Editorial

New Work on Early Canadian Literature

Janice Fiamengo and Thomas Hodd

This special issue springs from the editors' shared passion for early Canadian literature in English and our awareness of how much bibliographical, historical, and critical research remains to be done in the field. It would be wrong, of course, to argue that our early literature has been ignored or neglected—far from it. As a field of study, however, it remains an uneven and tantalizingly patchwork affair, not unlike the maps of early Canada that enticed the explorers and adventurers who set out to be the eyes of the Hudson's Bay or North West fur-trading companies.

From the period of the nationalist renaissance in Canadian studies—usually traced to such influential surveys as Margaret Atwood's *Survival* (1972) and John Moss' *Patterns of Isolation* (1974)—early Canadian texts served as touchstones for critics' synthesizing generalizations. We might think, for example, of the iconic power Atwood attributed to the "markedly double-minded" (61) Susanna Moodie, who stands in for every flummoxed immigrant unable to accommodate Old World preconceptions to flea-ridden reality. We might also remember the emphasis, in studies by Moss and Margot Northey, on the psychosexual patterns in John Richardson's *Wacousta* (1832), with its gothic attitudes to wilderness, Native people, and cultural survival in the New World. During the post-Centennial period of identity-defining surveys, critics often looked to colonial and Confederation writers as our literary cartographers, those who mapped the often-jagged psychic territory that continued to shape our literary culture.

No less a critic than Northop Frye was confident that the contours of modern Canada in the late 1960s had been largely prefigured in its nineteenth-century manifestations: the psychological "garrison mentality," recoil from the land, awareness of the fragility of human order, and preference for polemic and practical treatises over poetry. Many other critics, while not necessarily agreeing with Frye's assumptions or systematizing tendencies, also located in pre-twentieth-century literature the preoccupations and modes of seeing that endured in the country. In 1969, Dorothy Livesay identified the documentary as a particularly Canadian genre, part of a centuries-old English Canadian tradition. Beginning in the 1980s, D.M.R. Bentley, in his monumental work on early long poems (*The Gay[Grey Moose* and *Mimic Fires*, to mention only two) and on the Confederation poets (*The Confederation Group*), has argued that from the first, our poetry embodied the attempt to make Canadian places home, to take imaginative possession of unfamiliar geographies. Susan Glickman looked back to the colonial period for early expressions of the picturesque and sublime imaginaries that would endure through the twentieth century. Gerald Lynch found in the satirical wit and conservative humanism of Thomas McCulloch and Thomas Haliburton a still-vital model for a distinctive tradition of English Canadian humour ("Canadian Comedy"). These critics' arguments suggest the extent to which our earliest writers and literary modes cast a long shadow into the present.

Much of the vigour and impetus behind investigations of early Canadian literature since the nationalist 1970s came from the conviction that totalizing narratives about literary history were partial and exclusionary, failing to take into account the stories and styles of writers who wrote outside of the mainstream of Canadian culture. The earliest and most vibrant strand of such oppositional research was feminist in emphasis, as is reflected in the title of editor Lorraine McMullen's *Re(dis)covering Our Foremothers* (1990), a volume that both capitalized on the groundswell of feminist scholarship in the 1980s and encouraged further recovery work in the following two decades. Scholarship by Kym Bird, Helen Buss, Gwendolyn Davies (*Studies*), Misao Dean (*Practising*), Cecily Devereux (*Growing*), Carole Gerson (*Canadian*), Faye Hammill, and Michael Peterman, to name only a few, has recovered and complicated the textual record of literary foremothers, and an extensive body of criticism now exists on their poetry, prose fiction, dramatic texts, life writing, and creative journalism. Indeed, the recovery has been so enthusiastic and dedicated that a case might be made that male writers have been correspondingly neglected. Where are the multiple studies of Ralph Connor, William Kirby, or James De Mille—all popular and critically acclaimed in their day, now almost entirely neglected—or indeed of the many male pioneers, travellers, journalists, social reformers, and religious writers who left substantial records? Despite the magisterial contributions of Bentley as well as of Steven Artelle, Thomas Hodd, Gerald Lynch (*Stephen*), and Tracy Ware, many of the major and minor male authors of the nineteenth century have received relatively little attention in the past twenty years. Such authors are now ripe for their own recovery.

But this trope of recovery—with its implications of appreciative rescue and resuscitation—was complicated and even confounded by the rise and dominance, in the 1990s, of postcolonial criticism, with its emphasis on the saturation of all cultural expression by the violence of the colonizing effort; this perspective was given forceful expression in Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), which found even in literary works ostensibly far removed from the arena of colonial struggle suggestive traces of its bloody presence. In Canada, such critical investigation found early expression in questions asked by such critics as Stan Dragland, John Flood, and L.P. Weiss about Duncan Campbell Scott's Indian writing, which was both direct and ambiguous in rendering Native life under colonialism. Soon scholars including Christopher Bracken, Albert Braz, Carole Gerson, Terry Goldie, Brian Johnson, Alan Lawson, C.D. Mazoff, Veronica Strong-Boag, and Lisa Salem-Wiseman began to work not only to recover the lives and cultural contributions of early Aboriginal writers—one thinks of the work by Braz on Louis Riel and by Strong-Boag and Gerson on Pauline Johnson—but also to analyze the literature of settler subjects, understanding settler subjectivity as embodying the Second World position so evocatively outlined by Lawson. For Lawson, the settler text expresses a complex and troubled assertion of "belonging" that is both violent and desiring, claiming indigeneity while manifesting an anxious belatedness. Such a perspective is fruitfully applied, for example, in Mazoff's analysis of early Canadian long poems and in Devereux's reading of Isabella Valancy Crawford's *Malcolm's Katie*.

An interest in race as a textual construct has led many scholars to chart the cultural associations of whiteness (as in Daniel Coleman's *White Civility*) and the contributions of Asian and African Canadian writers to early Canadian literary culture. Notable examples include George Elliott Clarke's excavations of African Canadian writers and Mary Chapman's work on Sui Sin Far, Asian Canadian journalist and short story writer. Many of the essays in Jennifer Blair et al.'s edited volume *ReCalling Early*

Canada (2005) approach the "political" of their subtitle from a postcolonial perspective, considering how assumptions about indigeneity, femininity, and Anglo-Saxon superiority structured colonial and post-Confederation culture. It is no exaggeration to say that this approach has fundamentally transformed early Canadian literary studies so much as to affect the very terms of discussion, giving innocent-seeming words such as "landscape," "discovery," "claim," "map," "Native inhabitant," and "first" charged meanings and inescapable overtones. The dominance of race as a category of analysis has been so unchallenged for the past two decades, in fact, that it has been hard to imagine avenues of approach with equal interpretative power, and the strong moral charge of postcolonial theory has arguably limited discussion about the appropriateness of judging earlier texts by present-day valorizations of cultural openness.

While we are still very much in the postcolonial moment, some new directions have emerged, many of them more modest than the postcolonial in their claims. The field of book history and print culture studies, for example—given recent impetus by the History of the Book in Canada project and the Studies in Book and Print Culture series through the University of Toronto Press—investigates the material and contextual factors of textual production: the network of people (editors, publishers, booksellers, reviewers, anthology compilers, readers) and material factors (newsprint, presses, editions, copyright law, piracy) that affected the literature of early Canadians. George Parker was the notable pioneer of this kind of research with his painstaking *The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada* (1985). Since then, such scholars as Mary Lu MacDonald, Eli MacLaren, and Ruth Panofsky have examined the myriad of commercial, technological, legal, and cultural contexts that influenced how early Canadian books were contracted, printed, marketed, and sold.

Other critics, including T.D. MacLulich and Gerson (*A Purer Taste*), approached the subject of print culture with a focus on reception, examining literary periodicals to understand the climate of ideas about fiction and reading that dominated Victorian Canada's conservative book culture. A new generation of scholars is continuing to pursue this rich mine of information, combing through archives in search of partisan editor-authors (Geordan Patterson on Samuel Hull Wilcocke), prolific women poets (Ceilidh Hart on nineteenth-century Canadian newspapers), community-building editors (Suzanne Bowness on nineteenth-century periodicals), and much else. In his study of bestsellers, Clarence Karr made extensive use of letters and publishers' records to understand how readers reacted to such popular novelists as Ralph Connor and L.M. Montgomery, while Heather Murray, also interested in the cultural history of reading, has focused on those ardent bibliophiles who made up the literary societies of nineteenth-century Canada. Andrea Cabajsky has found the records of nineteenth-century lending libraries a productive source of information about reader interest. Considering the forces that shape literary taste from a different angle, Dermot McCarthy and Robert Lecker have examined the role of literary anthologies in creating a national canon. All of these critics seek to understand texts in complex interaction with readers, cultural arbiters, and commercial agents, significantly deepening our understanding of the multi-dimensional factors shaping literary production.

Such scholarship has often adopted an explicitly international lens, recognizing how authors and texts cross borders both literally and metaphorically. Sometimes Canadian writers travelled in search of subjects or markets; often they shaped or disguised Canadian materials for non-Canadian readers, usually British or American. Sometimes they wrote differently for different English-speaking audiences. On rare occasions, a Canadian product was aimed particularly at a Canadian audience, but more often, colonial and early Canadian writers negotiated international realities. The publishing climate was complex and in transition, often yielding little profit and exposing texts to piracy and unauthorized abridgement. While Eva-Marie Kröller chronicled those Canadians who wrote about travel to Europe, James Doyle and Nick Mount have investigated the tide of professional writers who moved to the United States in search of a readership and a living wage. Misao Dean ("Researching") and Linda Quirk ("Place," "Skyward"), among others, have looked at literary agents' and publishers' records to examine the complex publishing histories of such fascinating transnational writers as Sara Jeannette Duncan and Pauline Johnson. Recent work by Gerson ("Canadian," "Writers"), Davies ("Publishing"), and I.S. MacLaren continues to complicate nationalist assumptions by focusing on the border-crossing relationships amongst authors, publishers, audiences, and the sites of writing.

These book and print culture studies have shifted attention away from narrowly defined categories of poetry, drama, and fiction, defining "text" flexibly and capaciously. Although non-fictional prose has always been of interest to scholars (see, for example, the work of Alexandra Hurst on the "war among the [Confederation] poets" in the pages of the Toronto *Globe*, a fascinating nineteenth-century contretemps), recent scholarship has placed decisive emphasis on non-literary media such as letters, memoirs, travel journals, newsprint journalism, pamphlets, government records, photographs, and so on. Work on such genres by Julia V. Emberley, Janice Fiamengo, Jennifer Henderson, Kate Higginson, Wendy Roy, and Kathleen Venema, to name only a few, has had the effect of radically expanding literary scholars' subject matter.

We expect that as this cultural approach continues to hold sway amongst English scholars, attention to letters, diaries, journalism, pamphlets, and speeches will continue to provide rich sources of insight. Such research takes us full circle to Frye's belief that the culture of early Canada was most fertile and most vividly revealed in both its polemics and its practical communications. But we hope that literary texts will also be given their due, especially perhaps the landscape and philosophical poetry of such authors as Charles G.D. Roberts and Archibald Lampman, now almost entirely neglected. We expect and trust, in fact, that some of the more sweeping claims and lingering effects of the overtly political—feminist and postcolonial—arguments of recent decades will be contested and modified through the reappraisal and nuanced analysis of now-neglected, once-canonical writers. Straightforward recovery work—for example, of the fascinating Vancouver Poetry Society authors of the early twentieth century, of historical novelists, of First World War writers—remains valuable.

Through it all, we continue to recognize the significant gaps in basic scholarship on early Canadian literature: the lack of complete biographical and bibliographical information about authors, the relatively few scholarly editions of major texts—despite the heroic efforts of Carleton University's Centre for the Editing of Early Canadian texts under the direction of Mary Jane Edwards—the many undocumented letters, stories, poems, and other writings that moulder in private or uncatalogued public collections or are tenuously preserved on fragile newsprint or poorly filmed microfilm. Even simply establishing the complete works of a single author remains in many cases a daunting undertaking. We salute the preservation work of such projects as the *Canadian Poetry* website, Tecumseh Press' Canadian Critical Editions series, Early Canadiana Online, and Tom Vincent's Loyal Colonies Press. More such groundwork is urgently required. Thus, as new interests and approaches push the boundaries of the discipline, traditional scholarship is still crucial in shoring up its foundation.

WORKS CITED

Artelle, Steven. "The Meaning of Ottawa: The Confederation-Era Literary Culture of Canada's Capital." Diss. U of Western Ontario, 2004. PQDT. Web. 12 July 2012.

Atwood, Margaret. *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. 1972. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004. Print.

Bentley, D.M.R. *Mimic Fires: Accounts of Early Canadian Long Poems*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1994. Print.

—. *The Confederation Group of Canadian Poets, 1880-1897*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004. Print.

—. *The Gay[Grey Moose: Essays on the Ecologies and Mythologies of Canadian Poetry, 1690-1990*. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1992. Print.

Bird, Kym. *Redressing the Past: The Politics of Early English-Canadian Women's Drama, 1880-1920*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2004. Print.

Blair, Jennifer, et al., eds. *ReCalling Early Canada: Reading the Political in Literary and Cultural Production*. Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 2005. Print.

Bowness, Suzanne. "In Their Own Words: Prefaces and Other Sites of Editorial Interaction in Nineteenth-Century Canadian Magazines." Diss. U of Ottawa, 2012. Web. 12 July 2012.

Bracken, Christopher. *The Potlatch Papers: A Colonial Case History*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1997. Print.

Braz, Albert. *The False Traitor: Louis Riel in Canadian Culture*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2003. Print.

Buss, Helen. *Mapping Our Selves: Canadian Women's Autobiography in English*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1993. Print.

Cabajsky, Andrea. "*Lady Audley's Secret* versus *The Abbot*: Reconsidering the Form of Canadian Historical Fiction through the Content of Library Catalogues." *Another Country: Essays in Early Canadian Literature*. Ed. Janice Fiamengo. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, forthcoming.

Chapman, Mary. "'Revolution in Ink': Sui Sin Far and Chinese Reform." *American Quarterly* 60.4 (2008): 975-1001. Print.

Clarke, George Elliott. *Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2002. Print.

Coleman, Daniel, ed. *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2006. Print.

Davies, Gwendolyn. "Publishing Abroad." Lamonde, Fleming, and Black 139-46.

—. *Studies in Maritime Literary History: 1760-1930*. Fredericton: Acadiensis, 1991. Print.

Dean, Misao. *Practising Femininity: Domestic Realism and the Performance of Gender in Early Canadian Fiction*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1998. Print.

—. "Researching Sara Jeannette Duncan in the Papers of A.P. Watt and Company." *Canadian Literature* 178 (2003): 181-86. Print.

Devereux, Cecily. *Growing a Race: Nellie L. McClung and the Fiction of Eugenic Feminism*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2005. Print.

—. "The Search for a Livable Past: Frye, Crawford, and the Healing Link." Blair et al. 281-300. Print.

Doyle, James. "Canadian Writers and American Little Magazines in the 1890s." *Canadian Literature* 110 (1986): 177-83. Print.

Dragland, Stan. *Floating Voice: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Literature of Treaty 9*. Concord: Anansi, 1994. Print.

Emberley, J.V. "Colonial Phantasms: Aboriginality and 'The Family' in the Photographic Archive." Blair et al. 301-34. Print.

Fiamengo, Janice. *The Woman's Page: Journalism and Rhetoric in Early Canada*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2008. Print.

Fleming, Patricia Lockhart, Gilles Gallican, and Yvan Lamonde, eds. *History of the Book in Canada: Beginnings to 1840*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004. Print.

Flood, John. "Native People in Scott's Short Fiction." *The Duncan Campbell Scott Symposium*. Ed. K.P. Stich. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1980. 73-83. Print.

Frye, Northrop. *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*. Toronto: Anansi, 1971. Print.

Gerson, Carole. *A Purer Taste: The Writing and Reading of Fiction in English in Nineteenth-Century Canada*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1989. Print.

—. *Canadian Women in Print, 1750-1918*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2010. Print.

—. "Canadian Women Writers and American Markets, 1880-1940." *Context North America: Canadian/U.S. Literary Relations*. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1994. 107-18. Print.

—. "Writers Without Borders: The Global Framework of Canada's Early Literary History." *Canadian Literature* 201 (2009): 15-33. Print.

Glickman, Susan. *The Picturesque and the Sublime: A Poetics of the Canadian Landscape*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1998. Print.

Goldie, Terry. *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures.* Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1989. Print.

Hammill, Faye. *Literary Culture and Female Authorship in Canada, 1760-2000*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003. Print.

Hart, Ceilidh. "Poetry and the Press: Women's Literary Publishing in Canadian Newspapers, 1850-1900." Diss. U of Toronto, 2012. Print.

Henderson, Jennifer. *Settler Feminism and Race Making in Canada*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2003. Print.

Higginson, Kate. "Feminine Vulnerability, (neo)Colonial Captivities, and Rape Scares: Theresa Gowanlock, Theresa Delaney and Jessica Lynch." Blair et al. 35-72.

Hodd, Thomas. "The Celtic Twilight in Canada: William Sharp's Early Occult Influence on Charles G.D. Roberts and Bliss Carman." *Canadian Poetry: Studies, Documents, Reviews* 54 (2004): 37-55. Print.

Hurst, Alexandra. *The War Among the Poets: Issues of Plagiarism and Patronage Among the Confederation Poets*. London: Canadian Poetry, 1994. Print.

Johnson, Brian. "National Species: Ecology, Allegory, and Indigeneity in the Wolf Stories of Roberts, Seton, and Mowat." *Other Selves: Animals in the Canadian Literary Imagination*. Ed. Janice Fiamengo. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 2007. 333-52. Print.

Karr, Clarence. *Authors and Audiences: Popular Canadian Fiction in the Early Twentieth Century*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2000. Print.

Kröller, Eva-Marie. *Canadian Travellers in Europe, 1851-1900*. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 1987. Print.

Lamonde, Yvan, Patricia Lockhart Fleming, and Fiona A. Black, eds. *History of the Book in Canada: 1840-1918*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2005. Print.

Lawson, Alan. "Postcolonial Theory and the 'Settler' Subject." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 56 (1995): 20-36. Print.

Lecker, Robert. "Materializing Canada: National Literature Anthologies and the Making of a Canon." *Australasian Canadian Studies* 26.1 (2008): 23-41. Print.

Livesay, Dorothy. "The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre." 1969. *Contexts of*

Canadian Criticism. Ed. Eli Mandel. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1971. 267-81. Print.

Lynch, Gerald. "Canadian Comedy." *Comedy: A Geographic and Historical Guide*. Vol 1. Ed. Maurice Charney. Westport: Praeger, 2005. 199-213. Print.

—. *Stephen Leacock: Humour and Humanity*. Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1988. Print.

MacDonald, Mary Lu. *Cherchez L'imprimeur: Printers and the Development of Printing in Lower Canada Before 1860*. Sherbrooke: GRÉLQ, 1995. Print.

MacLaren, Eli. *Dominion and Agency: Copyright and the Structuring of the Canadian Book Trade, 1867-1918*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2011. Print.

MacLaren, I.S. "English Writings about the New World." Fleming, Gallican, and Lamonde 33-43.

MacLulich, T.D. "Literary Attitudes in English Canada, 1880-1900." MA thesis. Simon Fraser University, 1971. Web. 12 July 2012.

Mazoff, C.D. *Anxious Allegiances: Legitimizing Identity in the Early Canadian Long Poem*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1998. Print.

McCarthy, Dermot. "Early Canadian Literary Histories and the Function of a Canon." *Canadian Canons: Essays in Literary Value*. Ed. Robert Lecker. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1991. 30-45. Print.

McMullen, Lorraine, ed. *Re(dis)covering Our Foremothers: Nineteenth-Century Canadian Women Writers*. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1990. Print.

Moodie, Susanna. *Roughing It in the Bush, Or Life in Canada*. 1852. Ed. Carl Ballstadt. Ottawa: Carleton UP, 1988. Print.

Moss, John. *Patterns of Isolation*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974. Print.

Mount, Nick. *When Canadian Literature Moved to New York*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2005. Print.

Murray, Heather. *Come, Bright Improvement! The Literary Societies of Nineteenth-Century Ontario*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2002. Print.

Northey, Margot. *The Haunted Wilderness: The Gothic and Grotesque in Canadian Fiction*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1976. Print.

Panofsky, Ruth. *The Literary Legacy of the Macmillan Company of Canada: Making Books and Mapping Culture.* Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2012. Print.

Parker, George. *The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1985. Print.

Patterson, Geordan. "Periodicals in Early Nineteenth-Century Lower Canada: A Study of Samuel Hull Wilcocke's the *Scribbler* in the Field of Cultural Production." Diss. University of Alberta, 2011. Web. 12 July 2012.

Peterman, Michael A. *This Great Epoch of Our Lives: Susanna Moodie's* Roughing It in the Bush. Toronto: ECW, 1996. Print.

Quirk, Linda. "Skyward Floating Feather: A Publishing History of E. Pauline Johnson's *Flint and Feather*." *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 44.1 (2006): 69-106. Print.

—. "The Place of Bibliography in the Academy Today: Reassessing Sara Jeannette Duncan." *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 46.1 (2008): 79-86. Print.

Richardson, John. *Wacousta; Or, The Prophecy: A Tale of the Canadas*. 1832. Ed. Douglas Cronk. Ottawa: Carleton UP, 1990. Print.

Roy, Wendy. *Maps of Difference: Canada, Women, and Travel*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2005. Print.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf, 1993. Print.

Salem-Wiseman, Lisa. "'Verily, the White Man's Ways Were the Best': Duncan Campbell

Scott, Native Culture, and Assimilation." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 21.2 (1996): 120-42. Print.

Strong-Boag, Veronica, and Carole Gerson. *Paddling Her Own Canoe: The Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2000. Print.

Venema, Kathleen. "'As we are both deceived': Strategies of Status Repair in 19thC Hudson's Bay Company Correspondence." *RHETOR: Journal of the Canadian Society for the Study of Rhetoric* 1 (2004): 1-24. Print.

Ware, Tracy. "Byron's Influence on Early Canadian Literature." *Byron: Heritage and Legacy*. Ed. Cheryl A. Wilson. New York: Palgrave, 2008. 25-34. Print.

Weiss, L.P. "D.C. Scott's View of History and the Indians." *Canadian Literature* 111 (1986): 27-40. Print.