class "among" and "*within*" women (33). Layering both literary and filmic study, Donaldson situates the overlap and the slippage within race and gender, making visible the latent ideologies that mark colonialist enterprises.

While Donaldson trains a critical eye upon the colonialist complicity idling beneath white feminism, urging feminists' self-reflexive examination of their own nationalistic tendencies, she also exposes the equally monological positions of some Third World feminists. Gayatri Spivak, for instance, is caught in the act of simplifying Jane Eyre as the privileged "individualist female subject" (15), overlooking the complex interaction of gendered race and racialized gender. Donaldson initiates her book with a "take" on the problematic dynamic between Miranda and Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, stating, "the Prospero and Miranda complexes should become parables about the dangers of monotheistic reading" (17). Singular readings wielded by any critic, Donaldson suggests, function to colonize the subject.

Donaldson supplements her exploration of the interaction of identities with an interaction of disciplines, complicating unified readings with a "cultural studies" approach. Only at the intersection of film and literature does she discover the ways in which dominant representations stitch themselves together into almost seamless discourses. Donaldson targets the filmic device of "suture," a term popular in the "Screen" school as well one used by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, where it is described as the ideological practice of covering over complex relations. Donaldson sees it as that which creates "the imaginary unity, the sutured coherence . . . set up by the classic film" (230). Foregrounded as a colonialist technique of meshing together incompatible differences of race and gender in cinematic imagery, Donaldson locates the stitches, so to speak, in "natural" representations of people of colour and of women. In *Peter Pan*, film and book, she traces how the racial stereotype of the "pickaninny," or the "infantilized" Native Other, is an image sutured almost invisibly to the stereotype of woman, blending race and gender in a colonialist project that depends on the mastery of difference.

Donaldson begins by arguing that Bertha, the madwoman in the attic in *Jane Eyre*, and Jane herself, are more complex embodiments of race and gender than are allowed by either Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in their groundbreaking study *Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination*, or Spivak, in her essay "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." By reading the text from the angle of filmic "shots," Donaldson unravels Jane's unwitting participation in Bertha's othering without erasing Jane's own oppression within patriarchy. (It was both a surprise and a disappointment, however, that Donaldson never mentions Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a novel that counters *Jane Eyre* by giving the native, colonized Bertha a voice).

In her second chapter, the diaries and novels around Mrs. Anna Leonowen's experience in an Indian court are juxtaposed with several Broadway and film versions of the story, eliciting here, too, Anna's subtle imbrication in and exploitation by dominant culture. In the next chapter, Donaldson, again, braids her discussion of text and context, or postmodernist feminisms and essentialist feminisms, into an analysis of the 1982 Australian film *We of the Never Never*, highlighting the specific narratives of racial and gendered colonization in the Australian outback as they are constructed in "sutured" representations. It is in this third chapter that Donaldson introduces her own project, proposing a reading strategy that blends feminism's split positions, that "graf(ph)ts" one onto the other and arrives at a powerful hybrid. Borrowing and relocating Derrida's deconstructionist term, Donaldson writes, "Graf(ph)ting as the combination [of difference] . . . could become an extraordinarily powerful trope for feminist criticism because it insists not only upon the text as a playful system of signs but also upon the material rootedness of signification" (57). The rest of the book offers various configurations of feminisms that splice together difference to become not a singular entity, or one that grows irreconcilably apart, but one that accommodates many strains. Graf(ph)ting, as opposed to the ideological device of suturing, splices rather than fuses difference.

Donaldson goes on to make a Marxist appeal for a materialist analysis of discourse, one that would expose both the ways in which women's experience is discursively mediated *and* the ways in which discourses are experientially embodied. She does this around a discussion of James M. Barrie's 1911 story *Peter Pan* and its revival in a Leonard Bernstein musical in the 1950s. The blurring of "pickaninny" and woman in the figure of Tiger Lily exemplifies what Donaldson calls "graft as political corruption." Corrupt grafting, as opposed to the empowering technique of "graf(ph)ting," resembles the suturing described by Laclau and Mouffe, one which Donaldson situates as operating in literary and media representations of race and gender. In Tiger Lily, we witness the grafting together of a racialized Other and a woman so that each term is exerted against the other and cancels the difference. The enthymeme is a vehicle for such corrupt grafting, suppressing in logical argument an assumption that gives rise to a foregone (sexist, racist) conclusion (76). Yet if graft naturalizes and extends an empire, graf(ph)ting responds agentially by transforming it into a trope of resistant reading.

Chapter 5 allows us to compare E. M. Forster's novel, *A Passage to India*, with its 1984 film adaptation, both of which "write" the metonymic structure of colonizing desire and the consequent exoticization of India. Donaldson recognizes that although white women may be excluded from men's clubs on the basis of gender, they are still implicated in the colonizing of a Ralph Lauren-ish British Raj. With Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, for which there is no cinematic comparison, Donaldson reinforces her contention that plural and ambiguous, rather than singular and nationalistic, identity politics are the only hope for a truly subversive feminist movement, or "exodus." Hurston understands, as must feminisms, that exodus (liberation movements) can symbolize freedom without demanding a unified political identity. This contention is theoretically enlarged in Donaldson's last chapter, when the book begins to articulate something beyond the thorough—but not entirely new—readings of film and literature that precede it.

In "(ex)Changing (wo)Man: Towards a Materialist-Feminist Semiotics," Donaldson examines the abstract commodification of "woman" within postmodernist discourses. Only by graf(ph)ting postmodern feminism onto the body of women's experience does Donaldson see a way in which societies might stop exchanging woman by changing man. Here, there is a sensitive and timely attempt to heal, but *not* seamlessly to seal, what she describes as "the ethereal ballerina of deconstruction and the flat-footed ethicist of feminism" (126).

Donaldson both complicates and honours organicist feminisms. Her horticultural tropes of graf(ph)ting (and, later, gardening) pose a feminist vision that remains grounded in the soil of women's experience without falling blindly into the dangers of pure, nationalistic identity. For graf(ph)ting is a tool that equally cultivates hybridity. The book contributes to today's theoretical discourse through its careful attention to feminism and difference, situating race and gender within the historical and ideological contexts of film and literature, and ultimately working out a theoretical stance that offers a productive non-solution to the shifting intersections within and among women.

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Sharon Butala, *The Perfection of The Morning: An Apprenticeship in Nature*. Toronto: Harper Collins, 1994.

BY Gayle Irwin

Funny: how you can learn more about people through their fiction than you can when they are writing about themselves. It's a trendy project, but Life Writing can be a tricky task; and when you combine an often shifting autobiographical voice with other trendy genres like social history, eco-feminism, Jungian psychology, a sometimes new age spiritualism, not to mention anthropology and postcolonialism... well, pulling the project together can be a monumental task. Perhaps too big a task. In the opening section of *The Perfection of the Morning*, Sharon Butala explains how her latest text grew and insisted its autobiographical form. In the end, however, her short stories and her novels are far more "immediate" and "insistent" than this Life Writing text.

Funny: the impulse to hide behind quoted texts and quasi-psychoanalytical truisms, when you want to investigate not character, but self. As I read this book, I couldn't help feeling Butala would have been better off concentrating on the rich descriptions of the various not-quite-banal rural moments which sometimes peek through her narrative agenda. She could have given rein to her trademark aptitude for ironic detail. Instead, her attempt to weave together the mesh of historical, botanical, anthropological, mystical, feminist, and psychoanalytical titbits is often frustrating, and when all this merges with a "prairie call to the land," the project brushes precariously close to "just plain hokey."

Recently in the "Introduction to Gender in Literature" course I teach, my students and I reflected upon the rise of social history within the academy—another big and, yes, trendy topic. Throughout the year we had been discussing concepts of voice and exclusion, and we studied a number of Life Writing texts. I remember one discussion in particular which may be pertinent here: One student (a bright, white woman returning to school after four years on the wheel of fortune that pretends to be a workforce) complained of never learning about "her" culture in the midst of all our new-found consciousness surrounding ethnicity and race. Discussion that day hovered on the edge of what we defined as traditional history—a history that seemed little interested in "anyone's" culture, truth be told, and preferred instead to concentrate on the acts of a relatively few "great men," and a constricted sense of "great civilizations" (always Western). Hoping the issue could shed valuable light on a year long misunderstanding, I listened as my students coaxed out each other's sense of the changes being made. They zeroed in on the fact that we were studying Jeanette Armstrong's *Slash* and Cecil Foster's *No Man in the House*, for instance, and the way the CFB Heritage Series, which has been coming out with sixty second Canadian vignettes for years, now seems to be redressing the silences of past programming by producing pieces on a Manitoba suffrage leader, Canada's first female doctor, the underground railway, the Chinese labourers on the Trans-Continental line, and Native Canadian oral history.

All of which brings me, in a round-about way, to my take on Sharon Butala's *The Perfection of the Morning*. I'm from Saskatchewan, a fact which probably weighed in my favour when I was handed this book for review. I know the territory Butala is trying to describe. This text is about building a relationship with nature: an old Canadian theme, one that crops up everywhere in prairie fiction. Butala's story follows her "apprenticeship" in the often harsh, certainly unfamiliar, world of her second husband's ranch. His place in the far reaches of southwestern Saskatchewan is a rural world in the true prairie sense of the word "rural." It is only fitting, then, that some of the most poignant passages in the text come when Butala is describing

> **You'd be hard pressed to fit this book into any of the categories or sub-genres that fall under the non-fiction rubric.**

the awe she feels when she tries to understand her husband's life-long connection to the land:

> **on the far side of the hill in that slough-bottom, twenty or so cows stood grazing or lay with their calves beside them peacefully chewing their cuds. In their midst Peter's saddle horse, reins dragging, browsed lazily too. And far off at the edge of the cluster of cattle, a couple of antelope stood, noses down in the grass. All of them were oblivious to my presence and paying no attention to each other, as if they were all members of the same contented tribe on that still, hot afternoon, under that magnificent dome of a sky, and in the midst of those thousands of acres of short, pale grass. About a hundred feet out from the foot of the hill, in the midst of his animals, lying face down in the grass, head on one bent arm, hat shielding his eyes, Peter lay sound asleep.**

Other passages describing the rural world are equally infused by Butala's sophisticated understanding of the concerns that arise specific to a small community brought together and woven tightly because the people depend on nature and their environment in a way urban inhabitants rarely contemplate. Butala has established her niche in the world of fiction with complex accounts of rural life, and her new book has been produced with an eye for both the nostalgic and the contemporary. As a package, *The Perfection of the Morning* reminds me in some ways of the old texts my grandmother used to keep in her spare bedroom—mostly the books were dry accounts of Canadian history, but the pages were crisp, and they often had faded hand-drawn maps on the inner covers, full of squiggly river detail and icon signs of lost prairie bison. I love maps, so the brown ink map printed on the inner cover of Butala's book was a strong point in its favour.

Still, I can't say I wholeheartedly recommend this book—not to your average urban cynic, especially. While its prairie grid is compelling, the project as a whole feels naive. Again, I think the problem is linked to the shift in genre.

The Perfection of the Morning is registered as non-fiction, and a large part of the confusion that clouds Butala's more typically mature narrative style can be traced to the way this book treats non-fiction like an open plain, a prairie no-where waiting to be broken and settled without thought to previous inhabitants, or its deceptively flat terrain. You'd be hard-pressed to fit this book into any of the categories or sub-genres that fall under the non-fiction rubric. It's not really social history, since the majority of the narrative is dedicated to Butala's own very personal interaction with the nature of the southwestern Saskatchewan landscape. The text's subtitle doesn't help either: *An Apprentice-ship in Nature.* "Whose apprenticeship?" my academic training nudges me to doubt. If this text is simple autobiography, why add all the information on Native history, or the quotations taken from anthropology and psychology texts? ...And, yes, I suppose "appropriation" will have to be addressed. After all, non-fiction is as fraught with the political and narratological tensions of "subjectivity" and "authority" as any self-respecting contemporary novel. Butala's text captures historical details, but doesn't contextualize the facts she unearths. Speculation on the aboriginal peoples of the region, the time of the treaties they signed and their migration from the area, late in the last century after the buffalo had disappeared, never make it past the realm of speculation, and the information sits uneasily beside the narrative of a white woman's self-discovery. To give her credit, Butala admits to reservations about wandering into Indian territory. But she doesn't still my doubt: "I think of Aboriginal people whose entire lives were an interaction with Nature." She writes, "It seems to me so clear as to be self-evident that living directly on the earth as Native people did, with constant, direct contact with the natural world, in teepees instead of on floors lifted from the earth by cement basements, would make different people of any of us." A fine tension plays between this passage and the analysis of a visit to the urban buildings of Calgary after Butala has spent a number of years "living rural":

> **I felt a disruption of my normal ways of experiencing the external environment; I felt disconnected from my physical self. It was as if my body didn't end after all with the surface of my skin, and that some invisible, exterior part was being subtly disrupted by the machinery running the building. I felt as if I were minutely and imperceptibly vibrating with the machinery...as if I couldn't locate my*self* inside my body because the buildings (the furnaces, air-conditioning, florescent lights, removal from the natural world) were disrupting my normal way of functioning in the atmosphere.**

Still, we have learned little about the Native version of events, here; and we learn even less in the many strange moments of dream analysis, which, when they're not turning on the Native experience of spirit animals, make recourse to various tired theories from Jungian psychoanalysis. The narratives are patchy, perhaps gratuitous at times; the pieces don't fit together nicely the way, say, a quilted comforter might.

I guess I am most disappointed because all of this might have provided an interesting sort of pomo account of "the fundamental interconnectedness of all things." After all, the heading Nature is capitalized throughout the text and reified as the great bailer twine of the soul. But neither Butala's prose nor her tone reflects the typical postmodern irony at how so many fragmented narratives play off each other, and often lead to contradiction. She is either unable or unwilling to theorize properly the contradictions that arise as she meanders through First Nations issues, eco-feminism, and the economic demise of the traditional family farm. Finally, these issues co-habit even more uneasily than the people from Butala's isolated little community just south of the Cypress Hills.

The Perfection of the Morning is an essay on many things: the personal, the social, the natural, the mystic, the historic. Like the rural people she describes, Butala must forge her connection to the harsh landscape she inhabits. Unlike your average urban reader, she cannot treat her environment as an "issue"; she and her adopted community must live with it. A displaced city dweller, Butala offers a perspective that is interesting if somewhat romantic. Her narrative inhabits the scene of translation. But I can't help feeling that, in the end, this book isn't sure what language it wants to be speaking. This may have been a better text if the author had more faith in her own voice, or even if she had been more familiar with the terrain of her new genre.

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