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Editorial

"A beauty and daring all its own"

A Note on Science and Canadian Literature

Janine Rogers

In 1922, when Duncan Campbell Scott gave the annual address to the Royal Society of Canada, he spent some time considering the relationship between literature and science. On the whole, he saw it as a positive one: "Science has taught the modern [poet] that nature lives and breathes," Scott mused, although he also felt that poetry "has no connection with material progress and with those advances which we think of as specialties of modern life" (266, 269). Wrestling with these contradictory instincts, Scott tried to articulate how both the natural and mechanical aspects of science might be poetically combined. He imagines what he calls "the poetry of the aeroplane":

> The poetry of the aeroplane has yet to be written, but, when it comes, it will pass beyond the expressions of bird-flight in the older poets and will awaken images foreign to their states of feeling. Shakespeare wrote of the flower that comes before the swallow dares and takes the world with beauty. The aeroplane has a beauty and daring all its own, and the future poet may associate that daring with some transcendent flower to heighten its world-taking beauty. (270)

The "poetry of the aeroplane" seems oddly specific to us now. What might seem now to be a strange choice should sensitize us to just how foreign a subject science, especially technological science, was to a poet of the early twentieth century. But Scott was correct in anticipating that science itself would become a topic for Canadian writers, not just a source for them of poetic detail, as it had been in the tradition of nature writing of the nineteenth century. He might have been amazed, however, at the breadth and depth of literary engagements with science that have come out of Canada: could he have imagined poetry collections dedicated to atomic

structure? He might have had some inkling of the development of Canadian voices in what he probably would call scientific romance—James De Mille's *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* had been published in 1888—but he might have been surprised to find that one of the nation's most prominent authors had produced a trilogy imagining the dystopic future of misused science. And would he have imagined bacteria writing poetry? Surely not.[1]

Interestingly, Scott's anticipation of the poetry of the airplane contrasts with the opinions of J. R. Nursall, who appeared in a special issue of *Canadian Literature* dedicated to science and literature sixty years later, in 1983. In his article "To Dare to Attempt Impious Wonders: Science and Canadian Literature," Nursall struggles to define his subject; he seems to see science only as a social subject of literature, and the idea of scientists as literary protagonists dominates this view (15). He also sees literary approaches to science as almost exclusively prose-based; aside from a brief mention of Al Purdy's anti-nuclear poetry, Nursall asserts that he is "not aware of a body of science-delimited poetry of consequence anywhere" (26). Scott's idea of the poetry of the airplane turned out to be more prescient than Nursall's limited view of science poetry; the joint publication of a special issue of *The New Quarterly* and *Arc Poetry Magazine* in 2011 on literature and science (called "*QuArc*") demonstrates the strong poetic interest in science, as have scores of individual poems and poetry collections over the past thirty years. Although Nursall argues "there is a creative unity between science and the arts" (17), he seems to find essential and perhaps irresolvable differences. He quotes Thomas Kuhn's statement that "unlike art, science destroys its past" (25); for Nursall, this means that "the work of science is to find new truths, better answers, and new methods [that] will dispense of the old truths, answers and methods that have gone before." This, Nursall argues, gives science an "open" status: "everything is exposed, to be changed" (25). On the other hand, he sees literature as being about the beauty of form, and form, he argues, is "fixed" (25). His main point is that literary work does not aim to annihilate previous work: each work of literature stands apart from every other; it does not "succeed" its predecessors, but is a single unity, apart and entire in itself.

We might have a more nuanced understanding of both literature and science now, but we must remember the radically different context Nursall was writing in only thirty years ago: the popular science boom in publishing and in television media had only just begun. Most notably, Stephen Hawking's *Brief History of Time*, which initiated the phenomenon of the

scientific blockbuster, was not to be published until 1988. (Even bestsellers of earlier decades—those of Carl Sagan, Joseph Bronowski, Lewis Thomas, and E. O. Wilson—look like niche-marketed volumes in comparison with Hawking's book and those of his publishing descendants like Richard Dawkins.) The popular science boom is significant: consider the direct influence of Hawking's book on the writing of Margaret Atwood and Robyn Sarah, for example. So perhaps Nursall may be forgiven for seeing science and literature as poles apart; indeed, that is his final analogy: literature and science exist on a globe, one at each pole. They are a world apart, but share a surface that can in fact be navigated by an intrepid traveller who, when arriving at the opposite pole, will "discover that the natives are friendly" (30). The colonial metaphor is perhaps an apt one for a Canadian critic to choose.

But if Nursall's fumblings reveal the newness of the critical space we are working in, we must admit that defining the parameters of "science and literature," both within Canada and without, can be difficult. The field is a broad one. The designator usually refers to the study of the literature *of* science, wherein science is a subject of or the inspiration for a literary work. This can include science fiction and speculative fiction. Canadian literature has an early stake in both genres, dating back to De Mille's *Strange Manuscript*, mentioned above. Likewise, there is a strong Canadian corpus of "post-apocalyptic" literature, including important texts like Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* and William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (see Weiss; Hollinger). Several of these texts attribute the apocalypse in question to the misconceived advances in science and technology; science is not always discussed directly in this sub-genre, but it frequently lurks in the backstory.

The subject of science fiction is a topic in its own right, however, and while it overlaps with the literature of science, it is not the same thing. Briefly, one may make the distinction between the field of science fiction and the field of literature and science by saying that literature and science is concerned with a broad array of literary writing that concerns science, including science writing, literature with scientific themes, and science fiction; whereas science fiction is a popular genre much more concerned with speculations on the future, scientific and otherwise. In science fiction, the idea of science is not required to respect current scientific knowledge or practice (although much of it, as seen in texts like Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, involves real science projected into a speculative future). The overlaps between literature and science and science fiction studies are significant, but the distinction tends to be maintained; for example, most readers would

not consider Atwood's *Cat's Eye* to be science fiction, although it is heavily invested in science as both a topic and a methodological principle.[2]

Other overlaps between the field of literature and science and other critical fields may be mentioned briefly here. The most substantial one beside science fiction is the field of medicine and literature. It is often remarked that medicine is an art as well as a science, and some texts in the field of medicine and literature are focused on the humanist interests of medicine and really do not engage with scientific issues much at all. Indeed, the emerging field of the medical humanities includes literary texts and literary methodologies that consider metaphor, narrative, and other poetics that provide an aesthetic and affective view of medicine. "In medical school," Jim Johnstone and Shane Neilson have reflected, "art is commonplace" (112). The scientific work of medicine underpins this humane view, however, so the interdisciplinary approach is inherent. The scientific aspects of medicine inform the writing of Timothy Findley, Monica Kidd, and Shane Neilson. Certainly Vincent Lam, who as a medical doctor and a writer is one of the few Canadian authors who has a professional footing in both science and literature, combines these worlds seamlessly in his award-winning *Bloodletting and Miraculous Cures*.

Similarly, the emerging field of animal studies intersects with science studies, but only partially: animals and animal lives are not always constructed as scientific subjects. There is a long Canadian tradition of animal stories, going back to Charles G. D. Roberts and Ernest Thompson Seton, through Grey Owl to contemporary writers such as Farley Mowat, Don McKay, and Barbara Gowdy. Much of the animal-oriented literature is part of another realm that likewise overlaps with science and literature, ecological or environmental literature. Ideas around ecology and environment have had a significant impact on Canadian letters and may well be the strongest single link between Canadian literature and science: indeed, there have been theories that posit almost all Canadian literature as some expression of ecological literature. Nevertheless, the realm of "nature" (broadly construed) is one of the initiating engagements of literature and science: as Scott said, science taught us that "nature lives and breathes"—and this was especially true in the nineteenth-century tradition of naturalist writing.

Canadian Literature and the History of Science in Canada

Historian Carl Berger has noted that the culture of science remained rooted in Europe until relatively recently, and that pre-twentieth century science was essentially colonial in nature by virtue of that fact:

> The implanting and growth of science in Victorian Canada was one strand in a complex fabric of transplanted British civilization overseas; like other strands in that culture it was modified and the resulting pattern was not an exact duplication. Nor was it entirely a matter of borrowing. Canadian naturalists belonged to an international community, and their contributions to science were recognized abroad long before it was ever admitted that the country had a history, still less a literature. (xiii-xiv)

From the European perspective, North America was seen first not as a locale of scientific thought, but as the object of scientific practice. Before the mid-nineteenth century, the New World would have been a destination for the British or European collector—a "collecting ground and exporter of raw material" in the form of natural and anthropological objects for the museums and cabinets of curiosity in the old country (Berger 3). In some ways, Berger suggests, collecting and other natural history work mitigated the isolation of the immigrant experience for nineteenth-century newcomers to Canada: "Given the relative simplicity and accessibility of natural history, and the alluring opportunities presented by an area scarcely described in depth, the practice for this science was one way for Canadians to add to the stock of knowledge and to assert a certain intellectual status" (9). Suzanne Zeller also suggests that scientific practice in Victorian Canada was an integral part of nation building. From the "geological tradition" of scientific practice, whose purpose was to "explore and exploit new lands all over the world," and which assisted in "cultivating" the Canadian wilderness, to the "inventory science" of the collectors, science was an active part of the colonizing process (3-4).

In some ways it is difficult to distinguish between scientific and writerly activities in the nineteenth century, a time when "science and literature were still considered part of general culture rather than mutually exclusive activities" (Ainley 79). A case in point is Catharine Parr Traill, who wrote about the zoology, geology, and particularly botany of Canada. Traill was not a dilettante, but an expert observer deeply engaged with scientific practices, and with as much contact with the European scientific culture as could be expected given her geographical isolation.[3] The conjoined perspective of literature and science in the nineteenth-century naturalist enterprise is neatly summarized by Traill's reflection that Canada is "the most unpoetical of lands" because of its lack of history. This, she comments drily, is "the lamentation of a poet," and for her, the natural history of a landscape is a poetic enterprise that speaks to the interconnectedness between humanity and nature:

> "Here there are no historical associations, no legendary tales of those that came before us. . . . No Druid claims our oaks; and instead of poring with mysterious awe among our curious limestone rocks, that are often singularly grouped together, we refer them to the geologist to exercise his skill in accounting for their appearance: instead of investing them with the solemn characters of ancient temples or heathen alters, we look upon them with the curious eye of natural philosophy alone. (128)

For Traill, naturalism is not singularly scientific in its interests; it also requires testimony of human agency in history, interacting with and shaping the natural world. This history is what makes a landscape "poetical" and therefore meaningful—not only to the poet, but to the naturalist.

Naturalist societies were popular in the latter part of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century in Canada (Zeller 4-5). Canadians replicated the science-focused social events and field-naturalists' collection parties that had been part of British and European culture a few decades earlier (Berger 17-18). Archibald Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott were members of the Ottawa Field Naturalist Club and took part in the organization's nature surveys and presentations (Berger 13). Lucy Maud Montgomery's husband started the nature society of Prince Edward Island, although it is unclear if she participated herself (Berger 12). So although the scientific culture of nineteenth-century Canada may have been meagre in comparison to that of Britain, science was still part of the "dominant cultural mode" of Canada (Stafford 23). If we expand the idea of scientific knowledge to include Indigenous knowledge, we can see that some Canadians engaged the idea of science on completely different levels than those of Britons and Europeans, immersing themselves in natural history studies without institutional support and connecting with the traditional knowledge-making activities of the Native people (Ainley 81). Nevertheless, Native knowledge of the natural world, however expert it may have been, was rarely deemed scientific because it was not textualized and catalogued (Ainley 81-82).

Early on, Canadian science had a much more established status in the context of national identity than did Canadian literature. Berger relates the amusing (and sad) anecdote of the early Royal Society member who complained that while prominent Canadian scientists were easy to find, he could not find any writers of note: "But what is proposed or expected that the Section on English Literature is to do?" wrote the frustrated Daniel Wilson to the illustrious natural historian William Dawson; "I know not who to name. . . . It is like making bricks not only without straw, but without clay." Finally Wilson proposed that he would "try to make out a list of illustrious

nobodies," rationalizing that "the more insignificant they may be, the higher will be their delights when such Honours are thrust upon them" (Berger 19).[4] In turn, Lampman poked fun at the Society's aged membership: "The dry bones gave forth an vivacious rattle," was how he described one moment of an 1894 meeting (Berger 19).

One aspect of Canadian science that seems to be reflected in the literary culture is the relatively weak interest in Darwinism in the nineteenth century (Zeller 15-19). Berger has noted that on the whole, Canadian naturalists seem to mute Darwinist debate, with the notable exception of William Dawson, who fought it vociferously: "After the flurry of reviews in the 1860s, they seldom wrote general appraisals of the theory and kept to themselves whatever spiritual anguish this new view of life might have caused them" (Berger 68). One reader praised Catharine Parr Traill for eschewing any of the "irreverent materialistic philosophy . . . of too many of our modern naturalists" (Berger 70). Berger notes that evolutionary theory was not overtly addressed in Canadian academia until the turn of the century (75), and interestingly, the situation seems to be similar in Canadian literature: we don't see writers taking the implications of evolutionary theory head on until after the First World War, with poets like E. J. Pratt. There is a case to be made for reading Darwinism as a more subdued force in earlier Canadian literature—a subtext to the animal stories of Charles G. D. Roberts and Ernest Thompson Seton. Roberts' and Seton's stories about the red-in-tooth-and-claw natural world often contain a Darwinian aspect, although they are not truly scientific in their outlook (Berger 74). Overall, though, it seems the naturalist tradition of science lingered in Canada long after it faded in Europe; Frederick Philip Grove, for example, published two books "in the naturalist tradition" as late as 1923 (Berger 78)—out the same time as Scott's Royal Society address, and just a few years before a young modernist would declare post-Darwinian science a "catalyst" for a new poetic mode.

Perhaps it is an indicator of how quickly the Canadian poetic landscape was changing in regard to poetry's engagement with science that, only four years after Scott's Royal Society speech, a young A. J. M. Smith wrote of the influence of science in his essay "Contemporary Poetry," published in 1926 in the *McGill Fortnightly Review.* Examining the differences between the poetry of the Victorians and that of his own time, Smith concludes that the changes are both formal—a stripping away of archaic diction and a willingness to experiment with new forms—and topical. In both types of change he sees the impact of science, which has provided new frameworks for literature,

from "various psychological theories of the subconsciousness" to new understandings of the nature of time and space (32). Smith is particularly concerned with the social impact of technologies of industry, transport, and communication, and with these technologies' simultaneous effect on poetry:

> In less than three decades came the motor car, the steam turbine, the aeroplane, the telegraph and wireless, and the electric light. The result was that the standard of living was very quickly raised, business corporations were formed to exploit the new discoveries, and the whole world contracted almost visibly under the tightening bands of closer communications. Things moved faster, and we had to move with them. (31)

Even more significant for poetry, Smith feels, are the religious and philosophical shifts that have come with particle physics and relativity: "Science, again, has been the catalyst," he writes, for "a movement away from an erroneous but comfortable stability, toward a more truthful and sincere but certainly less comfortable state of flux" (31). As Smith noted, while some writers viewed scientific developments with suspicion, even dismay and anger, other poets were "awakened to a burning enthusiasm by the spectacle of a new era" (130). Indeed, Smith's vision of a science-positive literary approach was fulfilled by writers like F. R. Scott, who even took up Duncan Campbell Scott's indirect challenge for a "poetry of the aeroplane" in his poem "Trans Canada" and married those poetics to the Victorian tradition of science as nation building. In his lyric, Canada is joined together through modern plane travel, on "the everlasting arms of science" (157). Scott's poem goes further, however, connecting this technological development with cosmic existence; the national unification of flight is subsumed in the astronomical immensity of the universe:

> This frontier, too, is ours.
> . . . . . .
> And every country below is an I land.
> . . . . . .
> I have sat by night beside a cold lake
> And touched things smoother than moonlight on still water,
> But the moon on this cloud sea is not human,
> And here is no shore, no intimacy,
> Only the start of space, the road to suns. (158)

With the same gesture that F. R. Scott uses to build Canada through the technology of the airplane, he transcends the paltry limitations of national identity. If science is a resource for Canadian poets, it also demands of them—and us, their readers—that we take a wider, even cosmic, view of our existence: and therefore the Canadianness of Canadian science and literature

is undone in its inaugurating gesture. This may be the kind of "beauty" that the earlier Duncan Campbell Scott was after: the poetry of science might ask us to engage in aesthetic concerns that transcend nationalism.

But what of the "daring" Duncan Campbell Scott evokes? If poetry is where we've most taken up the existential implications of contemporary science, prose is where our relationship to science is worked out most fully in reference to its sociological, cultural, and ethical impacts, and many of these subjects require courage and a sense of daring. Whether we are looking at the sprawling futurist landscape of Gibson or Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* trilogy, or the much more intimate landscape of a single individual and his or her relationship with science, as in Alice Major's meditations on science and art, prose gives us the scope and depth to work through our complex experiences of science, positive or negative. Dystopic concerns obviously fit in here, but just as interesting are the novelistic spaces where science is inspirational, formative, and artistic: in Atwood's *Cat's Eye*, science is part of a complex network of knowledge that builds the child protagonists; it is an essential component of this novel as *Bildungsroman*. We might consider such a text as metaphor for the literary development of a nation as well; science is part of what has "built" our common identity as Canadians, including our literary identity.[5]

As the most celebrated contemporary Canadian author with a sustained interest in science, we can see Atwood working her way around the subject, looking at science from multiple perspectives. Her portrayals of science are somewhat conflicted; it is both a source of inspiration and a source of concern. She has addressed this in interviews, noting that while some might think her "anti-Science" ("My Life" n. pag.), she does not attribute an absolute moral framework to science outside of its applications in society (Atwood, "Conversation" n. pag.). Rather, Atwood's more comprehensive interests in social justice and cultural dynamics extend to science, bringing science into the discussions we must have about our contemporary society. Atwood's longevity and cultural impact make her somewhat unique insofar as she has had the time and the latitude to explore science from multiple perspectives, but as we will see in this issue, more recent novelists like Madeleine Thien are also developing a sustained and nuanced pattern of engagement with the subject of science. The cultural and social investments of science are immersed in political issues around colonialism, gender, race, economics, and class, as well as the deep tradition of engaging with nature that has such deep roots in Canada. Whether writing in poetry or prose, fiction or non-fiction, Canadian writing about science has a complex and

sustained tradition. Going back to Nursall's early reflections on the subject, the past thirty years of writing science in Canada may bring us to different conclusions than the ones he came to; rather than seeing literature and science as a world apart, we can see that they have shared intellectual and cultural space in Canada from the beginning of the Dominion, and that space does have beauty and daring all its own.

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NOTES

1 Christian Bök's *Xenotext* attempts to encode a sonnet (in a shortened, modified form) in a bacterium that will "write" the texts. *Xenotext* is the most literal example of how Bök uses science in his writing—it is not a subject, but a method. For Bök, scientific concepts and technologies inform poetry directly: science provides the ways and means of poetic discourse, form the nature of sound (as opposed to language) in his sound poetry to the bacterial structure of *Xenotext*. Bök has also explored the boundaries between literature and science in *'Pataphysics': The Poetics of an Imaginary Science*.

2 Science fiction studies of Canadian literature include Jean-François Leroux and Camille La Bossière's *Worlds of Wonder* (Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 2004), David Ketterer's *Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992), and Andrea Paradis' *Out of this World: Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature* (Ottawa: Quarry, 1995).

3 In fact, Traill was not even the first female science writer in Canada; Lady Dalhousie and Harriet Campbell Sheppard contributed natural history papers to cultural journals in the 1820s (see Ainley 82).

4 Berger notes that the Canadian Royal Society was much more exclusive than its British and Australian sister societies (18-19).

5 The fact that our highest-profile author is out in front with the literature of science is significant. While some of us might begrudge Atwood's dominance as a Canadian author on the international stage, it must be acknowledged that when she takes hold of a topic, others notice. I think it does contribute to the perception at home and abroad that Canadians are particularly active in regard to science and literature. What is interesting is that this means that the field of science and literature studies in Canada intersects with studies of canonicity.

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Elana Wolff

And Somewhere In The After-Image Winged Creatures Tread Gently On The Soft Ground

The mountainsides—let's say the sides—depicted bitumen black.
Brown debris and blackened scraps of golden shadow-facets.

The face of the cave—let's say a cave—gigantic black and slick.
The canopy above it, ashen; floor—a River Styx.

Knives of light can't part the dark that concentrates the hidden.
I stand before the image with my one good eye, my one good hand—

its bluish veins like subcutaneous creeks;
gaze conjunctively into the blood, the hand becomes a map.

Eventually
the differences collapse:

body is the starry sky, artifice the spark. The murderer the murdered
and the fugitive the found; the audience, the living-piece performed:

Our hearts are in the darkness, our hearts are in the chest.
Metered to the spheres and set to music.

Tania Aguila-Way

Uncertain Landscapes
Risk, Trauma, and Scientific Knowledge in Madeleine Thien's *Certainty* and *Dogs at the Perimeter*

In a poignant scene of Madeleine Thien's novel *Certainty*, the protagonist Gail Lim and her mathematician friend Harry Jaarsma reflect on a representation of the Mandelbrot Set, a fractal image that evokes the complex geometrical patterns that shape the universe. The image prompts them to question what it means to inhabit an ecosystem of complex structures, many of them operating at scales that exceed the powers of common human understanding (218-19). This scene invokes a problem that Fredric Jameson has identified as the quintessential dilemma of our cultural moment: "the incapacity of our minds . . . to map the great global . . . network in which we find ourselves caught as individuals" (50). According to Jameson, the confrontation with this overwhelming totality often produces a "spatial and social confusion" that neutralizes our capacity to "act and struggle" both as individuals and as part of larger collectivities (54). Risk theorists like Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck have complicated matters further by arguing that mapping the global involves an exercise not only of constant spatial and social rescaling, but also of constant risk assessment. According to Beck, we are living in a global risk society permeated by public health hazards that demand the mediation of the sciences in order to be adequately understood (27). More recently, ecocritics like Ursula Heise and Stacy Alaimo have taken up these concerns with renewed urgency, drawing attention to the novel narrative and aesthetic forms produced by global risk culture. Heise traces the rise of an aesthetic form she describes as the "Google Earth imaginary," which combines various forms of scientific data with the zooming capabilities of contemporary imaging technologies to visualize how global risk scenarios interact with "local, regional, and

global processes" (11, 12). Meanwhile, Alaimo maps the emergence of the "material memoir," a genre that dramatizes life in contemporary risk society by enacting the "profound sense of uncertainty" that can arise when we are forced to engage with scientific discourses in order to grapple with the material risks that surround us (93). According to these theorists, narrative representations of the global are increasingly drawing on scientific tropes in an attempt to visualize the complex globalized structures that shape the contemporary geopolitical landscape.

Certainty (2006) and *Dogs at the Perimeter* (2011) explore these concerns from a diasporic perspective. Set in a transnational context that transports us back and forth between Canada and various locations throughout Southeast Asia, the United States, and Europe, and populated by characters whose family histories are permeated not only by geographical displacement, but also by the traumatic effects of wartime violence,[1] Thien's novels narrativize the intersection between historical trauma and contemporary risk society. Echoing Beck's and Alaimo's insistence that grappling with life in risk society demands an engagement with technical and scientific ways of knowing, Thien draws heavily on language and imagery from the life sciences—and particularly from neuroscience, with its increasing scientific and cultural influence as a framework for understanding the material underpinnings of psychological trauma—in order to explore the place of diasporic communities within these global phenomena. Thien's interest in these interconnections resonates with recent work by Asian American writers like Ruth Ozeki and Gish Jen, whose respective novels *A Tale for a Time Being* (2013) and *World and Town* (2010) also draw on scientific tropes to grapple, on one hand, with the nihilism and uncertainty of global risk culture and, on the other, with the fragmentation induced through historical trauma.

Existing scholarship on Thien's work argues that her engagement with bioscientific discourse exposes "the limits of a scientific epistemological framework for understanding the traumas induced in socially—and historically—situated contexts" (Troeung, "Intimate" 72). I expand on this reading by arguing that, despite her emphasis on the failure of any one scientific discipline to quell the uncertainties associated with diasporic displacement and trauma, Thien stresses that such unknowns need to be confronted through multiple avenues, as opposed to a single field of inquiry. I therefore argue that instead of rejecting science, Thien's novels prompt us to consider how diasporic communities might productively engage with the sciences in order to negotiate the many sources of uncertainty that

shape their lives. I contend that by emphasizing that this task demands a collaboration between seemingly divergent fields of inquiry, these texts make an important contribution to current debates around the need to rethink the cultural critique of science in order to produce epistemologies that might "deal simultaneously with the sciences, with natures, and with politics, in the *plural*" (sic; Latour 3). In closing, I consider what these novels have to say about the specific contributions that narrative fiction can make to this important reconfiguration of knowledge. I argue that, by demonstrating that literature can enable us to engage with the *affective* (and not just cognitive) tensions that arise from cross-disciplinary dialogue in ways that other frameworks cannot, Thien's novels figure literary production as a crucial site for enacting the collaborative modes of knowledge-making that are necessary for grappling with contemporary experiences of globality.

Imagining the Global via Scientific Knowledge

In *Certainty,* the impulse to map one's position in the world via scientific knowledge is embodied in the figures of Gail and her partner Ansel, a doctor who specializes in pulmonary medicine. After Gail dies from a sudden respiratory infection, Ansel pores over her medical records in an effort to uncover the etiology of the disease that killed her. His faltering efforts to grasp the immunological changes that Gail underwent in the last weeks of her life are motivated by a need to understand not only her illness, but also "who she was" and "what she [had] hoped for" at the time of her death (95, 96). However, Thien makes it clear that tracing a linear causality between "past, present, and the anticipated future" (143) may not always be possible in a turbulent world in which "lives [can] change in an instant" (96). Far from yielding a sense of certainty, then, Ansel's efforts to make sense of Gail's death via the gathering of scientific data remind him that, as Alaimo would put it, the "scientific understanding of unpredictable material agencies will never be sufficient to protect us from unforeseen harms" (22). But it is through Gail's character that the search for a secure science takes on an explicitly diasporic register. The novel's non-linear narrative structure projects us back to the months before Gail's death, when she was creating a radio documentary about the diary of the late William Sullivan, a veteran who was held as a prisoner of war in Hong Kong during World War II. Sullivan had encrypted his diary in order to avoid detection by his captors and could no longer remember the encryption code when he bequeathed it to his daughter Kathleen years later. Gail's unfinished documentary follows

Kathleen's search to decode the diary in an effort to understand "the mystery [that was] her father" (203). Her search mirrors Gail's own lifelong quest to uncover the mystery of her own father, who lived through the Japanese occupation of North Borneo (present-day Malaysia) during World War II, but has never spoken to her about his past. Hopeful that the science of cryptography will shed light on Sullivan's and, by extension, her own father's past, Gail asks her mathematician friend Harry Jaarsma to help her decode Sullivan's diary. Jaarsma accepts the assignment, but cautions Gail about the dangers of looking for a secure knowledge via the science of cryptography. As he says to her during an interview, "someone says, 'Break this,' and . . . you assume that there is something to be pursued, some meaning to be unraveled. It is exactly the kind of thing that can destroy a person" (105). When Jaarsma finally cracks Sullivan's code only to find a simple record of the veteran's daily rituals in prison camp, Gail begins to recognize that certain memories have "no consolation" (216), and that she may never be able to decode the silences that permeate her own family history.

Aside from questioning the presumed certainty of empirical knowledge, Thien's novels emphasize that any effort to engage with scientific discourse in diasporic and postcolonial contexts must grapple with the role that Western science has played in the history of imperialism and, more recently, in modernization discourses that frame technical expertise as the key to "Third World" development. As Sandra Harding explains, this paradigm emerged in the aftermath of World War II, when Western policy-makers reached a consensus that "world peace could not occur without democratic social relations, and [that] this in turn required [an] economic prosperity" that could only be achieved through "Western scientific rationality and expertise" (1-2). In *Certainty,* Thien mounts a subtle critique of this long-standing development paradigm by juxtaposing Gail and Ansel's present-day quest for a secure science against the unprecedented flight of human capital that took place in Southeast Asia in the aftermath of World War II, when young people from across the region migrated to the West to "trai[n] as doctors and engineers" in the hope that they might one day return "home to their countries" and "bring with them a sea change" (171). However, the novel repeatedly questions science's ability to deliver "a life free from uncertainty," both at a personal and macroeconomic scale (166). This scepticism is also palpable in *Dogs at the Perimeter,* which questions the status of biomedical experts who travel to crisis zones to provide humanitarian aid, only to fly out when they run out of supplies or when the violence escalates (236).

Thien's ongoing critique of the problematic legacies of scientific rationalism in the developing world raises an important question: why, when she is so insistent on the insufficiencies and ethical problems that attend scientific discourse, does she seem so invested in mapping the interconnections between diasporic experience and bioscientific culture? We might answer this question by considering Thien's ongoing interest in contemporary neuroscience, which is already apparent in the many references to the neurobiology of memory and emotion that abound in *Certainty*. This interest comes fully to the fore in *Dogs at the Perimeter,* which interweaves its treatment of the Khmer Rouge genocide with a sustained exploration into the neurobiological underpinnings of trauma. Thien's engagement with the intersection between neuroscientific knowledge and diasporic trauma could not be more timely, as it comes at a moment when rapid advances in neuroscience are raising important questions around what some critics have denounced as the increasing biomedicalization of psychological trauma. For instance, Nikolas Rose has argued that, equipped with imaging technologies that produce "simulacra of the 'real brain,'" contemporary neuroscience has transformed the living brain into "one more organ of the body to be opened up to the eye of the doctor" (196). Rose contends that thanks to these developments, psychological conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder are being reframed as biomedical risks that need to be managed through pharmacological means (220-23). While Rose's critique paints a somewhat reductive picture of current neuroscientific discourse, he does raise some important ethical questions, some of which are actively being debated by neuroscientists themselves. Indeed, as Troeung mentions in her reading of *Certainty,* through his research into the neurobiology of memory, neuroscientist and Nobel laureate Eric Kandel has drawn attention to the possibility of developing drugs that can prevent "post-traumatic stress disorder, while allowing the experience and some aspect of memory, except emotionally reduced" (qtd. in "Forgetting Loss" n. pag.). Considering these developments explicitly in the context of diasporic trauma, neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux asks, "[W]hat would it mean to a Holocaust survivor . . . to lose such memories after having lived for many years having developed an identity based in part on them?" (162). In her analysis of *Certainty,* Troeung references these scientific debates in passing, to situate Thien's work as part of a larger cultural conversation around the need to open up a "dialogue about remembering and forgetting trauma" (n. pag.). However, in her reading of *Dogs at the Perimeter,* she

examines Thien's engagement with scientific discourse in more detail, arguing that the novel "call[s] into question Western psychiatric and biomedical frameworks of understanding and narrating trauma, [while] simultaneously recuperating . . . a Khmer Buddhist epistemology of healing and trauma recovery" ("Witnessing" 152). I want to extend this conversation by showing that, despite questioning certain kinds of scientific paradigms, *Dogs at the Perimeter* draws on emergent insights about the neurobiology of memory and emotion to imagine ways in which neuroscientific knowledge might be mobilized *alongside* other ways of knowing to formulate more capacious epistemologies for understanding diasporic trauma.

Diasporic Trauma and the Neurobiological Self

Contemporary neuroscience understands the brain as a network of neurons that communicate with each other by firing electrochemical signals across the small junctures, or synapses, that separate them. Since our feelings, thoughts, and memories all get encoded and stored at these junctures, some neuroscientists speculate that synapses may hold the key not only to the workings of consciousness, but also to the construction of the self. Eric Kandel notes that because synapses hold all of our memories, from the most traumatic to the fondest, they could be seen as the "biological basis of human individuality" (218), while Joseph LeDoux goes so far as to speculate that the self might be a product of the synaptic connections in our brain. In *Certainty*, Thien engages the scientific and popular fascination with the neurobiological basis of selfhood by constructing scenarios in which her characters question what it means to think of their memories and emotions as products of the networked interactions between the neurons, neurotransmitters, and synapses that make up the architecture of the human brain. One moment that poignantly evokes the implications of understanding the self in light of these neurobiological processes occurs when Gail is lying awake in bed, ruminating about her faltering relationship with Ansel. Still hopeful that they might be able to salvage their relationship, she wonders what a functional MRI scan would reveal about their feelings for one another: "[W]hat does it see? The work of thousands of synapses. The chemical traces of memory and love. If it could peer into Gail's mind in a moment when she thinks of Ansel, how many patterns would it see awakened?" (201).

Despite its potential for illuminating the material basis of memory and emotion, the neuroscientifically informed conception of selfhood that Thien invokes in this passage also carries some unsettling implications. As LeDoux

argues, imagining the self as a product of synaptic connections that can be altered or disassembled as a result of experience also means recognizing "how fragile a patch job [the self] is" (304). In *Dogs at the Perimeter,* Thien seizes on this very problem, complicating her engagement with neuroscientific discourse by raising a series of unsettling questions about the neurobiological basis of selfhood: If, as the contemporary biology of mind suggests, our synapses hold our selves together, what happens when these connections break down as a result of a brain lesion or a traumatic experience? Is there an essential self that remains tucked away somewhere deep within our minds, safe from these potential failures in connectivity? And finally, how do these shifting conceptions of selfhood affect our understanding of human relationships, both at an intimate and a communal level?

Thien explores these questions through the interrelated stories of Janie and Hiroji, two friends who work together as researchers at the Brain Research Centre in Montreal, and who also share a common bond as refugees who fled to Canada to escape the wartime violence that shook their respective countries during and in the aftermath of World War II. Janie arrived in Vancouver as a child refugee thirty years earlier after losing her entire family to the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia, while Hiroji and his family fled Japan after the American fire-bombings of Tokyo during World War II. Hiroji also shares an unexpected, but profound, connection to the Khmer Rouge revolution: thirty years ago, he travelled to Cambodia to search for his brother James, who went missing while working as a doctor with the Red Cross mission in Phnom Penh. While in Cambodia, Hiroji took care of an orphaned boy named Nuong, whose traumatized condition as a Khmer Rouge survivor continues to haunt him in his present life. The boundaries between past and present, between Canada and Cambodia, and between scientific objectivism and subjective experience begin to blur as the novel's plotline interweaves Janie and Hiroji's collaborative efforts to shed light on the neurobiology of various memory disorders with the fractured accounts of their respective struggles to assimilate their own traumatic memories.

In their work as researchers, Janie and Hiroji deal frequently with patients who suffer from brain lesions which have disrupted the connectivity between the different neural circuits in their brains, leading them to develop what some neuroscientists refer to as "disconnection syndromes" (LeDoux 306). Thien constructs a poignant parallel between the structural damages suffered by these patients and the more subtle failures in connectivity that can emerge from experience, particularly from historically induced forms of trauma.

In *Certainty,* this parallel is foregrounded in the scene in which Gail and Ansel discuss the contingencies surrounding memory retrieval. Gail notes that her radio interviewees will sometimes "remember things they haven't thought about in years" and accounts for this phenomenon by referencing Nietzsche's argument that memory loss is a survival mechanism, since "the ability to forget is what brings us peace" (85). Gail's comment prompts Ansel to respond that Nietzsche "was on to something in a biochemical way, too. If there's a trauma, or a difficult memory, sometimes that severs the links. The memories themselves don't disappear, but you can't find your way back to them, because the glue that connects the different streams is somehow dissolved" (85). In *Dogs at the Perimeter,* Thien builds on this insight by suggesting that although trauma-driven changes in the neurobiological self may not be as readily visible as the changes created by degenerative brain conditions, their effects are no less material or devastating. Thien illustrates this point by examining the lasting material effects of the fear-conditioning strategies that the Khmer Rouge regime deployed in order to maintain its pervasive control over the Cambodian population during and after the revolution.

Thien's novel explores how the Khmer Rouge government—or "Angkar," as it called itself—systematically conditioned its people to sever all the memories that might connect them to their past. Children in particular were indoctrinated to forget their families and look to Angkar as their only source of filiation—a practice that facilitated their subsequent recruitment as Khmer Rouge cadres and labour camp leaders. Thus, Janie describes how a work camp supervisor instructed her and her brother to "cut loose" all the memories of their loved ones (*Dogs at the Perimeter* 79). The novel also illustrates how the Khmer Rouge kept obsessive records of the biographies and family trees of the entire population and used its knowledge of these "networks of connection" to hunt down suspected traitors and their families (107). Thien shows how the fear that their life story might be used to "destroy [them] and all the people [they] loved" led many civilians to adopt false identities, so that "nearly everyone" had accumulated "many aliases" by the time the regime fell (25, 157). Thus, the novel stages a proliferation of discarded identities as it untangles the past lives of those who lived through this traumatic period in Cambodia's history. Especially significant in this regard is the fact that Janie's own birth name remains elusive throughout the novel: her Khmer name, Mei, turns out to be an alias that she adopted at the suggestion of a Khmer Rouge cadre who advised her that "if you want to be strong . . . you have to become someone else. You have to take a new name" (92).

As Troeung argues, Thien's representation of the trauma suffered by Cambodians during the Khmer Rouge regime highlights the limits of psychiatric models that emphasize the "closed interiority of trauma" while ignoring the historically situated circumstances from which trauma arises ("Witnessing" 157). But while Troeung's main focus lies in Thien's use of "Khmer Buddhist notions of health and healing" to question the "cognitive imperialism" associated with "Western epistemologies of . . . trauma recovery," my interest lies in her use of neuroscientific tropes to question the long-standing construction of trauma as a phenomenon that is primarily psychic in nature. A case in point is Cathy Caruth's theorization of trauma as a "wound of the mind" that is "not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (3-4). This characterization of trauma as a psychic wound that is fundamentally different from the "wound of the body" (3) elides the fact that psychic experiences emerge from the historically and materially situated experiences of *embodied* subjects. Addressing the need to engage with this materiality, and challenging the implicit Cartesianism of dominant psychoanalytic frameworks for understanding diasporic trauma, Thien shows in *Dogs at the Perimeter* that the psychic and embodied aspects of this phenomenon are deeply interconnected and that the language and metaphors of contemporary neuroscience might offer a useful framework for thinking through this mutually affecting relationship.

Instead of attempting to represent the neurobiology of trauma directly (an elusive task given neuroscience's precarious understanding of the complex neural processes that mediate trauma), Thien alludes to it obliquely through the narrative form of the novel. The fragmented, non-linear structure of *Dogs at the Perimeter* echoes the neuroscientific principle that, if experience can strengthen and even trigger the creation of new synaptic links, it can also *erode* these connections, disrupting the flow of information in the neural circuits that participate in the retrieval and consolidation of memories (Kandel 215). Thien reinforces this motif of synaptic "malconnection"[2] by dividing the novel into sections by character and then assigning two separate sections to the protagonist—one under her current name "Janie" and another under her Khmer alias "Mei." This structuring device, which frames Mei's narrative as a displaced stream of Janie's memory, evokes the way in which trauma can disrupt the synaptic connections that underpin a person's sense of self. This self-fragmentation becomes increasingly evident as Janie sifts through the files detailing James' disappearance during the revolution, and

is flooded with memories of her own childhood in Cambodia. Forced to confront these unassimilated episodes of her past, Janie feels like something has "broken and come undone" inside her, and she can no longer contain the fragments of her previous selves (*Dogs at the Perimeter* 140).

The motif of synaptic "malconnection" established by the formal structure of the novel is echoed in a series of cartographic metaphors that liken the memory disruptions suffered by Janie to fading signposts on a map. For instance, while recalling how she was forced to leave her mother's deathbed at the work camp infirmary, Janie casts her suppression of this painful memory as an erasure of the landmarks that might have led her back to her most cherished childhood memories: "A space grew around me, it rose from the soil, a space in which there were no doors, no light or darkness, no landmarks. No future, no past. The things I kept hidden from Angkar had not been buried deep enough," she laments (121). Her statement stands as a spatialized representation of the same problem Ansel alludes to in *Certainty* when he states that trauma can "dissolve" the synaptic links between the multiple neural circuits that house our memories, making it difficult for us to find our "way back to them" (85).

Current neuroscientific knowledge suggests that, aside from compromising subjects' ability to consolidate and contextualize memories, trauma also alters the connectivity of the amygdala—a region of the brain that is linked to the production of emotions and is crucially implicated in the initiation of fear responses. One important feature of the amygdala is that it stores information without our conscious awareness, thereby contributing to what neuroscientists term "implicit" memory—that is, the kind of memory that underlies our perceptual and motor skills and is "recalled directly through performance, without any conscious effort or even awareness that we are drawing on memory" (Kandel 132). This form of memory functions differently from explicit memory, which draws on information that is directly "available for conscious recollection," and is thus central to the construction of our self-concept (LeDoux 97, 28). As LeDoux explains, the neurobiological self is constructed and maintained through the interaction between implicit and explicit memory processes (216). However, as he and Kandel both indicate, these processes do not always map neatly onto one another, a problem that becomes especially evident when we experience a traumatic event (LeDoux 322; Kandel 133). During a traumatic experience, the amygdala will record a wealth of information about the situation at hand, *including stimuli we may not be consciously aware of*, forming unconscious

associations between these neutral stimuli and the original trauma. And because these connections are formed implicitly, without our conscious awareness, "those stimuli might on later occasions trigger fear responses that will be difficult to understand and control, and can lead to pathological rather than adaptive consequences" (LeDoux 225). In short, current neuroscientific knowledge suggests that trauma can engender an embodied (and not just psychological or mental) dissociation between the implicit and explicit memory processes that make us who we are.

In *Dogs at the Perimeter*, this slippage is invoked through Janie's struggle to maintain her self-identity as a neuroscientist with "expert" insight into the material basis of memory. Throughout the narrative, Thien stages an ongoing tension between Janie's explicit self-construction as an objective witness to the neurobiology of various memory disorders and her subjective experience as a trauma survivor still haunted by the fear responses she learned as a child. Particularly significant here is the way in which Janie's trajectory as a trauma survivor turned neuroscientist mirrors the life story of Eric Kandel as it is chronicled in his 2006 memoir *In Search of Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of Mind*, which interweaves the story of his personal quest to understand his past as a Holocaust survivor with an account of contemporary neuroscience's ongoing efforts to "understand the mind in cellular and molecular biological terms" (403). However, while Kandel's memoir reflects a relentless optimism that, despite its current limitations, neuroscience will one day be able to shed light on the neurobiological basis not only of memory and selfhood, but also of psychological conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder, Janie's trajectory works to emphasize the difficulty of understanding the workings of trauma even when one is equipped with "expert" insight into the neurobiological activity of the brain. This tension is subtly foregrounded in the passages in which Janie describes her experiments on the marine mollusk Aplysia. Despite her efforts to maintain an aura of epistemological certainty and scientific objectivity, Janie's descriptions of the creature betray a lurking sense that the boundary between herself and her "object" of study is much more permeable than she would like to think. For instance, having declared that she would be able to operate on Aplysia even while blindfolded, Janie adds that "in the sea, [the mollusk] looks like a petal swirling through the water, her gills clapping softly together" (150). The empathic tone of this musing, coupled with its curious gendering of Aplysia as female, suggests a doubling between Janie and the sea slug whose brain cells she has learned to harvest with "stoic

precision" (149). This doubling is reinforced by the novel's many intertextual references to Kandel's memoir, which call to mind the Nobel laureate's extensive discussion of the groundbreaking experiments in which he mapped the synaptic changes behind memory storage by applying electrical stimuli to the neural pathways of Aplysia (161). Crucially, Kandel describes how he "trained" Aplysia to associate a neutral stimulus with a stimulus "strong enough to produce instinctive fear" and thus conditioned the mollusk to react to that stimulus with an instinctive fear response (170, 343). Perhaps inspired by these interconnections, Thien constructs a poignant parallel between Janie and Aplysia as fellow subjects of learned fear.

The effects of the fear conditioning that Janie experienced as a child are revealed in their full magnitude as the narrative leaps from the scene of her lab experiments with Aplysia to an episode in which she beats her son Kiri. Janie describes this moment in terms that reflect her inability to control her body's neurophysiological responses: "I didn't know anymore, I couldn't explain, how this could have happened, why I could not control my hands, my own body. . . . Our son didn't understand and I saw that he blamed himself, that he tried so hard not to be the cause of my rage, my unpredictable anger" (153). Through her devastating depiction of Janie's fraught relationship with Kiri, Thien foregrounds how learned fear responses not only can compromise the ability of subjects to start anew in the aftermath of trauma, but also can perpetuate trauma across generations. In other words, Thien suggests how, as in Marianne Hirsch's work on "postmemory," the fear responses that take root in traumatized subjects can spawn "transferential processes—cognitive and affective—through which the past [will be] internalized" by new generations "without fully being understood" (31). This problem is not lost upon Janie, who comes to recognize that, despite her efforts to protect Kiri, the boy has internalized her learned fears, and "aspires to a sort of perfection, as if it were up to him to keep us safe" (153).

Ultimately, Thien's novel suggests that the value of neuroscience as a tool for negotiating the uncertainties generated by diasporic trauma lies not in its potential ability to mitigate the emotional import of traumatic memories through pharmacological or surgical means, but in its ability to shed light on the resilience of the neural circuits that enable us to think, feel, and engage with the world around us. This possibility stems from the recognition that the same plasticity that makes our neural circuits vulnerable to the "malconnections" engendered by trauma also renders them capable of forming new synaptic connections. As LeDoux explains, "if the self can be disassembled by

experiences that alter connection, presumably it can also be reassembled by experiences that establish, change, or renew connections" (307). Likewise, Thien's novel remains hopeful that subjects of trauma may be able to create new synaptic connections by forging new connections with *others*. More specifically, the novel suggests that subjects of trauma may be able to reclaim their identities through empathic acts of collaboration that might enable them to share the burdens of mourning and knowledge-seeking with others who have experienced losses similar to their own. In the novel, Janie begins to glimpse this possibility when, meditating on what her friendship with Hiroji has taught her, she recognizes that allowing for new connections (both neurological and interpersonal) to take root does not necessarily mean that she must erase old ones: "I could be both who I was and who I had come to be. I could be a mother and a daughter, a separated child, and adult with dreams of my own," she says to herself (147). By way of conclusion, and to return to some of the epistemological questions I posed in my introduction, I wish to explore the implications of Janie and Hiroji's relationship—and the empathic modes of collaboration this relationship invokes—for current debates around the knowledge practices that are needed in order to grapple with the cognitive and affective challenges posed by contemporary experiences of globality.

Towards an "Empathic" Collaboration between Scientific and Literary Ways of Knowing

Thien's understanding of the role of scientific knowledge in helping us to grapple with the task of imagining the global—with all its problems and possibilities—is most powerfully reflected in the passage in which Janie and Hiroji begin to talk about Janie's past in Cambodia as they wait for their computer to "crunc[h] its way through layers of statistical analysis" (146). This initial vignette of the two scientists sorting through layers of statistical data telescopes out into an image of the same two people walking together through a wintry landscape, talking leisurely as colleagues and close friends about the scientists and philosophers who have influenced their respective ways of seeing the world. In Janie's words, "for hours we talked, roaming together, stopping at the wide branches of Gödel and Luria, the winter stillness of Heisenberg, the exactitude of Ramón y Cajal" (147). Interestingly, the figures referenced by Janie and Hiroji share an important commonality: they each formulated a conceptual framework for thinking through the complex interactions that shape the world around us, while also recognizing

that we will never be able to map every component of these interactions, and that, consequently, our representations of the world will always only be partial. From Heisenberg's formulation of the "uncertainty principle," to Gödel's creation of the "incompleteness theorem," to Luria's use of narrative to bridge the gaps in his empirical observations of his neurological patients, the scientific references in this passage work to reframe science not as a source of positive knowledge, but as a tool that enables us to construct functional representations of the world in the face of doubt and uncertainty.

What emerges from this passage, then, is a recognition that, much like the visual arts and narrative fiction, science at its core is also concerned with questions of imaging and representation, of how to best manage the "resolution gaps"—to borrow a term used by neural imagists—between the complexity that surrounds us and our own imperfect attempts to capture this complexity. In this sense, Thien draws attention to a key methodological problem that the sciences and the humanities are both currently grappling with: how to represent processes that are happening simultaneously, yet at varying temporal and spatial scales. This challenge, which neuroscientists term the "levels" problem, has become a central focus of neuroscientific research in recent years. As Terrence Sejnowski explains, "if the study of neural circuits weren't sufficiently complicated, it is now known that circuits are dynamic on many timescales. . . . In order to fully address the challenges posed by this constant flux, researchers must map many circuits at different stages of development and in many different environments" (170). In her latest work, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization,* Gayatri Spivak engages the "levels" problem from a literary perspective, arguing that contemporary experiences of the global cannot be understood in terms of the polarities between tradition and modernity, colonial and postcolonial. Thus, she contends that what we need are aesthetic and narrative practices that can enable us to think in terms of the dynamic interaction between processes that are happening at multiple scales of time and geography. As reflected in her use of non-linear temporalities that interweave contemporary events with the complex history of Southeast Asia, Thien shares a similar understanding of globality as a condition that is characterized by the simultaneity between the colonial and the postcolonial, and between the local and the (seemingly) distant. Indeed, speaking about her depiction of the Khmer Rouge genocide in *Dogs at the Perimeter,* Thien has indicated that the novel narrates not just "Cambodia's story but also a story of our generation, from Western presence and interference in

Southeast Asia, to the flow of Marxist ideas into Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, and the way those ideas were reshaped within the regional political discourse," to Canada's complicity in the UN's continued recognition of the Khmer Rouge regime well into the 1990s, to the lives of "Cambodians who [now] live abroad," but remain deeply connected to Cambodia and its history (Thien, interviewed by Leighton n. pag.).

In both *Certainty* and *Dogs at the Perimeter,* Thien foregrounds the representational problem of how to capture this simultaneity through a sustained exploration of the capabilities and limitations associated with various visual and audio technologies. As Eleanor Ty points out, Thien emphasizes the ways in which these technologies construct reality while at the same time underscoring their ability to "help us see and hear things we would miss otherwise" (48, 49). In *Certainty,* Gail's fascination with radio's ability to capture entire ecosystems of sounds is tempered by her recognition that, when radio signals "are broadcast back to us . . . some parts always escape" (106). Similarly, in *Dogs at the Perimeter,* Janie is captivated by the "magical" ability of telescopes and microscopes to "collapse space and time" even as she recognizes the various optical illusions these technologies must rely upon in order to make the distant and the microscopic visible to the human eye (168). This tension between the search for the best instrument with which to capture the complex dynamics of globality and the recognition that none of these tools can capture everything on its own is invoked repeatedly throughout both novels and reflects Thien's concern with the resolution gaps in her *own* medium—that of narrative fiction. In Thien's own words, "[all] my life I've turned to fiction. It's my main form of expression. But . . . [t]here are questions that only science and nonfiction seem to answer, or even ask. I want a novel to be open to that. I'm trying to find the language to do that" (Thien, interviewed by Mudge n. pag.).

Ultimately, Thien's fiction demonstrates a profound interest in realizing the potential for empathic collaboration that arises from the recognition that arenas of knowledge production as seemingly divergent as neuroscience and narrative fiction not only share an interest in similar philosophical questions, but also struggle with the same representational problems. I am characterizing the modes of collaboration that Thien calls for as empathic because, in both *Certainty* and *Dogs at the Perimeter,* Thien repeatedly emphasizes that grappling with the totality we live in now is as much a question of *affect* as it is of cognition, since it involves negotiating those "visceral forces" that, as affect theory teaches us, always lie "beneath [or]

alongside . . . conscious knowing" and produce feelings and sensations that can sometimes "leave us feeling overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability" (Seigworth and Gregg 1). Thien acknowledges this challenge by filling her novels with intimate moments (such as the aforementioned exchange between Gail and her friend Jaarsma in *Certainty*) in which her characters recognize the need to work in solidarity as they each struggle to grasp phenomena that exceed their current understanding. These scenes demonstrate that, just as these characters must learn to relate to each other with "the kind of love that comes from [an] acceptance of not understanding the full story" (as Thien has stated in a CBC interview with Sheryl MacKay), so too must actors on different sides of the disciplinary divide learn to make new connections while also empathizing with each other over the gaps in their respective ways of seeing and knowing. These moments of empathic collaboration also indicate that approaching interdisciplinary knowledge-making with an eye to the role that affect plays in knowledge production might help us to better account for the feelings of uncertainty, defamiliarization, and otherness that can arise when we are confronted with epistemologies that exceed or challenge our conceptual categories, as well as the feelings of wonder, delight, and hope that can emerge when we find unexpected points of commonality between seemingly divergent methods of inquiry. In both novels, these moments of collaboration are often prompted by the encounter with an artistic representation of a scientific concept (such as the image of the Mandelbrot Set in *Certainty*), which suggests that the cognitive and affective challenges associated with the task of imagining the global call for creative responses that straddle the boundary between art and science. Thus, in *Dogs at the Perimeter*, Thien punctuates the scene of Hiroji and Janie's collaboration in the lab with a reference to Santiago Ramón y Cajal, the nineteenth-century scientist whose neural sketches illuminated the "properties of living nerve cells" in a "leap of the imagination, perhaps derived from [Cajal's] artistic bent" (Kandel 61). By emphasizing that modern neuroscience was founded on this creative fusion between art and science, and filtering this reference through the image of the two friends Janie and Hiroji engaging in an act of intimate knowledge-sharing, Thien stages broader questions about the kinds of knowledge practices that are required to grapple with processes that encompass multiple spatial and temporal scales. Through this gesture, she advances a collaborative model of knowledge-making in which actors from diverse backgrounds might help each other to negotiate the cognitive and affective challenges

posed by contemporary experiences of globality. Ultimately, Thien's novels remain hopeful that such acts of empathic knowledge-sharing might help diasporic communities to negotiate the landscapes of uncertainty produced by globality while continuously challenging themselves to cultivate more competent and ethical ways of approaching these unknowns.

NOTES

1 *Certainty* is set against the historical backdrop of the Japanese occupation of North Borneo (present-day Malaysia) during World War II, while *Dogs at the Perimeter* looks back at the genocide that took place in Cambodia from 1975 to 1979 under the Khmer Rouge regime.

2 I am borrowing the term "malconnection" from LeDoux, who uses it to distinguish the synaptic disruptions caused by trauma and experience from the more overt "disconnections" caused by brain lesions and degenerative brain conditions (307).

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Elana Wolff

Velocity Text

Flat seas, frozen axe.
The levelling force of vortex.
        Daughter, my laughter >
faster and faster.
        Stones blossoming,
                mammalling plants.
The man in my body com-
posing a poem > his fox-box.
        King bed.
                Velocity text.

Dreams demanding I give up sleep
that heaves me, harrowed, elsewhere—

Stoat approaching, also crow, I'm

                at the window
slipping into thinness of erasure;

nothing in the foreground
presses back.

Monica Kidd

Shadows, Slicksters, and Soothsayers
Physicians in Canadian Poetry

Introduction

As a physician and a (Canadian) poet, I am intrigued by how physicians are portrayed in Canadian poetry. I entered medical school with conflicted imagery. In addition to being (in my mind) scientists of the highest degree, the doctors I had growing up in a prairie town had been kind, receptive, caring, and patient. That small town family doc was the one I wanted to be: an expert of the human body, but also unhurried, useful; someone who knew the parents and grandparents of her patients. Television and movies taught me a different version of doctors: they were often avaricious, incestuous, sloppy, and selfish. Medical school showed me yet a third picture: some real-world physicians were tired, naive, protected by gender, class, power, and other forms of hierarchy, while most were doing their best for their patients in the face of complexity and ambiguity. In all three versions, the science part was taken for granted.

Now that I am a physician myself, I was curious about how the world sees *me*. My dual identities as physician and poet mean I rely daily on narrative, so I did what I always do when faced with an existential question—I turned to the poets. A word, however: I studied evolutionary biology before medical school, so I am a whiz with positivism and p-values. Therefore, I will give a nod to my intellectual heritage by using the traditional form of a scientific paper, with its thorough explanation of the experimental method.[1] If I have something approximating a hypothesis to test it would be this: doctors, in Canadian poetry, will be constructed as essentially competent people of science and appear on a spectrum from caring to aloof. This composite picture will stand as a critical analysis of physicians and speak to what patients want more and less of from doctors.

Method

Relying on my own personal poetry collection, I started scanning books. To be included, a poem had to have been written in English by a Canadian during my lifetime, feature an image of a physician, and be published in a book that resided on a bookshelf (or floor, or drawer, or on top of the piano) in my home. Overrepresented are poets who are my friends, who are published by my friends, or with whom I have shared a podium. On the other hand, certain regions, styles, and years are absent from my collection because of my own idiosyncrasies as a reader. I point out these limitations merely to show my biases. Also, it is quite possible that I missed subtle references to physicians because I was too dense or distracted. I deliberately excluded poems published only in non-book formats (i.e., literary journals, websites), poems written before I was born, and poems featuring the "allied health professionals"—nurses, social workers, unspecified therapists, home care workers, paramedics. I also excluded poems written by physicians. This last point may be controversial, but I was concerned primarily with what other people think of physicians, not what we think of ourselves. Therefore, I did not include various anthologies of physician writing, interesting though they are (see Charach; Clarke and Nisker). If, dear reader, you were to survey your own collection, you might come up with completely different results. Onwards.

I spent the next several weeks sorting through piles of books, pulled along by a powerful nostalgia—for the times when I first read the books and for the physician I thought I would be when I started the work of becoming one a decade ago.

Results

Negative Results

Poetry collections *not* visited by images of physicians were legion. This is not meant as criticism, for why *should* a poet write about a doctor? One scanning for images of pipefitters and chartered accountants might come up similarly short. However, what is interesting here is that all of these poets, in one way or other, write about health and illness. Take Basma Kavanagh's "Torpor," for example:

> When my father died,
> the night and my heart
> slowed.
>
> My body grew cold—
> for months, I was

sluggish and confused,

upright out of habit,
and reflex, a rigor
of the hands, clinging

to this branch—*if only*.
Every breath
involuntary. (81)

Kavanagh packs heavy medical imagery into these few lines: cardiac arrest; rigor mortis; grief, or perhaps depression; brainstem functions. Her short lines and short stanzas packed with iambic, trochee, anapest, and dactyl feet speak to the centrality of the beating heart (irregular, then stilled), to the death of the shallow breaths, and to those who witnessed it. This poem is a daughter's living recapitulation of her father's death. Yet there is no doctor in the room.

And Mark Callanan, writing "The Myth of Orpheus" after his own brush with death following a sudden, serious illness, places his narrator in the Intensive Care Unit:

And the old man in a nearby bed
kept dying. The monitor would shriek
its air raid warning and he would die
and come back. That was his trick.
He did it and did it. The slap-slap
of the nurses' soles was deliberate

applause. Then he left for good. (12)

Callanan's clipped language mirrors the military metaphors in the poem: shrieking monitors, patients who wander away then are slap-slapped back to attention, perhaps proud of their little insurrections. Nurses patrol in numbers, but no physician makes an appearance. Therefore, my first finding is that doctors seem incidental to the illness experience for many Canadian poets.

Those physicians who do appear may be broadly grouped into three categories: shadow, slickster, or soothsayer, arranged in increasing order of the humanity they reveal.

Shadows

In the first cluster of poems, a number of physicians appear merely as accidental tourists. That is, they simply *happen* to be doctors, and their profession plays no particular role in their appearance. For brevity, I present most of these doctor sightings in Table 1, but I will discuss three in the

Shadow cluster because they begin to show physicians entering intimate, if not sacred, spaces with their patients.

On one level, Steven Heighton's primary care physician in the first stanza of "Glosa" simply functions as gatekeeper to specialist care for someone suffering—and eventually dying—from a myocardial infarction:

> You were careful, at the first brush of the wing,
> not to put anyone out. The pain and numbness
> kicked in at dawn; you waited until 9:15—not 9—
> to call your doctor. He told you
> Heart attack. Get yourself down to Hotel Dieu, Emergency,
> fast. Tom,
> you walked. (38)

The physician's humanity glimmers here, in his instruction to Tom not just to get himself to the hospital, but to do so "fast." Furthermore, *fast* appears alongside Tom's name, making it appear on first reading as though it is the doctor using the patient's given name, suggesting a familiarity, if not tenderness. Also contributing to the tone of tenderness is the way the physician is bracketed by the appearance of a wing in the first line—an unusual image among the ordinary metaphors of the pain of cardiac ischemia, principally of an elephant sitting on one's chest—and the invocation of God in the name of the hospital, Hotel Dieu. Hotel Dieu is a real hospital in Kingston, Ontario, where the poet lives, but the dual image of a wing (perhaps that of an angel) and God seems to foreshadow a gentle afterlife.

However, once the patient is dispatched, the doctor is lost to follow-up. In fact, the poem doesn't really start until after this opening sequence. Once the patient has been diagnosed and stabilized, Heighton's narrator, in the second stanza, joins a community of concerned friends, finding the wounded Tom "by chance" (38). The poem remains rather technical until the concluding stanzas, where we begin to appreciate the deeper meaning of the poem, whose title belies the form. Heighton has taken the opening quatrain of "Glosa" from the translation of a verse by Callimachus, a Greek poet of North African birth, on the death of Greek philosopher Heraclitus.

> I wept when I remembered
> How often you and I
> Had tired the sun with talking
> And sent it down the sky (38)

Callimachus' words are a tribute to a mentor, and so is Heighton's poem, written, he suggests, from a "babbling novice" (39). The narrator walks with his

slowly dying mentor through the streets of Kingston, Ontario, tiring the sun with talking, until Tom's marrow turns to song. Great intimacy and patience unfold in the second half of the poem, to which Tom's doctor remains blind.

Susan Downe's "Pruning" also invokes a somewhat tangentially involved physician.

> Last year
> our raspberry canes came
> fruiting forth four times
> the berries of all
> other years, a thousand
> thousand ruby cells proliferating
> into faultless tender
> nipples on each
> arching wand. In fall
> I cut them back.
>
> Last summer and in fall, I bled
> from my life a terrible
> thronging restlessness that I
> keep a secret, but next
> Tuesday, when the lab
> gets back to me
> probably
> I'll ask a man who doesn't know
> my face
> to cut away my breast. (22)

The poem describes the early days of a breast cancer diagnosis. It is full of anxious red/blood imagery, wherein the narrator's restlessness forewarns of an ominous future, and contrasts the abundance of a garden with death taking root in a woman's breast, her most outward symbol of fertility. Her bumper crop of berries, each a "faultless tender / nipple[]," is likened to the proliferation of cancer cells, suggesting a kind of benevolence the narrator may feel toward the "faultless" physiology of cancer, merely a kind of accident of biology, simple mutation and guileless cellular mechanics. Which is not to say she is not terrified: the poem comes to a dangerous head when the narrator imagines she will have to "ask" (note, not "comply with" or "submit to," but something suggesting an active choice) a stranger, "who doesn't know / my face"—the most outward symbol of her personhood—to cut "away" (suggesting the need for disposal, like a piece of trash) a part of her body. There is no malice implied on the part of this faceless stranger-surgeon; instead, the terror seems to reside in the living dissection the narrator is about to undergo. But neither is the physician a healing presence.

Table 1
Annotated list of additional Canadian poems in which physicians appear as Shadows.

Author	Title	Citation	Comment
Crummey, Michael	"Pub Crawl in Dublin"	*Keel* 72-73	Crummey's narrator describes a trip taken with his wife to Dublin, the city where her father studied medicine and where her parents had a stillborn son.
Dalton, Mary	"Headlines"	*Hooking* 43	A cento composed of second lines borrowed from 25 poems, Dalton's second stanza suggests that when nothing is left of possibilities and one's mate has flown, one might "open a restaurant. Or practise medicine. / Go into the suburbs and never come out again."
Downie, Glen	"Taking your Lumps"	*Wishbone Dance* 82	Malignant melanoma is compared to an abusive boyfriend, against which doctors can only offer restraining orders.
Kroetsch, Robert	"The Sad Phoenician"	*The Sad Phoenician* 9-59	Kroetsch's narrator is dispensed insipid advice by his doctor.
	"Seed Catalogue"	*Seed Catalogue* 12	Kroetsch uses the poem to wonder how to "grow a prairie town." He decides this is achieved, in part, through absence of psychiatrists.
Ondaatje, Michael	"Light"	*The Cinnamon Peeler* 3-4	Ondaatje's physician had a "memory sharp as scalpels into his 80s."
Page, Joanne	"Ah Spring"	*Watermarks* 19	Good Dr. John Snow, a no-nonsense guy, discovers that the Broad Street well is the source of a cholera outbreak in London, removes the arm from the offending pump, and all is—yes—well again in London.
Pick, Alison	"Cortisone"	*Question & Answer* 55	Pick's physician joins a family gathered around a grandmother's bed for her last few moments of lucency and increases the dose of a drug.
Sinnett, Mark	"The Wading Pool"	*The Landing* 30	Sinnett's narrator, walking in "a park cut / out of a cemetery" wades through the shallow water kicking "from clay thin-boned / shin, a doctor's back tooth."

This supporting assassin role of the surgeon is also to be found in Mark Sinnett's "Brain Surgery," in which the narrator watches a craniotomy on television and reports with an understandable sense of horror: "the skull is hacked apart / by bright chisel and the smash / of sterile hammer" (33). He describes a spray of bone chips toward the camera as the patient sleeps, not seeing the skin of her face removed and folded down over her chin for safekeeping. He wonders at how a body could "recover / from such indignity" and how a mouth could ever "figure out smiling" (33). The language of the poem places neurosurgery somewhere between carpentry and butchery, which is echoed by the narrator's banal way of recovering from the voyeuristic ordeal: by drinking beer and staring into the sun, "numb / waiting for the anesthetic to wear off" (33). Interestingly, the plot of the poem is carried out by—or perhaps it is better to say that the narrator is undone by—physicians who remain unseen. Why does the narrator not wonder about them? Is it because they are ghosts, hidden behind surgical apparel? Or is what they are doing so horrifying that the narrator cannot begin to connect with them? Either way, the stuff of the poem remains squarely with the patient and voyeur while the physicians remain in the shadows.

Slicksters

I have grouped the preceding poems into Shadows because physicians in these poems appear to carry out the technical, tactile work of medicine, but we learn little about them. In addition, the poems seem to work at demystifying medicine, undermining the sense of "specialness" about medicine prevalent in society. The following poems overlap with the previous group in that they also show doctors largely as technicians, but these physicians are a bit slippery. They range from simply the self-serving to the predatory, evil rather than altruistic, as the ideal physician is often portrayed in medical school. Poems in the Slickster category introduce a new element of the power struggles that exist between doctor and patient, ranging from the struggle to be heard to struggles enacted in spaces defined by gender and race. Again in the interest of brevity, I will not discuss all the poems in the Slickster category, but instead present an annotated list in Table 2.

The first struggle I will highlight is the one for what might be loosely termed accessibility. Joanne Page, in "Half a Correspondence," writes about attending hospital visits with a friend who is dying from cancer and describes the frustration of trying to track down a doctor: "two days in a row I have sought

a fugitive in green / going downstream a little faster than the rest of us" (*Persuasion* 16). The physician here seems to have nothing against the patient—the clue is in the word "fugitive," suggesting he, too, is escaping from something—but the effect is that he leaves "the rest of us" behind, alone, and likely by choice. Page's physician might be zipping off to a more pressing emergency, or he may be simply fleeing another tiresome patient encounter. Either way, his needs come first, leaving us with our questions.

Stan Dragland, too, introduces us to a physician with other fish to fry. In "Stormy Weather," after listening to his soon-to-be ex-wife singing in the house they will no longer share, his narrator recounts that:

> [f]or the past several years, like John Keats, I don't know why, I have been "half in love with easeful Death." Expecting the annunciation of the illness I won't survive. Cancer? Heart? "A cardiac event," chided my physician, Kevin O'Hea, "we don't want that now, do we?" I wouldn't have minded being patronized by a "we" from the heart, but this was pretty damn thin and it vanished entirely when the doctor bolted to a more lucrative practice in the States. More than half in love with easeful Life. (10)

Dragland's narrator's internal critical monologue camouflaged within lines of tidy, report-like prose communicate a sense of betrayal: that his doctor would "bolt[] for a more lucrative practice in the States" rather than stick around and do the humbler work of keeping a mere Canadian away from the clutches of terminal illness, and by using the word "we," the physician would insinuate himself into the liminal space between a patient and his illness only to leave as soon as it suited him. His actions prove the "we" is a fiction. The doctors of Dragland and Page undercut the image of the selfless physician of yore; these doctors are Slicksters in that they are protective of their time and concerned with the bottom line.

I turn now to Slickster poems that have something more to say about the doctor-patient relationship—specifically, violations of them, ranging from deceit through to predation.

Leigh Kotsilidis' "Sound Check" is an odd piece of work. To me, it reads like a found poem constructed after eavesdropping on a clinical skills session for junior medical students. Here are the final two stanzas:

> To isolate districts of tenderness,
> palpate her ribs, sternum.
> *Again: Breathe.*
> Is there turbulence

in the air flow? Is what you hear
dull? If it sounds at all like rubbing
hair between your fingers,
feathers on a snare,

have her whisper two
two-target tongue positions:
Toy boat. Blue balloons.
Toy balloons. Blue boat.
Don't let her fool you with coy
notes, lewd bassoons, buoyant
plumes, booze, croak. (29)

What makes these words art is their play on context. Whereas a medical professional might read the poem as a familiar checklist, a non-medical reader would likely approach the instructions with some anxiety—heightened by short lines—for what might be waiting in the next stanza. Or perhaps the anxiety is performance-related, as the reader is invited into the medicine tent. As with many of the poems above, a physician does not, in fact, appear; the reader supplies the image of the physician who, unseen, carries out the action. He is silent and proficient. But unlike Sinnett's neurosurgeons who work away unperturbed by their gruesome business, we catch a chink in the armour of Kotsilidis' doctor. When they can't figure out what is happening with a patient, physicians often complain that the patient is a "poor historian." Though the context here is the physical exam, something changes in the final three lines of the poem. The first stanza reads like an instruction manual for a physician somewhat hostile toward a patient who is reduced to organs and fluid mechanics; once the patient is stripped of her humanity, she is remade at the end of the second stanza as a sexual creature, full of flirtatious deceit.

These poems by Page, Dragland, and Kotsilidis belong in the Slickster category rather than in the Shadow category because while the physicians remain largely unseen and passive, they also appear to convey a bloody-mindedness to resist the emotional needs of their patients.

Patronizing doctors make multiple appearances in Glen Downie's *Wishbone Dance*. Downie is a social worker who spent a season as poet-in-residence at the Dalhousie University Faculty of Medicine in 1999. In his poem "Medicine," he compares radiation oncology to herbalism in the Far East. In the first stanza, the narrator travels to cities of the Far East, discovering "unusual growths / of ginseng shaped like people" offered for sale along the subway lines that snake below the various refrains of "*tic tic*

tic" in the city (87). In the second stanza, a patient "gingerly fingers the bulge of his cancer & calculates / whether he's too young to die or too old to be tortured / on the slim chance of cure," then:

> . . . Even the doctor
> speaks as if ticking down
> a list of well-practised evasions Experience tells him
> that truth is too potent & must be replaced
> with half-truth as a dose of radiation is dispensed
> in fractions (87)

Here, truth is better dispensed as half-truths, just as radiation does its work while waning in potency. This stringent metric of the physician (which I am tempted to say misses the tattooed mark) stands in contrast to the poem's final lines where we learn "hope too is an old & unusual growth / often strong as the roots of stones / & human-shaped" (87). This doctor understands his patient's fear but responds with half-truths, thus earning him the title of Slickster.

From here, the images of Slickster physicians in Canadian poetry begin to move from the simply self-serving and patronizing toward the abusive and predatory.

Joanne Page's narrator, as we know, spent weeks accompanying a friend to cancer treatments in "Half a Correspondence." Here, a medical team is likely assessing the friend for a tumour or excess fluid in her lungs. I initially thought this poem should be categorized with the merely technical poems, but something more resides in the final line:

> your breathing too fast,
> too shallow
> to rosy up your cheeks;
> we shift
> oncologist and nurse
> undo, unlayer,
> tapping down the spine
> listening for a crackle,
> your back unprotected (*Persuasion* 26)

The acts of "undoing" and "unlayering" are, on one level, simply necessary for disrobing the patient for a proper physical exam; that a nurse accompanies the oncologist also softens the image somehow. But coupled with the declaration that the narrator's friend is "unprotected" makes the patient seem terribly vulnerable and subject to attack. That theme is developed a little further along:

Ordeal:
white tray,
surgical gloves,
does this hurt, hon?
iodine wiped on,
and off,
the square cotton patch,
fingers kneading,
sorry, sorry,
needing the outline,
thought we were in,
pinned down,
slender steel,
maybe sitting up
would be better
into your skin,
hand to hand, stronghold;
I don't want to hurt you
sweetie,
five times,
finally!
crimson blessing
fast up the needle
Yes! (*Persuasion* 27-28)

The short lines and dialogue of sorts between the narrator's observations and the coaching/cursing of the medical team as they attempt to set an intravenous line are relentless. That the steel is "slender" suggests a kind of insidious attack; when the team addresses her as "sweetie," they somehow belittle her discomfort. The same thing happens to Bronwen Wallace's narrator in "Exploratory" as the "anaesthetist slips something silent / through her veins" and tells her to relax like "a good girl" (85), suggesting a gendered element to the power struggle between doctor and patient, as well as a mind/body hierarchy, where doctor is mind and the patient is body.

Another parallel exists between the Page and Wallace cancer poems. In Page's "Ordeal" passage cited above, it is the narrator, rather than the medical team, who declares that finally getting the line into a vein amounts to a "crimson blessing," as though by giving up her blood, the pain might finally stop: this is a sacrifice scene. An almost equivalent scene unfolds in Wallace's "Treatment" when we meet doctors for whom the devastation of chemotherapy seems "simple as an old war" (90). Though they do so in the name of cure, the doctors subject their patient to "mechlorethamine / a derivative / of mustard gas" and "an older ritual / given a new name" (90).

The narrator feels as though she is made "a witch in need of cleansing," whereas for the doctors, this is a simple, well trod, and rational path (90). Comparing chemotherapy to the Inquisition moves it from the domain of medical science—albeit science derived from the machinations of trench warfare in World War I—to that of religious persecution. These doctors earn a place in the Slickster category not because of any intention apparent in the poem, but because the poet compares them to those who sought to end purported heresy against the Roman Catholic Church by slaughtering women.

It is not just cancer poems that use intravenous injections as a symbol of violation. In "Spanish Insane Asylum, 1941," Jan Conn's narrator speaks of the suspicion she has for her psychiatrist.

> The tide comes in and now they want to ship me to South Africa.
> No, says the doctor. He wants to cram my veins
> With yellow Jell-O.
> My mind is alive with ghosts. (65)

She is similarly suspicious of the priest who comes to visit, and sees "the tiny devils all over his jacket" (65). However, instead of cramming her veins with what most would consider to be a noxious substance, the priest's "visiting card tasted of dark chocolate" (65). Conn's is a novel use of taste to signify trust with caregivers.

Sandra Ridley's protagonist, admitted to the Saskatchewan (psychiatric) Hospital in the poem sequence *Post-Apothecary*, suffers from a similarly fraught relationship with her keeper in "O Ophelia : O Crazy Jane":

> Heat tossed as night sweats. Crux of breastbone
> cut &
> quivering.
>
> Unribbons her pinafore. She is ready.
> She is ready. (56)

The patient here—cast doubly as *Hamlet*'s Ophelia, mad with grief and lovesickness, and William Butler Yeats' Crazy Jane, embodying the holiness of body and soul, even in destruction—is vulnerable, sexual, quivering. She is anything but the empowered "client" of today's medical speak: she is prey. Shortly, the predator reveals his professional standing—he is her psychiatrist.

> She answers coherently but misunderstands the burden of his question.
> *I'll ask you to set aside how you came here.*
>
> *Now,*
> *We're here & in this together—how is it you feel so alone?* (60)

Table 2
Annotated list of additional Canadian poems in which physicians appear as Slicksters.

Author	Title	Citation	Comment
Downie, Glen	"Information and Special Instructions"	*Wishbone Dance* 58	A found poem drawing on patient information literature in which the reader is prepared not for a healing dialogue with their physician, but for a business transaction.
	"Learning Curve Journal — Pronouncing Death"	*Wishbone Dance* 80	A poem in which an international medical graduate boasts about a medical system back home where "young docs earned / a flat fee for pronouncing death," easy money known as "ash cash."
Murray, George	"Crown"	*The Hunter* 68-69	A dystopian poem in which we meet a physician completely removed from the rules governing the rest of us.
Nowlan, Alden	"Body and Soul"	*Alden Nowlan and Illness* 63	An intern gives the narrator an injection to correct his post-thyroidectomy hypocalcemia, and argues persuasively that the patient has "no existence apart from / my body."
	"A very common prescription"	*Alden Nowlan and Illness* 73	Where the narrator gets a prescription for dry eyes, his physician tells him, saucily, "It has been an excessively dry summer / and you use your eyes more than is good / for them."
Simpson, Anne	"Counting Backwards"	*Is* 29	A physician instructs his patient to count backwards from one hundred and remains resolutely uninterested in the monologue unfurling in her falling-asleep mind.
Walsh, Des	"Antibiotics"	*The Singer's Broken Throat* 40	A doctor in Ireland makes prejudicial assumptions about a patient because he is from Newfoundland.

His questions lure her from the tangle of her fear out into an opening where she is with him, and not alone. Finally, in "Anterograde : Retrograde," where we presume she is being given electroconvulsive therapy, he strikes:

> Gauze stuffed into her mouth until she is licked awake & wild eyed. Magnolia fawn wrapped in cerecloth curled under a briar patch. Doesn't move. Won't move until the click of a switch for his tonic hum
>
> Until the blue phase & the sun cracks the horizon of a lake. (64)

The protagonist's experience is vivid and terrifying, pulling us into the looking glass of psychosis, until a shadowy doctor-as-Charon ferries us through. These passages from Ridley blur completely the line between medical invasiveness and invasion.

Soothsayers

I would be surprised if any of the preceding poems made it into medical school classes as examples of the noble physician. So few poems published in Canada by non-physician poets in my collection had anything *good* to say about doctors, I can discuss them all here.

Toward the end of her friend's illness, Joanne Page's narrator gives us a rare glimpse of a physician who helped ease her troubles, rather than cause her fear and pain:

> she phones to find out how worried we ought to be. no problem,
> says covering oncologist, if she wants to be at home, that's where
> she should stay (or words to that effect), thereby confirming one
> final time that you are in charge and what you want is, will be,
> must be, what will happen (*Persuasion* 29)

The use of lower case throughout the poem as well as the lilting and sermon-like "what you want is, will be, / must be" at the poem's conclusion reveal a kind of tenderness created by the physician's advice. The physician—though as the "covering" oncologist she has no long-term relationship with the narrator's friend—respects the autonomy of the patient by telling her she has a right to control the context of her own death, an apparently controversial idea very much in the public dialogue these days. This physician seems to rise above the daily battles of doctor versus illness and to tap into something larger and more ancient, therefore earning the category of Soothsayer.

In the first stanza of "The Beautiful," Michael Crummey "took his shift that night" (*Salvage* 90) with a woman whom the family expects to die. When she finally does die, a doctor arrives to do the examination and to sign the death certificate. The poet is surprised by the physician's "loveliness, the

pulse of it brimming his head." Eventually, the family member's body is taken away into the December night, "leaving them / to strip the bed, scour the soiled sheets" (90). Then:

> A long dirty morning and no relief from it
> but his time in the presence of the lovely doctor
> when he was unfaithful to a fresh grief,
> ashamed of the infidelity, and grateful to see
> the beautiful survives what he will not. (90)

In one way, the doctor does little more than show up and be "lovely," temporarily luring the poet away from his pain, twining the ideas of fidelity and grief on the morning after the longest night. But her loveliness, I think, is not just physical, but metaphysical, in the tender way in which she approaches the dead. This physician embodies a kind of rebirth.

Though in *Wishbone Dance,* Glen Downie's physicians are often hapless purveyors of black humour, in "Learning Curve Journal — Path. Review," a sensitive pathologist/student duo look at a slide demonstrating increased cell proliferation and necrosis, often signalling Burkitt's lymphoma:

> Our pathologist fixes his van Gogh eye
> to the 'scope & asks us to appreciate
> the *starry sky appearance* There is a heaven—
>
> he seems to be saying—swirling above
> & within us (83)

The phrase "starry sky appearance" is not one coined by the pathologist; it is a designated descriptor in his field. However, something in the doctor seems open to the descriptor's symbolic possibilities—connecting the death implied by the pathology slide with a comforting celestial vastness—which permits a humanizing lyricism in his students.

A final poem also draws on imagery from the natural world—specifically, the sky—in a healing way. In John Barton's sonnet "Saint Joseph's Hospital, 1937," the protagonist—the artist and writer Emily Carr—has had a "cardiac event," and lies considering her mortality while convalescing in a hospital bed. The first two lines of the sestet begin with:

> I lie awake. To live, the Doctor said,
> The trees and sky must rest. My pain must rest. (96)

The doctor here is not prescribing medication or interventions, things we would expect following such an injury. He is telling her to end her extended painting expeditions into remote parts of British Columbia because her heart is not strong enough for it. But he is also laying aside his black bag, inviting

his patient to simply *be*; by choosing natural imagery, he has tapped into the power of symbols and metaphor and has used words he knew would get through to her. In doing so, he recognizes her needs as a whole person and not just her cardiac perfusion. The respect the physician engenders as a result is reflected in how the poet capitalizes Doctor.

Discussion

I undertook this survey of Canadian contemporary poetry to find out what Canadian poets had to say about doctors. I hypothesized that I would find physicians on a spectrum of caring to aloof, but who all shared a certain competence and scientific rigour. What I found was that while doctors are rarely—though potently—portrayed as malicious or incompetent, we poets often see them as patronizing and selfish; only occasionally do they appear as humane or healing presences.

Poets also indirectly commented on the intellectual scope of medical practice. Is medicine a science? Is it an art? Amongst medical types, this is a debate that seems never to grow old (see Saunders; Jenicek). Glen Downie and Leigh Kotsilidis show us physicians gathering evidence in their move toward a diagnosis. Clinical medicine, based on investigation, manipulation, and observation, surely at least resembles science. But in most cases, physicians at work in Canadian poetry are shown more as craftspersons, doing the hands-on work of medicine: starting intravenous lines, performing surgery, or administering medication. Is this because poets are typically not familiar with, or interested in, the working end of science?

Possibly, but I think the poets are onto something important here. Since the early nineties, the rule of evidence has taken on increasing importance in both medical education and in public expectations of medicine (see Zimerman). Certainly my own medical practice is scientific insofar as it is informed by scientific literature, and in that I use tools of the scientific method—not to mention technology—to diagnose and treat my patients. But as a poet, I am also highly narrative in my medical practice. I think getting the story straight is important in diagnosis and treatment; but truthfully, when it comes to story, I am a moth to flame. I am vindicated by my older mentors who tell me that the diagnosis almost always comes from the careful work of listening and from the physical exam—the laying on of hands.

It is because of my scepticism toward medicine's sidelining of narrative that I chose the traditional format of the scientific paper to examine medicine in poetry. I said earlier that the scientific format assumes knowledge is accrued in a neat, modular fashion, and that knowledge is

reproducible, given adequate disclosure of methods. It will also be obvious to scholars of narrative that my gesture at "sampling" Canadian poetry through perhaps a hundred books in order to arrive at general conclusions is, while (hopefully) informative, also somewhat ludicrous. I have chosen this parody because I wanted to illustrate that packaging information in the IMRAD fashion does not arrive at gospel. By using a scientific trope to examine poetry, I have tried to imply that narrative approaches to medicine (both its practice and representation) are inherently critical, illuminating, and regenerative. I am not alone in this opinion, as a growing body of work at the intersection of literature and medicine attests.[2]

And so, poets, in reflecting the daily bloody-mindedness and -handedness of medicine, show us that medicine sits only somewhere close to science, and that physicians, as slicksters and soothsayers, can wield terrible power in the most intimate places of human bodies and minds. It would be fascinating to know how this portrayal fits with physicians' own self-concepts, given that physicians are notoriously poor at evaluating their own performance (see Davis et al.). Either way, these are words of caution from the poets. And if poets speak for society in general—it would be fascinating to learn more about public perceptions of physicians; what patients/people want more of and less of from doctors; and how they feel physicians might be better trained to listen to their stories—then perhaps physicians should be more deeply invested in the interstices of literature and medicine: it can be like a good long look in the mirror.

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NOTES

1 The astute reader will recognize I am being coy here. I have also chosen the traditional "IMRAD" paper form (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion) to interrogate its assumptions: that rigorous knowledge is constructed in a neat modular fashion by attempting to falsify hypotheses; that one is aware of the totality of one's own biases and limitations; and especially that knowledge is reproducible, given that a reasonable set of directions is provided. The narrative disciplines, I think, are more fittingly skeptical about reproducibility, and understand that every reader brings a different set of interpretive skills to a set of data, whether those data are textual, genetic, or biochemical.

2 See Rita Charon's *Narrative Medicine*, H. S. Wald and S. P. Reis' "Beyond the Margins," Martin Donohoe's "Exploring the Human Condition," A. H. Hawkins and M. C. McEntyre's *Teaching Literature and Medicine,* and Johanna Shapiro's "(Re)Examining the Clinical Gaze."

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David McGimpsey

Emily Dickinson.

The fact there are so many good poems
about baseball is just further proof
that A) nobody cares about poetry
and B) they care even less about your poetry.

"The Rules of baseball Buzzed by like a fly
as Nobody Went to bat for Bizarro Jesus"
wrote an Amherst, Massachusetts author
still thinking she might be published one day.

The Amherst Arrows didn't last too long,
Though many made sour pork in aspic
for Amherst Arrow picnics they still left
and became the Washington Red Sox.

"The Left field stood a Simple monument
to Death" she wrote in a letter that Ford Frick
used to light a cigar. "All love Puff,
a Simpleton's psalm and No better Still."

Ghislain Thibault and

Mark Hayward

Jean Le Moyne's *Itinéraire mécanologique*

Machine Poetics, Reverie, and Technological Humanism

Two events define the career of Jean Le Moyne. The first is the publication of the Governor General's Award-winning *Convergences* (1961; English translation 1966), a collection of essays he wrote in the years leading up to Quebec's cultural and political transformation in the 1960s. The second is Le Moyne's decision to leave Montreal for Ottawa in 1968 to join his friend Pierre Elliott Trudeau, newly elected Prime Minister, as a speechwriter and advisor. Politics and literature would remain the pillars upon which his public reputation would be built throughout his life. In 1982, Le Moyne was awarded the Order of Canada for his "important contributions to Canadian humanities"; that same year he was appointed to the Canadian Senate by Trudeau, where he served until his retirement in 1988 at the age of seventy-five. His career follows an uncommon, but certainly not unheard of transformation from man of letters to political insider.[1]

However, such an account of Le Moyne's career oversimplifies his transition from literature to politics, ignoring the projects he worked on between the publication of *Convergences* and his arrival in Ottawa. Beginning in the mid-1960s, his primary interest was an analysis of the place of science and technology in society. Evidence of this growing interest can be found in the film and radio productions he contributed to during these years. In film, this included writing the script for *Cité savante* (1963), a film about the activities of scientists working at the National Research Council in Ottawa described as a "hymn to modern science" (Blain 66) as well as his collaboration with Claude Jutra on the documentary *Comment savoir* (1966), which profiled the use of technology to support learning. He was

subsequently a contributor to André Belleau's *La cybernétique et nous* for Radio-Canada (broadcast between November 1967 and April 1968), where he spoke at length about the importance of developing a philosophically grounded approach to science and technology. While less well known outside of Quebec, his opinions also garnered occasional interest elsewhere in the country. An interview with Le Moyne was included in a radio show produced for the CBC by Glenn Gould about the Moog synthesizer in which Le Moyne's views on, in Gould's words, "the human fact of automation and its sociological and theological implications" were edited together with an interview with electronic music pioneer Wendy Carlos and a short commentary by Gould on "music à la Moog and its meaning for our age" ("Glenn Gould on the Moog Synthesizer" n.pag.).

Le Moyne's goal throughout this period was bringing about a "cultural integration" through the creation of works that recognized the importance of poetic and technical imagination in equal measure to the renewal of humanism for a modern age. While the most widely circulated products of Le Moyne's interest in technology involved film and radio, he did not entirely abandon his commitment to literature during these years. Speculating at times that new media and modes of expression had superseded literature, he struggled to find the form through which literary expression might make a contribution to the project of bridging the divide that separated scientific and technical knowledge from philosophical humanism.[2] The fruit of these struggles and experiments was a literary-philosophical project called "Itinéraire mécanologique" (Mechanological Itinerary), a proposed three-volume work that would span the breadth of his interest in machines beginning with his childhood memories. The *Itinéraire* was never made available to the public in its entirety (and likely never completed). Only the first eight chapters were published in *Écrits du Canada français* in 1982 and 1984. These sections were only made available due to persistent requests from journal editor Paul Beaulieu, a friend of Le Moyne's who had worked with him at the journal *La Relève* in the 1930s. Close friends, including Claude Hurtubise, Alphonse Ouimet, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and John Glassco, wrote to Le Moyne with encouragement soon after the first chapters of *Itinéraire* came out, yet no new chapters were forthcoming; the project was subsequently forgotten by critics and historians of Canadian literature alike.[3]

This article revisits Le Moyne's *Itinéraire* in order to elaborate the contributions that its experimentation with genre as well as the conceptualization of technology it developed might make to contemporary discussions about

the place of science and technology in Canadian literature. The *Itinéraire* was distinguished by the way in which Le Moyne brought together the form of the "reverie" as developed in the later writings of Gaston Bachelard, with a body of philosophical work that sought to overcome the opposition between subjective experience and scientific knowledge. The value in returning to Le Moyne's writings on science and technology, a failed and mostly forgotten project, lies with the intersection of philosophical and poetic questions he attempted to resolve by writing the *Itinéraire*. While there is an established tradition of Canadian writing that has engaged with the relationship between literature, science, and technology, the canonization of these texts has obscured the volatility of the contexts from which these texts have emerged and in which they initially circulated. By returning to a text that was not completed, let alone able to find a community of readers, we hope to throw some light on the unstable contexts that played a determining role in discussions between the sciences and literature in the 1960s and 1970s.

To better understand the context that shaped Le Moyne's literary writings on technology and their interest to contemporary readers, we situate his work on machines both historically and in relation to the lines of thought they develop—lines of thought that might suggest new avenues for research into literature in the age of increasingly ubiquitous technology. In the first part of the article, we trace the development of Le Moyne's interest in science and technology in order to better understand the context in which he developed his ideas about a literary practice appropriate to the age of technoscience. In the next section, we examine Le Moyne's adaptation of the "reverie" to the topic of machines by situating it in relation to Bachelard's discussion. We show the way that Le Moyne's use of the reverie in his *Itinéraire* involved a change in the subject matter usually associated with the genre at the same time as it put forward a broader argument about the role of writing in lessening the divide between the tradition of literary humanism and contemporary technoscience. In conclusion, we situate Le Moyne's engagement with Bachelard and theories of machines in the context of the ideas and institutions that structured cultural production in Canada during the 1960s, as well as the debates about the relationship between the humanities and sciences taking place at the time. We suggest that the failure of Le Moyne's *Itinéraire* project resides as much with the disjuncture between the philosophical principles he adopted and the literary form of the reverie as it does with the institutional and intellectual context in which he worked.

Contextualizing Le Moyne's Interest for Machines

While he never published a programmatic overview of his views regarding the relationship between science and technology during the period between 1960 and 1980, Le Moyne attempted to articulate on several occasions the broader vision he was advocating: a project of social renewal that approached scientific and technical knowledge as originating from the same sources of creativity and imagination that produced traditional humanist wisdom. In the final episode of *La Cybernétique et nous*, Le Moyne offers a clear explanation of why it is necessary for humanists in particular to turn their attention to science and technology:

> To avoid alienation, we need to turn to the mediation of a new humanist, of a new *honnête homme*. This is a man who will lend himself to an austere scientific and technological impregnation, who will agree to be informed by science and technology, and thus properly equipped will exercise on science and technology his poetic contemplation and philosophical criticism. ("L'Avènement des automates" n.pag.)[4]

Le Moyne revisited the topic in light of his understanding of the divide between science and culture and the dangers it presented in a short text from 1968, writing,

> It is clear that the unity of culture has been broken and we are today divided between two cultures. Yet, it is absolutely impossible to bring these two cultures into alignment with one another. . . . Such a division impedes the integral humanism for which we are made and that must be our only expression. ("Parenthèse mécanologique" 3)

As is evident in the above passages, Le Moyne's views developed in a context described by C. P. Snow's analyses of the "two cultures" in 1956. While Snow argued that the sciences might bring greater moral clarity to the corruption he saw in the humanities, Le Moyne argued that the future lay in the establishment of new forms of knowledge that were capable of overcoming the entrenched divisions and suspicions between the two modes of inquiry and activity. To this end, Le Moyne dedicated significant effort during these years to the foundation of a new discipline, a "science of machines," to be called mechanology ("Prolegomena" 4). Le Moyne argued that mechanology, borrowing its name from the writings of French engineer Jacques Lafitte in the 1930s, was necessary for the consilience of science and the humanities, as it would reveal the common foundations shared by humanist philosophy and modern scientific and technological progress. Arguing that mechanology should be included on grade school curricula like mathematics, he explained that spreading "the science, philosophy and poetry of machines" was

necessary for humans to enter into "creative synergy" with the products of modern science and technology ("Parenthèse mécanologique" 32).

While Snow's discussion of the two cultures likely resonated in Le Moyne's rhetoric, Le Moyne's views on this subject bore the traces of being formed during his participation decades earlier in the circle of intellectuals at *La Relève* where he was introduced to the Catholic humanist philosophy of the 1930s (see Falardeau; Pelletier). Jacques Maritain and Emmanuel Mounier were the most important thinkers for this group, who "often refer[red] to their authority in order to justify their positions" (Pelletier 95). In this sense, Le Moyne's growing interest in science and technology did not represent a radical break with his earlier work on theological and political questions confronting Quebec in the twentieth century that had been the subject of *Convergences*. The expression "integral humanism," frequently used by Le Moyne to describe the synthesis of science and humanities he was proposing, was borrowed from Maritain's 1936 book *Humanisme intégral*. Similar to Le Moyne's broader project of establishing a new humanism, Maritain's discussion of "integral humanism" was motivated by his view that cultural and social renewal was urgently needed. However, Le Moyne's interpretation of integral humanism differed from Maritain's views regarding the relationship of scientific and technical knowledge to philosophy and artistic creativity, in that Le Moyne saw its integration as one of equals rather than the "mastering" of the technology by the human spirit as expressed through poetic and Christian morality. From Mounier, Le Moyne took his belief that the individual—the "new humanist" he called for on numerous occasions in his writings—might be capable of comprehending vast technological systems yet retain free will and reason, extending the arguments regarding the centrality of free will that was central to the individualist traditionalism that defined Mounier's "personalism." It was also through his reading of Mounier that Le Moyne was introduced to the work of Jacques Lafitte, thanks to a favorable citation of *Réflexions sur la science des machines* (1932) in Mounier's *Manifeste au service du personnalisme* (1936).

However, it would be a mistake to see Le Moyne's interest in machines as a simple extension of the work of Mounier and Maritain in the 1930s. Taken with Lafitte's claim that machines could be studied systematically and concretely according to philosophical principles, Le Moyne updated the typology of machines he found in Lafitte's short text to include a wider range of technologies. His decision to include a new class of machines, which he

categorized as "networked" and described as transforming communication and the circulation of information, is evidence of the influence that cybernetics had on his work (an influence that was already apparent in the documentary *Comment savoir*). However, perhaps attempting to retain the "aggressive individualism" (as David Hayne put it in 1967) that characterized *Convergences* and formed the foundations of the humanist philosophy he inherited from Mounier, Le Moyne never identified wholly with the system-oriented theory elaborated by Norbert Wiener (78). As he would later recall in a letter to publisher Claude Hurtubise, "my fervor for cybernetics was never very deep. In reality, Wiener and company were nothing more than avenues quickly traversed during my path towards machines (hard and rough)" (n. pag.).

It was instead the work of contemporary philosophers Gilbert Simondon and Henri Van Lier that were most influential in helping Le Moyne formulate a broader philosophical framework bridging scientific and humanistic modes of thought and expression. Both Simondon and Van Lier appropriated the insights of cybernetics about the systematic and reciprocal nature of interactions between humans and technology, while arguing that cybernetics' emphasis on the drive towards stability and equilibrium in systems reduced the complexity of technical objects to mere tools and instruments. In an argument similar to Le Moyne's, both Simondon and Van Lier argued that the renewal of humanism would only be possible if there was an adequate engagement with modern science and technology as sites of innovation and transformation. It is not, Simondon told Le Moyne, that society is too technical, but "poorly technical." This is because new techniques and technologies continue to be evaluated and engaged with according to outdated criteria, what Simondon describes as a kind of "cultural hysteresis" ("Entretien sur la mécanologie" n. pag.). Elsewhere, Simondon explained this argument in greater detail:

> The most powerful cause of alienation in the world of today is based on misunderstanding of the machine. The alienation in question is not caused by the machine but by a failure to come to an understanding of the nature and essence of the machine. ("On the Modes" 2)

Following a similar line of argument, in *Le Nouvel âge* Henri Van Lier described this new approach to technology as the dawning of a "new age" in which science, technology, and art would belong to a single world view.[5]

While many (including Simondon) pointed out to Le Moyne that the concept of "machine" did not seem adequate for thinking about the

pervasive influence of science and technology in society, his decision to remain focused on machines allows for a clearer understanding of his broader intellectual project. The "machine" for Le Moyne is best interpreted as a hybrid concept that, at one level, enabled him to analyze the full range of relations between humanity and tools while, at another level, allowing him to discuss the concrete details of material objects. In this sense, the concept of machine entailed the overlaying of two related, but distinct sets of relations: first, the relationship between humans and their environment as mediated by the creative use of scientific rationality and technical knowledge; and, second, the relationship between the abstract and the concrete as it related to the distinction between the theoretical and conceptual register of knowledge, on the one hand, and lived sensory experience on the other. In the context of debates about the relationship between literature and science in the 1960s, Le Moyne's mechanological project was a response to two common perspectives on technology: an understanding of modern science and technology as threats to human existence as well as sources of individual and collective alienation, and a pragmatic position that took an applied approach to new technology at the expense of its broader social significance (see Feenberg). Viewing both of these positions as inadequate and philosophically impoverished, Le Moyne felt that the "integral humanism" that might be brought about through the development and diffusion of mechanology would bridge the divide between science and culture, as well as between technology and humanism, by means of an engagement with machines as material artifacts that embodied areas of knowledge and modes of experience commonly taken as incommensurable.

Bachelard's Reverie and Le Moyne's Machines

Le Moyne never viewed mechanology as a project he could realize on his own, recognizing that an array of knowledge and expertise would be necessary to bring about the broad social transformation he felt was necessary. He saw his personal contribution to the achievement of integral humanism through the development of a poetics of machines. Following a 1971 colloquium on mechanology he helped to organize in Paris that brought together a number of philosophers and scholars (but relatively few poets or artists), he wrote that his "formidable" role was to "make sure that the voice of poetry could be heard" (Letter to Roger Bodard n. pag.). While he frequently acknowledged the insights and inspiration to be found in the philosophical texts of Lafitte, Simondon, and Van Lier, he

nonetheless argued that it was necessary to adopt a form of writing that was more amenable to documenting the symbolic and subjective experience of machines. New ways of thinking and writing about science and technology were necessary that did not fall victim to the entrenched divide between reason and the imagination that defined traditional humanism. To this end, he dedicated himself to the writing of "reveries," a term he borrowed from Gaston Bachelard's later writing on imagination and poetics.[6] Explaining the importance of these new modes of cultural expression (and the "reverie" in particular), he writes, "The study of machinic reveries must be a part of mechanology; it is indispensable to the total cultural integration of the machine. But this will not be classical or literary humanism into which we are trying to integrate the machine" ("Rêveries machiniques" 87). However, the "poetics of machines" he was proposing would not simply repeat the forms and effect of traditional poetry. Explaining the intended effect of the machinic reveries, he writes, "This is not a matter of aesthetics, and I know that traditional art is impotent before the machine. It is a matter of poetry. It is a poetry nourished in another universe than that of elementary nature. We find ourselves in a world where theory, prediction, and operation dominate. The poetry of that world cannot be anything else than a critical one" ("Rêveries machiniques" 88).

The appeal of the reverie for Le Moyne was its ability to fulfill his desire for a mode of writing that was capable of analyzing scientific and technical experience and expertise, yet did not block the relationship between these and the breadth of human imagination. The reverie, as developed by Bachelard, was both a poetic and critical practice. Described as "night" to the "day" of his earlier work on science and epistemology, such a description perhaps overstates the division between imagination and scientific knowledge put forward by Bachelard in his description of the reverie. The reverie does not simply reaffirm simplistic divides between science and non-science (see Lecourt; Richard). Rather, the two are mutually supportive, forming part of the continuum through which knowledge and experience are inductively co-constituted. This co-constitution is apparent both in the form and the content of the reverie. Bachelard was explicit that, distinct from dreams, reveries require the dreamer to be awake, but lost in the space and time of the poetic imagination, a state of wonder, awe, and "lucid tranquility" (*Poetics of Reverie* 64). Not estranged from the hypnagogic experience, reverie induces poetic images with recurring themes and metaphors that Bachelard situates in the individual experience of consciousness (see Hans).

Of equal importance to Bachelard's understanding of the reverie is that the dreamer is also a writer. Dreams, writes Bachelard in *The Poetics of Reverie*, may be recounted orally; a reverie can only be communicated through writing and appears to the consciousness in the form of the "sounds of the written word" (7). As he explains, "the reverie is written, or, at least, promises to be written. It is already facing the great universe of the blank page" (6). Finally, the reverie is not simply a collection of interpretations of daydreams and idle thoughts. It also holds epistemological value. As Bachelard writes in *The Poetics of Space*, the reveries constitute a "phenomenology of the poetic imagination," an "esthetics of hidden things" (xxiv, xxxvii).

While its relevance to Le Moyne's larger intellectual project is apparent, his interest in both Bachelard and reverie was quite uncommon among literary critics concerned with science and technology. Northrop Frye, however, was also interested in Bachelard's writings on poetic imagination during these years, having played a role in the translation and publication of Bachelard's *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*. As he describes in the preface of the translation, Frye's interest in Bachelard was a result of the similarity he saw between Bachelard's discussion of poetic images and his own interest in myth and symbol (vi, vii). But even Frye's promotion of philosophers such as Bachelard and Eliade seemed peculiar and, as John Ayre puts it, "ostensibly unpromising" (288). On the other hand, Bachelard was a rather well known figure in the French Canadian intellectual circles. Thus Le Moyne's decision to turn to Bachelard should not be seen as entirely unexpected in light of the influence of the French philosopher's ideas about imagination and experience on Le Moyne's writings since the 1950s. Writing for *La Revue moderne*, a mass-market women's magazine that Le Moyne edited between 1953 and 1959, he published a piece describing the transition from steam to diesel-powered trains titled "Un adieu et une révélation." To research the article, Le Moyne sought to experience the technological revolution first hand, travelling from Montreal to Lévis, Quebec, on the *Northern*, a steam locomotive, and returning on a train pulled by a diesel engine. In his account of the trip, Le Moyne focuses on the aesthetic experience resulting from the contemplation of the two types of trains. For him, this approach to technology entailed a consideration not just of the machine from a technical or social point of view, but of the ways technological transitions provoke different poetic images. He writes, "The diesel engine, which is replacing the steam locomotive, will never be able to nourish the same poetry as its predecessor, but its improvements correspond to a more reasonable, more

adult, mentality" ("Un adieu" 11). Searching for the poetry of the train, Le Moyne begins his account by wondering which "privileged objects" are at the centre of the engineers' reveries and how the transition from one system to the next modified our "elementary communion" with machines (11). He notes how locomotives are perhaps the "richest and most original source of poetics of the technical era" (12). The text's interest in the poetic images associated with the steam engine and diesel locomotive echoes the vocabulary that Bachelard was already using for the analysis of poetic images related to natural elements, suggesting that Le Moyne was experimenting with the reverie even before completing *Convergences*.

The chapters published from the beginning of *Itinéraire* (subtitled "Identifications initiales et premières rêveries") provide a sharper and more explicit experimentation with the reverie. Forming the first eight chapters of book one, the text begins with memories of the many trains that populated his childhood, from toy trains to the tramways in the streets and the steam locomotives he saw at the station when visiting family in the industrial neighbourhood of St-Henri. Recalling his time spent traversing the city of Montreal, he writes, "[A]ll alone, I was generally in search of, or lost in contemplation of machines" (50; ch. 1). The St-Henri train station is described as a "technical and machinic paradise" (49; ch. 1) as he documents the machinery that he encounters on his journey. Presenting a panoramic perspective on the machinery that allow life in the city to circulate, he writes:

> At the port, I found the gigantic and solemn wildlife of liners, cargo ships, tugboats, cranes, ferries, elevators, silos, barges and numerous trains filled with merchandise in perpetual motion; to the east, towards the end of the large quays, Viger Station, where there were different locomotives from those I saw at Saint Henri; to the west, near the first lock of the canal and a dock where an entire family of tugboats were kept and large liners stopped, there was the terminal for the suburban train line, of which the electric rails of the train and tramway leading to Longueuil over the Victoria Bridge, only to return by passenger steamship. (51; ch. 1)

However, these chapters did not simply consist of a catalog of machinery or nostalgic recollections of his childhood; the text continuously shifts from personal memories to exhaustive technical descriptions of machines to minutely precise descriptions of physical encounters with machinery inspired by the phenomenological roots of the reverie (see Genette and Morgan). Setting the stage for his experiences of industrial Montreal, he writes of his first toy trains (one green, made of wood, and one red, of metal): "not only can I still see them, I can touch them: the roughness of the first and the smooth curves of the second remained imprinted on my hands" (45; ch. 1).

In a later chapter, he describes the sound of electrical transformers, writing: "The transformers around me sang their cycles, each one with a particular timbre. Unchangeable music, an indestructible counterpoint in its duration! How I loved it, this warm and black chorus, this supreme measure of consistency!" (32; ch. 1).

Capturing both the schematic and the sensory aspects of the machinery he encounters, Le Moyne's mechanological perspective transforms these inert and inorganic objects into sources that give structure to the entirety of his subjective experiences. Reflecting on their role in his personal transformation, he writes: "I narrowly escaped the disaster that my parents and teachers were preparing me for, while my machines, they only offered an innate purity and the assurance of an unwavering poetry" (18; ch. 6). Le Moyne frequently projects his own feelings of confinement onto technical objects, mixing technical descriptions with his subjective feeling of confinement. When he writes that "departure [is] one of the preferred elements of the poetic universe that emanates from machines" (11; ch. 5), it is the departure of the locomotive itself rather than its passengers or cargo with which Le Moyne is identifying. Elsewhere, recalling his relationship with the toy trains of his youth, he comments, "My steam engine possessed me much more than I possessed it." (*Au bout de mon âge* 185). Explaining this process of identification in a radio interview, he states: "[There] was a process of identification, no doubt. And in those different machines, aside from the progressive consciousness of their rationality, I satisfied a need. In the steam engine, it was a need for power. I didn't have that power. I saw it there. In the case of the electric machine, it was the need of continuity, that is security, which I didn't have . . . these were the source of two kinds of reveries" ("Glenn Gould on the Moog Synthesizer" n. pag.).

Le Moyne's focus on his childhood was not to show the development or refinement of his ideas about technology as part of a process of personal development. On the contrary, his central epistemological assumption throughout the *Itinéraire* remains the articulation of his broader philosophical positioning regarding machines. At several points, he highlights the extent to which "integral humanism" might be made possible through the actualization of mechanology by showing that it is already present in the simplest and immediate experiences of technology. Early in the *Itinéraire,* he writes: "Ultimately, in the depths of my childhood, I encountered the locomotive that had burst the frames of literary humanism" (46; ch. 1). Throughout the *Itinéraire*, he integrates numerous theoretical

and philosophical comments and digressions in addition to poetic images and technical descriptions. At times, this seems quite explicit. The following passage, for instance, clearly evokes a theory about passive machines known to Le Moyne, elaborated by Lafitte in 1932:

> The worship of movement was equally harmful for me on the technological plane. For example, the stillness of buildings, bridges and other structures prevented me until adulthood from understanding the dynamics of their forms. (65: ch. 3)

Consider Lafitte's perspective:

> And, on the other hand, I don't know any example of a child, supposedly placed in possession of the most complete box, who has not constructed first passive machines (tower, bridge) then active ones (auto, plane, train, etc.) without ever starting on reflex machines properly speaking. The construction of these last, when it is effected with these games, always remains the achievement of children who have reached an advanced age, already almost adults. (81)

Taken in its entirety, then, the *Itinéraire* should be read as an attempt to reintegrate theories about machines from within the personal experience of technology. His readings of philosophers of technology *inform*—literally—his machinic reveries.

However, the realization of the *Itinéraire* remained fraught with contradictions and tensions. Most significantly, the objects of the reveries themselves did not seem well adapted to Le Moyne's endeavour. While Bachelard's studies of the elements or the family house focused on objects that foster contemplation and stillness, Le Moyne's machines in motion evoke a more fitful stimulation not particularly suited to the silent and calm state of the reverie. He notes this ambiguity at various occasions: for instance, the "frenzy" of the drive wheels "jeopardize reverie" (74: ch. 4), and some materials, like plastic and rubber, were "absolutely refractory to poetic animation" (70: ch. 3). The recurring spectacle of arrivals and departures of machines fuel his reveries with the "poetic resources that furnished [his] solitudes" (53; ch. 1). Trains (and machines more generally), being objects in motion, are a hazardous inspiration for reveries.

In the end, Le Moyne did not feel that he was successful in his attempt to overcome the deeply entrenched divide that separated literary humanism from scientific and technical discourse. Indeed, he would come to argue that opposition to his broader literary and philosophical project was the reason he was unable to find an audience for his mechanological writings. He noted that the failure of these projects to achieve the impact he desired was due to the "iron curtain between disciplines [and] cultural resistances" (Letter

to Henri Jones n. pag.). Throughout his career, Le Moyne explained the failure of his work on science and technology as the result of a conflict with *les littéraires*, a vaguely defined group of critics and cultural gatekeepers he repeatedly referred to throughout his work on machines. It was *les littéraires* from the National Film Board, for instance, who had been responsible for blocking the advances that mechanology might offer Canadian audiences because of their adherence to an outdated understanding of culture, one that denigrated technology and science.

Perhaps his encounters with *les littéraires* also undermined Le Moyne's personal confidence about the *Itinéraire* from the start. In a 1968 interview with Simondon, Le Moyne explicitly asked him for his opinion of the *Itinéraire*, which he was just beginning at the time, as if he was seeking a sort of attestation for the project. He wondered if it would be inappropriate to use Bachelard's literary genre of the reverie to analyze scientific apparatuses. When Simondon replied that one could "very well do a psychoanalysis of technical objects, just like Bachelard did to all elements," Le Moyne responded with a vibrant: "This is where I was going" ("Entretien sur la mécanologie" n. pag.). However, he felt that while he possessed the poetic abilities to describe machines, he lacked the technical knowledge of machines required to fully achieve the goals of the reverie as genre of inquiry (*Itinéraire* 78; ch. 4). With the passing of time, Le Moyne's enthusiasm waned and he spent less time working on the *Itinéraire* as his professional obligations in Ottawa increased. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, he confessed to several friends how his "machinic book" was only advancing in dribs and drabs, even though he often proclaimed his intention to return to it.

Conclusion

Le Moyne's feelings of isolation and uncertainty are curious in retrospect given that it was a period during which a number of others were attempting to overcome traditional oppositions between science and culture. At the same time that Le Moyne was beginning his engagement with the study of science and technology, Marshall McLuhan created his Centre for Culture and Technology (1963) and published *Understanding Media* (1964). Within the circle of interdisciplinary research on human interactions known as the "Explorations" group (see Darroch), McLuhan was also the one actively advocating for the voice of literature to be heard. Of major concern for him at the time was the "untapped field of communication in contemporary poetry" ("Untitled" n. pag.). His interest for both Christian theology and

humanism in the 1950s and 1960s testifies further to the intellectual context, shared by Le Moyne, within which scientific advancements (and especially the latest stage of mechanization) were articulated in relation with literature. In subsequent years, McLuhan's analysis of media and communication influenced a number of writers and poets, including the speculative poetics of the Toronto Research Group (bpNichol and Steve McCaffery) in the 1970s and many years later, the conceptual poetry of Darren Wershler and Christian Bök. Le Moyne's project solicited significantly less interest and it is not unfair that it currently languishes in obscurity.

However, its relevance to contemporary debates should not be overlooked. Recent work in the digital humanities has sought to expand discussions about the ways the tools and methods of computational analysis might contribute to our understanding of cultural practices and textual forms. Le Moyne's mechanological work raises questions about how to navigate the relationship between the ontology of technology, the epistemological grounds of scientific knowledge and literary practice. His interest in producing a literary form adequate to such an inquiry stands as an intriguing experiment to crossing the lines between cultural criticism, philosophy, and creative writing rather than a refusal to let go of anachronistic practices. Neither an attempt to popularize ideas about technology nor an aesthetic appreciation of scientific knowledge, it was, rather, an attempt to radically transform the relationship between science and literature, going so far as to dissolve the divisions between the two by means of the reverie form. This is not to overstate the artistic or philosophical worth of Le Moyne's work, but to acknowledge that its scope and range deserve to be seen as a contribution to debates about the relationship between science and culture that have only come into focus in recent years. For this reason, Le Moyne's *Itinéraire*, and the project of creating a "new" humanism it promised, deserve continued reflection and contemplation, remaining a site of promising exploration despite its failure to be fully realized.

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NOTES

1 Le Moyne's career is another example of the success that Catholic intellectuals from Quebec found in Canadian public life during the 1960s. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau is the most notable, but other examples include the careers of politician and journalist Gérard Pelletier and Pierre Juneau, initially a filmmaker for the National Film Board (NFB) and later the first chair of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).

2 In a document he prepared on the state of communication media while at the NFB, Le Moyne argued that literature had been surpassed by the newer media of photography, film, and television because they permitted the "direct capture of life itself" ("Le Désordre dans l'imagerie contemporaine" 3).

3 John Glassco found "Rêveries machiniques" "brilliant, original and profound—and also extremely amusing," and told Le Moyne how "no one [was] writing as well as this in Canada, in either language" (n. pag.). Gilles Marcotte, an author, critic, and filmmaker, encouraged Le Moyne in his philosophical and poetic endeavour: "You say that the poetics of machine can only be critical. Isn't it true of all veritable poetry today?" (n. pag.). Pierre Elliott Trudeau also encouraged him to "break his silence" on machines upon reading *Itinéraire* in 1982 (n. pag.).

4 Unless otherwise noted, all translations of citations originally in French are by the authors.

5 Le Moyne regularly mentioned the importance of Van Lier and Simondon; their influence on his work was profound. He worked to increase awareness of their work in North America, conducting interviews with both philosophers in the hope of having them distributed in the form of educational films by the Office du Film du Québec.

6 Bachelard's main publications on imagination and reverie include *L'Air et les songes* (1943), *L'Eau et les rêves* (1964), *La Psychanalyse du feu* (1965), *La Terre et les rêveries du repos* (1965), and *La Poétique de la rêverie* (1965).

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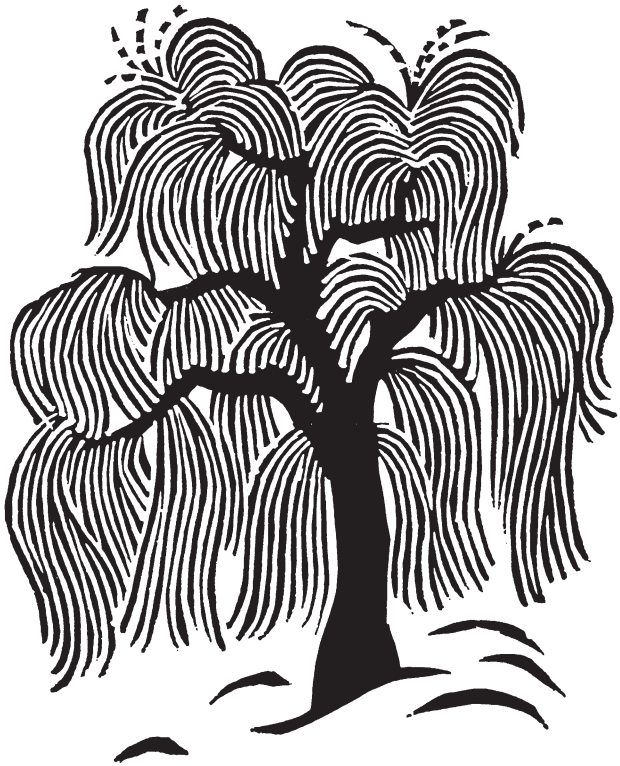

David McGimpsey

Washington Irving.

Each play in the 2009 Series
can be cross-indexed to Rip Van Winkle.
Those big hits by Hideki Matsui
were still falling asleep to history.

The falling maples leaves, Dame Van Winkle,
brings us back to our freshman year, never
quite dressed right for the coming cold, never
stopping to tour the nutmeg factory.

I hate Halloween. The last time I barked
at my students I was in a costume.
Downtown, cold, pecking my phone, miserable
in my wet Joe DiMaggio outfit.

Congratulations, Doc, you may have won
"the successful evasion of adulthood".
Fetterley, Judith. *The Resisting Reader*:
Indiana University Press. 1978

Victoria Kuttainen

"Sailor, Novelist, and Scientist—Also Explorer"

Frank Burnett, Canada's Kon-Tiki, and the Ethnographic Middlebrow[1]

> There is a people living within the zone of civilization and Christianised influence, upon islands composed of almost magic formation, scattered in strange and tiny groups in the midst of an ocean whose waters are continually being traversed by ships of every nation; withal, a people who, though presenting most other characteristics of their remote ancestors—they are semi-savage, superstitious, crude, and primitive, yet have such a legendary and traditional conception of, and belief in their own advancement and development, that one is forced to reflect anew upon the theory of evolution, and the pristine state of the first created being, who was their, and our common ancestor.
> —Frank Burnett, *Through Tropic Seas*

Norwegian explorer and writer Thor Heyerdahl's 1947 expedition across the Pacific Ocean was a spectacular success story. A favourite in the Book-of-the-Month Club, *Kon-Tiki* (1948), the account of Heyerdahl's journey from Peru to Tahiti by raft, was reprinted over two dozen times and translated into many languages as well as adapted for television and two films. But although *Kon-Tiki* captured the imagination of the world, Heyerdahl was not the first to bring scientific theories of the origins of Pacific peoples mixed with tales of derring-do and high seas adventure to a broad readership. Through the first three decades of the twentieth century, Canada's own writer, amateur scientist, and adventurer Frank Burnett self-funded sailing trips across the Pacific between British Columbia, Canada, and Queensland, Australia, to explore similar theories about the origins of the Polynesian people and the mysterious monoliths on Easter Island (Rapa Nui).[2]

Like Heyerdahl, Burnett sought evidence to support his scientific hypothesis that the Polynesian peoples had originated from the west coast of the

Americas. But in stark contrast to the longevity of Heyerdahl's success, Burnett's name and books have fallen into complete obscurity. Yet both authors appealed to wide readerships in their day. Drawing from a small body of work on the non-fiction middlebrow by Janice Radway; Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins; and Kate Macdonald, I explore Burnett's texts in terms of a genre I call the ethnographic middlebrow. I suggest that the disciplinary as well as transnational border-crossings of this class of texts have placed Burnett's work beyond the bounds of recognition as the disciplines of English, Canadian literature, anthropology, and museum studies developed. I tentatively outline the genre's changing scales of value in relation to emerging literary and scientific establishments in two national readerships in the first decades of the twentieth century in an attempt to account for the rise and fall of Burnett's celebrity authorship and Heyerdahl's enduring success.

Books of this category bundled the prestige of science and ethnography with the popular appeal of travel and adventure stories. They were connected to a class of travel books of the early twentieth century associated with personal and social improvement. In their bid for cultural authority, these books and their writers, as Peter Hodgins has shown, affirmed the supremacy of modern industrial and scientific progress but were also driven by and appealed to desires for the "untamed, exotic, and the sublime" (154). Hodgins argues that these texts reveal as much about "the complex nature of the desires and perceptions" of their authors and readers as they do about the lands they describe (155). As such, changing tastes are also discernible in studying them. The focus of Hodgins' research are books about science travel to Canada, and the fact that Burnett's work focused on travel from Canada suggests a straightforward account for why Burnett has escaped the attention of theorists of travel writing; after all, as late as 1965, in the first volume of the landmark *Literary History of Canada* edited by Carl F. Klinck, travel writing was understood to be works written by foreigners about this land. Yet an appeal to this explanation alone overlooks a rich set of other factors that are also observable in accounts of the rise and fall of Burnett's reputation.

Burnett's books include the non-fiction ethnographic travelogues *Through Tropic Seas* (1910), *Through Polynesia and Papua* (1911), and *Summer Isles of Eden* (1923), as well as a short novella published with a collection of interconnected tales and Native island legends, *The Wreck of the Tropic Bird and Other South Sea Stories* (1926). Throughout his books and travels, Burnett pursued a quest that was both modern and anti-modern. As the epigram to this essay potently suggests, the islands he explored and the

peoples he encountered were conceived at once as lands of magic, full of mystery, and zones of fieldwork entirely penetrable by science. Relatedly, the Pacific as Burnett imagined it was a basin crisscrossed by modern liners that opened up the region to industrial progress; at the same time, it was regarded as an archipelago of islands that remained remote, pre-modern paradises untouched by the ravages of development and in need of protection from them. Their peoples were paradoxically conceived as the apogee of a more dignified, pre-lapsarian civilization and yet also within the "zone of . . . Christianised influence" (*Tropic Seas* 5), even as the Pacific region sheltered the Galapagos Islands, those marvelous test-labs of Charles Darwin's evolutionary theories. As a hobby science-traveller with a hypothesis, undertaking exotic sailing adventures to prove it, Burnett's oeuvre and pursuit were marked throughout by ambivalence and contradiction.

Though his books are replete with the racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, and exoticism of their era, Burnett's work is worth reclaiming, not because of its literary quality (which it does not assert), but because it highlights the twin vectors of science and popular narrative as they converge during the first half of the twentieth century and draws attention to changing scales of value. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's articulation of the social formation and reformulation of taste, it is possible to see that the rise and fall of the ethnographic middlebrow in the early to mid-twentieth century was deeply connected to changing scales of social and cultural value. Read alongside Heyerdahl's work, which provides a diachronic and comparative perspective on the shifting market for this kind of literature, Burnett's books represent readers' and writers' changing relationships to science, ethnography, and literary value in the first half of the twentieth century, and display uniquely Canadian ideas about the Pacific on the cusp of colonial modernity.

Frank Burnett was a retired industrialist who had made a fortune in salmon-canning and West Coast real estate, and his books were based on his voyages as an amateur salvage ethnographer who collected curios from Fiji, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga, Tahiti, and Cook Islands. He displayed these relics in a collection room in his home on the edge of the university overlooking the Pacific Ocean, before donating over 1500 of these items to the University of British Columbia (UBC) where they formed the nucleus of the Museum of Anthropology. Though Burnett undertook his travels, curio-collecting, and ethnography as an amateur, he sought the respect of established academics and worked hard to cultivate the

Figure 1
Frank Burnett theatrically posing amidst skulls from Fiji in the collections room in his Vancouver home (City of Vancouver Archives Ref. AM54-S4—Out 647).

esteem of the general public; even as Burnett did win provisional academic respect in his day, eventually his ethnographic collection and books would languish, almost forgotten in the basement of the university library. Yet, all of his books were reprinted several times and collected by libraries across the world, suggesting that they found in their own time wide-ranging readerships that crossed class differences, educational backgrounds, and national boundaries.

Even as Burnett aimed to be taken seriously by academics, he was also a canny self-promoter, making use of his business connections to make a name for himself as a local celebrity. His exploits frequently made the front page of the Vancouver daily, *The Province*: "The Schooner *Laurel* Bought," "Laurel Will Sail Saturday," "Frank Burnett Back," and "Will Cruise in the South Seas." He was also featured in longer magazine articles, including a 1922 article in *Popular Mechanics* by prolific Vancouver-based non-fiction author Francis Dickie[3] and a curious magazine called *Progress* (see Burnett, "Voyaging"). These magazines appealed to progressive, aspirational readers who can be tentatively associated with the middlebrow. In literary circles, Burnett attempted to gain credibility within the newly formed Authors' Association in Vancouver. At this time, hobbyists such as Burnett were still welcome in these associations, but Burnett traded on the cachet of authorship throughout his press. He died addressing the "Authors' Club" in Vancouver, and news of his death splashed spectacularly across the paper, noting that he was "Sailor, Novelist and Scientist; Also Explorer" ("Burnett Dies" 1-2).

Heyerdahl also appealed to the public imagination and made clever use of newspaper, magazine, and Hollywood coverage that opened the doors of diplomats, financiers, and military men. Both writers therefore employed publicity and other organs of authorial legitimation. In Heyerdahl's case, the publicity contributed to the book's sell-out within fifteen days, and subsequently to wider distribution through the Book-of-the-Month Club; his success was commercial. Frank Burnett's success was academic, if only fleetingly so. Before his work and collection almost disappeared, he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of British Columbia.

These two authors' differing relationships to the scientific establishment suggest slight but noteworthy differences in aims, readership, and market in the first decades of the twentieth century. Though Burnett actively sought and won provisional respect among scientists in the early decades of the twentieth century, Heyerdahl began his career doing so, but later disassociated himself from the establishment. Chapter 2 of *Kon-Tiki* cheerfully details the indignant reaction from academics to his hypothesis about the origins of the Pacific peoples: "You're wrong, you're absolutely wrong" notes the head scientist of the Museum of Natural History, adding further, "You can't treat ethnographic problems as a sort of detective mystery," "the task of science is investigation pure and simple . . . [n]ot to try to prove this or that" (22). Further, Heyerdahl is told that in the late 1940s

modern scientists must be specialized for their work to be taken seriously (23). Heyerdahl notes repeatedly that not a single scientist would read his initial manuscript that contained his theories; and when he presses for an explanation, he is dismissed by the simple observation that it had not yet been proven possible to sail a primitive vessel across the vast Pacific. Heyerdahl comes to see this rejection as an adventurer's challenge.

Abandoning the scientific elites, Heyerdahl builds a crude raft and assembles a crew of more practical scientists: engineers, explorers, and military men, those for whom, as Colonel Lewis explains to Heyerdahl in the wake of World War II, "courage and enterprise count" (39). These represent a muscular, pragmatic, and popular science relatable to the readership to which he pitched his scientific adventure tale. Heyerdahl happily concludes, "where science stopped, imagination began" (16). Science may have motivated the Kon-Tiki expedition but its narrative appealed to a mid-century postwar readership characterized by heightened respect for self-reliance, inclination toward survivalism, and esteem for intelligent yet physically robust masculinity. The phenomenon Nanette Carter calls the post-Second World War "man with a plan" released and directed Heyerdahl's travel narrative into a distinctly different register than Burnett's books, which were published just decades earlier. Though both writers engaged with science as hobbyists who courted the approval of the scientific establishment, Heyerdahl succeeded through the narrative of an amateur whose sheer doggedness revealed the intellectual arrogance of the academic elites who rejected him, and this was part of his story's appeal. In contrast, Burnett relentlessly pursued and eventually won the honours of academic degrees only to be sidelined after his death as the fields of anthropology, archaeology, museology, and literature professionalized in the decades to come.

Burnett's narratives make explicit note of his correspondence with leading scientists of his day; he reads their books and cites their work throughout his own, ingratiating himself with the scientific establishment. The sheer number of times the word "theory" appears in Burnett's travel books suggests the degree to which he aligned his writing with science. As Carol Mayer observes, as a Fellow of both the Royal Geographic Society and the American Geographic Society, Burnett took meticulous records of the specimens he collected ("Traveller" 218), ensuring that his work as a self-taught amateur ethnographer and archaeologist was perceived as credible ("In the Spirit" 223). The quality of his scientific work received praise from educated readers. In *Through Tropic Seas*, prominent British Columbia jurist

and author Bram Thompson describes Burnett in the preface as a writer who exceeds the old-fashioned "legends and romances of the South Seas" by adding to them "the eye of an Ethnologist, Antiquarian, and Artist," in which Thompson perceives "no attempt to impart a false glow or gloss to the narrative" (qtd. in Burnett 3). Burnett's apparent adherence to the facts and avoidance of narrative flourish earned the respect of modern readers suspicious of Romantic and sentimental posturing. Readers were primarily impressed by the ethnographic and scholarly aims of these books to which readable adventure had been subordinated; as one fan of this genre wrote, "To me, [your books] are ethnological studies; and in the writing of them I note that you have also made them narratives of adventure" (Eley qtd. in Dixon, *Prosthetic Gods* 106). Burnett appealed to readers' taste for plain-speaking unadorned prose and cannily promoted his work as pleasurable, instructive, and unaffected. As he writes in his introduction to *Through Polynesia and Papua*, "If this volume is received at all favourably it will not be on account of its literary merit. I claim none of it" (ix). The *Winnipeg Tribune* took this as a point of promotion: "Mr. Burnett never laid any claim to literary merit" (qtd. in "Burnett Dies" 2), adding "[a] great charm about Mr. Burnett's work is his frankness" (2). Burnett's plain writing style, scholarly aspirations, and emphasis on fact were notable generic attributes.

On the other hand, Heyerdahl's work emphasizes adventure, and reclaims the genre of science writing from the elite preserve of the scientific establishment for a readership newly primed for escape after World War II. Heyerdahl's prose is replete with the narrative "personalism" (336) that Janice Radway discusses as a key feature of middlebrow narratives by the mid-century. These books, Radway explains in her brief discussion of non-fiction, "[c]onstructed a picture of the world that, for all its modern chaos, domination by abstract and incomprehensible forces and worries about standardization, was still the home of idiosyncratic, individual selves" (283). More than seventy percent of Heyerdahl's narrative takes place on the open ocean where the seas spill their glorious marvels and bounteous provision of flying fish, eels, and dolphins upon the raft's crew and the reader. The text therefore offers a paradigmatic example of the "immersion and connection" (117) that Radway discusses as attractive to the postwar mid-century reader. Heyerdahl's personal story of adventure is affective, exciting, and inspiring, interspersed with theory, scientific maps, and photographs of specimens.

While Heyerdahl addresses a firmly middlebrow mid-century readership, most of Burnett's publications appear before the first noted appearance of the

term "middlebrow" in print, when *Punch* makes their famously satiric announcement in 1925 that "[t]he BBC claim to have discovered a new type, the 'middlebrow.' It consists of people who are hoping that some day they will get used to the stuff they ought to like" ("Charivaria" 673). Nonetheless, the category of the middlebrow is helpful for understanding Burnett in relation to changing social values and shifts in the readership of ethnographic and scientific travel narratives.[4] As Melissa Sullivan and Sophie Blanch argue in their introduction to *Modernist Cultures* "Special Issue on the Middlebrow," the category itself has been a "product of contested and precarious assertions of cultural authority" (2) which has been critically derided for being "neither one thing nor the other" (4) and for this precise reason has been reclaimed by scholars as a way to understand the "strategic, experimental and entertaining cultural variability" (4) of early to mid-century print culture. Whereas Nicola Humble has connected the middlebrow to the female reader of domestic fiction in her *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity and Bohemianism* (2001), the non-fiction middlebrow, as Radway introduces the category, interpellated a male, middle-class aspirant reader. Instead of finding a readership of domestic fiction between the categories of romance and highbrow literature, the genre of the ethnographic middlebrow finds a readership balanced somewhere between adventure stories and elite science. Considering the terms of the ethnographic middlebrow is one way to advance Sullivan and Blanch's call to open up "fresh lines of inquiry for both modernist and middlebrow studies alike" in expanding modern textual studies beyond "fetishized notions of the 'literary'" (7).

Despite the welcome and significant work the field of middlebrow scholarship has undertaken to shift the terms of literary study toward discussions of non-canonical texts and tastes, it has remained in thrall to fiction, and non-fiction texts such as Burnett's, though widely read in their own day, remain understudied. Radway's discussion of C. W. Ceram's *Gods, Graves, and Scholars* acknowledges that literary fiction was for earnest readers "only one category among many" equivalent to "other sorts of knowledge, such as knowledge to be found in works of science, political affairs, or history" (274). Radway suggests that the non-fiction middlebrow appealed to a class of readers who understood its codes of geographical and class mobility as interchangeable, but her brief treatment of non-fiction texts is not expansive enough to consider the relationship of general science books to the domain of fiction that is her focus. Certain kinds of archaeological, historical, and scientific travel writing also played an important, formative

role in cultivating the subjectivity of middle-class readers of an earlier era and in shaping their views about the world.

Ethnographic and travel writing exploded across the South Pacific from the 1920s, as Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins explain in *Reading National Geographic* and as Richard Lansdown concurs in *Strangers in the South Seas.* In the case of ethnographic science-focused travel writing, the emerging middlebrow of this period might be defined against imperial adventure or romance on the one hand (Kipling, Buchan, Stevenson, and Becke), and the intellectually or formally theoretical work of scholars writing for an academic readership on the other (Boas, Haddon, Malinowski, and Rivers). Drawing on the tropes and topics of old-fashioned colonial adventure yarns, early twentieth-century non-fiction narratives attempted to redeem and modernize their somewhat escapist tales of exotic adventure by intellectual work in archaeology and ethnography. *National Geographic* was formative of the way in which American readers imagined the non-Western world, as Lutz and Collins have persuasively argued. By mid-century, then, the magazine seems to have become a touchstone of the non-fiction middlebrow.

Kate Macdonald's *The Masculine Middlebrow* is the first book-length study that takes the non-fiction middlebrow as its topic. Its focus is "the implied and inferred masculinity" of readers and writers of these texts, which it defines in terms of their "moderate aesthetic" (2). This class of texts, Macdonald explains, functioned neither to provide "mere escapism" nor "intellectual challenge" (2) but both, in a way that sutured story and imaginative projection to intellectually rigorous texts that provided "sustenance rather than distraction" for men of substance (Habermann qtd. in Macdonald 2). Relatedly, the ethnographic middlebrow, as Lutz and Collins broadly outline, was a mixture of fact and fantasy deeply invested in its non-fiction status that offered some of the appeal of adventure narratives in a modernized, progressive, scientific form. As a remediation of an earlier genre described by Robert Dixon in *Writing the Colonial Adventure* that had become passé by the twentieth century, this class of text retained the fascination of the old-fashioned colonial adventure, but worked hard to conceal its investments in fantasy.

The effort Burnett went to cover latent elements of colonial fantasy can be most clearly seen in the photographs that illustrate his texts. As Mayer perceptively observes, "[b]y the time Burnett was travelling in the early 1920s he knew the exciting and romantic world of the Pacific about which he had read did not exist" ("Traveller" 226), but his photographs of island belles fed

appetites aroused by these outdated, imperial and *Boys' Own* adventure stories. Black-and-white photographs of bare-breasted Native women in Burnett's books illustrate and offset his sophisticated, elaborate, and scientific-sounding prose. Readers could effectively peruse these without the disgrace of low-class peep shows because of the values associated with scientific photography and ethnographic writing. However, the photographs were laden with concealed fantasy. As Mayer explains, Burnett purchased most of these pictures from collectors who had taken them in studios, and they are not at all candid ("The Traveller" 226). The women in these photographs would have worn modern dress by the time Burnett arrived, but he indulges his readers' fantasies by presenting posed, bare-breasted, grass-skirted women as if they were contemporary. Despite his commitment to scientific accuracy in recording and collecting archaeological and ethnographic specimens, where the fantasy no longer exists in the Pacific, Burnett feels free to reinvent it. Evidence also suggests that despite meticulous record keeping, he also approached his writing as a professional jobber, copying large sections of one book into another, for instance in his sections on privateer "Bully Hayes." Burnett may have believed in the legitimacy of his research from an historical and ethnographic point of view, but he was adept at capitalizing on and eliding elements of make-believe. His appeal to science and his concealment of fantasy indicate the way Burnett was highly attentive to modern public reading tastes, the aspirational values of science, and the enduring appeal of South Seas fantasy despite its down-market taint.

In countering the spectres of massification, Burnett's and Heyerdahl's narratives appealed to a public fascination with the last basin to open up for ocean travel, where tourism remained rare and travel remained exclusive. They also waterproofed their books against the taint of massification and feminization by sealing their narratives within the vehicles of readable science and masculine pursuits. While Heyerdahl offers a realized figure of self-sufficient rugged masculinity, Burnett offers an aspirational masculinity associated with elite intellectual pursuits and bookishness. Heyerdahl finds key investors among the upper echelons of New York society; his journey and his education begin on the East Coast of America, where Hollywood visions of the Pacific had by now penetrated the imagination of the general public. "We had been to the movies and seen Dorothy Lamour dancing about in a straw skirt among palms and hula girls on a lovely South Sea Island," writes Heyerdahl, and his shipmate, Torstein gestures toward these films: "That's where we must go" (69). It is likely that Heyerdahl even saw

these films in Radio City Music Hall's cinema, which had been purpose-designed to emulate the style of a passenger liner, projecting Hollywood's gaze across the ocean in over one hundred films set on liners or islands of the Pacific during the interwar years.[5]

Burnett's gaze is framed not by Hollywood but by his Pacific Northwest British Columbian outlook from his home on the edge of the ocean. Burnett's readership was an emerging, aspirational class, and his personal story as a self-made millionaire-industrialist inspired aspirational readers to believe that the elite echelons of travel and scientific pursuit were attainable by hard work. While he linked social, class, and geographical mobility to science and education, as Heyerdahl did, Burnett did not thumb his nose at the establishment as a renegade hero but rather sought to enter it. He presented elite science and the Western frontier of the Pacific as equally penetrable. As such, his books expanded the imagined domicile of the Canadian reader not only across the Pacific but also into higher social and class echelons.

Heyerdahl appealed to a later, more well-established massified middle-class readership—the firmly established American reader of the middlebrow Book-of-the-Month Club who sought good reading infused with entertainment. In Heyerdahl's day, a firmly middle-class, postwar, Americanized modern readership is transported back in time—science and progress are affirmed and the Pacific is found mostly empty of people. Heyerdahl's book follows his journey across the Pacific by primitive raft and includes Indigenous islanders only briefly at its end, when the raft founders on the Raroia atoll over 4,000 miles and 100 days from the point of embarkation. Arriving on one of the most isolated islands in the Pacific, Heyerdahl finds it in a pristine state, "like a bulging green basket of flowers, or a little bit of concentrated paradise" (196). "We had arrived in a new world" (197), states Heyerdahl, adding that "every footprint which dug itself into the virgin sand beach . . . led to the palm trunks . . . and luxuriant bushes [that] were thickly covered with snow-white blossoms, which smelled so sweet and seductive that [he] felt quite faint" (197). In the brief chapter that includes his encounter with Polynesian people ("Chapter 8: Among Polynesians"), Heyerdahl describes most of the islanders as pure and untouched by civilization. Island Chief turns out to be directly descended from Tiki, "their first chief who was now in heaven" (215). Heyerdahl's hypothesis apparently confirmed, the trip's mission is complete; the narrative satisfies an anti-modern quest for romantic adventure, but manages in the end to confirm the supremacy of

practical science redeemed from elite academic preserves by doggedness and muscle. Lutz and Collins observe in their study of *National Geographic* that the magazine's ethnographic content privileged the South Pacific for this very reason: it enabled a modern Americanized readership to satiate their nostalgic yearning for primitive worlds but ultimately confirmed the advances of science.

Like Heyerdahl, Burnett depicts moving further westward as moving further back in time. But rather than empty, his Pacific is full of Natives intersecting at various points with the civilizing process. Throughout his books, modernity and its others collide in complex ways that connect Burnett's ethnographic middlebrow narratives to investments in the fantasy of a Canadian civilizing mission. As Lutz and Collins explain, a significant paradox in evolutionary thinking appeared at the turn of the twentieth century, when people who had been educated in positivist notions of progress and development were exposed to colonial peoples who "remained subordinate, exploited, and unfree" and thus "challenged the myth that 'civilisation was associated with the triumph of liberal principles and the equal freedom of all individuals'" (18). *National Geographic* resolves this paradox, according to Lutz and Collins, by advancing an "'optimistic' brand of social evolutionism that focused on 'the evolutionary guarantee'" (18) of progress through the increasing triumph of rationality over instinct. The purpose of this narrative is to show how far the West has come, and this is exactly what Heyerdahl's narrative does when he demonstrates how his engineering adventure confirms a hypothesis. Further, his first act upon arrival on an island in the remote Pacific is to cure a dying island boy with modern medicine. Burnett resolves the paradox differently, by conjuring a vision of corrupted progress, which forms an object lesson in the rise and fall of civilizations. As American power rises to its ascendancy in the interwar years in which Burnett pens his books, he scapegoats Americans as frontier mercenaries who corrupt the civilizing ideals of British imperial progress.

Burnett seems to find the Pacific as neither East nor West but as a magical place where snapshots of Britain's heyday as an empire with a civilizing mission can still be glimpsed, where the advance of American modernization might be halted, where the corrupting aspects of modernization can be forestalled, and where he reorients his own identity through a Western Canadian ethos of a middle way that emplaces him as a citizen of the Pacific Rim. He notes the ravages of American progress on his first approach to Honolulu, and associates American development with waste and garish taste:

> A great change has come over the Hawaiian group, particularly in Honolulu, since the annexation to the United States. The American element is there in full force, and with its characteristic push and energy, has changed completely the appearance of the city. In place of the low, old-fashioned buildings, with their iron shutters, such as were common in older portions of Canada, for instance in Montreal or Quebec . . . there have been and are still being erected the modern "sky-scrapers" with all their external adornment and internal conveniences. One of these, in particular, a mammoth hotel, cost, it is said, over three million dollars; all of the stone required in its construction having been imported from California. (*Tropic Seas* 6)

Burnett seems to suggest that a gentle form of Canadian modernity such as could be found in Old World Montreal or Quebec may offer a modulating influence on the advance of the decadent and corrupting effects of American-style modernity that is not only ruinous, but tasteless as its push for standardization erases not only beauty but difference and class:

> [O]ne of the most attractive and beautiful spots in this Paradise of the Pacific, [Waikiki] has now, with its modern residences, built regardless of expense, and in many cases of taste, become . . . a suburban district of a typical American city. (*Tropic Seas* 7)

While Heyerdahl encounters the descendants of an ancient race alive and well, eager for the fruits of progress such as radio and medicine, Burnett mourns the passing of a regal Hawaiian race, and predicts a similar fate for all Polynesians. His reasoning is not guided by the typical logic of dying race theories informed by Social Darwinist thinking; rather, Burnett blames urban and implicitly American-style civilization for decline and decadence: "[d]ispossessed of his lands," the Hawaiian "drifts into the city, where he is thrown into contact with civilization and its accompanying vices" (*Tropic Seas* 7).

These concerns underpin Burnett's role as a salvage ethnographer, undertaking a mission similar to the role of the late colonial taxidermist described by Pauline Wakeman, preserving the Native artifact from supposedly inevitable death and decline, and drawing on the advances of science and industry to do so. While an earlier generation of colonial adventure writing often omitted mention of development or industry, Burnett strove to inspect and celebrate the industriousness he saw emerging in the Pacific. He praises the Grieg plantation at Fanning Island for its production of copra at an annual rate of over four hundred tons (*Tropic Seas* 30). He also praises the employment of over two hundred Indigenous labourers there "under strict supervision of the British authorities of Fiji" (30), as a counterpoint to the "wild-west" era of Blackbirding and maritime-

frontier exploitation. While Burnett finds the traders he meets and lives with amiable, insofar as they protect Natives from missionary exploitation or corrupt colonial outpost officials, in general traders receive the same scorn he associates with these lowly profiteering types: "the trader is generally a low, beach-combing type, and a disgrace to his nationality" (*Tropic Seas* 59). On the other hand, mercenary missionaries who live "in luxury and ease, with all the adjuncts of civilisation" and access for travel to "a palatially fitted auxiliary schooner" (59) represent the decadence of civilization and are depicted as the real primitives:

> fallen from his high estate that was attained by his archetype. His ideals have undergone a complete change. He worships at the shrine of, and his example encourages the native to offer homage to . . . the God Mammon. This world's goods have now a great fascination for him to such an extent that the present Missionaries themselves . . . are to be found in the front rank of capitalists. (*Tropic Seas* 74)

As such, Burnett's Pacific becomes a mirror of his understanding of Canada in late colonial modernity: the middle way, the peaceable kingdom, the pioneering ethos and industriousness of the West, counterbalanced by the good governance of the British empire. It is unsurprising, then, that Burnett's laboratory of race becomes a kind of laboratory of Western-Canadian identity, as well. As Nicholas Thomas notes, "Pacific Islanders have been described and depicted by Europeans in innumerable texts and visual images" but these sources "frequently reveal more of European prejudices" than the people they sought to describe (n. pag.). In Burnett's case, the Islanders he encounters reveal to readers his distinctly Canadian prejudices, and he develops an idea of the Pacific as an extension of his Western Canadian domicile.

"It seems impossible to get away from Canadians . . . even in an out of the way Pacific Isle like Tongareve" (*Tropic Seas* 18), observes Burnett. Unsurprisingly, then, Burnett not only finds exemplars of primitive peoples in the South Pacific who support his thesis of descent, but also through his westward gaze across the Pacific, glimpses views of alternative paths for civilization's future ascent, noting opportunities for Canadian expansion:

> Everything in the way of provisions consumed throughout Polynesia seems to be American; but there appears to be no reason whatever why Canada should not be a participator in this trade, the American having no better means of access than Canada has to the distributing centres of New Zealand and Australia. . . . One has only to travel through Polynesia and Papua to realize how vast are the possibilities for increasing in these respects their volume of trade.
>
> Tatua, the principal South Sea Island village, and a fair example of its kind, puts one very much in the mind of a Lower Canadian one. (*Tropic Seas* 16)

Burnett conceives of the Pacific Basin in Canadian terms, as within the zone of Canadian influence, and as an extension of his land-based domicile.

As Macdonald explains, in the "'masculine' reading of the period" following the First World War, "new cultural values begin to find a voice: science, business, living independently" (17), and this sense of independence can be extended to a Canadian settler colonial context. Middlebrow masculine writing had a grown-up aspirational appeal, and ethnographic middlebrow drew these characteristics into the colonial domain. Canadian readers and writers of the ethnographic middlebrow could situate themselves as co-labourers in an imperial, scientific global project which inscribed and addressed Canadians as moderns and equals alongside England. Further, in its petition to the seriousness, progressivism, and factuality of science, it may have been regarded by readers as a mediating solution to emerging literary critical voices such as A. J. M. Smith's call to reject the "inspiration stuff and He-Man Canadiana" that Daniel Coleman notes "dominated Canadian literary tastes up to the late 1920s" (128). By translating those popular values to a more genteel register and into the elite domains of science, the ethnographic middlebrow preserved their charm while repackaging them in realist and intellectual terms that gave them a modern, postcolonial though still colonizing, cross-class appeal. Burnett's writing appealed to readers with ambitious scientific pursuits, but in so doing he concealed elements not only of the colonial fantasy that appealed to an enduring appetite for narratives of South Sea adventure but also to the latent wish fulfillment of frontier expansion and co-labouring in a British civilizing mission.

Yet ultimately, Burnett's vision did not become the vision of the future. While he managed to secure the respect of Canada's westernmost university in his day, the first anthropologist the University of British Columbia finally appointed generally overlooked Burnett's collection of curios as the field of anthropology developed in distinctly different directions from museum studies (Mayer, "In the Spirit" 219; also see Mayer, "Oceanic"). Similarly, he did not capture the imagination or longevity of postwar mid-century readers like Heyerdahl did. Even as Burnett's last work was fiction, and attempted to reinvigorate the buccaneering narrative of Louis Becke and Robert Louis Stevenson with a modern touch, it did not receive wide acclaim. As Leavisite ideas became widespread after the 1930s, evaluative criticism rose to prominence and was formative in professionalizing the study of literature in the university. As in the professionalization and separation of museum studies and anthropology discussed by Mayer, developments in literary criticism distanced the project

of preserving Canadian texts from the project of evaluation and subsequent theorization ("In the Spirit" 219). The academic acceptance he sought thus turned out to be Burnett's downfall, as the fields of literature, anthropology, and museum studies developed to exclude the kind of work Burnett undertook. When Canadian Literature finally entered the academy in the 1960s, literature of and in Canada was increasingly seen as a means by which Canadians could "know themselves" and their nation (Lecker 662). As Nick Mount has demonstrated, Canadian literature in the university has long been tied to what he has identified as a "topocentric axiom" (26). Burnett's work fell outside of this scope. His texts would have been overlooked by subsequent academics not only because of their polyvalent literary and scientific registers, but also because they could not be summoned for the purposes of nation narration. Even as Canadian literary study moved beyond thematic nationalist studies to embrace other kinds of writers and voices, writers such as Burnett, whose racial attitudes are a preoccupation of his work, are difficult to accommodate within postcolonial studies and alongside gestures toward reconciliation and inclusion of Indigenous voices.

Yet Burnett's work spectacularly illustrates the collision of the imperial adventure genre with late colonial modernity in its embrace of science and evolution as well as Christianity and the sublime, its critique of American progress, and its cautious embrace of the moderating forces of British imperialism. In this, Burnett's work is a splendid example of Canadian settler colonial visions that continued to gaze westward in the name of progress and advancement. This gaze was distinct from the vision exerted over this region by the commercially motivated fantasies of Hollywood. In contrast, Heyerdahl's story of the renegade hero was Hollywood-friendly. His ocean basin was empty and he encountered "simple" Natives in need of the industrial advances of modern medicine and technology. As middlebrow ethnography, part fact and part fiction, part academic and part mainstream, part science and part adventure, the middle way was therefore both a trope and the generic substrate of Burnett's work. Educative yet leisured reading characterized all of Burnett's oeuvre from the early 1900s to the late 1920s. Frontier administrators and traders are corrupt, and missionaries are decadent, but somewhere in the midst of these extremes Burnett seeks a balance where leisure is not sloth and industry is not exploitation. Burnett's work paired aspects of the emerging middlebrow with what Stephen Slemon once called the "middle ground" of Canadian culture, uncomfortably located between colonizing and colonized culture. Yet while Burnett's vision

resonates with this recognizably Canadian perspective, his work disappeared from view. As the scientific and literary academy professionalized, middle-class aspirant readerships were gradually replaced by firmly middle-class readers, and the emergent postwar alliances between commercial fiction, entertainment, adventure stories that continued to favour Heyerdahl's mix of science and literature left Burnett and his vision out to sea.

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NOTES

1 My title comes from "Burnett Dies Suddenly."
2 Despite similarities between their research and projects, there is no evidence that Thor Heyerdahl was aware of Frank Burnett, though both writers were likely influenced by general ideas about the origins of the Polynesian people that were circulating in popular culture in the interwar period. These ideas, as Sean Brawley and Chris Dixon explain in *Hollywood's South Seas: Searching for Dorothy Lamour*, partly accounted for Hollywood's fascination with the Pacific region in the early days of film, and explained how films about white men and native women set in the South Pacific were able to escape censorship prohibitions against depicting miscegenation: Polynesians were commonly assumed to be of Aryan descent. Reidar Solsvik, Curator of the Kon-Tiki Museum in Oslo has confirmed these points (Personal communication, 14 Aug. 2014).
3 For further discussion of the West Coast Canadian writer Francis Dickie, see Kuttainen 150-51.
4 Drawing from the work of Andrew King, Kate Macdonald suggests that complex market segmentation is evident as early as the Victorian era, and that the cultural divisions culminating in the so-called brow wars were evident before the 1920s (6-8).
5 Information about the design of Radio City Music Hall is freely available in the architectural and social history tours given by the Radio City Stage Door Tour. For more information, see "Radio City Music Hall."

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Emma Stothers

9 to 5

I am being domesticated
Chewing cud in a frosted glass stall
Monday I came in wild
Pawed my black-laced boots against
the linoleum
Snorted
Said crap a couple times in passing conversation
And stole a pen
The herd, soft fleshed, tender, dull
red-rimmed eyes
Smelt something foreign, and near spooked
(thankfully, sipping tranquilizers, no movement
occurred)
I brought a mug from home today
To fill with the rest
Three cats, red violence
Chained to one another, teeth clamped in tail
Celtic, you see
Nice viciousness
(my wild pride, shyly smiling,
nods) Nostrils a-flutter, I sip
Grit my teeth
And fatten

Sarah de Jong Carson

"The poem of you will never be written"

Memoir and the Contradictions of Elegiac Form in Patrick Lane's *There Is a Season*

In an interview with Margaret Atwood about his 2004 memoir, *There Is a Season: A Memoir in a Garden*, Patrick Lane describes his decision to write a prose memoir as a therapeutic alternative to writing poetry. Reflecting on the experiences of addiction and recovery that inform the memoir, Lane notes, "I knew I'd just begun the process of healing my body and my spirit. I wanted to write, but I was afraid to start writing poetry or fiction. . . . Nonfiction seemed a safe place to go" (n. pag.). *There Is a Season* might be considered a scriptotherapeutic text in its chronological, month-by-month account of a year of recovery from decades of alcoholism and drug addiction.[1] While the narrative of addiction recovery is at the forefront of the memoir, the work also incorporates an elegiac trajectory in which Lane explores other questions of recovery through the haunting figure of his mother. Having declared in a 1991 elegiac poem, "Mother," that "the poem of you will never be written" (*Mortal Remains* 20), Lane turns to the memoir form to engage with similar questions about the possibility of articulating his mother's life, death, and impact on his poetic vocation. While the memoir offers a more extended, prosaic form for these investigations, Lane's use of the genre elucidates the strong connections between memoir and elegy, particularly in his use of elegiac themes of poetic inheritance and the reassuring cyclicity of the natural world, as well as the elegiac motifs of apotheosis—the departure of the deceased other into a heavenly space—and anagnorisis, or revelation. Yet as in Lane's poetic elegies, the subversion and qualification of elegiac motifs in *There Is a Season* convey ambivalence about the possibility of elegiac consolation or poetic inheritance, especially

given his mother's silence as a victim of sexual and domestic abuse. Looking at the memoir alongside two of Lane's poetic elegies, "Mother" from *Mortal Remains* (1991) and "The Last Day of My Mother" from *The Bare Plum of Winter Rain* (2000), I argue that Lane's contradictory approach to elegiac consolation in *There Is a Season* culminates an ongoing negotiation of the gender and genre of elegy in his later work, which has received little scholarly attention in recent years.[2] A combination of disavowal and consolation in all three works allows Lane to confront the ethical dilemmas involved in representing his mother's legacy in the traditionally masculine elegiac mode, while the memoir form enables a reflective acceptance of the limited possibilities of emotional and physical recovery.

Lane's use of the memoir genre to explore elegiac possibilities and forms of recovery reflects a broader affinity between the two genres that has emerged as more writers turn to memoir to write about family members. While mourning and memorialization are associated with both genres, few autobiography critics have explored the formal use of elegiac motifs in the memoir; the term "elegy" is most often used thematically to describe content that involves an act of mourning. Thus, Sandra Pouchet Paquet's study of Caribbean autobiography identifies a "conjunction of elegy and autobiography" in poetic and prose texts by simply locating their similarity in a "lyric outpouring" (228) that expresses "elegiac themes of loss, mourning, and melancholia" (233). Nancy K. Miller's brief comparison of the genres in *Bequest and Betrayal: Memoirs of a Parent's Death* similarly identifies an affinity between memoir and elegy, but focuses on comparing the trajectory of memoirs of loss with that of the traditional elegy and, by extension, with Freud's theory of mourning:

> Memoirs that write a parent's death share many generic and thematic features of the elegy. Traditionally, the performance that elegy entails for poets is the act of taking up and revising the precursor's task in their own voices. This is a part of the mourning process and requires a break with the past, a separation, and a replacement. (7)

While Miller's assertion that elegy and memoir writers "taking up and revising the precursor's task in their own voices" identifies important vocational and recuperative trajectories that are shared by the two genres, she does not elaborate on how similar uses of elegiac motifs also connect the genres. Incorporating familiar motifs like apotheosis and prosopopoeia—an apostrophe to the absent other, or inclusion of his or her voice—is an important way of signalling an elegiac framework in prose elegy, studies of

which have been undertaken by John B. Vickery in *The Prose Elegy* (2009) and by Karen Smythe in her study of Canadian "fiction-elegy" in the short stories of Mavis Gallant and Alice Munro. Smythe's examination of "fiction written in an elegiac *form*" (5) considers how traditional devices of the poetic elegy are incorporated, reworked, or parodied within fictional forms, a model that fits even more aptly with memoirs that share the first-person voice of lyric poetry, a subjective engagement with experiences of mourning, and an association with recuperative writing.

The use of elegiac motifs in memoir complements the affinity that Miller points out between both genres' investment in questions of recovery, inheritance, and authority. Melissa Zeiger identifies psychological recuperation and succession as the central threads of elegy criticism, observing that

> two powerful models have dominated the discussion of elegy: an anxiety-of-influence model derived from Harold Bloom, and a work-of-mourning model based on Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia." While the first model conceives elegy as a rivalrous attack on a dead but still overwhelming precursor figure, the second conceives the genre as a translation into literature of the grieving process following a death, leading to resignation or consolation. (3)

While Zeiger's distinction between the psychoanalytic interpretation of elegy and the elegiac theme of poetic succession is useful, these two threads are often intertwined in practice, especially in the use of the concept of recovery. The term can refer either to a psychological recovery or to the recovery of a voice that represents poetic inheritance; most often, it encompasses both at once if the recovery of voice is depicted as *enabling* the psychological recovery and consolation. Celeste Schenck describes the elegy's "first premise [as] the recovery of poetic voice from ritual burial of the past" (*Mourning* 181), a description that illustrates the fascinating ambiguity with which the word "recovery" is used in elegy criticism. Most predominantly, the idea of a recovery of voice refers to the surviving poet's recovery of his or her own poetic voice after a period of silence and mourning, but this recovered voice is doubled in its association with both the deceased poet and the poetic successor. The idea that the voice is recovered both *from* and *due to* the burial of the past implies a recovery of the dead other's voice as well as a therapeutic recovery that takes place only because of the closure involved in burial. Indeed, many prose memoirs that deal with grief, including Lane's, end with scenes in which a grieving protagonist articulates and assimilates some meaningful words spoken by the deceased other, making them his or her own in a limited form of consolation and prosopopoeia.

While Lane's memoir incorporates both thematic and formal elements of elegy, his work indicates a strong ambivalence about both elegiac recovery and the possibility of succession or generational transmission—not simply because the poetic succession in elegy, as feminist elegy critics have pointed out, is typically a masculine one that relegates female figures to the periphery.[3] In the English elegy's traditional trajectory towards consolation, the poet, having sung a lament and experienced the weight of mourning, is consoled by some reassurance of continuity, whether an apotheostic reassurance that the other's life continues in some other form, an emphasis on the continuity of nature, or a more compensatory sense that the poem itself—and the inherited ability to sing—acts as a lasting memorial to the other. Yet the idea that any poetic work can come to a consolatory conclusion in the face of death has become problematic for many twentieth- and twenty-first-century writers of elegy; as Jahan Ramazani argues, the majority of "[c]ontemporary elegists . . . refuse a facile poetic therapy—namely, the transfiguration of the dead into consolatory art or heavenly beings" (7). Ramazani concedes, however, that some modern and contemporary elegists "have reclaimed compensatory mourning by subduing its promise" (30). Lane's adoption of a subdued form of consolation is evident both in *Mortal Remains*, which includes a family-focused elegy sequence, and in *There Is a Season*. *Mortal Remains* concludes with an afterword on the limited, retroactive efficacy of consolatory art:

> My brother's early death and my father's murder changed my life in the Sixties. It was only recently, twenty-five years later, I felt capable of approaching that time with poetry. *Mortal Remains* is a dark title yet it is somehow appropriate. Poetry cannot save us but it can provide us with some small redemption. (n. pag.)

Here, Lane overtly rejects the therapeutic potential of elegy, allowing it to provide "some small redemption" but not, in itself, a compensation for or healing of the wounds of the past. A similar approach to the healing potential of art is evident in *There Is a Season*, which also addresses the losses of Lane's father, brother, and mother and revisits some of the traumatic events of his working-class youth. Although the memoir articulates Lane's renewed experience of life through his writing, his garden, and his marriage, Lane expresses his scepticism about any final healing by twice repeating a line by poet Weldon Kees: "Whatever it is that a wound remembers, after the healing ends" (49, 217). Thus he allows for some possibility of healing in elegy—as William Watkin puts it, "elegy is to be seen as treatment, a salve, or balm

applied to the psychic wound" (54)—but in both texts, Lane emphasizes the remainder—and reminder—left by experiences of trauma and loss.

The elegiac subtext of Lane's memoir is immediately evident in the work's concern with the impact of death and the ritual succession of voice. The memoir's epigraph is taken from Lane's elegy "Fathers and Sons," from *Mortal Remains*; the line asserts that "if you listen you can hear me. / My mouth is open and I am singing" (19), gesturing to the work's elegiac concerns with both the contingency of communication and the possibility of renewal. Accordingly, Lane's memoir establishes a plot of poetic inheritance alongside his multiple narratives of recovery. Within the memoir, both of Lane's parents and his brother, Dick (Red) Lane—also a poet, who died at age twenty-eight of a brain hemorrhage—are figured as poetic muses and predecessors. Shortly after the unexpected deaths of his father and brother, Lane's grief-stricken wanderings are accompanied by their spectres, as "[m]y dead brother with his bloody brain sat beside me and my dead father with the hole in his chest where the bullet had blown apart his heart sat behind me, both of them whispering in my ears the lyrics to poems and songs I didn't want to hear but wrote down anyway" (*Season* 51). Haunting imagery surrounds all three, including his brother, who after his death "suddenly appeared inside me, his face inside my face, his laugh. . . . I could hear him talking to me" (238). Yet Lane's mother is the most central and recurring ghost throughout the memoir, partly because of the stark contrast between the early influence of her reading voice and the troubling silences that mark her later life due to traumatic experiences of sexual abuse by her father and to the domestic silence enforced by her husband. Recalling his mother's practice of reading him and his brothers to sleep at night, Lane relates, "My mother's voice was a soporific. It insinuated itself into all of our hearts and brought us to a waking sleep. It was a treasure of words, their rhythms and patterns, she was giving me and I have never forgotten it" (*Season* 33). Lane thus positions his mother as an early source of a healing, compensatory poetic voice, "the only stay we had against the darkness that surrounded us" (34), but both his poetry and memoir also reflect on the conflicted nature of his mother's poetic legacy.

Lane's ambivalence about representing his mother, who remains unnamed in the memoir, reflects both his troubled relationship with her and her personal struggles to manage her gendered experiences of abuse and confinement. Limited from social contact by her life on an isolated farm during Lane's teenage years, her association with silence is solidified in a period of months

in which she does not speak to the family—a silence enforced by a patriarchal family structure and a familial acceptance of silence. Lane is instructed by his father not to speak to her, with no explanation; he relates, "It was six months before I spoke aloud to her and even then she reciprocated with a deep silence. . . . There was an impenetrable barrier between us" (*Season* 84). A similar repression of grief and of past events permeates the other communications between mother and son, even when she begins to speak again after her long period of silence. As Lane notes, "I know I lived in a family of words where nothing was said" (*Season* 214). After his father's death, his mother does relate much of her past, telling "the story of her life through the dreary mask of rye whisky and television test patterns. . . . It was all a long monologue, ramblings, anecdotes, and snatches from her past" (60). Yet this mediated excess of confessional honesty also fails in the sense that she omits her childhood-long experiences of sexual abuse by her father, which Lane learns about in a posthumous revelation after which "every story . . . became something a little bent" (60).[4] While Lane allows that "[t]he silence in our home and the denial of any kind of trauma was how we understood things" (85), he also insists upon the importance, for himself, of confronting the past rather than repressing it, a conflict between himself and his mother that is repeatedly played out in his writings about her. Lane's ambivalent use of elegiac tropes reflects his desire to simultaneously capture his mother's contradictions in writing and to respect her silences by refusing to overwrite them.

In "Mother" and "The Last Day of My Mother," Lane expresses his difficulty with representing his mother in poetry, resulting in a contradictory movement from denial to acceptance in both poems. In "Mother," an elegiac poem published the year before his mother's death from cancer, Lane recalls her gardening in a red headscarf or "babushka" (*Bare Plum* 20)—a memory that becomes a repeated, haunting image in his memoir. Although the poem is part of an elegy sequence, it rejects the premise of an elegiac eulogy, suggesting, perhaps, his own—and others'—scepticism about the gendered limitations of the genre. As Priscila Uppal observes, "mother elegies written by mourning sons are practically non-existent" in English-Canadian writing (100). Yet Lane's hesitance about recovering his mother in elegy also reflects the instability of their personal relationship, captured in the poem's focus on the problematic transmission of sound and poetic voice:

> The wind searches among the leaves
> and your face returns, a shape that swells in the mouth

until it becomes a single sound, a strange happiness
mostly pain. The poem of you will never be written.
Each time I try to create you I fall into intricate lies,
a place of vague light, uncertain brooding. (*Mortal Remains* 20)

The apostrophic address to his mother recovers her face, a form of prosopopoeia, but it is transformed only into a "single sound"—a voice not her own, but one originating in the mouth of the speaker. Yet the speaker insists that this unitary sound can never be communicated as poetry, undermining the poem in which this idea is presented. Rather than offering a celebratory eulogy, the poem insists upon its own impossibility. Similarly, the poem overtly rejects an elegiac trajectory toward consolation, ending with the lines:

This poem goes nowhere
like a tree whose leaves are stripped by worms.
The wind blows, the branches move,
inconsequential, fragile and forgiven. (*Mortal Remains* 21)

The image of a static, worm-eaten tree suggests the impossibility of continuing growth, thus denying the significant elegiac consolation of natural rejuvenation; it also gestures to the impact of trauma on elegiac recovery. At the same time, the final line allows an ostensibly "inconsequential," small, and natural redemption through the final image of forgiveness; the concluding words are accentuated by the gradual lengthening of the line that implicitly contradicts the assertion that the poem "goes nowhere."

Lane employs a similarly contradictory approach toward representation and consolation in his later poem "The Last Day of My Mother." Recalling his mother's final day in a nursing home, the speaker reflects, "Tonight I don't know how to take these lines and make them / poetry, any more than I could change my mother / who still looked upon me as a child" (*Bare Plum* 34). His reluctance implies a critique of poetry itself as an idealized, aestheticized, and figurative version of hard truths, whether of the indignities of his mother's bodily functions in the nursing home, or the reality of her detached approach to their relationship; as he continues, "I don't want to turn this into metaphor" (*Bare Plum* 34), leaving "this" importantly undefined. In line with this refusal to aestheticize his response to her death, he also rejects an elegiac framework for the poem, asserting that "I don't want to turn this / into a lament. Death is in us, it's how we're born" (*Bare Plum* 35). By the end of the poem, however, the speaker acknowledges an elegiac inheritance with the reflection that

> I carry her in my flesh, can smell her if I try.
> . . . . . .
> . . . And there, I've made this into poetry.
>
> What else can I do? . . .
> . . . . . .
> *There's more than just the dark*, she'd say, and it was
> as if she'd said, *There is no death*, as I write and break
> these lines again and again, letting them fall where they lie.
> (*Bare Plum* 36)

By emphasizing the embodied influence of his mother, the speaker succeeds in creating poetry, turning to her own words to close the poem with a compensatory view of life. The consolation of both poems is bittersweet, even angry, but still present; in "The Last Day of My Mother," the resumption of poetic production is even presented as inevitable—"What else can I do?"—despite the ongoing "break[ing]" and explicit refusal to shape the long lines of blank verse. At the same time, the structure of each poem juxtaposes its limited consolation with an implied undermining of its truth; in this poem, the lines do not lie where they fall, but rather "fall where they lie"—an echo of the "intricate lies" in "Mother." The poems' contradictions resonate with both the representational concerns and the elegiac form of Lane's memoir, which similarly ends with a prosopopoeic turn to his mother's final words.

Lane's representational concerns and ambivalent use of an elegiac trajectory are even more marked in his memoir, which accentuates the difficulties of recovery both through haunting appearances of his mother after death and in the ghostly depiction of her life itself. The images of haunting reflect a central conflict in the memoir between Lane's desire to recover his past and his mother's insistent repression of past traumas. Appearing on several occasions over the course of the memoir, the spectre of Lane's mother becomes a frequent, but always unspeaking, presence in his garden. The possibility of communication is particularly evocative in a haunting scene near the end of the memoir, in which "she kept raising her fingers to her mouth as if a word or sentence there could be pulled out and left to speak on its own" (*Season* 247).[5] Although Lane wishes to ask, "*Tell me the story that brought you here*" (*Season* 248), the series of hauntings gradually lead him to the conclusion that these haunting encounters embody his own desire for story, recognition, and reciprocity. The repeated image of his mother kneeling in the garden, which replicates the imagery of the poem "Mother," suggests the resurgence of a buried memory; as Lane reflects, "I must have somehow fixed her in my mind in some past moment for she is always the same"

(*Season* 247). He finally interprets the spectre's appearance as an internal effort to resolve his own unfinished business, not his mother's: "[I]t is me who brings her back. She does not come because she wants to" (248).[6] This positioning of the hauntings as manifestations of Lane's memory and desire, including a desire for his mother to recover and voice the past, is further underscored by an earlier haunting scene in which "[s]he was trying to dig something up and I could see the frustration on her face" (225). With the ghost's inability to voice a story, Lane must simply accept the gap that exists between them.

Importantly, the memoir associates ghostliness and silence with Lane's mother not only in death, but also in depictions of her in life. In one scene during her period of silence, his mother catches him masturbating in the long grass outside a window, but he cannot read her response; she simply "gazed down at me, a paint brush in her hand. There was no expression on her face. She was there and not there, a ghost in an empty room. . . . Something passed between us at that moment, but exactly what I did not know then and do not know now. . . . [She] had a kind of woman's knowing that was alien to me" (*Season* 172). The opacity of gender to Lane as a young man influences his understanding of, and literally his alienation from, his mother. While this ghostly depiction partly works to convey a sense of an ongoing communicative barrier, the gendered, ghostly imagery is problematic given the work's invocation of elegiac devices. Feminist elegy critics have pointed out that the traditional elegy developed as a male homosocial and patrilineal form that "excludes the feminine from its perimeter except as muse principle or attendant nymph" (Schenck, "Feminism" 13); when women do appear, critics argue, they are often associated with death or division through what Louise O. Fradenburg calls "elegiac misogyny" (185). Zeiger observes that feminine figures regularly appear in English elegies in the form of "threatening or abandoning women" (7). The primary response of critics to this complexity of gender representation in the elegy has been to explore how women's elegies establish a counter-tradition, rather than to examine how men's elegies might also trouble these associations. Zeiger's suggestion that the problem can be partly resolved by focusing on historical rather than mythologized female figures, as Thomas Hardy does in his elegies for his wife, is an important starting point (Zeiger 19). While archetypes and individual personalities often converge in elegies written for parents,[7] Lane's problematization of voice in his elegiac poetry and the ghostly depictions in his memoir primarily reflect concerns about the representability of a mother whose relationship to himself and to the past is obscured.

Although the depiction of his mother's silence as ghostly risks replicating the "elegiac misogyny" that associates women with death (Fradenburg 185), the imagery of ghostliness also contributes to a broader pattern in the memoir that more generally associates silence with death and dissolution and voice, in contrast, with life and existence. This pattern establishes questions of voice, representation, and prosopopoeia as central issues in the memoir. While Paul de Man declares that in the written form of autobiography, "[d]eath is a displaced name for a linguistic predicament" (930), this idea is reversed in Lane's ghostly imagery; that is, the linguistic predicament of voicelessness becomes represented as itself a form of death. Thus, Lane allows ghostliness to penetrate life as well, representing those who are unwilling or unable to speak. Recalling his own early life as a labourer and young father unable to reflect on and comprehend his own place in the world, Lane recalls being called a "ghost" by a Native lover. Although the name is a teasing comment on his race and pale skin, his retrospective interpretation infuses the term with the lack of voice and self-understanding he now associates with ghostliness: "I think perhaps I was a ghost back in those days" (*Season* 196). For Lane as a young man, poetry offers the solution that restores life and control. With the advent of poetic writing, he recalls, "I was certain that with language I could heal myself and control what surrounded me. . . . Death's only dominion was in a poem" (169).[8] Although the writing of the memoir enacts this recovery of control for Lane himself, he confronts the limitations of language's healing potential in applying this paradigm to his mother's life of silence. Lane's reluctance to speak for his mother conveys the dilemma of representing and poetically succeeding a woman whose life is characterized, for him, by a deep silence; he cannot establish her voice as a marker of her existence.

Lane's subversion of elegiac devices in the memoir illustrates this central paradox. The ghostly imagery of Lane's mother culminates in a troubled parody of an elegiac scene of apotheosis, which again reflects the conflict between his own and his mother's approaches to the past. The final chapter relates an episode in which Lane convinces his mother to accompany him to his childhood home, against her wishes. In an evocative image of recovery that mirrors his mother's haunting act of digging in his garden, Lane spends the day digging in the dump below the house, "thinking that if he can only dig deep enough and far enough he will find something that will explain his life to him. He has forgotten his mother" (*Seasons* 289). Although Lane does find a toy truck that may have belonged to him, the moment of discovery

also reminds him of his mother's presence and inaccessibility. As he glances upward, he sees her in a transcendent image above: "He looks up and he sees his mother floating among the weave of branches, high above the ground. For a moment he thinks she has died and is now, at this moment, ascending toward some heaven only she knows" (*Seasons* 293). The image of ascension is a traditional device in the elegy, which Schenck suggests is in fact "the most important convention of elegy . . . the deification of the dead one in a process that lifts him out of nature, out of the poem, and, conveniently, out of the inheritor's way" (*Mourning* 34). This scene of shrouding—in the "weave" of branches—and ascension both invokes and problematizes the traditional apotheosis by applying it to Lane's living mother, who Lane later discovers is standing on a clothesline platform. The scene complicates the elegiac transmission of vocation from Lane's mother to himself, and suggests that rather than replacing his mother to take on his poetic vocation, Lane must succeed her without overwriting her voice and without her acknowledgement of his inheritance. Yet the memory of the scene also enables a successful posthumous scene of apotheosis, as Lane's reflections on it at the time of writing allow him to release her haunting figure from the garden by "quietly open[ing] the hands that grip her here. As I do I can feel her vanishing" (*Seasons* 295). Paradoxically, releasing his mother also entails an acceptance of the fact that his desire to recover her voice, story, and approval will remain unfulfilled.

In his lengthy narration of the ascension scene, which recounts the floating image three separate times, Lane shifts between third-person and first-person narrative voices to explore the possibility of voicing his mother's experience. The initial third-person narration of the scene includes a description of his mother's thoughts about her return to her former home, a place she had hated. Lane's narration imagines the sense of erasure that she may have felt: "The day she left here she swore she'd never come back. Now she is here and it is as if she had never lived here. All the mine buildings are gone, hauled away by the company" (*Seasons* 291). Yet Lane soon rejects these imagined thoughts by returning to a first person voice:

> What I remembered for years when I thought of that journey was finding the toy. Now, ten years after her death I remember best her floating in the sky. . . . I don't know what she was looking at or what she was thinking. It would be easy for me to say she was lost in time and had gone back to those early years, but I don't know that. I don't know if what she felt was bitterness or joy, happiness or grief. (*Seasons* 295)

By acknowledging the limitations of his insights into his mother, Lane rejects the possibility of truly speaking for her. At the beginning of the chapter, he explicitly comments on his experimentation with narrative voice, which, like the hauntings, ultimately returns to his own point of view. He writes, "There are times I want to be in the second or third person. Like any writer, I'd rather be a *he* than an *I*. It's simpler to be a fiction. . . . Yet even when I try to create the past using a point of view not my own, it is still and always mine" (*Seasons* 287).[9] By drawing attention to the personal desire contained in both his apparitions and his narration, Lane simultaneously invokes and rejects a consolatory recovery of his mother's perspective.

Although Lane subverts elegiac forms to problematize his efforts to recover his mother's voice, the memoir's episodic, chronological structure also develops a gradual sense of acceptance that ultimately does culminate in a limited but significant scene of vocational transmission. Like his poetic elegies, Lane's memoir overtly refuses the elegiac trajectory toward revelation and consolation, and he declares that "[t]here are no accidents, there are no serendipitous moments. There are only fragile interludes of clarity and sometimes I don't understand them fully when they happen" (*Seasons* 305). Despite this declared mistrust of serendipity, the final scenes of the memoir are presented as an "answer" to a question that Lane poses himself about the power of the word "sorrow" in his early poetry. The memoir presents this answer by recalling his mother's deathbed and her final words, which emphasize beauty and futurity:

> When my mother lay on what would be her deathbed I read to her from *The Old Curiosity Shop* by Charles Dickens. . . . I was reading quietly in the hope that she might hear the words from a book she had dearly loved. Halfway through a paragraph she suddenly sat up in her bed, tubes dangling, reached out, and gripped my wrist. . . . She held my wrist and stared into my eyes and said, *At every turn there's always something lovely*. She let me go and fell back on the bed. Those were her last words to me. Three days later she died. (*Seasons* 306)

Although his mother's words chronologically precede Lane's year of recovery, Lane's choice to relate this narrative of dying and his mother's final words at the end of the memoir allows the reader to cathartically share in their sense of limited consolation. The words do not provide the sense of recognition that Lane desires to truly act as his mother's successor—he regrets the fact that "[m]y life as an artist didn't seem a disappointment to her, rather my life seemed irrelevant, my art of no import whatsoever" (*Seasons* 248)—but they recover a fragment of her perspective that bequeaths an eye for beauty within and despite the turns of life, which Lane adapts into a renewed ability for poetry

and revelation in his own life. As in Lane's poems, then, the memoir enacts an elegiac recovery even as it acknowledges the one-sidedness of that task.

If *There Is a Season* echoes the subdued consolations of Lane's earlier elegies for his mother, its conclusion is also significantly more hopeful. The final chapter ends not only with a realization that "weeks had gone by and I hadn't once thought of drinking" (297), but also with a seasonal anticipation of spring and renewal; elements generically associated with elegiac consolation: "spring follows on the heels of winter; the sequestered ones seek reintegration with the community; literary appearance suddenly calls for an appropriate audience of witnesses" (Schenck, *Mourning* 46). Lane's recovered ability to write poetry is evident in his late inclusion of a poem that attests to the cyclical and livening effect of nature (*Seasons* 273), while the memoir as a whole concludes with a gesture toward community in a shared act of voicing. Suggesting that "[p]erhaps it is enough to stand there with Lorna and praise the rain and our lives together," Lane offers an example: "There were three bees in the ivy today. Lorna and I were in the garden when we saw them. We both said, *Look, look at the bees!*" (*Seasons* 307). With this shared quotation, which is also the first time that Lane's wife, Lorna Crozier, is quoted directly in the memoir, Lane signals his emergence from the reflective elegiac mode into a shared celebration of presence and intimacy.

The comparatively hopeful conclusion of *There Is a Season* can be attributed both to the formal demands of memoir, which typically seeks closure through "the arrival of the individual at some sort of equilibrium" (Couser 68), and to its conclusion of more than a decade of reflection on Dixie Lane's legacy in Lane's work. It would be naïve to read the end of the memoir simply as an unconstructed representation of Lane's experience; the convergence of elegiac motifs and the deathbed scene is carefully orchestrated, and might be read in the same vein as the "intricate lies" of form that enable representation and consolation in Lane's earlier poems. Yet Lane's memoir and a prose elegy published the same year, "My Father's Watch," largely conclude his elegiac engagement with the figure of his mother, suggesting a resolution within Lane's broader career as well as in the memoir itself. Although Lane continues to "circle" his mother's absence in *Last Water Song* (65), the later poems retain the meditativeness of *There Is a Season*, and reflects on "what the wound remembers" rather than the dilemmas of recovery. Ultimately, *There Is a Season*—perhaps along with Lane himself—finds consolation in its paradoxical acceptance of both the ethical limitations and the recuperative possibilities of elegiac form.

NOTES

1 Suzette Henke coins the term "scriptotherapy" in *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life Writing* (1998), arguing that autobiographical writing may be read as a written version of a Freudian talking cure in which "the narrator plays both analyst and analysand" (xvi).

2 Aside from Priscila Uppal's analysis of Lane's parental elegies in *We Are What We Mourn: The Contemporary English-Canadian Elegy* (2009), the most recent scholarly discussion of Lane's work is Adam Carter's 1995 analysis of political allegory, which joins several earlier articles on Lane's complex representations of class, landscape, and language. Lane's evolving interest in elegy has been evident in collections from *Mortal Remains* to *Last Water Song* (2007), which begins with a series of prose elegies for fellow poets. As Robert McGill recognizes in a review of *Collected Poems*, Lane's later work "increasingly straddle[s] the border between poetry and prose" (87).

3 See Schenck's "Feminism and Deconstruction" and Zeiger's *Beyond Consolation*. I return to the question of gender later in this article.

4 The memoir does not reveal how Lane finds out about the abuse after his mother's death.

5 This imagery is reminiscent of the dream sequences in Atwood's *Surfacing*, in which the spectres of the narrator's parents appear in a garden, and in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, in which Naomi Nakane dreams of her absent mother attempting to speak, her mouth linked by a thread to a package of letters. While Naomi's mother's story is posthumously recovered through a real set of letters, Lane ultimately accepts that his mother's silence can not be spoken through.

6 I do not read these hauntings as uncanny or gothic moments because the scenes evoke reflection and gradual understanding rather than unease. As Lane describes them, his mother "does not haunt, for her presence . . . is not malevolent" (83). Rather than a threatening anxiety, they encapsulate a sense of acceptable uncertainty that is characteristic of the memoir genre.

7 See Tanis MacDonald's work on women's paternal elegies, *The Daughter's Way* (23); Roland Barthes also notably merges mother and "Mother" in his reflections on bereavement in *Camera Lucida*: "In the Mother, there was a radiant, irreducible core: my mother" (75). While Uppal suggests that Lane mythologizes his mother in his early elegies, representing her "as a goddess . . . but not, one might say, as an actual person" (104), I read "Mother" and *There Is a Season* as meditations on her individual character.

8 In this allusion to Dylan Thomas' "And Death Shall Have No Dominion," which emphasizes the residue of humanity left after death, Lane limits death's power to the realm of poetry—the very site in which, according to his belief in language, death can be contained and transcended.

9 In "Autobiography in the Third Person," Philippe Lejeune notes that a third-person pronoun can function as "a *figure of enunciation*" that is "often used for internal distancing and for expressing personal confrontation" (28). Lane's use of the pronoun only for portions of this chapter illustrates the sense of "confrontation" and conflict he feels about this interaction with his mother.

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Dave Margoshes

Two months adrift

I was asked to house-sit but when I arrived
the house had burned down, leaving ashes
and only the ghosts of the plants and cats
I was to look after. Still, I took my duties
seriously and moved through the detritus
carefully, polishing furniture, tidying up.
Where the south window had been I opened
the curtains and let in the sun, admired
the bric-a-brac I imagined had lined
the sill: glass elephants and a hula girl made
of toothpicks, her eyes bright as embers, a shell
from the Sargasso Sea. I held it to my ear
but all I heard was the raging of flame. I lived
this way for weeks, waiting for the letter,
the phone call. When winter came I had no choice
but to move on. I locked the door, swept
the stoop, left my forwarding address.

Ceri Morgan

Writing Quebec City in Andrée Maillet's *Les Remparts de Québec* and Nalini Warriar's *The Enemy Within*

This essay is part of my "Heartlands/Pays du cœur" project, which aims to look afresh at Quebec's secondary cities and regions outside of Montreal. As is well known, Quebec's Quiet Revolution sought to effect a break with the past, rejecting a pan-Canadian cultural nationalism bound up in the preservation of the French language, Catholicism, and an attachment to the land. In embracing the city—specifically Montreal—the rising francophone technocrat middle-classes mobilized a discourse of "catching up" with other (overly) industrialized nations (Biron et al. 277-78).[1] In cultural terms, whilst writers for the highly influential publishing house and its journal, *Parti pris*, tended to exaggerate the alienation of the city, they did so in a way that nevertheless situated the nationalist struggle within this space (Maheu 22). Montreal increasingly became the preferred setting for fiction, as highlighted in Pierre Nepveu's and Gilles Marcotte's 1992 assertion, "il est évident que, sans Montréal, la littérature québécoise n'existe pas" (7).[2] The already nostalgic novel of the land, which had dominated Québécois literature since Confederation, was consigned to an even more distant past that had little, if anything, to say to a resolutely urban present. With the exception of a small handful of works,[3] critical analyses of literary representations of spaces and places outside of Quebec's metropolitan centre were largely relegated to the occasional article or book chapter.

The "Heartlands/Pays du cœur" project has a number of motivations. One of these is to reflect on affective attachments to, and imaginings of, space and place. It draws on work in emotional geography (see Thien; Thrift), with the aim of arriving at what Liz Bondi describes as "a relational

approach to research" (n. pag.). A second motivation connects with debates concerning national identity in the wake of the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences (2007-2008) and, more recently, Quebec's now defunct Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. Watching some of the television coverage in Montreal at the time of the Bouchard-Taylor hearings, I was struck by the degree of apparent ethnic diversity of places outside of the city, historically, the economic and cultural centre of Quebec and home to the majority of immigrants to the province. The Commission report predicts that this diversity is likely to grow (Bouchard and Taylor 10). Consequently, the project aims to challenge dominant "cognitive mapping[s]" (Jameson 347) of Quebec, which contrast Montreal with the supposedly homogeneous white francophone communities along the St. Lawrence River.

A third motivation is the attraction of *hors-Montréal* for authors of recent fiction in Quebec. This attraction is underlined in an issue of the journal *Liberté* entitled "Les régions à nos portes." Here, Samuel Archibald identifies three trends with respect to what he refers to as "le néoterroir en littérature"; one of these being "une *démontréalisation* [sic] marquée de la littérature québécoise" (17). However, the "heartlands" project is concerned not only with "le Canada [le Québec] profond," as a conference chair once translated the title. Rather, it focuses on representations and understandings of *québécité* in rural, semi-rural, exurban and urban spaces and places outside of the province's largest city. This focus is not to suggest that these spaces and places are all the same; just that they have in common a contrast, distance, or marginalization to or from Montreal, which, as Rosemary Chapman points out, "is quite unlike the rest of Quebec" (83). Retaining a sense of spatial specificity, the "heartlands" project aims to think about fictional representations outside of the fetish-city and consider what these might suggest about Québécois identity.

Focusing on two novels by female authors set in Quebec City, this article considers how they participate in a tendency in women's writing to subvert some of the conventions of Quebec's urban novel. At the same time, it aims to undercut popular imaginary geographies that cast Montreal as the sole ethnically diverse city in the province. Although a key example of the urban turn in Québécois fiction is set in Quebec City, namely Roger Lemelin's *Au pied de la pente douce* (1944), this genre soon came to be identified with Montreal (Morgan, *Mindscapes* 1). *Le roman montréalais* takes a variety of forms, from the nationalist texts of the Quiet Revolution to the novels

mediating ethnic diversity and cultural *métissage* of the 1980s, and the lyrical, more personal works of the post-referenda era (see *Mindscapes*). However, some common trends exist, such as the naming of spaces and places within Montreal which would be familiar to domestic audiences, themes of walking or otherwise traversing the city space, and representing Montreal as a metonym for Quebec. Clashes, collisions, and encounters between French and English and in more recent decades especially, other languages and by extension, ethnicities, are frequent features of Montreal novels in both French and English.

In contrast, Quebec City is often represented as a repository of *québécité*. Its importance within the province's past and status as administrative capital in the present mean that it has a particular symbolic presence in francophone and, to a lesser extent, anglophone cultural production. Quebec City evokes contradictory connotations, despite popularly being seen and describing itself on its tourist information site as "the cradle of French civilization in North America" (Quebec City n. pag.). Its role as "founding city" is a significant part of its domestic and international touristic appeal, with traces of its architectural heritage—some of which have been carefully restored for the purpose (Morisset 147-50)—attracting large crowds every year. The apparent conservatism of the seat of provincial power is nevertheless challenged in cultural practices such as Robert Lepage's self-described "multidisciplinary company," Ex Machina ("Ex Machina" n. pag.), and strong graffiti and *bande-dessinée* cultures. Daniel Laforest describes how the city tried to present itself as both historical and modern in its 400th anniversary celebrations: "Quebec showed on every level its desire to be perceived as an encapsulation of the European legacy on American soil while being on par with the dominant North American images and narratives corresponding to the present stage of globalisation" ("Blurry Outlines" 200). These contradictions feed into what some critics describe as the dual nature of Quebec City (Lintvelt; Marshall), which they connect with its topography. This duality doubtless informs the plays around appearance and reality; secrets, lies, and truth associated with the literary genre best identified with Quebec City, namely the murder thriller, or *polar*.[4] However, it is at odds with the ethnic and linguistic homogeneity that informs most fictional representations of the city (Marshall 140).[5]

Written at a time of cultural ebullition, increased publication of francophone Québécois women's writing, and growing national assertion, Andrée Maillet's *Les Remparts de Québec* (1965) is structured around a key moment, which is underlined in the opening: "hier, dans la nuit du vingt-

six au vingt-sept juillet, je me suis promenée toute nue dans les Plaines d'Abraham" (13). This night scene is repeated with variations at the start of each chapter, so that we have "hier, dans la nuit, je quittai la Grande-Allée pour venir dans les Plaines d'Abraham où personne ne remarqua ma présence" (31, chap. 2) and "hier, j'ai reçu des arbres la pluie nocturne" (91, chap. 3). The rest of each chapter then flashes back to the female narrator's life, her difficult relationship with her parents and her rebellion against the rules of behaviour expected of a girl and young woman from a so-called "respectable" family. Some of these flashbacks take the form of recollected sessions between Arabelle and her psychiatrist; others are conversations that she has with an older American tourist. The latter enable the recounting of Arabelle's losing her virginity at the age of fifteen: gradually, in fragments, we learn of her encountering a married, middle-aged man in Strasbourg during a trip to Europe which was supposed to improve her social and educational development. Wishing to avoid another admirer, she accepts a ride with the older man and the two drive to an hotel in Baden Baden where they eventually have intercourse. The end of the novel sees her part company with the tourist; farmer from Idaho who resists her attempts to seduce him, and later that evening she takes up with an American-Polish soldier she had first seen on the ramparts of the title.

For its part, Nalini Warriar's *The Enemy Within* (2005) is structured around a more explicitly politically significant moment. Opening the day after the 1995 referendum on sovereignty-association, the title makes a play on the xenophobia of Jacques Parizeau's infamous comments following the result, in which he blamed "money and the ethnic vote" for the extremely narrow margin of votes against the proposal (50.58% against as opposed to 49.4% in favour). In this way, the protagonist, Sita Verma, who moves to Quebec following her arranged marriage, comments on the attitudes of a local resident: "after more than twenty years in Quebec City as neighbours, Sylvie still thought of her as a colour" (4). At the same time, "the enemy" is also Sita's husband, Anup, who, in the course of their marriage, goes from being indifferent to abusive, raping his wife on the day of the referendum.

Both *Les Remparts de Québec* and *The Enemy Within* play with what is known and what is suppressed, appearance and reality. In this, they take up a common trope within Quebec City fiction that critics connect with the duality of the urban landscape. Mapped over divisions between the city's Upper Town (*Haute-Ville*) and Lower Town (*Basse-Ville*) have been various social distinctions, notably those of class and economic mobility. As Bill

Marshall highlights, with some of it enclosed within city walls, the Upper Town, situated on the promontory of Cap Diamant was, and remains to a certain extent, the centre of political, economic, and religious power (135-36). Partly located on the shore of the St. Lawrence River, the Lower Town is the site of Samuel de Champlain's first settlement in the early seventeenth century. Marshall reminds us how, in the eighteenth century, the Lower Town was inhabited by artisans and workers. It became linked with finance and warehouse trade in the nineteenth century and culture industries at the end of the twentieth (Marshall 135). According to Jaap Lintvelt, although it was nineteenth-century industrialization that cemented the association of the Upper Town with the bourgeoisie and the Lower with the working classes, the spatial organization of Quebec City already determined the distribution of social hierarchies (78).

At various points in its history, Quebec City has been a fortress: both at the time of Champlain and, most famously, during the war against the British, who easily overcame the city's defences (Marshall 139-40). In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the British built the large star-shaped garrison, the Citadelle, which incorporates elements of the protective walls built by the French, but its functions are now primarily ceremonial. Marshall argues that "Quebec City's dual function as port and fortress, of openness and enclosure, forms the deep structure of all its representations" (137). For his part, Lintvelt points to the way in which the walls appear to be experienced as oppressive or liberating depending on the author's gender (309). He argues that the ramparts of Quebec City function symbolically as prison walls in Maillet's novel (84). It is the case that Arabelle makes a comparison between "ces murailles dérisoires qu'on appelle les remparts de Québec" (24) and "les remparts de [son] enfance" (24). She is figured as rejecting her native city, asserting that as soon as she has sufficient money to do so, she will leave once more (83). This attitude contrasts, however, to her lyrical descriptions of the natural landscape; notably the St. Lawrence River (56 and elsewhere). Social class is a key preoccupation in *Les Remparts de Québec*, with the confines against which Arabelle is rebelling partly connected with the urban space and the supposed narrowness of vision of its inhabitants. Arabelle begins seeing a psychiatrist after being arrested for vagrancy on rue Notre-Dame-des-Anges. This prompts her to underline cynically the rigid fixity of much of the city, with mobility only permitted in certain areas (124). The narrator rejects many of the social conventions expected of her social background; numerous rules governing female

comportment haunting the narrative in the form of the voices of Arabelle's mother, grandmother, teachers, and doctors. Class is mapped out over the city, with Arabelle receiving the following reproach in response to a perceived misconduct, "*tu n'es pas née à Saint-Roch*" (sic; Maillet 85), Saint-Roch being at that time a working-class neighbourhood in the Lower Town.

Maillet's novel takes up a theme that is frequently found in francophone Québécois fiction leading up to and including the Quiet Revolution, namely an inadequate relationship between parents and child. Arabelle's surgeon father is represented as entirely absorbed in his work, wife, and the trappings of his upper bourgeois lifestyle, with his daughter complaining, "je ne suis rien pour mon père" (57). This relationship is an extension of the trope of the unloving heterosexual couple found in much of this literature. In his well-known 1964 essay, "L'Amour dans la littérature canadienne-française," Michel van Schendel makes a connection between the near-complete lack of romantic novels in Quebec and what is figured as the province's colonized position (158). Women writers of the time, like Marie-Claire Blais and Anne Hébert, often represent heterosexual relations as abusive so as to undercut the idealization of the mother and her large Catholic family that informed the so-called "revenge of the cradle": a high birth rate in Quebec associated with political clout. In *Les Remparts de Québec*, the parents are figured as loving one another; indeed, Arabelle's father is represented as placing his wife at the centre of his life (21). His comfortable class background might account for this relatively positive portrayal of heterosexual coupledom, although the latter is seen as less enjoyable for his wife. Sophie, a Polish immigrant to Quebec who is scarred by the War, spends much of her time nervously monitoring her behaviour so she is not found wanting in her host environment. In this way, the constitution of the family in Maillet's novel complicates what appears, in many respects, to be a narrative of teenage revolt at a time when Quebec's baby-boom generation was coming of age. It is not only Arabelle's body that is policed by her grandmother, but also that of her mother. Sophie is repeatedly reminded of her outsider status by her mother-in-law's arch comments as to her choice of outfits (20-21) and exclamations as to how little resemblance there is between her and Arabelle: "il faut avouer, Sophie, que votre fille ne vous ressemble en rien" (20).

If Maillet's novel highlights several differences between the narcissistic and privileged Arabelle, and Sophie, who, at the same age, "pensai[t] à sauver [sa] Patrie" (41), it also underlines some key similarities. To a degree, the episode in which Arabelle loses her virginity echoes her mother's

rape by a prison guard in a concentration camp. Sophie uses the rape as a warning so as to police the appropriate gender mores of her husband's class whenever her daughter appears to contravene these, thereby both exploiting and squandering the privileges of her social position: "si quelqu'un a le droit d'être tragique, ici, c'est moi, faut-il toujours que je le répète?" (87). At a metatextual level, these incidents of quasi-consensual and forced sex reinscribe the trauma of the Holocaust, which surfaces now and again, as in the instances when Arabelle's mother drinks too much alcohol and reveals her prison camp tattoos (134-35). Another recurrent historical trauma and a fairly obvious one, given the importance accorded to the setting of a large part of the novel, is the Battle of Quebec (1759). The decisive moment on the Plains of Abraham, in which the generals of both Britain and New France were killed, saw France lose control of much of North America. The Plains function as a "*lieu de mémoire*" (Nora xvii) in Maillet's novel; explicitly identified with francophone Québec's understanding of itself: "situées à la périphérie des vieux Remparts de Québec . . . ces Plaines pelucheuses nous conservent la mémoire" (159). The incantatory "hier" which begins each chapter and which then triggers a series of other memories underlines this connection to historical trauma.

In his preface to the 1989 edition of *Les Remparts de Québec*, François Ricard compares it with what have come to be some of the classic nationalist texts of the period, such as Jacques Renaud's *Le Cassé* (1964) and Marie-Claire Blais' *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel* (1965) (8-9). Nevertheless, the narrative is remarkable in that, unlike the majority of 1960s texts by women that engage with nationalism, it does not take place in a rural environment. Novels such as Blais' *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel* and Hébert's *Kamouraska* (1970) use their non-urban settings in order to rework the novel of the land and to problematize the oppressive roles for women in this genre's celebration of *l'agriculturalisme* and the large Catholic family. In contrast, male nationalist authors of the period choose to set their work in Montreal, where tensions between francophones and anglophones are symbolic of the national struggle. As highlighted earlier, what adds to the interest of *Les Remparts de Québec* is that it is set in Quebec City rather than Montreal and, unusually for nationalist fiction of the period, also gives a sense of an ethnically heterogeneous urban space. Most nationalist literature of this time suppresses ethnic diversity within the Montreal setting despite this city's importance within histories of immigration to North America. This suppression serves to highlight tensions between Quebec's majority ethno-linguistic groups (Morgan *Mindscapes* 18).

As well as references to American and Chinese tourists (45), Maillet's novel contains allusions to a Hungarian hairdresser (49) and a Chinese restaurant (231). As we have seen, the protagonist's family background is mixed Québécois-Polish (50-51). Crucially, Arabelle describes having positive relations with anglophones, telling the man she meets in Strasbourg about one of her friends: "elle est anglaise. *She is my very best friend*" (sic; Maillet 71). This narrative does not accord with what has come to be known as "le texte national" (Jacques Godbout qtd. in Smith 7), which has dominated literary studies of the Quiet Revolution. Some examples of *le roman montréalais* outside of the nationalist canon contain representations of positive interactions between francophones and anglophones.[6] For example, Lucile Vallières' *La Fragilité des idoles* (1964) which is set primarily in a downtown office building, anticipates the more relaxed informal linguistic politics of very contemporary Montreal identified by Sherry Simon (10) and that are familiar to many living in the city. Its description of the Christmas office party points to the exchanges between French and English that are a common occurrence there: "un étranger entrant inopinément se serait cru à un Cocktail de la Société des Nations-Unies. On parlait l'anglais et répondait en français" (Vallières 69).

With that in mind, *Les Remparts de Québec* does not offer a complacent or unambiguous celebration of diversity. Whilst the comparison between Sophie's rape and the Battle of Quebec is rather uneasy, another distress narrative lurks in the novel. We learn of Sophie's sexual attack quite early on, but the details of her story during and immediately after the war are revealed in fragments in a way that is similar to the account of Arabelle's first intercourse and which, in representing a struggle between remembering and forgetting, signal trauma (Caruth 4-11). In Maillet's novel, sexual violation then becomes a signifier for Sophie's wider trauma as a Holocaust survivor and displaced migrant. In common with many other Polish people, she had moved to Belgium after the war, where she had been treated as a heroine for her bravery. When Arabelle visits some of her mother's Belgian friends, their comments regarding Sophie's welfare and their assumption that "on la traitait sûrement comme une reine" (Maillet 150) are in ironic contrast to the actual treatment she receives from her husband's female relatives. Arabelle sees her mother as torn between cultures: "je viens de comprendre ceci: lorsqu'elle me frappe, elle frappe Québec; lorsqu'elle m'embrasse, elle embrasse la Pologne" (171-72). Within the social class in which she finds herself, Sophie's bond with her daughter is repeatedly interrupted: her mother-in-law's

insistence on the physical differences between her and Arabelle; Arabelle's recollection of her delight at the Meccano set her mother bought her one Christmas turning; and her unease when the gift was deemed unfeminine and unsuitable by her aunts and grandmother (184-85). Sophie's repeated frustration with her daughter is consequently also an expression of anger at her host society in which she is ill at ease and where "on [lui] enlève [la] fille" (87). If, at the end of the novel, Arabelle's new relationship with the American-Polish soldier can be seen as pointing to the promise of a more multicultural future, Sophie remains out of place, trapped between the trauma of her past and the discomfort of her present.

Published forty years after *Les Remparts de Québec*, Warriar's *The Enemy Within* comes out of a context that saw the territorial nationalism of the Quiet Revolution called into question for appearing to identify the national subject with whites of French descent. Warriar's semi-autobiographical account of immigrant female development shares with Maillet's novel a rather surprising choice of setting in that it does not take place in Montreal; historically, the key immigrant pole within the province and backdrop to numerous famous novels of migrant dislocation.[7] These novels include Dany Laferrière's *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer* (1985), Régine Robin's *La Québécoite* (1983) and, more recently, Rawi Hage's *Cockroach* (2008). Unlike Hage and other writers who have published in English since the turn of the century, such as Heather O'Neill and Neil Smith, Warriar is not typically seen as part of the province's anglophone literary renaissance, despite having won a Quebec Writers' Federation prize for her collection of short stories, *Blues from the Malabar Coast* (2002). *The Enemy Within* can be compared with Robin's *La Québécoite* and British author Monica Ali's postcolonial novel of feminine development, *Brick Lane* (2003). If Robin's heroines struggle to make themselves at home in various neighbourhoods in Montreal and Ali's lead character is transported into the run-down high-rise flats of East London, Warriar's protagonist finds herself in the cold climes first of Montreal and then the suburbs of Quebec City. Sita's third-floor apartment near Laval University is in what is represented as an overly clean, overly quiet neighbourhood, which is very much at odds with what she knew in India: "sunlight reflected from the spotless cars and lorries. . . . It was quiet too. At this time of the morning in Kerala, the streets would be teeming: factory workers, labourers, vendors, students, dogs and cows" (Warriar 41). Although it is not unusual to represent suburbs negatively, as can be seen in examples of Quebec fiction from the

1980s and 1990s like Louis Hamelin's *La Rage* (1989) and Hélène Monette's *Unless* (1995), the nearby city does not fare much better: "in contrast to Montreal, Quebec City was quiet. . . . The wide streets were empty. Clean. No cardboard huts on the pavements. No beggars" (39). Quebec City and its surroundings are represented as very white and francophone, barely concealing an endemic racism beneath their rather antiseptic facades. These places become ciphers for the whole of Quebec, with the possible exception of Montreal, which with its "towering skyscrapers," "mirrored facades," and "monotonous grey freeway ramps" (39) more closely resembles urban centres elsewhere in the world. As in other examples of women's fiction, the city's walls become a metaphor for Sita's social isolation: "with the passing of the years, the wall around her grew higher and higher" (50-51). Employment practices highlight and reinforce the ethnocentrism that Warriar figures as being a part of francophone Québécois culture: "French would never fill her soul as English did. There was a coldness in the hearts of the people that made Sita shudder" (118).

The Enemy Within displays little patience for the language politics of Quebec; Sita contrasts them with what is represented as an easy and depoliticized language use in her country of origin: "when she was growing up, she had used three languages and at one time even five because one of the cooks in her home had been from Uttar Pradesh" (120). The novel nevertheless points to the existence of more than one language in Quebec City in that, assumed to be a tourist, Sita repeatedly finds that those working in related industries automatically switch from French to English when addressing her (48). The character's acute awareness of her ethnic difference prompts her to dress in Western clothes, although the critique that goes along with this decision is somewhat tempered by a comment on her physical attractiveness: "she'd stopped wearing her Indian clothes because she resented the stares she got when she wore them. She didn't realize they stared because she was beautiful" (48-49). All the same, *The Enemy Within* is highly critical of francophone Quebec society, locating racism firmly with a group that, rather ironically in a text so concerned with ethnic difference, is identified solely with white *francophones de souche*. Indeed, the only positive representation of a francophone is of Sita's colleague, Michel. However, he almost does not count, as although his parents are Québécois, he grew up in Vancouver. In some ways then, it is curious that Warriar's protagonist is represented as coming to love the province that is represented as so guilty of racist prejudice: "Canada was home. Quebec was in her heart" (90).

This affection is bound up in her building a cottage near Lake Marie, thirty minutes outside Quebec City, with money left to her by her mother. It is quite common for writers of the Montreal novel to contrast the city with a more positive elsewhere.[8] Interestingly, like many examples of the province's second-city fiction, *The Enemy Within* figures the alternative to Quebec City and its sprawl as a spiritual or emotional haven. The beauty of the natural landscape is evoked as one explanatory factor, with the novel taking up the pastoral sublime in a similar way to Maillet's text: "each day, she discovered a new view to fill her heart. From the stone balustrade, the St Lawrence floated lazily towards the gulf and the Atlantic" (51).

It is only near Lake Marie that Sita finds genuine friendship and, through this, love and sexual fulfillment. As in Robin's *La Québécoite*, Sita's romantic life parallels, to a degree, Quebec's national situation, although the added dimension to Robin's novel is that the failure of the female protagonists to achieve a long-lasting relationship is also attributed to the pain and trauma of the Holocaust. A number of now-canonical francophone Québécois novels that engage with questions around diversity can be seen as subversions of the national romance. This is a genre identified by Doris Sommer in her study of Latin American fiction. She describes how novels written prior to the 1960s attempted to resolve social and political conflict by mobilizing a romance narrative that naturalized the coming together of male and female protagonists from different racial, political, economic, and regional backgrounds (76-90). In the Quebec context, 1980s classics like *La Québécoite* and Laferrière's *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer* take up the long-standing narrative in francophone Québécois fiction of the impossibility of successful heterosexual romances described by van Schendel. They map this failure of heterosexual relations over the failed inter-ethnic relationships of their immigrant protagonists with Quebec's anglophones, francophones or, in the occasional instance, allophones. Warriar's novel differs from this in that both Sita and Anup are originally from the same area of India, but the latter is represented as effectively Canadianized by the time of their marriage. Anup rejects much of the chaos and disorder of his homeland and adopts a blend of North American and Indian mores that see him accept a life of wife and children without really wanting to relinquish the independence he had as a younger man in his early years as an immigrant. Anup is contrasted in a number of ways with Sita's second partner, Kiran, a friend of neighbours on Lake Marie whose family is also originally from the subcontinent. In contrast to the cold and sexually

selfish Anup, Kiran is a loving, attentive partner. Whilst he is from Quebec City, Kiran's skin colour and use of English as his first language mark him out for a racist attack towards the end of the novel, as the province prepares for the 1995 referendum (269). In this way, ethnocentrism is revealed as exhibited towards men as well as women, although as far as professional practices are concerned, Sita's gender certainly also appears to play a role in her being exploited at work. In this context, Anup's rape of his wife is a somewhat muddled and a rather heavy-handed metaphor for the potential destructiveness of the debates around the referendum. Sita reflects on the exclusionary nature of the latter:

> What they said boiled down to one thing: Quebec for the francophones. Or as Sita saw it, white Quebeckers.
>
> They should come to Quebec City, she thought.
>
> No place could be more Québécois. Hell, she had never been to the home of a real pure laine Québécois. (218)

Consequently, Sita remains sceptical about the possibility of true integration to Québécois society, and encourages her children to move abroad, saying "there is no future for you here" (232).

It is interesting that both *Les Remparts de Québec* and *The Enemy Within* use rape as a metaphor for a lack of social cohesion. The criminal act of sexual violation slides into the crime of racism, although racism is a rather suppressed subtext in Maillet's novel. In nationalist fiction by male authors of the Quiet Revolution, violence against women functions as an act of national assertion which, in overcoming the frequently anglophone representative of the colonizing oppressor, promotes a (francophone) collective. This metaphor has been rightly critiqued by feminist scholars—for example, Lori Saint-Martin (116-17). The politics of female authors using the same act to highlight national disunity seems at the very least troubling, as it risks identifying femininity with being a victim. The novels by Maillet and Warriar certainly represent women—or certain women—as being out of place in Quebec City and, by extension, Quebec as a whole. However, there is a suggestion in *Les Remparts de Québec* that this might change, as represented by the rebellious actions of its lead character, whose walks around the city and the Plains of Abraham constitute so many "parcours" which, in Michel de Certeau's famous analysis, challenge the fixity of the map associated with the dominant workings of power (91-110). Two later works of fiction for which Maillet's novel is an important intertext aim to restore some of the breaches within it and reposition women more firmly within the

urban space. The most famous example of literary fiction set in Quebec City written by a woman, namely, Anne Hébert's *Le Premier Jardin* (1988), along with Nicole Brossard's more recent *Hier* (2001), take up the narrative of the fractured mother-daughter relationship and offer some healing alternatives. In so doing, they uncover and recover individual and national feminine memories, thereby casting Quebec City as a site of women's desire. Both novels situate Quebec City within an historic transatlantic network, but neither really engages with the question of multiculturalism (Morgan, "Writing" 206).

For its part, *Les Remparts de Québec* acknowledges Quebec City's ethnic diversity and shows some optimism regarding the future accommodation of cultural difference within the province. This is not unmitigated, however. Even though Arabelle's meeting with the Polish-American soldier is represented positively as a spontaneous celebration of youth and desire, an underlying tension remains because the young man has lost his heritage language: "je lui parle polonais. Il me dit: j'ai oublié" (233). Maillet's novel sounds a warning about the dangers of English; a language no longer identified with the province's historic British colonizers and their descendants, but with the United States. In common with other examples of cultural production of the period, it offers a critique of the embracing of mass consumerism that occurred during the Quiet Revolution, associating this with a further erosion of Québécois identity (Maillet 165). In contrast, French is identified as the threat in *The Enemy Within* for its association with what is identified as ethnic essentialism. The novel offers a largely pessimistic view of diversity outside of the Montreal context: the conclusion sees Sita murdered by her ex-husband, a crime that underlines the impossibility of future integration for this often well-disposed immigrant.

Despite the differences in the authors' ethnic and linguistic identities, period of publication and language choice, *Remparts* and *The Enemy Within* share a number of interesting points of crossover. Indeed, they take up many of the themes often found in feminine fiction, including reflections on women's place within Quebec City and the mapping of sexual desire. Although the narratives of ethnic and racial tensions contained within *Les Remparts de Québec* and *The Enemy Within* offer uncomfortable reading, the very fact that diversity is treated within these texts makes them worthy of note. Whilst they may not announce a new literary trend, they signal the possibility that Montreal need not retain its monopoly as the sole multicultural place—at least, as represented culturally—in an otherwise homogeneous Quebec.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

1 Of course, as many historians have pointed out, signs of Quebec's modernization can be seen much earlier than 1960, the date popularly seen as marking the beginning of the Quiet Revolution (Simard 3-14).
2 As Daniel Laforest highlights, this symbolic embracing of the urban marginalized the rural and did not take account of the growing suburbanization of Quebec's population centres ("La Banlieue" n. pag.). A recent special issue of *Liberté*, which focuses on suburbs, goes some way to addressing this lack; see Lefebvre and Parent.
3 See, for example, Laforest's *L'Archipel de Caïn* and Pamela Sing's *Villages imaginaires*.
4 Chrystine Brouillet is one author associated with this literature, and there is a walking tour on the thriller or *polar* which takes place on weekends in the city.
5 An interesting exception is Louise Penny's *Bury Your Dead*, which is concerned with the long-standing anglophone community in Quebec City.
6 In making this assertion, I do not wish to carry out the kind of forgetting of the very real social and political tensions between anglophones and francophones during this period. David Leahy warns against this kind of cultural amnesia (unpublished manuscript).
7 Of course, Quebec City has also been an historic pole of immigration within the province due to its being a port city.
8 Shelley Boyd, private conversation, December 2007.

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Ophélie hypermoderne

Mélikah Abdelmoumen
Les désastrées. VLB 25,95 $

Compte rendu par Marie-Andrée Bergeron

Vaste entreprise que celle de Mélikah Abdelmoumen dans *Les Désastrées*, son sixième roman paru en 2013 à l'enseigne de VLB éditeur, où elle emprunte les voies méandriques de la mémoire pour donner la pleine mesure d'un drame, celui de sa protagoniste Nora-Jane Silver, une rock star à mi-chemin entre Lady Gaga et Cat Power, à qui les faux-semblants de l'industrie de la musique ne conviennent que très peu et qui tente d'apprendre à vivre avec, en elle, un amour déchu qu'elle n'oubliera jamais. C'est le parcours de cette suicidée de 37 ans, qui porte un regard posthume sur les évènements de sa vie, que l'on suit tout au long des trois parties du roman.

On retrouve dans *Les Désastrées* une certaine poétique néo-grunge — et en particulier un lexique désespéré du trouble, du drame, de la noirceur — qui pénètre de part en part l'imaginaire du roman. Abdelmoumen est une écrivaine *trash* qui se révèle à travers des références explicites à Trent Reznor et des clins d'œil à Bret Easton Ellis, composant ainsi un bouquet riche et explosif de renvois à la musique et à la littérature : « Derrière une immense baie vitrée, un salon dans lequel on a accroché une immense boule disco qui tourne et fait des dessins lumineux sur les murs immaculés. Des adultes vêtus comme dans un James Bond des années 1960 discutent par petits groupes. Ils ont cet air mou et vacant que je connais trop bien : le regard désertés des drogués — *In a daze cause I found God*, comme disait Kurt Cobain. »

Traversée par le souvenir de l'écrivaine québécoise Nelly Arcan, dont on peut percevoir les traits subtils à travers ceux de Nora-Jane Silver, l'histoire se développe sur la base d'un jeu narratif à trois voix qui éclairent, à partir d'une perspective qui se renouvèle constamment, le caractère tragique du récit. Le défi d'Abdelmoumen a sans doute été celui de se tenir en équilibre entre les différents registres explorés dans et par le texte, de même qu'entre la fiction et la réalité, entre l'hommage et le deuil. Au seuil de l'autofiction (Nelly Arcan était une amie d'Abdelmoumen) et de l'expérimentation formelle, *Les Désastrées* est une heureuse tentative : celle de fixer les repères des identités de même que ceux d'un drame en progression qui se dessine par fragments posés dans une ligne chronologique trouble, tantôt prospective, tantôt rétrospective : « J'y ai assisté, oui, j'ai survolé mon cadavre avachi et il n'était pas beau à voir. Une sorte d'Ophélie hyper-moderne enflée de tristesse dans sa baignoire pleine d'eau tiède et de sang. » Au cœur de cette problématique qu'explore habilement Abdelmoumen se trouve l'enjeu des *Désastrées*, qui, en définitive, relève de l'ordre du sensible; il s'agit, semble-t-il, de rendre par le texte la puissance de l'être et son potentiel transformateur dans un environnement hostile; il s'agit peut-être aussi de concevoir, en ce sens, les limites de la désespérance.

Juggling Ghosts

Carolyn Abraham
The Juggler's Children: A Journey into Family, Legend, and the Genes that Bind Us.
Random House $32.00

Shyam Selvadurai
The Hungry Ghosts. Doubleday $29.95

Reviewed by Margaret Steffler

In *The Juggler's Children* and *The Hungry Ghosts*, finalists for the 2013 Governor General's Literary Awards in the categories of non-fiction and fiction, Carolyn Abraham and Shyam Selvadurai offer personal family stories within the context of larger public narratives of colonialism, diaspora, and immigration. The incorporation of storytelling in Abraham's work and the autobiographical elements in Selvadurai's novel blur the distinctions between memoir and fiction in ways that enhance the overlapping of the intimate stories with the more public backdrops. Abraham, a medical journalist, concentrates on the mysteries unlocked by DNA and genomics, integrating her discoveries about her own ancestry with a story about the science and ethics of DNA decoding. Novelist Selvadurai incorporates the Sri Lankan myth of the *peréthaya*, the ancestor reborn as a hungry ghost, using the spectral figure as a parallel for haunting memories of violence, violation, and guilt. Both science and myth lead to insights into origins and human connections. This insight includes the recognition of inclusivity in Abraham's daughter, Jade, who, as a result of learning about her ancestry, declares that she can "cheer for everybody" in the Beijing Olympics in a world where genes prove that "no one is any one thing." A commitment of selflessness is the result for Selvadurai's first person narrator, Shivan, who learns from the *peréthaya* that he will "find release only by offering it to another, by putting another before [him]self."

Both journeys, told from Toronto, begin with eccentric grandmothers, reminiscent in some ways of Michael Ondaatje's Lalla in *Running in the Family*. Abraham's inability to fill in glaring gaps in her maternal grandmother's eulogy was a major factor in the initiation of her genetic search. Nana Gladys, who created havoc with factual accounts and origins by whimsically moving birthdays to coincide with major holidays, becomes a person of key interest in Abraham's sleuthing. During the process of writing, Abraham considers the possibility that she is feeling the "presence" of Nana Gladys just as her grandmother, a "true believer," used to feel the presence of her dead husband. At one point Abraham facetiously refers to the popularity and intensity of the "march into the genetic past" in religious terms as a "pilgrimage" of the "faithful," but it is a journey that Abraham claims "changed the way I see others," giving her the status of a faithful pilgrim as well as a determined scientific journalist.

Shivan's relationship with his powerful maternal grandmother (Aachi) in *The Hungry Ghosts* forces him to face the troubled liminal spaces in which he lives—between Tamil and Sinhalese, privileged and marginal, child and adult, Canada and Sri Lanka. Manipulated by Aachi's demonstrations of power and need for devotion, Shivan, in retrospect, rages against "that malformed thing she calls love," acknowledging, however, that "love always comes with its dark twin—the spectre of loss, which drives us to do such terrible things." Shivan's loyalty to Aachi becomes aligned with his attachment to Sri Lanka, both loves deeply marked by violence, betrayal, and evil. From the Scarborough home where he prepares himself for his return to Colombo to bring his "ailing grandmother back here to Toronto," Shivan pictures the inevitable destruction by bulldozers of the "carved teak pillars and lattice panels," the

"turquoise-and-grey mosaic," the "intricately wrought antique doors, with their images of lotuses and peacocks" of his childhood home, the seat of horror and corruption presided over by the matriarch. The preparation and the image supposedly reassure him that "the life we knew there [in Colombo], the life that has haunted and misshaped us all, will come to a close."

Abraham's journey into multiple countries, including India, Jamaica, England, the United States and China, also takes her into dark spaces inhabited by her ancestors, challenging expectations and clear storylines of colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed. The corruption of the past, albeit removed, is as disturbing as that witnessed first-hand by Shivan in his adolescence and early adulthood. Abraham talks of the "in-between" world of her "Eurasian" ancestors, who passed down the "Anglo-Indian identity crisis" from "the railway colonies of India to the cold of postwar England and all the way across to Canada." Like Fred Wah in *Diamond Grill* who points out the ridiculous futility of attempting to measure background and race, Abraham carefully ensures that the genetic answers she receives do not define her identity. She uses instead the juggling of her great grandfather as a metaphor for the "millions of nucleotides in continuous motion, tossed up, generation after generation, and scattered by the wind and by warriors, by the kidnapped and the curious, the hungry, the greedy, the pious, the scared and the lovesick." Abraham's search originates in her sense of herself as a "brown girl with a Jewish last name who went to a Catholic school" in St. Catharines. Fuelled by curiosity and fed by science and the imagination, the search confirms a background that spans the globe.

Shivan, on the other hand, in the Sri Lanka of the 1970s and 1980s, is more rigidly defined by his Tamil-Sinhalese parentage, which, along with his homosexual relationship, places him in danger. Immigration to Canada does not provide freedom from fear or memory. In the pioneer cemetery in the parking lot of the Bridlewood Mall in Scarborough (both cemetery and mall actually exist), Shivan experiences "two irreconcilable feelings pressed tight against each other"—"a great longing to be back in Sri Lanka and also, paradoxically, a revulsion against being there." The detailed and vivid inclusion of Toronto, and specifically Scarborough, in this novel is one of its strengths, as is the back and forth literal and emotional movement between Canada and Sri Lanka. The contrast between the grandmother's bedroom in Sri Lanka, filled with teak, camphor, cloves, ebony, brass, lace, and the sea breeze, and the room awaiting her in Scarborough speaks of losses too acute to bear. Selvadurai evocatively conveys the sense of loss that accompanies immigration journeys. Shivan's homesickness is haunted by the pain of a lost love and the wretched compassion for a grandmother who shared with him, "the secret that had contorted her life."

The conclusion of *The Juggler's Children* is not entirely convincing in its idealistic proclamation of the inclusivity of difference. The resolution glosses over the troubling complexities of the past, which have not simply disappeared in an "enlightened" present. The detailed information about taking and testing DNA samples from the Abraham and Crooks families can become tedious at times, but for the most part the narrative is both engaging and informative. The conclusion of Selvadurai's novel introduces the potential release that could be granted to a terrified Shivan through an intended act of sacrificial compassion. The intention emerges from the *peréthaya* narratives, which have seemed somewhat artificial and forced to this point in an otherwise compelling and carefully constructed novel. Aachi's story of how Nandaka, a king, learns from a *peréthaya* that "in front of us the

way is seen, but behind us the road is gone" becomes a guide for Shivan, pushing him forward from fears and hauntings in a way that is similar to the ideal approach and attitude envisioned by Abraham for her daughter, Jade, and the next generation.

The Thin Gender Line

Carmen Aguirre
Blue Box. Talonbooks $16.95

Leanna Brodie
The Book of Esther. Talonbooks $16.95

Reviewed by Lourdes Arciniega

Women's drama sometimes misses an opportunity to create a space for groundbreaking feminist performance when it concentrates on upholding rather than dismantling existing gender binaries, as happens in Carmen Aguirre's *Blue Box*. Aguirre's sharp and biting monologue narrates the life of Carmen, a Chilean immigrant fleeing a revolutionary life and failed first marriage, who begins a doomed relationship with a Chicano television actor in Los Angeles. Although Carmen is the pursuer in this highly charged and erotic sexual liaison, she has none of the power. Her lover easily puts on and discards incarnations of gender by being both the object and manipulator of Carmen's sexual desire. Indeed, it is this blind focus on lust that ultimately derails Carmen, as well as the whole of Aguirre's work. Carmen subverts female agency by misreading her grandmother's advice to "look in front of you" and fixes her gaze instead on the "Vision Man," her lover. Aguirre's play works well when Carmen engages directly with the audience, as when she interactively stages the feeling of being hunted down and pursued by a spy. Tragically, Carmen is not aware that she is embodying the same role in her pursuit of her unworthy lover. Thus, Aguirre consistently undermines Carmen's opportunities for female empowerment by defining Carmen's sense of self worth in terms of her sexual desirability in the eyes of another. Aguirre writes a woman's drama where a woman speaks only in relation to her connection to the men in her life.

In *The Book of Esther*, Leanna Brodie's Esther finds more breathing room to wield some feminist agency. The fifteen-year-old farm girl runs away from her conservative, Christian parents to the apartment of a gay activist where she meets a teenage hustler who introduces her to the multicultural diversity of an urban environment. When Esther's parents arrive to claim her, her father has a heart attack, and Esther is forced to return to the farm. The hustler follows her and gives her a new perspective on her once familiar surroundings. The gay activist, who used to be a close family friend who was forced to run away when homophobia invaded his neighbourhood, also returns to the rural setting. Thus Brodie sets up gender, racial, and religious intolerance as obstacles that Esther, the hustler, and the activist have to overcome. Anthea, Esther's obsessively religious mother, becomes the surprisingly pivotal axis for change in this triangle. She gains everyone's trust and respect by assuming the patriarchal role in her household. Anthea wields her faith and empathy as instruments of female authority succeeding in creating a strong female bond with her daughter, which ironically also frees Esther to follow her own path outside the gendered confines of her home. Brodie gives her marginalized characters an alternative space for feminist-based engagement. This doesn't impose a gender-challenging resolution, but rather offers hope through its continued performance.

La Digne Mère

Marguerite Andersen
La mauvaise mère. Prise de parole 18,95 $

Compte rendu par Ariane Gibeau

Les voix de mères, longtemps écartées de la tradition littéraire occidentale, sont désormais très présentes dans nos productions littéraires, culturelles et médiatiques. Jeunes et moins jeunes, les femmes n'hésitent plus à partager leur expérience de la maternité, leurs joies et leurs difficultés. À près de 90 ans, Marguerite Andersen, pionnière des études féministes canadiennes, a décidé de relater elle aussi, sur le mode de la confession, son parcours de mère, de l'annonce de sa première grossesse à aujourd'hui. *La mauvaise mère*, récit autobiographique rédigé en vers libres et scindé en courts chapitres, revient sur un parcours atypique, fait de voyages, d'absences, de grandes réussites, de colère et de culpabilité.

Au sortir de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, la jeune narratrice, allemande, se découvre enceinte. Elle s'embarque pour la Tunisie, où habite le père de l'enfant. Entre le quotidien lassant de mère au foyer, l'ennui des tâches à répéter et la brutalité de cet homme étranger, sa colère émerge des ellipses et de la forme fragmentaire, devient fantasme : « Prendre le revolver. / Voir le sang, / souffrir la prison… » Un deuxième enfant naît malgré les tentatives d'avortement et annonce quelques années supplémentaires d'enfermement et de violence conjugale. Mais un voyage impromptu en Allemagne chamboule tout. La mère résignée étudie, travaille, vagabonde, change enfin d'existence… et vit un temps sans ses enfants : « Je suis la mère amputée ». Exilée au Québec, en Éthiopie et aux États-Unis, elle refait sa vie avec un autre homme, lutte pour retrouver la garde de ses fils, donne naissance à une fille, devient professeure d'université. La promesse de réunion est pourtant marquée d'autres séparations, dont le départ de l'aîné pour la guerre du Viêt Nam : « La veille de son départ / oui, j'aurais dû lui casser la jambe / j'aurais dû / clouer des planches / contre la fenêtre de sa chambre. » À la fin de sa vie, après les drames et les conflits, la mère, entourée de ses trois enfants, de ses petits et arrière-petits-enfants, fait les comptes, dresse les bilans : « montrer le chemin parcouru / le je dans toutes ses variations / le moi / si étrange. »

L'écriture d'Andersen, retenue et dépouillée, se révèle très efficace dans les descriptions du banal quotidien : cuisine, soins aux enfants, etc. En revanche, la même forme fait tomber à plat certains passages plus denses, comme celui où le fils cadet, resté pendant plusieurs mois auprès de son père pour pouvoir s'amuser avec une bicyclette, avoue à la narratrice qu'il a été battu : ces évènements sont tenus à distance, auraient mérité plus de profondeur. L'ensemble demeure touchant, dévoile la volonté d'une femme de s'investir dignement dans son rôle, d'être tout sauf une mauvaise mère.

Language: Known/Unknown

Marianne Apostolides
Voluptuous Pleasure: The Truth about the Writing Life. BookThug $23.00

Douglas Glover
Attack of the Copula Spiders. Biblioasis $19.95

Reviewed by Lucia Lorenzi

I often imagine that for readers, writers, and literary scholars alike, one of the great motivations behind our love of books is a deeply-rooted desire, or perhaps even a strongly-held obsession, to understand precisely how literature works—to unravel its intricacies and its mysteries. Through individual reading practices, classroom discussions, writing classes, and literary analysis, we attempt to pull back the

curtain and peer behind it to understand the wizardry of words. How does a phrase hang together just so? How does a particular narrative weave its magic upon readers, enthralling them in a world where fact and fiction may blend together? How do literature and book culture maintain their importance in an increasingly visually saturated culture? While Marianne Apostolides' *Voluptuous Pleasure: The Truth about the Writing Life* and Douglas Glover's *Attack of the Copula Spiders* take radically different approaches to the subject of storytelling, their works both challenge the reader to consider and reflect on form and content, and on the relationship between language and experience, whether it be in the way we learn to interpret our world, enjoy novels, or negotiate the precarious narratives that constitute our lives and the lives of others.

Douglas Glover's book is composed of a series of short essays, in which he offers not only practical strategies for writing novels and short stories, but also a number of compelling arguments about the value of literature itself. Far from separating the mechanics of literary production and analysis from the larger implications of literary proficiency and cultural relevance, Glover sternly argues that the art and the craft of language are profoundly intertwined. The first two essays, "How to Write a Novel" and "How to Write a Short Story," focus on the roles of narrative facets such as subplot, plot, theme, and image. However, by the time the reader arrives at the title essay, "Attack of the Copula Spiders," Glover pulls back the curtain to reveal that the mystery of literature is deeply embedded at the level of language itself, and that by learning how to become good writers, we also become good readers, and vice versa. In a "post-literate" age where the study of English literature is often dismissed as a "fluffy" or somehow merely aesthetic pursuit, and where writing courses are often perceived as dry and mechanical, Glover's book fiercely defends the value of studying language as both art and craft, especially in his careful analyses of texts by authors such as Alice Munro and Thomas Bernhard. The mechanics and aesthetics of language are inseparable; thus Glover makes a compelling argument for both rigorous reading and writing practices.

Marianne Apostolides' memoir concerns itself with somewhat different questions about language and narrative, namely their tenuous relationships to lived experience and to "truth." The memoir takes its title, in part, from a quotation by Roland Barthes, which is featured as the epigraph to the book. Barthes contends that the "voluptuous pleasure" of language lies in its murky inability to "authenticate itself." So, too, does Apostolides' prose delight and take pleasure in the slipperiness of language itself. The narrative delves directly into the complexities of storytelling, through the narrator's attempts to tell the story of her father's life, which begins during his complex childhood in wartime Greece. The narrator holds her father's story in her hands "like unformed flesh," and indeed, as the narrative unravels, the reader is compelled to consider the ways in which language shapes embodied experience (and vice versa). Most notable about this memoir is its intense self-reflexivity: Apostolides constantly questions and reflects on the roles of interviewer, writer, and reader of history, be they familial or otherwise. "We have given this void its unasked questions; we have held this exchange," she notes, a reminder that language is always-already relational, and that the act of telling and sharing stories is about being mindful of those relations, of both their limits and their moments of productivity. Blending the autobiographical with the archival, the fictional with the factual, *Voluptuous Pleasure* is a powerful call for language to be both questioned and celebrated, dispensed with, and relied upon.

Both Glover and Apostolides' works reveal the known and the unknown of language. And while both offer insights into the workings of words, perhaps their most compelling literary contributions are the ways in which they allow us to acknowledge that behind the curtains of language, lie yet more curtains and yet more mysteries.

Regional Threats

Théodora Armstrong
Clear Skies, No Wind, 100% Visibility.
Anansi $22.95

Tim Bowling
The Tinsmith. Brindle & Glass $21.95

Reviewed by Jan Lermitte

The most obvious similarities between these two volumes are British Columbia settings, and the unflinching examination of human weakness and the desire for connection. While the short stories in Théodora Armstrong's collection are set in contemporary regional towns and suburbia, the setting of Tim Bowling's novel begins in Maryland during the American Civil War and moves to the salmon cannery wars of 1881 at the mouth of the Fraser River. What each writer does particularly well is to create an atmosphere of uncertainty, human frailty, and the threat of danger, that is veiled by or embedded in the local landscape.

In a 2013 CBC radio interview, Armstrong discusses the title of her collection. She notes a common element in her stories: an interest in expectations and perceptions about life that arise out of a desire for perfect conditions. When unexpected events take place, relationships are altered and individuals look back to a time when life seemed simpler or easier. Armstrong's characters, many of them children or teens, navigate the edges of risky behaviours, rebellion, sexuality, and power. In each story, there is a sense of dread—the possibility of some unexpected threat presenting itself, changing lives forever. A boy sets a large fire to impress his brother. Teens in Lynn Canyon leap into the cold pools and explore the range of risks available to them. A young aircraft controller experiences the loss of control that occurs when a small plane crashes. Armstrong is skilled at creating scenes that are familiar, whether in terms of landscape (such as the desert of Interior BC or the wet coastal forest of Vancouver Island), or people's attempts at connection. Parents fail to understand their children; spouses forget how to relate to each other; siblings move together and apart in a dance of individualism. Armstrong's stories, while written with a clear, direct, and compelling style, are not simplistic. They capture the uncertainty of love, the obstacles to intimacy, and the difficulties that come from yearning for something but having to pay the price when it is achieved. Armstrong's style is reminiscent of Madeleine Thien's, with her emphasis on regionalism and the painful realities of missing parents, drug abuse, and contemporary urban life.

Bowling, like Armstrong, explores the human potential for violence and moral ambiguity. However, he depicts the bloody realities of war as seen primarily through the eyes of an army doctor, Anson Baird, who is forced to approach most patients with a saw and a plan to amputate, and through the character of the tinsmith, John, a (possibly) mixed-raced young man who helps tend the wounded. When Baird realizes that John is on the run and may have killed his slave-master, he protects him by giving him a new identity. The story then moves forward twenty years to New Westminster, BC where John (now William Dare) has made enemies on the river. This character, first developed by Bowling in one of his early poems, remains mysterious, his true actions hidden by assumptions about race.

As Bowling admits, his novel is "about the kind of violence we do" and Bowling does not fail to paint vivid pictures of the death and destruction of humans and landscapes created by war, nor does he avoid detailed description of the violent treatment of black slaves prior to and during the Civil War. Bowling's meticulous research and careful recreation of the Battle of Antietam, as well as the violence inherent in the salmon harvest, provide a frightening testimony to the ways in which humankind leaves death and environmental destruction in its wake. *The Tinsmith* could be read as an exploration of the slipperiness of identity relating to bloodlines and race—how one man's life can be made or ruined by the lightness or darkness of his skin. It could also be read as a warning of the inevitable destruction of our environmental resources when greed, politics, or the promise of profits become primary motivators for change. Does *The Tinsmith*, like the Canadian historical fiction discussed by Herb Wyile in *Speculative Fictions: Contemporary Canadian Novelists and the Writing of History*, fit into the category of "post-colonial"? Does it challenge traditional narratives and create conversations about the treatment of minorities in Canada? Yes, undoubtedly it does. However, I argue that Bowling's primary interest lies in creating an atmosphere that probes human moral actions. A finalist for the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize, Bowling clearly demonstrates a high quality of writing and his greatest achievement as a writer thus far.

Defying Definition

John Mikhail Asfour and Elee Kraljii Gardiner, eds.
V6A: Writing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Arsenal Pulp $19.95

Diane Buchanan
unruly angels. Frontenac $15.95

Reviewed by Erin Ramlo

These two collections arrived in my mailbox for review bound with an elastic band and a post-it note inscribed with the letters "DTES," the now ubiquitous and sometimes notorious short-hand for Vancouver's Downtown Eastside community. Yet, *V6A* and *unruly angels* are not really *about* the DTES, per se: one is about addiction in general, while the other seeks to open the rigidly encoded borders that surround the community. Both collections essentially disrupt the long-held beliefs, definitions, and expectations about people whom society labels as "homeless," "addicts," or "criminals," and break through the boundaries of the marginalized spaces to which such populations are often relegated.

While the first piece in Diane Buchanan's *unruly angels* is set on Vancouver's infamous Hastings Street, the actual inspiration for this collection of poems was Buchanan's attendance as a spectator—for four years—at weekly meetings of Edmonton's Drug Treatment Court. There are eleven such programs in Canada: dedicated court proceedings for "drug dependent offenders who have agreed to accept treatment for their addiction." Drug courts offer a community-based alternative to incarceration, giving participants the opportunity to earn both their sobriety and their freedom. For her part, Buchanan sought to bring attention to this system and to the diversity of its participants, travelling to the courthouse each week to be a silent observer of both their plights and their triumphs, before representing those experiences in her own

poetry. The poems in *unruly angels* are, at times, challenging: they speak of the myriad daily traumas experienced by people pushed to the edges of society and subsequently ignored. The poems are beautiful, often provocative accounts of the process of recovery that highlight the importance of community and social justice in the context of addiction.

And while *unruly angels* seems to advocate, throughout, for the value of this alternative model, I cannot help but feel a bit of unease with the project itself. In her foreword, when describing Courtroom 267, where the proceedings took place, Buchanan states "I found poems there!"—not people, not people's stories, but poems. There is a risk, here, of appropriation, especially when penning first-person poetic accounts of addiction and recovery based on the lives of other people. I do believe that Buchanan cares deeply for the people whose stories she witnessed and recorded—the care and pathos evident in these poems is testament to that. Yet, I must ask: did she consult these participants for permission to immortalize their stories in poetic verse? Ultimately, these are beautifully crafted poems that would have benefited from a more nuanced discussion of their origins and motivations. While the collection raises important questions about who represents whom (and how and why), as it stands, the ethical impulse of this work remains a bit elusive and troubling.

In contrast, *V6A* directly asks how and where in a neighbourhood so long defined from the outside can self-definition occur? Their answer: prioritize the voices, experiences, and stories of a host of individuals through self-representation. The project is rooted in the Downtown Eastside—inspired by a weekly meeting of local writers, the Thursdays Writing Collective—but editors John Mikhail Asfour and Elee Kraljii Gardiner made no requirements that submissions need be about the neighbourhood itself. Rather, submissions range from poetry to essays, from fiction to memoir, by both established and amateur authors alike, all of whom have some kind of relationship to the community of the Downtown Eastside: past, present, resident, or friend. As such, the collection has no real narrative arc, other than that the pieces are humblingly honest and stirring. These are strong, affective, and sometimes confrontational pieces of writing that throw open the rigid expectations of the Downtown Eastside and allow all kinds of people to express how this community might live in them. This is not merely a collection about Hastings Street SROs, as one might expect of the DTES; rather, it is a collection about families and history, about bike rides and coyotes and watermelons.

Perhaps the bundling together of these texts under the label of "DTES" says something about the tacit assumptions we make about the neighbourhood and the people who reside there. As these volumes teach, though, the Downtown Eastside is a vibrant community that defies definition, and addicts come from everywhere with every conceivable kind of story. There is a lot to be gleaned from the pieces in both collections: they deserve to be approached slowly and considered with care as they insist on a redefinition of our assumptions and our labels.

Wrighting the World

Ken Belford
Internodes. Talonbooks $16.95

Michael Boughn
Cosmographia: A Post-Lucretian Faux Micro-Epic. BookThug $20.00

Carmelita McGrath
Escape Velocity. Goose Lane $19.95

Reviewed by Michael Roberson

Taken together, the newest books by Carmelita McGrath, Ken Belford and Michael Boughn might demonstrate one, albeit academic,

perspective on the state of contemporary poetry. While McGrath, at one pole, operates in a very traditional manner, and Boughn, at the other pole, functions in a more vanguard fashion, Belford splits the difference and works, quite appropriately, at the internode.

Escape Velocity, Carmelita McGrath's third book of poems, begins with a "Disclaimer"—a reflexive poem that presents both the state of *her* art, and the state of *the* art. She begins: "Should anyone wonder, / should anyone expect, / there will be no pyrotechnics." McGrath functions, at her best, in a far more subtle, and "crepuscular" light, haunted by voices of Modernism like Frost and Stevens. As for the avant-garde, however, she proffers: "Too much already has been burned. / Enough turned to heaps of ash. / Let the children own the comet, the flare, the flash." McGrath's poems glisten in their most imagistic moments—when the punctuation is minimal, the lines tight and economical—like "black-and-white-lace moths." In a poem titled "Elision," for example, where McGrath addresses her aging parent, she demonstrates a proficient command of image and line:

> [A] fossil has begun in you, ribs of memory around absent cells, synapses flicker out like votive candles, and that sea, our sea no longer whispers a version of the world, but lives on the windowsill in a dried shell that fails to conjure anything to sail on [.]

Unfortunately, McGrath's poems suffer in their most prosaic moments—when syntax organizes the lines against the potency of enjambment, when grammar and mechanics interfere, and when she addresses a reader, almost seeking reassurance: "Listen, can you not hear it?" and "You know that feeling?" Overall, McGrath offers poems that always "open the windows" to the natural world—to the earth, the sky, the weather—and therefore to the mutabilities of life and relationships. Despite the title, these are poems that do not attempt to leave the world as we know it. Unlike the cover image, in fact, these poems are not streaks of light, but more like "reading stories in a leafy light."

Like McGrath's *Escape Velocity*, Ken Belford's eighth book of poems, *Internodes*, begins with a poem about his poetic project. In the first of a book-length sequence of untitled poems, Belford offers a series of poetic imperatives:

> Let go,
> and get rid of the entangled fabric
> of arcane meaning, and breathe,
> and be something more than
> the immediate, repetitious sample.

In many of the short, compact "agitated lyric[s]" that make up *Internodes*, Belford self-consciously asserts his outsider status in the poetry community. He wishes to operate outside of the prescriptions and demands of academic poetries, what he calls the "forcy algorithms of scolders." But, while he respects the conceptual writing of fellow Canadians Christian Bök and Derek Beaulieu, whose "bricks and blocks roll off the line," Belford prefers to get his "nuts and bolts from a bin." Still, Belford's intention to write a poetry that displaces our usual habits of attention to the world and language certainly falls within a vanguard poetic like the poets he names. Moreover, he claims to "concoct and fudge genres," by which he means that he writes a brand of eco-poetry, neither "pastoral" or "idyllic," but as "unpredictable" as the "environment." His poems "oscillate" between themes of language, masculinity, exploitation, family and land. As a self-described "speaker of a geo- / graphic lan(d)guage," Belford avoids "the charm of landscape poems," "appeals for land's sake," and "submiss[ion] to the local." His mostly uniform, columnar poems act as "persistent clumps of vascular / arrangements"—arrangements that demonstrate an organic form, analogous to the complexity and interdependence of an ecosystem, or the bright orange grouping of spores that adorn the cover. At times, I will admit,

Belford's heavy hand with statements about his *internodal* status, and his "aversion to retired / English teachers," interfere with the actual execution of his eco-poetic model.

With *Cosmographia: A Post-Lucretian Faux Micro-Epic*, Michael Boughn's fifth book of poetry, the title and cover suggest a grandiosity of tone and scope, as any epic should, whether classical, mock, or faux. Boughn approaches the project, in fact, with a tongue that might only fill the bloated cheek of Dizzy Gillespie. Across the cover Boughn has black and white cows traversing an antiquated cartographic depiction of three dimensional space and time. In Boughn's campy attempt to write the world, he also intends to right the world—at least as there continues to be "heavily armoured engineering assaults / on pools of words drained and reclaimed // for development by veritas platforms." Opposed to the cows that "here signify large groups / of meaning headed for the nearest / cliff," Boughn offers the character of Razzamatootie—a muse-like figure that inspires the "provocative non sequiturs hell bent / on breeding lilacs out of whatever vociferant / dung heap vocabulary tickles their dirty roots." Boughn's use of the word faux in the title allows him the latitude to write an epic of twelve books, each with six lyric-like cantos, while also transgressing the "imposition of bound rudiments" of genre or style. Boughn riddles the poem with footnote citations from jazz musicians, poets, philosophers, and scientists—footnotes that serve as "gravy," the otherwise "unusable material designated / unprofitable" turned into an excessive delight. While Boughn cites the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the real war at the centre of the poem is the war against the imagination, where poems act as "pockets / of resistance" against both the "rhetorical simplifications" and the "market based / truth disseminations" by the perpetrators of "archonic" agendas. Ultimately, Boughn writes a philosophical epic like Lucretius and "not just for the fun of it" but with the

> imperative to pay
> attention to what matters in a time
>
> of universal entrapment arranged
> in long parallel rows of shelves stacked
> with similar drugs to smooth out
> whatever variations might disrupt [.]

Reading Magpie—Patrick Lane

Patrick Lane; Donna Bennett and Russell Morton Brown, eds.
The Collected Poems of Patrick Lane.
Harbour $44.95

Reviewed by Louise Bernice Halfe

> Lost in the dark forest where dry wood
> Leaned ready to lay their hollow burden,
> I am unable
> To articulate the longing, loneliness, the
> savage tenderness
> Of love, the sight and smell of death as it
> blossoms
> In the poet's hand or how he witnessed
> the mystery
> Of the last breath. Walking arm in arm he
> lays down
> His pen inviting the lines as if the pen
> itself was a cowboy's larret.
> The rope captures the wind and breathes
> fire in to his pen.
> He rejoices as the page eats his thoughts.
> He lives to write
> Repeatedly. Repeatedly, the poet invites
> the reader
> To nest in his cradle of creativity. He says,
> "Here. Hear."
> As if he was an old warrior that took the
> heart out of his
> Victim's chest to shake at the sky. Only he
> holds it in
> A whisper allowing the words to startle,
> to awake
> Where so many attempt to hide. Like a
> boy, he
> Watches from the page.

Lane is the master of what is elementally human. That has been his grace and his gift

as a writer. Patrick Lane's writing career began in the 1960s. Self-educated and with a need to find expression, he navigated the foreign territory of poetry. Lane writes from self-reflection, self-condemnation, and observations from his daily life. Lane advises all, "Go beyond who you are to who you are not. // What would you conquer / if you do not conquer yourself." And so the poet continues to invite the readers to those uncomfortable places of the unexplored.

In Lane's early writings, the poem "Calgary City Jail" addresses not only the discovery of the written word but also acknowledges the universal fear of being unacknowledged, forgotten, or even erased from life. "Elephants," shares the knowledge of this animal with an alcoholic truck driver, who in turn laments the forgotten history of his people. Compassionate and empathetic, he beseeches those who are entering eternity to leave him a path to follow when he writes, "[y]ou are near enough to death / please tell me / where the beginning is."

At no time is Lane an indifferent observer. Life is Patrick's mistress and his muse which relentlessly pursue him as much as he pursues life. His poetry reflects choices and consequences, of action and thought, no matter how difficult. He masticates, swallows, digests, and regurgitates. The burden of this process is not an easy task. Hence, there is a need to find a space to release and to seek refuge. He asks the reader to be aware of their actions and surroundings. "O Reader You," he implores, "his burning you can heal" as he too desires and needs healing.

Patrick doesn't hide his alcoholism nor does he dwell in self-pity, and he doesn't ask for forgiveness. His life is driven by memory. What was wanted was unattainable and lost, in particular the desired enduring relationship he so aspired to have with his kin. His poems are driven by the psychological and physical scars that were inflicted by his murdered father; they penetrated deep and festered. The survivor of any death is often left with unanswered questions. Anger and grievances make one yearn for retribution. These inflictions fester, and the groan that escapes into his poetry and can be heard is raw and visceral.

The subject of death follows him into nature, the ugly and beautiful caught in the thralls of a last breath. In the poem "You Learn," the poet states "[d]ying is serious business" and In "Unborn Things," Lane imagines his burial. He details it and is aware in his body's decomposition transformation occurs. Hence, he continues to live through rot.

Butchering animals in order to eat is frankly brutal. One must ready their instincts, and prepare for the sights and smells of death. In "The Killing Table" little detail is spared. Lane's sympathies are unusual for white culture as he identifies birds as brothers and evokes a kinship with life.

In other instances, the poems are tender, loving, light and joyful and mixed in with this is sex violence. Nothing in Patrick's life is left unobserved and unexplored. Sometimes Lane's ruthless honesty can make for uncomfortable reading. In "Knotted Water," he introduces the reader to an ambiguous expression of love. He kisses his firstborn between the legs, as he wishes to be the first man to do so. One wonders if this poem is meant to justify an adult's attraction to the innocent. It is definitely provocative. Is it a confessional? Is the poet seeking redemption? What is the impetus?

Love can be perceived as a terrible emotion, though everyone craves, wants, and needs it. In "The Mother," a hen plucks feathers from her body to build and warm her nest. The sacrifice and the pain of being bare-breasted in order to encourage life doesn't escape Lane's eye. Whether or not the hen actually feels love, or is directed by instinct, is not a necessary revelation. To the human heart, it is an act of love. In Lane's words, "[i]t is not for nothing we love." Even the hen is directed to life. Love has no desire to

be captured, and yet all artists attempt to do so in in writing, song, music, dance, painting, and sculpture. In "SHE," Patrick speaks of love as a god in female form. He loves women. "I have no god but you," he professes.

Lane's ability to enter the psyche of his characters is remarkable. Many experience a disconnection from reality, where lucidity is hanging "by the skin of the teeth," Lane uses this unreality to write "Dostoevsky" and slips back and forth between the character and his own observations. "He knows he is mad. / He does not/need the crescent moon to tell him this. / . . . Who is Dostoevsky? / He wants to answer that."

Patrick's participation in bestiality mirrors society's underworld depravity. It appears he was goaded into this action. He isn't a simple bystander. Perhaps because he was unable to untangle himself from the bullying, or was afraid he'd appear a fool, or sought to satisfy his own curious perversion. In light, the writing is self-flagellation. Ultimately, the reader is left with his or her own reactions. As time marches and age hangs onto his flesh, Lane's poetry shifts to meditation and prayer. "The Prayer" does not take him any further than the dark places he has already haunted. Yet, he finds beauty with insects, on the prairies, in rain and snow, even beauty suffers its death. How difficult it must be to live in that place. Yet the poet demands that we all must.

Home and Garden

Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei, eds.
The Domestic Space Reader. U of Toronto P $37.95

Shelley Boyd
Garden Plots: Canadian Women Writers and Their Literary Gardens.
McGill-Queen's UP $29.95

Reviewed by Dale Tracy

Shelley Boyd's *Garden Plots: Canadian Women Writers and Their Literary Gardens* and Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei's *The Domestic Space Reader* are valuable resources for considering domestic spaces within their compound social and political connections. Boyd's study offers analyses of the garden, one domestic space that, as she shows, has moved importantly through the history of Canadian literature. *The Domestic Space Reader* has the scale of the overview: it ranges widely over time, place, discipline, and spatial category.

Briganti and Mezei arrange their text thematically. As they note, selections resonate across chapters; alternate categories and configurations are easily imagined. The provided chapter summaries defuse the difficulty this thematic border-crossing might have posed for locating particular subjects. These summaries sometimes have a necessary disjointedness that evinces the variety of material each chapter includes. Even when divided into themed sections, this arrangement suggests that ideas about domestic space are too diverse to flow neatly in a progression or to merge into a common point. In fact, the editors do not establish a program of study or organizing ethos for understanding domestic space. Rather, they collect an array of sources to survey diverse perspectives on material and conceptual aspects of houses and homes. Briganti and Mezei note genealogies of influence, providing a sense of historical development and context for commissioned pieces.

Since *The Domestic Space Reader* devotes its final chapter to "Literary Spaces," this anthology would be notably useful for literature students developing an interdisciplinary understanding of domestic space and for those in other disciplines considering architecture's influence on individual and cultural imaginations. The anthology's final selection is an excerpt from a novel narrated by an interior designer sharing her thoughts about her marriage, motherhood, friends, and work. This conclusion indicates, as does Briganti and Mezei's contributed selection, the anthology's interest

in interior, private spaces as they intersect with public art, intimate relationships, and social roles.

Boyd's *Garden Plots* traces the appearance of gardens in Canadian women's texts from the nineteenth century to the present. Boyd draws her framework from garden theory, adapting landscape historian John Dixon Hunt's theory of three natures to literary gardens. Since gardens mix culture and nature, they function as a third nature providing an "interpretative lens" on the idea of untouched wilderness (first nature) and the socio-cultural realm (second nature) that Boyd describes as the familiar surroundings forming the conventional, or "second nature," habituations of daily life. Considering the garden as a place from which everyday norms might be seen anew and potentially transformed, Boyd shows how literary gardens reflect and are read through their authors' "socio-physical environments and time frames" while their interpretations over time are also tied to changing literary traditions.

Boyd is not only interested in the thematic appearance of gardens, but also in texts that take gardens as formal inspiration. Examining gardens at the level of story and at the level of the text, she argues that a garden sets a text's central concerns, forming a "garden plot" within the larger framework; the garden does in a condensed and heightened manner what the text does as a whole. Boyd also considers, in her attention to palimpsestic texts, the interpretational layers literary gardens can accrue. Through this study of texts rewriting or engaging with earlier garden plots, Boyd works up to the idea of garden as both product and process. She considers this idea explicitly with Lorna Crozier's poetry, but it is present throughout her study of how palimpsestic texts reframe, reimagine, and recirculate literary gardens in new contexts.

In tracing the significance of the domestic garden in Canadian literature, Boyd intervenes in the dominant ways these five authors (Susanna Moodie, Catharine Parr Traill, Gabrielle Roy, Carol Shields, and Lorna Crozier) have been studied and counters a national literary theory historically guided by the large-scale garden-archetypes of wilderness and paradise. As she demonstrates how gardens participate in and produce Canadian identities, Boyd looks within texts for garden themes and forms, but also at the real gardens in the authors' lives. *Garden Plots* investigates the intersections between writers and gardeners in Canadian literary production and characters' writing and gardening in Canadian literature. As Boyd concludes that these intersections show the importance of considering "daily experiences of the domestic," she suggests the diversity of experiences that literary gardens represent, supplying examples in indigenous, postcolonial, and environmental literatures that demand further study.

After the Apple: Women and Power

Ronnie Burkett
Penny Plain. Playwrights Canada $16.95

Carole Fréchette; John Murrell, trans.
The Small Room at the Top of the Stairs/ Thinking of Yu. Playwrights Canada $16.95

Linda Griffiths
Maggie and Pierre & The Duchess.
Playwrights Canada $18.95

Reviewed by Anne Nothof

Canadian drama is preoccupied with the relationship of the personal to the political. These five plays explore the psychological and social implications of the diverse ways in which women attempt to push through limiting parameters. In *Maggie and Pierre* (1980) and *The Duchess* (1998), Linda Griffiths portrays two controversial women whose discontent and ambition had considerable consequences for their husbands

and for their countries. In *The Small Room at the Top of the Stairs* (2012) and *Thinking of Yu* (2012), Carole Fréchette dramatizes the obsessive need of two women to ascertain the reasons behind personal and political proscriptions, and to act on what they discover. In *Penny Plain* (2011), Ronnie Burkett shows a wide range of responses to an apocalyptic scenario, from the resigned acceptance of his powerless elderly heroine, to the psychotic behaviour of some of her boarders.

Griffiths enacts the fraught relationship between Margaret and Pierre Elliott Trudeau from the narrative perspective of the journalist, Henry, who considers their story to be mythological. In an entertaining introduction to the published play, entitled "Dancing with Trudeau," Griffiths describes her research process. She decides that she must enact Trudeau's vulnerability, but not use cheap laughs. Maggie is a conflicted young woman, plagued by insecurity but frustrated by the circumscriptions of her public life. Griffiths' perceptive portrait of the dynamics of a complex couple has contemporary resonance, since their son, Justin is currently the leader of the Liberal party. Although the play's humour and irony are best realized through her skills as a performer, it still plays well on the page as a struggle between reason and passion.

Wallis Simpson is a less sympathetic character in *The Duchess*. Although Griffiths provides a personal rationale for her greed and ambition, Wallis is primarily a caricature, a vehicle for political satire, much like the cartoon characters in Peter Barnes' *The Ruling Class*, and Michael Hollingsworth's *History of the Village of the Small Huts*. The other characters (including Noel Coward, the Royal family, and Wallis' jewels) provide historical context and choric comment. In another informative introduction, Griffiths suggests that she is using a Canadian *commedia dell' arte* style: "The characters are at their most effective when a balance is found between their comic potential and the reality of their emotions and situation." Through a series of vignettes based on the scandal and gossip Wallis inspired—from her sexual adventures with her first husband in China to the auctioning of her jewels after Edward's death—Griffiths tracks her rise and fall. For Wallis, power was an aphrodisiac and men the means to an end.

The Small Room at the Top of the Stairs also interrogates the shifting power dynamics of a marriage. It revisits the fable of Bluebeard as a psychological portrait of a woman's compulsion to explore the forbidden—the archetypal story that has been the rationale for the subjugation of women since Eve's first bite of the apple. Fréchette's heroine is significantly named "Grace." Although she appears to have it all—a loving husband, a mansion with ten guest rooms—she is compelled to open the door to a small room forbidden by her husband. She is also warned by her sister, mother, and maid against following her irrational inclinations; they have a more pragmatic attitude to what is possible for women. When she finally opens the door, Grace discovers the nightmare scenario of a bleeding man, whom she attempts to save. She lies to her husband about her disobedience, and when he finds her in the room, the wounded man has disappeared. The play ends with differing responses by all the women to the meaning of "true tears." What are the implications and consequences of compassion for others? Has Grace in effect destroyed not only her marriage, but also her husband by exposing his private pain? Is her sister's strategy a better response to human suffering—"to provide bandages and medicine and vaccinations for men and women who are bleeding and suffering on the other side of the world"?

Thinking of Yu explores a similar conundrum through a debate triggered by the arrest of three young men in China for throwing paint at a portrait of Mao. The protagonist, named Maggie, reads about

the release of one of these men after a seventeen-year incarceration and becomes fixated on his sacrifice of freedom for his beliefs. She feels wholly powerless: she has never had the courage of her convictions, and believes she has failed in every relationship and endeavour, to the point where she has arrived at a stasis. She is reluctantly teaching English to a Chinese girl who has recently left her country for a better, freer life, and who finally tells Maggie the unheroic truth about the political dissidents. A helpful neighbour, who is preoccupied with his responsibilities to his dependent son, engages in long debates with Maggie about the power politics inherent in helping others: "Some people are like that, all they ever want is power. And the ones who grab it while pretending to save humanity, they're the worst." He believes that political protest is pointless. But, in the end, they all conclude that their lives have been changed.

Burkett's Penny Plain, blinded as an indirect consequence of eating too many apples as a young girl, calmly awaits the end with George, her dog, who aspires to be human, although a highly contagious virus is wiping out the earth's population. The inhabitants of Penny's rooming house respond violently, or irrationally, or helpfully, but they are also fundamentally powerless. Burkett has again created an imaginative cast of marionettes with considerable skill in caustic one-liners or introspective monologues. *Penny Plain* is an apocalyptic cabaret, punctuated with news announcements about yet another atrocity or disaster. The innocent girl, Tuppence, masquerading as a replacement canine companion for Penny, embodies kindness and compassion, but she can change nothing. The puppet baby created by Geppetto is an assemblage of garbage—"the future we made for ourselves." The real power is vested in the earth, which is asserting itself through the detritus of the human race.

Griffiths, Fréchette, and Burkett all raise compelling questions about the nature and consequences of power in their plays. As Patricia Keeney points out in her introduction to Griffiths' works: "These playwrights use the unique resources of theatre to dramatize the psychology, history, and mythology embedded in the human stories it can most vividly tell."

The Art of Losing

Jenna Butler
Wells. U of Alberta P $19.95

Patrick Friesen
A Dark Boat. Anvil $16.00

Evelyn Lau
A Grain of Rice. Oolichan $17.95

Lorri Neilsen Glenn
Threading Light: Explorations in Loss and Poetry. Hagios $18.95

Reviewed by Sara Jamieson

Recent studies like Priscila Uppal's *We Are What We Mourn: The Contemporary English-Canadian Elegy* and Tanis MacDonald's *The Daughter's Way: Canadian Women's Paternal Elegies* testify to a growing interest in the representation of loss, grief, and mourning in Canadian poetry. Four new poetry collections by Lorri Neilsen Glenn, Evelyn Lau, Jenna Butler, and Patrick Friesen all contribute to the conversation on matters elegiac currently being conducted among Canadian poets and critics alike. While they vary widely in form and content, meditating in diverse ways on the deaths of family members and fellow writers, and the myriad of small losses continually generated by the passage of time, these four texts are all marked to some degree by an interest in the politics of loss as an experience that, at least potentially, encourages a recognition of our common vulnerability, and the extent to which our lives are interconnected with those of others.

Lorri Neilsen Glenn's *Threading Light* bears the subtitle *Explorations in Loss and Poetry*, but the book reads more like a series of journal entries than a poetry collection. It consists mainly of prose paragraphs, occasionally interspersed with poems of two- or four-line stanzas. Densely allusive, the book is liberally scattered throughout with epigraphs from the likes of Joni Mitchell, Robert Pogue Harrison, Connie Kaldor, Tomas Tranströmer, and Milan Kundera, just to name those that appear in the first dozen pages or so. For many an elegist, writing of loss provides an opportunity to locate oneself as part of a community of peers and predecessors, but in Glenn's book, this strategy sometimes backfires: against the formal deftness of Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art," which prefaces the section entitled "The Art of Losing," for example, Glenn's paragraphs can seem rather slack. This is particularly true of the final section, a meandering meditation on, among other things, literary foremothers, the L'Arche movement, and the challenges of coming to poetry later in life, which could have benefited from more rigorous shaping and editing. Glenn's autobiographical approach is more vivid and compelling when it turns to fragmentary sketches of a childhood in northern Manitoba, or sifts through the mystery of a boyfriend's long-ago suicide and its aftermath. The author's interest in ethnography comes through in the pondering of "Things Eschatological," burial practices and beliefs about death held among the Navajo, the peoples of Baffin Island, in medieval Europe, and Victorian Canada. A section called "Ground" explores the etymology of words like "cemetery," "graveyard," and "columbarium," and suggests the importance of situating the literature of loss within the context of a material culture of mourning that includes different modes and sites of burial, since "language isn't large enough to hold what we cannot even fathom."

One conclusion that Glenn reaches is that, as someone with "the gift of an ordinary life, [her] losses and griefs are small-throated," when compared with those of others in this world. The unequal distribution of loss across populations of varying degrees of privilege is a subject taken up by Evelyn Lau in *A Grain of Rice* in a manner much more incisive and technically assured. "Guanacaste Journal" shows denizens of a resort in Costa Rica ignoring television coverage of the Haitian earthquake with the justification:

> we have our own grief.
> What would we do with someone else's,
> where would we carry it on our bodies?
> Already the doctor says I am too heavy.

This is one of a series of travel poems that comprise the third of the book's four sections, and expose the workings of a bloated, consumerist, tourist culture founded on the denial of bodily vulnerability: in "Honolulu," a puddle of urine left by a dying man in a public market is discreetly covered by "a stand of flyers advertising / luaus, scuba dives, Polynesian dinner shows." In the book's first section, Lau's hometown of Vancouver does not come across any better as she repeatedly directs our attention to the dispossession and violence wreaked by urban renewal and rising property taxes. These poems explore the uneasy coexistence of affluence and destitution: a homeless woman burns to death while trying to keep warm a mere "five blocks away" from where others lie comfortably under "a snowdrift of duvets" ("Snow Globe City"). Derelict houses give way to "glossy condo[s]" whose inhabitants enjoy an existence that combines isolation and intimacy as sounds from neighbours' bathrooms leak through the walls ("City Centre"). Writing of urban "apartment-dwellers," Lau borrows a phrase from Al Purdy's "Lament for the Dorsets," and perpetuates his depiction of the modern cityscape as emblematic

of a society on the brink of destruction ("Noise"). Things are always exploding in this book: "fireworks like dropped bombs" at the Vancouver Olympics, plants "exploding open / with cargoes of allergens" in spring, the human heart in middle age threatening to burst "like a charge detonated out of sight" to name but three examples. Lau's poems are spoken in a direct, almost casual first-person voice that nonetheless employs careful acoustic effects to convey a variety of moods. "After the Gold Medal Hockey Win, 2010 Olympics" maintains a high-pitched assonance that conveys the brutal energy of a celebration spilling over into riot:

> Geese veer into the panicked sky.
> The streets are bleeding
> with red, horns blaring, screams
> not even the dying could summon.
> Figures stream out of buildings
> carrying pots and pans
> like refugees fleeing on foot.

Lau's art is equally capable of evoking the quietude of a December snowfall with a softly alliterative line like "Flakes of funereal ash falling from the sky" in "Dear Updike." This last poem is part of a sequence of elegies to the late author, in which Lau tries to forge a connection with a man she never met by visualizing and projecting herself into the places he loved.

Similarly emphasizing the close connections among place, identity, and loss, Jenna Butler's *Wells* memorializes a grandmother living with Alzheimer's disease by evoking the sounds, smells, and textures of the English village on the North Sea where she has spent her life. This is no rural idyll, however; as in Lau's, the threat of violence simmers beneath the surface of Butler's poems, even when she writes about a country garden whose flowers are a "punch of blue in a jacksnipe of prickles," and whose scent "threatens to break open the world." Meticulously crafted, the book consists of eight sections of six poems each in which Butler charts the stages of her grandmother's "vanish[ing]" and shores up the details of her world in long-lined stanzas of varying lengths. Cumulatively, the poems are "an homage to all the things that underpin memory," as each section treats a different element from the grandmother's life while emphasizing a different form of sensory perception. For example, the section entitled "Flight" attempts to preserve the grandmother's trove of knowledge about local birds, insistently recording the names of species ("meadow pipits," "coal tits," "dunnocks") that the grandmother herself can no longer recall. Seeing the old woman's "eyes flare briefly" at the call of a mistle thrush, the poet tries to wring from language its utmost capacity to approximate the sounds of the world (the "*great, rolling susurrus*" of storm petrels making landfall, for example) in an attempt to prolong her grandmother's connection to the things she loves when the words for them no longer have meaning for her. As the anguished observer of her grandmother's illness, Butler comments in the collection's concluding notes that Alzheimer's involves "not just the loss of the ones we care for, but the loss of ourselves in them" as we see "ourselves erased from memory." This awareness of Alzheimer's as something that undermines the notion of the autonomous self and forces an acknowledgement of our identities as interwoven with those of others is underscored by the structure of the book itself, which includes two sections, titled "He" and "& She" respectively, that provide portraits of the grandmother's parents, as if to suggest that there can be no memorial to the grandmother herself that does not include this web of family connections. The concluding section, "Flesh," affirms the poet's ongoing connection with a woman who "couldn't always recall [her] name, but . . . knew [her] touch." In a culture that often identifies selfhood with precisely those abilities that people with Alzheimer's

lose—the abilities to both remember and narrate their lives—Butler's emphasis on the persistence of her grandmother's embodied identity here is politically important.

Forms of embodied expression are also foregrounded in Patrick Friesen's book *A Dark Boat*, a substantial collection of seventy-five poems, interspersed with black and white photographs (presumably the poet's own), drawn from his travels in Portugal and Spain, many of which explore the expressive possibilities of song and dance forms like *fado* and *flamenco*. Friesen's short lines, frequent monosyllables, and abundance of hard consonants effectively convey the dancers' percussive rhythms. Envisioning dance as the locus of the genesis of the world, Friesen overturns the logocentrism of the Judaeo-Christian tradition:

> the world began with
> a sharp handclap then
> staccato fingers swirling
> across strings ("Palmas")

In place of the elegist's habitual faith in the enduring power of the written word, the primacy accorded in these poems to song and dance substitutes a different kind of endurance: "the song outlives all," but "the singer is never the same." The song survives not to confer glory on an individual singer, but only to be continually reinterpreted in the mortal bodies of successive generations of performers.

In some poems, Friesen's characteristic refusal to separate words with punctuation celebrates the possibilities of cultural pluralism:

> that alluvial moment
> morocco sacromonte and
> sepharad where songs
> hook into each other
>
> songs arrive and leave
> owned by no one
> only the dead have
> the voice to sing them ("Alluvial")

The universalist conviction that these songs are "owned by no one" enables the poet to absorb various influences into his own work, yet this is accompanied by a persistent awareness of his separateness from the cultures that he encounters as a traveller. For example, in another poem about flamenco, he sits outside a club listening to the "staccato of black shoes" coming from within ("Almost 60 Outside Peña de la Platería"). This ex-centric position is reinforced by recurrent images of windows as metaphors for the poet's encounters with otherness: in "Widow," the window is a site of revelation and concealment as the poet can see a woman's hands "[lying] on the sill," yet admits he doesn't "know what's behind her / in the dark room / what she will enter when she turns." Friesen's attraction to and distance from the melancholic *fado* tradition from which he borrows is acknowledged from the outset in the titular poem that opens the collection:

> the world is quiet outside
> though you know it's writhing
>
> you can't speak
> about the world
>
> the fadista sang
> of a dark boat
>
> you make do
> with the night you have

Like Glenn's cognizance of her "small-throated" griefs, Friesen's "making do" is a reminder of the importance of putting one's own losses and longings into perspective. His poems do more than "make do," however; they are both evocative and compelling in their exploration of how loss can connect us across cultural boundaries, yet also make visible the limits of that connectedness.

A Precarious Balance

Mark Callanan
Gift Horse. Signal $18.00

M. Travis Lane
Ash Steps. Cormorant $18.00

Donald McGrath
The Port Inventory. Cormorant $18.00

Patrick Warner
Perfection. Goose Lane $19.95

Reviewed by Robin McGrath

Mark Callanan's second volume of poetry, *Gift Horse*, is a fast, intense read, flowing more like a novel than like a collection of poems. Written after a near-fatal health crisis, Callanan writes from the perspective of someone who is aware of his own mortality for the first time in his life, and consequently sees death everywhere. The premise sounds grim and even depressing, but the poems are so charged with the intensity of his experience that they positively burst with life.

Many of the poems refer to the seafaring life endemic to Callanan's home port of St. John's, Newfoundland, but as he notes in "Sailors," if they are "not the kind that roam the ocean, / then at least those men at sea / in their own lives, [are] cut loose and dragged / by trade winds and foreign tides."

The first section in particular focuses on death and dying ("The Myth of Orpheus," "Last Suppers") but the entire book is riddled with rats, wolves, and the crabs and lobsters that feed on the drowned. The poems aren't exactly morbid—they are too lively for that—but they have the ominous glint of "a blade drawn / across a wetstone" that "filing by filing, / finds its edge."

The rare outburst of humour in "Insurance Claim" comes as a great relief: a dog, trained to fetch, retrieves a stick of dynamite being used for illegal poaching, and when the owner tries to shoot him to keep him from returning with it, the dog crouches under the man's brand new truck. It's a shaggy-dog story, compressed down into 71 intense words.

M. Travis Lane, in *Ash Steps*, also writes at length about death and dying, but each of the poems is as full as an egg. Apparently written during and after the death of her spouse, the collection's sense of loss, acceptance, inevitability, and exhaustion can be applied to far less traumatic events in one's own lives.

Death is mentioned or suggested in virtually all the poems in the collection, but this death is not unexpected, not a surprise. Like Callanan's work, the book tracks and traces the history of an illness, a hospitalization and its aftermath, but here the author is neither amazed nor indignant—rather there is a level of inevitable acceptance. Death is "Like a grief kept in a cupboard, / where the door, sometimes, unlatches"; it lowers "slowly like a blind."

In the opening poem, "Confluence," Lane establishes the idea of balance, "like a small bubble . . . midway in a plumber's level." Life and death, the old and the new, joy and sadness all have a mid-way point, a place between the two. The pitch-perfect metre, the restrained use of rhyme, and the small, unnamed birds that inhabit the poems like judiciously placed commas all convey a sense of ordered progression rather than blind panic in the face of the inevitable.

Lane's poems open out—extracting echoes and reverberations and possibilities from the reader. They are the reverse of narcissistic, taking the author's pain and suffering and turning it outward to reflect that which can be found in any human. Describing her husband after his third stroke saying goodbye to his possessions, "loving for all good reasons every thing / he must put by," she finds the irony in the two meanings of "stuff"—treasured material and junk. You don't have to be dealing with death to understand that paradox.

Donald McGrath's poems in *The Port Inventory* are chock full of vivid details that

read wonderfully, but they serve no purpose here except as an end in themselves. His recollections of baking cods' eyeballs to use as marbles, or of his mother scrubbing on a glass board or putting frozen underwear into the stove to thaw, don't lead to anything except a sense of nostalgia. All the goods are in the shop window, but do you want to go in and is there anything to carry away?

McGrath can match Callanan's sense of place, but his rhythms are uneven and his use of rhyme seems to be random. Even the first lines of the poems ("The glass was blue-green, like the sea, / and furrowed like it, too" or "While the outport slept, the horses / trailed back in along the roads") read more like the opening lines of stories than poems. *The Port Inventory* has its attractions, but the predominance of prose poems and the commonplace suggests that these meditations are presented as poetry only because the author didn't have time to write them in a longer, more expansive form.

Patrick Warner's *Perfection*, his fourth book of poems, focuses on the deterioration of the body, either self-inflicted or brought about by time. A number of the poems deal with anorexia, but this is more metaphorical than autobiographical. In "Ablutions of a Middle-Aged Man," the narrator stares into a mirror as intently as any teenaged girl, and inventories all the flaws he sees—the rosacea and seborrhoea that mar and pit his skin—and lists all the unguents and lotions that might bring it under control. It is not entirely funny. There is a strong sense of revulsion of the flesh here.

The anorexia poems are black with bile—against the disease, the therapists, the selves who are responsible for it. The tone lightens only temporarily in a satiric piece about the trial of a chocolate chip pancake that concludes, "the pancake will fry. / At which the defendant is led away / by a strudel and a rhubarb pie."

There are birds in these poems too, but the owls are "crepuscular," the pelicans murderous, and the Versace thrushes are "hijab birds." In "The Black Rats," the body is a leather armchair, its stuffing infested. In "Polyurethane," it is a leprous house shedding paint. At "The Pound of Flesh Bazaar" it is a meat market display of hands, genitals, and breasts.

Warner employs repetition, reusing words, phrases, and whole verses to new effect, delighting in the twisted logic of a "meaningless meaningful way," a "cot-caught merger," "the Caesar of their seizures," or a "vision's versions and revisions." This is not a comfortable or comforting book, but it certainly stirs the imagination and gives an unusual view of middle-aged angst.

Lorne Pierce's Legacy

Sandra Campbell
Both Hands: A Life of Lorne Pierce of Ryerson Press. McGill-Queen's UP $49.95

Reviewed by Gillian Dunks

Lorne Pierce—editor of the Methodist Book and Publishing House's Ryerson Press division from 1920 to 1960, author, Methodist minister, and Canadian cultural nationalist—was one of the most influential Canadian publishers in the first half of the twentieth century, yet his contributions to both the publishing industry and the Canadian literary canon have been largely overlooked by academics. Sandra Campbell's exemplary biography of Pierce, *Both Hands: A Life of Lorne Pierce of Ryerson Press*, provides a definitive account of her subject. In doing so, Campbell also responds to Brian Trehearne's call in *Aestheticism and the Canadian Modernists* for more Canadian literary histories, providing insight into numerous aspects of Canadian cultural life, including the Canadian publishing industry in the first half of the twentieth century, noteworthy Confederation-era and modernist authors,

and intellectual movements such as Theosophy. Undoubtedly Pierce had an enormous impact on the Canadian literary canon, but Campbell's account provides more than a record of Pierce's accomplishments. Campbell parses Pierce's voluminous archival records to uncover the motivation behind Pierce's fierce dedication to Canadian literature, positing several major factors: his moralism (specifically, the Methodist religious values inculcated by his parents), his freemasonry, and his nationalism and romantic idealism, both of which were rooted in a "protestant male construct of nation which valorized French-English entente and immigrant assimilation." Campbell's biography—weighing in at 500 pages, plus 120 pages of notes—covers much important historical and biographical ground. The fact that the work still leaves room for further literary historical explorations of Pierce's contributions to Canadian cultural life—particularly to Canadian poetry—is testament to his importance.

Although Pierce's labour had a significant impact on the Canadian literary canon of his own era, he has not been the subject of extensive academic scrutiny. Prior to the release of *Both Hands*, his work was discussed mainly in Campbell's academic articles, Janet Friskney's MA thesis, and a slim tome published soon after his death by his colleague C. H. Dickinson. Nonetheless, the Lorne Pierce Papers held at Queen's University are a veritable treasure trove for Canadian scholars, preserving large amounts of correspondence from established and emerging Canadian authors and intellectuals. It is from this extensive collection, as well as Lorne Pierce's own detailed diaries and numerous interviews, that Campbell informs her account of Pierce's life.

Campbell's biography, divided into twenty-one chapters which address particular phases of Pierce's life and editorial career, is noteworthy for the insight it provides into the formation of the Canadian literary canon. Pierce, Ryerson's book editor and literary advisor for most of his career, provided a venue for the publication and Canadian distribution of works by Confederation-era poets such as Charles G. D. Roberts and Bliss Carman, as well as poetry and fiction from first and second wave modernists including A. J. M. Smith, F. R. Scott, P. K. Page, Anne Marriott, Louis Dudek, and Al Purdy. Other writers Pierce championed include Marjorie Pickthall, Frederick Philip Grove, and Laura Goodman Salverson. Although Pierce personally favoured the romantic traditionalism of writers like Roberts and Pickthall, Ryerson's lists during his tenure boasted a diversity of writers. Campbell presents Pierce, sometimes lambasted as a narrow-minded traditionalist by the modernists of his era, as supportive of a range of Canadian literary trends. In fact, many Canadian modernists published their first works with Ryerson. By analyzing Pierce's professional correspondence and initiatives such as the Ryerson Chapbook series, Campbell revives Pierce's reputation as a multi-faceted publisher.

Pierce, famously ambitious and prodigious, not only published diverse writers throughout his career, but also a range of literary, textbook, and art series. Assessing the production and significance of each series is a large task that Campbell rises to admirably; her account details, among others, the Makers of the Canadian Literature Anthology series, Ryerson Canadian History Readers series, Canadian Books of Prose and Verse, Ryerson Poetry Chapbooks series, and Canadian Art series. Campbell's discussion of these series not only significantly enhances print cultural perspectives of the era, but also reveals hitherto unexamined correspondence and collaborations between Pierce and other publishers of the day, such as Hugh Eayrs of Macmillan of Canada.

Campbell's account of Pierce's life does not stop short at his editorial career; rather,

Campbell establishes the personal context in which this career took place. Pierce was plagued with deafness and lupus for most of his adult life, severe handicaps for an editor whose success depended on socialization with other industry professionals and authors. Most important, though, in Campbell's account of Pierce's private life is the attention she pays to Pierce's family, especially his wife, Edith Pierce, his mother, Harriet Singleton Pierce, and his aunt, Alice Chown, a well-known feminist and pacifist. Through an examination of Pierce's private correspondence with his wife, Campbell reveals the extent to which the success of Pierce—and no doubt other noteworthy men of his generation—was contingent upon the domestic labour and emotional support of women. Campbell's reconstruction of Pierce's marriage is one of the most insightful aspects of the biography.

Any limitations in *Both Hands* are surely the result of an overabundance of archival materials. It would be impossible for a single book to address all aspects of Pierce's activities at the press in equal measure. One area that merits further scholarly exploration is Pierce's publication of original Canadian poetry. For many decades, Pierce's Ryerson Poetry Chapbook series was one of the main venues for emerging and established poets seeking to publish new work. Assuredly, the series itself and Pierce's professional correspondence with series poets will prove a fruitful area of research for new Canadian scholars.

As Campbell consistently makes clear, Pierce's nationalistic cultural contributions laid necessary groundwork for the dynamic Canadian literary developments of the 1960s and 1970s. Pierce, one of the most influential cultural figures of the first half of the twentieth century, will certainly be the subject of further academic research. Similar to Pierce's own precedent-setting editorial work, Campbell's exhaustive archival research and exemplary dedication to the task of reviving the legacy of a Canadian publisher has set a high standard for Canadian literary historians.

Feminist History Reconsidered: Gender, Activism, and Equity in Canada

Catherine Carstairs and Nancy Janovicek, eds.
Feminist History in Canada: New Essays on Women, Gender, Work, and Nation. U of British Columbia P $95.00

Reviewed by Sarah MacKenzie

Carstairs' and Janovicek's collection derives directly from the "Edging Forward, Acting Up" conference held at Simon Fraser University in 2010. Sponsored by the Canadian Committee on Women's History/Comité canadien de l'histoire des femmes (CCWH - CCHF) and "built upon forty years of feminist scholarship," the conference addressed the connections between feminist history, activism, and social policy, while also emphasizing the significance of a transnational feminist praxis. The thirteen pieces selected for this volume are duly imbued with contemporary feminist theorizing regarding the significance of intersectional historical analysis and transnational identities. The essays are loosely divided into four main categories: women's work, biography, transnationalism, and activism.

A number of works in the collection make the gendered nature of employment their focus. Catherine Charron examines paid domestic labour in 1960s Quebec. Charron reveals that, despite increased numbers of female labourers, "women's work" remained low-wage and insecure. Donica Belisle is similarly emphatic about the sexism often inherent in economic structures. Employing department store newsletters as archival texts, Belisle reveals that, although women

took pleasure from these newsletters—making decisions to dress in accordance with the overtly sexualized models—the pervasive objectification of the women in the letters makes apparent that they were valued for their appearance, rather than their skills.

Adele Perry's opening essay is a combined biography of James Douglas, British Columbia's first governor (a child of a mixed marriage), and his Métis wife, Amelia. Perry's retelling of Douglas' and Amelia's life stories is a lateral examination of the treatment of Indigenous women in the colonies, which highlights the subjective nature of colonial archives. Kristina Llewellyn's piece, also primarily biographical, demonstrates the articles' overarching attention to the importance of Critical Race Theory. Llewellyn examines the life and career of Hazel Chow, a postwar, British Columbian home economics teacher, who constructed herself as a paradigm of white feminine "respectability" in order to further her position in a masculinist and racist society.

Multiple articles in the collection work to situate Canadian women's lives within a transnational framework. Karen Balcom demonstrates the manner in which North American child welfare activists used the League of Nations to form international political ties, ultimately allowing them to promote the overhaul of outdated child welfare practices. Significantly, framing the experiences of Canadian women within expansive, transnational political boundaries draws attention to colonial legacies that continue to impact Canada. In her essay, Lorna R. McLean describes the life and work of Shakespearean scholar and prominent peace activist Julia Grace Wales. Though she spent most of her working life teaching in Wisconsin, Wales forged international connections and constructed a transnational identity in order to further her political aims. McLean compellingly argues that Wales was disregarded by scholars because her life story did not adhere to the Canadian national narrative.

Contextualizing feminist activism within the realm of employment, Rose Fine-Meyer examines the efforts of the Ontario Women's History Network/Le Réseau d'histoire des femmes to connect teachers with academic researchers so as to equip them to teach women's and gender history, thereby improving curricula. Also dealing with the intersections of work and activism, Ruby Heap's essay explores the precarious relationship between female engineering organizations and the women's movement in the 1970s and 1980s. Because young, female engineers benefited, along with their male colleagues, from government funding for science and technology, these women were far more apt to insist upon gender equality, eliding the gender gap within their own profession. As feminist activism became increasingly opposed to government policies, the ideological divide between the women's movement and women's engineering organizations broadened.

As Carstairs and Janovicek note in their introduction, *Feminist History* is the first all-encompassing collection of essays concerning Canadian women's history to be published in ten years in Canada. Contending with the connections between women's employment, family life, and feminist activism throughout national history, this volume is indeed a timely contribution to the field of Canadian history. Drawing upon cutting-edge feminist theoretical perspectives and methodological developments, the essays included unquestionably encourage us to consider the continued importance of feminist perspectives in historical research.

Revisiting the Past

Eleanor Catton
The Luminaries.
Little, Brown and Company $27.00

Olive Senior
Dancing Lessons: A Novel. Cormorant $22.00

Reviewed by Dee Horne

Eleanor Catton and Olive Senior illustrate a past made up of fiction and fact, unreliable narrators and witnesses, and diverse, memorable stories. Catton returns to the 1860's gold rush in New Zealand while Senior depicts an elderly Jamaican woman's recollections of her life. Both novels question truth; accounts vary not only from person to person but also between different recollections of any given person's retelling.

Awarded the 2013 Man Booker Prize, *The Luminaries* is engaging precisely because the further the tale spins, the less certain readers are that they know anything. There are twelve parts and each corresponds to a different astrological sign, a structure that is appropriate for a story about luck and fortune. Within each part, there are different headings, rather than chapters, that are astrologically labelled. In a nineteenth-century vein, Catton prefaces each section with a narrative summary and uses language and a writing style that evokes the period. In the first four parts of the novel, time flows forward but then jumps back and forth and the parts become progressively shorter and shorter until the last one, in which the narrative summary preface is longer than the actual narrative, and which takes place ten days before the opening scene. The more we learn about the characters, the less we know. Catton reveals the absurdity of claiming to know anyone, any story, or any history.

She has thoroughly researched the New Zealand gold rush and includes details that make us want to believe. Reader, beware. A clever hybrid work that blends historical fiction, ghost story, mystery, love story and *Tristram Shandy*-like cock-and-bull stories of deceit, addiction, identity theft, betrayal, forgery, revenge, and blackmail, the story twists and turns, surprising us to the end.

The book opens with twelve fortune hunters, mirrored by the twelve astrological signs, who meet to uncover a mystery that revolves around gold fraud and a prostitute by the name of Anna Wetherell who indeed does weather them all. When we first meet her, she is down on her luck, and has clearly been set up. The antagonists of the story, Francis Carver and Lydia (Wells) Carver, are determined to recover the gold they stole and sewed into five dresses that went missing. This story weaves in and out of many others, connecting the twelve characters whose paths cross and crisscross throughout the narrative, reminding readers to distrust all stories.

Although the lengthy earlier sections may have some readers wishing Catton had a more ruthless editor, persistence is a must, for this is a fun shaggy dog story of greed and passions that motivate and enslave humans and the lies and stories they create. The lengths to which one woman will go to avoid knowing herself and her children is the subject of Olive Senior's *Dancing Lessons*. "G" (Gertrude Samphire), a Jamaican elder, loses her country home to a hurricane. Her eldest daughter, Celia, places her in Ellesmere Lodge, an assisted living home.

Constrained by the rituals and the routines and the Matron whose "eyebrows crawl like centipedes up to her hairline," "G" later sees an opportunity to liberate herself. Writing in journal entries, she airs her grievances and losses and reclaims herself. Abandonment and loneliness haunt her. Her mother died shortly after her birth and she grew up with her father's relations who resented her. She never knew the man in this house was her father and when, as a teen she learns he is, and he shares his

love of dancing with her, their relationship is cut short because he is sent away to a mental health institution. Charles Leacroft Samphire, known as Sam, the man "G" runs off with and later marries, leaves her with his mother. He is often drunk and abusive and has numerous affairs, coming and going as he pleases, leaving "G" to mind the small farm and raise their four children. "G's" abandonment carries over to the next generation when Celia goes to live with a Reverend and his wife who raise her. "G" tells herself the Reverend came "[t]o steal my child," yet her guilt pervades her journal entries. While she is aware of the gulf between herself and her children, "G" is unaware of how little she knows them. In entry 62, she considers that she has never loved any of them, adding that perhaps no one ever loved her. Her observation provides a context for her actions and an awareness of her self-pity that, if not redeemable, at least makes her believable. That she often concealed the truth from her children may well explain why they haven't shared their lives with her:

> Not a word did I say about my black eyes and split lip and noises in the night. Not a word when their father left. Didn't I of all people know the awfully destructive power of silence? Yet I silenced my own children with a look, forced their own words back inside them with a hand raised to strike.

Senior's insights about gender, race, and class in Jamaica reveal her keen eye for details. "G" recalls that her grandmother's parents had come from England. She attributes her grandmother Celia's hatred of her to her colonial snobbery, specifically Celia's view that G and her family are inferior because G's mother's family "had come from out of the cane fields." Racial discrimination within the family is evident when "G" notes, "But while Miss Celia and Aunt Zena's skin was white and mottled with freckles, my father's was logwood honey."

The motif of dance spins from guilty pleasure to guilt (the loss of her father, the death of Mr. Bridges, the loss of communication with her children) to "fragments of self-assertiveness." The revelation about Mr. Bridges and the inevitable talk with Celia are predictable yet poignant. The lessons "G" learns are the hard truths about her children, her relations, but most of all herself. In re-visiting the past, these two novels invite us to reflect on the present.

The Revolution(ary) Left

Stephen Collis
To the Barricades. Talonbooks $16.95

Gordon Hak
The Left in British Columbia: A History of Struggle. Ronsdale $21.95

Reviewed by Gregory Betts

The left in British Columbia can produce an astonishingly polarized and even demoralizing experience. On the one hand, there is a devotedly bureaucratic side that is procedurally astute, political (thus institutionally oriented), but neutralized by carefulness and inclusivity. On the other hand, there is a passionately revolutionary side, activist and militant, blindly reactionary, radical (thus anti-institutional), but neutralized by naïveté and exclusivity. I have attended social functions in Vancouver where leftists followed Roberts rules. I have attended far more social functions where leftists shred allies over the possibility of a glimmer of compromise. As Gordon Hak notes, unions strike harder and react more fiercely under progressive governments.

As the two books covered in this review make clear, this dual orientation of the left in Canada dates back at least to the radicalism of the nineteenth century. Hak's *The Left in British Columbia* carefully and systematically documents the specific policy ambitions of each generation of leftist activists since the 1880s, from advocating for

safe working conditions and a Chinese head tax (to protect industry jobs) to advocating logging the old-growth forests of Clayoquot Sound (to protect industry jobs) and fighting transnational neo-liberalism. He tracks the progress of leftist political engagement, warts and all, culminating in the elections of the New Democratic Party to power in 1972, 1991, and 1996. Given this political focus, it follows that Hak's book privileges the evidence of leftist political accomplishment in the form of bills and policies that leftists successfully influenced, introduced, or, even implemented. Leftist art and theory in British Columbia are minimized, mostly ignored, but never dismissed.

In contrast to this institutional orientation, Stephen Collis' poetry in *To the Barricades* attends to the revolutionary spirit that inspired uprisings from Paris 1848 to Vancouver's Occupy movement of 2011. Collis mostly avoids gritty details and specific grievances for the feeling of upheaval that leads citizens to the barricades—"sing come the revolution / sing a jubilee for all the revolution / sing come hammer come storm / the revolution will come." Hak notes that the Occupy movement began with a tweet by Vancouver's activist 'zine *Adbusters*. Collis points out that Occupy builds from a long history of resistance that prefigures its transhistorical significance. His poem "La Commune (1871)" presents a list of important dates in French revolutionary history, ending with a meditative note on revolutions in general: "Whatever therefore its fate at Paris / Beginnings can then be measured by the re-beginnings they authorize."

While both books embody divergent orientations of the left, they also document how these two forces can occasionally combine to produce euphoric, idealistic reactions to policy initiatives. Hak, for instance, documents the revolutionary fervour that animated debates of land tax reform across BC in the 1880s. Similarly, Collis documents the feeling of potential revolution in the calls for tighter investment regulations in the Occupy movement. In both cases, the hopes were decidedly/inevitably disappointed as the "demobilization machines" quickly neutralized the radical dynamic of the policies and spun them to the advantage of the status quo. Even barricades themselves have become a tool of state apparatus. This predictable loss provokes an important question by Collis that haunts both books: "Here we come upon a problem: / what if our rebellion / has been congruent / with the gradual transition / to this more flexible capitalism?"

Both of these books end with the reality of contemporary geopolitics in which, as Hak characterizes it, "Capitalism reigns triumphant"; but these are not two swan songs of defeat. The limitations of traditional leftist methodologies, including failed revolutions and bad policy initiatives, must be remembered and interrogated for both their shortcomings and potential. Hak's book does important work in cataloguing the very real advances and protections generated by leftist activists, including quotidian banalities such as minimum wage laws, government-run health insurance, and pension schemes. There have been setbacks and mistakes, but solace can be found in work that has made a difference. Collis' poetry, meanwhile, captures the spirit of the call to arms – one hardened by setbacks but firm in belief. Taken together, they evoke the details and the optimism of the left in British Columbia. They create a sense of a political community that is aware that "revolution's monument is / emptiness untold" (Collis) but that small victories at the microscopic level of governance can help "steer history in the direction of greater justice in economic and social relations" (Hak).

Family, History, Place

Dina E. Cox
small flames. Signature $14.95

Nora Gould
I see my love more clearly from a distance. Brick $19.00

Naomi McIlwraith
kiyâm. Athabasca UP $16.95

Rachel Thompson
Galaxy. Anvil $16.00

Lisa Young
When the Earth. Quattro $16.95

Reviewed by Jan Lermitte

The books reviewed here represent the work of five women writers from across Canada, and a "first" for each—their first books of published poems. Although the style of these poets is diverse, their themes are similar; family, history, and place figure prominently. The volumes range from minimalist poetry which celebrates the wonders of nature and contemplates relationships, to complex and technically accurate depictions of life and death on an Alberta ranch, to bilingual poems that examine language and culture.

Lisa Young's collection, *When the Earth*, begins with reminiscences of childhood that capture the innocence and wonder found in daily activities. Central to the narratives are Young's mother and her distinctive approach to domestic chores (including baking bread and gardening) completed in a simple and joyful way. Young's poems are short meditations on the experiences that create a life and give it meaning. For Young, "Everything counts. Just to remember is enough. / Just to be here is enough."

In contrast, *Galaxy*, by Rachel Thompson, recalls the painful memories of a childhood wrought by violence and mistrust. Winner of the First Book Competition sponsored by The Writer's Studio at Simon Fraser University, *Galaxy* describes the impact of home, of where one comes from. Thompson reveals the harshness of small town life and the pain of family wounds and estrangement. In "Ultimatum" she writes: "I can't I don't / wish to speak to my mother. / I don't believe the mere flight of time / is reason enough." Thompson, like Young, has a minimalist style that emphasizes the rhythm of language and the power of emotions and senses. Although many of the poems express anger or hurt, Thompson also reveals her desire for love and a family of her own. She explores a wider range of emotional subjects than Young, and includes memories as well as humour and hope.

Dina Cox's collection, *small flames*, offers readers more complexity and variety than the previous two. A specialist in Haiku, Cox melds emotions and images to create a nuanced depiction of family, place, art, and history. The second section of five in the collection, "Kaddish" offers a poignant illustration of the decline and death of her father, with all the resulting mixtures of emotions and memories: "Orphaned, I shook / hands with the stranger / I had become, and so / prepared myself for / the rest of my life." Cox is keenly interested in the stories of her family. However, she also widens her scope to include broader topics such as the impact of divorce, the power of music, the cultural problem of entitlement, and even the tragedy of Canadian soldiers who are killed in action. Cox looks back from life's experiences with wisdom and compassion.

Nora Gould's evocative collection of poems, *I see my love more clearly from a distance*, offers readers an enticing, often disturbing, glimpse into the life of ranchers in central Alberta. Gould, who is trained as a veterinarian and volunteers in wildlife rehabilitation, brings her technical understanding of anatomy, illness, and injury into her imagery. She is unafraid to uncover the uncertainties of love and marriage, the sadness and loss that illness brings, the precariousness of farming, the harsh realities of death. These are not easy poems. Moreover,

Gould's honest declarations reveal a life story defined by hardship. Of her marriage she writes: "Buckled / to the load of our days, we live with the badger / of again—our muteness, our words / brace, peck and quarter." Whether describing the hunt for a missing cow or "willow branches soaked supple in rain water," Gould captures the essence of her home and the landscape in a compelling, complicated way. Sometimes clear and simple, other times elusive and cryptic, Gould's poems push readers to consider that there are many ways to live. In "Mom" Gould writes simply: "I've gone to Joel's / to boil deer skulls / back before 11:30 / love / Farley." This macabre theme of death appears in many forms: as a result of illness, by accident, by hunting, and by a veterinarian's hand. Love, too, is described as given, lost, longed for, and un-returned. Gould dissects religion, sex, and war; she turns them over like the pieces of fabric in the quilts she constructs.

Finally, *kiyâm*, by Naomi McIlwraith, offers readers a challenge of another kind. Writing in both English (*âkayâsîmowin*) and Cree (*nêhiyawêwin)*, McIlwraith raises questions about the relationship between family and history, listeners and speakers, culture and language. The stylized image of plants with vari-coloured roots on the cover of the collection suggests McIlwraith's own mixed heritage of Cree, Ojibwe, Scottish and English. She acknowledges her uncomfortable position—as one who has learned to read and write a language that is traditionally oral—but emphasizes that she learned Cree as a way to offer tribute to her father's bilingualism and her mother's Métis heritage. For McIlwraith, family is closely bound with language, history, and culture. "I mean no wrong in writing / or speaking your language. I mean / to understand you on your terms, in your words," she writes. McIlwraith praises her father for modeling a different way of living—for embracing cultural diversity. However, she also laments that he died before he could teach her more of the *nêhiyawêwin* language. McIlwraith's volume is the most scholarly of the five texts. She includes a pronunciation guide to Cree, notes on the poems, a glossary, and a bibliography. McIlwraith's poetry, like the groundbreaking work of Métis poet Louise Halfe, is best read with an eye to the glossary and a will to decipher her Cree references. Ultimately, the importance of her poetry is directly related to her persistence to ensure that *nêhiyawêwin* remains a living, *written* language.

Each of these volumes contains poems that would add to meaningful discussion of the diversity found in Canadian literature. Representative of women of various ages and cultures, they share themes of place, of family, and of history.

(Un)Weaving CanLit

Eva Darias-Beautell, ed.
Unruly Penelopes and the Ghosts: Narratives of English Canada. Wilfrid Laurier UP $85.00

Reviewed by Pilar Cuder-Domínguez

This volume is the result of an ambitious three-year international research project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Education under the title "Penelope's Embroidery: Literary Tradition, Cultural Identities, and Theoretical Discourses in the Anglo-Canadian Fiction of the Late 20th Century." For the editor, the reference to classical mythology is far from frivolous, as it suggests the book's main goal to unmoor dominant literary paradigms. Like the original Penelope, the contributors have set out to unravel the threads making up CanLit since the days of Canadian nationalism in the late-1960s, by mapping later developments, by critiquing entrenched notions, or by opening up new venues of inquiry, most of all those that, in having been barred from the official record, have become ghostly presences.

Structurally, the first and the last essays allegedly frame the larger questions. Coral Ann Howells charts the various approaches in drafting Canadian literary history from Carl F. Klinck's groundbreaking *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English* (1965) and Margaret Atwood's *Survival* (1972) to *The Cambridge History of Canadian Literature*, edited by Eva-Marie Kröller and herself in 2009. Howells perceptively assesses the balancing act of exclusion and inclusion that each of these projects undertook, and highlights the tensions between shifting understandings of literature and of the nation itself. Closing the book, Michèle Lacombe invokes Rauna Kuokkanen's term "critical intimacy" in her call for literary studies—and more generally, academia—to take on board Indigenous epistemologies and establish a more fruitful intercultural dialogue. Like Howells, she historicizes the rise of Native Canadian literary nationalism (vis-à-vis its American Indian counterpart) against the background of the Expo '67 World Fair in Montreal, stopping to consider how it challenges the silences and gaps in the colonial record. To these two chapters I would add Smaro Kamboureli's on Asian Canadian Studies fits in well because it similarly critiques the methodological and epistemological foundations of a whole field of study. Kamboureli takes issue with what she considers an uncritical reliance on US-created paradigms and argues that concepts such as "Asian North American" may bend towards the American to the detriment of its Canadian component, so hers is a call to clarify the stakes and terms of discussion.

The remaining essays address different sets of questions. Ana María Fraile's "When Race Does Not Matter" analyzes in detail the complex politics of mixed-racedness in fiction by Lawrence Hill and Kim Barry Brunhuber to conclude that its racial hybridity does not fit into the nationalist African-Canadian school of thought (represented by George Elliott Clarke) or the diasporic school of thought (Rinaldo Walcott); she interprets this fact as a revisionist move on the dialectics of both schools. Another thoughtful close reading of a Canadian text is provided by María Jesus Hernáez Lerena, who describes how Michael Crummey's masterful use of several genres (testimony and journal writing, private confession) in *River Thieves* mends the historical record of Newfoundland by disrupting historicity and by shifting the epistemological underpinnings of the reconstruction of the past. Genre is also the subject of Belén Martín-Lucas' chapter on the use of speculative fantasy by contemporary racialized women writers to interrogate hegemonic cultural assumptions. This essay identifies the variegated manifestations of the monstrous mutant female body populating writings by Hiromi Goto, Larissa Lai, Nalo Hopkinson and Suzette Mayr, laying the critical groundwork for a body grammar of dissent in their fiction. Likewise, body politics surface in Richard Cavell's thoughts on identity formations outside traditional nationalist models. His analysis of Jane Rule's work, placed as it was both outside the founders' narrative and the multicultural narrative, adds to the book's running thread of the constructedness of Canadian cultural memory, making a strong argument to include sexual orientation in our understanding of citizenship. Darias-Beautell's chapter draws the reader's attention to how urban growth may have erased parts of Vancouver's collective memory (e.g., its Indigenous topoi) in an essay that takes on board relational affective views of space in order to interrogate idealized views of the city in late renderings of the city of Vancouver in literature and the visual arts.

The book is extremely well researched and wide-ranging, so it is a welcome contribution to current debates about Canadian cultural and literary studies from national

and international perspectives. Like *Trans.Can.Lit* (2007), *Shifting the Ground of Canadian Literary Studies* (2012), or *Crosstalk: Canadian and Global Imaginaries in Dialogue* (2012), to mention the latest, it turns an inquiring eye on the dominant discourses in Canadian literary studies, providing a thought-provoking account of ongoing critical conversations.

Munro's Narrative Art

Isla Duncan
Alice Munro's Narrative Art.
Palgrave Macmillan $104.00

Reviewed by Chris Reyns-Chikuma

Since she received the Nobel Prize for literature in November 2013, I guess almost everybody knows Alice Munro by now. She is not only the first Canadian recipient of the award, but she is also the first beneficiary receiving it for writing almost exclusively short stories. Isla Duncan reminds us that Munro wrote only one novel and more than one hundred short stories from ten pages to seventy pages long. Duncan's study certainly shows how her short stories are deceptively simple. However, because this study is very technical, it is not a book for the lay reader who wants to discover Munro but rather for university students and professors. This is a beautiful demonstration of how "narratology" can help to better understand the aesthetics and the beauty of Munro's stories. While everybody understands "narrative art" as the art of telling stories, few would even know the word narratology and even less its analytical tools.

Duncan, a British scholar, is a specialist of Canadian women's writing but she is fascinated just as much by narratology, and she explains the concepts, some of them quite challenging, for non-narratologists. She spends the first chapter defining these narratological concepts as "invented" and refined by great scholars such as Vladimir Propp, Roland Barthes, Bal, Prince, and most recently, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan. She uses examples from Munro's stories because these technical terms offer "the best possible descriptive and explanatory models for analyzing and discussing Munro's work." Each one of the seven following chapters uses one or two of these narratological concepts to analyze one or two short stories broadly following a chronological order. The first one is about first-person narration used by Munro as early as in the mid-1950s such as in "The Peace of Utrecht" from *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1955; 1983) and "Material" from *Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You* (1960; 1984). After briefly using the omniscient narrator in the very first stories published in the early 1950s, Munro almost systematically used the first-person narrator in her twelve anthologies published over her sixty-year career. This choice presents a limited perspective to the readers and therefore it implies ellipsis in their knowledge, made typographically visible by the fragmentation of the text. Duncan explains that what is felt by the reader, for example, a character's sense of guilt, is not simply produced by Munro's saying plainly "she felt guilty," but rather by way of using specific techniques that imply such a feeling.

Overall, one might argue that Duncan's study does not bring new knowledge about Munro's texts but rather confirms the previous understanding of her fiction in a more rigorous way. Previous studies of Munro's work, using other approaches such thematic and biographical studies, have already emphasized similar findings (see Carol Mazur and Cathy Moulder's *Annotated Bibliography*, 2007). Moreover, three of the chapters have already been published (in 2003, 2006 and 2009) albeit "in a slightly different form."

However, one of the new theses of this book is that Munro's techniques became more refined and the world she describes

more complex while her protagonists do not learn anything to make them smarter as would be the case in a *Bildungsroman*. Interestingly, her use of more complex techniques does not make her "worlds" more realistic, or plausible, but rather more incomprehensible, adding "layers of mystery and uncertainty" to ambiguous stories of Canadian small-town life. In other chapters, Duncan uses technical concepts such as analepsis, prolepsis, and shifting focalization to analyze stories in which these concepts are the most relevant.

Finally, one will be surprised to find so few references to feminist narratology in relation to a writer like Munro by an academic primarily interested in Canadian women writers. Except for some little problems (the spelling, especially in French names or words, is not always right, such as Génette instead of Genette, and the bibliography is not always clear, especially in regards to dates for anthologies), and its very technical nature, this book is certainly well done and welcome. It shows first of all how narratology is still useful (Duncan talks about a "renaissance" of the field) and secondly how rich Munro's prose is. Published two years before Munro received the Nobel Prize, this prescient study will contribute to inspiring students to read or reread these beautifully constructed stories more carefully, more attuned to narrative variations and life's subtleties.

Re(dis)covered Histories

Safia Fazlul
The Harem. TSAR $20.95

Truman Green
A Credit to Your Race. Anvil $18.00

Raminder Sidhu
Tears of Mehndi. Caitlin $24.95

Reviewed by Sunny Chan

Set in small neighbourhoods and ethnic enclaves within larger Canadian cities, these three novels tell stories that would otherwise have remained secluded within their respective communities. Truman Green's *A Credit to Your Race*, originally published in a tiny press run in 1973 and chosen for republication as a "Vancouver 125 legacy book" in 2011, is set in Surrey, BC, circa the 1960s. The first person narrator is Billy, a Black Canadian boy who has a teenaged romance with a white girl, Mary. Written in a simple, colloquial style, the narration is at times heavy-handed, yet also believable as an adolescent voice. Billy and Mary have an unplanned pregnancy, and the reactions of Mary's blatantly racist father and the insidiously ignorant townsfolk drive Billy's and Mary's stories toward inevitable heartbreak. As the conflict escalates predictably, the reader sees through Billy's eyes what it is like to grow up surrounded by massive misinformation about race and miscegenation. Green adds a uniquely small-town Canadian perspective to the topic of interracial romance. Billy's family are the only visible minorities in town, and multiple characters make observations about the large difference between Canada's cultural, political, and juridical environment and the American racial context they glean from television shows and newspaper headlines.

Meanwhile, Safia Fazlul's *The Harem* is set in a fictional Bangladeshi immigrant ghetto in an unnamed city much like Toronto. Also told in the first person, it follows the lives of the narrator Farina and her best

friends, Imrana and Sabrina, as they live out their teenaged rebellions against their strict Muslim parents. Obsessed with getting rich and having moved out as soon as they turned eighteen, they hatch a plan to open an escort agency. *The Harem* is fraught with competing tensions between filial duty and yearning for freedom, class aspirations and allegiance to the downtrodden, and multiple racial desires. It is also full of characters who serve as foils for each other, such as Ali and Clint, Farina's romantic interests. Ali is the good Muslim boy next door who respects Farina and yet wants to trap her in traditionalism, while Clint is the married white boss who can offer Farina wealth and liberty yet sees her as nothing but a sex object. As one might expect from a story about three young women running an escort agency, things quickly go downhill and Farina is left questioning her place as an ethical being in the world. Like Green's book, Fazlul's is full of clichés and unoriginal language, but surprises with its depth of insight from a perspective not common in culture class narratives. Fazlul's Farina is an incredibly unlikeable character whose moral reflections are nonetheless compelling because they are so nuanced. It would be unfair to dismiss *The Harem* for its plainness, since it also offers unexpectedly sophisticated considerations of how gender, class, and race intersect as characters find both common ground and disparities in their unique positions. Farina's unpleasantness is redeemed by her gradual realization of how she is not only a victim but also a perpetrator in cycles of violence.

Raminder Sidhu's *Tears of Mehndi* is more formally adventurous than *A Credit to Your Race* and *The Harem*. Spanning from 1976 to 2012, every other chapter of *Tears of Mehndi* is a third-person narrative about a close-knit Indian Canadian community in Vancouver's Little India. The third-person chapters are snapshots of gatherings at a Sikh gurdwara, at dinner parties, and at weddings, as characters catch up on gossip with each other. These snapshots are intercut by chapters from the first-person points of view of different women connected to that community. By flipping back and forth, Sidhu shows the differences between what is speculated about and what really goes on in the lives of these characters. One downside of this format is that the resulting dialogue is often implausibly expositional in order to explain what has happened in the intervening years between each snapshot. However, the structure of the book does also give the reader a sense of involvement in the community, as it feels like one has gotten to know a very large group of people after reading all the interconnected stories. These stories explore the various types of oppression and violence experienced by women in a strongly patriarchal society where daughters are seen as a curse, and many of these stories end tragically. Like both Green and Fazlul, though, Sidhu manages to convey tragedy without melodrama. The narratives are true to life and life is often sad, but they are also full of characters who try to make the best of the situation and of themselves. There is also a clear trajectory of progress in *Tears of Mehndi* as the same background characters age and learn, changing their attitudes over time. It is ultimately an optimistic novel.

Tears of Mehndi comes with a foreword by a Senator of Canada, the Honourable Yonah Martin, who claims that this novel is universalizing and "relevant to us all," but the exact opposite is also true. The strength of Sidhu's work is that it does not let the reader forget that things happen to people *because of* their positions in life, their specific cultural upbringings, their geographic locations, and their gender. Sidhu's acknowledgements, like the interview with the author included at the end of Green's novel, reveal a desire to get the story "right," just as Fazlul's author biography states that *The Harem* was inspired by her own work

as a "phone girl" for an escort service. All three authors share a similar dedication to authenticity and telling the truth of their experiences.

Excavating Childhood by Lexicon and Song

Jon Paul Fiorentino
Needs Improvement. Coach House $17.95

Rodney DeCroo
Allegheny, BC. Nightwood $18.95

Reviewed by Catherine Owen

Childhood, its vistas, torments, and fleeting instances of innocent reverie are potentially long-term plunderable material for a poet. As Flannery O'Connor wrote, "anybody who has survived his childhood has enough information about life to last him the rest of his days." These two books of poetry, one inflected by scholarship and the other haunted by song lyrics, couldn't be more disparate, but they share a concern to trace some of the darker realms of childhood: bullying via systemic rhetoric and neglect via the grim melodies of addiction and poverty.

Jon Paul Fiorentino's latest lexically-textured foray in the so-called "post-language" laboratory is *Needs Improvement*, the cover of which features a wry depiction of an eighties-style report card announcing evident lack in "Metre" and "Imagery" and a failure in "Responsibility." Fiorentino, along the lines of Gregory Betts and derek beaulieu, is a champion rehasher, though his unpacking of everything pedagogically intriguing from Judith Butler to evaluation rubrics and urban slogans certainly doesn't wallop the essential "POW" of deconstructionist books like Shane Rhodes' *X: Poems & Anti-Poems*, which uses the damaged language of legislation such as the Indian Act to enable the reader to re-enter the poison of colonialism at the level of feeling. *Needs Improvement* forced me to set aside my own aesthetic desires and envelop myself in Fiorentino's disgorging of the scholastically violent discourse that shapes us all. I enjoyed his ironic "Summary" drawings that *illustrate* principles like Cultural Hegemony, the sectional piece, "Winnipeg Cold Storage," which integrates Butlerian idiom to engage the bind of affection and indifference the city of one's childhood evokes, the humorous, pugilistic slapping down of pseudo-report cards that illustrate one student's educational and personal descent, and the "alyric villanelle" called "Moda" whose repeated refrain: "a spectacular national celebration unequalled" was the slogan for Expo '67. Poems transcend their basic status as lexical experiments when that angsty melancholic note slithers in, as with, "Nothing here / but anchors. Home never lasts, outlasts" ("Live Stream"), "The song lies and you knew it / but that's the thing about aging" ("How Wise You Must Be by Now"), and the Barthesian, "you do not know a thing / let's agree to one thing in a season of sorrow: / no fears, so and so" ("Tautnotes: I Lace Words"). While the prodding nihilism of "It Still Means Fuck All to Me" gestures towards a potential deadending of what Betts dubs "plunderverse," Fiorentino's aim, again in Betts' definition, to destabilize "the source text by exploiting its weakness," is successful if at times more than a tad too aggravatingly opaque for satisfying delving.

In violent stylistic contrast is songwriter Rodney DeCroo's *Allegheny, BC,* a collection of disturbed nostalgia drawn from memories of his boyhood in Pittsburgh, PA, narratives of hunting, itinerancy, alcoholism, and the land that continue to haunt his adult years spent in Vancouver, BC. As with poets such as Patrick Lane, Al Purdy, Jim Christy, and Pete Trower, DeCroo's hard-luck days have turned sweetly into the bounty of art, his sharpest experiences producing his most poignant poems. Under the tutelage of Russell Thornton, along with decades of songwriting and

performing, DeCroo has grown massively in his craft, his ear blooming inside the gorgeous vignettes of such pieces as the almost Cormac McCarthy-toned "On the Night of My First Breath," "The Trumpet," "Oil Drum," and "Everywhere You Look." Deft with internal rhyme ("the light streaming through his hair / like strands of fire around his face"), consonance ("She is the river, the snow fields, the neon / in the rain. She is everything that has been / taken from you and never returned"), and occasionally even metaphor (the silver sound of the trumpet compared to a homeless youth's sleeping saliva strand), DeCroo's bittersweet paeans to what made him mainly shine. While some of the poems like "Fight" feel unfinished, and others trail off into prosaic information delivery such as "Mrs Tobin" or "Willy Soble," allowing for confused clichés ("the barn planks / collapsing like a toothless old face"), or are simply overwritten into redundancy ("oak leaves / like fossil imprints of prehistoric fish / millions of years old"), *Allegheny, BC*, is still a compellingly emotional read, redolent of the way, over the years, regions and recollections fuse in the blood until it is just one foot-tapping tragedy.

The Children's Story

Richard Ford
Canada. Harper Collins $29.99

Reviewed by Gordon Bölling

For the summer 2013 issue of *Brick,* the editors of the literary journal asked forty-four writers to contribute short pieces on their favourite endings. John Irving paid homage to *Moby-Dick*, Sven Birkerts found praise for *To the Lighthouse*, and David Young recommended the ending of Richard Ford's most recent novel *Canada*. Should Linda Spalding and her co-editors at *Brick* one day decide to publish a similar series of essays on the beginnings of stories it is almost certain that someone will choose Ford's novel as his or her favourite beginning. The novel's stunning first paragraph has been quoted in virtually every review of *Canada* that I have come across: "First, I'll tell about the robbery our parents committed. Then about the murders, which happened later. The robbery is the more important part, since it served to set my and my sister's lives on the courses they eventually followed. Nothing would make complete sense without that being told first." At the end of the opening paragraph, readers may be forgiven for wondering whether Ford has not just spoiled the plot in one fell swoop. With a beginning such as this, how can he create enough suspense to carry the reader through the 400-odd pages of his novel? In *Canada*, Ford is not interested in story in a narrow or traditional sense of the word. His main focus does not lie on a specific sequence of events. Instead, *Canada* is much more about the consequences of certain acts than it is about the acts themselves. That is why Ford can be so free as to give away significant parts of the plot in the opening paragraph. Written with great precision, *Canada* is an extraordinary novel about the ways in which we try to give meaning to our lives.

Apparently, the idea behind *Canada* occupied Ford for more than two decades. He first visited southwestern Saskatchewan in 1984, a region that now serves as the setting for the second part of the novel. Part one is set in Montana, a state that Ford has previously written about in the short-story collection *Rock Springs* (1987), as well as in the novel *Wildlife* (1990). *Canada* is told by Dell Parsons, who, in the narrative present of the year 2011, is about to retire from his position as a teacher of English in Windsor, Ontario. Although Dell has spent most of his life in Canada, he grew up in the States where his father served in the Air Force. In Great Falls, Montana, Dell and his twin sister Berner live ordinary

enough lives until the moment their parents rob a bank. A threshold has been crossed, and things will never be the same again. In *Canada*, the robbery is only the first in a series of figurative or literal border crossings. Following the arrest of their parents, Berner runs away from home, whereas Dell is taken north into Canada by a friend of his mother's. His escape from juvenile authorities only leads Dell straight into the arms of Arthur Remlinger, who is hiding himself from American authorities in the small Saskatchewan town of Fort Royal. A Kurtz-like character, he holds a strong fascination for the fifteen-year-old boy. It is not a coincidence that *Heart of Darkness* is among the books that Dell will later teach to his students in Windsor. When his past catches up with him, Remlinger kills two Americans in cold blood. Dell becomes a witness to the double murder and is then forced to help with the removal of the bodies. Throughout the novel, Dell continuously tries to understand and to accommodate the events that shape his life and the life of his twin sister: "But the children's story—which mine and my sister's is—is ours to weigh and apportion and judge as we see it." In fact, Dell's entire narrative can be read as an attempt to regain some measure of control over his life story: "Through all these memorable events, normal life was what I was seeking to preserve for myself. When I think of those times […] it is all of a piece, like a musical score with movements, or a puzzle, wherein I am seeking to restore and maintain my life in a whole and acceptable state, regardless of the frontiers I've crossed. I know it's only me who makes these connections. But not to try to make them is to commit yourself to the waves that toss you and dash you against the rocks of despair." That Dell makes his way back to what we call an ordinary life is a victory against the odds.

When Richard Ford discussed his then-new book on *The Colbert Report* in June 2012, the show's host berated Ford for not naming his novel *America*. In fact, it is not that often that American writers of Ford's standing set their books in Canada, let alone name them *Canada*. In the classical American novel, for example in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Canada is a place of refuge. In Ford's novel, Canada as a place defies such clear-cut definitions. When first crossing into Saskatchewan, the vastness of the Canadian prairie simply overwhelms Dell. Watching from the car window, he experiences a sense of profound isolation and loss: "Once we were out of the hills, there were no landmarks. No mountains or rivers—like the Highwoods or the Bear's Paw, or the Missouri—that told you where you were. There were even fewer trees. . . . There was no feeling, once the hills disappeared behind us, of a findable middle point from which other points could draw a reference. A person could easily get lost or go crazy here, since the middle was everywhere and everything at once." In the course of the novel, what Canada means to Dell is changed to its opposite. It is in Canada that Dell becomes a witness to the murder of two men. Still, Canada is also the place that finally affords him a new perspective on his life: "In time, I would be able to explain it all to myself—somewhere. Somehow." Though his students in Windsor might believe they can detect the Yankee in him, Dell himself has no desire to see his birthplace in nearby Michigan or to visit Great Falls. Canada does not save Dell in a way that involves positive action but it is the place that allowed him to become who he is. Richard Ford's *Canada* is a first-rate novel by one of the outstanding American writers of our time. It is fully deserving of a large Canadian audience.

Danger and Decorum

Jaime Forsythe
Sympathy Loophole. Mansfield $16.95

Nyla Matuk
Sumptuary Laws. Véhicule $18.00

Reviewed by Lorraine York

I take my title from Nyla Matuk's poem "Road Madonnas of Nocera," but the collision of danger and decorum, the random and the regulatory, pervades both of these first full-length collections by Canadian women poets. In Matuk's *Sumptuary Laws*, the domestic is deeply infused with the bizarre. A dizzying array of metaphorical pyrotechnics adorns Matuk's description of the banal. "Sunday Afternoon Croquet," for instance, a poem about playing that most placid of domestic lawn games, becomes saturated with repressed chaos; the poet imagines herself bending over the ball, "elfin green bitchy lady" feeling "like a mad Roman emperor with a history of failures / at miniature golf"—a fabulously bathetic collision of the bizarre and the tame. For Matuk, this is life as we know it: the everyday suddenly disclosing its grand theatre. Her collisions of language and metaphor are so daring, the jumps between image and image so precipitous, that she provides, at the end of the volume, a gloss on some of the references. This is more than a paratextual glossary, though; the entries themselves refuse to follow the convention of explanatory material acting as a taming explanation. The most witty of these is the note explaining that her description of "Petit-four disciplinarians" refers to six- or seven-year-old bossy little girls: "Sometimes these girls are dressed in the colours of buttercream icing on petit-fours, but they are sometimes just little fucks." Matuk's poetic lexicon may be ornate, but it refuses the cloyingly sweet; here is sweet "feminine" domestic poetry exploded.

"The Exploding House" is one of the poems in Jaime Forsythe's *Sympathy Loophole*, another collection seeking to explode the domestic. Forsythe's palette is lighter than Matuk's, and her collisions of unexpected bits and pieces of the world more welcoming of the zany, more celebratory of the ridiculous. "The Exploding House" imagines the flotsam of a house that has, for whatever reason (by propane, frayed wires, candles, dynamite) exploded; souvenir spoons and postcards rain down upon the neighbourhood. This is an apt description of Forsythe's poetry of sudden juxtaposition. It rains down objects, images of the particularities of life crowding around like accumulating flotsam: "Looseleaf fan, accordion pleats, floor-length / floral. Paintbrush tips of a niece's braids."

Forsythe's exploded domestic poetry features a major tension between the forces of regulation and the explosions of the flotsam and traces of our lives. The language of rules, of guidebooks, often clashes with the viral variousness of lives lived messily: "You will see a mountain. You will uncover a code," opens the poem "Fortune." As the poem proceeds, the language of instruction and direction breaks down under the glorious pressure of life's variousness: "You won't know the structure / of the aircraft you're in," the poet reminds us. Brilliantly, Forsythe takes on and explodes other languages of pedagogy—the English phrase book, for example. In "Real-Life Phrases in Everyday English," Forsythe offers us an apparently simple list of such phrases, but soon the blandly typical among these grow monstrously funny: "Alan was a dentist and a father, but mostly a dentist." But lest we think that this is all fun and games, Forsythe's final English phrase critiques the way in which English language acquisition is also a regime of loss and capitulation to the linguistically dominant: "Anne adopted a name she would never again have to repeat."

Both Nyla Matuk's and Jaime Forsythe's collections, with their eloquent bombardments of the reader with the bits and pieces

of contemporary life, remind me a great deal of Sianne Ngai's recent study, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting*, particularly her reading of the "zany" as a conflicting response to post-Fordist conditions of production and consumption. The conditions of the zany—that bombardment with information or sensation, and the sense of sped-up action—become, for Ngai, evidence of a deep-seated malaise about stressed-out, precarious labour. Matuk's and Forsythe's language of exuberant collisions, their verbal zaniness, discloses, I think, a similarly divided response to life under late capitalism. Our houses have exploded, our lives have sped up, and we look to the flotsam that remains—to the commodities that surround and identify us—to somehow speak of who we are, and to register our complicated, divided responses to a post-modern world.

Germaine Guèvremont et le journalisme

Germaine Guèvremont; David Décarie et Lori Saint-Martin, dirs

Tu seras journaliste: et autres œuvres sur le journalisme. PUM 39,95 $

Compte rendu par Mathieu Noël

La romancière Germaine Guèvremont (1893-1968) est surtout connue pour ses romans *Le Survenant* (1945) et *Marie-Didace* (1947), deux classiques de la littérature québécoise. Son œuvre littéraire est pourtant beaucoup plus vaste. Dans l'édition critique *Tu seras journaliste et autres œuvres sur le journalisme*, David Décarie et Lori Saint-Martin présentent certaines œuvres de fictions méconnues de Guèvremont et portant plus précisément, sur le journalisme. Décarie et Saint-Martin entreprennent leur ouvrage avec une introduction de 80 pages dans laquelle ils présentent la carrière de Guèvremont et les œuvres littéraires reproduites dans leur volume. Ils décrivent, notamment, le passage de la romancière dans le domaine du journalisme. De 1928 à 1935, elle est correspondante à Sorel pour le quotidien montréalais *The Gazette*. Ensuite, de 1938 à 1947, elle collabore à la revue *Paysana*. La présentation des auteurs se termine avec une chronologie de la vie de Guèvremont.

La première œuvre de Guèvremont reproduite par Décarie et Saint-Martin est *Une grosse nouvelle*. Dans cette satire du milieu journalistique, Guèvremont raconte les émois causés par la nouvelle d'un accident maritime dans la salle de rédaction d'un journal de région. Les auteurs présentent trois versions d'*Une grosse nouvelle* : le sketch radiophonique (1933), la nouvelle (1949) et le téléthéâtre (1954). Nous pouvons ainsi noter les variantes que Guèvremont apporte à son texte au cours des années et selon le genre. La seconde œuvre reproduite est *Tu seras journaliste*. Il s'agit d'un roman-feuilleton à caractère autobiographique publié en dix-huit épisodes dans la revue *Paysana* d'avril 1939 à octobre 1940. Le texte met en scène Caroline, une jeune femme qui tente avec difficultés de percer dans l'univers masculin du journalisme dans une petite ville semblable à Sorel. Guèvremont souligne ici les injustices qui existent entre les hommes et les femmes dans ce milieu. La troisième œuvre reproduite est « Un sauvage ne rit pas, » une nouvelle de deux pages publiée dans *La Revue moderne* en mars 1943. Dans celle-ci, Guèvremont relate la rencontre d'une journaliste avec un Amérindien désireux de traverser l'Atlantique en canot. À ces trois œuvres, Décarie et Saint-Martin ajoutent d'autres textes assez courts de Guèvremont portant sur le journalisme. Chaque œuvre reproduite dans ce volume comprend plusieurs notes de bas de page dans lesquelles les auteurs apportent des précisions et tracent des parallèles entre les différents textes. Il ne fait aucun doute que les commentaires de Décarie et Saint-Martin enrichissent notre lecture de cette

part mal connue de l'œuvre de Germaine Guèvremont. Soulignons en terminant qu'une importante bibliographie recensant tous les écrits de cette auteure complète un ouvrage que nous recommandons à tous ceux qui s'intéressent à l'œuvre de cette pionnière de la littérature au féminin au Québec.

Realism & Conceptualism

Wanda John-Kehewin
In the Dog House. Talonbooks $16.95

Paul Zits
Massacre Street. U of Alberta P $19.95

Reviewed by Susan Gingell

Though Wanda John-Kehewin's *In the Dog House* and Paul Zits' *Massacre Street* are both first trade-book collections of poetry focused on Indigenous-Euro-Canadian contact zones, two more different books would be hard to imagine. The two books speak eloquently to different readerships. John-Kehewin's poems use the realist mode to chart what she herself identifies as a healing journey, and they rely largely for their effects on the unflinching honesty of her female-centred, social-realist account of the personal devastation wrought by colonization. Zits' *Massacre Street*, by contrast, is a work of conceptual poetry focused on the Frog Lake Massacre early in the Northwest Resistance of 1885. As is typical of a poetry that Marjorie Perloff compellingly characterized as that of "unoriginal genius," Zits' book juxtaposes fragments of others' writing to invite readers to ponder the concept of reconstituting history when the low fog of racism attends cultural difference and shrouds events, when personal investments of witnesses to that history are so divergent, and when oral and written versions of events tell incommensurable stories.

In the Dog House is structured by the four directions of the Medicine Wheel, which John-Kehewin explains in a four-page reconstruction of the concept based primarily on her father's teachings. However the book somewhat oddly mixes an Indigenous oral-traditional style of rhetoric and decolonizing political commentary with Western-style confessional lyrics and shape poems. Their success is varied.

On the least felicitous end of the range are the almost unreadable "Chai Tea Rant" in a seventeen-loop spiral in small print imitative of a circuitous city drive that constantly circles personal sadness; the pain-laced "Alcohol," shaped as a bottle and wine-glass but nevertheless feeling it needs in its final line to tell readers "I am alcohol"; and earnest poems like "A World at Peace" whose energy is so attenuated by abstract nouns that these texts struggle for life.

Further along the continuum is "Twinkle Twinkle Fallen Star," a moving exposé of the crippling feelings that spring from growing up with a mother "who tasted whiskey / and it stained her lips / a golden five-star brown." The daughter, told to wish upon a star, wishes fervently that her mother didn't collect those golden stars and would come back "from indian [sic] school" to her daughter and her world. Also largely successful is "Luna," whose concrete detail of an isolate bow whale calling mournfully to her pod on a moonless night serves as objective correlative for the persona's condition.

Most compelling of all is the chilling neo-gothic of the title poem. So cliché has the expression "in the dog house" become that the realization that the poem is literally about a child huddled in fetal position, and hiding from unidentified horrors behind a shivering dog in its kennel, comes as a shock. When John-Kehewin's poems work best, they are poignant documents impelled principally by suffering and loss, though beauty also emerges in more hopeful poems like "Pow Wow Dreams," with its vision of a mother, abandoned as a child, finally finding freedom in lovingly providing her

own child with a carefully-sewn outfit for her dancing.

Zits' theoretically-impelled but varying avant-garde poetics demand far more of his readers than do John-Kehewin's of hers. Zits guides readers about the nature of his work with epigraphs from Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* (literary montage, showing only rather than commenting); from William Burroughs (copying others' words to make another book); and from Michel Foucault (intellectual collaging while knowing that words may be resurrected, but not their human authors). Zits thus signals an abdication from any sovereign rendering of all he surveys as he looks down the symbolic gravel road running through Frog Lake to Fort Pitt, known after 1885 as Massacre Street. Yet Zits concedes the impossibility of non-interventionist repetition in his reproduction of documents from the Glenbow Archives, like a brief letter from the Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories acknowledging receipt of we know not what. This letter appears to be overwritten in a modern hand and is reproduced off-centre so that words at the far right are obscured. Readers may want to hurry through the disconcertingly fragmented and often deliberately uninformed footnoted transcriptions of tapes and through the incoherent texts headed "Rough Work." However, readers may also be haunted by the reordered echoing of the titular words of massacre survivor William Bleasdell Cameron's *Blood Red the Sun* as Zits submits to a poetics of constraint and by the glimpses of experience recorded in the female captivity narratives that Zits re-sites.

Overwhelmed by Memory

Kathy Kacer, ed.
We Are Their Voice: Young People Respond to the Holocaust. Second Story $16.95

Leanne Lieberman
Lauren Yanofsky Hates the Holocaust. Orca $12.95

Reviewed by Adrienne Kertzer

A collection prompted by Kathy Kacer's invitation "to write about the Holocaust in a meaningful way," *We Are Their Voice: Young People Respond to the Holocaust* contains close to one hundred entries that range from letters to survivors (and to Anne Frank), Holocaust diaries and memoirs, book reports, stories based on other works (such as a story inspired by Karen Levine's *Hana's Suitcase* that imagines Hana Brady inside a gas chamber), and meditations on the value of studying the Holocaust. Written by students in grades six, seven, and eight, *We Are Their Voice* undoubtedly demonstrates that the writers are capable of being moved by and committed to remembering the Holocaust. The collection's intended audience is not as obvious. Despite how Kacer addresses child readers, the book will likely appeal more to teachers who are uncertain whether children can respond to this history, and who will use this text to model their own classroom practice. Why else does Kacer include feedback from educators who participated in the project?

Kacer longs for a future generation to be the "voice of [Holocaust] history" but she and her consultants appear to value emotional response more than historical accuracy. Several entries present a confused understanding of that history, one where Jews are in hiding pre-*Kristallnacht*, a hidden child writes haikus "even though they are very uncommon in Germany," and Auschwitz is mentioned both repeatedly and inaccurately. Contrary to what some of the contributors believe, American soldiers did not liberate Auschwitz, and when the Soviets did, it is

doubtful that they helped a survivor contact his American uncle and immigrate.

One of Kacer's epigraphs is an excerpt from Jack Layton's final letter. Layton's inspirational words—"love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear"—might well describe the longing in Leanne Lieberman's young adult novel, *Lauren Yanofsky Hates the Holocaust*. Lieberman's protagonist, Lauren Yanofsky, subject to Holocaust panic attacks after she witnesses her grandmother's grief at the loss of eleven family members, decides to abandon Judaism in a desperate attempt to escape the fear and anger produced by Holocaust memory. Rejecting the books recommended by her Holocaust historian father, she finds herself compulsively reading a book about Josef Mengele until she is so overwhelmed that she burns it and as a result badly injures herself. Asking numerous questions about Holocaust pedagogy even as her novel participates in it, Lieberman accepts that there is no automatic link between factual knowledge and Holocaust understanding: the adolescent males who shock Lauren when they play Nazi war games presumably know about the history of the Holocaust. Kacer's final chapter advises readers how to move from words to actions. Lieberman's novel explores the same territory but is far less confident that young people's encounter with Holocaust history will affect them in the meaningful ways that Kacer desires.

Marshalling a Humanist McLuhan

Elena Lamberti

Marshall McLuhan's Mosaic: Probing the Literary Origins of Media Studies. U of Toronto P $32.95

Reviewed by Dan Adleman

Elena Lamberti's *Marshall McLuhan's Mosaic* is itself an ambitious mosaic of a number of different enterprises. In it, Lamberti sets out to illustrate how McLuhan's "humanistic background" laid the groundwork for his groundbreaking media theory; she also interlaces her analysis with autobiographical accounts of her "own journey as a literary scholar through McLuhan's wordy wood," and to top it all off, she endeavours to apply McLuhan's ideas to several cinematic and literary texts.

Lamberti does a competent job of underscoring McLuhan's interest in Modernist writers and ancient rhetoric (though her exploration of the latter's current influence on McLuhan's understanding of advertising is disappointingly limited), but seems to overstate his paradigmatic literary "humanism"—a term that she employs equivocally by misconflating McLuhan's background in the literary "humanities" with a human-centric (i.e., anthropocentric) philosophy. From the outset, Lamberti's methodology is therefore highly problematic.

There is a case to be made for McLuhan's philosophical humanism, but it would require more nuanced optics than Lamberti provides. In *Exits to the Posthuman Future*, Arthur Kroker, following German media theorist Friedrich Kittler's lead, adumbrates McLuhan's Catholic "humanistic" valences with a great deal more sensitivity to both the myriad influences that McLuhan synthesizes and the extent to which his ideas remain irreducible to them. This by no means settles the matter. In an equally intricate account, Richard Cavell's *McLuhan in Space* situates McLuhan as not a humanist but a post-humanist whose work gestures forward towards the likes of Baudrillard, Lefebvre, and Kittler far more powerfully than it harks back to its literary Modernist forebears (whose influence Cavell also traces).

Still, Lamberti's excavation of McLuhan's engagement with Modernist writers like Joyce, Elliott, and Pound persuasively makes the case for their profound influence on McLuhan's ideas. But her arbitrarily circumscribed "rear-view mirror" approach

to her subject matter overlooks the various ways that McLuhan's myriad ideas about the emerging mediasphere both emerge out of a particular aesthetic-political-mediatic milieu and transcend any one set of literary or philosophical influences.

As both a backward-looking attempt to account for McLuhan's putative "humanism" and a forward-looking attempt to argue for his work's continued relevance to thinking through, with, and about media, *McLuhan's Mosaic* would fare better if Lamberti loosened the causal chain she imputes to McLuhan's own academic *Bildung* narrative and located his work within a broader epochal moment. To her credit, she occasionally makes promising gestures in this direction, for instance when she meticulously distinguishes McLuhan's "mosaic" from the "hypertext" with which it is usually conflated.

Stylistically speaking, this book also suffers from a number of intractable impediments. Lamberti's autobiographical insertions and apostrophic addresses to the reader detract from the text's readability. And, as a modified translation of an earlier book, *Marshall McLuhan: Tra Letteratura, Arte e Media*, which she wrote in Italian in 2000, it reads unevenly and requires more stylistic calibration to the English vernacular.

Agency & Self-reflexivity

Dennis Lee
Testament. Anansi $19.95

Daphne Marlatt
Liquidities: Vancouver Poems Then and Now. Talonbooks $16.95

Leon Rooke
The April Poems. Porcupine's Quill $16.95

Reviewed by Shazia Hafiz Ramji

Grappling with loss requires reflection—an engagement with the past to prepare for the future. The three books under review are re-visitations that use self-referential strategies to draw the reader into discourse to acknowledge relational subjectivities, and to reinvigorate that which has been lost. *Liquidities: Vancouver Poems Then and Now* is Daphne Marlatt's latest book of poetry. Marlatt re-envisions Vancouver to understand the changes that have shaped the city since the 1970s, when she published *Vancouver Poems*.

Liquidities is divided into three parts. Part one comprises "Vancouver Poems," to which Marlatt has made changes, with a significant substitution of "the city" with "the *sh'te*" in "Changes air now wet as the sea, the *sh'te*" in the opening poem. The word "*sh'te*," borrowed from Japanese Noh theatre, refers to an "inhabiting presence, its ghostly energy for self-transformation," as stated in the preface. The city's past, and the potentiality inherent in this absence evolve to encompass the organic progress of empathy in the second part, "Some Open Doors," in which Marlatt gives voice to historical sources by an active imagination of particulars. The last poem in this section, "reading it," ends with a self-reflexive turn that paves the way for the third section, "Liquidities" by reminding the reader of the act of interpretation: "she waits as the cards collapse / the roads rearrange / another reading."

In the section "Liquidities," Marlatt focuses on interpretations of interpretations. She borrows from art and myth, such as from the 2011 *Digital Natives* public art exhibition curated by Clint Burnham and Lorna Brown, Thad Roan's photograph of The Marine Building, and a Squamish story. Marlatt's lines are as fluid and lyrical as in her early work, but their embedded perspectives offer further identification by introducing monosyllables as in "marine ah / body of water you came wet you / [. . .] elle ll a live oh." These jarring sighs not only draw attention to the inadequacy of language when expressing the recollection of a memory, or disappointment, but they

also emphasize habitual reactions, points of relief, comfort—and dissolution.

Dennis Lee's *Testament* revels in self-reflexivity at the level of the syllable. *Testament* is a revision of his previous books *Un* and *yesno.* Like Marlatt, his poetry is concerned with the (lack of) attention paid to the civil landscape, and environment, but self-reflexivity is derived from the language itself, as opposed to external sources. This is evident in a passage in "scarlight": "Of paleopresence. The extra / space around what is"; and in "lascaux": "*Is* — now / there was a word. Was / funnelforce eddy of / strut and incumbence; pelt. . . ." On the surface, Lee's associative thinking defies logic, but the focus on language allows the reader to breathe amidst the vibrant momentum of his words. Though they slip just as meaning becomes cognizant, this ephemerality highlights the potency of loss, and deterioration; the reader's implication in the search for meaning allows issues—such as the pending extinction of the human species—to be contemplated, and felt.

The lines in Lee's *Testament* are drum-tight, armed with torque; variations of meaning surface in the mind with every reading, and chills in the body are felt often. Even though Lee's themes of extinction and apocalypse are sometimes redundant, the sheer rhythm of his words and precise attention to language allow the reader to pardon all else.

The April Poems by Leon Rooke focus on appearances and acts of perceiving in order to convey experience. If Marlatt and Lee have used self-reflexivity to challenge boundaries of subjective and objective identities, then Rooke uses self-reflexivity to portray these boundaries as they are seen from the perspectives of two lovers separated by death.

In *The April Poems,* the perspective is second-hand; the reader sees through someone else or sees themselves being aware of being seen through someone else. Even in a supposedly subjective entry from April's journal titled "Back to the Future: Is It All Folly?" Rooke's April tries to appeal to the reader using a direct address: "dear you / I've fallen into arrears / with all this / 'love' / business," but the language remains idiomatic and clichéd, despite the self-awareness of the characters. Acts of love occur in a voyeuristic setting, and the need for validation is always present. The self-reflexivity in these poems is circular, solipsistic, and brings to mind the lovers that inhabit films by Philippe Garrel—young, lost, constantly demanding to be seen, frustrating but handsome. Only in the rushed optimism of the final poems does the cycle break. In the last poems, April finds a voice for herself, and in the final poem, her husband, Sam, writes to her friend, Tate: "Dear Tate: It is a lie that beautiful words have disappeared. I / have myself a trunkful in the attic. . . ." In these particulars, April becomes what is more than a two-dimensional character, but by this time, she is dead, and her husband speaks for her. As such, the deceptive self-reflexivity of these poems ultimately blurs identities between lovers, and speaks of the transference that sometimes occurs when in love, and when grieving.

Growing Pains

Nancy Lee
The Age. McClelland & Stewart $22.95

Valerie Mason-John
Borrowed Body. Demeter $19.95

Reviewed by Alana Fletcher

Nancy Lee's *The Age* (2014) and Valerie Mason-John's *Borrowed Body* (2013) both provide chaotic modern takes on the female *Bildungsroman*. *The Age* is a speculative history of 1980s Cold War activity in which the protagonist becomes embroiled in a plot to blow up a government building. *Borrowed Body* is an imaginative portrait of a young

British girl of African descent who is shuttled among foster homes before ending up in a youth detention centre. Providing an updated take on the girl-coming-of-age story and extending the scope of the female problem novel (exemplified by Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* [1990]), Lee's and Mason-John's books explore the ways structural problems like economic uncertainty, racism, sexual violence, political instability, and ecological crisis intersect with the growing pains of female puberty.

Contrary to some of the praise on the cover copy of Lee's *The Age*, this book's strength is its well-woven plot rather than its writing, which can at times be over-dramatic and clunky. The main storyline focuses on Gerry, a young girl who gets involved in an activist bombing. Reader curiosity about what happens with this plot is piqued, as it only slowly unfolds, interrupted by the other vagaries of Gerry's adolescence. Another page-turning aspect of the book is the presence of interspersed chapters about a completely different story about a post-apocalyptic colony of pillager-survivors. The question of how these storylines might be related is not resolved, however; the post-apocalyptic story remains a kind of speculative warning about what could have happened or may yet happen should the Cold War tensions alluded to in the main plot heighten.

Mason-John's *Borrowed Body*, winner of the UK Mind Book of the Year Award, does not follow a plot so much as catalogue various events in the life of the protagonist, Pauline. Pauline's perspective is our reality as readers, and reality thus includes angels, including a being of light and colour named Sparky, the ghost of Pauline's dead friend Annabel, and a spirit cat and snake who seems to represent Pauline's evil compulsions. The title of the work refers to the way these beings occupy Pauline's body in times of stress or danger. In contrast to *The Age*, it is fine writing rather than a dramatic plot that drives this book. The radically understated narration lumps Pauline's experiences of sexual and physical abuse together with everyday childhood events like running a paper route, suggesting that the struggles encountered by children in the British child welfare system are so pervasive as to be mundane.

Both books are written from the first person limited-omniscient perspective of unreliable narrators. Both are also written in present tense; in the case of *The Age* this technique adds to an urgency that builds around the slowly-revealed bombing, while in *Borrowed Body* the effect echoes the loss of control that Pauline experiences as she is buffeted about in foster care and controlled by various spirits. While readers of *Canadian Literature* might notice that neither work is terribly Canadian (both are very much informed by American and British political and social systems), both will be appreciated as compelling modern interrogations of the ways in which emerging female autonomy can be structurally limited or defeated.

The "solid part"

Keavy Martin
Stories in a New Skin: Approaches to Inuit Literature. U of Manitoba P $27.97

Theresa Meuse, Lesley Choyce, and Julia Swan, eds.
The Mi'kmaq Anthology Volume 2: In Celebration of Rita Joe. Pottersfield P $21.95

Reviewed by Jennifer Hardwick

In her poem "The Solid Part of One's Identity" Rita Joe writes that "The solid part of one's identity / Is communication." Joe's words get to the heart of *The Mi'kmaq Anthology Volume 2*, which is dedicated to her memory. The book is a follow-up to 1997's *The Mi'kmaq Anthology*, which was edited by Joe and her colleague Lesley Choyce, and it furthers Joe's great wish "that

there will be more writing from my people, and that our children will read it." Like the original anthology, Volume 2 both highlights and complicates the "solid part" of Mi'kmaq identity.

It is important to note that "solid" does not necessarily connote rigidity. The essays, poems, traditional stories and autobiography in Volume 2 clearly show that the Mi'kmaq people share a unified language, culture, and in many respects, spirit. However, their identity is built of innumerable experiences and ideas, and the texts show a great deal of diversity. The works touch on a multitude of subjects—governance, land, death, residential schools, friendship—and are alternately infused with pain and joy, struggle and celebration. They highlight a nation that is as complex and adaptable as it is unified and rooted. At times, the pieces in the anthology are so diverse that it is hard to shift from one author to the next; for example, moving from Marie Louise Martin's imagery-laden poetry to Marie Battiste's personal essay on education and activism feels somewhat jarring. However, once past these initial moments of transition it is easy to see the connections that tie each piece together—relationships to land and family, resistance to colonization, appreciation of and commitment to the lasting value of traditional teachings, and a struggle to find the best way forward as individuals and as a people. Together, the pieces that editors Theresa Meuse, Lesley Choyce, and Julia Swan have gathered offer a nuanced and thoughtful depiction of the multiplicity and complexity of the Mi'kmaq people's "solid identity" communicated in their own words. It is a fitting tribute to the life and legacy of Rita Joe.

In her book *Stories in a New Skin*: *Approaches to Inuit Literature* Keavy Martin also grapples with the difficulty of locating, depicting, and engaging with "the solid part" of a peoples' identity. Martin seeks to examine "the ways in which Inuit texts adapt to new contexts and, in doing so, powerfully challenge the academy to rethink its own ways of being." To do this she mixes analysis of *unikkaaqtuat* (traditional stories), songs, and *inuusirmingnik unikkaat* (life writings) with discussion of Inuit nationhood and Inuit knowledge (also called Inuit Quajimajatuqangit or IQ), and personal anecdote about her experiences as a non-Inuit southern scholar working to understand Inuit ways of knowing. As with *The Mi'kmaq Anthology Volume 2*, the material in *Stories in a New Skin* is both startlingly diverse and deeply connected; Martin's exploration spans historical periods and touches on the social, political, cultural, linguistic, and economic. For those who are unfamiliar with Inuit life this can be overwhelming, and readers will likely have to go back and forth through the text to keep track of history, concepts, and people. However the disorientation serves a purpose—readers are forced to trade western and southern ideas about genre, linearity, and even literature for Inuit concepts in order to engage with the material offered. Martin is a great guide for this work; her translations of Inuit words and ideas manage to be clear and understandable without being overly conclusive, and she chooses sites of analysis that are both accessible and challenging for unfamiliar readers. She is the first to acknowledge that reading Inuit literature through the lens of literary criticism is not unproblematic, and that it is impossible to offer a comprehensive overview of such a rich literary tradition (if that term is even appropriate). However, she does offer an excellent introduction to the topic, and asks questions which will guide the reading of Inuit literature for years: what would a truly Inuit form of literary criticism look like? How can southern readers engage with Inuit literature in a way that acknowledges its connections to land, family, spiritual life, and community? How can readers come to embody its lessons?

Ultimately, Martin's book shows that communication—in a variety of forms—is central to the "solid part" of Inuit identity, and that this identity (much like Mi'kmaq identity) is not easily definable. Thankfully, as Martin notes "the stories are there to guide us."

Evangelizing and Exploring

Jim McDowell
Father August Brabant: Saviour or Scourge?
Ronsdale $24.95

Linda Dorricott and Deidre Cullon, eds.
The Private Journal of Captain G. H. Richards: The Vancouver Island Survey (1860-1862).
Ronsdale $24.95

Reviewed by Mark Diotte

Shortlisted for the Basil Stuart-Stubbs Prize for Outstanding Scholarly Book on British Columbia, Jim McDowell's *Father August Brabant: Saviour or Scourge* is a superb volume. One aspect of the volume's success is its academic rigour in re-evaluating Brabant's life. McDowell begins by juxtaposing his volume against six other versions of Brabant's life, and draws the conclusion that four of these are flawed "reprints or rewrites of Brabant's own *Vancouver and its Missions*." Another version is a eulogy, while the sixth is "reliable, but dated." McDowell's version, therefore, presents a much needed corrective to the available information and historical record. Furthermore, the value of McDowell's version is its scope—it ranges from Brabant's life in British Columbia, to the general historical context of the late eighteenth century, to some of the history and stories of the Hesquiaht First Nation. The concluding critical assessments of Brabant and Hesquiaht Chief Tawinisam, in addition to the in-depth appendices and endnotes, add to the academic excellence of McDowell's work. Yet, for all his academic rigour, McDowell also uses a novelistic prose style to propel the reader forward through the narrative, and thus his volume serves the general reader as much as the academic reader.

One strength of McDowell's work is his portrayal of Brabant who, despite his belief in his own good intentions, is revealed to be a somewhat arrogant individual who was overly concerned with his own reputation and role in the area. Indeed, McDowell represents Brabant as something of a metonym for the role of the Catholic Church in the region—a person and an institution characterized by a concern over influence and expansion in the region, by power struggles with Protestant groups, and by a relationship of assumed paternalistic superiority over First Nations. Concurrently, McDowell systematically examines historical documents to demonstrate Brabant as largely ineffectual in his personal attempts at conversion, dishonest in his reportage of conversion numbers, and inadequate in understanding the Nuu-chah-nulth people he lived amongst for such a long time. As McDowell remarks, Brabant's lack of understanding meant that "he remained intellectually handicapped as an effective agent of social change, let alone religious conversion."

Yet, McDowell is also effective in demonstrating Brabant's success in documenting or witnessing Hesquiaht culture and ceremonies such as the *Lōqwoná*, or Shaman's Festival, and the potlatch—despite his limited understanding of these things. McDowell also emphasizes Brabant's important role in establishing the residential school on Mears Island, Clayoquot Sound, as well as his role as facilitator or link between the Hesquiaht and settler society in trade, disputes, legal issues, and difficulties with other bands. In these roles, Brabant was somewhat successful—though this success contributed to the dislocation and disruption of Hesquiaht practices and culture.

One of the most powerful aspects of the book is McDowell's representation of Hesquiaht culture and the Hesquiaht response to the evangelical efforts of Brabant. The Hesquiaht are represented even-handedly—dubious of Brabant and his teachings, but hospitable to his presence; as his efforts at conversion increased, so too did the Hesquiaht backlash, aggression, and resistance. The Hesquiaht resistance to colonialism and conversion is represented mainly through Chief Tawinisam whose life is characterized by a rejection of Brabant alongside a solidification of traditional values and practices. Where Hesquiaht conversion does occur, McDowell shows it to be primarily nominal, an attempt to gain access to the wider settler society, and as a part of the larger processes of colonization and capitalism rather than due to the personal attempts of Brabant.

Insightful and disturbing, *Father August Brabant: Saviour or Scourge* is an excellent contribution to the history of British Columbia and Canada.

The Private Journal of Captain G. H. Richards: The Vancouver Island Survey (1860-1862) edited by Linda Dorricott and Deidre Cullon, is a first-rate publication of Captain Richards' journals alongside brief supplements from the journals of Second Master J. T. E. Gowlland. The book is well-researched, academically rigorous, and contains a series of remarkable drawings, photographs, and hydrographic charts of Vancouver Island. While the book is accessible to academic and general reader alike, the style is quite formal and sparse. Unlike the various narratives of "adventure and exploration"—including those by Captain James Cook, George Vancouver, John R. Jewitt, and Simon Fraser—Richards' journal was not likely meant for publication. Readers with an interest in nautical surveying, exploration, and history will find this volume particularly appealing. Of interest is the slight overlap between Dorricott and Cullon's non-fiction volume, and Vanessa Winn's novel *The Chief Factor's Daughter*—Lieutenant Richard Charles Mayne, an officer and friend of Richards, appears in each book, and both texts offer insight into a little studied era of Vancouver Island history.

Richards was a remarkable individual, and Dorricott and Cullon draw much-deserved attention to the man. Aside from his work charting and acting as "peacekeeper" along the coast of Vancouver Island, Richards is credited for "moderniz[ing] the Hydrographic Department" in England, managing the Telegraph and Construction and Maintenance Company, and achieving both the rank of admiral and a knighthood, among many other achievements.

A particularly noteworthy aspect of Richards' journal is the way it captures the prejudicial Eurocentric attitude in his writing, and the way in which the ideology of colonialism and imperialism is implicit in his surveying activities. While Dorricott and Cullon report that Richards "adopted native names wherever possible," he also seems very ready to name places himself. Remarks such as, "I commenced the Survey of the point at once – which I named Port Harvey after Capt Harvey of Havannah," are common in the text, and they indicate a colonizing practice whereby control is exerted over geography. His surveying practices, moreover, are just as directed at finding locations suitable for settlement and resource extraction as they are at charting the coast. Finally, Richards' constant references to First Nations as "creatures" or "filthy and dirty" are symptomatic of his tendency to objectify them while also indicative of the paternalistic paradigm of superiority and conquest he operated under.

As Dorricott and Cullon remark, Richards has never been "the focus of any major published work" and "his significant contribution as a surveyor and chart maker have not been widely recognized." This volume,

therefore, makes an important contribution to the study of Richards, to the colonizing practices and ideology of early surveyors, to British Columbia's historical record, and to life on Vancouver Island in the mid-nineteenth century. Particularly important is the fact that the original drawings of G. H. Richards do include details of First Nations villages on Vancouver Island and may, in the words of Dorricott and Cullon, "add to existing ethno-historical information and provide support for land and resource claims."

Rocky Seas, Safe Arbour

Don McKay
Paradoxides: Poems. McClelland and Stewart $18.99

John Terpstra
Naked Trees. Wolsak & Wynn $17.00

Reviewed by Nicholas Bradley

Don McKay's great poetic strength is often said to be his command of metaphor. His limitation, detractors have claimed, is a formal slackness. Is McKay a master of the outlandish comparison, the outré juxtaposition that reveals unsettling truths about the ecological nature of things? Or is he a yuckster whose digressive, bathetic mode is achieved at the expense of the hard, gem-like condition of serious poetry? The poems in *Paradoxides* are not wholly different from those of McKay's recent collections, namely *Another Gravity* (2000) and *Strike/Slip* (2006); the poet remains committed to his enduring topics and themes and to the style in which he has conducted his investigations of natural history and philosophy. Yet while *Paradoxides* treads familiar paths, delights and surprises abound. McKay's fine poems stem from his fascination with evidence of flux, such as rocks and fossils, and from his abiding love of birds. They attempt to fathom the unimaginably ancient origins of the earth, and they praise pied and dappled things: juncos and varied thrushes, common loons and their song, "What perilous music!" McKay seeks in his poetry to catch the world's glory and to emerge gracefully from forays into existential uncertainty. The mysteries of the distant past, when the foundations of the earth were laid, can scarcely be apprehended, but McKay suffers uncertainties with good cheer. The dread precipitated by contemplation of the inhuman world is assuaged by the dependable pleasures of birdsong and seasonal change. The first lines of "Slow Spring on Vancouver Island" hint at renewal: "In the understory, *sotto voce*, / crypto-birds rehearse." Soon winter will end, the underbrush will burst into song: "And then—by / the Jesus we'll be on our way." This joking around is serious stuff.

John Terpstra's *Naked Trees*, first published by Netherlandic Press in 1990, has been newly issued by Wolsak and Wynn. Aside from minor textual variations and illustrations by Wesley Bates, the second edition is essentially the same as the first. But let it gain *Naked Trees* readers, for Terpstra's poetry teems with arboreal satisfactions. The book includes a preliminary sequence of reflections upon a felled silver maple and "a *deciduary*, a dictionary for deciduous trees," which comprises short poems in prose that span the alphabet from "Achievement" to "Yes." "It is the open otherworldliness of the individual tree upon the landscape that encourages us to see it as being, at once, so necessary, and so simply gratuitous," Terpstra suggests in "Habitat." Although neither is strictly botanical, the book's two epigraphs epitomize its concerns. Lines from David Jones' *In Parenthesis* introduce the meditation on the "loss of equilibrium"—aesthetic, spiritual—caused by the strokes of havoc that unselved the maple. Terpstra through Jones offers this counsel: "You ought to ask: Why, / what is this, / what's the meaning of this[?]" In the notes to his poem Jones directs readers to "the Welsh *Percivale* story, *Peredur ap Evrawc*." Had the hero Peredur asked the

requisite questions, peace and order would have been restored to the troubled realm. The thrust of Terpstra's allusion is clear: deforestation has quietly cataclysmic consequences. The passage from Martin Buber's *I and Thou* that begins "A deciduary" proposes that "One should not try to dilute the meaning of the relation" between a tree and its observer. Terpstra lingers on such relations and their meanings, treating trees and people as faithful companions: "So much has transpired between us."

Canadian Theatre Quips

Susan McNicoll

The Opening Act: Canadian Theatre History 1945-1953. Ronsdale $24.95

Reviewed by Robin C. Whittaker

If it were not for journalists, we would have far less to say about Canadian theatre's so-called "maturation" from amateur productions to a postwar professional era—recall Betty Lee's whimsically dust-jacketed *Love and Whisky* about the Dominion Drama Festival (DDF). But *Ottawa Journal* writer Susan McNicoll's *The Opening Act* will not earn the same ubiquity, owing only in part to its shorter scope. McNicoll seeks to examine "professional theatre" in three provinces between World War II and the opening of the Stratford Festival: "Without all the postwar struggles to bring professionalism to Canadian theatre, there would have been no Stratford, no cast of Canadian actors to make up the bulk of the company that trod the boards so tentatively that first summer." Chapters are arranged geographically: British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec. (She claims there were no professional theatres in the Maritimes or Newfoundland during this period and does not mention the prairies.)

Author of several fictionalized accounts of historical murders, McNicoll here collects anecdotes from fifty interviews she did with selected actors who worked in these postwar years, including Christopher Plummer and Amelia Hall. Taking these as gospel, she adds evidence from unattributed newspapers and uncited histories. Her selection is guided by where her father, Floyd Caza, acted during these years (the book is inspired by her discovery of his papers).

The book shares with Lee's a grating "professional is always better than amateur" tone while failing to adequately define "professional" or "amateur." It neither questions its famous interviewees, nor states why professional practices are preferable to amateur ones. Donald Davis' view of the DDF haunts these pages: "In those days the distinction between professional and amateur and community and so on, weren't finely drawn." The pages teem with anecdotes about "professionals" pranking each other while on stage, eroding any professionalism argument.

McNicoll argues that "The truth was it was much more of a coming of age than a birth" for Canadian theatre when Stratford opened. But how does a Canadian theatre "mature" by opening a festival dedicated to a British playwright almost 350 years after his death? Stratford is overemphasized because her interviewees overemphasize it. At best, the book is a trundle through selected theatre memories. At worst, tracts of chapters are paraphrased (referenced, but not cited) from extant scholarship on the Little Theatres and the DDF (dominant amateur practices that put the lie to the importance of professional theatre at the time), Radio Drama, and the New Play Society.

History buffs may glean something from these fan-lit pages, the interviews, and the serviceable index. But without grounded scholarship, *The Opening Act* is a bewildering read that fails to convince its reader of its overall historical accuracy or originality. It provides further evidence that what is needed now is a rigorous, reliable, and up-to-date Canadian theatre history text. Recommended

only for quips at cocktail parties, McNicoll's latest historical murder cannot be taken seriously as—according the claim in its subtitle—"Canadian Theatre History."

Judith vs. Judy

Dianne Newell and Victoria Lamont
Judith Merril: A Critical Study.
McFarland $44.95

Reviewed by John Robert Colombo

The science-fiction editor Judith Merril and the urban-development critic Jane Jacobs, both Jewish writers from New York City, arrived in Toronto in 1968, and set about to make waves in what came to be called "the city that works" and "the new city." Both women have been the subjects of studies. There is a single reference to Jacobs in the present book, as well as a single reference to the present reviewer (whose name is misspelled in the index but correctly spelled in the carefully written text itself).

Judith Merril: A Critical Study, a sturdily produced trade paperback, has been undertaken by two well-qualified academic writers, Dianne Newell, professor of history at the University of British Columbia, and Victoria Lamont, associate professor of English literature at the University of Waterloo. Together they have written what their publisher describes as "a valuable source for students of science fiction, women's life writing, women's contributions to frontier mythology, and women's activism." I have no reason to argue with that assessment. Yet this full-fledged study is very much a scholar's view of Judith Merril. Those readers who remember the subject, Judy Merril, as a feisty and restless woman with a reputation for "getting things done," will do better to turn to the pages of an earlier publication, *Better to Have Loved: The Life of Judith Merril* (2002), the well-researched, impressionistic account of the woman seen into print by her granddaughter Emily Pohl-Weary.

Those readers who want to fit Judith Merril's legacy, her advocacy, her activism, and her writings into contexts that are ideological, literary, psychological, and social will find the approach of the present study to their liking. I cannot imagine it will be bettered. Yet Judy Merril regarded herself not just as a writer, anthologist, activist, or feminist but also as a person who was somewhat larger than life—the description she preferred was a "science-fiction personality." What she wrote was not "science fiction" but "speculative fiction," a term she helped to popularize. (Margaret Atwood adopted the term; Robert J. Sawyer did not.) So she was at core a "speculative personality."

The length of the present work is about 114,000 words, and this review is limited to 650 words, so the best I can do is skate over the surface, mentioning its argument chapter by chapter. The authors rightly stress the influence of the Cold War mentality on American writers of Merril's generation. They link it with "a paradigm shift in the central mythology of American identity: the frontier myth." This makes sense: if there is no surplus land in the Western states, there is ample land on unexplored planets in outer space.

They discuss the "atomic frontier theme" which they see in the context of gender, noting that "Merril privileged the role of the feminine in space travel and exploration." Then they consider "another standard space-related theme, alien encounters." (Having written stories related from the vantage points of alien beings, Merril took particular pride in being deemed by the Canadian Department of Immigration to be a "Resident Alien.") Something of a surprise is the stress on Merril's recurring theme of "primary communication," a term encompassing alternative forms of communication including intuition but also telepathy (sharing this power with fellow writer Phyllis Gotlieb).

Other chapters deal at length and in depth with collaborations in fiction and pioneering anthologizing plus the final memoir. Her role as the catalyst for speculative fiction in this country is perhaps more assumed than studied. Entirely missing is any discussion of her as a Jewish writer as well as her unique collaboration with Carl Sagan and Jon Lomberg on the Mars Observer spacecraft in the fall of 1994, which took her words (and voice) to the Red Sands of Mars, fulfilling a lifelong dream. Two valuable, not-to-be-overlooked features are the twelve-page bibliography of writings and the detailed index.

Early on the authors describe Merril as a "central figure in science fiction"; yet later they worry about her "near-footnote status in science fiction literature" with the "erasure" of her reputation and achievement. Odd. Earlier, I made this judgment about this study: "I cannot imagine it will be bettered." Contrarian that she was, Judy would have disagreed with this assessment. I can hear her insisting, "Things can always be better!" She was generally right, but in this instance she might just possibly be wrong.

Stranger Debris

Alix Ohlin
Inside. Anansi $22.95

Susan Glickman
The Tale-Teller. Cormorant $21.95

Reviewed by Hannah McGregor

On the first page of Alix Ohlin's *Inside*, Montreal-based therapist Grace is cross-country skiing on Mount Royal when she comes across the unconscious form of a man who has tried, and failed, to hang himself: "At first glance, she mistook him for something else. . . . [S]he'd found stranger debris across her path." The debris left, or constituted, by the unexpected arrival of a stranger in one's life is the driving concern of Ohlin's new novel, in which three intertwined characters have their carefully regulated lives thrown into disarray. Grace forms an intense connection with Tug, drawn to the inscrutability of his past; her former patient, Anne, loses control of her New York apartment when she lets a teenage runaway move in; and Grace's ex-husband Mitch, also a therapist, is shattered by his failure to help a young man in Iqualuit.

The unpredictable force of the stranger is emphasized by the novel's temporal shifts: Grace's story takes place in 1996, Anne's in 2002, and Mitch's in 2006. This structural movement back and forth in time both emphasizes the long-term repercussions of a single encounter and resists any sense of narrative inevitability or teleology. When Grace reappears in Mitch's story, ten years after her first encounter with Tug, the details of what has happened in the intervening decade are as much a mystery to the reader as they are to her ex-husband. This pervading sense of unknowing makes *Inside* intensely readable, taking on a dimension of the mystery thriller even while resisting pat or satisfying revelations. When Tug finally confesses to Grace the trigger for his attempted suicide—the ongoing trauma of his presence in Kigali as an NGO worker during the Rwandan genocide—she finds herself doubting the tidiness of this narrative: "She didn't know if Rwanda had anything to do with it. The darkness . . . might have been inside him all along. . . ."

At the root of the novel is the unknowability of the stranger, which has as a corollary the absoluteness of hospitality as an ethical demand. As Grace, Anne, and Mitch open themselves up to the uncontrollable impact of others, they realize that the dangers of trust and the pleasures of intimacy are two sides of the same coin. The moment in which the ruthlessly manipulative and isolated Anne opens her home to a girl she does not know—an openness that

eventually extends to giving up her own bedroom to the girl, her boyfriend, and their unborn child—is perhaps the most striking image of what it means, in Ohlin's novel, to let someone inside. But the space of the inside, and the damage or healing the stranger can enact there, is both literal and metaphorical, encompassing the home as well as the heart.

The unpredictable force of the stranger and the ethical challenge of hospitality are also central to Susan Glickman's *The Tale-Teller*, which begins with the arrival of the mysterious Esther in the carefully regulated colony of New France in 1738. Esther has disguised herself as a boy, and while this deception is uncovered instantly, her further deception—that she is also Jewish—remains a secret throughout much of the novel, a secret she protects by spinning a complex Scheherazade-like past for herself involving shipwrecks and pirates and harem-escapes. The narrative is split between the realist historical narrative of Esther Brandeau, based on archival documents researched by the academically trained Glickman, and Esther's fantastical first-person stories, told in an engagingly intimate tone with a non-linearity and geographical range that contrasts markedly with the protagonist's own cramped existence.

Esther's stories are a carefully devised tactic, wielded in the face of her total lack of agency as a woman and a racialized minority. In both style and content they revel in mobility and subversion: she is raised by apes, refusing the strict division between the animal and the human; her adopted father, a sailor named Joaquin, falls in love with a slave woman when he is temporarily blinded, a metaphorical forgetting of race as a learned category. It is not surprising that Esther's fantasy world is more appealing than the one she actually resides in, in which petty French officials use her as a pawn in their struggles for power and keep her captive throughout the long Quebec winter. Glickman's imagination shines in these passages, unmoored from the documents that root the historical half of her novel. Appropriately enough, the restrictions of historical fact are felt at the level of narrative much as Esther feels the ties of her own oppressive social world; both language and subjects are freed by the unbounded imagination.

As the narrative proceeds, however, even Esther's subversive imagination encounters its limits. The kindly Hocquart in whose home she is equal parts captive and guest, is originally enchanted by her stories and her fine recipe for *chocolate*, both exotic temptations in their own right. Eventually, however, her stories demand too much of him: "Far worse than the seduction of the stories themselves was how they challenged his convictions. If he accepted what Esther said as true, his beliefs about the world would be put in doubt. In her version of reality slaves deserved freedom, infidels were as good as Christians, and women became the equals of men." Esther's stories similarly fail to have the desired impact on the Ursuline nuns with whom she is lodged once her true identity, as the daughter of a Jewish merchant, is discovered. And when she attempts to use her tales to distract the inmates of the lunatic ward where she is made to work, she discovers that the destabilization of reality that comforts her only agitates those who already struggle to distinguish reality from fantasy.

The Tale-Teller is a novel both fascinated with the power of stories and aware of their limitations. As the period of Esther's life illuminated by archival documents comes to an end, the historical woman and the fictional character slip beyond the reader's view, the story's control, and New France's borders. The debris left by the stranger, in this case, is an awareness of Canada's colonial history as a story not only of violent invasion but also of a failure to enact the ethics and politics of hospitality.

Le Pétrole sous l'angle de l'analyse du discours

Dominique Perron
L'Alberta autophage. Identités, mythes et discours du pétrole dans l'Ouest canadien.
U of Calgary P 39,95 $

Compte rendu par François-Emmanuël Boucher

Le livre de Dominique Perron est avant tout original et constitue un excellent exemple de ce que peut réaliser l'analyse du discours. Regarder le pétrole albertain avant tout comme un grand producteur discursif de manière à « répertorier d'abord ce qui en Alberta a pu et peut être *dit* et *argumenté*, ce qui était *dicible* et *argumentable* sur la question de ses ressources pétrolières » fait apparaître les logiques sous-jacentes aux grands débats sur les questions énergétiques, écologiques et, plus encore, sur ce qui a trait à la richesse que produisent ces ressources naturelles et à leur redevance autant à l'intérieur de la province que sur l'ensemble du Canada. La démarche vise à la fois à faire surgir une généalogie de certaines formations discursives qui ont saturé l'espace public entre 2005 et 2008 — les principaux topoï qui structurent la *géodestinée* de cette province, question de souligner les fondements de « l'identité albertaine de l'énergie », « la Petro-Alberta », — et à montrer comment ces thématiques obligées, ces arguments que le bon sens ne pourrait réfuter, ont fini par prendre en otage les habitants de l'Alberta en leur fournissant une chape de plomb argumentative tissée de contradictions devenues peu à peu insurmontables. De la virilité du *blue-eye sheik* à la prise de contrôle de Husky par le canadien Bob Blair, en passant par le ressentiment à l'égard du Canada central de Pierre Elliott Trudeau et par le syndrome de la Terre de Caïn et de la Commission gouvernementale de revue des redevances pétrolières, les discours que génère le pétrole albertain sont connectés les uns avec les autres de manière à souligner la façon dont ils fabriquent un *ethos* et une rhétorique particulière sur lesquels se développent le cadre à l'intérieur duquel il devient non pas tant possible mais surtout acceptable, selon les intérêts supérieurs de l'Alberta, de penser la politique, le développement économique, le rôle de l'entreprise privée, les orientations gouvernementales, la péréquation, les enjeux environnementaux, etc. L'industrie pétrolière albertaine qui est parvenue à dominer « complètement le social et le politique » semble, au fil des années, avoir ainsi réalisé un « pacte faustien » avec les habitants de cette province dont la logique est resservie « en un prêt-à-porter discursif où est resserré de façon inextricable le mythe d'une communauté d'intérêt absolue entre la population albertaine et les compagnies exploitant son pétrole ». En multipliant les exemples et les analyses, Dominique Perron parvient à expliquer les raisonnements et la logique discursive qui motivent l'opinion publique albertaine à soutenir tel ou tel projet ou, encore, telle ou telle décision politique. Autant les discours enthousiastes sur la vente de la compagnie Nexen à la compagnie nationalisée chinoise CNOOC (phénomène étrange dans une province qui honnissait Petro-Canada), que les propos sur les écoterroristes s'opposant au pipeline Gateway, deviennent soudainement intelligibles tant l'auteur réussit à les connecter avec les grands présupposés argumentatifs qui ont créé la *persona* albertaine depuis les années 1970. Dominique Perron a finalement le mérite d'avoir abordé le discours de sa province d'adoption comme une véritable ethnologue : au lieu de juger ces discours sur le pétrole comme cela est trop souvent le cas, elle a tenté d'en rendre compte pour ce qu'ils sont : des discours identitaires qui cherchent tant bien que mal dans l'océan centralisateur canadien à affirmer une distinction.

Il était une fois . . .

Éric Plamondon
Pomme S (1984, Volume III).
Le Quartanier 23,95 $

Compte rendu par Benoît Melançon

> « Qu'est-ce qu'une trilogie ?
> C'est la preuve par quatre que jamais deux sans trois. »
> —Éric Plamondon, *Pomme S*

Pomme S clôt la trilogie *1984* d'Éric Plamondon. L'avaient précédé *Hongrie-Hollywood Express* (2011) et *Mayonnaise* (2012). Plusieurs choses unissent ces ouvrages, largement (et justement) encensés par la critique québécoise.

Une date, d'abord. En 1984 meurent Johnny Weissmuller, célèbre nageur avant de devenir l'interprète de Tarzan, et Richard Brautigan, romancier iconique de la Californie des années 1960-1970, qui se suicide; l'ordinateur Macintosh naît chez la société Apple, alors dirigée par Steve Jobs. Une année, trois hommes, trois romans (un par homme), un voyage : « [Gabriel] Rivages est parti à la recherche de Weissmuller, Brautigan et Jobs comme des milliers d'hommes et de femmes sont partis sur la piste de l'Oregon, vers la Californie, au dix-neuvième siècle. » Avec ses personnages, ses vedettes, ses héros (« Seuls les vrais héros n'abandonnent jamais »), voire ses mythes, l'Amérique est le territoire d'Éric Plamondon, tant spatialement que temporellement.

La forme, ensuite. Sous des titres volontiers sibyllins (« *Lorem ipsum* », « 23 heures 28 et 666 vierges », « O Ko Mo Go To Po Eo Zo Yo », « Guili-guili »), les romans de la trilogie sont faits de textes brefs (113 dans *Pomme S*, en 232 pages) : poèmes, listes, choses vues, fragments de récits, souvenirs, considérations historiques, citations, etc. La narration n'est pas confiée à une seule instance : des textes sont au *je*, d'autres racontent l'histoire d'un personnage, Gabriel Rivages, né en 1969 et suicidé à 40 ans, auteur d'un roman sur Steve Jobs, figure très proche de celle qui dit *je*, sans que l'une corresponde parfaitement à l'autre. Aucun cheminement linéaire n'est proposé; tout est affaire de variations, de répétitions, de reprises. Quelle que soit la voix qui raconte, elle aime pratiquer l'anaphore et exhiber son érudition (cinématographique, littéraire, musicale, scientifique, informatique, mythologique, etc.). Le lecteur d'Éric Plamondon apprend des choses sur la natation et le cinéma, sur la littérature des *beatniks* et sur l'ordinateur personnel, mais aussi sur la pêche à la ligne, les machines à écrire, les fabricants d'armes, les petits faits qui font entrer le Québec dans le grand récit étatsunien, mille autres choses. L'auteur aime les anecdotes, les coïncidences, les correspondances ténues mais réelles, et il les agence avec une habileté consommée. Pour le suivre avec profit, il faut ne jamais oublier un chiffre, un nom propre, un titre, un évènement — et ils sont nombreux.

Une quête, enfin, celle des origines. *Pomme S*, plus encore que *Hongrie-Hollywood Express* et *Mayonnaise*, est un roman obsédé par la filiation et la transmission, et donc par la naissance, la mort, le nom du père. Dans les deux premiers romans, il était sans cesse question de la famille : dès qu'un personnage apparaissait, son pedigree apparaissait avec lui; on présentait son père, sa mère, ses frères et sœurs, parfois ses aïeux. Dans le troisième, c'est encore plus net. D'une part, celui qui dit *je* parle souvent de son fils, de sa naissance à ses dix ans. (Gabriel Rivages a aussi un fils, du même âge.) Ce fils était présent, mais bien plus discrètement, dans les deux romans précédents (très peu dans le premier; un peu plus dans le deuxième). D'autre part, Steve Jobs, le créateur du Macintosh, a eu un rapport complexe à la famille : enfant adopté (les premiers mots de *Pomme S* sont « Il était une fois en Amérique un enfant adopté devenu milliardaire »), donc privé de ses parents

biologiques, il refusait de reconnaître la paternité de sa première fille, la privant par là de ce dont lui-même avait été privé. Les liens du sang ne sont jamais simples.

Imbriquée dans cette représentation de la filiation familiale, une généalogie de l'informatique occupe une place considérable dans *Pomme S*. Elle va de Fou-Hi à Steve Jobs et Steve Wozniak, en passant, dans le désordre des lieux et des siècles, par Ron Wayne, Alan Turing, Norbert Wiener, Ada Lovelace, Thomas Edison, Joseph Marie Jacquard, Jacques de Vaucanson, Charles Babbage, Doug Engelbart, Vannevar Bush, Pascal, Einstein, François Gernelle, d'autres encore. Les machines qu'ils ont aidé à concevoir sont capitales, car elles « nous ont imposé leur descendance ». C'est bien des origines du monde contemporain qu'il est question.

Cette obsession de la filiation et des origines fait ressortir un trait fondamental de l'écriture d'Éric Plamondon : sans mémoire, l'homme n'est rien et, pour donner cohérence à cette mémoire, il doit (se) raconter des histoires. Voilà la leçon finale de *Pomme S* — rappelons que cette expression désigne la commande informatique permettant de sauvegarder de l'information — et de la trilogie dans son ensemble : « Le propre de l'homme n'est pas le rire, le propre de l'homme n'est pas de fabriquer des outils. Le propre de l'homme, c'est de raconter des histoires. » Les premiers et les derniers mots du troisième volume de la trilogie sont d'ailleurs les mêmes : « Il était une fois. »

S'il est autant question de mythes chez Éric Plamondon, c'est que les mythes, d'abord et avant tout, sont des histoires. Sans elles, le monde n'aurait aucun sens. Le romancier est là pour lui en donner (au moins) un.

Elements of Craft

John Reibetanz
Afloat. Brick $20.00

Russell Thornton
Birds, Metals, Stones and Rain. Harbour $16.95

Alexandra Oliver
Meeting the Tormentors in Safeway.
Biblioasis $17.95

Peter Norman
Water Damage. Mansfield $17.00

Reviewed by Jim Johnstone

By the end of the twentieth century, Canadian poetry was on autopilot, its shapeless fuselage rendered in rough-hewn vernacular. It was in this climate that John Reibetanz published *Ashborne* (1986), a poetic debut notable for its persuasive monologues and craftsmanship. An anomaly at the time, Reibetanz's work has transitioned seamlessly into a body of literature that's been transformed by a new generation of Canadian poets including Russell Thornton, Alexandra Oliver, and Peter Norman.

Reibetanz's eighth book of poetry, *Afloat*, is a collection of elegies where natural order is unified by the classical elements, particularly water. In keeping with its title, Reibetanz opens the collection by proposing that "all nature wants to be water," from "curled tongues of fire" to the human body. He extends this notion to the eye in "Floater," continually shifting perspective to mimic the need to refocus to see anew. Of course, the adaptions necessary for the development of the eye are often used to illustrate evolution, and Reibetanz finds a kindred spirit in Charles Darwin, evoking his theory on the transmutation of species where "reptiles leave to return as hummingbirds" in "To Darwin in Chile, 1835." *Afloat* transmutes formally as it proceeds into its second and third sections, eschewing traditional punctuation in favour of spaces that serve to freight the poems with breath. While this

slows the reader and brings focus to the environmental implications of the Three Gorges Dam examined in "Lament for the Gorges," it also blurs the boundaries between poems, generating a homogeneity that distracts from individual denouements. This homogeneity extends throughout the book as a whole; *Afloat* is masterful yet painstakingly slow to reveal the depth of its ecological metaphors. Reibetanz is best when anchoring his work with concrete images such as the bone flute that ends the collection as "a wing once more / to ride to paradise."

Russell Thornton, like John Reibetanz, is a poet concerned with scale. *Birds, Metals, Stones and Rain* opens with a squall "[t]hat is the wet ghost that will ride / along the edges of the flesh," and Thornton's vision only grows from there. Elemental hyperbole contributes to the magnitude of poems like "The Oldest Rock in the World" and "Aluminum Beds," the latter expanding into a "core of blackness not burning, / within the beds' angular emptiness / because of the love meant for us." Here Thornton finds security in beds welded together for him and his brothers, likening them to an embrace in his father's absence. The urban and industrial worlds clash often in *Birds, Metals, Stones and Rain*, playing off one another to create a portrait of western Canada. "As if the ships were the same ships / that sat there twenty-four or forty-eight hours ago. / As if, in the middle of the night, the ships did not / arrive and drop anchor at exact latitudes and longitudes" Thornton writes in "Burrard Inlet Ships," a poem that traces the origins of a seemingly unchanging landscape. While such scope can be extravagant, Thornton's rhetorical precision saves him from oversentimentality, and lends the collection a sense of balance.

After beginning her career as a slam poet, Alexandra Oliver has become one of Canada's most electrifying new formalists. Her poems are distinguished by both their strict rhymes and inventive diction, which regularly coalesce to produce aural pyrotechnics. Consider the description of the conductor in "Party Music": "He reeked of fame, / wore grey ostrich shoes, a beaver hat / tipped on a sweep of hair now going white, / a coat in astrakhan." Written in terza rima, Oliver bends the poem's metre to suit the off-kilter appearance of the musician, and this is highlighted with the assonance of words like "reeked," "beaver," and "sweep." Thematically, *Meeting the Tormentors in Safeway* is chock full of domestic parables built on everyday events. In the title poem, the narrator is confronted with a group of her childhood tormentors in a supermarket, and remembered humiliations are used to diminish the impact of finally meeting them in the present, their "joyful freckled faces lost for words." It's an outstanding sonnet—driving, rhythmic, and self-aware in its payoff. Oliver's strengths can be her weaknesses however; rhyme often forces her into awkward word choices (coop / poop), and her habit of contrasting high and low culture can lead to overblown stanzas like:

> I told him that he whispered pleas
> and vows into her chilly ear.
> He answered, *where's the damn remote,*
> *and who forgot to buy the beer?*

Taken from "The Classics Lesson," these lines lack the restraint necessary to modernize the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea. Despite the fact that some of her verse can be overwrought, Oliver is a first-class wordsmith.

Peter Norman begins *Water Damage* by travelling backwards, talking the reader out of the highway collision he describes in the first stanza of "Up Near Wawa." The poem is an allegory for memory—the way trauma can embed and confuse, imparting only "winking glimpses of the broken line" on the road. Memory is the antecedent for many of the poems in *Water Damage*, which questions authenticity in self-deprecating, often surreal lyrics. "Hear that? The

grinding of teeth in the wall?" Norman asks in "What I Meant," evoking the failure of memory in contrast to the ethos of modern living. Norman is a subtler craftsman than Oliver, favouring plainspoken over elevated language, the latter of which he uses sparingly to signal shifts in logic. "What I Meant" is a fine example of Norman's formal control—written in tercets, the poem is an exercise in blank verse that devolves into monosyllables to emphasize the narrator's sincerity when he promises that "we'll sit there. We'll eat," responding to the chaos of earlier reasoning. Norman's verse has a tendency to unravel without structure, as evidenced by the "The Flood," the six-page love poem that ends the book. It's ill defined and ineffective—schmaltz compared to Norman's more calculated emotional displays. But when Norman is on, his technician's eye ranks him with Reibetanz, Thornton, and Oliver as one of the best of the current cohort of Canadian poets.

Making Stuff Mean Different Stuff

Al Rempel
This Isn't the Apocalypse We Hoped For.
Caitlin $16.95

Chris Hutchinson
A Brief History of the Short-Lived.
Nightwood $18.95

Mary Dalton
Hooking. Signal $18.00

Reviewed by Owen Percy

Prince George poet Al Rempel's writing clearly knows where it's coming from, but it knows, terrifyingly, where it's headed, too. The poems in *This Isn't the Apocalypse We Hoped For* build upon the aesthetic influence of Prince George legends Ken Belford and Barry McKinnon in its eco-poetic focus and eschewing of standard capitalization, punctuation, and semantic fixity. Most of the poems are concerned with the growing detritus of waste with which we continue to fill the planet in the face of countless dire warnings. The speaker of the titular poem finds his "pockets stuffed with receipts of corporate failure / and blister packs of synthetic gum" and is struck by the realization that "somewhere in the North Pacific, my plastic obsession / is being stirred into the brine by an invisible finger." The rub is that we remain, along with the speaker, anxiously complicit in a culture that finds itself "barely in control of the steering wheel / polished with animal grease" from the drive-thru meal we're tucking into as we ponder these things. The excellent "We Love Bananas" embodies the brutal irony that the windfalls of our first-world privilege are shamefully wasted. After a playful salvo about the playful peculiarities of banananess, the poem's second half lets drop the other shoe from a considerable height:

> here's what we do with bananas. we buy them just
> when they're turning yellow. we play the Tarzan
> theme song in our heads as we carry them to the car.
> we place them in a ceramic bowl and leave them
> out with the still life. we forget to eat them and they go
> soft. we put them on the top shelf in the freezer.
> we throw them out when we can't fit
> the box of pizza in. we've already bought more.

This Isn't the Apocalypse We Hoped For is ultimately characterized by what, in "Have A Bath," Rempel names as "the same kind of worry / as a paring knife buried under soap suds" where we "put our hand in tentatively, over and again, / this searching out of the unwanted" that we know is going to hurt and that we must nonetheless do. It is an important and rewarding book.

Chris Hutchinson's *A Brief History of the Short-Lived* is dense, erudite, and serious.

A Brief History lives and speaks within many past and alternate versions of the world we might be said to share on a day-to-day basis. Each poem here is an incredibly crafted, often beautiful abstraction of an idea and/or artistic premise, and the book's range of historical influences and references is staggering. The first half of the poem from which the book takes its title, for example, sweeps across large swaths of time and space, alluding to Hong Xiuquan and the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), the Bucharest earthquake of 1977, and the demise of John Milton, all within the space of a few lines. The book lays a trap for readers with scholarly training whose instinct is (as mine was, at least) to work out allusions, dates, and references; its deliberate density and obscurity doesn't allow for smooth or uninterrupted consumption. Which may in fact be the point. *A Brief History* is concerned with art's ability to speak and represent universals. Clearly unsatisfied with the tenets of postmodernism, the poems often revolve around exploring, if not reinforcing, the distinction between high art and popular distraction. In this sense, the book's microcosmic thrust can be found in the lines like "Listen, the intellect wants to dream— / Goes the tinny refrain of an ice cream truck // Moving somewhere between / *Unheard melodies* and crass utterance." Most of these poems make themselves clear on where they stand, be it on the sycophantic nature of cultural hipsters (in "Avatar") or on the economic reality of celebrity-driven homogenized literary culture as a whole: "Cold fact: mimesis / makes money / make money." Hutchinson's book is one for dedicated and well-read lovers of poetry—it is they who will glean most pleasure and pause from it.

Like Hutchinson, Mary Dalton's latest offering has her reconsidering the role, character, and limitations of literary art. *Hooking* is comprised entirely of centos—poems woven together from the lines of extant poems in much the same way that a hooked rug is woven together from strips of reused fabric. In *Hooking*, Dalton goes a step further and insists that each individual poem be composed of lines that appear in precisely the same linear place in each of the source poems from which they are drawn. So, for example, "Cloth" consists of the seventh line of various poems by poets as diverse as Tennyson, Richard Wilbur, and Priscilla Uppal. The results in *Hooking* are as one might expect: there is less coherence and consistency than in Dalton's other poems, several pieces read more like lists of theme-based epigrammatic one-upmanship, and we find ourselves sporadically interrupting poems to flip forward to the nearly thirty pages of sources listed at the back of the book. As such (and after a line from Christopher Reid pilfered into Dalton's "Hesitant Silhouette"), the book foregoes "a vision of wholeness by means of collage" and is at its best in brief, stanzaic flourishes. That said, there are several instances of curatorial sublimity here that are worth the wait. In "Markings" we encounter "the same old druid Time as ever, / letting his arms down to laugh, / mad-eyed from stating the obvious." These moments are what might grab you, "an ancient broad-mouthed fish, / dear reader, on the end of a bifurcated hook—"; the probability that such formula might yield such fruit is as attractive as the fruit itself. In the poem "On Silk By Hand" Dalton's composition boasts that "Not even the pharaohs dug so far / to take you to the city of your ancestors— / I call this my work, these decades and stations." And indeed it is; when it works, it works in a way that stokes the fires of wonderment and possibility of poetry as a pursuit in the first place.

Shifting Narratives in the Canadian Nation

Donald B. Smith
Mississauga Portraits: Ojibwe Voices from Nineteenth-Century Canada.
U of Toronto P $37.95

Bruce Erickson
Canoe Nation: Nature, Race, and the Making of a Canadian Icon. U of British Columbia P $32.95

Reviewed by Beverley Haun

These two books, one tracing Anglo-Canadian narratives about the canoe and one gathering Mississauga Ojibwe narratives about life in nineteenth-century Canada, speak in counterpoint to one another. Both begin with early stories of cooperation towards a common goal, the economic advantages of the fur trade. *Canoe Nation* traces the racialized and gendered Anglo-Canadian mythology of the canoe that begins by honouring the First Nations for their "gift" of the canoe to the nation and then proceeds to silence and erase these same Indigenous inhabitants from the very Canadian wilderness the canoe invites us now to explore. In contrast, the Ojibwe writers collected in *Mississauga Portraits* protest this Aboriginal erasure from the forests of Upper Canada as they are repeatedly removed from their lands and the promises made to them, broken first by the Crown and then by the new nation of Canada.

The Ojibwe belong to one of the largest linguistic groups in North America, the Algonquian, who call themselves Anishinabe, which in its plural form is Anishinabeg, meaning "Human Beings." The book title *Mississauga Portraits* comes from the designation "Mississauga" applied by the British in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the Ojibwe people on the north shore of Lake Ontario. For over forty years Donald B. Smith has collected the written records by and references in public documents about several Mississauga missionaries who embraced Methodism in southern Ontario in the nineteenth century. Part of the Methodist mission work with the Mississauga was to teach literacy in both Ojibwe and English for purposes of reading the Bible. A consequence of that objective is the rich written record that remains from a Mississauga point of view. The texts that inform Smith's portraits are important to the archive as they can be seen as the first body of Canadian literature in English.

Smith divides his book into eight chapters, each devoted to one Ojibwe missionary: Kahkewaquonaby (Peter Jones), Nawahjegezhegwabe (Joseph Sawyer), Pahtahsega (Peter Jacobs), Maungwudaus (George Henry), Kahgegagahbowh (George Copway), Shawundais (John Sunday), Shahwahnegezhik (Henry Steinhauer and his sons Egerton and Robert), and a devout and politically active woman, Nahnebahnwequay (Catherine Sutton). Because these people were all part of an interconnected Methodist missionary network that ranged into the prairies and the United States, their lives intersected, and throughout the chapters a complex narrative unfolds that speaks their individual and shared responses to their own changing community and to the social, economic and political machinations of the colonizers at the time.

In presenting the stories of each of these historical figures, Smith largely allows their experiences to speak for themselves. But he also suggests reasons for the nineteenth-century success of Methodism taking hold amongst the Anishinabeg in what is now southern Ontario. Their population was decimated by infectious disease and alcohol abuse. Industrialization caused the destruction of their hunting and fishing grounds, especially around the rivers flowing into the northwest shore of Lake Ontario, which became polluted and overrun. In Methodism they perceived shared core values that would help them adjust to and survive in the new world they

found surrounding them. In contrast to the Ojibwe who embraced Methodism, Smith emphasizes the lack of success these same missionaries had in trying to convert the more northern Ojibwe to accept this European religion. In the less colonized space of northwestern Ontario, the tightly organized and self-sufficient Ojibwe preferred to maintain their economic autonomy and established cultural values.

In spite of embracing the colonizers' religion, farming organization, language and dress and crossing the Atlantic on multiple occasions to state their case for retention of their lands to Queen Victoria, the Ojibwe again and again end their accounts by describing the denial of their treaty lands and constrictions of their available territory until their decimated population was concentrated on a handful of reserve spaces.

The remaining wilderness, largely cleared of any First Nation presence, is central to the ideas presented in *Canoe Nation.* Bruce Ericson interrogates the politics of nationalism in Canada, specifically as it speaks to the role of nature and the canoe. It is a white male European canoe nation he finds constructed through Canadian history narratives that write the canoe as forging intimacy and cooperation between the Indigenous population and the colonizers during its fur trade beginnings. Erickson traces this discursive canoe as it moves from a material-economic role to one that also draws in national identity. He organizes his interrogation into four distinct yet interconnected chapters. The first examines the canoe as it is taken up in texts as a colonial product both connected to the land and inseparable from it. Here Erickson finds the emergence of the canoe as a national icon that becomes fetishized and acquires discursive worth beyond its actual material value. He shows how this iconic status serves to obscure the legacy of land usurpation, the disenfranchising of First Nations, and the resulting complex relations between indigeneity and the Canadian nation-state embedded within the celebration of the canoe.

Chapter two is shaped around the question (posed by this reviewer in *Topia* in 2002, as he acknowledges) of "why a particular object (the canoe) or activity (canoeing) moved from being seen and used as a utilitarian tool of explorers, surveyors and traders to an activity that was seen as pleasure to that specific group who adopted it for recreational use." Erickson concentrates his answer on privileged white male leisure under late nineteenth-century capitalism. He explores state-sanctioned, and regulated, fishing and hunting as canoe-based leisure activities where the canoeist was enabled by the same social Darwinism that Smith identifies as having been used to appropriate Native land. Here the virile canoeist performs as different and superior in an increasingly standardized world. Here canoeists seek a pre-modern world in (empty) wilderness to celebrate the past and connect to nature.

Erickson goes on to examine the practices of "Indian" masquerade in the wilderness through Ernest Thompson Seton's Indian-mimicry camp programs and Grey Owl's Indian-imposter focus on nature conservation through the lens of a falsely indigenous identity. Nature is produced as an innocent space and entering it by canoe as a recreational cure for the modern psyche as well as a duty to the natural world, a place to develop moral regulation and manhood. Adult recreational hunting and fishing shift to saving the nation's youth from soft city living by hardening them in the wilderness, at the same time teaching them to conserve its beauty. This discourse gets transferred onto the canoe as part of the masquerade such that these uses of the canoe in Canada especially as they relate to the politics of conservation are continually haunted by early twentieth-century attempts to become Indian.

In his concluding chapter Erickson considers the contemporary production of the

nation through the recreational consumption of the canoe and the emerging politics of wilderness. In this discursive space, rescuing the forest becomes a national and personal duty, recreation becomes a site of activism, and green consumerism becomes a strategic place from which to protect nature. The response Erickson offers to the current state of canoe narratives is an interventionist politics of the canoe that can interrogate the colonial encounter that has created Canada.

Canada's relationship to the First Nations informs both *Mississauga Portraits* and *Canoe Nation.* Each traces the narrative reshaping of the First Nations from their initial discursive presentation as economic partners through to the discourse of Social Darwinism and the right to conquest that reshaped them as an inferior and doomed race in a hierarchy of Euro-defined achievement. Both of these books are important voices countering the prevailing national narratives and calling for further interrogation of the Canadian story.

Partage des solitudes

Paul Socken, dir.
Entre fleuve et rivière : correspondance entre Gabrielle Roy et Margaret Laurence. Plaines 21,95 $

Compte rendu par Louis-Serge Gill

Les lecteurs francophones se réjouiront certainement de la traduction de Dominique Fortier et de Sophie Voillot de la relation épistolaire entre Gabrielle Roy et Margaret Laurence. En 2004, Paul Socken avait déjà fait l'édition des trente-deux lettres échangées entre 1976 et 1983 par ces deux voix féminines majeures de la littérature canadienne. De plus, cet ouvrage récemment traduit s'ajoute aux autres éditions en langue française par, entre autres, François Ricard et Jane Everett, de la correspondance de Roy à d'autres intimes.

Une lettre du 15 février 1976, rédigée par Margaret Laurence, ouvre l'échange sous les auspices d'une certaine admiration. En effet, l'Ontarienne vient de terminer la lecture de *La Route d'Altamont* et n'a que de bons mots pour Roy qui semble à ce moment encore, une influence ou un mentor. Néanmoins, cette dernière se rattrape et commente à son tour l'œuvre de Laurence. Cordial dès le départ, l'échange épistolaire entre les deux femmes se teinte progressivement d'une aura amicale où s'instaure une confiance réciproque. Les bases même de cette confiance, et c'est ce qui marquera probablement le lecteur, réside dans cette manière qu'elles ont de se reconnaître l'une en l'autre. Comme l'écrit Laurence, « nous sommes après tout membres de la même tribu, tous autant que nous sommes ». Ce sentiment d'appartenance à une même « tribu » invite les épistolières à partager tant sur leur métier que sur leur vie quotidienne. Roy, quelque peu en retraite à son chalet, revient sur quelques moments de sa carrière, notamment le succès, — alors encore retentissant —, de *Bonheur d'occasion*. Même si les deux écrivent très peu à cette époque, c'est le début d'une certaine reconnaissance pour Margaret Laurence qui voit ses romans traduits au Cercle du Livre de France, notamment par Claire Martin. Plus tard, Gabrielle Roy ne manquera pas de se délecter de la traduction de *The Diviners* (*Les Devins*) en la comparant à l'original.

Tout au long cours de cette correspondance « entre fleuve et rivière », les deux écrivaines partagent leur vision de leur métier, de la création littéraire qui, marquée par la maladie, se fait de plus en plus rare et chacune ne manque pas de renseigner l'autre sur ses projets à venir. À un moment, la conversation dévie vers la politique et la question linguistique, mais c'est à mots presque couverts puisque l'essence même de l'échange réside dans le souvenir et le partage avec l'autre de son expérience d'écrivaine. Le lecteur trouvera dans cette édition de lettres un regard authentique posé sur près d'une décennie par deux des plus grandes et plus influentes auteures de la littérature canadienne.

Game Plan

Karen L. Wall
Game Plan: A Social History of Sport in Alberta.
U of Alberta P $34.95

Reviewed by Christiane Job

Karen Wall's *Game Plan: A Social History of Sport in Alberta* reads as a labour of love. Wall offers the reader a delightfully detailed narrative that is meticulously researched and accessible to a multitude of audiences. Accumulating such a detailed account is no simple task: the author traversed the province's local museums and archives to make a meaningful contribution to the canon of Canadian sport history. *Game Plan*'s appeal reaches beyond the specialist, however, as historians (both professional and lay) will find the text worthwhile. Wall is particularly skilled in weaving together archival material, primary, and secondary resources to address the vantage points of stakeholders, founders, athletes, and citizens. This synthesis provides a provocative critical evaluation of the processes, power relations, and cultural dynamics of Alberta from a socio-historical perspective.

Game Plan takes the reader beyond the realm of fandom (e.g., scores and championships). Wall uncovers sporting activities rich in cultural heritage from the perspective of a "resident" and critical sports scholar. According to Wall, "stories about sport situate small details of everyday life in the larger sphere of meaning determined by a society's cultural, social, and economic relations." Drawing on French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, Wall highlights the social context in which sporting cultures were developed and addresses how such activities translated into codes of discipline and conduct now represented through rich traditions and organizations within Alberta.

Separated into three distinct sections, *Game Plan* begins by establishing the early beginnings of Alberta's sporting culture as typifying the pioneering spirit of Western Canada's early settlers. In this section "Inventing Alberta Sports Culture," Wall establishes the diversity of activities found in the province and attributes this broad range to the settlement patterns of the land beginning with grassroots participation followed by urbanization. With rich descriptions and accounts, the author emphasizes the roles of Indigenous populations and British upper-middle-class settlers.

In the second section of the book titled "Writing the Rule Book," Wall traces the transition from early recreational activities to amateur and professional organizations. This segment showcases old photographs and tributes to organizations and teams from the past. Wall provides detailed accounts of various summer and winter sporting activities for men and women, from lacrosse to curling. Here, she focuses on winning teams, influential stakeholders, and citizens while underscoring their activities in relation to increasing pressures to institutionalize sporting activities for Canadians locally, provincially, and nationally.

"The Social Body" rounds out the tripartite. Wall trends away from hagiography toward a critical approach to the culture and organization of Alberta sports. This section is by far the most critically complex compilation of the research and exemplifies Wall's training as a sports scholar. At times her writing is poetic as she blends social theory and prose to convey a steeped message about the meaning of sport and how it is "invented in the same sense that other spheres of culture are, through a process of selection and incremental action. Among all the grains of possibility that gather into patterns of cultural identity, sport is a hardy instance of how passions, more or less rational or irrational, take root and flourish in the imagination." This section grounds contemporary issues such as gender, sexuality, and aggression in historical context

while highlighting topics such as risk, the media, and mass marketing.

Game Plan is an exemplary account of sport and the role it has played in both shaping and identifying what it means to be an Albertan. Wall's writing is clear, her research is concise, and she weaves together both primary and secondary resources in such a way that the readers may find themselves captivated by athletic accomplishments while remaining aware of the greater message linking sport to culture for her audience. In addition to her writing the notes, index, and bibliography of this text provide useful resources for academics and sport scholars alike.

The Shape of Our Times

John Wilson
Ghost Moon. Orca $12.95

Carol Matas
The Edge of When. Fitzhenry & Whiteside $12.95

William Bell
Fanatics. Doubleday $14.95

Reviewed by Stephen Dunning

Ghost Moon is the middle instalment of John Wilson's *Desert Legend* trilogy, and picks up immediately where the first, *Written in Blood*, leaves off. Set in the late 1870s in the Territory of New Mexico, it traces the continuing adventures of seventeen-year-old James Doolen, originally from Yale, British Columbia. The setting inevitably carries a certain appeal, and in this case primarily for boys, since females play virtually no role in the novel. And while Doolen himself may prove too sensitive, self-reflective, and emotionally mature for his age to convince many readers, Bill Bonney—whose sinister, yet ambivalent, presence shapes Doolen's adventures—more than compensates for this weakness. Indeed, he is the most intriguing character in the work, "like two men living in the same body, a fun-loving boy and a hard-eyed killer." And Wilson is wise not to resolve this ambiguity.

Unfortunately, when dealing with race and class, Wilson falls too readily into a predictable form of politically correct didacticism, which may rankle. The book, however, displays the author's self-confessed addiction to history. He clearly knows this period, conveys the setting well, and despite Doolen's frequent postmodern anxieties about his own narrative, offers up a good straightforward story in clear unpretentious prose.

Like Wilson, Carol Matas specializes in young adult fiction. *The Edge of When* resulted from the updating of three works written thirty years earlier, the themes of which "seem more urgent and relevant now than they did then." Part One, Part Two, and Part Three in the new work deal respectively with time travel into three possible futures: a post-nuclear apocalypse, a repressive Corporatocracy, and a stable, environmentally sustainable global society.

Such issues are indeed timely, and the subject of many fine works, including such notables as Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, and (for younger readers) Scott Westerfeld's *Ugly* series and M. T. Anderson's *Feed*. The success of such works depends on their psychological realism and firm grasp of the (often horrific) context within which they place their characters. Some focus on individual existential struggles, while others address the systemic issues that led to the disaster. Unfortunately, Parts One and Two of Matas' work disappoint on both counts. Rebecca, the twelve-year-old narrator, remains psychologically unconvincing throughout, and the book simply fails to acknowledge the systemic problems facing humanity. Even children know that they are not going to change the world simply by organizing a few demonstrations. Part Three proves generally more credible and engaging, in particular because it begins to address the ontological paradoxes that emerge when

altering the past. Despite these shortcomings, Matas correctly recognizes that globally aware young people require hope given the staggering challenges they face. If this novel inspires even one reader to act courageously, I imagine that she will count it a success.

Fanatics, the sequel to William Bell's highly successful *Stones* (2001), is also set in Orillia, features the same two teenage protagonists, and draws on similar genres, including romance of the archive, gothic horror, and investigative thriller. In exchange for space to set up his woodworking business, Garret Havelock agrees to repair the library of a lakeside mansion that has been damaged by a fire, and then to catalogue its contents with his girlfriend's help. They soon discover that the library is haunted by the historical fifteenth-century monk, Girolamo Savonarola (1452-98), who apparently caused the fire, killing the owner of the library, a fictional professor of Renaissance history deeply hostile to Savonarola's puritanical reforms. The epigraph to the work makes Bell's sympathies clear: "Flee, flee from those who speak in the name of God."

That Bell includes a contemporary subplot involving Islamist terrorists, loosely based on the "Toronto 18," indicates his willingness to strain plot credibility to hammer home the point that strong religious conviction proves the perennial enemy of democracy and tolerance. Bell, however, would do well to digest Terry Eagleton's review of Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion*, and also to consider the unprecedented scale of oppression and slaughter issuing from modern secular states. And one might also quibble with Bell's treatment of Savonarola, the multifaceted historical Reformer, who in the novel proves simply malevolent.

But this partisan moralizing does not seriously detract from the overall appeal of the work. Bell conveys both the historical and contemporary settings assuredly and economically, offering memorable descriptions of food, summer storms, and even a hostile, pyromaniacal ghost. And though Bell handles the extraordinary adequately, his true forte is the quotidian. Moreover, the voice of the protagonist here is sure and authentic throughout. He also paces the work well, telling an engaging story and building to a satisfying conclusion. In short, Bell has provided a worthy successor to *Stones*, one that should confirm his place as one of Canada's pre-eminent writers of juvenile fiction.

Of Cowherds and Wagers: A Poetics of Chinese-Canadian Family Histories

May Q. Wong
A Cowherd in Paradise: From China to Canada. Brindle & Glass $24.95

Vincent Lam
The Headmaster's Wager. Random House $32.95

Reviewed by Irene Gammel and Jason Wang

"My parents' unique voices are an integral part of me." With these words, May Q. Wong begins her literary journey of self-discovery through a century of family history. Encompassing fascinating stories of love, loss, and identity, Wong's memoir *A Cowherd in Paradise: From China to Canada,* her first book, is an intercultural conversation between China and Canada played out in the everyday life of her family, giving accounts of the chafing foot-binding of her great-grandmother, the arranged marriage of her mother, and the impoverished life of her father. Wong's search for and reconstruction of family is assembled from fragments of memory and conversation. Her narrative incorporates photos and other material objects, such as her mother's homemade Chinese dictionary, a single leaf of which is reproduced generously across two pages of the memoir, paying tribute to

the cross-cultural tools that helped in the navigation of this journey.

Prompted by the discovery of family secrets, the memoir is the story of the author's parents. Her father, Ah Dang (Wong Guey Dang), born in 1902 into a landless peasant family in southern China, was sold by his biological father, a gambler and opium addict, to a family who wanted to replace their dead infant. Her mother, Ah Thloo (Jiang Tew Thloo), born in 1911 into a traditional rural family in pre-revolutionary China, grew up taking care of her family's treasured cow (hence the titular "cowherd"), and married Ah Dang at the age of 18 through a blind arranged marriage. Within a year of their marriage, Ah Dang leaves China for Canada, and so begins the painful story of the couple's twenty-five year separation, with the young Ah Thloo abandoned in China because of Canada's notorious Head Tax that discriminated against Chinese immigrants. A copy of the 1930 Head Tax Certificate is reproduced as a chilling image of this politically charged family history.

Left alone with her mother-in-law, and later with two children, Ah Thloo evolves into a heroine who single-handedly takes care of the entire family even during times of natural disasters, Communist revolutions, and wars in China. Meanwhile, Ah Dang supports his family from Canada, visiting China only twice during a quarter-century of marriage. It is not until 1954 that the couple reunite in Canada, making a home in Montreal, where Ah Dang runs a successful café. Throughout her memoir, Wong intentionally emphasizes vernacular, and the in-between of languages and culture that her parents embodied. "Canada peacefoo place," her father reflects, continuing: "But I don't forget, I Chinee, my famly Chinee. I still love China. But now Canada my home."

Like May Wong, Vincent Lam, winner of the 2006 Scotiabank Giller Prize for his short story collection *Bloodletting and Miraculous Cures*, turns to family history for inspiration in his novel, *The Headmaster's Wager*. Set in Saigon during the Vietnam War, the story is told through the eyes of Percival Chen (Chen Pie Sou), a Chinese expatriate from Shantou, Guangdong. As the eponymous "headmaster" he runs an English school, the Percival Chen English Academy in Cholon, the Chinese area of Saigon. Percival is cast in the role of unlikeable hero: an inveterate gambler, he is deterministically marked by his addictions, much like a fatalistic hero in a Thomas Hardy novel, unable to escape the cycle of bad habits. Percival's pride in his Chinese heritage casts shadows of radical prejudice.

Through the prism of Percival's life, the novel deftly explores the problematic of "Chineseness" in Vietnamese culture during the war. Despite the success of his English school, Percival, caught between Vietnamese and American positions, is unable to prevent the war from intruding into his life. His son Dai Jai is arrested, forcing Percival to send him back to China at the critical time of the Cultural Revolution. During his son's absence over the war years, Percival turns to gambling, and at the mah-jong table he wins Jacqueline, a Vietnamese-French prostitute. The offspring of their liaison is a son, Laing Jai, born in 1968 at the time of the Tet offensive, one of the largest military campaigns of the Vietnam War. In *The Headmaster's Wager*, as in *A Cowherd in Paradise*, family relations, separations and reunions are key themes, conjuring up traditional values of Chinese collective culture. Ultimately, though, Percival is an outsider—situated in between cultures, he is culturally and spiritually lost. In contrast, Wong evokes possibilities for connection and forgiveness.

"Gan-na-aie [Canada] is known as a fair country," says Ah Thloo at the end of Wong's memoir and continues: "To keep being fair, Gan-na-aie must recognize its wrongs and apologize." In 2006, four years after Ah

Thloo's death, Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government apologized for the Head Tax, making payments of $20,000 each to Chinese-Canadian immigrants and their surviving spouses who had paid the tax. In May 2014, British Columbia Premier Christy Clark apologized for BC's historical wrongs against Chinese immigrants. These political gestures recall a historical past of marginalization and inhumane treatment of Chinese residents in Canada.

Lam and Wong take their place beside other Chinese Canadian writers, such as Fred Wah, Denise Chong, Sky Lee, and Wayson Choy, all of whom draw in their work on their family histories ultimately to address the lives and experiences of second- and third-generation Chinese diaspora in Canada. Within this emerging tradition of Chinese Canadian literature, Lam and Wong juxtapose different geographies and negotiate distinct cultures. Both address the problem of "Chineseness" outside of China's geography—and explore how this "Chineseness" is performed and received, and ultimately negotiated. By doing so, they offer nothing less than a Canadian ethnic and multicultural history, in which the changing social image of Chineseness is embodied in the existential shifting of individual and family identity.

L'Abîme et le firmament

Andrée Yanacopoulo
Prendre acte. Boréal 24,95 $

Compte rendu par Sylvain Brehm

Le titre de cette autobiographie donne le ton : témoigner, sans rien renier, de ce qui a été vécu et accompli, notamment aux plans social, politique et amoureux.

Bien que ce récit de vie adopte l'habituelle perspective chronologique, ce sont des lieux, et non des dates, qui en constituent les principaux points d'articulation. L'enfance et l'adolescence se déroulent en Afrique du Nord, dans un pays alors sous domination française et dans un milieu bourgeois, au contact de descendants d'Européens. L'évocation de cette période de la vie d'Andrée Yanocopoulo oscille entre les souvenirs, parfois futiles, d'une jeune fille rangée et la critique d'une existence « tronquée, desséchée » par la volonté maternelle de préserver à tout prix un héritage français. L'auteure grandit dans un environnement à l'écart du monde : « nous étions tenus dans l'ignorance de tout ce qui se passait en dehors de notre petit monde; nous n'avions aucune, mais alors aucune conscience politique; chez nous, tout était orienté vers la France ».

La description des années passées en France est d'autant plus saisissante. Si Yanocopoulo en profite pour s'émanciper du milieu familial, terminer ses études, rencontrer son premier mari et devenir mère, on a le sentiment que cette période est plutôt austère. Les évènements sont relatés sur un ton distant et objectif, comme si l'auteure s'en tenait à une position d'observatrice du monde qu'elle découvre avec un regard d'adulte.

L'installation en Martinique marque une nouvelle rupture pour Andrée Yanocopoulo. D'une part, cette période coïncide avec l'étiolement du sentiment amoureux; d'autre part, c'est là qu'elle « ouv[re] les yeux sur les problèmes sociaux, sur la question de la négritude et sur celle de la colonisation linguistique dénoncée par Fanon ».

La partie du récit intitulée « À Montréal » revêt, bien entendu, un intérêt particulier. L'auteure y témoigne de l'effervescence intellectuelle et politique du Québec aux débuts de la Révolution tranquille (la création des revues *Parti pris* et *Liberté*, la radicalisation de certains militants indépendantistes, etc.). Elle y relate aussi sa rencontre et son idylle avec Hubert Aquin.

Les pages consacrées à cette rencontre et à la vie avec Aquin sont aussi intéressantes qu'émouvantes. Elles contiennent le récit

sensible d'une relation qu'on imagine d'une rare intensité et font (re)découvrir un homme hors du commun dont la destinée aura été de traverser l'existence comme un météore.

Bien qu'inexorable, sa fin tragique plonge Andrée Yanocopoulo dans un « [é]tat de vide total ». La poursuite de l'engagement politique, notamment aux côtés des féministes, va l'aider à affronter le désespoir. Plus tard, elle tentera de combler une autre béance dans sa vie en retournant au pays natal, quitté quarante-sept ans plus tôt.

« La question de l'Orient » n'a jamais cessé de tarauder Andrée Yanocopoulo. Elle lui inspire une réflexion délicate sur ce qui oriente une vie :

« Alors, l'Orient?

Il est la lumière du soleil levant, il est la nacre de la perle, il est celui qui me fait exister. Il était toi — car c'est bien ici le temps, et non l'espace, qui gouverne. »

Cette émouvante conclusion ne doit pas être interprétée uniquement comme un repli mélancolique sur ce(lui) qui n'est plus, car, comme l'affirme Andrée Yanocopoulo : « Ma seule nostalgie est celle du futur. »

Canadian Representations

Lorraine York
Margaret Atwood and the Labour of Literary Celebrity. U of Toronto P $29.95

Manijeh Mannani and Veronica Thompson, eds.
Selves and Subjectivities: Reflections on Canadian Arts and Culture. Athabasca UP $29.95

Reviewed by Nathalie Cooke

Both these texts concern themselves with identity construction. On the one hand, Lorraine York's *Margaret Atwood and the Labour of Literary Celebrity* underscores the labour involved in sustaining a certain kind of identity—the literary celebrity. On other multiple hands, *Selves and Subjectivities* offers eight reflections on the way identity is reflected, represented, and negotiated across a wide range of Canadian art forms.

Working from the Atwood Papers in University of Toronto's library and drawing on some of her foundational thinking about and analysis of celebrity for her 2007 book, *Literary Celebrity in Canada*, York was quite right to suggest that much of the labour and the labourers of literary celebrity often go unnoticed. Shifting the spotlight of attention is one contribution this book makes to the field of Canadian literary scholarship. With specific reference to Atwood as a case study, her book includes chapters on the work of literary agents, literary editors, and those who wear multiple hats in a celebrity writer's business office. York also offers astute observations about the recent evolution of Atwood Inc. in the digital age, especially of Atwood's Twitter presence.

However, York's most interesting insights emerge in the opening and closing discussions. Her introduction summarizes watershed insights in celebrity theory—such as those of Richard Dyer, David Marshall, and Joshua Gamson—to highlight tensions between economic and cultural capital, gift and purchase exchange, as well as the strategic imperatives of visibility and invisibility for both celebrity and labour. York's conclusion revisits the range of works and variety of mediums her book addresses. After all, Atwood does move between multiple communication mediums, including some not mentioned by York possibly because they were just beyond the scope of this study (e.g., libretto or screenplay). York suggests that Atwood, since the 1980s, has seen a link between medium change and cultural loss. How then does Atwood reconcile this concern with her embrace of new media and technology? York's answer in this book seems to be that Atwood proceeds with caution and good counsel.

In *Selves and Subjectivities*, Manijeh Mannani and Veronica Thompson situate this book within Canadians' concern about

identify formation. They point to Diana Brydon's recent call to rethink Canadian literature out of the box of nation and into more nuanced notions of place, and to other commentary extending the scope of analysis beyond literature to Canadian art and culture. So what does *Selves and Subjectivities* contribute to the conversation? Mannani and Thompson argue that all contributions in this volume look to "emerging concepts of identity formation," focusing on Canadian examples but extending the scope of analysis well beyond it. They also note that while all contributors to the collection signal something "equivocal and ambivalent" in their reflections of Self and Other, they all are much more specific about "the complex political and social debates that are attempting to achieve a definitive understanding of Canadian identity." Unfortunately, while the editors signal such points of commonality between the papers, they neither justify the sequence of the chapters nor develop a storyline to offer transitions between the particular papers. This is particularly unfortunate for two strong papers analyzing classic texts (Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* and Daphne Marlatt's *Ana Historic*), which seem a bit out of place in this collection of "recent manifestations and delineations of Canadian identity."

I offer different answers to the question—what does *Selves and Subjectivities* contribute? One contribution certainly involves the range of texts analyzed here. Anne Nothof, for example, mentions a wide variety of theatrical productions and initiatives. Janne Cleveland offers original analysis of Ronnie Burkett's play *Happy,* a work of puppet theatre. Gilbert McCinnis offers a strong analysis of Colleen Wagner's play *The Monument* against the backdrop of atrocities in Yugoslavia and Canada and works that have attempted to grapple with them.

Valuable contributions to knowledge also reside in particular papers, perhaps rather than in the collection as a whole. In terms of interesting analyses of "emerging identities," for example, I would look to Thor Polukosko who tackles the thorny issue of appropriation and authenticity in relation to an Aboriginal band playing Hip Hop (itself emerging from an Afro-American tradition). Or I would look to Mark McCutcheon who introduces the term "dubject" to describe a subject who is mediated in multiple ways through representation and technology, and who offers a range of illustrative examples. Or I would look to strong articles by Anne Nothof and Dana Patrascu-Kingsley, both of which probe ways of thinking about ethnicity in the works they scrutinize in chapters complementing one another nicely.

Science at the Heart: Five Recent Canadian Books of Poetry

Kathleen McConnell

A survey of fifty-two first books of poetry published by Canadians in 2012 (entrants in the Gerald Lampert Award) reveals that five, each from a different press, treat science as a central concern. These five are Kristian Enright's *Sonar* (Turnstone), Nora Gould's *I see my love more clearly from a distance* (Brick), Mathew Henderson's *The Lease* (Coach House), Andrew McEwan's *repeater* (BookThug), and Gillian Savigny's *Notebook M* (Insomniac). The aspects of science they explore vary widely: human psychology, veterinary medicine, gynecology, industrial technology, computer programming, zoology, and botany. In the article which kicked off 1983's science-themed issue of *Canadian Literature*, J. R. Nursall defined three categories that remain useful for this discussion: basic science research ("experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundations of phenomena and observable facts, without any particular application or use in view" [14]); applied science ("original investigation directed primarily towards a specific, practical objective, i.e., science with intent" [16]); and technology ("systematic use of knowledge and practical experience directed to producing, installing or improving processes, systems, and services" [16]).

Kristian Enright's *Sonar*—which received the Eileen McTavish Sykes Award for Best First Book by a Manitoba Author, and the John Hirsch Award for Most Promising Manitoba Writer—exemplifies all three of Nursall's categories. *Sonar* is a highly allusive "long poem, with some narrative [which] has been a *Bildungsroman* and become a *Kunstleroman*" (Enright 128). The events take place largely within the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg (3) and follow protagonist Colin Verbanofsky's struggle to create a psychology applicable to his own mental health problems (3).

In *Sonar*, the word "science" usually refers to medical technologies—drugs—controlled by pharmaceutical companies. After watching a Prozac commercial, Verbanofsky observes "the voice of science is linked to healthy images" (21), and later asserts "giving suffering a dignity and meaning is something that is going to be difficult. Why not when science is like a Prozac commercial? It distills our tears backwards" (39). According to *Sonar*, science-as-technology exists to prolong illness, ensuring long-term drug sales. Verbanofsky justly suspects such monetized technologies.

Verbanofsky's diagnoses differ according to the training of the people doing the diagnosing. Nursing staff report he suffers from "what appears to be severe depression tempered with considerable mania, likely bi-polar" (13). His psychiatrist Dr. Earwinker initially wonders whether Verbanofsky is schizophrenic (48, 50) because of the voices in his head—voices of authors and characters of

Verbanofsky's extensive reading. Like its protagonist, Enright's book is informed by multiple authors; it owes "much to the work of Jorge Luis Borges, Jacques Derrida, Friedrich Nietzsche, Ludwig Wittgenstein, as well as Jack Kerouac" (151). *Sonar* also alludes to Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Blake, Whitman, Benjamin, Eliot, Auden, and others. Fortunately, Earwinker correctly determines these voices are not, in fact, symptoms of schizophrenia (138). Thus, in observing Verbanofsky—in coming up with and discarding various diagnoses—the nurses and psychiatrist practice applied science.

In one of several passages that arguably elide narrator and author, Verbanofsky self-diagnoses as "a creative mind repressed by human disconnections" (137), and reluctantly lays claim to psychosis, depression and "obsessive-compulsive disorder, which some might think is obvious . . ." (138). Recent research by Simon Kyaga et al. found that "being an author was specifically associated with increased likelihood of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, unipolar depression, anxiety disorders [such as OCD], substance abuse, and suicide" (Kyaga et al. 83), and that there is "a trend for authors without diagnosed psychopathology to commit suicide more frequently than controls" (86). Ultimately, Verbanofsky realizes "a new language is needed" because many "diagnostic terms are fundamentally though ironically flawed" (Enright 49); he undertakes the basic research of redefining the tenets of psychology in order to achieve mental health for himself.

Over the course of *Sonar*'s narrative Verbanofsky slowly reimagines himself as a more conventionally sane person, but not because of the pharmaceuticals (technology) judiciously prescribed to him, or the talking cure of Dr. Earwinker's applied science. The most significant component in this reimagining is the basic science of his writing cure, which has the side effect of producing the manuscript for *Sonar*.

Nora Gould's *I see my love more clearly from a distance* received the City of Edmonton Robert Kroetsch Book Prize, and was a finalist in both the Gerald Lampert Award and the Stephan G. Stephansson Award for Poetry. In this autobiographical collection, Gould chronicles her experiences as a woman, a rancher, and a veterinarian. Although some poems explore ranching technologies, most of the science in this book concerns applied science derived from her experiences as a doctor and a patient; her experiences are distinct from those of Colin Verbanofsky in part because Gould embraces the fatalism typical of health care professionals.

Gould's specialist knowledge saturates the book, from vocabulary—"axilla" (49), "fetopelvic" (68), "amnion" (73), "freemartin" (101), etc.—to subject matters, imbuing the poems with the fatalism Elaine Drew and Nancy Schoenberg observe "tends to be used [by health care professionals] extensively" (165). Over and over, *I see my love more clearly from a distance* records how Gould feels death's cold breath upon her neck, from the early poem "In this dearth some pack a .22 in their calving kit" (24) to the later description of how

> Last spring, with wire, I portioned twins inside a cow:
> their hair and hooves sloughing, I pulled them out piece
> by stinking piece—head, forelimb, hind leg with hemipelvis—
>
> until she was empty . . . (102-03)

Nor is Gould's fatalism reserved for animals; she applies it to both the personified Prairie and herself, who between them make up two of the three corners of a love triangle completed by her husband Charl. Gould writes, "His hand on my back, one finger lifts, / falls, on my scapula // But it's her he holds in his sleep, dreams in his hands, Prairie" (11). The book's second poem describes how Prairie "came in

season" and was impregnated by the constellation Orion (12). For eons Prairie was fecund with Orion's seed, but now she has been penetrated by technologies: "pipes in sections, each joint rigid, / drilled deep in her parenchyma, have shifted, mixed / her fluids, frayed, broken her" until "she tastes air- / borne emissions" (12). Suffering accompanies Prairie's fecundity.

Gould suffers similarly: "First one / ovary, big as a saucer. Blood / and fibrin bound it to my uterus, glued / ureters, bladder and loops of bowel / together" (41). After surgery

> the doctor exhibited me to residents
> . . . *here, proof that*
> *a woman with endometriosis*
> *can have children; see the cervix pulled*
> *to one side by the scarring. Tell them*
> *how many children you've had.* (41)

Where *Sonar*'s Verbanofsky provided health-care professionals the opportunity to practice applied science, Gould becomes part of medical residents' training in applied science. However, her suffering has no place in their education, any more than Prairie's suffering does in oil-workers' professions.

Unlike Verbanofsky, who deconstructs the mental health care system to achieve an idiosyncratic cure, Gould remains professionally complicit:

> For ten days I was left
> to believe I have ovarian
> cancer: this was good.
>
> I'd been praying for
> an anesthetic death. (38)

This poem, taken in context with two others describing the fictional autopsy of Gould's body (29, 49), constructs a protagonist acquiescent to the inevitability of not only death but her body's violation at the service of science.

A few passages eschew the fatalism of applied medical science. Despite a plethora of losses, Gould claims she doesn't "rush to deliver" death (44), and goes on to catalogue a few shining successes amongst the losses (see Gould 53-55, 73, 92, 93). Typically, however, her statement about not delivering death comes in a poem about euthanizing pets. "I sign my letter to my daughters / *I press my cheek to yours*" (88) revisits the treatment of her body after death, but in this case as a loving interment on the Prairie with whom she so identifies. However, these and other positive incidents inevitably come in the context of death stories demonstrate the fatalism of Gould's sensibility, shaped by both experience and formal training in applied veterinary science.

Mathew Henderson's *The Lease* was a finalist for the Gerald Lampert Award and the Trillium Book Award for Poetry. A memoir of a period in "your" youth spent working in the Alberta oilfields, it describes "your" struggle to develop self-identity in a dehumanizing context. The second person point-of-view closes the distance between reader and subject by evoking technical instruction as well as anecdote. The science is applied, using extractive technologies, which puts you in a mutually exploitative relationship with the land leased to the oil companies. Where Gould alludes to the oil industry as an ominous, pervasive alternative to ranching, in *The Lease* ranch life is a shimmering chimera on the oilfield's horizon.

The Lease's only mention of the word "science" comes in the book's second poem. "Fenceless," describes the actual leased acreage:

> There are no signposts, no old men
> waiting
> to tell you *here*. This place repeats itself:
> everywhere you've been is folded into
> grass
> and dirt, and you blame chance, not
> science,
> for putting the iron here, like no seismic
> charts
> were read, no holes drilled, as if wealthy
> men
> and god just wanted you sweating in the
> mud. (8)

In this context, "you" turn from seventeen to eighteen (33), a time crucial for identity formation. Initially, you feel alienated on the oil-patch; "you are no part of it. You can only watch . . ." even though you "feel everything as the oil turns your face brown" (14). Before long, you've learned to "lay pipe like limbs along the lease, / hard shapes, hollow and straight"; even at night "your arms push and pull at the air above your bed, miming the rig in" (29).

The poem "What hands do" explores the synechdochial implications of characterizing workers as "hands" which

> . . . lift and hammer,
> mark oil in and oil out. They wade
> through gas
> that sits thick as wet wool inside your lungs.
>
> Hand scrub trucks, rack pipe and paint
> bins . . . (48)

The rig's hands are extensions of the technologies defining their communication, too; though hands "don't speak" (48) they do "throw tongs and catch string like a conversation" (14).

Rodger Wilkie notes that every definition of "cyborg" includes "the configuration of the organic and the technological into a single system" (n. pag.). Thus, Henderson's narratorial "you" is a cyborg—an organic element in a technological system whose body must be modified to fit the equipment. "Under Air" begins with the admonition "All men must be clean shaven, a small moustache is acceptable / but the rubber has to seal," and ends after a cautionary fantasy about dying of "H2S-anus contact. / All employees must wear latex underwear, bums must be clean / shaven. A little hair is acceptable, but the rubber has to seal" (32). More seriously, in "Self-portrait in oil" you have become an extension of the machinery:

> You gauge the flowback, and the dipstick
> sends your reflection swirling, bouncing
> through the fluid to the steel sides of the
> tank
> back to when your mother's arms could
> hold
> you still and clip your nails. (43)

The Lease focuses on ways you serve technology. In "Remember Charlie," the title character's burns are "darker and redder than the yawning / mouths of dogs who terrorized your youth" (31), supplemented by the "half-circle, barrel-edged nub" of Joel's amputated wrist (31). Jared's missing fingers (30), the guy with PTSD (52), the "airgunners from Lakeside" who "wake up screaming most fucking nights" (52), the two dead after the blowout at Newell, where "the pipe swung so fast it took one guy's face / clean off" (54), Clint's supe who burned "so hot they had to pry bones from the metal" (63) all index the danger inherent in the human/technology interactions of the lease, which leave you so anxious that "though you do it every day, the panic / you feel before opening the well never fades" (49).

Cyborgs are identified by what they do (Wilkie n. pag.), and what "you" do is work the lease, drink at the bar, and have an increasingly vexed relationship with the few women around. Though you know "we all need to couple" (65), and though you have become skilled at pushing iron into and out of the earth in sixty-foot lengths, you know that proficiency at technologically fucking the prairie isn't good coaching for human intimacy. You fear becoming as desensitized as your co-workers: "you will call women whores, measure distance / in *cunt hairs* and encourage a man to *go get him some gash*" (64). Even though you "quease and pull away" when James rhapsodizes about rape, you suspect you can't help but "grow a little / more like him for all your shutting up" (64). Take comfort; you got out soon enough to avoid that, and when you later hear Caitlyn is pregnant, "you worry the kid / is yours" even though the most you ever did was hug (66). More realistically, you wonder "is it feet and hands that grow in her, / or something as lustful and

sad as empty / as its father and the way it was made?" (66).

Where Gould derives a sense of self through identifying with the personified Prairie and the generations-deep and prairie-wide culture this figure sustains, Henderson's *The Lease* personifies you, his narrator, in the context of the testosterone-charged, ahistorical (though anecdote-rich), world of the rig hand; a world that misshapes, deforms, and renders contingent your understanding of yourself. Like your co-workers, the narrative "you" functions as a cyborg hand serving the industrial technology of oil extraction. That service renders you and your co-workers intimately dysfunctional—impotent, brutal, or obsessed—off-site.

Where Henderson's *The Lease* uses anecdote and observation to narrate the distortion of personality experienced by oilfield workers, Andrew McEwan's *repeater*, another finalist for the Lampert award, features an artificial intelligence as the narrator; it strives for enough personality to achieve anecdote and observation. *repeater* contains twenty-six eight-line poems, one for each letter of the alphabet. Each of these poems' eight lines begins with 0 or 1 to form the ASCII code for the letter that titles the poem. These ASCII "letters" in computer language are the eight bits or octet that conventionally make up a byte. An appendix contains five poems that expand on the book's aleatory project.

In "Poetry as Prosthesis," Brian McHale points out "in the estranging light of machine composition, all language use appears as a cyborg phenomenon—a human being coupled to a machine" (29). *repeater*'s mechanistic narrator strives to achieve the humanity required of a cyborg, by exploring the language of which it is comprised:

0 fossils tossed pell-mell into sedimentary strata

1 dirigible alphabet swerves

1 toward constant drift

1 as letters nest in migratory wayside

0 corpses hurled full-tilt into dregs of plot

0 petrean body squirms under coroner's blanket

0 this moraine contains remains

1 utterance is perpetual archeology (27)

The double-spacing and initial binary character ensure that each line is read discretely prior to being read in the context of the others. However, in all the letter poems, adjacent "1" lines enjamb to create an extended syntactical unit investigating uncertainty in language. The "0" lines do not enjamb but restate; in "q," the "0" lines concern life's persistent residues: fossils, corpses, petrean bodies, remains. The repetitions make similar statements with diverging implications, demonstrating language's inherent slipperiness and resulting in poems that balance linear isolation with two kinds of continuity—the self-similarity of the "0" lines and the tenuous narratives of the "1" lines. Thus, the letter poems take readers from the unequivocal clarity of binary through the combinations of binaries making up individual letters, which together interact in even more complicated manners to make up the words, sentences, and syntax of language.

The letter poems either do not contain humans or refer to them only abstractly. The abstraction of these referents ensures that the contingent narrative develops through the interactions not of characters but of phonemes. For example, "q" lacks even an abstract allusion to a human subject. Instead, the first three "1" lines express

anxiety over what happens when enough binaries interact to become language: "dirigible alphabet swerves / toward constant drift / as letters nest in migratory wayside" (McEwan 27). When eight 0s and 1s combine to make a letter, duality becomes complex; as letters flock to become words they drift into unpredictable interpretive possibilities until, as the final "1" line puts it, "utterance is perpetual archeology" (27). In contrast, the "0" lines discuss inactive remains, enacting the fate of revenant bits of computer code whose function has been superseded. Thus, the letter poems perform the stuttering dynamism of the proliferating binaries making up language, with its potential for swerving meanings leading to proliferating interpretations.

Only the final work in the book, "appendix e pretext: embodied standard," includes a first-person narrator. Literally marginalized, the narrator's comments gloss the poem's couplets which describe code as intelligence's pretext. "I" appear to be a programmed intelligence on the cusp of recognizing myself as a self, or becoming "embodied" (McEwan 83). Concurrent with developing awareness, I worry about corruption in the data upon which I base my awareness: "I seem to occasionally / detect error. // Thus I am deceived. // I think I am" (89). While chronicling a machine voice's drive toward selfhood, "appendix e" also displays anxiety over language's ability to sustain multiple meanings. Thus, *repeater*'s basic research finds that a language sufficiently complex to sustain intelligence inevitably also leaves that intelligence groping for stable meanings.

Like McEwan's *repeater*, which humanizes an anxious machine, Gillian Savigny's *Notebook M* humanizes Charles Darwin by plumbing the emotional history of the man behind the research that changed Western culture. *Notebook M* won the Lampert Award; it details a fictional history of Darwin's thoughts prior to the publication of *On the Origin of Species*; it takes its name from the notebook in which he explored "Metaphysics on Morals & Speculations on Expression" (Savigny 11).

In the erasure poem "Journal of Researches: Patagonia," Savigny leads readers through Darwin's early realization that God's biological, zoological, and geological works contravene his Biblical word. As the pages of "Journal of Researches: Patagonia" pass, the font gradually gets larger; the chosen words are set in bold text, while those not chosen become grayer. From Darwin's discussion of phosphorescence off Cape Horn, Savigny picks out ". . . my notes / scintillate with / bright / doubt" (24), and follows it with the assertion "One is tempted to believe" (25)—though it is unclear whether the temptation is to believe in the theory of evolution or in the Bible as the received word of God. A moment paralleling Christ's desert exile comes on the heels of this statement: "I / die alone / of reason" (26), indicating the temptation is toward rational science.

As the poem continues, the erasures reveal further evidence of faith's erosion while Darwin's understanding of evolution grows: he observes animals congregating beneath his ship (34), which becomes the ark of evolutionary theory wherein "We / carry gravel / a considerable / distance from the parent / rock" (35). Saint Peter is the rock upon whom the church was built, and whose doctrine Darwin's studies have left a considerable distance behind. The final two pages of "Journal of Researches: Patagonia" extend the imagery inimical to the church: "In / Patagonia / we / anchor / the ruins of / old men" (36); Darwin's observations anchor the ruin of patriarchal Christianity, and he is faced with the realization "we / belong to / the / ground" (37)—dust, without a transformative afterlife. The increasing font size of these final pages indexes Darwin's growing certainty and alarm about the theory he is developing.

The realization that he trusts science more than church doctrine leaves Darwin facing a dilemma subtly explored in the poems of the next section, "An Autobiographical Fragment": should he undermine the church's authority and risk a lifetime of controversy by publishing? In recalling the amusing lies of his childhood (48-49), the adult Darwin toys with the possibility of doing the same as an adult—denying the controversial science which will cause public consternation, and thereby shoring up the church's comforting but inaccurate doctrine. In "The Laboratory," science takes precedence: he recalls another period of childhood, when he studied the chemical properties of physical matter and saw "clearly, for the first time, / without a doubt . . . , the seams of the universe" (56-57). *On the Origin of Species* will later unpick these seams, changing irreparably the social fabric that depends upon Biblical infallibility.

The eponymous third section, "Notebook M," follows the process leading to the adult Darwin's decision to publish. In the penultimate poem "Blind Cave Fish" Darwin admits he doesn't owe fealty to ingrained falsehoods, however comforting they may be. He recounts how he "found god in a cave full of dead things" (89); "god is small and white and blind. Mostly he swims in circles and / has no sense of direction" (89). Nor is he alone; all these little gods "have forgotten the sun; they do not know they / are fish" (89). This poem presents a regretful repudiation of Christian doctrine from a man winching up his courage to publish the notorious *On the Origin of Species*.

Both McEwan and Savigny write process poetry; that is, poetry where the process of composition rather than the meaning is the focus. Nonetheless, the process itself exposes some of the ideologies that support our ideas of truth, God, and human reason. Where McEwan's poems reveal how the simplicity of binary code leads to the compounding complexities of linguistic unreliability, Savigny's *Notebook M* maps Darwin's crises—the loss of his personal faith in Christian doctrine and his dilemma of public responsibility—and ends with the scientist's recognition that he cannot privately accept the conclusions of his basic scientific research and go on to deny it publicly.

These five books explore science as basic research, applied research and/or technology. In Enright's mental health narrative *Sonar*, Verbanofsky derides pharmaceutical technologies, tolerates the applied science of the professionals, and undertakes basic research through authorship—the creative profession most often linked with mental illness. In *I see my love more clearly from a distance*, veterinarian Nora Gould constantly applies science to the life-or-death decisions required on her ranch. In so doing, her poetry demonstrates a fatalism typical of healthcare workers. Mathew Henderson's *The Lease* also examines human relationships with the prairie, focusing on oilpatch workers' dehumanizing submission to the technologies of oil extraction. Andrew McEwan inverts that paradigm; in *repeater*, a nascent technological intelligence strives to achieve self-awareness even though the linguistic complexity which makes consciousness possible seems to make self-doubt and self-deception inevitable. Gillian Savigny's *Notebook M* explores a different aspect of deception, showing how Charles Darwin's basic science caused him crises of private faith and public responsibility. Thus, four of these five books use literature as a means to critique some aspect of science, with technology most likely to be depicted negatively; only McEwan turns the tables by using technology to critique language.

That so many examples of a fairly small subset of Canadian literature—first poetry books published in 2012—focus on science indicates that, as Nursall predicted in 1983, Canadian writers celebrate science as "one

of the great creative activities" available to us (Nursall 14). Furthermore, the number of awards and nominations recognizing *Sonar*, *I see my love more clearly from a distance*, *The Lease*, *repeater*, and *Notebook M*, suggests science remains a fecund source of poetry which contemporary Canadian poets treat with intelligence, verve, and finesse.

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"A Minister and a Rabbi . . . ": The Parallel Careers at the University of Toronto of Northrop Frye and Emil Fackenheim

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I was fortunate to know Northrop Frye: he was the external examiner of my PhD thesis, and, throughout the 1980s, when my wife—mezzo-soprano Judith Forst—was singing at the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto, I would take him to and from the opera house, enjoying our many conversations. Much later, I was asked to review many of the volumes of his *Collected Works* for *Canadian Literature*, a refresher course that led me to consider the issues I reflect on below.

Frye's critical theories certainly influenced me over my forty-five years teaching in post-secondary institutions in New York and Vancouver, but it was also during these forty-five years that I began working in the area of Holocaust history through the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Department of Psychology at the University of British Columbia. And it was this work that, more than any developments in critical theory in the late twentieth century, drew me increasingly away from Frye *as a thinker*, a role I could not separate in his case from that of a literary critic.

Over these latter years, I became progressively interested in another eminent Canadian: the philosopher Emil Fackenheim, who was for thirty-plus years a colleague of Frye's at the University of Toronto. Fackenheim, was and remains, the central Canadian figure in Holocaust studies; in fact, one recent historian has called him "the preeminent theologian of the Holocaust" (Rosenbaum 279).

Thus, when the index to Frye's collected works appeared in May of 2013, out of curiosity I checked for Fackenheim's name. It

appeared once. The reference is in a short diary entry for 16 January 1950: "Fackenheim," as Frye referred to him, was "needling" a colleague of Frye's (the philosopher Robert McRae) who was delivering a paper at a colloquium. And "Fackenheim" was getting the upper hand in the exchange because McRae, Frye says, "was less adroit at dodging questions" than was he (*Diaries* 231).

That Frye should have known who Emil Fackenheim was is not surprising: as well as their shared tenure at the University of Toronto, they were both ordained clergymen, and were both deeply involved in important Canadian publishing projects (Frye was Managing Editor and Editorial Board Member of the *Canadian Forum* for many years, and Fackenheim was one of the founding editors of the journal *Dionysius*). Similarly, Fackenheim could hardly have failed to know who Frye was. Although he was never mentioned by Fackenheim in any of his many books and articles, Frye's reputation was at its peak during Fackenheim's tenure at the University of Toronto—and his beloved young wife, Rose, had been a student of Frye's there.

The fact that Frye and Fackenheim—two of the most important people in the world in their respective fields during the latter part of the twentieth century—virtually never referred to each other in their voluminous writings could simply be seen as typical disciplinary disjunction in the modern multiversity, but there is something else here. I always had the sense as I studied Frye, and referred to his theories in class, that there was something missing; that in a way his theories had no effective window on the outside world; that his passionate defence of humanism might have squared with what he knew of Blake and Milton, but not with the post-Holocaust world. Michael Ignatieff has called the Holocaust "the ghost at our feast" (28)—but the ghost has no seat at Frye's table. (In fact, the only time the word "Holocaust" appears in the seven million words of the *Collected Works* is in reference to Noah's "holocaust of the animals" after the flood.)

Fackenheim, on the other hand, was Holocaust-obsessed. In fact, the eminent theologian Gregory Baum (another professor whose career at the University of Toronto overlapped with Frye's), admitted he came to think of Fackenheim as having been driven "crazy, honorably and admirably, but still a little insane" (n. pag.) by the German Judeocide—a claim for which his writings offer no evidence.

The complete absence in Frye of any sense of the historical significance of the Holocaust is puzzling. Frye has been almost universally regarded as one of the great "synoptic" men of letters of the twentieth century, and the publication of his *Collected Works* has been cited as "one of the most important humanistic efforts taking place at this point in history" (Lee xiii). During his lifetime he was variously labelled on the cover of *Maclean's* magazine as one of the "towering figures in Canadian letters" ("Northrop") and "the foremost living student of Western Literature" (Harold Bloom qtd. in Salusinszky 58). At the peak of his reputation, Frye was cited as "the Einstein of criticism" (Scott 2) and "one of the most widely cited thinkers in human history" (Heer n. pag.) and even "the architect of the spiritual world" (see Denham).

In this regard, the "monumental" *Collected Works* project puts Frye under the magnifying glass in a way that allows comparison between him and few other great critics of our time. And what we see in this magnification clearly justifies his reputation in every area. Except, I believe, in one: the unwillingness to recognize the radical, existential character of human evil and to acknowledge the cultural fissure between human reality and his vision of classical humanism opened by the Holocaust. This is not to complain that Frye was not Fackenheim, or that his social and

philosophical views should have squared with those of a certainly bitter and fixated concentration camp survivor. It is rather to assess the justice of those who, like his editor Jean O'Grady and many others, thought of Frye as a major contributor to twentieth-century humanism: that had he lived, he would have offered the world "a survey of the whole of human knowledge" (O'Grady n. pag.).

I never met Emil Fackenheim. In my years as a Holocaust educator, I only knew about him through his famous "614th mitzvah," or "commandment," by which he is known worldwide: "Thou shalt not hand Hitler posthumous victories: To despair of the God of Israel is to continue Hitler's work for him" (*The Jewish Return* 23-24). I knew also that he was a very popular professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto, that he loved to wear Hawaiian shirts to class, that (decidedly unlike Frye) he proudly marched with the students against the Vietnam War, and lastly, that he had written voluminously on the Holocaust and on G. W. F. Hegel. And I also knew that he felt that the Holocaust had permanently "ruptured" history, leading to a serious need to reconsider the history of human culture.

For Frye, humanist values are recorded in and perpetuated through the institution of the university and through the reading of literature encouraged there: "the more exposed we are to [literature]," said Frye in his 1963 Massey Lectures, published by the CBC as *The Educated Imagination*, "the less likely we are to find an unthinking pleasure in cruel or evil things" (472).

As Fackenheim often noted, however, the German humanists and universities not only failed to *safeguard* culture, they *produced* many of the major instigators of the Holocaust. For example, seven of the fifteen attendees of the Wannsee Conference in 1942—which planned the extermination of European Jewry—had PhDs, as did Goebbels, and as did three of the four leaders of the infamous killing squads that bloodied the trail left by the Wehrmacht as it marched eastwards from 1941 to 1943.

Moreover, there is a strong sense in Fackenheim, which sharply separates his thought from Frye's deeply held and self-defined "humanist" point-of-view, of the existential *radicality* of evil. (Frye, in fact, at one point in his notebooks, finds himself wondering whether evil might not, in fact, be "redemptive," clearly reflecting his Christian background, and perhaps explaining his refusal ever to give up his ordination [*"Third"* 11].) Contrariwise, for Fackenheim, the Holocaust *is the very definition, and de facto evidence of* existential evil, and denotes the complete destruction of any possible bridge between man and God. I will return to this point.

Northrop Frye and Emil Fackenheim were born four years apart—Frye in 1912 and Fackenheim in 1916—to middle-class religious families, and they were ordained within three years of each other: Frye in 1936 (as a Methodist minister) and Fackenheim (as a Reform rabbi) in 1939, but there the similarities end. As Frye prepared in 1939 to become a member of the permanent staff at Victoria College, Fackenheim was being arrested and sent to the notorious Sachsenhausen concentration camp in northeastern Germany.

Fackenheim was released from Sachsenhausen after three months and managed to get to Britain where he studied briefly at Aberdeen University until he was deported to Canada in 1940. Once there, he endured sixteen months of internment as an "Enemy Alien"; and on release, he practiced for three years as a rabbi. He then applied for and won a position in the philosophy department at the University of Toronto. The year was 1947—the year that Frye published *Fearful Symmetry*.

Fackenheim earned his full professorship in 1959, the year Frye became principal of the University of Toronto's Victoria College.

He stayed at the University of Toronto until 1984, when he moved to Jerusalem to teach at the Hebrew University. He died in Israel in 2003.

To return to the main difference between Fackenheim and Frye: their respective views on the existentiality of evil. For Fackenheim, the "radicality" of evil was of course symbolized by the Holocaust. Auschwitz is, in other words, "the symbol of a radical evil that . . . could only occur in a world in which either God was absent or else was powerless to prevent" (Rubinoff 253). Thus, the world after Auschwitz "can never be the same"; the Holocaust has caused an "eclipse" in human history, insofar as history is understood as "the march of faith-inspired reason toward human redemption and fulfillment of the covenant between man and God." And further, any attempt to subsume the Holocaust under the Hegelian rubric of "rational cunning" is not only "obscene" but also "blasphemous" (Rubinoff 272).

Fackenheim was a world authority on Hegel, yet one can immediately see from his attitude towards history and its mid-twentieth-century "eclipse," that he ultimately gave over Hegelianism and its premises of human progress. As Fackenheim put it, "were he [Hegel] alive today, so realistic a philosopher as Hegel would not be Hegelian" (*Religious* 60). Frye on the other hand continued to see Hegel as "the great philosopher of *anabasis* [ascent]": in his late notebooks, he refers to Hegel 222 times; in another place, he cited Hegel as "having done a lot of my work for me," that is, by mapping the grand dialectical path "upward, through morality, art [and] revealed religion" (*"Third"* 89).

Fackenheim, on the contrary, saw it as impossible to be a dialectician after the Holocaust; he saw in the Holocaust a *unique* historical event, a "*novum*," an event that caused a "fissure" or "abyss" or "fracture" in history, one that precluded any notion of *anabasis*. Contrast this position to Frye's: "nothing that happens in history is unique," he said in a late interview with David Cayley, reflecting his continuing vision of history as progressing dialectically ("Conversation" 917).

There are other contrasts between the minister and the rabbi, and not just on their relative focus on the first and second Biblical covenants. For example, although both were deeply influenced by Kant, Fackenheim was particularly (and characteristically) interested in Kant's view of radical evil, as laid down in the latter's 1793 essay "On the Radical Evil in Human Nature." Here, Kant takes the position that evil is a deep and essential element of the human condition—an evil which Fackenheim saw as taking over Europe with the rise of Nazism and potentially, given a slight tweaking of the situation in Stalingrad in 1943, the whole world. (Kant's essay on evil is not listed on the University of Toronto website which itemizes Frye's vast library—a library which contains almost all of Kant's other writings.)

One would think they never met, and it's hard to believe they would have anything to say to each other if they did. But one thing they did have in common: a strong sense that the future can be better than the past. Frye saw this possibility as invested in the arts: that "immense imaginative and transforming force" which is "still ready to recreate both our society and ourselves" (*Religion* 46, 82).

Fackenheim could not take this optimistic view of the arts, as he agreed with Elie Wiesel that "[t]here is no such thing as a literature of the Holocaust, nor can there be. The very expression is a contradiction in terms. Auschwitz negates any form of literature, as it defies all systems, all doctrines. . . . A novel about Auschwitz is not a novel, or else it is not about Auschwitz. The very attempt to write such a novel is blasphemy. . . ." (314). Rather, for Fackenheim, hope was symbolized, first, by the heroic

activities of a few Nazi dissenters in Germany during the war (especially Kurt Huber and the White Rose), and second, by the coming into existence of the state of Israel, which he came to see as an authentic Jewish response to the Holocaust, and a promise that humanity can continue to hope. By contrast, Frye (who visited Israel in 1982) never mentions modern Israel, except to decry it (falsely: it is a liberal democratic state) as a theocratic state ("[as is] much of the Moslem and Hindu world," as he put it [*Religion* 175]).

The Frye-Fackenheim divide provides an astonishing contrast and when it is thought about, it must be done so in the context of a supreme, and very Canadian, irony. When Fackenheim was deported from Scotland to Canada in 1940, he was immediately imprisoned in a Canadian war prisoners' internment camp. The camp was in Sherbrooke, Quebec. The city that imprisoned the man who was to become the greatest Holocaust philosopher in the world, is the same city that produced one of the world's greatest of humanistic literary critics: Northrop Frye.

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