

Hartmut Lutz Interview with Anne Acco, October 14, 1990¹

Anne Acco

Anne Acco (Cree) grew up in Cumberland House, an Indian and Metis community in northeastern Saskatchewan. Listening to the stories told to her in Swampy Cree by her elders awakened an early interest in words and reading, and she decided to become a writer herself. A more than 20-year "interlude," during which she raised six children and spent three years in Trinidad, interrupted her "literary career," which she resumed in the eighties in Ottawa, her present home. Her first book of poetry and prose vignettes, *Eko-si*, was self-published in 1989 and sold out within a year. Some of her poetry also appeared in *Canadian Women/les cahiers de la femme* (1989), and in other periodicals. Anne Acco's impressive reading performances demonstrate the importance of sound in her literary works, which centre on the psychological and social effects of the history of colonization in Canada.

The interview was recorded on 14 October 1990 (a day before Anne Acco's first grandchild was born) in Ottawa, following the CINSA [Canadian Indigenous/Native Studies Association Conference] Annual Conference (copyright Anne Acco/Hartmut Lutz).

HL: How did you start writing?

AA: I started writing simply because I like what words do. I am a linguistics student as well as being an English literature major, University of Ottawa.

In my little community, Cumberland House, in the northeast part of Saskatchewan, people spoke up to four languages. They definitely spoke in the Cree language, and some English. Because of where we were situated, the radio came through in English. I was interested in sounds. How people made sounds, what they stressed, and what their emotions showed as they were speaking the language, as opposed to the language showing what they were feeling because of what they said. I wanted to hear what it is. Were they speaking loudly? What happened to the tonality of their presentation?—be it speech, be it straight exhortation saying, "get out of here" or "stop that!" I began to really listen. When I was 19 I was going through university, my very first and only year. I wanted to become a health care worker, either a nurse, or a doctor. It quickly became very evident to me that I had no money, but I had enough education to go on to be a laboratory technologist, and I did three years in histology. So from that background you can see that I was well on my way to becoming a "terrific" writer. But when my children were born and I realized that I had to stay home with the six of them, I found that I was becoming less and less able to write in the English language and express myself properly. So, what I started to do was to write essays, letters to the editor, gather any books I could.

I just loved to read as a child. I was very lucky—a man by the name of Jim Brady¹ had left us with some of the classics. We had a very dry warehouse, and he was able to leave his books in my father's care. And he also told us that we could read the books. So by the time I was 10 I certainly had read Somerset Maugham and the poems of Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg. I realized the power of words. In realizing that to learn this, and in later life to be able to keep up with this kind of thing, I just wrote. It got to the point where I had about five boxes of different kinds of writing—everything from poems to short stories, just trying to teach myself how to keep up with the writing. And then we were going to move from Montreal to

¹ Hartmut Lutz. *Contemporary Challenges: Conversations with Canadian Native Authors*. Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 121-134. Reproduced here with the kind permission of Anne Acco and Hartmut Lutz.

Winnipeg, and I threw everything out, all the writings.

HL: You said you were up at Cumberland House at that time? So, from the standpoint of urban Canada you were quite “isolated.”

AA: Yes! I left home when I was 15 years old, and I only spoke Cree.

HL: I see. There are other authors I talked to, like Ruby Slipperjack. She also grew up in a very isolated community, and she started writing as a child, really urgently. Maria Campbell relates how they read Shakespeare and enacted scenes. Peter Deranger, the storyteller, who is up from the Northwest Territories, only had the Farmer’s Almanac and comic books, but he too was a reader and a writer. Tomson Highway also comes from an isolated northern community. So there seem to be several Native authors who are really isolated and have this urge to write. I asked Peter, “What made you do that—was it a jump from the oral tradition?” He said no. Maybe you can say something about that?

AA: Well, I can say that it was another means of communication, and you were always looking for ways of communicating. And if that book can communicate something to you, then you want to read it.

When we were in the encampments, and this is spring trapping, my cousins and I all had a cache of comic books, and little books to read. So, towards the end of the winter, I had gotten to the end of my powers of observation to read these things again and again and again. I was fed up. So on the very first, fine, spring day, we started to walk with our comic books to exchange them with the next campsite, which was 20 miles away. Halfway there we met them with their comic books coming to do the exchange with us. That kind of drive is a tool, a way to communicate.

You have to go back to the history of the Cree people. The Cree people had their own syllabics They had their own way of communicating. I think from the time it was introduced among the Crees, within 10 years, anthropologists say, every man, woman, and child with the ability was able to read. And in that exchange there was always somebody. The scribe was always prized. He was the person you could take something to, to read, to decipher. So the person who could read became a figure not of accomplishment but of usefulness.

Within the oral tradition the way to tell a story is very strict, and you were taught. If you were able to tell stories, the people came to visit you. Your aunts, your uncles, would tell you stories from the time you were a toddler, and somehow you become attuned to storytelling in such a way that it becomes a part of your unconscious reality, and you are able to pick up. The process was already ongoing so that the step to writing was very natural. It is this kind of thing I want to stress.

I saw a picture taken by a famous American photographer, and this particular picture said: these are people from the Apache nation sitting down for some storytelling. To me that said an awful lot, because any time Native people gathered, they would go into their storytelling mode. And now we are just experimenting with some of the ways we speak.

My mother is a wonderful poet. She does not write but some of her phrasing is so poetic that it just literally blows me away. I can give one example: she was just simply watching the rain come down. This is in Montreal, and we had four scotch pines in the front yard. She said, “Look at that, the rain has come to wash the faces of the trees?” She said this in Cree, and I cannot retranslate it and catch the essence of the beauty because you would have to hear her voice. This to me is very fascinating that somebody could embody a thought, transcribe it into her own communicative process, and come up with something that touches the human heart so profoundly.

HL: I realized the other night when you were on stage with Willie Dunn, reading your poetry, how important sound is to you. There is a lot of melody in your reciting. You raise your voice, and then it goes down, you speed up, etc. So, you use voice a lot. You said your first language was Cree, and it has all these possibilities that you probably don't have in the English language. Could you say something about that, about mastering a different language and trying to get across something that you could express more easily in Cree?

AA: I will try to read Angelique: Just before her death. (Reads in Cree) Can you hear the rhythm?

HL: Oh yes, and you have a lot of what I would describe as "clearer," vowels, much clearer than in English, where in a multisyllabic word you generally have only one clearly pronounced, stressed vowel, and the rest is "aw" "aw."

There is one word that I understood. That was "Batoche," which has a wonderful sound to it. You hear it in so many different pronunciations.

AA: Again it is Angelique, my great-grandmother.

ANGELIQUE

Just before her death, I was taken to see my Great-Grandmother Angelique. It was my fourth birthday. I went to share a piece of cake with her. She rose from her wooden bed, dignified, alert but weak. Her words, directed to a destiny I was to have, meant nothing to me at the time. I never forgot Angelique, the occasion and the words. Years later, I came to know this was the woman whose husband was killed at the battle of Batoche, 1885, officially listed as a suicide. In this country of long silences, it took three generations to write the truth burned into her heart.²

HL: That is a powerful story. "Three generations of silence." I guess that is one thing that Native writing, I think any writing, should be about: to break the silence. I feel that a lot of Native writers in Canada, maybe all of them, are doing that very consciously.

AA: Oh, we have to do it!

HL: So it is not the kind of literature that you have in the mainstream, where a lot of it is literature for literature's sake.

AA: Absolutely different.

HL: The message is very important.

AA: The message! The people themselves are dying out! We have to obey the tradition because we come from such oral people fascinated with words. People have to trade with different people. You had what were called "illiterate people" who knew six languages. If you think about my line, my grandfather Lionel, who I write about in this book, spoke about prayer and its place in our lives in the natural way that is typical of a truly religious people. He was himself a trader. He travelled a thousand miles up and down. I used to see him in his trading. Well, he could count. That is one thing he could do, and he could write down numbers, but to say he was a literate person in the sense that he could come and sit down and start writing a story for you—no. But he could tell you a story, and he could quote from

the Bible like no one I have met in my life. Whenever he spoke we had to be very quiet. In this particular story I say very small snippet of what I wanted to say:

LIONEL

My grandfather Lionel, spoke about prayer and its place in our lives in the natural way that is typical of a truly religious people. He never doubted his God. He paid homage whenever possible. I can still see him sitting on his wooden bed, his grub box under it. His grey woollen blankets and his feather robe were folded away in a corner. His room and the stove that kept him warm helped him think of his Manitou. As our grandfather he let us know that we had to be good to one another and to think the best of each other. He told us that as a group of people we were distrusted and afflicted from without. He felt the practice of prejudice was a sickness of the heart and mind. He asked God to forgive all of his enemies. This is but a glimpse of the kind of man my grandfather, Lionel Carrière [sic], the son of Dumas and Angelique, was to his children and grandchildren, in spite of tremendous hardship. (22)

This person could speak so many dialects of the Cree, he could speak Dene and its different variations, he spoke French, and he also spoke English. But, as I say, he was illiterate—but in numeracy you could not beat him.

HL: So he learned everything that he needed for his life.

In the beginning I asked you how you started writing, and you went into the tradition that you come from through your childhood. What made you start to write this book? How did you get down to doing that?

AA: How I got down to doing this was simple. I felt that there was a lot of writing about Native people, yet writing in a manner that seemed to be all right but wasn't quite all right. In other words, not obeying the tradition. I said, "What is the responsibility of myself, as a Native person, as a storyteller? What I have to do is: I have to master the language. That is all I have to do!"

I already had the stories! If I have the stories, and I can master the language, I just go ahead. And now I write. If I am published or not published, that is not my problem. My problem is to get it down on paper, to type it out, and that is exactly what I did! I started to read in public. I started to do that three years ago when I came to Ottawa. I had to do it that way. I was separated at the time, and felt more motivated to write to fill the hours. But at the same time, because of the tremendous upheaval that was going on in my life, I was able to write and pour out an awful lot. Before I had been writing, but I had not placed any kind of importance on what I was writing. By that time, my brother Ken told me that what I was writing was very important because it came out of my experience. And because it came out of my experience and because I was able to use the kinds of phrases I was able to use, he felt that I really should try to write down as much as I can. In doing so, I could see the value of my own work because no one knows Abel Kanada. No one else knows this man [but because of my poem] young men have come up to me and said, "Thank you for writing this, I feel I know an elder and that he is my friend!" So that ancestry is there, and other people can tap into it. It is very, very important. Phillip, who is an artist, people like this, I just describe something, an incident in their lives, and they become very, very much part of the tradition. In the same way, I suppose, when you say "Rumpelstilzchen" I immediately come alive!
(LAUGHS)

And how I got interested in poetry, I learned, "Abu Ben Adem put up his tent one night ...," and I forgot the name of the author, but I will always remember: "Abu Ben Adem

put up his tent one night ..." And I really found that, with the stress on the "night:" I said, "That is something I can do!"

HL: That is powerful.

AA: Very, very powerful.

HL: It makes you expect something. You know something is going to happen. Sometimes you have openings like that.

AA: And I also saw that this was a man out in the desert, and his name is "Abu" and if somebody had not sat and written about Abu, I wouldn't know anything about him.

HL: Okay. But I have to challenge you on this. I have heard some people, although not very many, who say, "Well, the oral tradition is just the oral tradition. It is in the traditional languages, and if the people who have this language and who belong to that culture are not able to carry on the tradition, and the language, then the stories will go, because they are tied to that language and to the oral storytelling. If you write them down, you kill them!" What do you say to that?

AA: The challenge is to reach into your creativity and to bring as much as you can out of that translation! I will show you a story that I wrote called "Elizabeth."³ It did not work as a short story, but it worked beautifully as a poem. And again, this shows you that if one form doesn't work, you reach into another form, which implies that you have to study.

HL: Some of these stories or poems are monuments to people who passed away, so they wouldn't be forgotten. They are something from your immediate experience, or from your family tradition. Other stories are parts of the oral tradition, are sacred, are not personal—could anything be written down?

AA: I would say, if you are reaching into the metaphysical, and if you are reaching into the spiritual, those are always hard subjects in any language, and you have specialists for that.

HL: So you would say that you limit yourself...

AA: To what I know, to what I *can* do. I am not a philosopher, but somebody else might be. And I know these people. They are wonderful philosophers, and they will write. But they might write allegorical things, or they will write essays. They are just beautiful writers. But I am more historically orientated. But, again, I was extremely lucky. Not everybody has this capacity and also has the memory and that kind of memory training. Again, this is done very early, and you are not aware of it as a child that your memory is being trained, deliberately trained. This again is something that is passed on.

I would like to think that as Native people begin to appreciate what is in their culture, and to learn to see it for what it is, they will not try to put too much into one particular aspect of, let's say storytelling, passing things on in an allegorical manner, of myth—they have to be able to extract it and to approach it with a great deal of respect, and to completely analyze what they are doing.

There are some stories that would approach almost a sacred tradition, in the same way that very few people can tell the story of Louis Riel. The story has yet to be written. A lot of people make comments. You can read his diaries, but as I see it, you have to almost be a

linguist to start to read what it is he was doing in his diaries. Because he is doing something. I don't know what it is, but maybe at some point the key will come. There are key words that he uses which say he is going into a different world or different way of expressing himself. And it is for us to begin to understand what it was he was doing. That has not been done yet.

So there are people we do not touch in a manner of saying, "Okay, I am going to write a history of this person." And you know, it will just be another book. There is just "no other book" about certain people! And certainly, the different myths that we have, as they come up from the different traditions, and from the different languages, they have to be treated as, say, "This is a myth! This is how it works as a teaching tool!" People will choose the people they will want to write about. You could see that tradition very strongly in Willie Dunn, and he does it very well.

HL: Absolutely.

AA: You can sing his songs in 1970. You will sing them in 1980, and they will be singing them probably a hundred years from now. And they will just hold completely. This is the kind of writing that we are doing in this country right now.

HL: You mentioned earlier the classics you read because they were there in that storehouse. You also said that you write from your own personal experiences, and stories that you know through your family. Are there any Native writers, any other literary sources, especially Native writers in Canada, who influenced you?

AA: The West Indian writer V.S. Naipaul. His approach is: "Do your homework! If you are going to write a historical novel, if you are going to write anything about your people, make sure that you are historically correct! Do not invent! If it is 1885, put it in perspective!" The West Indian writers deal with colonialism. We have to deal with colonialism.

HL: Absolutely.

AA: We cannot ignore any aspect of our life! If we have family breakdown, violence, that comes out of being poor, being marginalized. That is what we have to write about.

HL: So it is also very much political writing?

AA: It becomes automatically political writing.

HL: I totally agree with you on that.

AA: Yes!

RAILWAY STOP

Reaching the railway stop,
Catching the rail-liner,
Seeing them riding high,
Doffing toque, knowing my place,
My place somewhere inconspicuous,
My tribe is supposed to be dead.
I come to this railway stop,
To remind you and the governments,

HL: Well, that was an issue that was contended by some people very strongly.

AA: We are saying that the challenge is that we have to be more careful who does the anthology. That they do a damn good job. That they are good editors, that they pay attention to even the way they put things together, and I think that is their responsibility.

What you have to say to yourself is, well, who is this person, why does he want to put this anthology together? I mean there are people in this country who might say, "Oh, okay, I'll get 3,000 poets, and I will get a dollar from each of them, (LAUGHS) and I will produce an anthology." And they know nothing about poetry but hire an editor of short stories, and put this kind of person in charge. I am very wary of the person who becomes an expert after a couple of years of reading this kind of material. So for me, we are learning too.

HL: Everybody is learning.

AA: We are learning. This is a whole new field.

HL: This looks good to me.

AA: But it is exciting. There is no doubt, for me, this is very exciting.

HL: I have used tape recordings like this in classrooms in Germany. Would you have any objections if I used this there?

AA: Oh, absolutely not.

HL: And if I use it like that, is there something you would like to say to young people in Germany, students?

AA: I think, whatever your approach, the Nobel Prize is given to all kinds of people writing in all kinds of languages. So there are bodies of literature that you are never going to come across except in translation. You can only hope you have a good translator. You can only hope to have a good transcriber. But when people are writing from their tradition, and they are now transcribing, we have the responsibility to be faithful. Even as we are writing fiction, to write as close to the truth as possible. That we don't put things in there that are foolish, that make the people appear stupid. In this country we have humour that is totally untapped. We haven't gone into that section as yet. There is so much of it among the Native people, and I am just literally bursting, wanting to write in that way. I realize that to be funny is a very hard task because you are transcribing. So that is something that I am going to have to look at.

When students hear somebody like myself speak: listen to how I start my sentence and how I stop it! You will hear something. Just pay close attention. From there you might have an idea of what kind of a person I am. Once you have an idea of what kind of person I may be, you begin to understand what kind of people I come from. I hope that I am a good representative of my people, because their investment in me was one of time, in very difficult situations. They brought me through sickness, they brought me through water, literally, ice water. They brought me through times when it was horribly cold. My mother sewed my moccasins, my shoes. She sewed everything for us. My father hunted in the dead of winter. So, I am a commodity that is hard-won, and I am a very important person in my family. Often this has been a tragedy among Native people, that they were not important enough to their families. Something vital was lost. People like myself were so privileged that I had grandfathers, that I had aunts, uncles, in the family circle, to give me that sense of place.

Consequently, if I bring anything to literature it would be that sense of place, and I hope it comes through in my voice and in the writing. One of my daughters has learned German at Concordia University in Montreal, and because of this interest of hers she has gone to Belgium, France, Europe. She also is looking to understand peoples. She comes from six different nations, from four races. When I think of my daughter who is taking a liberal arts education—she will have been in school now for five years before she gets her degree—what I see is a young woman striving to understand herself. So when students listen to me, they are not only trying to understand me, they are trying to understand their reaction to me. They should analyze that and should something be amiss, should they feel something is not right, they should analyze that. Maybe it is them, or maybe it is me. I think that is the purpose for going for higher education. I think that is all I should say now.

* * *

If you ever have a chance, go up to Nistowiak Falls. There you will hear something in the night, and feel something in the night, because as early as 1820 George Nelson travelled through there, and my own family travelled there. In the log books of the Hudson Bay it says that some of my people passed through there. That is in Lac La Ronge, northern Saskatchewan. There are trails through the bush along the Nistowiak Falls that you realize are really ancient. As you spend time in this place, you begin to enter a different realm of reasoning. Your life just slows right down. You become another person.

It is that kind of a place, it is like magic. It is like the magical kingdom, and even the trees are like magic. We took photographs of them, and you could see where the stories come from, because the trees overlap, and they are full of moss. They have different colours during the different times of the day, and you could begin to see shadows almost like “little people” dose to the ground, and sometimes you see a great, big tree which just comes out at you like a big giant. You could see that these are the stories that manifest themselves. It is a wonderful place but you could see why these stories were told because they are so much a part of our subconscious.

I think to be a storyteller is to be a privileged person. At the same time, if we are going to see it as an art form, you have to be a person who obeys that muse. You have to obey it. At the same time you have to look at the language, and to see that it obeys you, because it has to say what you want to say. If there is a better word, use it. And if there is a simple word, use it. So it is very tricky. I am finding that I have to work.

One of my uncles, his name is Uncle Bill McKenzie, was a consummate storyteller. He was the one who used to come and tell me stories. So one day, I was three years old, during the war, I had eaten an orange and I was so sick that I decided that I was going to die. So I told my mother, please put me in my wicker rocking chair and give me my blanket and give me my doll because if I am going to die, this is where I want to die. So I am sitting there in front of the stove dying and my uncle came in and I told him, “I am dying?” And I am sitting in front of the stove to make sure I am warm while I am dying. Being warm while I am dying! He said, “Okay, I have a story to tell you?” And in telling me this story, I forgot that I was going to die! (LAUGHS)

HL: (LAUGHS) I like the idea of sitting by a stove to be warm when you are dying.

AA: That was the idea. (LAUGHS)

HL: So there was some hope to be warm when you were dying.

AA: Yes, there was hope that somebody was going to rescue me, and it was my uncle because he was able to tell me this story and I forgot my illness. So that is the power of

storytelling. It made me forget how ill I was and it had to do with an orange. It started with me eating an orange at a time when we had no fruit, fruit was very scarce.

Many times I used to sit by the stove early in the morning, and he used to pass by our house, I would say by eight-thirty. He would already be coming from where he had been, and passing by our house for his second cup of tea, and my mother would have it there for him. He was on his way home, and he was still 20 minutes from home, so he would come to visit his sister, have tea with her, and then he would say, "What's the matter?" And I would say, "I am too sleepy, and I don't want to go to school." He said, "No, no, don't worry about that. Your sleepiness will pass but in the meantime while you are sleeping and you don't want to move, I will tell you a story." And he would tell me this story and he would suck me in completely. I forgot how sleepy I was, I forgot how grumpy I was, I forgot I didn't want to go to school, and next thing I would say, "I am late, I am late! Where are my clothes? I have to go to school!" So this again is the magic of words.

The other thing that I have to say is that my father decided that we were going to have films in our village. So from the time I was seven years old, we had to pay five cents once a week to go to the movies. We had the projector, and the generator was run by the Canadian Legion. And my father said, "I am going to bring in quality movies!" And everybody wanted cowboy stuff! But once a month I would get to choose a good movie. Consequently, I saw *Casablanca*, all these wonderful stories. Again appreciating another medium, another well-told story, realizing all this time that this is what it is all about. And the commentary that used to come from the people during the story would be really funny! At times they would say, "I saw that rock in last week's movie!" (LAUGHS) They began to recognize the scenery, and my aunt would say, "You damn fool, can't you see what she is doing to you? She is telling you lies!" She would make these comments in the same way that people get so involved. Or they would have a running commentary during a very important scene, and then you knew it was a lousy movie.

HL: When I was between nine and eleven, my best friend in school was a farmer's son. They were really very hardworking people, it was just a family farm. I would go there very often, and later on take my bike out there. They were about the first people that I knew who had television. They had this, and in the evening we would all sit in front of it. There would be the grandmother, his father, sister, his mother, he, and myself. And once they showed *Hamlet*. I remember I was so spell-bound! I remember it was the scene with the skull. Neither I nor these people had ever read Shakespeare, or anything of that kind. They were not very well educated in terms of schooling, and the play was even in German. Here was this guy talking, and we were so spell-bound, and all of a sudden, I don't know what made it happen, I "woke up" and I realized that I had tears running down my cheeks, and I turned around. Normally his father, as soon as the news was gone, would be sitting on the couch snoring because he was so tired. He was working all day. Everybody was awake, and the grandmother, and the mother, they were all crying!

I always use that now when I teach classes and I get all these "Oh Shakespeare!" comments. So there must be something there if he can make that happen.

AA: So, here you are! And aren't you glad somebody sat down and wrote the *Canterbury Tales*? I am just studying them.

What fascinates me in that tradition, again, is the ability to tell a good story. So in each tradition there is an ability to tell a really good story in whichever form you want to take. I grew up listening to Hemingway, rather hearing about Hemingway, because media really started to pay attention to Hemingway because he was a rather flamboyant character. But then I read *The Old Man and the Sea*, and I began to see the power of this man and the

power of the understatement. And I began to see an undertow, that it is possible to have an underlying theme. That too is very, very powerful.

I am a student of literature, and because of the kind of analysis I am doing at the university right now, at the undergraduate level, I am beginning to see. I am already writing. I have already done all of the oral, and because I still like to hear a good story, I am beginning to appreciate the kind of critical analysis I am forced to do in order to get my grades. I am not always successful. Sometimes I am totally wrong but even that I appreciate, because at least I have attempted to understand the story. And if I am mistaken I am told, "No, you look at it from this point of view," and that to me is enhancing to my understanding of the story.

Again going back to the way they hand out the literature prizes or Nobel Prizes, you never know who really is going to get it, and what language, and from whom. So you begin to realize this whole power out in the world. I am thinking of the other writers too. I am thinking of Carl Gustav Jung who is a very popular interpreter of dreams.

HL: I read a lot of Jung. I am biased against Jung.

AA: The only thing we are interested in as Native people is Jung's attention to dreams, and the passing on of the ancestral.⁴ You don't know what it is that gets passed on to us, in terms of memory in the cells, and what is released. I think some of us are born with memory. This is my honest feeling that the template is there. I don't know how it works, but somehow it is there. Because something will be evoked in my memory, and I will think, "Gee, I recognize that as *déjà vu*," and it happens to me a heck of a lot. Less and less as I get older. But when I was young, I would be transfixed by a moment and I would not know where it came from.

I think the other writer who pays attention to that is Thomas Merton. He does pay attention to it in his writings, where at different times he has felt that he has been here before. He would analyze it, and then he would work through it, and he'd say, "Well, I have never been here under any other circumstance." There are many occasions like that in my life.

HL: Yes, I have had that too.

AA: I have been very lucky to have had wonderful storytellers! I lived three years in Trinidad, and right next door to us, the tradition in that family was to tell stories in the evening. Grandmother would lie down in the hammock, and we would all sit on boxes that they have, they were very poor, and they would just start telling stories. Sometimes they would bring the harmonium over, and they would play their East Indian music. There I was able to see again the power of the story, and you had to have very good practitioners. People would come from all over the little village, and they would come and tell their stories. They would talk about their memories, etc. It was just very moving. I cannot forget how that worked.

I always appreciate it when somebody tells me a story. That is the other thing— appreciation. You really have to pay homage to the storyteller. That is something I have always done. I can remember this, I think in *Casablanca*, I said to myself, I appreciate the actress Ingrid Bergman and her ability to say in her tone, "Play it again." I said to myself, "What is it in her voice that says something to me in my heart when she says, 'Play it again' "? What is she saying to them? I would start to imagine all kinds of things in this very short sentence, the way she says it. All of a sudden I have begun to appreciate something from another aspect of storytelling, and I guess I use that in the performance, I bring it out in a phrase or bring it out in a totally different way.

NOTES

1. For a biography of the Métis socialist teacher and community organizer James Brady and his comrade Malcolm Norris, see: Murray Dobbin, *The One-And-A-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris, Métis Patriots of the 20th Century* (Regina: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1981, 1987).
2. Anne Acco, *Eko-si: That is it* (Ottawa: Anne Acco, 1989), 22. (All subsequent references to this text are indicated by page numbers in brackets.)
3. Anne Acco, "Elizabeth," *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme*, 10.2, 3 (Summer/Fall 1989): 74.
4. Carl Gustav Jung. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. Aniela Jaffe (New York: Random House, 1955).