

- press, 1976); "L'économie agro-forestière: genèse du développement au Saguenay au 19e siècle", dans Normand Séguin, *Agriculture et colonisation au Québec* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1980), 159-164.
7. Gilles Paquet et Jean-Pierre Wallot: "Le Bas-Canada au début du XIXe siècle: une hypothèse", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 25, 1 (Juin 1971), 39-61; "Crise agricole et tensions socio-ethniques dans le Bas-Canada, 1802-1812: éléments pour une réinterprétation", *Ibid.*, 26, 2 (septembre 1972), 185-207; "Sur quelques discontinuités dans l'expérience socio-économique du Québec: une hypothèse", *Ibid.*, 35, 4 (mars 1982), 483-521.
 8. Cette thèse de l'égalitarisme a été remise en question par Christian Dessureault: "L'égalitarisme paysan dans l'ancienne société rurale de la vallée du Saint-Laurent: éléments pour une réinterprétation", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 40, 3 (hiver 1987), 373-407.
 9. Les pourcentages proviennent de Vicero, 157-62. Sur la mécanisation, voir Claude Blouin, "La mécanisation de l'agriculture entre 1830 et 1890", dans Séguin, *Agriculture et colonisation*, 73-91.
 10. Bernard Bailyn, "The Challenge of Modern Historiography", *American Historical Review*, 87, 1 (February 1982), 1-24; Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History", *Past and Present*, 85 (November 1979), 3-24.
 11. Pour un exemple, voir Mary Elizabeth Aubé, "Oral History and the Remembered World: Cultural Determinants from French Canada", *International Journal of Oral History*, 10, 1 (February 1989), 31-49.
 12. Les entrevues ont été réalisées dans le cadre du Federal Writers' Project, un programme du Works Progress Administration, mis sur pied par le président Roosevelt pour contrer les effets de la crise économique. Voir Ann Banks, *First Person America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), xi-xxv.
 13. Par contre, d'autres reprocheront probablement à l'auteur d'avoir fait le contraire, puisqu'il a choisi de réécrire certaines entrevues, pour faire disparaître "le French-accented English", une pratique selon lui condescendante. Il a aussi fait disparaître la voix de l'interviewer et a modifié certains passages pour faire avancer la narration (p. 6). Se pose ici toute la question des principes devant gérer la transcription écrite de textes oraux.
 14. J.I. Little, *Nationalism, Capitalism, and Colonization in Nineteenth-Century Quebec: The Upper St. Francis District* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).
 15. Respectivement par Yves Roby, François Weil, Bruno Ramirez, Garry Gerstle et Mary Elizabeth Aubé.

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The Mainstreaming of Postmodernism: A Status Report on the "New" Scholarship in Canada

VANGUARD.

PARACHUTE: ART CONTEMPORAIN/ CONTEMPORARY ART.

STRUGGLES WITH THE IMAGE. Philip Monk. Toronto: YYZ Books, 1989.

A POETICS OF POSTMODERNISM: HISTORY, THEORY AND FICTION. Linda Hutcheon. London and New York: Routledge, 1988.

THE CANADIAN POSTMODERN: A STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH-CANADIAN FICTION. Linda Hutcheon. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988.

FUTURE INDICATIVE: LITERARY THEORY AND CANADIAN LITERATURE. Ed. John Moss. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1987.

GYNOCRITICS: FEMINIST APPROACHES TO WRITING BY CANADIAN AND QUEBECOISE WOMEN. Ed. Barbara Godard. Toronto: ECW Press, 1987.

A MAZING SPACE: WRITING CANADIAN WOMEN WRITING. Ed. Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli. Edmonton: Longspoon and NeWest, 1986.

FEMINIST RESEARCH: PROSPECT AND RETROSPECT. Ed. Peta Tancred-Sheriff. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988.

THE EVERYDAY WORLD AS PROBLEMATIC: A FEMINIST SOCIOLOGY. Dorothy Smith. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987.

THE POSTMODERN SCENE: EXCREMENTAL CULTURE AND HYPER-AESTHETICS. Arthur Kroker and David Cook. Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1985.

CANADIAN JOURNAL OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL THEORY.

BODY INVADERS: PANIC SEX IN AMERICA. Ed. Arthur Kroker and Marilouise Kroker. Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1987.

Attending a symposium called "Our Postmodern Heritage" at the University of Toronto's University College in the spring of 1987, I got the impression that most of the participants were either oblivious to or disturbed by the notion of paradigm shift. A year later everything had changed. At the Learned Societies Conference in 1988 every group from the Canadianists to the semioticians seemed to have its special session or keynote paper on postmodernism. No journal was without its nod to the "new" theory. The staunchest bulwarks of conservative pedagogy were suddenly talking interdisciplinarity. The only thing that hadn't changed was the rampant disagreement about what postmodernism actually entailed. I decided it would be useful to examine exactly what was going on in this remarkable rush for the bandwagon. From a holiday whim the task turned into a year-long odyssey. The problem was not merely the evaluation of products, but the decision as to what products should come under the general heading of postmodern.

Canadians are not, of course, alone in their confusion. Despite the verbiage that has been expended world-wide on the phenomenon, at close sight the *ding-an-sich* tends to evaporate. Though the term

first came into general usage in the U.S. to describe certain trends in 1950s fiction, it has lately taken on the not-entirely-compatible colouration of European theory. Between these extremes lies a morass of counter-claims. Even allowing for arbitrary terminological differences, the literature yields an almost breathtaking range of contradictory assertions about its constitution, its derivation, and its value. Is this simply an excess of "bad" judgment? I don't think it's that straightforward. What becomes clear if one actually looks at the artifacts invoked by the various apologists is that not everyone is looking at the same "thing." Leaving aside the grinding of personal axes, in fact, there is still a substantial variance in what is claimed or labelled or simply taken for granted as postmodern. In mounting this project I had no intentions of trying to arbitrate the largesse, nor do I purport to do so now.¹ It has become obvious, however, that to understand the Canadian entries into the field — to assess their adequacy and account for their biases — one requires at the very least a sense of the controversies that have raged and still rage within the intellectual milieu from which they claim, or at least seem, to derive.

The most obvious problem for anyone trying to talk about postmodernism is the lack of agreement about dating and periodization. Some critics see the postmodern as a post-war development; others make it synonymous with the whole twentieth century. This uncertainty about boundaries is exacerbated by a confusion not only about the relationship it bears to its ostensible precursor (depending on whom one reads, the "post" may be taken to mean conceptually anti-, temporally after, or a moment within), but how the latter should itself be defined. Ideas of modernism differ considerably from place to place — there are especially large discrepancies between continental and North American usages — and from one field or medium to another. Modern literature (according to Virginia Woolf) began in 1910; modern art in the mid to late nineteenth century; modern "times" in

the Enlightenment, the Renaissance, or even earlier. With such divergence of bases, it is hardly surprising that the products of reaction were different in different arenas. Even controlling for context, moreover, there have been major changes over time. In American literature, for instance, we may discern three phases in what has been called postmodern: an early hedonistic stage centering on the apocalyptic fable-makers like Barth, Burroughs, and Pynchon, which was imported to Europe during the 1960s; a middle aesthetic stage exemplified by Gass and the Surfictionists; and a late political-theoretical stage after the European version, with its higher degree of politicization, was imported back again. The effect of this layering was to entrench under one umbrella a number of phenomena which are not merely varied but seriously discrepant: new elements discord with old ones (1970s hermeticism with the counter-cultural reaction against elitism; 1980s militancy with 1970s hermeticism); imports assort ill with homegrown traits (the poststructuralist decentering of self versus the American celebration of individualism); what seems consonant is at root at odds (the action-oriented politics of both 1970s art and 1980s feminism sits uneasily with the deterministic implications of their own preferred theoretic base, the Foucauldian discourse on power). Given the lack of even vestigial stability, it's small wonder we have a portmanteau concept yielding something for everyone.

It's easy to see why this would pose difficulties for the would-be reviewer. With more distance it may, of course, be possible to discern beneath the multiplicity the delineaments of a unified paradigm. On the basis of actual usage, however, it's not just risky but foolish to erect any norm or standard of postmodernism. In selecting the "subjects" for this essay, I used the loosest criteria possible. Beginning with texts that talk about being, or label themselves as, postmodern, in order to adequately assess the new trend in Canadian artistic/academic discourse I found myself

compelled to include within my purview a number of individuals who are postmodern only adjunctively, through their association with movements or practices which are themselves popularly placed within the postmodern ballpark. In constituting a provisional map of this terrain I take my cue from W.J.T. Mitchell. "The most important movements in contemporary criticism," he says in a recent essay, "are feminism, Marxism and post-structuralism. By 'post-structuralism,' I do not mean simply deconstruction, but a diverse and highly unstable set of interpretive practices that incorporates all the techniques supposedly 'left behind' by deconstruction, including structuralism, formalism, phenomenology, speech-act theory, reception theory, and semiotics."² Though Mitchell himself does not apply any homogenizing label to this lineup, most recent critics would agree that these isms, at least as taken collectively (there would be lots of disagreement about the weight to be given individual items), may be considered to comprise the theoretical branch of postmodernism. Content aside, I was also on the lookout for forms of writing resembling what is generally considered as the postmodern "style": impure, open-ended, multifocal, paratactic, fragmentary, self-conscious, and anti-authoritative.

As seems only reasonable in light of the lack of consensus, I have made my assessments in what follows on the grounds of (1) *internal* coherence; (2) consistency with *invoked* context; and (3) utility for the *self*-announced task of critique or analysis. Although some of the texts selected are bilingual, I have addressed myself only to the English-Canadian materials. Reasons of practicality aside, it would be misleading to attempt to generalize on what in fact arise from very diverse backgrounds. Despite some interesting cross-referencing, the discourses produced by French-Canadian postmodernists over the last decade differ significantly from their anglic counterparts in derivation, in emphasis, and in degree of sophistication. For convenience

I have divided my discussion under three major heads: artwriting, literary criticism, and cultural studies. Inasmuch as one of the primary markers of a post-modern approach is the breaching of categories, however, the reader will not be surprised to note that, with some field-specific differences, these texts almost all range beyond the traditional boundaries of their writers' "official" disciplinary bases.

Artwriting

I began with this field for the same reason that I borrowed my start-up list from Mitchell: because there's a belief abroad among wishfully trendy Canadian academics that the arts entourage is the font of all that's new-fangled. One of the early warning signs that a lit-critter or social scientist has joined the postmodern pack is, in fact, a tendency to start talking about art. When one looks at the texts that have actually been produced by our art-writing community, one wonders whence this prejudice has arisen. Probably because so much of the available talent and energy are drained off into ephemera like exhibition catalogues, there is a near dearth of extended, innovative, theoretically informed critique. My original plan for this essay called for the selection of several representative, recently published books, preferably on Canadian topics, for each of the three fields. In the case of art, the pickings were so slim that the only way I could get a sense of the ground was by turning to periodical publications — not the small specialty magazines (my interest here, as my title implies, is less in heralding the new than in charting its reverberations within the mainstream), but the glossy, long-lived, broadly distributed journals which have found their way onto the shelves of the yuppy bookstores.

Surveying this material it seems clear that something *has* shifted over the last decade. Traditional publications like *Canadian Art* have, to be sure, remained for the most part bland, backward-looking, politically and theoretically oblivious. A whole clutch of "new" journals

has arisen since the late 1970s, however, the stock in trade of which is not merely the "new" art but the "new" criticism. Key in this regard is the increased awareness of theory. Take *Vanguard*, for instance — the best known and most conventional of the recent publications. For the first few years after its inception in 1979, this journal still looked very much like an organ of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Its reviews continued to concentrate on west coast events and productions. Theoretical and general articles were very much in a minority. Beginning in 1982, however, as the focus became broader, "theory" suddenly gained a much higher profile. From 1982 through 1987, a survey reveals that out of 238 feature articles, 74 — almost one-third, up from less than fifteen percent — had a more or less significant theoretical component.³ Insofar as it challenges the modernist emphasis on the self-validation of art, this change in itself suggests a relative postmodernizing of stance.

If the presence of theory is not enough to seal *Vanguard's* case, the bias of its content leads, or at least *seems* to lead, to the same conclusion. Of the theoretical essays, twenty — almost one-quarter — are about, or contain explicit references to, some aspect of postmodernism. Close reading unfortunately does much to muddy the implications of the quantitative evidence. It's this particular body of material, in fact, that poses the greatest challenge to any claims one might be tempted to make about *Vanguard's* postmodernness. The first problem is the lack of consensus one infers from the sample, not only about *what* postmodernism comprises, but *whether* it comprises anything distinctive or significant at all. Many writers continue to use the term "modern" for features and phenomena claimed elsewhere by the posties.⁴ Others speak of the idiom as only one, and not necessarily the most interesting or important, among many alternative contemporary styles.⁵

The second problem has to do with the slightness of most applications.

Despite the increasingly pervasive sounding of trendy terms and references, little of the "postmodern" component in the *Vanguard* sample goes beyond tacked-on introductions to conventional critiques, or token, offhand references to what "everyone knows." Far from essential to vision, in fact, a paper's postmodernness frequently goes no further than the choice of topics.⁶ The third problem in a sense "explains" the former two. Even a cursory survey reveals that many of the writers who address this issue do so not as advocates but as critics. During 1985, the year in which the postmodern component peaked, five out of the seven relevant articles were mildly or strongly disdainful of postmodern products or practice. It seems clear from such indicators that the apparent mid-decade burgeoning of *Vanguard's* interest in and commitment to postmodernism was only coincidental. Certainly on the evidence of its theoretical bias this journal was far from leading any sort of bandwagon.

Ideological analysis reinforces this conclusion. I mentioned above the importance Mitchell places on Marxism for the shape of contemporary criticism. Browsing the bookstores, one would have to agree entirely with his assessment. Browsing *Vanguard*, one gets a rather different impression. Of the almost eighty theoretical pieces in my sample, only twelve have any significant political component, Marxist or otherwise. Even more surprising, much the same may be said of Mitchell's other main category. Between 1982 and 1987 only twelve feature articles touched upon feminism. Of these, moreover, fully half are indicated in my notes as "weak," minor, or even — like the postmodernism pieces — antagonistic examples. Given the amount of talk one hears about feminism within the art community, this is not, I would say, a strong showing. Evidence suggests, though, that it is reasonably typical, at least of mainstream vehicles. *Parachute*, for instance, yields much the same results as its west-coast competitor. Of the sixty-odd strongly or weakly "theoretical" pieces of

English-language art critique published by this magazine from 1977 through 1987,⁷ only eleven have any explicit feminist component, and four of these are in a special issue on fashion. Even more revealing than these low totals are the number of otherwise competent articles one finds in both journals which somehow manage to ignore feminist issues that the art under discussion invites.⁸ In the absence of contrary editorial intention,⁹ Canadian artwriters would seem either disinterested in or uneasy about the feminist position. I will have more to say about feminism below. For now, I will only note that the conspicuous rarity of Mitchell's top-billed isms within *Vanguard's* pages provides yet another reason for not taking an apparent postmodern turn too seriously.

It would be misleading, by contrast, to imply that the turn had no reality at all. Despite the lack of substance, it is true that the language and — insofar as vocabulary constrains what is thinkable — the perspective of Canadian artwriting, even mainstream variants, has changed substantially over the last few years. Many journal articles now simply assume what seemed contentious a decade ago: that art is a discourse, that its meaning is not intrinsic but constructed. Perusing the latest issue of *Vanguard*,¹⁰ for instance, one notes that although none of the four lead essays mentions postmodernism, and only one of them could be called "theoretical," nearly every component piece, features and reviews alike, makes casual, recurrent use of the terms and concepts and concerns of what Mitchell calls post-structuralism. Regardless of how they might label themselves — regardless, too, of how deep the change goes — it is clear that these writers as a group have picked up a whole new set of critical conventions. In so doing — and this is the really crucial development — they implicitly subvert traditional notions of what artwriting involves. By privileging codes and dethroning the subject, the language of "post" explodes the whole notion of authority. It's this silent subversion, in-

dependent of intent, which to my mind comprises the most salient, if not always the most obvious, diagnostic of postmodernism. Postmodern *does* what postmodern *is*.

Have I lost you? What I'm talking about here is something that *Parachute*, Canada's "other" main contemporary art journal,¹¹ has been doing, or at least trying to do, for a long time. On the face of it, this magazine has no more claim to represent postmodernism than *Vanguard* does. Because of its broader focus it is both difficult and risky to make direct comparisons. (Besides critical and review essays, *Parachute* publishes interviews, autobiographical statements, pseudo-fiction, and mixed media pieces; besides traditional art, its venue includes video, books, music, dance, performance, even popular culture productions.) Allowing for some methodological looseness, however, it seems clear, despite the presence of several important individual articles on the topic,¹² that in *quantitative* terms the visual arts component of this journal includes less explicit "talk about" postmodernism than we turned up in our earlier survey. Numbers aside, however, *Parachute* "seems" more postmodern than *Vanguard*. And not merely for substantive reasons — its bilingualism, its greater political awareness, its earlier and better grasp of the "new" theory. Though it is obviously not insignificant that virtually all the notable pieces on postmodernism appeared by 1983, two years prior to *Vanguard's* peak, I don't think this is the really important factor. What makes *Parachute* postmodern is not its content but its "look." Exemplifying, albeit tacitly, many of the aforementioned consensual features of postmodern discourse, from anti-elitism (the mixed bag of "kinds"), through interdisciplinarity (breaking down genre/medium boundaries), to the de-lineation of "narrative" (non-"illustrative" use of graphics and visuals), the Quebec magazine practices rather than preaches. Editorially, *Vanguard* hasn't caught on to the distinction yet. Individual contributions notwith-

standing,¹³ its format and focus are clearly intended to reinforce traditional norms of vehicular transparency. This, unfortunately, counteracts any potential subversiveness carried by the language. If anything, in fact, the increased sophistication of its contributors of late simply makes it appear more seamlessly academic. The lesson has some important ramifications for our broader task of assessment. Throughout the combined oeuvre, as we shall see below, it is the chasm between dimensions of practice, not the lack of explicit articulation, that is most likely to mar the Canadian postmodern's mastery of the paradigm.

Filtered through conventional expectations, the flaw is not always readily apparent. One of the most charismatic and influential of Canada's contemporary art critics is Philip Monk, whose selected essays have recently been published under the title *Struggles with the Image*. Title notwithstanding, there is little sign of uncertainty in this collection. Whether or not one agrees with Monk's analyses, it is almost impossible to question his perspicuity or his scholarship. But this is the whole problem. Monk's critique is *so* impressive, *so* persuasively reasoned and elegantly framed, that one rarely even considers such small points as "agreement." Elisions and assumptions slip by unchallenged that would from a lesser writer raise a red flag. And I don't merely mean minor quibbles. If one fights the appeal it becomes clear that the impact of this work depends at least partly on sleight-of-mind. Though Monk uses the full range of structuralist and semiotic analytic techniques, his primary concern — at least ostensibly — is the way artworks are constructed through their public reception. Despite the formal invocation of shared experience, however, the fact is that these essays focus almost entirely on a private, personal, and significantly atypical transaction. Yet we accept it as "true." Why? Just as he displaces attention from art objects to art effects, by "disqualifying" the reader through the sheer weight of his unquestionable erudition

Monk minimizes the likelihood that one will "measure" the account against any extrinsic standard. Thus normalized, not only does *his* experience replace *ours*, but like conventional renditions of the landscape it also comes to "stand for" the reality it purports to be an experience of.

The question is, of course, whether the shift is regrettable. For myself, I find that Monk's responses, while hardly simple (the complexity and subtleness of his anatomizations are often no less than mind-boggling), underrepresent the potential range of experience that art-viewing offers. To be blunt about it, they are just too cerebral. In his syntactical analysis of Ian Carr-Harris, for instance, he misses entirely what for me is essential to bring alive the play of "ideas" in the art — the emotionality and allusiveness of its subject matter. This doesn't mean that my interpretation is "better" than Monk's, but merely that, in this case at least, it is possible to find something more than or apart from the abstract interrelations he fixes upon. His discussion of the conceptual/performative works of General Idea is even more problematic than his view of Carr-Harris. Because he misses the sense of fun — the sheer, wilful, elbow-nudging, complicity-inviting mischievousness — that underwrites these productions, he also misses much of their ambivalence: the way they parody not only the world of Capital, but also the hackneyed nature of the parodic convention itself. In so doing Monk inadvertently does himself a damage. His own shortcomings seem much more palpable in this essay than elsewhere. Why? Because his language, delivered straight-faced, sounds so damningly similar to GI's inflated take-offs on trendy artbabble that he liberally quotes in his text.

There are, then, despite the erudition, a few problems in Monk — problems with adequate reference; problems, even more, with the fit between practice and theory. *Coming from* post-structuralism, with all that implies about de-centering, Monk's modus in the end comes down to personal authority. Elitist in taste and

blatantly self-referential, he not only wields but incarnates phallic potency, the modernist's *beau ideal*.¹⁴ The conclusion seems obvious. Regardless of theoretical ties, Monk is *not* — is nothing *like* — a postmodernist. Yet we *can't* disregard those ties: he invokes them himself. So how do we take him? As a fraud or a failure? Clearly it's not that simple.

We get a new slant on this problem if we look briefly at what some of Monk's colleagues are doing. Jeanne Randolph and Philip Fry have both been important contributors to the art journals. Very different in temperament and approach, they yet have one very significant thing in common. Both see critique not as a secondary or parasitic form but as a first-order construct fully equivalent to the texts and objects conventionally considered as "art." While best known for her psychoanalytic articles,¹⁵ Randolph's most interesting contribution, to my mind anyway, is her experimentation with a genre she calls *ficto-criticism*. By setting up these pieces (a typical example — if there is any such thing — is the self-deconstructing "diary" that comprises the catalogue essay for a 1986 show on Joanna Tod at the Art Gallery of Victoria) in such a way that they can't be read with confidence as either *fictive* or *factual*, she destroys the grounds on which we usually determine "truth value," thus forcing the reader/viewer to arbitrate for himself or herself not merely the meaning of *this* text, but the relationships borne by any/all texts (including art) to each other and to the world-at-large. Fry ambiguates the same boundaries by so interweaving the activities of *making* and *theorizing* that they become a single practice. The first of his essays I encountered was an entirely workable recipe for soup which served simultaneously (pun intended) as a critique of certain semiotic analyses.¹⁶ Most recently he has used landscape gardening as a jumping-off point for examining the transaction between artist and object as a generalized type of the relationship between self and other.¹⁷ In both of these pieces, as in a different sense in Randolph's, the visual and

verbal, "creative" and critical texts are not related hierarchically, but as alternative concretizations of the same perceptual/conceptual experience. Does this help unravel our problem with Monk? Perhaps. From the Fry-Randolph perspective his essays, as first-order artifacts, need not — cannot — "represent" anything but themselves. In one sense, then, they are postmodern regardless of the stance they severally depict. It is important to realize, though, that this level of meaning resides primarily in the eye of the beholder. It is questionable whether Monk — and in this he is unfortunately not uncommon — recognizes the conflict between his voice and his words. Here, of course, is where we depart finally from the Fry-Randolph organic approach — and from postmodernism. The problem is not so much that Monk evokes the modernist myth of an ideal (authoritative) viewer, but that he does so while employing a theoretical apparatus whose subtext tells us not just that the notion is no longer creditable, but that it was never more than a hoax.

Take note of that word "never." Many critics talk about postmodern subversion as if it were merely a matter of choice: the new populist aesthetics is "nicer" than its elitist predecessor. The whole lesson of deconstruction, however, is that the discourse of authority, as an ideological construction, is illegitimate — that is, dishonest, illusory — *not* just unfashionable. If, like Monk, one rests one's claims on the explanatory powers of poststructuralist methodologies, yet ignores the inbuilt corollary of epistemological and existential limitations, one is at best vitiating new ideas by forcing them into the service of old attitudes, and at worst fostering a lie.

Literary Criticism

If authority is the enemy, then Linda Hutcheon — author of Canada's most ambitious entry to the literary side of the debate, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*¹⁸ — would seem to have the whole thing taped. Never mind that she's a little vague on the

history of the term, or that her application is a little inconsistent, or that she generalizes madly while castigating all others for their lack of grounding. She has seen through to the essence of the phenomenon. Postmodernism is freedom from traditional constraints: textual, social, and philosophical. Over and over she berates the moment's favoured straw men, Patriarchy and Capital. Over and over she emphasizes rupture, the linked themes of plurality, of openness, of normalized paradox and parodic destabilization. The postmodern's "deliberate refusal to resolve contradictions is a contesting of what Lyotard ... calls the totalizing master narratives of our culture" (x). Sounds quite different from Monk, doesn't it? Well, it is and it isn't. Certainly Hutcheon differs (negatively) in the rigour of her analysis, but it's equally certain that she's just as much of a closet modern. What she argues for in this book — the "idea" that comprises its sole detectable *raison d'être* — is a singular, normative postmodernism derived from mid-1970's architectural theory. Here, unfortunately, is where the performance falls apart. Despite her rhetorical stress on strategies of de-lineation, Hutcheon somehow manages to remain oblivious to the incongruity of privileging one version of a practice which itself challenges the very notion of privilege. Less intellectually suspect but more troublesome for the information-seeking reader, she also seems oblivious to the fact that her particular version is indefensible on either logical or historical grounds. Ignoring the almost two decades of very different usage that preceded her arbitrary point of insertion, she rules to exclude both the ludic-cum-apocalyptic mass culture element insisted upon by critics like Leslie Fiedler and the aesthetic insularity of the Surffictionists. "[W]hat I want to call postmodernism," she says, "is *fundamentally* contradictory, *resolutely* historical, and *inescapably* political" (4, italics added).

Once one gets past one's surprise that so noted a critic should be capable of such oversimplifications, the question that

arises is why, with all there is to choose from, Hutcheon should have fixed her boundaries just where she did. The answer to this, I think, is tied up with the answer to why — flying in the face of her own paradigm — she would want to fix them at all. It is striking that the literary form which best fits the architectural model is a form on which this author, long before she jumped on the postmodernism bandwagon, had already staked a claim. Again, in fact, we would appear to have a lovely sleight-of-mind. If “historiographic metafiction” is the epitome of postmodernism, and if Hutcheon is the recognized expert on “historiographic metafiction,”¹⁹ then, *ipso facto*, Hutcheon is an expert on postmodernism. But this, of course, is what it’s all about. What becomes clear if one reads between the lines is that the real subject of this book is not what the title says it is (postmodernism merely provides a suitably trendy occasion) but the writer’s authority as a “talker about” the latest literary fashions.

Quite apart from her efforts to validate a particular, recognizably idiosyncratic interpretation, it is interesting, if only because of their ramifications for broader practice, to look at the means by which Hutcheon achieves this remarkable self-canonization. One of the most striking features of her text is the dense incrustation of references. Every point, no matter how trivial, has its long list of parenthetical citations — at times as many as twenty to a page. This is *not*, it must be noted, deference. Nor is it consideration for the reader. (Invoked sources are more often than not of dubious or negative relevance.) What it is, is old-fashioned name-dropping. Just like her deceptively unproblematic capsule summaries of key nexes in recent intellectual history,²⁰ the main purpose of these star-studded incantations is to create the impression that Hutcheon’s views are universally supported. Disagreement is obscured by the simple act of appropriation. One might, for instance, note her treatment of Brian McHale, author of an excellent recent study — in a sense the very study that

Hutcheon herself has purported to write — called *Postmodernist Fiction*. Though she lists four of his works in her bibliography, and includes his name in her index, and cites him in her text, Hutcheon never once acknowledges that McHale’s definition of postmodernism is much broader than hers, incorporating — indeed, emphasizing — types of material, like surfiction, which she herself explicitly disqualifies. McHale is not an exception. Even those few critics like Jameson and Eagleton with whom, from time to time, she openly differs are tacitly drafted into the apparent chorus of approval.

Narrative strategies reinforce the sense of unanimity. By repeating key points over and over, and especially by scaffolding her argument with popular clichés about power, ideology, gender, decodings, recursiveness, multivalence, the social construction of reality, the reader’s construction of the text, the ironic marking of difference, the subversion of convention, the recuperation of marginality, and so on and so forth, Hutcheon makes her material seem so plausibly familiar that the casual reader will almost certainly take it at face value. The subject itself is warped to the same single-minded end. By normalizing what is ostensibly ambivalent (her text is studded with phrases like “typically postmodern,” “distinctively postmodern”), totalizing what is ostensibly diffuse (“postmodernism is...,” “post-modernism always...,” “postmodernism never...”), and personalizing what is ostensibly de-centered (“postmodernism attempts to be...,” “post-modernism self-consciously demands...,” “postmodernism is careful not to...”), she makes postmodernism itself into an icon of authority. So much for plurality. But it doesn’t matter — the contradictions are amply offset by the inflated language and oracular tone. Even her discussion of counterviews (and it’s interesting that she hardly acknowledges that there *are* any significant counterviews until the penultimate chapter, *after* she has subliminally established her own ascendancy) adds to the effect. Far from opening up the

debate to alternative possibilities, she implies that what she is dealing with are simply better or worse interpretations of a single coherent phenomenon, thus reinforcing the modernist notion of a "good reading." Which brings us back to Monk again. It also, and more critically, brings us to my real reason for detailing all these abuses. That Hutcheon has written a problematic book is not important. That her modus may be imitated is. And not merely because it fosters a misunderstanding of postmodernism.

Hutcheon herself provides the best possible example of the potentially detrimental secondary effects of this kind of practice. In the same year as the *Poetics* she published a slimmer volume entitled *The Canadian Postmodern*. What we are given in this book, essentially, is a shorthand version of its companion piece (the same themes, the same ritual incantations of names and sources, the same familiar catch-phrases) chopped into bits and disposed as a kind of legitimizing framework around and between long chunks of relatively conventional (despite the interlarding of jargon) thematic-cum-formalist analyses of selected Canadian novels. To what effect? Well it's boring, of course — regurgitation does tend to pall after a while. It's also, however, in a subtle but important sense, a betrayal of its subject matter. What Hutcheon does in this book — and the key here is the hierarchy tacitly implied by her format — is to take the "special knowledge" normalized so persuasively in the *Poetics* and transform it in turn into an agent of normalization. Invoked this time as a *fait accompli*, and validated through the simple device of prioritization, the discourse of postmodernism, no longer the subject but the arbiter of questions, now serves itself as a kind of alternative "master narrative" by which the author can legitimize not only her own work ("owning" the narrative marks one immediately as an authority) but also — and this for me is the real problem — the body of literature she has managed to bring under the fashionable umbrella. As if it has no significant pre-

history of its own, no claims on our consideration except insofar as it can be shown to resemble an international model, Canadian fiction, divested of its Canadianness, is suddenly "discovered" to be interesting.

What's ironic about this is that there was really very little to discover. Despite her attempts to downplay the fact,²¹ virtually every feature singled out for comment in this study, from recursiveness to an obsession with history, has already been amply documented by other critics. Where this writer departs from her predecessors is only in labelling these things as postmodern. Far from momentous, in fact, the substantive contribution made by the book is at best a trivial one. Its positive flaws, by contrast, are far from trivial. Again Hutcheon cheats her readers. Labels aside, in failing to acknowledge that many of the supposedly unique features of the "new" literature can be traced to or derived from the practice of earlier writers, she creates the entirely misleading impression that recent developments signal a radical departure for Canadians. They don't. Canadian literature was recursive, historical, evasive, subversive, ironic, collective, parodic, poetic, and feminist long before such features became fashionable. If it looks postmodern, therefore, it is for uniquely Canadian reasons. Had she examined these reasons, Hutcheon could have written a much more important book. In her determination to present her thesis as a monolithic and seamless construction, however, she ignores totally (that is, neither recognizes *nor* rebuts) the possibility that the "explanation" for current practice might lie anywhere else than with her master narrative.²² In so doing she implicitly denies that Canadians have anything more to congratulate themselves for than their cleverness at finally making it onto the bandwagon.

This approach has unfortunately become all too common among Hutcheon's colleagues. Representative of the ostensibly more "progressive" faction among the Canadian lit-critters is a collection of

essays entitled *Future Indicative: Literary Theory and Canadian Literature*, edited by John Moss. Despite the binocularly promised by the title, this book is actually constructed in such a way that the "literature" falls right out of the picture. It is framed — that is, warranted as "post" — by two pieces of suitably trendy dialogue between Robert Kroetsch and George Bowering, the consensual fathers of Canadian literary postmodernism, plus a couple of suitably up-market critics, Hutcheon (of course) and Stephen Scobie. Within these "covers" is a kind of inner sandwich — though this time the symmetry is an illusion. At the beginning — on top, so to speak — are several strong, long, and interesting essays addressing/detailing the history, morphology, and problematics of recent Canadian critical practice. On the bottom, and quite overweighted in terms of both length and consequentiality, are half a dozen brief applications. In between are what we are clearly meant to view as the meat of the offering: a series of think pieces so overloaded with the buzz-names and buzz-concepts of postmodern theory that we know immediately their primary function is to provide an occasion for parading the authors' erudition.

Ordering aside, the real problem with these essays is what they *don't* do. The referential dimension is minor at best, and often misleading. Terrie Goldie, for instance, is clearly far more interested in expounding the Foucault-Said party line on imperialism than he is in elucidating his ostensible topic, the imaging of native people. If he looked *at* the oeuvre, instead of simply projecting a prepackaged interpretation *on* it (even the believer must find it problematic that on the basis of only one example, Samuel Hearne's description of the "Coppermine Massacre," Goldie has no hesitation in pronouncing a "norm" of Canadian usage [90]), he would realize not only that there are distinct cross-cultural differences in the representation of indigenes, but that the Canadian literary Indian is in fact quite different than what the master narrative implies. How? Well

for one thing, contrary to internationalist assumptions, s/he is far more often Self-symbol than Other.²³ And for another, s/he simply isn't characterized the way Goldie claims. One need only review the entries of the last few decades²⁴ to realize that "concentration on the indigene of history rather than the indigene of contemporary experience" (Goldie, 90) is not only *not* typical of recent usage in Canada, but relatively rare.

But it's not fair to pick on Goldie just because I have a personal interest in the topic he has chosen. There are *much* worse offenders than he when it comes to misrepresentation. In Barry Cameron's essay, "Lacan: Implications of Psychoanalysis and Canadian Discourse," the *only* reference to Canada or its products, apart from a bit of namedropping (Atwood, Kroetsch, Metcalf, Hood, and "some Canadian writers" are mentioned in passing, though not discussed), is in the rhetorical queries with which he interlards his rambling and incantatory disquisition on "reading, narration, and ideology." "Let me end this phase of my paper with a few questions," he says (and says, and says): "Is the colonized voice of Canadian discourse ... the woman's masculine language? ... Why has Canadian criticism exalted, privileged, the Imaginary modes of the classic realist text of fiction? ... Who has access in Canada to psycho-analytic and literary discourses?" (140, 146, 149). Since he never answers these questions, one can assume that their sole purpose is to foster the pretence that — as promised in his title — he is actually saying something about Canadian discourse.

Cameron is not alone in his priorities, unfortunately. His essay may take non-referentiality to extremes, but the whole collection gives very short shrift to the side of application. This is its real weakness. In privileging theory beyond what is either useful or reasonable — and here, of course, is the analogy with Hutcheon — it obscures the very object it purports to explore. It is notable that *Future Indicative* in fact tells us very little about Canadian writing. At the same time — and this is

more than a little ironical — it also, and by means of exactly the same distortions, the same simplifying/aggrandizing overemphasis, misrepresents the theory it privileges.

Leaving aside the problem of enactment — the fact that we are expected to take a prescriptive modern text as somehow adequately modelling the openness urged by its language — it is notable that in many of these papers *citation* (whether directly through references or indirectly through the use of specialized terminologies) takes the place of a sound instrumental grasp of the enabling/legitimizing apparatus. The more ostentatiously theoretical they are, moreover, the worse. Of the three papers that invoke Bakhtin, for instance, the only one that doesn't distort or trivialize its borrowed ideas is the one that downplays its momentousness. One might, in fact, take this particular comparison as exemplary. Where Sherrill Grace ties herself into knots attempting to erect the concept of polyphony into a grand, reductive, value-determining, universal classificatory schema, and Richard Cavell uses it in a distinctly questionable manner to valorize his favourite nineteenth-century author,²⁵ John Thurston manages — refreshingly enough — to avoid doing violence to either his sources or his object. Resisting both the seductions and the pitfalls of megatheory, he uses the notion of carnival to good but limited effect as simply one of a number of perspectival bases for examining and explaining the presence and varieties of textual instability in Susanna Moodie. Note that phrase "bases for." Unlike the foregrounded think pieces — and this brings us again to the issue of referentiality — "Rewriting *Roughing It*" both starts from and comes back to the work it purports to explicate. As a result, it is one of the few contributions to this collection that actually told me something new about Canadian literary history — specifically, the way the politics of publication in the nineteenth century could affect the constitution of a given text. In its interrogation of several explanatory models, despite or

perhaps because of its relative modesty it is also one of the few that actually comes close to demonstrating postmodern multifocality.

It's regrettable that Thurston's ilk seems to be in such a minority of late. Judging by the people and practices that get applause in lit crit circles these days, it is clear that modesty (in a textual, if not a personal sense) is a much underrated quality. Because of the example and particularly the success of Hutcheon and others, one sees a growing tendency to consider the assertion/incantation of authority as a guarantee of genuine up-to-the-handle critique. As is demonstrated even in the relatively unpretentious applied pieces included in the nether sections of *Future Indicative*, there is, in fact, a general expectation abroad that one *must* pay at least token tribute to the new master narrative or be dismissed as old hat. James Steele's emphasis-through-capitalization of all his properly pedigreed technical terms; Susan Dorscht's reverent invocations of big-name sources ("Kaja Silverman stresses..."; "Jacques Derrida writes..."; "Julia Kristeva makes..."; "Barbara Godard has noted..."); the almost irritating care that Elizabeth Seddon takes to bolster her own quite viable observations with borrowed warrant: far from idiosyncratic, such strategies — paradoxically, considering the extent to which they actually violate postmodern canons — are coming to be viewed as a kind of a badge of belonging. It would not be going too far, in fact, to suggest that the closer a critic is to the leading edge these days, the more likely s/he is to sound like an insecure grad student.

How do we account for this? Part of it undoubtedly relates to the fact that the Canadian literary establishment came late to the paradigm. But I don't think that's the whole of it. Canadians have always tended to be defensive about their differentness. Judging from the concerted and recurrent attempts we have made over the years (this is only the latest version) to align ourselves with — prove ourselves indistinguishable

from — imported models and fashions, there is clearly a feeling among Canadian artists and intellectuals that to be distinctive *qua* Canadian is necessarily to be inferior. This, to my mind, casts a rather different light on the recent bandwagoning phenomenon. On the surface it *seems* like mass arrogance. Underneath, however, it may betoken something quite other. Take Hutcheon, for example. When one notes that her atypical definition of postmodernism in fact “fits” Canadian literature much better than it does the international oeuvre from which it was ostensibly derived, it seems reasonable to suspect that she picked up her sense of normativity subliminally from her own cultural environment, projecting it on the broader ambience out of an unconscious desire, born of insecurity, to make it, and herself, seem more important. Godard reminds us at the end of the review which provides the lead and keynote to the *Future Indicative* collection that the theories so admired by the new new Canadian critics “are themselves imported with their carpet bags stuffed with ideological positions.”²⁶ She goes on to suggest that the “new colonization [may paradoxically] free [us] from colonial status.” Considering our apparently endemic lack of critical self-awareness, I for one don’t think it likely.

Feminism as a Subset

There is, fortunately, one notable exception to the tendency of lit-critters to confuse naming and doing. Spurred by a desire to break phallogocentric moulds, the feminist cohort within this camp has shifted at least vestigially out of the old paradigm. One must not lose sight of the qualifier, of course. Here as elsewhere one still finds a certain amount of “Look-at-me-I’m-trendy-ness.” Not surprisingly considering how much and how quickly this particular subject area has boomed in the last few years, there’s also a lot being churned out in which the progressiveness is more apparent than real. One of the glossiest and most widely acclaimed of recent publications is a bilingual critical

collection edited by Barbara Godard under the title of *Gynocritics: Feminist Approaches to Writing by Canadian and Quebecoise Women*. Despite its packaging (the back-cover blurb uses words like “pioneering” and “an inspiration”), this book, *qua* body, is really not quite up to the mark. Beginning with Godard’s competent but conventional history of Canadian feminist critique (though Godard in her own way is as admirable a scholar and as good a writer as Monk, she is even less innovative; her forte is reprise rather than essay) and ending with her equally conventional though equally useful bibliography, the English-language component of the text is constituted largely by a series of apologies for and recuperations of different types and aspects of women’s writing: lost oeuvres (Gwendolyn Davies on women in pre-Confederation Nova Scotia), underrated genres (Susan Jackel on autobiography), overlooked individuals (Mair Verthuy on Michele Mailhot), subversions of malestream conventions (Rota Herzberg Lister on Erika Ritter). As such, far from groundbreaking, it converges on a project generally associated with an earlier, largely atheoretical, pre-“post” stage of feminism.²⁷

Though disappointing in some ways, this datedness is not, I think, fatal to the book’s ultimate value. To be fair about it, the limitation is not all that visible. Even apart from the lulling effect of Godard’s personal authority, the homogeneity of the discourse is both camouflaged (which is problematic) and offset (which is interesting) by the co-presence of other “voices.” First and foremost, of course, there is the French element, with its greater emphasis (as Godard herself tells us [iii]) on language and ideology. Second, and less obvious, there is an American component, represented by Annis Pratt’s and Gloria Orenstein’s archetypalist (but distinctly non-Frygian) celebrations of woman’s mythic associations with nature.²⁸ If only because of the false impression it creates in what is self-identified as a “Canadian” text, this par-

ticular presence makes a less than entirely happy contribution to the lineup. Finally, there are two speculative, non-objective pieces by short-story writer Donna Smyth and poet Daphne Marlatt. Its general oldfangledness notwithstanding, these latter, I think, do in the end redeem the book, not just because they run so strikingly counter to conventions of academic writing but because they are *personal*. It is notable in this regard that even the "straight" pieces in the collection have an anomalously obtrusive subjective component. Foregrounding the "I" has the paradoxical effect of decomposing the invisible (conventionally male) author-ity. For this, as well as (ironically) for what the modernist would have to consider a flaw — the unintentional dissonance of its vocality — this book can be considered to have made a first step toward a new kind of discourse.

To see where this step can ultimately lead, we have to look elsewhere. Though published a year earlier than the Godard collection, *A Mazing Space*,²⁹ an anthology of/on women's writing edited by Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kambourli, in fact represents a temporally later stage in the development of Canadian literary feminism. And it shows. What was tentatively dialogic is now a full scale polyphony of different voices. Novelists, poets, artists, editors, critics, journalists, media writers, teachers of divers subjects and levels, immigrants (Welsh, American, Greek, Trinidadian, Icelandic), Westerners, Maritimers, Ontarians, Quebecers, even a couple of men — the list of thirty-nine contributors is itself as varied as any Bakhtinian might wish.

The "kinds" are varied too. Ranging erratically from the old-hat conventional (Diane Bessai's belated addition to the sixties-ish thematic-cum-descriptive "images of women" genre) through the recuperative (Marni Stanley and Bina Friewald on the female travelers' tale) to the unabashedly "post" (Sarah Murphy's self-consciously liminal ficto-memoir), these essays not only cover but demonstrate the full gamut of women's writing.

Theory is not lacking, but neither is it placed on a pedestal. Papers like Kambourelis ("The body as audience and performance in Alice Munro") share many of the concerns and conceptual vocabulary of the self-styled postmodernists, but without all the authority-scaffolding. Beginning with the predictable ritual invocation of big-name critics, Louky Bersianik, for instance, interrogates rather than appropriates her sources. As hinted by its defiantly traditional sounding title, "Aristotle's lantern: an essay on criticism," what we get in this paper is in fact a rare (in an age of regurgitation) example of first-, not third-, order theorizing. Heather Murray interrogates as well, in her essay on "Women in the wilderness." And not just the theory. What's all too unusual these days, she actually takes the trouble to look at the evidence in order to determine whether the pre-valorized international models really "fit." The result is a reading which — again very rare — is both theoretically informed *and* culturally grounded. Quite contra the primitivistic assumptions of Orenstein and Pratt, Murray concludes that the Canadian oeuvre privileges a mediating category *between* nature and culture, a zone she associates with the woman's "place."

Labels aside, then — and it's clearly not irrelevant that these people, with one notable exception (Janet Paterson who, in a sense, pulls off what Hutcheon only talks about³⁰) neither claim to "do," or pronounce upon, postmodernism — what we have here is our first true facsimile of post-modern multivocality. Nor do the parallels stop at voice. The one constant we find throughout this collection — the one theme that recurs over and over in many different modes and contexts — is an obsessive fascination with *language*: its duplicity, its construction of self-in-the-world, its power both to constrain and to liberate. "To recognize a symbolic code is to accept it" (Bersianik, 44). "[B]lack writers in Canada are searching for a language which instantly identifies their work as black" (Claire Harris, 121). "The act of writing her autobiography can be

seen as an attempt to heal the divisions within herself" (Kristjana Gunnar, 152). "Woman inhabits language. It is like the rooms of a house around her" (Carolyn Hlus, 293). "Before history can be transformed, woman's experience of the world and the word must be changed" (Lorraine Weir, 347). "To find oneself as a woman is to find one's way out of masculine language" (Louise Dupré, 356). "I have never had enough words. My language has been continually reworked, invaded, cut off, diverted" (France Theoret, 365). "[L]anguage in its power to express the most fundamental dimension of both personal and universal realities also has the power to transpose, transform" (Lola Lemire Tostevin, 391). Language, of course, is the concern *par excellence* of post-structuralist theory. This is important, not only for what it tells us about the perspective of this collection, but even more for what it implies for the project at hand. Many, both in and outside the feminist ranks, would challenge my until now apparently unquestioning assumption, on the slim evidence of contingency, that feminism can in fact be subsumed under postmodernism. Political feminists like Toril Moi, for instance, have been outspoken in their criticism of attempts, especially in the U.S., to align the movement with, or co-opt it to, the rarified strata of "post" theory.³¹ The emphasis on texts and language, they say, can only obscure the necessity for and possibilities of action. Some at least of the Canadian feminists (I'll be returning to this later) would agree. Regardless of whether its editors or contributors take conscious positions on the issue, however, the concern with discourse evinced so strikingly throughout its pages clearly puts this book in the postmodern camp. I'll go even further. Especially in comparison with the other texts and practices we have been examining in this review, *A Mazing Space* not only meets the feminist call for a dephallicized writing, but in doing so (and in answer to Moi et al., I would underline here the extent to which these projects are *self-evidently* not merely compatible but

coincident) provides an exemplary demonstration of postmodern critique.

Can we codify this example? Not without running the risk of prescription. I will, however, go so far as to say that a truly postmodern text must in some sense or another share this book's openness. One might, in fact, take Donna Bennett's essay-cum-parable, "Naming the way home," as a kind of mini-paradigm for the whole class of endeavour. The intellectual core of this piece is a conventional, name-studded, theory-wielding conference paper entitled "What is feminist writing?" What could have been merely another exercise in the construction of authority is, however, here marked clearly as exploratory through its juxtaposition with other, diversely validated (i.e., phatic, documentary, notational) discursive forms, and even more through its embeddedness in a fictive/subjective framework. Bennett's answer to the question she poses is hence a *process* rather than a *product* — a dialogue between selves. This brings us back to the factor I foregrounded earlier: enactment. Much like postmodern fiction — to which it bears a strong family resemblance — this essay elucidates, instead of merely preaching, the deconstruction of the modernist/patriarchal narrative.

The feminists, then, demonstrate that it *can* be done. The literary feminists, that is. It would be misleading to generalize too far on this point. That the "literariness" of this last group is as important as their feminism is amply demonstrated if we look elsewhere — in the social sciences, for instance, the new feminist discourse is barely visible. Which is hardly surprising. Aside from a marginally increased interest in "theory" of late, one sees little on this side of the fence to indicate that postmodern ideas have made any headway at all. Especially when it comes to conventions of writing. At least within the traditional disciplines, the traditional modes are still very much the rule. And this goes for feminist as much as for classical entries. Rhetoric aside, most of the workers in the women's studies field have concen-

trated on changing the subject matter of research (exploring women's problems, validating women's experience), with little or no thought to changing its form. That this is problematic can be inferred from the foregoing discussion on the power of language. Because the issue goes so largely unnoticed in this arena, however, now that we see what *can* be accomplished in the way of renovation, it is, I think, worth taking the time to look at least briefly at a couple of counter examples.

Typical of recent publications in feminist social science is a collection of papers from the 1986 CRIAW conference, edited by Peta Tancred-Sheriff under the title of *Feminist Research: Prospect and Retrospect*.³² Despite the fact that the introduction to this book calls for a new language, a new practice clearly divergent from malestream norms ("our research is joyously impure," says Marguerite Andersen: "our theories include reflections of our life experiences" [10]) — despite the fact, too, that the necessity for change is underlined by the findings of several contributors that masculine methodologies are biased toward masculine values and masculine psychology³³ — the majority of these essays are constructed entirely according to prevailing (read patriarchal) academic norms. And to their detriment, I think. Jane Gordon's call for more attention to "the mother's perspective" on childbirth, for instance, is ironically undercut by her impersonal and authoritative style of presentation. Proceeding dutifully through all the prescribed component stages (literature review, thesis statement, justification of sample, description of methodology, statistical analysis, discussion, conclusions), Gordon's paper could, in fact, stand as an exemplar for what is currently considered "proper" sociological writing. She is far from alone. Again and again throughout this collection we find the same impersonal voice;³⁴ the same acceptance of "scientific" modes of organization. Again and again we note the privileging of authority markers: statistics

(Lorna Erwin, "What Feminists Should Know about the Pro-Family Movement in Canada"); prevalidated data (Martin Thomas, "The Impact of Gender Preselection on Gender Maldistribution"); prevalidated models (Linda Klimack, "Coping with Abuse: Applying the Grieving Model to Battered Women"); social-historical "facts" (Nancy Forestell and Jessie Chisholm, "Working Class Women as Wage Earners in St. John's, Newfoundland, 1890-1921"). In short, we find exactly the same discourse as we would find in mainstream social science journals. This isn't to say that these aren't good papers — many of them are. Some, like Erwin's, provide new facts about important social and political issues. Others, like Stoppard's (see note 37), help us to see old issues from a new perspective. My point, though, is that as long as they slavishly mimic the enemy's forms, they have not in fact accomplished the departure they proclaim.

To be sure, it's possible to plead irrelevance here — to insist that these papers be judged not according to *my* standards but on the basis, solely, of their own intentions. Unlike their literary sisters, these women would clearly place themselves on Toril Moi's side of the argument about the relative importance of word versus action. One must remember in this regard that feminism entered the social sciences in this country as politics, not theory. The seminal text in the field — a 1982 collection called *Feminism in Canada*, edited by Geraldine Finn and Angela Miles — is devoted almost entirely to the partisan project of exposing the far-reaching and baleful effects of patriarchy. Ends notwithstanding, however, the problem of means is *never* beside the point. Means constrain ends — willy nilly. And not just on a cosmetic level. Even leaving aside secondary detriments like the potential subversion of reception (too much has been written on the topic for me to have to retail claims about the ideological freight carried by language systems), it's evident from the work at hand that the failure to align textual and political strategies, and

particularly the habit of deferring to authority structures, can actually undermine a researcher's ability to *think* her problem.

What do I mean by this? One of the near-consensual claims of feminist social science is that research should be grounded in the real experience of real people. This is what Andersen means when she speaks of narrowing "the gap between theory and praxis" (10). Despite their tacit agreement on this point, however, it is notable that the papers in *Feminist Research* are no more solidly grounded, no less abstract, than their male-generated counterparts. I am particularly struck by the lack of concern with the source of data. While perhaps less absolutely enamoured of imports than the posties, these women are certainly quite prepared to accept non-Canadian findings as normative for and predictive of local experience. In most cases, indeed, there is little or no differentiation made between indigenous and non-indigenous sources. There's only one thing we can be sure of: since only sixty out of more than three hundred items on the bibliography are recognizable as Canadian, there are obviously many more of the latter than of the former. No one finds it necessary to address this imbalance. No one, even in papers (like Martin Thomas's on gender preference) which themselves elucidate source-specific differences in social values, queries the propriety of generalizing from research done in different countries.³⁵ And this despite the call for groundedness. Substantive flaws aside, it seems clear that *these* feminists, at least, are inadequately mindful of the power of the word. Failing to give form its due, they fail also to recognize the extent to which patriarchal biases — and generalization is only one of them — are embedded in the borrowed discursive model.

This conditioned insensitivity holds true, unfortunately, even when the vehicle *looks* non-conventional. One very important *apparent* exception to the pattern is Dorothy Smith, whose recent book — *The Everyday World as Problematic: A*

Feminist Sociology — proposes as its primary aim the task of concretizing research strategies. "Taking a standpoint outside the textually mediated discourses of social science," she says in her introduction, "has meant renouncing theoretical projects that seek full development and coherence prior to an encounter with the world." "A feminist mode of inquiry ... [will] begin with women's experience from women's standpoint and explore how it is shaped [by] ... larger social and political relations" (11, 10). Note the agency of that word "shaped." In articulating her preferences, Smith makes explicit what is implicit in the whole feminist project — the necessity of building social models from the ground up rather than imposing them from the top down. When it comes to her practice, however, it soon becomes clear that the nod to induction is a token one. Smith, it turns out, is no more immune to the lure of a master narrative than her sisters. The macro-patterns she "infers from" her micro-findings are exactly what she expected: the class relations described by Marx and Engels.

Now I want to be clear exactly what I'm criticizing here. Certainly it's not Smith's competence — the contribution she has made to the theorizing and elucidation of the ideological bases of social organization in Canada cannot be overstated. I'm also not challenging her claims that class relations *are* recapitulated in the structure of the "everyday world." What I'm challenging is her *a priori* assumption that these relations are the primary and even the sole determinant of social reality. To privilege *any* given model, even a plausible and politically desirable one like Marxism (and here one has to recall that Marx is no less a product of the mainstream than Parsons), is, no matter how one rationalizes it, to defer to the rule of authority. This, of course, brings us full circle again to the question of misrepresentation. No matter how good Smith's analytic powers, or how laudable her intentions, as long as she is willing to subordinate what she sees to what she

"knows," she can only reproduce what she *brings to* her readings. And *that* is a limitation that even her considerable powers of perspicuity cannot overcome. Space constraints make it impossible for me even to broach the main argument of this book. I would, though, like to direct the reader's attention to one relatively minor example: her discussion of the conventions of dog-walking (154ff). Alert to class markers, Smith fixes on the extent to which the designation of appropriate target areas on the part of the conscientious "walker" documents a difference in attitude toward public and private property, single-family dwellings and rental units. Her observations on this level are unexceptionable. What strikes me more forcibly, though, is her obliviousness to the possibility that in this particular case other patterns, other "relations" — like those of myth, for instance (it is notable that the very concept of a "pet," like Levi-Strauss's cooking categories, is diagnostic of a particular attitude toward nature) — might ultimately be more important in "explaining" behaviour.

This brings us to the bottom line for this particular section. Taking negative as well as positive examples into consideration, two points might be made. The first is that, despite affinity, not all feminist critique is postmodern. The second is that in light of its stated aims to demystify and de-lineate theoretical discourse, it probably should be.³⁶

Cultural Studies

I said above that there was little sign of postmodernization in the Canadian social sciences. To be fair I must now qualify this statement. The one place one finds a considerably more than token lip-service to the new paradigm is within the interdisciplinary programs which have become a trademark of the "new" universities like Concordia, Trent, and York. Why credit this to the social sciences? While it is true that these programs draw both their subject matter and their staff from across the spectrum of academic fields, it is also true that sociologists and

political scientists have been disproportionately influential in setting the agenda for what has come to be lumped as Cultural Studies. It is telling, for instance, that almost three-quarters of the faculty listed for York's graduate program in Social and Political Thought are drawn from traditional social science specialties. At Trent, by contrast, the chairs of both the Cultural Studies and the Women's Studies programs are currently occupied by individuals of literary derivation. Despite this counter example, my own impressions suggest that *in general*, while it may have been easier for arts types to foster limited change within their disciplines, social scientists (albeit in very small numbers) have been more successful in making the leap *out* of their disciplines into something new.

In terms of publications at least, the hub of all this interdisciplinary activity would seem to be Concordia. New World Perspectives, a small publishing initiative under the general editorship of Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, is unique among Canadian houses in not merely incorporating but *specializing in* postmodern theory and postmodern topics. The one text that most saliently exemplifies their product is a somewhat motley collection of essays entitled *The Postmodern Scene: Excremental Culture and Hyper-Aesthetics*, written, not coincidentally, by Kroker himself (Arthur, that is — for all her formal partnership and reportedly indispensable contribution to the practical side of the NWP operation, one always knows when this name is mentioned in trendy circles that it does not refer to Marilouise) in collaboration with David Cook. Perhaps, though — and the very need for this demurrer is a large part of its exemplariness — it's misleading to speak of *Scene* as "one text." Much of the interest of this work lies in its allusiveness, its invocation of a much longer conversation of which it is itself only a small part. *Scene* can't be reviewed in isolation, in other words, because it represents the iceberg tip of a practice, a world view, a theory, a clique.

Where to start? Beginning with the obvious, the bottom line to *Scene's* intertextuality is clearly its genetic relationship (both physically and spiritually) with the *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, a Concordia-based publication founded by Kroker in 1977 to provide a vehicle for more radical voices within the Canadian academic community. For the first few years of its life, this journal was more political than social in its thrust. Left-leaning by design, its preferred contents — judging by a scan of the index — were analyses and applications of various forms of Marxist political critique, and particularly that body of thought in direct line of descent from the Frankfurt School which is generally designated as critical theory. Increasingly after the first few years, this emphasis was leavened by other elements of both radical and local concern: Freudianism, feminism, intellectuals, Nietzsche, phenomenology, third-world issues, Canadian culture, technology — the list is far from complete. Eventually the subset became major. Since the mid-1980s, intriguingly enough, the focus of *CJPST* has shifted away from politics per se (except for an obsession with ideology that undercolours the entire corpus) to more purely cultural phenomena. Art, film, music: all have become grist for the critical mill, though the preference has been increasingly canted of late toward the more topical and bizarre aspects of popular entertainment, body politics, lifestyle. Over the same period, and documenting the same evolution of interests, the choice of theorists has shifted from Hegel and Habermas to Barthes, Baudrillard, and Bataille. For the last few years, “the” topic has been postmodernism.

It is from this perspective, this body of material, that *Scene* arises, in part reprinting and in general reiterating the distinctive world view of the *CJPST* group and particularly of Kroker himself. What is this view? It is important to note that its focus is the postmodern *condition*, broadly defined, rather than any of its particular products. Contra Hutcheon, far from

zeroing in on one or another purportedly characterizing feature, *Scene* actually muddies the question of definition even further. With marked idiosyncrasy, Kroker places the pivot point of modernism back in the fourth century, with Augustine's *Confessions*; his postmodernism is commensurately encompassing. The “feel” of the ism is different on this side of the fence, too. Nihilistic and angst-ridden, it has far more to do with decay than revolution. It is, in fact, *beyond* politics in Hutcheon's sense. Fixated on violence, it nevertheless describes a world in which power is so diffuse that no one is in control. Its key concept is the *sign*. Central to the vision of *Scene*, for instance, is Kroker's imaging of the paradigm shift in terms of a metamorphosis of the symbolic ego: from Kafka's cockroach to Magritte's *False Mirror*, from the subject deformed by history to the I-site as data-processing surface. “The significance of the disembodied eye as an almost primitive expression of the postmodern fate,” he says, “is that it symbolizes the *charismatic leap of power* from its previous basis in normativity (‘the old position of authority’) to a new foundation in the ‘semiurgy’ of the pure sign” (97). In this formulation the modern conflict between self and society that so concerns the newly politicized lit-critters is resolved (negatively) through the derealization of both. Kroker's world, like Baudrillard's, is “a simulacrum in which the nature of the real is severed from the natural ... becom[ing] solely what has been reproduced” (210).

At least in its stance, then, *Scene* is quite *literally* postmodern. This isn't to say, on the other hand, that *qua* book it is without its problems. Its fragmentation, its circumlocutions and redundancy, the disparity between its two voices — Cook's cool and academic; Kroker's vivid, literary, and impassioned: all of this adds up to a considerable degree of incoherence. It is also almost wholly ungrounded. Counter-intuitive, based on texts rather than social data, predisposed by the Baudrillardian conception of a

mediascape-world which is both homogeneous and monolithic, it fails, like so many of the other works we have looked at in this review, to "get at" the *self*-reality of the phenomena it addresses. When Kroker talks about Edward Hopper's painting, for instance, it's clear that what he sees ("What is particularly striking about *Rooms by the Sea* is its mood of anxiety, dismay and menace" [248]) is what he *wants* to see: an expression of twentieth-century nihilism. It's my opinion that he is deluded in this. If one views these works without the pessimistic expectations — if, going just a little further, one puts them in the context of their natural predecessors, the light-soaked landscapes of the nineteenth-century luminists, or compares them with cross-cultural examples like Christopher Pratt's hermetically sealed spaces — far from signalling the final severance of culture from nature, as Kroker claims, the recurrent motif of sun streaming in through a window would in fact seem to licence a simpler, more optimistic, and more "American" reading (Godard's archetypal feminists would catch on immediately) having to do with merger, or expropriating the best of both worlds.³⁷ Kroker's analysis, then, is no less predisposed — no less subservient to the "foreign" viewpoint — than that of the lit-critters. The question arises then: why should we give any more credence to this text than we do to theirs?

I have to tread carefully here. There is, I think, a distinction. Partly it has to do with originality — Kroker doesn't merely cite the master narrative, but adds significantly to it. It also, however, has to do with the fact that there is a difference in *kind* between *Scene's* flaws and Hutcheon's. In this respect, one might do well to consider the example of Clement Greenberg. Once universally touted as the high priest of modernism, this critic has been devalued of late. Whatever his role in history, few are prepared to take his aesthetic pronouncements as gospel any more. And why? Because Greenberg, it is now generally recognized, was too caught up in what he purported to interpret, too

much a proponent to have any critical distance on his topic. It's this same discrediting involvement, however, which underwrites his *lasting* value. If no longer viewed as an "authority," Greenberg is still and will always be important for his *epitomization* of the modernist position. The same might be said, without the benefit of hindsight, of Kroker et al. Just as Greenberg "expresses" modernism, their collective works "express" postmodernism, not least through their flaws. If *Scene* is disorderly, superficial, then so too is the felt-world it purports to describe. Like much post-modern fiction, this discourse stands literally as a homologue of the terrain it charts. That's not all it does, either. Functioning as a kind of allegory or *mis-en-abyme*, it even provides a means to heal the experiential "wound." "More aware than the 'last men' of consumer culture of Nietzsche's legacy to us of 'freedom' in a universe indifferent to our purposes," says Kroker, "the perfect nihilists would always prefer to will cynically than not to will at all. Baudrillard's world of the *simulacrum* is the perfect freedom of remaking the world which provides no purpose to our willing" (186). And how does one exercise this freedom? If everything is now reduced to signs, then signs, used audaciously enough, can change the "world." This explains the note of glee that so oddly undertones Kroker's lament for the lost centre. But doesn't it also bring us right back to the modernist image of the writer-as-hero? Perhaps — but there's a qualifier here. In juxtaposing two very different voices, this book, like *A Mazing Space*, models its own contra-diction.

The question is, of course, whether this saving circumstance is anything more than accidental.

Certainly there are plenty of mixed signals. No matter how self-deprecating he may be in person (when I interviewed him last spring, he was insistent that the NWP line was strictly a group effort), any attempt to allocate influence must come up against the fact that Kroker *is* generally viewed as the leader and spokesman of the

CJPST circle. Rumours abound, moreover, that the ascendancy is not entirely a benign one. In 1984, for instance, when a York faction broke away to start its own culture studies magazine, *Borderlines*, the reason given for the split was that Kroker was too autocratic, that the *Journal* was essentially a one-man show.³⁸

The oeuvre itself would seem to support such a contention. No matter how many people are involved in a given project, it always seems to be Kroker's voice, Kroker's views, that set the tone. Typical in this regard is one of the more recent NWP productions: a 1987 collection of essays entitled *Body Invaders: Panic Sex in America*, edited by Arthur and Marilouise. Despite the verbal and visual games it plays (like the Neuman-Kambourelly anthology, *Invaders* includes a number of experimental pieces hovering on the border between literature, autobiography, and criticism), this book seems — at least on a cursory reading — little more than an extension of Kroker's will. Many of the papers, especially in the segment on fashion, do a remarkable job of imitating their master's voice.³⁹ But we don't even need to go as far as specific parallels. Simply because it dominates the first section (two papers out of three, and the third is by an appropriated outsider, Baudrillard himself) and "frames" the rest, Arthur's (and Marilouise's) contribution is already given a strong structural priority. Despite all this, the discourse is not as seamless as it looks. Some of the essays — like Eileen Manion's "A Ms-Managed Womb" — are linguistically divergent, resisting or at least ignoring the consensual "post" style. Others — like Greg Ostrander's anatomy of Foucault — offer at least vestigially divergent readings of canonized theory. Most significant, however, is a body of counterinterviews — notably, Charles Levin's "Carnal Knowledge of Aesthetic States" — which, by underlining the immediacy and inescapability of social and biological "facts," actually countermand Kroker's claims about the hegemony of the *simulacrum*. "All of this," writes Levin, "amounts to

saying that the body is not reducible to the structures and conventions of its 'invaders,' that there is something about [it] which is indestructible so long as it remains biologically viable ... [that] there is a kind of 'animal substance'" (115). This is a long way from an echo. The dialogue may be imperfect, perhaps for no other reason than the difficulty of finding voices as distinctive, personalities as strong, as Kroker's. As in *Scenes*, however, it is there.

This doesn't, of course, wipe out all the problems. There's a strong element of self-indulgence in the CJPST travelling "post" show, and an even stronger element of in-groupier-than-thou-ness. There's also — more regrettable from my point of view (I'm prepared to put up with a certain amount of silliness in an interesting cause) — the aforementioned matter of grounding. Dealing cavalierly with "difference" is, to be sure, more *theoretically* defensible when one assumes an all-encompassing mediasphere than it is when one is preaching the necessity of personalization. I suppose I should be thankful that the CJPST approach at least leaves a small space for the inscription of the local.⁴⁰ One could also give more weight to the performative aspect of the endeavour. In "doing" (rather than simply talking about) postmodernism, Kroker et al. are, by virtue of their *own* ineluctable groundedness, also perform "doing Canadian."⁴¹

Conclusions

The heading is misleading. I have no intention of trying to sum up or normalize the results of my perambulations. If nothing else, the foregoing should make clear that the influence of postmodernism on Canadian academic practice has been both diverse and problematic. Before closing, however, there are just a couple of additional observations I'd like to leave with you. In the spring of 1988, as part of the process of gathering background information for this project, I attended a number of conferences, two of which bear mention here. The first was a big glossy production mounted by the University of

Western Ontario's new "Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism"; the second was an international graduate student symposium (that is, run both *by* and *for* students) sponsored by the S.P.T. program at York. If this seems like an unfair conjunction, think again. Despite the marked difference in budget size and status of participant, in terms of substance there really wasn't much to choose between these events. Both covered the same general range of topics, both revered much the same lineup of big-name critics, both suffered from about the same leavening of naive, simplistic, and clichéd approaches. There were some good and even a few outstanding papers in each venue. The Western contingent had a slight edge (as one might expect given the collective experience of the speakers) when it came to preparation and delivery. The York students made up for this by their greater take-it-for-granted familiarity with the new modes and sources. If I had to bestow the palms in either direction, I would be inclined to favour the latter if only on the grounds of originality and imagination. It would, however, be a tough call. Which makes it all the more surprising that as *experiences* these conferences weren't at all comparable. On this level, the York symposium was clearly superior.

Why? It's a question, once again, of format. Like the written critique that arises from the same venue (it's notable, despite the conference title of "Theory between the Disciplines," that the vast majority of the presenters at U.W.O. were from literary backgrounds), the more high-profile event was structured in such a way as to create and enforce a sense of authority. The lineup of speakers was carefully contrived to split evenly not just along sex lines but along national ones: fifty percent each of men and women, Canadians and Americans. Apart from the niggling question as to why anyone would think it reasonable that "they" should make up half of "our" voice, this all seems very democratic — even more so than at York, where, purely coincidentally (participa-

tion was in this case voluntary), though Americans were relatively thin on the ground, they ended up with only twelve females to nineteen males. When one looks a little closer, however, a distinct hierarchy emerges. There were, in fact, three "levels" of presentation at U.W.O.: public lectures (big theatre, lots of fanfare), featured presentations (each of which got an hour to itself), and "others" (which were lumped two to a session). Of the former, *both* were given by American men. Of the mid-category, seven out of nine were either men *or* Americans. It shouldn't be hard to guess where the Canadian women ended up.

The effect of this preferencing was reinforced by the pace of the program. Where the York group ensured that fully half of each session would be devoted to discussion,⁴² at the Western conference the presentations were *it*; there was rarely time left for more than a token ten minutes of debate. This not only made it less interesting for the audience — I wasn't the only one left floundering and frustrated when a fruitful exchange was cut off in its infancy — but more important, it sent a clear message about what the convenors expected from their audience. Quite contra the postmodern emphasis on reader complicity and viewer involvement, this discourse was clearly packaged for passive consumption. The result? Despite all the hype about ground-breaking that accompanied this event — despite, too, the clear implication on the part of these people that they "owned" the new paradigm⁴³ — the form outspoke the content. What it spoke *of* was a total lack of awareness of the grounds to the knowledge they were tacitly claiming.

There are a couple of lessons we can draw from this. The first is that packaging counts — and not just in a negative sense. While it is true that form/content dissonance is one of the most common flaws in the new Canadian postspeak, it's also true that the collectivity can redeem the individual. It is notable that the most densely theorized paper in *A Mazing Grace* — Shirley Neuman's "Importing Difference"

— appeared also in the Moss collection. Coming first to the latter, I was completely turned off by what struck me as an arid, pretentious, overly jargonized and totally abstract disquisition on Lacanian psychoanalytics. When I encountered it again, I could hardly believe — in fact, it took me some time to realize — that it was the same piece. Indeed, if we accept that the reader constructs the discourse, it *wasn't* the same piece. Why? Part of it was the extent to which, in the feminist anthology, contiguous papers both by and about her “subjects” provided a broader and more concrete informing context against which to read Neuman's analysis. A greater part, though, was simply the way the cumulative tone of the book, not to mention the strikingly de-centred visual format,⁴⁴ bracketed — offset — her personal construction of authority. Which brings us to my second and last point: whether the other voices are social or textual, implicit or explicit, the reader's or the essay next door, in order to avoid deconstructing itself “post” discourse *has* to entail some kind of dialogue.

What chance is there that *our* particular bunch of would-be bandwagoners are ever going to “get it”? Perhaps the answer to that, too, lies with our contrasting conferences. One of the differences between these events was the disciplinary bias of the conveners, literary versus (generally) social science; another, and more important, however, was the age of the participants. If, as seems to be the case, the new crop of graduate students have a better sense of the new paradigm than their recently converted elders, perhaps in another ten years this problem will solve itself.

1. Due to space constraints it is beyond my capacity here even to offer an authoritative starting bibliography. So factionated is this field that to nominate one critic rather than another is already to choose sides. As a good starting point for any reader interested in the details of the postmodernism debate, however, there are a number of useful and well-rounded anthologies. Three which have played an important role

in changing perceptions of this issue are Harry R. Garvin, ed., *Romanticism, Modernism, Postmodernism* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1980); Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983); and Douwe Fokkeme and Hans Bertans, eds., *Approaching Postmodernism* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1986). Collectively these should provide an ample basis for assessing my criticisms of Canadian practice.

2. “The Golden Age of Criticism: Seven Theses and a Commentary,” *London Review of Books*, June 25, 1987, p. 16.
3. This total includes all general and theoretical articles whether they focus on Canadian art or otherwise, but — except where the topic touches on some particularly relevant issue, like feminism — with respect to the larger body comprising critiques of specific shows and artists, only those have been included whose subject matter is largely Canadian.
4. See Donald Kuspit, for instance: 12, 9 (1983), and 13, 2 (1984).
5. An example of this would be Dan Nadimer's discussion of the relative attractions of recent neo-romantic modes: 13, 7 (1984).
6. For all its self-announcing cleverness, Joshua Bendah's much-jargonized discussion of architectural meta-codes, for instance, is less an elucidation of, than an extrapolation from, the show which provides his occasion: 15, 4 (1986). Bendah is far from anomalous. In fact, one may speculate that part of the reason why art-writing is perceived as being more than usually up-to-the-handle is that even the most pedestrian critic can sound trendy when s/he is talking about trendy art. Impressionistically, I would say that Canadian artists as a whole have made much more headway in digesting the new paradigm than those who write about them.
7. This number does not include dialogues, reviews, “expressive” pieces, or essays on non-plastic arts like performance and music.
8. See, for instance, Andy Patton's review of the YYZ Monumenta show in *Parachute* 31 (June/July/August 1983), or Russell Keziere's of Allyson Clay in *Vanguard* 14, 5/6 (1985).
9. Such intention, I would claim, can be seen to “explain” a large proportion of the exceptions that do exist, from specialized

- magazines and/or catalogues to the "feminist" column recently introduced in *Canadian Art*. In charting tendencies one must, I think, distinguish between practices or productions that are *motivated* (people doing a certain kind of art or talking about art in certain ways because current transnational aesthetic or political doxa tell them they should) and those which arise uncoerced from the cultural ground.
10. See 17, 6 (December 1988/January 1989).
 11. One might think that Toronto's *C Magazine* should be included under this head. Even apart from its relatively shorter lifespan and somewhat more specialized focus, however, I would argue that this publication has not yet been as fully integrated into the mainstream as *Vanguard* and *Parachute* have. It is significant, I think, that although the University of Western Ontario, traditionally a bastion of academic conservatism, recently made a concerted, albeit belated, bid to join the trendsetters by establishing a number of "centres" for interdisciplinary studies in such fashionable subject areas as theory, feminism, mass media, and so on, it has not yet added *C Magazine* to its main library's periodicals list.
 12. Best known of these is Hal Foster's classic essay "Re:Post" in *Parachute* 26 (Spring 1982), but there are also, more critically for present purposes, at least a few interesting disquisitions on the homegrown product. Apart from the writers discussed individually below, one might note particularly Bruce Elder's "Redefining Experimental Film: postmodernist practice in Canada" which appeared in the next issue after the Foster piece; *Parachute* 27 (Summer 1982).
 13. Again taking the recent issue as indicative, I must say that Ian Carr-Harris's deftly meandering interrogation of the current critical scene is as satisfyingly "post" as anything I've encountered of late; *Vanguard*, 17, 6 (December 1988/January 1989).
 14. I am not the first to notice this aspect. For a comparison between Monk and several less authoritative (more "postmodern") critics, see William Wood, "Sustaining Testimony under the Gaze of Criticism," *Vanguard* 14, 7 (1985), p. 22.
 15. The most recent of these is "Illusion and the Diverted Subject," *Parachute*, 47 (June/July/August 1987). A selection of Randolph's work will shortly be published by YYZ, the same press that produced the Monk collection.
 16. "Le Potage outaouais," *Parachute*, 6 (Spring 1977).
 17. See, for example, "Chronicle of a New Landscape Garden," *Parachute*, 44 (September/October/November 1986).
 18. A slightly expanded version of this critique of Hutcheon is forthcoming in *Border/Lines*, No. 18, Spring 1990.
 19. Although the term *per se* does not appear until 1984-85 in a paper entitled "Canadian Historiographic Metafiction," *Essays on Canadian Writing*, 30, Hutcheon laid down the outlines for this form as early as 1975 in her dissertation, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (published under the same title by Wilfrid Laurier U. Press in 1980). The reason this is interesting is that at that time, by her own telling (see *The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction* [Toronto: Oxford U. Press, 1988], p. vii), Hutcheon was not only pre- but anti-postmodern, describing herself as a resolute formalist. That she later makes the coinage the crux of a theory of postmodernism seems not only ironical but, given the political hay she has made from her shift of allegiance, distinctly opportunistic.
 20. In chapter 3, for instance, we are offered in one paragraph what purports to be an adequate summary of what Said, Rorty, Derrida, Barthes, Krauss, and Todorov all thought about the issue of genre-crossing (p. 54); earlier she actually managed to get Foucault, Derrida, Habermas, Vattimo, Baudrillard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Marx, Freud, and Toulmin into a single sentence (p. 7).
 21. Only big-name critics get much play in Hutcheon's work. Apart from passing references in the text, discussion of even directly relevant work by other lit-critical Canadians is mostly relegated to the endnotes. The only real exceptions to this are a few notable postmodernist writer-critics, like Robert Kroetsch and George Bowering, and a handful of feminists. Both of these groups may be presumed to have accrued a certain amount of reflected glitter due to their affiliation with the privileged discourse.
 22. To accept that there *are* undeniable resemblances between Canadian literature and some aspects of postmodernism does not imply that one must accept an internationalist account of origin. For myself, I have elsewhere argued for a parallel but

- largely separate evolution. See "Geography, I-Site, and (Post)Modernism" in G. McGregor, ed., *Recuperating the I-Site: Canadian Art and Contemporary Theory*, special issue of *RACAR* (forthcoming in 1990). For a more detailed discussion of the historical rootedness of many of Hutcheon's "postmodern" markers, see also G. McGregor, *The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Landscape* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).
23. The difference between the psychosymbolic functions attributed to natives in different cultures in fact provides an important marker for differences in social psychology. I have discussed this topic in detail in my series of studies of post-frontier cultures. For three different versions see *The Wacousta Syndrome*, ch. 9; *The Noble Savage in the New World Garden: Notes toward a Syntactics of Place* (Bowling Green and Toronto: The Popular Press and University of Toronto Press, 1988), especially section 3; and *EcCentric Visions: Re Constructing Australia* (forthcoming), intertext 11.
 24. Laurence's *The Diviners*, Matt Cohen's *Wooden Hunters*, Rudy Wiebe's *And Peace Shall Destroy Many*, W.O. Mitchell's *The Vanishing Point*, Hubert Evans' *The Mist on the River*, Robert Kroetsch's *Gone Indian*, David Williams' *The Burning Wood*, to mention only a few.
 25. Cavell's usage is so idiosyncratic as not to require much comment. Grace's practice in "Listen to the Voice: Dialogism and the Canadian Novel" is both misguided and representative enough, however, that I feel I can't let it pass unchallenged. Given that Bakhtin's whole aim was to dissolve the false opposition between self and society, this critic's insistence on making the polarity of monologism and polyphony into an instrument of classification, and even more (revealing the influence of liberal and particularly American commentators, who have taken up the notion of carnival as somehow giving warrant to both individual freedom and organic community), her privileging of the latter over the former, in a sense subverts at the same time as it invokes her validating grounds. If this weren't enough, her application of the schema also leaves much to be desired. Partly because of the American bias, but partly too because Bakhtin himself, writing in a period with very different conventions of representation, tends to identify "voice" with actual speakers, Grace accepts as polyphonic only those examples in which "potential ambiguity, diversity of point of view, incipient heteroglossia" (p. 123) are embodied in or expressed by a range of real characters. This doesn't, unfortunately, take account of the fact that in the majority of Canadian novels — indeed, in most postmodern fiction — ambiguity is more often than not achieved by structural rather than subjective means. Not one of the novelists who make up Grace's middle category (Laurence, Atwood, Hodgins, Findley, Wiebe) can, I believe, be said to give us only characters "closed off and finalized within their roles as socially or psychologically represented types subservient to the author's purposes and monologic, hierarchical, and ideologically centred world view" (p. 123). Accommodation there may be in their works, but it is a kind of accommodation which, like postmodernism itself, incorporates rather than erases difference (see *The Wacousta Syndrome*, chapter 12, especially pp. 422ff). Even in the writers at the devalued end of the spectrum who do seem on the face of it to represent the "strong, authoritative, homophonic narrator" (Grove, Davies, Mitchell, etc.), there is, as I and others have demonstrated, considerable ambiguity of viewpoint. The destabilization is achieved, moreover, at least in part through the oft-times parodic deployment of the very biblical and mythic imagery which Grace sees as invariably an instrument or sign of authorial foreclosure. Even if one were to accept that her general approach is legitimate, it seems clear from such mis-takes that Grace's narrow interpretation runs against the spirit, if not the letter, of Bakhtin's concept of polyphony. This unfortunately is typical of the kind of problems likely to slip by when an editor, blinded by the heady prospect of leading the vanguard, fails to look any further than an article's validation-by-association.
 26. "Structuralism/Post-Structuralism: Language, Reality and Canadian Literature," pp. 46-47.
 27. This retardataire element cannot be laid at the feet of the contributors. Illustrating the difficulty of getting "new" forms of critique past the gatekeepers, as well as the generally slow and unwieldy nature of Canadian academic publishing, it is notable that the conference at which these papers were first delivered took place in 1981. Published five or six years ago (which is as long as it *should* have taken, given adequate responsiveness on the part

- of the industry) this collection would have looked a lot more up to date than it does now.
28. Even if they weren't identified as American in the list of contributors, these women are markedly unCanadian in their practice. Particularly telling in this regard is their identification of nature with the feminine (in Canada, as I have illustrated in *The Wacousta Syndrome*, nature is typically imaged as both masculine and other) and their enthusiastic endorsement of the neo-primitivist project of mergence therewith (in Canada, confrontations with nature are almost always life- or at least sanity-threatening). It is both noteworthy and typical that the climax of the interchange between the heroine and her animal lover in Marian Engel's *Bear* is not, as Pratt misleadingly claims, a completed sexual relationship but an object lesson about the ultimate alienness and inaccessibility of nature (see *The Wacousta Syndrome*, pp. 185-86; see also pp. 192-222 for a discussion of other aspects of the Canadian imaging of animals).
 29. The fact that this collection, based on a 1983 conference, took only three years to get into print, compared with *Gynocritics*' six, says much about the relative efficiency of the new, small and the old, traditional publishing houses in Canada.
 30. Unlike Hutcheon's more pretentious analyses, Paterson's "A Poetics of transformation: Yolande Villemaire's *La Vie en prose*," trans. A. J. Holden, approaches the problem/phenomenon of postmodern fiction inductively. As a result, it preserves the specificity of its object at the same time as it places it within a broader aesthetic and intellectual framework. Considering the divergence that Godard observes between French and English feminist concerns, it is not irrelevant, I think, that this one in fact comes from the French side of the fence.
 31. For an iceberg's tip view of this particular debate, see, for instance, Toril Moi, "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Style: Recent Feminist Criticism in the United States," *Cultural Critique* (Spring 1988).
 32. I should point out that not all the contributors to this collection are social scientists. The mandate of the parent organization, moreover, is strongly and specifically multi-disciplinary. Despite this formal qualification, it is the social science element that dominates both the focus and the tone of the book. It is telling, I think, that the editor is a sociologist. Of the nineteen English-language contributors, six come from sociology and a majority of the remainder (if one includes history under this heading) from other social science disciplines. The only significant minority within the group is literature, with three.
 33. See Melamed and Devine, Martel and Peterat on various shortcomings of traditional pedagogy, for instance. Also relevant here is Janet Stoppard's critique of conventional sex-linked (personalized) explanations for socially-related psychological disfunctions like depression.
 34. With very few exceptions (philosopher Lorraine Code's analysis of "tokenism" is refreshingly anomalous in its speculative tone and even more in its open acknowledgement of the author's own reactions and reflections as intrinsic elements in the argument), the subjective component in these papers is minimal. Even Martel and Peterat's discussion of "Feminist Pedagogies"[sic], with its condemnation of authority, its paeans to the democratic mode of interaction ("Trust, collaboration, and cooperation allow a genuine understanding among individuals," p. 90), is so general in the level and inclusiveness of its rhetoric as to be almost wholly de-personalized. The most enthusiastic approbation of "niceness" is not the same thing as the recognition/expression of true particularity.
 35. Though Thomas himself makes the wishful statement that "the approach taken in the paper will allow the reader to substitute different values in the predictive model based on the perceived appropriateness of the research findings to the Canadian population," his failure to raise the possibility of *in*appropriateness, not to mention the absence of comparative data, make it clear that such a project is in fact neither expected nor deemed important.
 36. I am far from claiming originality in articulating this notion. The question of whether feminism is either by nature aligned with, or should adopt, postmodern principles has been hotly debated of late. For a particularly salient entry to the "pro" side of the argument, see Jane Flax, "Postmodernism and Gender: Relations in Feminist Theory," *Signs*, 12, 4 (1987); also Daryl McGowan Tress's rebuttal in *Signs* 14, 1 (1988).
 37. For a more extended examination of the differences between Canadian and American painting, and particularly the significance of the enclosure image, see G. McGregor, "Geography, (Post)Modernism, and I-Site."

38. No official statement to this effect was ever made, but it is notable that a review of *CJPST* in the first issue by two of *Border/lines'* founding editors, Ioan Davies and Jody Berland, fixes upon exactly this issue. "[W]hy does the journal present itself to us with such authoritative urgency that we feel it *must* be read before the bills are paid, the letters answered? What has Kroker put together this time? Kroker? Well, that's it: the question can't be avoided. Whose words has he inhabited now? ... Because the strength and weakness of *CJPST* is that this is Kroker's journal, his personal vision of theory and culture and Canada"; *Border/lines* 1 (Fall 1984), p. 48.
39. In some cases the echoes only involve a reiteration of the same, clique-accredited theorists (a somewhat more up-to-the-handle lineup than the one we infer from the lit crit oeuvre), a preference for the same pop-cultural examples, a rehearsal of the same clichéd lamentations about the shallowness and violence of the contemporary world. Many of the younger members of the group, however, have gone so far in emulation as to appropriate Kroker's idiosyncratic diction and inflated rhetorical style. "The nihilistic experience of postmodernism we could attribute to its erasure of history, to the destruction of the cycle of life and death by levelling experience onto a continuous plane of 'change,' that is constituted by the eternal reproduction of the 'same,' albeit, in an apparently new set of clothes," says Julia Emberly; "the cycle is no longer a cycle but an unbroken chain of death and mechanical reproduction, a 'vacant' (Sex Pistols) reproduction of the image that glosses over and smooths out the sur-face of the w/hole body ..." (p. 57). This sentence — which goes on for another seven lines — could, for both sentiment and manner, be plunked into the middle of Kroker without so much as ruffling the surface.
40. It is interesting in this regard that one of the primary criticisms lodged against the *Journal* by Davies and Berland in their inaugural review was its overwhelming abstractness. "*CJPST* has become, since Issue 4, the journal of the sign, the celebration of the metaphor where nothing is real, not even thought or action.... In spite of Kroker's plea to understand the humanistic against the technologically rational, there is no space in which we can begin to understand this place, this life, this country" (p. 48). *Border/lines* was conceived specifically as a vehicle for redressing this bias. Populist in both organization (it is run by an editorial collective, not a single individual) and in constitution (its format is less academic, its tone folksier, its articles shorter and more particularized), it is in many ways a better example of postmodern practice than its parent. Why did I not include it as one of my featured texts? It was a judgment call. It's my feeling that this publication is not (yet) widely enough recognized among middle-of-the-road academics to be considered mainstream. Insofar as it represents a *reaction* to Kroker, however, one could say that *CJPST* has once again "created" its own contra-diction. This sense of an ongoing inter-action, as mentioned below, is perhaps, in the end, the most critical and potentially most fruitful aspect of the "new" scholarship. Even in the stricter terms of internal dialogue, one might also note that, contra the Davies-Berland claim that Kroker's world is not merely insubstantial in a geopolitical sense, but *beyond* ethics (*ibid.*), the year after *Invaders* appeared NWP produced a collection of essays edited by John Fekete — *Life after Postmodernism: Essays on value and culture* — whose primary aim, as its subtitle indicates, is precisely to fill that gap. There has been a "massive shift in this century whose result has been a downgrading of attention to value in favour of a foregrounding of all the categories of structure," says Fekete in his preface. I am "convinced that ... [this] change of emphasis [is] in some important respects disabling."
41. For a discussion of the extent to which culture-specific cognitive imprinting affects not only cultural production but the procedural biases of intellectuals, see G. McGregor, "A View from the Fort: Erving Goffman as Canadian," *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 23, 4 (1986).
42. This was not coincidental. The symposium was deliberately mounted in such a way as to provide an alternative to the authoritative modes of "normal" academic discourse. When asked to summarize the group's motives for mounting this event, Pat Elliott, one of the student organizers, emphasized the collegial aspect above all others. This kind of forum, she says, "offers a supportive audience of one's peers, so that one need not worry about being subjected to derogatory comments by hostile or self-promoting faculty ... it allows us to find out what other graduate students are

producing, especially in areas with which we are not familiar. We learn from each other — that is what makes it exciting.... Because our work is work in progress — whether it's for a course paper or for a thesis — it is always a new production [rather than a] ... regurgitation of ideas worked out a decade ago or more, as one often finds with faculty lectures.... Another thing our conference provides is a setting for feedback and discussion.... This ... is in my view crucial" (letter to me, dated March 30, 1988). I would like to add to this that the *quality* of the discussion at that particular symposium, judged in terms of both liveliness and content, was outstanding, not just for a "student production" but by any criteria.

43. Lest it be said that I am projecting a role on these people that they would not themselves claim (it is notable, for instance, that the word "postmodern" does *not* appear in the conference title), I should point out that the flyer put out by the Centre to publicize its activities makes "theoretical" a synonym

for "advanced." "'Theory' as it has developed in academic discourse over the last ten years ... investigates ideas concerning the nature, function and intelligibility of social, political, cultural, and artistic phenomena and in doing so has called into question the traditional academic boundaries." In asserting a proprietary relationship to such an exemplary agenda, the group is clearly asserting its own exemplary up-to-dateness — and by association placing itself well within the range of practice that we have been calling postmodern.

44. Among the strategies employed are 1) the graphic punctuation/fragmentation of the text, 2) the interlarding of non-representational (iconic) visuals, and — especially — 3) the non-hierarchical (i.e., horizontal) deployment of normally "subordinate" material like notes and digressions.

GAILE MCGREGOR
York University

News and Notes

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vue jugé pertinent, et qui touche au Canada et à la Chine.

Conseil international d'études canadiennes/International Council for Canadian Studies, 2 avenue Daly, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 6E2. (613) 232-0417, Fax (613) 232-2495.

6. **Atlantic Canada Studies Conference, 17-19 May 1990.** The 8th Atlantic Canada Studies Conference will be sponsored and organized by the Canadian-American Center at the University of Maine and held in Orono, Maine. Papers on aspects of regional history and development from the disciplines of history, geography, literature, folklore, anthropology, and the other humanities and social sciences are most welcome.

Complete papers should be sent by **31 January 1990** to Stephen J. Hornsby, Assistant Director, Cana-

dian-American Center, 154 College Avenue, University of Maine, Orono, Maine 04469.

7. **Victoria, 31 May-2 June 1990.** Annual Conference of the Association for Canadian Studies. "Conscience et survie: Pécologie et la culture au Canada/To see ourselves, to save ourselves: Ecology and culture in Canada." For Information contact: Rowland Lorimer, CP 8888, succ.A, Montréal, Québec, H3C 3P8.
8. **Armidale (Australia NSW), 19-22 July 1990.** Fifth biennial Canadian Studies Conference of the Association for Canadian Studies in Australia and New Zealand/Cinquième colloque biennal sur les études canadiennes organisé par l'Association des études canadiennes en Australie et Nouvelle-Zélande. Sessions will deal with Politics and Public Policy, Literature

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