

strophic looping back is summed up in the darkly comic image of Vietnamese assassins in cowboy hats chasing an American covert warfare operative through a Texas town full of Japanese tourists. If the once privileged cultural fields of the West, and the Western, are being creolized, DeLillo implies, the forces sponsoring the change are the very ones which also use the idea of the West, and the genre of the Western, to legitimate imperial adventures. Perhaps LeClair pays relatively little attention to such geopolitical themes because these themes have been only sketchily studied by systems theorists of the sort he admires. (Immanuel Wallerstein uses the language of systems, but not systems theory, to elaborate his influential theory of the "modern world system.") But the lack of any critical application of systems theory to the contemporary geopolitical situation makes DeLillo's explorations all the more worthy of attention and analysis.

I am troubled by one other aspect of *In the Loop*: its insistence that DeLillo's novels constitute "a coherent fictional system" and "a comprehensive critique of the ideologies" of our times (xi). At the very least, such a claim is premature. DeLillo is in mid-career: *Libra*, which many critics consider his most fully achieved novel, had not yet been published when LeClair completed his study. But I think the problem with such claims runs even deeper; DeLillo's work strikes me as correctly and courageously exploratory: tentative, unfinished, and "open," to use one of LeClair's favourite words. From whence, then, comes the impulse to turn the work into something like a "closed system"? Could it be that the holistic ambitions of systems theory collide with its celebration of openness? LeClair implies as much when he talks of the theory's "doubled or split relation to the idea of mastery, criticizing man's [*sic*] attempt to master his ecosystem and yet, in its own synthetic act, 'mastering' various specialities in large abstractions" (11). It is one sign of the strength of this rich and illuminating study that it can be mined for insights into its own limitations. But I wish LeClair had loosened his own loop a bit, and allowed DeLillo — whom he so successfully celebrates as a novelist of prodigious and protean energy — a little more room for play.

JOHN A. MCCLURE

Russell McDougall and Gillian Whitlock, eds. *Australian/Canadian Literatures in English: Comparative Perspectives*. Melbourne: Methuen Australia, 1987. pp. 247. \$29.95 pb.

The Australian critics Russell McDougall and Gillian Whitlock have edited a book which, no doubt, will become a classic in the field of comparative studies of the two national literatures it examines. The ten essays included in this volume, together with the editors' lengthy introduction and Alan Lawson's useful bibliography, explore

the literatures of Australia and Canada in a variety of methodological and thematic contexts that offer new critical insights into not only the two literatures but also the theoretical exploration of such areas as postcolonialism, ethnic studies, ideology, and literary production.

In their introduction, McDougall and Whitlock outline "the historical discontinuity" of comparative studies of Australia and Canada which, for a long time, "remained a function of the occasion, an event in British publishing, which would confirm rather than challenge imperial supremacy and the centrality of the English literary tradition." What they term the "central irony" in the insistent but repeatedly thwarted attempts at a comparative perspective resides, they argue, in "comparing the colonised while invoking the coloniser" (3). The ideological underpinnings of this critical attitude are obviously related to the colonial reluctance to legitimate the literatures indigenously produced in Australia and Canada. It is more than a coincidence, then, that only in the 1950s, the time the two national literatures began gaining ground, does this ideological position begin to change, thanks partly to institutional efforts such as those of the Dominion Project of the Humanities Research Council of Canada. The exchange visits of academics like Brian Elliott to Canada and Claude Bissell and Reginald Watters to Australia fostered the necessary academic and personal connections that have since given rise to the ongoing critical debates concerning the common ground of the two literatures.

These initial attempts at comparison posit themselves as a kind of dialogism which oscillates between similarity and difference, a dialogism occurring, interestingly enough, at the same time that "a monocultural perspective," as the editors observe, "has been ascendant in studies of the national literature in other countries" (4). As they intimate and as is obvious in many of the essays in the collection, the concept of otherness emerging from these dialogic endeavours embraces more than the colonial other; it recognizes the importance of challenging the grammar of literary institutions, with regard, for instance, to canon formation and curriculum, and addresses itself to the imperative to redefine cultural imperialism and cohesiveness.

One of the factors that make *Australian/Canadian Literatures in English* rewarding is the astuteness with which the editors problematize the comparative perspective of this book's method. "Considering the history of criticism in this area," they say, "it seems that almost every escape from the critical enclosure of literary self-definition (in the national context) has been followed by a retreat from the open space of comparison where, after all, the critic is more vulnerable. A residual effect of colonialism, of dis/location and dispossession: this sense of vulnerability. The comparative exercise turns out to be extremely problematic: how to stay in place, 'at home' and 'in touch',

without feeling too confined or defined by the boundaries?" (15). Boundaries is the key word here, for it capitulates both what determines and what engenders difference. Whereas the early efforts at a comparative study of Australian and Canadian literatures were primarily (and naturally) born out of the recognition of similarity, the basic premise behind these essays is that of difference.

Adrian Mitchell's "The Western Art of Makeshift": A. B. Facey and M. Allerdale Grainger" compares the treatment of the West in two books published almost eighty years apart. Arguing that Conrad "is the key literary reference in both Canadian and Australian literature, especially in [the] interesting transition from colonial to post-colonial" (46), Mitchell proceeds to examine how both the Canadian Grainger and the Australian Facey "share a like distance from the perceived centre in each country" (47). Mitchell's comparative method in his treatment of the autobiographical elements and fictional strategies employed in these two texts is organic to the formal differences characterizing the two authors: "these two amateurs," she says, "write their place as well as their life. . . . they take what they can from where they can to make their books. They both have an innate sense of *how* in the West a story gets itself told" (47; emphasis added). It is indeed this shift from what a book is "about" to "how" it is told, written, produced, or received that informs most of these essays' content and methodology. Gillian Whitlock's essay on Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life* and John Richardson's *Wacousta* succinctly articulates the complex reasons why this "kind of comparative and precise generic analysis which might allow us to discern how forms such as the Gothic and the historical novel were reshaped in colonial literatures has only recently begun" (61).

J. J. Healy and G. D. Killam examine how such diverse authors as Xavier Herbert, E. J. Pratt, and Rudy Wiebe have recorded history. "There is," Healey argues in what is perhaps one of the strongest essays in the collection, "a difference between how the first people of each country were perceived, or conceived. In Canada there was a theology and a mythology of encounter. . . . The Australian Aborigine was, however, for Europeans in the early contact situation, unfamiliar. . . . the Aborigine eluded the theological-philosophical text that gave the Canadian Indian such treacherous visibility" (78). In an equally appropriate, but less theoretical and complex, context, Killam too discusses how Wiebe's and Herbert's epic (re)writing of their regional history differs but also converges in their common attempt at "reconciling the demands of history and those of fiction" (177).

Diana Brydon's "Discovering 'Ethnicity': Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* and Mena Abdullah's *Time of the Peacock*," one of the better essays on ethnicity published recently, analyzes how "one becomes ethnic through the eyes of another" (94). In her own words, her "compara-

tive approach shifts the focus from an externally defined ethnicity to the interaction between the imposed sense of identity and other available definitions of self . . ." (96). Here, again, the reader finds that the comparative approach works best when discussion of genre enters the realm of cultural interaction both inside and outside literature.

Jennifer Strauss's and Helen Tiffin's collaboration in "Everyone is in Politics": Margaret Atwood's *Bodily Harm* and Blanche d'Alpuget's *Turtle Beach*" deals with the question Edward Said — a critic to whom a number of the contributors in the book are indebted for their theoretical positions — has posed, "how does one *represent* other cultures?" In trying to answer this question, Strauss and Tiffin rightly feel compelled to operate as "cultural analysts" (120). Beryl Donaldson Langer undertakes the same task in her essay "Women and Literary Production." She tries to identify the factors determining "the production and legitimation of fiction in each country" (133).

These, as well as the essays by Bruce Nesbitt, John Matthews, and Russell McDougall, make *Australian/Canadian Literatures in English* required reading not only for those interested in either Canadian or Australian literature but also for those pursuing comparative studies.

SMARO KAMBOURELI

Elizabeth Waterston, Ian Easterbrook, Bernard Katz, and Kathleen Scott. *The Travellers: Canada to 1900*. Guelph: University of Guelph, 1989. pp. xix, 321.

The Travellers, an annotated bibliography of works published in English from 1577, is a timely and substantial contribution to the growing scholarly interest in Canadian travel writing. In my work over the years, many occasions have arisen on which such a reference tool would have been quite valuable, and I anticipate more such occasions.

The volume includes an annotated bibliography of over seven hundred Canadian travel books. While *The Travellers* focuses on works published up to 1900, fifteen additional pages of entries are included for books published after 1900 but concern journeys undertaken before the turn of the century. Thus, such works as Johann Miertsching's 1850-54 diary aboard McClure's *Investigator* — not translated and published in English until 1967 — are accessible through this bibliography. Titles are arranged chronologically by the year in which first editions of the texts were published. Also convenient is the inclusion of the Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproduction number for all items in that series. Each entry is followed by a brief note, which provides information about the itinerary and purpose of the travel (such as tourism, transport, and military matters) and special features of the book.