

Roy's autobiography enchanting

Gabrielle Roy
Enchantment and Sorrow
Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1987

By MARK KEMP

The title of Gabrielle Roy's 1984 autobiography, *Enchantment and Sorrow*, published just after her death, is very apt. Breathless joy and paralyzing pain are inextricably connected in her life-story, and are not at all antithetical. As she observes in one of the numerous epiphanic moments that are the signposts on the long and zigzag path she follows to her literary vocation: "I've learned that if you haven't at least briefly known real happiness, you can't feel for the suffering in this world either."

Happiness is an elusive sensation that often passes before it can be grasped or is forgotten in the hardships of poverty or failure. The first half of the book is in part a study of Roy's parents' hopeless dream of happiness, while the second becomes her own search. Only towards the end of her quest, after nearly two years of being more lost than foot-loose in Europe, does she realize "that before dying everyone needs to know that one had been happy occasionally, and how, where, and why

... The people who die most alone are those who cannot remember being happy at least for a moment on this earth." Ironically, Roy's autobiography (which was never actually completed—this book represents only two of the four planned volumes) becomes her own act of recollecting those spots of happiness before death erases them.

Roy laments, however, not having always been able to console others at the moment of death. For instance, there's Ruby, a mediocre Sancho Panza to Roy's Don Quixote who tramps around Provence with Roy but dies without seeing her friend again to reaffirm the memory of those adventures. Death is a pervasive theme of the book, and death, like the coupled enchantment and sorrow, is juxtaposed with life. It is at the deathbed of her father and sisters that Roy sees them the clearest and becomes closest to them. In one of the most poignant scenes, Gabrielle tries to console her dying sister, a nun who has never left Manitoba, by describing the Manitoba sky outside her window as the most beautiful in the world, comparable only to the skies found in great works of literature.

We find a recurrent metaphor in the sky, and in the succession of cramped rooms and confining land-

scapes—the London fog, the crowded streets of Paris—that block Roy's view of it. The sight of an open sky, like that of her native Manitoba, fills her with hope and a clear sense of direction she lacks most of the time; anxiety and disorientation are always accompanied by enclosed spaces. The use of geography and weather as symbol is reminiscent of Roy's first novel, the acclaimed (awarded the Governor General's Prize and France's Prix Femina, among others) *The Tin Flute*.

Roy wrote fifteen books during her life, including novels, short story collections and children's books, all of them in her native language of French, in which she chose to write although she was completely bilingual. Her recounting of her early years in an alienated Francophone community in Manitoba is fraught with a sense of oppression and failure of communication, which she goes to great lengths to escape.

Enchantment and Sorrow is the story of an artist's apprenticeship and of the journey out and back, but it reads more like one of Roy's well-structured, often poetic novels. Roy manages to convey her own struggle to develop an artistic sensibility and imagination without reducing her story to a discussion of technique or an exercise in pedantry. Although



The late French-Canadian novelist, Gabrielle Roy.

the book only covers her life until the age of 30, when she returned from Europe to live in Montreal and work on *The Tin Flute*, it comes off seeming rounded and complete. This is partly due to the deft integration of "flash-heads" at crucial points in

her life, which serve to tie up loose ends. Unfortunately for us, the autobiography will never be completed, and many important characters—Roy's long-suffering mother for example—are left unfinished.

MORE SUN... LAUDERDALE MORE FUN...

★ ★ ★ FEATURING THE DAYS INN LAUDERDALE SURF ★ ★ ★
ONE OF THE FINEST HOTELS ON THE SUNNY LAUDERDALE STRIP
RIGHT ON THE BEAUTIFUL SANDY BEACH

To Sign Up
Or For More Info

CALL LISA
739-1913

Driving Package
Without Transportation → \$169.CDN
Quad Occupancy

Full Package
With Transportation → \$309.CDN
Quad Occupancy

Arrangements by ECHO TRAVEL, INC.
The largest in college tours to Florida
for over 9 years.

YOUR TRIP INCLUDES:

- Seven nights accommodations at the Days Inn Lauderdale Surf Hotel located right on the beach at 440 Seabreeze. One of Lauderdale's excellent high rise hotels, it is located right in the central strip area right next to nightlife spots like the Button and Elbo Room. The hotel has a nice pool, a sun deck, patio bar, restaurant, convenience store, and cable TV.
- Transportation package includes round trip motor coach transportation via luxury highway coaches to your hotel in Lauderdale. Unlike others, we use the newest style buses available.
- Free pool deck parties and activities.
- Discounts at local bars, restaurants, and stores.
- The services of full time travel representatives to take care of you.
- All taxes and gratuities all week.

FOR THE MOST SUN AND THE NICEST BEACH — TRY LAUDERDALE!



★

Best Weather

Lauderdale is warmer and sunnier than just about anywhere in the USA.

★

Best Beach

Wide, soft, sandy and warm - the best for a good tan.

★

Best Hotel - Guaranteed

You know where you will be staying on this trip.

★

Best Location On The Strip

Don't let a poor location ruin your trip.

★

Top of the Line Luxury Coaches

For the most comfortable trip to the sun.

★

You might find a cheaper trip, but why risk your Spring Break cash on a cheap imitation!!

COMPACT DISC RENTALS!

on campus at the

**YORK
BOOKSTORE**
(Central Square)

5 FOR
\$4.99

\$1.49 each

Now you can order
weekly from over

3000 DISCS!

OVER 700 DISCS IN STOCK
ROCK, JAZZ, CLASSICAL
HARD TO FIND IMPORTS
CD PLAYERS \$4.99/DAY