

“In Momentary Triumph”: The Novels of Nancy Bauer

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ABSTRACT

David Creelman shows the ways in which Nancy Bauer’s four novels create innovative visions of community countering traditions established by earlier Maritime novelists.

RÉSUMÉ

David Creelman montre comment Nancy Bauer, dans les quatre romans qu’elle a écrits, met en scène une vision renouvelée de la communauté, vision qui va à l’encontre des traditions établies par les premiers romanciers des Maritimes.

During the last two thirds of the twentieth century Maritime fiction has been influenced by a powerful wave of anti-modernism. Thomas Raddall, Charles Bruce, Ernest Buckler and others have adopted the tenets of realism in their texts as they experienced the cultural alienation of the post-depression period, but they often buffered their sense of anxiety by returning to nostalgic forms; recreating a secure idyllic community structured by masculinist hierarchies. The female characters generated by such formal tensions are usually submissive, maternal, house-bound, and mute. With the exception of such characters as Ellen Canaan in *The Mountain and the Valley*, women actants are often barred from speech, writing, and story telling. Even Ellen’s rug, which functions as the object summary of the Canaan’s lives, is not represented as a cultural artifact the rest of the community could read, in the same way they could have absorbed David’s never-to-be-written book. This retreat to the nostalgic defense is not a permanent literary condition.¹ Since the 1970s, many writers have faced the region’s dislocations and losses and come to terms with the inevitable uncertainties of the post

war era. Many of these writers are women who inscribe innovative heroines and open up textual spaces to sound voices once silent. Nancy Bauer is among them.

Born in Massachusetts in 1934, Nancy Luke grew up in Chelmsford and received a Bachelor of Arts from Mount Holyoke College. Between 1956 and 1965, Nancy moved throughout the United States with her husband William Bauer, before the couple settled in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Bauer joined the “Tuesday Night Group” - an all male circle of writers which included “Bob Gibbs, Kent Thompson, Bill Bauer, Joe Sherman..., Dave Richards, Michael Pacey, Dale Estey, Brian Barlett, Andrew Bartlett, and Ted Colson” - and began to write fiction (Bauer, Interview).² Her first two novels, *Flora Write this Down* and *Wise Ears*, focus on individual protagonists: middle aged women who are suddenly unsure of their identities and must renegotiate their places within their changing families. Their sense of disruption and alienation eases only as they experiment with forms of story telling in order to recover their own voices. The following three novels, *The Opening Eye*, *Samara The Whole Hearted*,



Nancy Bauer. Photo courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

and The Irrational Doorways of Mr. Gerard, take a wider perspective, focusing not on the single individual, but on larger groups of people whose anxieties lead them to seek resolutions through the formation of communities.³ The desire to examine and reinvokethe powerful traditions of community, leads Bauer into interesting conflicts as some patriarchal assumptions begin to gain ground in her recent texts.

Bauer's debut novel, Flora, Write This Down, was the first book printed by Goose Lane Editions and the small run of 176 copies has long been sold. One of Bauer's strongest texts, the novel revolves around the title character, Flora, who accompanies her young son to the United States where he is to have a delicate operation on his hand. Flora's own family is stable, but as she visits with her maternal relations, Flora feels increasingly uncertain about herself and her role. Overwhelmed by family memories, Flora embarks on a near Oedipal struggle in order to reinscribe herself in the shadow of her powerful mother: "God know's I'm no Doc. A pale imitation perhaps" (Flora, 12).

Nicknamed "Doc" for her "gentle manner in looking after the young ones when they were ill" (Flora, 7), Flora's mother has been elevated to mythic stature by the family. Aged thirteen when her own mother died, Doc "took on the responsibility of raising five children" (Flora, 9). She soon becomes the authority within the family, and even watches over her father, whom she occasionally reprimands in the name of her absent mother:

"Pa," Doc said, "you can't go out like that. It isn't right. Change and put on your good clothes."

"These look all right and I'll miss the cars."

"They don't look all right. Ma would not have liked your going to the library in your working clothes." (Flora, 9)

Doc accumulates the full power of the matriarchal line and her strengths are legendary. It is Doc who insists that the family will raise Winkie's illegitimate boy without a sense of difference or shame (Flora, 27-28), and when the picnicking family is attacked by a hobo, it is Doc who wounds him as they escape (Flora, 62). Flora and Doc's niece both name their daughters after her, and although she has been dead for eight years, stories of her determination and insight are touchstones for the family. The text's celebration of powerful women echoes Bauer's own sense of history:

I grew up with very strong women. My mother really was a very saintly person. She died in 1969. Her funeral was immense. The church was totally filled and the church yard was full of people who just wanted to be there. My grandmother was strong. She was a midwife and had a hospital and my aunt was saying that she never had one case of infection in all those years. She boiled everything. And all my Aunts on my father's side were strong dynamic women. So I grew up with them all around me. (Bauer, Interview)

But Flora, Write This Down is not an idealistic text, and despite the family's desire to mythologize their own past, Doc is not a stereotypical matriarch. Though she is remembered as being complete and self sufficient, Doc does not escape paying a price for her heroism, and she develops "several secret eccentricities and one that was well known. She wrote everything down" (Flora, 104). When the family grows up and moves out, Doc feels a void and the lists which she once made to keep a sense of order become obsessive. She generates lists of "things to do today, things that need to be done tomorrow,... clothing to buy, grocery lists for

the week, grocery lists for the winter, flowers I've planted, plants I've given away..." (Flora, 104). The lists are not emotional records, but they form a curiously intimate chronicle of Doc's daily life as she supplements her emptiness with text. Her elaborately decorated account books become symptomatic of her essential strengths: her determination, drive, and foresight. Yet they also testify to her deepest wounds: her longing for love and nurturing security.

In a masculinist text, such as Thomas Raddall's *His Majesty's Yankees*, the son must often resort to violence in order to clear a space for himself within his father's world.⁴ Flora's struggle is less direct. Doc was a formidable character while alive, and the trace of her memory remains influential long after her death, but Flora finds it difficult to define herself against the shifting stories and the enigmatic account books that are her mother's only remaining presence. The family is a unit without a tangible centre to challenge, and thus Flora remains a daughter without a clear sense of her abilities:

...the house is the centre of the family. While Doc lived, she was the centre, but no one now has the same authority. They look to me, but I live in another land and am not a natural born leader. (Flora, 26)

Flora's sense of dislocation is addressed only as she exercises her own voice and begins to compile her own family history.

In the second section of the novel, entitled "Family," Flora retells stories of her own youth and is able to demythologize her mother. She recalls her mother's strengths and records Doc's heroic attentions to her dying father, but she also reconstructs her weaknesses. She recalls how Doc's unyielding sense of discipline was unable to accommodate the needs of Marion, a minor who briefly lives with the family until

she flees from Doc's rigidity and returns to a prior destructive relationship. As Doc is returned to a stature which her daughter can embrace, the narrative increasingly signals that Flora is able to reproduce many of her mother's strengths. Just as Doc's resistance to the threatening hobo is part of family folklore, so Flora's attack on Paul Pelletiers, a boy who had cut her cousin with a rock filled snowball, attains the status of legend:

Remember the fight we had with the Pelletiers that time? You almost beat the shit out of Paul you were so mad. He never knew what hit him... He said he'd never dared tangle with a woman since. (Flora, 29)

My God, Flora, you kneed him in the balls, and I thought he was going to croak... (Flora, 52)

Flora's story telling, her own supplement to the absence of her mother, is a successful response to her insecurity. In the final section of the novel she begins to link her past and present. She recognizes her mother's influence, saying, "In a family where there has been a Doc, there will always be a Doc. The founder of a family is the one who raises the family to such a level that it can never fall permanently below that level again" (Flora, 114). Flora then immediately turns to consider how Doc's powers echo in her own daughter, Priscilla, whose strengths are so evident that a neighbour remarks that she would "rather leave Priscilla with the children when they were sick than with her husband" (Flora, 114).

The novel retells the traditional humanist narrative of a protagonist's search for her identity, but it does not reconstruct old hierarchies or teleologies. The "God" invoked in the text is not the phallogocentric source of all meaning, but a being at whom Doc can shout threats and to whom Flora can successfully pray

“that Marion have her period” (*Flora*, 75). Nor is writing an attempt to confine the world within a perfect order of words, but an experimental process by which Flora evokes a series of images which generate individual meanings but resist systematic closure. The stories of Mr. Johnson, whom Winkie found “dead for several days, covered with flies” (*Flora*, 18), or the strange home of Bozo Talty whose floors were covered with pots filled with “custard” (*Flora*, 36), remain unresolved enigmas of sexuality and mortality. In the final scenes of the novel, Flora is comfortable with the uncertainties of her life and is able to retreat by herself to a cabin in the woods. She does not attempt to find permanent answers and is simply glad, “I stuck it out. The whole exercise was probably silly, but at least I did what I said I was going to do” (*Flora*, 133).

If it is useful to view *Flora, Write This Down* as a feminist revision of the Oedipal story, then it might be constructive to position Bauer’s second novel, *Wise Ears*, within a Kristevan framework. *Wise Ears* focuses on the protagonist Sophie Aspinwall, a woman who has submitted herself to her society’s dominant symbolic/patriarchal codes, and reads herself not just essentially, but exclusively, as a mother. In the opening scenes of the novel, crises loom as Sophie, realizing that her children have grown up, encounters feelings of alienation and disorientation (Keefer, 252). She is unable to expand her carefully inscribed self image, and her confined role within the domestic economy is chillingly apparent when she reflects casually that “women like me should be shot as soon as the last child leaves home” (*Wise Ears*, 23).

With an abyss opening before her in the first half of the novel, Sophie unsuccessfully attempts to force her world to revalidate her narrow vision of herself. When she writes imaginative letters to her sister, transforming them both into midwives, caring for children in the remote provinces of China, Pearl refuses to participate and instead calls to see “if everything is al-

right” (*Wise Ears*, 73). Her attempts to establish more intimate contact with her children similarly come to naught. Her erratic letters to her married sons Philip and Edmund, and her single daughter Emma, are greeted with not-too-subtle hints about other mothers who are now “taking courses at the university” (*Wise Ears*, 17). Such suggestions do not address Sophie’s deeper needs, for as Bauer has noted,

If you’re a woman there’s always the sense that you’re going to be swallowed up. In *Wise Ears*, Sophie devoted herself and suddenly there is nothing there. This comes from a feeling that my mother had, and she even articulated this to me; she was quite devastated when we left. Sophie is pulling away from the community because all the suggestions given to women are so patronizing. Something that you’ve done that is so tremendously important as to raise a family, all of a sudden you’re supposed to do something trivial like go home to aerobics. (Bauer, Interview)

Unable or unwilling to break from the confines of her role, Sophie attempts to restore her maternal identity by encouraging the birth of grandchildren. She goes so far as to redecorate the guest room to stimulate her children’s procreative impulses. Throughout this first section the external narrator distances herself from the character’s perspective. The resulting irony is clear when Sophie installs a bed with “magic fingers,” selects “deep red” wall paper, has mirrors installed on the ceiling, and then declares, “the room was a success, even though Harold was not over enthusiastic” (*Wise Ears*, 31). The ironic tone continues as Sophie becomes increasingly frustrated after grandchildren fail to appear. When Philip and Candy write to announce

that he has had a vasectomy, Sophie's reaction signals the degree to which she has been absorbed into the patriarchal system: "That bitch. Why didn't she get her tubes tied? At least that way Philip could hope to get himself a better wife" (*Wise Ears*, 59). Only when Sophie admits that alternative roles must be considered if her anxiety is to be successfully addressed, does the ironic tone subside and the narrator once again draw close to her perspective.

Unable to speak her need, or find ears that hear, Sophie withdraws from the symbolic systems which have governed her conscious existence, and turns inward towards the private elemental experience of the semiotic. As Kristeva notes in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, no subject functions within an "exclusively semiotic or exclusively symbolic" signifying system, but Sophie's ability to create narratives grounded in "dream logic," and her desire to hear the rhythms and energies of her body, signals a shift towards the semiotic chora (Kristeva, 93-96). Sophie withdraws from the organized space of her conventional home, and takes over the crawl space, a rich image suggesting both a return to the maternal womb, as well as a desire to undermine and remake the foundations of the house. Decorating the crawl space with a variety of non-binding spiritual icons, Sophie creates a "place of my own" which she protects by installing a "large shiny dead bolt" to block Harold's interfering gaze (*Wise Ears*, 60).

Outside the normal domestic economy Sophie begins taping children's stories and writing fictional biographies which she neither fully controls nor understands. The genotext which pours automatically from her pen and begins to dominate her interests focuses on Anna, a Swedish woman who visits the far eastern country of Yangi Hissar. Armed only with the ordinary skills of a homemaker, she manages to curb the sexually abusive behaviour of her employer, Mr. G., conceives and gives birth to a child of magical potential, and finally travels to Fredericton where she redis-

covers a sexuality of pleasure.⁵ Sophie is frequently shocked by her creation. She quickly moves from a first person to a third person voice but she will not abandon her text, and when she contemplates burning the manuscript she rejects the idea: "something prevented her, some sense of self preservation" (*Wise Ears*, 89). Echoing the sexual rhythms of Kristeva's primal chora, these narratives help Sophie rewrite her own experiences into unconventional adventures.

Through her narratives Sophie reexamines the many possibilities open to her and she finally decides to express her creative impulse through the cultivation of tomatoes. At first her choice appears bizarre, and even Sophie asks herself, "Grow tomatoes? What kind of activity is that?" (*Wise Ears*, 144). But the cultivation of tomatoes, like the move into the crawl space, proves to be evocative. Fascinated by their names, histories, colours, tastes, and textures, tomato growing becomes a sensuous game which even captivates her husband. Through the organic, Sophie discovers a language of the body/senses which does not function within the bounds of traditional logic. Having suspended her need for narrowly constructed certainties, she recovers frivolity and play. The text opens with Sophie hearing a pulpit-thumping minister prescribe the ways the Christian story should be told. In the final pages, however, Sophie discovers a quieter, internal muse who advocates "fun, parties, joyous occasions" and declares "celebration is my chief attribute" (*Wise Ears*, 164). Without retreating to nostalgia or rigid hierarchies, *Wise Ears* encounters the alienation of modernity and learns to play within its unresolvable uncertainties.

In Bauer's first two novels the family structure is the site of anxiety and the protagonist's reinscription of her identity signals the text's feminist perspective. In her third and fourth novels Bauer draws back from the psychological novel to examine the larger social context, and considers the individual's relationships within the community. As the following summaries

suggest, both texts continue to focus on characters who struggle with uncertainty, while refusing to seek easy comfort within totalizing systems.

Set five or ten years in the future, The Opening Eye traces a group of six people, who enrol in Carol Prosser's creativity course hoping to find ways of dealing with their own lacks and absences. Stephen Brighten, a photographer blinded in an accident in Lebanon, hopes to find a new means of artistic expression as he "conducts an experiment to find my soul" (Eye, 18). Nita Orton, an emotionally unstable young woman, wants to become independent from her family; while Philip Aspinwall makes a reappearance from Wise Ears and hopes to come to grips with the loss of his job, his marriage, and his fertility. The student counsellor, the doctor, and the retiring professor who round out the group are all attempting to address needs within their professional lives. As they work through Carol's seven strategies the group bonds so effectively as a community that they decide to rent an apartment complex together. They each eventually find a place within the social system and their deepening relationships and friendships survive - at least past the end of the text.

Samara the Wholehearted, functioning as a sequel to The Opening Eye, returns to the remaining members of the apartment commune, twenty years later, as they go on vacation to their farm house retreat, "Summerland." The text focuses on Carol Prosser's daughter Samara. Twenty years old, Samara is initially determined to break from the patterns established by her charismatic parents. However, as she spends her summer at the community's country retreat, Samara begins to form her own "household," as a variety of eccentric individuals are attracted to her compassionate nature. Samara gradually becomes responsible for Marty Peters, the brilliant but severely disabled physicist who wants to take a break from her arid world of academia; Raisa and Yuri, two Russian adult immigrants who were "cruelly" abused in "foster homes" (Samara, 109); and finally Gina and Gus, the neglected

children of her erratic half brother Fred. The novel becomes a record of Samara's development and maturation as she devotes herself to her tribe.

Just as these characters are wrapped in anxiety and troubled by their inadequacies, so the reader of these later texts experiences a sense of uncertainty and dislocation as the texts both repeat and undermine the narrative conventions which had operated smoothly in her earlier fictions. If Bauer's later novels adhere to most of the conventions of realism which have dominated Maritime fiction since 1940, they undermine the genre's insistence that texts be grounded in a broad historical context. Erich Auerbach notes that the realist novel traditionally is written within an awareness of "the subsurface movement and the unfolding of historical forces," and creates a credible portrait of the world by ensuring that the events and characters of the narrative are embedded in a carefully developed web of cause and effect (Auerbach, 391). Bauer's later fiction suspends this impulse towards historicism, and interrupts the causal chain.

The disruptions become apparent as significant events simply occur 'out of the blue' - unexpected and unexplained. In The Opening Eye, Nita's mystical visions of an interior "brown nut" which "glowed, sang, and was transformed into a blue star" remains an enigma within the narrative (Eye, 48), news of Stephen's unanticipated and meaningless death in a car accident breaks suddenly on the reader, and Paul Simon is unaccountably transformed from a threatening character to an amiable community member. As a *bildungsroman* which draws from the conventions of the romance, Samara the Wholehearted is even more troubling for the reader expecting a conventional text. When Fred dies he describes the "blue... all around me" and the "cheerful yellow" fingers which are "coaxing me in," but no one, including the coroner, appears to find a logical cause for his demise (Samara, 105). Similarly, Samara has a healing power akin to a magical "pure energy," which is never explored by the nar-

rator. The characters' ability to speak, clearly and completely, every thought which comes into their heads, implies a facility with language which seems improbable and even irritating to a reader expecting normal dialogue. These narratives suspend historical causality to create a sense of dislocation within the audience, but critics have condemned the resulting narrative gaps as evidence of clumsy writing. In her review of *Samara the Wholehearted*, Carole Giangrande suggests that "[Bauer's] new novel, reads like a first draft. Don't editors get paid to prevent that from happening" (Giangrande, 44). If Bauer's experiments have led to unsettling reviews, they have also allowed her to extend her exploration of uncertainties without retreating to rigidly structured, totalizing systems.

In most cases the two novels avoid a metaphysics of certainty. The characters are intrigued by Christianity and Sufism, but the theologies do not provide a 'ground' on which any of the characters depend. *The Opening Eye* frequently invokes the term "imagination," and *Samara the Wholehearted* repeatedly talks about the protagonist's ability to "centre" her "energies," but the narratives do not define these terms. Such utterances function as floating signifiers which the community refuses to link to any particular set of signifieds, thus reenforcing Bauer's own claim that "I don't have a system myself" (Bauer, Interview). Rather than provide a single mythology to bind the various characters together, the individuals are linked by nothing more tangible than the simple decision to commit themselves to each other's welfare. Bauer's communities are thus formed by little more than each member's desire to care for one another, and the need to find their place in a larger matrix.

And herein lies the problem. *The Opening Eye* concentrates so intently on its formal complexity and its pluralistic community, that a blind spot develops in the text's sexual politics. Characters search for their unique place in the social order, but these places are often constructed within traditional gender roles. At

some points a strain of irony is present and the reader is encouraged to deconstruct the group's invocations of male power. The collective journal records, "we can sense Philip is becoming the head of the family," but it also notes that he "does not want the position" (*Eye*, 99). The reader recognizes that this divorced, unemployed, sterile male, is a complete reversal of the traditional 'man of the house'. Other patriarchal conventions, however, are not as effectively critiqued. For example, there are times when the text positions men as active creators, while women remain passive muses. Stephen is blind and thus cannot confine Nita within a typical specular gaze, but he is none-the-less inspired to capture her expressions via photographs as she listens to his "made up stories or stories of his childhood" (*Wise Ears*, 91). These photographs form the basis of an art show which features her "fragility," her "grace," and her "delicacy," while celebrating his creative talent (*Eye*, 113). Their art is a "collaboration" and Nita is called a "powerful presence" at the exhibition, but the "one man show" is referred to as "his exhibit" (*Eye*, 112).

Similarly, men often appear as the heroic rescuers of vulnerable women. When Nita wants to join the community her mother objects stridently until her father, "a quiet, henpecked" man, comes to "the conclusion that this was the best chance Nita would ever have to become independent and stable. So he went to bat for the project and persuaded Nita's mother" (*Eye*, 78). When Nita is then harassed by Paul, the offender is confronted not by the women but by the men of the group: "the next afternoon when the men had come home from work, they rang Simon's bell" (*Eye*, 96). The pattern is repeated at the end of the novel when the group learns that Nita is carrying Stephen's baby, and a reformed Paul steps forth to marry the young woman and provide the rational framework necessary for her emotional security. Even Conway Belmont, the man who courts Carol in the final chapters, is a kind of knight in shining armour. Sufism suggests that

the imagination can generate powerful figures who appear at a time of need, but the signifying system surrounding this guardian angel, who drives an expensive foreign car and has enough money to buy the community a summer retreat, has more to do with conventional gender roles than mysticism.

The resurrection of "community" values in *The Opening Eye*, is accompanied by exhumation of patriarchal hierarchies which complicates Bauer's usually equalitarian sexual/political vision. In *Samara the Wholehearted*, the reader is returned to the territory mapped out in the first two novels as the patriarchal hegemony is questioned within the narrative and somewhat more equitable models are used within Samara's assembled family. Conway Belmont is still present, but he is twenty years older. While he is a valuable adviser who cooperates with Carol, he is no longer a phallic emblem of power. Indeed, Samara is the one now driving the expensive sports car. As Samara begins to collect her tribe around her, establishing comforting rituals, and mediating her gift for healing, she echoes the women of *Flora, Write This Down* and *Wise Ears*. Like Flora and Sophie, Samara proves to have the gift of language. She has "the facility" to understand Marty's distorted speech (*Samara*, 19), and she is able to find the words to comfort her distressed brother and his frightened children. She also has a finely tuned sense of human relations. She accurately identifies that Yuri and Raisa are lovers long before their affections are suspected by others, and she is able to unravel her own feelings and make a commitment to Ron: "I'll just have to dive in, and if

I'm making a fool of myself, well, I'll have to live with that" (*Samara*, 154). Her intellectual gifts are apparent when she becomes an assistant in Marty's classes, and her emotional range is clear when she helps build a secure environment for Gus and Gina. Samara's resources are so vast that the text moves into the realm of romantic stereotypes. Moreover, her recurring decisions to efface her own needs, and suppress her own desires in order to nurture others, carries with it the shadow of the traditional domestic economy. Samara's sole devotion to duty takes on a tone of martyrdom as she concludes, "People are always asking too much of me... But then I'm getting used to it" (*Samara*, 154). In the end, however, she is celebrated as much for her own accomplishments as for her simple ability to sacrifice, and Samara emerges as a powerful figure within a communal system.⁶

Having produced five novels in thirteen years, Nancy Bauer is a prolific and innovative writer. Her texts have interrogated and recreated conventional narrative patterns, and she has recovered a variety of voices too long unheard in Maritime fiction. Bauer resists the formal and thematic structures which have dominated Eastern Canadian fiction for much of this century. Yet she also resists the temptation to simply replace old models with new hierarchies: "It's not that I resist, as much as I am incapable of closures" (Bauer, Interview). Determined to undermine monolithic perspectives and committed to finding fresh perspectives within Maritime writing, Bauer has helped open the door to a new territory. She, like Samara, has "entered [her] house in a momentary triumph" (*Samara*, 163).

NOTES

1. Ian McKay argues that nostalgia becomes a dominant form in Maritime texts as middle class writers attempt to find a positive alternative to the economic depression and out-migration which has plagued the region since the 1920s. Gwen Davies responds to McKay and argues that these nostalgic texts are not static and reactionary, rather they include "elements of realism, irony, and economic cynicism" (196).

2. All biographical information was obtained during an interview with Nancy Bauer recorded at her studio in Fredericton on 12 August 1992.

3. Nancy Bauer's five novels include: Flora, Write This Down, (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 1982); Wise Ears, (Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1985); The Opening Eye, (Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1988); Samara the Wholehearted, (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 1991); and The Irrational Doorways of Mr. Gerard, (Fredericton: Goose Lane, 1994). Unfortunately, due to constraints of time and space this paper will be unable to thoroughly examine Bauer's most recent text.

4. For a more detailed psychoanalytic reading of Raddall's His Majesty's Yankees, see Donna Smyth, "Raddall's Desiring Machine: Narrative Strategies in the Historical Fiction," Time and Place: The Life and Works of Thomas Head Raddall ed. Alan Young, (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press 1991), 65-67, or David Creelman, "Conservative Solutions: The Early Historical Fiction of Thomas Raddall," Studies in Canadian Literature 20, no. 1 (1995): 127-149.

5. Kristeva distinguishes between a genotext, which emerges from the semiotic chora, and a phenotext which is created within the symbolic realm. "The former includes drives, their disposition and their division of the body... The later encompasses the emergence of object and subject, and the consti-

tution of nuclei of meaning involving categories: semantic and categorial fields... The genotext is a process, which leads to articulate structures that are ephemeral and non-signifying... The phenotext is a structure; it obeys rules of communication and presupposes a subject of enunciation and an addressee" (Kristeva, 120-121). In as much as Sophie is creating a private, unconscious narrative chronicling her emerging/presymbolic identity, her stories can be read as genotexts.

6. Bauer's most recent text The Irrational Doorways of Mr. Gerard continues this celebration of women who work within their normal domestic sphere to perform extraordinary acts of restoration. Adapting the form of the mystery novel, Bauer constructs a careful system of cause and effect, which compared to her third and fourth narratives seems less erratic in its disruptions of conventional realism. Like Samara, the heroine Arlene is a figure who is willing to brave the apparent arbitrary meaninglessness of the world in order to assert her powerful sense of familial protectiveness and adopt a mysterious child. The novel again edges towards a patriarchal discourse as Arlene remains curiously willing to be manipulated by a variety of men who direct her activities in their attempt to save a matriarchal religion. But her determination and strength eventually provide the structures for a new mystical community which will be led by her adopted daughter. The Irrational Doorways of Mr. Gerard demonstrates Bauer's own determination to continue experimenting with a variety of narrative models as she explores the power of the feminine.

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