

bath) during his regular visits there with Sophie, his nanny. Redolent with sensuality and eroticism, the story is rare in its appeal. Equally noteworthy is Hassan Daoud's also autobiographical treatise on the cultural meanings attached to the moustache, that unmistakable and indispensable sign of virility in a number of Middle Eastern societies.

Coming from Cyprus and having a special interest in gender politics, I found this collection of essays particularly enlightening, appealing and exciting to read. Having served in the Cypriot army, I felt compelled to read Sinclair-Webb's superb article on military service in Turkey. Having had a grandfather who was greatly proud of his moustache, I found Hassan Daoud's contribution to be one of the several moments in this collection that had me absorbed and moved. I think this book will quickly become an important reference. Finally, I appreciate the politics of two female editors bringing out a collection on male identity in the Middle East. As Emma Sinclair-Webb rightly points out, working on women also means working on men, and "[f]ocusing on masculinity should not be seen as a shift away from feminist projects, but rather as a complementary endeavor, indeed one that is organically linked" (8).

Stavros Stavrou Karayanni

---

George C. Jacob, ed. *Encounter and Identity: Perspectives on Indo-Canadian Studies*. New Delhi: Prestige, 2001. 207 pp. Rs. 400.

This volume of twenty-three essays comes out of the International Seminar on Canadian Studies held in January 2000 at the Centre for Canadian Studies at Union Christian College in Alwaye, Kerala. Similar volumes such as *Canadian Studies: New Perspectives* (New Delhi: Creative Books, 1998) indicate keen interest in Canadian Studies by young Indian scholars, who offer valuable comparative perspectives on the two countries' shared colonial and postcolonial experiences, however diverse. The main themes of the essays in this collection are cultural identity (tellingly, the word "identity" appears in the titles of more than half of the essays) as well as "encounters of the colonial, migratory, cross-cultural, constitutional, multilingual, and many more kinds" (Preface). Overall, the book is a laudable effort in engaging with the concerns of both nations with multiculturalism and multilingualism, the changing status and role of women, first-nation peoples' rights (Tribals' rights in India), and even postcolonial writing strategies in general.

An overview to the book would have been helpful in providing some idea of the general situation of Canadian Studies in India, the historical, social and literary contexts for the main themes and issues of the Seminar, as well as a rationale for the arrangement of the essays into six sections somewhat vaguely titled “Dialectics of Identity,” “Discourses of the Border Zone,” “Polemics of Marginalisation,” and so on. The first section, “Contexts of Discourse,” deals with interesting ideas in sociology and political science in essays on secularism in a multicultural society, identity (“genetic metaphysics”), economics (“vertical and horizontal fiscal imbalances”), and recent Canadian science fiction. The rest of volume is mostly devoted to fiction and drama. There is no discussion of poetry, but there is a lone essay on a Metis documentary film, *Women in the Shadows* by Christine Welsh.

One can't help but notice that three of the four essays concerning plays by women – Margaret Hollingsworth's *Islands*, Carol Bolt's *Red Emma*, Sharon Pollock's *Blood Relations*, Pamela Boyd's *Inside Out*, and two of Wendy Lill's plays, *The Fighting Days* and *The Occupation of Heather Rose* – begin in a similar vein: “One of the significant developments of English Canadian drama has been the emergence of a strong feminist voice” (60, 92, 99). Amid broad questions such as “What is feminism?” (83) and generalizations such as “All Canadian women playwrights write about women. . . . The plays are all set in Canada” (92), the discussions tend to be descriptive rather than analytical, expounding less than original views on the search for female identity and empowerment, and paying scant attention to dramatic techniques or character development. However, the essay entitled “Parody as Feminist Strategy in Canadian Fiction,” using Linda Hutcheon's theories of parody and the postmodern, fruitfully explores works by Audrey Thomas, Gail Scott and Margaret Atwood (there are also two other essays on Atwood's *Bodily Harm*).

There seems to be particular interest in the native literature of Canada – especially in Tomson Highway's plays, *The Rez Sisters* and *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*. There are studies of contact narrative in Wendy Lill's play *The Occupation of Heather Rose* and of the search for racial identity in Christine Welsh's documentary *Women in the Shadows*. One essay on native women's writing analyzes the use of subversive first-person narrative to achieve subjectivity in Beatrice Culleton's *April Raintree*, Jeanette Armstrong's *Slash*, and Lee Maracle's *I Am Woman*, but it borrows excessively from *Canadian Literature's* special issue on native literature edited by W. H. New. Another discussion of native short fiction – specifically Lee Maracle's short stories “Charlie” and “Maggie” – promises a “reconception of the aesthetic of native writing” (188), yet the article demonstrates

little engagement with Maracle's "eco-feminist concerns and her deft exploitation of the oral tradition" (188), and remains yet another rendition of plot summary. The only substantial essay in treating native writing is one with the grandiose title "Culture, Myth and Language: the Contours of Identity in Tomson Highway's *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*." It examines the dream structure of the play, the significance of the trickster figure Nanabush, the symbolic features of drum and dance, and the extensive use of Cree language in the play.

More illuminating and useful is the comparative section, entitled "Canada and India: Imaginative Equations." Aside from a scathing attack on Janette Turner Hospital's *The Ivory Swing* for its "neocolonialist" and "orientalist" approaches to India (though the essayist seems to confuse the viewpoint of the character with that of the author), the other comparative essays in the section command interest. In a discussion of the subversion of sacred texts, Leslie Thomas contrasts Timothy Findley's provocative treatment of the Noah's Ark story in his novel *Not Wanted on the Voyage* with Shashi Tharoor's allegorical rewriting of the *Mahabharata* in *The Great Indian Novel*. Kishore Ram discusses John Gray's play *Billy Bishop Goes to War* and O. V. Vijayan's novel *Thalamurakal*, showing how in both the military serves as surrogate identity for the main characters: Billy Bishop attains his identity, other than that of a colonial, only by fighting in the British army in the First World War, while Velappan elevates his from a low-caste untouchable to a superior status also by donning a British uniform. Finally, M. Dasan compares Narayan's *Kocharethi* (not *the* R. K. Narayan) and Thomas King's *Medicine River*, noting similarities between the native people in Canada and the Tribals and Dalits in India.

Overall, the quality and length (ranging from 5 to 17 pages) of the essays are uneven. One also wishes for more vigorous and careful editing as well as a consistent style of documentation. Further, aside from one reference to Hutcheon (90) and a few other scant references (182), most of the essays rely only on primary works and make no reference to critical sources or existing scholarship. One article does include an impressive works cited with names such as Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and Aijaz Ahmad (189); however, there is no reference to any of their works in the article itself. Another ten-page study entitled "The Politics of Domestic Sphere" (72) lists twenty reports, yet without providing a coherent chronology of the reports (ranging from 1969 to 1995), thoughtful organization or contextual analysis of the data, or any insightful conclusions other than the accumulation of random statistics. Even the title of the article is lifted directly from one of its sources.

Shao-Pin Luo