

Book Reviews

***The Vietnam War and American Culture.* Edited by John Carlos Rowe and Rick Berg. New York: Columbia UP, 1991. Pp. xi, 273. Paper, \$14.95.**

This exceptionally informative work is the sixth in a remarkable Columbia University Press series, "The Social Foundations of Aesthetic Forms." To think of the Indochina war as a foundation of aesthetic forms seems ironical. However, the experience of this war and, especially, the continuing drastic cosmetic surgery performed on the remains of that experience, has created new genres and transformed others, often grotesquely: in music, in literature, and certainly in cinema and television. "Happy wars are all alike; each unhappy war is unhappy in its own way," Tolstoi might have written as the opening sentence of *War and Peace*. In this regard, the Indochina war was a real *tour de force*.

Among them, the contributors to *The Vietnam War and American Culture* canvas most of the forms in which the cultural impact of the war has been recorded. Following a tightly woven introduction by Rick Berg, in which the cultural and political ironies of American involvement are summarized, the work's ten chapters are divided into three sections: "The Vietnam War and History," "The Vietnam War and the Mass Media," and "The Vietnam War and the Popular Media." The mass media section deals with the way in which images of the war, its origins and conduct, were generated and manipulated by cinema and television in largely uncritical collaboration with the U.S. Department of Defense. The popular media section deals profoundly, and in often fascinating detail, with the way rock and country music, and fiction, developed contrasting ideologies to meet the moral and political needs of the "hawks" and "doves," while effectively compromising the expression of protest against the war by casting it in terms of personal sentimental conflict rather than political

action. It's hard to imagine a Death Watch beetle dreaming that, last night, he saw Joe Hill.

There is not much unity among the various essays that comprise this work, except for that imposed by the oppressive force of the war itself. There is, however, an underlying moral issue of great importance to which the contributors often advert. They raise troubling, fundamental questions about the role of individualism as a moral basis for political action in our culture. Individualism, or the belief that we are each responsible for our actions, is the source of the pathos and bathos of our celebrations of the Indochina war in song and story. It is also the source of our arrogant, gun-and-napalm-slinger approach to other people's problems and institutions; and, most importantly, of the hatred for effective collective social and economic action—which Americans call "communism"—that propelled the United States into the Vietnam War, and into countless other military interventions. Most of the contributors to this volume are emphatically aware of this dynamic of American policy; but they fail, nevertheless, to acknowledge the validity of a related argument, raised brilliantly by Noam Chomsky in the first essay of this volume (and elsewhere).

Several of the contributors agree, with excusable *Schadenfreude*, that the United States lost the war and was, finally, ignominiously defeated in Vietnam. As Chomsky demonstrates, it was not; it was even more ignominiously successful in accomplishing its purpose, which—as many bitter veterans have complained, albeit from a contrasting point of view—was not victory. Its purpose, as in Cuba and Central America, was to abort and destroy a peasant economy that promised to meet the needs of its people without subjecting them to the demands of a profit economy. In this, the U.S. succeeded totally. Indochina remains economically desolate, while its progressive neighbor, Thailand, has learned to rent and sell even its children at a handsome profit.

Two of the essays in this volume require special attention because of unique qualities that thrust them beyond the paradigm into which the others more easily fit. Carolyn Mithers's "Missing in Action: Women Warriors in Vietnam" is a compelling revelation and analysis of the exclusion of women from the *mythos* of the war in which they were so active and indispensable and suffered so greatly. And Susan Jefford's "Tattoos, Scars, Diaries, and Writing Masculinity" is a wholly original,

difficult, and very revealing analysis of some of the most complex themes interwoven in Larry Heinemann's extraordinary novel, *Paco's Story* (1986). Jefford's essay, unique as it is, pulls the whole volume together.

Finally, a word of caution about an aspect of *The Vietnam War and American Culture* that may put readers like myself off. Most readers, I expect, will turn to the book for a deeper political understanding of the Indochina war and what it has done and is doing to the society we share—and this understanding they will surely gain. But this Columbia University Press series is not primarily devoted to social criticism; rather, it is devoted to the more esoteric field of literary criticism, as its language sometimes reveals. John Carlos Rowe's perceptive essay, "Eyewitness: Documentary Styles in the American Representations of Vietnam," sounds rather like Jacques Derrida, which doesn't seem quite to fit a discussion of the Vietnam War and its meaning. Yet, when this leads Rowe to explain how "the ideological rhetoric by which genuine understanding of Vietnam has been displaced by story-lines reaffirming the cognitive and political values of a very traditional American individualism" (54), the reader will feel rewarded for his or her patience.

Hubbards, Nova Scotia

Edgar Z. Friedenberg

***Beyond Nuclear Thinking.* By Robert W. Malcolmsen. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1990. Pp. xiii, 141. \$29.95. Paper, \$12.95.**

Although the title of this work may give a first impression of over-ambitiousness, Malcolmsen commendably fulfils the promise implied by his title, to provide a way out of an all-too-common mindset. The book concisely and usefully presents a historical overview of the Nuclear Age, referring to many of the most significant studies and documents related to the subject. In so doing the book is ideal both as an introduction to what has been falsely—and at times deliberately, for nasty reasons, one suspects—treated as an esoteric matter, and also ideal as a sophisticated, *while simple*, in the best sense of that word, foundation for change.

In a brief epilogue Malcolmsen turns towards the future, and states that the central problem of the Nuclear Age is to prevent the exercise of

the capability for complete self-destruction that human beings have attained. In the rest of the book Malcolmson's focus is on the past of the Nuclear Age, as distinct from many people's highlighting of the present. This approach is valuable both because the almost-half-century of events which constitute the Nuclear Age have left a legacy which shapes current realities, and also because "nuclearized thinking" has been "highly resistant to fundamental change," even though "the nuclear threat," as Malcolmson puts it, "is objectionably central to modern world history." At this moment even, when the Cold War has apparently ended, nuclear weapons, more absurd and more lethal than ever, perhaps, are also less visible, less talked about than ever.

The opening chapter of *Beyond Nuclear Thinking* is entitled "The Great Deterrent." I have been so numbed by the slogans which attend the notion of deterrence, that only on my second reading of the book, having been sensitized by Malcolmson's astute presentation, did I once again appreciate the insanity of this so-called "thinking," which dominates us to this day. Malcolmson's epigraph is a quote from the 1951 chairman of the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy, Senator Brien E. McMahon, who proposed that the US make nuclear weaponry "the real backbone of our peace power" (3). The idea was not new then, Malcolmson points out, since President Truman, in announcing the destruction of Hiroshima, had called for nuclear weapons to become "a powerful and forceful influence towards the maintenance of world peace" (4). Nor has the idea exhausted itself yet. Richard Cheney, George Bush's Secretary of Defense, "has continued to demand," Malcolmson writes, "that Congress fully fund just about every nuclear weapons programme that had been launched in previous years; otherwise, he asserted, America's security would be gravely imperilled" (112-13). While Russia and France have recently stopped nuclear testing, the U.S., China and Britain continue to test. The purpose of the ongoing testing, of course, is to develop new generations of nuclear weapons.

The fatal and inevitable double-cross which nuclear weapons perpetrate was articulated by Canada's UN Ambassador, Lester Pearson, a few months after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki blasts. In November 1945 he foresaw that without an international agreement to restrain the proliferation of nuclear bombs, "there will be competition." "Such competition," Pearson went on, "would be the most bitter and disastrous

armament race ever run. Like every other armament race in history, it would follow the same course, of fear, suspicion, rivalry, desperation and war; only in this case the war would probably mean international suicide" (30). In spite of Pearson's and many of the bomb's developers' warnings, the nuclear states chose the arms race, rather than a means of control beyond national sovereignties. Pearson did not mention the economic implications of such a competition. More remarkably, these connections are presently invisible to most people, including the experts, in the midst of our current recession. Even with the successful US strategy of bankrupting its opponent in the arms race out in the open, Canada (not to mention the US!) continues to spend all-time high amounts of money on the military: \$12.856 billion for 1992-93, an amount roughly equal to twenty per cent of the entire world's development assistance spending.

The epilogue of *Beyond Nuclear Thinking* articulates the theme of the Nuclear Age by reiterating the various deadly paradoxes which nuclearism has imposed. In stating that "Modern power means both control over nature and the ever present peril that this power might escape control and consume its possessors" (116), Malcolmson links the problem with other "manifestations of our new state of global interdependence" (117), such as environmental and economic concerns. He concludes with a warning: "A planet dominated by the rules of power politics has only a bleak future. Unless these rules can be overhauled, the fittest to survive may not even be human, much less the best of civilization" (118). *Beyond Nuclear Thinking* imparts a sense of potential for positive change, and provides a firm starting-point from which to begin such a renewal.

Laurentian University

Thomas M. F. Gerry

***The Contexts of Acadian History, 1686-1784.* By Naomi E. S. Griffiths. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1992. Pp. xxi, 137. \$39.95. Paper, \$17.95.**

This extended version of the Winthrop Pickard Bell lectures in Maritime Studies is useful, stimulating and frustrating. It will be useful for students of the period because it unites and expands on the themes found in Dr.

Griffiths's previous publications on Acadians: her admiration and affection for Acadians and their culture, the importance of the "Golden Age" of the 1730s for the development of the delegate system and family networks that helped Acadians to survive the deportation, and their particular situation as border people. The chapters on the deportation and subsequent experiences of the Acadians are the synthesis of lengthy research on the topic and as close to a clear version of this controversial and emotional subject as any account yet available.

It is stimulating because the contexts referred to in the title include the European politics, attitudes to government, landholding and nationalism of the period. Dr. Griffiths suggests that even after the period of primary immigration had passed, the Acadians continued to intermarry with new arrivals and were open to outside influences. She also gives some evidence that the influence of the fur trade and interaction with the Micmac community were more important to the development of the Acadian identity than historians have generally realized. A wide range of European and North American primary and secondary sources are used to achieve this and it helps to remove the Acadians from the aura of hallowed isolation that was the usual light on Acadian history until the 1970s. (Raymond Mailhot's "Prise de conscience collective acadienne au Nouveau-Brunswick, 1860-1891 et comportement de la majorité anglophone," PhD, Université de Montréal, 1973 can be seen as a turning point.) The North America context established by John Brebner and George Rawlyk is also reinforced and the comparisons with colonial experience in Maine and Nova Scotia that were made by John Reid are extended beyond 1690. The result is a lively and well written account of the diversity of Acadian society and the growth of a distinctive North American culture.

The strengths that must have made the lectures very enjoyable are also sources of frustration to the reader. Every chapter identifies a number of questions that cannot be answered yet. Future scholars should be inspired to work on these topics, but, as Dr. Griffiths notes, the answers are important for the identification of the distinctive culture that is the thesis of the book. The periodization that is convenient for lectures makes the deportation the climax of Acadian experience and allows only very brief treatment of Acadian society after the deportation. This leaves the reader with a question that is not identified in the book. What was the effect of

the deportation on the diversity emphasized in the earlier chapters? There is a hint at continuity when the early delegate system is referred to as "the development of the Acadian political elite" (41). But this topic is one of many marked for further investigation. Even though the differences between the experiences of Acadians in the deportation are emphasized, the implication seems to be that common suffering provided a historical experience that consolidated nationalism and contributed to the establishment of a self-image requiring a greater degree of conformity. This gap needs to be bridged by the analysis of group and personal experience of the period immediately after return from exile when the social structure that had allowed the Acadians to survive as a people was forced to adapt to new challenges. (Régis Brun, *De Grand Pré a Kouchibouguac: l'histoire d'un peuple exploité*, Moncton: Acadie, 1982, provides some insight into the continuing disputes and occasional acrimony over the varied experiences of Acadians in the deportation that lasted into the period of resettlement.) Perhaps, having brought the insights of broad scholarship to the Acadian experience up to 1784, and destroyed the myth of the uniform agrarian society, Dr. Griffiths will take a shot at the sacred cow of periodization when her forthcoming major work on Acadian history is finished. Meanwhile, this is an interesting and enjoyable contribution to English language historical scholarship on the early Acadians and it leaves the reader asking for more.

St. Thomas University

Sheila Andrew

***Luther: Man Between God and the Devil.* By Heiko A. Oberman. Translated by Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart. New Haven: Yale UP, 1989. Pp. xvi, 380. \$29.95. Paper, \$12.95.**

Since the controversial revival of interest in Martin Luther in the twentieth century, prompted by hostile attacks like those of Denifle and Grisar, few scholars, if any, have contributed more than Heiko Oberman to the publishing of texts and, in general, to the opening up of the almost unknown world of late-medieval theology that constitutes Luther's background and the sources of his reformation rebellion. The results have

been enormous and beyond expectation. Inspired greatly by the scholarly discoveries, old stereotypes have greatly vanished, and recent Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues have led to agreement on most major issues. Even reunification of the Churches now seems possible.

In *Luther: A Man Between God and the Devil*, published in German in 1982 and awarded the Historischer Sachbuchpreis as the best history book published in 1975-85, Oberman presents a vivid and objective picture of the complete life of Martin Luther. The book has received glowing tributes from Luther scholars. It has been well described as a labor of love.

Oberman begins with the desperate situation in Germany, the cry for reform, the history of the Augustinian hermits and Luther's early family life. He proceeds through the education and development of Luther, his break with Rome, his many achievements and struggles in his life and ends with his death in the reformed faith. In treating these questions Oberman never hesitates to tackle the thorniest historical issues, e.g. why Luther entered the monastery, the bigamy of Philip of Hesse, the break with Erasmus and humanism, the peasant wars. On every disputed topic Oberman presents fairly the viewpoints and then usually defends Luther or explains his action.

The book is entitled *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* because this insight constitutes Oberman's fundamental understanding of Luther as a man who believed deeply in the devil's constant attack on believers either through Rome or heretics (the radicals) or Jews or Turks, and who awaited God's imminent salvation, not human achievement. Luther saw himself as an instrument. "God was drawing him on" to be an agent of reform and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. "No, the condition of man does not depend on the breadth of his education but on his existential condition as a "mule" ridden by God or the devil but with no choice in the matter, no freedom of decision, no opportunity for self-determination" (219). So much for all humanists then and now! "What Luther saw on the horizon were the dark clouds of divine judgment gathering over a world nearing its end, a world fettered and enslaved in a thousand ways, that insisted on self determination before God . . ." (218).

Oberman seems to feel that Luther's denial of human freedom in *The Bondage of the Will* is correct. Nothing is said of Melancthon's dissent

on this issue. The work focusses sharply on Luther and is more history than theology and a German flavor is manifest. Oberman does not see Luther as liking modern ecumenism and he shows no interest in recent dialogues though he often relates Luther to modern humanism, subjectivism, racism, psychology. Does he do justice to Roman Catholic views of the late-medieval Church? Are all his explanations of Luther's deeds and words acceptable to all? Surely not!

All in all Oberman's book is a masterful presentation of the life of a great religious figure, well written, hard to put down, and able to interest all levels of readers. Probably it will be the standard biography of Luther for many years.

Saint Mary's University

Lawrence F. Murphy, S.J.

***Shakespeare and Feminist Criticism: An Annotated Bibliography and Commentary.* By Philip C. Kolin. New York: Garland, 1991. Pp. 420. \$55.00.**

It seems churlish to find fault with a book that performs such a vital service for scholars of Shakespeare by making accessible the vigorous diversity of feminist approaches. I am very glad that this book sits on my shelf; I shall consult it often. Especially useful is Kolin's introduction, in which he attempts to summarize divergent feminist views on a variety of topics ranging from crossdressing to genre. His industry here makes me almost willing to ignore his critical naïveté: in the same paragraph that he applauds feminists for revealing that "gender roles are not imposed upon characters biologically but culturally," he supports essentialism in claiming that "male characters can profitably incorporate female characteristics, and women characters can assume masculine ones" (6). While it may be unfair to judge Kolin as a critic, since he has not written a critical study, such a necessary book should be both more consistently reliable and more fun to read—should be, in short, the work of a critic. Perhaps because of sheer fatigue, Kolin can be sloppy: Stephen Orgel's extraordinary suggestion that Shakespeare *himself* is mirrored in his pubescent heroines (since both marry young) is misreported as humdrum "biographical parallels between Shakespeare's daughters and Miranda and

Ariel" (10). The index contains errors and omissions. And Kolin's attempt to avoid critical judgments in neutral annotations leads to a terse prose style as bland and disjunctive as many an undergraduate essay. Avoiding evaluation here leads not only to a dull read, but also to critical dishonesty—my recent experience as an editor has convinced me that the simplest gloss involves an act of interpretation, weighing connotation and context. Kolin's own critical bias—irritating only because never openly acknowledged—sneaks in the space he allots to various items. For example, Kolin approves of Marilyn French's *Shakespeare's Division of Experience* (unlike many feminists such as Gayle Greene, author of "Feminist Criticism and Marilyn French: With Such Friends, Who Needs Enemies?") apparently because it resurrects the greatest cultural patriarch as a proto-feminist (6); he gives it six pages of summary. More hostile to the bard, and probably more influential, is Lisa Jardine's *Still Harping on Daughters*; it is accorded a mere page. Linda Woodbridge's intelligent and exhaustive study, *Women and the English Renaissance* gets even less than that, while Catherine Belsey's seminal book, *The Subject of Tragedy*, is—astonishingly—omitted altogether. The last two works may have been passed over because they are broader in scope, but they raise the larger question of what Kolin considers feminist criticism of Shakespeare to include. He omits some items that are more "feminist" than Shakespearean (like Jane Marcus's polemic based on *Titus Andronicus*) as well as other items that are more Shakespearean than "feminist" (such as Harriett Hawkins's work, which insists on equal critical treatment for Shakespeare's male and female characters and thus deliberately eschews the category). Again, hidden critical bias is at work in the process of selection. Why not flaunt it?

As useful as a book like this is, it can ghettoize, or bracket the very criticism it seems to celebrate. Much like the token feminist in an English department who takes care of *that*, and leaves the others comfortably in the "main stream," this book can give the impression that feminist criticism is an isolated or eccentric perspective. Ann Thompson is right to insist that feminist criticism is "a major new perspective that must eventually inform *all* readings" (396). I guess we should hope that this work becomes obsolete, but use it gratefully—or churlishly—in the meantime.

***Questioning Edmond Jabès.* By Warren F. Motte, Jr. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1990. Pp. 182. \$25.00 US.**

The work of Edmond Jabès, persevering, obsessive even, self-reflexive yet richly pertinent and open upon the multiple discourses of the world, has been questioned before, and with insight. Blanchot, Derrida, Auster, Starobinski, Caws, Waldrop, Stamelman and many others have pored over the dogged yet buoyant and finely imbricated meditations of one of our great contemporary poets, alas no longer with us. Warren Motte's analysis, measured, text-centred though achronological in its treatment, remains nuanced and sensitively "intersubjective" (as Jean-Pierre Richard would say) despite its semiotic underpinnings. Divided into chapters dealing with legibility, the logics of letter, word, "story," book and figure, the study demonstrates coherence and progression, and marries well and with poise the claims of authorial consciousness and the needs of readerly distance. Jabès, of course is a writer ample and profound enough to keep ahead of most readers' inquisitiveness and critical inquisition. The intertextual complexity of his bast textual *errance*—better, poetic *errance*: for Jabès's work is nothing if not the place of an endless creativity, a wandering *poiein*—would be impossible to conceptualize and systematize; his obsessional lexicon constantly modifies its emblematicity; paradox, dialogue, multilogue, indeterminacy, specularly and an oddly transparent hermeticism render his texts as opaque as they are persistently in search of meaning, clarity, (self-)knowledge. Warren Motte's handling of much of this complex and exemplary modern poetics—reaching back from its contemporary and sometimes improbable affinities with writers as diverse as Du Bouchet, Barthes, Bonnefoy or Derrida, not merely to Mallarmé and Rimbaud, but far beyond to the medieval, the cabalistic, the anciently judaic, the mystical—provides a reading that is sure yet never closed, informed and thoughtful and ever-conscious of the slippery subtleties beneath his, and Jabès's, pen. An eminently readable book upon an oddly eminently, endlessly readable poet.

***The Romance of Tristan by Beroul.* By Stewart Gregory. Faux Titre 57. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992. Pp. xxxi, 311. \$52.50.**

It will be remembered that the late twelfth-century French (Anglo-Norman) Tristan legend has been preserved only in two groupings of fragments: Beroul's poem and the *Folie Tristan* of Bern for one version, Thomas's text and the *Folie Tristan* of Oxford for the other.

Unlike other editors, translators and restorers, Stewart Gregory does not reconstitute the complete Tristan story from these fragments, from the German versions by Eilhart of Oberg and Gottfried of Strassburg, and from other sources. His is instead a meticulous edition (with facing English translation) of Beroul's 2,243 rhyming octosyllabic couplets (Gregory's line count of 4,486 includes missing verses), the latest in a series of editorial and/or translatory endeavors (Caulkins and Mermier 1967, Fedrick 1970, Reid 1972, Jonin 1974, Payen 1974, Mermier 1987, Braet and Raynaud de Lage 1989, Lacroix and Walter 1989, Lacy 1989) going back to Muret (1903, 1913, 1974), Ewert (1939-70) and Sandqvist (1984).

Given the amount of scholarship Beroul's work has elicited, Gregory's introduction (ix-xxxi) and bibliography (305-11) are surprisingly succinct (versification ix-xi, authorship xxiii-xxvii, date xxvii-xxix, literary tradition xxix), the longest analysis being devoted to the linguistic description of the text (xi-xxiii). Editorial practices adopted for this single-manuscript text (Paris, B.N. 2172, see p. ix) are explained in less than a dozen lines (xxx-xxxii).

Gregory's expertise and erudition are fully contained in the list of rejected readings (painfully if economically crammed into pp. 213-16) referring back to his (sober and minimal) interventions in the scribe's text, and especially in the copious notes (217-66) on matters both philological and literary. There is also a useful index of proper names (267-70), and a good glossary (271-303).

By his own implicit admission (vi), Gregory's edition is basically, though by no means entirely, a work of synthesis (Muret, Reid, Sandqvist). As such, it presents a text the reliability of which is being guaranteed, apart from Gregory's own insights and solutions, by almost ninety years of textual work on Beroul's romance. The central part of the legend, from the couple's meeting under the tree where Mark overhears

them, to Yseut's trial, is thus conveniently available to both readers of Old French and the general public. The latter will find here a faithful and (yet) eminently readable translation, as this excerpt from Yseut's (infamously deceptive oath may show: "so help me God and St. Hilary, / . . . / [I swear] that never did a man come between my thighs, / except the leper who . . . / . . . / carried me across the ford [and who is none other than Tristan, see ll. 3933-55], / and King Mark my own wedded lord" (4201-4208).

Dalhousie University

Hans R. Runte

***Life in Another Language.* By Liliane Welch. Dunvegan, ON: Cormorant Books, 1992. Pp. 77. Paper, \$9.95.**

Liliane Welch's *Life in Another Language* is an excellent book of prose poems in which the author exploits the possibilities of the genre. The prose poem is an exciting form with quick shifting tones, unexpected leaps of imagery, sometimes mystical incantatory rhythms and the employment of unusual personae. One finds all of these techniques and more in Welch's collection. There is an excellent balance between spontaneous expression and the development of an underlying argument. The book is effectively organized into three parts in which the poems move from alienation and fragmentation toward poems which offer hope and spiritual renewal.

Welch's *Life in Another Language* is concerned with people who cannot confront unresolved issues in their lives, and people who find the "language" to express their lives. In "Dead Trees" she writes that Paul Valéry and Alfred North Whitehead, "Both yearned for life in another language and not the silent presence of dead woods." She quotes Whitehead, "For a poet a tree is a symbol for a word." This expression of the natural world is the main argument of the book, which Welch explores through recurring motifs of mountains (usually in the form of mountain climbing—a favorite sport of the author) trees, flowers and food. In a number of these poems Welch ironically presents people who

escape into various forms of unreality and cannot find a connection beyond themselves.

The first section primarily contains poems about people who are isolated: some people escape through sexual fantasy, food or various kinds of literature. In "A Good Family Man" a middle-aged man is torn by his desire for a "chequered" life as opposed to the "well-appointed life" that he has. Sometimes the poems are similar to short stories in their point of revelation. In "The Nun" a middle-aged man confronts his rape of a nun as a teenager when he sees that "his fourteen year-old daughter was blushing under the predatory gaze of a handsome Italian." In "Unlocked Words" the devoted wife sees that her seventy year old husband's love for her is a forgery. In "Confessions of a Siren" there is a more humorous tone as the young wife says, "Sometimes, when Joe gets drunk, I count my options and all the lovers who need me. Their flesh covers the kitchen floor like a huge angel food cake."

In the second section Welch is concerned with the relationship of art to life; a number of these poems are written in the first person and have a more personal tone. In the opening poem "Master of Silence" the speaker invokes Orpheus and Rilke in order to practice "the song of silence." What is striking is Welch's ability to bring together a finely structured argument with a lyrical spontaneity, a weaving together of motifs for a surprising effect. In "House" she begins the poem with an ironic commentary on Pound's idea of love, developing the poem with the different ideas of home, love, music, and freedom, combining them in the final line, "And when Mozart begins replaying in another room, I circle the house and feel like saying its name." In "Deathwatch" the speaker steps outside herself just before her death. Its visionary mode, varied syntax and original use of persona is particularly suited for the prose poem form. And "North, Deep Inside" is one of the strongest poems.

Beyond the Trans-Canada Highway trees swallow abandoned
homesteads. In a sugar-house near a pond a family leans
into clouds of steam from their boiling pots. One woman skims
a young moon, and a man his wife's death. Are they inventing
our needs? Further north deep inside us only scrub spruce
haunt the dark. In these wild places we travel alone. At
midnight, to survive our small deaths, we hold on to doubt.
At noon, in a clearing the sun sets us free.

This poem creates its own language through a special imagery and specific condition. The short sentences and the gap between the images create an excitement; the leap from night to noon suggests the speaker's freedom. However, not all of the poems reach the level of that other "language," the connection with the natural world. Sometimes in Welch's prose poem there is a tendency to rely too much on explicit statement as in "A Good Family Man." Some of the poems are too abstract and move away from the freshness of experience as in "Images That Strike Like A Bell"—one desires more of the mountain, and less of Flaubert.

The third section acts as a counterpoint to the first, moving from paralysis to one of spiritual renewal. In these poems there is a movement to the earth, "The last angel has returned" as well as a return to the sources of history. In a few poems "Tourists," "Pâtisserie," "Heresies," Welch satirizes people who escape into false bourgeois rituals. In "The Best Exile" she presents the ironic portrait of Canadian tourists who "will assure a safe rape of Venice." The poet contrasts this with the legendary Luxembourg where the "bistros were filled with old codgers, sentries of tobacco haze, gaiety and booze." The poems at the end of the book are concerned with a search for "grace and spiritual hunger," as exemplified by the mountain climbers who sacrificed their lives in "The Roof of the World" and "A Mountain Revisited."

Life in Another Language is a rewarding book of prose poems not only because of Welch's fine handling of the form, but also because of the sympathy she has for her subjects. Her satire is not only directed at individuals who live in a world of fantasy or deception, but against monolithic technology of the contemporary world, and the homogenizing and dehumanizing influences apparent in industry, business and the university. Opposing present day materialism, she pays tribute to Rimbaud, Rilke, and D. H. Lawrence who recognize the value and nature of words. Like Canadian poets Don McKay, Roo Borson, and Allan Cooper she uses the prose poem to emphasize the connection with nature and to chart a new poetics of the earth.

***The Miraculous Hand and Other Stories.* By J. J. Steinfeld. Charlotte-town: Ragweed, 1991. Pp. 160. Paper, \$10.95.**

In 1983 the *Globe and Mail* praised the Kafkaesque qualities of J. J. Steinfeld's first short story collection, *The Apostate's Tattoo*. With the publication of *The Miraculous Hand*, Steinfeld's fourth volume of stories, that view of his fiction is confirmed. His imaginative world is distinguished by a grotesque vision and a surreal atmosphere and is populated by misfits—men whose daily lives are plagued by physical deformities and emotional suffering and for whom there is no solace. Steinfeld's characters are the dispossessed who either live meaningless lives or who teeter on the edge of insanity. These stories border on the macabre; they evoke a reality that is difficult to deny and horrifying to contemplate.

Of the fourteen stories in this collection, seven take as their subject the challenges faced by North American Jews in the latter half of the twentieth century. As a child of Holocaust survivors, the author's private legacy of painful memories informs much of his writing. Like Steinfeld, his protagonists are often men whose parents survived Hitler's reign of terror and for whom the Holocaust has become a metaphor for the senselessness and resulting alienation of contemporary life. The desire for stable and comfortable lives is thwarted in story after story about the impossibility of reconciling the suffering of the past with one's hope for the future. Whether they grapple with such difficulties as the inability to write successfully ("Starring at Auschwitz"), the crime of plagiarism ("Fifty Bullets"), or the compelling need to assassinate a neo-Nazi as a futile attempt at retribution ("The Idea of Assassination, Toronto 1973"), Steinfeld's characters are the creation of an author for whom writing is a means of exorcising the demons of his own past.

The remaining seven stories in *The Miraculous Hand* are similarly concerned with individuals who feel alone and adrift in a hostile world. With the single exception of "Mornings and Light," these stories are dominated by men who are either grotesque ("The Miraculous Hand") or disturbed, unable to relinquish the burden of the past to pursue the arduous road toward spiritual health ("The Note"). The female characters who haunt the periphery of these stories are murderers ("An Attempt at Rescue, of Love and the Past"), lost lovers ("The Old Man's Love"), or prostitutes ("The Great Writer"). Although his focus is no men, both