féminine" in her "The Politics of Writing (the) Body." Dismissing what she calls "antiessentialist paranoia," Dallery highlights the positive aspects of a writing practice that celebrates difference through the use of puns, heterogeneous meanings, and symbolic codes. In the same section, Suzanne J. Kessler's ethnographic essay, "The Medical Construction of Gender: Case Management of Intersexed Infants," discusses the active construction of gender by medical staff when the sex of a child is indeterminate.

The final section, "Questioning Gender," is perhaps the most intriguing, detailing the theories of standpoint epistemology and deconstructionism. As well, essays by Donna Haraway and Rosalind Pollack Petchesky insist, in different ways, that feminists should actively embrace the technological world. Both advocate an understanding of recent scientific and technological findings, not only for enhancing the life of the average woman, but also for reassessing our current feminist understanding of "gender."

The anthology, without eliminating theoretical discord, demonstrates the parallel exchanges taking place in a variety of academic disciplines. An ideal course book for undergraduates and graduates alike, *Theorizing Feminism* provides an insightful examination of the broad range of theoretical debates occupying contemporary feminists in the humanities and social sciences.

HOLOGRAM

P. K. Page. London, Ontario: Brick Books, 1994.

by Deborah Jurdjevic

This is a fascinating book of poems. *Hologram* explores a little used poetic form, the Renaissance glosa; confirms a frequently challenged canon; extends the range of Page's poetic voice. The title indicates the governing metaphor and the method of composition: a hologram is a three dimensional image achieved by working with a photographic negative. We note Page's hologram first in the word, second in the cover painting "Votive Tablet" and third in the series of pen and ink kaleidoscopic images which introduce the poems severally. Each of Page's poems develops an unexpressed dimension in existing poetry.

The book has a compelling physical presence. For example, having read the poems once, the reader might hold the spine of the book in the left hand and use the thumb and forefinger of the right hand to spin through the pages. One hears along with the turning pages, Page's voice supplementing or challenging the voices of the poets she has summoned through her glosas; one sees print and pattern (the image which looks like a frame from a kaleidoscope) blend into one another. The effect is one of complex unity.

In her introduction, Page dates the glosa form as late fourteenth and fifteenth-century. She notes the form, used by the Spanish, has not been popular in English. In spite of the success of these poems, one understands why. There is the sense that the poem is initially anyway not much more than an intellectual exercise, a "crossword puzzle." The form is certainly contrived: "the opening quatrain is written by another poet; this is followed by four ten line stanzas, their concluding lines taken consecutively from the quatrain; their sixth and ninth lines rhyming with the borrowed tenth." The key to Page's success with this form lies I think in the opening lines to her introduction: "I was introduced to the glosa through the ear. Its form half hidden, powerfully sensed, like an iceberg at night, made me search for its outline as I listened." A poet may well write first from a sense of sound, a sense of music in the language, and any poet carries always in her head lines, couplets, whole poems which resonate and so create further possibilities. This individual and collective memory (of, for example, Eliot's moment in the rose garden) gives a vitality to these poems which is several removes from that commanded by a crossword puzzle.

Page has chosen her quatrains from the poetry of twentieth-century figures (a quatrain from Sappho being the exception that proves the rule). All but four are in English (George Seferis, Rainer Maria Rilke, Pablo Neruda, and Sappho); all have influenced the poet in her formative years. Page sees her own work as paying homage; her debt is paid partly through her poetry, through the extension of the original lines into an idiom of her own, and interestingly, the debt is also paid through an indirect iteration of the canon. *Hologram* bears out Helen Vendler's assertion that if we want to know the important poets of the past, we need to look to contemporary poets, rather than to critics, to find out. These poems do not descend in an expected line in women's poetry from Marianne Moore, through Bishop to the confessional poets. Rather than the common perspective of gender, these poems seem to share a heroic perspective. I am thinking specifically of Auden's "ethical hero" in *The Enchafed Flood* who knows what others do not know and whose mission is revelation. What is revealed here is a kind of toughness of character as Page's persona responds to a challenge inherent in the landscape (either literal or emotional) in the original quatrain. "Hologram" provides a case in point; so too does the poem dedicated to Rilke, "Autumn."

In "Hologram" Page begins with four lines from Seferis's "King of Asine."

> All that morning we looked at the citadel from every angle.
> We began from the side in the shadow, where the sea,
> Green without brilliance, - breast of a slain peacock,
> Received us like time that has no break in it.

She marks the landscape as a psychological one by introducing a reference to Kafka's castle. The physical landscape acknowledged in "a new geometry of interlocking octangles" acquires a transcendental aspect as the two lovers discover that they are "interlocked in a strange dimension." There is a reciprocity of symbol between the figure of the lovers and the landscape. On the one hand, Page's "we" is a functional device for exploring the peculiarity of the scene; on the other hand, the scene is a test of character. Like traditional quest figures, the lovers make "the passage / from the faint light of morning star and pale moon." They are "brave" to begin in darkness. And they are rewarded as traditional romantics at journey's end with an experience they half perceive and half create.

> But to the cones of our eyes that green was shining
> and pierced us like a spear. (When joy is great enough
> how distinguish it from pain?) And after the fugal greys
> and the near-invisible shafts of no-colour that had stained us,
> how could our eyes adjust to so full a spectrum?
> And yet in a flash, from infra-red to ultra-violet,
> we saw the hologram glittering above us
> glistening in air we could suddenly enter like swallows
> as the whole citadel, rainbowed, immediate,
> *received us like time that has no break in it.*

Faithful to the borrowed four lines, Page's poem is faithful too to its own internal imagery. The eye "cones" of the lovers are one of several geometric references whose purpose is to build up the readers' sense of the citadel. What the lovers know is that there is another dimension to a diurnal world. That discovery is their revelation. They enter the negative space of the hologram with the freedom of swallows; it is always there.

In "Hologram" Page teases out latent meaning in Seferis' poem. In "Autumn" her speaker challenges the expected sense of Rilke's lines.

> Whoever has no house now will never have one.
> Whoever is alone will stay alone
> Will sit, read, write long letters through the evening
> And wander on the boulevards, up and down . . .

Page picks up Rilke's sense of "the end" by elaborating on the season. I quote her first stanza in full.

> Its stain is everywhere.
> The sharpening air
> of late afternoon
> is now the colour of tea.
> Once-glycerined green leaves
> burned by a summer sun
> are brittle and ochre.
> Night enters day like a thief.
> And children fear that the beautiful daylight has gone.
> Whoever has no house now will never have one.

Images of light and colour dominate the stanza as Page builds on Rilke's understated anxiety. This is subtly done. One knows for example that tea stains do not come out; that ochre is the inevitable end of green. "Night enters day like a thief" suggests sexual violation, a sense enforced by the "children's fear" in the following line. Throughout the stanza, Page plays with assonance and alliteration: the glycerined green leaves, the summer sun, the 'l's colliding in the children's "fear that the beautiful daylight has gone."

Time is the subject of the poem of course, and Page keeps it before us by continued reference to late afternoon tea: the tea coloured air of the first stanza, the world as a "cup / one could hold in one's hand like a stone" in the second, "toast and tea are nothing" in the third, the "tea-stained air" of the fourth.

The first three stanzas echo and elaborate on Rilke's sense of despair in the end of things. The fourth, however, is a turn around. Page's narrator, in a voice she has clearly established for herself, confronts her poet. She is now the sage who summarizes Rilke's argument and relocates it:

> Even though there is bounty, a full harvest
> that sharp sweetness in the tea-stained air
> is reserved for those who have made a straw
> fine as a hair to suck it through -
> fine as a golden hair.
> Wearing a smile or a frown
> God's face is always there.
> It is up to you
> if you take your wintry restlessness into the town
> and wander on the boulevards, up and down.

The notion that you are the source of the world you see is a carry over from nineteenth-century romanticism, but the affirmation of God's face belongs distinctly to Page's narrator. I am reminded of George Santayana (at one time the teacher of Frost, Stevens, and Eliot) who believed that religion is another world to live in. His sense of alternative worlds is present throughout this collection of poems, in the space made by the interaction of contemporary and modern poet, in the negative space articulated by the hologram, in the sense of responsibility accepted in this poem by the narrator: "God's face is always there."

We have heard much of late of Harold Bloom's notion of strong and weak poets and Oedipal confrontations. In *Hologram* Page pays a tribute to her own mentors in a form which acknowledges the power of the original and which establishes at the same time the power of the younger poet. More useful in reading these poems than Bloom's image of struggle is Page's image of affinity. In the concluding paragraph to her introduction she writes of song birds brought up in isolation who produce a "kind of song - not species perfect - but recognizable." When these birds are introduced to the songs of a vari-

ety of birds not of their species, they choose "the notes and cadences that, combined with their own attempts, completed their species song."

ALL MY SISTERS: ESSAYS ON THE WORK OF CANADIAN WOMEN WRITERS

Clara Thomas. Ottawa: The Tecumseh Press Limited, 1994.

by Sylvia M. Priestley-Brown

Just under half of the essays in this collection first appeared when Canadian cultural nationalism was at its height; there is something anomalous about their publication in book form in the mid-1990s when, regrettably, nationalism is waning and when, in the name of greater inclusiveness, critics often reject the culture of one of the dominant founding nations and feel compelled to write criticism in keeping with convoluted, nearly impenetrable, European-derived elite discourse. Schools of critical thought have changed greatly since Clara Thomas's literary thinking was first formed; this book returns us to the optimism and excitement of a burgeoning female-centered and nationalist critical perspective in Canada.

Her adherence to earlier critical methods made Thomas a particularly sensitive critic to the seventies' focus on female characters whose "opportunities and...future...are circumscribed." Thomas concentrates on themes, motifs, and on types of fictional women, on evolving female figures from Canadian romantic fiction of the nineteenth century to realism up to the end of the modern period. The pattern of Thomas's criticism is descriptive and chronological—a reminder of the text under scrutiny, then an assessment and appreciation, making these essays accessible in the positive sense by contextualizing with her strong sense of cultural history. Hers is a literary-historical approach, sometimes even a sociological one (apt because some writers, like Sara Jeannette Duncan, are so keenly interested in social types themselves), and a biographical one, as befits a biographer of Anna Jameson and William Arthur Deacon; the subtitle might have reflected the fact that most essays are equally on the lives as well as the work of the Canadian women writers under discussion.

As this collection is meant to crown Thomas's considerable scholarly achievement, its value is multifarious: to those who know Thomas as an inspiring teacher, it records her survey of Canadian literature from pioneer writers to the brink of the post-modern era. It is particularly valuable for her autobiographical introduction on teaching and research during an intense rediscovery period in our culture. The unabashed thread of nationalism and sense of difference from Americans, which Thomas signals in writers such as Sara Jeannette Duncan, Margaret Laurence and Northrop Frye, makes these essays significant for students of interdisciplinary Canadian Studies. The book can also be recommended to newcomers to Canadian literature as a more intensive reference work on a more specific group of writers than John Moss's *A Reader's Guide.*

Thomas is one of the earliest critics to focus on women writers as unique, thus her essays are those of a groundbreaker, appreciated by ensuing feminist critics, that can be read from the vantage point of cross-cultural women's studies (namely, comparative studies between L.M. Montgomery and Gene Stratton Porter, Margaret Laurence and Willa Cather, and Laurence and Gabrielle Roy). Thomas's reclaiming, through archaeological work on buried authors such as Evelyn Eaton, makes her a model to emerging feminist scholars. Most of all, when Thomas is writing as an archivist, we glimpse her friendship with Margaret Laurence in quotations shared from their letters, and learn much about the writing process Laurence developed towards the end of her oeuvre.

Readers accustomed to a diet of critical theory readings may be impatient with linear commentaries, with notes on a book's publishing history and an author's popularity in her day, or with the moral undertaking which Thomas elucidates in the religious and spiritual convictions of Laurence, Frye and others. But Thomas is a senior scholar who can continue writing what she wants to write without being constrained by current fashions. As in the dark ages before the sixties' boom of nationalist and feminist sentiment, Canadians still tend to forget, devalue or be indifferent to their own literary history. Clara Thomas's example as a friend to Canadian writers, their literature and our culture is a corrective to such amnesia and neglect.

PIONEERING WOMEN: SHORT STORIES BY CANADIAN WOMEN. BEGINNINGS TO 1880

Lorraine McMullen and Sandra Campbell, Eds. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1993.

ASPIRING WOMEN: SHORT STORIES BY CANADIAN WOMEN 1880-1900

Lorraine McMullen and Sandra Campbell, Eds. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1993.

NEW WOMEN: SHORT STORIES BY CANADIAN WOMEN 1900-1920