

Canadian Minority Writing and Acculturation Options

"Would you tell me please, which way I ought to go from here?"
"That depends, a good deal on where you want to get to," said
the Cat. "I don't much care where" — said Alice. "Then it
doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat. (Lewis Carroll,
Alice in Wonderland.)¹

Racial oppression presupposes that the dominant group has the power to oppress and the subordinate group has fewer resources to resist oppression. In this sense, the terms majority/minority groups in the context of race relations are defined by unequal power rather than numeric differences. Minorities are groups which are in a subordinate position, dominated by groups which have the power to subject them to unequal treatment. Conversely, a majority group is the group that has the power to dominate. (B. Singh Bolaria and Peter S. Li, *Racial Oppression in Canada*, 15.)

A failure to make explicit the societal basis of social science may create the illusion of having established universal truths... The danger is ethnocentrism... Ethnocentrism may lead to a distortion of reality in that one's own culture-bound perspective is taken as universally appropriate. (Robert C. Gardner and Rudolf Kallin, *A Canadian Social Psychology of Ethnic Relations* 6.)

Acculturation may be roughly defined as cultural change (on the individual and group level) which results from the meeting of different groups in a multi-ethnic society (Berry, "Finding Identity," 223). In Canada, if we assume that some form of ethnic pluralism is likely to continue for the immediate future at least, acculturation is now, and will continue to be, a national fact of life. And given the close connection between acculturation processes and

1 I am indebted to M. Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life* for the use of this quotation. I would also like to thank Francesco Loriggio, Ben Jones and Lindsay Mann for their helpful comments on this paper.

the specific characteristics of a particular society, the discussion of this topic, even from a literary perspective, leads to a great many related questions. A full consideration of acculturation in Canada would thus need to look closely at a number of different areas and consider, for example, identity issues, attitudes regarding ingroups and outgroups, social structures, and available social and cultural options. The aim of this paper, however, is much more limited. In it I wish to examine how some of these relevant issues relate to one area of Canadian literature, namely Canadian ethnic minority writing. And within this area I am more interested in establishing a conceptual framework, an approach to the issues, than in attempting an overview or a comprehensive treatment of this large and diverse body of literature. Such a framework will allow us to examine better how Canadian minority literature (its writers, readers, and texts) relates to the sociological, psychological, and cultural forces (diachronic and synchronic) which are salient in Canadian acculturation processes.

The relation of acculturation to assimilation, another term commonly used in describing intergroup relations in a society, depends on the way the latter term is understood. To put it another way, one's view of acculturation is related to the teleological assumptions implied in the model of assimilation being used. Thus for example, Milton Gordon's well known assimilation model for the United States separates cultural assimilation ('acculturation') from the various components of structural assimilation and posits three distinct paths (teleologies): Anglo-conformity, amalgamation (i.e. melting pot), and pluralism. In each of these paths, the nature of acculturation is to be seen differently.

Gordon's distinction between cultural assimilation and structural assimilation is an important one since it allows us to analyze more clearly the different kinds of processes which are involved.² Yet at the same time the analytic distinction between culture and structure does not imply that culture and acculturation occur independently of the structures of society. To speak of *acculturation options*, therefore, whether for individuals or for groups, is to speak not just like Alice in my first prefatory quote (free to take whatever road she wants), but also like Bolaria and Li in my second prefatory quote. In other words, the two discourses may be distinct and yet

2 Gordon sees *culture* as the way of life of a society, its ways of behaving, norms of conduct, beliefs, values, and skills, along with the behavioral patterns and uniformities based on these categories (32-33) and *structure* as that which involves the social structures of a society, its set of social relationships, formal and informal, organized institutions, etc. (30-31). To some extent, even in Gordon's analysis, these two concepts are inextricably related. Gordon's other assimilation variables are mainly psychological or host society related and will be dealt with in a slightly different form in the acculturation model which follows.

be part of the same interrelated system.³ In acculturation, it seems to me, ethnic cultural features, whether considered subjectively or objectively, are acted upon not merely by the existential difference of the 'other,' but also by the instrumental forms in which the culture is found.

For the ethnic diversity of Canadian society, therefore, the discussion of acculturation and ethnic identity also needs to take into account, at the very least, questions of status and power since these areas are an important part of Canadian social structures. In other words, the study of acculturation also involves a consideration of the interplay between dominant ethnic majority status (itself differentiated historically, regionally, by sub-group or by sector) and subordinate ethnic minority status (also differentiated in a variety of ways). In Ontario, for example, the ability of non-Christians to choose their days of work depends not only on their cultural beliefs but on the structural environment of the dominant core culture. Indeed, one problem with Canadian multicultural policy, if I may use it as a general example on this point, is that it has on the whole tended to see culture (and hence ethnic identity), as something separate from Canadian social structures. The result has been the restriction of culture to 'song and dance routines' which are often seen by minority participants as instrumentally innocuous and culturally limiting.

Literature, insofar as it is a cultural activity, obviously has a close relationship to the acculturation dynamic. Writers and readers are participants in acculturation processes, and literary texts can very often be seen to reflect or incorporate their acculturation options. This is particularly clear in Canadian ethnic minority writing, that is, in that part of Canadian literature which arises from and reflects Canadian ethnic minority experience in its broadest sense (whether immigrant, aboriginal, or third plus generational, in official or non-official languages).⁴ That minority writing should put a high salience on issues of acculturation is not surprising since to a large extent minority enculturation, unlike majority enculturation, takes

place in contrast to dominant cultural norms, at least insofar as minority identity boundaries are concerned.⁵

The close relationship between acculturation and social structure outlined above suggests that discussions of this subject in related disciplines such as sociology or social psychology should be able to offer considerable insight in a literary critical context as well. Sociology is no substitute for literary analysis (from whatever perspective), but there is no reason why sociological or social psychological models cannot be adapted to serve literary critical purposes. And indeed, this is what I am going to try to do in the rest of this paper. My basis for doing so, as I stated above, rests in the affirmation that Canadian writers and readers, as part of Canadian society, bring to the literary text implied or explicit positions on acculturation issues and that these positions (attitudes, judgments, expectations, etc.) are centrally relevant to the literary analysis of minority writing. To put it another way, I am arguing for the centrality of performative, behavioural, and instrumental factors in the relationship between readers, writers, and texts and justifying the theoretical applicability of sociological models to literature on this basis.⁶ A full consideration of the theoretical implications of this issue is of course not possible here.

What we require, then, in the consideration of acculturation and minority writing, is a way of describing the variety of acculturation options that writers and readers bring to minority texts and a way of analyzing the literary implications of these acculturative positions. A preliminary version of such a descriptive model is presented in Figure 1 below. The model is derived from a number of Canadian sociological and social psychological studies and in particular from those of Berry, Driedger, and Kallen. Using elements from each of their models, I have attempted to portray here in one figure a wide range of issues relevant to Canadian minority writing: cultural and structural elements, voluntary and involuntary factors, synchronic and

5 Cf. Kallen, 82: "For members of the dominant ethnic collectivities, the processes of enculturation and acculturation may, to a large degree, tend to be mutually reinforcing phenomena. Hence, the line between the actor's ethnic and national identities may blur, and ethnicity may become salient in only a few situational contexts. Alternatively, for members of ethnic minorities, the processes of enculturation and acculturation may generate opposing (push and pull) forces. In this context, ethnicity may be rendered highly salient in a great many situations."

6 Needless to say, the application is not to be seen as merely one-sided since the results of literary analysis based on these models may very well affect how the models themselves are perceived. Further, in forming my own descriptive model, I have adapted and changed the social science models in order to fit them better to the context of literature. The problems, theoretical as well as practical, involved in this interdisciplinary venture, could easily form the basis of another paper.

3 Cf. the discussion of field theory in Herman, 18 ff.

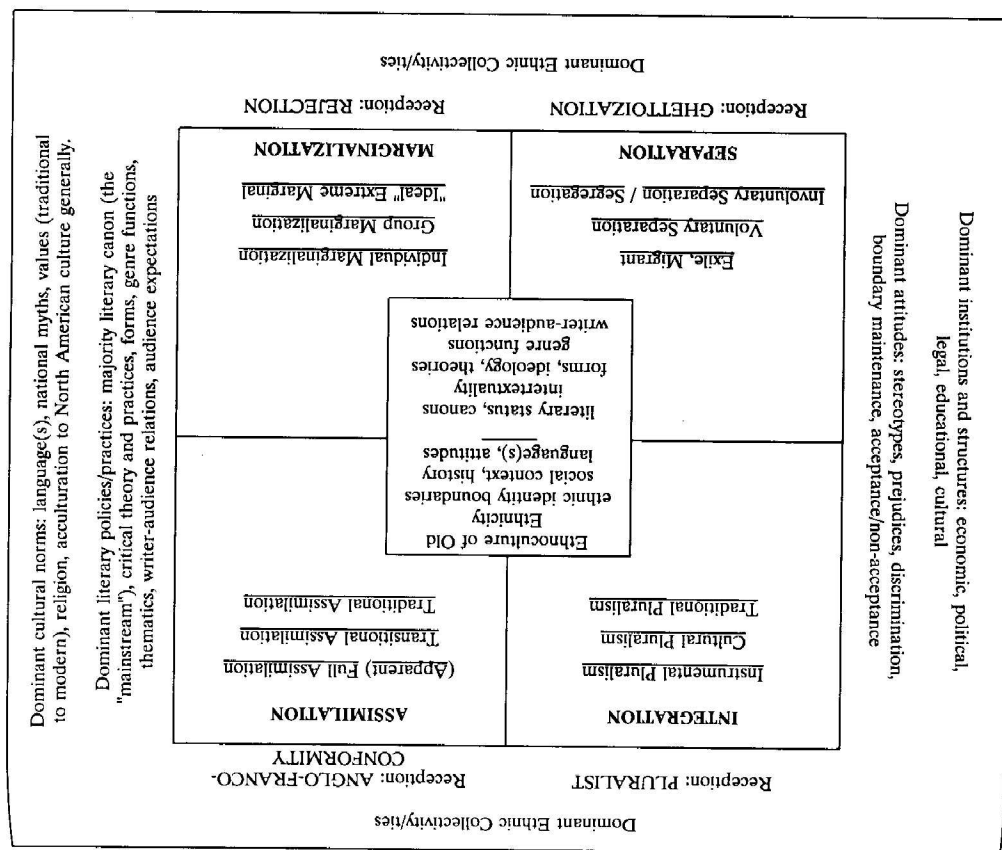
4 For further discussion of the terminology being used here and the distinctions between majority and minority, see Padolsky, "The Place of Italian-Canadian Writing." You will note that I am excluding from my scope minority situations of the dominant groups, i.e., English-Canadian writers in Montreal, Acadian, Franco-Manitoban writers, etc. These are interesting cases from a number of perspectives, but I would distinguish them from the situations of ethnic minority writers *per se*.

diachronic aspects, and majority/minority, ingroup/outgroup relationships, all seen in terms of the literary ramifications they generate. The literary model which results should perhaps best be seen as an available range of analytic options. By means of the model one can clarify where particular literary cases fit and with regard to which aspects. The validity of the model, of course, depends on how well the analytic structure fulfills this need. At this point, all I would wish to claim is that the model does seem to handle most minority literary examples and that most positions on the grid can indeed be represented, though undoubtedly some adjustments will need to be made in the future. It should also be noted that what is presented here is not to be construed as a general model for the study of acculturation and literature that can be applied without adjustment to other literatures or other times. As my third prefatory quote by Gardner and Kalin reminds us, analyses (whether in social science or literature) tend to be culture-bound and should be extended outside their immediate contexts only with great caution.

The pattern shown in Figure 1 describes the variety of acculturation options available to Canadian minority ethnic groups and individuals as reflected in Canadian minority writing. The positions in the Figure are thus located with reference to both the ethnoculture of the old ethnicity (both social and cultural) and the dominant ethnoculture(s) of Canadian majority collectivities (again both social and cultural). This fundamental relationship reflects the fact that Canadian ethnic minority identity and hence minority acculturation options find their dynamic between the ethnicity of the minority group (with its history, social structures, culture, literature, etc.) and that of the dominant majorities in Canadian society. Note also that the acculturation options displayed in the Figure are intended as descriptive, not normative, categories. No judgment is being made about which position is 'best' in the grid.

The Figure has three axes. The first is that between the centre and the periphery. Since we are attempting to describe ethnic minority writing, the core is that of the minority ethnoculture and the dominant ethnic collectivity/ties are seen as an encompassing or containing periphery. If we were describing dominant majority conditions, these two positions would presumably be reversed. In this sense, the Figure is an interesting comment in itself on the decentering which results when you see from a minority perspective. 'Normality,' of course, would put the dominant view at the core. The radial axis, from centre to edge, may be seen to some extent both synchronically and/or diachronically. Thus the power/status relationship, the interplay between majority and minority aspects can be seen as a permanent and hence synchronic fixture as long as there is a multi-ethnic situation. This can be found in, for example, the majority reception responses depicted in the outer ring, or in the very location of elements throughout the pattern.

Figure 1 CANADIAN ETHNIC MINORITY WRITING AND ACCULTURATION



At the same time there is a general and crude diachronic movement from past to present (or future) as we move out from the core. This is an attempt to capture the diachronic arrow movements used in Kallen's model (80) and to do justice to the facts that acculturation, after all, means change, and that change takes place over time. Thus, for example, the movement from traditional to transitional to full assimilation might be equated roughly with generational developments over time and thus with immigrant, second generational, and third plus generational writers, *all other things being equal*, which of course they are not always, either for groups or for individuals.

Yet as Gordon argued (75), there is a need to explain the relationship between the various assimilative processes, and to respond to the fact that there does seem to be a pattern in the order that assimilation takes place, even if we do not believe in a linear version of assimilation. But the diachronic factor here, though important, can only, it seems to me, provide a tentative if logical descriptive structure. It does not follow that empirically, in all cases, acculturation *must* proceed exclusively according to that logic. That is a matter for empirical study. Note also that, unlike Kallen's model, both ethnocultural core and enclosing dominant periphery contain both cultural and structural features. This reflects the fact that from a literary perspective, both aspects need to be taken into account whether in the old or new ethnocultural situation. And this also fulfills the requirement, noted earlier, that both factors be considered together, not only at core and periphery, but at all positions represented between them.

The remaining two axes, vertical and horizontal, represent the Berry acculturation attitude types regarding degree of attachment to ingroup identity and outgroup relationships: integration, assimilation, separation, marginalization.⁷ At the same time other aspects of the Driedger and Kallen category descriptions (for example, voluntary/involuntary; traditional/transitional) have been built in.⁸ As in Berry's model, the basic acculturation

7 Berry's four categories (see 228) are derived from answers to two (sets of) questions, which in distilled form are the following: 1) "Is it considered to be of value to maintain cultural identity and characteristics?" 2) "Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with other groups?" The four options can thus be crudely summarized: 1) Integration: where both answers are in the affirmative; 2) Marginalization: where both answers are negative; 3) Separation: ingroup affirmative, outgroup negative; 4) Assimilation: ingroup negative, outgroup affirmative. Berry has worked with these categories for a number of years and, as he points out (228 ff.), they have been "operationalized" and "validated" in the field.

8 In particular, Driedger's model (170) stresses the importance of choice and of the potentially conflictual nature of both options and power relationships. The Kallen model (80) also points to the importance of power relationships and boundary maintenance factors, and provides a number of useful features: diachronic and synchronic dimensions, the notion of an ethnocultural core, and a useful breakdown of elements and terms which

options have to be understood not as rigid positions but as a kind of sliding scale of attitudinal responses whose variations can be represented very crudely here by the positioning within each segment. Thus the differences between 'traditional,' 'transitional,' or 'full' (apparent) assimilation, for example, are shaded rather than absolute differences.

Table 1 below outlines briefly some of the literary characteristics (and social and attitudinal contexts) which may be assigned to each of the divisions and subdivisions within the four main Berry categories as used in Figure 1. These are intended only as examples to illustrate the concept and not as comprehensive lists. The description under "Cultural Pluralism," for example, could have been much expanded and no doubt argued and clarified. The particular list of characteristics I have supplied indicates some of the ways (both literary and attitudinal) in which this type of minority writing (writers/readers) gives importance both to ingroup identity concerns and to maintaining outgroup relations in a pluralist majority response context (i.e., "Integration"). At the same time these characteristics locate this attitudinal position with reference to two other positions I have introduced into the Berry Integration category — one a more tradition-oriented position ("Traditional Integration") and one a more activist position ("Instrumental Pluralism"). In similar terms, I have also attempted to clarify variations in the other three Berry categories by introducing a three-part structure to each.⁹ The Table may at first glance appear somewhat cryptic since space does not permit me to explicate each category and since literary examples have not been included. The discussion below will I hope serve to clarify many of these categories as more examples are considered.

It is not possible to run through all the variations shown in Figure 1 but I would like to point out some of the most widespread features. Thus for example, categories closest to the core are most similar (e.g. traditional assimilation, traditional integration); categories closest to the periphery are most clearly differentiated (instrumental pluralism, full assimilation); and categories diagonal to each other are of course most contrasted. In part this is due to the nature of double axis depiction but it also reflects the impact of dominant society on the minority acculturation options, a point noted also by Berry. Further, though majority reception responses are important

I have drawn heavily on in my own diagram and table. Though I wish to acknowledge my debt to both these models for aspects of my analysis, I also differ in significant ways which should not be attributed to either of these scholars. It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into these differences here.

9 Note that Berry, "Social and Cultural Change" (260), also uses a three part scale ("traditional," "transitional," and "acculturated") to indicate the degree of acculturation. My own subdivisions have been chosen mainly for their literary applicability.

everywhere on the grid, they are particularly salient on the lower (negative) areas of the Figure since this is where majority power tends to determine which issues count regardless of minority attitudes. Thus, for example, a writer or his/her works may be 'segregated' in majority structures (publishing houses, bookstores, granting agencies, university courses, etc.) or majority readers' attitudes regardless of the self-ascribed acculturation attitude of that writer. Bharati Mukherjee's introduction to *Darkness* might be cited as an eloquent statement on precisely this situation.

Like any model, the positions represented can be related to both 'ideal' and 'real' factors, i.e., they are analytic elements derived generally from a view of the whole. Thus though we might wish to equate positions on the grid with the general thrust of particular writers, texts, readers' expectations, or groups of these, the model allows for differentiations for any particular case. For example, we might wish to place various aspects of Indian-Metis writing somewhere in the Marginalization category, Ukrainian-Canadian Ukrainian language writing in the voluntary separation category, 'visible minority' writing generally in the segregation category, etc. In a sense this would be both a judgment on reality and an interpretation of the grid. At the same time, however, this does not prevent us from pointing out that for any particular case, it or elements of it may represent other positions on the grid. Michael Ondaatje, though 'visible,' is hardly segregated; the acculturative implications of *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* are somewhat different from those of *Running in the Family* or *In the Skin of a Lion*.¹⁰ The same can be said for various elements and aspects of literary analysis for any given writer, reader, or text. Let me illustrate the particulars of the model now by looking very briefly in turn at a few sample issues involved in each of these three literary elements.

WRITERS: From the authorial perspective, what the model shows are the implications flowing from acculturation decisions. Thus the writer's decisions on language, audience, theme, form, genre, etc. will consciously or unconsciously place him/her in various positions in the relationship between ethnic core and majority society, thereby establishing his/her version of ethnic minority reality. Take for example the question of language (which will be my primary illustrative area here). For those writers whose core cultural language is a non-official language, the decision to write in that language tends to imply a number of acculturative consequences: 1)

10 Cf. Berry: "... the model allows for shifts between the various orientations over time, and in different domains of life: youth may prefer assimilation, their parents integration, while others in political movements may seek separation; moreover, there may be assimilation in food preferences, integration in identity, separation in social relations, and marginalization in religious beliefs" (238).

Table 1 ACCULTURATION OPTIONS

INTEGRATION

Instrumental Pluralism: As in Cultural Pluralism but with instrumental mobilization in social, attitudinal and cultural areas; subversion of dominant myths, forms, language, canon; minority structures; transcultural interests

Cultural Pluralism: The centrality of ethnic minority concerns; assertion of self-defined ethnic identity; symbolic ethnicity; language 'stones'; both ingroup and outgroup audience; balance of national and intergroup focuses

Traditional Integration: As in Traditional Assimilation but with assertion of self-defined identity; self-justification in pluralist terms; a pluralist bias on Canadian commonality; participatory role in dominant forms, genres, etc.; strong ingroup audience relations

ASSIMILATION

(Apparent) Full Assimilation: Acceptance of dominant cultural forms, languages, institutions, etc.; low ethnic salience (but with the potential for higher salience still there [hence the use of "Apparent" in the heading]); 'universal,' general, 'Canadian' characteristics and affiliations

Transitional Assimilation: Fewer ethnic symbols and less salient ethnicity than in Traditional Assimilation; tendency to use dominant forms, theories, language(s), etc.; intercultural focus with bias to national coherence; tendency to individualism, universalism, rejection of group primacy

Traditional Assimilation: Selective enculturation, adapted ethnic symbols, adherence to core cultural values; ethnic language retention or loss; use of traditional forms, themes, etc.; link to ingroup audience; Old/New World dualities

SEPARATION

Exile, Migrant: Dominance of old ethnicity and literature, forms, ideology, etc.; old audience/old world reception; minimum impact of new contexts; links to traditional categories in Canadian ethnic minority community

Voluntary Separation: Non-official language writing in Canadian context; ingroup forms, themes, audience; high salience of ethnic identity, boundaries; usual focus traditional, old ethnicity

Involuntary Separation (Segregation): Outgroup exclusion highly salient; high salience of instrumental concerns: race, class, 'visibility,' prejudice, discrimination, etc.; possible wide range of self-selected acculturation positions: assimilation to integration; traditional language retained or lost

MARGINALIZATION

Individual Marginalization: Voluntary or involuntary; with or without dispersal, breakup of community; loss of contact with community, language, culture, audience; non-acceptance by dominant groups; high acculturative stress

Group Marginalization: Community breakdown, loss of minority culture, language, etc.; highly salient instrumental minority issues; low status and power; severe acculturative stress; low level of literary expression; cultural aim of recovery of forms, traditions, etc.

'Ideal' Extreme Marginal: Non-specified rejected minority individual with only residual or confused group identity, i.e. almost a "participant" of categories rather than groups; confused or nil ethnic salience; non-specified minority perspective; official language only

restriction to minority audience or Old World society (traditional, separation or exile positions); 2) maximum distance from dominant group reception; 3) minimum cultural distance from traditional sections of minority audience; 4) related repercussions on form, genre, theme, etc. How the writers handle these implications may vary in individual cases but the acculturative impact of this language choice clearly applies to a whole range of Canadian minority writers: some examples include Mennonite writers writing in Low German, Pakistani-Canadian writers writing in Urdu, Ukrainian-Canadian, Hungarian-Canadian, Italian-Canadian, and other European-Canadian writers who see themselves mainly in the exile or voluntary separation areas of the grid.

Translation, or bilingual publication, of course, have in recent times offered a pluralistic optional overlay to this basic language choice. Yet it is important to remember that translation is not equivalent, in terms of acculturation, to writing in the official language. And even in this case, the writer still has to choose on other grounds which acculturation option(s) he/she wishes to embrace. Thus Josef Škvorecký, for example, might still be considered primarily as an exile writer, even though his novel *The Engineer of Human Souls* was able to reach out successfully in the current 'multicultural' era to a broader Canadian audience (reception: pluralist) even winning a Governor General's award in the process. Nevertheless, Škvorecký's attachment to the exile acculturation option is evident not just in his choice of writing language (Czech) but also in his concentration on Czechoslovakian place, his view of Old and New World differences, and so on. This becomes obvious if we compare his case with that of Henry Kreisel, who decided from the day of his arrival in Canada (at the internment camp) that he would write in English, whatever the cost to himself as a writer, and whose different choice of options (traditional assimilation?) is reflected in the way he treats the interrelation of Old and New Worlds in *The Rich Man* and *The Betrayal*.

It is also worth noting that the non-official language option for the writer may very often have more to it than an official/non-official aspect. Thus Mennonite, Pakistani-Canadian or Italian-Canadian writers, to return to a few examples referred to earlier, may find their core language 'home' in a minority ethnoculture within the social world of the old ethnicity (Low German/High German, Punjabi/Urdu, Friuli dialect/Italian) and this language situation further complicates the Canadian acculturation situation for the writers even on a non-official language basis.

What about the implications when a minority writer does use one of the 'official' languages? For those minority groups with a historical non-official language background, this option represents to some extent a movement away from old ethnocultural core and into the language of dominant group culture. But we should also note the following points. 1) In some cases

(group marginalized, some involuntary segregation groups, third generation assimilated, etc.), this does not necessarily represent a voluntary decision for the individual writer. 2) As before, the language option alone can represent a variety of positions: it may reveal a desire to join and be part of the dominant culture (transitional assimilation: Mary Melfi's *A Dialogue of Masks*); it may reveal a desire to justify the role and culture of the group (traditional integration: Vera Lysenko's *Yellow Boots*, Laura Salverson's *The Viking Heart*); or it may even be used tactically in garnering political support for an exile position (cf. Jan Drabek's novel *Report on the Death of Rosenkavalier*). 3) The official language option is not exclusively an either/or decision. Minority language elements (syntactic, semantic, or even phonological) can be left in a basically official language text as a culturally pluralistic integration tactic (i.e., the use of symbolic or existentially real linguistic 'stones') as ethnic markers: examples that could be cited include the poetry of Kristjana Gunnars or A. M. Klein, or Armin Wiebe's novel, *The Salvation of Yashch Siemens*. In this regard, an indication of the nature of the writer's acculturation option (for example, separation or integration) might be indicated by the degree of translation provided for the dominant or other-group reader. We should also note that minority language elements can also be used (the case of Richler comes to mind) purely as descriptive 'local colour' features to aid characterization, theme, etc. in an otherwise assimilative authorial perspective.

There are a number of Canadian minority writers for whom the language of old ethnoculture is English or French. For these writers (South Asian, West Indian, African, etc.) the acculturative options regarding language are to be found in the areas of dialectal or sociolinguistic features or on various other factors related to the texture, level, and intertextuality of literary language. Examples of these situations would include writers such as Austin Clarke, Cyril Dabydeen, Rienzi Cruz, and Dany Laferrière.

Finally, we should note that the dynamic between the two dominant official Canadian languages, English and French, can also have implications for minority writers and their linguistic acculturation options. Thus immigrant writers in Montreal (such as Marco Micone or Dany Laferrière) reflect their acculturation options not only in the terms we have already been examining, but also in their reaction to the politics of language within Quebec, within Canada, and in North America. The best general example of this situation is the Montreal Italian group, where we find writers working in Italian, English, French, and even Italian dialect. Playwright Marco Micone has even used all four in the same work! This highly complicated linguistic situation obviously has implications in a variety of acculturation areas.

This brief discussion of the writers' language choices and acculturation implications shows above all the complexity of issues that may be in play. The writer's choice of language obviously has an impact in a great many ways, including the writer's sense of individual and group identity, the sense of audience, the intended social and cultural role, the intertextual world in which the writer perceives himself/herself to be writing, and so on. All these carry acculturation implications that need to be discussed in the context of the works and their audience. The acculturation model being outlined here may thus prove to be a useful analytic tool in that it allows us to describe and define this network of issues with reference to both literary and social contexts.

The same can be said of areas other than language relevant to the discussion of the authorial presence. Thus, for example, the perception that the authorial stance is directed primarily at a dominant cultural audience would, assuming some form of positive reception, represent acculturative options somewhere in the top of the grid, and critical analysis of evidence of this stance could attempt to determine where, with regard to which features, the author should be placed. To take an obvious example, one major difference between Toronto minority writers Matt Cohen and Joy Kogawa, both highly successful, lies precisely in this area of acculturative options. Cohen's (early) works (for example *The Sweet Summer of Kiri Malone*) reflect in a number of areas (theme, subject, characters, etc.) a highly assimilative authorial stance while Kogawa's works (for example *Obasan*) represent an equally strong instrumental pluralist (integration) stance. At the same time, shifts in acculturative stance can also be noted. Thus Cohen's more recent writing (for example, *The Spanish Doctor* and *Nadine*) would seem to indicate a turning away from an assimilation position and an increase of concern for his (Jewish-Canadian) ethnic minority identity.

Authorial choices regarding form and genre can also be seen in terms of their acculturation implications. A good example of this is the difference between the two Icelandic-Canadian writers W. D. Valgardson and David Arnason. For Valgardson, as we see in his article "Personal Gods," the justification for continuing to write in traditional, mainly realistic forms and genres comes from their perceived emotional impact on his desired (Icelandic-Canadian and rural Manitoba Interlake) audience. This attachment to a traditional audience is clearly a reflection of Valgardson's acculturatively integrative position, a position which is confirmed by other features found in his writing. For Arnason, on the other hand, the use of post-modernist forms reflects an acculturative stance in the assimilation area of the grid, a stance which can be traced in a variety of other areas in his case as well. We should note, by the way, that it is not the form or genre

itself but the writer's acculturative option which is the primary determining factor. Chilean writers in Canada reflect their strong links (exile separation) to their ethnocultural community by writing in *avant garde* non-traditional forms. Choosing traditional realistic forms or genres might, in their case (and this is purely hypothetical since I know of no such writers), represent an assimilative acculturative stance.

READERS: Acculturation issues are as important for the minority audience as they are for the minority writers. Again the questions that arise are very broad and highly complex, since the reader's response to the minority text involves not only his/her network of acculturation options but his/her perception of the authorial acculturative perspective as implied in the text. And since the nature of both reader's and writer's acculturative positions will vary not only on an individual basis but also on the basis of feature, of group history, of minority status, of intergroup relations, and so on, this leads to a large number of variables.

Among the most obvious areas of acculturative impact is the reader's most basic option: what text to read. Language, authorial group affiliation, theme, genre, form—all these imply acculturation attitudes and expectations which are very often put into play before the book itself is even opened. In the actual 'confrontation' with the text, then, what presumably occurs (insofar as acculturation is involved) is a kind of ongoing comparative analysis, conscious or unconscious, of the reader's positions with those of the implied author.

One important distinction to begin with is whether or not, regardless of acculturation attitudes, writer and reader share ethnic group affiliation. Let us look first at an example where this is the case, using the issue of representativeness (only one of many issues that might have been chosen) to illustrate what is involved. Just as writers at times (when it is a question of ethnic minority status) consider whether and to what extent they do, should, or should not represent the concerns and issues of their ethnic minority group or status, so on the other side the reader's response to the text addresses the same questions.

A good working hypothesis might be to assume that on the whole reader expectations tend to correspond to the acculturation options consciously or unconsciously adopted. Thus, for example, a South Asian-Canadian reader with a traditional (or other) integration position might be expected to be much more positively responsive to Rienzi Cruz's poetry than to Michael Ondaatje's (cf. Arun Mukherjee's attack on Ondaatje). On the other hand an assimilative Jewish-Canadian reader might feel more at home in Matt Cohen's Ontario novels than in Seymour Mayne's poetry. Yet it would be wrong to underestimate the complexity of the reader's relation to the issues. Very often there may be a mixed response due to a variety of competing features. Thus for example Adele Wiseman's sympathetic (traditional

assimilation?) portrayal of Jewish-Canadian minority experience in *The Sacrifice* may be preferred by traditional or culturally pluralist positioned readers over Richler's satiric, somewhat rejectionist and assimilative perspective in *Son of a Smaller Hero* and *Duddy Kravitz*. But at the same time, the Richler novels may appeal to such a Jewish-Canadian reader's presumed anti-lower grid feelings (i.e. anti-ghettoization or marginalization), not to mention the reflected positiveness of Richler's acceptance by dominant cultural institutions. And lastly, we should note that the reader's expectations regarding literary form, genre, and their functions may also form part of his/her perception of what is representative of the group culture for these too are seen against the interplay of core ethnicity, acculturation options, and dominant cultural norms. And as we noted before (the Valgardson reference above), an evaluation of an intended audience's expectations in this area can be an important factor from the writer's point of view.

The case where the minority reader does not share ethnic group affiliation with the writer/text raises equally interesting but somewhat different acculturation issues. If the case of shared ingroup status involves a comparative analysis of reader/writer acculturative attitudes on ingroup identity, status, and culture, then the case of responding to outgroup minority texts brings into play a whole range of cross-cultural comparative issues. Since these too will vary by individual as well as by group, we can only look here at the general lines of what is involved. For if acculturation attitudes centre on the relation between ethnocultural core and dominant society, the areas of reader response also can be related to these two reference points. For example, for those readers whose focus is strongly on their own ingroup attachments (the integration-separation side of the grid), one would expect a range of responses from indifference to other group experience (voluntary separation) to a strong interest in parallel experiences, common instrumental issues, pluralistic aims, etc. (integration). Or conversely, those who are marginalized or who see themselves on the assimilation part of the grid will tend to put a lower emphasis on ethnic identity and respond more to dominant cultural features, if they are present to any degree in minority texts. Traditionalists (of whatever stripe), on the other hand, may react to other minority group texts on the basis of Old World rivalries (for example, Indian-Pakistani, Jewish-Ukrainian, etc.) or may be sympathetic because of perceived historical parallels (the Holocaust/Japanese-Canadian evacuation, etc.). Similarly, issues of discrimination may predispose readers from marginalized or involuntary segregated positions to texts perceived to have been written from similar perspectives. In sum, as in the case of writers, the relation between reader and writer/text,

whether group affiliation is shared or not, is a complicated one that brings into play the whole range of acculturation attitudes that may be held.

TEXTS: The implications of acculturation options on the literary text depend, of course, on how we view what a 'text' is and on the degree to which reader, writer, culture, and society are seen to be involved in the 'text.' But since we have already looked, however briefly, at some of the implications for writers and readers, I would like to consider here some of the thematic and other textual aspects to the acculturation question.

Not surprisingly, given the salience of acculturation issues for minority writers and readers, a great many Canadian ethnic minority works focus directly and thematically on acculturation. Thus John Marlyn's *Under the Ribbs of Death*, to give just one example, portrays a main character, Sandor Hunyadi, whose experience in the novel constitutes a veritable exploration of acculturation issues. Marlyn's own ideological perspective should probably be termed one of traditional integration yet Sandor must undergo a number of hard lessons before he too comes to a similar acculturative position in the end. Along the way he moves from a transitional assimilative position (name change, ethnic self-hatred, preference for English, attachment to the material values of the majority reference group, etc.) to a deeper understanding of the meaning of his group identity and values. Part of the process of this experience, as Marlyn portrays it, is the reaction, the response of the majority English Canadians, with reference to whom Sandor is attempting to assimilate. Thus Sandor's rejection by both Eric's mother and by the downtown businessman who first interviews him together represent the cultural and economic response to Sandor's assimilative acculturation attitude. What he finds out, and what Marlyn shows us, is that it is not enough to remake your ethnic self-identity. The success of an acculturation option (as our model shows), also depends on the reaction of the dominant cultural group. This point is only one rhetorical thrust of this *Bildungsroman* but it is not an uncommon one in minority texts. And the use of the *Bildungsroman* genre by Marlyn, by the way, does raise the question as to why this genre of novel is so common in Canadian minority writing. Is it the fact that the enculturation process for Canadian minorities is such an acculturatively conflictual experience?

Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* is an even more interesting example in which a range of acculturation issues is explored by means of a variety of characters. Thus Stephen, who rejects the language, food, and values of his Japanese-Canadian culture and who embraces wholeheartedly the majority culture (he even has a French girl friend), represents an assimilative position. Obasan, the enclosed silent territory of the old Issei ethnic core of Japanese-Canadian ethnic identity, represents a classic case of involuntary segregation. Aunt Emily, the Nisei word-warrior and activist advocate of

Canadian justice for Japanese Canadians, represents a good example of instrumental pluralistic integration. And Naomi, the protagonist of the novel, begins as a 'Group Marginal' (community breakdown, acculturative stress, etc.) and moves through the course of the novel to the position near that of Aunt Emily (at the end she puts on the latter's coat), a position which entails speaking for the silent Obasan as well (combining words and silence, water and stone in terms of the novel's system of imagery).

Even the formal, structural, and generic aspects of this novel underline its acculturative options. Thus the combination of historical documentary and fictional autobiography may be said to put together social history and psychological analysis with an instrumental (pluralist) aim. That is, the key impact of the novel is that it lets you feel (fictionally) what it is like to be a minority member caught in the grip of (real historical) majority power. Furthermore, the novel's structural movement of forced analysis into the burden of the past serves both as a freeing psychological healing for the protagonist and a plea to examine this past for the rest of us. In sum, what *Obasan* shows us is that the relation of acculturation to minority texts is not merely one of theme, character, or plot. Instead, it also takes us into the social arena, into the discourses of rhetoric, of politics (the redress issue), of social issues such as discrimination, class, justice, and morality, and of the general power relationship between majority and minority groups in Canadian society. Like Rudy Wiebe's 'aboriginal' novels, George Ryga's play *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, and a great many other minority texts which could be mentioned, in its literary handling of acculturation issues, *Obasan* both illustrates and enacts the point of contact between culture and society, between literature and the world.

By way of conclusion, I wish to make two general points. The first is that the conceptualization of minority acculturation options as we have been discussing them underlines the *commonality* of Canadian ethnic minority literature. The positions outlined above can be and are highly differentiated but the choices available are always minority. This accounts not only for close parallels (writer, reader, text) for texts we might want to place in common positions (for example, those of Mukherjee, Clarke, Kogawa, Maria Campbell, etc.), but also for a general consciousness of the whole pattern of acculturation options and of the differences between minority and majority situations in Canadian culture and society. To put it another way, minority writers and readers, regardless of their positioning in the grid, are more likely to be aware experientially of the nature of acculturation for minorities than majority writers and readers. It is this which in my view contrasts, for example, the sympathetic portrayal of aboriginal situations in the works of Ryga, Wiebe, Suknaski, Gunnars, Valgardson, etc. with the equally sympathetic (but majority) portrayals of the aboriginal situation in Laurence

or Roy. Morag Gunn, in *The Diviners*, does share a commonality (initially) with Skinner Tonnerre but it is on the basis of class, not ethnicity or minority status. When it comes to issues of racial discrimination, Morag (and here Laurence is being highly sensitive to her own majority status) does not feel she has the right to comment. One can contrast this with the instant recognition, with all that this implies, of the similarity of situation between Naomi and her Indian students in Kogawa's *Obasan*.

An interesting aspect of this shared commonality is the question of how it functions in critically negative environments. Thus, for example, is there a difference in how Valgardson portrays the Ukrainians and Indians of the Interlake district of Manitoba and how he treats British-Canadians in his stories? Or, to take another example, is there a difference in the critical treatment of minorities and majorities in Austin Clarke's novels and stories? Is Clarke's critical perspective on Jewish, German, Slav, or aboriginal characters tempered or at least measured by an awareness of minority commonality? Is his perspective on majority figures measured by an awareness of the dominance implied by membership, however peripheral, in the Canadian majority collectivity?

My concluding remark, the obverse of my first point, has to do with our perception of the dominant majorities in this model. Just as we need to remember the commonality in the diversity of minority acculturative positions, so too we need to remember the *diversity* of response positions implied in the encompassing majority collectivities. Not all British-Canadians or French-Canadians are assimilationist or rejectionist. Further, it is important to remember that the nature of majority responses is dependent not only on the perception of the particular minority group in question but also, as I noted at the outset, on a variety of factors having to do with internal majority characteristics: sector, region, time period, etc. And included in these differences are the variations between British-Canadian and French-Canadian groups, which constitute, as we all know, the dominant nexus of issues in Canadian interethnic relations. To put it in literary terms, the cultural and social impact of the dominant Canadian majorities on Canadian minority writing can vary between that reflected in the range of works from l'Abbé Groulx to Gabrielle Roy, or from Ralph Connor to Margaret Laurence, and must take into account the implications of a social context which produced majority writers as diverse as these. In this sense, the range of majority response positions described in this discussion is as important for the understanding of minority writing and acculturation as the

minority acculturation positions are themselves.¹¹ Taken together, we can perhaps begin to study and understand the way in which acculturation affects Canadian ethnic minority writers, readers, and literature in general.

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- 11 The corollary of this point is that the nature of majority ethnicity and status must also be studied and then be taken into consideration in the discussion of minority writing. I have touched on this aspect only briefly here (for example, in the list of items that make up the dominant collectivities in the Table), but I have discussed it more fully elsewhere: Padolsky 148 ff.; also "Cultural Diversity and Canadian Literature: A Pluralistic Approach to Majority and Minority Writing in Canada," unpublished paper delivered to the Ninth Biennial Canadian Ethnic Studies Association Conference, Halifax, N.S., October 14-17, 1987. Much more work remains to be done in this area.

The Fictionalization of the Vertical Mosaic: The Immigrant, Success and National Mythology

In the years since the publication in 1965 of John Porter's *The Vertical Mosaic*, the relationship between ethnicity and socio-economic stratification in Canada has become a commonplace for students and researchers in Canadian ethnic studies. Considerably less attention, however, has been paid to the relationship between the vertical mosaic and cultural expression. In an article first published in 1963, "The Dodo and the Cruising Auk: Class in Canadian Literature," Robert McDougall argued that Canadian writers in general reflect Canada's elitist class structure, both in their own genteel backgrounds and in their failure to come to grips with the issue of class in Canada. According to McDougall, "Our literature shows what can only be described as an abnormal absence of feeling for class and of concern for what the class structure can do in a developing society to make or mar the life of the individual... class is not a central issue in any significant part of our fiction."¹ Much has changed in Canada since Professor McDougall wrote these words, not the least of which has been the coming of age of multiculturalism and of ethnic literature in Canada — developments which have had and are continuing to have a significant impact on our cultural imagination.²

- 1 McDougall, Robert L., "The Dodo and the Cruising Auk: Class in Canadian Literature," *Contexts of Canadian Criticism*, Eli Mandel, ed. (Chicago: U of Chicago P 1971) 217.
- 2 For a sense of the changing relationship between 'ethnic' and 'mainstream' Canadian literature, see *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Special Issue, *Ethnicity and Canadian Literature* XIV.1 (1982); E.D. Blodgett, *Configuration: Essays in the Canadian Literatures* (Downsview: ECW 1982); Jars Balan, ed. *Identifications: Ethnicity and the Writer in Canada* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, The Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies 1982); Walter E. Riedel, ed. *The Old World and the New: Literary Perspectives of German-Speaking Canadians* (Toronto: U of Toronto P 1984); Tamara J. Palmer and Beverly J. Rasporich, "Ethnic Literature," *The New Canadian Encyclopedia* Vol. I (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers 1985) 595-598; Joseph Pivato, ed. *Contrasts: Comparative Essays on Italian-Canadian Writing* (Montréal: Guernica 1985); *Canadian Literature*, Special Issue,

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