Book Reviews

Andrew Gurr. *Writers in Exile: The Creative Use of Home in Modern Literature.* Sussex: The Harvester Press; New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1981. pp. 160. $25.00.

This book sets up a provocative proposition about the conditions which shape twentieth-century creative writers, in particular, creative writers from the colonies. It proposes that a great majority of modern writers are exiles, expatriates, or émigrés who have followed James Joyce's pattern and have become alienated in one way or another from the society which was their original home. A distinctive group of such writers are those from the colonies who fled to the metropolis, like Katherine Mansfield of New Zealand, V. S. Naipaul of Trinidad, and (James) Ngugi wa Thiong'o of Kenya — the three writers on whom this volume concentrates. Their career as exiles follows a set pattern: they flee from their own society and history at an early age; they spend the next decade or more constructing a vision of the lost home in their fiction; and if the vision is achieved, they emerge homeless and historyless. The pressure of exile on them, however, is enormously constructive. In creating their fictional home, these writers who come from small, immobile, close-knit communities and are shaped by forces antithetical to those of the amorphous, impersonal, individualistic metropolis, acquire a clear social identity which the metropolitan writer cannot have; they focus in their works on psychosocial matters unlike their metropolitan counterparts who are preoccupied with self; and they acquire a clearer, more objective, and more detached artistic vision. This theoretical foundation of *Writers in Exile* certainly qualifies it for the series in which it appears, *Harvester Studies in Contemporary Literature and Culture*, which offers "new and stimulating approaches in the fields of English and comparative literature" and aims "to illuminate the common themes and conditions of twentieth century writing" (p. 2).

Andrew Gurr presents his case very astutely, using a two-pronged approach: the early sections of the book offer prescriptive generalizations about creative exiles in general, and on the colonial exile in particular; the later sections examine the conditions which nurtured

Mansfield, Naipaul, and wa Thiong'o. The early sections are extremely dense. Here Gurr refers to the experiences of a host of exiles and expatriates (Joyce, Conrad, Lawrence, Eliot, Pound, Chekov, Okigbo, Achebe, Lamming, and others) and examines various ideas such as the sociological contrast between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (which he equates respectively with the colony and the metropolis) and Terry Eagleton's observation that among the eight major writers in England in the first half of the twentieth century there is only one non-émigré, D. H. Lawrence. Gurr sets up a number of secondary propositions that are as provocative as his main hypothesis. He suggests that exiled writers in their isolation speak most readily to other exiles and consequently try to establish the universal underlying personal experience, and that the insecurity of exiles prompts them to construct static worlds and to impose order on the dynamic which they interpret as chaos. Using Yeats and Joyce as archetypes, he proposes that, unlike the exiles, writers who stay home tend to write poetry and drama, forms "which live more easily in the present than does prose fiction, story as history" (p. 31). In differentiating between exiles and expatriates, he states that among expatriates there is a wholly voluntary detachment from their original home, whereas exiles are banished victims, deracinated and tortured by the long wait to return home; and he proceeds to say that many expatriates are primarily poets (Eliot, Pound, Auden) while exiles most often become novelists because, having an outward society to depict rather than an inner psyche, they turn to the explicitness of realistic prose fiction.

These observations are not supported by case studies or, given the structuring of the book, by immediate substantial reference to particular authors. Gurr acknowledges this, stating that his intention is to set up a series of propositions which his analysis of the individual authors will support. His approach allows a more integral consideration of individual authors and individual works. However, many of the early propositions are not considered explicitly in the later sections, and we are left with some questions unanswered: for instance, given Gurr's definition of the expatriate, could not Mansfield and Naipaul who categorically rejected their homeland be seen more as expatriates than as exiles?

When Gurr turns to discussing the three writers, he reveals himself to be impressively conversant with the various primary and secondary sources. Since he considers the writers' works to be products of the pressures of exile and since he is interested more in the circumstances of creativity than in "the literary end-product" (p. 25), he concentrates on the writers' experiences rather than on their literary achievement; and if we accept that literary works could be used legitimately as biographical and cultural documents, these later

sections, where Gurr's considerable ability as a critic is evident, are most persuasive.

In the case of Mansfield, much is available on her life, and using this material and her creative pieces, Gurr brilliantly constructs a portrait of an alienated individual. However, he appears to raise, but leaves unanswered, two related questions: was Mansfield a *colonial* or an *artistic* exile, and was her alienation from society the consequence of her colonial status or of her own personal atittudes and experiences, that is, her abrasive personality, her brother's death, her marriage to Middleton Murry, and her tuberculous condition? Since the salient facts of Naipaul's life, unlike Mansfield's, are sparse, Gurr draws more heavily on the novelist's works to find his proposed pattern. Gurr ingeniously construes *A House for Mr Biswas* as a work not about Mr Biswas's sense of identity but about Naipaul's. It is in the process of tracing his ancestry in this novel, Gurr suggests, equating Mr Biswas with Naipaul's father and Anand with Naipaul, that Naipaul achieves his sense of home. In Gurr's study of Ngugi, where he is at his best, Ngugi's exile is shown to be different from Mansfield's and Naipaul's. He neither rejected his country nor was forced to stay away for any extended period. His British education, which isolated him from his family and community, made him an exile. Given this, it would have been worthwhile for Gurr to consider whether Ngugi is really an exile *per se*. It would have been worthwhile, too, for him to examine whether Ngugi's view of himself as both a swimmer "in the mainstream of his country's history" (p. 93) and an observer on the river bank is the product of his "exile" or of the archetypal divergent pulls experienced by the artist who is both onlooker and participant.

In limiting his study to Mansfield, Naipaul, and Ngugi, whom he considers to be "among the most original and successful writers in this century" (p. 30), Gurr is able to provide detailed and extended analyses of the interaction between their lives and works. He does go on to offer brief consideration of how three other writers — Jean Rhys, Doris Lessing, and Patrick White — fit his pattern of creative exile. It would have further strengthened his theoretical basis if he had squeezed in brief assessments of a creative exile from India (Mulk Raj Anand?) and extended his footnote on the Canadian Rudy Wiebe whom he sees as someone following the Ngugi pattern.

Gurr's stated intention in his study of the three main writers is to concentrate on "the individual rather than on his or her contribution to the pattern" (p. 32). While this approach allows us to understand better the creative conditions of the individual writers, it leaves a few loose comparative threads which need to be tied together: for example, Naipaul's observation that the "English language was mine; the tradition was not" (p. 69) should be examined

in relation to Ngugi's acceptance of Fanon's view that the colonial language induces a state of "double exile" (p. 95); and Naipaul's comment that the British education of Caribbean youths made them develop split personalities should be compared with Ngugi's on his education which alienated him from his people and made him a *homo duplex*.

I must hasten to say that in offering these suggestions I am not underscoring flaws in this complex work, but attesting to how stimulating it is. *Writers in Exile* is an important book for students of contemporary culture and of Commonwealth literature (a slighted term which I use here for convenience, but which Gurr, who recently retired as Editor of *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, appears studiously to avoid in his book), and one which will be widely discussed.

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Dennis Duffy, *Gardens, Covenants, Exiles: Loyalism in the Literature of Upper Canada/Ontario*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1982. pp. x, 160. $25.00; pb. $10.00.

> This work has made a few wild stabs at pinpointing one of the cultural forces that gave Ontario its sense of place. (pp. 132-33)

"... a few wild stabs..." With this demurral Duffy begins the final paragraph of his book, and concludes on a note prominent in the opening of *Gardens, Covenants, Exiles* and persistent throughout. He begins by telling us that he is dealing with "an intuition about a culture" (p. 3), engaging in "speculation" (p. 3), and constructing an "hypothesis" (p. 4). He then acknowledges that he may "have perpetrated a series of discrete essays rather than... a coherent essay retaining an amplitude sufficient to explore the particular" (p. 10). He later reminds us that he is "tracing a habit of mind rather than a specific theory" (p. 108), and indulging in "considerable philosophical question-begging" (p. 111). Finally, to return to his closing pages, he describes his work as "tentative and inexact" (p. 132). This persistent self-criticism does not inspire great confidence in the reader, but it does constitute an honest recognition by the author of his work's limitations. The clarity, coherence, and therefore, the cogency of its organization and argument are matters of some doubt.

Duffy has undertaken in *Gardens, Covenants, Exiles* to trace Loyalism in the literature of Upper Canada/Ontario from its experiential origins in the American Revolution, through its transformation from historical fact into myth, and through the progressive

alterations and restatements of that myth to its gradual diminution in the pragmatic world of twentieth-century Ontario, and its ultimate relegation to the position of mere motif rather than central concern in contemporary literature. His subject, in other words, is characterized by an inherent continuity. Yet Duffy has strangely chosen to confuse that sense of continuity, to assert its presence from time to time, and to force his readers to search out and piece together its stages, rather than to maximize its effectiveness by arranging his materials in a straightforward chronological order. Such an arrangement would certainly have been possible, is implicit in the subject, and would have enhanced the reception of Duffy's argument. If, for example, Chapter 7: "The Reification of Loyalism," which provides a quick summary of the outlines of development of Loyalist mythology had been contiguous with Chapter 1: "The Experience" — the factual history of the Loyalists — the reader would have been supplied with a thorough, clear, and compelling context in which to place, and by which to judge, the particular, but also representative, analyses of the other chapters on individual writers. In addition, it seems to me that the implicit, but very important, points that William Kirby, both in his personal history and in his literary definition of the Loyalist myth, represents a secondary or tertiary stage in the development of that myth, and is well displaced in time from the original experience — these points would have been much better served by placing the discussion of Major John Richardson, even if it defines the underside of the myth, before that of William Kirby. Richardson, after all, was much closer to the Loyalist experience through his grandfather Askin, and through growing up within one of the colonies that Loyalism brought into being, whereas Kirby, as Duffy himself accurately says, was at best a quasi-professional Loyalist. The fact that Richardson's writings dramatically demonstrate that Loyalist culture is far from being homogenous even in its early stages (which Duffy admits but does not sufficiently illustrate) should not be neutralized by building up the affirmative vision first. The reader might begin to suspect that the author is more interested in dramatic effect than in analytic accuracy, that he is not only begging a philosophical question, but is also constructing a biased presentation in favour of, rather than objective about, Loyalist culture. A sense of nostalgia for a lost past and disappearing conservative culture does pervade his final chapters with a poignancy and strength not attributable entirely to his definition of Loyalism or to his analyses of the works of George Grant, Dennis Lee, and Al Purdy.

Duffy's partiality is particularly evident in his chapter on Richardson. He has apparently read David Beasley's biography of Richardson;[1] he does cite it in his footnotes. But he differs markedly

from Beasley in several important respects. He refers to Maria Drayson as Richardson's first wife (p. 45); Beasley points out that Richardson married Maria in 1832, but that he had married a Jane Marsh in 1825. (Duffy makes a similar error of fact when he refers to the wolf-suckled child in *Westbrook, the Outlaw!* as the villain Westbrook's son; the child is his grandson, and the distinction is of some importance.) Duffy's description of *The Monk Knight of St. John* as "pornographic" (p. 51), and as breaking "every canon of taste" (p. 52) is in almost *verbatim* agreement with the judgements of earlier genteel critics of Richardson, but differs dramatically from Beasley's more substantial explanations of that novel's considerable concerns. Beasley's interpretation may indeed be motivated by sympathy with his subject, but that interpretation is buttressed by evidence of sufficient weight that it should be acknowledged, at least in footnote form, not simply ignored and thereby dismissed. These conventional, and by now stereotypical, relegations of Richardson to the role of rude, arrogant, and tempestuous sociopath should be discarded, however appealing they may be to a genteel perspective. Recourse to such a perspective, combined with errors of fact, undermines Duffy's contention that Richardson reveals an underside of a phenomenon that is publicly confident and decorous, and that he articulates displaced and disguised Loyalist preoccupations and dilemmas. Because the argument is tainted with factual error and prejudice, or at least predisposition, the conclusions which derive from that argument are unconvincing. Not only did Richardson not fit comfortably within his contemporary Loyalist culture, he does not fit comfortably within the *schema* of a present-day Loyalist sympathizer.

Duffy does not display similar faults in his discussions of his other principal figures, most of whom affirm Loyalist ideals in some fashion, even if minor. Hugh Hood in *A New Athens* is the only exception, and he does not negate the Loyalist vision; he diminishes it, Duffy says, to the level of "motif rather than central concern" (p. 104). Kirby, Charles Mair, William Wilfrid Campbell, Mazo de la Roche, George Grant, Dennis Lee and Al Purdy are the more successful representatives of his outline of Loyalist cultural definition and redefinition. That outline is continuous and does possess some coherence when the reader has been able to reconstruct it from the discontinuous and somewhat incoherent manner of its presentation. When the outline has been thus liberated, it can be seen to possess some interest and validity.

The Loyalist vision, Duffy suggests, developed in the following stages. First, it originates in the factual experience of a group of American colonists who were forced, some by chance and some by the confused circumstances of war, to desert their former homes and

to seek new residence in the Canadian colonies. Very soon, at least in Upper Canada with which Duffy is concerned, the facts of the historical experience of defeat, dispossession and exile, and the occupation of a new land, begin to be compromised, altered and refashioned into a narrative which equates defeat with moral nobility, dispossession and exile with Christian[2] suffering, and occupation of a new land with images of promised land and of redemption. The myth is beginning to be formed and receives impetus from the "Loyalist" victory of the War of 1812, an interpretation of fact which ignores the roles of other groups, such as that of British regular soldiers for instance, and an expansion of narrative to include the theme of vindication and reward for a "deep attachment to traditions of western civility" (p. 10). The myth then compounds its conservatism, and continues to compromise fact, by taking on associations with Family Compact government, which Loyalists did not monopolize, and with Anglican establishmentarianism — the original Loyalists were not primarily Anglican. Victory and vindication are again subsumed to the credit of Loyalist virtue in the defeat of the insurgencies of 1837.

Then comes a rather serious gap in Duffy's chronicle. He fails to consider the impact on the developing, transformative and accretive Loyalist myth of the acquisition of responsible government in the 1840's, 50's, and 60's and the institution of nationhood in 1867. Duffy ignores these formative events, formative that is, for most aspects of Canadian culture, and proceeds to an analysis of the myth as articulated in the work of Charles Mair, principally in the verse-play *Tecumseh* (1886), where it is beginning to be assailed by the secularist forces of nationalism and individualism with a consequent loss of moral vigour and character, and to take on a darker hue. Campbell's *A Beautiful Rebel* (1909) further depicts the split between Loyalist romance with its emphasis upon "an agrarian, deferential and devout polity" (p. 75), and modernistic realism with its pragmatic, "unabashedly liberal, capitalist, and (abashedly) secularist society" (p. 75). Duffy sees this split widening in de la Roche's Jalna novels which displace from historical reality even further Loyalist images of exile, garden, and of the covenantal life, displaces them so far that they serve simply as the substanceless pattern for the genteel life of Whiteoak imperialism. By this time, too, the Loyalist myth is being subsumed within a myth of pioneering, and the movement which Duffy has been tracing from the moral/romantic Loyalist myth to the realist/pragmatic modern vision is coming close to completion. Hood's *A New Athens* (1977), as I have already suggested, confirms this process, and all that remains is to lament its passing. This Duffy hears in the various voices of

Grant, Lee, and Purdy, and this I hear, not entirely displaced, in Duffy's own voice.

My reconstruction of Duffy's literary history of the Loyalism of Upper Canada/Ontario illustrates, I hope, that his subject is fascinating and important. I agree with the general shape of his outline. I disagree with many of its particulars. It is also, in my view, incomplete, and disadvantageously structured. The research indicated in the footnotes is impressive in scope (I would like to have seen it organized into a proper bibliography); the use of research in the Richardson chapter is decidedly unimpressive.

Gardens, Covenants, Exiles is an uneven work. I agree with its author that it makes "a few wild stabs," that it is tentative and inexact," and that it traces "in hops and jumps a vital tradition in the literature of Upper Canada/Ontario." I don't agree that this is necessary. I wish that Duffy had proceeded further than "intuition" and "speculation," that he had employed the required rigour and developed a complete portrait of Loyalism in the literature of Upper Canada/Ontario. It is worth doing, and I think Dennis Duffy can do it.

NOTES

[1] David Beasley, *The Canadian Don Quixote*, the life and works of Major John Richardson. Erin, Ontario: The Porcupine's Quill, 1977.

[2] Christianity, of course, has appropriated the Hebraic patterns of the Old Testament, and these are employed extensively throughout the Loyalist myth.

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Books Received

BERLIN, NORMAND, *The Secret Cause: A Discussion of Tragedy.* Amherst: U. of Massachusetts Press, 1981. pp. xii, 190. $17.60.

BERNSTEIN, MICHAEL ANDRE, *The Tale of the Tribe: Ezra Pound and the Modern Verse Epic.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980. pp. xiv, 320. $22.50.

CHABOT, C. BARRY, *Freud on Schreber: Psychoanalytic Theory and the Critical Act.* Amherst: U. of Massachusetts Press, 1982. pp. 176. $17.50.

CHATTERJEE, VISVANATH, *Mysticism in English Poetry.* Calcutta: Progressive Publishers, 1980. pp. x, 168. Rs. 25.00.

HUNTER, JEFFERSON, *Edwardian Fiction.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982. pp. xii, 280. $17.50.

HYMES, DELL, *"In vain I tried to tell you": Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics.* Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania Press, 1981. pp. 402. $49.00.

JACOBSEN, JOSEPHINE, *The Chinese Insomniacs: New Poems.* Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania Press, 1981. pp. 80. $14.00.

JAMESON, FREDRIC, *The Political Unconsciousness.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981. pp. 307. $19.50.

KURISMMOOTIL, JOSEPH, *Heaven and Hell on Earth: An Appreciation of Five Novels of Graham Greene.* Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1982. pp. viii, 268. $8.95.

MARKS, EMERSON R., *Coleridge on the Language of Verse.* Princeton University Press (Princeton Essays in Literature), 1981. pp. xii, 121. $9.50.

MILLER, J. HILLIS, *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982. pp. x, 250. $15.00.

MOSER, THOMAS C., *The Life in the Fiction of Ford Madox Ford.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982. pp. xx, 348. $22.50; $8.95 pb.

WILSON, R. B. J., *Henry James's Ultimate Narrative: The Golden Bowl.* St. Lucia: U. of Queensland Press. pp. xii, 329. $31.50.

WINN, JAMES ANDERSON, *Unsuspected Eloquence: A History of the Relations Between Poetry and Music.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981. pp. xiv, 382. $18.95.