on voit bien ici la différence qui peut exister entre ce premier moment et le second de cette écriture. Tant que l'écriture est hésitante, balbutiée, elle ne conquiert pas vraiment sa forme, elle demeure essentiellement informe et chaotique. Mais à partir du moment où elle va jusqu'au bout de cette hésitation, l'affirmant comme son élément propre, elle invente alors la forme qu'elle cherchait à même son altérité. Et c'est là qu'elle accède vraiment à son deuxième moment, qu'on pourrait appeler celui de l'écriture intime. C'est précisément ici qu'elle procède à l'écriture de son être femme, qu'elle s'écrit au jour une histoire qui la raconte, la révèle.

Mais il faut tout de suite présenter le troisième moment qui serait comme un approfondissement intérieur des deux autres. Celui où l'écriture ferait peut-être surgir le lieu d'où elle provient en réalité. Elle se donne alors comme écriture du corps, c'est-à-dire écriture marquée par un rapport à la sensibilité où pourrait s'exprimer un nouveau rapport à la langue et à la pensée. Langue qui ne passerait peut-être pas d'une manière privilégiée par le rapport au raisonnement, mais qui n'en ferait pas néanmoins l'économie; de sorte qu'une "raison" pourrait émerger de cette sensibilité dont l'effet pourrait être repérable au niveau d'une certaine manière de dire, que l'on pourrait classer sous le vocabulaire d'écriture au féminin.

Mais ne pourrait-on pas imaginer qu'un tel style — ou manière d'être — nous introduirait à un nouveau rapport à l'histoire et à la mémoire? Et dans
ce cas, quelle serait la nature de ce nouveau rapport? C'est-à-dire que pour instaurer un nouveau rapport, il faudrait passer par un détour, celui du corps. Malgré que le corps de la femme ait été célébré, dévoilé par l'imaginaire masculin, il reste étranger aux femmes comme lieu d'inscription de la parole. Ce non-lieu de la femme est précisément le lieu de dire de l'homme et se pencher sur ce dire masculin, c'est contribuer à l'histoire du corps des femmes, à l'histoire des femmes et à leur mémoire. Pour que le corps des femmes ne reste pas un non-lieu, encore faut-il qu'elles le parlent elles-mêmes, qu'elles brisent les représentations passées et qu'elles modèlent par leurs mots les corps qu'elles font naître ainsi une deuxième fois.

Mais cette femme écrira peut-être dans l'oubli consciemment, cela veut dire que l'on n'ignore pas. Mais que veut dire ne pas ignorer que l'autre existe néanmoins avec son histoire? La question pourrait être posée ici autrement d'une manière plus radicale. Comment de son manque à être, la femme fera-t-elle surgir un être qui aurait une mémoire, sa mémoire?

Peut-être en puisant au sein de son expérience intime où elle prendra alors possession de son être en tant que sujet, c'est-à-dire que la femme se choisit comme sujet, sujet-femme donc. Il s'agirait là en réalité d'affirmer sa différence au lieu de tenter de l'étudier.

Mais ne faut-il pas pour cela procéder à l'invention d'une langue qui nous désigne en prenant le risque de parler tout simplement dans nos propres mots pour faire entendre ce murmure qui nous a toujours habité et le porter à l'expression écrite.

Quelle femme, un jour ou l'autre, ne s'est pas trouvée sans voix, sans mot pour se dire, prise au piège des discours qui la définissent ou de ceux qui lui sont autorisés. Mais parlant désormais ses propres mots, n'accédera-t-elle pas, par le fait même, au creux de ses images les plus intimes et les plus singulières. C'est ce que nous appelons l'écriture sourcière (Claire Lejeune).

Ce qui reviendrait en fait à une véritable expérience d'enfancement. La femme s'enfantant par elle-même. Autrement dit, l'oubli de son être raturé dans une écriture qui la ferait être désormais. D'où la nécessité de se voir naître pour se reconnaître et réveiller sa mémoire qui serait mémoire du futur, au sens où l'entend Louky Bersianik.

CEGEP de Rosemont, Montréal
"Hall of Fame Blocks Women" — Re/Righting Literary History: Women and B.C. Little Magazines¹

The general history of the little magazine, its emergence as a vital literary institution of the twentieth century with its own distinct characteristics,² has been well documented with works such as Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography of Magazines in America: A Modern Documentary History published in 1978. In Canada, there are Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski's The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada (1967) or Ken Norris' The Little Magazine in Canada (1984). Robert Brinthurst's Ocean Paper Stone, a catalogue of little magazines and small presses in British Columbia also published in 1984, provides a fairly complete list of B.C. little magazines and detailed descriptions of some thirty or more.³

Most major writers of the twentieth century first published in little

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¹ An article in the Calgary Herald (November 8, 1989) about the exclusion of women from the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (only three women have been admitted to date) had the headline "BOYS CLUB ROCK HALL OF FAME BLOCKS WOMEN." I have "borrowed" a portion of that title for this paper.

² From its origins in the late nineteenth century European cenacle magazines, set up for the purpose of maintaining literary standards in the wake of commercial publishing, through its rapid growth as part of the early modernist avant-garde of British and American writing — with such magazines as Blast, The Egoist, The Little Review — to the present several hundred or so in North America alone, there has been a remarkable consistency in its nature and purpose. Although the physical form has changed as the print technology changed, there have been several constants. Little magazines always have a small circulation, from one hundred to three hundred copies (hence the name "little" magazine); they are non-commercial, definitely non-profitable, often given away or sold for a nominal cost, and produced by the cheapest means available. They are usually edited and produced by writers who set up the magazines to provide outlets for the young, the unknown, the experimental, the local.

³ There is also a dissertation in progress by David McKnight at Concordia University which will provide an annotated Bibliography of Canadian little magazines from 1940-1980.
magazines; likewise the major literary movements were launched there. There can be no doubt about the importance of the little magazine in the development of twentieth century literature. It has become an established literary institution and a significant part of the historical record. But my question is: how well were women writers served by this institution and to what extent have the activities of women become part of the historical record? The question was prompted partially by Barry McKinnon’s recent “History of the British Columbia little magazine and small press movement from the 60s to the present” (in an issue of Open Letter magazine entitled B.C. Poets and Print) which consists of interviews with ten men. Knowing that a number of women writers—Daphne Marlatt, Sharon Thesen, Maxine Gadd, Caroline Zonailo or Leona Gom for instance—have been involved with little magazines and small presses during this period, I want to at least recuperate that history, if not challenge the whole process by which literary history is constructed.

McKinnon would probably defend himself by pointing out that he limited his selection to poets who published poetry magazines. There were simply no women in that category. But surely that begs the question. The category itself needs to be questioned. Why exclude fiction magazines, for instance (which happens also to exclude some of Daphne Marlatt’s significant work as an editor)—there were only two or three of them, so the numbers could hardly be a problem. In any case, several of the magazines that McKinnon covers published both fiction and poetry so the distinction seems arbitrary. Similarly, why exclude the student/faculty produced college magazines, such as The Capilano Review or Event, presumably because they had some (though very limited) institutional support. Both of these have been edited and produced by writers and have been as adventurous as any other little magazine. And what about the writer/editors of small presses? Surely they, too, belong in a "history of the little magazine and small press movement." McKinnon interviews one such editor—Ron Smith of Oolichan Books in Nanaimo—why not others? At least one of the editors of Press Gang or Caitlin press, for instance, two small presses that were started in the seventies by women. Indeed, he can’t interview everyone, but his exclusions seem arbitrary, based on some questionable notion of "purity"—only poets who published poetry magazines and books. One begins to wonder if the purity is perhaps more one of gender than of genre.

My own focus on women in little magazines and small presses is just as arbitrary—there was no such historical category—but such a focus becomes essential because of the exclusion of women as a group from the historical record.

To start off this re-writing of history, I would like to go back to the forties briefly, for a look at B.C.’s first little magazine, Contemporary Verse.
This magazine, which ran from 1941 to 1952, is the forerunner of the present *CVI*, revived by Dorothy Livesay in Winnipeg in 1974 and presently edited by four women — (Jan Horner, Jane Casey, Di Brandt, and Keith Louise Fullerton). Although outside the time frame of my study, I mention it because it is part of the historical ground and because of its long history of having women in active roles. Few people know that it was begun by four women writers — Dorothy Livesay, Floris McLaren, Anne Marriott and Doris Ferne — who got together in Victoria for an afternoon at Floris McLaren's home and decided to start a poetry magazine. Although they invited Alan Crawley to edit the magazine, they themselves were actively involved in other ways. Floris McLaren took charge of printing and circulation, Dorothy Livesay wrote reviews; all of them were frequent contributors (cf. McLaren, McCullagh).

*Contemporary Verse* is also significant for the number of women writers that it published. Thirty to fifty percent of the poems in every issue were by women: Margaret Avison, Ann Wilkinson, P.K. Page, Miriam Waddington, Marya Fiamengo, as well as the four women who started the magazine, were regular contributors. (So also were the male writers of the period such as Earle Birney, A.M. Klein, F.R. Scott, Louis Dudek, James Reaney, i.e., this was not a "women's magazine.") Jay McPherson published her first poems there when she was seventeen years old; Phyllis Webb also published some of her early work there.

I can only speculate as to why the high percentage. (Not until the 1980s do we see as high a percentage again.) Was it the greater prominence of women in wartime combined with the obvious prominence of women contributors at the start of the magazine, or editor Alan Crawley's open and supportive manner, or the non-aggressive nature of the magazine. There were no militant editorials, no polemical statements, simply a general commitment to publish young writers and to foster the development of modernist writing in Canada. Whatever the reason, the major women writers of the 1940s generation were well served by this magazine. However, the magazine itself has been marginalized in the historical record. That is to say, it tends to be forgotten, or only briefly mentioned in historical overviews. Because it was Western? Because it was not militant? Because it included so many women? For various reasons it did not quite fit the standard (masculist) definition of the little magazine, established by Louis Dudek and others, as an aggressive, assertive, fighting, militant instrument of the avant-

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4 Joyce Wayne and Stuart McKinnon, for instance, in an article about Dorothy Livesay note that "to this day *CV* has never received the attention it deserves from eastern critics" (30).
But to move on to the time frame of my study — 1960 to the present. Literally dozens of little magazines have appeared in B.C. in the last three decades. Starting with *Prism* in 1959 and *Tish* in 1961, new little magazines have appeared with astonishing regularity, as the attached chronology/bibliography graphically demonstrates. Many B.C. writers have been associated with one or more magazines: Daphne Marlatt, Frank Davey, George Bowering, Fred Wah, Bill Bissett, Robin Blaser, Brian Fawcett, Sharon Thesen, Patrick Lane, Leona Gom, Dale Zieroth, Angela Hryniuk, Jeff Derkson, Kathy Alexander, Susan Clark, Kathryn MacLeod. A complete list would be too long to give here. More to the point, in any case, than naming them all is to return to my opening questions: to what extent and in what way have women writers been involved in editing and producing little magazines and small press books. And why have they been excluded from the historical record (assuming that McKinnon's article represents current trends).

To find answers to these questions, I spoke with a number of women who have been variously involved with little magazines: Daphne Marlatt, Gladys Hindmarch, Sharon Thesen, Betsy Warland, Carolyn Zonailo, Athena George, Kathy Alexander, Angela Hryniuk, Anne Rosenberg, Dorothy Jantzen, Susan Clarke, Maxine Gadd, and Carol Itter. We explored four general topics: 1) What did women do? 2) What facilitated their involvement? 3) How much writing by women was published? 4) What brought about changes?

1. WHAT DID WOMEN DO?

Most magazines of the sixties were edited and produced by men. In some instances, however, women were "peripherally" involved: Martina Clinton and Maxinne Gadd, for instance, with *blewointment magazine*, Daphne Marlatt and Gladys Hindmarch with the first editorial period of *Tish* (they also became official editors of the second *Tish* editorial group), or Sharon Fawcett [Thesen] with *Iron*. They participated informally in editorial discussions, perhaps helped with production and distribution. Gladys Hindmarch, for instance, recalls that "every time I went into the cafeteria [at

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5 Dudek mentions it only briefly, for instance, in his essay on "The Rise of Little Magazines in Canada" (in *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*) and describes it as "not a fighting magazine with a policy; it was concerned with publishing 'good poetry' — which, in itself, can embody an affirmation — but it did not in addition work out any program of ideas which this program could fire" (208). Norris, however, gives it a little more attention (four pages) and describes it as "an important publication because of the breadth of social-realist poetry it printed in the forties" (23).
U.B.C.), I would join in a discussion or argument going on about some poem that was being submitted to Tish. By the time the next issue came out, I had seen at least half of it" (interview). None of them was formally acknowledged at the time (i.e. not listed on the masthead) nor are they given more than a passing glance in McKinnon's "history" (with one exception: Bill Bissett always says "Martina [Clinton] and I" in his conversation with McKinnon).  

The most glaring instance of ignoring or erasing contributions by women is the case of Sharon Thesen's work with Iron magazine (1967-1970). Thesen (then Sharon Fawcett) did almost all the work of putting out the magazine: she typed it, ran it off, put it together, distributed it. She also helped edit in the sense that as the wife of editor Brian Fawcett, she would usually be present and would often contribute informally to the editorial discussions. But her job was to do all the slave work, as she now calls it. In McKinnon's interview with Brian Fawcett about the magazine, however, not once is Thesen mentioned, despite the fact that the magazine could not have existed without her. Like the Sherpas who made it possible for mountaineers to conquer Mt Everest, she remains nameless.

On the whole, however, I found few complaints about sexist divisions of labour. Everyone, it seems, did his or her share of typing, producing, distributing — the general skuz work of putting out a magazine. It was not so much a question of who did the typing — everyone did — but of who occupied the centre — only the men did. Not until the 1970s, when the feminist movement as a whole began to challenge the male monopoly of power and public space, do women begin to formally take on the traditionally male dominated position of editors.

2. WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN EDITING.

Generally speaking, women became involved in editing through serving an apprenticeship as part of an editorial group, or editorial board. Magazines that were run by an editorial group, such as Tish, The Capilano Review,
Event, or more recently Raddle Moon or Writing have thus been the more enabling ones for women. In such a structure, editorial decisions are made by the group, although not necessarily by consensus, which gives all members some autonomy and authority. The structure builds editing skills and develops confidence in all members. Several women have participated in such editorial groups: Sharon Thesen has been a poetry editor of The Capilano Review since 1976, for instance; Gladys Hindmarch was a member of the second editorial group of Tish and served briefly as an editor of the Capilano Review.

Some also went on to become general editors, or start other magazines. Vancouver visual artist and novelist Ann Rosenberg was the visuals editor for The Capilano Review for the first ten years of the magazine and then became general editor for two years (1982-84); Leona Gom was first a poetry editor of the Douglas College magazine Event and then general editor for four years (1980-84). More recently, Susan Clark, a member of the student group that started Raddle Moon at the University of Victoria, has recently taken over that magazine, and Kathryn McLeod, also one of the editors of Raddle Moon, has now started her own magazine — Motel. Similarly, Angela Hryniuk, a present editor of f(Lip) was first a student editor of Writing magazine, then a contributing editor of Jag and Island (and editor of Island for one issue).

I have not yet mentioned Daphne Marlatt, who was involved with a number of magazines, because I want now to look at her more closely, as a kind of individual case study if you will. Marlatt's editing "career" is striking for its range and variety. Also for its duration. It spans three decades. She has been an editor of six different magazines; she has worked at editing without a break for the past seventeen years; she has covered poetry, prose, and theory; and has worked within both local and international contexts.

It began in the Spring of 1963 when Marlatt (age 21) joined the Tish editorial group. As I mentioned earlier, she had been peripherally involved with the first and best known editorial group which ran the magazine for its first two years (Frank Davey, George Bowering, Fred Wah, Jamie Reid, and David Dawson), but she became an official editor when the first group resigned. The second editorial group included two women — Marlatt (then Buckle) and Gladys Hindmarch and four men — Dave Dawson (managing editor), Peter Auxier, Dave Cull, and Dan McLeod. They brought out five issues — Tish 20-25 — in a little less than a year. I'll re, let me interject another comment on the question of historical constructions. Keith Richardson, in a study of the Tish movement, calls this "an interim period" without any "distinctive character" and Ken Norris also dismisses this and the subsequent editorial periods with the comment that "despite the fact that the magazine continued for six years after the first editorial period and
served well various factions of the Vancouver literary scene, the important work done by Tish is contained in the first nineteen numbers" (122). The supposed insignificance of this editorial group, I suspect, has partially to do with the fact that literary history, like other forms of history is largely the history of the powerful. It rewards and reinforces the patriarchal values of dominance, aggressiveness and competitiveness, qualities that were noticeably lacking in this second group. Of course, it's also true that they only brought out five issues, as compared to nineteen for the first group. But the fact that no one person can be singled out probably also contributes to its "insignificance." Barry McKinnon's interviews, for instance, are all with single editor magazines, or magazines where one individual stands out. The impulse to valorize individuals as the makers of history, literary of otherwise, contributes to an erasure of magazines where a single editor cannot be easily identified (such as the later Tish or The Capilano Review or Event). My point is not to underplay the very real achievements of individuals, but simply to argue for a wider concept of who and what is significant and how significance is determined in constructing literary history.

Certainly for Marlatt, the group activity was crucial. When I asked her about her editing experience with Tish, for instance, she explained: "It's not so much editing [that's important] as feeling part of a discussion — that's what the magazines always gave me was this sense of a threshing ground. You could thresh out ideas. You could struggle with people over poetics. It really helped to clarify my own ideas, my own notions of things." The discussion process became even more pronounced in her next editing venture. In 1972, she became poetry editor (with Janice Harris) of the Capilano Review which, like Tish, was also run by an editorial group (in this case a mixture of students and teachers, with poet/painter Pierre Coupey as the general editor). Again, what Marlatt remembers most vividly were the long hours of discussion and argument. "We used to have these ridiculous marathon editorial meetings. And Pierre [Coupey] and Bill [Shermbrucker] and I used to have incredible fights. We battled for days about [a proposed Jack Hodgins issue]." The editorial meetings were a place where she could challenge others and be challenged herself, where she had to defend, explain, explore, question her aesthetic theories and practices.

After the Capilano Review experience, as useful as it was in building confidence and skills, Marlatt was ready to start her own magazine. In her next venture, Periodics, begun in 1977, there are only two editors, herself and Paul de Barros, an American writer who had recently moved to Vancouver. She also shifted her focus to prose — "A Magazine Devoted to Prose" is the subtitle. Periodics appeared twice a year for four years (1977-1981). Periodics was a magazine that began without a community (in contrast to Tish and The Capilano Review which had strong locally based communities), but
worked hard to generate one, certainly a different but equally useful function of the little magazine. That is to say, Marlatt's editing in this period is informed by her own urgent need to discover alternative models, to seek out writers who were challenging the traditional poetry/prose boundaries, to create (through the magazine) a community of writers who shared an aesthetic ground. As Marlatt explained in a recent interview:

I felt that where I wanted to go in my own writing, which was more into prose, there weren't any models. In Canada, you were either writing novels, or you were writing poetry. There wasn't much exploration going on of where the two crossed.

Both Periodics, and later Island magazine which she co-edited with John Marshall, facilitated that exploration by reaching out across Canada and into the U.S. and (with Island magazine) to Britain. Indeed, the list of contributors to Periodics could serve as an inventory of the radical edge of recent North American writing. Many of the writers who appeared there were unknown at the time and are still regarded as highly experimental. Kathy Acker, Barbara Einzig, Charles Bernstein, Lyn Hejinian, Anne Waldman, for instance, from the U.S. and Canadians such as Marlatt herself, Sharon Riis, Sarah Sheard, Carol Itter, Penny Kemp, Chris Dewdney, David Young, David McFadden, and Anne Szumigalski. That is to say, Marlatt is not just open to new writing, she actively seeks it. As she explains,

You don't get enough interesting material just sitting and waiting for it to come in. You have to go and solicit it. Go to readings and find out the newest stuff that people are doing and go up to them and ask them for it. In that sense it's very newspaper like, you've got to get it while it's hot.

Marlatt's most recent editing venture is as a member of the editorial collective of the feminist magazine Tessera. Once again, both the magazine itself and the nature of her participation in it are quite different from the preceding. But I shall say more about Tessera later, on the subject of interventions.

Marlatt's editing career has certainly been both extensive and impressive. Her omission from McKinnon's "history" is astonishing, outrageous, etc. — all adjectives apply. Yet I am sure McKinnon did not deliberately exclude Marlatt. I would guess that he literally did not even notice her activities. She was rendered invisible by the categories that he chose to use. That is to say, the erasure of women's achievements under patriarchy occurs in invisible ways: some huge blackboard brush seems to automatically appear every so often to wipe the record clean.
3. HOW MUCH WRITING BY WOMEN WAS PUBLISHED IN LITTLE MAGAZINES?

In looking at how much writing by women was published in some dozen or more magazines (a representative sample I hope), I was particularly interested to see if the more "radical" nature of the little magazine meant that it provided better access for women. Also, whether the presence of a woman editor increased the percentage of women published. Generally speaking, neither of these two factors affected the male/female proportions until the 1980s or late 1970s. In the magazines of the sixties and most of the seventies, about five to fifteen percent was the usual proportion, sometimes as high as twenty percent, but usually closer to the bottom line, whatever the gender or the leftist and/or liberal positions of the editors. Even when women editors appear in the seventies, there is at first little change. Obviously both women and men internalize and reinforce the values of patriarchy. As Marlett somewhat ruefully admits, her apprenticeship in largely male editorial groups trained her well to reflect their values. I should add, too, that the under-representation of women writers is not necessarily the "fault" of the editors — if fault is the right word to use here for institutionalized inequities. Apparently, women were simply not submitting their work. Did they practice a kind of self-censorship and automatically assume that it had no value in the public domain? Or were they simply not writing, assuming that creativity was the prerogative of males only? Most editors complained that they received very little writing by women. (Indeed, it would be interesting to know if the percentage of published material reflects the percentage of submissions.) In any case, for whatever reason, as far as providing public space for women, the little magazine was not significantly different from any other institution. Its radicalism operates within patriarchal ideology and values. Changes in the content and editorial structure do not occur until the whole system of patriarchal values is challenged and undermined in the late seventies and eighties. The recent fiftieth issue of The Capilano Review, a retrospective issue divided into four sections reflecting the four consecutive editorial periods of the magazine, shows the general trend. There is a steady increase in the number of women published — from 15% in the first section (representing the 1972-76 editorial period), to 40% in the second (1976-82), to 60% in the third (1982-84) to 65% in the last section (1984-89). Although the work published is new work, the writers were selected to represent the four editorial periods, so can be taken as representing the trend of that period.
4. WHAT BROUGHT ABOUT CHANGES?

Finally, I looked at the specific interventionist actions taken by women (and men) to disrupt the male dominance of the institution. In this respect, the nature of the institution itself, its underground and marginal position, made it easier perhaps to change than other more established ones. Since little magazines have always been started by radical and/or marginalized individuals or groups, women were able to start their own presses and magazines without too much difficulty. This was an area where it was not difficult for women to take that essential revolutionary step of "seizing the means of production." Several small presses run by women writers started up in the seventies. Carol Itter, with Gerry Gilbert, started He She and It Works in the early 1970s (publishing six books — three by men, three by women). The Press gang, a feminist publishing collective, began in 1974. Carolyn Zonailo started Caitlin Press in 1977, joined by Cathy Ford and Ingrid Klassen in 1979 (over fifty percent of their titles are by women). The magazine Room of One’s Own also began in the 1970s, a magazine devoted to writing by and about women. Indeed, the editors of Room of One’s Own in their first editorial stress the importance of publishing outlets for women writers. After noting that an increasing number of women are creating the time and space to write, the editors go on to say:

But the actual literary process, difficult and important as it is, is only a first step. Once she has arranged a time and a place to write, the beginning author wants to feel that other people will be interested in her finished work. Access to publication is absolutely essential if a writer is to develop her skills and her confidence. (1.1 [Spring 1975]).

Enter the little magazine, which has always sprung up to fill a gap. In other words, the institution proved to be flexible enough to respond to the changing "demographics" of the literary community.

Editors of existing magazines also began to seek out more writing by women, beginning in the mid to late seventies. Event put out a special issue of women’s writing to celebrate international women’s year in 1975, edited by Rona Murray. Marlatt, in the later issues of Periodics and in Island, went looking for women writers. The proportion of women published in Periodics, for instance, increased from one fifth in the first two issues to one third of the final issue. The appearance of the feminist magazine f.(Lip) in 1987, however, which publishes only writing by women, points to a continuing need for more public space for women's writing. We must be wary, also, of assuming that significant change has occurred just by noting quantitative change. Along with consciousness raising comes tokenism. Editorial boards may look politically correct, but not have much power. Certainly, most magazines of the eighties have a number of women on their editorial boards,
but in at least two instances that I am aware of, the women have little or no impact. Daphne Marlatt, for instance, was asked to join the advisory board of *The West Coast Review*, but the board never met in the four years that Marlatt was a member. Also, *Writing* magazine (which began in 1980) lists several women as members of the editorial board. Yet, even though in this case the board met regularly, the women on the board felt they had little input or impact, with the unfortunate result that they felt dis-empowered. One of them commented that she not only became discouraged about editing in general but, since her editorial suggestions had no effect, she also felt uncertain about sending her own work out to other magazines. Quantitative change certainly does not necessarily mean qualitative change.

However, change of various degrees and kinds has certainly occurred. And a number of women have felt empowered in the process. At the present time in B.C., out of a total of ten, there are four little magazines run by women: *Raddle Moon* (Susan Clark), *Motel* (Kathryn McLeod), *Room of One's Own* (editorial group), and *f.(Lip)* (editorial group). Two more were run by women for a major part of the decade — *Event* (Leona Gom) and *The Capilano Review* (Dorothy Jantzen), which would bring the total to well over fifty percent, as compared to zero in the sixties, and about twenty percent in the seventies. The interventions of editors and publishers have indeed given women more public space in the book and magazine world.

One of the most ambitious attempts in recent years to expand both the quantity and quality of women's writing is the magazine *Tessera*. Begun in 1984 by Daphne Marlatt, Barbara Godard, Gail Scott, and Kathy Mezei, I am including it in this study of B.C. little magazines since two of its editors are from B.C. and the production/management centre has been in B.C. However *Tessera* reaches across the country geographically, with the first four issues appearing in different venues from *La Nouvelle Barre du Jour* in Quebec to *Canadian Fiction Magazine* in Toronto to *Contemporary Verse 2* in Winnipeg to *Room of One's Own* in Vancouver. Unlike most other little magazines both past and present which have always existed to publish the new writing, its main focus is on theory. Its purpose is not only to provide more public space and/or better access for women writers, but to open up the theoretical ground, to challenge the patriarchal *forms* of writing. Marlatt explains: "we felt like the feminist writing that was going on in English Canada was still so tied up with realism and that the only way it was going...

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9 This may not be true for all the women board members. I only spoke with Angela Hryniuk, Athena George, and Kathy Alexander. Nor is this necessarily only a gender issue. Differences in aesthetic interests and values also contributed the peripheral status of some members of the editorial collective. That is to say, not everyone agreed with the magazine's editorial commitment to publish the new "language" writing.
to shift was if more of the theory was made available." Also that "it was more important to just get the theoretical in place," the theory being primarily the work of the Québec feminists.

As even a cursory glance at the contents of any issue will confirm, it proposes radical changes in the perceptions of language and world. Barbara Godard, referring to "feminisms epistemological project" in an editorial for *Tessera* 4, writes that "We must transform the ways in which we perceive the world and the methods by which we arrive at this new knowledge" (12). Jane Casey, in her editorial for the same issue, adds that "to change the way we think is one of the most exciting and treacherous projects we can undertake" (7) and Kathleen Martindale speaks of "attempts to imagine a discourse and a world beyond oppositional differences" (54). How much of the project will be achieved remains to be seen, of course, but *Tessera* has certainly proposed an expanded linguistic, social, and cultural space along with increased physical space for women's writing.

There are at least two conclusions to be drawn from all of the above, one positive, one negative. First the negative one: although women have done much to establish their presence as writers, editors, and publishers, the erasure of women's achievements from the historical record continues. (McKinnon's work is one example). It is not enough simply to recuperate that history, as I have attempted to do here. Reclamation provides only a temporary reprieve. The assumptions and frameworks which underlie the construction of literary history must in themselves be continuously challenged and examined — something which I have only been able to touch on briefly here — in order to forestall the continuing erasure.

On a more positive note: women have indeed become increasingly active in the world of little magazines and small presses. From the women-writer-book publishers who have proven (both to themselves and others) that women too, can be producers as well as consumers of books (the more traditional role for women), to the women editors who have created magazines, to the women theorists who have challenged the hegemony of patriarchal forms, women have used the little magazines and small presses as a means to foster, to validate, and to disseminate their writing. The best case scenario is that women's activities will become impossible to ignore, which will, in turn, force a change in the categories and constructions of literary history. However I hope that it won't be simply a question of making room for women in the grand historical parade. Rather, that we will all rethink the very notion of an historical parade of "great" individuals. We need metaphors that define achievement in many different ways.

*Alberta College of Art*
Works Cited


APPENDIX

A Partial Chronology/Bibliography of British Columbia Little Magazines

1941


1959


1961


1962


1963


1966


1967


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1 This is not a complete list. For more titles, see Robert Brighurst's *Ocean Paper Stone* "A Partial Chronicle of Literary Publishing in B.C. from 1856-1984," Vancouver: William Hoffer, 1984. I am indebted to Brighurst's book for some of my information. I would also like to thank Charles Watts, Special Collection Assistant, Contemporary Literature Collection, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C., for his assistance in compiling this Bibliography.


1968


1969

George Straight Writing Supplement. 1969-72. Vancouver, B.C. Twelve issues. Edited by Stan Persky and Dennis Wheeler. Issues 11 and 12 were published as supplements to The Grape.

1970


1971


1972


1975

Room of One's Own. 1975-. Vancouver, B.C. Founding editors Laurie Bagley, Lora Lippert, Gayla Reid, Gail van Varseveld. Quarterly.

1976


Edited by Paul de Barros and Daphne Marlatt. 1 (Spring 1977); 2 (Fall 1977); 4 (Fall 1978); 5 (Spring 1979); 6 (Fall 1979), 7/8 (Winter 1981).

1980

Writing Magazine. 1980-. Nelson and Vancouver, B.C. No.1-9 (Summer 1980-Spring 1984) published by the School of Writing, Nelson, B.C.; No.10-. (Fall 1984- ) published by the Kootenay School of Writing, Vancouver, B.C. Editors: Dave McFadden (1-5); John Newlove (6); Colin Browne (7-22); Jeff Derksen (23- ). Editorial board beginning with Writing 10 included Kathy Alexander, Jeff Derksen, Athena George, Gary Whitehead, Calvin Wharton, and Nancy Shaw.

1981


1984

Raddle Moon. 1984-. Victoria, B.C. Edited by Susan Clark. Associate Editor, Kathryn MacLeod (1-6). Advising Editors, Kathryn MacLeod and Jeff Derksen (6-7). Special Editor, Jeff Derksen (No.5). Several Editors-at-large from Canadian and International centres.


1985


1986


(f.) Lip: A Newsletter of feminist innovative writing. 1987-. Vancouver, B.C. Editors: 1.1-2.1 Sandy (Frances) Duncan, Angela Hryniuk, Betsy Warland. 2.2-3.2 Hryniuk, Warland, and Eric Hendry (Associate editors). 3.3-, Hryniuk, Hendry, and Jeannie Lochrie.

1989


Poptart. Edited by Gordon Murray. 1989-. Vancouver, B.C.

Barscheid. 1990-., Vancouver, B.C. Edited by Lisa Roberston and Catrina Riona Strang.
La critique au féminin: réalité et utopie

Il est évident que les écritures au féminin ont réussi à s'imposer, au Québec, depuis les quinze dernières années. Cela, bien sûr, n'est pas étranger au fait que les femmes ont su fonder leurs propres lieux d'édition et de critique, qu'elles ont créé des cours dans les collèges et les universités, qu'elles se sont impliquées activement dans des milieux où elles avaient été jusque-là absentes.

Alors que certaines craignaient que cette attitude ne provoque un repliement, que les textes ne soient en quelque sorte confinés aux rayons des livres dits "féministes," cette prise en charge a permis aux auteures d'entrer dans le champ de la littérature générale. Le prix du Gouverneur Général, décerné le 3 mars 1989 à Patricia Smart pour son essai Écrire dans la maison du père, a reconnu non seulement la qualité de l'ouvrage, mais aussi l'importance de la critique féministe comme courant de la critique générale, au même titre que la critique d'inspiration matérialiste ou psychanalytique. Ce fait mérite d'être souligné. Et on se serait attendues à ce qu'une telle distinction ait des répercussions, dans la grande presse, sur la critique des livres de femmes.

Mais on se retrouve au contraire devant un tout autre état de chose. La critique québécoise est actuellement en crise et la réception des livres de femmes s'en ressent. Qu'est-ce à dire? Depuis un certain temps, la critique des ouvrages québécois est en régression. Comme si, après l'enthousiasme qu'avait provoqué le nationalisme pour les œuvres québécoises durant la décennie 1970, notre littérature était de nouveau déconsidérée, reléguée à un rang inférieur. Durant les années 1970 en effet, la métropole littéraire s'était déplacée de Paris à Montréal, mais suite à l'échec référendaire, cet ancrage a commencé à nous échapper, de sorte que Paris et New York ont peu à peu remplacé Montréal comme nouveaux "centres."

Pour contrer cet état de fait, des mouvements de défense de la littérature québécoise sont récemment apparus dans les milieux intellectuels. Des universitaires ont mis sur pied, au printemps 1989, un groupe de travail sur la diffusion du livre québécois dans les médias. Le 4 novembre 1989, un colloque organisé conjointement par la Société des écrivains, la section...
québécoise du PEN Club international, l'Union des écrivains québécois et l'Académie canadienne-française a dénoncé la situation de la critique dans les grands médias. Jacques Allard a constaté "la déchéance du littéraire sur la scène publique, au profit du spectacle" (Martel Cahier D, 3). Guy Cloutier, de son côté, a remarqué la censure par le silence "dont souffre" la parole dissidente, qui veut inventer une nouvelle lecture esthétique du monde" (Martel Cahier D, 3). Dans une lettre ouverte parue dans le journal La Presse, Bruno Roy, président de l'Union des écrivains québécois, dénonce pour sa part "la servilité que nos médias entretiennent en se mettant d'abord au service des livres et des auteurs étrangers" (Roy 3). Il en conclut que "nos médias se comportent en colonisés" (Roy 3). Ce problème, on le voit, préoccupe les écrivains et les écrivaines, les éditeurs et les chercheurs.

Mais il s'agit d'un problème qui, pour l'instant, est difficile à circonscrire parce qu'on possède peu de chiffres. Il faudra faire des analyses approfondies, recueillir des données, établir des statistiques, comparer le nombre de livres qui parait annuellement avec le pourcentage de livres couverts par les médias, le genre littéraire auquel ils appartiennent, le lieu où ils sont critiqués, etc. Le travail, on en conviendra, risque d'être long. Il faut tout de même commencer quelque part.

Afin d'arriver à des données plus scientifiques que celles qui se basent sur une simple impression, j'ai compilé, avec l'aide d'une assistante, Linda Gosselin, le nombre de recensions parues dans la section littéraire du samedi de deux grands médias montréalais, Le Devoir et La Presse, pendant une période de 46 semaines, soit du 5 novembre 1988 au 16 septembre 1989.1 Les résultats parlent d'eux-mêmes: dans Le Devoir, 39% seulement des parutions souignées appartiennent à la littérature québécoise. Dans La Presse, on remarque un pourcentage plus bas encore: 33.5%. Inutile de se le cacher: quand moins de 40% des articles sont consacrés à la littérature nationale, c'est qu'il y a un problème réel.

La situation me paraît plus dramatique encore en ce qui concerne les livres des Québécoises: dans La Presse, 9.6% seulement des recensions portent sur leurs écrits, soit moins de 29% de toutes celles consacrées à la littérature québécoise. Dans Le Devoir, 10.8% seulement, soit 27.7% des recensions sur la littérature québécoise. Si on considère que, en septembre

1 C'est intentionnellement que nous n'avons pas couvert le mois d'octobre 1988, mois de la rentrée littéraire. Nous avons préféré concentrer nos recherches sur la période où l'activité littéraire revient à la "normale" et où, par conséquent, les journaux n'accordent pas d'attention spéciale au phénomène de la rentrée. Ceci dit, mentionnons encore une fois qu'il ne s'agit pas ici d'un travail définitif, mais d'une première recherche qui devra être poursuivie à la lumière de données plus complètes.
1989, 41% des membres de l’Union des écrivains québécois étaient des femmes, il faut admettre qu’il existe un déficit évident.

MODERNITÉ, FÉMINITÉ

Plus difficile encore est la situation faite aux écritures au féminin qui s’inscrivent dans la modernité. On sait en effet qu’au Québec, modernité et féminité sont intimement liées. La recherche d’une subjectivité-femme est passée par le travail de la langue: elle s’articule à partir d’une exploration des formes du langage, d’un métissage des genres et des discours puisqu’il s’agit de décentrer le symbolique paternel pour laisser passer dans la langue une autre logique, une logique maternelle montrant ses liens avec l’inconscient. On peut penser par exemple au travail de Louky Bersianik, de Nicole Brossard, de Madeleine Gagnon, de Gail Scott et de France Théoret. Il va sans dire qu’on est loin ici du best-seller dont aiment parler les grands médias.

Mais si les livres de ces femmes que j’appellerais de la première génération du féminisme se voient tout de même assez souvent couverts par les grands médias, les femmes de la génération suivante sont le plus souvent laissées dans l’ombre. Et cela, d’autant plus que plusieurs pratiquent la poésie, un genre qui n’est à peu près plus représenté dans la grande presse. Dans *Le Devoir*, sur 18 recueils de poésie dont on a parlé durant les dix mois sur lesquels a porté la recherche, 4 ont été signés par des femmes. Dans *La Presse*, sur 18 recueils également, trois seulement de femmes.

Restent les revues spécialisées: *Arcade, Trois, Voix et images, Lettres québécoises, Spirale*. Il n’en demeure pas moins que le risque est énorme que ces écritures ne soient connues que des spécialistes (étudiants et professeurs), qu’elles ne franchissent jamais la barrière d’un public plus large qui, le samedi, achète *La Presse*, mais qui ne lira pas forcément *Voix et images*. Le risque est grand que les femmes en viennent à délaisser toute une pratique d’écriture inventive pour se conformer aux exigences de la critique. L’écriture peut difficilement fonctionner à vide: elle a besoin d’être nourrie, de prendre une certaine place dans la vie littéraire.

Le retour à la pureté des genres littéraires qu’on constate présentement au Québec, ce désir nouveau de faire entrer les écrits dans des genres clairs et bien définis (poésie, roman ou nouvelle), de même que l’intérêt croissant pour la prose, ce désir donc ne me semble pas entièrement étranger à la réception littéraire: comme si les femmes ressentaient que le métissage des

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2 Ce pourcentage provient du service des communications de l’Union des écrivains québécois.
genres n’assurait pas, à long terme, la mémoire de leurs œuvres dans l’institution littéraire.

Ajoutons aussi qu’il faut bien vivre: les droits d’auteure étant presque nuls, il reste les prix, les bourses de création. Or, comment inscrire, dans une demande de subvention, un projet qui tient à la fois de la fiction et de la théorie, de la poésie et du récit? Où s’adresser, au concours de fiction ou de non-fiction? Faut-il inscrire son projet en poésie ou en roman? Et s’il y a toujours moyen d’inscrire sa "dissidence," il y a de gros risques que les jurys soient moins portés à donner des subventions à ces auteures qu’à d’autres dont le travail est identifié à un genre littéraire clairement déterminé, dont le travail est plus connu, bref à celles qui peuvent fournir un dossier critique. On en revient à notre point de départ. On ne peut pas négliger le rôle de la critique.

Il nous faut actuellement questionner les fonctions de la presse. Non seulement d’ailleurs en ce qui concerne le nombre d’ouvrages dont parlent les médias, mais aussi le type de traitement qu’on fait subir aux ouvrages. Or, dans les grands médias, il n’est pas rare qu’on ait l’impression que les livres féminins sont lus de façon inadéquate, sinon biaisée. On pourrait multiplier les exemples.

Dans La Presse du 25 mars 1989, Réginald Martel a fait la critique du récit L’empreinte de Danielle Fournier, récit poétique, quête amoureuse qui est aussi quête de soi dans l’autre. Bien que le chroniqueur garde ses réserves habituelles en ce qui concerne la modernité de l’écriture, il reconnait l’intérêt du récit. Pourtant, il se sert du livre pour repousser du revers de la main toute une partie de la littérature au féminin des années 1970. Il écrit en effet:

Il y a quinze, il y a dix ans, le texte de l’amour était réduit aux repères qui étaient la mode, aujourd’hui plus usés qu’investis vraiment, le corps des femmes, leur désir, leur jouissance. Madame Danielle Fournier empoche ces mots selon leur sens premier, ou ovvie. Loin de rejeté l’amant, de le condamner pour son seul pouvoir de domination.... Leonie Ander en fait spontanément un dieu. L’amour mort, le dieu enfui, elle redevient païenne mais sans oublier, mais sans se repentir." (Martel 1989, Cahier K, 3)

Selon lui, L’empreinte brise ainsi avec la tradition de l’écriture au féminin de la décennie précédente et "annonce que l’écriture féminine, celle-ci en l’occurrence, sait s’évader de ses clichés politiques et rendre au texte une fonction ludique, donc artistique" (Martel 1989, Cahier K, 3). Le chroniqueur se trouve à affirmer la pauvreté des écrits de toute une génération de femmes, comme si ces écrits n’appartenaient pas à l’art. L’avertissement est clair: si vous voulez qu’on vous lise, parlez-nous d’amour,
du Vrai, et cela, dans une écriture linéaire en dehors des recherches de la modernité.

La réaction face à la prise de conscience des femmes, réaction qu'on sent un peu partout actuellement, passe aussi par la critique. Je pourrais aligner les exemples pour démontrer mon propos. Je me contenterai de mentionner l'attitude de Jean-Pierre Issenhuth, de la revue Liberté qui, dans le numéro 182 paru en avril 1989, montre une attitude franchement misogyne (cf. Issenhuth). La critique du dossier France Théoret, préparé par Patricia Smart dans Voix et images, a servi de prétexte à un règlement de compte inacceptable. Mais, pour s'assurer que le coup porte, le critique attaquait aussi Nicole Brossard, Madeleine Gagnon, Denise Boucher, Germaine Beaulieu, Jocelyne Félix et d'autres écrivaines.

Il ne s'agit pas de dire ici que tous les comptes rendus de livres de femmes faits par des hommes suivent cet exemple, bien heureusement. Comme il ne suffit pas d'être une femme pour lire un texte au féminin de façon éclairée. Une telle démonstration relèverait du simplisme. Il est primordial que des hommes parlent des livres de femmes, en donnent une interprétation personnelle. Les livres de femmes n'appartiennent pas qu'aux femmes: ils doivent entrer, rappelons-le, dans la littérature générale, accéder à l'universel.

Cependant, rares sont les critiques masculins qui s'intéressent à la littérature au féminin. Dans une lettre ouverte dans Le Devoir, Patricia Smart rappelait d'ailleurs que si tous les textes du dossier Voix et images sur France Théoret avaient été signés par des femmes, c'est qu'aucun homme n'avait répondu à l'invitation (Smart 1989, 2). Quant aux critiques qui s'y intéressent, plus rares encore sont ceux qui lisent les livres de femmes avec sensualité. Je citerai rapidement Gilles Toupin, critique de poésie à La Presse, qui démolit avec la meilleure conscience du monde le dernier recueil d'Anne-Marie Alonzo, Le livre des ruptures, un des livres pénétrants publiés en 1988 un livre-limite autant parce qu'il brouille les frontières entre les genres que parce qu'il montre l'insoutenable de la passion. Un livre, bref, que Gilles Toupin n'a vraisemblablement pas compris (Toupin 3).

UN RENOUVEAU CRITIQUE?

Pour nous qui nous intéressons aux écritures de femmes, la tâche reste énorme et nous sommes hêlas! bien peu pour l'accomplir. Ceci dit, avouons qu'on a assisté ces dernières années à l'émergence d'une critique journalistique qui n'a jamais cessé de questionner ses a priori et qui a suivi de près les productions. Cette critique s'est faite selon deux axes:

1) une critique de la connivence, apparentée au commentaire, qui est entrée dans les œuvres par le biais d'une lecture complice: c'est la critique
qu'on a pu lire chez des femmes travaillant à *La vie en rose*, aujourd'hui disparue, à *Arcade, Trois ou Estuaire*;

2) une critique de la distance, cherchant à dégager les lignes de force et les faiblesses des ouvrages. Des femmes publiant à *Spirale*, à *Lettres québécoises*, à *Voix et images* ont la plupart du temps tenu cette posture.

Je dirais cependant que ces deux courants ont présentement tendance à se brouiller par la constitution d'une critique plus près de la critique de fond, cherchant à approfondir les œuvres, à mettre le texte étudié en relation avec le trajet de l'auteure et avec l'ensemble de la production québécoise. C'est par exemple le rajeunissement qu'a décidé de faire *Arcade*: "le travail des collaboratrices ira dans le sens d'une analyse en profondeur plutôt que dans celui d'un simple compte rendu" souligne le comité de rédaction dans le numéro d'octobre 1989 ("Le comité de Rédaction,*" 95).

Sans renier l'importance de la critique de la complexité et de la critique de la distance (les livres de femmes ont besoin de tous les types de lectures), je souscris personnellement depuis quelques années, dans ma propre pratique, à une critique qui s'apparente à la critique de fond. Mon parcours universitaire n'y est sûrement pas étranger. Ce qui m'intéresse, c'est de lire en profondeur les livres pour en faire ressortir l'originalité et l'apport dans le champ scripturaire. Faire en sorte que chaque nouveau livre de femme puisse éclairer les lecteurs et les lectrices sur les tendances de la littérature québécoise d'une part et sur celles de la pensée au féminin d'autre part.

On n'a plus à démontrer que la fiction précède la théorie: la création littéraire accomplit un travail de friche que l'essai et la recherche prennent en charge plus tardivement. Au moment où, au Québec, on a l'impression que les théories féministes pâlissent, au moment où on sentirait le besoin de les porter plus loin, la lecture des livres de fiction écrits par les femmes peut nous permettre d'accomplir un travail énorme qui enrichira le champ de la réflexion. Le travail d'Anne-Marie Alonzo par exemple, dans ses derniers livres *Seul le désir* et *Le livre des ruptures*, me semble renouer la thématique de l'amour lesbien, de même que Louky Bertsianik, dans *Kerameikos*, donne une vision originale de la mort, une vision "au féminin."

Quant à Louise Cotnoir, comme l'ont fait remarquer Caroline Bayard dans *Lettres québécoises* et Claudine Potvin dans *Arcade*, elle a su porter, dans *Comme une chienne à la mort*, un regard neuf sur les effets de l'histoire sur le corps des femmes.

Lire les textes de femmes, c'est analyser ce qu'ils bousculent, ce qu'ils déplacent dans l'imaginaire collectif pour intégrer de nouvelles valeurs culturelles. C'est étudier ce qu'ils remettent en cause dans l'écriture pour modifier le champ esthétique. Je veux pour ma part relier le présent au
La critique au féminin: réalité et utopie / 75

cité, l’individuel au collectif afin que la mémoire littéraire ne néglige pas ce qu’apportent les œuvres au féminin.

Mais il me paraît important aussi de lier le travail des Québécoises au travail des femmes d’autres cultures, pour éviter que la culture québécoise ne se referme sur elle-même. En ce sens, je dirais que les rapprochements plus fréquents depuis les dernières années entre les écrivaines et les chercheuses du Québec et celles du reste du Canada sont une source de motivation, d’enrichissement et de renouvellement pour nous.

Du côté anglophone, on remarque actuellement un dynamisme novateur qui, jusqu’à un certain point, prend la relève de celui qui avait émergé au Québec dans les années 1970. Je pense à la parution d’ouvrages collectifs comme celui dirigé par Shirley Neuman et Smaro Kamboureli, A/Mazing Space: Writing Canadian/Women Writing, à l’anthologie SP/ELLES: Poetry by Canadian Women/Poésie de femmes canadiennes, préparée par Judith Fitzgerald, au collectif Tessera qui rassemble des femmes de différentes régions du Canada, à l’organisation de colloques, à l’intérêt qu’on rencontre pour les recherches féministes.

Pour nous, au Québec, la décennie qui s’annonce sera celle d’un double défi: nous assurer de la diffusion de notre littérature dans la culture québécoise et, au sein de groupes de pression, faire en sorte que les livres de femmes ne soient pas oubliés. Articuler, une fois de plus, la question nationale à la question féministe. Mais aussi: retrouver le souffle que nous avions dans les années 1970 et que je sens actuellement dans les milieux anglophones. Recréer des lieux de discussion, de recherche, de diffusion des écritures féminines. Pour cela, former une relève qui, à son tour, prendra les choses en main. Cette relève passera, entre autres endroits, par les collèges et les universités: la création de cours, de programmes, de groupes de recherche, de publications, la formation de critiques qui à leur tour formeront une autre génération de critiques. À l’intérieur de l’Institution du Savoir, creuser des espaces pour des savoirs au féminin.

Université du Québec à Montréal
Bibliographie

The Business of a Woman's Life: Money and Motive in the Careers of Early Canadian Women Writers

When I initiated my current research project on early Canadian women writers, I expected to be dealing with no more than 100 authors. After several years, with the support of a generous grant from SSHRCC and the help of an extraordinarily diligent researcher, I have assembled files on more than 500 Canadian women who authored an English-language book of fiction or poetry before 1940 and about whom some biographical information has been found. One of the first questions posed by my overstuffed filing cabinet is, why? In a society not distinguished by its hospitality to literary activity, why did so many women go to such effort to present and preserve their creative writing in the form of a book? Only a few explicitly revealed their motives. Some announced that they wrote to earn money, and I will return to the commodity aspect of their work later. Others wrote instructive fiction (Catherine Parr Traill) or to support specific causes such as patriotism (Sarah Anne Curzon, Agnes Maule Machar), moral reform (Margaret Murray Robertson) the values of a particular religion (the Catholicism of Lucy Gertrude Clarkin, the Baptist consciousness of Ida Emma Baker), sympathy for the deaf (Annie Charlotte Dalton), animal welfare (Marshall Saunders, Annie Gregg Savigny), or improved conditions for labourers (Machar again). But the majority published their books and pamphlets (in many cases, paying the costs themselves) without a deliberate reformist purpose and with little hope for financial reward.

To be inferred from the publishing of women’s creative writing that occurred in Canada from the 1820s to 1939 is a complex picture composed of conflicting notions regarding relations between self and history, private and public domains, and author and text. The history of the book as cultural icon carries strong connotations of religious sanctity and specialized scholarship, wafting from not so distant eras when book-creation was implicitly a male domain. As the medium is inseparable from the message, the physical form in which an author’s words appear plays an important role.
in signalling their significance. The objectified book, which has accumulated an accretion of cultural and religious significations from the classical period through the Middle Ages (not all of which have disappeared during the modern era) is historically an intrinsically more male medium than is publication in a periodical.¹ The latter represents a secular, ephemeral, and more recent mode of textual communication which has quite comfortably accommodated women for several centuries.²

When a woman publishes a book, the transition from the single handwritten manuscript to multiple publicly accessible printed and bound copies constitutes a leap out of the private sphere in which women’s lives have traditionally been conducted into the public realm where the author herself, if not shielded by anonymity or a pen name, becomes an object of general attention. Presenting her work in the shape of a book both valorizes an author and violates her, simultaneously giving her an enduring identity and subjecting her to discomfiting scrutiny for her presumptuousness.³ Hence the publishing of women’s writing, in Canada as elsewhere,⁴ has been enmeshed in a conflictual network, in which the pleasure of seeing one’s name in print is sullied by the discomfort of being turned into a "thing" (as Margaret Atwood put in 1973) or the notoriety of being labelled "the woman that writes" (in Susanna Moodie’s earlier words) and suspected of belonging to another species.⁵

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³ Note however that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, publication was frequently disdained as vulgar by many poets and authors of both sexes, who preferred the privacy and elitism of manuscript transmission. See Margaret J.M. Ezell, *The Patriarch’s Wife* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1987) 64-100.
Thus arise also the conflicting attitudes surrounding the notion of earning money from writing. Payment for literary production defines writing as "work," an activity not traditionally sanctioned for "proper ladies," in Mary Poovey's phrase. But receipt of financial recompense can also justify a middle-class woman's descent to literary labour, if this is something she must do to support herself or her children. The ambiguity of the situation that obtained well into the twentieth century is expressed in the phrasing of Susanna Moodie's 1851 comment to Louisa Murray. In reference to John Lovell, publisher of The Literary Garland, Moodie said: "If you can afford to write for him gratis, you are more fortunate than I am." Money should not be of concern to ladies, who should be able to "afford" to indulge their artist inclinations without attention to cost or reward. Yet, over the past several centuries writing has "afforded" women one of their few economically viable opportunities to work without blatantly transgressing their class status or their domestic commitments.

However they may wish to, authors who desire publication can seldom separate the "joy of writing" from the economics of getting into print. In 1892, Sarah Anne Curzon wrote to William Kirby: "Literature as far as I am acquainted with it has few enough rewards, and even if it had many I am not sure but the consciousness that one has made some mark on the mind of one's time would not transcend them all." From first-hand experience, Curzon knew only too well how few were the tangible rewards that awaited the late nineteenth-century Canadian poet; three years earlier, Louisa Murray had appealed to readers of The Week on Curzon's behalf to rescue her from debts incurred for the publication of Laura Secord and Other Poems. Murray explained that Curzon had overestimated the patriotism of her fellow Canadians: "believing that the subject would appeal to all Canadian hearts as it did to hers, and [that] a ready sale [would] secure her from pecuniary loss, she undertook the expenses of its publication." Now Curzon was threatened by "loss and mortification." The terms of Murray's appeal construct a special pleading for the female author of a proto-feminist

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8 Elaine Catley to Wilfrid Eggleston, 9 Feb 1962: "I did not expect to make any money on my books, although I have sold many poems to about 40 different English and Canadian publications. As long as I covered the printing bills, I did not mind. The joy of writing, and the many friends I have made has been reward enough." Eggleston Papers, MG 30 D282 vol 17 file 14 (NAC).

9 Curzon to Kirby, 14 October 1892, Kirby Papers, Archives of Ontario.
nationalist text: "all those who, whether they acknowledge woman's rights or not, acknowledge woman's influence, must allow that to inspire the future wives of our young men, with the spirit of patriotism through the teaching of a noble example, is no small contribution towards the making of the nation Canada is yet to be."10

While money was often to be made from periodicals, prestige and canonicity have been conferred by books. In English-speaking Canada, this is abundantly evident in the still scanty bibliographic records that map our literary history such as Watters' Checklist, bibliographies of early Canadian imprints, and the CIHM microfiche series. By privileging books and monographs over periodicals (indexes for which have not yet entered the research domain) such projects, including my own, privilege authors who could afford book publication over authors who sold their work to periodicals, many of whom were women.11

As the vehicle of cultural preservation, the book confers a sense of permanence upon an author or her work. Powerful rhymes fail to endure without the reinforcement of sturdy binding; when teacher and journalist Florence Sherk issued her only book of poems in 1919, at the age of sixty, her purpose was simple: "I do not want to be forgotten." Pamela Vining Yule's single substantial volume, likewise published late in her life, explicitly represents a woman's self-created testimonial to an otherwise transitory daily round of activity in which poems were written "in brief intervals snatched from the arduous duties of teaching and the even more arduous ones of domestic life."12 Thus Jennie Nelson Smith in 1925 contravened Archibald MacMechan's advice not to bring out a "small volume of verses" and paid for the publication of her Moor-Mists because "My needs are so very urgent ... 'it is the book which counts,' launching my secret soul out into the world, for it to have a little peep around!" Less confident was the still unidentified elderly woman who wrote to MacMachan as "Mrs. Nobody" residing at "No. 0 Nowhere Street" who tried to arrange for an anonymous vetting of her book of poems which "persistent friends" had persuaded her to publish, and about whose literary merit she was having second thoughts.13

10 The Week VI (10 May 1889): 362.
11 Just as the current practice of privileging print over manuscript circulation has led to misreading of earlier periods, according to Margaret Ezell (64).
13 Jennie Nelson Smith to Archibald MacMechan, 1 Oct 1925; Mrs. Nobody to MacMechan, [1918?], MacMechan Papers, Nos. 874, 729, Dalhousie University Archives.
A number of books by pre-1940 female poets were specifically memorial volumes assembled after the death of an established author. Ida Emma Fitch Baker's son, literary critic Ray Palmer Baker, understood the significance of book publication when he edited his mother's posthumous Selected Poems "to make her poems available to her friends and relatives, particularly her great-grand-children." When popular newspaper columnist Nina Moore Jamieson died of cancer in 1932 at the age of 47, her friends in the Toronto Heliconian Club honoured her memory with a volume of some of her previously uncollected poetry and prose. Rosanna Leprohon, well known and highly respected in Victorian Montreal for her fiction and poetry, saw some of her novels published as books but not her poems; the latter appeared two years after her death to commemorate "a blameless and beautiful life."14

In some instances of single authorship, a woman’s work did not receive book publication at all until after her death, an early or sudden demise frequently providing the necessary incentive. Such may have been the case with Miss M.A. Campbell, whose Posthumous Poems were published in Woodstock (Ontario) in 1865 and about whom nothing has been discovered. The names of another dozen (Jane McKenzie Arkley, Minnie Blanche Bishop, Mary Stewart Durie Gibson, Evelyn Durand, Margaret Des Brisay, Margaret Laing, Kate Douglas Ramage, Bertha Simonson, Anna Beatrice Smith, Irene Willerton, Alice Elizabeth Wilson) enter the historical/bibliographical record because their untimely deaths prompted mourning relatives and friends to issue memorial editions of their poems.15

Other books published towards the end of the author’s life, like those of

14 Ray Palmer Baker, "Introduction," Ida Emma Fitch Baker, Selected Poems (Toronto: Ryerson, 1951. It is highly unlikely that Ryerson would have issued this book without the financial backing of its editor); Nina Moore Jamieson, The Castle in the Stall, Eleanor McNaught and Mary White, eds. (Toronto: Garden City P, 1932); John Reade, "Introduction," The Poetical Works of Mrs. Leprohon (Montreal: Lovell, 1881)

15 Although posthumous books are usually graced with informative prefaces, the only clue regarding Miss Campbell is that some of the poems were written at Zorra [near Woodstock, Ontario]; Margaret (Pasadena, Calif., 1928), by Margaret Laing (1914-28) was issued by her grieving parents [not in Watters]; Vashé, and Other Poems (Montreal: Lovell 1884) by Kate Douglas Ramage (d. 1883?) was brought out as a tribute to the author and her deceased mother by a friend, Will McInnes; Poems by Bertha Simonson (1874-94), reportedly edited by her mother (R.J. Long, Nova Scotia Authors and Their Works) has not been found; Water From the Rock (Toronto: Macmillan, 1937) by Anna Beatrice Smith (1904-36) appeared a year after her death from tuberculosis with an introduction by Dr. Mabel Cartwright; My Sanctuary Garden (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1937) by Alice Elizabeth Wilson (1897-1934), was brought out by her mother.
Sherk and Yule, constitute self-published personal testaments to busy lives devoted to traditionally unrecognized women's work in the family or the classroom, on the farm, and occasionally on the newspaper, activities that would normally produce no monuments other than those standing in the graveyard. In a new country so obviously in a state of continual transition, the solidity of the book, an object both concrete and portable, may have seemed all the more attractive.

You may have noticed how frequently I describe books as self-published. One of the major findings from my sporadic forays into authors' and publishers' papers is that most volumes and booklets of poetry issued in Canada before 1940 were financed by the author, male or female. Title pages seldom indicate who paid the production costs, and the academy's bias against so-called 'vanity publishing' has led us to assume that if a book appeared under the imprint of a major publisher (Lovell, Briggs, Ryerson, Macmillan), then the publisher was financially responsible. This was seldom the case. While the evidence must be gleaned from the fragmentary remains of authors' and publishers' correspondence, it consistently indicates that during the pre-World War II period, few publishers ever ventured their own money on poetry and few authors expected them to do so.

In 1944, Duncan Campbell Scott told a fellow Ottawa poet that "he had published all of his books at his own expense."¹⁶ If this was the experience of one of the country's most eminent authors, lesser souls could scarcely expect publishers to take risks on their behalf. The standard arrangement was for the author to cover production costs in exchange for the publisher's reputation, distribution, and publicity. The author might also be expected to arrange for a substantial number of sales. Profits would return to the author after the publisher took his contracted commission on the selling price. Records of the Methodist Publishing House for books issued under the Briggs Imprint from 1894 to 1914 indicate that the cost varied with the size of the book and the print run, the publisher's commission usually being 40 or 50% of the retail price. During the 1930s, the publisher's portion was similar. In addition to the production costs, Macmillan charged Sara Carsley 25% of the net price of her Alchemy and Other Poems (1935) for overhead (warehousing, cataloguing) and another 10% as selling commission. Her return on a book retailing at $1.50 was 6 1/2 cents per copy.¹⁷ While this system protected the publisher, it didn't necessarily impoverish the author.

¹⁶ Wilfrid Eggleston, Literary Friends, (Ottawa: Borealis, 1980) 112. Also, "as a condition of Macmillan's publishing Grove's latest novel, the publishers had stipulated that Grove must sell a minimum of 250 copies himself first, of a limited edition, at $4.00 per copy" (112).

¹⁷ Macmillan Papers, Box 83, McMaster University Archives.
In 1905, Hannah Isabel Graham exulted that her booklet, *A Song of December and Other Poems* (Toronto: Briggs, 1904), was

a decided success in every way. After paying all expenses amounting to about $130.00 I am the happy possessor of a surplus to the amount of over one hundred dollars which is not bad for a first venture. Mr. Briggs says there are scores of Canadian writers who would be in transports if they could say the same. He says it sold better by far than any of the others they published.18

During the prosperous 1920s Macmillan still expected poets to finance their poetry. In 1924, Hugh Eayrs explained to Annie Charlotte Dalton, after charging $465 for 1,000 copies of her *Flame and Adventure*:

it is a most difficult matter to sell poetry of any kind. The average new book of Mr. Masefield's with all Masefield means, sells in this country about 150 copies, and Mr. Yeats, I think, is lucky if he gets a sale of 100. ... I think, with the possible exception of Service's publisher, no publisher in Canada has ever made the publication of a book of verse pay.19

Dorothy Livesay's surviving correspondence with Macmillan indicates that she published under similar terms: *Green Pitcher* (1928) cost her 23 cents a copy (for a run of 250), and during the spring of 1936 she attempted to negotiate a similar arrangement for "The Outrider and Other Poems" (which never appeared). When Lorne Pierce entered the publishing arena with Ryerson Press in the 1920s, he threatened to steal Macmillan's authors; Eayrs mockingly asked Louise Morey Bowman why she had not gone over to Ryerson: "There they tell me they give you advances of $500 and the backing of the Methodist Church. Here we offer nothing but the best name in the publishing business all over the world.20

How many Ryerson authors actually enjoyed such benefits is questionable. While Lilian Leveridge received a royalty cheque on Christmas Day of 1926 (amount unspecified), surviving letters written to Pierce between 1924 and 1930 by more than half-a-dozen other women poets indicate that they were either asked to pay their own costs or simply

18 Hannah Isabel Graham to Henry Morgan, 7 Feb 1905, Morgan Papers, MG 29 D61 vol 9 (NAC).
19 Eayrs to Dalton, 26 Sept 1924, Dalton Papers, 1-16, University of British Columbia Library.
20 Livesay Correspondence, Macmillan Papers, Box 114, f 3&4, McMaster University Archives. There seems to be no record regarding *Signpost* (1932). Eayrs to Bowman, 3 Jan 1924, Macmillan Papers, Box 11 f 13, McMaster University Archives.
expected to do so. Annie Charlotte Dalton was one author who did switch from Macmillan to Ryerson. The latter published *The Amber-Riders* (1929) on the eve of the Depression, bringing her a grand profit of forty dollars. As the Depression deepened, Pierce wrote to Dalton, "Business is awful, and poetry is my Despair. . . . Of late I have had to ask a guarantee for everything." During the 1930s, the publication of substantial volumes of poetry by an established publisher became a luxury available only to the privileged, like Irene Moody, a Vancouver doctor's widow who could afford a total of $730 for her two volumes issued by Macmillan in 1934 and 1936. On the other hand, self-publishing and peddling of booklets of her verse helped ease Susie Frances Harrison's Depression poverty, in part because the elderly poet could canvas a broad network of literary acquaintances who could spare a dollar.

While I have uncovered no overt gender discrimination regarding publishers' willingness to accept a poet's money to subsidize the publication of her/his verse, the system was obviously structurally discriminatory in that fewer women were wage-earners with cash on hand or had unconditional access to family coffers. Not many displayed the temerity of Harrison, who

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21 Leveridge to Blanche Hume, 29 Dec 1926, Blanche Hume papers, access. 5901, Mount Allison University. Lorne Pierce Collection, Queen's University Archives, letters to Pierce: Alice Winlow, 27 May 1924, 2001a, box 1 file 11 item 75; Agnes Joynes 17 Aug 1926, 2001a box 30 file 3 item 104; Frances Ebbs-Canavan, 2001a Box 5 file 8 item 72; Elsie Frye Laurence, 26 Sept 1928, 2001a Box 30 file 3 item 47; S.F. Harrison, Nov 1928, Box 3 file 1 item 53; May Percival Judge 15 Nov 1930, 2001a B 004 F002 item 41; Kathryn Munro Tupper 2 Oct 1930, 2001a Box 30 file 3 item 98; Abby Lyon Sharman 19 July 1949, 2001a box 18, file 7 item 49. Jean Kilby Rorison may have also had free for her 1929 Ryerson Chapbook, as in 1928 she was prepared to spend two or three hundred dollars to have Graphic Publishers do the work. Bernard McEvoy to Rorison, 21 March 1928, Vancouver City Archives, AM0054.018.03977. The statement inside the cover of Ann Boyd's "Spring Magic" (1931) that "Additional copies of this chapbook may be secured from the author" implies that this Ryerson chapbook was author-financed.

22 Earning Pierce's congratulations: "The lord is with you if you get $40 from the last. To do our singiest we make nothing. But it is for the love of you, and the poems and the grand cause generally that we try to make the publishing of such things look businesslike. The sheriff is only one hop behind us, but we keep him there" (Pierce to Dalton, 26 February 1931, Dalton Papers 1-22, University of British Columbia).

23 Pierce to Dalton, 6 May 1934, Dalton Papers, 1-23, University of British Columbia.

24 At this time, the annual income of a family of five on relief ranged from $720 in Calgary to $228 in Halifax ("Great Depression," *Canadian Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. 934.)

25 Moody file, Macmillan papers, Box 123 8-10, McMaster University Archives; Harrison to Blanche Hume, 7 Nov 1933, Mount Allison University Archives, Acces. 5901; Harrison to W.D. Lighthall, 9 Dec 1933, Lighthall Papers, Box 7 f17, McLennan Library, McGill University.
raised the $200 needed to produce *Pine, Rose, and Fleur de Lis* (1891) by actively soliciting subscriptions when subscription publishing had ceased to be a common practice.\(^{26}\) The story of Isabella Crawford’s economically disastrous self-publishing venture with *Old Spookses’ Pass ...* (1884) is part of our literary lore. Unlike the late nineteenth-century male poets with whom she is historically grouped, she never knew the security of a civil service income (like Lampman and Scott) or the safety-net of teaching and/or editorial work (like Roberts and Carman). Nor, like Campbell, did she have access to the political connections which then, according to a prominent member of the literary establishment, constituted the only "road to preferment for a literary man" in Canada.\(^{27}\)

Despite these difficulties, a number of women managed to make the conventions surrounding the financing of book publication work in their favour, and not only recovered their costs but turned a profit. Unfortunately, we will probably never learn the name of the woman who authored one of the best-selling Canadian books of the previous century. In 1879, the Hunter Rose Company launched the Rose Library; by 1885, they had sold 100 copies of the *Home Cook Book*, "said at the time to be the largest sale of any book ever published in Canada."\(^{28}\) While the marketplace was less generous to those whose talents were in the realm of poetry and fiction, there was usually one stall reserved for indigent gentlefolk.

During the middle decades of the nineteenth century, literary publication, which signalled education and gentility, offered a strategy that allowed members of the middle class to solicit charity. Men could raise money this way if sufficiently debilitated by age and illness: J.W.D. Moodie’s *Scenes and Adventures of a Soldier and Settler*, published by subscription in 1866, netted the elderly Moodies about $600.\(^{29}\) The practice was particularly suited to distressed women and widows. The woman who published a slim pamphlet of verses in 1833 in Montreal as "Widow Fleck" appealed to the "sympathetic bounty" of her "gentle readers" towards a "Widowed Mother" left destitute by the loss of her "bread-winner" to the "pestilence" of cholera. Likewise the preface to Ethelind Sawtell’s book, *The Mourners’ Tribute* (1840), identifies the author as "a widow in reduced circumstances ... a stranger in a land without one tie of affinity." She swiftly won the advocacy of *The Literary Garland*, which commended the author, "one whom misfortune only has

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26 Harrison to W.D. Lighthall 20 May 1890, Lighthall Papers, Box 1 f6, McLennan Library, McGill University.


tempted to cultivate the field of literature," for her desire to maintain "an honourable independence."30 The sheer volume of this book (271 pages, compared to Fleck's 12) suggests that widowhood granted Sawtell the opportunity to finally get previously written material into print. Mrs. Sadlier's lengthy literary career also began with a plea to the public when, as a young unmarried woman recently immigrated to Montreal, she prefaced her first book with the apology that "necessity rather than choice brings me before the public," an act that would never have occurred "had it been my fate to belong to that fortunate class which is happily exempt from the necessity of working."31

By far the most enterprising Canadian woman to try her hand at charitable self-publishing was Sara McDonald, recently identified as the author of the anonymous Sabra, or The Adopted Daughter, written to free her family from debt. In 1858 McDonald took the astounding step of ordering a first edition of 5000 copies; these she sold so successfully that she brought out a second revised edition in 1863, a third in 1867, and a fourth in 1873.32 Literature was also a viable economic recourse for the physically handicapped. The Book of Poems of Euphemia Russell Bellmore, who had the misfortune to lose her sight and a hand, went into eight editions between 1869 and 1874; Blanche Elmore, "born blind," issued six or seven pastel-covered booklets of poetry during the 1890s, their author's disability announced on the title page of each one. In the twentieth century, the publication of Pauline Johnson's Legends of Vancouver in 1911 was organized by her friends to establish a trust fund for the dying poet.33

For writers in less stringent circumstances, the income from their books brought welcome pin money that gave them a little more control over their lives. Nina Moore Jamieson, whose "business was to be farmer's wife" embroiled with "the cows and the children and the everlasting housework," described her writing as her "pleasure" whose profits allowed her to make

30 Widow Fleck, "Address to the Public," Poems on Various Subjects (Montréal, 1833); Sawtell, "Preface," The Mourners' Tribute; or, Effusions of Melancholy Hours (Montréal: Armour & Ramsay, 1840); The Literary Garland 2 (1840): 123.

31 "Our Table," The Literary Garland 3 (1845): 576. Another version of this tactic was adopted by Eleanor Lay in 1853, when the sudden death of her husband, editor of the Maple Leaf, left her with three small children and a magazine in questionable health. She solicited subscriptions from, "many gentlemen who are not, and have not been subscribers, trusting that they will now feel disposed to aid her in maintaining the issue of the Magazine." "A Card," inside front cover, Maple Leaf 2 (May 1853).


donations to worthy causes. Rhoda Sivell's *Voices from the Range* (1911) (first printed up for her by the T. Eaton Company), bought a stallion for her ranch, and Elaine Catley's books "were useful as small Christmas gifts."\(^3\)

To be differentiated from the charity cases and the hobbyists is a third category of Canadian literary women, the professionals. Driven both by financial need and a strong sense of commitment, they forged careers that achieved a degree of commercial success. Not without conflict, they defied the social strictures underlying Robert Southey's 1839 stipulation to Charlotte Brontë that "Literature cannot be the business of woman's life," and actively joined the "d---d mob of scribbling women" by whom Nathaniel Hawthorne felt threatened.\(^3\) During the nineteenth century, their models were necessarily British and American, with the exception of May Agnes Fleming. But in the first decades of the twentieth there emerged a group of financially successful, popular Canadian women creative writers who served as beacons to their aspiring sisters. Marshall Saunders, L.M. Montgomery, Marjorie Pickthall, Nellie McClung, Isabel Ecclestone MacKay, Madge Macbeth, and Mazo de La Roche showed that it was possible to earn money, maintain their dignity, and sell their work abroad, while remaining in Canada. Moreover, the occasional windfalls of producing a best-seller or winning a substantial prize (de la Roche, Martha Ostenso) offered the possibility of prosperity, an inconceivable prospect in other occupations open to women, such as teaching or nursing.

For the remainder of this paper, I would like to mention a few significant features of the careers of several of these authors. History has favoured only a few with the preservation of their account books or royalty statements. Moreover, because money was a sordid subject, acceptance letters frequently announce that a cheque will follow without specifying the amount. Throughout the period under discussion, poetry could best be counted on

34 Jamieson to Belcher, 11 Feb 1918, 7 Jan 1919, Belcher Papers, Archives of Ontario; Catley to Eggleston, 21 Feb 1962, Eggleston Papers (NAC).

35 Southey: "The day dreams in which you habitually indulge are likely to induce a distempered state of mind; and in proportion as all the ordinary uses of the world seem to you flat and unprofitable, you will be unfitted for them without becoming fitted for anything else. Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure she will have for it, even as an accomplishment and a recreation." Elisabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857; rpt. Penguin, 1975) 173. Hawthorne (1855): "Besides, America is now wholly given over to a d---d mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash ..." (Caroline Ticknor, *Hawthorne and His Publisher* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913] 141).
to earn money if sold to newspapers or magazines, and fiction, in any form, was the more reliable commodity.

Among pre Confederation woman writers, Susanna Moodie's experience is the most accessible. Had she remained in England, Moodie would probably have known a smoother career. She came to Canada as an author and promptly got her work into the local newspapers, likely without payment.36 The first twenty dollar bill earned by her Literary Garland writing, that elicited tears of joy, signalled empowerment for herself and potential well being for her children. During the 1840s and 1850s, the income from her writing considerably upgraded her family's standard of living, allowing them to purchase a piano (symbolic of their regained social status) and later to send a son to medical school (he never graduated). Her Literary Garland work (at the rate of £5 per sheet of 16 pages of prose, and £8 per sheet of poetry) brought her more than 25 pounds a year over 11 years (1839-50), and from 1852 to 1856, sales of a total of 6 books to Richard Bentley in London and to De Witt and Davenport in New York earned at least 350 pounds more.37

However, Moodie's income suffered considerably from her situation in terms of both geography and gender. The records (admittedly incomplete) suggest that for Roughing It the Bush Bentley paid her an initial 50 pounds for the copyright, followed by another 50 later in 1852 and 30 more in 1858. On a first printing of 2,250 copies priced at a guinea apiece, his profit must have been considerable.38 Two North American male authors who also published with Bentley during this period struck much better deals: Haliburton, who had been accustomed to 500 pounds a book, in 1851 settled for 300 for the copyright to Sam Slick's Wise Saws and Modern Instances because Bentley pleaded declining markets for "light literature,"39 and Susanna's brother Samuel Strickland received £100 per thousand copies of his (vastly inferior) Twenty Seven years in Canada West (1853). Even more

38 Ballstadt, intro to RI (CEECT): xxix, xxx, xxxv.
39 Richard A. Davis, ed. The Letters of Thomas Chandler Haliburton (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1988) 159-60. "At a time when his annual salary as a judge was slightly above £400, Haliburton by August 1838 was asking Bentley for £600 for a three volume Sam Slick series, each volume of which would be as long as the first series of The Clockmaker. ... the eventual result of their negotiations was that Haliburton received £500 for the third series of The Attaché, or, Sam Slick in England published in 1843 and 1844" (Bruce Nesbitt, "Introduction," The Clockmaker [Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1984] 9).
damaging was Moodie's inability to collect anything for the pirated American reprints of *Roughing It*. The cheap Putnam edition, into its 9th thousand in 1854, brought her only ten free copies and an apology from the publisher for not being obliged to give her "a proper remuneration." With subsequent books she attempted to arrive at better arrangements with American firms, but surprisingly, given her businesslike manner of recycling her work whenever possible, she failed to negotiate substantial terms. By 1866 her earnings dwindled to the point where she was painting flowers and writing to Bentley as a "bold beggar" seeking any kind of literary work. We don't know whether the 1871 edition of *Roughing It* brought her more than $200, although she was supposed to receive an additional 4 cents per copy after the first 2500.

During the 1870s and 80s the briefer careers of Isabella Crawford, whose poverty was not relieved by the trickle of dollars Toronto newspapers paid for poetry (when they paid at all), and May Agnes Fleming, who moved to her New York publishers to reap the profits of her facile pen (reputedly over $15,000 a year), attest to the difficulty of sustaining literary activity while living in one country and requiring the markets of another. As the century turned, both Lily Dougall and Sara Jeannette Duncan pursued their professionalism outside of Canada, their work aimed mostly at British and American publishers and readers. Indeed, so foreign is the notion of professional authorship to the Canadian mind that during the entire period under investigation, the Canadian census failed to distinguish authors as a unique category. In 1871 and 1881, "Artists and Litterateurs" were combined, with no distinction by gender. In 1891, the listing was for "Authors, lecturers, and literary and scientific persons" (the latter are "hommes de lettres" in French), of whom 58 (21%) were women. In 1921, "Authors and librarians" comprised a single (particularly useless) figure, in 1931 and 1942 the category was "Authors, editors, journalists," of whom women were 14% (464) in 1931 and 17% (713) in 1941.

George Parker dates the beginning of the possibility of literary professionalism in Canada from the 1890s, when the names of Gilbert


42 Of all literary occupations, "Editors and Reporters" along with "Authors, librarians, etc.,” women were 30% (839 of 27940). Of 880 "Authors, librarians, etc.,” 67% (591) were women.
Parker and Ralph Connor appeared on best-seller lists. If we look beyond the more prominent women cited above we can find an earlier precedent in Jessie Kerr Lawson, whose profile is so subdued that she isn't even mentioned in the Literary History of Canada, although in 1894 the Canadian Magazine described her as "well-known in Canada." A sterling example of Scottish fortitude, when her husband's health collapsed Lawson shouldered the burden of supporting her growing family first by moving them to Canada in 1866, and then by exercising her pen. The success of the commercial career launched from her home in Hamilton sent most of her ten sons and daughters to institutions of higher education. Lawson's skill lay in her ability to accommodate her literary products to the available markets. She sold popular sentimental serials to The People's Friend in Dundee, wrote a column for the Glasgow Herald, and in Toronto published several novels as well as work in The Week and Grip. For each portion of her output she adopted an appropriate pseudonym: "Mona Fife" and "Hugh Airlie" for Scottish material, "Barney O'Hea" for Irish, "J.K.L. Washington White" for American Negro subjects, and variations on her initials for other items.

That women could be literary professionals in Canada was clearly acknowledged when the Canadian Society of Authors, founded in 1899, announced that they would make "no distinction of sex" and considered it "a matter of congratulation that the feminine contingent of Canadian writers are with us to a woman." The meagre surviving records suggest that this figure of speech actually excluded most women, including Jessie Kerr Lawson — but also many men, as membership was by invitation. However, equality did not extend to power within the Society, whose officers were the same elite of professors, publishers, and men of letters who dominated the literary sections of the Royal Society of Canada. But as no women were

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43 George Parker, The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1985) 233-39. This was also the era when women entered journalism as a profession, many of whom had literary ambitions. Attracted to journalism as an opportunity to "practice their craft and be taken seriously as writers" (Marjory Lang, Unpublished Ms. on women journalists, 21-23), they soon discovered that the drudgery of their jobs interfered with other writing; Kit Coleman never finished her novel.

44 Canadian Magazine 2 (1894): 204.

45 Typically, no personal records seem to have survived and information on her life is buried in the biography of one of her sons. See Francis E. Vaughan, Andrew C. Lawson: Scientist, Teacher, Philosopher (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark, 1970) 25-41.
admitted to the latter until 1947, the authors may be deemed somewhat more progressive. 46

The gender differentials in payment that Moodie suffered seem to have been less overt by the turn of the century. It is difficult to obtain comparable data; the *Youth's Companion* in 1890-92 paid William Wilfrid Campbell $10 or $15 a poem (with the exception of one which earned $20.00), a rate consistent with the $10, $12 of $15 paid to L.M. Montgomery, Isabel Ecclestone Mackay and Marjorie Pickthall over the next two decades. At the *Canadian Magazine*, as with most periodicals, rates were variable (and likely negotiable). For one year (1898-99) their highest paid contributor was Joanna Wood, who received $12.00 for each installment of "A Daughter of Witches." However, this was less than the amount previously paid for a serial novel by Scottish author Ian MacLaren, or for John George Bourinot's series on the "Makers of the Dominion of Canada," or the $25.00 per poem that William Henry Dominion was able to command. 47 Rates for literary products were based on reputation rather than explicitly on gender. 48 While women were implicitly excluded from the academic and political networks and honours that conferred a portion of an author's literary value, writing offered a fairer chance to achieve economic equality than teaching, for example, where a woman was lucky to earn half the salary of a man. 49

46 *Canadian Magazine*, 12 (1899): 561-63; 13 (1899): 292; James Mavor Papers, Box 34, Fisher Library, University of Toronto.

47 *Canadian Magazine*, Contributors’ Ledger, MU 2123, Archives of Ontario. McLaren’s “Kate Carnegie” cost up to $19.00 per installment, depending on length, and Bourinot was paid $16.66 per chapter.


49 In 1861, the average annual salary for a male teacher in Toronto was $640.00 and for a female was $265.00. See Alison Prentice, "The Feminization of Teaching," Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice, eds. *The Neglected Majority* (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1977) 56-61; Alison Prentice et al., *Canadian Women: A History* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988) 94, 130. In 1884, the average female teacher in Toronto made $342 and the average male $720 (Victor Skretkowski, "Where Isabella Valancy Crawford Died," *Studies in Canadian Literature* 10.1-2 [1985]: 180). At the turn of the century, $20-25 a week was probably the best a Canadian women journalist in New York could hope to earn. The top woman journalist, believed to be making $100/week, actually received only $42. Journalism being a notoriously ill-paid profession, in the lower ranks women did not earn significantly less than men; they were, however, unable to rise to the editorial and managerial positions that brought comfort and prestige (Lang, 24, 28-30).
Three of the most successful Canadian women creative writers of the first three decades of the twentieth century, who also left adequate records of their earnings, were motivated by different circumstances, each typical of their gender. Marjorie Pickthall was a single, independent woman, Madge Macbeth was left a widow with two small children, and L.M. Montgomery was driven by her determination to protect her children from the poverty and denial of education that had marred her own youth. From the archival business records of each we can draw a few insights into the way the interrelation of money and motive determined what and how they wrote and published.

Although etherealized by her admirers, Pickthall, as remembered by Arthur Stringer and represented by her account book, was a hard-nosed businesswoman. Knowing (like Charles G.D. Roberts before her) that to live for poetry meant living by prose, after the First World War she shifted her targetted audience from London to New York. Her American agent earned every penny of his commission (which rose from 15% to 20%) as he expertly nudged the price of her magazine stories up to $450 apiece. In 1920 she earned about $1500; in 1921 her income was approximately $3500; in 1922, the year of her death at the age of 39, her work earned more than $8,000. Substantial benefits continued to accrue to her estate (i.e., her father) for several decades.50

The financial security almost attained by Pickthall was achieved with a vengeance by Montgomery, whose account books tell a different motivational story. Pickthall diligently recorded the specific details of each transaction but her annual totals are only approximate. Her concern was to assess the market value of each item and as profits from her fiction increased, she submitted fewer and fewer individual poems to periodicals, reserving her poetry for her books. Montgomery’s "Price Record Book," on the other hand, documents more than her business activity. Every few years she tallied her total income and average earnings from each genre in a way that seems to assess her self-worth as well as her financial worth. During the 1920s, when her books of fiction brought well above $10,000 a year,51 she still relentlessly calculated her income per poem and per story going back to the

50 Arthur Stringer, "Wild Poets I’ve Known: Marjorie Pickthall," Saturday Night (14 June 1941): 41. Pickthall Papers, Lorne Pierce Collection, Queen’s University Archives, 2001b Box 59, file 10; Box 68, f3.

51 Price Record Book, Montgomery Papers, University of Guelph Library. She was earning about two-thirds of Frank Packard’s income during this period, which averaged over $15,000 a year from his detective novels and other work (plus several thousand more from investments) MG30 D114 vol 1 (NAC).
"first three wonderful dollars of 1896" (1 March 1919). Thus in 1929, when her accumulated earnings, now "representing 33 years," totalled over $213,000, she humbly recorded that the average amount per poem over the same period was only $3.45 and per story was $26.32. There is an important business contrast here that reflects each author's relation to her work. Although Pickthall was a poet, she seemed quite willing to forego magazine publication of poetry to earn more money from fiction, which would in turn buy her the time for poetry. Montgomery, on the other hand, while a fiction writer earning bundles from her novels, still sent out nickel and dime poems when it ceased to make good business sense to do so. To her biographer I leave the question of why, when she was exhausting herself with her demanding triple career as author, mother, and minister's wife, Montgomery consistently undercut her obvious success with the self-deprecating calculations in her account book.

It is appropriate to conclude with the image of Madge Macbeth as the consummate professional woman author. Her career began around 1906, when her status was suddenly transformed from middle-class wife to young single mother. It ended with her death in 1965, when she left as estate worth over $727,000 and was crowned "A literary queen" by the Ottawa Citizen (2 Oct 1965). Deciding to remain in Ottawa, where she found herself when her husband died, Macbeth cultivated a personality that was sufficiently captivating and immaculate to win her way into the elite dining-rooms, both literary and governmental, of the nation's capital. As the first woman president of the Canadian Authors' Association (CAA) and the only president to serve three terms, she achieved a success that was political as well as economic. By 1933, the majority of the members of the CAA were women, yet with the exception of Macbeth they were conspicuously under-represented in the power structure of the organization founded to advance authors' professionalism.

Poetry never attracted Macbeth, who claimed she wrote "everything but hymns" and concentrated on journalism, travel writing, fiction, and film. As

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52 Lucy Maud Montgomery, Selected Journals 1910-1921 (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1987) II 308. In February, 1896 her first money was actually a $5.00 prize for a poem entered in a contest by the Evening Mail on "Which has the more patience under the ordinary cares and trials of life - man or woman?" followed five days later by a check from Golden Days (Philadelphia) for a story, "Our Charivari." The three dollar check arrived two months later, from the same magazine, for a poem, "The Apple Picking Time" (Journals 1 157-59).

53 In 1924, 45% of the more than 800 English-speaking members of the CAA were women, and 16% of the 74 members of the French section. By 1933, women were 58% of some 730 English-speaking members, and 24% of the French. Canadian Bookman 1924 (120-22, 146-47); Canadian Author 11 (1933): 16-23.
with most professional women authors, she was motivated less by notions of high art than by her children's growing feet and she marketed some of her work under pseudonyms to expand her sales. During the 1920s and 1930s, while Morley Callaghan hobnobbed with Americans in Paris and Frederick Philip Grove established his reputation by fabricating his biography and networking with the country's cultural king-makers, earning the Lorne Pierce medal (1934), membership in the Royal Society (1941), and two honorary degrees, Macbeth, who received none of the above, wrote several novels that have been undervalued because of the gender of their author or their subject. Shackles (1926), a "woman to woman" novel about a woman writer unhappily married to a consummate egoist, anticipates Alice Munro's wonderful story, "The Office," and The Land of Afternoon (1924), published under one of her pseudonyms, Gilbert Knox, so effectively pillories backstage Ottawa life that the few reviewers and critics who knew that the author was not a man assumed that she must have been assisted by one.

Far from enjoying the independent income and room of her own that Virginia Woolf considered essential for a woman author, many of the Canadian women I am researching turned to writing to secure both the money and the roof over their heads they required in order to live. Most of their literary texts now rest in storage in our university libraries; less tangible but no less culturally significant are the uncertain texts of their lives, which both reveal and conceal their authors' motives for getting into print.

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54 Tuchman argues that towards the end of the nineteenth century, as fiction became respectable as well as profitable, men edged women out of the field by defining the high-culture novel in terms that automatically excluded women (65-92), and maintained that hierarchy through a "critical double standard" (175-202).

55 On the exclusion of "woman to woman" writing from the canon see Terry Lovell, Consuming Fiction (New York: Verso, 1987) 132, 159-61.

"Petticoat Anarchist?": Joanna Wood, the Sex of Fiction, the Fictive Sex

"... gender is the linguistic index of the political opposition between the sexes and of the domination of women." (Monique Wittig)

"But is there an elsewhere?... If it's not yet 'here,' it's already there — in that other place ... where desire makes fiction exist." (Hélène Cixous)

Part I.

As these liminal re-marks suggest, the erotics of representation and the representation of the erotic are the pregnant questions of sexual/textual politics. The poetics of gender has emerged as a central area of contemporary critical concern. Feminist criticism has shown that the social construction of sexual difference plays a constitutive role in the production, reception and history of literature. The conventions and categories of critical discourse within which we engage in acts of interpretation are inextricably in/formed by and in/form the conventions and categories of identity itself. With the help of Teresa de Lauretis, we have come to understand the representations of literary fictions as "technologies of gender," disciplinary instances that interpellate us, that through their appropriate conventions and recognized modes of enunciation and address work to keep us all in our "proper place." In relation to power, these places have been hierarchized along gender lines positioning women as the "marked" gender (Wittig) in respect to a masculinist norm in which women's symbolic value is that of "male-minus" (Spender). Narratives are modes of legitimation whose authenticity is certified in the act of transmission through "performativity" (Lyotard 41). They "formulate prescriptions that have the status of norms," exercising their competence not only over denotative utterances concerning what is true, but also prescribing utterances with pretensions to justice (Lyotard 31). As feminists have come to realize, narrative is less a content category, a
"story," than a set of relationships by which knowledge is made intelligible to readers.

Generic conventions are important here in organizing these relations within discursive (ideological) fields. As Fredric Jameson has pointed out, "genres are essentially literary institutions or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact" (106). In this, he follows Bakhtin and Volosinov for whom signs are conditioned by the social organization of participants and by the immediate conditions of their interaction (Volosinov 21). Semiotic value within a differing network of relations is produced only in/as social communication. The relationship between signs and existence are those of "dialectical refraction." "Each period and each social group has had and has its own repertoire of speech forms for ideological communication in human behaviour": each set of behavioural speech genres has a set of cognate forms and themes (Bakhtin/Medvedev 20). Interdiscursive (or intertextual) relations are played out in relations within and between texts, genres and practices. Each utterance is situated within an enunciative instance, that is, in a particular social and historical instance. As Volosinov phrases it" "each situation, fixed and sustained by social custom, commands a particular kind of organization of audience" (97). The meanings of the word-utterance can only enter the concrete purview of speakers and become the object of discussion within the determination of "the aggregate sociohistorical conditions and the concrete situation of the given individual utterance." Consequently, meaning is s(c)ited in the "concrete unity of the historical phenomenon-utterance" (Bakhtin/Medvedev 120).

The site of competing discourses in this instance of enunciation is Canada in the 1890s. This was a moment when the women's suffrage movement was gathering force in its fight to win the vote and the right to political effectiveness for women through the formation of a national organization, The National Council of Women of Canada, founded in 1893, in turn linked to the International Council of Women. But this discourse of emancipation was not the only figuration of the feminine. The 1890s was also a period in which "woman" was situated prominently in the construction of a nationalist literary discourse where Isabella Valancy Crawford was being figured as the "mother of Canadian poetry." To this end, however, she was turned into a "proper lady" by editor John Garvin (Johnson), returned to the traditional discourse of female submission and passivity. Such new political and symbolic positions for women — contradictory though they might be — were being produced through changing legal and economic structures set in place by the double movement of the passage of the Married Women's Property Act (1884 in Ontario) and divorce legislation (British Matrimonial Causes Act, 1857 in the Canadas), giving women control over money, a limited economic autonomy and the simultaneous opening of employment
possibilities for them in some professions and in offices. These in turn were produced by emergent capitalist structures that increased management activities which required secretaries to support them and the rise of professionalism in such fields as teaching and medicine reorganized along hierarchical models that operated with a few male executives (doctors and principals) and an army of subordinates (nurses and teachers) (Prentice). These changes in the forces of production resulted in alterations in the forces of reproduction, producing, in Bakhtin's terms, a new chronotope, a new type of speech and literary genre from this new discursive site — the novel of "the New Woman" — named after the emerging social type of active woman. These were the "Women Who Did," who rode bicycles in their bloomers, taught school, gave speeches at suffrage meetings, and (more rarely) campaigned for free love (Goddard).

In dialectical relation with this developing discourse of emancipation was an alternate sociobiological discourse produced by the rising field of the social sciences wherein the sexually active woman was figured as Other along with "social degenerates" such as Hottentots and criminals who shared the tell-tale signs, "Darwin's ear," and elephantine hips (Gilman). This classificatory discourse on sexuality was designed to control women's bodies, the site of "proper femininity," through the opposition wife/prostitute that privileged the former. In contrast, the emancipatory discourses of emergent feminism sought to destabilize these categories and to question, through narrative, the concept of essential "femininity," jamming social codes of purity with their figuration of maternity as sublime in the ineffability of the Madonna by interrogating and collapsing the symbolic function of Woman as touchstone of moral purity operative in the metaphor of childbirth (MacPike). It is in this discursive formation we encounter Myron Holder, "a mother but not a wife" (Wood) whose narrative exemplifies one of the categories of the "new woman" novel, that of the "Unrepentant Magdalene" (Mizejewski) which, like the "Pregnant Madonna" of Freud's Dora (Jacobus), foregrounds the sexuality of the maternal body, undermining the figuration of Woman as defense against instinctual chaos.

From the "erotics of property" to writing the erotic female body — this has been the trajectory of women's fiction since the 1890s, a struggle with the social and fictional contract grounded in Woman as a token of exchange, as a sign in discourse, in what Luce Irigaray has called a "hom(m)osexual" economy of desire. In this, woman is the property, guarantor of the "propre," of identity and the order of the same, of the mimetic contract of verisimilitude ensuring a masculine line of succession. For, as Patricia Parker has argued, the fixed representations of the illusionist (classic realist) novel and the fixed identity of the subject are inextricably mixed with the proper name, guarantor of "completely individualized identities," a function that was "first fully established in the novel" in the eighteenth century when the
differentiating function of the proper name was connected by philosophers to the "principle of individuation" (Watt in Parker 92). The (self)-identity of the text — the social text of femininity as well as the literary text — is bound up in questions of "property, propriety, proper place and proper name" (Parker 92). The vexing problem of female subjectivity and sexual difference is entangled in a critical debate on the proper noun and the proper place, questions of (self)-identity.

For the preoccupation of the Western philosophical tradition, heir of Plato, has been the propre, the same, identity and the mimesis of the icon not the simulacrum — that is, logical and mathematical mimesis — which, according to Luce Irigaray, has resulted in idealist body/soul dualism that has devalued sexuality and the feminine and produced a discourse between men in which woman as sign is figured as lack, necessitating completion in narrative. The problem of articulating difference is compounded in an economy that requires difference in order to (re)produce itself, yet reduces difference always to the same. Woman is both that Other and yet subsumed by the Selfsame. Indifferent.

This generates anxiety of authorship when a woman takes up the pen, for she acts with "impropriety," her assertion perceived as greed, an offence to property. In expressing such "greed," moreover, in admitting desire, she also breaches decorum which requires woman as "the sex" (the "marked" gender), a creature of enormous desires, to contain her appetite within a chaste demeanour. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, during the period of the development of the novel, there emerged an ideal of feminine propriety which first "proper," was then considered "natural" for a lady. According to the code of propriety, even to refer to the body was considered "unladylike" (Poovey 1984, 14). To draw attention to feminine modesty as a coded, learned behaviour was equally a violation of propriety: a woman was not to betray knowledge of sexuality, or even the absence of knowledge which might be read as knowledge disguised, because this knowledge denotes experience and the potential for, if not actual, corruption. Propriety then, involves a complex and paradoxical game of appearance and illusion.

By acting in a proper manner with decorum, that is, according to the norms of seemly behaviour, a woman would be a lady. But this might be only a semblance of propriety. This ambiguity was troubling to the function which the ideal of feminine propriety served, to assure identity. Women became most proper as men's property where they ensured the legitimacy of the male heir and the transference of property in a line of masculine inheritance. In other words, women were most proper as "pure" mothers or madonnas. This code of propriety is the narrative programme of the "heroine's plot" or marriage plot generating so many eighteenth century
novels in the realistic mode. Consequently, this code is part of the "political unconscious" of the novel as genre, since the discourses of its earlier instances of enunciation remain in the archeology of any genre (Jameson).

Rejecting the Oedipal contract that grounds such a masculine libidinal economy, the triangular pact which positions woman as the sign of exchange between two men, as the ground and vanishing point of social coherence — what Kristeva has termed a "sacrificial contract" for maternity — contemporary women are refusing to be identified within the frames of "true womanhood," as lack, in the name of an alternate (feminine?) economy of the continuous circulation of differences, of a relational and heterogeneous poetics organized along the endless circulation of desire not on desire fixed on a single object. Situated historically between the novels of the "heroine's plot," of the erotics of men's money, from the 1790s (the romance whose code links chastity and men's property as continued in the Harlequin romances today) and the "writing in the feminine" (the post-modern exploded texts of the mimed discourse of the "hysteric" of the 1980s), are the "fictions of sex" and the "New Woman," which scandalized the reading public of the 1890s by representing women's desire.

At this high point in the political action of the women's suffrage movement, there occurred a change in the semiotic field of the representation of women dominant in Victorian fictions of property and propriety, namely in the topos of the "fallen woman" — unrepentant Magdalene, not guilty one — and consequently, an interruption of the binary codes that constrained women within the opposed valences of Angel in the House and "public woman." Moreover, this was the culminating moment in the hysterization of the body of the woman taking place in the second half of the nineteenth century (Rose 115).

Throughout the century, a shift occurred in the institutional powers and discourses that regulated feminine propriety on the very site of female difference, the scene of childbirth. The debate over the use of chloroform to ease women's pain in labour was part of the contest between medical and religious discourses for the authority to adjudicate women's social role, a contest ultimately won by medicine. Clergymen and doctors opposed to anaesthetized childbirth invoked the pain of Eve's curse, childbirth situated in an order of nature mediated by the divine. Those in favour of anaesthetization developed arguments that instituted medical men to monitor women's pain, transferring the power of interpretation and knowledge of this pain to the doctor and producing women as passive objects. These arguments for intervention were reinforced by descriptions of women in childbirth exhibiting instances of "delirium, and spasms, and convulsions," the same symptoms as in a "case of hysteria," symptoms that are more precisely displays of "sexual excitation" (Poovey 1988, 30). Such
lasciviousness was shocking to Victorian medical men: rather than leaving women to their "natural" sexuality attended by women where no man was necessary, however, those doctors favouring anaesthesia argued that it would protect both women and doctors from "scenes of an indelicate character" (Poovey 1988, 34).

Neither side disputed the contradictory model of the female body, the nature and position of woman, a "reproductive creature who was by nature, socially dependent on man but somehow morally superior to him," a model in which the uterus was understood as the most important organ, or "muscle of the female economy" (Poovey 1988, 34-35). This organ was thought to govern the entire female organism whether or not a woman was pregnant and despite her will or emotions. Under a model of "reflex action," the uterus regulated a female economy of instability and periodicity in need of monitoring since it influenced and was influenced by many nervous disorders. Childbirth was situated, then, at the boundary "between physiology and pathology." It was believed that "a great part of the pathology of hysteria consists in interruptions of the catamenial [menstrual] cycle" (Smith 1847 in Poovey 1988, 37). "With women, it is but a step from extreme nervous susceptibility to downright hysteria, and from that to overt insanity. In the sexual evolution, in pregnancy, in the parturient period, in lactation, strange thoughts, extraordinary feelings, unseasonable appetites, criminal impulses, may haunt a mind at other times innocent and pure" (Isaac Ray 1866 qtd. in Poovey 1988, 37). Hysteria, then, was contradictorily both the norm of the female body taken to a logical extreme and a medical category that defined this norm as abnormal, pathological.

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, a new group of medical specialists was emerging who would make female hysteria their field of specialization, taking it out of the domain of the physiological and spectatorial, where it had been situated by the clinical practices of observation and experiment of Charcot — Charcot's gaze was made concrete in graphs, photographs, and drawings of the bodily signs of his hystéricas — into the domain of discourse as Freud's "talking cure" which produced hysteria within the domain of the psychological susceptible to (dis)cernment through language, through narrative, as recorded in the case studies of his analyses.

Hysteria occupies the problematic border between somatic and psychosomatic disorders precisely as a syndrome in which symptoms of real diseases may be imitated. The "factitious condition" of the body mocks its "nature," such duplicity of hysteria requiring the diagnostic intervention of the trained specialist to distinguish between physiological disorder and feigning or acting. Consequently, hysteria exposes the double bind of medicine's discursive control of women's bodies, its physiological symptoms necessitating and defying medical intervention yet so mandating the
retention of moral categories to order relations between semblance and reality. The 1890s was the decade of the emergence of psychoanalysis as an institutional discourse to regulate female sexuality precisely on the terrain of hysteria, a discourse which established its mastery and control over the female body through its ability to read the gestures of the female body in an analytic narrative interpreting and reframing them. So psychoanalysis proliferated rather than questioned the longstanding belief in women's licentiousness productive of such a fascination with female sexuality.

Bordering on "nature" and "culture," on the "real" and the "feigned," the female body in childbirth/hysteria marked the vanishing point of sociality, the limits of the sayable. Because it so gestures towards saying, and holds out the hope of closing this gap to articulate the unthinkable childbirth is a suggestive and powerful trope for nineteenth century writers. It was at this point in 1894 that Canadian writer Joanna Wood published her first novel, The Untempered Wind, the story of a "fallen woman," of an unmarried mother. This is a novel that stages the contradictions of the metaphor of childbirth as it configures the feminine showing how its power, like female sexuality, is shaped in its limitation. Ultimately, however, Wood's novel does not undo this contradiction: her heroine dies. She dies, moreover, not for violating Victorian norms of moral purity but for failing to be fully herself, for failing to be other than proper, than property. Nonetheless, the standard of "purity" with its attendant contradictions is subjected to analytic scrutiny in narrative. It is, moreover, as I hope to show, a narrative of analysis rather than one of mastery (Lacan).

Part II.

To give a second turn to my discussion, is to begin again, to dis/place the story about the clash of discursive fields within which are represented narratives of the feminine, the story in my critical fiction, by a supplemental history organized along chronological lines. Through selected quotations from contemporaneous texts will be (re)constructed the Canadian debate on the emergence of the "new woman" as it echoed from England and Europe. In Canadian periodicals, the focus was displaced from attacks or defenses of the "wild women," "social insurgents" and "politicians" disturbing the stability of Victorian society (cf. Linton, Caird) to the site of literary norms in a debate between realism and romance as the appropriate forms for a Canadian literature: "naturalism" with its depiction of low life in European cities, typified by the prostitute and the flaneur, was explicitly rejected. A concern with "a purer taste" in literature was the temper of the times. "Decorum" and wholesomeness were preferred values of this "discourse of gentility" as bulwark against the "morbid psychology" of European realism
(Gerson 153). The discourse of purity dominated the political sphere too where the emergent feminist movement inverted, then played out its opposing signs, taking on the role of moral housekeeper to clean up the social ills in a society where masculine corruption reigned. The hand that had rocked the cradle set forth to rule the world in what has subsequently been termed "maternal feminism" (Prentice) to demand purity for men. In the midst of Canadian women's pursuit of purity, Joanna Wood's novel *The Untempered Wind*, adumbrating her later fascination with the aesthetics of the decadent movement and its figuration of the "femme fatale," stirred up controversy in the Toronto press.

In Europe, the emergent field of psychoanalysis established protocols for the endless reading of signs of the female body — woman constituted as spectacle for analytic voyeurism — protocols that are models for narratives of mastery attempting to close the potential space between the (female) body's silent and possibly chaotic gestures and a civilizing order of words. Words become, then, the solid reality, consolidating the power of both medical discourse and linguistic narratives.

In all these texts, the writers struggle with the question of sexual identity — to be really a woman or really a man — the problem of sexual difference that is the hysteric's problem (Rose 126). What is proper Canadian literature? Who is a real woman? Is "true" or "pure" womanhood natural or cultural? Is purity rooted in instinct or imposed by law? Does the hysteric fit arise spontaneously or is it produced by the pressure of the doctor? Even as they invoke one element in these binaries these texts stage the other:

In 1887 Sara Jeannette Duncan writes that

The novel of today may be written to show the culminating action of a passion, to work out an ethical problem of everyday occurrence, to give body and form to a sensation of the finest or coarsest kind, for almost any reason which can be shown to have a connection with the course of human life, and the development of human character.

(45)

In 1887 Jean-Martin Charcot publishes his lectures on hysteria which include those on *hysterical hemianaesthesia* and on *ovarian hyperaesthesia* which attempt to demonstrate that pressure on the ovarian region will produce the phenomenon of the hysterical seizure in a woman and, likewise, that systematic compression of the ovarian region will stop even the most intense hysterical fit:

But you are aware, gentlemen, that there still exists at the present time a great number of morbid states, evidently having their seat in the nervous system, which leave in the dead body no material trace that can be discovered. Epilepsy, hysteria, even the most
inveterate cases, chorea, and other morbid states which would take us too long to enumerate, come to us like so many Sphynx, which deny the most penetrating anatomical investigations. These symptomatic combinations deprived of anatomical substratum, do not present themselves to the mind of the physician with that appearance of solidity, of objectivity, which belong to affections connected with an appreciable organic lesion. (12)

There are two points in the history of hysteria upon which I wish to lay particular emphasis, in this and the following lectures. These are, on the one hand, hysterical hemianaesthesia, and on the other, ovarian hyperaesthesia.... With reference to ovarian hyperaesthesia, I hope to render evident to you the influence of pressure on the ovarian region ... over the production of the phenomena of the hysterical seizure.... I shall likewise show you a method which I have discovered, or rather re-discovered, which, in the case of some patients, enables us to arrest the course of even the most intense hysterical fit — I refer to the systematic compression of the ovarian region.... I am far from believing that lubricity is always at work in hysteria.... Nor am I either a strict partisan of the old doctrine which taught that the source of all hysteria resides in the genital organs; but I believe that, in a special form of hysteria — which I shall term, if you please, the ovarian form — the ovary does play an important part. (247)

Among these symptoms there is one which, on account of the predominant part it, in my opinion, plays in the clinical history of certain forms of hysteria, seems to me to deserve your entire attention.... This is the ovarian pain.... Sometimes it is an acute, nay, a very acute pain; the patients cannot tolerate the slightest touch, nor suffer the weight of the bed clothes, etc.; they shrink suddenly, and as if instinctively, from the finger of the investigator.... In other cases, the pain does not spontaneously show itself; it requires pressure to discover it ... this preliminary exploration proves that the seat of the pain is neither in the skin nor in the muscles. It is consequently necessary to push the investigation further, and by penetrating, as it were, into the abdominal cavity by pressure of the fingers we reach the real focus of the pain.... This is no common pain we have to do with, but a complex sensation which is accompanied by all, or some, of the phenomena of the aura hysterica ... we are thus led to acknowledge that compression of the ovarian region, simply reproduces artificially the series of symptoms that spontaneously present themselves in the natural course of the disorder.... I propose now to show you that a more energetic compression is capable of stopping the development of the attack when beginning, or even of cutting it short when the evolution of the convulsive accidents is more or less advanced.... The best condition for a perfect demonstration of the effects of ovarian compression, in such a case, is that the patient should be laid horizontally in dorsal decubitus, on the floor, or, if possible, on a mattress. The physican then, kneeling on one knee, presses the closed hand or fist into that iliac fossa, which he had previously learned to regard as the habitual seat of the ovarian pain. At first, he must throw all his strength into the effort in order to vanquish the rigidity of the abdominal muscles. But, when this is once overcome and the hand feels the resistance offered by the rim of the pelvis, the scene changes and resolution of the convulsive phenomena commences. The patient soon begins to make numerous and sometimes noisy attempts to swallow; then consciousness returns almost
at the same time, and now the woman either moans and weeps, complaining that you are hurting her ... or else she experiences relief, and testifies her gratitude.... Whichever happens, the result in short is always the same, and if you but continue the pressure for two, three, or four minutes, you are almost certain to find all the phenomena of the seizure disappear as if by magic.... At present, the assistants in the wards who have been instructed in the method of manipulation described, apply it day by day in the case of those patients to whom it is really beneficial. (263-72)

In 1889 Ibsen's *A Doll's House* has its first London production.

In 1889 Louisa Murray writes an essay on fiction in which she decries the "the cult of democracy" that has resulted in an emphasis on "the prosaic details of commonplace life, with every vestige of poetry carefully eliminated" and in a dreary pessimism. She concluded that all books are mean that do not make us think nobly of human nature and the heights to which it may attain. (550)

In 1892 Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is published.

In 1894 Joanna Wood's *The Untempered Wind* is published which opens with an exchange of vows under the trees and open sky and a woman giving herself in "generosity" to a man:

When under no more sacred canopy than the topaz of a summer sky — with no more sacred bridal hymn than the choral of the wind among the trees — in obedience to no law but the voice of nature — and the pleading of loved lips — with no other security than the unwitnessed oath of a man — a woman gives herself utterly, then she is doubtless lost. But it must be remembered that the law she breaks is an artificial law enacted solely for *her* protection: and it must be conceded that there may be a great and self-subversive generosity which permits her to give her all, assuming bonds of sometimes dreadful weight, whilst the recipient goes his way unshackled — uncondemned. (6-7)

In 1894 an anonymous review of Wood's *The Untempered Wind* appears in the *Globe*:

... In following the history of Myron Holder, the heroine of Miss Wood's novel "The Untempered Wind," the most careless reader must perceive the artifice by which the unreal has been made to do duty for the truth. Carried away by a desire to awaken the sympathies of the public the author drags forth a long-dead grievance and shakes it before us at a length of several hundred pages. Conscious of the travesty and anxious to propitiate the reader an attempt is made in ch ix to account for the exceptional persecution of the heroine, and it fails wholly. The young girl deserted will find nowadays a hundred to hold out a hand to her where one will turn away in scorn. The spirit of the age is strongly inclined to regard lightly offences against the moral law, but
to palliate to the utmost and direct into better channels the will which has proved itself too weak. Foremost, and not as some will have it most backward, amongst those who stand ready to save are women, sisters, wives and mothers, consecrated to just such ends... (Anonymous [Durand?] 9).

In 1895 Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* is published in London. In the novel, Herminia Barton's surrender to Alan is interrupted by her "flush of shame and horror" that he should propose marriage to her:

He folded her in his arms. Her bosom throbbed on his. Their lips met for a second. Herminia took his kiss with sweet submission, and made no faint pretence of fighting against it. Her heart was full. She quickened to the finger-tips... "So, Herminia, you will be mine! You say beforehand you will take me." "Not will be yours," Herminia corrected in that silvery voice of hers. "Am yours already, Alan. I somehow feel as if I had always been yours. I am yours at this moment. You may do what you would with me." She said it so simply, so purely, so naturally, with all the supreme faith of the good woman enamoured, who can yield herself up without blame to the man who loves her, that it hardly even occurred to Alan's mind to wonder at her self-surrender. Yet he drew back all the same in a sudden little crisis of doubt and uncertainty. He scarcely realised what she meant. "Then dearest," he cried tentatively, "how soon may we be married?" At the sound of those unexpected words from such lips as his, a flush of shame and horror overspread Herminia's cheek. "Never!" she cried firmly, drawing away. (37-38)

In 1895 Sigmund Freud publishes his first work on hysteria where he describes the case of Anna O. who experienced an inhibition of speech and motor paralysis from the affect of anxiety, this first producing an absence, then being organized into a double consciousness as the patient's "not knowing" became clearly a "not wanting to know," a resistance to association to be overcome by the therapist's insistence and pressure on the body, which will bring the missing material to light:

I had come fresh from the school of Charcot, and I regarded the linking of hysteria with the topic of sexuality as a sort of insult — just as the women patients themselves do. When I go through my notes on this case today there seems to me no doubt at all that it must be looked on as a case of severe anxiety neurosis accompanied by anxious expectation and phobias — an anxiety neurosis which originated from sexual abstinence and had become combined with hysteria. (342)

It is remarkable how completely the earliest manifestation of her [Anna O.] illness in its beginnings already exhibited its main characteristics, which afterwards remained unchanged for almost two years. These comprised the existence of a second state of consciousness which first emerged as a temporary *absence* and later became organized into a "*double conscience*"; an inhibition of speech, determined by the affect of anxiety, which found a chance discharge in the English verses; later on, paraphrasia and loss of
her mother-tongue, which was replaced by excellent English; and firstly the accidental paralysis of her right arm, due to pressure, which later developed into a contractural paresis and anaesthesia on her right side. The mechanism by which this latter affection came into being agreed entirely with Charcot's theory of traumatic hysteria — a slight trauma occurring during a state of hypnosis. But whereas the paralysis experimentally provoked by Charcot in his patients became stabilized immediately, and whereas the paralysis caused in sufferers from traumatic neuroses by a severe traumatic shock sets in at once, the nervous system of this girl put up a successful resistance for four months. (97)

Thus a psychical force, aversion on the part of the ego, had originally driven the pathogenic idea out of association and was now opposing its return to memory. The hysterical patient's "not knowing" was in fact a "not wanting to know" — a not wanting which might be to a greater or less extent conscious. The task of the therapist, therefore, lies in overcoming by his psychical work this resistance to association. He does this in the first place by "insisting," by making use of psychical compulsion to direct the patient's attention to the ideational traces of which he is in search. His efforts, however, are not exhausted by this, but, as I shall show, they take on other forms in the course of an analysis and call in other psychical forces to assist them. (353).

But if we examine with a critical eye the account that the patient has given us without much trouble or resistance, we shall quite infallibly discover gaps and imperfections in it.... The patient will not recognize these deficiencies when his attention is drawn to them. But the physician will be right in looking behind the weak spots for an approach to the material in the deeper layers and in hoping that he will discover precisely there the connecting threads for which he is seeking with the pressure procedure. Accordingly, we say to the patient: "You are mistaken; what you are putting forward can have nothing to do with the present subject. We must expect to come upon something else here, and this will occur to you under the pressure of my hand." (366)

In 1898 C.S. Clark, self-proclaimed "public moralist" writes in support of legalizing "houses of ill-fame" in Toronto against the protests of "social purists" because it will stop men and boys from being constantly solicited on the street and will limit the seduction of girls who "are presumably respectable, but who are not really virtuous":

In suggesting a system of toleration, as I do, I conscientiously believe that houses of ill-fame are absolutely necessary in, not Toronto alone, but every city in America. I reflect public opinion more than any so called public moralist could do simply because I consider myself to be more in touch with the general public that they are. I have tried to prove that suppressing houses of ill-fame is not lessening the evil, it may confine it more amongst respectable people, domestic servants etc., but I think such a state of affairs is far more deplorable than the most open permission of houses would be. ... In the following pages I have endeavoured to show that social purity is not advanced by suppressing houses of ill-fame, everything I have stated being absolutely true, and
my contention is that people who hold positions as social purists are not in a position to give opinions on such matters, for they are not only entirely ignorant of them, but they are illogical. (86-87).

I state that I have never yet been solicited on the streets of Montreal during a twelve months' residence in that city, and I state that I have been solicited on the streets of Toronto if I am in that city only one night. I do not mean to say that women stop me on the street, but every man or boy knows that soliciting can be done without a word being spoken, and that is the way I have been solicited in the city of Toronto. I think I may truthfully and consistently say that there is in the majority of men and boys an inherent chivalry that impels them to refrain from the seduction of respectable girls, and in preference thereto would visit a house of ill-fame. I also state that in a great many of cases girls are more to blame than boys, and I could give scores of instances where such is the case, so that my contention that licensing houses would not in any respect increase the evil, but really be the salvation of girls who are presumably respectable, but who are not really virtuous. (91)

The case of the school teacher, who was also "ruined is laid at the door of the young man who seduced her. For my own part, I am constrained to believe that she was a willing victim, and do not, in fact consider it a case of seduction at all, it is simply an act of fornication in which one is guilty equally with the other. (93)

In 1907, during meetings of the National Council of Women of Canada, consideration of the "subject of Purity" turns in the first instance to the "Social Evil, or the White Slave Traffic" to call for purity for men, holding up the standard of a "white life for two." Protests are voiced that for every fallen woman there are at least ten fallen men:

Generally when we speak or think upon the subject of Purity, our first thought is the "Social Evil," or the White Slave Traffic. In this Province there are about 3,000 known fallen women, and to one fallen woman there are ten fallen men at the very least. What about the manhood of our country? We may say this will not affect us, our children are pure; but how do we know whether one of our daughters may not marry one of these men! Impurity has become a disease, fastening upon our manhood, and unless we wake up and do something to remedy it, our future generation will be, at the least, a race of weaklings and imbeciles. The social evil is so entrenched between the saloon on one side and the dance hall and low theatre on the other, that it is almost impossible to touch it. This is a terrible part of the question, but to-day we will go back and think of the cause of these conditions, rather than the consequences. Impurity is the cause of nine-tenths of our divorces and our domestic troubles to-day. Sometimes it is wickedness, but generally, I believe, ignorance is at the back of it all...We believe that ignorance has been the curse of the past, and that knowledge of the truth is to be the salvation of the future. We do not think our young people should be kept in ignorance. It is better that their modesty should be shocked, if by so doing their virtue can be saved. ("Address," Mrs. Thompson qtd. in Cook 238)
When we set up the standard of a "white life for two," and demand of men the same blameless life we require of woman, then, and not till then, will the race be freed from its bondage of sensuality. It can never be done through the law. Attempts have been made for legal restriction as a partial remedy, but usually such have been severe repressive measures directed chiefly against the women, and calculated to diminish, not the sin itself, but the physical ills which attend the evil. Not the law, but knowledge and truth, must be the means applied. If the truth shall make you free, then are you free indeed. ("Address," Mrs. Spofford qtd. in Cook 238)

Part III.

To cerne my subject through another narrative, I turn in this third movement to the fiction of Joanna Wood, The Untempered Wind, the narrative of a "Fallen Woman," the Magdalene, double of the domestic "Angel" of Victorian romance and melodrama, the woman whose sexuality was openly expressed in defiance of the norms of social, and textual purity. Here, I develop a narrative initiated by the anonymous critic [Laura Durand?] of the novel in the Toronto Globe who judges it hysterical (Anonymous 1894, 9). S/he finds the situation of the unwed mother to be a social commonplace and no cause for scandal, not sufficient wrong to support the lengthy tale of Myron's persecution at the hands of her female neighbours, but complains about the excessive language of the novel, its "tedious descriptive passages," its "poetic flight," its "gush":

Persecution such as was carried on systematically and maliciously against Myron Holder is as much a thing of the past as the pillory and the whipping-post. Not all the superlatives impressed for the purpose nor the half-hysteric recital of the brutalities practised on the heroine can move us — we are incredulous, we know the story is untrue. (Anonymous 1894, 9)

Another anonymous reviewer agrees with the "wearisome abundance" of detail about the "heroine": "technically the sinner, is not only an angel but a monopolist of goodness, and not only of goodness but of ordinary humanity.... As a whole, the book leaves the reader feeling like one who has eaten a kid seethed in its mother's milk" (Anonymous 1895, 426). Both underline the prominence of the "feminine" in the novel in terms of style as well as content.

Hysterical, the novel proclaims scandal, the scandal of the "speaking body," the irreducible scandal of the incongruous but indissociable relation between language and the body, the scandal of the seduction of the human body through speech, the promise of love which is above all a promise that cannot be kept. This scandal of seduction, of the love letter, is the founding instance of the literary, the theoretical and the historical all preoccupied with "speaking an act," with performance (Felman 12-13). What is being
asked of women in this literary contract, however, is that sexuality and language should be stylized, refined. The controversy over female sexual license, in the case of Wood, takes place not on the grounds of moral encomiums but on the terrain of style. The corruption of female sexuality and the corruption of language go together; they lend each other support. The cohesion of the moral body requires the cleaning up of language and woman at the same time. As Jacqueline Rose sums it up: "Female sexuality becomes answerable, therefore, for something which is felt as a sexual and linguistic debasement. Not by chance Freud will remove the moral indictment of the woman at the same moment that he asks what it means to constitute oneself with such unwavering certainty in language, whether public discourse or everyday speech" (Rose 115). Freud's contribution to the theory of hysteria was to shift the analysis of the hyster from voyeuristic gaze at a spectacle of moral turpitude to the attentive listening to the language of image in order to translate it into a narrative of sexual and linguistic identity. The photographs of Charcot's hysterical patients at la Salpêtrière whose frozen images in _attitudes passionelles_ offered a spectacle for the camera are displaced by Freud's "case histories" of hysterics whose somatized language is translated into "short stories" which founded the discipline of psychoanalysis, the "talking cure," the scene of translation of the body's hieroglyphs into words in the performativ space of analysis.

Following this line of analysis, to probe the discourse on/of hysteria in Wood's novel will take us into the "literature" on the split subject of the hysterical discourse in order to explore the spectacle of this female (textual) body as it is specularized by the masculine gaze scrutinizing its ambiguous desire for the father and the mother. Is this the body of repression or the body of transgression? Is the hysterical body a carnivalesque body? Does it advance a discourse of containment or one of contestation? Is it anarchic, or is its transformative gesture fettered in feminine petticoats? Ambiguity there is in this term though it was one of opprobrium when used in 1894 in relation to the New Woman novel: "petticoat anarchists who put a blazing torch to the shrine of self-respect and feminine shame," women writers who have abandoned "womanly feeling and instinctive delicacy" (qtd. in Cunningham 18).

Before subjecting this hysterical textual body to analysis and forcing my narrative into its gaps and silences, I want to situate it within the field of Victorian discourses on proper femininity as they are figured in the genre of the "Fallen Magdalene" and its subsequent subgenre of the "Unrepentant Magdalene." Prostitution was defined in the nineteenth century as "the great social evil" (cover for poverty?), the stimulus for much heated debate. Now, however, it is felt that "Victorian prudery in sexual matters was not so much repression as regulation, lest debauchery flood out uncontrolled. And it may
be that the reason why so much Victorian art appears today as lightly
disguised eroticism or soft, submerged pornography dignified by 'high art'
connections, is that it formed part of the process of negotiating this difficult
and disturbing terrain: art provided an approved way of articulating
questions of sex" (March 78). Within this terrain, several appropriate generic
conventions developed which produced differing positions for the female in
relation to desire and power. On the one hand there are the portraits of
luscious females, full-throated women with luxuriant (Medusa-like) hair and
gorgeous, jewelled accessories which contradict the conventional wisdom that
for ladies, sex was a duty rather than a pleasure — the Nana’s, the Becky
Sharpe’s, the Anna Karenina’s. Most of Wood’s heroines belong in this
company: Laurine-Amourette-Violet in A Martyr to Love, who is a fallen
woman from the "neurotic school," Vashti in Daughter of Witches, and
Marriott in Farden Ha’, who are sensual women unfaithful to their
husbands. Only Judith, the artist in Judith Moore whose beauty and voice are
seductive, quits the stage for marriage, abandoning the portrait of the artist
novel for that of domestic realism. On the other hand, are the portraits of
rural innocents drawn into prostitution through seduction and abandonment,
ignorant and unwilling victims. In this company, are enrolled Gaskell’s Ruth,
Hardy’s Tess, whose subtitle "the story of a pure woman," provided the name
for this particular school — "the purity school" or "the hill top school" —
fiction which stressed the "happy fall," the redemptive possibilities seduction
offered to women.

Purity is thus figured relationally— and paradoxically — in these opposing
discourses, applied both to the Victorian mothers who were wives and also
to those mothers who were not wives. Such polysemy interrupts the
figuration of the maternal as woman’s "proper sphere," since it is not
(self)-identical. This is especially the case in The Woman Who Did, the best
known of these novels, published in London by Canadian novelist Grant
Allen. His heroine, Herminia Barton, willingly espoused the cause of the
"Anti-Marriage League," protesting against hypocrisy, thus inverting the
conventional semiotic field in a contestatory discourse that argues for the
purity of free love over the corruption of materialist bourgeois marriage.
Canadian readers were quick to denounce such a challenge to the
conventional pieties: reviewers attacked the novel as an "abortive production
of an unhealthy brain ... free-love being frankly advocated" (qtd. in Gerson
146) and decried the damage to Allen’s reputation caused by "his outré
writings" (Anonymous 1896, 584).

It is in this field that Myron Holder is situated, ambiguously, with the
seductive tresses of a sensual Rossetti portrait, her face "carven cameo-like
against a night of hair" (Wood 1894, 56), hair the colour of which makes
Homer (her trusty neighbour) feverish: "hair bright enough to drive him almost mad" (Wood 1894, 38).

Beginning with a dark cloud, that hovered for a time before him and then floated away fragment by fragment till all was gone save enough to halo round a pale and steadfast face, with dark locks of hair, and the face at first only outlined by the curving tresses, gradually assumed features — dark eyes and ... pale, sorrowful lips, and a chin which told of strength to endure, yet pleaded most eloquently against a test; and then came patient shoulders and the bosom of a mother. (Wood 1894, 135)

In the movement of this passage to read and translate Myron's facial features, we shift semiotic fields away from the "femme fatale" to the Madonna. For this is also the sweet face of Mary Wells' painting of Gretchen (Marsh), the rustic innocent, further purified by her suffering, whitened like her soul "which was being blanched by the pointing fingers of the world."

Her face had gained a pale and — inapplicable as the word seems — lofty beauty. Her eyes held within their depths the secret of all pain, and the storehouses of such knowledge are often more beautiful than those that garner gayer truths.... Her lips softened by the love of her child, ever warm and red.... (Wood 1894, 213)

Myron's guilt has been transformed through motherhood so that she has become a "meek-mouthed Madonna," with no happy glow, no aureole, however, only lines of pain and suffering on her face from the "heights of motherhood's Golgotha — a child's grave" (Wood 1894, 272). In this, Myron contains within herself the binary oppositions of Angel/whore, disturbing the economy of the Proper, of the same, through her excessive signification. What she has gained through her struggle is knowledge, sensitivity, truth, personal integrity, and this is figured on her body. As the changes in her face show, the language in which she communicates is the somatized, symptomatized one of the hysteric who speaks with her body, a body under the governance of the "uterus," the "hystera," site of maternal (re)production, that represents her difference in the semiotic field and naturalizes social differences as gendered dis-ease.

In its focus on the redemptive potentials of maternity wherein the child is saviour of the mother, The Untempered Wind develops the metaphor of childbirth so crucial to this genre and to the fictional contract where the legitimacy of the male line is the controlling narrative line. Following the conventions of the genre closely, Wood only briefly, and analeptically, refers to the scene of seduction, the scene of false promise which, failing to translate love into act, falls back on the substitute of language, of narrative.
When under no more sacred canopy than the topaz of a summer sky — with no more sacred bridal hymn than the choral of the wind among the trees — in obedience to no law but the voice of nature — and the pleading of loved lips — with no other security than the unwitnessed oath of a man — a woman gives herself utterly, then she is doubtless lost. (Wood 1894, 6-7)

Presented as *incipit*, this oath functions as fictional contract for a narrative that examines the consequences of the failure to keep this promise even as it raises questions about the identity of (the) man. The nineteenth-century discussion of sex used a "rhetoric of allusion and metaphor" in order to mask the "transforming of sex into discourse," to mask the regulatory force of law in social narrative (Foucault 17). Wood goes on to interrogate this rule of law and to expose its inequitable distributive function to bind and contain women.

But it must be remembered that the law she breaks is an artificial law enacted solely for her protection: and it must be conceded that there may be a great and self-subversive generosity which permits her to give her all, assuming bonds of sometimes dreadful weight, whilst the recipient goes his way unshackled — uncondemned. (Wood 1894, 7)

Explicit here is the operation of the "double standard" but also an insistence on women's strength outside the social contract. For Wood, faithfulness to the vow, to the word is the critical question, and in such constancy to the letter the woman proves greater fidelity than the man. Crucial in this regulatory force is the metaphor of childbirth that foregrounds the ambiguous potential of naturalizing social laws. It is deployed in all the fictions of sex to condone or redeem the fallen woman. In childbirth the guilty woman is either punished for her sin (Eve's curse) or finds her way to salvation (Mary's redemption). Through this trope, women's sexuality is contained genealogically, physically and socially (MacPike 57). The many valences in this network of signs each offer a different position for the female subject under the phallic law. She may be condemned harshly, positioned in a narrative wherein she suffers hideously in childbirth, and/or gives birth to a girl child who dies either before birth or in infancy because of her inability to nurture it properly. On the contrary, if her crime is not judged harshly or if she has been seduced through ignorance, she may be the subject of a narrative where her labour is not intense, where her child is a boy and through her love for this child she is transformed into a madonna. The birth of an illegitimate but beloved son is a means of redemption for the erring mother whose only fault was to have been denied the social and moral education that would have prevented seduction by unscrupulous men. A feminist discourse on independence through education would question the
conventional discourse of innate morality. The Untempered Wind displaces this question, however, since Myron’s is not an ignorant but a deliberate act, one that goes against the teaching of her family moreover, since her grandmother with whom she lives is one of her harshest critics. Childbirth is a "hell of suffering" for Myron not bodily pain in divine retribution for sin but psychological pain because she is "helpless and alone," outcast by the village women who refuse to act as midwives because she will not name her seducer:

far as Myron Holder had fallen, deep as was her humiliation, black as was her shame, inexcusable her error, she still shines in effulgent whiteness when compared with those women who refused her aid that long night through, demanding as recompense for their ministering the betrayal of her betrayer. Myron Holder would not pay their price. (Wood 1894, 17)

Myron’s resistance to them exposes the hypocrisy of social codes. Wood introduces another feminist discourse critiquing the double bind of social laws that exist only to protect women, that is to constrain them but is not consistent in this line of argument, for it is used to show that Myron is animated by the spirit of a higher law, that of love, of charity, which places her on a different scale of purity, a lofty one that transcends and mocks social values. Myron’s moral superiority over her suitors is stressed, especially her fidelity in contrast to Philip Hardman, the minister of little faith, and her generosity in contrast to Henry Willis, egoistical and possessive doctor.

Myron belongs to the second group of women whose fall has been fortunate. She has made of her child a "new religious sect" and the cry of her boy into the "translation of her heart" (Wood 1894, 165). This insistence on the boy as her access to the symbolic order of language sets in play a counter movement contradicting that toward subjectivity through the exercise of free choice and the stubborn keeping of her promise. For through this merger with an other, she moves toward abjectivity. Although he lives long enough to redeem her, Myron’s child is never able to effect the bridge with the community again, to communicate fully for her. As he leaves babyhood and tries to play with other children, he is excluded, left standing alone at the fence looking in while they run from him. Appropriately, he is named "My," fused always with his mother. He dies in childhood after his mother has been cursed by another mother with a sick child, dies because she is unable to nurse her child even though she cures others. My in this way launches his mother on her career of self-sacrifice or expiation of guilt: she goes to the city to train as a nurse and ultimately to serve in a cholera quarantine centre where she gives up her own life for those suffering. She mothers the world but never separates from her dead child. Her last words
are a request for a proper name to be placed on the child's grave, darkness into which she too has foundered, having not kept her word and, consequently, not having attained subjectivity.

In certain ways, however, Wood's novel deviates from the generic conventions, violating them to undermine the implications of this ending in which Myron as the "New Woman" seeks the hard work of nursing that will make her a useful not a decorative woman. For in a sudden melodramatic twist of the plot on the final pages, Myron Holder meets her former lover who is now the doctor in charge of the cholera station. On her death bed, she succumbs to his pressures to marry him and give her child a name. This resumption of a loveless relationship with her seducer who has ignored her for all these years can only be read as self-annihilating, as the pull of conventions in which Myron has seemed not to believe, thus reinstating the heroine's plot with its closure of marriage and subservience to the law of the Father. The doctor's insistence on a death-bed marriage is ironically a second seduction/violation. It forces Myron to take back her word, to fail in her promise, in exchange for a "proper name" that makes her his "property" and guarantees the (fictive) connection between father and son.

Indeed this is the temptation she finally succumbs to in marrying Henry Willis. "But to all his pleading Myron Holder was deaf, until, by the inspiration of despair, he cried aloud: 'For his sake, to give him a name!' Then she consented" (Wood 1894, 313). This is a failure to sustain the self she has forged in the very silence of her resistance, in her refusal to speak that was a speaking otherwise. One can read this as the problem for Wood of how to shape an unacceptable situation into a narrative form acceptable to her public. One can also read this as the struggle to articulate a female subject within a symbolic order that has figured her as absence. Silence speaks powerfully here. Wood invites this second interpretation and a denunciation of patriarchal authority in her depiction of the motives of Henry Willis in proposing to Myron.

The quality Dr. Willis most admired, respected and understood was Will, but here it reigned in such transcendent strength that he stood appalled before it. From that moment of retrospect and recognition he had awakened with a galling sense of his own inferiority. Never before had Henry Willis owned the domination of a living will. Now the wide earth held no sweetness, all his achievements no triumph for him, unless he could once more possess the woman who had, so long ago, been wholly his. (Wood 1894, 312).

This drive to mastery is paramount and successful only because Myron is so ill. Once having accomplished it in marrying Myron, he breaks his oath yet again and neglects to change the name on the gravestone of My. "The names of Dr. Henry Willis and Nurse Myron were coupled with honorable and
enduring encomiums" only in the pages of the newspaper reporting their work, never to be "read above the grave of a nameless child" (Wood 1894, 312). Myron's submission at the end makes the doctor a hero in the eyes of the other staff. But for her it entails the abdication of the integrity and purity which has made her the paragon of moral virtue she has become through faithfulness to her word, constancy in the promissory that has formed her will to identity. Keeping her word, Myron continues to say yes to her desire despite all the complications it creates. In this script, she has followed the lead of Jane Eyre, a study of the "falling woman," or novel of female education, whose struggle to become both moral and active is accompanied by the temptation to avoid the responsibility of choice. "Sorrow and shame," Wood writes, "teach subtle truths etched clear upon the metal of this woman's soul, burned deep upon the tablets of her heart, their acids had graven the symbols of their teachings." Myron is strong to resist temptation, to resist falling into marriage. Inverting thus the model of Jane Eyre, The Untempered Wind reworks the conventions of the nineteenth-century novel of the double suitor that insisted on women's education for moral choice between two suitors, between seduction and marriage, between a promise broken and a promise actualized. There is also a third suitor here, the wavering self-doubting, former minister, Philip Hardman, who shifts the burden of choice to Myron, offering her yet another proof of the conviction in her promise and evidence of the lack of such faith or strength of will in men:

now he would wonder if Myron Holder as his wife would stultify his efforts for the Faith, and presently tremble lest he drag her down to the perdition he feared. At this juncture he deliberately shifted the burden from his own shoulders to those of Myron Holder. He asked her to decide, expressing his own love for her and saying tenderly: "And you, Myron, you love me?" She only looked her answer, but the eloquence of her look seemed to argue and decide the whole case. (Wood 1894, 305)

Philip's is a temporized promise of love. Myron reacts to it with a cry for "A sign — a sign!" (Wood 1894, 306) responding shortly after to a telegram requesting nurses for the cholera quarantine station.

Myron has kept her own promise all these years and consequently her son lies in an unmarked grave. The unspeakable as site of the feminine. She has never revealed the name of My's father, never betrayed this secret, nor has she talked back to the women who heap scorn on her. Myron's sin, as they point out to her, is that she maintains such independent silence (Wood 1894, 93). If she had married the father of her child after his birth, and given her son a name, the village women would have forgotten her fall and accepted her into the community again. Under the law/the name of the father, she could be integrated into sociality. But My is his mother's child as
his name signifies being both the possessive pronoun and a diminutive of hers. This resolution is the source of Myron's strength and (self)-identity. It is a self-naming carried out in the very absence of a name, indeed, in a refusal to name. "I cannot tell you," she says firmly and repeatedly to Homer despite his entreaties, because "I promised".

"Promised," he echoed. "What's a promise given to him worth? Nothing — absolutely nothing. Promised! He did some fine promising, I dare swear. A promise to him!" "I promised," she said again, then pushing back her head a little that she might look him in the face (for she was hardly of the common height of women), she went on. "I promised and I will keep my promise, he will come and I can wait." (Wood 1894, 61-62)

Later, as Myron refuses to marry him, reiterating the sacredness of her promise, of truth and fidelity, she explains: "You understand, Homer?" she said. 'If I cannot justify myself in my own eyes, I shall go mad" (Wood 1894, 191-92). Through such constancy and strength of will, which is a fidelity to her word, to her self-naming, Myron distinguishes herself from the other women in Jameston who are quick with their tongues and who torture her with their verbal abuse. She never complains or answers back. She is no gossip like them either but strong in her silence and refusal to engage in the name-calling of others. The power and sanctity of the word is emphasized in Myron's refusal to use it lightly. Her silence is broached, however, by the language of the body whose blushes and blanchings are hieroglyphs which the narrator decodes and translates into verbal description and narration, that excessive description and consequent slow development decried by Wood's contemporaneous critics. This is most evident in the handling of the seduction scene whose promises exchanged, inevitably failed ones, constitute the originating speech act for this narrative.

A shift from the generic norm of the novel of the "fallen woman," the novel of seduction, is the staging of more than one love scene. If the initial narration of Myron's fall is brief, and placed near the beginning of the novel as an analepsis, the second is extended and culminates a long friendship between Myron and Homer Wilson. This scene plays on the erotic suggestiveness of landscape which Wood develops so extensively in her fiction as a paysage d'état d'âme in the symbolist mode. These two scenes are ironically displaced by two others, one with Hardman that inverts the roles to emphasize women's independence in choosing and a reprise of the first seduction scene, in which Myron is convinced to marry her seducer on her death-bed. This trope foregrounds the fictional (and social?) truth that marriage equals death, both functioning as narrative closure in Victorian fiction.
The second seduction is itself staged in three moments. Myron's temptation to fall is enacted in three different forms. After she has with great difficulty resisted the "supreme temptation" to become Homer's wife and have her son instated in the social contract with a "name" (Wood 1894, 190), Homer approaches her a second time offering her money to keep her over the winter so that she can buy proper food for her son even though she has little work. This too she rejects to maintain her independence refusing both forms of metaphorical prostitution. Instead, Homer arranges to have two indigents from the township's welfare role board with her over the winter. This gesture exposes the trope of sexuality as cover for poverty as social evil. Paupers like prostitutes lack propr(i)ety. Escapes from impoverishment are gendered, however, at least in the Victorian code of "social evils": "it is to be remembered that as Mrs. Besant says, a girl has this advantage over a boy, she can sell herself, where a boy cannot, so that where poverty makes a girl a prostitute, it makes a boy a thief" (Clark 89). Myron and the indigents are saved from these two fates through charity, however, which gives money to the poor for board and lodging, money that is recirculated to Myron, the undeserving poor. Economies of desire and power are related and relativized here to position female sexuality at the bottom of the scale.

The third temptation comes on a moonlit summer night when Homer visits Myron at her cottage, this the temptation of sexual pleasure. This is of a different order, the temptation of a woman, not that of a mother. The narrative is silent about the actual encounter between Myron and Homer, focusing instead on its effect, on Myron's aroused sensuality and her struggle to contain it so as to keep her (the) word. In this, the narrative reads and translates her bodily signs. When Homer leaves her house,

behind him he knew a woman lay prone upon a bare floor, sobbing and wrestling with the evil of her own nature, with hard-wrought hands half-outstretched to him — half withdrawn to cover her shamed eyes. Within his breast he bore the memory not of rejection or rebuke, but the echo of a plea for mercy — the broken syllables of a woman's voice raised in an appeal for help against her own weakness. (Wood 1894, 228)

Homer's tempering of passion with compassion is immediate. He responds to her broken voice with "a pledge of aid" (Wood 1894, 228). Not so Myron's. She enters "her wilderness" to struggle with "the Devil of her own passion" both metaphorically and literally, running through the countryside at night, a "wild figure" crossing the fields and woods to the promontory overlooking the lake. "As she ran, the spirit of the night and the intoxicating odor of flowers and grasses entered into her and steeped her senses in a delirium of freedom. She sprang on — now running, now
half-dancing, once going a rod or two in the old childish hippety-hop fashion" (Wood 1894, 229).

She stood up on the rocky point and held out her clasped hands despairingly. Her hair loosened by many a tugging branch, fell about her in wild disorder — now blown across her flushed cheeks, wild eyes and parted lips, now wrenched back by the high wind, its whole weight streaming behind her, now framing her face in dusky convolutions.... And still she stood outwearing her passion by her patience. About her surged all the weird melodies that loneliness and night and despair smite from the heartstrings. The blood sang in her ears, a monotonous obligato to those piercing notes.... (Wood 1894, 230-31)

Like Jane Eyre, Myron learns to temper passion with reason. On the book cover, not surprisingly, the editors presented Joanna Wood as "the Canadian Charlotte Brontë." In this delayed and displaced scene of seduction, it is the effects of sexual excitation in Myron that are the narrative focus. Significantly, Myron is alone with nature whose changing aspects are deployed as objective correlatives of her sensations and emotions in symbolist fashion. In the natural environment, far from the hypocrisy of the community, she is most resolute in her will, returning to the village in the morning to take up her isolated life again with eyes "undimmed with tears, unblurred by passion" (Wood 1894, 232).

The narrative also tracks the positions and movements of Myron's specularchized body. First she lies prone on the floor, then her body gyrates and arches — the very "attitudes passionelles" into which Charcot's hystericis were frozen as spectacle for his camera's gaze. More than Wood's prose is hysterical in this novel: the heroine is as well for, in Wood's presentation of her, Myron somatizes constantly. Wood's principal device of characterization is a description of Myron's face and eyes where the language of the body is most readily deciphered. Myron's face "still shines in effulgent whiteness":

Her face, holy with the divine shadow of coming maternity, turned to her questioners and indecipherable page write large with characters of shame and sorrow, but telling nought else. (Wood 1894, 17)

Her eyes unclosed, she did not stir, nor flush, nor speak. She only looked at him out of eyes which were terrible in their tragic despair, eyes which seemed to accuse him of his manhood, that rendered him akin to her betrayer. (Wood 1894, 60)

Old Henry Deans ... said with learing facetiousness, "Ah — a fellow askin' after you, Myron," and pointed his fist with a look that made the blood spring to the woman's cheeks and linger there, a painful blot as though the face had been smitten. She bent over her tub in silence, her heart hot within her. (Wood 1894, 35)
Through much of the narrative, Myron is silent, represented in these verbal "portraits" as spectacle for the narrator's gaze, her face either pure white or blushing, sign in her body language of "this mask of arrested life" (Wood 1894, 155), hieroglyphs transcribed into the narrative prose. Here the body is the soul. Myron's emotions and thoughts are unverbalized — she keeps her counsel silently — expressed nonetheless (or there would be no narrative) through a language written on her body, in the gestures of her specularized performances that become the scenes of translation into the verbal text of Wood's novel.

On several occasions, Myron enacts one of the major gestures of the hysterical: she faints. The first time, she is serving at Mrs. Dean's house along with the bound servant, to which status she is reduced by her "fall." The employer's "vituperation" raging over the heads of the two girls provokes Myron to this form of silent retort (Wood 1894, 111). The second time she faints is at the time of her grandmother's death. The village women have refused to stay with her over night to watch over her grandmother's body. Myron, alone, prey to hallucinations, imagines her grandmother's punishment emanating from the corpse in the form of "two balls of livid light" from the "very couch of death" (Wood 1894, 171). Myron faints in terror at this apparition that seems to be divine retribution for her guilt.

In her deployment of this body language for her silent heroine, the narrator self-reflexively meditates on this problem of finding a language to translate gestures: "By what written sign may we symbolize the agony of a heart, bruised and pierced and crushed day after day? By what strange language express the torture of a pure soul, stifled in a chrysalis of shame?" (Wood 1894, 26). Constantly, she invokes metaphors of writing to draw parallels to the language inscribed on the body. "There was one night — one dreadful night — whose memory stained for ever even the dark pages of her retrospect" (Wood 1894, 18). "There is much that could be told only with bleeding lips, written only with a pen dipped in wormwood" (Wood 1894, 7). Appropriately (appropriatingly), this writing on the body is described as "hieroglyphics" in a passage which contrasts the changing norms of Christianity that no longer fastened a "physical sign of degradation upon the object of their religious wrath," as with "Hawthorne's stately Evil Woman who bore an 'implacable face above that fatal mark.'" Upon her face "was writ in all the varied hieroglyphics of tint and expression, line and curve, the story of her passion and her shame" (Wood 1894, 297). Myron has no scarlet letter A on her breast, her face alone signs "the pangs of sublimest torture" (Wood 1894, 298). The dilemma of the hysterical enacted here is, as Shoshana Felman has pointed out, a problem in translation. A "strange language" is necessary, as the narrator indicates. The hysterical needs a translator to write her story in another sign system, in language, so as to inscribe her within the symbolic order (currently ordered by the phallus), in order to turn her into
(socialized) text, a task that Myron's son had commenced as "the translator of her heart's cry" (Wood 1894, 165). But he dies, and another narrative programme is set in place, a discourse of analysis that forces the body to re-member and articulate its (guilty) secret, its conversion of repressed sexual desire into physical symptoms. "More body, more writing," as Cixous says about this transcoding, one that would "mscribe" no longer denying the unconscious drives but articulating them in the rhythms of prose (Cixous 92, 95), in the delay, the excess, the "gush" identified by Wood's critics (Anonymous 1894). Hysteric tells tales and act them out particularly for doctors who will listen or for narrators who will translate. Both combine in Wood's novel in the figure of Dr. Willis whose power to invoke closure is equated with his will to mastery. It is his word that is twice broken, however, this trope underlining the unreliability, the instability, of masculinist discourse and social (phallic) laws in Wood's novel.

Tension between closure and interruption is not confined to this ending but works through the entire text in the ambiguous figuration of madonna/hysteric which, placed at the intersection of "nature" and "culture," functions as threshold or liminality to unsettle the stability of these categories in the symbolic order, to disrupt the mind/body dualism that has devalued both the feminine and the material by showing these categories to be impure, shifting. The maternal may be imagined as a source of religious mystification, as some ineffable beyond in the discourse of the sublime, or it may be experienced as a potential site of differentiation and splitting, the "other" within the "(m)Other" (Jacobs 143), a process that gives rise both to self and to language. In giving birth, a woman is immersed in the body and makes contact with her mother as "the same continuity differentiating itself" (Kristeva qtd. in Jacobs 149). The heterogeneity of this process of splitting is the very condition of representation which takes place through repression to create boundaries, distinctions, determining insides and outsides. Similarly, the hysterical raises questions of representation as the problematic of identity through her literalization of the figural which threatens to expose sexual difference, indeed "reality," as the products of representations, as constituted by specific interests.

So too, in running the risk of self-loss in a maze of signs, of experiencing herself as text, herself become a stranger in the hysterical conversion that, in literalizing, seeks to restore "the original meaning to words" (Jacobs 206), the hysterical plays out the problematic of subjectivity in representation. The doubleness and incompleteness of the hysterical is what representation must repress in order to figure as true, whole or unified. As the not-said, the "dumbness" that is "a speaking symptom" connected with sexuality, the hysterical functions as the unconscious of the text or discourse, the way in which it knows more than it knows: the story, that is, "remembers what its
teller has forgotten" (Jacobs 198). It necessitates a reading that is an implication rather than an application, engaging a reciprocal reading of the reader or a transferential turn. Transferential and countertransference turns may vary, as Lacan (1991) has suggested in his analysis of different discourses with respect to their relation to desire and knowledge.

Within a system of permutations, the discourses produce each other, the discourse of the university requiring a master to justify its teaching and reinforcing the master's striving to achieve absolute knowledge through its mystification. Likewise the hysteric's demand for knowledge and the master's striving for absolute knowledge function symbiotically. Significant here is the triangulated relation of the discourse of the hysteric between those of mastery and of analysis. In the discourse of the hysteric, the question of subjectivity is paramount in view of its instability: the division of the subject in relation to fantasy produces the symptom in place of knowledge, symptom detached, moreover, from the signifying chain. Whereas the discourse of mastery involves the exercise of power and constitutes itself through an exclusion of fantasy to give primacy to the signifier and produce knowledge as its object in place of desire, that of the analyst focuses on the question of desire, giving primacy to the object of desire in opposition to knowledge as such: this produces the subject in its division as the very structure of fantasy, constituted by, yet apart from, the signifier (Lacan 1982, 161). What characterizes this discourse is the primacy of the subject in futile quest for the irretrievable object that causes its desire. While the discourse of mastery seeks absolute knowledge and the (illusory) identity of the ego, psychoanalytic discourse would discern the course of desire as it works to constitute reality as a function of discourse, tracing interruptions, openings, lines of flight. Its concern with lack-of-being and the flow of the signifying chain, in opposition to philosophy with its truth for all, produces a space between the lines, in the margins, where the (silent) narrative of the hysteric may be discernible as an effect of reading or transference.

It is important to keep this concern with questions and desire in mind in examining the implications of *The Untempered Wind*. The political effect of hysterical discourse and the maternal metaphor is an issue that has provoked dissonance in feminist circles, most marked in the debate between Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément. Whereas Cixous argues that the hysteric is engaged in depropriation which jams the codes of sociality and as such makes possible openings for the radically new (Cixous 96), Clément counters that this is in fact a case of appropriation: the mad woman may be cured and return in a reversal to social life within the circle of kinship and marriage, return, in fact, to the men's world (Cixous 22). The hysteric can only disrupt and is put in check. Though she may indeed be recuperated, counters Cixous, still she dismantles the structures, exposes them to criticism (Cixous
This contradiction is summed up by Juliet Mitchell who considers the hysteric's discourse not as female writing but as "the woman's masculine language" (Jacobs 202), that is women's speaking position within a masculine symbolic. Crucial here is the question of desire, whether it is excluded in order to constitute an illusory unity, or attended to in order to follow its processes and advance provisional or fictive truths.

Such contradictions are played out in The Untempered Wind especially in the strong double closure of the ending (marriage and death together) which exposes the function of (narrative) convention in enforcing the Father's law. Questions of representation have been foregrounded, as we have seen, through attention to the processes of translation of the discourse of hysteria and of the double movement from mind to body and from body to word or text, the literalization and the textualization of a discourse on the body. How to represent the signs of Myron's body is a constant concern for the narrator. This is the discourse of the analyst, following up the signifying chain, tracking the signifiers in their relation to desire in the maze of interpretation that shapes narrative. The dilemma for Myron, however, is that of subjectivity: to be for herself or to be for others as other. This is foregrounded in the tension between will and charity as frames for her action. Is she constituted through her resistance to the communal discourse of scapegoating in self-affirmation or rather through her traditional maternal role of nurturing, nursing where she exhibits selflessness? Such a clearcut distinction is ultimately impossible to sustain in face of Myron's persistence in turning symptom into language, in living her symptoms through a sheer will of (the) word.

What is evident, however, is the constant narrative focus on desire. Myron is moved not by God's desire but by her own, not by the ineffable Word of divine retribution but with the intent to keep her word, concretized as the object of desire. The narrative takes up the position of analyst to track her as a desiring and representing subject, as she makes visible the corporeal in a community that would conceal it. The very oscillations and contradictions of the strategies for closure that are deployed trouble the unity and authority of mastery. Moreover, the discourse of the institution that would mystify is disturbed by the constant questioning of social laws and of the double standard that is carried out in Wood's novel. Myron's struggle for will is dual, waged both as an effort at self-control, to subordinate passion to reason, and as resistance to the exclusionary tactics of the village women. In this attempt to generalize, so that many women may be glimpsed engaging with Myron in silent riposte to an alien and alienating sociality, may be discerned an emergent feminist reading of the connections between the repression of femininity, of the body, and the politics of women's oppression. Nonetheless the repetition of this pattern of exclusion is, as Wood's critics
noted, excessive, obsessive even, like a hysterical symptom. Repressed, what
is familiar returns as strange, as alien, split off from consciousness.

Such "symptomatic dispossession" (Jacobus 237) occurs within an
economy that produces female subjectivity as madness or non-sense, in the
realm of personal feeling divorced from knowledge, that is, without power.
As such, the force of estrangement is limited and the potential "uncanny" or
unheimlich becomes sentimentalized, limited to the sensational, the
"improper" feminine (Jacobus 237). This is most certainly the case in Wood's
later fiction which exploits women's sexuality for its sensationalism, its
affective power to tantalize and shock, soft-pornography, in short. In
contrast, in The Untempered Wind, Wood turns her attention to the process
of making strange, both of scapegoating as it produces social outcasts and
the making of a "strange language" (Wood 1894, 26) or translation, as it
engages in the differential processes of representing women's bodies.
Feminist critique is muted, made dumb, in this covert resistance in woman's
masculine language. However, the novel through its play with divine
decadence broaches analysis of the politics of representation and exposes the
paradoxes of the discourse of purity and gentility dominant in Canada in the
1890s.
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LALAGE GRAUER

Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear: The Life and Adventures of Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney

Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear: The Life and Adventures of Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney, published by the Parkdale Times Press, appeared in Ontario in the same year as the events to which it referred: the uprising of Big Bear's band at Frog Lake, Saskatchewan Territory, in April of 1885. What I call an uprising of the Plains Cree, occurring at the same time as the Riel rebellion of 1885 after a history of manipulation of the Plains Indians by an expanding Canada, was seen quite differently by the authors of this little book. Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney used the word "massacre" for the shootings on April 2, when nine settlers and government employees, including the husbands of the two women, were killed at Frog Lake by members of Big Bear's band. After the shooting, the two women were taken with the Cree as they journeyed away from the site of the incident. How the two women's publication came into being and how Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney constructed their experience in the Indian camp are the subjects of this paper.

The appearance of a text such as Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear in Ontario in 1885 was relatively unusual in Canadian publishing. At the same time, its emergence gestured toward dozens of narratives about being captured by Indians which had been written, often by women, in the thirteen colonies and the United States over two hundred years of war with the various Indian nations (Levernier, Cohen xiv). In Puritan New England the first captivity narrative, written by Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, was published in 1682, and became one of three captivity narratives best-sellers between 1680 and 1720; a fourth best-seller, John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, with its story of the Christian hero tested by a series of obstacles and disasters, suggests a cultural context for the development and popularity of the Puritan captivity narrative (Slotkin 96).

Two successive periods of war with the indigenous inhabitants of North America, the French-English wars of the late seventeenth and eighteenth
centuries and the wars of settlement of the United States, continued to generate captivity narratives. Over time, a variety of discourses told the basic story of a battle or confrontation leading to captivity and ending in escape or rescue. The early Puritan narratives were often concrete and specific in detail, partly because, historian Roy Harvey Pearce suggests, the details of captivity "figure forth a larger, essentially religious experience" and therefore "the record is made minute, direct and concrete in order to squeeze the last bit of meaning out of the experience" (2). The accounts also indicate an interest in the customs of the captors. For example, John Gyles' *Memoirs of Odd Adventures, Strange Deliverances, etc.* (1736) rendered detailed accounts of native hunting practices. By the nineteenth century a type of discourse had become common for this kind of description, which Mary Louise Pratt calls "manners-and-customs description" (121). This discourse, which Pratt points to in a late eighteenth-century account of travels in Africa, homogenizes the people it describes into "a collective 'they,' which is distilled even further into an iconic 'he' (the standardized adult male specimen)" (120). Embedded in captivity narratives, this kind of description performs the same function Pratt discusses in the travel narrative: it serves to normalize by codifying difference, "fix[ing] the Other in a timeless present" (120). It both mediated early encounters with the Indians and later preserved on paper what was perceived as a vanishing culture.

The main story of the captivity narrative, however, focuses on the suffering of the individual captive. This focus helps to distinguish it as a genre: Louise K. Barnett has pointed out how the captivity narrative differs in this way from the frontier romance — such as *The Last of the Mohicans* which centers on the adventures and daring feats of the rescuer (50). In contrast, the matter-of-fact voice of "manners and customs description" in the captivity narrative, can, for the reader more attuned to adventure stories, comically disrupt a drama of trials and torments. The title of the following mid-nineteenth-century narrative is one example:

*The Dreadful Sufferings & Thrilling Adventures of an Overland Party of Immigrants to California. Their Terrible Conflicts with Savage Tribes of Indians!!! & Bands of Mexican Robbers!!! with Marriage, Funeral & Other Interesting Ceremonies and Customs of Indian Life in the Far West.*

As this title also suggests, captivity narratives of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, often written by hack writers and journalists for the captives, became increasingly sensational. Some of the most sensational narratives focussed on the captivity of women.

The *Affecting History of the Dreadful Distresses of Frederic Manheim's Family*, published in 1794, was a collection of some actual and some undocumented incidents (VanDerBeets 202-03) which Pearce calls "a
hodgepodge of journalistic horrors aimed at proving that the Indians exercise "dreadful cruelties" (11). It contains the following passage describing the torture of the two sixteen-year-old Manheim girls, a passage which was reprinted almost verbatim in another account, An Affecting Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Mary Smith..., published in 1818 (Levernir and Cohen 69, 70):

These furies [the Indians] ... stripped the forlorn girls, already convulsed with apprehensions, and tied each to a sapling, with their hands as high extended above their heads as possible; and then pitched them from their knees to their shoulders, with upwards of six hundred of the sharpened splinters above described, which, at every puncture, were attended with screams of distress, that echoed and re-echoed through the wilderness. ("Affecting" 73)

A much later anonymous account entitled General Sheridan's Squaw Spy: and Mrs. Blynn's Captivity (1869), echoes the Manheim description:

There were seven women and two children in the center wagons. Two of the children were girls; one about twelve years old and the other about fourteen.... These poor children were at once seized by the Indians, stripped, and horribly violated by at least a dozen of the red ruffians. And more horrible yet to relate, as each brute satiated his passions, he would draw his knife and cut a deep score on the body of the victim. (34)

Pearce sums up his extensive reading of nineteenth-century American captivity narratives with the comment: "[they] seem to stem from real enough experiences, but ... have been worked up into something terrible and strange" (16). This comment is as close as Pearce comes to alluding to the element of pornographic sadism evident in many of these narratives.

These kinds of stories, so extensive in the United States, did not proliferate to the same degree in Canada. An obvious condition for the writing of these narratives — being captured in the first place — occurred much more frequently in the the thirteen colonies and the United States than it did in the northern territories. Far greater numbers of settlers in the American colonies settled on aboriginal land, resulting in repeated wars with various tribes in a struggle for possession of territory. The development of the fur trade in Canada, in contrast to agriculture in the United States, promoted ties with the native peoples and created conditions for enforcing a strict imperial policy regulating trade and settlement.

Captivities and captivity narratives did occur in New France during the Iroquois wars of the mid-seventeenth century. The absence of a publishing infrastructure and the separation of English and French cultures prevented the Jesuit accounts from circulating in Canada until the late nineteenth century, although in the United States, where publishing had developed earlier, Jesuit accounts were circulated in anthologies such as John Gilmarry
Shea's *Perils of Ocean and Wilderness* (1857). Explorers' narratives also contained stories of captivity, but these differed from the separately published American captivity narratives.

When *Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear* was written, conditions in the Canadian North-West were perhaps closer to those which confronted the American settler than at any other time in its history. With the end of the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly in the North-West in 1870, the takeover by the Canadian government and the encouragement of settlers was perceived as a threat by an indigenous population. The mixed-blood settlers of the Red River resented the unilateral Canadian annexation of Rupert's Land and their own increasingly marginalized economic and social position as "a minority in their own homeland" (Flanagan 75). Most of the plains Indian tribes, confronted with the disappearance of their means of survival — the Canadian buffalo herd had become virtually extinct by 1879 — were starving in the transition from buffalo hunting to other means of survival, and the Canadian government used food rations to control and manipulate the treaty process with the Plains Cree (Tobias 526-27). In this general context, the first armed conflict of the Riel rebellion in Saskatchewan took place at Duck Lake on March 26, 1885 and on April 2 the militants of Big Bear's band attacked and killed the government Indian agent, the farming instructor John Delaney, the grain-mill owner, John Gowanlock, and six other settlers of Frog Lake. Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney, along with Hudson's Bay clerk William B. Cameron, Louis Goulet and other Métis, were taken captive.

This event was immediately inscribed in a Canadian discourse which resembled that of sensationalist American captivity narratives. News of the Frog Lake "massacre," highlighting the fate of the women, was first printed in Toronto on April 11, 1885, by the *Daily Mail*. The headline read *BAD NEWS / The North Saskatchewan Indians on the Warpath / MASSACRE AT FROG LAKE / Ten Persons, Including a White Woman, Murdered ... Another Woman Taken Prisoner by the Indians*. On May 20 the following story was reported on the front page of the *Toronto World*, under the headline "Horrible Atrocities by Indians":

News has ... been received via Edmonton that Mrs. Delaney has died a victim of foul outrages on the part of the Indians, and torture on the part of squaws. There is no news of Mrs. Gowanlock, but fears are entertained that she has shared the same fate. There is a terrible excitement among the men composing Gen. Strange's column and hopes are expressed that the campaign will be prosecuted until every member of Big Bear's band is exterminated. A telegram from Latouche Tupper, who is with Col. Osborne Smith's battalion, confirms the report of Mrs. Delaney's death. He states that she was horribly ill-treated by the Indians, passed around from one band to another,
and finally died from abuse. The squaws cut her into pieces. Mrs. Gowanlock is said to be owned by a buck and to be still alive.

In the press, Gowanlock's body went through various mutations and mutilations: she was reported dead, then alive, then dead again after a body was found in a well in the Frog Lake region at the end of May. The *Manitoba Daily Free Press*, under the headline "Mrs. Gowanlock's Body Cut to Pieces," reported that both legs were severed near the thigh, and the arms above the elbows. The Toronto *Telegram* reported that "they found the body of Mrs. Gowanlock in a well, with the breast cut out" ("Strange Near Big Bear").

In fact, both Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney returned to Ontario from the Indian camp, to use Delaney's words, "unharmed in body and mind" ("Big Bear's Captives"). In an interview with the *Globe*, which had previously refused to credit what it called the sensational reports of the other newspapers, the two women reported that they had been given "plenty to eat," and were provided with transportation so they did not have to walk when the Indians frequently moved camp. Gowanlock said that "during my captivity I suffered a great deal of mental care and anxiety, but I was not hurt or ill-treated in any way" ("Big Bear's Captives"). At the same time, the *Globe* interview also emphasized, in headlines and sub-headings, "Terrible Experiences," the "Savage Camp," "Suspense and Peril," "Trials, Hardships and Great Losses." A similar duality occurs in the women's narratives.

According to Gowanlock, *Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear* was one way of responding to "conflicting statements in the public press." It was her "bounden duty," she wrote in the Introduction to her narrative, to give the public "a truthful and accurate description of my capture, detention, and misfortunes while captive in the camp of Big Bear" (6). The opening sentence of her Introduction, however, reinscribes the discourse of the Toronto *World*, combining sensationalism with a ladylike modesty which is typical of many American women's captivity narratives. "It is not the desire of the author of this work," she says, "to publish the incidents which drenched a peaceful and prosperous settlement in blood, and subjected the

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1 One account of the fate of Theresa Gowanlock which appeared in the *Telegram* represents her pinning an Indian's arms to his side as he attempted to shoot Gilchrist, John Gowanlock's clerk; she is flung off and shot ("Helpless Woman Slain"). This story (although not its title) evokes the archetypal opposite of the passive female victim: Leslie Fiedler's "Great Mother of Us All," the aggressive white female discussed in *The Return of the Vanishing American* who "scap[s] the woodland scalper with whom the American artist identifies himself" (108). This portrayal, despite Fiedler's assertions, appeared much more rarely in captivity narratives and was often a male projection rather than an actuality, as in the *Telegram*'s story.
survivors to untold suffering and privations at the hands of savages, in order to gratify a morbid craving for notoriety* (5).

In telling their stories, Gowanlock and Delaney put themselves in the position of the victim-heroine who features in American captivity narratives and the newspaper discourse. Although they were neither passed from one band to another nor wedded to a "young buck," they evoked similar dangers in their accounts by portraying the Cree of Big Bear's band as terrifying savages, who, if they did not actually abuse the women, were constantly on the verge of doing so. They wrote the descriptions which had become set-pieces in American captivity narratives of Indians in war paint, with "cruel mouths and devilish eyes" (Gowanlock 26) and doing the war dance, "wild, savage, mad" (Delaney 115). And they portrayed themselves as the sentimental heroine at the mercy of these villains. "Every time I saw one of Big Bear's Indians coming in," wrote Gowanlock, "I expected it was to kill us, or take us away from the tent, which would have been far worse than death to me." Delaney wrote, "For three weeks I was watched, as a cat would watch a mouse. All night long the Indians kept prowling about the tent, coming in, going out, returning: they resembled, at times, a pack of wolves skulking around their prey" (117). Yet other discourses are also at play in the narratives of Gowanlock and Delaney.

In Gowanlock's account, manners-and-customs description explains the ways of savages to the civilized. An explanation of exactly how an Indian teepee is constructed defuses a dramatic account of being dragged, a captive, to the Indian camp. "I was shivering with cold" she writes; "this squaw took my shoes and stockings off and partly dried them for me. Their tepees consisted of long poles covered with smoke-stained canvas with two openings, one at the top for a smoke hole and the other at the bottom for a door" (26). The observation and recording of detail and the use of the impersonal, semi-scientific discourse to describe the Cree customs interrupt a narrative of victimization to inscribe the mastery of the colonizer.

Delaney also presents herself as helpless victim-heroine, but her account connects this role to a conquering pioneer-heroine. "These few papers," she writes, "should they ... survive the hand of time, will tell to the children of the future Canada, what those of your day sacrificed and suffered ... to build up for them a great and solid nation" (129). Much of Delaney's account is taken up with the promotion of settlement in the West: descriptions of the potential for farming, the amenities of Frog Lake, and the generally pliable nature of the Indians in the region — except for Big Bear's band. By linking her story of captivity to a discourse common to Canadian expansionists of the period (Owram 150-66), Delaney reinforces the idea that the civilization of the settler is needed to control the savage Indians and creates sympathy
and admiration for her position on the hazardous frontlines of settlement, an "unwilling heroine of the North-West troubles" (84).

If the words "unwilling heroine" signal both pride and modesty, self-importance stated in a self-effacing manner, they also suggest that the position of heroine, like the position of captive, is not freely chosen. Theresa Gowanlock characterizes the task of writing her narrative in the same terms she uses to describe her experience with the Cree: it is something which "has no pleasures for me, and has been accomplished under the most trying difficulties and the greatest physical suffering" (6).

The type of narrative the women produced fit certain expectations in their community. Gowanlock's brother-in-law A.G. Gowanlock, proprietor and editor of the Parkdale Times, obviously supported, approved and promoted the women's accounts despite resistance from Delaney, according to one commentator (Hughes 1). Unfortunately, information on how the Parkdale Times responded to the event of the women's captivity and promoted their book is not available as the 1885 issues have not been recovered in archives. The apocryphal stories disseminated by such papers as the World, however, caught on and persisted in the community despite later retractions. Although the World corrected its sensationalist reporting on May 23, a letter to the editor of the World on June 3, for example, which blamed Louis Riel for inciting the Indians at Frog Lake, found "the highest colouring which devils could invent for the finishing touches of Riel's portrait in the capture, treatment, and horrible end of Mrs. Gowanlock and Mrs. Delaney." Even Mrs. Delaney's mother, Mrs. Fulford, who was informed by the government of the facts of the situation, tells the Globe shortly before her daughter's return home to Ottawa that she "didn't expect to hear from her daughter," because of "the terrible treatment and torture of the Indians, as has been reported" ("A Mother's Joy" 2).

In Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear Gowanlock reproduced a letter written to her by Mrs. C.F. Bennett of Winnipeg when Gowanlock was passing through Moose Jaw on her way back to Ontario after her escape:

Before I was dressed this morning, my husband came up to tell me that you were both safe. And I cannot express to you, neither can you comprehend the joy that intelligence brought to everyone. The terrible stories of your being tortured and finally murdered, outraged the feelings of the whole civilized world, and while men swore to avenge your wrongs, women mourned you, as sisters. I am very thankful to see by the papers that you were not so inhumanly treated as reported, although your experience has been a terrible one — and one which you can never forget. (56)

Interestingly, Mrs. Bennett's letter repeats and foregrounds her response to the apocryphal stories, implying their primary significance and impact in contrast to the news that Gowanlock was "not so inhumanly treated."
Gowanlock and Delaney dedicated their narratives to "Our Sisters, the Ladies of Canada," suggesting their response and perhaps capitulation to peers such as Mrs. Bennett. The emphasis that all three women, including Mrs. Bennett, give to "untold suffering" and torture at the hands of Indians, while defining themselves as ladies, signals the emergence of contradictions Mary Poovey explores in the writings of the "proper lady." If, as Poovey has postulated, feminine modesty and circumspection is a bulwark against supposed female sexual voracity attributed to women by a patriarchal society (3-30) then any unconventional action could be regarded as a sign of sexual insatiability. For Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney, association with the "primitive" native could fall into that category.

Captivity, then, which necessitates proximity and invites equality with the native must be resisted as a positive experience by the proper lady. For the proper lady of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, according to Poovey, "to define oneself by some other category than the paradox of sexuality/chastity was to move wholly outside of social definition, to risk being designated a 'monster'" (23). If Gowanlock and Delaney wished to avoid being designated as monsters themselves, then, they were in the position of designating the native as monstrous, and, ironically, calling attention to their own sexuality. Theresa Gowanlock, while modestly denying any "craving for notoriety" emphasizes the possibility of all kinds of abuse, including sexual, "at the hands of savages" (5). The position that Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney assume can be further explored by comparing their narrative to other texts in a colonial context. For example, E.M. Forster's in his Passage to India constructs one woman's transgression against the paradigm of the helpless female, victimized by the native. Adela Quested refuses to tell the expected story.

Upon the circulation of the story of Aziz's alleged attack on Adela in the Marabar Caves, women who had previously thought of Adela as someone who "wasn't puuka" (49) suddenly saw her as "our sister" (187) and men thought of her as a symbol "of all that is sweetest and warmest in the private life" (191). This newfound identity is shattered when Adela responds to the Superintendent of Police at the trial of Dr. Aziz. Speaking "agreed words," and expecting agreement back, the Superintendent states that Aziz had followed her into the cave (230). After a slight hesitation, Adela replies "No," "in a flat, unattractive voice." A little later Forster writes, "It was in hard, prosaic tones that she said 'I withdraw everything'" (231). "Flat," "unattractive," "hard," "prosaic" — as Adela refuses the story and discourse of the colonial female victim, she fractures the "equation between female and feminine" (Poovey 30). Her status as female according to the discourse of the proper lady disappears. After the trial she feels "emptied, valueless" (Forster 234). While Gowanlock and Delaney differ from Adela Quested in
that they actually were taken captive, similar pressures and choices surround
the representation of their experiences.

While Gowanlock's and Delaney's narratives reinscribe traditional
paradigms and discourses of the feminine, they also represent the self-
assertion of women writing, as the second half of their title, *The Life and
Adventures of Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney*, proclaims. Their
extended justifications for this act, while common among amateur writers,
also suggest that it is the site of their own transgression against the
prescribed behaviour for the proper lady. Gowanlock uses the moral
justification, as we have seen, of righting the record and scotching false
reports; this moral duty, she says, compels her to undertake the "task" which
she insists "has no pleasure for me" (6). Delaney more overtly presents her
work as an artistic exercise, but one which is to repay friends who have
supported her, a "little book which will please all who read it; amuse some;
instruct others" (88). With typical feminine apology, she describes herself as
unqualified for such an enterprise: "the scenes I have to describe, the story
I have to tell, would require the pen of a Fenimore Cooper to do them
justice" she writes (82), and repeatedly, she interrupts her story to declare
her unworthiness as an author.

I have attempted to show how the outlet in which these women
tentatively assert themselves, the narrative *Two Months in the Camp of Big
Bear*, is prescribed and inscribed both by the colonizing history of the United
States, Canada's colonization of the North-West, and the discourse of the
proper lady. The superiority of white European "civilization" and the
position of women within it seems to be accepted by the two authors. As
Gowanlock states categorically, "[the Indians] will not in the least impress
anyone to such an extent that they would be willing to forego the restrictions
of civilized life, and enter upon the free life of the red man" (20). Yet these
words contrasting restriction and freedom adumbrate a different story more
fully evoked in Gowanlock's Introduction:

During all my perils and wanderings amid the snow and ice of that trackless prairie, the
hope that nerved me to struggle on, was, that if rescued, I might within the sacred
precincts of the paternal hearth, seek seclusion, where loving hands would help me to
bear the burden of my sorrow, and try to make me forget at times, if they could not
completely efface from my memory, the frightful scenes enacted around that prairie
hamlet. (5)
Gowanlock defines her captivity as "wanderings" on "the trackless prairie" while to be freed from captivity is to "seek seclusion" "within the sacred precincts of the paternal hearth." This imagery of space for captivity and confinement for liberation suggests that the proper lady is bound to tell her story from within constraints which were not imposed in the camp of Big Bear.

University of Toronto
Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear / 137

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MARY LU MACDONALD

The *Montreal Museum*, 1832-1834: the Presence and Absence of Literary Women

The *Montreal Museum* was the first periodical in British North America specifically intended for female readers by a female editor. The first number was published in December 1832, and the fifteenth and final one in March 1834. Mary Graddon Gosselin was both editor and proprietor. She was assisted for the first two numbers by Elizabeth Tracey. Although the prospectus was published in both French and English, the actual periodical, with the exception of two poems, was written only in English.1

Despite Mme. Gosselin's complaint in her last number of lack of support for the *Museum*, her periodical had received uniformly good notices throughout its existence. Her lament was a standard one for editors of the time, but no one else could point to the consistent public statements of approval which legitimized her regret at the *Museum*’s disappearance. *La Minerve, Le Magasin du Bas-Canada, L'Ami du Peuple, the Canadian Courant, the Vindicator* and the *Gazettes* of Montreal and Quebec (journals in both languages and of all political positions), had welcomed the first number. All mentioned that the editor and her projected readers were women, and all applauded the idea. Only one comment was at all condescending, the remainder could more properly be labelled "gallant." For example:

This interesting work, edited by two ladies, has made its first appearance in a very pleasing manner. The editorial pen is wielded with ability, perspicuity and good taste.

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1 Beaulieu and Hamelin in *La Presse Québécoise* Tome I state that there was an initial number in French, but since this publication has not been located in the designated repository, or any other location, I assume that the researcher saw only a catalogue entry but did not examine the volume he or she listed, and thus that the reference was actually to a copy of the sheet containing the prospectus. The French text of the prospectus reads "Les pages du Musée seront également ouvertes aux écrivains Français et Anglais..." but "Les écrits qui nous seront adressés en Français seront traduits."

*Women's Writing and the Literary Institution / L'écriture au féminin et l'institution littéraire*  
Towards a History of the Literary Institution in Canada: 6th Conference  
ISBN-0-921490-07-0/139/$02.00  
University of Alberta, Research Institute for Comparative Literature
Several of the original articles are worthy of attention, and bear marks of being the productions of experienced writers of respectable standing in our literary community. We hope the editors will meet with ample encouragement. (Canadian Courant [Montreal], December 22, 1832).

Successive issues were equally well received. The Montreal Gazette, in particular, extensively reviewed each number, commenting both on specific works and on the excellence of the magazine in general.

The public are, or ought to be, deeply indebted to the indefatigable perseverance of our editorial sister, who so elegantly and gracefully furnishes us with the production of her periodical journal, for the combination of taste and talent displayed in the August number of the Montreal Museum. This completes the ninth number of the first volume, and exhibits an industry in the selection of materials, and a chasteness in original matter, which, though, we are sorry to observe not abundant, is sufficient to prove the existence of mental refinement on this continent of no ordinary character......

The critique upon the Theatre is written in language to which we cannot do justice. The style of composition is of the most eloquent yet chastened order, and we must acknowledge the justice of those admirable remarks on the costume of the audience.... (September 10, 1833)

The periodical's termination seems to have been universally regretted. The Quebec Gazette comment is fairly typical:

The country is too new for purely literary works.... Even with distinguished merit, such a periodical would not pay, and no talent nor zeal could long support it. [The editor] ... has shown a mind free from the romance and fashion, the florid style and canting sentiments of the novel writers of the day, — a chastened feeling, and judicious application of her own talents, and those of others, to the instruction of her readers. (May 7, 1834)

No observer suggested that the periodical had failed because it was directed to female readers by an editor of their own sex.

The Montreal Museum cost $22 per annum, including postage, and each number contained sixty-four pages. The resulting calculation of 38.4 pages per shilling per annum made its price less than other periodicals of the early 1830s, where the subscription rate was similar but the number of pages fewer.2 Neither the proprietor, nor any commentator, suggested that the additional value per subscription had anything to do with the sex of the Museum's intended readership.

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2 When the Literary Garland appeared in 1838, its proprietors charged the same price for the same number of pages as the Museum.
The basic format for each number was about five short stories, three or four poems, several "improving" articles, one article of literary criticism or comment, an account of current London fashions, and a local miscellany.

All fifteen numbers of the Montreal Museum contained this same mix of poetry and fiction, both "borrowed" and "original" (that is to say, first published elsewhere or first published in the Museum), fashion, literary criticism, engravings, essays, and advice. The content of the periodical was thus not greatly different from that of similar productions in England and the United States in the early 1830s. A unique feature was the number of French works, most often stories of famous people associated with the revolution period, which were "translated for the Museum," probably by Mme. Gosselin herself. Later numbers contained more locally-written material than the early ones, but, although written in the Canadas, the actual subject matter rarely had anything to do with distinctive Canadian places or events. Critics of the period, as we do today, lamented that the Museum's contents were not entirely Canadian. On the other hand, in a more positive light, some modern critics might argue that this familiarity with the international literary scene indicates that Canadian women of the early nineteenth century were not at all narrow or circumscribed in their view of the world.

The editor had certainly hoped for specifically Canadian material. In the "Introduction" to Volume I, no. 1, she wrote

Deeply interested in the honour of our country, and conscious of her claims to a great degree of intelligence, our pride has been often and severely wounded by the sarcastic remarks of uninformed strangers, on our defective education, our slight acquaintance with literature-the total want of taste and spirit evinced in our Cities, and to render those galling reproaches unanswerable, they cite a fact — that in the Canadas there is not a single Literary Journal....

In the second number, she returned to the theme twice — once advising "Francis H." "... to direct her descriptive talents to local society and manners" since "Sketches from her pen of fashionable life, as it is at home, would be more to the purpose, more piquant, than stories told of 'gallant lords and ladies fair' who figure in a 'far far land'" (102). The word "home" refers to Canada, not to Britain, as it would have if Gosselin had been an immigrant. At the end of the volume, in the editor's address "To Readers and Correspondents" she agrees with those who have offered the suggestion that Canadian topography would make an ideal subject but indicates that she wants something more than mere description:

... mere geographical details ... would be dry and uninteresting if imagination lent not its witching wand to enliven and animate the scenes.... As we cannot draw upon the
legendary lore of ages past, imagination must be invoked to supply the deficiency, and that creative faculty of mind, if so directed, invest with an intense interest, scenes of a less romantic shade, that those to be met with in Canada. (127-28)

The Museum's utility as a vehicle for moral instruction was as important to its editor as its utility in developing national pride. This was, after all, a period when theology was the only socially approved subject for serious intellectual activity, and when the purpose of literature was defined in both English and French as "to amuse and instruct," "plaie et instruire"-with heavy emphasis on the latter injunction. Every poem, story or article illustrates the thesis that good taste, correct morality and moderation in all things are appropriate objectives for all the periodical's readers. An article by "G" "On the Immoral Tendency of Modern Novels" in the second number defines this morality as essentially sexual. "Our literature may be more deeply erudite, more refined, but alas it is far less chaste." D'Ir'srael, Bulwer, Fanny Kemble and Rousseau are all condemned for including unnecessary "naughty episodes" as part of a formula in which "so many wicked women, and so many bad men, with a pretty young lady who does odd things, and a wild youth who reforms, make a novel." The author calls on mothers to guard their children against "the knowledge of such grossness" but she leaves it to "the natural defenders of her sex" to root out literary evil. Cervantes and Scott are the only writers whose works meet with approval.

There is not a great deal of literary criticism in the Montreal Museum, but what there is appears to value works according to the morality of the contents, or the excellence of mechanical production. Mme. Gosselin was the only native-born critic before 1850, as well as the only female critic. In a comment about a perceived decline in the number and quality of American Annuals for 1833, the editor remarks that "... deficiencies apparent in the Works now before us, may be more attributable to a change in public taste than to want of zeal in the conductors" (15). She goes on to say that public taste seems to require continual variety and novelty. One of Mrs. Trollope's novels is condemned for improbability, and the author of The Ghost Hunter, from which extracts were printed, is said to have avoided in this work "the weakness that sullied his subsequent efforts."

Concerns with moral and national utility were basic to the criteria used by residents of both sexes when evaluating literature, they were not uniquely female preoccupations. Similarly, the lack of interest in questions of social status apparent in the Museum's fiction, was common to all the literature produced in the Canadas in this period. Characters in stories seem to be middle class, comfortably off though rarely rich, educated, and a professional

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3 "The O'Hara Family," which was the pseudonym of John and Michael Banim.
(or the wife or daughter of one). There do not seem to be many servants, yet it is obvious that the heroines supervise those who do the housework, rather than do it themselves. One exception is a story which, using bad spelling and bad English, makes fun of a servant girl who, by emigrating to Van Diemen's Land has had many offers of marriage (Vol. I, no.3, 169 — "A Letter From a Settler For Life in Van Diemen's Land"). The ironic intention is, of course, that a convict spouse is all that such a person could aspire to. Slavery is dealt with in one of Mrs H. Bayley's stories, "The Young Soldier" (Vol. I, no.4, 203) in which a young bride goes to live in the West Indies. She discovers "with heartfelt gratification" that slaves were well fed and cared for, that their working hours were limited, and that "they each had a separate house" and "a provision ground." Economic disparity is acknowledged in several stories in which one of a pair of lovers is less rich than the other. After initial renunciation the problem is resolved by a reversal of fortune which elevates the poorer lover to a higher economic status. In one instance, a downward reversal of fortune causes the loss of a suitor. Heroines are as likely to be well-to-do as heroes and well-off young ladies are often portrayed as prudently testing the character and motives of their prospective spouses. Most of the stories in which economic status is a factor could be found in periodicals intended for the general public, not just in one directed to women.

Nonetheless, the unique quality of the Montreal Museum was that it was intended for female readers. It is for its perception of what women wanted to, or should, read that we find it most interesting today. The authors who produced this "women's literature" were of both sexes, more or less evenly divided. Even among the works written in the Canadas, at least two were male productions.

How are women presented to other women in the pages of the Museum? Principally, they are wives, aunts, mothers and daughters. They are part of families, not independent individuals. Even orphans have guardians as a substitute for family. Although we might find this perception negative and limited, most women of the early nineteenth century did not. While men usually wrote of women in the family situation as silly and dependent, limiting the action of powerful, decisive males; women wrote of themselves as strong, nurturing, sensible and sensitive, keeping home and family together, frequently in the face of difficulties caused by male weakness. Within an, admittedly, fairly limited range of activities, they were capable of independent action. Perhaps because a number of the authors whose work was reprinted in the Museum were male, the contents of that periodical are somewhat more generous to men than the average.

The "Introduction" to the first number clearly states the editor's point-of-view.
It is not within our sphere, as Ladies, to pretend to an acquaintance with those deep and abstruse studies necessary to the improvement and display of human ingenuity, in the great and important arts of life. Our views of utility are confined to the Domestic and social circle, and to these limits our capacities and inclinations alike restrict us.

Words like "limit" and "restrict," and a denial of any acquaintance with what is "great" and "important," all indicate a narrow view of a lady's "sphere." Nonetheless, most numbers of the *Museum* contained an article on popular science, adapted to household situations. "Simplified Applications of Steam," for example, discusses boiling water, evaporation, humidity, etc. (Vol. I, no. 1, 38). The sphere was restricted, but women should be in control of what was theirs. In number 3, an article by the American, Mrs. Childs, on the "Education of Daughters" suggests that "the general tone of female education is bad" because there is too much emphasis on marriage and not enough on domestic education. "Vanity, extravagance, and idleness" are the result of a focus on marriageability (129). The general attitude is that women should be sensible, knowledgeable, and in control of their sphere. In fiction, those who get their way by being silly or scheming always receive their comeuppance—usually at the hands of some steady, sensible woman.

The editor consistently published works which strongly supported the submission of wives to husbands. In the first number, in a review of Lady Blessington's book on Byron, the reviewer, who refers to himself with a masculine pronoun, criticizes Lady Byron for driving her husband from friends and home by her revelations.

She who caused this sudden revulsion, can never be identified with the gentle and forbearing wife, with the proud, yet meek, and feeling woman, who would fain shield her partners [sic] faults from the public gaze, and seek to win him from a reckless state, to the charms of domestic life, and the love of virtue. (9)

The editor appears to approve these sentiments, which go on in the same vein for two pages.

In a story, "The Husband," the anonymous author writes:

The fond protecting love of a devoted husband is like the tall and stately poplar, that rears its foliage beside some happy cot, to which its leafy honours affords reviving shade; while its spreading branches shelter the melodious songsters of the verdant grove, who within its hallowed precincts nurture their callow brood, unmolested by the wanton tyranny of the schoolboy prank. (188)

Another anonymous contribution, "Maxims for Married Ladies," states that the first maxim is to be good yourself and to avoid all thoughts of managing a husband. The wife should never dispute with her husband and "submission in a man to his wife, is ever disgraceful to both..." (244-45).
There is a clear division between the roles outlined for married women and the objectives of education for the young; which suggests that some women saw their daughters taking on somewhat broader roles in society than had been their lot. It also suggests that supervising the education of children was one of women's spheres. Much space in the Museum was given to the education of children, especially girls. The "Education of Daughters" mentioned above appeared in Number 3. In number 7 there was an article called "Parent and Child," in number 12 an article on the "Physical Education of Girls," and in the last number another article on "Female Education." All the articles are enlightened for their day. The author of "Parent and Child," an American, opposes both too rigid discipline and too much indulgence, suggesting that children can be taught good habits and morals through firmness, moderation, love and trust.

The author of "Physical Education of Girls" suggests that too much attention is paid to the mind and not enough to the body. Girls should play in the open air at least six hours a day until they are 14 or 15 in order to develop strong limbs and healthy organs. Loose clothing, as opposed to tight lacing, is recommended.

Mrs. Bayley, the author of the final work on "Female Education," addressed young women directly. She wishes them to spend their youth in acquiring good habits such as piety, benevolence, domestic management, and mental discipline. "Accomplishments" are less important than developing the mind, yet they are of great value because cultural activities, such as reading the works of great authors, reinforce virtue, piety and nobility of soul. Good character on the inside will shine forth on the outside. "Mildness of manner and affability of temper," as well as "neatness of dress" are all to be cultivated (Vol. II, no. 3, 166). The heroines in Mrs. Bayley's fiction either exhibited these characteristics, or learned through experience to do so.

There is a tendency today to find these attitudes quaint, yet they were expressed by educated, intelligent women, who obviously believed them. Many of the attitudes, particularly those concerning female education, written in an era when children were generally considered to be born sinful, are actually rather enlightened for their day.

Before dealing specifically with some of the individuals involved in the production of the Montreal Museum, the more general question of women writers before 1850 should be considered. From the vantage point of the late twentieth century it appears as if Canadian women of the first half of the nineteenth century were more notable for their absence from the literary world than for their presence in it. We must remember that the total population was still very small, however, when taken as a proportion of resident authors, women number far fewer than one would project from their proportion of the population. This fact is particularly noticeable among
native-born writers, where only 3 of 18 English-speaking, and one of 27 French-speaking were female. The four Canadian-born women, Rosanna Mullins, Julia Beckwith Hart, Mary Graddon Gosselin, and Odile Cherrier were all daughters of prosperous merchants who had provided their daughters with good education so that they might rise socially in the world. Mullins, Gosselin, and Cherrier were convent-educated Catholics. Of the four, only Hart came from a Protestant family. She seems to have been taught by her own mother, a former governess to vice-regal families at Quebec. The lack of quality education for girls, especially Protestant ones, in the early part of the century certainly made it difficult for many Canadian-born women to acquire the background and skills necessary to a writer. As education improved in the second half of the century, more native-born female writers appeared. The four women resemble their male peer group in that three of them did their creative writing only in their youth. Mullins, known in the latter half of the century as Mrs. Leprohon, is the exception. They differ from their male peer group in that native-born male writers display quite different attitudes on a broad range of subjects from their immigrant counterparts, while this is not true of the young women. Again, I would suggest that the nature of female education in this period is responsible for the divergence.

In the first half of the nineteenth century there were no professional writers in the Canadas. Avenues for unpaid publication were available to all in newspapers and in the many small literary periodicals which came and went. Since everyone made their living by some other means, the career which served as principal occupation, whether located inside or outside the home, had first claim on the writer's time. The women's duty to their homes and families no doubt interfered with the leisure time required for writing, but the parallel male responsibilities also put an end to the authorial endeavours of many promising young male writers. It had become accepted that literature was a leisure occupation, especially for ladies and gentlemen who might be expected to have some leisure. The merchant fathers of our early women writers who, being "in trade," were not considered to be gentlemen, would have been anxious to have their daughters educated to the level of "accomplished ladies," who would thus contribute to the family's upward-mobility by marrying well.

Fourteen of a group of sixty immigrant English-speaking writers were female. Two were definitely born in Ireland and two in the United States; the remainder seem to have come from England. In contrast to the native-born women, only one was Roman Catholic. Most of them were married, were older than the native-born and continued to write throughout their lives. Two of the three who were spinsters in the first half of the century, Mary Ann Madden and Rhoda Ann Page, subsequently married and continued to write as Mrs. Sadleir and Mrs. Faulkner, respectively. Since all
but one of the group had completed her education before emigrating they had thus absorbed a tradition in which the presence of women writers was accepted. Nonetheless, only about one-quarter of the immigrant writers were female. It may be that there were fewer immigrant women, it may be that this group had little leisure for writing while establishing themselves and their families in a new environment, or it may be that immigration was a selecting factor in reducing the number of female writers. However, to analyze this latter factor properly one would have to know the percentage of the whole literary world occupied by women writers in England, Ireland, and the United States, since it is equally possible that a greater percentage of writing women emigrated than remained at home.

The available information indicates that only one of the immigrant women was employed outside the home. That one, Emily Coxon, advertised her services as a teacher of French, educated on the continent (Canadian Courant July 31, 1833). Three of them did, however, publish books in a genteel search for charity when left alone in Lower Canada. The Widow Fleck, M. Ethelind Sawtell, and Mary Ann Madden all stated more or less overtly that they were publishing because they needed the money. Generally, writing was not a viable option for women who needed an income, however genteel their birth may have been. Periodicals in North America did not start paying their contributors until the 1840s, and even then the remuneration was low and by no means all periodicals paid it. Books were published at the author's expense.4

The Montreal Museum illustrates some of the above general statistics about Canadian women writers. It was owned and edited by Mary Graddon Gosselin, a native of Québec City, who herself seems to have written or translated a large proportion of the periodical's contents. Its principal contributor was Mrs. H. Bayley, an immigrant.

It is an indication of women's role in early nineteenth century Canada that one usually has to trace our early female writers through their fathers and husbands. Gosselin was the daughter of John Graddon, a dry goods merchant. Her father died in February 1830, and she married Léon Gosselin in August of that year. Her husband was a lawyer, deeply involved in reform politics and, from 1831 to 1834, editor of La Minerve. They had a child before 1832 (National Archives of Canada, Duvernay Papers MG 24 C3). It may be that Mary Gosselin's illness, which delayed publication of the Montreal Museum in late 1833 was associated with another pregnancy. Léon Gosselin must have had some status in the community since he was

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4 J.H. Willis was the only author before 1850 who was paid outright for the text of his book by its printer. Fleck, Sawtell and Madden's pleas for support were part of their "sales pitch."
appointed Deputy Registrar for the County of Montreal, (an appointment having to do with the law courts,) around 1840. He died in June 1842, at the age of 41. Mary Gosselin drops from public notice after the termination of the *Museum* in 1834, except for a notice in the Montreal *Transcript* in 1850, advertising Mme. L. Gosselin’s boarding house (June 13, 1850).

Not a great deal is known of the *Museum’s* principal contributor, Diana Bayley. From the British Library catalogue we know that she had published 3 books in England between 1825 and 1827. Because military records are generally quite complete, it is easier to trace her husband, Henry Addington Bayley, who was an officer in the Commissariat. They were in Barbadoes 1825-29, at Isle aux Noix, Lower Canada, in the early 1830s, in Montreal where he was Deputy Assistant Commissary-General, in 1837 and ’38, in Kingston in 1839-42, and in Sorel in 1843. She appears to have been the mother of the English poet F.W.N. Bayley, whose works also appeared in the *Montreal Museum*. The works Mrs. Bayley published in England are notable for their emphasis on moral instruction for both sexes, from the point of view of "a mother tenderly interested in the morals and happiness of her children," for their military background, and for the prevalence of parent-child separation due to death, natural disaster or disobedience, resolved by benevolent friends and happy-ever-after marriages. Her *Montreal Museum* pieces, usually signed "D.B.," were not dissimilar. J.W.D. Moodie, having met her in Kingston in 1839, described her to his wife as "a most unaffected and agreeable woman."

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5 *Employment, The True Source of Happiness; or, Good Uncle and Aunt.* London: John Harris, 1825; *Tales of the Heath, for the Improvement of the Mind.* London: John Harris, 1825; and *Scenes at Home and Abroad.* London: Henry Stokes, 1827. She also published *Henry; or the Juvenile Traveller,* London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1836, while resident in Canada. Three works of short fiction appeared in the *Literary Garland* in 1842 and 1843.

6 Her 1843 contribution to the *Literary Garland* is dated at Sorel.

7 The *Montreal Gazette* (July 30, 1836) makes this assertion. Biographical details for F.W.N. Bayley given in the *Dictionary of National Biography* tally with what I have been able to discover about Henry Addington and Diana Bayley. According to the *DNB* Bayley died fairly young from the effects of leading a dissolute life. Perhaps having a mother as self-consciously moralistic as Mrs. Bayley seems to have been encouraged him to revolt against his upbringing.

8 Preface to *Tales of the Heath*. The Preface is dated at "Bushey Heath."

A third writer, "Maria" of "Bedford," illustrates another aspect of the difficulties in studying Canadian women writers of the early nineteenth century. "Maria" published three stories in the Museum, which are thematically interesting. Unfortunately, no one has ever been able to discover "Maria's" identity, or even to ascertain that this author was female. It was not uncommon for men writing "sentimental" literature to use female pseudonyms, so it is unwise to assume the sex of an anonymous writer from the name used. We know the three stories as the work of one person, but we are unlikely ever to know the role played by creative imagination and social conditioning in their production, and the state of our research into English-Canadian literary history is such that someone as minor as "Maria" will almost certainly remain forever anonymous.

In fact, most of our early women writers were anonymous in their own time, and remain so today. Anonymity was another facet of the social attitude which dictated that literature, as an unpaid activity, was an acceptable leisure occupation for ladies and gentlemen. Few ladies or gentlemen would want their names banded about by the general public, although some were not above providing broad hints. A glance through M.M. Brown's Index to the Literary Garland shows the prevalence of initials and pseudonyms right through to mid-century. Certainly some of these "M.F.M."s and "Quiz"s were women, but in most cases we will never know which ones. Taken with the absence of leisure and the lack of educational opportunity for most women, which reduced the quantity of Canadian literary production in the first half of the nineteenth century, the faceless anonymity of most of what they did produce accounts for the absence of all but a few women writers from our early literary history.

Working through models which might provide explanations for the small number of Canadian female writers in the first half of the nineteenth century, and which might elucidate the bio-bibliographies of those who did write, it is easier to eliminate inadequate explanations than it is to produce a theory which applies in all respects.

Demography explains why there were few writers, but not why there were proportionately fewer women. The entrepreneurial basis of the economic system explains much about publishing conditions, and thus why writers were not paid professionals. This, in turn, provides one reason why the system did not meet the needs of potential women writers. The heavy weight of the patriarchal Christian religious code which dominated British North America crushed in advance the expression of many women's concerns, but this had not prevented women in other countries from working within, and

10 "The Triumph of the Christian Principle" in No. 6, "Recollections of my School Days" in No. 7, and "The Victim of Devoted Affection" also in No. 7.
subverting, this framework in their writing. The dominant political and social ideology saw women as delicate persons, in need of male protection. In fact, women, who had had the right to vote if they were property owners, lost that right in Lower Canada in 1833, during the Montreal Museum's publishing period, because the Legislative Assembly decided that they must be protected from the "hurly-burly" and physical intimidation of the public voting places of the day. In literature, it was considered acceptable for women, as the "weaker vessel" to write lyric poetry of sentiment, and heavily moralistic fiction, but many forms of literary expression were thought to be closed to them. Perhaps some women found these restrictions too limiting, but others managed to pack quite a bit of personal emotion into them. Then, too, there was the perception by many, of both sexes, that, while it was permissible to write for one's own amusement, to publish was not lady-like.

The Montreal Museum was the first specifically women's publication in Canada. Its contents were not, however, exclusively written by women, or by Canadians. In fact, in many respects, this periodical does not differ markedly from the four other English-Canadian literary periodicals of the early 1830s, which were edited by males and intended for a more general audience. Nonetheless, in the Museum's fiction the story is usually told from the point of view of a female persona, the heroine is always more important than the hero, and the didactic articles focus on what was perceived to be women's sphere of independent activity. The Museum is also typical in that it was only one of many periodicals published before mid-century which had a fairly brief existence. That it was directed to women does not seem to have been the cause of its failure. In fact, the more general literary periodicals mentioned above had a much shorter life-span and were not as well received. Although in some respects it does not differ from other periodicals of its day, the Museum is important to our understanding of early Canadian literature because of its focus on female readers and the consequent revelation of what was perceived to be their interests. It is also an indication that educated women were considered to be an important part of society and that this group existed in sufficient numbers to make the idea of a literary periodical directed to them attractive. The Montreal Museum demonstrates as well that, although they were few in number, there were indeed literary women in the Canadas in the early 1830s.

Halifax

CLAUDINE POTVIN

Jovette Marchessault, autodidacte: en marge de l’institution littéraire ou les limites de la marge

Depuis sa naissance, chaque personne doit négocier son existence, être confrontée au reste du monde et en même temps trouver le moyen de préserver son espace vital. Il n’y a somme toute, que bien peu d’êtres marginaux et ils paient tous bien cher pour pouvoir en profiter. Dans cette perspective, le paradoxe, la déviance résident néanmoins dans l’individualité. C’est alors le social qui fait figure de norme, de loi. (Robert 152-53)

Ce passage de Lucie Robert donne à lire le rapport de confrontation, de négociation et de préservation d’un lieu minimal, de marginalisation donc par rapport au texte de la loi auquel fait face l’être humain dans tout contexte social. La marge indique précisément l’exclusion de quelque chose par rapport à autre chose, à un groupe: déplacement donc, rejet à l’extérieur de. Elle signale aussi le blanc, le bord, la rive, le hors-texte, le vide par opposition au plein de la page et à la ligne, au noir de la lettre/de la signature, au nommé, au socialement connu et reconnu, lu, codé, décodé d’avance. La notion même de marge renvoie à un concept spatial (centre/marge, coeur/tangente, milieu/periphérie et par extension fond/surface) qui laisse voir une relation de nécessité entre des termes apparemment oppositionnels.

L’institution littéraire se définit ainsi bien davantage par ses marges, ses à-côtés, lesquels confirment d’ailleurs le juste milieu, le bon sens, que par le normatif. La loi ne s’entend que dans la criminalité. Cependant, ajoute encore Lucie Robert à ce sujet:

Women’s Writing and the Literary Institution / L’écriture au féminin et l’institution littéraire
Towards a History of the Literary Institution in Canada: 6th Conference
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©University of Alberta, Research Institute for Comparative Literature
Appréhender le littéraire comme une forme institutionnelle ne saurait alors se limiter à reconstituer l’ordre des choses, à retrouver, derrière les comportements et les énoncés, le système de normalisation et le texte de la loi. L’institution ne correspond plus à l’ensemble de ces micro-pouvoirs que sont les pouvoirs additionnés des enseignants, des critiques, des éditeurs, des fonctionnaires qui exercent une contrainte sur l’écriture. De l’existence d’une communauté, de groupes, de comportements itératifs, on ne peut conclure à la concertation, ni au complot. (153-54)

Ce commentaire de Lucie Robert s’avère particulièrement pertinent quand on pose la problématique de l’écriture au féminin en fonction de l’institution littéraire. Ainsi, pourrait-on dire, ce n’est pas la faute, si faute il y a, de l’institution en soi si les écrivaines se trouvent marginalisées. Par contre, les marginaux, et plus encore les marginales, sont toujours coupables: d’être, de se démarquer, de se vouloir différentes, indépendantes, hors-la-loi. Pour un temps, en tout cas, car de fait, l’ensemble du système, ou du polysystème pour reprendre la terminologie de Itamar Even-Zohar, correspond au canon, lequel n’exclut pas la périphérie bien entendu; il faudrait plutôt parler de coexistence. Finalement, le groupe qui gouverne le polysystème détermine la canonicité d’un certain nombre d’éléments ou de modèles et, selon Even-Zohar, une fois la canonicité établie, le groupe en question ou bien adhère à ce canon, ce qui lui assure alors un certain contrôle du polysystème, ou bien, en cas de nécessité, modifie le répertoire des éléments canonisés pour pouvoir conserver ce contrôle. Par ailleurs, si ces deux procédures échouent, le groupe et le répertoire canonisé sont tous les deux déplacés par un autre groupe qui fait alors son chemin jusqu’au centre en consacrant un répertoire différent (17-19).

Selon Dubois, l’exemple québécois ouvrirait en ce sens des perspectives nouvelles aux littératures régionales et, jusqu’à un certain point, contribuerait à remettre en question la notion même de centralisation; la littérature des femmes ne se fait-elle pas par ailleurs également essentiellement en région? Dans son livre sur l’institution littéraire, Dubois entretient par littérature minoritaire "les productions diverses que l’institution exclut du champ de la légitimité ou qu’elle isole dans des positions marginales à l’intérieur de ce champ" (129). Il distingue les quatre catégories suivantes: les littératures proscrites, ou censurées; les littératures régionales, ou géographiquement et culturellement coupées du centre; les littératures de masse, ou populaires; enfin les littératures parallèles ou sauvages, en dehors des réseaux précédemment mentionnés.

Les deux premières catégories nous intéressent plus spécifiquement parce que la forme la plus générale de "censure sociale" exercée à travers l’appareil institutionnel, ajoute Dubois, est "celle qui écarte de la pratique et de la consécration littéraires des catégories socialement dominées comme les femmes ou les prolétaires" (133-34). La poétique des femmes qui écrivent a
traditionnellement relevé de ces deux catégories: littérature proscrite, coincée à une époque ou à une autre; littérature régionale et minoritaire, en ce qu'elle se construit loin du/des centre(s) et en ce qu'elle concerne, supposément, un groupe restreint de la population de pseudo-intellectuelles, de soi-disant radicales, ou encore de lesbiennes et d'illuminées pour reprendre les termes de Jovette Marchessault qui ajoute la longue liste suivante:


D'où une pratique de l'écriture refoulée, barrée, marginalisée, décentralisée. Par ailleurs, l'institution tend à se définir exclusivement à partir du centre, de la capitale, de la métropole: Paris ou Montréal, selon le cas. De plus, "toute production régionale est vouée dans son principe à se penser comme minoritaire," voire inférieure, sans valeur réelle sur le marché, à moins de faire preuve d'une valeur "esthétique," d'un effet concurrentiel temporaire, effet-vague, effet-mode (Dubois 135). Ainsi, si on pose l'hypothèse que l'écriture au féminin et féministe s'est vue et se trouve encore grandement marginalisée par l'institution littéraire, sans qu'il y ait eu "mauvaise volonté" de sa part, précisons-le, on peut se demander quelles sont ses chances d'atteindre le centre en canonisant un répertoire différent. Pour pouvoir amorcer une ébauche de réponse, il faudrait bien sûr consiéder un grand nombre de problèmes et de questions d'ordre institutionnel, dont les concepts de marginalisation et de centralisation comme tels. En ce sens, une réflexion sur la personne et l'écriture d'une écrivaine comme Marchessault qui exemplifient particulièrement bien ces deux derniers aspects, devrait éclairer quelque peu le sujet, d'où l'intérêt de se pencher, même brièvement, sur son travail.

Nicole Brossard signalait dans "Lesbiennes d'écriture," texte paru dans *La lettre aérienne* que

À priori, ce n'est pas tout le monde qui écrit et toutes les femmes ne sont pas lesbiennes ... Nous avons donc ici affaire à deux modes existentiels qui s'inscrivent l'un et l'autre en marge du cours normal-normatif de la langue et de l'imaginaire et conséquemment en marge de cette réalité et de la fiction. (123)
Pour écrire, ajoutait-elle, il faut "être un sujet en mouvement et en recherche. Pour écrire il faut s'appartenir" (123). Ce commentaire de Nicole Brossard résume en partie la problématique de l'espace posée plus haut en termes institutionnels (centre/marge) et situe quelque peu l'écriture de Jovette Marchessault. Née en milieu ouvrier, Marchessault a quitté l'école après sa huitième année. Très jeune, elle a dû travailler pour subsister et aider sa famille. Elle a pratiqué de nombreux métiers (caissière dans une banque, vendeuse, femme de ménage, ouvrière, etc.) pendant quelques années avant d'en venir à l'écriture. Elle reconnaît y être venue d'une façon marginale, grâce à sa grand-mère qui lui a donné le goût des livres; elle commencerait toutefois d'abord par peindre et sculpter car "Masques, dessins, fresques, femmes telluriques, tout cela, pour moi c'est du "signifiant," avouera-t-elle dès le début, ça fait du sens, de l'histoire. C'est ma grand-mère, c'est la vie" (Smith 58). Elle reprend ici des idées exprimées en termes semblables un an plus tôt dans une entrevue qu'elle accordait au Devoir: "La peinture, la sculpture, l'écriture, pour moi, c'est toujours le chaos brûlant de la mémoire. J'essaie de ramener constamment à la surface des choses qui concernent l'humanité des femmes, leur civilisation et leur culture. Quand je dis "chaos brûlant," cela évoque la formation du monde; je veux aussi parler de la création d'un langage" (Royer 1981, 40). Écrire pour une femme consisterait alors à faire surgir le je, l'émotion, des profondeurs vers la surface, du fond au dessus, de l'obscurité à la lumière, du bas de la page au milieu du texte, au coeur des mots et de la pensée. Le processus de création, quel qu'il soit, suppose un mouvement de régénération du sens lié à l'histoire des femmes et à l'expression de leur culture.

Autodidacte, Marchessault se situe d'emblée hors de l'institution littéraire. Parallèlement, elle dessine dans ses écrits et dans ses portraits de femmes telluriques une géographie sacrée qui ramène la création des femmes au centre de l'agora (dans son théâtre, par exemple), replace le sujet (féminin) et son désir/femme en son lieu. Double mouvement du texte qui s'inscrit et s'écrit en périphérie, contre, en dehors de, en rejet, en marge d'un autre texte dit central mais en même temps qui se donne comme mémoire, matrice, creux, ramassage, collection, collage, naissance. Texte perçu, reçu d'une part et texte pensé, projeté de l'autre.

Cette marginalité de la femme écrivaine autodidacte est aussi doublement reprise dans l'écriture de Marchessault. D'abord, au niveau des éléments de

1 Il faut ajouter que ces questions n'intéressent plus Jovette Marchessault de la même manière. Lors d'une entrevue réalisée en 1991 pour Voix et Images, à la question que je lui posais sur l'importance de l'écriture lesbienne dans le cadre de son champ d'exploration littéraire, l'auteure me répondait qu'elle n'en était plus là (cf. Potvin 226).
contenu: par exemple, la démesure des descriptions de la nature, du bestiaire et de la faune, l'immensité des femmes telluriques, la récupération absolue d'un héritage matriarcal ainsi que d'une culture ancestrale et archaïque qui a été "mise à la poubelle" par la société patriarchale, le discours mythologique de source amérindienne, le blasphème, la dénonciation de l'ordre castrateur des pères et frères qu'elle dénomme le syndicat du crime, enfin le lesbianisme. En second lieu, au niveau du langage, l'explosion s'opère dans le refus des codes traditionnels: rejet du récit linéaire, lyrisme fougueux de la prose, débordement au niveau formel et thématique, personnages hors du vraisemblable, renversement de la notion de conflit dramatique dans les œuvres théâtrales, déconstruction des mythes orthodoxes, d'une forme d'écriture "soignée," "ordonnée," envahissement de la culture livresque et de la référence littéraire comme mode d'écriture, etc.

L'ensemble de ces éléments pour la plupart grandement innovateurs furent précisément les mêmes aspects bien souvent rejetés par la critique (cf. Potvin 289-303). L'auteure remarque à propos de son premier roman, Le crachat solaire, qu'il fut reçu par une critique meurtrière de Jean Basile et par "les ricanements méprisants de ces messieurs des émissions littéraires de Radio-Canada" (Smith 54). Par contre, dans sa "Préface" à La mère des herbes, Gloria Feman Orenstein écrivait que

La voix de la narratrice fait vibrer une corde longtemps oubliée dans la littérature contemporaine; elle rend à l'art du XXe siècle toutes les pulsations multidimensionnelles des voix des alchimistes, toutes les visions des mystiques et les révélations des voyantes à l'intérieur d'une perspective cosmologique qui souvent rappelle celle du Popol Vuh, du Livre des splendeurs, du Livre des morts égyptien et des grands mythes de la création dont la fonction artistique a toujours été de réconcilier le sacré et le profane.... (1980b, 10)

Orenstein reprend ici la voix de la protagoniste du roman qui se déplace dans le temps et l'espace à la recherche de l'âme-femme perdue, la Grande-Déesse, la Grande-mère des herbes d'avant la chute de la femme.

Cette quête se concrétise également dans le paradigme du voyage qui traverse les récits de Jovette Marchessault: au-delà de l'Amérique jusqu'au Mexique, de retour en terre natale, au cœur du cosmos, l'héroïne se perçoit itinérante et se définit ou se parle en mousse. Bouger, c'est se placer hors d'atteinte, s'éloigner de, déplacer le sujet. C'est aussi se mettre en situation d'étrangeté. C'est encore effectuer une traversée des frontières: autres signes, autre langue. Il en va ainsi, semble-t-il, du texte féminin lui-même. Julia Kristeva constate que "le langage poétique, ou au moins celui du texte, fonctionne sur la voie de la pulsion et il suit sa dichotomie" mais pour ce qui nous intéresse ici, précise-t-elle, "l'ambivalence pulsionnelle agit vis-à-vis de l'"étrangeté," c'est-à-dire d'une altérité qui est avant tout l'autre langue.
Fasciné par elle, la désirant dans la mesure où il y voit un stimulant de ce procès qui met en cause les structures et les limites données, le texte l'adopte, la suit, se prend pour elle: étranger de tous les étrangers, limite de toutes les limites" (542-43). La femme chez Marchessault est cet être "étranger" à la langue des hommes, absent, en marge et à la limite d'elle-même, d'où souvent les cadres et les bornes qu'on lui impose et qu'elle se trace. D'où aussi le rejet d'une ligne, d'une lisière comme on le dit d'un tissu, d'une démarcation divisant l'étranger et le pareil. Phénomène de rejet d'autant plus grand qu'il y aura d'abord eu assimilation complète.

S'il implique une forme de décentrement continu, le voyage n'en permet pas moins la transgression d'une zone limitrophe généralement située aux confins de la parole et du lieu des pères, de la loi, de "leurs lois, l'arche de noé, l'ancien pis le nouveau testament, cet ignoble héritage, ce grouillement vorace des générations qu'ils ont soudé au ventre des femmes," leur loi, soit le "bon droit, la droite," le droit au mépris, "tous les droits de reproduction ... réservés à l'éditeur, le droit d'aïness pour homme seulement, droits d'entrée, de sortie" et surtout le droit et le pouvoir de "cracher dessus, l'autorisation tacite, les droits du sang" (Marchessault 1980, 105, 106, 108).

La reprise de ce droit s'entend dans le discours autobiographique qui caractérise un grand nombre des productions textuelles de Marchessault pour qui l'écriture, la création artistique, constitue une façon de redonner aux femmes leur moi. Encore une fois, c'est le rapport au livre et à l'espace réduit que le texte questionne: en mettant la création des femmes écrites au coeur de son théâtre et au centre de la représentation et de la scène elle-même ainsi que dans le texte épistolaire (Lettre de Californie), l'auteure pose le sujet féminin, voire l'écriture des femmes, à l'intérieur de l'histoire bien sûr mais encore bien plus à l'intérieur d'une institution qui l'en avait traditionnellement exclu, ou nié ou relégué aux oubliettes, dans la marge, en bas de page, ailleurs, nulle part, dans tous les cas objet d'une note dans la grande histoire littéraire vécue au masculin.

*La saga des poules mouillées, La terre est trop courte, Violette Leduc, Alice & Gertrude, Natalie & René et ce cher Ernest, Anais, dans la queue de la comète* constituent quatre dramatiques dont les personnages sont justement des écrites et dans certains cas des lesbiennes; quatre ouvrages centrées sur l'écriture des femmes, d'accès difficile pour les uns, impossible pour les autres. Textes qui semblent inspirer la peur, l'inquiétude, l'angoisse; textes qui provoquent le refus, le rejet à plus d'un titre. De Laure Conan, Jovette écrira comme elle a été courageuse en son temps car, avoue-t-elle, la Malbaie au XIXe siècle, ce n'était pas le paradis. "On attribuait ses ouvrages à son frère, le notaire, commente-t-elle. Avez-vous souvenance qu'on ait attribué l'ouvrage d'un homme à sa sœur ou à sa mère?" (cité par Smith

De plus, comme je l’ai souligné plus haut, Jovette Marchessault construit ses textes dramatiques en dehors de la notion de conflit ou d’affrontement des personnages; elle y redonne la parole aux écrivaines en insérant constamment des passages d’œuvres diverses de ces mêmes personnages/poètes/romancières, élaborant les dialogues et monologues autour de ces citations devenues centrales. Le texte en partie réinventé, d’auto-référentiel qu’il était au départ, devient maintenant biographie et récit, jusqu’alors inédit, du vécu, de la réalité et des fantasmes de l’autre; l’écriture chez Marchessault est en ce sens un processus essentiellement dynamique qui débouche sur l’ouverture et le renouvellement des formes mentales et littéraires. Raconter le drame des petites filles piégées par la littérature des autres, se remémorer le procès, la censure et le travail, de l’écriture au féminin, revivre les ambitions et le désir de toutes ces créatrices, retracer sous la plume et le pinceau le jet de l’artiste, pour dépasser enfin les "limites" arbitraires imposées aux femmes par les conventions d’une institution littéraire répressive, d’un langage étranger, pour pouvoir dorénavant interpréter et vivre le rêve en plein jour, pour écrire le désir d’une page blanche noircie à l’encre rouge, pour le pur plaisir de dire ses mots à soi et qu’on en parle autrement. Des fictions qui tiennent du réel certes, des personnages qu’habitent des corps de femmes s’écrivant désormais non pas en marge de ou hors de mais en pleine place publique.

Il va de soi que l’institution littéraire n’appartient plus exclusivement aux critiques masculins et que certains commentaires, d’hommes ou de femmes, peuvent toujours être, mais ne sont pas nécessairement, le fait d’un regard purement patriarcal et logocentrique. En effet, les femmes interrogent également les femmes et ce n’est pas négatif en soi; toutefois, de quel lieu de l’institution le font-elles, en vertu de quelle loi, à partir de quels critères et en fonction de quelle critique? Un passage d’un compte rendu de La Saga des poules mouillées de Thérèse Marois s’avère ici assez révélateur. Cette dernière y remarque, à propos de la pertinence de la démarche de Marchessault que

Nous nous vantons de fabriquer notre propre mythologie, notre propre légende, nos propres transgressions... d’aménager notre propre histoire... Certainement "chez nous"... Mais où cela, chez nous? En marge? Dans le sacré? Dans l’évasion? L’évasion géographico-mythique à connotation nord-européenne (La saga...), l’évasion dans le
repli sur soi, son corps et sa sensualité, l'évasion dans la célébration-confession-exorcisme-apologie du féminin? Enfin, et couronnant le tout, l'évasion dans et par l'écriture consacrée maintenant comme issue royale pour les femmes. (55)

Selon Marois, le texte déboucherait dans ce cas-ci sur une fermeture et une coupure puisqu'il s'enferme précisément dans la marge et se confine au repli sur soi. Toutefois, puisqu'il opère déjà et presque exclusivement à partir d'un lieu séparé et tenu dans l'oublé, ce texte se voit dans l'obligation de s'écrire d'abord et avant tout comme une note, une marginalia.

Ainsi, ce n'est peut-être pas en termes d'ouverture que le texte signifie et se signifie mais dans son rapport du dehors au dedans. Orenstein parle de la vision de Marchessault comme supposant une existence hors de la culture de la mort (1980a, 115). Il ne s'agirait donc pas d'un repli sur soi limitatif et autodestructeur mais d'une forme de déplacement, d'une tentative de rejoindre le centre de la page, d'y inscrire un chant épique pluriel et la parole des mères, ou pour le moins d'y amorcer une relecture et une réécriture de la littérature, plus ou moins efficaces dans certains cas peut-être, selon les modes littéraires, mais néanmoins désespérées et nécessaires. Ainsi, les métaphores du pont, du seuil et de la porte dans les écrits de Jovette Marchessault indiquent précisément un passage et un mouvement vers des environs parfois insolites mais recréés pour que s'y profilent et s'y entendent des voies/voix nouvelles et ancestrales.

Finalement, si les textes de Marchessault s'inscrivent en marge d'une certaine institution littéraire, en marge d'un texte officiellement canonisé, reconnu comme appartenant au centre, ils n'en opèrent pas moins un déplacement puisqu'ils instaurent parallèlement une territorialité autre qui parachute le discours "marginal" au beau milieu de la page, remettant en question jusqu'à un certain point les notions mêmes de centre et de périphérie telles que développées par les théoriciens de l'institution littéraire. L'écriture au féminin y trouverait sans doute là un lieu qui ne soit pas entièrement marqué ou délimité par le discours du centre. De là à s'y insérer totalement par la voie canonique, il y a une marge que ma lecture de Marchessault ne me permet pas de franchir. De plus, compte tenu du fait que l'écrivaine a reçu l'an dernier le Prix du Gouverneur général, instance de consécration dont le prestige confirme à plus d'un titre la reconnaissance de l'oeuvre, il faudrait sans doute reprendre les observations de Even-Zohar mentionnées au début de cette étude sur les possibilités, restreintes mais fort réelles, pour les nombreux groupes marginaux, d'atteindre le centre; il faudrait aussi revoir dans ce cadre l'hypothèse de la marginalisation de l'écriture au féminin. En effet, celle-ci serait-elle déjà en train d'être récupérée par le(s) milieu(x) érudit(s), phénomène dont l'institution de l'enseignement universitaire de la littérature témoignerait largement? L'institution, on le constate, tend à intégrer ses marges et le discours
féminin, repoussé ou différé au verso de la page, glisse ou s’efface au profit d’une politique du littéraire souvent bien obscure.

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Dans l'étude du rapport de l'individu à la loi, l'analyse institutionnelle se place du point de vue de la loi. C'est l'autre côté, celui de l'individu, que je cherche aujourd'hui à explorer dans l'écriture. Mon objectif dans cette communication n'est donc pas de vous offrir une analyse détaillée du roman d'Arlette Couture, Les Filles de Caleb, mais de me servir de ce roman pour poser une hypothèse quant à un des lieux d'inscription possible du sujet féminin dans le texte littéraire et quant au travail qu'il permet de réaliser sur les formes instituées de l'écriture. L'institution, telle que je la conçois, est ici inscrite dans ces formes fixes, dans les genres eux-mêmes, en tant que modèles canoniques et en tant que normes littéraires de la vraisemblance. Mon objectif est de voir si le sujet féminin peut être vu que comme une instance contre-institutionnelle, une instance déconstructive, qui travaille le texte et le transforme. Du même coup, je me trouve à poser la question de la sexuation du sujet, non pas au plan de l'énoncé, mais à celui de l'énonciation.

J'ai choisi de poser la question des rapports entre le sujet féminin et l'institution au cœur même d'un roman qui a certainement fait couler beaucoup d'encre depuis qu'on en a vendu plus de 600 000 exemplaires au Québec et depuis que l'on en a fait une série télévisée dont le succès a dépassé toutes les espérances. Passé à peu près inaperçu au moment de la publication du premier tome dans la collection "Best-seller" chez Québec/Amérique, le roman d'Arlette Couture, Les Filles de Caleb, depuis la parution du second tome en 1986, a fait l'objet non pas tant d'analyses et de critiques que de nombreuses présentations d'ordre général, présentations qui, le plus souvent, accompagnent une entrevue avec l'auteure, la plus intéressante de mon point de vue étant celle qu'a réalisée, dans une livraison de Lettres québécoises, un Adrien Thérioc pontifiant, aux prises avec une Arlette Couture moquée, assommant la mythologie littéraire à coup de données et de statistiques historiques (cf. Thério).

J'ai commencé à m'intéresser à ce roman un peu par hasard, à l'occasion d'une réflexion plus générale sur le best-seller et j'ai rapidement été amenée

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à intégrer *Les Filles de Caleb* dans une autre réflexion que je mène depuis quelques années sur l'écriture des femmes au Québec, notamment sur la poésie féminine des années 1930 ou, plus récemment, sur les romans de Laure Conan ou de Jovette Bernier (cf. Robert). Mon hypothèse de travail à ce sujet est que l'écriture des femmes, même quand elle tente de s'approprier le langage littéraire institutionnellement reconnu, déconstruit le point de vue habituel pour en reconstruire un autre, lequel peut alors se traduire dans une focalisation particulière et lequel se traduit en tout cas dans une lecture particulière du social, où sont opposées, de manière conflictuelle, la sphère privée, dans laquelle vivent les femmes, et la sphère publique, où dominent les hommes.

Dans le cadre de cette réflexion, *Les Filles de Caleb* offre un triple intérêt. Il s'agit en effet d'un best-seller, conçu et édité comme tel, dont le succès a été largement confirmé par les chiffres de vente, et non d'un roman de facture disons savante ou expérimentale. C'est également un roman très contemporain, alors que mes travaux antérieurs portaient sur la fin du XIXᵉ siècle et sur le début du XXᵉ siècle. C'est enfin un roman historique, c'est-à-dire un roman qui porte un regard sur le passé et qui en plus porte un jugement sur l'écriture que l'on a faite de ce passé. En somme, c'est un roman à la fois historique et historiographique. Le premier problème que j'aimerais poser concerne cette dimension historique, la manière dont elle est mise en place dans ce roman et la manière dont le sujet féminin s'y inscrit.

La dimension historique du roman se manifeste d'abord par la problématique du temps qui se présente dès le titre. *Les Filles de Caleb*, en effet, en tant que syntagme, inscrit la généalogie à la source du roman, superposant ici l'histoire et la famille, dans un temps répétitif, un temps d'ordre cyclique, ponctué par les naissances, où l'historique ne surgit que dans l'engendrement des générations. Ce temps, que je qualifierais de mythique, plutôt que d'historique au sens strict, renvoie à une mythologie bien précise, que l'on trouve dans la Bible. Caleb en effet est celui qui a pu entrer dans Jéricho. De même, ses filles pourront entrer dans un lieu auparavant interdit. J'y reviendrai. La généalogie est aussi la forme que prend le récit biblique. On peut déjà noter un fait étrange: la généalogie biblique, et même toute généalogie, omet en général de parler des filles qui sont ici pourtant l'élément premier du titre. De plus, lorsqu'il est question du féminin, la Bible parle plus volontiers de "la femme de..." comme dans l'histoire de "la femme de Loth." Des fils de Caleb, car il en a trois, le roman ne parlera guère. De la femme de Caleb, il ne sera pas non plus question. Celle qui occupe cette fonction dans le roman, a uniquement comme rôle celui d'être la mère du personnage principal, Émilie.

Les titres expriment donc déjà une problématique inscrite dans cette tension entre un temps mythique et un temps historique, ce que confirme par ailleurs l’exergue: "Les morts ne dorment plus dans l’oubli méprisant/ car du passé j’ai fait un éternel présent." Ce que confirment également les mots qui encadrent le récit. Au début: "Prologue. Saint-Stanislas, comté de Champlain, printemps 1892." À la fin: "Saint-Lambert, Longueuil, octobre 1986." L’épilogue lui-même est daté "1er janvier 1946." Cette linéarité du temps historique est en absolue contradiction avec la structure circulaire du roman. Récit d’une vie, celle d’Émilie Bordeleau, *Les Filles de Caleb* commence par une naissance, alors que la vache Graziazi mét bas. L’épilogue, à la fin du tome II, ramène le corps d’Émilie qui a demandé à être inhumée dans son village natal et sous son nom de jeune fille, sous le nom de Caleb. Émilie a succombé à un cancer du rein, maladie qui est celle également de la petite Charlotte dont les mésaventures avec le grand Joachim constitue le point d’embranchage du roman, le début du premier chapitre, le prétexte à raconter la première journée d’Émilie comme institutrice à Saint-Tite. Le premier chapitre du second tome met en scène le retour d’Émilie à Saint-Tite au moment où elle renoue, quinze ans plus tard, avec son métier. La scène qui clôt le premier tome est identique à celle de l’épilogue: Émilie qui vient de quitter son mari à Shawinigan, est dans le train qui la ramène à Saint-Tite avec ses enfants. Son train croise celui qui va vers l’Abitibi et une ombre, celle d’Ovila, le mari, assiste à la scène. Entre les deux scènes quelques différences seulement: le temps, il y a vingt-huit ans entre les deux scènes; et la destination, Saint-Stanislas et non plus Saint-Tite. Blanche, la fille d’Émilie, qui est l’héroïne du tome II a elle aussi un périple circulaire qui la mène de Montréal en Abitibi puis de retour à Montréal. Le temps qui passe n’empêche personne de revenir aux sources.

La dimension historique du roman se manifeste encore dans la manière dont la narration présente l’univers des personnages. L’obsession du temps fait ici place à l’obsession du réel et cela, dès les premières pages du livre.
L'"Avertissement" en effet précise que _Les Filles de Caleb_ est principalement inspiré de la vie de deux femmes et que "la toile de fond est authentique" même si l'auteure insiste sur le fait d'avoir "prêté pensées, paroles, âmes, sentiments et ressentiments à tous les personnages." La dédicace double cet effet: "à toutes les filles de Caleb ... mais plus particulièrement à l'âme d'Émilie et au cœur de Blanche." Les "Remerciements" permettent de renchérir. L'auteure s'adresse à plusieurs personnes, mais surtout à Oscar, Émilien et Charles Pronovost ainsi qu'à Rolande Pronovost-Buteau. Dans le roman, Émilie a épousé Ovila Pronovost, lequel a un second prénom, celui de Charles, et un frère du nom d'Oscar. Émilie et Ovila ont eu dix enfants, dont un Émilien et une Rolande. L'auteure remercie encore ses deux soeurs, Lyse et Michelle, alors que Blanche, à la fin du tome II, aura deux filles, Élise et Micheline. Dans l'entrevue qu'elle accorde à Adrien Thério, Arlette Couture poursuit ce jeu. Fort de son expérience d'élève à l'école du Chemin Taché, Adrien Thério demande des précisions sur des scènes qu'il juge invraisemblables. L'auteure répond en citant des archives et des ouvrages d'histoire, en particulier, l' _Histoire du Québec contemporain_ de Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher et Jean-Claude Robert, mais aussi en racontant des détails inédits de la vie de sa mère Blanche, de sa grand-mère Émilie, de sa tante Rolande et de son oncle Émilien (cf. Linteau _et al._) Que peut le vraisemblable devant tant de réalités historiques ou familiales?

Le récit lui-même porte la marque de cette érudition particulière. La narratrice, que je mets volontairement au féminin, omnisciente de surcroît, prend le temps de décrire, d'expliquer et de commenter les éléments du récit qu'une lectrice pourrait ignorer. Je cite au hasard: "Du haut de ses treize ans, elle comprenait très bien qu'il y avait sur la table tout ce que l'imagination de sa mère avait pu apprêter, _compte tenu qu'à la fin de mars, les provisions commençaient à diminuer sérieusement_" (Tome 2, 12). À l'analyse, la position qu'occupe ainsi la narratrice est double. Elle joue d'abord le rôle de l'opinion publique qui juge les comportements de ses personnages en les comparant à la norme sociale et à la moyenne statistique. Mais elle joue surtout ici le rôle d'une historienne de la vie quotidienne, plus précisément, celui d'une ethnologue. L'ensemble des notes explicatives mettent au jour les us et coutumes de la campagne québécoise à la fin du XIXe siècle et au début du XXe siècle. L'effet d'étrangeté ainsi obtenu, l'effet "carte postale" pour reprendre une expression utilisée par Madeleine Ouellette-Michalska, a pour conséquence de folkloriser la vie rurale, pour un destinataire de toute évidence québécois, urbanisé et relativement instruit. Le fait que l'épisode des sucres, à l'établière, ne donne lieu à aucune description ou explication, est un indice supplémentaire de la compétence des lecteurs et des lectrices. En revanche, le texte est suivi d'un
glossaire où se trouvent définis les mots en italiques dans le texte. Arlette Couston renoue ainsi avec une pratique ancienne en littérature québécoise où le folklore devient correction de langue, ce que démontre aussi le personnage d'Henri Douville, l'inspecteur d'école, chaque fois qu'il entreprend de châtier le langage de la jeune institutrice.

À l'inverse, la vie urbaine n'est pas décrite. Les mots prononcés à Montréal, ne sont pour ainsi dire jamais en italiques, quelle que soit leur relation à la norme linguistique. Les us et coutumes de la ville, ou les événements qui s'y déroulent, ne sont prététexte qu'à de rares explications complémentaires. Il en est de même pour les épisodes traitant de la colonisation en Abitibi, à propos de l'expérience de Blanche, devenue infirmière de brousse. Dans ce second tome, la narratrice montre un savoir non pas tant ethnologique que scientifique. Certains événements semblent n'avoir pour seule fonction que d'introduire les découvertes récentes dans l'histoire de la médecine.

Dans l'ensemble on peut dire que la folklorisation opère exclusivement sur le monde rural, sur le temps cyclique, sur l'univers de Caleb et sur celui d'Émilie, personnages d'Ancien régime, par ailleurs descendants d'un soldat du régiment de Carignan, ce qui n'est pas sans rappeler la famille de Montbrun de Laure Conan, qui descend, elle, du chevalier de Lévis. Henri, Ovila et Blanche vivent au contraire l'industrialisation, le temps linéaire, le monde moderne. C'est ainsi que Caleb n'a qu'une descendance féminine. Alors que son fils Horace "a vu mourir ses trois enfants" (Tome 2, 136), sa fille Émilie engendre un avenir. C'est la même chose du côté des Pronovost: les frères Ovide, Lazare et Télesphore sont sans descendance pour des raisons de santé. Edmond et Émile n'ont que des filles. Seul Ovila, le mari d'Émilie, engendre des fils qui toutefois pour leur part n'engendreront que des filles. Les gènes des Bordeleau ont ainsi suppléant ceux des Pronovost, à la joie d'Émilie qui constate avec satisfaction que le nom d'Ovila "mourra avec lui."

Conformément à un des lieux communs de la littérature occidentale, une descendance féminine signale la fin d'une civilisation. Cela est vrai ici aussi, mais une exception, puisque les filles de Caleb sont parfaitement capables de se débrouiller et d'assumer la transition puis de reconstruire le monde nouveau. Blanche, devenue infirmière faute d'avoir pu obtenir le baccalauréat ès arts qui lui aurait permis d'étudier la médecine, mais devenue infirmière de brousse, ce qui lui permet de pénétrer l'univers masculin, le démontre avec brio.

Cette réflexion sur l'écriture de l'histoire, vue du point de vue des femmes, mettait en question le réfèrent, c'est-à-dire la vérité historique. Les Filles de Caleb offrent par ailleurs une autre réflexion, qui met en question l'écriture elle-même et le réfèrent littéraire, c'est-à-dire la vraisemblance.
Cette discussion sur le vraisemblable et sur la distance établie par la narratrice prend son sens en regard des techniques d'écriture utilisées dans le roman. Je me contenterai d'en exposer trois qui renvoient l'une et l'autre à des modèles littéraires canoniques.

Les deux premiers chapitres du roman constituent ainsi un roman d'amour dans sa forme la plus figée, celle du roman Harlequin tel que décrit par l'équipe de Julia Bettinotti dans leur livre, *La Corrida de l'amour*. Il n'y manque rien. Les mécanismes de présentation des personnages introduisent l'héroïne Émilie dès la première page: elle a un travail agréable, celui d'institutrice de campagne, un petit chez-soi que décrit son père, un ou deux prétendants que lui soupçonne sa mère (Tome 1, 72). Le héros apparaît comme il se doit avant la vingtième page, sous trois formes: celle de l'élève Ovila, trop jeune pour être pris au sérieux, celle des fils de Dosithée, les frères d'Ovila, et surtout sous la figure d'un splendide étalon noir que renifle la jument de Caleb. J'aimerais voir le temps de vous faire voir tout l'érotisme que transporte cette bête dans le roman. Le premier chapitre du roman vise à déterminer lequel des frères Pronovost occupera la place de héros, place qu'Ovila conquiert de haute lutte en même temps qu'il obtient la place d'héritier présomptif de la terre. Le rôle de rival sera tenu par Henri Douville. Émilie aura ainsi à choisir entre son élève pour qui elle éprouve une violente attirance physique et l'inspecteur d'école qui la séduirt intellectuellement.

La division sexuelle de l'espace est aussi caractéristique du roman Harlequin. Saint-Tite, la terre, la forêt, la ville, l'université appartiennent aux hommes. Saint-Stanislas, la maison, les intérieurs en général et l'école de rang appartiennent aux femmes. Contrairement aux femmes de sa génération, Émilie partage avec les hommes cette capacité de se déplacer seule, son père lui ayant offert une voiture et un cheval pour ses vingt-et-un ans. Autrement, les espaces sont incompatibles. Ovila, qui est grand, se cogne la tête partout dans la maison. Il n'est à l'aïse que dans la forêt avec laquelle il semble se confondre. Émilie s'épanouit dans l'école que déteste Ovila. Douville lui est l'homme de la ville qu'il maîtrise parfaitement.

Le scénario du modèle Harlequin est respecté à la lettre: la rencontre, la confrontation polémique, la séduction, la révélation et le mariage. Émilie rencontre les deux fiancés à l'école. La confrontation polémique porte sur l'irresponsabilité d'Ovila qui, à la mort de sa jeune soeur, disparaît pendant un an à la ville. La séduction, je l'ai dit, est d'ordre physique. La révélation se manifeste par un échange d'objets de valeur: Ovila écrit une lettre et Émilie montre un coffre de cèdre. Il en est de même dans la relation à Henri. La séduction ici est celle des "bonnes manières" (Tome 1, 186), de la perspective d'une voyage en Europe (Tome 1, 195) de l'écriture littéraire dont témoignent ses lettres (Tome 1, 202).aussi la confrontation
polémique, source de la rupture, porte-t-elle sur la langue et sur l’histoire, Émilie ne pouvant accepter la relation privilégiée qu’Henri entretenant avec la France au point de boudre le Québec. La révélation est négative, le mariage n’aura pas lieu. Le deuxième chapitre du roman se termine par les fiançailles d’Ovila et Émilie, bientôt suivies du mariage et du baptême de la première-née, trois événements hautement carnavalisés. L’épisode de la confrontation polémique se répète, depuis le mariage jusqu’à la fin du roman. Le mariage, dans Harlequin, en effet, c’est la guerre.

Cette guerre dans le troisième et le quatrième chapitre des Filles de Caleb, s’inscrit dans un second modèle figé de l’écriture romanesque: le roman du terroir. En réalité, la suite du roman, vue du point de vue d’Émilie, qui est le point de vue dominant, n’est que le récit de ses dix grossesses et accouchements, que ponctuent les départs et les retours d’Ovila, source de la guerre entre les conjoints.1 Mais, vu dans la perspective d’Ovila, en toile de fond, le roman est un roman du terroir. Tout y est. À commencer par la rivalité entre le père et le fils qui refuse le travail à la ferme (Tome 1, 415) et qui préfère à toute chose, y compris à sa famille, la vie en forêt. Émilie elle-même constate que la forêt est devenue sa rivale (Tome 1, 310). On y trouve également la crainte du père quant à sa succession: des fils aînés de Dosithée, Lazare souffre d’épilepsie, Ovide de tuberculose, Edmond rêve d’un élevage de chevaux. Au point où Dosithée se donne partiellement à Ovila en espérant ainsi l’attirer à la terre. Cependant, devant l’incompétence de son fils, il lègue par testament l’argent à Émilie et la terre à son plus jeune fils, encore un enfant, Émile. On aura noté sans doute, la similitude des prénoms. Ovila aura beau vouloir se racheter, une série de catastrophes l’entraînent à la ville, à Shawinigan.

Du point de vue d’Émilie, qui en fait est celui de l’Alphonsine Moisan de Trente arpents, comme si elle était tout à coup projetée sur l’avant-scène du roman de Ringuet, la ville est aus­sitôt une déchéance: l’air est vicié, les logements sont étroits, les citadins méprisent les campagnards. Du point de vue d’Ovila, la vie ouvrière paraît d’abord une amélioration, mais quand il rate sa promotion, faute de diplôme et de la maîtrise de l’anglais, l’alcool et

1 On trouve ici insrite dans l’énoncé de la vie du personnage féminin la structure circulaire déjà observée au niveau de la structure du roman. Cette circularité, qui est aussi répétition, rend difficile la lecture du roman à ceux et à celles qui ont une formation spécialisée en lettres, ce que j’ai pu observer chez mes étudiants, plus que chez mes étudiantes toutefois, de même que chez plusieurs collègues. L’univers masculin et, en général, le milieu professionnel sont structurés de façon linéaire, comme le sont également le discours historique et le discours littéraire. J’aurais donc tendance à postuler que cette structure circulaire est un des éléments qui au contraire facilitent la lecture du roman aux 600 000 lectrices qui en ont fait un best-seller. La lectrice moyenne trouverait dans cette circularité le reflet de son univers à elle.
les dettes l’achèvent. C’est à ce moment qu’a lieu la séparation. À Ovila qui l’engage dans un troisième roman, celui de la colonisation, Émilie réplique, qu’elle préfère rentrer à Saint-Tite, ce qu’elle fera seule, pour constater que l’étranger, sous la figure de la Shawinigan Water, s’est approprié la terre et a détruit la maison paternelle des Pronovost. L’inversion du point de vue élimine évidemment la dimension didactique et prescriptive du roman de la terre. Un pastiche en particulier expose la thèse agriculturiste dans un style parfaitement idyllique, à un moment particulièrement délicat du roman, où Émilie accepte une dernière fois de croire aux promesses d’Ovila et l’engage à accepter la terre paternelle. Elle y croit tellement qu’Ovila accepte et que Dositée tue littéralement le veau gras pour célébrer le retour de son fils. Quelques lignes plus bas, le roman reprend son cours normal et Ovila le chemin de sa forêt.

Qu’advient-il tout ce temps du personnage d’Henri Douville? Il aurait été si simple de le faire disparaître après que son offre de mariage ait été refusée. Douville en effet épouse Antoinette, une amie d’Émilie. En tant qu’inspecteur d’école, il continue de visiter l’école d’Émilie, tant et aussi longtemps qu’elle enseigne. En tant qu’ami, il est de toutes les fêtes et de tous les grands événements. Par la suite, il s’installe à Montréal, termine son doctorat et décroche un poste de professeur de littérature française à l’Université McGill.2 Ses relations avec Émilie demeurent sporadiques, et elles sont liées à ses lectures. À quelques occasions, en effet, il est dit qu’Émilie lit beaucoup. De ces livres, un seul nous est connu, *Madame Bovary*, prêté par Henri. Le roman de Flaubert a un écho immédiat quand Émilie fait baptiser sa fille Jeanne-Emma. Je passerai rapidement sur la liaison amoureuse adultere que suggère cet événement, liaison subsumée par le livre, mais assumée par le nom de baptême de la petite fille.

Le repérage de ce troisième modèle d’écriture est plus compliqué puisqu’il ne s’agit pas ici d’un modèle figé, ni d’une forme à thème et cela le rend plus difficilement identifiable. De plus, ce roman se déroule dans le deuxième tome du roman, au moment où le personnage principal n’est plus Émilie, mais Blanche sa fille. À bien y regarder, toutefois, on trouve de nombreux échos du roman de Flaubert, en tout premier lieu l’assonance des prénoms, Émilie/Emma, Charles/Charles-Ovila, Blanche/Berthe. Émilie a avec son père Caleb une relation qui ressemble étrangement à celle du père Rouault et de sa fille Emma. Émilie partage avec Emma cette faculté de se

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2 Il faudrait pouvoir étudier cette filiation entre la littérature française et l’Université McGill, université anglaise au Québec, université représentant au mieux la culture canadienne-anglaise, aux yeux des francophones du moins, dans la littérature québécoise. Cette filiation représente la fusion des deux institutions qui pèsent le plus lourd sur le Québec: au plan politique, le Canada anglais, au plan culturel, la norme française dans la langue et dans la littérature.
déplacer puisqu'elles possèdent toutes deux une voiture avec un cheval. Elles sont toutes deux musiciennes, leur père leur ayant offert un instrument, le piano pour Emma et un accordéon, instrument plus populaire et adapté au Québec, pour Émilie. Ce qui m'intéresse davantage ici, est le mimétisme qui est exercé par la liaison entre Léon et Emma et, mais dans une moindre mesure, celle entre Emma et Rodolphe, liaisons où les lettres prennent une importance énorme et où la ville comme le monde (au sens du "grand monde") deviennent des objets d'envie. Ces lettres sont dans le roman de Flaubert ce qui distingue en tout premier lieu Charles des amants d'Emma. Charles ne possède en effet pas l'art des tournures et il sera détruit par les missives de ses adversaires. Ce sont les lettres d'Henri, je vous le rappelle, qui séduisent d'abord Émilie, lettres ici étant entendu aussi bien au sens de missives qu'au sens de littérature. Dans les deux cas, l'illettré est le mari, le lettré est l'amant. Les deux romans ont en outre pour objet central un personnage féminin aux prises avec le monde des hommes. La différence principale réside dans la manière dont ces personnages féminins assument ce monde: Emma se suicide, Émilie survit pour avoir toujours conservé ses traditions familiales et n'avoir jamais accepté la soumission.

J'arrête ici mes analyses. On voit déjà que le roman travaille l'histoire, si vous me passez l'expression, à plusieurs niveaux. D'une certaine manière, il la nie en éliminant le passage du temps. L'objectif de l'auteure est de rendre le passé éternellement présent. Elle y parvient en partie de deux manières: d'abord en racontant cette histoire en 1984 et 1986, puis en campant dans le passé des héroïnes modernes, cette Émilie entêtée, passionnée, indépendante, qui lutte contre son père pour devenir institutrice et qui quitte son mari plutôt que de se laisser entraîner à la ruine. Puis cette Blanche, qui conquiert peu à peu l'espace masculin, la ville, la forêt, l'enseignement supérieur. L'effet de téléologie est accentué par l'usage du modèle Harlequin qui, parmi les types de romans d'amour, est celui qui impose l'héroïne la plus moderne et qui, seul, instaure le sujet féminin tant au niveau du personnage qu'à celui de l'instance narrative.

En prenant des femmes pour héroïnes, la romancière se place d'un point de vue particulier: celui de la vie quotidienne, de la famille, de l'école primaire, bref, celui de la vie privée. L'histoire que raconte la romancière n'est donc pas celle que racontent les historiens. L'histoire des historiens est présentée ici comme secondaire. La guerre n'est pour Émilie qu'une occasion de plus pour lire les journaux. Il n'est jamais question de politique autrement que sous l'angle du harcèlement que lui fait subir un certain commissaire d'école. L'industrialisation est vécue d'abord par Ovila puis par les enfants. Pour Émilie, elle est d'abord un facteur de désintégration de sa famille. Le sexe des héroïnes donne ainsi un sexe au point de vue mis en place dans le roman.
Mais, encore davantage, le roman règle ses comptes avec l'histoire littéraire. Henri Douville est le modèle de la réussite sociale. Élevé à l'orphelinat, il devient inspecteur d'école, épouse Antoinette avec qui il a trois enfants dont au moins un fils. Il décroche un poste de professeur à l'Université McGill, achète une maison à Westmount et voit sa fille aînée faire un grand mariage. La seule chose que Douville a raté dans sa vie est son mariage avec Émilie. Il ne s'en remettra jamais. À trop vouloir lui apprendre à bien parler, à bien se conduire, à bien lire, à trop valoriser la France et à trop mépriser le terroir, il ne peut que perdre la seule femme qu'il ait vraiment aimée. Émilie préfère sa terre inculte à une culture d'importation trop contraignante, ce que démontre en outre l'accordéon dont elle joue, instrument français, mais populaire. Si elle avait épousé Henri, Émilie aurait eu la même vie qu'Emma Bovary, une vie sans histoire, une vie sans intérêt pour une romancière, à moins de connaître des liaisons adolescentes et de se suicider.

La littérature qu'enseigne Henri n'aurait pas réussi à raconter la vie d'Émilie Bordeleau. Celle-ci n'a d'existence que dans des modèles d'écriture très particuliers et dans des modèles québécois: le roman du terroir, mais écrit du point de vue d'Alphonsine, et surtout le roman d'amour, le seul après tout à avoir garanti aux femmes la position de sujet. C'est pour cette raison aussi que le roman de Flaubert est en retrait, plutôt dans les interstices que dans la structure même du roman. En ce sens, les personnages d'Émilie, Ovila et Henri, représentent aussi bien une place précise dans l'histoire sociale qu'une forme littéraire canonique tout aussi précise qui sert à l'exprimer. Au nom de la réalité des femmes, Couture critique ainsi le réalisme mis en place dans ces formes canoniques en tout premier plan celles qui ont été instituées par les hommes dans la littérature québécoise.

Le sujet féminin s'inscrit donc tant dans la diégèse, dans l'histoire racontée, que dans l'histoire littéraire, au niveau de la narration elle-même. L'instance narrative devient ainsi une instance sexuée. On remarquera en effet que le modèle traditionnellement écrit par des femmes, celui du roman Harlequin, est respecté, alors que les deux modèles élaborés par les hommes ont été inversés dans leur point de vue et déconstruits sous l'effet d'un sujet féminin. Les modèles utilisés se trouvent ainsi allègrement pervertis l'un par l'autre d'abord, puis par la position de sujet féminin qu'occupent la narratrice et le personnage principal. Il en résulte un questionnement de l'histoire, de l'histoire littéraire en particulier, de la vision réaliste aussi qui

3 Il y a ici un écho des Belles-Sœurs de Michel Tremblay, qui, par la voix de Rose Ouimet, oppose les livres français et les films américains: "la vie, c'est la vie, pis y'a pas une crise de vue française qui va arriver à décrire ça!" (65).
trouve un écho dans la confusion établie entre la réalité et la fiction, le roman étant largement inspiré de personnages réels auxquels il fait également référence. Arlette Cousture parvient ainsi à mettre en question l'image traditionnelle des femmes dans le roman québécois et à créer un contre-modèle qui n'est sans doute pas étranger au succès du roman.

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BECKI ROSS


... when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing. To make yourself visible, to claim that your experience is just as real and normative as any other, as "moral and ordinary," can mean making yourself vulnerable. But at least you are not doing the oppressor's work, building your own closet. (Rich 199)

The legacy of "lesbian" print materials that pre-date the emergence of the "second wave" women's movement is one of erasure, bowdlerization and distortion. Gradually, painstakingly, half-forgotten, half-destroyed and half-neglected texts have been recovered across North America, Western Europe and Britain. Over the past two decades, diaries, letters, journals, photographs, poetry, fiction, newsletters and other textual artifacts authored by largely white, middle class lovers of women have been dug up, dusted off and subjected to the interpretations of lesbian historians and community-based researchers. With the exception of early American

1 For examples of recovered texts that attest to female homoerotic expression prior to the sexological classification of female homosexual/lesbian as pathological by the early twentieth century cf. Whitbread, for the networks of self-identified lesbian writers, publishers, editors, and booksellers of ex-patriate London and Paris between 1910 and 1940 cf. Hanscombe and Smyers, and Bentstock.

2 The use of the term "lesbian" has been problematized by historians who are sensitive to the deployment of language that may not correspond to the ways in which women who loved women self-identified at different points in history (cf. Bayuk Rosenman).

3 Much of the most exciting, provocative lesbian and gay historical work has been carried out by community-based researchers through oral history and archival projects (cf. Nestle; the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project; Davis and Kennedy;
homophile magazines like *Vice Versa* (1949) and *The Ladder* (1956-1972), lesbian writing prior to the late 1960s was accomplished by individuals, often in isolation from one another. Much of this work was self-published, if published at all. In fact, the collective project of writing and publishing deliberately articulated to the formation of a radical lesbian community and political vision did not emerge until the post-Stonewall period.

Beginning in the early 1970s in large urban centres across Canada and Québec, largely white, middle class, young lesbian feminist activists sought to create autonomous social, political, and cultural organizations. Central to virtually all organizing initiatives was the launch of a newsletter or a newspaper as a mode of communicating lesbian-specific struggles, concerns and stories. Without access to mainstream print media, and with limited access to straight feminist and gay liberationist publications, lesbian feminists concluded that "owning the means of production" was of paramount import. Contrary to the absence propagated by heterosexist surveys of Canadian English-language feminist print media, I have uncovered a rich history of English-language lesbian periodical publishing between 1973 and 1988. Created out of working collectives and articulated to broader constituencies beyond the editorial desk, lesbian periodicals operate as one window into the state of lesbian cultural and political organizing at the different times and places of their production. In what follows, I intend to bring into view the material and ideological conditions under which Canadian English-language lesbian publications were produced and circulated over a period of fifteen years. In addition, I will attend to the nature of the content that was carried. Finally, I will speculate on the promise of lesbian publishing not

Lesbians Making History. Exceptions to the white, middle-class locations of most of the recovered authors include Hull, Garber, Roberts, and Silvera.

4 For a discussion of women-centred, though not explicitly lesbian, writing, editing and publishing circles in the period between 1910 and the 1940s in London, Paris, and parts of the eastern United States cf. Hanscombe and Smyers.

5 The Stonewall riots in New York in June 1969 are often cited as the major catalyst of contemporary lesbian and gay liberation movements.


7 Unfortunately, lesbian periodicals are not mentioned in the otherwise well informed and up-to-date article on feminist publishing by Valiquette, while Hillabold's article, although short, contains valuable information. See also Wachtel (1982, 1985) and Godard.

8 My primary sources of archival material are the Canadian Gay Archives and the Canadian Women’s Movement Archives in Toronto.

9 With regard to French-language lesbian or lesbian/gay periodicals, there are several that are now defunct: *Amazones d’hier, Lesbiennes d’aujourd’hui, Ca c’attrape, Le Berdache, Sortie*, and two others still publish, *Les Sorcières* and *La Revue Treize*. 
only to contribute to the dismantlement of institutionalized heterosexuality, but to further the emergence of political praxis planted firmly in feminist, anti-racist and socialist soil.

LESBIAN PERIODICALS BROUGHT TO LIGHT

In the winter of 1972, disenchanted with the sexism and financial power of the men, a group of women at Gay McGill in Montréal decided to split from the male-dominated organization. These women later formed the nucleus of Montreal Gay Women and published the first English-language lesbian periodical, Long Time Coming, in 1973. Though the small collective wanted to publish monthly, they settled on six times a year and published until 1976. The Pedestal, an early Vancouver feminist paper was taken over by the Lesbian Caucus of the British Columbia Federation of Women for five issues in 1975. APPLE (Atlantic Provinces Political Lesbians Everywhere) published one issue of Lesbian Canada/Lesbiennne in 1976/76, following the National Lesbian Conference in Ottawa. The London Lesbian Collective produced a Newsletter from 1977 to 1980. LOOT (Lesbian Organization of Toronto) published a monthly Newsletter from 1977 to 1980. The first issue of Lesbian/Lesbiennne was August/December, 1979. It was produced by a collective of Toronto and Kitchener lesbians, and was generated out of the Bi-national Lesbian Conference sponsored by LOOT in 1979. It was a more overtly political paper, and in the first issue included articles on the Canadian Women’s Movement Archives, lesbians in the women’s movement and a large, detailed reader-response questionnaire. The quality and depth of the paper dropped drastically after this first issue, and although there were plans to move the paper to Vancouver after the 1981 Bi-National Lesbian Conference, this did not transpire and the paper ceased publication after four issues. Waves, a lesbian feminist quarterly was printed for one year under the financial sponsorship of the BCFW lesbian subcommittee and in 1979 the Victoria-based collective produced three issues. The Feminist Lesbian Action Group newsletter, Flag Rag, later Flagrant served the Victoria community for two years, from 1980 to 1982. Lesbians Against the Right (LAR) in Toronto produced a thirty-page pamphlet, "Lesbians are Everywhere, Fighting the Right," in 1981. The Open Door was published by the Northern Lesbian Collective in Terrace, B.C., from March 1983 to the Spring of 1986. Voices, For Lesbian Survival was started up in 1980 by two lesbians in Kenora, Ontario, and ceased publication in 1988. With the help of several others, Emma Joy Crone, a resident of Hornby Island, B.C., published A Web of Crones from 1983 to 1988. A collective in Ottawa published the bilingual quarterly, Lesbian Fury/Furie lesbienne from 1984 to 1988. In 1991, Lavender Times (Calgary), Womonespace (Edmonton), The Second Wave (Regina) and Vancouver’s Diversity, the Lesbian Rag are the
only English-Canadian lesbian periodicals in circulation. Several mixed lesbian and gay periodicals — *Angles* in Vancouver, *Perceptions* in Saskatoon, and *Rites* in Toronto — continue to demonstrate a strong commitment to lesbian liberation, both editorially, in terms of bodies, and substantively, in terms of regular content.\(^{10}\)

**ONE MORE BAKESALED**

The material conditions of producing and distributing an English or French Canadian lesbian periodical have changed very little over the past twenty years.\(^{11}\) The production process is resource-poor and labour intensive, typically accomplished by a collective of unpaid, over-extended, and devoted workers — and a transient bevy of volunteers — who lead with their hearts rather than with a concern for financial solvency. Inhabiting the edges of the capitalist media marketplace, lesbian periodicals, like the organs of other oppositional social movements, have never been held up as paragons of corporate profit maximization.

Lesbian publications rely on sales, subscriptions, donations, and the money generated from bakesales, benefits, dances, t-shirt and button sales. Rarely has the number of subscribers ever totalled more than five hundred and circulation is forever jeopardized by the rising costs of postage, paper, and printing. Within the past year, the leveling of the Goods and Services Tax on books and periodicals, combined with the dismantling of postal subsidies has seriously threatened the health of the Canadian publishing industry. Indeed, most vulnerable to these neo-conservative measures are independently produced, left, anti-racist, feminist, and lesbian/gay publications. And readers who cannot afford to absorb increased subscription and newsstand rates suffer the consequences.

Money is rarely available from corporate-run foundations or Canadian state funding agencies. In June 1987, in response to the vicious anti-lesbian, "pro-family" campaigns of REAL Women, the Secretary of State’s Women’s Program published their "Fairness in Funding" report. In bold print, they declared the *ineligibility* of all those groups who intend to "promote a view on sexual orientation," effectively disqualifying all lesbian-specific projects

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10 For a critical expose of the gay male commercial press cf. MacDonald.

11 For discussion of the material conditions of lesbian publishing see, Elanna Dykewomon, "Notes for a Magazine," in the back issues of *Sinister Wisdom* and 1988. Occasionally, the editors of *OutLook* (San Francisco) — the most exciting and provocative lesbian and gay quarterly ever to be produced in North America — comment on the diverse factors involved in the nuts and bolts of publishing an alternative magazine.
(cf. Ross 1988). In similar ways, Section 28, which was passed by the British House of Lords in May 1988, forbids local London authorities to fund the "promotion of homosexuality through educational initiatives and publications." And in the United States, the "Helms Amendment," passed in Congress in 1989, denies lesbian and gay artists, including publishers and writers, access to National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) grants (cf. Zando). The virtual non-existence of advertising revenue is an ongoing problem. Few lesbians own businesses, and many are not in a position to publicize ownership in the pages of a lesbian publication. There is rarely any money for direct mail campaigns, readership surveys or the sponsorship of lesbian/gay community events, all of which would greatly heighten both the visibility and the viability of a press. Office space is unusual, and even with an office, there is no one to answer the phone, except during meeting hours. Needless to say, for lesbian magazine publishers, there is no money to pay contributors or purchase the supplies needed by graphic artists or photographers. And although few lesbian publishers have the money to translate print to Braille or extra large type, or to transform their workspaces into physically accessible venues, the absence of these measures reveals the extent to which the abilities of readers and writers are taken for granted.

12 Contrary to the disqualification of lesbian periodicals from state funding practices, virtually every "straight" feminist periodical ever published in either Canada or Québec has benefitted at one time or another from some form of government financing, whether through the Canada Council, the Secretary of State publications portfolio, provincial arts' councils, short-term youth employment initiatives like Opportunities for Youth and later, Futures, and municipal grant programs such as the Local Initiatives Program (LIP).

13 Section 28 of a law passed in the House of Lords, London England, May 1988: A local authority shall not: a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish materials for the promotion of homosexuality; b) intentionally promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship by the publication of such material or otherwise; c) give financial or other assistance to any person for either of the purposes referred to in paragraphs a) or b) (The italics are mine). For a more detailed analysis of Section 28, cf. Rodgerson.

14 Focusing on controversial artists like photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, moral conservatives like Senator Helms were able to force the National Arts Endowment Fund (NEA) to reconsider their definitions of art, and ultimately, to disallow the funding of artists who produce sexually explicit or provocative work. For a critique of strategies used by artists in the U.S. to combat NEA policies, cf. Schulman.
FINDING IT, READING IT, AND BEING MOVED BY IT

Connected to the material costs incurred through self-publishing, a serious disadvantage is that much of the printed work is hard to find. The majority of lesbian periodicals disappear off book-store shelves, and resurrecting back issues is a feat performed only by magicians, second hand bookshop workers and some archivists. Very rarely are lesbian articles reprinted in book form unlike the extended book-bound life of much feminist material originally published in periodicals. Most libraries and mainstream bookstores have made decisions not to carry much lesbian feminist literature, and rarely house sexually explicit work. Some women’s bookstores and resource centres also participate in this lock out. Ministries and boards of education tend not to recommend lesbian or gay writings as resource material, or as fundamental components of their curricula.

For those institutions which have made a commitment to house some lesbian and gay texts, decisions as to what to purchase, what to replace if something goes missing, where and how to catalogue and display the materials, what original matter to reproduce on micro-film and micro-fiche in archives, what to defend in the face of state sexual regulation and severe budget cuts, etc., are expressly political decisions. Decisions made by library workers and archivists that marginalize or negate the contributions of lesbian and gay writers and activists serve to silence these voices.

Happily, there are a number of voluntarily-run, community-based archives across North America and in Australia that are exclusively committed to the care of lesbian and gay material: for example, the lesbian Herstory Archives in New York, The lesbian and gay Archives in San Francisco, The Canadian


16 Some women’s bookstores in Canada, Québec and the U.S. have gone as far as posting white cards near displays of sex-related materials, warning potential customers of "controversial" content. And several of the same bookstores have refused to house lesbian publications that treat explicitly sexual topics: Bad Attitude (Boston), On Our Backs (San Francisco), the Dyke Sex Calander (Vancouver, 1990), Joan Nestle’s A Restricted Country (1987) and Susie Sexpert’s Lesbian Sex World (1990). In Toronto, the informal, unofficial policy which operates to legislate the exclusion of several important lesbian sex magazines has never been debated in a public forum.

gay Archives and the Canadian Women's Movement Archives in Toronto, Traces (lesbian archives) in Montréal, and the Australian gay Archives. And even here, unless the lesbian and gay holdings are clearly identified, materials that do not sport "lesbian" in the title, which covers almost all the periodicals I have mentioned above, may go undetected.

LEGISLATING IGNORANCE AND LOATHING

One blunt instrument of state moral regulation, the "obscenity" law has serious consequences for the accessibility and availability of lesbian and gay print and visual materials. As Linda Semple warns,

lesbians and gay men are a community of interest whose very existence is predicated on sexual preference and sexual practice. Anyone opposed to our existence knows well that the easiest way to cancel us out is to deny the right to any material written or pictorial which describes and reflects our experience.

In 1985, the Fraser Commission on Pornography and Prostitution was used by the Canadian government to justify its sharpened appetite for sexual censorship legislation. Though the anti-pornography Bill C-54 died on the order table, hundreds of lesbian and gay publications and videos have been detained or confiscated at the Canada/U.S border over the past six years, while millions of dollars worth of violent, misogynist heterosexual pornography travels across the border unimpeded (cf. Ross 1988; Moore; Kinsman 1985). Seized for contravening Memorandum D9 1-1, titles have included Long Time Passing (1987) — a book on older lesbians, Pat Califia's collection of sexual fiction, Macho Sluts (1989), and safer sex educational

18 The Gay Archivist is the official publication of the Canadian Gay Archives. Published irregularly, it is available free of charge, Box 639, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1G2.


20 For a superb account of the limitations of anti-pornography legislation cf. Lacombe.

21 On the 1990 banning of Jane Rule's book The Young in One Another's Arms (1976) cf. Nunes. It must also be clear that the regulation of lesbian/gay materials is one piece of much larger regulatory initiatives on the part of the state to ban "offensive" work, which in the recent past has included Satanic Verses by Salman Rushdie, Kathy Acker's Empire of the Senseless, as well as Canadian works by Marian Engel and Margaret Laurence. On the power and political necessity of a feminist anti-censorship platform, cf. Burstyn.
materials. In the Spring of 1990, Jane Rule's book, The Young in One Another's Arms (1976) was deemed "obscene" and detained at the border. For lesbian and gay bookstores in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montréal, state targeting and harassment has meant vast sums of lost revenue and an immense drain on community energies and resources.

Even when the texts are available, barriers remain. Lesbian and gay youth, lesbians isolated in heterosexual marriages or rural communities — all those who desperately want texts that speak to their lives with honesty, clarity and hope — have made and make decisions not to subscribe or contribute to periodicals or explore possibilities of grassroots activism. Leaving the double-edged protection of the closet with the flourish of one's name on a masthead means confronting the fear of dismissal from paid jobs, from rental housing, from the lives of friends and family members, and from racial and ethnic communities.

Many lesbian writers continue to use pseudonyms to protect their identities. In the early 1960s, Barbara Grier, now the publisher of Naïad Press, wrote several entire issues of The Ladder under the name Gene Damon. In the early Canadian lesbian periodicals I have encountered, the contributors are either not named at all, they use only their first name or they invent names such as Radical Reviewer, Radical Reveller, and Popsicle Polly. Not prepared to enter the terror place of visibility, the "freely compelled" practice of anonymity has provided, and continues to provide lesbians (and gay men) with a small measure of safeness. Editorial collectives also have been known to print the disclaimer: "Any names, contributions or advertisements in this newsletter do not denote lesbian or gay association." In effect, another closet is constructed between the covers of lesbian publications. Faced with the fear of state intervention and/or community disapproval, self-censorship — a chilling and immesurable reality, particularly among those lesbians who produce sexually graphic materials — represents a tragic loss to all readers.

WHAT RESIDES BETWEEN THE COVERS?

The content of the lesbian periodicals I have researched reflects the political, economic and psychological determinants that have both constrained and enabled their production and circulation. Striking is the influence of the

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22 The main instrument Customs Canada officials deploy to seize lesbian and gay materials is Memorandum D9-1-1, a document which clarifies the position of Customs on "obscene" literature — books and magazines they deem unfit for a Canadian readership.

23 Commercial printers and typesetters have been known to refuse the production of what they deem "obscene" material.
Tracking Lesbian Speech / 181

early 1970s American lesbian separatist discourse that ascribed to all things male or male-identified the reviled status of "the enemy."24 In several Canadian publications, the anger and vertigo of militant lesbians best captured in the rallying call, "feminism is the theory, lesbianism is the practice,"25 and in manifestos published in The Furies, Bad Apple Dyke, Sinister Wisdom, Amazon Quarterly, and Tribad, is trumpeted on covers that announce "For Lesbians Only."

The mainstay of 1970s lesbian publications is the announcement of self-help support groups and seminars that address issues of coming out, alcoholism recovery, peer counselling, isolation, lesbian mothering, money management, and relationships. Also popular are reviews of lesbian plays, poetry, music, and fiction, as are listings of cultural events, dances, bookstore and bar locations together with lesbian services such as carpentry, printing, sound engineering, and hair design. An index of the fear of public disclosure, there are very few (if any) announcements or reportage of lesbian-directed public demonstrations, rallies, speaking engagements at schools or community centres, briefs presented to school boards or government bodies, petitions or other forms of direct action. There is inconsistent mention of the existence of lesbian political groups, and almost no analysis of political issues that are specifically lesbian. Analysis that is included concerns broad feminist struggles such as violence against women and abortion rights.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings, to thirsty lesbian readers in search of "survival material" in the 1970s and 1980s, periodicals presented a wellspring of rich clues to au courant lesbian identity, life/style, and community formation.26 As LOOT member Gay Bell once exclaimed, "We read lesbian; therefore we are lesbian" (cf. Bell). Vested with meaning, these texts operated not only to instruct "interested" readers in the norms and values of "correct" lesbian feminist culture; they worked to organize a system of communication and coordinate relations among activists.27 Networks were built, exchanges were fostered and lesbians became knowable to themselves and to each other as subjects through this powerful collective process of

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24 For a sample of lesbian separatist writings, see back issues of The Furies, Washington, D.C., Johnston's Lesbian Nation and Brown's A Plain Brown Wrapper.

25 This maxim is attributed to Ti-Grace Atkinson. For a fascinating analysis of the manipulation of this construct, cf. King.

26 On the subject of regional disparity, there was virtually no circulation of these "life-saving" materials outside of large urban centres, which only magnified the isolation lesbians and gays lived with in smaller, more remote communities. And the materials that were found rarely if ever spoke directly to the particularities of the reader's experience.

27 On "textual mediation" and "documentary reality" cf. Smith.
"enunciation" or "utterance." To literary critic Bonnie Zimmerman, "lesbian texts are 'sacred objects' that bind the community together and help express its ideas about itself" (21).

Still, certain absences internal to the lesbian texts themselves are glaring. Leafing through the periodicals published between 1973 and 1988, it is clear that conflicts and highly charged debates on issues of transsexuals, bisexuals, lesbian mothers of boy children, lesbian prostitutes, butch/femme, s/m, child sexuality and age of consent laws, socialist feminist vs. radical feminist vs. gay liberationist politics, racism in the women's movement, and so on, were rarely committed to print. The predominance of lesbian periodicals as social registers is indicative of the overwhelming need lesbians felt to raise consciousness, meet friends and lovers, and celebrate new-found identities and community. As well, the dearth of lesbian theorizing on the page reflects the difficult search for a new language, the dominant equation of theory with masculinist modes of thought and practice, and the fear that conflict and disagreement would derail the quest for "lesbian unity."

In all, the content of lesbian periodicals since the early 1970s has been largely devoted to the self-empowering personal narratives and observations of individual, middle class, white, radical lesbian feminists. The claim of "sameness" and the "commonality" of a lesbian "sisterhood" or a lesbian Nation, has made little room for differences along lines of class, race and ethnicity, language, region, age and ability that cut across singular notions of a "transcendent lesbian identity" or a "lesbian minority." As lesbian of colour, Michèle Paulse states: "We're so shut out: on one hand, the media presents white sexuality, and on the other hand, white lesbians who have media skills speak only from their own experience, so they shut us out also. We're made invisible amongst lesbians (qtd. in Bociurkiw)."

THE DISARTICULATION OF LESBIAN SPEECH

Notwithstanding its rich heritage, lesbian periodical publishing (and activism more generally) during a fifteen year period was, and still is accomplished through a web of political, economic and ideological factors. In a patriarchal capitalist marketplace, without direct access to the material resources

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28 Enunciation or utterance used to describe specifically lesbian feminist speech can be found in Zimmerman.


30 For a discussion of racist ideology and practice in white feminist publishing, with specific reference to the recent Women's Press skirmishes in Toronto, cf. Philip, Lesbians of Colour Caucus.
necessary to circulate a wide variety of lesbian texts, an awareness and understanding of lesbian existence is obstructed. Anti-lesbian and gay policies, whether implemented by the state, libraries, bookstores or school boards, contribute to this many-layered process of obstruction. And the fear of coming out experienced by so many lesbians, along with the over-extension of lesbians who do unpaid activism, insures a forever tiny base of committed publishers, readers and organizers. Indeed, the marginality of lesbian textual offensives has been firmly secured not only by the largely privatized, domestic character of attempts to get the message across, but also by the fragility of collective labour and the divisions within what constitutes "feminist politics."

Although the commitment to publishing explicit lesbian content in the "feminist press" was never even or regular, the rash of recent closures or suspensions of *Horizons* in Winnipeg, *Hystérie* in Waterloo, *La Vie en rose*, *Amazonnes d’hier*, and *Lesbiennes d’aujourd’hui* in Montréal, *Cayenne*, *Tiger Lily*, *Women and Environments*, and *Broadside* in Toronto, and *Breaking the Silence* in Ottawa, has dealt an enormous blow to lesbian and heterosexual feminists alike. Given that the Vancouver Status of Women was hit hard by cutbacks in the fall of 1989, the future of the twenty-year old *Kinesis* magazine is bleak. In the spring of 1989, editors at *Resources for Feminist Research/Documentaire sur la recherche féministe* were told by their Women’s Program Officer that they were prohibited from producing a follow-up to the *The Lesbian Issue* (March 1983) — their all-time best-selling issue.

Most punishingly, the federal budget cutbacks introduced by the Secretary of State in the spring of 1990 meant the withdrawal of one hundred per cent funding to feminist magazines such as *Healthsharing*, *Resources for Feminist Research, Canadian Woman’s Studies Journal*, as well as a number of feminist organizations, including the National Action Committee (NAC) and the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW). Funding for the communication networks and political organizations of many First Nations peoples was also severely slashed.

**SOMESTHEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW**

A lesbian periodical is much more than sheets of paper stapled, glued or sewn together; it is an educational, survival and organizing tool as well as the fruit of dedicated, unremunerated and collective hard work for social change. An interrogation of the specific material and ideological conditions under which lesbian periodicals have been produced and circulated, who they have and have not reached, the substance of what they have and haven’t been able to accomplish and why, has much to teach us about where lesbian activism has been, and where activists might now go, differently. To account
for densities, nuances and contradictions, oral histories with readers, writers
and publishers must be combined with analysis of both the texts and the
myriad extra-local forces which both constrain and enable alternative textual
production.

Not only is such insight invaluable, it is timely. Sex radicals in most
western capitalist cultures are currently faced with the ascendancy of moral
and economic conservatism and the erosion of political gains; the resurgence
of lesbian and gay-directed hostility on the streets, in the media, on
university campuses, in schools, on the job, and in the courts; the rootedness
of heterosexism and homophobia deepened by the AIDS crisis; the
continued state and private sector resistance to same-gender spousal
benefits; the exclusion of sexual orientation from the Charter of Rights and
 Freedoms; the stepped up state and social regulation of sex trade workers
and other sexual minorities; and, the general sluggishness of social change
movements. Moreover, manifestations of sexual rule are not separate from
neo-conservative economic and social policies such as Free Trade,
immigration and refugee policy, cutbacks in health care, social assistance and
education, and the gradual disintegration of the "welfare state."

Up to now, absorption in self-examination, self-definition and prescriptive
moralism has left lesbian feminists ill-equipped to attack the sticky,
spreading tentacles of a right wing backlash. The potential for multi-racial,
multi-class, multi-abled lesbian periodical collectives to claim the right to
lesbian sexual subjectivity, to root out and systematically neutralize
heterosexism, sexism and homophobia, and to build upon anti-racist and
working class struggles, marks a very real possibility. Still, such a project
provokes a series of questions — the politics of literacy and the politics of
translation, the lived reality of closetry, the historically race- and class-bound
character of feminist publishing, the accessibility of new technologies, i.e.,
desk-top publishing and commercial distribution networks, and most
importantly, the accountability of any periodical to the communities it
serves.

Polishing up the early 1970s slogan "lesbians ignite" is at once seductive
and simplistic. Who is out there to hear such a rallying call and be moved
by it, what projects to set aflame, how to fan the flames and sustain the fire,
and with whom, when and how to work in coalitions, are questions to
consider before anyone endeavours to strike another match.

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Laure Conan et l’institution littéraire: d’*Angéline de Montbrun* à *La Sève immortelle*: rupture malheureuse ou étonnante continuité?

On peut penser que la cause a été entendue depuis belle lurette. La sentence officielle véhiculée par l’histoire littéraire depuis plus de vingt ans est en tout cas très claire: Laure Conan a été une victime de l’institution littéraire. Suite à la parution d’*Angéline de Montbrun*, elle a été incitée par l’abbé Casgrain à mettre désormais son talent exceptionnel au service de la noble cause nationale. Et, par la suite, renonçant à la veine originale qu’elle avait inaugurée — le roman psychologique — elle serait rentrée dans l’ordre institutionnel, en produisant des romans historiques de loin moins novateurs et moins percutants.

Loin de moi l’idée de prétendre que les historiens de la littérature du temps de la révolution tranquille auraient mal fait leur travail. Il n’en demeure pas moins que le dossier Laure Conan mérite d’être reconsidéré, pour au moins trois raisons: 1) l’anticléricalisme libéral des intellectuels québécois des années cinquante et soixante n’est pas plus objectif que l’était la visée cléricale conservatrice de l’abbé Casgrain à la fin du XIXᵉ siècle; 2) l’argument central conduisant à la mythification actuelle de Laure Conan en victime du nationalisme conservateur est qu’il serait littérairement plus valable de produire des romans à dominante psychologique que des romans à dominante historique; cet argument mériterait à tout le moins d’être conforté par d’autres éléments de preuve plus immédiats et établissant, par exemple, que le talent littéraire de Félicité Angers a réellement été contraint par la thématique historique mise à la mode à la fin du XIXᵉ siècle; et 3) la question du rapport d’une personne à une institution se double, dans le cas précis de Laure Conan, de la question du rapport d’une femme à une institution dans un monde dominé par les hommes; cette troisième question me paraît finalement la plus sérieuse, car il serait un peu aberrant de confiner les femmes qui écrivent au seul champ "psychologique."

Au tournant des années quatre-vingt, Mary Jean Green réouvrait le dossier Laure Conan dans une perspective féministe en attirant l’attention.
sur un trait avant-gardiste d’*Angéline de Montbrun*: ayant rompu avec son fiancé, l’héroïne serait une féministe avant la lettre, puisqu’elle choisit le célibat — et non la vocation religieuse — s’opposant de ce fait et à la volonté de son fiancé et à la norme sociale d’alors. Depuis, Patricia Smart a produit un essai qu’elle a voulu articuler historiquement, et où elle met en évidence que du premier roman de Laure Conan aux textes romanesques d’Hubert Aquin, la situation n’a finalement pas beaucoup évolué, qui continue d’exiger beaucoup des femmes qui osent écrire au Canada français. En un sens, les lectures de Mary Jean Green et de Patricia Smart sont paradoxalement : alors que Green parle d’un choix de vie hors des sentiers battus du mariage et de la vie religieuse, Smart, tout en convenant que le refus de vivre de l’héroïne est subversif, considère qu’il convient de parler d’un legs négatif laissé aux femmes venues ensuite, en ce sens qu’on peut être porté à voir dans la finale mystique du roman une trahison de la cause des femmes, au nom de Dieu et de la patrie (82).

Ce que j’ai à proposer ici est un peu différent : l’analyse comparative des divers romans de Laure Conan m’incite plutôt à penser que la conception de l’écriture mise en œuvre dans *Angéline de Montbrun* n’est en rien étrangère à l’idéologie de la langue gardienne de la foi, qui fondait par ailleurs l’entreprise sociale de l’abbé Casgrain. D’où le point d’interrogation à la fin du sous-titre de mon exposé, "d’*Angéline de Montbrun à la Sève immortelle*: rupture malheureuse ou étonnante continuité?"

Je ne dispose pas des moyens qui permettraient d’intégrer dans une même démarche de recherche à la fois la question du rapport à l’institution littéraire et celle du rapport d’une femme à une institution littéraire pensée par des hommes. La question du rapport à l’institution s’analyse d’évidence en termes de problématique énonciative, et je ne sais pas de critères pour intégrer dans le même mouvement à une problématique sémiotique une problématique féministe.

immédiatement été sanctionnés négativement par la même institution littéraire canadienne-française.

Quant à la question du rapport de l'écriture de la femme Laure Conan à l'institution littéraire, il me parait possible de la concevoir indirectement, étant donné qu'elle relève plutôt de la place de la femme dans la société dont il s'agissait d'assurer la survivance, du moins dans l'idée de l'institution littéraire de l'époque.

Dans le cadre d'une recherche sur les inscriptions de l'écriture dans les textes romanesques qu'elle dirige au Centre de recherche en littérature québécoise de l'Université Laval, Louise Milot a montré, au printemps 1988 (cf. 1990) que le caractère novateur du premier roman de Laure Conan tient à ce que, à l'encontre des canons littéraires d'alors au Canada français, y est mis en place un discours sur l'écriture qui subordonne finalement le projet amoureux initial à la volonté d'affirmation personnelle d'une instance d'écriture. Partant, elle a proposé, en conclusion, que la collaboration subséquente de Laure Conan au projet national constitue peut-être une subordination de l'isotopie de l'écriture — qui triomphait dans le premier roman — au projet historique national. Cette soumission expliquerait — c'est là une hypothèse qu'elle émettait — l'affadissement de l'écriture dont parle la critique au sujet des romans historiques qui sont venus ensuite.

Collaborateur de Louise Milot, j'étais au départ en accord avec son hypothèse de soumission de l'isotopie d'écriture au projet national de l'abbé Casgrain. Mais, avec le temps, j'en suis venu à me demander pourquoi la thématique historique triompherait ensuite, alors que la thématique amoureuse avait, elle, été dépassée. Comme je suis passionné par les questions de sociologie de la littérature, je me suis donné pour tâche de questionner cette hypothèse au sujet des romans historiques de Laure Conan, dans le but de mener l'enquête un peu plus loin que l'on ne le fait généralement, c'est-à-dire d'analyser plus attentivement ces autres romans de Laure Conan. Pour être bien honnête, il y a aussi que j'avais le goût d'essayer de contribuer à évacuer la possibilité de lire négativement, par rapport à la cause féministe, la fin de l'roman.

Je suis en mesure d'exposer aujourd'hui deux catégories d'arguments qui me paraissent faire avancer la question du rapport de la première écrivaine québécoise à l'institution littéraire. Il y a d'abord que, dès le moment de la rédaction d'Angéline de Montbrun, tout au long de la seconde partie dite plus valable parce que psychologisante, est mise en œuvre de façon très explicite une vision de l'écriture, qui conduit très exactement là où Casgrain, de façon paternaliste mais politiquement très habile pour son entreprise personnelle, a semblé inciter Laure Conan à aller. On ne saurait donc imputer rétrospectivement cette vision de l'écriture à Casgrain: elle est donnée comme celle du personnage d'Angéline et surtout elle est inextricablement liée à
l'organisation d'ensemble de la seconde partie du roman. Par ailleurs, du premier roman au dernier les fonctions narratives des personnages ne changent pas tellement: dans tous les cas, les hommes sont donnés comme ayant de grands rôles sociaux à tenir mais, de façon on ne saurait plus régulière, au fil des pages, ce sont toujours les femmes qui, sur le plan narratif, posent les gestes décisifs, tant et si bien que les hommes s'en tirent mais sans véritable gloire. Quand je lie ces deux séries de fait, j'en arrive à la conclusion que Laure Conan n'a finalement écrit qu'un type de roman: elle aurait probablement été bien plus malheureusement manipulée par l'institution littéraire si l'abbé Casgrain l'avait incitée à écrire des romans encore plus psychologiques, car alors, elle se serait emprisonnée elle-même dans la maison de son père.

Dans les quelques pages dont je dispose, je vais donc m'appliquer à étayer une hypothèse qui, sur un point, rejoint la pensée de Patricia Smart, à savoir que toute l'œuvre de Laure Conan se joue dans les dernières pages d'Angéline de Montbrun, où l'héroïne renonce au bonheur terrestre, au profit d'un futur bonheur éternel; par contre, quant au constat de legs négatif posé par Smart, j'annonce tout de suite qu'à mon sens l'éventualité d'une lecture négative repose justement sur l'idéologie humaniste et libérale — la recherche du bonheur — qui anime ouvertement tout son travail d'analyse.

Cette observation critique me paraît nécessaire, et cela d'entrée de jeu, pour une raison bien simple: il s'agit de lire un texte, de chercher à savoir si ce texte aboutit ou non à la mise en place d'un sujet d'écriture, en l'occurrence un sujet féminin. Il est impensable de fonder l'analyse du rapport d'un récit à l'institution littéraire qui l'a sanctionné sur un préjugé idéologique: la question n'est pas d'établir s'il convient ou non d'être d'accord avec l'idéologie conservatrice qui triomphe dans Angéline de Montbrun; d'ailleurs cette idéologie pose, elle aussi, que l'essentiel est la poursuite du bonheur, mais éternel. J'espère arriver à montrer qu'il est plus conforme à la fin d'Angéline de Montbrun de repenser le tout en termes d'une méconnaissance de l'activité d'écriture même, qui me semble aller de pair avec l'idée que l'on se faisait du langage au Canada français au XIXe siècle.

LA VISION D'ÉCRITURE MISE EN PLACE DANS ANGÉLINE DE MONTBRUN.

La dernière partie d'Angéline de Montbrun est intitulée Feuilles détachées. Elle a d'abord été présentée par l'instance narrative comme étant faite des pages intimes écrites par Angéline une fois son père décédé subitement et une fois que son fiancé Maurice a été délié de sa promesse, suite à un accident qui l'a défigurée, elle et qui l'a refroidi, lui. En pratique, tel un journal, ces Feuilles détachées racontent, sur trois années, comment Angéline
arrive à assumer sa solitude du cœur; y est effectué un retour sur les événements qui avaient d’abord été racontés sous forme de lettres dans la première partie et le tout se termine sur un dernier échange de lettres entre Maurice et Angéline où celle-ci réitère par écrit sa volonté de ne pas revenir sur sa décision. Le lecteur y constate cependant que, la seconde fois, la raison évoquée est un peu différente: sur le coup, le fiancé avait été déçu de sa promesse parce qu’il n’avait plus que de la pitié à offrir et qu’Angéline n’était pas intéressée à ce pisaller; trois ans plus tard, il est allégué qu’en sacrifiant tout, on sacrifice bien peu de choses... que rien sur la terre... ne nous satisféra jamais* et qu’en consacrant l’union des époux, le sang du Christ ne leur garantit pas l’immortalité de l’amour* (190-91).

Ce changement constitue l’aboutissement d’un long cheminement dans lequel l’écriture a compté pour beaucoup: revenue vivre seule dans la maison paternelle, 1) Angéline tricote beaucoup, tout en se faisant faire la lecture; 2) elle s’en tient "surtout aux livres de religion et d’histoire," étant donné qu’elle a "besoin d’élever son coeur" et 3) elle "aime à voir revivre, sous [ses] yeux, ces gloires, ces grandeurs qui sont maintenant poussières" (104).

On n’a évidemment pas de peine à saisir que l’attitude finale de résignation implique le retour sur des étapes importantes de la relation amoureuse racontée dans la première partie du roman par le biais de lettres. Ainsi, dans un geste bien romantique, Angéline en vient à accepter de faire effacer une phrase de Dante gravée sur un arbre par son fiancé, phrase qui dit que "L’amour impose à qui est aimé d’aimer en retour." Si, cependant, on s’avise de cerner au plus près du texte la transformation, cela en se fiant, comme cela a été suggéré, aux lectures religieuses et historiques d’Angéline, on est assez rapidement amené à remarquer pourquoi il s’agit de "Feuilles détachées" et non pas d’un "journal": on ne peut parler de journal car des lettres sont insérées entres les pages intimes de l’héroïne et, si la plupart sont des lettres écrites par l’héroïne à son amie intime Mina qui s’est retirée au couvent, il en est deux plus exceptionnelles, venues d’ailleurs à des moments on ne peut plus stratégiques; il y a d’abord une lettre-testament signée par Véronique Désileux, puis il y a une autre lettre, qui raconte un épisode de la vie d’un père missionnaire, le père S.

La lettre-testament est écrite par Véronique Désileux, une orpheline d’une laideur telle qu’elle repugnait même à son propre père. Post-mortem, donc, Véronique Désileux tente de convaincre Angéline devenue laide de ne plus fonder ses espoirs sur des choses qui passent... Par la suite, s’identifiant en rêve à la morte, Angéline comprend et assume la dernière parole de son père: en mourant, celui-ci lui avait parlé de l’absurdité qu’il y a à opposer de la résistance à la volonté divine. C’est un peu là sans doute qu’on peut être tenté de parler de trahison au nom de Dieu. Mais, à dénoncer une
aliénation née dans l’écriture sans la déconstruire, on risque d’en être également victime un jour ou l’autre.

Aussi, dans l’immédiat, il me paraît utile de remarquer plus simplement que la lettre de Véronique Désileux constitue une victoire sur le temps, et ce doublement: parvenue à sa destinataire après la mort de sa destinatrice, elle fonctionne rétroactivement en venant aider la destinataire à comprendre une parole du père dite sur son lit de mort; du coup, en somme, Angéline s’identifiant à la morte, communique avec son père mort ... accède à un temps autre ... d’où le temps humain peut être transcendé. Pour entendre que les mots font sens dans un temps autre, celui de l’énonciation, il n’est pas nécessaire de nommer ce temps un temps "divin" et d’aliéner ainsi le sujet parlant.

Par la suite, dans le roman, arrive la lettre du père S. Qui a, elle, pour effet d’assurer à Angéline une place dans ce temps autre. Je n’invente rien: dans sa lettre, le père S., un missionnaire, raconte qu’en souvenir de monsieur de Montbrun qui lui avait payé ses études, il a donné le nom d’Angéline à une enfant qu’il a eu le plaisir de baptiser juste avant sa mort. Pouvant désormais compter sur un nom qui saura, cette fois, être sans défaillance à son endroit, Angéline renonce ensuite à constamment écrire le nom de son fiancé en lieu et place du sien. Vous vous rappelez le dénouement: Angéline remplace symboliquement la photo de son fiancé, dans le médaillon où elle conserve religieusement un portrait de son père, par la médaille de la Vierge que lui a envoyée le père S. Ainsi est réalisée, en conviendra sans doute Patricia Smart, l’entrée symbolique d’une Angéline d’écriture dans le symbolique. Je veux bien par ailleurs lui concéder que l’appellation "nom du père" n’est pas incolore.

En somme, une fois un peu dépoussiérée, l’anecdote romanesque d’Angéline de Montbrun illustre tout simplement la mise en place d’un signifié — soit la partie "Lettres détachées" — qui vient donner une portée sociale à un signifiant — soit la mondaine histoire d’amour d’Angéline racontée sous forme de lettres, puis de récit à la troisième personne. Ma lecture a strictement consisté à ne pas confondre la signification ainsi mise en place à partir de la vie et la mythification qui s’inspire d’un mot de Lacordaire placé en exergue du roman, mythification qui consiste à confondre "symbolique discursive" et "vie éternelle." À mon sens, en somme, Laure Conan n’a pas trahi les femmes: comme bien d’autres en son temps, dont l’abbé Casgrain, elle s’est enfermée dans sa propre méconnaissance de la dialectique langagière. Cela explique que Casgrain l’ait invitée à le rejoindre: elle partageait déjà sa vision conservatrice du nationalisme, qui reposait sur l’idée que la langue est préservatrice de la foi. Sans doute convient-il d’insister: la seule croyance utile, en contexte langagier, est celle qui mène à concevoir que des signes peuvent servir à désigner les choses.
L'ORGANISATION NARRATIVE DES ROMANS HISTORIQUES DE LAURE CONAN.

Par la force des choses, j'ai laissé de côté bien des aspects d'*Angéline de Montbrun* qui seraient des plus pertinents pour mon propos. Par exemple, il y a le personnage de la mondaine soeur du fiancé et amie d'Angéline, Mina. Mine de rien, cette Mina vient littéralement miner les chances de son frère en tombant d'abord en amour avec Monsieur de Montbrun et, après la mort de ce dernier, en entrant soudainement au couvent. Je rappelle le fait parce qu'il y a dans *Angéline de Montbrun* tout un passage de la première partie du roman qui, à première vue, semble un peu inutile, et c'est justement celui qui est constitué par la dizaine de lettres qu'échange Mina avec une amie à elle qui lui fait finalement réaliser son amour pour Monsieur de Montbrun. Il s'avère rentable d'analyser sémiotiquement la fonction de ce passage en apparence secondaire dans l'économie narrative de l'ensemble du récit, car on en tire un élément intéressant pour la comparaison du premier roman avec les romans historiques qui ont suivi.

Dans l'économie narrative d'*Angéline de Montbrun*, Mina est très importante: sa correspondance, où apparaît petit à petit son amour pour le père d'Angéline, la place très exactement en position de mère et c'est à elle que s'identifiera par la suite Angéline. En entrant au couvent, Mina indique en somme à Angéline la direction à prendre pour assumer la perte de son fiancé. Alors que Mina était excessivement mondaine et qu'elle se démondanise de façon tout aussi radicale, Angéline, qui était moins excessive en amour, se contente ensuite d'une retraite laïque, dans l'écriture. L'épisode de Mina constitue en somme la phase d'acquisition de compétence du roman. Ensuite, Angéline est en mesure d'assumer dans l'écriture sa solitude du coeur. Elle peut assumer pour elle-même la fonction d'énonciatrice, même si c'est en mythifiant l'écriture.

C'est paradoxalement là une des caractéristiques les plus inattendues de tous les romans historiques de Laure Conan: c'est toujours une femme qui pose le geste qui va permettre la mise en mots. Ainsi en est-il dans *À l'oeuvre et à l'épreuve*, écrit qui reconstitue la vie du martyr Charles Garnier. Le début du récit concerne pourtant Gisèle Méliand, la fille adoptive de Monsieur Garnier, à laquelle il destine son fils Charles. Dans un premier temps, Gisèle découvre et assume dans l'écriture que celui qu'elle aime rêve de partir missionnaire au Canada. Puis, c'est elle qui convainc le père Garnier de laisser son fils réaliser son idéal. Une fois en pays de mission, Charles n'aura qu'à se placer en position d'être capturé par les Indiens: sa fiancée en Dieu se sera entre temps faite carmélite pour qu'il soit assuré, par ses prières, que la grâce ne lui manque pas au moment du sacrifice final. En d'autres mots: c'est grâce à la force de caractère de Gisèle Méliand que Charles Garnier a été martyr; c'est elle, littérairement parlant, l'héroïne de
papier du récit. Et, comme Angéline, elle le devient grâce à une relation privilégiée à l'écriture.

Un scénario semblable se retrouve dans L'Oublié. L'oublié en cause est Lambert Closse, un militaire de carrière qui a vécu au temps de la fondation de Ville-Marie. Encore une fois, cependant, le récit s'ouvre et se ferme sur une femme, ici la jeune Elisabeth Moyen, qui devient secrètement amoureuse de Lambert Closse à qui elle doit d'avoir échappé aux terribles Iroquois. Elisabeth rend bientôt la monnaie de sa pièce à son sauveur, en lui sauvant à son tour la vie. Mieux, elle le tire du même coup d'une impasse, car lui aussi était amoureux d'elle, mais il n'osait pas faire de projet, à cause de sa trop dangereuse carrière militaire. Elisabeth ayant en quelque sorte acheté pour un temps un droit sur la vie de Lambert Closse, celui-ci peut en retour faire d'Elisabeth sa femme et s'éloigner de la vie militaire active. Prenant alors comme modèle un moine célèbre qui avait humbatement décidé de passer sa vie à cultiver la terre, Lambert Closse se fait défricheur, tel un bon père de famille; mais Elisabeth le taquine, en lui disant qu'elle ne tient pas du tout à le voir modeler sa vie sur celle, plutôt terne, de ce moine "antique." Après s'être prémonitoirement arrêté sur un passage de la Bible racontant la mort de Job, Lambert Closse meurt de façon imprévue, lors d'une bête escarmouche. Le roman se termine au moment où Maisonneuve va prévenir Elisabeth, désormais seule pour vivre avec son enfant.

Le quatrième roman, La Sève immortelle boucle véritablement le cycle en ce qu'y est constitué à la fin un couple, pour la vie. Cette fois, un peu comme le Charles Garnier du second roman, Jean de Tilly renoncera à l'amour, mais ce sera pour assurer la survivance de la race française en terre canadienne et non pour y mourir martyr. Le récit met en effet en scène un héros qui est aimé de deux femmes. Blessé lors de la défaite tragique de 1759, Jean de Tilly a peine à reprendre goût à la vie, jusqu'au jour où il reçoit de la part du colonel d'Auttrée, un officier français également blessé, une invitation écrite de la main de sa fille, Thérèse, et qui lui souhaite un prompt rétablissement. Bientôt Jean et Thérèse sont amoureux, même si 1) le colonel d'Auttrée ne tarde son retour en France qu'à cause de l'état de santé de son épouse et même si 2) Jean se voit confier le devoir de faire durer au Canada le souvenir de la France. Lors d'un séjour dans sa famille, Jean apprend de son frère que sa mère lui destine sa cousine Guillemette, qui l'aime secrètement et qui vit chez eux depuis le début de la guerre. Pour assurer matériellement la survie de la colonie vaincue qui ne peut en plus se permettre de sacrifier une année de récoltes, Guillemette mène de son propre chef une bataille délicate: elle obtient d'un officier anglais les grains nécessaires pour l'ensemencement de la terre des de Tilly, mais elle refuse fermement ensuite d'épouser cet officier, en allant contre l'assentiment de
son propre père. Encore ici, on le voit, le vrai héros de papier est une héroïne. Le fait de Jean est simplement d'obtenir ses lettres de noblesse. Une fois qu'il sait que le père de Thérèse lui reconnaîtrait assez de noblesse pour lui donner sa fille, s'il consentait à venir s'établir en France, il reprend en effet soudainement conscience de son devoir et renonce à partir, sa blessure s'étant au dernier moment symboliquement réouverte. À peine rendue en France, Thérèse meurt, après avoir assuré Jean par écrit que son amour pour lui durera au-delà des apparences matérielles. Jean n'a alors qu'à demander Guillaume en mariage, elle qui l'attend et dont la détermination a fait que la sève française pourra réellement être immortelle en terre canadienne.

Tout comme c'était le cas à la fin d'Angéline de Montrou, à la fin de La Sève immortelle, il y a mythification de l'écriture dans l'affirmation d'une sève française et chrétienne qui serait immortelle: une seconde héroïne de papier, française en l'occurrence, assure un personnage, canadien en l'occurrence, de l'immortalité de son sentiment pour lui, et puisque l'histoire racontée se passe au lendemain de la conquête, il faudrait comprendre que la langue française a été gardienne de la foi, étant donné que la conquête a permis d'éviter la révolution française.

En résumé, tous les romans de Laure Conan proposaient une même façon de comprendre l'écriture et tous ont été reconnus comme littéraires parce que cette vision correspondait à celle que vénéraient les critiques littéraires d'alors. Cela étant, je ne peux que souligner la grande fragilité de l'interprétation selon laquelle la préface de l'abbé Casgrain aurait eu des effets néfastes sur notre première romancière. Celle-ci proposait déjà, dans et par Angéline de Montrou, une vision mythique de l'écriture, vision mythique en ce qu'elle déplagait vers un hors-temps divin le lieu constitutif du sujet d'écriture. Il en résulterait à plus ou moins long terme l'idéologie de la langue gardienne de la foi; ce qui convenait comme un gant au genre de littérature dont rêvait l'abbé Casgrain. On ne saurait donc évaluer en termes de refus de vivre et traduire en legs négatif la position de sujet à laquelle accède l'héroïne à la fin d'Angéline de Montrou. Il convient simplement de remarquer que l'héroïne arrive à la conviction que le bonheur qu'elle cherche lui sera assuré dans une autre vie. Cette "vision des choses" pouvait difficilement, on en conviendra, faire progresser concrètement la cause des Québécoises et celle des Québécos. Mais c'est une mythification du langage, dans l'écriture, qui fonde cette "vision des choses" et non pas un refus de vivre.

La nuance me semble d'importance: à faire des curés les coupables, on pourrait en venir à faire d'Hubert Aquin un fils de curé, et, sans bien s'en rendre compte, on risquerait à la fois de desservir la cause des femmes et de maintenir ouverte la porte qui a conduit au bilinguisme canadien. Par le
biais de l'idéologie du désir, qui n'est que l'exact envers de l'idéologie du sacrifice de soi, on finit subrepticement par donner à la littérature une finalité extra-langagière; ce qui fut le cas de Laure Conan.

Quant à savoir si le virage historique de Laure Conan est la cause de l'affadissement de son écriture, je serais plutôt porté à poser la question autrement: manifestement, en ralliant la cause nationale, Laure Conan n'a pas tellement trouvé dans une histoire faite par des hommes l'occasion de faire revivre directement des heroïnes. Il me semblerait cependant malheureux de ne pas se rappeler que loin de sacrifier la cause de l'écriture féminine, elle a continué dans ses romans historiques à proposer à ses lectrices des heroïnes de papier dont les hommes ne sont, tout compte fait, que les interlocuteurs, que les révélateurs de l'acte d'énonciation littéraire.

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Une voix féminine précoce au théâtre québécois: *Cocktail* (1935) d’Yvette Ollivier Mercier-Gouin

Madge: Comment! pas une histoire de cocktail! Au contraire, jugez par la suite ... (criant) l’amour, l’argent, la vie ... la mort! (*Cocktail* 68)

M. Ardouin: Dans un cocktail, les plus petits incidents tournent à la tragédie. (*Cocktail* 74)

Treize ans avant la création de la célèbre pièce de Gratien Gélinas *Tit-Coq* (1948), une autre pièce, dont on entend peu parler aujourd’hui, a fait éclat sur la scène théâtrale québécoise. Il s’agit de *Cocktail* d’Yvette Ollivier Mercier-Gouin. La pièce a été présentée pour la première fois le 22 avril 1935 au Théâtre Stella à Montréal où elle a eu la distinction d’être la première pièce canadienne que l’on y a montée. Elle a été reprise les 22 et 23 mai au Palais Montcalm, à Québec, et le 29 mai au Little Theatre à Ottawa. L’année suivante, le 18 mai, elle a été reprise au Monument National de Montréal. Enfin, le 8 décembre 1937, *Cocktail* a été jouée à la Palestre Nationale à Montréal (Tourangeau 245). Il est intéressant de comparer l’indifférence dans laquelle la pièce est tombée à partir de 1940 avec les propos élogieux qui l’ont accueillie en 1935. Les journaux étaient unanimes pour déclarer *Cocktail* "la meilleure pièce canadienne jamais écrite" (*Le Droit* [21 mai 1935]: 12). Lucien Desbiens, critique littéraire du *Devoir*, n’a pas hésité à placer *Cocktail* "au-

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dessus de nombreuses pièces importées, jouées sur le plateau du Stella" (Le Devoir [20 avril 1935]: 2). Jean Béraud de La Presse juge que Cocktail est "une excellente pièce, qu'il faudra conserver au répertoire du théâtre canadien, que l'on pourra reprendre avec intérêt, qui enfin suffit déjà à classer son auteur parmi les rares dramaturges authentiques que nous possédions" (La Presse [23 avril 1935]: 10). À Québec, Cocktail a fait salle comble au Palais Montcalm. Le journal Le Soleil parle de "succès illimité pour l'auteur" (Le Soleil [21 mai 1935]: 11). Les manchettes annoncent que Cocktail est "goûtée et applaudie par le tout Québec".

Les Québécois qui emplissaient hier soir la salle du Palais Montcalm ont été ravis de la pièce qu'ils ont entendue — Une pièce canadienne qui ferait bonne figure sur une scène parisienne — L'auteur et les interprètes sont ovationnés avec enthousiasme. (Le Soleil [23 mai 1935]: 3)

On souligne que l'auteure est "Québécoise elle-même" et qu'elle "a cherché à peindre un milieu de chez nous avec des personnages que nous connaissons bien" (La Patrie [20 avril 1935]: 54). La Patrie soutient que Cocktail est "très supérieure à tout ce que nous connaissons du répertoire canadien. Le succès a été, inutile de le dire, considérable" (La Patrie [23 avril 1935]: 17). "Voici une pièce canadienne qui s'impose par ses qualités," lit-on dans Le Droit ([31 mai 1935]: 6). "Amusante, émouvante, profonde" (Le Soleil, cité dans Le Droit [23 mai 1935]: 12). Cocktail est "sans personnages ni scènes inutiles ... bien composée et bien écrite" (La Presse [23 avril 1935]: 10), "fait[e] selon les principes du théâtre moderne et trait[ant] un sujet d'actualité passionnant" (Le Soleil [22 mai 1935]). Voici "la première grande pièce de théâtre écrite par une femme au Canada," annonce Le Soleil ([22 mai 1935]: 3). Un an plus tard, "les amateurs de théâtre [ne cessent] de [la] réclamer" (La Presse [16 mai 1936]: 27). "Cocktail reste de beaucoup l'une des meilleures pièces d'inspiration locale, et on y prend autant d'intérêt qu'à une comédie parisienne. Il y a longtemps qu'on n'avait pas réussi ce tour de force" (La Presse [19 mai 1936]: 8).

À première vue, il est difficile de réconcilier ces divers commentaires louangeurs — où l'on souligne à plus d'une reprise qu'il s'agit bien d'une pièce canadienne écrite par une Québécoise — avec le destin que Cocktail a subi. Il semble que le public québécois de l'époque fût conscient qu'il recevait sa première grande pièce et que cette dernière inaugurerait une tradition théâtrale nationale. Mais, une telle tradition pouvait-elle débuter avec une œuvre de femme?

Cocktail était la deuxième pièce de Mercier-Gouin, qui n'était pas novice au monde du théâtre. Avant son mariage, Mercier-Gouin avait fait partie d'une troupe d'animateurs à Québec et avait connu plusieurs succès sur la

Le titre de la pièce peut servir de point de départ d’une lecture contemporaine. Le fait qu’il se résume à un seul mot, qui est en anglais, attire l’attention sur un thème auquel la critique littéraire féministe s’est vivement intéressée: le langage. En 1978, l’écrivaine québécoise Denise Boucher a persisté à partir de son expérience du bilinguisme ce que de nombreuses femmes reconnaissent. "J’écris en français et au féminin," explique-t-elle, "parce que je connais les deux langues" (Boucher 13). Le bilinguisme que Boucher évoque est celui de la femme qui prend conscience du fait que le langage du discours dominant ne rend pas compte de l’expérience et de la réalité de la femme. Le langage, a-t-on constaté, n’est pas neutre. Il est étroitement lié aux systèmes symboliques, psychologiques et socio-politiques qui ont été façonnés en grande partie par les hommes. Il existe une richesse d’expériences, d’émotions, de perspectives, et de désirs féminins qui n’a pas encore été codifiée dans le langage. Il n’est donc pas étonnant que l’expérience que la femme fait du langage soit celle d’une langue étrangère, langue à apprendre, langue à travailler pour qu’elle


4 Tourangeau écrit que Péché de femme se conserve en manuscrit dactylographié à la Bibliothèque générale de l’Université Laval (Tourangeau III 740). Cela ne paraît plus être le cas, puisqu’on ne réussit pas à l’y retrouver. Le manuscrit ne se retrouve pas non plus à la Bibliothèque nationale à Ottawa.

5 Par rapport au sujet du langage dans une perspective féministe, voir, entre autre, le numéro spécial de Documentation sur la recherche féministe/Resources for Feminist Research 13.3 (novembre 1984): "Femmes et Langage."
puisse communiquer sa réalité de femme. Nulle n’en est plus consciente que la femme qui écrit.

La critique de l’époque n’a pas été insensible aux possibilités symboliques du titre *Cocktail*. Dans un reportage du *Soleil*, on joue sur le mot en observant que c’est "le mélange des sentiments dans un coeur de femme bouleversé par l’amour, c’est aussi le mélange de qualités et de défauts qui constitue [sic] tout caractère humain. Et comme pour la boisson dont il emprunte le nom, ce mélange n’est pas toujours également réussi. Les différents caractères s’influencent, se heurtent, le drame naît" (*Le Soleil* [23 mai 1935]: 3). Le cocktail, c’est aussi la "société mélangée comme cela se voit si souvent dans nos salons canadiens, atmosphère parfaite: Canadiens, Français, Écossais, Anglais, Irlandais. François [protagoniste masculin], très spirituellement, compose un cocktail des qualités caractéristiques de ces différentes nationalités" (*ibid.*). On n’a pas tort de faire ressortir les possibilités langagières du titre, puisque le thème du langage revient régulièrement dans la pièce. L’auteure le développe à plusieurs niveaux.

La thématique du langage est exposée dans un premier temps à travers l’usage de l’anglais et la présence du précepteur anglais Charles Black. Dans un cas, comme dans l’autre, on fait l’expérience de "l’étrangeté" du langage. "When I speak French," fait observer M. Black à Geneviève et à Francine, les deux jeunes filles de la protagoniste Nicole Beaudry, "my words are strangers to my thoughts" (17). Le malaise engendré par l’usage du langage "étranger" se retrouve chez les jeunes filles qui s’expriment maladroitement en anglais au cours de leur leçon d’anglais quotidienne: "It was now seventeen years since the count and countess has been united," fait dire Geneviève à son précepteur. L’anglais paraît hors de propos, voire même une intrusion, telle la présence chez Nicole Beaudry du précepteur Charles Black. Selon François Normand, prétendant de Nicole, "ça fait jaser": "Tu es veuve ... il est jeune" (24). Vu sous l’angle de l’anglais intrus, le thème du langage n’est pas insolite dans un ouvrage datant des années 1930, décernée où l’idéologie dominante cherchait entre autre à sauvegarder la langue française.7 Mais le thème se développe à un autre niveau un peu plus étonnant.

Dans *Cocktail*, le langage se présente comme un obstacle, que l’on parle sa langue maternelle ou une langue étrangère. C’est du moins l’expérience

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6 Dans *La Partie* du 20 avril 1935, on écrit que la pièce "forme un véritable cocktail de races, puisqu’elle nous présente des personnages canadiens-français et canadiens-anglais" (54).

de la protagoniste Nicole Beaudry. Dans une scène clef au début de la pièce, Nicole révèle l'importance du langage dans sa vie. Expliquant sa réticence à l'égard du projet de mariage que lui propose François, Nicole attire l'attention sur la façon de parler (c'est moi qui souligne) de l'homme. Ce dernier préfère croire que ce n'est que la désapprobation "d'un tas de gens pas intéressants" qui fait hésiter Nicole (25). La femme répond que "là n'est pas la vraie cause de [son] hésitation ... C'est plus subtile, trop compliqué"; comment François comprendrait-il, puisqu'il s'agit, dit-elle, de sa façon à lui de parler (c'est moi qui souligne):

Tu ne dis jamais en parlant de l'avenir: "Nous prendrons un appartement dans le quartier qui te plaît ... Nous irons à telle pièce dont tu m'as parlé." Tu dis toujours: "Quand nous serons mariés, nous verrons tel spectacle, il est de mon auteur préféré," ou: "J'ai toujours rêvé d'un appartement à Outremont. Nous chercherons de ce côté." Ou encore: "Nous changerons ta limousine pour un touring, c'est plus agréable." Tu oubliés qu'à 40 ans, je peux prendre froid. (26)

La froideur en question est tout aussi symbolique que physique. La réponse de François est de résumer et de minimiser les propos de Nicole: "En somme, je suis un affreux égoïste" (26). Mais l'égoïsme est une explication trop simple pour l'hésitation de la femme, qui s'avère de l'ordre langagier, comme le suggèrent plusieurs échanges au cours de la pièce:

FRANÇOIS. — Et bien, quoi! Je serai leur père, elles m'aimeront.
NICOLE. — Francine, oui, c'est déjà fait. Geneviève, c'est moins sûr.
FRANÇOIS. — Nous la mäterons.
NICOLE.: — Tu vois. Tout à l'heure, tu as dit: "Elles m'aimeront." Maintenant, tu dis: "Nous la mäterons." Ça sent déjà le beau-père! (30)

Les difficultés de langage qui troublent le rapport entre l'homme et la femme se cristallisent lors de l'événement évoqué par le titre de la pièce — le cocktail. Les problèmes de communication trouvent une représentation symbolique dans la conversation téléphonique par laquelle se termine le deuxième acte. Certains critiques de l'époque ont trouvé à redire à cette scène, prétendant que c'était artificiel. Il est cependant possible d'y voir que le "dialogue" entre l'homme et la femme est en réalité un monologue: celui

8 Voir Lucien Desbiens: "À la fin du deuxième acte, l'auteur atteint à un moment dramatique intense: cette scène de la femme qui lutte désespérément ... au téléphone pour son amour est un peu artificiel, mais émouvante quand même; elle permet à l'auteur de supprimer un acte divin, dans ce providentiel téléphone, indispensable" (Le Devoir [25 avril 1935]: 3). Par contre, Dominique Laberge de La Patrie croit que "la scène du téléphone ... est fort originale" ([23 avril 1935]: 17).
de la femme, puisque la voix de l'homme passe sous silence. Silence de l'homme; parole pénible de la femme:

Ne raccroche pas, je t'en supplie ... Non... écoute! ... laisse-moi parler ... une minute seulement ... ne me parle pas avec ce ton de voix ... Je m'abaisse ... Tu as raison ... J'aime sans dignité. (82-83)

Bien que François finisse par se rendre chez Nicole pour l'accompagner au bal masqué, l'amour n'est plus possible entre eux.

Le langage occupe aussi une place centrale dans le rapport entre la protagoniste et sa fille Geneviève. Le rapport mère-fille dans Cocktail est des plus intéressants. C'est un sujet auquel la critique féministe s'est vivement intéressée, d'une part parce que le lien entre mère et fille a été éclipsé, dans le domaine de la littérature comme dans d'autres domaines, par des liens jugés plus importants: ceux entre père et fils, ceux entre frères et mère, ou le rapport d'amour entre homme et femme. D'autre part, comme l'ont montré des critiques féministes telles que Luce Irigaray, Nancy Chodorow et Adrienne Rich, l'analyse psychanalytique profite d'une révision des théories du développement psychique humain. Il faut, suggère-t-on, examiner la période qui précède la réalisation du complexe d'Oedipe, période où la mère (la femme) joue un rôle décisif.

Vu sous une perspective féministe, le rapport entre la protagoniste et sa fille Geneviève dans Cocktail se prête à une lecture plus nuancée que ne l'était celle des critiques des années 1930 qui ont préféré voir une rivalité entre la mère et la fille. Ce sentiment serait inspiré par le désir de la mère de rester jeune et belle, et le désir de la fille d'être aimée de l'ami de sa mère, François. Dans cette optique, la fille est mise dans la position d'antagoniste vis-à-vis de sa mère. Vu sous une autre perspective, cependant, on constate que mère et fille partagent une situation semblable. Elles se ressemblent plus qu'elles ne s'opposent l'une à l'autre. Ainsi que le dit Nicole, sa fille est "un autre moi-même dont je ne peux me défendre" (124). Le lien étroit entre mère et fille est mis en évidence à travers le thème du langage.

C'est moins au niveau de l'apparence physique que la fille et la mère se ressemblent qu'au niveau de la souffrance qu'elles connaissent toutes les deux. On sait dès le début de la pièce que la jeune fille est malheureuse.

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9 Le mot "rivale" figure dans le texte mais la lecture que je propose n'y prête pas autant de signification que l'ont fait certains critiques de l'époque.

10 Au début de la pièce, on nous fait comprendre que mère et fille ne se ressemblent pas. C'est Geneviève qui rapporte les commentaires d'autrui: "Quelle grande fille pour une maman aussi jeune!" ou encore avec un petit air de regret: 'Elle ne ressemble pas du tout à sa mère.' Oh! un jour, je leur ferai une surprise à tous ces beaux messieurs" (43).
Mais le malheur de Geneviève ne découle pas de la jalousie à l'égard de sa mère, de même que le malheur de Nicole ne trouve pas sa source dans la jeunesse et la beauté de sa fille. Pour la mère comme pour sa fille, le malheur est lié à la difficulté d'être. Geneviève ressent à dix-huit ans ce que Nicole ne découvre qu'à quarante ans. Dans une conversation avec sa petite sœur, Geneviève dit qu'elle éprouve (c'est moi qui souligne): "le désir d'être quelqu'un dans la maison, celui d'être jolie aussi, le désir des amis qui vous parlent" (43). Le désir d'être jolie (comme la mère), sur lequel insiste la critique de l'époque, est secondaire au désir d'être quelqu'un. Il est suivi de près du désir de la parole. Mais c'est d'abord la difficulté d'être, de vivre, qui fait le malheur de la jeune fille. "Je veux vivre ma vie.... J'ai dix-huit ans" (118), dit-elle, faisant écho à la mère qui proteste quelques pages plus tôt: "J'ai quarante ans.... Je veux vivre" (95).

Le désir de vivre, d'assumer enfin son être, son identité propre, se présente à Nicole à quarante ans. Ce n'est pas la perte de la jeunesse qu'elle regrettte tant que la prise de conscience qu'elle ne fait que commencer à devenir elle-même. Jusque-là, elle n'a été qu'une "femme formée" par l'homme — son père d'abord et ensuite son mari Jacques maintenant décédé:

J'avais vingt ans. Tu [le père de Nicole] me l'avais choisi [le mari Jacques] ... Avant de vivre de la pensée de Jacques, j'avais pris l'habitude de vivre de ton cerveau, à toi. Tu m'avais formée à ne jamais avoir une autre opinion que la tienne. Je regardais par tes yeux. Je surprenais sur mes lèvres ta façon de t'exprimer. (93; c'est moi qui souligne)

La tension de la pièce, et sa tragédie, se dégagent du fait qu'en bonne fille-femme "formée," Nicole, malgré une conscience qui s'éveille, croit que François va pouvoir la rendre à elle-même: "Lui seul peut m'apprendre tout ce que la vie ne m'a pas appris. Il m'a rendue à moi-même. Il m'a redonné une personnalité" (95). Voici l'illusion de la protagoniste que l'auteure fera éclater de manière symbolique à travers les événements du bal masqué. Nicole y envoie à sa place Geneviève, chaperonnée par François, tout en sachant que "la présence d'une belle fille le grise" (76). François, "déguisé en gentleman" (62), essaie de séduire la jeune fille.

Geneviève est d'abord ravie d'assister au bal, mais non parce qu'elle va y remplacer sa mère. Au contraire, la mère reste très présente à l'esprit de sa fille. "Quand on saura que je suis ta fille, on m'invitera [à danser]," s'écrie-t-elle (105). Si elle est folle de joie, c'est parce qu'enfin elle a

11 Remarquons que ce thème se présente au tout début de la pièce lors de l'échange entre Rose, la femme de chambre, et Sosthène, le maître d'hôtel: "SOSTHENE. — À toi ... seulement ... et toi ... toi ... c'est moi. ROSE. — Merci ... j'aime mieux être moi... je ne veux pas être toi" (11).
l'occasion d'assumer une identité propre. Elle sera invitée, lui promet-on, "pour elle-même":

GENEVIEVE. — Pour moi-même? Vous croyez...? Je suis heureuse ... si heureuse ... Grand-père, je suis folle de joie! (Puis elle embrasse très fort sa mère). Merci, petite mère. (105; c'est moi qui souligne)

"Rendue" à elle-même, la fille ne pense nullement à oublier sa mère. Celle-ci sera bien présente à travers la parole:

GENEVIEVE. — Tu sais, maman, on parlera de toi tous les deux. (105; c'est moi qui souligne)

La reprise de la parole est symbolique car c'était l'absence de la parole - l'obstacle du langage — qui s'était dressée entre la mère et la fille. À Charles, Nicole raconte sa dispute avec Geneviève, qu'elle a accusée de vouloir lui voler son bonheur:

CHARLES. — Qu'a-t-elle répondu?
NICOLE. — Pas un son, pas un mot. Ses lèvres scellées, elle était debout d'une pâleur mortelle dans sa robe sombre ... Je ne pouvais plus supporter cette vision. J'ai crié. J'ai hurlé, faisant presque une crise d'hystérie ... Parle ... mais parle donc ... Geneviève, ma vie, mon bonheur sont dans tes mains. Un mot, un seul mot, et tu fais de moi la femme la plus heureuse de la terre. Un mot, un seul mot, et tu brises mon cœur dans tes doigts. (108-09)

Tout pèse sur un mot, sur la parole, sur le langage. D'abord refusée, enfin rendue, la parole permet la réunion des deux femmes:

Maman ... maman ... nous sommes si malheureuses! Je ne veux pas que tu sois misérable, je ne veux pas que tu pleures.... Je t'aime, maman, je t'aime trop ... je suis jalouse ... je le déteste [François]. Il nous a volé notre mère! ... Maman, ... oh! maman ... ne pouvons-nous plus nous aimer comme autrefois? ... comme avant le jour où il est venu? (109)

Devant la passion et le malheur de sa fille, Nicole décide d'envoyer Geneviève au bal à sa place. Si d'abord la fille se révolte contre l'idée de "prendre la place" de la mère, celle-ci finit par la convaincre "avec tous les mots qui [lui] venaient aux lèvres" (110; c'est moi qui souligne).

Ce n'est pas une rivale que la mère voit dans la fille, ni l'inverse comme l'ont suggéré certains comptes rendus de Cocktail. L'une se voit dans l'autre; elles se revoient leur image, comme si, se voyant, elles regardent leur reflet:
NICOLE. — Vous auriez dû voir combien elle était jolie dans ma robe! Ses joues encore humides de larmes, elle contemplait son image dans la glace. Je me rappelai ma jeunesse... ma jeunesse, elle était là me souriant dans le grand miroir, venant vers moi du fond des années passées. Le bonheur m'avait rendu ma fille. (111)

L'homme [François] empêche la mère et la fille de se voir, de se parler. En son absence, elles voient clair et s'entendent bien. Mais l'homme revient rompre une dernière fois la réflexion.

Au cours du bal masqué, François commence à séduire Geneviève. En fin de soirée, dans un échange dont Nicole, à l'insu de François et de Geneviève, est témoin, le rôle du langage est souligné:

GENEVIÈVE. — Vous m'avez serré très fort contre vous.
FRANÇOIS. — C'était pour mieux vous guider. Le tango, c'est difficile quand on n'a pas l'habitude.
GENEVIÈVE. — Et les mots que nous m'avez murmurés, ils étaient peut-être dans le chant espagnol?
FRANÇOIS. — Vous avez entendu...?
GENEVIÈVE. — (fermant les yeux et se remémorant) Vous avez dit: "Je suis fou de bonheur... Dites-moi que vous ne me détestez plus...."
FRANÇOIS. — Et que m'avez-vous répondu?
GENEVIÈVE. — Je commence à vous aimer.
FRANÇOIS. — C'est vrai?... C'est bien vrai, Geneviève?
GENEVIÈVE. — (avec un son de voix faux et un regard qui dément ses paroles). C'est bien vrai, mon ami François.
FRANÇOIS. — Que ces mots sont exquis sur des lèvres fraîches!
GENEVIÈVE. — Sont-ils moins sur des lèvres de quarante ans? (120)

Au moment où François embrasse de force la jeune fille, la mère se dresse. Ce qui choque Nicole le plus, ce sont les mots prononcés par l'homme:

NICOLE. — Toi...toi...oh! ces mots d'amour à ma fille!... tes lèvres d'homme sur ses lèvres fraîches... (pleine de dégoût).... (122)

L'intervention de l'homme dans le rapport mère-fille est violente, et pousse Nicole vers la folie à mesure qu'elle repousse sa fille. Celle-ci à son tour repousse l'homme. Quand la mère s'écroule, la fille se dresse:

GENEVIÈVE (se redressant). — Mais sortez, monsieur... Allez-vous-en... Maman... maman!... Tu n'as donc pas compris... Je n'ai jamais aimé cet homme... Je le déteste... je le déteste.... C'est à ta demande que j'ai été gentille et puis après...J'ai voulu voir son vrai visage... (puis se ragenouillant et comme on parle à un malade) Aujourd'hui tu m'en veux, mais plus tard... bien plus tard, tu me remercieras. Nous aurions été si malheureuses! (126)
La réplique de Nicole, par laquelle se termine la pièce, est moins prometteuse que la parole de sa fille. Ceci est à regretter du point de vue de la critique contemporaine où l'on préfère éviter que la femme sombre dans la folie — destin qui lui est trop souvent réservé. Mais, à l'époque, le désespoir et la solitude, sinon la folie, s'offraient encore toujours comme dénouement au désir de la femme. Au moins peut-on remarquer que dans la pièce de Mercier-Gouin la femme ne remplace pas son rapport avec sa fille par un rapport avec un homme. Il en va de même pour la fille dans son rapport avec sa mère. Mais si Demeter vient à l'aide de Perséphone, en 1935, à la scène du théâtre québécois, elle ne peut pas encore assurer sa sortie des enfers, ni celle de sa fille.

*Cocktail* présente plusieurs thèmes qui seront repris et explorés dans les décennies suivant sa création, par le théâtre québécois ainsi que par l'écriture des femmes: le thème du langage; le thème de la famille, plus particulièrement le rapport mère-fille; et le thème de l'amour, notamment l'amour déçu. Dans *Cocktail*, le public québécois de l'époque reconnaissait une pièce "d'inspiration locale" (*La Presse* [19 mai 1936]: 8) écrite par une Québécoise, et présentant "un milieu de chez nous avec des personnages que nous connaissions bien" (*La Patrie* [20 avril 1935]: 54). La pièce a connu un grand succès. Cependant, on n'entend plus parler de *Cocktail*. Après la deuxième guerre mondiale, le public québécois ne s'intéresse plus aux histoires de cocktail, histoire tragiques de femmes qui bouleversent les choses. Car le "cocktail," ainsi que le suggère la pièce de Mercier-Gouin, c'est en fin de compte, le bouleversement, le désordre. Bouleversement de la protagoniste qui sombre dans la folie; désordre semé par la femme qui raconte son amour déçu; qui exprime son désir d'amour et son droit au bonheur; qui choisit sa fille au lieu de l'homme. L'histoire de Nicole Beaudry se trouve reflétée dans celle de Madge Robson qui, à l'aide du cocktail, laisse deviner ses déceptions d'amour et bouleverse l'atmosphère gaie du cocktail. "Heureusement," remarque le personnage François au cours du dernier acte, "tout rentre dans l'ordre quand l'effet du cocktail s'évanouit" (100). Selon cet ordre des choses, *Cocktail* s'éclipse. Plutôt qu'inaugurer une tradition théâtrale québécoise, pièce et auteur passent sous silence.

*Trent University*

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12 Un exemple par excellence, tiré de la même époque, c'est *La Chair décevante* (1931) de Jovette-Alice Bernier.
Une voix féminine précoce au théâtre québécois / 209

Ouvrages cités


I want to begin with a very brief explanation about some of the personal difficulties that I encountered while writing this paper. This summer I had a minor operation that I was warned might affect the entire left field of my vision. Therefore I was relieved to discover that the field defect was only slight. I now have trouble with ragged left margins, oncoming traffic, and the like. Occasionally, the initial letter of a word is missing. Still, we all know enough about reading theory to realize that one contextualizes. Most of the time, I pick up the words from their context without even realizing that I have not "seen" the letters I know to be there. While reading and re-reading a number of essays and books of feminist critical theory and, of course, Daphne Marlatt's poetry, I became very disturbed to realize the great proliferation of "he's" all of a sudden in the literature. Had I missed some new, subtle approach that this return to the male pronoun signified? Then I realized that the fault was not in the texts but in my "seeing" of them. My vision was simply not registering the "s" at the beginning of "she," and because "he" is still a valid word, even if not normally prominent in feminist writing, I was not contextualizing automatically. Perhaps, I thought, in the past it is as if a large portion of society had a left field defect in their vision and simply cut off the identity of women with that initial letter. Contextualizing would have no effect, as the contexts of women were far from the centres of power. And am I being too optimistic casting this in the past tense? The re-visioning of women and their places in society is a crucial project of much feminist writing. That this "re-visioning" is so clearly linked to language is the conclusion of many feminists. For me it has never been quite so graphically suggested that vision and voice are inter-related.

My working title for this paper was originally "The Double Exile: Daphne Marlatt's Recent Writing." Well, happily Daphne is so prolific that although the texts I am looking at here have remained the same, In the Month of Hungry Ghosts and How Hug a Stone, they are no longer strictly speaking "recent." My remarks today are actually a section of a chapter from a larger project I am currently completing and which has to do with the development
of Canadian poetry by observing through the years the different attitudes of poets towards silence. From subject, as part of the natural world and a reflection of the poet's own often fluctuating moods, silence has become an aspect of highly complex poetic theory. The earliest poets described the new land in language and forms that were inappropriate to what they found here. The developing complexity of Canadian poetry and the need/desire/success to produce a poetry with form and language suitable to the land, time, and/or poet's position is in turn reflected in the growing complexity of the view of silence. So we find today poets ironically seeking to give voice to "other"ness, to the "gaps," whether they are part of the marginalization of class, ethnicity, or gender. They are creating a poetics that seeks to empower through the exploration and creation of "appropriate" language. A poet like Marlatt strives to re"author"ize her language by deconstructing the power structures (colonial, patriarchal) built into the language. Although recently she has been most eloquent about feminist language strategies, In the Month of Hungry Ghosts and How Hug a Stone reveal a sensitivity to the marginalization through language of immigrant and social classes as well. They provide a narrative of life and language, that reflects a duality at the heart of Marlatt's writing.

The narrative begins: An English couple living the colonial life in Malaysia before the Japanese occupation are evacuated to Melbourne, Australia. There their first child, Daphne Marlatt, is born. After the war, at age three, she moves back to Penang with her family. At age nine she moves to the west coast of Canada, travelling with her family, which now includes two younger sisters, via England, the ancestral "home" in which she has never lived. These journeys and displacements profoundly affected Marlatt, her writing, and, above all, her very sense of and sensitivity to language. Brought up on the dripping, cedar-clothed side of a North Vancouver mountain, Marlatt tried to erase her past and assimilate herself with the present. Her mother, isolated and unsure, drew more and more comfort from a memoried past. These two movements, antithetical though they seem, nonetheless inversely affected each other. The more Marlatt exploited her newly-acquired slang, the more her mother emphasized the correctness of English speech. The more Marlatt immersed herself in Canadian culture, the more her mother was drawn into a nostalgic recreation of her past.

Marlatt could understand the nostalgia for Penang, and 25 years later she went back with her father and one sister to stay in the same house, same room even, in which she had grown up. In the Month of Hungry Ghosts was the result. Marlatt could not, however, understand the nostalgia for England, and 30 years later she went back with her son to retrace the steps she and her family had taken en route to Canada. How Hug a Stone was the result. Her mother's integral involvement with this past and the nostalgia for it
means that these trips are as much an attempt by Marlatt to discover her mother as to explore her roots. Taking along her own son amplifies for Marlatt the resonance of the mother-child relationship, so the search is for mother-mine, mother-me, motherland, and mother-tongue. This last search and the need to discover the poetic means to express one's sexuality are further amplified in *Touch to My Tongue* and *Ana Historic*, as well as in *double negative*, on which Marlatt collaborated with Betsy Warland.

I address here the double notion of "exile" (as woman and as immigrant) in Marlatt's writing, and in particular the poetic and linguistic strategies she employs to deal with the estrangement of her position, her estrangement from male models of language and living. As Xavière Gauthier says: "if women begin to speak as men do, they will enter history subdued and alienated" (163). Marlatt accepts the need to attack the dominant political, cultural, and linguistic structures, to break them apart. But her shattering of the old is necessary to re-create the new. "The act of writing is a form of strike against sexist myths, fantasies, propaganda" (101), Louise Cotnoir reminds us. I call Marlatt's poetic response a poetics of association. In talking of *How Hug a Stone*, she says: it is "the connections which exist outside chronology ... that really intrigue me." Speaking more generally, Nicole Brossard nevertheless seems to respond: "it is renewing comparisons, establishing new analogies, risking certain tautologies, certain paradoxes" (181). Marlatt's task becomes the search for a language and a poetic appropriate to her needs, and thus the breaking up of syntax in *Ghosts* is deliberate, as a way of "rescuing [her] own voice," and the use of the journal in *Ghosts* and *How Hug* is a conscious attempt to ground herself in her "current language." Similarly, the etymological process and the archeological approach are the poetic correlatives of the journeys of discovery to Malaysia and England. Being "dis-located" Marlatt attempts to "locate" herself in landscape and language. She employs polyphony, puns, collage, and juxtaposition (all associative techniques) as the means of creating her own models. The sounds of her poetry, as does the sense, "initiate thought by a process of association. words," she reminds us, "call each other up, evoke each other, provoke each other, nudge each other into utterance" ("musing with mothertongue," 171).

*In the Month of Hungry Ghosts* has not received the readership it deserves, being printed in its entirety only in a 1979 volume of *The Capilano Review* and in a four-page excerpt in Marlatt's *Net Work: Selected Writing*. It captures her journey to Penang in a variety of ways: a journal kept at the time, letters written home to her lover and to her remaining sister; short-lined poems, lists, excerpts from a children's composition; and family-album photographs from then and now. Describing the journey to her sister, she says: "It's not so much a holiday as a curious psychic re-dipping
in the old font, & most of the time I'm kicking against it" (62). There is
often a richness to Marlatt's descriptions that reflects the richness of her
surroundings, but even here she notices a disparity: "The temples, their
ornate imagery, colours, gilt, such a contrast to the rusted corrugated iron
and wood shacks most of the people live in, live very simply, poorly" (48).
This disparity and the sense of being kept off-balance that Marlatt refers to
is similarly reflected in the language. "Alien" is an oft-repeated word: "alien
place," "alien eyes" and "alien feet" (56), while Ghosts is a polyphony of
"alien" voices: guide, host, servants, colonial rubber planters, Indian cloth
salesman in market, and Chinese catholic convert. Marlatt scrambles not to
lose her current voice in the seductiveness of her childhood voices: "haunted
by echoes of earlier (age 12 etc) letters & journals, that so stilted proper
English" (69). In an interview she explains:

The dilemma for me, being there [Penang] was that I did feel that I had lost my
contemporary English and that I was slipping back into this, to me, stilted English
politeness and that it was infecting my letter writing. I would write a letter and feel that
it wasn't quite from me, because I was sort of between my childhood language and my
current language. And so the journal writing was an attempt to ground myself in
current language. And then the poems even more so, because they're such tiny lines.
It was as if, if I could break the conventions of syntax then I would be able to rescue
my own voice, my own way of speaking. But I had to go down to atoms really, bits and
pieces.

Marlatt's mother's voice is perhaps the strongest ghost, promoting the
colonial code of behaviour for young ladies. Marlatt rebels against propriety
in language and deportment, nevertheless discovering that her position as a
woman is inextricably linked to colonialism: "My (hardwon) independence
as a Western woman is being eroded every day.... Mostly it's a struggle, an
old old resistance against the colonial [and we could add patriarchal] empire
of the mind" (69). She describes her dis-ease with the position in which her
family's colonial past places her:

O the disparities — how can I ever relate the two parts of myself? This life would have
killed me — purdah, a woman in — the restrictions on movement, the confined reality.
I can't stand it. I feel imprisoned in my class — my? This is what I came out of. and
how else can I be here? (50)

Juxtaposed with this cri de coeur is a framed, blank half page, the photo
missing, the gap in the record sought. Such poetic associations are part of
Marlatt's answer to her question about relating the disparities. She
questions: "How can I write of all this? What language, or what structures of
language can carry this being here?" (52). She associates her past experiences
and confinements with language and formal experimentation. Speaking of
her life, Marlatt also describes her writing:

I'm finding out more about the taboos I was raised with, the unspoken confines of behaviour, than I am about Penang. Still, that's useful — it makes me see the root of my fears: either I obey the limitations & play safe, stay ignorant, or else I go off limits, play with "danger" & suffer the price of experience. (53)

Of course, we know that Marlatt has not "play[ed] it safe," nor has she "stay[ed] ignorant," but has gone "off limits." In an interview she describes it as "risk[ing] to try and speak ... the unspeakable." One last example from *Ghosts* links Marlatt's poetic techniques to break "the old order" of language to her personal desire to break "the old order" of her family. Often, she questions the hidden associations of cliches; when attacked by her mother for going against her wishes, getting caught picking a flower for when a snake "shot across it." The cliches "Why don't you listen?", "give me your word," and "don't break your word" (83) are all atomized and re-assembled from a little girl's misdemeanor to a more fundamental re-structuring. This garden of broken words becomes the seedbed of future language. Such techniques are amplified in *How Hug a Stone*, in which snake, seedbed, and creativity are further explored. The associations between mother and daughter and codes of behaviour and language are even more clearly "broken."

*How Hug a Stone* is a vital record of the second return journey, a reversal of the original displacement, so that in fact Marlatt is writing herself into identity, or consciousness. Her journey frames the sequence, and the progression is chronological. Maps are reproduced, shorthand journal entries are recorded, events and conversations are recreated. A sense of verisimilitude pervades. More than a documentary recounting of a journey begun and completed, however, the movement is one that echoes through time. What is significant are the parallels between this journey and others, between mother-child relationships, between different senses of language, between different perceptions of life, again for Marlatt it is the "intriguing" "connections."

The first section, "Crossings-over," ostensibly refers to Marlatt's present Atlantic crossing, reflecting as it does the original crossing-over of thirty years past. But in reality the "crossings-over" are much more numerous — family customs, and above all "family phrases." In the home of her step-brother, among the hoardings of a lifetime, are "relics i [Marlatt] recognize," phrases familiar from her "so English" upbringing in North Vancouver, the lingual standard against which to rebel, "my mother driven wild." By employing the archaeological approach Marlatt amplifies this story of language's blossoming from the familial to the universal and also foreshadows the density of her book's ending:
what was familiar now is relic: sweetshop, pillbox. clipped monosyllables with a distinctive pitch pattern. remnants of Old English, even moth, snake, stone. word henge to plot us in the current flow. (19)

The next sections amplify the inter-relationships of people, events, and language through time. Marlatt and her son retrace the 1951, seaside steps she and her family took, and in the reliving Marlatt gains insight into her mother's loneliness and isolation. Both Marlatt and her mother had dreams in conflict with their mothers wishes for them, but Marlatt's mother capitulated, apparently giving up her dream of a fashion-designing career for an early marriage. Marlatt dons jeans, acquires Canadian slang, chooses to take a job, "refusing the dream its continuity in what i thought was no / man's land."

The idea of the fruitful breakdown is reflected in life and in language, as both Marlatt and her son become ill. She questions: "i say the mother-things to him but what do i say to the child / in me? who mothers me?" Answers come, in part, when Marlatt's son recovers, and she goes on to explore the significance of her surroundings.

June 30. circling the power thresholds of Stonehenge — embracing the squat stone mothers of Avebury under her mothering wing five thousand year old long barrow bones planted like seeds in the ground — they cultivated death to ensure a new spring.

The stone circle of Avebury, womb-like enclosure of burial mounds, is both death and rebirth. Dedicated to a pre-Celtic goddess, a version of the Mother Goddess, it was used for burial and for ensuring fertility and initiating female adolescents, an obviously appropriate "power threshold" for Marlatt to choose. In her text she weaves in the voices of Gaelic poems about Avebury and the myths it enshrines. Significantly, this goddess is associated with the serpent, both in the form of her sanctuary (the path to the inner-circle is the shape of a curling snake) and in her mythology: "snake was called ... the Milkmaid of Bride" (Dames 86). Throughout both Ghosts and How Hug the young Marlatt is warned about the dangers of snakes, but in the present snakes, or stories or memories of snakes, lead to an understanding and acceptance of her poetic role. As in the garden in Ghosts, here the serpent road leads her to some "broken" answers. "The old story, its ruined circle" has its "limit[s]:"

we have forgotten parts, we have lost sense of the whole. left with a script that continues to write our parts in the passion we find ourselves enacting, old wrongs, old sacrifices. & the endless struggle to redeem them, or them in ourselves, our "selves" our in-heritance of words. wanting to make us new again: to speak what isn't spoken, even with the old words. although there are stories about her, versions of history that are versions of her, & though she comes in many guises she is not a person, she
is what we come through to & what we come out of, ground & source. the space after the colon, the pause (between the words) of all possible relation. ... how hug a stone (mother) except nose in to lithic fold, the old slow pulse beyond word become, under flesh, mutter of stone, stane, stei-ing power. (73-75)

Marlatt sifts the artifacts for answers, grave objects, the etymology of "our inheritance of / words." And it is the poetic interplay of relations that makes *How Hug a Stone* so powerful: "writing in monumental stones" or writing on paper using "the old words." "fold of a garment," "stone-folds," "the enfolded / present." The circular shape of Avebury, the "shape" of Marlatt's mother's life, the shape of the "transformative / sinuous sentence." She enacts through language her journeyings and all the resonances sounded.

*Vancouver*

**Works Cited**


"I Peel Myself Out of My Own Skin": Reading Don't: A Woman's Word

13.6 Survival. Dreaming with a pen in my hand. Writing. Writing. Writing. Who will hear me? (Elly Danica)

Our power does not lie in hope (we can learn to live without it), but in our invincible power to remember and to warn. (Mary Meigs)

INSTITUTIONAL/TEXTUAL BORDERS

To write the body in pain, a particular historical body that has suffered particularly damaging abuse, is to articulate one of our culture's unspeakable secrets.¹ To read a daughter's interpretive account of incestuous relations with her father is to experience how feminist writing rattles canonical and textual borders. In her analysis Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change, Rita Felski argues that "the politics of feminist reading or writing is not a question which can be resolved at an aesthetic level alone; it is inextricably linked to the fate of the women's movement as a whole.... Writing should be grasped as a social practice which creates meaning rather than merely communicating it" (182). Women's life-writing

1 I am grateful to the participants who gathered at "Women's Writing and the Literary Institution/La littérature au féminin et l'institution littéraire" for their insightful comments and warm support, and in particular, to conference organizer Claudine Potvin, and to Carolyn Bayard and Carole Gerson. Elly Danica's generous conversations clarified some of my responses to her work. Gary Watson provided a helpful editorial reading of this paper. Part of this paper was presented at the Association of Canadian University Teachers of English annual meetings (Queen's University, May 1991) where Jeane Perrault's research and writing on "body/pain" made productive dialogue possible. This paper is published in Kadar (133-51).

Women's Writing and the Literary Institution / L'écriture au féminin et l'institution littéraire
Towards a History of the Literary Institution in Canada: 6th Conference
ISBN 0-921490-07-0/219/$02.00
-University of Alberta, Research Institute for Comparative Literature
that exposes incest experiences makes possible new subject positions in that
it potentially liberates the woman writer or reader, transforming her from
silent victim to engaged "survivor."

My reading of Elly Danica's Don't: A Woman's Word is informed by the
assumption that children are disempowered. Judith Herman writes:

Because a child is powerless in relation to an adult, she is not free to refuse a sexual
advance.... The question of whether force is involved is largely irrelevant, since force
is rarely necessary to obtain compliance. The parent's authority over the child is usually
sufficient to compel obedience. Similarly, the question of the child's "consent" is
irrelevant. Because the child does not have the power to withhold consent, she does
not have the power to grant it. (27)

Any useful analysis of child sexual abuse acknowledges not only the
disempowerment and vulnerability of children but the structures of male
domination and the organization of male sexuality in order to account for
statistics that "show that men — fathers, stepfathers, boyfriends, and other
males — are the culprits in more than 90 per cent of child sexual-abuse
cases" (Underwood 56). Many fathers rationalize their behaviour, insist on
its normative character and refuse to assume responsibility for their actions.
A sexually abusive father might assert his paternal authority: "I was just
teaching her the facts of life." Or he might accuse the victim: "She seduced
me" (Herman 27). Increasingly, there is documentation about sexually
abusive mothers.

While women's life writing about incestuous experiences circulates within
the literary institution, it not only intersects but is central to feminist social
practice in other disciplines. In a review of Sylvia Fraser's My Father's House,
another autobiographical account of father/daughter incest, Jill Johnston
notes that the narrative suggests "what could be done to change society
through the affecting, self-observing, literary enterprise of victims" (50). And
indeed, these narratives both enable and are enabled by feminist interven-
tions in both psychology and the law; they play an important role in the
development of adequate treatment for and analysis of sexual abuse
experienced by children.

There are too many stories. It wasn't until the mid 1960s that researchers
asked the incest survivors for their responses; before this, they simply
inferred what the effects would be. In 1984, American sociologist Diane
Russell found that 54% of the women interviewed reported an experience
of incestuous or extramarital sexual abuse in childhood before the age of
eighteen. Other studies suggest that one in three boys is sexually abused. Therapists point out the impact on the child does not necessarily correlate with that the level of violence since many cases of incest are with "willing" children who do not "object." Lori Haskell's critique of "Research on the Effects of Child Sexual Abuse" ends with her ideal projection of future research. Central to this projected research are stories of the survivors themselves, their tell tale signs, which describe "what they believe is most aversive about the abuse ... [and which lead] to important insights regarding the variables associated with differential effects" (17).

What is at stake in telling the secret stories? In her incest narrative, Walking Inside Circles, Angela Hryniuk outlines the terms of speaking out:

*Dissuasion.* Write about it, but don't publish it. It would heal the family more if you didn't go public. Keeping silent will heal you? We did that for centuries and look where that has taken us. In a handbasket. The silence is broken. This time the story is told. She is aware. And she remembers. No one can tell her her memories are wrong. Or she didn't feel what she did. She knows. And she remembers. (44)

2 Russell's definition of incestuous abuse is "any kind of exploitative sexual contact or attempted contact that occurred between relatives, no matter how distant the relationship, before the victim turned eighteen years old. Experiences involving sexual contact with a relative that were wanted and with a peer were regarded as nonexploitative and hence nonabusive" (1986, 41). Ian Hacking describes the philosophical framework of Russell's research and results as "consciousness-raising," a framework of empowerment through knowing that informs my study. Hacking explores the philosophical implications of the contemporary discourse on child sexual abuse, raising important questions that need to be developed in further readings of incest narratives. He asks: "What happens to the person who now comes to see herself as having been sexually abused? I am not now referring to the person who has merely kept an awful private secret, who now may feel liberated by being able to talk about it, or oppressed by having it brought to surface consciousness again. I am referring to placing oneself in a new world, a world in which one was formed in ways one had not known. Consciousness is not raised but changed" (1992, 26).

3 Russell suggests that "father-daughter incest [is] the most traumatic form of incestuous abuse" because her research shows: "1. Fathers were more likely to have imposed vaginal intercourse on their daughters than the other incest perpetrators...; 2. Fathers sexually abused their daughters more frequently than other incestuous relatives and for a longer duration...; 3. Fathers were more likely than other relatives to use physical force (even though the use of force by incest perpetrators is extremely low)...; 4. The vast majority of fathers were also the victim's provider...; 5. Most of the fathers were at least twenty years older than their victims" (1986, 231-32).

4 Risks in speaking out include negotiating the media. In a personal interview with me, Hryniuk described an interview with Winnipeg CBC Radio that was never aired. The three female producers wanted the interview broadcast as it had been taped. However, the male executive producer insisted that Hryniuk respond to an additional set of questions that would have forced her to represent the actual act of violation, a disclosure
In their courageous telling, survivors clarify the structures of authority that made their submission almost inevitable. They also often identify their own wounds and damage as life-long without remission were it not for their memories, disclosure, and healing. For many women survivors, the cost of silence is high. They often have symptoms of sexual disfunction or substance abuse, or they are unable to acknowledge boundaries between themselves and others. All these symptoms can be experienced by those who have not been abused, but feminist therapists and sexual abuse centres identify this clustering of symptoms as specific to child sexual abuse.

While the sexual trauma for women "does not necessarily lead to any permanent emotional damage ... for too many, childhood sexual abuse is an introduction to a life of repeated victimization, an early and indelible lesson in woman's degraded condition" (Herman 33-34). In a study of adult women’s responses to their own childhood sexual abuse, Mavis Tsai and her colleagues found that women who escaped permanent suffering, "most frequently cited ... supportive friends and family members, who assured these women that they were not at fault" (Herman 33). Those incest survivors who communicate their experience to others through writing recreate this community of understanding and release many readers from silent collaboration in their own secreted guilt and shame.

Beyond this significant reading effect, life writing about incest intersects in very concrete ways with feminist social practice in the non-literary sphere of feminist psychotherapy and jurisprudence. In 1976, Louise Armstrong published her popular paperback "pioneering book" Kiss Daddy Goodnight. Ten years later in a forward to its republication, Armstrong responds to the current rhetoric of "disease and cure" which has medicalized incest and participated in a legal tangle of court decisions which have not led to the effective protection of the child. She addresses the proliferation of discussions about incest:

At least we’re talking about it now.... Yes. But it was not our intention merely to start a long conversation. Nor did we intend simply to offer up one more topic for talk shows, or one more plot option for ongoing dramatic series. What we raised, it would seem, was discourse. And a sizable problem-management industry.... It was not in our minds ... ten years ago, that incest would become a career option. (ix)

In light of this cautionary note, the role of the cultural critic of incest narratives becomes problematic. Elaine Scarry has written that "the turn to

that Hryniuk's own written account critiques: "They – only the men – ask point blank — only the men – was it sexual intercourse? That being the ultimate in sexual abuse. What's the difference between a finger, a broomhandle, and a penis? Why, in their minds, is intercourse the only legitimate form of sexual abuse? Finger. Broomhandle. Penis" (42).
history and the body — the attempt to restore the material world to literature — has been in part inspired by a kind of collective regret at the very weightlessness, the inconsequentiality of conversation about literature" (xxvi). However the apparent restoration of the body in feminist criticism can occur in potentially reductive and relativising discourses about sexual abuse. In her reading of "sexual violence and literary history," Christine Froula replays psychoanalytic accounts of Freud's diminishment of "the crucial role played by neurosis of the abuse of paternal power" (630). Analysing the controversy, Froula notes how "metaphysically, the woman reader of a literary tradition that inscribes violence against women is an abused daughter" (633). This figurative repositioning of the incestuous female body from her bed of pain to the library is a rhetorical sleight of hand. It retraces with a difference Freud's own substitution of fantasy for truth in his notorious repudiation of the seduction theory during the development of his analysis of female hysteria. In Froula's economy, literary history and the female victim of patriarchal textuality stand in for Freud's insistence that women's accounts of incestuous sexual abuse were "emotionally charged fiction" (631).

READING DON'T

Elly Danica wrote Don't: A Woman's Word after ten years of trying to write Don't while living in a drafty church in Marquis, Saskatchewan a few miles from where she grew up with a pornographer father who beat her, raped her, and photographed her with other Moose Jaw men who paid to rape her. After Danica published her book, other neighbourhood women her age came forward to confess that as girls they too had been abused by her father. Some had what came to be known as "happy pictures." After her father humiliated and abused neighbourhood girls, he sent them home with photographic portraits of their unsettling "happy" smile for their mothers.

Danica wrote 2200 pages before she sat down and wrote Don't in two weeks, revising it for another four weeks. She sent the manuscript to Nicole Brossard, who was teaching at the Fifth Summer Women's Writing Workshop, West Word, a two-week retreat sponsored by the West Coast Women and Words Society. When Danica was accepted into the workshop, she assumed her writing was simply notes towards a book. She had numbered all of her paragraphs so she could remember how her memory had structured her story and revised her long repressed history. Brossard, astonished by the content and writerly innovation, assured Danica her manuscript was not only complete but "postmodern." Prince Edward Island publisher and writer Libby Oughton, another student at West Word,
published Don't through her feminist Gynergy Press. Danica published the book without prior publicity and called it "autofiction" in order to discourage attempts by others to dissuade her from publication. They also hoped to avoid possible lawsuits. Immediately following the publication of Don’t, Gynergy Press received one hundred unsolicited poetry and prose manuscripts of autobiographical incest narratives. Since then Don’t has sold more than 10,000 copies in Canada and was republished in a mass market paperback. It has been translated into German, Dutch, and Italian and is forthcoming in French.

Danica’s work can be read in relation to several other father-daughter incest accounts written recently by Canadian women. Charlotte Vale Allen’s Daddy's Girl: A Very Personal Memoir was published in 1980 by McClelland and Stewart and Sylvia Fraser's autobiographical account My Father's House was released for the North American paperback mass market in 1987. While both books trace the process of remembering and reconstructing a lost history of sexual abuse, the narrative resolution of each is specific. In a review of Charlotte Vale Allen’s Daddy’s Girl, Eleanor Wachtel describes how Allen constructs a counter narrative to deflect the pain of her own history, a story of compensation with "tributes to her saviours" and the promise of a happy ending. Wachtel interprets this as "an exercise with which we are all familiar: when feeling discouraged, make a list of those things we do have — friends, family, home, whatever" (14). Sylvia Fraser’s narrative enacts her own splitting into a multiple-personality, the "Girl Who Knows" and the "Girl Who Doesn't Know" during the period she suffered her father’s sexual abuse between the ages of 2½ and 17. This split female subject is reconciled finally in a version of the "happy ending," an epiphanic scene of forgiveness where the child imagines the father as victim also.

Danica’s narrative differs from both of these accounts in its refusal of compensatory narratives involving family or father. In discussing these incest stories, I do not wish to construct a comparative ranking. Each writer required great courage to write her story; however a different set of reading effects is created by each text. Charlotte Vale Allen posits an ideal nuclear family as the utopian space for recuperation outside father-daughter incest. Sylvia Fraser implicitly identifies both child and father as "co-victims" of the incestuous encounter, commenting that "coming to grips with this [incest] has to involve acceptance and forgiveness.... I feel very deeply sorry for my parents" (MacKay 3). However for Danica, any forgiveness is out of the question: "I think there are things that human beings do to each other that are not forgivable and I put child abuse in that category.... If you consider

5 Oughton also published Hryniuk’s Walking Inside Circles as another of the four chapbooks by West Word alumni.
power imbalances, as you must in this issue, there's no such thing as adults and children being co-victims in this scenario" (Williamson 1993, forthcoming). Danica's writing and painting are compensation for childhood wounding; her imaginative repetition helps propel her through healing and recovery.

Don't is also focalized through the dissociation of the narrator, but the split subject is not named or personified as character as in Sylvia Fraser. In a particularly grotesque section that describes how her father arranged for her to be raped by a group of men, Danica communicates the abjection of her body by dissolving the first-person voice into the third; the eleven-year old self becomes other.

The panties come off. He doesn't notice that my skin comes off with them. I peel myself out of my own skin. I am no longer myself. I am someone else. Someone I don't want to be. Someone I don't want ever to remember having been. Someone I used to know sits on a white brocaded bench, under photo lamps, in front of a camera. A body sits here naked. The body tries to cover itself. Its hands move automatically. It clenches its thighs... The body is no longer capable of response. The voice was peeled away with the skin. (53-54)

Danica's feminist account is an enactment in language of a woman's pain; this embodied tortured knowledge is unmediated by a comfortable framing narrative that would provide the reader with a safe critical distance. Language is at the centre of Danica's remembering. Boundaries of language are exceeded by writerly suffering and the reader's horror. The perceiving subject "peels" herself out of her first-person skin sliding away from both agency and subjective insight. The narrative performs a psychological zoom from "I" to an anonymous spectacular body. This process of disembodiment replicates one-half of the procedure that occurs in a medical examination where the "dual attention to the body as incarnate and discerned, self and object, is handled by a delicate manipulation of frames and boundaries which might be called the etiquette of touch." In Danica's case, the "etiquette of touch" is not operative in the "manipulation of frames and boundaries." However in both cases "the dislodgement of the self from the body is designed to preserve the social persona from the trespasses" (Young 63).

This psychological splitting initiates Danica's amnesia and provides her with the narrative distance to retell her story. Her book begins at the outer edges of memory where her consciousness first glimmers with the realization that her hatred for her father has an actual abusive genealogy:

1.1 DON'T. I only know this word. This is the only word I have ever learned. Don't. I can not write with only this word. A woman's vocabulary: Don't.
1.2 Don't tell. Don't think. Don't, what ever else you do, don't feel. If you feel, the pain will be there again. Don’t.

1.3 But the pain is there anyway. It exists even when I don’t. See? I warned you. You can't afford to feel. Pain will reach out of your belly and grab you by the throat. Choking. His hands around my throat. It is only pain. Old friend. I thought it was him. Again. Only pain. I can stand the pain. I can drown it in words or wine or smoke. Something can be done. If it was him again, that would be different. (7)

Don’t: A Woman’s Word begins at the beginning of a survivor’s lexicon. The birth into language of her savage abuse is marked by the imperative assertion of her own agency, "don’t" — the survivor’s Cartesian revision, "You do not, therefore I am." "A woman’s word" is part of a language not authorized by the father, a difficult language beyond collaborative silence.

AN INAPPROPRIATE RESPONSE

Australian feminist critic Meaghan Morris discusses how a "feminist speaking-position" is a problem of rhetoric, of developing enunciative strategies, or ways of "play-acting," in relation to the cultural and social conventions that make speaking difficult or impossible for women (7). The problem of establishing a speaking position in relation to Don’t collapses into the problem of establishing a reading position.

Danica’s narrative interpellates the reader as one who will not misread. Early on she recounts her childhood attempt to tell her story. In Holland at four years of age, she told her story of her father’s abuse to her mother and grandmother. While the grandmother heard her words, Danica’s mother denied them and refused decisive action. The revelation did nothing to deter the abuse and simply initiated the father’s decision to bring his wife and children to Canada. Later Danica would tell her story to priests, to nuns, to teachers. All of them refused to hear Danica’s words and did nothing. Their denial stands as a warning to the reader who is asked to not only believe her story but to vicariously participate in a shadow of Danica’s tortured pain.

On reading Don’t, the reader herself is unbounded; we are the speaker’s witness inside a body that does not lie. The speaker is birthed into the sound of nothingness: "nothing is born of pain.... Pain like a mountain (7). Birth is the coming into being of an absence which has annihilated selfhood. The narrator/the reader is dispersed in a shattering of words: "The woman made of potsherds. Pieces. Not herself. Never herself. Who is herself? Only broken pieces" (13).

In the case of sexual abuse, the child experiences feelings of betrayal and powerlessness, often enacting the perpetrator’s view; if he tells her she is bad, she tells herself she is bad. In Danica’s case — the child has sinned. The child is responsible or guilty; any affection is sexualized. Danica writes that
when the father asks whether she wants to have intercourse, "he'll get a yes. Now it is your sin. Now it is your fault" (46).

And here the feminist critic finds herself unbounded, trembling at her keyboard, and uncertain. How will she attend to her own words?

CRITICAL IMPLICATIONS

1. The feminist critic can follow Kristeva towards an analysis of abjection that is marked by suffering and a crisis in the subject:

Where [abjection] ... emerges, where it is differentiated from chaos. An incandescent, unbearable limit between inside and outside, ego and other. The initial fleeting grasp: "suffering," "fear," ultimate words sighting the crest where sense topples over into the senses, the "intimate" into "nerves." Being as ill-being. (40).

We recognize in this "ill-being" a variation on Kristeva's "semiotic," though voided of jouissance. Jacqueline Rose has described Kristeva's analysis of abjection as "a response to an idealization latent in her own formulations ... [a reply] that the semiotic is no fun" (27).

2. The feminist critic can follow Kristeva down another path toward psychoanalysis itself as that "site of maximum abjection, the only place where the "savagery" of the speaking can be heard." Thus Don't provides a safe place for verbal reenactment and repetition within an analytic scene that refuses the traditional therapeutic authorization of the analyst over the analysand. "Without ... biologizing language, and while breaking away from identification by means of interpretation, analytic speech is one that becomes 'incarnate' in the full sense of the term. On that condition only, it is 'cathartic,' meaning thereby that it is the equivalent, for the analyst as well as for the analysand, not of purification but of rebirth with and against abjection" (31).

3. The feminist critic can trace the shadow of another narrative embedded in the text, one which leads to the mother, and not simply as the object of blame. The mother's disappearance is elaborated in Tanya Modleski's analysis of the gothic (59-84). Several contemporary Canadian feminist writers identify the feminist daughter's enabling and disabling ambivalence to the mother. In Gail Scott's Spaces Like Stairs, the mother becomes the "semi-Gothic character, a figure of excess, of hope, but also of terrible absence," a source of both oppression and rebellion (128).

4. The feminist critic can accompany Danica through a labyrinthine descent in the mythological traces of Inanna, a journey that restores and heals the
traveller. Individual sections of Don't are organized as a series of gates recalling the Sumerian "Queen of Heaven" Inanna, "who gave up, at seven successive gates, all she had accomplished in life until she was stripped naked, with nothing remaining but her will to be reborn" (Wolkstein xvi). 6

5. The feminist critic can analyse how this incest narrative puts the lie to Freud's law of seduction. Danica’s text provides a critique parallel to Luce Irigaray, who writes:

If, under cover of the law [Freud's Oedipus complex in women], seduction can now be practiced at leisure, it seems equally urgent to question the seduction function of law itself. And its role in producing fantasies. When it suspends the realization of a seduced desire, law organizes and arranges the world of fantasy at least as much as it forbids, interprets, and symbolizes it. (38)

Don't tells the other side of Freud's Oedipal seduction fantasy, interrupting the pleasures of prohibited desire.

6. The feminist critic can trace the movement of Danica's narrative into the public sphere by analysing how the early dissemination of a small feminist press book to a community of feminist readers was superseded by the creation of a larger public sphere of listeners, owing in part to the award-winning interview conducted by Peter Gzowski on his CBC radio program. The book's popularity carried with it the shocking recognition that too many readings were informed by first-hand experience.

7. The feminist critic can explore what it means to narrate the scene of one's own violation. Remembering is so much a part of storytelling; language moves her from disembodied third-person fly on the wall to the first-person experience on the table or the bed. Did her disengagement and splitting in response to physical invasion lead not only to her painful amnesia, but to her life-long desire to write?

8. The feminist critic who writes about incest narratives, that is, this academic feminist, dissolves the boundaries between the subject of her study and her experience. Is this the writer in her? Or is this any reader's response to the political imperative of Danica's text? This particular feminist reader/critic is a white woman who has had a fortunate

6 For critical readings of Don't in relation to this mythology cf. Hartwell.
education, a middle-class economy and a painful memory of child sexual abuse. Is it appropriate to speak of this?

AD-PROPRIS

At lunch with a group of feminist scholars in a prairie city, I am told that sexual abuse and incest are inappropriate topics of conversation. I continue to speak. Is my stubborn talk vulgar self-interest or a reactive memory of my Wasp childhood dinner table where the monitoring of topics turned conversation from dialogue to competitive taboos? I am unsure of anything but a story my body has recently remembered. At that moment I had no absolute memory of the abuser's identity, though I know he was male. I continue to tell my story of child sexual abuse just for a moment longer. I become aware that the others' resistance may derive from their own secreted memories. I ask myself once again whether my story telling comes out of mere self-interest. Or am I responding to the interest of another woman at the table who reaches out to say, "Sometimes it is important to tell the inappropriate story."

Appropriate. AppropriAte, ad-proprius; to render one's own. By speaking out of this secret space, my improper talk forces some of my listeners to vacillate between apathetic and inappropriate readings of my story. Marked by proximity, the inappropriate reading renders the story the reader's; the apathetic reading maintains the "proper" distance. This feminist critic cannot maintain a critical distance. I call Elly Danica on the phone, ostensibly for an interview, but in the end, I want to talk back to her book. There are long silences in the interview. My questions are too elaborate to be effective. I worry about Danica's interpretation of my questions, then worry about worrying — what are the limits of intentionality? Spurred on by my apparent critical correctness, I tell Danica how, in numbering her paragraphs, she revises Wittgenstein who cautioned that where man cannot speak, there he must be silent. "Isn't this silence the place where women's words begin?" I ask Danica hopefully. Quietly she considers my question for a moment, then remarks "You have very definite ideas of what you want ... and I'm not sure I'm answering your questions." I feel myself resurface from my theoretical bunker and decide to spill the beans, the seed, the story. Out with it. I admit to "framing my questions in this complex way in order to protect myself." Danica replies with compassion: "For too long we've been trying to fit into a male academic paradigm of what it is we should be saying and how we should be saying it. But [personal] engagement is very, very difficult and very painful and very risky in an academic environment" (Williamson 1993). I wonder what the line is between analysis and self-dramatization. How do I keep the lid on? Or, as Armin Wiebe would say, "Who is keeping the tarp tied down?" (Public Reading, Winnipeg, November 2, 1989).
Later I reread Don't in a restaurant. The inside story, a sordid affair; the outside story, business as usual. Between the two—nothing more than two dots dark eyes stare out of a baby head... two tiny memories of somewhere else someone under the same tender skin pulled inside out. A slit opens up in the middle of her mind slide of a man framed in the white cardboard of a window. Now that she's read the story of incest with the numbered paragraphs she wonders for a moment whether this memory is a lively re-creation of fictive imaginings or a crossover from a temporal elsewhere. On the page, the story of child sexual abuse oozes from her flesh. Memory returns like snatches of conversation in the writing it surfaces as a compulsion without motive. Memory returns when the woman smells a smell not located in the room, twists and turns her sense closing in towards her own body shifts ground her vagina aches all day without reason and all day long the imagined smell of excrement fills her with revulsion. Her body, register of the unrecorded, knows what she does not. Her body, lost bearer of unfelt touch, of probing fingers, remembers in stages: there is no story. She, the third-person narrator, watches the history of her body peel away a texture of mental debris and lived surfaces. A voice (shell) cries—"don't."

THE SENSE OF AN EPILOGUE

Don't ends with this epiphatic "Epilogue" of recovery and a visual image: "Beginning. Always. From the secret place. Soul dwelling: found. Self: found. Heart: found. Life: found. Wisdom: found. Hope, once lost: found. Process: never lost" (93). This "subject in process" is visually represented in a reproduction of a drawing by Danica that follows the "Epilogue," doubling the ending as though recovery and healing exceed the ability of verbal language to describe it. Danica's "Ikon" is a round airbrushed drawing reproducing in black and white a series of layered petals or lips (fig.1). The round drawing reframes the female body in a sexual economy that refuses to figure the woman's body as lack, absence, hole or wound. The boundaries of the palimpsestic surface (skin) are both fixed and unfixed in the shifting edges of superimposed repetition. Elaine Scarry writes that creation and torture share a vocabulary,

"produce," "body," "project," "artifact." However, they share the same pieces of language only because the one is a deconstruction of the other, a reversal of the path of creation to decreation.... In the one, pain is deconstructed and displaced by an artifact; in the other, the artifact is deconstructed to produce pain. (1985, 145)

Danica's vision of a female body's fluidity resists and reverses the unimagining/imaginable tortured body. Danica's book begins with a single word interrupting defiant silence: "Don't. I can not write with only this word" (7).
The writing that follows negates the nightmarish inscription on her body of a father-torturer's humiliations. Writing is precisely her recuperation of an imagining creative subjectivity — a "dreaming with a pen in hand." Writing makes it possible for the subject to read her own wounds. "Each scar holds a book" (93). The textualization of her body is less objectification than an "objectification" that restores agency to her being. Writing reconstitutes the writer's body and world, making survival possible in a sensorium of particulars: "Fingernails. Teeth. Determination" (93). These particulars are not simply body parts organized by a consciousness informed by the body/mind inner/outer split and hierarchy of Cartesian dualism. The physical body is inhabited by "determination" and will. The utopian body of Danica's "Ikon" provides a visual correlative to Danica's recuperation in language of a body capable of subjective pleasure. Don't's revisionary subject privileges relatedness and associative imagining: "I dream. I love. I am" (93). The spare syntax of these three sentences announces a new subject whose recuperation depends upon a shared collective rereading of her body in pain.

AFTERWORD

A 1990 McClelland and Stewart paperback edition that sells for less than half of the original price packages Danica's story with telling differences. A comparison of the covers of each edition suggests the effects of diverse design and marketing strategies. The cover of the McClelland and Stewart edition reinforces an opposition between opaque forgetting silence and transparent bold telling with a chalk-white handwritten block-letter "Don't" scratched out of the surface. The female voice is represented in the typescript letters below spelling out "a woman's word." The visual representation of the command Don't in the original Gynergy edition foregrounds the process of sounding a woman's voice in the insistent and ascending intensity of repetitive visual echoes "Don't. Don't. Don't. Don't. Don't." While the mass market paperback suggests that something hidden will be revealed in the book, the feminist edition implies that the woman's voice or the chorus of voices has become progressively louder and more effective. What is obliterated in the mass-market paperback is represented as increasingly powerful in the feminist edition.

The original "Introduction" by Nicole Brossard is now preceded by Peter Gzowski's "Foreword." While Gzowski is "hit hard" by Danica's book, he maintains a journalist's reassuring distance from the text itself; his words focus on the revelation of the "ordinariness" of child sexual abuse, contextualizing his original interview with Danica in terms of recent discoveries by several friends that they were survivors of child sexual abuse. Gzowski's identification with the story is based on his professional history which included time "as a young newspaperman" in Danica's home town Moose
Jaw: "unspeakable acts, I realized, could have occurred while I was working down the street, and they had been perpetuated by men I might have met—or, for that matter, written about in other contexts" (x-xi). Gzowski's empathic but nonetheless detached response to the text contrasts with Brossard's embodied response as reader/writer where grief and pain are re-enacted and born "in ourselves":

When I first read the manuscript, I experienced a range of feelings—from outrage to utter dejection, from anger to the deepest of sadness. It took me several days to finish reading it, because this is a book that is read with a lump in the throat, a tightness in the heart, tears. Reading this book, we bear the child and the woman in ourselves. Reading this book, we share intimately what seems beyond words. (xv)

Omitted in the new mass-market edition is Danica's visual image of petal-like vaginal imagery that affirms women's bodies through a symbolic representation of female genitalia "beyond words." In place of the visual image, Danica's own "Afterword" reinforces Gzowski's assertion of a happy ending to the story in the writer's new-found joyful health. This revision not only eliminates any reference to the body but psychologizes Danica's recovery. No longer "victim," she is "a woman with her eyes and her heart open, strong, hopeful and more determined than ever before" (99-100).

Danica's transformation into a self-determined autonomous writer and speaker is celebrated in her new "Afterword." However, there is an intriguing comparison to be made of the publicity quotations on each publication's cover. In the earlier Gynery edition, an extended excerpt of Brossard's "Introduction" on the back cover alerts the reader to the socio-political context of the book, which reminds us how much sexual violence, whatever its form (incest, rape, pornography, flashing, verbal harassment), is not only a repeated assassination of our vitality, our dignity and our creativity, but also a way for men to occupy our lives, in the same way one "occupies" a country.

This political context dissolves in the M&S edition, where Brossard is replaced on the cover by Peter Gzowski, whose comment individualizes Danica's story, stressing the heroism of her text: "[An] unforgettable powerful book.... The pain, the reality, and the courage are now all of ours to share." Ironically, Danica herself denies this heroization in her "Afterword," where she writes about the significance of feminist collectivity in the development of her writing. She also notes: "There are now reviews which speak of my courage. I prefer to call it determination. Determination not to let men control or define who I am my whole life" (99).
Danica's "Afterword" doesn't finally have the last word in this new edition of *Don't*. The last two pages of the book are devoted to publicity advertisements that announce "More Great Titles from M&S Paperbacks..."; two of the ten titles are by Joan Clark and L.M. Montgomery, the famous Canadian children's author. The other books listed celebrate Canadian businessmen, male explorers, male private eyes, male humorists, and male aviators. Secrets, power, discovery, daring, and laughter are carefully ordered in masculine terms.

Who has the last word? In the world of mass-market publishing, will the new female subjects have a short shelf life? In this transition from feminist to mass market, do we find ourselves at a moment of social transformation or political co-optation? Will this new community of readers embody a cultural hegemony that potentiallyinvalidates the concerns of incest survivors and feminists? These questions potentially lead us to take up a cultural pessimist position and negate the potential for transgression and resistance in "the popular." Is it more likely that the proliferation of stories by incest survivors may help to create an atmosphere whereby, increasingly, child care givers are conscious of the symptoms of abuse and perpetrators are held accountable for their actions. The epigraph to this paper links "Survival." with writing, period. This reader/writer can attest to the potentially liberating effects of the telling story, the act of writing out a narrative of child sexual abuse. Literary criticism may be something other than testimonial, but for some, psychic healing is in the telling.

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