

tion. The referential power of images seems destined to overwhelm feminist critique as in the feminist films *Working Girls* by Lizzie Borden and *A Man in Love* by Diane Kourys where the images of love scenes reinscribe the dominant narrative of romantic love which the films set out to defamiliarize. Scott's novel runs the risk of the referent as well. However, oscillating between the interpellation of nostalgia and the distancing of disruption, the fiction keeps the reader on a seesaw.

Memory is purely fictive, a word-being called "Sepia," with whom the narrator engages in monologue. The temptation to empathize with the character is further undermined by the narrative framing. The narrator is seated in a bath in a rooming house on the Main trying to plan out a novel, struggling with the difficulty of creating a positive heroine in a context where symbolically women do not exist. Through its meditation on the negative image of women — "she looks instinctively for her own reflection in a store window, But it's too dark to see clearly" — the fiction offers a critique of representation intertwined with a critique of patriarchal domination of the symbolic. The mimetic element in the novel is undercut by the processual hermeneutic of the narrator's self-reflexive discussion of her difficulties of writing, of the problem of gaining enough distance from her character. Maybe this would be easier if she got out of the bath she wonders.

But the "reality effect" is also undercut by a blurring of levels of narrative. The only dialogue the narrator has in the text is with her heroine in a confounding of fiction and reality on the level of the text; this foregrounds and defamiliarizes the tendency for the reader to enter into dialogue with the fictional narrator. This is further encouraged by the blatant overwriting evident in the intrusion of the autobiographical contract in a work of fiction: both the author of *Heroine* and the aspiring fictional writer in the bathtub are named Gail. This deconstruction of the fictional conventions might have been further emphasized with numbers as used for dramatic texts with such embeddings, Gail I and Gail II. The constructed and aleatory aspects of the narrative are also laid bare through two other narrative devices — the grey

woman who inexplicably appears on the Montreal streets to both narrator and heroine, and the black tourist whose bird's eye view through the telescope on the top of Mount Royal is the opening scene of the novel. His progress through the city provides the frame for each chapter. This panoramic view presents the city in which desire is inscribed in every reflective surface, shop window or mirror-like wall; desire in which the narrator's future creates itself as she lies in her rooming house in the heart of the city. (In this aim to write woman into the city, into the polis, we hear echoes of the project of Brossard's *French Kiss*). But the black tourist has no story to tell, does not engage with the characters, remains an inexplicable figure undermining our attempts to effect closure and make sense of the narrative. Closure is resisted also in the parodic reworking of the heroine's plot which lays bare its grammar: the heroine does not choose a marriage partner, but is chosen. Even more passive is the heroine of Scott's novel within a novel; she is the epitome of negativity. Needless to say *Heroine* is an ironic title.

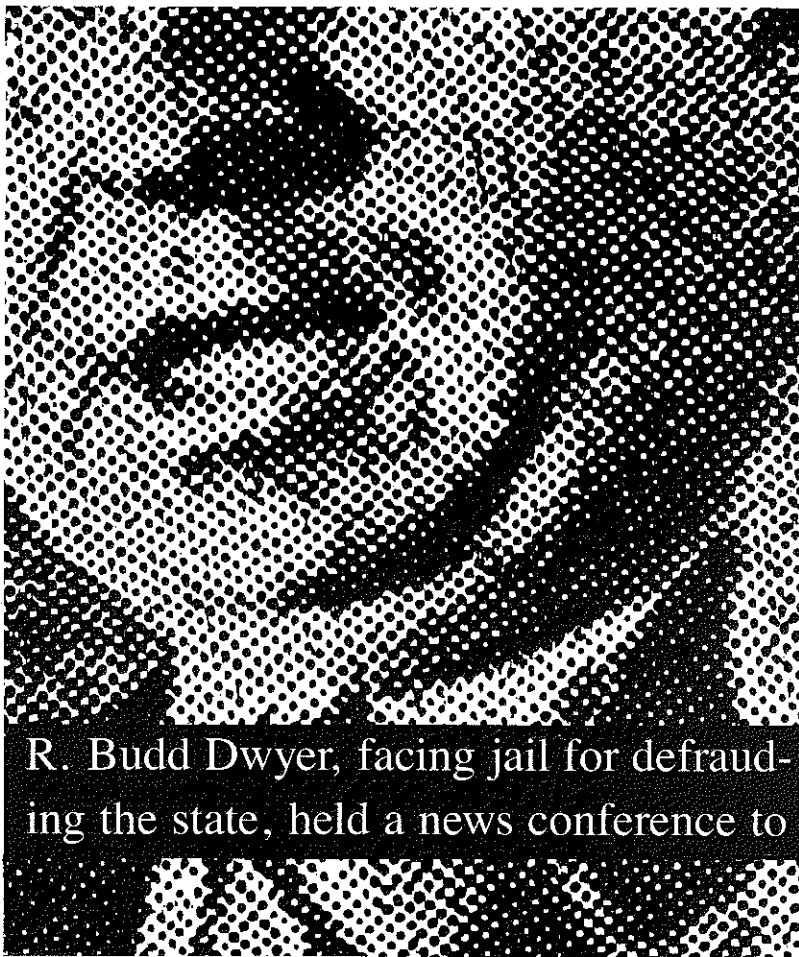
Although the past is fictive and the future unrepresentable, the present of narration is lucid. Scott's prose is densely textured as a poem, indeed like a poem it echoes and reechoes, structured not around the temporal sequence of clauses but around repeated segments which allow the work to take shape in the mind's ear. This clashes with the emphasis on detailed visual imagery which creates the scintillating surfaces of the novel. Everything is illusion. In the same way the extraordinarily rich symbolic imagery clashes with negativity to create further paradoxes which disrupt linear logic. Scott's fiction also disrupts linguistic norms with its mixture of English and French. Such a novel, needless to say, does not end. The final selection entitled "Play It Again, S" invites us to think associatively through this collage. It breaks off after a list of sentences stating what she thinks or she does (183) in mid sentence with the word "She —."

To herald this as the most outstanding work of the year as one is tempted to is perhaps premature in light of the forthcoming works promised by several major avant garde woman writers. However, it

will be hard for them to surpass the brilliance of Scott's writing in her critique of representation and of narrative.

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would be built upon the bulldozed bones of the politically embarrassing "free-wheeling and unconventional life style" of the mostly lower class Milton-Park residents. But, amazingly enough, her saga ends with a "roomer's dream, a planner's dream, an organizer's dream — an urban success. Local democratic and cooperative (albeit middle class) participation succeeded in saving and eventually renovating 597 out



R. Budd Dwyer, facing jail for defrauding the state, held a news conference to

THE MILTON-PARK AFFAIR Claire Helman Montreal: Vehicule Press.

The affair that Claire Helman recounts — the Milton-Park neighbourhood's 20 year battle to exist in Downtown Montreal — is more than just an affair of the heart. Using a descriptive narrative, the author highlights one developer's attempt to crawl into bed with the Sugar Daddy of Montreal, former Mayor Jean Drapeau. Ms. Helman begins with Concordia Estates' seduction of the seemingly willing civic administration vis a vis La Cité, a nightmare of rampant urbanization — 6 blocks of office towers, luxury hi-rise apartments, and

endless strips of exclusive specialty shops. These concrete monoliths would not only increase tax revenues, but they of a possible 852 units. Plenty of hard work as well as all-important trilevel state support, transformed Milton-Park into Canada's largest ever housing co-operative. To be honest, Ms. Helman chronicles for us a not-so-pretty reality. Her account intrigues as well as informs the reader about the effects that unchecked uses of power have upon quality of life in a neighbourhood like Milton-Park. The author, who perceives this urban setting to be a "safe, diversified, low-rental district with a pleasurable degree of interaction among residents, correctly emphasizes how any corrupt power base — whether it be developer or citizen — could and would dismantle the Milton-Park

community. Readers of Toronto citizen-developer confrontations written about in the early 1970's by noted journalist and author Janice Dinneen, or activist, columnist and bureaucrat John Sewell, may be put off by Ms. Helman's style. In keeping with her position as Director of Audio Visuals for the National Film Board of Canada, the author seems more interested in presenting a spectacle than in outlining a basis

of traditional economic thinking standing in the way of social values. Economics is not the big obstacle; it is the way people think. People have to be made to realize that they can have an effect on their own environment.

Unfortunately, their move toward pressure group and task-oriented community action was too little, too late. By the early 1970's the fire in this movement of students

Corporation and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (Section 56. of the National Housing Act) who bought the remaining property from the cash-poor Concordia Estates. Finally in 1976 a by-law, "backed by local merchants who could no longer afford the huge costs associated with high-rise construction," was passed by a pressured Montreal City Council. The by-law, which limited the height or bulk of new buildings to 4 storeys, prevented Concordia from completing La Cité with any capital it might access from private sources. With Concordia Estates out of the way, the focus of the book shifts to a handful of Milton-Park leaders entering into boardroom negotiations with those beauraucrats and decision makers who eventually underwrote the costs of the Milton-Park project. To this day, deals are being struck between representatives from senior levels of government and Milton-Park. Ms. Helman notes that the Milton-Park project, which officially opened in September 1983, is by no means problem free. Yet, she goes on to elaborate that the project itself helps us understand how even a semi-active community can serve as the means of bringing power back to the citizenry. Certainly this self-proclaimed urban historian gives us some useful history and a call to action comparable to struggles, past and present, in inner-city Toronto; however, it provides less of a basis for action than we might have hoped for. Reading Helman leaves us with the same uneasy feeling shared by concerned Torontonians during David Crombie's vague but winning "Save Our Neighbourhood" mayoralty campaign in 1972. Then, as perhaps now, our uneasiness was well-founded. Shortly after the election, the "tiny, perfect" mayor and the majority of his prodeveloper Council used the "Save Our Neighbourhood" platform to accede to the Meridian Group of Companies' plan to add three more twenty-nine storey towers to the St. Jamestown development. This development for affluent singles had been erected on the site of a well-publicized battle between long-time residents and radical reformers on the one hand, and Meridian and City Hall on the other. Unlike the fairy tale conclusion to the Milton-Park struggle, the story of St. Jamestown ended in compromise.

The neighbourhood retained twenty-five of their own houses in South St. Jamestown. The developer built eighteen apartment towers in St. Jamestown, which made this one-tenth of one square kilometre area the most densely populated block in Canada. Fifteen years later (thanks to a Toronto City Council who supported the wholesale destruction of entire neighbourhoods), more than 11,000 people are forced to live like rats in a rapidly deteriorating and downwardly mobile St. Jamestown. Toronto City Council's neglect of the plan for a just and humane city is similar to the neglect Ms. Helman seems to project for the Montreal of tomorrow. She avoids a discussion of future implications for affordable housing in Montreal, and overlooks the necessity of expanding the city's non-profit housing sector. In addition, she completely locks out any mention of the urgent demand for Montreal's citizens' movements to question who benefits from the ownership of property. By so doing, Ms. Helman fails as an urban historian for us. And, she may well end up falling into bed with those women and men who don't give a damn. Whether it be Montreal or Toronto, a city must be planned, and any affair, illicit or other-wise, must be exposed and analysed in order to address the future needs and rights of the majority of the non-owning public who find themselves city bound.

A community activist since, 1979, Larry Morris has worked with the First United Church in Vancouver, and is presently of the Open Door Centre and Rooms Registry Service in downtown Toronto. He is currently working on a book which focusses on issues underlying homelessness.

THE SOLITARY OUTLAW
Bruce Powe,
Lester & Orpen Dennys,
Toronto, 1987.

Bruce Powe's *The Solitary Outlaw* demonstrates two things clearly: that alarms over the state of literacy are generally poorly conceived, and that the influence of McLuhan is occasionally pernicious. McLuhan's "message" (really) was that a literate man in a post-literate world has found

himself suddenly of a realm. His supersedes electronic media, Powe has led to a dangerous cultural level and even, of individual identity. Powe's remark the writer exploit himself as an "outlaw" to the evening, probing, punning a solitary individual irritating and attractive bringing "the crowd" to a reflection.

What this means is when we look back at book, *A Climate Change* (Press, 1984), a collection of provocative essays of Canadian writers, the political environment quarter-century in work largely appears role of government, and the universities production of literature. The book is framed by opposition between styles, the one between Marshall McLuhan (the other by Northrop Frye better the contradictions of McLuhan's inviting controversy involvement, than the contained "theoretic" and "Themes" of Frye "slow, logical and precise" whereas McLuhan, the tempered critic, is "urgent and immediate," right times.

The dichotomy is can personal extremes. W. McLuhan is eulogized in introductory essay the *Phaedo*, Plato's text of the last days of Socrates. Frye is rendered from a bush. Powe on Frye's after class:

Thus we see him ambling along a briefcase in hand, entering into his obscure reveries, his minor archetypes, the mythical. He shyly stares and stutters of students and his office with his books, leaving chalkboards varied and grids, a system of concepts and categories without moral judgment himself perhaps now, a fiction, ha Northrop Frye, a

Try to do and say only that which will be agreeable to others. In conversation, as in

for community activism. The on-again, off-again rhythms of her prose however, suggest both the themes of the Milton-Park Citizen's Committee (MPCC) in its various lives, and the "generational class split that plagued the whole Milton-Park movement". Initially and perhaps somewhat naively, the MPCC of the 1960's expressed its "raison d'etre" in terms of the abstract concepts of structural conflict which immobilized the largely non-politicized majority of residents. While "on occasion the young idealists became anxious and uneasy about what they were doing and for whom," it wasn't until the late 1960's that the movement, frustrated by repeated failures at confronting class inequalities in and around the development issue, began to articulate a more radical perspective:

We have to overcome the problems

and professionals had all but gone out. Unhindered, Concordia Estates proceeded with phase One of La Cité, and 255 units were lost to the wrecking ball. From the ashes of the movement, however, an economic, political and social phoenix rose. Quebec's poor economy, when combined with the fact that Concordia could not lever any capital from the public coffers of its civic lover (unlike the Olympics, La Cité was not a monument to Jean Drapeau), created a series of financial crises for the developer. At that time the pro-development *Montreal Star* unintentionally published a single, pivotal story about the struggle from the citizens' point of view. The article raised the question, "Can developers do what they want?" and introduced the idea of a Non-Profit Housing Co-operative — financially supported by the Quebec Housing