Phyllis Mcleod

NOVEMBER 2011

Terralyn McKee

Sharon Mcleod

Greg Stott

4.1

Moiz Bakhiet

Brenda Firman

the quint

the quint volume four issue one

an interdisciplinary quarterly from the north

the quint welcomes submissions. See our guidelines or contact us at:

the quint
University College of the North
PO Box 3000
The Pas MB
Canada R9A 1K7

We cannot be held responsible for unsolicited material.

A quarterly journal, the quint is housed in and produced by the Humanities Area of The University College of the North. The encouragement and support of the Office of the Vice President Academic for this project at the University College of the North is deeply appreciated.

EDITORIAL

Merry Christmas to all our *quint* readers. We at the quint wish to wish you all the happiness thatthe holidays may hold. 2012 promises to be a wonderful new year with more exciting materials from the North to bring your way. Our next issue of quint will take us out of the boreal forest andinto another "North." The good folks at Northern Lights College in Fort Saint John, British Columbia, will be showcasing their northern experience for us in March.

Time has passed so quickly since we began publishing that it is almost impossible to believe that *the quint* is now into its fourth volume. It is with great pleasure that we are able to present to you an issue in which every article and story highlights the work of individuals at the University College of the North.

This quint begins with Brenda Firman's insightful investigation of teaching in aboriginal classrooms and Sharon McLeod's call for an aboriginal and northern museum in the boreal region of Manitoba. We are then very pleased to offer our readers Terralyn McKee's article outlining nature of aboriginal pedagogy and Greg Stott's discussion of The Pas' contribution during the Great War of 1914-18. An article examining the work of African poet, Christopher Okigbo by John Butler and another which considers cinematic metaphors found in Robert Altman's McCabe and Mrs Miller (1971) by myself concludes our scholarly offerings. Anne Jevne was privileged to be able to discuss traditional leatherworking with Phyllis McLeod, Cecilia Ross, and Rod Nabess for this issue. We are extremely honored to be able to showcase one of Phyllis McCleod's sensitive poems and premiere English translations of the poetry of Moiz Bakheit, a poet living in the Sudan.

It is time to allow you to take this quint and a cup of cheer to the living room, settle yourself by the fire, and begin to enjoy your holiday season.

Thank you again for your support of the quint.

Sue Matheson
Editor

contents

Reviews

Contributors

Call for Papers / Guideline

*L*earning from *G*ifts

by Brenda Firman, University College of the North, Thompson, Manitoba

An old VHS tape on my bookshelf holds a Canadian documentary that has not been available for many years now. Filmed during the last year of the International Decade for the Disabled, it documents the efforts of an Ontario March of Dimes fieldworker in her remote northern Aboriginal community. The documentary was aired on the TV program *Human Edge* as part of their Disability Series. The introduction notes that the number of Native Canadians living with a disability is twice that of non-natives and that approximately 30% of Native Canadians have a disability. The fieldworker explains that there are no words in her language for descriptors such as 'retarded', 'disabled', or 'developmentally disabled'. Human Edge host Catherine Olsen explains how, in Aboriginal communities, 'disabled' children are considered to be a gift from the Creator, sent to teach the family and the community lessons of acceptance, understanding, and a new way of looking at the world. I remember a time when I was graced with such a gift.

Stephen looked about five years old and appeared to be as stubborn, persistent and disruptive in the institutional setting as an active two-year old. He grunted and pointed to communicate. He still wore diapers and frequently soiled himself at school. Stephen threw tantrums and could scatter the contents of a desk or a room in a flash. He disrupted the entire school, darting in and out of classrooms to turn the lights off and on – often refusing to leave voluntarily. Stephen was ten years old. He had Down's syndrome.

Everyone in the community loved and accepted Stephen. He wore his emotions on

his sleeve. He was so openly loving and his glee was so vibrant. Stephen always received a special award at school assemblies. When his name was announced, he ran to the stage with great excitement, accepted the award, and motioned for the microphone. Full attention was given to Stephen as he proudly and unselfconsciously grunted, babbled and gestured. When he was ready, Stephen gave back the microphone and bowed to the audience. He walked off the stage to thunderous applause and friendly whistles; then ran to his educational assistant for her approval and recognition.

Lucy (Stephen's educational assistant) was young, enthusiastic, and willing to try new ideas. She had attended high school in the city. She talked about her grandfather and what she has learned from him. She shared stories of how, for many years, her grandfather has taken youth out on the land. Lucy also expressed some frustration with Stephen's parents whom, she said, never take Stephen anywhere. I began to hear about problems between Stephen's parents and the school.

Stephen was on the nominal role of the Grade Four class. The classroom teacher wanted 'inclusion' and Stephen was expected to report to that room for attendance, and spend as much time as possible with the class. The principal's concerns were that Stephen not disrupt the regular classrooms and that there be no political repercussions from Stephen's parents. So many people had a stake in Stephen; and the caring was mixed with personal agendas and conflicting worldviews. As Special Education teacher on this tiny, remote, and isolated reserve what was *my* personal agenda and worldview?

I focused first on relationships. I was new in the community and must build relationships carefully and respectfully. Stephen did not know me, or I him. I began to follow Stephen around, copying everything he did. He caught on quickly. He tested me. Would I really follow him up and down the hall for twenty minutes? Would I stand and wait… and wait... and wait… until he chose what to do next? Would I copy his sounds and his motions? I did. Stephen did not push too far. He obviously enjoyed my copying. He did not challenge me by doing things that I could not or should not copy. He did not force my hand – although he delighted in pushing the boundaries. We began to trust each other. All behaviour is communication. Somehow, Stephen had not felt listened to and had turned to misbehaviour in order to communicate. It was not enough to love him. We must listen to him with our hearts.

I was new in the community and must build relationships and connections with humility and openness. Stephen's home was his life. Home and school must support each other. Home for Ste-

phen meant mother, father, and four younger siblings. Yet Stephen will forever remain the 'baby' of the family. Luckily, Mum already knew me – her father told her I was moving here (she was a teenager ten years ago when I taught in the community where her parents still live). The moccasin telegraph can be wonderful! As soon as we arrived in town, my six-year old granddaughter and Mum's young niece became immediate good friends on the playground. Mum and her sister had probably already laughed together about my calling the radio station to report that I could not find my daughter. Mum's sister brought my little girl home. Past and present connections reduced the tension associated with my first visit to Stephen's home as his teacher. We chatted and caught up on news. While I played with the younger children, Stephen hid in his room – occasionally poking his head out. Dad returned from a meeting at the Band Office and shared proudly about Stephen's love of the bush and of hockey. We all laughed together about Dad's recent four-day hunting trip that offered up only one partridge. I listened and watched and played and laughed and learned. I did not talk about school. Stephen was well loved. He *did* go places with the family. Just not within the community – at least, not visibly. Mum had her reasons. I wondered how life had been for her.

Before long, Stephen and Lucy moved into our resource room full time (I was gently promoting a name change from 'special education' in an attempt to diminish some of the associated stigma). We currently shared the room with the curriculum coordinator. The situation was a recipe for disaster considering her array of books and paperwork and Stephen's penchant for throwing tantrums. Now one more person had a vested interest in 'the problem of Stephen'. One more person's voice was added to the professional gossip mill of personal opinion. Lucy and I worked together to set up a space that belonged to Stephen. If we wanted him to respect the boundaries of others, we must first provide him with his own boundaries – a place of his own, where he is 'the boss'. That is how it was for him at home. He had his own space. Lucy and I began to work together on a program for Stephen. Her enthusiasm grew as new materials and equipment began to arrive. Lucy had neither professional training nor prior experience with special needs children, yet had previously been left on her own to do the job. She was eager to learn. I learned a lot from her. She lived so well with Stephen.

Stephen still had tantrums that escalated with attempted interventions. Eventually, when Stephen calmed down, he was contrite and apologetic. He so obviously felt so badly, yet there was so much

damage for him to try to repair as he made amends. The next time Stephen began to explode, I tried holding him with warmth and compassion until his furor was over. I murmured to him as I would to any hurting child. I forestalled any talk, from anyone, that was directed towards 'talking' to Stephen about what he had done, or what he should now do. It was not until Stephen's posture, facial expression and energy indicated he was ready that Lucy verbalized as Stephen signed "sorry". Stephen himself initiated both the repair of physical damage and hugs for the personal damage. Stephen was truly sorry. We must not give him 'bad boy' messages. Lucy showed confidence in the process by using it herself. At first we needed two adults, for Stephen remained angry with the person who had held him. Hugs with that person were the final part of making amends. Over time, the intensity of Stephen's struggle decreased, as did the frequency of the tantrums. We learned to notice the warning signs, and to help Stephen defuse before his emotions became a 'critical mass'. We slowly learned the many ways that Stephen felt disrespected. Our own behaviour was often the source of Stephen's frustration.

But I needed to learn *that* lesson over and over again. It was months before I recognized that my casual entries into Stephen's space to speak with Lucy frequently contributed to Stephen's frustration. How inconsistent I was! I provided Stephen with a space, and then invaded it at will. I began to ask Stephen's permission prior to entering his space and stealing Lucy's attention. Sometimes he said "no". I respected that. I felt honoured that Stephen continued to trust me and that he made up his own 'sign' to refer to me.

Shirley was twelve years old, and twice Stephen's size. After watching Shirley for a few minutes, it was difficult to avoid the label of severe developmental delay. Shirley seldom spoke. Even her head-nods in answer to yes/no questions did not reflect consistent communication (Are you cold? Yes. Are you hot? Yes.) I had the impression that her expression never changed. Tom was ten years old and very shy. He kept his head down, close into his chest, and avoided contact with anyone but his educational assistant, Peter. Federal funding provided half-time support for both Shirley and Tom. Peter had worked full time with both students for the last two years. They all sat together at a table in the regular classroom. This year they were placed in Grade Five, although academically Shirley could be placed in Kindergarten and Tom in Grade Two. As with Stephen, the classroom teacher promoted inclusion. She also expected Peter to follow the classroom schedule and include as much Grade Five content as possible in his students' programming. The classroom atmosphere was both strict and condemning. Peter began to bring his students to the Resource room for parts of the day.

Before long, they became full time residents, joining the Grade Five class only for Native Language and Gym.

With the curriculum coordinator now ensconced in her own office, the resource room became home to six full time residents – myself, two educational assistants (Lucy and Peter), and three children (Stephen, Tom and Shirley). There was also a constant stream of small groups of children who received instruction for part of the day. After Peter helped set up the computers, we were also able to accommodate individual students as they worked at self-directed programming. We began to work as a team, 'mixing and matching' students to meet varying needs throughout the day. Shirley enjoyed working with Lucy and assisted her with Stephen for parts of the day. This freed Peter to work with two boys who required full-time assistance if they were to achieve academically. Tom became more social and his production improved tremendously as he warmed to this more appropriate grouping. Tom attended the regular classroom more frequently, while Shirley remained in the resource room full-time. A third educational assistant (Sarah), responsible for a child in the half-day Kindergarten, requested help with programming and brought Emily to the resource room for part of her day. This opened up other possibilities, as Shirley was at Emily's instructional level while Stephen and Emily enjoyed activities together. The room was a beehive of activity and home to many of the worst behaviour problems in the school; yet the atmosphere remained calm, productive, and respectful.

Most of the credit for this belonged to the community paraprofessionals. They were able to create a mood that felt more like the community than like the institution of school. I remain convinced that the continuous presence of the *Anishininimowin* language was a strong contributing factor. Peter tuned into the local radio station and kept it playing quietly at all times. Soon Shirley was singing along with an amazing variety of tunes – from hymns sung in *Anishininimowin* to the latest pop hits. She nodded knowingly as she listened to the announcements of rummage sales. After Sarah called the news to me in English, the boys chimed in with directions to the house, then immediately returned to working on their assignments. We were an extended family – a mix of adults and children of different ages, a mix of personalities, and a mix of strengths, a mix of needs. As we did our best to look after each other, the students' school skills grew.

Stephen kept us all in line. Any tendencies to misbehave were easily dealt with by reminding the students that Stephen copied everything he saw. Stephen wanted to be just like them. The boy who was

asked to keep all four chair legs on the floor easily understood that if Stephen were to push his chair back on two legs, he might fall and hurt himself. A student ejected from his classroom by his teacher was brought to our room instead of being sent home. He regained some self-esteem by helping Stephen. We all benefited. Whenever Stephen began acting out, we learned to look at how our adult behaviour was negatively affecting the usual equilibrium. As a team of adults, we usually noticed when another person was short on energy and helped each other out in various ways. This was never an arrangement that was detailed and spoken. We just did it. But sometimes we were all low in energy – especially during times following community tragedies and at anniversary dates of previous suicides. At these times, we closed the door to the room, settled the students at cooperative activities, and grouped together at the round table to talk. The children felt the energy of what was happening for us. They required no intervention, taking good care of each other. We talked as we needed to talk, for as long as we needed to (provided the principal didn't poke her head into the room). These were very special times.

We measured the appropriateness of the learning environment and the programming by watching the children and by feeling the energy; not by evaluating the children's paperwork against some arbitrary measure, although we did look for forward movement in each child's developing skills in *all* areas of their lives.

Inclusion should be seen from the eyes of the child. Stephen needed his own space. In time, he began to share it with others. He also visited other classrooms to share in their activities. Shirley needed to be separated from her twinning with Tom. She also needed a very safe place where she could 'include' herself with adult females from the community. She gained self-esteem as a caregiver and teacher for Stephen. With no adults nearby, she held up word cards for Stephen and said the words clearly, sometimes in English and sometimes in her own language. Stephen responded with his version of the word. They laughed and giggled together, independently maintaining the activity for at least fifteen minutes. Tom desperately needed to be separated from the twinning with Shirley. He gained inclusion in our room with a small group of boys, and inclusion in his class as he returned for various activities without Shirley and Peter.

By allowing the children a separate space, responsive to their needs, we were able to promote a more natural *inclusion* by including other students and teachers in *our* space.

Your shape of ability

To your memory
I climbed the shining beams of the moon
on a night that included your face as a shape of magic
when I reached the moon; I suddenly recognized that
it was you
You are the color of beauty and the shape of ability
to invade me like a missile
The waves of your warmness hold me
and drive me unconsciously to the island of your hug.
Things with yours everything including the blue feelings
of sadness are mirrors of a great person that is you…
The purity is covering my travel towards you with clouds of happiness
and the wings of the wind are smiling

When I carry my enthusiasm to the rain…
While I am gazing at a colorless spot on the air
you absorb me and adsorb by power to escape from reality
when I meet you, on the first day I meet you
Be prepared for unlimited journeys

Moiz

Museums as Keepers of Aboriginal and Northern Knowledge and Heritage in Northern Manitoba

by Sharon McLeod, University College of the North, Thompson, Manitoba

The purpose of this paper is to reflect on and raise the level of public awareness about the multi-dimensional role of museums in northern Manitoba to act as storehouses and to preserve and interpret of aboriginal and northern heritage. The role of northern museums, the people and places that provide a meaningful balance in the preservation, interpretation, and exhibition of the diversity of aboriginal and northern histories and cultures in northern Manitoba, is a complex web of undertakings. As a result, there is an imminent awareness of the increasing pressures that are placed on locally-based museums in northern Manitoba to fulfill their social responsibilities, which is to remain relevant and fully engaged with their northern and aboriginal communities, while at the same time, interpret northern and aboriginal heritage to the wider national and international publics.

There are eight community museums in northern Manitoba. They are located in the communities of Flin Flon, The Pas, Snow Lake, Wabowden, Thompson, Leaf Rapids, Lynn Lake, and Churchill. Each facility was created for the purpose of showcasing aspects of their community heritage, linking their community stories and histories to the broader northern and aboriginal audience, and displaying these materials to national and international visitors to the north. Their efforts to act as platforms for the particular aspects of northern and aboriginal heritage in their regions and to fulfill their social responsibilities in northern Manitoba have required endless hours of service from the staff and volunteers of these small museums to ensure that their visitors experience authentic representations of northern and aboriginal values and customs.

Several factors are involved when one considers these museums' efforts to interpret northern and aboriginal heritage in northern Manitoba: the lack of attention by Canadian historians and historiographers to the North, the newcomers' interactions with the North, the original inhabitant's orally-based understandings of the northern landscape, the cultural and social interchange between newcomers to the North and the original inhabitants, and finally, the accumulation of knowledge about the North that results because of this interaction.

In particular, the lack of attention to the North by Canadian historians has resulted in a situation where the North continues to be considered a marginal place with regard to Canada's historical past. W.L. Morton in his assessment of northern history initiated the call for Canadian historians to reassess their thinking about the North. He advocated that the North needs to be better understood. In his 1970 paper "The North in Canadian History", he states that "the ultimate and the comprehensive meaning of Canadian history is to be found where there has been no Canadian history, in the North."[1]

This absence of historiography regarding the North places museums in northern Manitoba in an important situation. By definition, they are the sole storehouses of a particular aspect of Canadian history that for the most part, goes unnoticed. Museums in northern Manitoba play a dual role by interpreting Canada's forgotten history and at the same time advocating to a wider audience the importance of their own and their country's northern heritage.

The newcomers' interaction with the North continues to be an integral undertaking for museums in northern Manitoba. Archeological evidence continues to provide countless of evidence of newcomers' interaction in the North with the local inhabitants of the land. Newcomers to Manitoba brought with them various aspects of their own unique language and cultural heritage and with their interactions with the original inhabitants of the land a distinctive northern and aboriginal heritage has been created of which they and their descendants are proud. There are many personal stories that have been and can continue to be told about their work and lives that are a valuable source of local northern knowledge for the rest of the world. Many came to northern Manitoba to live as prospectors, loggers, miners, civil services workers, medical practitioners, NGO's, and educators. These individuals participated in a northern life way of life that they constantly talk about as part of their own histories. By doing so, they have created a brand of northern knowledge that is characterized by personal sacrifice and adaptation, surviving in a climate that was very different than they originally knew. Northern museums play an integral role in documenting and preserving these regional stories and histories.

Currently, there are no community-based Aboriginal museums and/or locally-based cultural centers in northern Manitoba that preserve, maintain and enhance the oral traditions, stories and material histories of the First Nations in northern Manitoba. Northern Manitoba Cree, Dene, Inuit, Ojibway, Oji-Cree, Metis, Scottish Half-breeds, and/or non-status Indians, as constitutionally defined by the government of Canada, make up more than 60% of northern Manitoba's population. Although it is considered small compared to the rest of Canada, Northern Manitoba's population base is culturally

---

1 W. L. Morton, "The North in Canadian History," in A. B. McKillop, ed., *Contexts of Canada's Past* (Toronto: Carleton University Press, 1980).

diverse and rapidly changing. It is growing and adapting to global change. The Aboriginal part of northern Manitoba's aboriginal and northern heritage has yet to be shared with their fellow northern Manitoba neighbors and the rest of Canada.

Northern Manitoba's Elders and traditional storytellers and teachers share and pass on their oral knowledge through cultural ceremonial practices, celebrations, and community gatherings. Many of these community gatherings are locally organized and often held in the heart of the northern landscape—according to traditional values, beliefs and customs. According to cultural custom, the northern Elders validate the sacred oral knowledge that has become both oral and written in our modern world. These Elders constantly remind one and all of the imposed threats to their oral knowledge and language. With support from the traditional teachers and learners they are advocating for and have become participants in a cultural rebirth of the oral traditions and customs in northern Manitoba. Part of this increasingly broadening trend, is their call for a cultural healing of the land and its people in northern Manitoba. This call raises awareness of the need for a spiritual awakening and the rekindling of the northern value-based teachings that were once prevalent in the lives of aboriginal peoples who lived in close proximity with the northern landscape and the aboriginal cultures of northern Manitoba.

Northern museums recognize the need to partner with this orally-based way of life in order to complete their obligations and social responsibilities of preserving northern and aboriginal heritage. Nonetheless, need for a northern aboriginal museum in which to preserve and practice this cultural way of life should be addressed. Such a physical place would further the Elders' spiritual and cultural understandings of aboriginal culture and preserving the languages of northern Manitoba.

Northern museums are founded on a long legacy of historic land use and occupation of various cultures in northern Manitoba that require a certain degree of reflection and contemplation. Much of the northern landscape is currently situated on surrendered Crown Land through the numbered treaty-making process that began in 1875 with the signing of Treaty Number 5 in Norway House. The division of the northern Manitoba landscape is represented by Treaty Numbers 5 and 10. Much earlier, northern Manitoba has been the heart of the fur trade district for the Hudson's Bay Company's fur trade activities. The provincial and national archival records contain information that helps to tell the story of industrial and resource development in northern Manitoba. Before these activities, however, the original inhabitants of the land lived their lives in harmony with the resources that were necessary for their collective survival, according to the traditional and spiritual governance systems that directed their lives. As western expansion progressed and the coming of the railway line in the early 19th century spread from The Pas towards Churchill, northern Manitoba was experienced con-

tinued economic, political and social growth and development.

The cultural and social interchange between the newcomers and the original inhabitants in northern Manitoba produced and continues to produce a wealth of invaluable information that northern museums have the important mission to preserve.

courtesy of The Northern Heritage Museum, Thompson, MB

Continuing to undergo constant transformation, this cultural and social interchange is never static. It is an interchange worthy of appropriate authentication according to provincial and national museum and/or archival practice and standards. Localized heritage training continues to be the underlying factor to create cultural momentum in northern Manitoba. The broader question then becomes that of the extent of heritage resources that will be necessary to engage northern Manitoba community into mobilizing in order to create a heritage, a lasting legacy, in which northern Manitobans participate and share.

Finally, the accumulation of centuries of northern and aboriginal historical knowledge in northern Manitoba has created a treasure house of resources upon which northern museums can continue to build. If it is the role of northern Manitoba museums to engage in preserving, interpreting, and

showcasing the diversity of northern and aboriginal history of their local communities, now is the time to spring forward. When cultural and heritage institutions are continually looking to preserve under-recognized aspects of their regions' pasts, these northern museums may look forward to playing an important role in the continuing cultural development of the North. With their communities, these museums have captivating stories to showcase and share with the rest of society.

It is the time for northern and aboriginal community members to assess their local cultural resources and assist their northern museums to move beyond their present platforms to reclaim and broaden northern Manitoba's cultural capacity and to utilize their forgotten histories. A North in continual cultural transition, northern Manitoba has an important and over-looked legacy to share.

LAVENDER

Petals of purple fields awaken

Memories of my past

Encased with gifts

And embraced by love

Illusions of far off lands

Inside the touch of elegant hands

The aroma of exquisite eyes

That sees the beauty in disguise

The sands of time

Will always be

At the bottom of lavender seas

An eternity of memories

Laced in fields of purple dreams

-----Phyllis McLeod

Holistic Aboriginal Pedagogy: Transformative Learning and Restoration through Cultural Cognizance

by Terralyn McKee, University College of the North, The Pas, Manitoba

Introduction

Educational pedagogies define knowledge transmission and scope of learning within the developed framework of practice. While there are many philosophical theories that inform pedagogies and their focus of educational structure, most remain tacit and operate beneath the surface of the theoretical model, much as a *'hidden curriculum'* (Anderson, 2001; Margolis, 2001; Jackson, 1968; Dreeben 1968; Durkheim,1922; Marx, 1959), reinforcing patterns of power and privilege. It is this epistemological assumption that lies at the heart of current discourse on Aboriginal pedagogy within Canada (Battiste, 2002). Can the current Western pedagogical approach, so prevalent within current educational practice, accommodate Aboriginal context and culture? Or is it necessary to introduce new structures of knowing, learning and teaching to address the particular needs of Aboriginal students in Canada? And if so, how can and should this be done?

While historical and evolving philosophies within adult education practices have challenged the staid methodological and pedagogical approaches to knowledge acquisition, organization, and dissemination for the individual and for society, the underpinning philosophies directing adult education demonstrate no less than five separate approaches to adult learning– liberal, behaviourist, progressive, humanist and radical (Spencer, 2006) – all arising from a distinctive *a priori* perspective of Eurocentric philosophies.

In an effort to integrate Aboriginal context into curricula, Western strategies have exercised a narrow interpretive approach which has resulted in the reductionist view of elements within Aboriginal culture, generated static and ineffectual taxonomies, and an over-simplification of Aboriginal pedagogies. None of these approaches, singly or combined, fairly represent the holism of Aboriginal culture, knowledge, and contexts (Battiste, 2002). Liberal, behaviourist and progressive approach-

es to education have categorically failed Aboriginal learners as demonstrated by an unprecedented and growing gap between the educational levels of aboriginal students and non-aboriginal populations, particularly in secondary and post-secondary settings (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007).

Currently, humanist and radical philosophies offer the most appropriate catalyst for dialoguing the shift in Canadian educational paradigms in support of the reclamation of traditional ways of knowing as educational pedagogy. Transformative learning - a practice within radical and humanist philosophies, paired with restoration as defined by Lange (2004) - is one approach that has the potential to sustain and encourage current initiatives toward pedagogical advancement for a distinct Aboriginal way of knowing within Canadian academia milieu.

The Hubris of Eurocentric Educational Practice

The foundational premises of current educational pedagogies perpetuate the acceptance of *a priori* analytic models of knowledge acquisition. Science, empiricism, rationalism, and reductionism operate at the expense of intuition, insight, reflective self-dialogue, and inductive learning. This reliance on analytic educational methodology demonstrates the dichotomy in both thought and practice for Aboriginal learners. In a culture ravaged by colonization and a curricula devoid of holistic relationships and connections to self, aboriginal achievements in education have reached a crisis point that policy analysts calculate as beyond urgent. The following excerpts are from The Caledon Institute of Social Policy illustrate the current state of aboriginal education: "…Aboriginal people were falling further behind…. we are moving backward to a more unequal and less inclusive society….. Closing the gap would require a tripling or quadrupling of the number of Aboriginal graduates from universities in most provinces… at this rate of change, the Aboriginal population will never catch up and achieve parity" (Mendelson, 2006); from a report to the Council of Ministers of Education in 2003 one finds this assessment: "Aboriginals in Canada have the lowest incomes, the highest rates of poverty, the highest rates of dropping out of formal education, the lowest overall educational attainments and the worst health indicators of any group" (Tobin Associates, 2003).

In a variety of reports and studies, barriers to aboriginal academic success have been attributed to a number of core issues: the need to respond to community and family expectations, the underlying mistrust of education, family responsibilities and lack of supports, financial instability in education funding, overt and covert forms of discrimination, distance from the institution, alienation coming from within the institution, and cultural insensitivity (Mendelson, 2006) – all of which bear the

hallmarks of years of colonization, trauma and the institutional rejection of indigenous holism as a frame of reference (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2000; Mendelson, 2006; Bear Spirit Consulting, 2007).

There can be no doubt about the role that the hidden curriculum within Canadian educational pedagogies contributes to the erosion of both social and cultural capital for Aboriginal peoples and its process of unabated colonization (Battiste, 2000).

Aboriginal Ways of Knowing: Foundational Elements

There are a growing number of Aboriginal scholars who are or have contributed extensively to the area of indigenous pedagogies and ways of being and knowing. Battiste, Henderson, Black Elk, Hart, Tecumseh , Cajete, Ermine, Moore, Castellano, Stiffarm, and Ball, are only a few that come to mind. Each comes from a different 'space, place and time' within their cultural heritage but their contributions reinforce many of the core elements occurring within indigenous philosophy that appear to be innate within Aboriginal pedagogies.

According to Battiste & Henderson (2000), Aboriginal pedagogy stands on its own. It is not an extension or adaptation of Western pedagogies, and it deserves a place in scholarship to support its own theories, methods, concepts and values. Aboriginal pedagogies are holistic and inclusive, rather than unitary, positivistic and empirical like Western pedagogies. Current practice derives from established pedagogies which are based on the scientific model of induction, reason and empiricism. Anderson (2001) points out that there is a pernicious quality to the elements of 'hidden curriculum' – these qualities are the ones which work to distort authentic understanding of Aboriginal ways of knowing. The precepts are reorganized and reinterpreted within the conceptual framework and language of Western practices, all of which nullify the meaning and significance of the distinct knowledge paradigm. Case in point, the problems encountered when translating an indigenous language into a European language - the meanings are lost or confused as there is no direct translation of Aboriginal concepts into the existing framework of Western practice and understanding. To do so, razes the distinctness of Aboriginal ways of knowing and perpetuates another form of colonization upon Aboriginal cultures (Grande, 2004).

Enduring elements of Aboriginal pedagogies include a foundational base of holistic connection to all things. This fundamental concept is at the core of each distinct community of thought across Aboriginal cultures. Holism, in contrast to Western pedagogies, stresses the reliance upon collective con-

sideration of all components of the system as a whole. The interconnectedness and dependence upon relationships and their contexts creates a very complex and variable sense of understanding not possible through reductionist pedagogies of knowledge. Within holism, the whole is most certainly more than the sum of its parts. Western-derived taxonomies, principles and absolute systems of classification become conditional under the multifaceted lenses of holism. This is a principle most untenable within the scientific approach and is aptly summarized by research scientist Fred Kerlinger, "There's no such thing as qualitative data. Everything is either 1 or 0" (Miles & Humberman, 1994, p. 40).

Holism contains elements of metaphysics and theology which contradicts the premises of a positivistic philosophy where observation and experimentation are meant to isolate, describe, classify, and define elements within the environment of study. The 'nature of being' and the manner of 'coming to know' contain uniquely spiritual qualities within the context of holism. Holism within Aboriginal pedagogies embraces the spirit, or life force, of all elements and assigns meaning and relationship to these elements and their interactions; as such they are mutually dependent upon one another and are not subject to separation and classification (Battiste & Henderson 2000). A web of connectedness is created that cannot be isolated without destroying the essence of the element(s). This type of focus is beyond the scope and language of scientific method – as Kerlinger posits, qualities that cannot be quantified do not exist. Hence, Aboriginal pedagogies are problematic for current educational systems!

Another recurring premise of Aboriginal pedagogies, as identified within holism, is the element of relationship. How elements relate to one another and the process of stasis or balance and harmony form a dynamic aim within Aboriginal epistemology. These associations are expressed in both personal and social contexts within Aboriginal constructs of being and coming to be, knowing and coming to know. Knowledge is localized in relationship to the environment and the situation in which it is generated. The dissemination of that knowledge from personal to social contexts is based on personal and communal reflection. Expression and transmission of that knowledge becomes part of the fabric of the community through ceremony, ritual, and symbolic representations. To consign 'knowledge' to the singular context of intellect removes the authentic understanding of the concept. In holism, relationships are experiential. That is, knowing is constructed through personal connection to the event and the elements. Transmission of that knowing therefore requires a common experiential base from which to mediate truth.

> The hallmark of the community of truth is not psychological intimacy or political civility or pragmatic accountability, though it does not exclude these virtues. This model of community reaches deeper, into ontology and epistemology –

> into assumptions about the nature of reality and how we know it – on which all education is built. The hallmark of a community of truth is in its claim that reality is a web of communal relationships, and we can know reality only by being in community with it.
>
> Parker Palmer (encyclopaedia of informal education)

Thus, knowledge without experienced knowing or relationship is hollow and lacks authenticity. Just as relationships and circumstances change, so can the previous knowledge facets in holism. Absolute truths do not exist within Aboriginal ways of knowing, and innate natures of truth can manifest at deeper levels when the 'learner' has come to understand the previous representation of a truth. This knowing is attained through relationships and their nuanced experiences – and it results in a lived authenticity. Such a level of understanding cannot come from a book or cognitive interactions alone.

The medium of land-based connection for knowledge discovery is another feature of Aboriginal pedagogies as a whole. The holistic relationship with the land serves as a catalyst for connection to all sources of knowledge (Peat, 1994). Land-based experiences are, by definition, connected geographically and historically to defined spaces and places. The interactions and relationships that play out within each dimension reveal a narrative of experiences and learnings or lack thereof. Relationships exist across elements and inhabitants. The land seeks stasis after chaos and heals wounds from natural disaster – fire, flood and earthquake. The interplay between life before, during and after such disruptions seek out a new existence given the new sets of realities. It is a similar type of knowledge that inhabitants seek as well. Within these archetypal experiences, knowledge resides. Understanding the elements and ways of nature and the inhabitants and their complex relationships lies the source of all authentic knowledge. In short, meaning within Aboriginal pedagogies is directly connected to the land.

A final element that Hart (2007) identifies within Aboriginal pedagogy is the integration between the physical and the spiritual. Western philosophies would engage this concept as dualism; indigenous cultures connect the concepts as part of an on-going cycle of engagement and enlightenment. Methodologies and practices which are distinctive to each aspect (as defined by Cajete, 1999, 2000), support knowledge development and sharing. Physicality and spirituality are two aspects of the Aboriginal cosmology. The Circle of Life (or Medicine Wheel) is an indigenous symbol of this holistic nature.

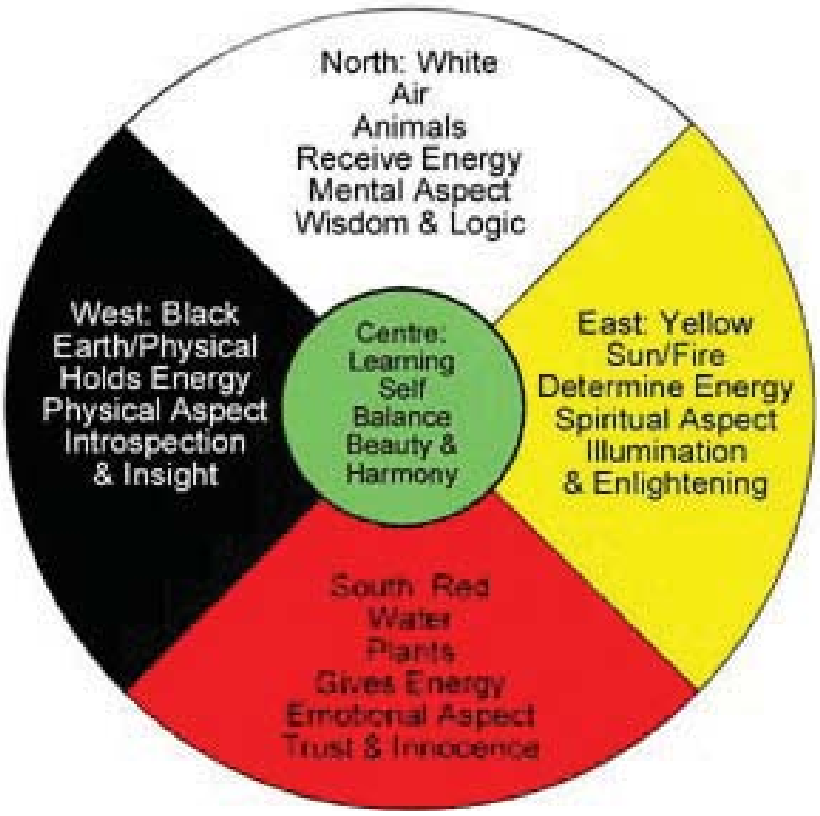
Figure 1: Ways of Knowing is based on the writings of both Hart and Cajete which illustrates the cyclical interplay and exchange between the physical dimension of observation and experience and the reflective, intuitive dimension of spirituality. Each aspect informs the other within a given set of methodologies and practices. The aspects of Mind and Emotion are parts of this equation and the balancing nature of this system can be seen as a whole representation in Figure 2.

Figure 1: Ways of Knowing – T.McKee

As illustrated in Figure 2: Medicine Wheel as Symbol, holism addresses the mind, spirit, emotional and spiritual connections as a construct in Aboriginal cosmology. The pedagogy of learning within this cosmology encompasses the entirety of space and place within environment and circumstance to develop authentic ways of knowing. As such, knowledge is not immutable, but gained through intrapersonal and community interpretation, making Aboriginal ways of knowing mutually negotiable, sentient and evolving. The multiple lenses provide the incremental deviations, changes, and growth or rejection of knowns or ways of knowing – progressive transformational knowledge supported through experience and reflection.

Figure 2: Medicine Wheel as Symbol

(http://www.webpanda.com/There/uot_directions-colors.htm)



Together then, these four premises, holism – relationship – land-based connection – physical spiritual integration – form a foundational premise upon which to ground an Aboriginal pedagogy for development within transformational adult education practices.

Holism: Spirituality as Arbiter of Knowledge

Both the definition of spirituality and its integration into educational practices have been fraught with controversy, and at times, outright hostility. Hard empirical scientific methodologies are presented as being diametrically opposed to the soft intuitive narratives of philosophical and qualitative approaches. The debate rages on quite apart from the complications of current cultural considerations.

Here, it is important to note that the venue of theology is consigned to its own separate discipline, of which spirituality is a member. New paradigms of spiritual review, disassociated

from religion, are emerging which are in alignment with many global indigenous pedagogies, for whom the integration of spirituality is a core precept of their worldview: prime examples of such paradigms are found in the works of Freire, Jung, Maslow, and Weber. As well, the boundaries between analytic and metaphysical disciplines are blurring with evolving research in the scientific community which is directly addressing the elements of, and impacts on, material science in the forms of spirituality; while it is outside the realm of this work, Newberg and d'Aquili's work in neurotheology - spirituality and the brain – is one such example (Begeley, 2001).

In response, a working vocabulary across the social sciences - sociology, psychology, anthropology and theology – is emerging to assist in this development, minimizing the once perceived amorphous nature of 'spirit-related' contexts. Spirituality, once defined as the property of the church (a decidedly Eurocentric convention), has broadened to capture a more representative characterization of 'self-knowledge'. Language commonly appearing across the social sciences now consist of terminologies laden with cultural symbolism – wisdom, nature of self and being, authenticity, actualization, archetypes, wholeness, balance, reverence, transcendence, awe, imagination, intuitiveness, creativity, curiosity – and carry a highly individualistic focus on personal capital. It is within the domain of personal capital that the seeds of transformative learning lie and the potential to expand into movements for social consciousness and transformation (Scott, 1998; Freire, 2007). As with Aboriginal pedagogies, these definitions from the Sciences support foundational concepts of a common definition of spirituality that is focused upon its origins within the individual and the processes of internal reflection, meditation and coming to 'know one's self'.

Without this knowledge of self, no external truth or knowledge is possible, only applications of uninformed prejudices. Without truth, there is no growth or harmony. Spirituality at its core then, is authentic self-knowledge. Aboriginal cosmology supports this assertion; "…[G]rounded in the self, the spirit, the unknown…Aboriginal epistemology speaks of pondering great mysteries that lie no further than the self" (Ermine, 1995, p. 108). While not rejecting the role of intellect in knowledge construction, this stance does reduce the empirical model to a component of knowledge that is informed through relationship of spirituality and physicality. The holistic tenet – the sacred connection of creation – is the framework which provokes and mediates the dialogue of 'coming to know', 'ways of knowing', and 'teaching' for Aboriginal peoples.

There is an increasing body of scholarly work across the disciplines that argue for the inclusion of spiritual aspects in knowledge creation, learning and education. Paulo Freire (2007) is another scholar and activist who asserted the absolute necessity of including emotional and spiritual aspects into education as it impacted on culture and community.

"Where is the knowledge that is lost in information? Where is the wisdom that is lost in the knowledge?" (T.S. Eliot). This question strikes at the heart of objectivism within education; reason without the revealing power of spirit is a failure to 'know'. Parker Palmer, another early advocate for the inclusion of spirituality in education, embraced the ethics and connectedness of becoming whole through learning and personal knowledge that has potential to transmit to the larger stage of social responsibility and action.

A final example is Toliver and Tisdale (2006), who frame the presence of spirituality in higher education as an integrative process that encompasses all domains of being – affective, imaginative, somatic, rational and spiritual and can significantly impact transformational learning for adult students. They define spirituality in the broader sense as connection, meaning making, quest for wholeness and authenticity of being. Spirituality defines the essence of the individual struggle for understanding and actualization of self.

A Pedagogy of Transformative Restoration

One of the first thinkers to champion transformative learning, Mezirow defined perspective transformation as the change in thought, belief and behaviour brought about through disequilibrium, cumulative or sudden. There was no room for consideration of forces outside reflection, analysis, and rational logic. In fact, Mezirow posited, theological constructs only impeded transformational learning through the subjective medium of emotion (Scott, et al, 1998; Fenwick et al, 2006; Spencer, B. (2006).

By definition and intent, transformative learning has undergone its own transformation beyond a strict reliance upon Mezirow's 'critical', toward providing opportunity for purposeful deliberation of 'spiritual' aspects in learning and its power of healing and restoration (Imel, 1998; Tisdell, 2001; Tolliver & Tisdell, 2006). Similar self-reflection and dialoguing occur in work done by Lange (2004) where the language of 'collective, relational, consciousness and self as creator' influence a shift toward personal and social construction of transformation.

Summary

Colonization and its aftermath has been a source of incredible pain, fragmentation, disillusionment and alienation for Aboriginal peoples. How can restoration of culture through culturally-based adult education provide this source of transformation? Lange's research speaks to the deepest levels of alienation within an individual and a society, and through it, emergence

toward transformation. She asserts that restorative learnings allow access to 'old' knowledge, authentic ways of being, and the strength embedded within that knowledge to withstand "alienating social relations". Reference to this knowledge is the same resiliency that nurtured aboriginal peoples throughout their experiences within Eurocentric cultures and colonizing abuses.

> …(they) took our land, our lives, and our children like the winter snow takes the grass. The loss is painful but the seed lives in spite of the snow. In the fall of the year, the grass dies and drops its seed to lie hidden under the snow. Perhaps the snow thinks the seed has vanished, but it lives on hidden….Deep inside itself it knows…and we are no different. We know deep down inside ourselves the pattern of life. Eber Hampton (1993)

Transformative practices – becoming critically aware of one's self and circumstances, recognizing assumptions and the expectations of others and then determining conscious responses - provides the wellspring for self-confidence, optimism, resiliency and self-determination. Transformation based on restoring one to a place that has been lost resonates authentically with the restoration of aboriginal pedagogy – a re-discovery and re-claiming of the spiritual aspect of 'knowing', reverent interaction with the connectedness of holism.

To answer the question whether a teaching pedagogy reflective of Aboriginal culture is necessary, research presents a resounding "Yes." Regarding how such a model should be crafted, it is evident from past practice that indigenous cultures should be charged with the identification, definition and articulation of models, methodologies and practices that support their epistemological beliefs and values. There is a growing body of theory, in the form of transformative and restorative learning that is respectful, reflective and holistic enough to serve as a starting point in transformational practices within adult education for Aboriginal populations.

References

Anderson, T. (2001).The hidden curriculum in distance education: an updated view. *Change, 33*(6), 28-35.

Battiste, M. (2002). Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in First Nations education - A literature review with recommendations. *National Working Group on Education, Our Children: Keepers of the Sacred Knowledge*. Ottawa, ON: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Retrieved from: http://www.usask.ca/education/people/battistem/ikp_e.pdf

Battiste, M., & Henderson, J. S. Y. (2000). *Protecting Indigenous knowledge and heritage: A global challenge*. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing.

Bear Spirit Consulting (2007). *Improving Post-Secondary Outcomes for First Nations and Metis Students in Southern Manitoba*. A Consultation for the Council on Post-Secondary Education, Manitoba. Retrieved from: www.copse.mb.ca/pdf/reports/**bear spirit consulting** final report may 07.pdf

Begley, S. (2001). Religion and The Brain. In *Newsweek*, May 17, 2001). Retrieved from: http://www.newsweek.com/id/79341/output/print.

Cajete, G. (1999). *Igniting the sparkle: An Indigenous science education model*. Skyand, NC: Kivaki Press.

Cajete, G. (2000). *Native science: Natural law of interdependence*. Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers.

Canadian Council on Learning. (2007). *Redefining how success is measured in First Nations, Inuit and Métis learning. Report on learning in Canada.* Ottawa. Retrieved from: http://www.ccl-cca.ca/NR/

rdonlyres/212C03D9-7B43-4F94-BAFB-784A3199F06E/0/Redefining_How_Success_Is_Measured_EN.pdf.

Dreeben, R. (1968). In *What Is Learned in School*. Reading, MA: Addison- Wesley. encyclopaedia of informal education. *Parker Palmer*. (n.d.) Retrieved from www.infed.org

Durkheim E. (1922). *Education and Society*, trans. S. D. Fox. New. York:Free Press, 1956; original, 1922.

Ermine, W. (1995). Aboriginal epistemology. In M.Battiste & J. Barman (Eds.), *First Nations education in Canada: The circle unfolds.* Vancouver: UBC Press.

Fenwick, T., Nesbit, T., & Spencer, B. (Eds.).(2006). *Contexts of adult education: Canadian perspectives.*Toronto: Thompson.

Friere, P. (2007). *Pedagogy of the oppressed. (*30th anniversary ed.). New York: Continuum.

Grande, S. (2004). *Red Pedagogy: Critical Theory and American Indian Education.* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Hampton, E. (1993). Towards a redefinition of Indian education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 20*(2). 31-32.

Hart, M. (2007). Indigenous knowledge and research: The míkiwáhp as symbol for reclaiming our knowledge and ways of knowing. *First People's Child and Family Review, 3*(1), 83-90. Retrieved from: http://www.fncfcs.com/pubs/vol3num1/Hart_pp83.pdf

Imel, S. (2003). Effect of Emotions on Learning in Adult, Career, and Career- Technical Education. In *Trends and Issues Alert,* No. 43. Available from: http://www.eric.ed.gov.

Jackson, P. (1968). *Life in classrooms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Jung, Carl G. (1970); *Collected Works*, Volume 10; Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

Lange, E. (2004). Transformative and restorative learning: A vital dialectic for sustainable soci-

eties. *Adult Education Quarterly, 54*(2), 121-139.

Margolis, E., Soldatenko, M., Acker S., & Gair, M. (2001). *Peekaboo: Hiding and Outing the Curriculum*. In The Hidden Curriculum in Higher Education. E. Margolis (ed.). Retrieved from http://www.questia.com/read/102759701?title=The%20Hidden%20Curriculum%20in%20Higher%20Education

Marx, Karl. 1959. *Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Political and Philosophy*. (Ed) .Feuer, L. S. New York: Anchor Books.

Aboriginal peoples and postsecondary education in Canada. [Electronic version]. Caledon Institute of Social Policy. Ottawa, Canada. Retrieved from http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/595ENG.pdf

Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative Learning as Discourse. In *Journal of Transformative Eduction, 1*(1). Retrieved from: http://jtd.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/1/1/58

Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA, p 40.

Peat, F. D. (1994). *Indigenous science. Lighting the seventh fire: The spiritual ways, healing, and science of the Native American.* Toronto: Canadian Manda Group.

Schissel, B.& Wotherspoon,T. (2000). *Marginalization, decolonization and voice: prospects for aboriginal education in Canada.* In Y. Levoir, W. Hunter, D. Hodgkinson, P. de Broucker & A. Andre (eds.), A Pan-Canadian Education Research Agenda, Ottawa: Canadian Society for Studies in Education. 193-214.

Scott, S. M., Spencer, B., & Thomas, A. M. (Eds.) (1998). *Learning for life: Canadian readings in adult education*. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc.

Spencer, B. (2006). *The Purposes of Adult Education: A Short Introduction. (2nd ed.) T*oronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc.

To your love the health of Rain

If I knew

I will find you

The extension of life

I wouldn't have slept a minute

I wouldn't have cried for wounds

And burns a bit

I would have deleted the sorrow of the world

And cancel it

Abrogated the pain of defeat

And wait for you ahead

If I new, meeting you

Is the world and civilization!

Seeing you is the spring and navigation

I would have covered the face of the fire

To harbor you by my ribs entire

And tolerated the grief, for you forever

I would have wrapped my way with pearls

And made the space a castle of earls

To you, they all attend in queue

Dissolve in your eyes, the shining cue

Moiz

The Pas, Manitoba and "Greatest War in Our World's History": 1914-1919[1]

by Greg Stott, University College of the North, Thompson, Manitoba

As the summer of 1914 progressed and the warm temperatures of July settled upon the northern reaches of Manitoba there was little to portend that the world was on the brink of what would soon become known as the Great War.[2] The citizenry of the newly minted town of The Pas were concerned with their daily routines, certainly, but too their interest was piqued in the growing excitement generated by the discovery of gold at Beaver Lake just across the provincial boundary to the northwest.[3] Although The Pas had been inhabited and used for centuries by the local Aboriginal people and subsequent waves of European fur traders the town had only been formally established after 1910 when government officials forced the Opaswayak people

1 This paper does not pretend to be a comprehensive examination of World War I in Northern Manitoba given its heavy reliance on sample issues of *The Pas Herald*. While this potentially limits the voices and points-of-view, as one of the area's chief surviving sources of news for the period, the *Herald* did supply a fairly broad coverage of social, political, and economic happenings and provided an interesting contemporary vantage point on the events unfolding at both home and abroad. The content was obviously influenced and governed by the perspective of the editor Grant Edward Rice (born April 1882) who was a native of Dorchester, Quebec at least until his enlistment in 1916. However, as the samples used indicate the coverage of perspectives, however much they might be altered or influenced by editorial intervention, was surprisingly broad. Library and Archives Canada, Grant Edward Rice Attestation Papers, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 8222 - 15. Rice was also instrumental in championing the Northern Manitoba Trappers' Festival in 1916 before he enlisted as an officer in World War I. Sue Lambert, "The Northern Manitoba Trappers' Festival: A Brief History," *Manitoba History*, 15 (Spring 1988).

2 *The Pas Herald,* July 17, 1914. The only hint of possible conflict was a published letter from the Society of Friends condemning all wars. Otherwise the only referencing of conflict dealt with local baseball and football competitions. This paper does not pretend to be a comprehensive examination of World War I in Northern Manitoba. Although its reliance on issues of *The Pas Herald* potentially limits the voices and points-of-view the paper's role as one of the area's chief sources of news does supply a fairly broad coverage of social, political, and economic news. While the content was obviously influenced and governed by the perspective of the editor Grant Edward Rice (born April 1882) who was a native of Dorchester, Quebec. Library and Archives Canada, Grant Edward Rice Attestation Papers, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 8222 - 15. Rice was also instrumental in championing the Northern Manitoba Trappers' Festival in 1916 before he enlisted as an officer in World War I. Sue Lambert, "The Northern Manitoba Trappers' Festival: A Brief History," *Manitoba History*, 15 (Spring 1988).

3 "Some Facts About Beaver Lake Goldfields," *The Pas Herald*, July 17, 1914; "And Now It is Beaver Lake," *Saskatoon Phoenix*, March 9, 1914.

off the land and moved them to the north bank of the Saskatchewan River. Surveyors plotted a town and encouraged settlement so that the community was incorporated in 1912 and quickly became an administrative, judicial, and service centre at the hub of railway and steamboat transportation routes. Within a year of incorporation the population had swelled to 1,509 with seventy-three percent being male and only twenty-seven percent female. Having banished most of the original inhabitants to the north bank, the town was also overwhelmingly "white" with a tiny Aboriginal population of thirty-seven and two individuals of African-origin and seventeen of Asian-origin. Just under half of the population had been born in Canada with significant minorities coming from both Great Britain and the United States and 401 coming from "other countries." Fifty-seven percent of the people were Protestant, thirty-percent were Roman Catholic, nearly eleven percent were Greek Catholic, and the remainder adhered to the teachings of Confucius.[4] The growth continued so that by 1914 it had more than 2,000 inhabitants, 500 of whom were employed directly by Hermann Finger in the Finger Lumber Company.[5] The town was just beginning to get a sense of itself and attempting to develop not only infrastructure but institutions both secular and religious which would help to establish a sense of place, identity, and belonging. Given the realities of the international situation much of this early development would occur against the backdrop of war that would be chronicled by *The Pas Herald*.

While the news of the gold strike at Beaver Lake was a source of considerable interest, the minds of many residents of The Pas were preoccupied by political concerns and localized disasters common to many northern towns. The fire that destroyed both the Manitoba Hotel and a neighbouring structure on Fischer Avenue caused local volunteers to hurriedly form a bucket brigade thereby saving other buildings including the nearby Herald Block. While it was determined that the blaze began in one of the hotel rooms the cause was unclear. As Horace Halcrow explained he had been attending a party across the street at Fred Fischer's cabin when "a stranger with a grip in his hands" knocked on the door and alerted the party of the danger. The losses were only partially offset by $1500 in insurance coverage, but bowling alleys "stored on the rear end of the lot" were a complete right off. While insurance adjustors assessed the damage others in the community turned their attentions to what the editor of the local paper called "The Rape of The Pas." Despite having been burdened with charges of corruption the government of Rodmond P. Roblin in Winnipeg had managed to secure a majority government in the recent provincial election. With no holds barred the editor published a scathing indictment that :It is over. The curtain has rung down on the burlesque which be writ into the political history of Manitoba. The results of the election which was to be, are known to Manitoba, and inklings of the infamy practiced have been rumored beyond its confines. It is a shame and a cry-

4 Sydney J. Allen, ed. *The Pas: Gateway to Northern Manitoba* (The Pas: The Pas Historical Society, 1983), 24.

5 Yale D. Belanger, "Building the Opaswayak Cree Nation Economy: A Case Study in Resilience," *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 4 (2) (2005), 73.

ing shame. The disgrace is felt so keenly to-day in The Pas that men, regardless of party affiliations, discuss the affair with heads hanging down and countenances indicative of their inmost feelings.

Citing a case of betrayal on the scale of Judas Iscariot the piece went on to lament "A People disenfranchised; citizenship mocked; the boasted liberty of British subjects trampled in the dust – Manitoba's disgrace. It is well the curtain has been drawn."[6]

While provincial politics certainly rankled and preoccupied the minds of electors in The Pas and vicinity, it is difficult to know to what extent people were aware of a growing crisis in Europe. Certainly the more educated and erudite members of the community had undoubtedly heard about the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne at the end of June, and those who followed international politics may well have followed the situation and concluded that once again the Balkans seemed destined for another one of their localized wars. However much the people of region were aware of the deteriorating situation across the Atlantic if the local press is to be believed most were ultimately caught very nearly unawares when war ultimately came. The complicated system of international treaties and alliances that bound and divided the European powers were activated as the situation worsened. With the full backing of Imperial Germany Austria-Hungary placed impossible demands upon tiny Serbia in the aftermath of the assassination which inevitably led to the outbreak of hostilities. That Russia came to the aid of tiny Serbia was probably a foregone conclusion, and that Germany backed up Austria by going to war with Russia, led to Germany having to contend with Russia's western ally of France. When German forces violated Belgian neutrality to attack France the decades old guarantee by the British to safeguard the Belgian state, suddenly made an otherwise distant conflict a very real reality of the people of The Pas, Manitoba, and the Dominion of Canada as a whole when on August 4, 1914 Britain declared war on their behalf.[7]

Having more-or-less completely banished complaints of the local politic crisis, on August 7th *The Pas Herald* informed its readership of the new and greater crisis which it likened to "a bolt from the blue sky". Whether taken by surprise or not it was clear that the paper saw that Britain and therefore Canada stood on the side of right against brute force and militarism. It was, the paper asserted, "to be hoped that the Government at Ottawa will adopt no half measures" in the empire's time of need for gone were the days of taking "everything from the old country without giving anything in return."[8]

Yet whatever the level of excitement, foreboding, or patriotism that was expressed by the local

6 *The Pas Herald*, July 17, 1914. The matter continued to vex and the following week the paper was filled with discussion of the fallout from the election. *The Pas Herald*, July 24, 1914; Jim Blanchard. *Winnipeg's Great War: A City Comes of Age* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010), 77-78.

7 "Causes Leading Up to the Declaration of War," *The Pas Herald*, August 14, 1914.

8 "The Empire Crisis," *The Pas Herald*, August 7, 1914.

press, realities closer to home continued to impress upon the local population. About the same time that The Pas learned of the outbreak of war there also came the news of the drowning death of Joseph E. Pickering whose canoe had capsized in the Frying Pan Rapids. A native of New Zealand, Pickering had spent time in South Africa and was counted as a veteran of the Boer War from a decade earlier. His untimely death caused considerable sadness in the wider community. Local and international catastrophes aside, tenders were still being sought by the municipal council for both a sewage lift chamber and oil tank chamber, while advertisements for "Wilson's Fly Pad Poison" and David E. Brown's real estate and insurance office catered to every day realities.[9]

The grim assumptions of what war in the early twentieth century would be were anticipated with some horror. With the recent examples of the Balkan wars and the Russo-Japanese war of a decade earlier, there was deep concern about the losses that would be incurred. Indeed the *Herald* republished an editorial from the *Farmers' Tribune* which noted that the losses in the Balkans had reached 500,000 soldiers. The pensive editorial the paper concluded:

"What will happen in the present war is almost beyond conjecture. Perhaps the horrors of the strife will ultimately help the cause of peace. The common people who are bereaved by the wholesale, and who suffer most financially, mentally and physically, have shown a strong disposition to live in peace.[10]

Yet as people began to internalize these dire and hopeful prognostications there were other issues concerning the population of The Pas and surrounding area. The recent completion of the Panama Canal had caused considerable comment and there were concerns about its impact upon the farming population of the Canadian West. Arguments that prairie farmers could expect an increase in ten cents a bushel for their wheat thanks to the new canal where dismissed by the *Herald* who argued that the prosperity of wheat farmers would be secured by the Hudson Bay Railway and its port facilities to the north which would bring the wheat trade through the canal "to a standstill."[11]

Inevitably war news dominated the pages of the local press. Readers of the August 28, 1914 edition of the *Herald* were fed a steady diet of dismal reversals from the battlefields of Belgium and France, juxtaposed with patriotic *boosterism* and hopeful news of German panic in East Prussia. If dispatches from the battlefields of Europe seemed hopelessly remote to the people of The Pas, the fact was that the conflict had quickly become a local concern. Readers of the paper were alerted to fact that local men had already decided that duty and adventure meant that they would "do their bit" and fight for "King and Country." Local organizers were not about

9 *The Pas Herald*, August 7, 1914.
10 "Horrors of War," *The Pas Herald*, August 14, 1914.
11 "Hudson Bay vs. The Panama Canal," *The Pas Herald*, August 14, 1914.

to let their gallant heroes to go without a proper sendoff and so a community dance was organized at the Dreamland Theatre. Given the vagaries and uncertainties of modern war and the fact that there would be free admission "[e]very lady in town is expected to be present and give first choice to the lads, some of whom may be attending for the last time, a social affair in The Pas."[12]

It would, however, be a mistake to assume that the war had disrupted the warp and weft of daily life. Kenneth Miller had departed for Copper Lake to trap and reported that "he is progressing well on his journey." In the meantime Mr. Nicholson of the Dominion Lands Office at Dauphin had come to The Pas on business, and Isabella and Alexander Morrison of Aberdeen, Scotland had come to join their father in The Pas. Too, Mrs. H. Finger had taken ill and was confined to her bed. Town council continued to meet and Robert Long and J. McDoside advertised The Pas Restaurant which they boasted was "The Place Where Everybody Eats," and Mrs. Reid commended her rooming house on Fischer Avenue. Women who needed corsets were entreated to patronize Mrs. J.H. Reed's establishment.[13]

While the war was certainly more than a lingering concern local residents had another concern. Attempts to limit or eradicate the sale and consumption of alcohol in the community caused concern. By October 1914, "300 of the leading citizens of The Pas" signed a petition which was forwarded to Winnipeg and then passed along by provincial officials to the Public Works Department in Ottawa asking them to rescind the restrictions placed upon the town in terms of the sale of alcohol, and praying that liquor licenses be granted. As the *Herald* eloquently explained:Our contention is 'what is the good of prohibition, local option or interdiction, when a man can saw off the leg of a table and get drunk on the alcohol he can extract from the wood.' By which we mean that the present attempted enforcement of the Public Works Act, so far as concerns this town, has proved a failure . . . We do not believe in granting licenses for the permitting of drunkenness, but rather for the sale of refreshment, and maintain that whereas with a license a man would be satisfied with a limited quantity of alcoholic refreshment, knowing he could get more if and when he wanted it, yet under present conditions one can get a case occasionally and proceed to enjoy it with more or less satisfaction.[14]

Aside from the question of the sale and consumption of alcohol, continued interest was expressed in the gold fields at Beaver Lake, and Mr. W. Wilson and Mr. Martin planned to take a flat-bottomed boat there the following spring, loaded with supplies. While such matters captured the imaginations of fortune seekers and adventurers alike, the pressing matter of war and a plea from H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught in Ottawa, led to the staging of a Sunday School concert at the Lyric Theatre

12 *The Pas Herald*, August 28, 1914. The steamer *George V* ran aground near Cumberland House. The wreck was largely unsalvageable and by May 1916, had been largely written off. *Ibid.,* May 5, 1916.

13 *The Pas Herald*, August 28, 1914.

14 "Respecting Liquor License," *The Pas Herald,* October 9, 1914.

the previous Sunday. With over 250 people attending the concert raised $70.00 for the Canadian Patriotic Fund. As chair of the proceedings, Dr. H.H. Elliott "gave a brief but most eloquent address on 'Patriotism.' In the course of his remarks, which were listened to with rapt attention, Dr. Elliott first spoke of the origin of patriotism as being the 'love for the parent, and, enlarging upon this, spoke of patriotism as also meaning loyalty to the country to which one owed allegiance."[15]

As the largest weekly circulating in the north the *Herald* served as the main published news source covering a considerable area. Early in February 1915, in The Pas itself residents were being asked to venture over to the Union Bank to contribute money to the Overseas Tobacco Fund "supplying the fighting lads with a smoke or two." The economic news for the region was mixed and dependent upon commodity prices. While considerable satisfaction was derived from the fact that fisheries in and around The Pas had produced nearly $50,000 and led the entire province, the lowered prices for fur were problematic for many. Chief John Stremens came into The Pas (reputedly to procure a broom) and reported that at his community at Moose Lake the deflated price of furs and a scarcity of paid work meant that many were suffering. However, he noted that his people "have plenty to eat . . . and on this score he has nothing to complain about." An Anglican cleric who traveled the north reported that rates of tuberculosis at Moose Lake and Cedar Lake were high, although in both locations and at Grand Rapids he was pleased to find the mission churches "in excellent condition" and services well attended. When word reached The Pas that the people at Shoal Lake and the Red Earth were suffering severe deprivation, Mayor Herman Finger responded by sending thirty barrels of flour, a barrel of sugar and eighty pounds of tea to each community. Finger's apparent generosity had already led to him to feed "them half the winter at his lumber camps on the Carrot river." Whether brought on by Finger's own actions or spurred by duty the local Indian Agent forwarded $200 in goods and government rations to both communities. The reactions of the intended beneficiaries was not recorded. When A. Mercer came to The Pas with a load of fur in February 1915, he opened up negotiations for establishing direct trade between the city and his community at Cross Lake, instead of carrying the furs all the way down to Winnipeg has had been the more recent tradition. When Ed Bertrand, Frank Dolphin, and James Clee arrived in The Pas from Nelson House "with a valuable load of fur" they also brought the news that Clee had married Matilda Hart from the same community. Before setting out on their return trip the three men explained that "the cariboo are no farther south than the Churchill river and before leaving Indian lake they heard it was three days trip to the cariboo yard north of the river."[16]

How helpful the apparent benevolence of the non-Aboriginal population was perceived by the

15 *The Pas Herald*, October 9, 1914. Readers of the paper would also have learned that the Belgian government had moved their capital to the unoccupied city of Ostend, and that in The Pas Joe Asher and J.B. Oembensky had established a store two doors from the Bank of Commerce, having bought out the stock belonging to Louis Bacon.

16 *The Pas Herald*, February 5, 1915.

people that they were ostensibly helping is difficult to assess from the published reports. Closer to home, however, the people at Opaskwayak Cree Nation situated across the Saskatchewan immediately across from The Pas townsite had clear grievances. Anxious about nearly continuous spring bush fires seventy-year-old Chief Constant noted that "[S]ince I can remember never have I seen such destruction from fire as I have done this spring." Continuing he noted that "Day by day and night by night have I seen fires and still they are burning." Fire had destroyed timber reserves, including assets controlled by the Finger Lumber Company. Constant worried that the nests and eggs of the birds were being destroyed as were entire populations of fur bearing animals. It was Constant's opinion that the fires were caused by the carelessness of settlers farming along the Carrot River. He asked, "Can something not be done by the upholders of the law to prevent such wholesale destruction. I speak for my band of Indians. We look to the fur bearing animals for our livelihood, those being destroyed by fire deprives us of our means of living."[17]

Preoccupations with the development of Port Nelson as the desired lucrative terminus of the Hudson Bay Railway, buoyant reports about The Pas' progressiveness, and the fact that the provincial treasurer ranked The Pas as his favourite place in the province immediately after Winnipeg were front page news on September 3, 1915. Too, there were considerable hopes placed on the promise that the new centrally located school building in town would be completed in just nine weeks.[18] While these were all of importance locally, they may have been written to assuage and compensate for the exploded euphoria from the previous week. On August 26, 1915 news flashed into The Pas that the allies had smashed through the Dardanelles leading to Constantinople in the battle against the Ottoman Turks who were aligned with Germany and Austria-Hungary. Given the stalemate on the Western Front, this news was met with rejoicing. Citizens of The Pas poured out onto the streets bedecked with flags and followed along the town's band that paraded along the main thoroughfares. That evening the celebrations continued with fireworks and bonfires. It was only on Saturday when the Winnipeg papers arrived in town that word came that the report had been false. The *Herald* was surely putting on a brave and philosophical face when it concluded that "The Pas people are laughing over the incident,

---

17 "Indian Chief Protests Against Bush Fires," *The Pas Herald*, May 7, 1915. Another preoccupation of the local press was on the developing investigation into the deaths of Harry V. Radford and Charles Street while amongst the Inuit near Bathurst Inlet. See Francis J. Dickie, "The World's Longest Man Hunt," *Popular Mechanics* (April 1917): 549-551.

18 *The Pas Herald*, September 3, 1915. *Ibid.,* December 3, 1915. The last ship of the season left Port Nelson on October 21, 1915. Port Nelson never lived up to the hopes it initially engendered and problems with the harbour and labour shortages during World War I ultimately led to its collapse and the rerouting of the railway to Churchill. While there had been great hope vested in Port Nelson in The Pas in other circles there were misgivings. See "Port Nelson Better Terminus, Churchill Is Superior Harbor," *Toronto World*, March 5, 1912 and "Heavy Losses and Blunders at Port Nelson," *Saskatoon Phoenix*, February 12, 1914.

and, outside of spending a few hundred dollars for firecrackers . . . they are none the worse off."[19]

Curiously, another international development had local ramifications for this part of Manitoba. Italy had entered the war on the side of Britain and France and as a result "A crowd of Italian reservists left for Italy [on August 30]. They have been working on the Hudson's Bay railway, and the staff presented them with many good things to eat, smokes and money . . . many more are leaving the railway for the front within the next ten days."[20]

Few would probably have charged that the men of The Pas had been shirking their duty. As 1915 reached its close reports indicated that approximately 200 men had enlisted from the town and immediate vicinity which constituted a twentieth of the entire population. This number did not, however, include the fifty Italians who had returned to Europe nor an estimated "350 Russians, and a sprinkling of other nationalities, who are fighting for the Allies." The *Herald* wondered whether other towns across Canada could claim such a significant proportion, and also reminded its readers that with the approach of Christmas to remember "our fighting lads" with "some kind remembrance of good cheer and pleasant recollections."[21]

While fit young men were expected to enlist women were also expected to play a role in the war. Certainly there were women who became nursing sisters or joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment for service overseas. Given the shortages of men, particularly in The Pas, some women would have been called upon to take up vacated jobs and positions. However, in the main women were confined to ancillary roles. Young women of Christ Church contributed to the war effort by organizing a fund raising "Silver Tea" in a vacant building next to the Union Bank on February 3, 1916 to which "[e]verybody is invited to attend" and in addition to "[a]ll the good things to eat" all were encouraged to stay for "a social chat with the charming young ladies." While the hosting of teas was staying within acceptable gendered roles, it should be noted that of forty-eight recognized donors to the local Patriotic Fund five were women including Miss Mary Duncan, Miss Glennie Brown, and Miss Ruth Taylor.[22]

In the midst of a serious outbreak of measles that beset both The Pas and Opaskwayak in the spring of 1916, news came that Private A.O. Newman of Herb Lake had been hospitalized in France after contracting pneumonia at the front near Ypres. While Dr. Stephenson placed houses in The Pas under quarantine, his counterpart Dr. Robertson placarded affected houses across the river on the reserve. Undaunted by the outbreak, which had claimed at least two lives, Lieutenants Elliott and Rosborough with the 200th Battalion out of Winnipeg arrived in The Pas to set up a recruitment

19 "People Celebrate Fake Report on Dardanelles," *The Pas Herald*, September 3, 1915.
20 "Italian Reservists Leave for Battlefields," *The Pas Herald,* September 3, 1915.
21 "200 Pas Boys Have Enlisted," *The Pas Herald*, December 3, 1915.
22 *The Pas Herald,* January 28, 1916.

drive.[23] It is difficult to know how successful the drive was, but on May 12, 1916 approximately forty-six men of the "The Pas Vikings" boarded trains south for Winnipeg to continue their training.[24] Fighting at Ypres resulted in the wounding of at least one resident of The Pas in the person of Private Fred J. Fitter, an architect by profession.[25] The comings and goings on the trains and the arrivals of new residents were recorded in the various columns of the paper. Certainly not all departures were related to the war, as a dance was held at the home of Fred Jackow at which Mrs. Andrew Johnson provided the food. It was ostensibly to be a send off for Mr. Ahlman who was heading to Athapapuskow to work his mining claims.[26] As 1916 entered its final month there were grim predictions that the was would last for another year. Church organizations staged various events to raise money. The children of Westminster Methodist Church opted to forgo the traditional Christmas tree and instead planned to send money to the Protestant Orphanage in occupied Brussels.[27]

While news celebrated the acquisition of former German colonies to the British Empire, and there was much anticipation about The Pas finally having a telephone network up and running, Reginald Devin was seriously burned when a can of gasoline he was holding exploded near a stove in his shop where he cleaned and pressed laundry, a business he only took over the previous year. Despite their ministrations the doctors were unable to save his life and he died nearly a week later. A teacher at the Grand Rapids died from internal injuries sustained during a dog sled accident.[28] However, these tragedies were followed shortly afterward by news early in February that Gideon and Margaret Halcrow received word that their son, Angus Halcrow, had been killed in France. In a letter Halcrow's commanding officer wrote:

> It is with deepest regret that I write this letter, for I have to inform you that your son, A. Halcrow, was killed on the 25th of December, while passing down a trench, about 10 p.m. He was instantly killed by the explosion of a shell. He has been buried in our cemetery and a cross has been erected on his grave. It seemed the especial irony of fate that he should go on Christmas day, but he went to his death at duty like any soldier should. Your son was well thought of an liked by everybody who knew him. I tell you this, although I know that as a stranger I cannot do or sa

---

23 *The Pas Herald*, May 5, 1916. It was also noted that "A cafe-sleeper car is expected to be attached regularly to the Muskeg, commencing with next Wednesday's trip. It will be in charge of a colored porter who will serve buffet meals." See Sarah-Jane (Saje) Mathieu, "North of the Colour Line: Sleeping Car Porters and the Battle Against Jim Crow on Canadian Rails, 1880-1920," *Labour/Le Travail* 47 (Spring 2001): 9-41.

24 *The Pas Herald*, May 12, 1916. There is evidence that the "Vikings" had already been recruited before the arrival of the recruiters mentioned the previous week, as the May 5, 1916 edition noted that "Rev. Mr. Cormie is teaching the illiterate of The Pas Vikings to read and write." While the names of many of this group appear to have been British a significant portion may well have been of Eastern European origin.

25 *The Pas Herald,* June 30, 1916.

26 *The Pas Herald*, September 29, 1916.

27 *The Pas Herald*, December 8, 1916.

28 *The Pas Herald*, February 2, 1917.

much to lighten your sorrow. His personal effects will reach you in due course . . . H.S. Oliver.[29]

The effect of the news upon his family and friends can only be imagined. It was, however, a sad reality that would face the families of the 60,000 Canadian soldiers and nurses who were killed over the course the four year conflict.

By 1917 Canadians generally were beginning to suffer from profound war weariness. Although Prime Minister Sir Robert L. Borden had promised to raise Canada's troop commitment to 500,000 the horrendous rate of casualties suffered throughout 1916 and into 1917 led to sharp decrease in the numbers of men enlisting. While the triumphs at Vimy Ridge in April 1917, gave something of a boost to morale in general, voluntary enlistment rates did not rise accordingly. (Many Aboriginal Canadians had attempted to enlist in the early days of war but were turned away after being told the conflict was "a white man's war.") The federal government went ahead and passed the Military Service Act in August despite the deep divisions within the country, particularly from Quebec and many parts of rural Canada. The subsequent election campaign, for which many Canadians were disenfranchised and women who had close relatives at the front were enfranchised, was largely fought on the issue of conscription.[30] When the federal election campaign was mounted there was some apparent astonishment in The Pas that "[a] notable feature of the registration was the large number of women who had their names placed on the lists. 'Sweet sixteen' did not figure among them at all. Quite the reverse – all acknowledged they had passed the 21st milestone." In the end there were 372 men registered to vote and 212 women who were able to exercise their franchise at the federal level for the first time. (Women had won the vote at the provincial level in 1916 but had yet to have an opportunity to exercise it).[31]

Whatever weariness the people in The Pas felt the public face as depicted in the *Herald* suggested that they were grimly continuing to do their duty. Vacant lots in town were ploughed and turned into productive lots for gardens, leading one commentator to assess that these otherwise empty properties were "Doing Their 'Little Bit.'" The formal entry into the United States of America into the war renewed the spirits of some residents and as a result the congregation of Westminster Methodist Church held a special service to provide boost to local morale and the spiritual side of the war effort. A special invitation was extended for any Americans in the vicinity to attend

29 *The Pas Herald,* February 9, 1917. Sydney J. Allen, ed. *The Pas: Gateway to Northern Manitoba* (The Pas: The Pas Historical Society, 1983), 276. Angus Halcrow was born at Pelican Narrows on November 21, 1894. A trapper, he enlisted at Prince Albert on April 24, 1915. He was 215 cm tall. Library and Archives Canada, Angus Halcrow Attestation Papers, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 3928-49.

30 James W. Walker, "Race and Recruitment in World War I: Enlistment of Visible Minorities in the Canadian Expeditionary Force," in *Canadian Historical Review* 70, 1 (March 1989): 1-26; Martin F. Auger, "On the Brink of Civil War: The Canadian Government and the Suppression of the 1918 Quebec Easter Riot," in *Canadian Historical Review* 89, 4 (December 2008): 503-540

31 *The Pas Herald,* August 24, 1917.

the program which included renditions of hymns like "Fight the Good Fight," "Onward, Christian Soldiers," "Ye Soldiers of the Cross," and "Stand Up, Stand-Up for Jesus." Too, the congregation planned to sing "La Marseillaise," the new Russian National Anthem "God the All Terrible," the American National Anthem, Canadian national songs, and, of course, "God Save the King."[32]

While such services may have helped local morale there was plenty that would probably have sapped the spirits of even the most patriotic and optimistic. In early December 1917, came the terrible news of the widespread death and devastation wrought in Halifax by the explosion of the *Mount Blanc* which caused much shock and disbelief in The Pas. As some fifty men left town on the C.N.R. to go to work at a sawmill at Tisdale, Saskatchewan word came that Private Arthur "Buster" Smith who had been wounded overseas and shipped to Winnipeg was expected to return to The Pas before Christmas.[33]

1918 dawned with little hope that the war would end any time soon. Readers of the *Herald* were reminded on March 22, 1918 that they had only nine days left to fill out and file the newly implemented income tax. As the paper explained:

It was inevitable that an income war tax law should have been placed on the statute books. The growing demands made upon Canada, as one of the free nations of the world, engaged in the life and death battle with the force of barbarism, and the necessity of distributing the burden as equitably as possible, made the imposition of a tax, based on ability to pay, merely a matter of time.[34]

With a new source of funding the Canadian war effort plodded on. Some locals savored the joy of their victories at the five-pin bowling tourney at Telluride Alleys while by June 20, 1918 others congratulated themselves that the renewed Red Cross drive had garnered $7,514.76 from The Pas. It was said that the local population "believe that the wounded and sick heroes of the battle line are their care; that those who are left behind through inability to take part in the great physical struggle, can, in a material way, contribute to victory for the Allied arms."[35]

As September wore on the local news remained somewhat mundane and predictable. Mr. and Mrs. Jack Quigley and their daughter spent some holiday time in The Pas before "returning to the Mandy Mine by gasoline boat . . ." The Women's Guild at the Presbyterian Church hosted a successful cooking sale, and the women at Westminster Methodist had a successful sale. As well:

A batch of ten Swedes workers on the trail road leading into Herb Lake mining region came in on last Muskeg for a few days of enjoyment, and returned again north on

32 *The Pas Herald,* June 1, 1917.
33 *The Pas Herald*, December 7, 1917.
34 *The Pas Herald*, March 22, 1918.
35 *The Pas Herald*, June 21, 1918.

Wednesday morning. Another number of them went out by Ross Co. boat on Tuesday evening to make repairs on the road from Sturgeon Landing to Lake Athapapuskow.[36]

Perhaps the only out-of-the-ordinary occurrence came on September 15th when "[s]omething went wrong at the electric light plant Sunday night at a few minutes after 11 and the town had one hour's darkness except for the rays from a three quarter Luna."[37]

As October progressed, however, there came to the faint glimmers of hope that the war might at last be coming to an end. Rumblings of such news hit the *Herald* on November 8, 1918. Whether residents of The Pas were caught up in the so-called "False Armistice" earlier that month is unclear.[38] However, amidst reports of the start of the resumption of the fur season, came reports of revolt in Germany itself. [39]

When word came on November 11, 1918 that the war had finally ended the citizens of The Pas erupted with joy. As the *Herald* explained:

With an incessant ringing of [the] fire-alarm bell, whistles tooting, sirens screeching, cannon gunshot and pistol belching forth streaks of flame, horn-blowing, town residents on Monday morning, at nine a.m. believed the scene of battle had been transferred from Europe to this Northland.[40]

Word quickly spread from house to house that Germany had given up the fight and the guns on the Western Front had fallen silent. When confirmation of the news was received officials sprang into action requesting that all recently returned veterans and those of past conflicts should don their uniforms and congregate at 2:00 p.m. Businesses were asked to close up shop by 1:00 p.m. and "[f]lags and bunting were thrown to the breeze, and within a very short time the town partook of a holiday appearance." As the paper explained, somewhat incongruously:Constable David Hunter, in his beat police uniform, and carrying the flag of our local branch I.O.O.F. and a Japanese parasol, led the march, which proceeded along Fischer avenue and First street.

The town band played under the conduction of Father Baud while a float carried an effigy of the now ex-Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany which was "guarded by a dozen school-boys who tooted horns incessantly." Then the returned veterans marched behind followed by masses of ordinary citizens of all ages and genders. "The privilege accorded of being present in celebration of the closing of the greatest war in our world's history could not be denied to them." The whole assembly halted at the gate of the

36 *The Pas Herald*, September 20, 1918. Sturgeon Landing was awarded a post office that would be serviced weekly from The Pas via Cumberland House. *Ibid.,* June 21, 1918.

37 *The Pas Herald*, September 20, 1918.

38 Robert J. Sharpe. *The Last Day, The Last Hour: The Currie Libel Trial* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 27.

39 *The Pas Herald,* November 8, 1918.

40 "Our Celebration," *The Pas Herald*, November 15, 1918.

mill and all sang "God Save the King" to piano accompaniment and then the band struck up "La Marseillaise" and then wended its way through the back streets of town. As for the effigy of the ex-Kaiser:

Me und Gott' was still held a close prisoner, however, until the hour when he would expiate his many crimes on earth. His death knell had been ringing all day on the town fire-alarm bell, and what with sirens screaming, horns blowing, and wind whistling, his visions of Hades must have been ever-present. At eight o'clock in the evening, on the baseball grounds, at the end of a rope and a large foot warmer beneath him, he passed out, to regions beyond our ken.

The immolation of the deposed monarch did not satiate residents of The Pas so an old derelict steamer "on the river bank, was set ablaze, and burned gloriously for an hour or more before collapsing into the water. This ended the day's elation, and our satisfied citizens wended their several ways home."[41]

The feelings of those families like the Halcrows for whom the war had exacted a heavy toll were not recorded. Presumably the celebrants included many who were not residents of The Pas who happened to be in town on the momentous day. However, whether any of the people from across the river at Opaskwayak were either welcomed or made their way to join in the festivities is not recorded. Given a growing worry and regulations over a new threat it is unlikely that anyone who was not then in town would have been welcomed given that towns across the province attempted to isolate themselves from a growing scourge.[42]

Even before the war had officially ended the northern reaches of Manitoba had been infiltrated by the dreaded "Spanish Influenza." The first case recorded in The Pas was on October 25, 1918.[43] By early November there were some forty-five confirmed cases in The Pas itself which overwhelmed the facilities of St. Anthony's Hospital so that officials had commandeered the empty Northern Light Hotel which was transformed into an isolation hospital. (The participants in the parade on November 11th made their way there and serenaded the inmates). A call went out for volunteers to act as nurses or fill other roles that would help to carry out necessary care and alleviate the suffering of the infected. About fourteen women put forward their name as did members of the local clergy and several other local men. Advertisements in the paper provided advice on how to best avoid or beat the

41 *The Pas Herald*, November 15, 1918. Even with telegraph and telephone the distance between The Pas and Europe meant that war-related news continued to filter in after the conflict had ended. For instance as celebrations occurred it was reported that L. McGillivray had been wounded and was in hospital. The paper also received a letter from Tom Gill who was recuperating from his wounds at Colchester Military Hospital. On November 22, 1918 the paper published the confirmation that Private O.V. Keddle, who had been reported as missing in action on August 15th, had been confirmed dead. He was about nineteen-years-old and while he had come from Cumberland House, he had two brothers living in The Pas. *Ibid.,* November 22, 1918.

42 D. Ann Herring and Lisa Sattenspiel, "Death in Winter: Spanish Flu in the Canadian Subarctic," *The Spanish Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19: New Perspectives*, H. Philips and David Killingray, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 157-58.

43 Herring, "Death in Winter," 157.

disease.[44] The best efforts to stem the spread of the disease proved largely ineffective. The influenza reached Norway House on December 4, 1918 having possibly been introduced to the community by a dog sled team that brought in the mail from Cross Lake. In the end eighteen percent of Norway House's population, both young and old, succumbed. In some of the outlying communities in the vicinity of The Pas the population the rate of death was so high that the bodies were wrapped in white sheets and placed on the roofs of the houses to await burial in the spring.[45]

World War I or the Great War had exacted a horrendous price. Around the world the death toll was an estimated seventeen million, both military and civilian, directly tied to the war, with more than 60,000 coming from Canada alone. The subsequent loss of 50,000 Canadians to influenza only increased the agony. While these numbers would be tragically dwarfed by the subsequent horrors of World War II a generation later, the reality was that the world was scarred and changed by this first cataclysm. There were hopes for a better world, and despite a serious postwar downturn, demands in The Pas called for meaningful employment for the returning veterans.[46] Although it was far removed from the fighting and marginal even in terms of Canada's own war effort, The Pas, Manitoba was buffeted and shaped to a surprising degree by this far off conflict that involved many of its own. While life in The Pas carried on more-or-less unmolested by the direct realities of war, the fact remained that, if in imperceptible ways, the news reports from the *Herald* indicate that it was a changed community. The news of the conflict, the plight of loved ones in the fight and the changing economic, social, and political realities the war engendered and shaped and altered the community and Northern Manitoba as a whole.

---

44 *The Pas Herald,* November 8, 1918. It is possible that the death of Wilfred Ross at the age of seventeen was a result of the influenza, although he had been ill for several weeks.

45 Herring, "Death in Winter," 158; D. Ann Herring, "`There Were Young People and Old People and Babies Dying Every Week': The 1918-1919 Influenza Pandemic at Norway House," *Ethnohistory* 41 (1) (Winter 1994), 84-87, 90.

46 "Work Demanded for War Veterans," *The Pas Herald*, June 27, 1919.

The Sound of missing you

As usual, you changed the color of feelings

And sent a beam of hope to the valley of loneliness

When I talk to you,

The see absorb the sound of the wind

And convert it to a warm melody

The life takes the taste of ability

Mixed with purity and sensitivity

To swim in the vacuum

Is a way of getting fast to the goal!

And your touch is the goal

Let me hold your hand

And listen to the sound of missing you

Tell me to fly to your uncovered infinity

And whisper to the birds in the seventh sky

Approaching novelty

You are my passage to reality in a world

That has not yet born

And you are the dream of a virgin queen

Who turned on all my genes and reproduced

Me back to you

I am not a copy of my white shadow,

But I am a shadow of your copy in a random world

And of you every where...

To you, life will start singing

Smile and kiss me

Moiz

Writing as an African: the Poetry of Christopher Okigbo

by John Butler, University College of the North, The Pas, Manitoba

Today, the most distinguished Nigerian writers familiar to readers in the West are most likely the Nobel Prize-winning dramatist Wole Soyinka and the novelist Chinua Achebe, author of the ground-breaking *Things Fall Apart.* However, even if they agreed that this assessment was accurate, they would want to add the name of the poet Christopher Okigbo (1932-1967), who had known them both and who had tragically died fighting on the Nsukka battlefield for the short-lived independent state of Biafra. Until recently, Okigbo was represented by one slim volume of verse, *Labyrinths*, published (1972) in the Heinemann African Writers Series, but now there is a Christopher Okigbo Society and a full-scale conference has been held in his honour, with the contemporary Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, author of *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) giving the keynote address. Okigbo appears in her novel, which is set during the terrible but now largely-forgotten Biafran war, as the poet Okeoma, who perishes at Nsukka like his real-life compatriot. Achebe himself, together with Dubem Okafor, has edited a book of memorial verses on Okigbo, entitled *Don't Let Him Die* (1978), and several full-length critical studies are now available, all of which owe something to the late Sunday Anozie's pioneering study *Christopher Okigbo: Creative Rhetoric* (1972).

This writer's interest in Christopher Okigbo began accidentally. In 1972-73, just a few years after the end of the Biafran war, I was working at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Nigeria, my first teaching job. The university had a unique round bookshop, which at that time didn't have very many books in it because, it was said, the manager often neglected to pay the book distributors for their

services, preferring to use funds for other purposes, and they simply stopped the supply of books until the problem was resolved by the manager's dismissal. Amongst the few Nigerian books still on the shelves were Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Okigbo's *Labyrinths*, which had an interesting cover, and Sunday Anozie's companion work. I was struck by the elegance of the poetic language and with Okigbo's obvious delight in English literature, especially in the poetry of Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Keats and others, but there was something more, even to an eye untrained in reading African poetry, although it was difficult to put one's finger on it exactly. This was not a derivative voice at all, but that of someone who had taken what he needed from the English poetic word-horde and turned it into something uniquely his own; with Professor Anozie's help it might be possible to find what that was, which is the stated objective of this speculative paper.

In his excellent book *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of the Self Under Colonialism* (1982) the Indian cultural psychologist Ashis Nandy examined the psychological relations between colonists and colonized with respect to the various ways in which the latter may "recover" their identity after the experience of colonialism. Although Nandy was writing strictly in the Indian context, much of what he says about colonialism and its cultural impact on the colonized can be applied also to Africa, and the object here is to see whether Christopher Okigbo's poetry can be used to illustrate, in an African setting, some of Nandy's ideas. Furthermore, as a more purely "literary" approach to the same topic, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion in their *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1975) of what they term "minor literature" may be applied to Okigbo, so that Nandy's concept of "loss" might correspond to Deleuze and Guattari's "deterritorialisation" and "recovery of self" to "reterritorialisation." And, as Edward Said remarked, "one cannot look at African writing except as embedded in its political circumstances, of which the history of imperialism and resistance to it is surely one of the most important" (239). Also, perhaps inevitably, lurking somewhere in the background we may find some ideas from Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), particularly when Fanon posits a three-stage approach to the literary development of the colonized intellectual in the chapter entitled "On National Culture." Examples of how these theories might function in the work of a poet can be

found quite readily in *Labyrinths*, where the versions of the poems, according to Okigbo himself, "are final" (vii).

Christopher Okigbo seemed an interesting figure to pick for reterritorialisation because of his unique status in the literature of his country, something of which has been described above. He was a Nigerian intellectual and poet who died serving the cause of a rebellion, that of Biafra, which in a sense made him a victim of an African colonial power. He is a prime example of the kind of revolutionary writer Fanon was looking for, a writer so obviously involved in his new country's struggle; he also illustrates Deleuze and Guattari's contention that "the literary machine becomes the relay for a revolutionary machine to come" (18), and served, finally, as an example of that "authentic innocence" of which Nandy speaks in his preface. Okigbo, at the time of his early death, had just found his voice as a Nigerian poet when his political convictions made him turn into a Biafran poet; he had at last found the way to reconcile the tom-tom with his English literary background and create a Nigerian poetics when he was "colonized" and "oppressed" by his own former homeland. Ultimately, of course, the new nation soon disappeared amidst the horrors of civil war, and with it went Okigbo himself, its most eloquent voice.

A Kafka writing in German, the language of the Austrian Empire, to reterritorialise had one problem, but with Okigbo it's more as if Kafka, a Czech, were in fact a Slovak in what was formerly Czechoslovakia. How much did Okigbo's "Biafran" identity battle with his "Nigerian" identity, which had freed itself from its colonial ties with Britain only in 1960? Can Fanon, Nandy or Deleuze and Guattari help sort out the strands? Okigbo himself once said that African literature "must have its roots deep in African soil, must take its birth from African experience, must pulsate with African feeling" (Anozie 23), but at the same time he showed indifference towards the idea of *négritude* promulgated by the poet (and President of Senegal) Léopold Sédar Senghor, for whom *négritude*, or black identity, served as a counter-weight to the colonialist myth, the assertion of black civilization by means of language and analytical tools, such as Marxism, taken from the colonial culture and turned into a tool for reterritorialisation. Senghor (and Fanon, for that matter, as he was Algerian) needed French to assert

the greatness of their own culture against that of France, as Okigbo, perforce, had to use English. As well, a much wider audience could be reached by using a widespread language; confining one's ideas and cultural assertions to a small select audience who could read, say, Yoruba, would have doomed Okigbo's writings to the same fate as has befallen the work of Daniel O. Fagunwa, whose novel *Forest of a Thousand Demons*, written in Yoruba, was translated into English by Wole Soyinka (1968) five years after the author's death in a car accident and whose other works are virtually unknown today.

Nandy's views on the process of colonialisation may be summed up as follows. Many writers from the nineteenth century onwards assumed that the ideal society is made up of one homogenised world dominated by technology and arranged in a strictly hierarchical manner. Nowadays this might be the world of the Internet and of the corporate empires who increasingly control it; corporate cultures can afford to dominate and colonise by way of "accessibility" those who cannot resist their inevitable control over people's lives, a control exercised even more surely, perhaps, over those who do not have access to it. Similarly, the colonial powers in the nineteenth century believed that they were helping humanity by bringing science and progress to the benighted masses of the non-Western world, and indeed some good was achieved. Later, more "enlightened" colonialists refrained from merely killing and stealing, instead bringing a colonialisation of the mind by planting Western culture within the people whose land they occupied and thus sowed the seeds of what many feel today is the colonialisation of young people's minds by corporate or popular culture, the endless deluge of "cute" cartoons and films designed either to sell things or to promote a Western lifestyle. The result of this was that many of the colonized felt that Western ideas somehow liberated them from traditional cultural values and thus were worthy of being embraced; tradition then became "superstition," "ignorance" or "savagery." Those who attempted in any way to stem the tide ended up like Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, a victim of "progress" as much as of his own bloody-mindedness. In the case of Okigbo, the Western literary canon and its spiritual counterpart, Christianity, played a dual role in his poetry as liberator and oppressor alike. Okigbo often seems unable to decide whether he is being oppressed or liberated by being steeped in Yeats and Eliot, or whether Christianity can somehow be reconciled with

the old religion. In the end, Nandy believes that imperialism was defeated by the "innocence" of the colonized peoples rather than by historical forces, the *realpolitik* of the colonial powers or the inherently contradictory nature of capitalism. He quotes the psychologist Rollo May's observation that "authentic innocence. . .includes the vulnerability of a child which has not lost the realism of its own perception of evil or that of its complicity in that evil" (Nandy xiii). The colonized constructed the West so that it made sense to the non-West in terms of the latter's experience of suffering.

The process described above is essentially the same as the ideas of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation on a broadly cultural scale rather than a purely literary one. Okigbo's English poetry (he has also written some poetry in Igbo) is what Deleuze and Guattari term "minor literature" because it is poetry "which a minority constructs within a major language" (16), in this case English. Okigbo recognizes his complicity in cultural colonialism; he loves the poetry of Wordsworth, Yeats, Eliot and others. For example, "The man embodies the child/ the child embodies the man; the man remembers/ the song of the innocent" (64), Okigbo writes in "Elegy of the Wind," simultaneously evoking both Wordsworth and Blake. In "Debtor's Lane," an early poem, we find "the wall clock strikes each hour/ in a dry cellar" (Anozie 33), surely an echo of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." Then there is Hawthorne, represented in the lines "to tell/ the tangled-wood tale" (4). In his introduction Okigbo lists Mallarmé, Hopkins, Melville, the American novelist Malcolm Cowley and Lorca as influences, as well as Rabindranath Tagore (surely the English version of *Gitanjali*) and Virgil (xii-xiii). Okigbo constantly evokes the language of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer and thus constructs a poetic language that is Western as well as African. This is all what Deleuze and Guattari call deterritorialisation; the references to Western poets are an expression of what Anozie called Okigbo's "frantic aspiration towards an ideal, a purist state which [Eliot] possibly might but could not easily give him" (102), which leads him untimately away to find his own voice.

Okigbo also satisfies two other criteria for minor literature; he is "political" in that first Nigeria and then Biafra, not just Okigbo himself, speaks through his voice, and his poetry has "collective value," that is, "what each author says" and which "constitutes a common action" (Deleuze and Guattari 17).

Having gone through this process, language then "reterritorialises" itself through new usage; its words "no longer belong to a language of sense" (21) and it becomes "animal," one of the terms that the Europeans associated with the so-called primitive cultures of Africa. In *The Passage*, Part I of Okigbo's "Easter Sequence," as he originally called it (xi), the poem turns into an evocation of Mother Idoto, the village water-spirit, but Okigbo retained the Easter imagery as part of the ceremony. He himself noted that the poem was "a ceremony of innocence" (a phrase from Yeats's "Easter 1916," which is also quoted by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*) in which the prodigal poet asks for a mother's blessing as he is about to embark upon a journey, that of Idoto's prodigal son returning to her protection, although he is no longer the same person who started out on the journey. This is made more profound by the fact that Okigbo was said to be a reincarnation of his maternal grandfather, who was the priest of the Adjani shrine where Idoto was worshipped (Anozie 42).

Okigbo further speaks of the prodigal being "like Orpheus" (xi), the inventor of poetry. But the Orpheus-figure in Okigbo is also Oedipal; he is not only in conflict with his father, or at least with the religion his father followed, Christianity (the elder Okigbo taught in Catholic missionary schools), but he paradoxically needs a blessing from his "mother," Idoto. The speaker also expresses the innocence spoken of by Nandy; he knows that he is a prodigal, and our Western antennae immediately make the connection, but his prayer is not to the Christian god but to Idoto. He wants to return to his spiritual family, "leaning on an oilbean,/ lost in your legend;" he wants Idoto's blessing, yet he asks for it using the language of his father's colonial religion and in the language of the major literature: "out of the depths my cry:/ give ear and hearken. . ." (3). The very means to "cry" has been given him by the major language, the ancient *De profundis* (Psalm 30) echoing down the ages and transposed to the worship of a "pagan" deity. What has taken place in this poem by the time these final lines were written is a shift in its priorities, the acquired god of Christianity giving place to Mother Idoto, her oilbean and her legend. The voice is not entirely released from its Christian undertones, but the prodigal knows where home is, despite the language which he must employ; the borders between the Christian god and Idoto have become blurred as Okigbo uses the former's codes to evoke the latter's

blessing, a new use of the acquired language and a reconstruction of an order not quite the same as either the old or the new. Further on Okigbo writes of "silent faces at crossroads:/ festivity in black," perhaps the Christian funeral service, but this soon becomes evocative once more: "O Anna at the knobs of the panel oblong,/ hear us at crossroads at the great hinges/ where the players of the loft pipe organs/ rehearse old lovely fragments, alone—" (5). Anna, we are told by Anozie, was Okigbo's mother (43), with her direct connections to both Idoto and the Christian god; she is now herself evoked as an intercessory deity. In "Newcomer," the fifth poem in the sequence, her role is somewhat different:

> Time for worship—
> *Anna of the panel oblongs,*
> *protect me*
> *from them fucking angels;*
> *protect me*
> *my sandhouse and bones.*(17)

Here Anna is a protector from the acquired Christianity, but in the same poem she is described in terms straight from that religion as "my guardian angel," and the poet has to admit that his own "mask" is "not ancestral" (17) for it has been deterritorialised. Sunday Anozie puts it this way: "It is this Christian role and doctrine which the poet appears to reject in favour of the guardian spirits of the dead in matters relating to the individual's salvation" (50). Ashis Nandy states: "The absolute rejection of the West is also the rejection of the basic configuration of. . .traditions: though, paradoxically, the acceptance of that configuration may involve a qualified rejection of the West" (76).

The very wavering of Okigbo's imagery, both animist and Christian, shows the process at work. And what, exactly, are "panel oblongs?" Are they linked to the "oblong-headed lioness" in "Siren Limits IV," against whom "no shield is proof" (27) or the "skeletal oblong/ Of my sentient being" in "Dis-

tances VI" (59)? Okigbo seems to have reworked the language here, using familiar words to create something we don't quite understand, although the theme, the unresolved conflict between two value-systems, is clear. The "newcomer" is Christianity; there is Christ betrayed with his "synthetic welcome at the cock's third siren," and Moses, "from behind the bulrushes/ waking, in the teeth of the chill May morn" (18). The qualified rejection is the poet's request to Anna for protection; its revolutionary purpose is to build out of the colonial experience what Nandy terms "a more contemporary, more self-critical version" (75) of the colonized culture, here perhaps its "prodigal" nature as represented by the poetic *persona.* Okigbo's speaker needs the angels because they allow him to evoke Anna's power against those aspects of the "newcomer" he wishes to reject.

Okigbo notes that in "Heavensgate" the prodigal becomes cleansed by the water-spirit. But he speaks also of the "celebrant at various stations of the cross" (xi). The African allusions are themselves part of the decolonizing process, the re-emergence of what Said calls the "communal memory" of the African past, a re-peopling of the landscape "using restored ways of life, heroes, heroines and exploits" (215). These allusions form a kind of contrapuntal discourse to the discourse of Christianity and colonialism, which both underscores and undercuts them by, if you will, colonializing them. This is what Okigbo does with his Western poets, too; the process of decolonization is as relentless in its way as it was in history. As Okigbo wrote in "Elegy for Slit-Drum," one of his last poems, "Jungle tanks blast Britain's last stand--/ the elephant ravages the jungle" (69-70). In "Silences" the reterritorialisation process is well on the way to completion, for this is very much an African work, distinct and clear not so much in any *négritude* but in their re-placement in the poetic soil of Africa. "We carry in our worlds that flourish/ Our worlds that have failed," says the Chorus in "Lament of the Silent Sisters III" (41), those Silent Sisters whom Okigbo tells us are "sometimes like the drowning Franciscan nuns of Hopkins's *Wreck of the Deutschland*, sometimes like the *sirens* of Debussy's "Nocturne"—two dissonant dreams associated in the dominant motif" (xii).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anozie, Sunday. *Christopher Okigbo: Creative Rhetoric.* London: Evans, 1971.

Deleuze, G./ Guattari, F. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature.* Dana Polan, Tr. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth.* Constance Farrington, Tr. New York: Grove Press, 1963.

Nandy, Ashis. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism.* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism.* New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

Note: Parts of this essay appeared in Yuichi Midzunoe, ed. *Discourse on Multilingual Culturse, Popular Cultures, Societies and Art.* Tokyo: Taga Shuppan, 1999.

Dirty Business in Presbyterian Church: re-examining genre conventions in Robert Altman's Western elegy, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971)

by Sue Matheson, University College of the North, The Pas, Manitoba

As Robert Merrill points out in "Altman's *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* As A Classic Western," *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971) is almost always considered to be an 'anti-western,' that is a film largely devoted to severe satire, even parody of the classical westerns" (79). Patrick McGilligan includes *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* as one of the six Altman 'anti-movies which "invert, satirize and enrich certain Hollywood genres" in *Robert Altman: Jumping Off The Cliff* (329); Robert T. Self reads *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* as a revisionist Western, that is as a "negotiation with the western genre which motivates a revised sense of narrative, style and history" and which shares in "the widespread revisionist impulse in Hollywood movies at a major time of transition in the movie industry as it undertook wholesale experimentation with classical narrative forms" in *Robert Altman's McCabe and Mrs. Miller: Reframing the American West*, (5-6); Norman Kagan argues that *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* is "Altman's most deeply felt and pessimistic anti-genre film, a reversal of the classic Western dealing with the 'taming' of the frontier…and argues that in many ways, McCabe & Mrs. Miller is "an anti-genre counterpart of John Ford's *Stagecoach*, *My Darling Clementine*, and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance"* in *American Skeptic: Robert Altman's Genre Commentary Films* (57).

Encouraging revisionist readings of the film at the time of the film's release and subsequent-

ly, Altman himself has asserted his animosity towards the unreality of Westerns and expressed his concern when shooting *McCabe & Mrs Miller* about capturing how life actually must have been in the American West. In 1972, Stuart Rosenthal's review of *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* for *Focus on Film* cites Altman as saying, "in Paris they referred to McCabe as an anti-western and they called it the 'demystification of an era.' That was my reason for getting involved in *McCabe* in the first place because I don't like Westerns," Altman continued, "I don't like the obvious lack of truth in them. I see no reason to go back to the reality of it and then tell the story" (in Self 56).

Much later, however, in a 2008 interview with Alex Simon, Altman admitted that *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* was actually carefully constructed around the "classic elements of the western: the hero, the whore with the heart of gold, the three gunslinger villains." "I knew that people would pay attention to that," he said, "[T]hen I could pay attention to the detailing." With Altman's admission in mind, one must wonder whether, twenty six years earlier, this director was riding a wave of public opinion when *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* was released. Were his anti-Western / anti-American Dream stances matters of targeting his movie as American New Wave to an audience that would appreciate its critique—the older and wiser members of the Youth Generation who were surviving the final years of the Vietnam war. After all, a good deal of the movie's appeal may be credited to its ensemble cast of extras, most of them American draft dodgers who built, acted on, and then populated the set of this movie. Or was Robert Altman selling out to public opinion? Was he involved in recovering the movie's costs when making McCabe and Mrs. Miller? After all these years, could this revisionist classic of American New Wave cinema be a conventional Western after all?

Altman's attention to detailing is an important place to begin such an inquiry. The importance of detailing in his is apparent when one considers the squalid filthiness of Presbyterian Church. Paul Arthur claims in "How the West Was West Was Spun: *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* and Genre Revisionism" that Altman's desire to unsettle our expectations of what constitutes a 'proper' Western is apparent from the beginning…[S]tripped of its romanticized, dualistic luster… the archetypal Western town--or in this case, a bleakly soggy Northwest mining outpost in 1902--is adorned with a grubby miser-

ableness we tend to call 'realistic.'" Generally, towns in Western films are not portrayed "realistically": unrealistically clean places (perhaps because there is very little mud in the desert)--paint does not peel in these places; cowboys and gunslingers are clean shaven and well dressed, even on cattle drives; their horses are always curried; and the leather of their saddles glints in the sunshine. This lack of grime (with apologies to Henry Hathaway one is tempted to say grit) may be due to the fact that it seldom rains in the Southwest where many of the filmic West's stories take place. But even in Westerns set in Arizona, horse manure does not litter the Main Streets and well-used thoroughfares, in spite of the large, healthy well-fed horses which are always picturesquely tied to hitching posts and the busy traffic is horse drawn. Indeed, when considering the immaculate streets that this genre boasts, it seems that every horse in a Western must relieve itself offset or magically has no need to relieve itself at all. John Ford understood the importance of this presentation of the American myth was to the popular American imagination. When approached by his assistant Wingate Smith with the concern that the set of *The Man Who Stole Liberty Valance* would not be accepted by audiences as "real" because it didn't look lived in, he snapped, "If they notice it, then we'll give 'em their nickel back" (Anderson 180).

It is not surprising therefore that Gregg Bachman begins his analysis of *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* by asserting that the movie's muddy opening sequences strongly indicate that the Western's conventions will be set, "if not on their collective ears, than on a more appropriate part of the anatomy" and provides the screenplay's direction for McCabe's pack horse to "relieve his bowels" while his owner searches for his hat in a saddlebag before riding into town. The horse's action, the direction suggests, is "perhaps as an opinion of the muddy trail, the rank weather and the filthy town" (in Bachman 97).

As Bachman indicates, establishing the almost overwhelming dirtiness of Presbyterian Church was a significant decision on Altman's part--but, in doing portraying the West in the Northwest in as realistic a manner as possible, he remains to true to one of the genre's most central, yet often unnoticed, conventions. Like cleanliness, dirt is also an essential signifier in the classic Western. As Martin Pumphrey points out in "Why Do Cowboys Wear Hats in the Bath?: Style Politics for the Older Man," over the years, washing, bathing, shaving have provided Westerns with a familiar set of

narrative moments, and cleanliness (or the lack of it) has played a crucial part in their coding of character (51). Heroes, Pumphrey says, are not "stained, grimy, or disheveled in the style of the rough, unmannered villains. Heroes may be dusty but not dirty. Their clothes may be worn but not greasy. They seldom sweat. Above all, they have always just shaved" (53). At the outset of *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, there does no seem to be a hero in sight. The inhabitants of Presbyterian Church who watch John McCabe (Warren Beatty) ride by on his steaming, mud-splattered horse are incredibly, intentionally grubby. In fact, the movie's script details just how grimy they are. As McCabe searches for his immaculate derby in his saddle pack before entering Presbyterian Church. …the camera pans introducing the audience to his point of view…the four miners whom he notices are "all bad breath and elbows. Dusty, dirty, unshaven. Unkempt, decaying teeth, facial hair which even money says house lice." Individuals whom Rooster Cogburn would recognize as being "high smellin' and lowdown," these men work and live in frontier conditions—the set which they built as the movie was shot and which houses them after the days of shooting are done can only be described as a filthy squalor.

Of all the unwashed living and working in that cold, soggy Northwest wilderness known as Presbyterian Church, Sheehan (Rene Auberjonois) is the dirtiest. Warned not to stand too close to the warmth of the potbellied stove in McCabe's apartment because he smells "kind of ripe," Sheehan's inner life parallels his appearance. The owner and proprietor of a begrimed saloon and flophouse so filthy that McCabe supplies his own blanket to cover the greasy gambling table, he looks like he has never washed. Unlike the other men in Presbyterian Church, McCabe will not sleep in the stained bunk beds upstairs at Sheehan's or eat a meal off Sheehan's plates. His usual order, a raw egg swimming in a glass of alcohol, may well a wise precaution, for it allows McCabe to avoid the germs and bacteria proliferating on the dinnerware. Sheehan's unsavory offerings are plated on a dish whose edges are wiped with a greasy, grimy dishcloth before the meal is presented. In the most literal sense, in Sheehan's Saloon and its restaurant, making money is a dirty business, and Sheehan, another prime example of the genre's critique of what can only be termed a filthy capitalism indeed.

In *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, grime signifies the corrupt and debased nature of frontier life--from

Presbyterian Church's slimy primordial streets to the dingy derraugotype effects created by Altman's insistence on flashing the film's negatives after each day of shooting. Altman's very traditional treatment of this genre convention is supported and furthered by the function of women in the movie. In traditional Westerns, the civilizing feminine influence is often an urban phenomenon: when women arrive in a frontier town, they order and clean up the natural and moral wilderness that is the West. Accordingly, it is not surprising that when Mrs. Miller (Julie Christie) appears in Presbyterian Church, she paradoxically does exactly that. Miners, who complain bitterly about having to take baths before visiting McCabe's whores, are inspected by Mrs. Miller before they are allowed to put their money down. If they are not washed and scrubbed, they are refused the women's services. Her establishment, however morally dirty the business of prostitution may be is a respectable and respected business in Presbyterian Church: Mrs. Miller's is "a sporting house with class girls and clean linen and proper hygiene."

Mrs. Miller allows no exceptions to this rule. Here it should be noted that setting and maintaining such standards of cleanliness awards women in this movie power and authority. Mrs. Miller and her prostitutes can and do say no to men who have not had their baths. Even the brothel's owner is refused entrance to Mrs. Miller's bed if he has not scrubbed and tubbed. Mrs. Miller' expertise in matters of personal hygiene makes her so valuable that McCabe cannot say no to going into a business partnership with her. "What about the customers?" she says, clinching her bid to become his business partner, "Who's gonna skin 'em back and inspect them. You gonna do that? Because if you don't this town will be clapped out inside of two weeks, if it's not already."

At this point, the professional gambler cannot maintain his poker face. McCabe's revulsion that he himself should inspect his customers for signs of venereal disease confirms what viewers already suspect: paradoxically, he is a businessman who does not want his hands dirty. In Presbyterian Church, the wealthier one is, the dirtier one is. In this place, money is indeed "filthy lucre" as the condition of the miners suggests, but unlike the grubby men whom he exploits and his even grimier competitor, McCabe is personally fastidious. A man who sews his buttons back on his gleaming white shirts, he wears clean clothes and a spotless derby hat. In contrast to the other eating and gambling estab-

lishments in Presbyterian Church, McCabe's saloon is sparkling clean--even when it is half built, his establishment's walls shine, and when its tables and bar top arrive they are clean and stay that way. At one point during the shooting, actress Julie Christie nearly broke her foot kicking a brass spittoon by McCabe's bar--aptly, there are no spittoons of any sort to be found in Sheehan's establishment.

At first, the apple pie order of McCabe's saloon invites and then encourages Altman's viewers to see its owner and proprietor as a heroic figure. But as Pumphrey would point out, the presence of McCabe's unkempt beard serves as a constant reminder of the true nature of his profession and character. A clean shaven man is another established convention used to signify a man's character in the Western. Announcing himself as a "businessman" to his customers, John McCabe is, in fact and by trade, a professional crook and confidence man. Traditionally in Westerns, gamblers are not leading men. Morally and ethically suspect, they may or may not redeem themselves as the narrative unfolds. In *Stagecoach* (1939), for example, the gallant and meticulously groomed gambler Hatfield (John Carradine), a prodigal Southern gentleman redeems his seedy past, dying chivalrously (and bloodlessly) while protecting the honor of married Southern womanhood in the form of Lucy Mallory . Given the ambivalent figure of the gambler in the Western, Altman's attention to and foregrounding of such a detail in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* cannot be considered a revision of the genre. By 1972, foregrounding such a character in a frontier story was an interesting, not an unusual or unpopular, narrative staple. Indeed, it is highly possible that Altman drew upon his experience with a similar protagonist when working with the character of John McCabe. After all, he was the director of episode #90, "Bolt from the Blue," of *Maverick*, a Western television series which ran from 1957 to 1962 in which TV's first Western antihero played by James Garner played the gambler not as a villain but as another stock Western character developed by Harry Carey, Sr.—the goodbad man.

Here it should be noted that in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, the Western convention that one does find overturned is that of the cowboy, the range hero. Squeaky clean, venereal free, and generally the Western's narrative focus, the Cowboy (Keith Carradine) is presented in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* as a minor, ineffectual figure which appears only briefly. Not a gunslinger, he arrives in town to visit

the whorehouse at the movie's midway point. Backlit by the setting sun, wearing a white Stetson, and riding a tall horse, he appears to be a prime example of virile American manhood. Once in the whorehouse, however, it quickly becomes apparent that this book cannot be judged by its cover. Mrs. Miller's whores certainly do not respect the Cowboy's prowess in bed (is it the length of his performance or the size of his sex that is laughingly measured later in the parlor?), and he is murdered almost immediately because he is not skilled with his gun.

Discarding the gullible Cowboy, Altman uses the experienced gambler and the worldly-wise prostitute, supporting characters found in the chorus of the townspeople and stock Western characters, to make *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* a very 'traditional Western'—what Roger Ebert in 1999 termed "a perfect movie," because it did not "unsettle our expectations" of the genre. Fulfilling those genre expectations, Altman employs what may be termed a minor key for his opus to impart what John Cawelti has identified as the genre's concern with "social transition--the passing from the old West into modern society" (in Merrill 80).

Further, Altman's film rests on "the standard western story" (Merrill 86)--set in a standard western town which defines the nature of its inhabitants and delineates the audience's expectations of its townspeople. Generally, there are two types of towns found in the fictional Old West: the Western town which has had time to develop a veneer of civilization via the presence of young families and senior citizens who are served by its church, its schoolhouse, its bank, and a sheriff's office with its jail. A railroad, announced by a telegraph office, connects such a community to the rest of the country, and there is often a newspaper office. In *The Man Called Liberty Valance* (1962), Shinbone is one such place; Tonto, in *Stagecoach* (1939), another. The raw frontier town of the Wild West, on the other hand, does not enjoy the civilizing influences of religion, education, capitalism, and the law. Instead, in these towns, one finds saloons and brothels. may insist that Presbyterian Church and its saloons and whorehouse presents a revision of the Western by putting forward "a negative, even truculent view of social progress," but it should be noted that seedy frontier towns like Presbyterian Church are also genre conventions. For instance, Tonto's polar opposite, Lordsburg houses what are ironically termed "the blessings of society," the saloon and the whorehouse, popular signi-

fiers of the lawless frontier, found on the very edge of America's movement westward. Located much further East than Lordsburg, Tonto has had more time to develop a civilized culture, one managed and maintained by the formidable ladies of the Law and Order League who clean up the town by scouring out its "dregs": with the help of the Law, these women see to it that all their community's anti-social elements, a prostitute, thief, drunk, gambler, and jailbird leave Tonto to go to what is their natural habitat—Lordsburg, a wild and wooly place billed as the "Last Frontier of Wickedness."

In the Western, it is common knowledge that the further West one goes, the wilder and more socially aberrant life becomes. Those who transgress society's norms and forms are individuals suited to living on the frontier. When Eastern standards and conventions take root in such places and transform Western towns into Eastern cities, those suited to frontier living must go further West to find a place to live. Even Lucy Mallory, as a cavalry officer's wife who wants to be with her husband instead of being at home having her baby, finds herself moving Westward in defiance of Eastern society's norms and forms.

In *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, Altman's Presbyterian Church could not be located any further West--in 1911, perched on the edge of the Pacific Ocen, it is located on America's most Western frontier, and it is difficult to imagine how this frontier town could be more wicked. A lawless place where slums and saloons and whores and whorehouses predominate, Presbyterian Church is a place where neither spiritual nor social transcendence is possible. Its minister is mad, and its church, constantly under construction, is empty. It is never open for worship.

Aptly, Presbyterian Church's most respectable, leading citizen, John McCabe, is a saloon owner. As Philip Loy points out in *Westerns and American Culture 1930-1955*, Westerns frequently cast businessmen--saloonkeepers, bankers, shop owners, lumber company owners, lawyers, and doctors--as villains. In the business of making Westerns, the uncouth "dog" heavies relied on brawn rather than brain. Saloonkeepers were the natural 'brain' heavies because saloons were commonly associated with drunkenness, gambling, and prostitution": "many Americans believed saloon keeping was a sin business," Loy says, noting that "people who made a living of other people's moral weaknesses were not likely to be

honest in other areas of life" (153). Thus, he notes, it was natural that, in films, the Western outlaw, the gangster's frontier ancestors in crime, would be linked to saloons--usually crooked gambling (153-54).

Like the gambler, the Western saloon keeper was a genre convention—a villain, adept at defrauding his customers and exploiting dance hall girls (Loy 154). Unlike the gambler whom Self points out seldom merited the role of the hero in the frontier narrative, the saloon keeper never merits the role of the Western hero. Appropriately, when John McCabe finds himself engaged in a shootout, defending his life and his property from Harrison and Shaugnessy's three gunmen, he does not do so like a Western hero. There is no challenge in a bar room or shootout at high noon on the main street of Presbyterian Church. Instead, McCabe bushwacks his opponents. Scurrying from building to building and shooting his enemies in the back is not that "heroic" behavior that one would expect of a Western hero, but it is behavior that supports and fulfills the viewers' expectations of how gamblers and saloon-keepers in Westerns act. Here it should be noted that Altman painstakingly prepares his audience for the climax of the film. Such "low" behavior has been evident from the moment McCabe was introduced as a cardsharp. During his first game of chance at Sheehan's, he announces to the audience (but not to his victims at the table) that he is crooked by producing a shiner, a silver whiskey flask, and placing it on the table. It is no surprise then to the viewer when Sheehan spreads the rumor that McCabe has a big rep--that he killed Bill Roundtree, a man whom no one knows—anything is possible for a man who cheats at cards. Nor is it unsettling that in the scene immediately following this game, McCabe is found procuring prostitutes and acting as their pimp. Capitalists in Westerns are always highly suspect, and McCabe proves not be an exception to this rule. Aptly, his nature mirrors the place in which he lives. What matters here is not one's morals but one's work ethic. As he tells the men of Presbyterian Church who haven't set up the prostitutes' tents in time for their arrival: "You boys gotta make up your minds if you want to get your cookies. Cause if you want to get your cookies, I've got girls up here that'll do more tricks than a goddamn monkey on a hundred yards of grapevine."

In *Stagecoach*, Dallas is saved from the life of a dance hall girl, escaping with Ringo from what Curly Wilcox and Doc Boone term the "blessings of civilization" to live in marital bliss on a ranch

in Mexico. In *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, escape from Presbyterian Church is a more complicated proposition--escape is possible only if one has the money to do so. Mrs. Miller's ambition to own and operate a respectable boarding house in San Francisco depends on her partnership with McCabe being successful. Unlike Ringo and Dallas who are lovers and thus able to transcend their limited social and spiritual conditions, McCabe and Mrs. Miller are business partners. In spite of his erotic and sentimental feelings for her, McCabe pays for his nights with Mrs. Miller.

Altman's ironic treatment of their relationship offers a scalding critique of capitalism (another staple of the Western narrative). Paying for Mrs. Miller's favours, McCabe has become his own customer since his own money is returned to him by his partner. As the Madame's lovely, heart-shaped money box in which he stuffs dollar bills, matters of the sentiment in the Wild West are really matters of one's pocketbook. The tragedy of their relationship lies not in this couple's defiance of social conventions, but in the competitiveness that capitalism promotes. Trying to get ahead dooms McCabe and Mrs. Miller because their successful partnership in Presbyterian Church brings them to the attention of the M.H. Harrison-Shaughnessey Mining Company.

As Merrill points out, "Altman's Western is far more faithful to the standard western story than anti-westerns like *Doc* and *The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* because the movie presents characters to whom we respond with sympathy if not full approval, people who elicit tragic and comic responses" (79; 86). McCabe and Mrs. Miller are sympathetic characters because they are small businesspeople. Another important Western convention, the small businessman was associated with the spirit of progress--its desirability and its inevitability. Such men were depicted as heroic being men with foresight and courage who developed the West and were pitted against the interests of big business and/or the banks (Loy 166). Using his purchasing power, McCabe, the quintessential small businessman, refuses Sheehan's offer to form a monopoly which would control the business economy of Presbyterian Church. Self argues that McCabe aversion to Sheehan's offer earmarks him as the classic independent western hero. Like the knight of the plains, McCabe wants no partners: "Partners is what I come up here to get away from." Ironically, however, McCabe is not an independent businessman

for long—but he would like the men of Presbyterian Church to think that he is.

Unable to add correctly and keep his debits and credits on different lines, McCabe depends on Mrs. Miller, his business partner, to balance his books and make his enterprise a success. For her part, Mrs. Miller harbors no illusions about McCabe's nature precisely because she can add and balance the books. A better businesswoman than McCabe, her insights into the nature of business itself are particularly instructive. An expert in the matter of dirt and cleanliness--and therefore image management--Mrs. Miller instructs McCabe in the niceties of climbing the social ladder: "If you want to make out you're such a fancy dude, you ought to wear something besides that cheap jockeyclub cologne," she says. Constance Miller knows that one's business is furthered by the appearance of social success. Cleanliness may be ranked next to godliness in this movie, because it is an indicator of profit and power.

Compared to mining, gambling seems to be a much cleaner and more desirable business in which to be until one notices that the cleaner a man appears to be in this movie, the more suspect his business ethics are. Acknowledged as the town's leading citizen, the well-groomed McCabe is a pimp. The movie's representatives of Big Business, Eugene Sears (Michael Murphy) and Ernie Hollander (Anthony Holland) of the M.H. Harrison-Shaughnessey Mining Company, also arrive in Presbyterian Church well dressed and clean shaven. Much better dressed than McCabe, these men are wealthy. Their tasteful derbies and understated outerwear indicate that they do not smell of cheap jockey club cologne. The work of businessmen, who appear to be fastidious, is even dirtier than that of the small businessman. Unlike McCabe who swindles, Sears and Hollander extort and murder. In this movie, the nature of business remains the same, but the individual's degree of its debasement depends on whether one is working for oneself or has sold one's sold to a corporation.

Aptly then, Altman's strongest critique of capitalism is found in the cleanest place in town. Morally, Mrs. Miller's flesh trade is a dirty business indeed. Throughout *McCabe & Mrs. Miller,* Western conventions strip bare and critique relationship dynamics, creating what Roger Ebert believes to be one of the "saddest films" he has ever seen, filled with a yearning for love and home that will not ever come…a poem—an elegy for the dead." Marriage, love and home are impossibilities in Presbyterian

Church with its population of 125 men and very few women. Men may purchase a mail order bride like Ida Coyle (Shelley Duvall) but the emotional depth of marriage cannot be purchased, and the relationship itself is therefore not respected. As a variant of the flesh trade, Altman's treatment of the mail order bride business could hardly be less romantic. Ida does not make love with her husband--sex, for her, is her duty as a wife. Mrs. Miller is not the only inhabitant of Presbyterian Church who sees little difference between being a mail order bride and a prostitute. On the street, Ida, accompanied by her husband, is asked by strangers if she works at Mrs. Miller's.

As Elliott West points out, "romantic notions to the contrary the flesh trade [itself] was strictly business--and a rough one" (267; in Self 36). In this movie, "[t]he issue of romantic and sexual desire," Self notes, "[I]s subordinate and definitely marginal to the [business] challenge Constance Miller" presents to John McCabe (68). In his 1999 review of *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* in the *Chicago Sun Times*, Robert Ebert also comments on the disquieting nature of the principals' relationship: "study the title. 'McCabe & Mrs. Miller,'" he says, "Not 'and,' as in a couple but '&' as in a corporation. It is a business arrangement. Everything is business with her." Ultimately their relationship must fail: for Constance Miller, a business professional, John McCabe is an "amateur" who is "screwing up me business" (Self 70). Supporting Altman's critique, relationships between men and women in Presbyterian Church all seem to be matters pertaining to the market. McCabe appears to be a romantic as he claims, "I got poetry in me!" when he thinks about Mrs. Miller, but his relationship with her is really a matter of profit and loss: "All you've cost me so far is money and pain," he says, "pain, pain, pain."

In the traditional Western, the gambler is unable to maintain relationships with others whom he must exploit to survive. Likewise, the prostitute, always exploiting herself and being exploited by others, cannot enjoy a lasting relationship for one customer is quickly replaced by another. In the Western, the chances of either the gambler or the prostitute being redeemed is slim. Because Mrs. Miller's opium addiction ensures that social, economic, and, for McCabe, which emotional transcendence which their partnership promises is not a possibility, theirs is a business marriage which must fail. Appropriately, death parts them. Indeed, McCabe's chilly conclusion in a snowdrift may be read

metaphorically. Earlier, he claimed that Mrs. Miller was "freezing" his soul—and while attempting to prove himself heroic to her that is exactly what happens. Andrew Sarris' review in The Village Voice July 8, 1971 could not have been more correct when it noted Altman's "poetic evocation of the fierce aloneness in American life" (in Zuckoff 206). Bleeding to death in a snowstorm, the capitalist literally freezes solid, while protecting his business interests.

In final analysis, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* is very much a conventional western. In spite of his protests to the contrary, Robert Altman, it seems, did not in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, as Self suggests, always read "the western against the grain of its traditional narrative, challenging and reworking its assumptions, its forms and its style" (56)—even though it appears that most of its audiences and critics have done exactly that in spite of this movie's faithful adherence to genre code and conventions. What John Huston thought to be the "best Western he had ever seen" (Zuckoff 229), *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* proved, in its historic and cinematic moment, to be that most fascinating of film anomolies—an American New Wave Western which simultaneously upset and fulfilled its viewers' expectations while maintaining faithful contact with its genre conventions.

Works Cited

Anderson, Lindsay. *About John Ford.* New York: McGraw, 1981.

Arthur, Paul. "How The West Was Spun: *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* and Genre Revisionism." *Cineaste: America's Leading Magazine on the Art and Politics of the Cinema* 28.3 (Summer 2003): 18-20.

Bachman, Gregg. "McCabe and Mrs. Miller: Altman's Showdown with the Western Genre." *Creative Screenwriting* 4.3 (Fall 1997): 97-111.

Ebert, Roger. 14 November 1999. "*McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971*). rogerebert.com.* Accessed 2 February 2011. <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19991114/REVIEWS08/911140301 /1023.>

Engle, Gary. "*McCabe and Mrs Miller*: Robert Altman's Anti-Western" *Journal of Popular Film and Television* . 4 (Fall 1972): 268-287.

McGilligan, Patrick. *Robert Altman: Jumping off the Cliff. A Biography of the Great American Director.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984.

Kagan, Norman. *American Skeptic: Robert Altman's Genre Commentary Films.* Ypsilanti, MI: Pierian Press, 1982.

Loy, Philip. *Westerns and American Culture 1930-1955.* Mcfarland & Company, 2001.

McCabe and Mrs. Miller. Dir. Robert Altman. Warner Bros. Pictures. 1971. DVD.

Merrill, Robert."Altman's *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* As A Classic Western." *New Orleans Review* 17.2 (Summer 1990): 79-86.

Pumphrey, Martin. "Why Do Cowboys Wear Hats in the Bath?: Style Politics for the Older Man." The Book of Westerns. Ed. Ian Cameron and Douglas Pye. New York: Continuum, 1996:

50–62.

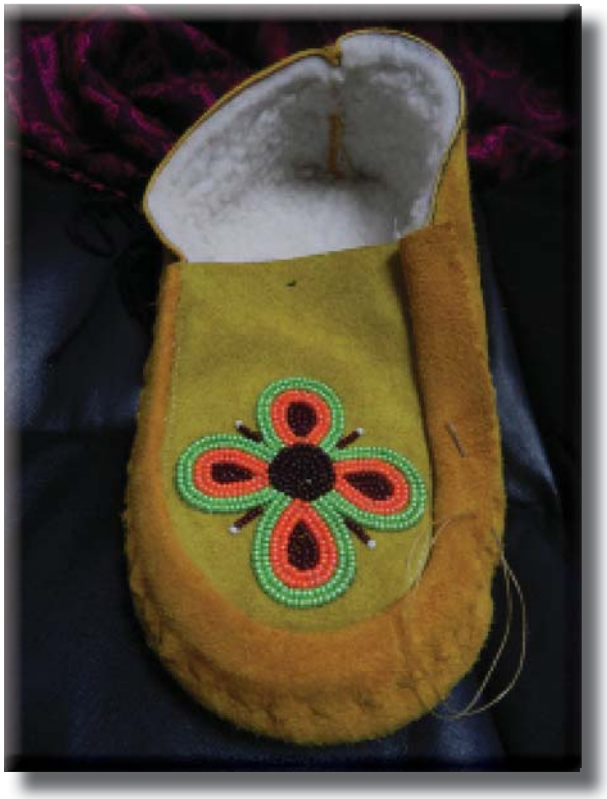
Self, Robert T. *Robert Altman's McCabe and Mrs. Miller: Reframing the American West.* Lawrence, KS: UP of Kansas, 2007.

Simon, Alex. 6 February 2008. "Robert Altman: An Appreciation." *The Hollywood Interview: The Best Q&As by Alex Simon and Terry Keefe*. Accessed 15 February 2011. < http://thehollywoodinterview.blogspot.com/2008/02/robert-altman-appreciation.html.>

Zuckoff, Mitchell. "McCabe." In Robert Altman: The Oral Biography Mitchell. Alfred A. Knopf New York 2009: 206-32.

Continuing Tradition

by Anne Jevne



Working with moose hide is alive and well and living in The Pas, Manitoba. An art only centered and creative individuals can master, leatherwork is an intricate and time-consuming activity. Traditional leatherworkers know that it takes much more than hours to create a pair of handmade moccasins. The finished product is the result of years of experience that stretches back through generations of women teaching women the intricacies of beadwork and tanning. .

Evelyn Jebb. Cecilia Ross. Phyllis McLeod. Cecilia McLeod. And at the ages of five and ten years, members of the next generation of this family are also learning their mother's, grandmoth-

er's, great grandmother's, and great great grandmother's artistry.

Years ago, what has become art was a matter of survival.

"It was a necessity," Ceclia Ross emphasized, "We had to do it. When my mom was teaching us, it was necessary to keep the feet warm, the little ones' moccasins. They made their own hides then. We never bought hides."

Easier to handle and sew than factory produced cowhide, the deep carmel-colored, home tanned moose hide, the real thing that leather artists treasure, is as supple and as soft as feathers.

"You start from scratch," Cecilia said, "And it takes a long time. You have to take the hair off. Bull work you can call it."

Picking up a pair of scissors and demonstrating how to soften the leather further on a pair of unfinished moccasins, Cecilia emphasized the importance of working the leather properly after it is tanned to make it ready for sewing. "The ladies would drink tea and bite the hide," she remembered, "It was part of survival."

She and her daughter, Phyllis McLeod, still use a traditional Moose Lake bone scraper to prepare hides. Made from the leg bone of a moose, the scrapper is razor sharp and serrated. There is a cloth attached to one end of it to cover the user's arm, protecting her from the chemicals and excess hair and flesh that flies off while the hide is being scraped.

When Cecilia was growing up, her family made moccasins and gauntlets for themselves. "We never sold our stuff," she said, "It was all for the family. Later, in my time, people started asking us to make mukluks and slippers."

"I remember that my mother made a jacket at Christmas time for my dad," Phyllis added, "The men got all dressed up at that time of the year. The moccasins…there was rubber wrap across the bottom and beadwork all around the ankle and over the vamp."

The beadwork from The Pas is distinctive as the women in this area generally prefer floral patterns

and design. There are "all different colors to match the beadwork on the jacket," Phyllis pointed out. "There is beading on the pockets, cuffs, lapels and the back of the jacket."

At the University College of the North, students and visitors are greeted by Evelyn Jeff's artistry when they walk through the door. Evelyn began to teaching her daughter how to bead when she was very young. "I was maybe ten when I started," Cecilia remembered.

"My mother would have us doing moccasins," she said, "Little wrap-arounds for the kids. The men also wore wrap-arounds when they went hunting. And gauntlets, the beading on the arm or on the mitt."

Currently, she is making a pair of gauntlets for her son for Christmas. "His old pair lasted for eight years," she laughed. "He doesn't want to give them up. He wants me to fix them. I looked at them and thought, 'I can't fix these. It's good lynx fur though. I'll be making another pair for Christmas.'"

The Christmas tradition of making and giving leather goods this year includes a pair of mukluks for Phyllis daughter. "One year I made mitts for everyone," Cecilia said."My daughter was offered $200 for her fox mitts. She told the guy, 'No I can't my mother made them.' Then he offered her $500. Even for $500 she never gave them up."

"The same thing happened to my daughter," Phyllis laughed. "I lent her a finely beaded purse I made and she went out to bingo. One person offered her $200, 300 $ for it, but she said, 'I can't, my mom would kill me.'"

Using porcupine quills given to her by her mother, Phyllis is just finishing earrings for her daughter-in-law. "I wouldn't give up those quills," she said, "My mom gave them to me."

Like Cecilia's, Phyllis' skills with the needle were passed on from her mother. She remembers when Cecilia ran her own business, selling moccasins wholesale and retail. The business did so well, that it couldn't continue. "I burnt out," Cecilia said, "There were too many orders. We were sending orders all over North America and to Europe."

"I'd come home," Phyllis said, "And there'd be a circle full of women…tables…the tv would

be going… they'd be sitting there sewing and laughing. There were funny conversations and really good stories. So I learned from them and from watching them."

Although the traditional work produced by the older generations stays in the family, the younger generations tend to sell their work which tends towards more modern patterns. Medallions, earrings and rings are very popular, and there is the art form is being learned by teenagers in The Pas.

Work-in-progress by Cecilia Ross

This year Cecelia is teaching beading at Oscar Lathlin Collegiate. "I can tell who has patience and who hasn't," she said.

"The boys find this stressful," she smiled. "They say it's a dangerous class because of the needles. They don't like it when they prick themselves and bleed."

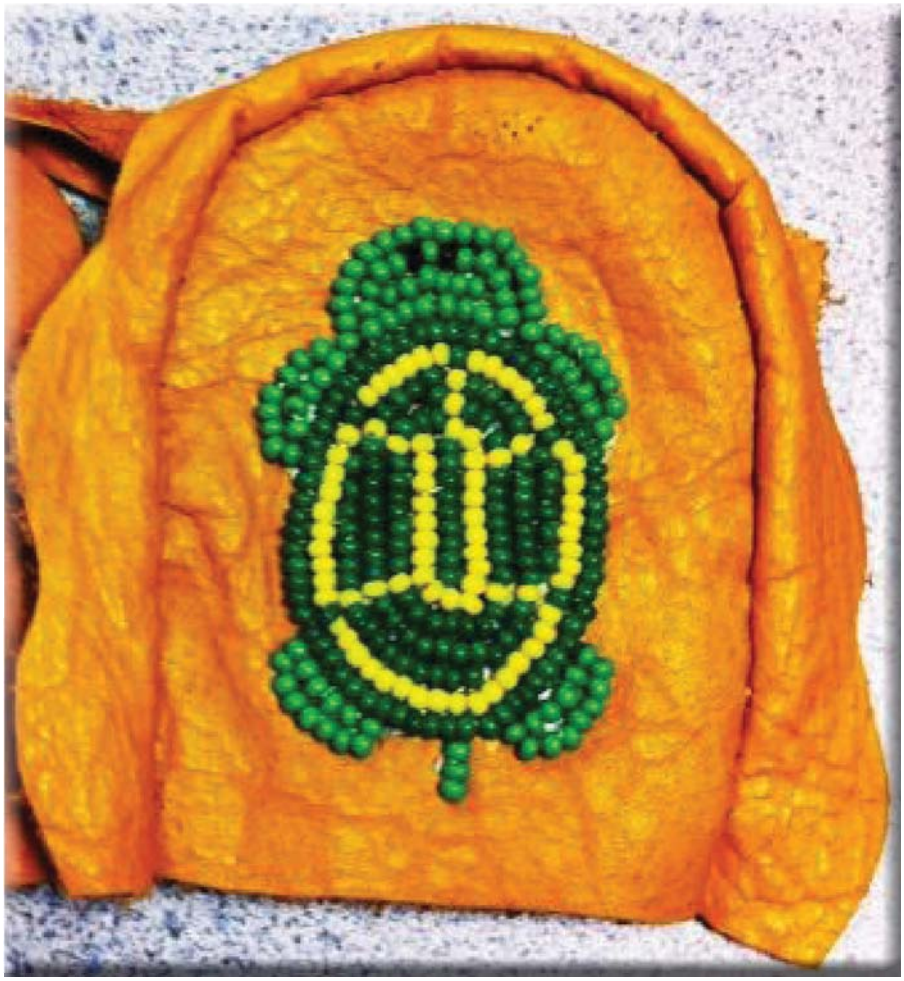
At the University College of the North, Phyllis' daughter, Cecile McLeod teaches students about the art. Phyllis pointed out that one of the most important parts of a teacher's job is to teach stu-

dents not to do a *mamasis,* a "half-assed job." As she explained, the extremely intricate and delicate Cree-style beadwork involves beading by tacking every two beads. Held at a premium, the square three-headed flat beading needles are expensive and not a single one is available in The Pas this Christmas.

Phyllis McLeod and Yellow Thunderbird Medallion

Last year, their multigenerational table at the Trapper's Festival showcased "Granny's work, Mom's, mine, my daughter's and the great grandchildren's, "Phyllis said. There were five generations. The ten-year old sits with us already."

"The quality you have to have is patience," Cecelia said, "If you make a mistake take it apart and put it back together 'til it's right. Patience is a good thing. My five-year old great grand daughter is making rings and earrings." Perseverance and determination are other qualities of these aboriginal artists. Creativity is another, Cecilia pointed out. Humor, Phyllis added, is also necessary. But most of all, beading and leatherwork, made for family members, are works of love.



Nikanik by Rod Nabess

An interview with Rod Nabess

Rod Nabess has always interested in the art of beading. Beading is a gift for Rod. You might say that art is a part of his genetic make-up. ""My family are all aboriginal artists," he said, "My cousin, Robert Nabess, owns and runs White Feather Creations. We were always doing stuff like this"

Rod began beading after meeting Cecile McLeod at University College of the North. He began beading in February, first learning how to loom bead on a stretcher and then the art of flatbeading. Rod picked up the time-consuming art right away. His first attempts at loom work were so impres-

sive that Cecile, also a traditional dancer, asked him if he would make strips on the loom for one of her garments.

"She taught me how to bead," he said. "I have a knack for it. And you have to understand colors and contrasts."

Currently, he is finishing his family's moccasins for Christmas. Nicole and Rod are expecting their first child in January.

"My wife wanted bear paws," Rod said, "She prefers traditional colors like black, blue and white, so I'm using black and silver. I'm thinking maybe it's a little bit too much J. Lo…a little too much bling, but everyone really likes it."

Work -in-progress ***Bear paw* by Rod Nabess**

Completed bear paw *by Rod Nabess*

Completed bearpaw moccasins *by Rod Nabess*

The more intricate design for the baby was chosen because turtles represent a mother's love.," he said.

The intricacy of Nabess's bear paws and turtles make them both "large designs." A fast beader, Nabess created the bear paws in four days, the work on the turtles took about eleven hours, spanned over a week.

Completed Nikanik moccasins ***by Rod Nabess***

I asked around about turtles," he said, "Learning language and culture is part of the classes. There's so much dancing, singing and stories. So much culture is involved. I thought there's got to be a word for turtle. Everyone said, Rod, we don't have turtles up here. Finally I asked John Martin and it is *nikinak*. Cree will make up a word to describe something that it doesn't already have a word for. Hippopotamus, for example, would translate as a two-two, thick skin underwater swimming pig."

For Rod, choosing leather and fur for the moccasins for function as well as their look is very

important. The baby's moccasins are made of buckskin because it is a softer, more flexible leather than the dyed hide which is appropriate for an adult's footwear.

He has also been asked for "a little more flatbeading" by his cousin. "I designed a Harley Davidson logo with a Nabess middle bar that my cousin, who makes moccasins for a living, likes," Nabess said, "He wants a set. I'll have a couple of pairs done like that."

Nabess Harley Davidson Logo

by Rod Nabess

Color of destiny

The color of life touch my feelings

And you carry me on wings of a purple air

Coming from your sense of beauty

I am declaring to the morning that

I am free of everything, except of you

Living inside me

Don't be angry with me forever

I will extend my arms around the universe

And hold the sun to hide an ultraviolet wave

Of sadness that may touch the ground

And reflect on a moment in your destiny

You are the only pulse of purity that keeps me alive.

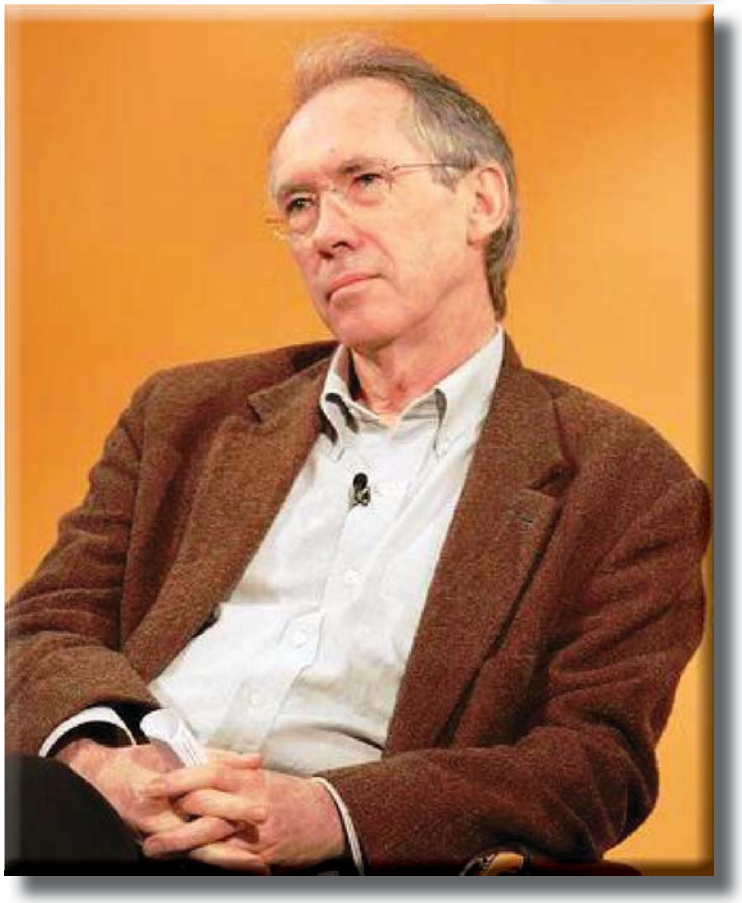
You are my destiny

Moiz

REVIEWS

Ian McEwan *Atonement.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2007.

Gary A. Kozak



Ian McEwan

Atoning , moaning, moaning, and atoning...

Ian McEwan's eighth novel *Atonement* is a tragic account of betrayal and self-inflicted retribution. It is set in the difficult but formative years of the Second World War. The war, and in particular "the blitz", is used as the backdrop for a story involving characters who are facing ordeal due to fate or wrongful decisions. These decisions have long term impacts on the characters themselves.

The story concerns a young adolescent named Briony Tallis who is entertaining family visitors. Despite her age, she is already developing a talent as a playwright. The problem begins when she witnesses her older sister Cecilia gaining a physical attraction and burgeoning intimate relationship with long-time family friend Robbie Turner. Due to psychological confusion involving jealousy she implicates Robbie for the rape of her cousin Lola. This implication sends him to prison, thereby ending the physical aspect of his developing relationship with Cecilia

as well as his hopes of entering the medical profession. The couple manage to maintain contact but Cecilia severs contact with Briony. He gains his freedom due to volunteer service in the war. Briony becomes a nurse and continues to live to an old age while feeling remorse for the wrongful mistake she made in her youth.

The story is told in four separate sections, each with a distinctive narrative to demonstrate direct circumstances rather than an evolving continuum of events. In the first section the characters are introduced and the problem is set. The second section concerns Robbie's service in the war at the time of the Dunkirk retreat. He experiences a flashback when he remembers Briony's juvenile attraction to him during a swimming lesson. This attraction developed into the malicious envy that eventually led to her reprehensible action. In the third section she is working as a nurse in a hospital for the war injured rather than cultivating her talent as a playwright. McEwan leads us to believe this career decision is a kind of self-punishment on Briony's part. The fourth section is presented in the form of a diary written by Briony at an old age while she is suffering from vascular dementia.

McEwan's method of presentation is in highly descriptive narrative form with limited dialogue. The amount of dialogue increases in the second section. The description is meticulous and vivid with the intention of giving the reader a realistic feeling of place in time. His descriptions can be alluring as well as coarse and funereal. He especially presents a vivid depiction of the war itself. An example is the following:

The leg was twenty feet up, wedged in the first forking of the trunk, bare, severed cleanly above the knee. From where they stood there was no sign of blood or torn flesh. It was a perfect leg, pale, smooth, small enough to be a child's. The way it angled in the fork, it seemed to be on display, for their benefit or enlightenment…" (180)

McEwan's depictions of war-life appear as if he had a first hand experience in it and these depictions continue for much of the novel. Another example of this is when he tells the story of Briony working in the hospital amongst the wartime casualties. He creates a disturbing atmosphere of despair and gauntness. An example of this is found in the following:

In the folds of skin at the back of his neck were beads of perspiration. The wound was eighteen inches long, perhaps more, and curved behind his knee. The stitches were clumsy and irregular. Here and there one edge of the ruptured skin rose over the other, revealing its fatty layers, and little obtrusions like miniature bunches of red grapes forced up from the fissure (279).

In the first section, McEwan's tone is lighter when calms us with more attractive descriptions. An example of this is the following:

Of the four dolphins whose tails supported the shell on which the Triton squatted the one nearest to Cecilia had its wide-open mouth stopped with moss and algae. Its spherical stone eyeballs, as big as apples, were iridescent green.

The whole structure had acquired around its northerly surfaces a bluish-green patina, so that from certain approaches, and in low light, the muscle-bound Triton really seemed a hundred leagues under the sea (27).

He creates an imaginary, surreal and almost impressionist setting containing a hidden potential for tragedy. As the novel progresses, the settings become more grim and realistic and as the tragedy unfolds and a period of impending hardship has commenced.

Clearly, McEwan has a talent for descriptive writing and he has a boldness to demonstrate it. This feature continues for most of the novel with dialogue fitting into it. The only problem is that he uses it on an exhaustive scale at the expense of the novel itself. His descriptions are used so frequently and excessively that they overwhelm the plot. It is perhaps not a literary flaw but a chosen technique. The limited dialogue diminishes our sympathy for the characters causing us to admire the style and forget about the issues that McEwan is attempting to deal with.

The tone of the novel is languid and dispiriting without any high points. None of the characters are in any way charming. They suffer from bad fate, or in Briony's case bad judgment, and they are unable to restore prosperity. Cecilia and Robbie are both war casualities and they never have the chance to develop their relationship past its early stage. Briony is never able to make peace with her sister and becomes ill in the end. The story finishes on a low point with the characters' problems remaining unsettled. Ian McEwan's eighth novel can be appreciated for its impressive style but not for its spirit.

Cabeza de Vaca, Alvar Nuñez. *Chronicle of the Narvaez Expedition*. Introduction by Ilan Stavans. Revised translation by Harold Augenbraum. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2002

Gary A. Kozak

Interesting and exciting but no picnic

Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca was a Spanish explorer of the New World and one of only four survivors of the original 600 members of the Narvaez Expedition. He wrote detailed accounts of many of the Native American tribes he came into contact with. The details of the expedition were presented to King Carlos I of Spain. The account was later written as *La Relacion* and *Naufragios*. He asked for a return to the New World as a regional governor but the position was given to Hernando De Soto. He did succeed in establishing a colony in present day Buenos Aires. He died in Valladolid in 1558. The names and other details concern-

ing native American tribes are attributed to him.

The chronicles prepared by early explorers are an invaluable form of literature. Besides leaving us with the step-by-step account of the daily routine of the person in question who is doing the exploring, they provide important and insightful description of land, people and the experience itself. Fifteenth century explorer, Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, has left us with a significant chronicle of the Narvaez expedition in which he was a member. This makes him the most important member of that expedition, at least to the point of view of a contemporary reader. Cabeza de Vaca's account is compelling, tragic and daunting. Its details are relevant to history, geography, anthropology and psychology.

Having the position of treasurer, Cabeza de Vaca departed from Spain in 1527 and arrived in Florida with an expedition of 600 men. The purpose of the expedition was the initiation of an ambitious colonization program. While at the landing point of Tampa Bay, the plans were altered. Cabeza de Vaca supported the consolidation of their forces but Narvaez, the leader of the expedition, overruled him and they travelled into perilous territory in search of gold. As of no surprise, this greedy and poorly conceived move caused great hardship as they became the victims of nearly impenetrable swamps, disease, starvation and confrontation with unfriendly indigenous tribes. They eventually reached Apalachee Bay with a largely depleted expedition of 242 men. Wrongfully believing they were approaching Spanish forces in Mexico, they discovered they were far off course and in unchartered territory. As the hardships continued, the expedition kept thinning out until Cabeza de Vaca was one of the last handfuls of survivors.

For the next ten years, Cabeza de Vaca endured more starvation, disease, attacks and slavery until he finally escaped his indigenous captors. After that, he continued his attempt of searching for his Spanish colonial authorities while living with other indigenous tribes. He became a trader and a religious faith healer. Throughout the entire experience, he started in Florida, travelled through the southern coast of what is now the United States arrived in the southwest and eventually in Mexico which was colonized by the Spanish. He returned to Spain with his lengthy story of geography, culture and hardship.

Although many aspects of Cabeza de Vaca's story are fascinating, it does include frequent mention of difficulties within an obvious grim prose. He describes the hardship he and his comrades had to endure as well as the suffering and the extreme tensions that were prevalent. Their clothes and weapons were lost and they found the necessity of feeding off their horses. This eventually led to feeding off their comrades. The hardship is described in the following:

Pantoja, who remained as lieutenant, treated them badly. Because of this Sotomayor….unable to stand it any longer, quarreled with Pantoja, hit him, and he died. In this way they perished one after the other. The survivors sliced the dead for

meat. The last one to die was Sotomayor and Esquivel cut him up and fed on his body….

Despite all of the hardship, they do develop a sense of resourcefulness. They learn to use the fibers of the palmetto palms for ropes and other equipment. The problems continue as he describes the attacks by the indigenous tribes. He even goes into detail on their warfare techniques and more details involving their capture and torture.

Cabeza de Vaca's account contains many good descriptions on the land and the customs of the indigenous people. He describes the topography, flora, fauna and climate and how they relate to the difficulty of the expedition. He also provides details on the indigenous peoples' odd customs and unique temperaments. Also included are detail one particular tribe's methods of curing disease.

The information provided on the land and the people is significant but it is also problematic. It is difficult to tell where they are as the minute details of the land are mentioned while lacking the overall habitat. Perhaps Cabeza de Vaca is so preoccupied with survival that he misses many important details. In addition, the large numbers of indigenous tribes that are mentioned have names that are not familiar. The translator does attempt to clear the problems by providing a map but it is based on interpretation.

A unique feature of Cabeza de Vaca is his change in tone as time progresses. Initially he is

Cabesa de Vaca

describing personality problems as attitudes interfere with common sense. Later the grim details become predominant. Most of the details of Indian life don't come until chapter 18. After his capture by a warlike indigenous tribe, he is displaying displeasure with their customs. At around chapter 24, he is finally mentioning their benevolence. He always shows admiration for all of the indigenous peoples' appearance and warfare techniques. There is mention of their resilience in the following:

Many times they are shot all over their bodies with arrows, but they do not die from wounds as long as their bowels or heart is not affected. On

the contrary, they recover quickly. Their eyesight, hearing, and senses in general are better, I believe, than those of any other men on earth. They can stand, and they have to stand, severe hunger, thirst, and cold, and are more accustomed and used to it than others. I wished to state this here, since apart from the curiosity all men have about the habits and devices and others, those who might come in contact with those people should be informed of their customs and deeds, which will be of no small profit to them.

This particular admiration becomes more common later on. The tone that doesn't change is his Catholic religious fatalism. He always believes that God is guiding their actions and he is constantly making reference to this. Certain parts of the story are interesting. For example, he finds a method of religious conversion by connecting it with the Natives' preoccupation with fear and superstition. He also appears to show annoyance at always having to feed on prickly pear cactus fruit. Initially, he enjoys it.

Cabeza de Vaca's chronicle is highly recommended. As already stated, it is exciting, interesting and tragic as we can see him change and adapt in order to survive. Attempting to decipher the tribal names, languages and locations can be daunting. The basic content can make us grateful for the difficulties early explorers had to endure for the benefit of the modern age.

Tus, oculvir misquam, ca rehebat amenderum more quius enibic mandam.

shbel Addyman. *Cyrano: The Life and Legend of Cyrano De Bergerac.* Simon and Schuster. 2008.

Anne Jevne

Left with an uneasy, uncomfortable feeling....

With apologies to Bill Shakespeare, Cyrano de Bergerac's life is the stuff that best sellers are made of: a soldier-poet in the age of the musketeers his dueling skills were unparalleled; an invincible swordsman, he wrote plays, letters, and poetry. One of the first to create a work of science fiction, he inspired Moliere, Voltaire, Jonathan Swift, Jules Verne, and H.G. Wells. An independent thinker born in 1619, he elicited such strong reactions from those who knew him --jealousy, fear and hatred-- admiration, loyalty and love-- that he himself was moved to comment, "In truth it is a very great consolation to me to be hated because I am loved; to find enemies everywhere because I have friends everywhere."

Cyrano claimed to love to be hated, yet little is really known about the man behind the enduring legend of the shy, romantic, big-nosed suitor who wrote love letters for his friend to

the woman he himself adored. As Ishbel Addyman points out in her introduction to *Cyrano: The Life and Legend of Cyrano de Bergerac*, her subject eluded definition. At once a murderous pacifist, a serious comedian, a frivolous intellectual, an honest deceiver, Cyrano lived a life, which, perhaps because of his mysterious death, reads like a murder mystery.

Addyman makes no secret that she is fascinated, even infatuated, with the man and that her book is to introduce him once again to the world--*in Cyrano: The Life and Legend of Cyrano de Bergerac* we are to become acquainted with the man as fact, not fiction. Good stuff, eh? One would think. The lone swordsman who steps out of the shadows in the first chapter is an intriguing figure, as is the eyewitness account of Cyrano's most famous duel, in which he handily dispatched 100 (count them, 100!) assailants.

The book itself promises to be an enjoyable experience. Published by Simon and Schuster, UK, a handsome hardcover with an attractive paper dust jacket, sporting an illustration of Cyrano himself, a well-dressed gentleman with a large nose sitting in a leaf less tree and looking skywards with a dove roosting on a branch behind him, *Cyrano: The Life and Legend of Cyrano de Bergerac* consists of sixteen chapters loosely arranged after the chronology of its subject matter's life. Painstakingly researched, it offers insights into the legend generated by de Bergerac's adventures and the nature of French culture in the seventeenth century, a smattering of French history, a handful of court scandals,

Cyrano de Bergerac

a dissertation on the theatrical development of Cyrano's stage character, and detailed examinations of his careers as soldier and writer. There is also a lengthy investigation of his science fiction and his plays.

But after twenty five pages or so, I found Cyrano and everything he did to be a crashing bore: his duels, his infamous affair with a man ten years older than himself, his insistence on free thinking, his infatuation with his cousin whose name I'm afraid I cannot remember. It was all BORING. Very, Very Boring. Very, very, very boring.

How could anyone with what should have been such an interesting life be such a tedious read? It was at this point that the book became oddly interesting. I'm afraid that Cyrano could not hold my attention simply because he was the product of his culture--a seventeenth century Frenchman.

A youngest son of very minor nobility interested in social mobility and self aggrandizement, Cyrano, descended from Sardinian fishmongers, spent his life lying about himself. Here I should note that the politically correct term these days for this sort of behavior is "reinventing" oneself, but, in Cyrano's case, my use of the more old-fashioned term indicates why I was first my disenchanted with and then soon disinterested in him. Thus it was obvious early on that Addyman's mission to reveal the "real" man to the reader was doomed to failure. Given his propensity to reinvent himself continually, I don't think there ever was a stable centre to his personality. One might even argue his habit a pathology that began early in life. Cyrano lied about being born in Paris because he thought he would be better received by the military and in society if thought a Gascon. Having no other options for climbing the social ladder, once he entered the military he began dueling to validate his new identity--men from Gascony had the reputation of being outrageously courageous. Like all the other young noblemen in France, he found dueling became a passion even though the activity was punishable by death. Dueling once a day, he remorselessly and methodically skewered his opponents until his reputation as a top swordsman was unshakeable.

I found Cyrano's flamboyant and rebellious antics uninteresting in themselves because they were motivated purely by self-interest. At no time was self-sacrifice a factor when he fought--each of his victims was merely another rung up the ladder he was climbing. Interestingly, it is the background Addyman supplies about the dueling craze in France during the seventeenth century when discussing Cyrano's "heroic" exploits," which provides insight into the French character and its priorities. While the young nobles were busy slaughtering each other, for example, the king imposed heavy penalities on the activity to discourage it. Two unlucky swordsmen, Comte de Montmorency-Bouteville and his cousin Comte des Chapelles survived a duel only to be hunted down, imprisoned, and finally executed in spite of their families' intercessions and the emotional testimony of Montmorency-Bouteville's young wife who was pregnant at the time. The king's only comment can only be judged superficial and cynical "I pity the woman," he said, "but I must defend my authority."

Power and prestige were so valued that human emotions often expressed themselves as matters of double meaning and paradox in literature and madness in life. A callous, obsessive overachiever, Cyrano was not along. He was surrounded by people whose personalities were similarly disordered. Take for instance the experience of Marie-Catherine Desjardins. A successful authoress, Marie-Catherine wrote a series of

letters to her lover the Sieur de Villedieu about the painful (to her) disintegration of their relationship. A cad and bounder of the nth degree, Villedieu encouraged the poor woman to continue writing so he could show her letters to his friends and acquaintances and then persuaded her to formally renounce the signed marriage promises that he had made her so he could marry another. Finally, Villedieu found himself urgently needing money: he borrowed a sum from his brother and raised the rest by selling Marie-Catherine's love letters to the printer Barbin.

Throughout this sad scenario, the injured party first refused to believe her lover to be capable of such behavior. When she asked her friends to begin an investigation and start legal proceedings against whoever had sold her letters to the printer, her instructions included a hair-raising proviso that protected Villedieu if he indeed was the guilty party: "If you cannot defend me except by ruining him entirely, do not defend me at all I beg you," she insisted. When Villedieu finally died what I considered to be a very timely death on the battlefield, his widow remarried quickly. Marie-Catherine, however, took on the term Mme de Villedieu--for a decade appearing to continue to suffer from delusions--until she finally married and began a family.

Not surprisingly, it is Voltaire, who looking back over the events of Cyrano's century, best sums up the lunacy loose in Cyrano's France. Philosophy, he claims, ultimately prevailed and cured the witch-burning judges of the notion that sorcery existed, teaching them that 'one should not burn imbeciles." With young widows in France becoming nuns or secular sisters of mercy because their newly married husbands (whom they scarcely knew) were killed in battle, young men slaughtering one another to gain noteriety, scholars were having their tongues torn out before being toasted at the stake for differing with religious dogma, it seems evident that witches were not only imbeciles on the loose.

In contrast, Cyrano's free thinking, his rejections of violence, warfare, superstition, and witchcraft, appears to be refreshingly rational with such extreme and often sickeningly violent behavior.

But was it…really? Was he the splendid chivalrous soul, a wild adventurer, an explorer of the known and unknown universe that Addyman would like us to think? I'm afraid that I didn't think so after I laid down the book, because Addyman bases too much of her argument for Cyrano the man on evidence gleaned from literary legend itself. Fudging the line between fact and fiction, she relies heavily on material from *The Voyage to the Moon* and *The Voyage to the Sun*, attributing elements of his fictional characters to the man himself.

Here I should note that what puzzled me most while I read this book was Addyman's inability to reconcile herself to the size of Cyrano's nose--in life and in literature. It is generally known that the French do not consider a large nose a blemish: for a man, the size of one's nose is a reliable indicatory of the size of one's libido and

one's sexual prowess. Indeed one may argue, in France, the larger the nose, the better! Vive le nez! It is not surprising that Cyrano was pleased with the size of his probiscus.

And finally, it may be an unpopular and unpleasant suggestion, but after becoming acquainted with de Bergerac, I was left with the uneasy, uncomfortable feeling that the man in question was not a sophisticate but a socialized sociopath--shallow, superficial, charismatic, manipulative, unable to develop and maintain friends and lovers, self-involved, anti-social, and narcissistic. For this reason, I would encourage the reader to try *Cyrano: The Life and Legend of Cyrano de Bergerac*. It is an interesting study albeit not of Cyrano.

A statue of De Bergerac in Dordogne

awi Hage: *De Niro's Game*. Toronto
House of Anansi, 2006

Gary A. Kozak

A bluntly realistic and compelling read

Rawi Hage was born in Beirut, Lebanon in 1964. He has been living in Canada since 1992. He studied photography at Dawson College and fine arts at Concordia University. In addition to being an award winning author, he has worked as an artist , curator and political commentator. His other published novel, *Cockroach*, was published in 2008.

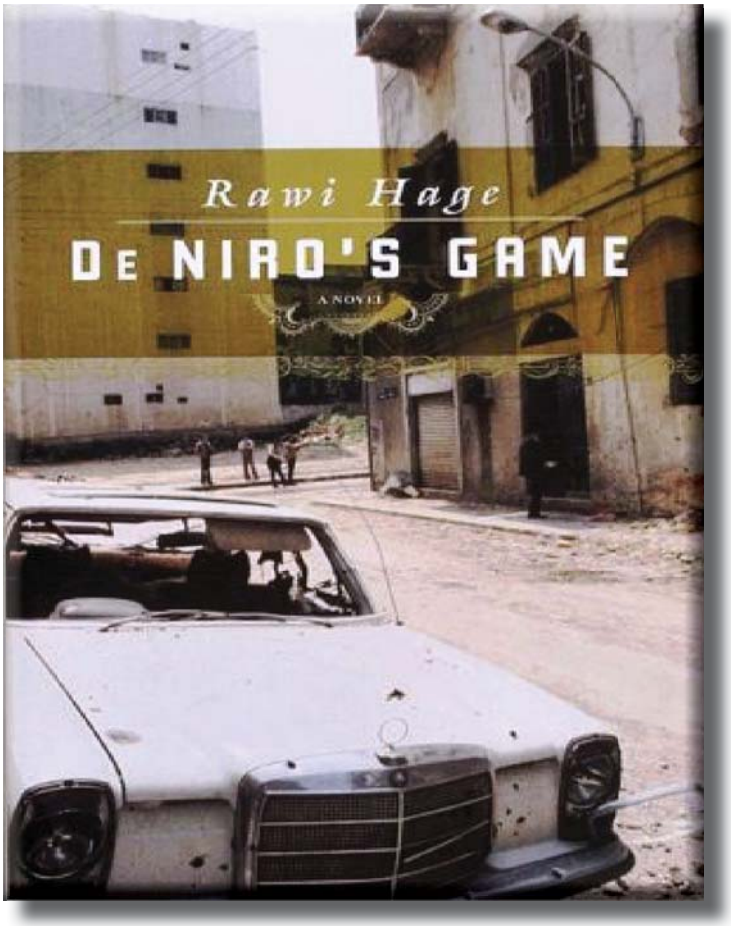
Rawi Hage's novel *De Niro's Game* is a first person account of life in the most forbidding type of environment. He is quite capable of describing such a life from the viewpoint of one who has personal experience in that environment. He then transmits this experience to the readers in a manner that is vivid, scornful and cynical. This is accomplished by telling the story through the narration of the main character.

The story concerns Bassam and George (De Niro), two street-wise 'punks' attempting to make a living in bombed-out Beirut at the time of the

Lebanese Civil War. Bassam works on a dock while George works in a casino. Everything they do and are involved in is a shakedown or a scam. The casino's income is funneled to the corrupt Christian militia while the two main characters are scamming both the casino and the militia for meager savings. They regularly go through various fraudulent schemes while dodging gunfire, bombs and landmines. Bassam raises money in any method possible for the purpose of buying his way out of the hopeless 'hell-hole' and moving to Europe. George becomes increasingly involved with, and eventually volunteers with, the militia. Bassam, meanwhile, takes on George's 'loser' cousin as a new 'partner in corruption'.

As the story progresses, Bassam is deceived by George's cousin and he is swindled into selling drugs and whisky at George's benefit. He is captured and tortured by the Christian militia's 'thugs' for stolen diamonds he knows nothing about. His mother becomes a war casualty but he does manage to make contact with a relative on the Muslim side of the city. He almost settles down with a girl named Rana but he is too agitated and unfocused to have a meaningful relationship. Out of disillusionment she loses interest and is taken by his best friend George. He does manage to obtain enough money to emigrate finally but not before he confronts George.

In Europe, life is never that easy. He makes contact with George's generous half-sister. He attempts to finally settle down with her but his repulsive habit of stalking her while she is with someone else only gives her a feeling of aversion



towards him. He gets into more trouble as as he experiences a number of puzzling events. He cannot move to Canada as a refugee and finally decides to move to Rome.

Rawi Hage's descriptions of life in a war zone are vivid. He tells us about bombed out buildings and dilapidated roads, broken-down infrastructure and the dangerous task of walking the streets at any time of the day or night. Refer to the following:

Heat descended, bombs landed, and thugs jumped the long lines for bread, stole the food of the weak, bullied the baker and caressed his daughter. Thugs never waited in lines.

Most of the characters are unscrupulous and fraudulent. They are attempting to survive in a hellish chaos of a world. France, by contrast, ap-

pears almost entrancing with quiet streets and law-abiding citizens.

The only character we learn about in depth is the narrator Bassam. He is a product of the tumultuous society that takes centre stage in the novel. He is unprincipled, nihilistic and aimless. His frequent sexual relations are capricious and without any emotion, on a whimsical urge to clear his thoughts. This is a case of erratic and erotic being used in conjunction. Nothing he ever does takes much thought and, for this reason, he is a victim who is taken advantage of. When he finally arrives in a more peaceful and orderly Paris, he attempts to settle down in a relationship but cannot adapt. He only continues to nervously smoke his cigarettes thinking of his next desperate move.

The main character's tone is consistently cynical. Refer to the following:

They had fought and screamed at each other when my father came late at night with alcohol on his breath and a pair of defeated gambler's hands that slapped my mother's face, and blackened her eyes, and chased her to the kitchen under flying saucers and above broken plates. Now still, two corpses devoured by slimy carnivorous worms, they were at each other's throats under the moist earth.

A few thousand Johnny Walkers marched west, burning throats and breaking houses. Men drank liquor, and bedroom doors slammed, and thighs closed with promises never to reopen, and rings were pulled from fingers and tossed toward old dressers, weeping mirrors, and joining walls.

These comments give us the impression of the atmosphere Bassam is conveying to us. It becomes less noticeable after he leaves Beirut.

Bassam's tone does change after he arrives in Paris. His sexual descriptions change from coarse and vulgar to unselfish and meaningful. This is an indication that he wants to improve his life and settle down. The woman of his interest, Rhea, discovers that he is not the nicer person he wants to be. He is still capable of violent actions. He is encouraged to surrender his gun but he disposes of it in a manner which it can be properly recovered. Bassam has retained his paranoia regardless of the change in environment.

The strongest feature of Hage's novel is its blunt realism. It contains the appropriate atmosphere providing us with a feeling of security in having a more fortunate life than anyone living in such a war zone. His choice of telling the story in the first person gives the reader the opportunity to learn about the psychology of the character. A stronger ending would have strengthened the overall plot, however. The last part of the novel, concerning Bassam's life in Paris, leads it into the direction of resembling an intriguing spy story. This is the point when the realism is lost. It only complicates the plot at an awkward point in the novel. Despite its weaknesses, Hage's novel is very compelling as it leaves a long lasting impression.

Jonathan Spence, *Return to Dragon Mountain: Memories of a Late Ming Man*. New York: Penguin Books, 2007.

John Butler

The fascinating and subtle historian Zhang

Jonathan Spence, a British-born and educated American academic, was Sterling Professor Emeritus of Chinese History at Yale University from 1993 to 2008, and is one of the leading Sinologists of our century . Spence is the author of more than a dozen books about China, which include *Emperor of China: Self-Portrait of K'ang-Hsi* (1974), *The Death of Woman Wang* (1978), *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (1984) and a number of books on modern China in addition to a well-received biography of Mao Zedong (1999). An Honorary Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge (his old college), Spence has also been a Visiting Professor at Beijing University and Nanjing University and delivered the Reith Lectures for the BBC in 2008.

In his book on the emperor K'ang-Hsi (Kangxi in the currently-accepted *pinyin* notation) Spence allowed his subject as much as possible to tell his own story, using generous extracts from the emperor's writings, edicts, laws and other official documents. These were interspersed with narrative, for which Spence has a skilled novelist's knack, and the results were fascinating, with the emperor being brought back to life on the pages of a book that was, to all intents and purposes, his own. This technique also appears in *Return to Dragon Mountain*, and is equally effective as Spence takes us into the mind and world of Zhang Dai (1597-c.1680), a seventeenth-century Chinese historian who lived through the fall of the Ming Dynasty in 1644 and ended his life, as Spence says, "reclaiming the past," knowing very well that "nothing need vanish if only someone can remember it." At first glance the life of a historian doesn't sound very interesting or exciting, but anyone who thinks that does not know Zhang Dai or his family. Spence himself is at pains to tell us that he "had no idea" that this man "would prove to be so elusive and so subtle. . .after several years of trying, I still cannot feel that I have penetrated his defences or grasped the full force of his erudition." This is an understatement; drawing on a vast corpus of writings not just by Zhang Dai himself but by other members of his family and some of his friends, Spence gives us a vivid picture of a very complex character, a man trying to keep his own identity alive as his world collapses around him, and at the same time seeking spiritual meaning in that world, avoiding self-pity in adversity and "most contented when allowed to stay within the confines of his own mind."

Spence follows Zhang's life in all its vari-

ous ups and downs, both the personal and the political, always allowing him to speak for himself and never losing the objectivity of the real historian, the historian who wishes to give readers the whole sense of the past, who is interested in our understanding the times he writes about without necessarily judging them on anything but their own terms. We meet Zhang's ancestors, brothers, sisters and children, and he has something to say about all of them, how they succeeded or failed, what their personal habits were, and how he himself assessed their lives. Zhang gives them labels; his great-uncle Rusen is "the Drinker," his grandfather Rulin "Rhyme Mountain," his cousin Yanke the "Emperor Who Lost It All." His tenth uncle Shishu is known as "Blind Rage," and his cousin Pei as "Blind Physician," a literal description, it turns out, of a man who overcame great handicaps to become a skilled and well-liked doctor. We learn about how Chinese officials were chosen through a series of state examinations, and how some of Zhang's relatives studied for years and years to pass them, only to reject the system altogether and find other things to do. One attractive part of the evaluation for a modern professor is that the examination booklets were first looked over by an Assistant Examiner, who sorted out the wheat from the chaff, and by the time the Chief Examiner received his batch of booklets he would not have to spend his time evaluating failures, which would already have been weeded out! One of Zhang's relatives wrote the exams but his booklets were culled by the Assistant Examiner. However, the Chief Examiner rejected every batch of exams given to him by his underling until there was only one left, the one containing grandfather Rulin's papers, which the Assistant had kept only "as a source of amusement," remarking that "those seven booklets made no sense at all." But when the Examiner read them, he "clapped his hands and declared them to be profound." Grandfather got his degree.

Zhang coped well in adversity. He even became a soldier for a brief time and supported Ming resistance to the encroaching Manchus, after which he went into hiding as a Buddhist monk. He wrote poetry and essays and enjoyed music. He remained loyal to the ideas of the Ming rulers and had kind things to say about emperor Chongzhen, the last Ming ruler and blamed the people around him for the fall of the dynasty. "Emperor Chongzhen died more nobly than the last emperors of the Han, Tang or Song dynasties," Zhang wrote; "he was hard-working, frugal and intelligent." It was corruption at lower levels that ended the Mings, he concluded; "wasps and scorpions give what looks like the final sting, but the flies and maggots were already writhing in the privies before the bandits got there." In a poem written shortly before the Manchus entered Beijing, Zhang noted "How I wish for the curing hand of the great official doctor,/ So that the state's spirit might yet be revived." On a personal note Zhang seems not to have been entirely happy with the endgame of his life; in another poem he complains "My two concubines are old, withered like monkeys,/ And can hardly

draw water from the well/. . .Each day at dawn I rise to no breakfast,/ Forced to run about for food before the sun has risen."

There is so much more to this book than a short review can recommend, but such recommendations as can be made are done so unreservedly. Anyone who wants to know about the Chinese mind should read this book, and because Zhang was a historian Jonathan Spence has a unique connection with him through the ages, and his superlative literary skills make the book utterly rewarding as we enter into the life and mind of a fascinating and engaging figure. "One cannot say Zhang Dai was an ordinary man," Spence tells us, "but he was surely closer to ordinariness than he was to celebrity." And that is what makes this book so compelling.

CONTRIBUTORS

Moiz Bakhiet is the Chief Executive Director (Founder) of Princess Al-Jawhara Centre for Molecular Medicine, Genetics, and Inherited Disorders. He received his M.B.B.S. in 1985 from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Khartoum, and his Ph.D. in Medical Sciences in 1993 from Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden. He is a Professor and Chairman of the Department of Molecular Medicine, College of Medicine and Medical Sciences, Arabian Gulf University, and is a senior Consultant/Physician Neurologist at the Bahrain Royal Medical Services, Kingdom of Bahrain. He has published 12 poetry books which have been collected recently in 3 full collections of poetry.

John Butler is an associate professor of Humanities at University College of the North. Formerly a professor of British Studies at Chiba University, Tokyo, he specializes in seventeenth-century intellectual history and travel literature, especially that of Asia and Asia Minor. John and his wife Sylvia live in The Pas with their 3 cats.

Brenda Firman travelled from England to Canada as a young child, and to the Aboriginal communities of northwestern Ontario as an educator. Living in community, and in relationship with people, she had the opportunity to re-educate herself – a process that continued during graduate work, supported by both the T'Skel program and the First Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia. The process continues today with the support of Elders and colleagues in northern Manitoba. Brenda is currently an Associate Professor in the Kenanow Bachelor of Education program at University College of the North, with accountability to the Elders' vision of Kenanow (all of us together).

Anne Jevne, a single mother of two, lives and writes in northern Manitoba.

Gary A. Kozak, has worked overseas extensively in the fields of educational management, childhood development, linguistic counseling, and employment counseling. He has academic education from the University of Manitoba at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in the fields of archaeology, history and geography.

Sue Matheson is an associate professor who teaches literature and film studies at the University College of the North. Her interest in cultural failure has become the base of her research: currently, Sue

specializes in popular American thought and culture, Children's Literature, Indigenous Literature- and Western film.

Terralyn McKee, an academic specialist at University College of the North, lives and works in The Pas, Manitoba.

Sharon McLeod was born and raised in Grand Rapids, Manitoba. Her Scottish and Cree genealogical roots are in Norway House, Manitoba, the birthplace of her biological parents. The First Aboriginal Chair of Aboriginal and Northern Studies at the University College of the North, Sharon received her Bachelor of Arts Degree in History and Native Studies from the University of Manitoba and her Masters of Integrated Studies from Athabasca University. Much of Sharon's work focuses on various aspects of Aboriginal history and heritage.

Greg Stott, an assitant professor at the University College of the North, graduated with his PhD in Canadian History at McMaster University in 2004 with minor fields in British and American History. Prior to arriving at UCN he taught at the University of Toronto at Mississauga, Laurentian University, University of British Columbia Okanagan, and Nipissing University.

call for papers

The *quint's* thirteenth issue is issuing a call for theoretically informed and historically grounded submissions of scholarly interest—as well as creative writing, original art, interviews, and reviews of books. The deadline for this call is 20th May 2012—but please note that we accept manu/digi-scripts at any time.

quint guidelines

All contributions to *the quint* will be forwarded to a member of the editorial board. Manuscripts must not be previously published or submitted for publication elsewhere while being reviewed by *the quint's* editors or outside readers.

Hard copies of manuscripts should be sent to Dr. John Butler or Dr. Sue Matheson at *the quint*, University College of the North, P.O. Box 3000, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada, R9A 1M7. We are happy to receive your artwork in digital format, PDF preferred. Email copies of manuscripts, Word or RTF preferred, should be sent to either jbutler@ucn.ca or smatheson@ucn.ca.

Essays should range between 15 and 25 pages of double-spaced text, including all images and source citations. Longer and shorter submissions also will be considered. Bibliographic citation should be the standard disciplinary format.