

book. All in all, *Found Goddesses: Asphalta to Viscera* is a work that gives the lie to all who say that feminists have no sense of humour. It shows, furthermore, that feminists can and do laugh at themselves and, what is more, that laughter is an important survival mechanism. "Hail, Hilaria, do your bit,/Bring us laughter, soul of Wit!"

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**Seismographs: Selected Essays and Reviews.** Liliane Welch, Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1988, Pp.120 paperback.

My childhood was so painful I seldom speak of it. Consequently, it was with some surprise that I read an account by Liliane Welch which was almost identical to my own. The odyssey for the ethnic writer, moving from old culture to new, from country to country, begins with family memory and folk past. According to the editors of *Ethnicity and Canadian Literature*, it is the "golden age" of childhood which shapes the whole and contributes to the ideal of country and nation. Various writers, both in English and French Canada are responding, however unconsciously, to this national vision, with retrospective fictions (very often viewed through the eyes of a child) of regional and ethnic cultures, writers who are, in effect, in a sociological sense, reinventing the Canadian past to multicultural ends.<sup>1</sup>

So it is that this collection of prose by a poet and professor of French literature at Mount Allison University begins with a quotation about how childhood memories are recreated in later years. However, there was no "golden age" for the would-be émigrée who defines self not through social structures and the cultural milieu but without them. She rejected the patriarchal sexual and social order of class society in Europe, phallographic, dominated by the Law/Catechism which her father/priest embodies. In this context, she must also discard the role models of lady/barbarian, Eve/Madonna, woman as uneducated, subservient to men, subordinate to the household.

The last words of her maternal grandmother, "Your father was not your friend. You speak like me," (p. 33) are true in part. The author exchanges the Roman Catholic religion for a belief system based on a passionate aestheticism. Furthermore, she adopts a belated mother tongue, English. Nevertheless, the implied comparison between rural and urban values, enacted in generational conflicts,

reveals a family epic as forbidden, incomprehensible and ritualistic as a wilderness area (p. 20).

Richard Lemm observed in his introduction that Montana has not yet surfaced in Welch's poetry or prose despite the fact it was where she first attended university and read the works of Melville, Whitman, Faulkner, Steinbeck and Hemingway. He sounds puzzled by her patent disregard for the landscape of the Northwest. He fails to comprehend that the land patterns and myths of the United States exclude women authors and women's literary work. For the frontier, by definition, is the place which is far enough away to leave women behind.<sup>2</sup> This is possibly why the Tantramar region of New Brunswick, in which the pseudo-wilderness and its attendant freedoms are connected to the civilized, has been so agreeable for Welch, and not necessarily because of her European background. Also noteworthy is the fact that she annually returns to Europe, following a path similar to her grandfather (nomadic/outsider/urban) and grandmother (rooted/solitary/rural).

That she pursues, albeit unconsciously, a well-established pattern is interesting for two reasons. Her initial enthusiasm for the wilderness/freedom arose when she read the German author Karl May, who wrote romantic adventures about the American West, and *Globi's Adventures in America*. When she established the motivating and mediating ground in New Brunswick she was free to create an authentic fiction of her own. And, secondly, her art is based on place but a place recreated "where we stand, helping us to dwell poetically there" (p. 69).

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#### NOTES

1. Robert Kroetsch, Tamara J. Palmer, and Beverly J. Rasporich, *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 14, No. 1 (1981), pp. 3-4.
2. Heather Murray, "Women in the Wilderness," in *Amazing Space: Writing Canadian/Women Writing*, Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli (eds.), Edmonton: Longspoon Press/NeWest Press, 1986, p. 77.

**Carry on Bumping.** John Metcalf (ed.), ECW Press, 1988.

Celebrated chauvanist John Metcalf's naively arrogant attempt to include women in *Carry on Bumping* is lightly energizing to skeptical feminist scholars. However, this ECW Press collection of literary essays has an ambitious market — third and fourth year English undergraduates. That means that more than fifty percent of its readers will