

loves a Fascist.") The ambivalent feelings the bear arouses in Lou and which eventually subvert her rational self are typical of the experience of "falling" in love. The sensuous relationship between the two is celebrated, yet underlying it all is the great unknown animal quality in both bear and woman. These elements all hint at what might be called "masculinity," or a combination of qualities to which something basic in the heroine responds.

Many aspects of this book recall other, specifically Canadian, writing. It is hardly gratuitous, for example, that the main item of value in the Cary estate should be a first edition of John Richardson's historical romance Wacousta, a melodramatic account of settlers and Indians. Throughout Bear are instances of the counterpointing of fact and fiction, reality and romance in order to explore the question of the Canadian wilderness--what is it? The backdrop of Charles G.D. Roberts' animal stories? The colourful forest peopled with the treacherous Indians of Wacousta? The place where one becomes "bushed"? The habitat of Frye's "garrison mentality"? This emphasis on a highly ambiguous wilderness brings into relief what it means, in turn, to be human and what, particularly, it means to be female. Canadian literature is well stocked with wilderness women. From the Strickland sisters to the heroines of Ethel Wilson's Swamp Angel and Margaret Atwood's Surfacing, female Canadian identity has often been defined in terms

of contact with a formidable environment. Bear is, in some ways, a continuation of such writing. But it is also something else, much harder to define, incorporating and transcending this sort of writing. At once concise, lyric and elegaic, it gives to the reader a new awareness of the mystery at the heart of things. Lou's final reverence for the unknowable life of an inarticulate creature is powerfully and beautifully conveyed. And Marian Engel's communication of compassion and tenderness, her ability to make the reader experience the love she so bravely presents--these are the most remarkable features of this extraordinary book.

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L'Euguélonne Louky Bersianik. Montreal: Editions La Presse, 1976. Pp. 399..

Louky Bersianik is a novelist born in Montreal in 1930, educated in Montreal, Paris and Prague. In February 1976, La Presse published L'Euguélonne, a novel dealing with the plight of women in the modern world. This novel is presently being translated into English. It is somewhat unusual to write a review in English of a novel written in French. However, the outstanding literary and intellectual qualities of L'Euguélonne place it among the important works not

only in feminist literature but in world literature. This novel with its inventiveness, its breadth, its far-ranging critical scope, is a timely reaffirmation of the sustained creative act and of its power to infuse the reader with the conviction that we stand on the threshold of a new era.

L'Euguélionne begins with the assertion in epigraph that 'one man out of two is a woman.' Thus the novel, which becomes very aggressive at times, announces that on the whole its aim is simply to restore a sane equilibrium in the roles assumed by both men and women. L'Euguélionne is the name of the central character, an extra-terrestrial creature who has left her planet to search for the 'male of my species' who had himself been ostracized long before by an invading race. Her quest brings her to Earth where the novel begins. In the first two sections of the novel L'Euguélionne undergoes a learning experience as she passively observes how Earthly men and women relate to each other; the third and final section is in the form of a long recitative diatribe delivered by L'Euguélionne which includes both a virulent analysis of the crippling lot reserved for women and a pressing injunction urging women to various forms of action. At the end L'Euguélionne leaves Earth and presumably continues her quest.

A summary of the plot, however, leaves one completely unprepared for the colossal allegory contained within the pages of L'Euguélionne. Poetry and prose,

humour and tragedy, statistics and even a fairly detailed study of linguistics, including diagrams and tables, all converge in a structure where the evocative power of surrealism and the clear dictates of lucidity form an indissoluble whole. Bersianik has created prose and poetry of astounding beauty. The consistent use of dynamic symbolism initiates what almost amounts to a new mythology or a new iconography, a process which represents an attempt to establish in the unconscious the necessary foundations upon which to build a conscious revolution toward the liberation of women. Legislative changes in working conditions, legal rights, etc., will never bring full satisfaction, will never completely alter the ambiguous position women are forced to accept in the world unless these changes are accompanied by a deep and thorough transformation in mentality. The latter must occupy a great deal if not most of our energies and Bersianik makes a major contribution to this end.

The novel exhibits an uncompromising need to express totalities, all-encompassing realities. Even the names of the characters, based on letters of the Greek alphabet (the fatuous Alfred Oméga, for instance), convey to the reader a sense of timeless involvement with the extreme limits of existence as well as with everything that lies within these extremes. And Bersianik does deal with every facet of life: from the most mundane level where it has been the woman's traditional position to literally

clean-up men's filth as housewife or servant until the woman has come to be identified with filth; through common speech and writing where the structures of language are sorely wanting when it comes to describing activities and qualities of being that pertain specifically to women; to a sweeping denunciation of more than two thousand years of art, philosophy, thought and logic, all half-disciplines for having ignored half the human race. The summum of these absurdities, according to Bersianik, is incarnated in Sigmund Freud who appears in the novel in the guise of 'Saint Siegfried' whose 'Sermon on the Mount' reveals to mankind the primacy of the penis and its corollary concerning woman as a mutilated creature. Bersianik makes a brilliant reply, eulogizing the 'primacy of the hole.' Both men and women are riddled with holes that make life both possible and pleasurable and sometimes painful. We breathe air through our nostrils. We speak to each other through the mouth. The surface of the skin is covered with pores which breathe, expand and contract in close and vital rapport with our surroundings. The woman receives and partakes of man's being through her sex; and, of course, were it not for the hole at the end of the man's penis he would find the union with a woman quite frustrating. The touch of humour is typical of Bersianik as is the rather sound truth she puts forth. This 'eulogy of the hole' is one example of how Bersianik challenges the very foundation of myths that have gained acceptance in the past two millenia. The

author's sense of style, her sure dramatic touch, heighten the impact of her polemics to the point where her ideas become imaginatively as well as logically convincing.

In short, a great work of art such as L'Eugué lionne extends the reaches of the mind in the two opposing directions of the conscious and the unconscious. Simultaneously as we achieve greater consciousness, that unknown base of the unconscious expands greatly in us. We become infinitely more aware and more mysterious creatures for having read Louky Bersianik's L'Eugué lionne.

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The Wheel of Things: A biography of L. M. Montgomery, Author of "Anne of Green Gables" Mollie Gillen. Don Mills: Fitzhenry & Whiteside Ltd., 1975. Pp. 200.

When I saw Mollie Gillen's biography of Lucy Maud Montgomery in a Halifax bookstore last December I quickly bought and read it. Like so many Canadian women (and indeed women in the United States, Europe and Japan) I was virtually raised on the Anne books and wanted to know more about their author. It has always seemed remarkable to me that the creator of so popular a character as the intelligent, imaginative and accident-prone Anne Shirley (it is the Anne of