

reconcile such an interpretation of Simon's narrators with the author's frequent and vehement disclaimers about the psychological or philosophical importance of his novels.

Doris Y. Kadish

### JEANNETTE KING

*Tragedy in the Victorian Novel: Theory and Practice in the Novels of George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and Henry James*

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. Pp. 182. \$14.95.

In this book Jeannette King describes some Victorian attempts to cross traditional ideas of heroic tragedy with realistic portrayals of everyday life, in particular the efforts of George Eliot, Hardy, and James. Her first three chapters deal with some of the critical background to their work, and the final chapters study representative novels usually selected from early, middle, and late periods in each novelist's career.

The book's central thesis is that tragedy is defined by its dramatic structure as much as by its themes, and any cross-fertilization of tragedy with the novel may produce an unsatisfactory hybrid. Tragedy idealizes human greatness, whereas the novel attempts to depict life as it really is; tragedy represents a sequence of events, complete, Aristotle says, in itself, while the novel shows the continuity of life, implying what occurs after the curtain has fallen. It follows that George Eliot, Hardy, and James faced difficult problems, both theoretical and practical, in trying to create a tragedy of modern, everyday life. Tragedy in these novels is a condition instead of an action: life, not death, is tragic. Dr. King goes on to argue that the lives of ordinary characters are blighted by various deterministic influences—human relationships, institutions, and heredity. Women in particular, she says, are made to be passive and weak, and so represent as a special case the tragic condition of men as well as women for all three novelists.

From the discussion of particular novels, Dr. King draws her conclusions about the achievement of each writer. She finds that the claims of continuing life in George Eliot overpower the effect of tragedy and, as a result, tragedy is shown to be only a part of life. In contrast, Hardy was influenced by Shakespearean as well as Greek models, and adapted the novel's themes and structure to the traditional idea of dramatic tragedy. In the most rewarding of these chapters, she shows how James, in turn, recognized and exploited the parallel conflicts between the artificial structure of tragedy and the continuing life of the novel on the one hand and his characters' choice between a life of purpose and a life of freedom on the other.

The problem this book raises is more complex than Dr. King seems to allow, probably too vast for any one book to manage. Nevertheless, one really expects to find some indication that the Victorians were not the first to create this hybrid; apart from one reference to Richardson's *Clarissa*, no attention is paid to eighteenth-century domestic tragedy and its influence on fiction. Similarly, Aristotle and a few quotations from Shakespeare are an unduly limited basis for Victorian tragedy, blended as it was with melodrama and clumsy pathos arising from outrages against lower- and middle-class dignity. Dr. King's book is useful within its limits, but those limits prevent it from fulfilling the claim of its short title, *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel*.

John Miller

### GIOVANNA CAPONE

*Canada, Il Villaggio della Terra: Letteratura Canadese di Lingua Inglese.*

Bologna: Pàtron Editore, 1978. Pp. 213.

This book, the first of its kind to be published in Italy, proposes to survey the Canadian literary imagination in both its chronological development and in its central themes, as expressed by some of the major writers in English. Approximately half the study is centered on fiction.

In the first chapter, "Una letteratura," Professor Capone, proceeding with seemingly discretion, passes from the earliest literature of exploration to the criticism of Northrop Frye, relying on an extended systophe of "viaggi" and "terra" for thematic coherence. Reference to the "nobile selvaggio" (p. 8) nicely prefigures her subsequent perceptions of Romanticism in Canada; and the estimation of James de Mille as "un autore ingiustamente ignorato" (p. 11) and of much of pre-Confederation descriptive poetry as "non sempre memorabili" (p. 10) is judicious. Other observations may strike the Canadian reader as effusions of politeness, as in the characterization of Isabella Valancy Crawford as "una sorta di Emily Dickinson canadese" (p. 15) and of the post-1940 production of literature in Anglophone Canada as "una vera esplosione di talenti" (p. 17). Canadian literature, according to Professor Capone, has recently come to assume "una fisionomia precisa" (p. 40).

"Il villaggio della terra: un itinerario poetico," the second chapter, offers that the Canadian literary imagination, from Oliver Goldsmith ("the rising village of the land") to Marshall McLuhan, is born of "la coscienza della terra" (p. 41). With erudition and perspicacity, Professor Capone traces the inner landscape, the inscape, of the surrogate world of art as a mapping, by archetype, of the "spiritual" consciousness of the Canadian people. The reader has been shrewdly prepared for her observations on the literary "interiorization" of the Canadian wilderness: in the first chapter, Coleridge is said to have taken inspiration from Captain Cook's account of his voyage to what is now Canada's west coast. As a scholar who has made an odyssey to Canada, Professor Capone does not mention the prospects for mariners trained to navigate the Coleridgean inner landscape once these are set afloat on the sea of the "Non-Io."

Chapter III gives a concise account of McLuhan's axioms, placing him within the context of Canada's history, principally that of the C.P.R. Professor Capone translates his vision as an attempt of the "Io" to order the world of the "Non-Io," the land. Associating McLuhan with Blake, Coleridge, and Joyce, among others, she observes of *Finnegan's Wake* and, by analogy, of McLuhan's work, that it represents "un gran sogno di una coscienza collettiva" (p. 68).

Chapter IV, by far the longest in the book, examines "il realismo mitico di Hugh MacLennan." The length of the chapter is understandable, since MacLennan provides a convenient medium for presenting to a non-Canadian public the central thematic concerns of Canadian literature in English. With justification, Professor Capone indulges in extended plot summary here; and, on occasion, she seems to go considerably out of her way to place Canadian writers within an international context perhaps more familiar to her Italian readers. The allusions linking MacLennan with Joyce and Melville, for example, seem not as enlightening as the analogues provided elsewhere in the book. MacLennan is considered the first writer consciously to have made significant progress in plotting the coordinates of the Canadian imagination and its literary-cultural expression.

Chapter V, on Mordecai Richler, begins with the line, "A man without land is nobody." As one with a close knowledge of Canada's intellectual history, Professor Capone proves a perceptive reader of the author of *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*: "Questi perseguirà per tutta l'adolescenza e la giovinezza il sogno della *land*, il possesso del pezzo di terra che lo identifichi, e che è insieme un simbolo di identità tipicamente canadese, un modello epico parodiato e una proiezione ironica di Terra Promessa in una certa tradizione di 'Secular Scripture'" (pp. 129-30). It is in such commentary that this scholar is at her best.

Leonard Cohen is treated in Chapter VI, where it is suggested that *Beautiful Losers* and his other works reflect the conviction that "le sue mitologie sono pluralistiche e i soi miti ambigui" (p. 166). Cohen's is an *ars poetica* of ecumenism by mythology. Professor Capone declines, however, to speak of the implications for Canadian culture of such a pluralism, nor does she choose to go beyond describing the theme of inner landscape as a device for the solitary artist's bridging of the abyss between man and nature, spirit and flesh. The antinomies in Cohen are also reflected in Margaret Atwood, the subject of the final chapter. In *Surfacing*, as in the analogous landscapes recreated by narcissism in Atwood's poetry, the wilderness is transformed into archetype. Concluding with a chapter in which Frye figures prominently, Professor Capone's book offers a clear reflection of the inscape of Canada's literature in English.

Canada has been well served by Professor Capone, whose students in recent years have been the first to be granted degrees in Canadian literature by an Italian university. The high quality of her achievement in this work is suggested by a comparison of *Canada, Il Villaggio della Terra* with English-Canadian books on Québécois literature.

Camille R. La Bossière

### CLAUDE MÉLANÇON

#### *Indian Legends of Canada*

Translated from the French by  
David Ellis  
Toronto: Gage Publishing, 1974.  
Pp. 163.

This is a collection of thirty-four native Canadian legends and folktales which belong to Indian tribes from the Atlantic coast and the Eastern Woodlands (part one), the Prairies (part two), and the Pacific coast (part three). About half of these are from Eastern Canada, the other half from Central and Western Canada. Since genuine folklore usually has mixed literary value, selection of material is important when offering folklore to the public.

Claude Mélançon favors the stories of the Micmac tribe, the first Indians met by Jacques Cartier in 1535. The Glooscap legends of the Micmac are indeed fascinating; Glooscap is a gigantic, supernatural figure of Micmac and Malecite mythology who taught the Indians how to hunt and fish, how to recognize certain plants for medicine, and how to predict the weather by looking at the stars.

Several stories of the Ojibway Indians are also included in the volume. Many deal with Nanabozho, the man-god, son of the sun, the creator of nature, and protector of the Indians. The Iroquois Indians, a powerful and civilized group, who, at one time, were a great threat to other Indians and even to New France, are also represented in this collection. Their relatively ancient and advanced culture is

reflected in their stories which deal with the happiness not only of man, but also of animals and plants.

Although the Huron language is extinct, their stories are extant. The Hurons believed the earth to be an island, floating in the ocean, supported by a turtle. There was peace on that island before the first bloodshed when a stag gored a bear with its antlers. The blood dripped onto the leaves of a maple tree, and, as a result, the maple leaves become red in the fall in Canada. The Great Spirit punished the stag by causing it to lose its antlers every year before the winter.

Probably Claude Mélançon did not have enough space to include everything he wanted. One grave oversight is that no mention is made of Cree, a member of the same language family as Micmac and Ojibway and the most widely spoken Algonquian language in Canada.

All stories presented in Mélançon's book were originally noted down in an Indian language and appeared later in either English or French. These translations do not destroy the beauty of the stories, since the translators try to imitate the Indian words and expressions, thus giving a peculiar charm to their style. For instance, instead of saying "when he was twenty years old," we read, "after twice ten springs had gone by." Instead of "in the evening," they say, "when Black Wolf had swallowed the light of day and it was no longer possible to look for a trail," etc.

The folklore of Canada's Indians is extremely rich and their stories would fill many volumes. For this reason, one understands why Claude Mélançon omitted many narratives. All stories included in this book, however, have their indisputable beauty and literary value.

Laszlo Szabo