

rejecting mother. As Ty shrewdly observes, this novel can be read as a mother-daughter "love story," one tragically frustrated by Editha Mowbray's obsession with abstract, Godwinian theory, and subsequent inability to *feel* any maternal love for her daughter. In the last novel Ty discusses, Opie's *Temper*, Ty persuasively shows how the daughters in this two-generation plot consistently sacrifice or compromise the sexual independence and desire of their mothers.

Throughout *Empowering the Feminine*, Eleanor Ty provides judicious and perceptive readings of these fictions, readings finely informed by Kristeva's and Luce Irigaray's theoretical discussions of female subjectivity and the mother-daughter bond. By focusing on issues of gender and maternity, Ty goes far beyond the class-based analyses of these novels previously offered by Gary Kelly. Ty's theoretical model might have been further enriched by attending to Nancy Chodorow's more sociological and historical conceptualisation of maternity in *The Reproduction of Mothering*, but her accounts of individual fictions are always sensible and at times profoundly insightful. This is a book that anyone interested in these three women authors will need to consult.

ANNE K. MELLOR

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Brian Trehearne. *The Montreal Forties: Modernist Poetry in Transition*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1999. Pp. 380. \$60.00

*The Montreal Forties* offers a broad look at English Canadian poetry in Montreal in the late forties and early fifties, and a detailed examination of four poets: P.K. Page, A.M. Klein, Irving Layton, and Louis Dudek. Brian Trehearne has written his book as an antidote for the accepted historical narrative of the period. Unfortunately, in setting the record straight, he performs an unjustified hatchet job on John Sutherland, one of the seminal figures in the Montreal poetry scene of that era.

Trehearne takes as his starting point the idea that the legendary feud between *Preview* and *First Statement* is not all that important, and that what should be emphasized are the similarities shared by the members of the two camps. "We have," he argues, "ignored the appar-

ently commonsensical idea that the poets of a given era must necessarily face a common inheritance" (9-10). By stressing important similarities, we can come to a clearer understanding of the "Montreal forties." I'm not sold. Controversy is a better breeding ground for creativity than clubby me-tooing. Even Trehearne is attracted to it. Though he says the "feud" between the two little magazines isn't important, he spends much of the book talking about it. A second new spin is that the forties are most important as the gateway to the fifties. The accepted take is that the Montreal forties were a time of revolution, excitement and new beginnings, and that the fifties were rather dull by comparison. Trehearne, however, suggests that the forties were the adolescence of something in poetry, but that the fifties were the time of consolidation and maturation.

Hand in hand with his dismissal of the feud comes Trehearne's overly harsh depiction of John Sutherland as a mere tactician and opportunist. By downplaying the feud, he is able to depreciate the importance of Sutherland's critical writings, many of which were created in the context of opposition to *Preview* poetics. As an example of this supposed insincerity, he cites Sutherland's denigration of A.J.M. Smith, which, he says, is insincere because it attacks religion while using the rhythms and language of Sutherland's Christian education: "A typical polemicist, he was less concerned to find a consistent alternative to Smith's views, or to *Preview's* than to establish *First Statement* on a more prominent footing" (22). The logic is superficial. There is nothing inherently insincere about using the rhetorical flourishes of an opponent to reduce him to absurdity. And to attack "Bishop Smith" and his Eliotian take on religion and poetry is not to deny religion. Many Protestant denominations survive without bishops. Elsewhere Trehearne takes cheap shots and attributes venal motives to Sutherland, such as a shakily supported claim that Sutherland was critical of P.K. Page's verse because she had rejected him as a suitor (53). At best, he doles out backhanded compliments, such as presenting Sutherland as the decade's "chief nay-sayer" (318).

The most stimulating aspect of Trehearne's book is his pursuit of the development of *integritas* in Page, Klein, Layton, and Dudek. He brilliantly delineates the search for this *integritas* as the defining quality of these four poets' evolution from the forties to the fifties:

the broad modern search for a new *integritas* that would permit poetry's adherence to *and* growth beyond late-Imagist accumulation: the coherent force of the poem would become by the mid-1950s the delineation through *presence or absence* of the poet's speaking voice (73)

*Integritas* has dual connotations, referring to both moral integrity and the integration of sensibility, style and world view. Together it means the achievement of a wholeness of vision and personality. The core of

the book lies in the four chapters in which the author traces each poet's quest for *integritas*.

As the forties slid into the fifties, Page became increasingly unhappy with her poetics, which were essentially more flash than substance. In part, Trehearne attributes this unhappiness to Sutherland's hostile criticism. She went through a long silence, during which, one assumes, she mulled things over and came out in the sixties with a more solid content while retaining her skill with images. With Klein, Trehearne traces the reasons for a poet's failure to find *integritas*. The short answer is that Klein became mentally ill and was, therefore, unable to express himself coherently. Trehearne searches for the causes of Klein's disintegration in three problems that were presented to him as an artist living at that period. The first is "the fetishization of literary style" (121) as evidenced by his deep interest in Joyce. Klein took the strong interest in matters of style, which poets of the Montreal forties shared, to an extreme. The second is survivor guilt as felt by a Jew who lived out the Holocaust in the safety of North America. The third is an emotional reaction to the political infighting of the two groups of poets in Montreal. Trehearne makes effective use of lines from "A Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" to support this point.

One notes in passing that so far this *unimportant* feud has eased one poet into a monumental writer's block and nudged another toward mental collapse.

"The forties," Trehearne writes, "were, not, then, Layton's decade" (176), and adds that "Layton's status as a major Canadian poet . . . is based almost entirely on the poems he wrote after the collapse of the forties literary culture" (176). Layton starts out in the forties as an "impersonal" poet, much like Klein and Page. He is more successful than them in his fifties transition. He does not go mad, and he does not suffer a silent period (ever). He develops his egoistic, first person superman persona, and finds that voice which allows him to speak of the personal and the impersonal. It is his form of *integritas*.

Of Dudek, Trehearne says, "only Dudek can help us chart the full formal implications of forties poetic debate, as they filtered along the deltas of his own long poems" (243). But then he unaccountably — or "idiosyncratically" as he says of his practice (243) — rests much of his argument on *Continuation*, a long poem from the eighties. "In the forties," he argues "Dudek had shown particular fits as lyricist and Imagist, as well as a somewhat ambivalent desire, typical of that decade, for longer poetic structures . . . [L]yric and Imagist methods, whose paradoxical conjunction would be central to the long-poem aesthetics Dudek was to explore, did not fuse easily in the forties' imagination" (264). Therefore, Dudek's *Integritas*, not fully achieved until the eighties, involves overcoming this "forties imagination" and evolving a style that works on the micro and macro levels the imagistic

fragments which seem random, but which the poet's imagination fuses into a grand structure. The chapter on Dudek, while highly enlightening about his late career, does not have much to tell us about Dudek and the Montreal forties.

*The Montreal Forties* would be a more enjoyable read without the author's irritating self-centredness and propensity for whining. The first person pronoun is given a too prominent place:

I took the three basic polemic positions in order to mine this archive: I rejected a dominant narrative frame for 1940s period study, the little magazine; I forced the Canadian poets as far as I could into international contexts; and I refused the negative image of modernism's styles and purposes, taking it for granted instead that all my poets were critically alert and deeply feeling individuals (319)

"My poets"? And why pre-emptively admit defeat by stating that "it will probably do little to weaken further the consensus over *First Statement* and *Preview* to demonstrate...affinities of personality and intellect between Sutherland and Anderson" (32)? Is the lack of confidence in himself or in his audience?

Overall, this is a thoroughly researched and documented work. It is marred by the quirks of style and tone mentioned in the previous paragraph and is unbalanced with respect to John Sutherland, but it is certainly the best book on its subject to date.

DON PRECOSKY