

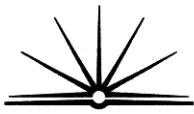
Context: Jane Tober and Daniel Stewinaski have just exited a lecture university lecture on "Skin..." They now discuss their own ~~perspective~~ responses.

Jane - All that technical jargon back there drove me crazy! ~~to~~ I don't see how ~~any~~ anyone can read something so moving, something with so much... empathy and heart, then turn around and analyse poetic technique.

Daniel - That's a little simplistic. I agree that Oncaatje's insights into the woman condition, history, our life experience and all that are valuable in their own right, but you're you can't ignore the centrality of his activity in holding that those ideas up. The fact is

ideas are so thoroughly integrated with the ~~very~~ linguistic and structural approach he takes you can't isolate them.

- Hear me out. ~~The~~ ~~you~~ ~~can't~~ The ~~that~~ greatest value for me, is when he pulls us into the microcosm, gives us the human outlook: "those quiet moments which in literature are the real gifts... underground pools where we can ^{sit} ~~be~~ still." He ~~can~~ makes us connect with the human; that surrealist fusion of thought his own narration and ~~is~~ a character's thoughts... take the waterworks scene, the strength of the evocative language, "the shirt bloody with the darkness of sweat, the painted mask looking up like a dog..."



Again,

- ~~Now~~ you're ignoring the scope of the scene. Alice's performance was a detailed and profound metaphor for so many themes - the workers' struggle for voice, to embrace their ~~stories~~ story, the role of art to express the human condition... And you yourself admitted the strength of the language in that passage. Poetic diction is what ~~gives~~ conveys that human strength you so admire.

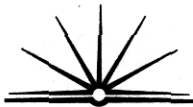
- ~~but~~ but why do we have to analyse it purely within the ~~scope~~ sphere of traditional criticism? There's so much insight - the parallels and dualities of different historical perspectives, "The Bridge. The bridge," the feminist angle... I mean, the

- characterisation was incredible!
The Alice's and Clara's and Maria's
Strength, "women" like the sea
through a foreground of men" --
- A simile. Ha - another poetic device.
- Alright, Mr "pms so ~~is~~ 'in' with
the literary jargon"! Explain your
theory.
- You're finally going to let me
get a word in? Too kind. Very
well.

Firstly, much of the novel's
memorability arises from the
strength of its images, agreed? You
respond so strongly to ~~it~~ it
~~is~~ because the language resonates -
in little seeds, the loggers "raced,
swerved, fell and rolled on the
ice" - now that's ~~ski~~ poetry! The
Sibilance, the long tension-building
'c' sounds, the distillation of words.
It gets better - "each of them moving

like a wedge into the blackness,
magically revealing the grey bushes
~~on this~~ of the shore, his shore,
his river." You can visualise the
scene - the whole textual chain
around magic and myth - this
"druidic ritual" this "magic"
builds the atmosphere!

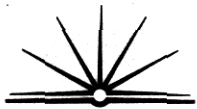
- You really are passionate about
this poetry thing...
- And then you have the
rythm of the words passage,
"speed! romance! one man
waltzing with his fire." What a
beautiful fusion of images! And
it's all through the book -
too there are echoes of the Imagist
poetic style, for example in his
description of the tanners in
"Palace of Purification" - "the blue...
fell in one piece to their ankles
and they stepped out, in the



critica of being made pee."

- I prefer find more value in the warmth of the characters' dialogue. Clara's "would it be forgivable to say I stayed with him because he gave me a piano?" or that ridiculous scene in "The Searcher" when ~~the~~ Patrick nearly slams the door. It's this humanity that I respond to - and it's the same with the workers. I value the new historical perspective for its humanity: "Nicholas' guileless and relaxed flattery towards a nun with regards to her beauty." Now his brief dialogue isn't fancy poetry! - But don't you see that the variety in the characters, in their voices, is for another facet of his artistic skill? ~~At~~ okay

Hang on - stop. I'm going to lay this out straight so you



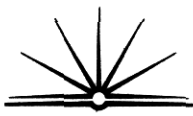
know where I'm coming from
with this ^{the} integration of artistry
and humanity' idea.

- Be my guest, or wise one!

- Most you? Ondaatje himself
tells us suggests what he's trying
to accomplish ~~is~~ by all those
metafictional references. By his
own judgement, "only the best
art can order the chaotic tangle
of events. Only the best can
realign chaos to suggest both
the chaos and order it will become."
The ~~whole~~ structural composition
of the novel reflects this idea -
"there is order here. Very faint,
very human."

Consider his use of the verbal
cinema approach, ^{the} ~~this~~ communication
of the narrative in fragments.

Very postmodern! ~~He~~ He zooms into
the microcosm - Patrick's childhood,



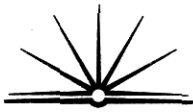
Nicholas' ~~and~~ heroism, Patrick's love for Clara - slowly weaving the story into a "wondrous night web. All these fragments of a human order." And isn't our whole life experience like that?

The characters' passions that you mentioned, they too are "fragments of a human order" - of the grand story of life. We're all "part of a mural... a falling together of accomplices."

- So you think he offers insight into the human experience by his "postmodern" confusion of the responder?

- life is confusing. And besides, he maintains the textual integrity - light and dark is used throughout to

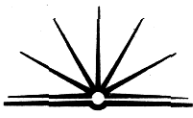
symbolise our search for meaning, "taking ^{responsibility for the} control of the story," the blood motif reinforces our common humanity,



other motifs like ~~the~~ the lunar moth, knives and so on keep echoing back throughout the text. Even the apparent vulgarity, "the avid shit and wine," Clara's ~~love~~ "eroticism" or Patrick's "hey, lightening bug!" gives a kind of internal consistency around the theme of humanity. - ~~it's~~ it's a celebration of "the human element" in all its duality of nobility and "heroism" and our changeability, our imperfections.

- Prove it.

- Fine. The conclusion. Harris realises Patrick's heroism, right? "My God he swam here... what vision, what dream was that?" despite Patrick's fallibility - he falls asleep! ~~A~~ Also, the final ~~word~~ word - "lights" symbolised the



acceptance of the story, embracing who we are. The echoes of the epic of Gilgamesh add another dimension, the intertextuality ~~conveying~~ ^{implying} a ~~convey~~ metaphorical reference to the role of history, story telling and mythology to the human life experience and the condition of modernity.

- Okay! Okay! But there is no way I'd get all that on the first reading. I'm just thankful that his "moments of stidness" are so beautiful. There is no way I could value it a look for its "theoretical" significance alone.