

poration into the white text: "if the rabbit's foot were lucky it would still be on the rabbit" (147).

Goldie's potential resolution to the seemingly intractable power of the white semiotic field lies in the direction of self-referentiality, a direction he would be quick to acknowledge is itself temporally and culturally specific. In place of arguments for the referentiality of at least the less stereotypic white texts or alternatively surrender to "our semiotic snare" (79), he argues for a foregrounding of the problematics of representation of the Indigene. Thus we have the quite unexpected defence of Duncan Campbell Scott's choice of the ostensibly inappropriate form of the sonnet for his Indian poems. It is a choice, Goldie suggests, which, by contrast with the aims of verisimilitude, more clearly "shows the manipulation of the signifier and thus represents the manipulation of the referent" (62). Goldie's apparent preference for Patrick White's approach over Rudy Wiebe's (though he pulls his punches with Wiebe) lies in his sense that Wiebe enacts rather more than he highlights the white pursuit of indigenization. Without underestimating the vulnerability of even his own text to the semiotic force field, Goldie argues for the impossible necessity of resistance and provides us with some of the self-awareness essential to it.

HELEN HOY

E. D. Blodgett, *Alice Munro*. Boston: Twayne Publishers. 1988. pp. xii, 179. \$19.95.

Initially, my expectations of pleasure or instruction from this critical survey of Alice Munro's fiction were mitigated by two kinds of misgiving, one arising from a rather outmoded understanding of Twayne's mandate, the other from my sense that commentary on Munro has not evolved beyond the rudimentary stages of thematic inquiry or plot summary. Twayne's books, I remembered, were read furtively by graduate students preparing for their comprehensive examinations, who spoke of them only to complain that very little analysis was contained between those familiar red covers. So, I feared, the constraints of the medium would preclude any genuine critical progression.

Such negative preconceptions are dismantled — in a clever, self-conscious manner — from the very outset of E. D. Blodgett's sophisticated and articulate reading of Munro's strategies of "reading" and reconstructing the fictional life. Generally, the accomplishments of this book are twofold: Blodgett manages to work within the confines of the chronological survey of Munro's canon, thus satisfying the publisher's agenda, while focusing his argument usefully on recurring

narratological structures and paradigms; secondly, his close readings escape the trap of plot summary by analyzing, from the perspective of post-structuralist theory, the impulses of the narrating voice. In tracing the evolution of Munro's modes of narration, Blodgett significantly reorients and advances the direction of Munro studies in a critical discourse that is at once engaging and accessible to a reader unfamiliar with literary theory.

Blodgett's introductory chapter, "Signifying a Life," *appears* to situate critical inquiry in the familiar, even stale territory dominated by the autobiographical dimension of Munro's fiction and its consequent realism. Readerly expectations of the merely conventional are almost immediately subverted, however, as Blodgett reformulates the question from *what* to *how* fiction signifies, and resituates his inquiry within current theory. He suggests an affinity between the reader's and the narrator's activities, in that both "continually ponder how something is known and understood," and insists that "what needs to be addressed in Munro . . . is what Roland Barthes has called the hermeneutic code" (7), the ways in which the life-as-text is interpreted by the narrating agent. Granting that Munro's typical narrative act is to interrogate an experienced event, to induce it to disclose its significance, Blodgett points out that the act of interrogation itself entails a postponement or deferral of disclosure, for "what the writer wants to recapture is continually put off with each word that would make an effort to seize it" (8-9). In order to demonstrate the tactics of delay that are characteristic of Munro's narrative, Blodgett introduces two theoretical paradigms: Derridean *differance*, the interplay of "to differ" and "to defer," by which narrators open a space between their former (narrated) and present (narrating) selves; and *focalization*, the process by which chronological story is disrupted by temporally discontinuous narrative, and by which the narrator establishes a "syntax of relations" (12) among potentially significant events. Each of the subsequent chapters examines a collection of stories — from *Dance of the Happy Shades* to *The Progress of Love* — and applies these theoretical constructs to expose the tension between a narrative desire for meaningful reconstruction and an authorial epistemology that undermines or renders inappropriate that desire.

Blodgett traces the evolution of narrative strategy along a continuum that stretches from the summary insights and "closures radiant with epiphany" (15) characteristic of the early work, to the infinite postponement of disclosure and limited possibilities of clarification in the mature fictions, in which closure places both narrator and reader "upon a threshold of a mystery that the story prepares but cannot always elucidate" (130). If the early fiction is marked by "a pattern of absence and apparent recovery" (27), a privileging of the ordering power of narration, then Munro's art acquires complexity

by subverting that power in a series of metafictional fissures that remind us of the distinctions between story and discourse. As the "comfort of realism" begins to crack and slide through the narrative awareness of its own meditations, "the ordering gesture [is] quietly brought down . . . and the precisely real begins to lose its firmness" (38). Thus — to mark but one point on the continuum — the stories contained in *Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You* demonstrate the dislocation of seeing from knowing and are "more exploratory, more skeptical of the hermeneutic code, persistently testing what we know and how we know it" (61).

Quite apart from its careful elaboration of theoretical paradigm and lucid application of theory to practical criticism, this book frequently articulates intriguing tropes which encapsulate its entire argument and, paradoxically, gesture beyond the limits of its own discourse. Nearly always, these tropes illuminate the structural properties of *all* narrative acts: the disruption of linear narrative, for example, results in "configurations of the discontinuous" (109); the layering of discrete times past becomes "a kind of archaeology of temporal zones" (130). Such rhetorical felicities, arising from Blodgett's attention to the grain of Munro's voice, constitute the pleasure of his text; his application of recent narratological investigations to a canon in need of critical reorientation constitutes its ample instruction.

ERIC SAVOY

Stephen Slemon and Helen Tiffin, eds., *After Europe: Critical Theory and Post-Colonial Writing*. Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1989. pp. xxiii, 152. Unpriced.

I have read few books in recent years as important as *After Europe*. Its authors ask gutsy questions about the place in the academy of Anglo-American contemporary critical theory and about the role of the theoretical assumptions emerging from colonized societies. In the 1950s and 1960s Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire were among the first commentators to raise the question of the post-colonial intellectual. In Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, for instance, the post-colonial intellectual is described as part of the "national bourgeoisie" whose responsibility it is to help construct a strong national unity. In the 1970s and 1980s Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Chinweizu, Homi Bhabha, Fernández Retamar, among others, have further developed the idea of the post-colonial intellectual in a Third World context. This collection of essays, called *After Europe*, belongs to this intellectual tradition. What does *post* mean in the term *post-colonial*? Does it mean the death of something? Does it simply mean *after*, which