

Ex-centriques, Eccentric,
Avant-Garde:
Women and Modernism
in the Literatures of Canada

BARBARA GODARD

WOMEN HAVE BEEN “excluded from the production of thought, images and symbols,” which has occurred and been perpetuated within the circle of male experience, writes Dorothy Smith,¹ introducing a metaphor for the marginalization of women that is helpful in illuminating the position of Canadian women writers. Ex-centriques, “telling it slant,” in Emily Dickinson’s words, they are transgressing literary codes in a manner approximating madness—hence eccentric. Contemporary women’s writing especially is characterized by strategies of textual (and political) subversion, strategies of decentring and deflective irony which are the classic strategies of the colonized. Women have been identified as the colonized within patriarchal culture by feminist theorists such as Elaine Showalter.² And within the literatures of Canada, women’s writing holds a special place. Since Canadian and Quebec literatures are in themselves expression of colonized peoples, women’s writing is a model for our two literatures in general. Women’s decentralized position is especially evident with respect to language; their traditional oral culture

and language alerts them to the problematics of established literary discourse. As I shall argue in the course of this paper, there is a causal link between their situation as women and the pioneering role of women writers in this country, most specifically in the advent of Modernism and Post-Modernism in this country's literary tradition. The more forcefully they have asserted their feminism, the more disruptive their literary productions have been. Ex-centricques, thus avant-garde.

The relationship of women's writing to Canadian literature as a whole has its genesis in an attempt to account for the unusual ("ex-centric") position of women writers in this country. Elsewhere (the United States and France especially), feminist criticism has been nourished by the obvious omission of female writers from a national literary tradition. A first glance at the established pantheon of Canada would suggest that feminist criticism had little work left: the present celebration of writers such as Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, Marie-Claire Blais, Anne Hébert or Antonine Maillet, implies that a woman writer here need not fall victim to the existing canon, to phallogentric criticism. Though the achievements of some of our women writers have been widely recognized³—how unthinkable it would be to teach a course in Canadian or Quebec literature and exclude women writers—the literary *his*-tory of the country has its hidden corpses as well—forgotten women writers,⁴ victims of censorship,⁵ prey to the double critical standard felt by every woman writer.⁶

Ex-centricity implies many things—bizarre, fantastic, unconventional, incomprehensible, other—all subsumed by the concept of difference. As Robert Scholes pointed out,⁷ identity and difference are concepts fundamental to the nature of our logic. Our first apprehensions of difference are sexual: had we three sexes, he indicates, our systems would not be binary. Women being displaced from the centre of our society learn the lesson of difference on the margin. Their de-centred position allows, indeed ensures, that their gestures, language and writing will be ex-centricque, ex-perimental.

A second look over our shoulders suggests that there is a tradition of innovation in women's writing in Canada. Women have long

been pioneers in new subjects, new forms, new modes of discourse. The first novel written in Canada was the work of a woman, Frances Brooke, active in British feminist circles of the eighteenth century. Her position as a visitor might disqualify *The History of Emily Montague*, but *St. Ursula's Convent* (1824),⁸ the first novel by a native Canadian, was the work of Julia Catherine Beckwith. The centrality of the female pioneer experience to our tradition has been amply demonstrated by Atwood's *Journals of Susanna Moodie* which validates in its high poetic form both the female alienation from Canada and the ephemeral form of the journal. The recognition of the works of Anna Jameson, Catharine Parr Traill and Moodie as classics of our literature owes much to feminist critics⁹ as does the establishment of a broad definition of the canon of Canadian literature to include paraliterary forms, travel writings, journals and letters.¹⁰

Quebec's literary tradition advances my contention that in this country ex-centric is central.¹¹ In her many letters and journal, Mère Marie de l'Incarnation set a high standard for subsequent women writers in the sublimity of her religious visions and the efficiency of her administration of the pioneer colony. Although the nineteenth century was nearly over before it produced its first creative writer in the novelist Laure Conan (Félicité Angers), her turning from the conventional historical romance to the psychological novel marked a decisive moment in Quebec literary history. The extraordinary qualities of her *Angéline de Montbrun* (1884) in terms of imagery, discontinuous form ("feuilles détachées") and the use of the journal are echoed in the writing of twentieth-century "poetic" novels by Thérèse Tardif and Anne Hébert.¹² Indeed the sense of alienation, nihilism and the accompanying fragmented form, all marks of modernity, have been characteristic of the writings of earlier Quebec women included in the national canon.

While these women have won recognition in paraliterary genres, such as the letter and the journal and the "lowly" novel, others have played a pioneering role in poetry. In a recent article exploring the belated arrival of free verse in Quebec, Ivor Arnold has demonstrated the innovative role in prosody of Simone Routier, Jeanne Duguay and Jacqueline Francoeur concluding with a statement that reveals the

full weight of sexist bias in deforming the literary tradition:

Si les critiques québécois en général n'ont accepté que tardivement, et toujours à contre-cœur, cette "révolution esthétique, c'est-à-dire lors seulement du moment où la célébration de l'oeuvre de Saint-Denys Garneau d'abord, de Grandbois ensuite, la légitime, force est de connaître aujourd'hui le mérite d'un fait déjà accompli par ces femmes moins douées peut-être mais également dignes de notre reconnaissance en tant qu'artistes-exécutantes d'un mode nouveau devenu norme.¹³

Only Routier among these women poets is included in Tougas' *Histoire de la littérature canadienne-française*, and she is mentioned along with some other "poetesses" in a special section.¹⁴

History provided the grounds for viewing writers as the founding mothers of Canadian and Quebec literatures. The telescoping of nationalism and the woman's text, paradigm of that colonial experience, has been most evident in Margaret Atwood's work. As her rewriting of Moodie has shown, the dislocation connected with woman's experience (Moodie's own hidden theme is her husband's failure to cope and the consequent inversion in sex roles) can be read as a paradigm of our national uncertainty about our collective experience in this decentring new world. Diverse readings given *Surfacing* reinforce this conflation of the two experiences in her work. Viewed in Canada as a revolt against American domination of the Canadian economy, it has been read by American feminists such as Carol P. Christ as a fable of female spiritual quest.¹⁵ Both fables intersect at the locus of domination, whether of the colonial or sexual ilk. Were it read in light of a feminist quest to write oneself out of the margins and into history, Margaret Laurence's exploration of the impact of a tradition of oral narrative in the stimulation of creativity in a woman writer, subject of *The Diviners*, would extend the implications of this interlinked domination into an analysis of discourse and the production of meaning in a woman's text. Until now, though, Laurence's work has been read in terms of a national concern with empires and communications.¹⁶ It is in this interest in the hitherto unsaid that we find the key to both feminist concerns and the avant-garde, and cen-

tral to both is the issue of intransigent language which has become detached from reality.

For colonial countries, a common tongue for both colonizer and colonized makes it difficult for the latter to express their unique situation. In this country, early advocates of national (that is non-colonial) literatures in both languages focussed on the need to create a new language in order to establish independence. Neither Anglo-Ojibway¹⁶ nor franco-huronne¹⁷ came into being, however, and the issue remained dormant, at least among male writers, until the 1960s. In "Cadence, Country, Silence," Dennis Lee sums up the problematics of language for a minority whose public space is threatened:

But if we live in space which is radically in question for us, that makes our barest speaking a problem to itself. For voice does issue in part from civil space. And alienation in that space will enter and undercut our writing, make it recoil upon itself, become a problem to itself.

The act of writing 'becomes a problem to itself' when it raises a vicious circle: when to write necessarily involves something that seems to make writing impossible. Contradictions in our civil space are one thing that makes this happen. . . .¹⁹

The marginalization of any group makes its language problematic for, de-centred, considered as other, members of such a group have difficulty perceiving themselves as subjects. Women within the Canadian groups constitute a second sub-culture within a sub-culture. This situation, I would suggest, has enabled them to express the problematics of language for the entire sub-culture. For their literature is truly a "littérature mineure," as described by Deleuze and Guattari,²⁰ whose deterritorialized language thrusts them into an intensive use of an asignifying language.

This enterprise has its origins in an awareness that official discourse, which gives meaning and value to existence, is that of the holders of power in our society, men. For women, language does not mirror any political, social or psychological reality. There is no continuity between their perceptions and the language used to em-

body them. Language must therefore be invented anew in a revolutionary act that will overturn all grammatical laws. Women may assert the right to speak an already existent language whose use has been forbidden or restricted:²¹ they may embark on linguistic subversion (the extensive use of puns, paratax, etc.); on a repossession of the Word (a woman's body and bodily functions *expressed by women*); on the creation of a parallel opposing language (experiments in the invention of new words). Sheila Watson is one writer who has taken the latter road in her concern with the renewal of a solidified word.²² As that celebrated Modernist Gertrude Stein wrote in a passage quoted by Sheila Watson, "in this epoch the only real literary thinking has been done by a woman [because that] woman related not to an historical tradition but to a particular way of seeing."²³ Stein's own contribution to American Modernism was to probe the limits of language.

This question of language has been identified as Modernism's principal characteristic, a feature supposedly lacking in Canadian writing, according to its critics, who suggest that Modernism failed to take root in this country, for poets such as Souster, Dudek and Layton, Warren Tallman has written, have concentrated scarcely at all upon the language innovations necessary in order to enter Modernist writing.²⁴ In Europe, in the mid-nineteenth century, Flaubert dreamed of writing a book about "nothing" and the Symbolists retreated from the word into music or the silence of the objective correlative, fleeing from the "murder" of language implicit in Mallarmé's oft quoted phrase, "to speak has no connection with the reality of things." Later in Surrealism, an extreme phase of Modernism whose radical critique of literature involved attempts to dislocate its syntax, disrupt its lexic, destroy its grammar, a championing of the subconscious and the irrational was closely linked to a celebration of the feminine (as in Breton's *Nadia*). In this configuration we recognize the perennial situation of woman as dark "other" of man's rational self. Although the otherness was thus opened to exploration, it remained for women to develop the dislocating effects of speaking from this non-space. Importation of Symbolist ideas into Quebec, as we saw earlier, occurred without the linguistic and prosodic revolution implied in the search for musicality in the "vers

libre." Not until women poets in the thirties explored free verse did it appear in Quebec. Their innovative role was effaced from the histories once major male poets had adopted this practice. Within the parameters of the literary history of English Canada, it is significant that Sheila Watson has quoted Stein on the ahistorical, hence avant garde, position of women writers, for Watson's own work of mythic deconstruction and probing of the inadequacies of language is one of the foremothers of Post-Modernism here.

An account of the importance of women in the advent of Canadian Modernism will of necessity result in a decentring of the existing tradition which has denied the presence of modernism before 1960. Three moments seem of particular significance in uncovering women's contribution: the publication and censorship of Elizabeth Smart's *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* and Thérèse Tardif's *Désespoir de vieille fille* in the 1940s;²⁶ the publication of Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook* and Gabrielle Roy's *Alexandre Chénvert*,²⁷ in the 1950s, both accepted into the national canons but misread; and finally the emergence of Audrey Thomas and Nicole Brodsard in the late 1960s, whose challenge to the dominant discourse has direct roots in feminism but has received only partial recognition.²⁸

With the exception of Roy's novel, the texts I shall discuss are poetic, substituting the flux of surrealist images for linear narrative, probing the chasms between sign and experience, as they discover that language bears no relationship to their reality. I have described elsewhere the melodramatic details of the controversies the works evoked,²⁹ so uncannily similar. Slight variants exist in the sketchy plots but both Smart and Tardif's books centre on a woman alone crying out her passion and anger after the loss of a lover. Both attack Biblical paradigms, inverting sacred and profane loves in Biblical language. Juxtaposed passages of prosaic language with the poetic language of Augustine or *The Song of Songs*³⁰ challenge the simple dichotomy, linguistically created, of body and soul, heaven and hell. Paradoxically these entities are interrelated, for the language of the world, of sexual love, is confined within the walls of a prison, while in the language of love sexuality is free. Both writers challenge the forces of containment that the world (and the Church) would place on sexual love. Only the Whore of Babylon can attain the angelic

vision of vitality in Smart's novel, while Tardif asserts women's right to experience her sexuality as subject: "Jouissance charnelle, unique jouissance, unique certitude," (p. 69) openly attacking Catholic containment: "Man has the right to sin. Only to myself is it refused" (p. 44). These women, in ceasing to be "the other" and assuming their own sexuality and desires through writing, have transgressed. They were attacked by critics, principally for writing about the taboo of adulterous love, though Tardif was taken to task for her "paradoxes."³¹ Such an "illogical" style marks her as eccentric.

But in excluding these women from the mainstream—Smart is not even mentioned in *The Literary History of Canada* and bears the distinction of being banned by order of the Prime Minister—the only mode of writing in the forties appears to be that of social realism. Modernism, with its focus on language, has been concealed. As another practitioner of the poetic novel, Anaïs Nin wrote about the United States: "The climate of the forties was insular, provincial, anti-poetic and anti-European."³² And this was even truer in Canada.

Nonetheless, the allusion to Nin evokes another possible obstacle to the recognition of our foremothers. Their transgressions are formal as well as social. Like the Biblical passages from which they originate, these books are litanies. Sentences remain parallel rather than joined; linear syntax is disrupted in this form which has been identified as one favoured by women. "A rose is a rose is a rose," writes Stein. "The words capsize, bring vertigo. Turning around on a merry go round circling nothing. Content absorbed through repetition: the void pulls like silence which would lead to regression and death on the borders of non-sense, of madness. A sabbath in flood."³³ Their novels, like hers, lack plots, are repetitious, densely written, focus on epiphanies—all qualities evoking critical denigration for their excess of sensibility, their triviality, their lack of action—in short, their femininity. And indeed, if viewed from the male pantheon of mastery, control and distance, their writing displays all the characteristics of a "texte de femme" in its diffused, disordered, circular, multiple, unpredictable, unstructured and uncensored nature.³⁴ Male pantheon, or Modernist pantheon? For the problem to be faced in examining these writers is that there are many facets to

Modernism: their writing practice diverges from the sculptural formality of symbolism. Anguished cries, these books draw more sustenance from the irrationality of surrealism, and thus are pioneers. Surrealism influenced literature in Canada only in the 1960s.

Watson's work with its mandala-like precision is recognizably symbolist, and poses different problems in interpretation. Recognized by avant-garde writers (e.g. b.p. Nichol, the concrete poet) of today as an influence on their exploration of the disjunction of feeling and language, *The Double Hook* has been more often read as a displacement of the Biblical myth of the Messiah into the realistic location of Western Canada.³⁵ It is indeed a story of the "coming of the Word," a dramatization of the beginnings of language and cultural order in a primitive people. Having lost their language which would open up their cultural past, the Indians suffer. Alienated, they have only fragments of experience left, fragments that have hardened into cliché, have become mechanical gestures of sinister aspect. *The Double Hook* is an inventory of ritual ways of expression—proverbs, Biblical passages, Indian myths, the mass—detached from their original emotional and spiritual meaning. The problems of finding words with more potential as vehicles for meaning is dramatized in the figure of Felix who is aware of his inability to communicate. In his personal crisis, when he realizes that he has no words, that all is silence, he pours forth sounds in Latin devoid of all sense for him, though ironically denotatively still rich for the reader, who recognizes the appropriateness of the angel's salutation to Mary at the annunciation as an address for the pregnant Lenchen. At this point for Felix "to speak has no connection with the reality of things," and he articulates the central concern of the book, a concern with the act of writing as the actual reality of the moment, metalanguage, which opens up the disintegrative possibilities of language. Watson moves here to express her vision of hope in Latin: English has lost its potentials for her. Nevertheless, like Gertrude Stein she works to reactivate the clichés, to move beyond the thinness of modern usage by disturbing the reader's conventional consciousness of words and their so-called corresponding realities, and compels us to enter a realm of aesthetic possibilities and values foreign to our experience. In this second disruptive development, beginning with a dislocation of the

ordinary lexical meaning of words, Watson explores their musical and visual properties, moving into silence when the "light" has been born into the world and the possibilities of minimal language exhausted. Given the silence which has followed the publication of this book, it seems clear that the Indians are in fact an objective correlative for Watson's mistrust of language. In this, Watson joins a long line of women writers stretching from Frances Brooke through to Margaret Laurence and Margaret Atwood,³⁶ for whom the Indian has been a shamanic figure releasing their creativity, an objective correlative to their linguistic alienation and a tribute to that elusive Anglo-Ojibway tongue, metonym of their colonized state. Watson's awareness of writing from the silence of the margins is submerged in that of her characters.

Gabrielle Roy's reception has been more favourable since the 1950s and she has written many books since *Alexandre Chênevert*. In this book she too reflects on the thinness of our communication and the problem of silence to which it leads. Roy does not continue her probing of the limits of language towards minimalism, seeking there a means to regenerate our impoverished tool, but she develops the feelings of loss when words cease to conform to the individual's emotional experience as she dramatizes the adventure of the banker. A Franco-Manitoban, Roy is only too aware of the autonomy of language. She first began to write while studying drama in England and was obliged to make a choice between English and French as a literary language. As she suggested in a recent interview,³⁷ the language then imposed its conventions on her. Reworking a story in English, she found it taking a comic bent, not present in the original version. Doubly dominated, Roy expresses her own mistrust of language through the figure of Alexandre, avid reader and would-be writer.

Despite the direction that her later work has taken in exploring the creativity of the artist, this novel of Roy's has not been read as a fable of the artist, but has generally been interpreted in light of the urban realism of her first novel and an oscillating movement between cage and garden.³⁸ Granted, the image of the cashier's cage and the grid of the city streets is a powerful one in the novel, but the alienation of Alexandre is as cogently expressed in the interrogation of language. Alexandre's mind is filled with thoughts about suffering

humanity which he would like to communicate to others. He reads widely and admires the power of writers to voice his concerns: his great tragedy lies in the poverty of the linguistic means at his disposal. Throughout the novel, Alexandre's exchange with other human beings has been limited to the expression of conventional formulas concerning time and weather. This phatic discourse has shaped his communications, depriving him of the possibility of exchanging ideas and feelings. Feelings are devalued in a society that values encounters based on the transference of money, and Alexandre in his cage is at the centre of this society. Words shaped in this economy lose their currency, cease to mirror any emotional reality. Alexandre's tragedy lies in his ability to perceive the gap between his emotions and his statements. When at Clear Lake he wishes to emulate his models and write down his feelings about the goodness of life in the country for all to share, his page remains blank before him. Only phrases from advertising, from the radio announcements of world atrocities, enter his mind. Testifying about events Alexandre's feelings can scarcely encompass, in countries whose topography he cannot visualize, or giving testimony to the symbolism of the dollar, these detached phrases ring up their emptiness for us. Alexandre's mind has been filled with these clichés: he is paralyzed by the novelist's most deadly enemy. He has no words to express what he means. Roy herself has escaped Alexandre's problem, always finding the means to articulate her world freshly, but in this self-reflexive novel about the writer's struggle with autonomous language she makes us aware what a difficult task this has been. Nonetheless, the disruptive effect of these two books is less than that of novels written more recently. While Watson and Roy explore the problem of language, they displace it, locating the gap between experience and its expression in the lives of other alienated beings and thus not carrying it to its ultimate possibilities.

Our third moment in the intersection of feminist writing and Canadian Post-Modernism finds its centre in Audrey Thomas and Nicole Brossard. In an interview with the editors of the *Capilano Review*, Thomas has talked of the marginal position she had as a fiction writer with an office next door to a group of male poets.³⁹ One of these, George Bowering, in writing the only serious critical

evaluation of her work to date, has thus admitted Thomas to the group.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, this awareness of difference remains and she believes her work to be addressed primarily to women. Her stated intention has been to articulate the gaps between women's language and men's with all the resulting lack of comprehension. Frequently this impasse is suggested by moving into foreign languages, Spanish in many short stories and Arabic in *Latakia*, which become metaphors for the chasm between word and experience, between sign and signified. Here she explores the new poetics of openness and spontaneity, seeking out the minimal elements of language where a correlation between sound and experience may be detected. Her works become structures of cognition itself, metafiction.

In *Latakia*, where this epistemological intent is most clear, Thomas reinvokes the metaphor of Africa from her earlier work to articulate differences between men and women. In *Blown Figures* and *Mrs. Blood*, the crisis of language is developed in terms of Africa versus Europe, madness versus rationality. Focusing on a search for a miscarried baby and a buried self, *Blown Figures* also becomes a monument to a lost language, for its collage form abandons words for popular visual art forms or the white page. Balancing black print and white page, Thomas opens the text up to the reader's participation, inviting us to fill in the spaces with our own experience before bringing the structure together in our minds. Elsewhere she inserts comic strips depicting life in Africa. Together frames and words create a complex arrangement whereby we can experience many elements simultaneously, both seeing and reading. Through the typographical play our speed of reading has been changed: our sense of the word is renewed through the graphic elements at the same time as its limitations are cogently illustrated. The text is indeed exploded.

Brossard's feminism developed in the seventies after a decade of involvement with the periodical she helped found at the centre of the new writing in Quebec. Marked too by the traits of multiplicity, non-linearity, discontinuity, Brossard's writing has exemplified the Post-Modernist directions of contemporary Quebec, her collection *Mécanique jongleuse/Masculin grammaticale* being awarded the Governor General's Award in 1975. In this collection the continuity of her

writing between its early Surrealist/Structuralist phase and its later feminism is visible: certain practices of ellipsis, omission, metalanguage are constant. Although her entire corpus has blended epistemology and emotional core (this latter until her recent Lesbian poems yielding meagre lyricism), Brossard's theoretical concerns have been articulated in several manifestos which exhibit the alignment of Post-Modern and feminist strategies of subversion. In *Prose Today* she writes:

prose: understand its abuses and its methods.
And similarities which exist between the writer and
the politician—both usurpers of meaning—the
appetite for words and writing is at such a pitch
that we are constantly assaulted by the meaningless.
Put a check on this.
and Speak too of a certain reluctance to pronounce, to write
certain words.
So the speech marks, dashes and brackets appear
and add to the confusion. A new style is emerging,
some claim. More likely writing's nervous twitches.
blankspaces, gaps which lead eventually to one's giving up.
To abdication. Hesitation. . . a stammer. To be the
puppets of a linguistic system which no longer controls
meaning. . . ⁴²

This radical mistrust of language leads her to write texts like *un livre* (*a book*), in which minimal elements for a fiction are provided for the reader to assemble. Large white spaces for this purpose are left around the text. In *Turn of a Pang* (*Sold Out/Etreinte illustration*) the entire page is surrounded by a frame, the basic syntactic unit of the comic strip. Here as in Thomas' work we are made aware of the artificial order in each box.

The focus on language in contemporary French feminism arises from the same pressures exerted on the avant-garde, though the villain ceases to be the bourgeois world of advertising and politics and is located in the underlying symbolic power of the phallus. The subversive aims remain:

* The feminine text ought to break the greatest number of

fears, taboos, intimidations. Never for a single moment write out of distraction and habit. The writing must break the connections with the symbolism that immobilizes feminine thought. . . . Our path of research is different from that of Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Bataille and Blanchot. Our keys of information and practice no longer open the same desire and anticipations. In the same way that we shift from the written to the audio-visual, from mechanics to technology, from electronics to cybernetics, we shift from the blood stream, vertical vertigo (desire, red, aggression, progress) to the neurological system (ecstasy, white, consciousness, condition).⁴³

In this extract from "E muet mutant," Brossard identifies many of her images and concerns in "Le cortex exubérant," another text breaking literary and linguistic (the pun) conventions, another example of the mutant manifesto/fiction of which her most extended is *L'Amèr ou le chapitre effrité*. Here two levels operate at once: disintegration of form and a depiction of the means whereby women may become subjects—kill the womb, abandon reproduction for production, recognize the bitterness of maternity and leave behind the symbolic representation of woman as fertility goddess for real presence in language—she can spell, after all! To her bag of discontinuous devices, Brossard adds the pun, functioning so suggestively in the title, to awaken us to a woman's sense of words hidden in our clichés and conventional titles. Brossard's explosive practice of deconstruction and renewal of discourse purged of its phallogentric values, like that of Thomas, extends the dimensions of the crisis of language into new domains. Their sensitivity to the problem of language nevertheless builds on that of earlier female modernists. The explicit feminism of their work leads to even greater testing of the limits of language and makes explicit my hypothesis of the inter-relatedness of a woman-centred view and formal experimentation.

Ex-centric, women's writing will continue to be disruptive of male traditions. Women's writing will find its sources of energy in the gaps and holes of phallogentric discourse: in the diffuse oral tradition, "la jasette," and the language of the body which will bring new semiotic systems into play. It will also be located on the fron-

tiers, at the margins where the interplay of domination and innovation is most intense. In the avant-garde, as in the literature of a society emerging from colonialism, women writers play a hidden, though I hope now clearly evident, central role. One can guess that their pioneering role will be accorded increasing rewards, as is presently the case with an increasingly visible, active, subversive group of women writers in Canada and Quebec.

Notes

¹Dorothy Smith, "An Analysis of Ideological Structures: How Women Are Excluded: Considerations for Academic Women," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 12 (November 1975), p. 353.

²Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own* (Princeton, 1977), p. 13.

³Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel* (Toronto, 1964), for instance, was voted the best Canadian novel ever written at a conference on the novel at the University of Calgary, 1978. Only women writers from Quebec have been honoured by French literary prizes. Recipients include Antonine Maillet, Gabrielle Roy, Marie Le Franc, and Anne Hébert.

⁴Current reeditions of 19th century works in the New Canadian Library series heavily favour male writers.

⁵Barbara Godard, "Transgressions," *Fireweed*, nos. 5 & 6, pp. 120-129.

⁶Margaret Atwood, "Paradoxes and Dilemmas," in Gwen Matheson, ed. *Women in the Canadian Mosaic* (Toronto, 1976), pp. 257-274. In this article Atwood describes a survey of Canadian writers carried out by a class of hers in which a majority of the women believed themselves to have been the victims of sexual bias in reviews.

⁷Robert Scholes, *Structuralism and Literature* (New Haven, 1974), p. 194. Also enunciated by Rosemary Reuther, "Mother Earth and

the Megamachine," in *Womanspirit Rising*, C.P. Christ and J. Plaskow, eds. (New York, 1979), p. 44. "But the alienation of the masculine from the feminine is the primary sexual symbolism that sums up all these dualities."

⁸Frances Brooke, *The History of Emily Montague* (1769, rpt. Toronto, 1961). Julia Beckwith, *St. Ursula's Convent* (1824, rpt. Sackville, N.B., 1980).

⁹Notably Clara Thomas who, in numerous critical articles and in her introductions to the NCL reeditions of these books, has done much to advance their cause.

¹⁰Susan Jackel has advanced such arguments in an article to appear in the proceedings of *Dialogue*, ECW Press.

¹¹Mère Marie de L'Incarnation, *Lettres . . .* (Paris, 1681); *Word From New France*, trans. Joyce Marshall (Toronto, 1967).

¹²Félicité Angers, *Angéline de Montbrun* (1884, rpt. Montréal, 1950). Thérèse Tardif, *Désespoir de vieille fille* (Montréal, 1941). Anne Hébert, *Le torrent* (Montréal, 1941).

¹³Ivor Arnold, "Le vers libre au Canada: Notes à propos d'un problème de datation," *Studies in Canadian Literature*, 5, 2 (Fall, 1980), pp. 234-5.

¹⁴Gérard Tougas, *Histoire de la littérature canadienne—française*, 2e ed. (Paris, 1964), pp. 92-5 in a group of modern women poets.

¹⁵Carol P. Christ, *Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers in Spiritual Quest* (Boston, 1980), Chapter 4.

¹⁶Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners* (Toronto, 1974). Pamela McCallum, "Communication and History: Themes in Innis and Laurence," *Studies in Canadian Literature* 3, 1 (Winter, 1978), pp. 5-16. See also Alice Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women* (Toronto, 1971). This book establishes as the grounds for its existence as text the blending of women's oral narrative—the Aunt's Stories, and those of Uncle Bennie—with the historical, factual mode of Uncle Craig.

¹⁷Barry Dane, "National Literature," (1884, *The Week*) in Carl Ballstadt, ed., *The Search for English Canadian Literature* (Toronto, 1975), p. 117.

¹⁸Octave Crémazie, "Letter of January 29, 1867," in *Oeuvres Complètes* (Québec, 1892), p. 40.

¹⁹Dennis Lee, "Country, Cadence, Silence," *Open Letter*, 2nd series, 6 (Fall, 1973), p. 37.

²⁰Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka, pour une littérature mineure* (Paris, 1975).

²¹Antonine Maillet; see B. Godard, "The Narrative of a Narrative: Maillet's *Don l'Original*," *Atlantis*, V, no. 1 (Fall, 1979), pp. 51-69.

²²B. Godard, "Between One Cliché and Another," *Studies in Canadian Literature* 3, no. 2 (Summer, 1978), 149-165.

²³Gertrude Stein quoted in Sheila Watson, "The Style Is the Machine," *Open Letter*, 3rd series, no. 1 (Winter, 1974-5), p. 168.

²⁴Warren Tallman, "Wonder Merchants: Modernist Poetry in Vancouver During the 1960's," *Open Letter*, 3rd series, no. 6 (1976), p. 186.

²⁵Bethany Ladimer, "Madness and the Irrational in the Work of André Breton: A Feminist Perspective," *Feminist Studies*, VI, no. 1 (Spring, 1980), pp. 175-195.

²⁶Elizabeth Smart, *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* (London, 1945; rpt. New York, 1966).

²⁷Sheila Watson, *The Double Hook* (Toronto, 1959). Written in early 50s. Gabrielle Roy, *Alexandre Chênevert* (Montréal, 1955).

²⁸Audrey Thomas, *Mrs. Blood* (Vancouver, 1970); *Blown Figures* (Vancouver, 1974); *Latakia* (Vancouver, 1979); Nicole Brossard, *un livre* (Montréal, 1970); *L'Amèr* (Montréal, 1977); translated by Barbara Godard; *These Our Mothers* (Toronto, 1983).

²⁹cf no. 5

³⁰“She does not say to Christ: I give him to You./She is from Africa./She does not believe in Christ./She loves.” Tardif, p. 12.

“But at the Arizona border they stopped us and said Turn Back, and I sat in a little room with/barred windows while they typed./What relation is this man to you? (My beloved is mine and I am his: he feedeth among/the lilies). Did you sleep in the same room? (Behold/thou art fair, my love, behold thou art fair:/thou hast doves eyes). Smart. p. 51.

³¹Gabriel M. Lussier, O. P, “Compte-rendu,” *Revue Dominicaine*, 50, 1 (février, 1944), pp. 125-7.

³²Anais Nin, *The Novel of the Future* (New York, 1970), p. 1.

³³Suzanne Lamy, *d'elles* (Montréal, 1979), p. 89. “Litanie des litanies.” My translation.

³⁴Christiane Makward, “Nouveau regard sur la critique féministe en France,” *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa*, 50, no. 1 (janvier, 1980), pp. 47-54.

³⁵Beverly Mitchell, “Association and Allusion in *The Double Hook*,” *Journal of Canadian Fiction*. II, 1 (Winter, 1973), pp. 63-70. For an elaboration of the view advanced here. cf. n. 20.

³⁶Catherine Ross, “A Singing Spirit: Female Rites of Passage in *Klee Wyck*, *Surfacing* and *The Diviners*,” *Atlantis*, IV, no. 1 (Autumn, 1978), pp. 86-94.

³⁷Gabrielle Roy in an interview with Donald Cameron, *Conversations with Canadian Writers*, II (Toronto, 1973), p. 130.

³⁸Hugo MacPherson, “The Garden and the Cage: The Achievement of Gabrielle Roy,” *Canadian Literature* 1 (Summer, 1959) pp. 46-57. The emphasis on language was first offered by Ellen Babby in a paper to the joint meeting of American and Canadian Comparative Literature Associations, Montreal, October, 1978.

³⁹Audrey Thomas, “Interview,” *Capilano Review*, 7 (Spring, 1975), pp. 87-109.

⁴⁰George Bowering, “Snow Red and The Short Stories of Audrey

