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Patricia Morley, *Kurelek: A Biography*. Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1986

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allow him to warn his protégé of his wife's charms. Those charms were in any case no longer apparent to Ruskin. Effie sulked in his company. Ruskin could not resolve this situation: that is why he wished only that people were other than they were, and preferably like characters in Miss Edgeworth's improving novels . . . [Ruskin's habits of steady thought had not been easy to maintain] while the shallow-minded Effie and headstrong young painter had been behaving so peculiarly.

Literary critics call this indirect speech because the words we hear are not in quotation marks yet they are supposed to belong to the mind of the "character" described (in this case, Ruskin), not the narrator (Hilton). "Shallow-minded" and "headstrong" are supposedly Ruskin's words. Similarly, the rest of the perceptions of this triangle are Ruskin's, silently recorded in his mind and now re-recorded by Tim Hilton. We begin to wonder if we are the ones looking at Effie as a character in a novel. Or is this only a figure of speech for the mood of disappointment as Ruskin feels it?

I call attention to this passage because it is typical of the whole biography. Hilton's highly composed account of the party at Glenfinlas is not false because it is written in a novelistic style, although it may mislead the reader by its smooth transparency, which is easily taken for simple, direct fact. Hilton is perhaps the first biographer to understand Ruskin so well that he can make Ruskinian principles of composition part of the story of Ruskin's life. This is a difficult but essential task.

In his art criticism, his pamphlets, and even his diaries and love letters, all of which Hilton has read with care, Ruskin mixed a concern with sincerity of expression with an awareness of artifice and formal composition. If Ruskin's profuse commentary on art could be reduced to some basic principle, it would be the distinction between hollow, false "composition" and true, sincere utterance. It is a distinction Ruskin applied to Turner (favourably), picturesque water colours (unfavourably), and Gothic architecture (mixed). This was the distinction Marcel Proust worked with in his essays on Ruskin—which I think could be read as the first attempt at a biographical portrait of Ruskin—in trying to categorize Ruskin's writing as either "sincere" or "idolatrous" (full of hollow enthusiastic rhetoric). Hilton has the ability to use this Ruskinian distinction as a divining rod. Time and again, I was struck by Hilton's sharp contrast between some text in which Ruskin strikes an authentic tone and some companion text that was obviously of little worth to a biographer—even though the second text might claim to be more intimate because it was a diary or letter.

So, for example, Hilton picks up a letter of 1845 written by Ruskin to his lifelong friend, Henry Acland, in which he criticizes the high church policy of merited redemption (p. 84), a letter apparently so controversial that Ruskin's first editors suppressed its publication. Hilton, however, simply says, "To Ruskin, religious belief was often a matter for argument." The letter is not necessarily indicative of some major religious stance underlying Ruskin's works. Hilton properly establishes the context of the religious revelations of 1845, usually made much of as some crucial turning point in Ruskin's life, and his new awareness of the piety of Italian quattrocento art as being Ruskin's search for an authoritative tone as a critic rather than some personal religious crisis. At the same time, Hilton can simply ask us to "imagine" Ruskin in a hotel room with one of his servants reading the Bible aloud with utmost piety. Analogous examples throughout the biography draw a distinction between Ruskin's hollow and sincere letters to Effie, or Adèle Domecq, or even his own parents. Where Hilton finds a genuine investment of self by Ruskin, he makes up his own "composition," as in the passage above. Otherwise, he rightly addresses Ruskin's own self-mystifications, in which Ruskin composed his own quotidian experiences into structures of revelation and anxious acts of psychological association (which created further anxiety when some church monument or nature scene was altered by industrialization, leading to a loss of psychological attachment for Ruskin).

Hilton's biography is beautifully composed and readable because it rests on a truly Ruskinian base, which separates authentic from empty speech in Ruskin's writing from whatever source, published or unpublished. Hilton reminds us that everything that Ruskin wrote was highly autobiographical, which is not to say that everything Ruskin wrote was sincere. Hilton's biography, still incomplete, is the first to make a substantial contribution to the theoretical study of Ruskin's art criticism.

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PATRICIA MORLEY *Kurelek: A Biography*. Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1986.

William Kurelek presents a fascinating challenge for a biographer. There is the task of moulding the life to fit the art; of considering the development of the art within the Canadian and, more importantly, the European context; and of accounting for the phenomenal reception of the work itself. In Patricia Morley's *Kurelek: A Biography* the reader is given ample material with which to do this. It comes in various forms: fragmented interviews with Kurelek's friends, acquaintances, publishers, physicians, and art dealers; long quotations from the artist's public and private writings; content analysis of the visual documents; the use of archival and printed material; and the inclusion of the author's own experiences of researching the biography. From this myriad of sources and biographical approaches the life unfolds over some 300 pages.

Kurelek was born to parents of Ukrainian origin on a farm near Shandro, Alberta in 1927 and spent his formative years there, in Stonewall, Manitoba, and in Winnipeg. He was a sensitive child who overreacted to a domineering father, a more mechanically minded younger brother, and taunting classmates. A love for drawing came to him early. His view of himself as an artist was established by reading James Joyce's *Portrait of an Artist As a Young Man* and Irving Stone's *Lust for Life*, a biography of Vincent Van Gogh. Yet it was only after leaving the University of Manitoba with a Bachelor of Arts in 1949 that Kurelek took art classes at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto and later at the School of Fine Arts in San Miguel, Mexico. Following six months of work in lumber camps in Quebec and Ontario, he set sail

for Europe in 1952. During the next seven years, Kurelek sought help for his shy, introspective, chronically depressive and sometimes suicidal personality by making extended visits to psychiatric hospitals: London's Maudsley Hospital and Surrey's Netherne Hospital, where he was encouraged "to paint his problems." He found companionship and spiritual guidance in Catholicism, to which he was converted in 1957, and in the Guild of Catholic Artists and Craftsmen. Finally, he broadened his knowledge of art by travelling to the continent to view, among other works, Pieter Brueghel's paintings in Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum, and to London's Tate Gallery to study the paintings of Stanley Spencer. He also read Nicolaides's book *The Natural Way to Draw*, attended evening courses at the Hammersmith School of Building Arts and Crafts and painted a *trompe-l'oeil* series that he exhibited at London's Royal Academy of Art.

Kurelek returned to Canada from Britain in June of 1959. In the autumn of that year, private gallery owner Avrom Isaacs, who mainly handled the work of abstract-expressionist artists, encountered his work. His "My God" response to Kurelek's paintings was soon echoed by the prestigious New York critic Alfred Barr and Canada's own Robert Ayre who admired the artist's "seriousness and involvement with the human predicament." Like Ayre, others also found the abstract school of artists as represented by Michael Snow "trivial, even trashy, by comparison." Not surprisingly, Kurelek's first exhibition at Isaacs's gallery in 1960 drew a record crowd.

Spurred on by his success, Kurelek's life now took on a greater sense of purpose: he wanted to become Canada's premier painter of the people and the land. In order to do this he travelled widely: to Stonewall and to Shandro, in order to capture something of his Ukrainian-Canadian boyhood, to the Arctic, French-speaking Canada, and the Maritimes, among other places, recording the country's diverse ethnic groups and landscape. His art also became a vehicle for expressing his strongly held views against abortion, homosexuality, and pre-marital sex. All of these endeavours were assisted by his dealer, Isaacs, his book publisher, Christopher Ondaatje of Pagurian Press, and Mary Ebbitt Cutler of Tundra Books, among others. The reception of Kurelek's paintings, books, and prints was fuelled by the public's aversion to abstract-expressionist painting, by increased wealth, and by the willingness of Canadians to spend their money on art. Also important in accounting for Kurelek's success was the Canadian government's involvement in Expo '67 and its multicultural policies of the early 1970s. Kurelek responded to the enormous demand for his paintings by working up to seventeen hours a day in cramped surroundings (his death from cancer at the early age of fifty might well have been caused by fumes from his oil sprays and lacquers), by making multiple copies of his work and by employing an assistant-apprentice to paint backgrounds of flowers and grass.

All of this makes for a good story. And yet *Kurelek: A Biography* does not knit the various source materials and biographical approaches into an integrated whole. The research that would have allowed Morley to do this is certainly there—if not on the works of art, certainly on his life. But while Morley has gathered much material, she has not processed it, digested it, and taken the time to reflect upon it. For example, Morley calls Kurelek a genius several times, yet it is not clear to me why she repeatedly makes this claim. What in the end accounted for Kurelek's phenomenal success? Was it the work? Was it simply timing: nationwide interest in the country's diverse ethnic groups? Was it the public's aversion to abstract-expressionist painting? Or was it simply the presence of an infrastructure of private and public art galleries and publishers capable and willing to promote the work?

And what about Kurelek's development as an artist? We simply need more than content-analysis descriptions of the paintings in which Morley assumes that reality can be recorded and that Kurelek somehow did this. A more complete discussion of the paintings would not have been difficult, given the obvious influences of Spencer and Brueghel. These and other lacunae are unfortunate because Morley has done an admirable job of gathering her material and because there are insightful accounts of Kurelek's relationship with Isaacs and with his book publishers. But the biographer must go beyond the mere assembling of data; he or she must tell a story with force, emphasis, and wit.

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GAILE MCGREGOR *The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Landscape*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1985, 473 pp., $45.00 (cloth), $18.95 (paper).

This is an unusually rich and insightful work and a brief summary or review cannot do it justice. *The Wacousta Syndrome* is a comparative examination of the "frontier" cultures of Canada and the United States (a comparison that will be expanded in a future work to include the cultures of Australia and New Zealand), which the author characterizes as similar in language, derivation, and geohistorical terms. The purpose of the work is to elucidate the *Weltanschauung*, first by isolating and explaining the mechanics of cultural change, second by rationalizing the relation between culture at large and various kinds of cultural expression (novels, paintings, films, etc), and last by devising a portable methodology for "mapping" marked traits.

The organization of the material in this extensive book is highly individual and requires keen attention, but it offers considerable rewards for those who persevere. The stage is set with the comparative examination of two nineteenth-century novels, *Wacousta* by Major John Richardson, a Canadian, and the Leatherstocking stories by James Fenimore Cooper, an American. McGregor's comparison of these novels stems from her desire to "define the conceptual underpinnings of the Canadian imagination," and is informed theoretically by notions of socially constructed aspects of wilderness and other components of reality. In this sense, differences in the treatment of nature found in the novels under dis-