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We acknowledge that we are on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓-speaking Musqueam people.

Editorial

Canadian Literature 6.0

Laura Moss

> What kind of talk do you bring to the table?
> —Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *He Manawa Whenua Indigenous Research Conference*

In September 2015, I became the sixth editor of *Canadian Literature*, following Margery Fee, Laurie Ricou, Eva-Marie Kröller, W. H. New, and George Woodcock. Daunting. Each editor has left a mark on the journal and the field: Margery ushered in the digital humanities and conceived of the open-access educational resource *CanLit Guides*; Laurie brought ecocritical awareness and academic creativity; Eva-Marie formalized the peer-review process, made the journal international in readership, and extended the francophone content; Bill placed Canadian literature within the field of Commonwealth studies and emphasized the work of minority and Indigenous writers; and Woodcock (it feels presumptuous to call a man I never met by his first name) began it all with a goal of critical eclecticism. As I said, daunting.

Before I began as editor, I was asked to craft a vision statement for the journal. Generally, I am more inclined towards creating "To Do" lists than vision statements. I tend to approach manifestos with incredulity. Still, I was asked. My vision is straightforward, albeit aspirational: publish important work on Canadian literature and culture; support the teaching of Canadian writing through the continued development of *CanLit Guides*; maintain multidisciplinarity; circulate criticism that counts; steer clear of theme-spotting; value literary history; pay attention to a diversity of voices and perspectives; read broadly and deeply; review equitably; imagine communities; think in planetary terms; honour the place we stand and the territories we are in; never be seared by the beauty of crocuses; take on ethical debates and issues of social justice; think intersectionally; continue to make connections across generations between scholars, readers, and writers; share knowledge; avoid siloes; fight fiercely for the humanities; care about the state of the profession; acknowledge precarity; nourish generosity; recognize originality; appreciate creativity; question generic expectations; welcome radical play;

experiment with ideas; surprise people; enjoy intellectual arguments; remember that no language is neutral; harness the power of speech; stimulate conversation; speak with a loud voice; listen well; sustain interest; and empower through learning. In short, my goal is to ensure that the journal continues to be vital to a wide readership.

Since *Canadian Literature* was launched in 1959, Canada, Canadian writing, and literary criticism have changed dramatically. What hasn't changed is the journal's commitment to creative critical engagement. In his first editorial, Woodcock announced that the journal "seeks to establish no clan, little or large. It will not adopt a narrowly academic approach, nor will it try to restrict its pages to any school of criticism or any class of writers" (4). While the schools keep convocating, the desire not to promulgate any single one has not. For Woodcock and now for me, "good writing, writing that says something fresh and valuable on literature in Canada is what we seek, no matter where it originates" (4). That's it: *fresh and valuable takes on literature in Canada*. *Fresh* relies on surprise, originality, and unpredictability. In 1977, Barry Cameron and Michael Dixon edited an issue of *Studies in Canadian Literature* in which they pointed "to an ultimate goal: the consistent practice of a critical craft in Canada that is equivalent and responsive, in range and discipline, to the literature it treats" (138). The calibre of critical practice today corresponds well with the calibre of literary works, but I think we can keep pushing criticism creatively to unsettle expectation and read anew, building productively on the foundations already well-established.

Canadian Literature is concerned with the study of writing in Canada. This is sometimes about Canada but more often it is not. There has been a good deal of discussion focused on the limitations of national designations because, it is argued, they act as catchalls for a disparate array of cultures that cross time, space, histories, and genres. Indeed, other meritorious categories are used elsewhere: transnational studies, hemispheric studies, diasporic studies, border studies, Indigenous studies, fiction studies, poetry studies, theatre studies, and genre studies, as well as studies of critical race, gender, class, the environment, and language, among others. It is no longer possible to say, as Hugh MacLennan did following the Second World War, that "literature is not an international activity in any sense, and though new visions and new techniques can flow across borders, the substance of any living literature must come out of a society to which the writer belongs" (138). Contemporary institutions of culture are predominantly global in scope, particularly in the Internet society to which we belong. Some writers cross borders regularly

and belong to multiple communities. Others write within, beyond, and back to local literary traditions and, sometimes, to dispiriting legislation. I see the benefits and continuing relevance of national groupings—mainly because I think it is important to recognize the specificities of historical, political, and social contexts in the production and reception of the culture we study. Context contains memory. Contextual knowledge is necessary to help us remember what is or what has been done in the name of the nation and within the specific laws of the polity. National groupings, however, neither provide us with a map of how to read nor a hierarchy of criteria.

I teach both Canadian and African literatures, sometimes comparatively. I recently came across a pertinent discussion of critical expectation by Malawian novelist Shadreck Chikoti. Out of frustration at the persistence of expectations of certain themes dominating writing from the many communities across the continent of Africa and the diminishment of works that do not meet such narrow expectations, Chikoti recently wrote, "We are still describing African literature by content, so, an African writer becomes somebody who writes about Africa, while an American writer is simply a writer from America. One is defined by content while the other is defined by descent" (n. pag.). I have heard a similar complaint from a friend in New Zealand. The shift from content to author—"about" to "from"—happened in Canadian studies as critics and writers realized that a dystopian feminist novel was just as Canadian as a story about surviving a loveless marriage on a prairie farm, that a poetry collection that probed climate change was not only warning about dangers to the immediate environment, and that a novel by a Canadian writer set in a Bombay apartment community deserved to be applauded for the magnificence of its prose with a national literary award even if Canada was never even mentioned in its pages. The question of "descent," itself, has garnered much debate (see M. G. Vassanji's 2006 editorial in this journal, for instance). For me, the "Canadian" of this journal's title, *Canadian Literature,* refers not to expectations in content or form, but rather to the author—Canadian by birth, by choice, or by circumstance.

The "Literature" in the journal's title refers to the study of fiction, poetry, drama, non-fiction, and criticism, but it also encompasses more expansive cultural concerns and broader questions raised at the intersections of art and community. Furthermore, it embraces a consideration of the paradigms through which we encounter the literary itself in the contexts of Canadian cultural production. Literature can serve as an umbrella under which we can productively study the conjunction of such things as radio, film, and fiction.

What is *valuable* writing? Instead of quantifying impact or commodifying writing here, I think instead of social utility. The space of this journal as a space to speak freely, debate passionately, think safely, question vigorously, argue vehemently, and express contentious opinion can't be taken for granted. The world today is uneven. In some places, freedom of expression is severely compromised. Some writers work in a climate of censorship. Some are fighting for the right to speak openly. Some people are discriminated against because of who they are or what they believe, and they are anxious about the reprisals of speech. Some lack the ability to associate freely or dissent without fear. There are millions of displaced persons, fleeing war and terror for unknown futures, who have little access to safety, let alone venues of self-expression. Sometimes poets' words are used against them in court. Mobility rights are curtailed for some, while others fly freely to meet and discuss ideas at conferences and symposia. Still others risk everything to share knowledge. Valuable writing, then, is criticism that recognizes the inequitable world in which it is produced: art in global, national, and local environments. There is an onus on a publication like this one to take notice of the communities in which we live. This is not a call to perform collectivity or the encouragement of solidarity criticism. We need to recognize the responsibilities we carry as citizens with the freedom to speak and an audience who listen. When we write about books and culture, through whatever methodological apparatus we choose, we must remember what a privilege it is to be able to do so and to make sure that our words count.

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Erratum:

We regret that an error was introduced to Shannon Maguire's article "Parasite Poetics: Noise and Queer Hospitality in Erín Moure's *O Cidadán*" (issue 224) by editorial staff at *Canadian Literature*. The spelling of the name of the poet who wrote *Sheep's Vigil By A Fervent Person* should read "Eirin Moure" instead of "Erin Mouré" on page 53. Our apologies to the author of the article and to the poet.

Anna Sajecki

Contrapuntal Politics
Glenn Gould, Canadian Landscape, and the Cold War

While Glenn Gould's *Solitude Trilogy*—consisting of "The Idea of North" (1967), "Latecomers" (1969), and "Quiet in the Land" (1977)—has long been celebrated for its nationalist reverberations, Gould's own political investments still appear elusive. Perhaps this evasion is logical. Is not the point of the renowned Canadian pianist and radio artist's contrapuntal technique, defined by the simultaneous expression of distinct melodic lines, the circumvention of a singular voice? More than one critic has referenced Gould's letter to Roy Vogt, dated August 3, 1971, in which Gould defines contrapuntal arrangement as the antidote to "totalitarian" musicality (Roberts 150). And yet, critics such as Kevin McNeilly and Markus Mantere have avoided the full political implications of a term such as "totalitarian" by instead using the letter to establish those now foundational claims regarding the plural identity of Gould's music and his representation of isolated spaces such as the North. But just as the North fascinated Gould, Gould's use of the term "totalitarian" fascinates me. Not only did Gould's career span the Cold War era, but—as historian Graham Carr examines in a recent article—he was the first pianist from North America to perform in the Union of Soviet and Socialist Republics (USSR). The rhetoric in Gould's letters is repeatedly political—notwithstanding his views on the "totalitarian" impulses of music, the artist also reflected on the "undemocratic" harmony in Mozart's opus (Roberts 109) and the "tyranny of stylistic collectivity" both in art and life (Roberts 176). Is it possible, then, that Gould's work was indeed motivated by a politics inseparable from post-Second World War and Cold War tensions?

This article elaborates the wider political resonances of Gould's contrapuntal technique by addressing his lesser-known radio documentary "The Search for Pet Clark" (1967)[1] in relation to his journalistic work and personal letters. The rise of Gould's contrapuntal method is inseparable from his early performance of J. S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, wherein the multiple phrases and melodic expressions produce an overlapping, plural conversation to which Gould himself added his improvisation and humming. In the *Solitude Trilogy* documentaries, Gould revolutionarily applied the contrapuntal method to radio by overlapping voices discussing isolated communities made up of either Northerners, outpost Newfoundlanders, or prairie Mennonites. As a political form, the contrapuntal is often associated with Edward Said's application in *Culture and Imperialism*, in which Said recommends reading cultural archives "not univocally but *contrapuntally*, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (51).[2] While Said applies the contrapuntal as a methodology, for Gould the form embodies political possibility. Gould's work supports a specifically Canadian Cold War and post-Second World War perspective, refusing the simple equation of the United States with democratic pluralism and the USSR with totalitarianism, and instead presenting totalitarianism as a politics that circulated in a multitude of ways (including within the world of art and music) and that affected Canadian space through the homogenizing forces of post-Second World War American capital. For Gould, the antidote to totalitarianism was a pluralism that celebrated individual perspectives simultaneously, a dynamic that informs his presentation of the contrapuntal. And it was in a long-idealized notion of Canadian space where Gould found his model for making manifest the contrapuntal as a utopian political form.

By addressing the Cold War politics of the contrapuntal, this article also approaches a larger gap within Canadian literature, as there is still little understanding of the relationship between Canadian literary studies and Cold War ideology. How has the Cold War been culturally represented in Canadian literature? Are there any formal characteristics unique to Canadian Cold War literatures? Can literature help further our understanding of the ways in which Canadians experienced Cold War tensions? The few studies published on the cultural impact of the Cold War in Canada tend to frame its impact according to Canadian-American relations. Robert Teigrob's *Warming Up to the Cold War* focuses on the role mass media played in cementing Canada's affiliation with American diplomacy. Reg Whitaker

and Gary Marcuse's *Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State* also centres on Canada's allegiance with America and American Cold War policies, arguing that this dynamic enforced a conservative strain in Canadian politics that limited liberal freedoms in the country. Richard Cavell's collection, *Love, Hate, and Fear in Canada's Cold War*, includes a number of essays that address how Canada circumscribed and limited the freedoms of those belonging to non-normative identity categories. Nevertheless, questions regarding the particular ways in which Cold War ideology traversed and affected Canadian literature and art, as well as their formal representations, remain largely unanswered.

"The Search for Pet Clark"[3] was first written for the November 1967 issue of *High Fidelity* and then broadcast as a radio documentary for CBC on December 11, 1967. The Canadian political resonance of the documentary—especially in relation to the *Solitude Trilogy*—has been overlooked by critics largely because it has been categorized as a piece of music criticism. This impetus was established early on: *The Toronto Daily Star* almost immediately published the work under the title "Why Glenn Gould *Loves* Petula Clark," removing those portions not pertaining to Gould's music analysis. The documentary actually begins with Gould driving the highway along Lake Superior in Northern Ontario, followed by a detailed description of a local timber town called Marathon. After hearing Clark's latest hit "Who Am I?" on his car radio, Gould launches into a lengthy meditation on her music. Gould's analysis of Clark eventually peters out and he returns to a reflection on Marathon, ending the documentary by driving away from the town at dusk.

As the documentary opens, Gould describes driving the Trans-Canada Highway through the Canadian Shield, "its east-west course deflected" ("Search for Petula" 384). This is a descriptive that foregrounds the influence of the south (the United States) on Gould's first depictions of Canadian space. He imagines the highway as a Hollywood science fiction beast, taking a stance that separates Gould from a Canadian literary tradition of "othering" the northern landscape[4] and instead focuses on the highway's otherworldly, and particularly American, presence. The highway literally becomes an alienating presence as Gould compares it to the alien monsters in "such late-late-show spine tinglers of the 1950s as *Blood Beast from Outer Space* or *Beak from the Beyond*" (384)—a tactic that belies his desire for a different order of Canadian space. Identifying external colonizing forces in the Canadian North, Gould continues to denaturalize local spaces through a cultural reading of town names: "Michipicoten and Batchawana advertise

the continuing segregation of the Canadian Indian; Rossport and Jackfish proclaim the no-nonsense mapmaking of the early white settlers; and Marathon and Terrace Bay—'Gem of the North Shore'—betray the postwar influx of American capital" (384). In tracing this history, Gould's description culminates in the attachment of post-Second World War Canadian space to American capital. Before Gould has even described Marathon, the opening section of "The Search for Pet Clark" renders Gould's comprehension of Canadian space as, at least in part, colonized by Americanizing forces.

The concern for the American colonization of Canadian space—and as Gould might argue its subsequent alienation—that we see in the opening of the documentary is of course not a unique sentiment, but in communication with a wider post-Second World War Canadian conversation over American influence. From a specifically Cold War perspective, the promotion of Canada's unique cultural identity would not only help assuage fears over Canadian cultural takeover by America, but would also help mitigate the threat of Canada as a USSR target. Officially, Canadian Cold War policy was aligned with American policy regarding defense, the spread of democratic rights, and anti-communism. Yet Canada was also a neighbour of the Soviet Union by way of the Arctic. The defection in 1945 of Igor Gouzenko, a Soviet spy who worked as a civil servant in Ottawa, was an event that not only reverberated internationally, but awoke Canada to the very real dangers attached to the country's entanglement in Cold War tensions. As one of the main events marking the start of the Cold War, the Gouzenko affair officially placed Canada with the United States as an enemy of the USSR. One way to mitigate this tension between Canada and the Soviet Union was by emphasizing Canadian difference via the country's international position as a neutral peacekeeper, as well as by establishing more cultural ties with the USSR. As Lester Pearson advanced a solution to the 1956 Suez Canal crisis, for instance, plans were cautiously concretized for Gould's concert tour of the USSR (Bazzana 165). As Carr notes, several individuals within Canada's External Affairs department promoted these cultural visits as a form of diplomacy that could potentially ease relations between the two states (10).[5]

Domestically, a conservative nationalism would not only help redress the outcome of Canada's increasing economic dependency on the United States, as well as the country's mass consumption of American media, but would also help distinguish Canada from America on an international level. As Cavell writes, "the discourse of the Cold War in Canada was concerned with complex issues of national self-representation; if the Canadian state was anti-communist

in many of its activities, it was also anti-American" (5). The Massey Report, on the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences (1951) highlights this condition: the report fuses Cold War rhetoric regarding the spread of democracy through culture with an anti-American rhetoric in relation to the promotion of national culture. This connection between anti-American rhetoric and democratic promotion must be considered within a Cold War context, as Canada's relationship with America affected not simply Canadian nationalism but Canadian-Soviet relations.

While Gould is presented as having avoided overtly political stances in favour of a more generalized moralism, I argue that his morality was indivisible from his Cold War politics. Oddly, biographer Kevin Bazzana foregrounds Gould's interest in politics while simultaneously dismissing it by affirming his puritan morality:

> Gould saw moral issues everywhere, and saw them in black and white—another legacy of his puritan heritage. . . . Curiously, though, he apparently had no fixed views on politics or religion. In his youth he was already fascinated by Canadian and American politics, and in later years he eagerly followed the Watergate scandal, the Quebec referendum, and so on; his surviving videotapes show that he was a news junkie whose television was often tuned to political events. (331)

Those biographers and critics of Gould who point to the artist's "puritan" nature are likely referencing Gould's own words in his infamous interview "Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn Gould About Glenn Gould," that he likes to think of himself as "the last puritan" (40). And yet, the line is an outcome of Gould's conversation on violence and the atom bomb. Rhetorically, the interview's progression suggests that Gould's puritan views have been concretized in reaction to those politics following the consequences of the Second World War. In the interview Gould is concerned with the limitations of the "ban-the-bomb movement" and believes that as long as the logic of violence persists in other realms—even as tangentially related as the plucking of dragonfly wings by children—the successful outcome of any pacifist campaign will remain tenuous (39-40). It is because of this synoptic view that Gould somewhat facetiously refers to himself as both a sixteenth-century reformer and a puritan (40). When Gould is pressed (by Gould) on "the collective censorship of puritan tradition," he clarifies his affiliation is with the tradition "at its purest," when it involves "perpetual schismatic division" (40). By associating puritanism with the "individual conscience aspect of the Reformation" (40), Gould is unsettling pre-established categories of totalitarianism, framing his political encouragement of moral purity within an individualist "schismatic" tradition.

For Gould, aesthetic expression is also indivisible from morality: he states that if he makes any artistic judgment it is based on the moral impetus of the creative work ("Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn" 33). Moreover, he makes explicit the relationship of this aesthetic morality to Cold War politics. To illuminate this dynamic, Gould presents a town where all the houses are painted battleship grey, which Gould deems his favourite colour and acknowledges as a rather "negative colour" (34). Gould then identifies a problem that would arise if an individual decided to paint his house red. Inevitably, he suggests, the townspeople would react by painting their houses in "similarly garish hues," encouraging "a climate of competition and, as a corollary, of violence" (35). I suggest the image analogizes Gould's view of Cold War politics. By pitting the negatively-defined grey homes against a fervour catalyzed by the confrontational red home, Gould echoes anxieties over the Red Scare—whereby a Western community defined by negative liberalism is infiltrated and affronted by communism and inevitably thrown into turmoil. Gould's description doesn't simply replicate American Cold War perspectives, however, as the red home is not associated with communism but with a competitive individualism—an association that echoes more the American spirit of free-market ingenuity. Since the red home encourages the painting of "similarly garish hues," the totalitarian aspect here is not aligned with the spread of the colour red specifically, but the repetition of a thematic action. As Gould outlines in his letter to Roy Vogt, the "totalitarian ideal" is reflected in a "homophonic music in which one thematic strand . . . is permitted to become the focus of attention" (Roberts 150). The Westernized "climate of competition" perpetuated by the painting of the red house reflects this process in which a homogenized behaviour is given centrality, and which Gould attaches to the totalitarian ideal. Later in the interview, Gould associates Renaissance logic with "menace" (38)—a loaded term that recalls the Cold War designation of both the Soviet Union and communism as the Red Menace. By associating "menace" with individualism's legacy of Enlightenment thinking, Gould is again undermining the form of subjectivity that the West positioned in opposition to totalitarianism during the Cold War.

While Gould cites the painted houses as an example wherein an aesthetic choice has a moral undertone, the image also allows us to familiarize ourselves with what seem to be Gould's Cold War politics. His concluding comments on the analogy leave little room to deny that, for Gould, moral aesthetics have a political application:

> The man who painted the first house may have done so purely from an aesthetic preference and it would, to use an old-fashioned word, be "sinful" if I were to take him to account in respect of his taste. Such an accounting would conceivably inhibit all subsequent judgments on his part. But if I were able to persuade him that his particular aesthetic indulgence represented a moral danger to the community as a whole, and providing I could muster a vocabulary appropriate to the task—which would not be, obviously, a vocabulary of aesthetic standards—then that would, I think, be my responsibility. ("Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn" 35)

While it appears that Gould is justifying censorship, his tactic here is not force but persuasion through speech—an essential element of the Athenian *polis*, a political formation that Hannah Arendt upheld as the best defence against totalitarianism.[6] It might seem that Gould, in his reaction, promotes the moral benefits of homogeneity: a preference for a slate of grey houses over a bold red one. However, such a reading, too, would be simplistic. For Gould associates the infiltration of the red home with the formation of a violent, competitive homogeneity, based on the assumption that neighbours would then want their houses painted in "similarly garish hues" (35). Moreover, Gould's reference to grey as "a negative colour" (34) suggests a constitution of negation where the grey homes are not to be interpreted as an assertion of uniformity, but as objects defined more by their lack (for example, they *are not* garish hues). Gould's belief in the ethical responsibility of an artistic work, I argue, becomes the political impetus behind his application of the contrapuntal in his radio documentaries. The contrapuntal becomes Gould's "vocabulary" of political responsibility.

"Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn Gould About Glenn Gould" appeared in *High Fidelity* magazine in February 1974, a full seven years after the publication and broadcasting of "The Search for Pet Clark." Yet, what prompts Gould's analogy of the painted houses is a clarification needed after Gould states that "The Search for Pet Clark" "contained more aesthetic judgment per square page than I would presume to render nowadays," and that "it was essentially a moral critique. . . . It was a piece in which I used Miss Clark, so to speak, in order to comment on a social milieu" ("Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn" 34). For Gould, the documentary became a venue where he could not only promote his synoptic framework—wherein a political approach to violence, for instance, must be considered from many angles—but where he could execute his own belief in the artist's obligation towards morality through the establishment of the Canadian contrapuntal space. And as the interview demonstrates, for Gould these convictions were embedded in his reaction to the Cold War.

Critical discussion of Gould's Canadian contrapuntal spaces has advanced mostly in relation to "The Idea of North" (*Solitude Trilogy*). Critic Friedemann Sallis suggests that Gould uses the contrapuntal form in relation to the North because he is attempting to push the meaning of music composition. Critics such as Paul Hjartarson and Anyssa Neumann focus on how the documentary aligns with a cultural history that promotes the North as an empty container for the manifold projections (spiritual, personal, sublime) of Southerners, while McNeilly focuses this geographic dynamic in relation to Northern pluralism. Mantere contends that the contrapuntal is not used to help illuminate the North, but the North itself becomes the guiding musical-compositional force and frame for Gould throughout his career. Mickey Vallee recently emphasized the various colonial stakes of "The Idea of North" by stating that if there is a contrapuntal procedure in the documentary, it is "not between speaking voices; rather, it is between the voices active and the voices silenced" (37). And yet, while critics such as Vallee certainly determine a politics within Gould's work, few critics explicitly pursue Gould's own political investment in contrapuntal spaces. What "The Search for Pet Clark" demonstrates is the multiplicity of the Canadian contrapuntal space as the ultimate political affront to homogenizing, totalitarian spaces. In the documentary, Gould suggests an affiliation between the nationalist import of space and the ethical message of art, demonstrating the ways in which spatial and aesthetic representations can overlap and even collapse into each other in relation to their political expression. Because of this affiliation, these realms contribute to each other's realization. Canadian space becomes such an important vessel of representation for Gould because it allows him to express more explicitly the politics and ethics of the contrapuntal form in its conveyance of distinct, overlapping voices and inherent difference.

This important overlap between art and space in "The Search for Pet Clark," as well as the extension of their representation into the ethical and political realm, is reified through Gould's repeated exploration of the dynamic between timbre and range. Gould at one point acknowledges that Clark, "bound as she might be by limitations of timbre and range . . . would not accept any corresponding restrictions of theme and sentiment" ("Search for Petula" 386). Similarly, the implications of timbre and range for nationalist space are represented as Gould listens to Clark's song "Who Am I?" while driving along the Trans-Canada highway, attempting to match his "driving speed to the distance between [radio] relay outlets," so that he could "hear it most hours and in the end [come] to know it" (386). In relation to Canada, range is a tenuous category and the projection of any

nationalist message (the timbre) is reliant upon those technologies that enable the navigation and organization of its space.[7] At the top of a hill in Marathon (the peak of the town), Gould spies behind a padlocked gate "the two indispensible features of any thriving town—its log-shoot breaking bush back through the trackless terrain and an antenna for the low-power relay system of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation" (385). Here too is an incarnation of timbre and range, though slightly altered. Timbre has been replaced by timber (the main industry in Marathon, represented by the log-shoot), while range is implied again by Canada's communications infrastructure. This alteration reinforces a particularly Canadian paradigm that affects the country's realization: the nation's vocalization is inseparable from its resource economies, whereas the range or projection of this vocalization relies again on how discourses circulate. It also hints at the way that space itself can inform the pitch or message to be projected. This motif of timbre and range, then, underscores the relationship between a fundamental message and its projection/reception. In "Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn Gould About Glenn Gould," this dynamic is expressed through Gould's contention that words and deeds are not separate realms, but must be considered in relation to each other with emphasis on their interconnection (35).[8] This is also the same dynamic that underscores Gould's linking of the aesthetic and the moral, where the aesthetic functions as the timbre, while the moral outcome manifests as the work's range or ultimate projection.

Gould's interest in timbre and range helps illuminate his fascination with Clark and Marathon, as in each case he focuses on the unique way they resonate with and project American ideals. He states that he respects Clark because the progression of her songs between 1964 and 1966 presents a determined narrative of adult self-realization, and because the lyrics of her songs are at times in an antagonistic relation with the music and the delivery of the music. Starting from "Sign of the Times," then "My Love," then "Downtown," and then "Who Am I?," Clark's music aligns the British artist with a particularly American expression, as the song order presents a "modest acceleration of the American teenager's precipitous scramble from the parental nest" that establishes Clark as "pop music's most persuasive embodiment of the Gidget syndrome"[9] (386). However, what apparently interests Gould most about Clark's career is the existential shift and sudden doubt that arises in the song "Who Am I?" which Gould hears repeatedly on the radio as he drives through Northern Ontario.

Gould's analysis of Clark's music is bookended by Gould's aesthetic judgment of the timber industry town of Marathon, a town whose layout reflects spatially the same pattern Gould approves of in Clark's music. While Gould recognizes that each of Clark's four songs presents "an adjacent plateau of experience" (386), Gould also recognizes in Marathon's town planning—which he describes as "1984 Prefab" (384)—spatial plateaus that correspond with the job positions of the locals. These plateaus lead to a series of homes for the executives, which Gould recognizes would "be right at home among the more exclusive suburbs of Westchester County, New York" (385). And while in Marathon's layout "the upward mobility of North American society can scarcely ever have been more persuasively demonstrated" (385), beyond the executive houses the ascent continues. At the top of the hill, however, is the padlocked gate that prohibits access. This shift in town planning presents a stilted ascent that recalls the aspirational shift in Clark's song "Who Am I?" Marathon's Americanization is moreover suggested through the content of the CBC, a "local programming which, in the imaginative traditions of commercial radio everywhere, leans toward a formula of news on the hour and fifty-five minutes of the pop picks from *Billboard* magazine" (385). And yet, even the normality of Americanized radio is destabilized by the limitations of the aerial range, and the acknowledgement that "its power rapidly declines as one passes beyond the country club toward the highway" (392).

Gould's fascination with Marathon is inseparable from the town's moral application. While Gould ultimately conjectures that "the idea of suburbia is meaningless within the context of Marathon" (391-92), it is an unconvincing replication of homogenizing, suburban forces within the town that first prompts Gould's reflection. Marathon's imperfect application of American—or even North American (Gould's use of the term North American at times suggests the extent of homogenizing processes across borders)—social space in regards to town planning is established, for instance, through a stench from a mill that pervades the town. Gould attributes the stench to "a minor miscalculation by one of the company's engineers" in relation to prevailing wind patterns, a pungent mistake that "serves to proclaim the monolithic nature of the town's economy" (385). These instances of proclamation, or calling out, encourage a self-reflective and critical mode crucial for any confrontation of homogenizing forces. What Gould appreciates in the expression of Clark's persona and music is a similar story of American aspiration—there is a seeming failure that attends her shift from "Gidget" adolescence to adulthood. For Gould, the moral message coming from both

Clark and Marathon is also a political one: as the two exceptions that prove the rule, the singer and the town simultaneously call attention to the forces of Americanization while also denaturalizing them.

And yet, Gould wavers. In his final declaration on Marathon, he reverses any initial enthusiasm he had for the symbolic complexity of the place:

> The problem for citizens of Marathon is that, however tacitly, a preoccupation with escalation and a concern with subsequent decline effectively cancel each other out. And the result, despite the conscientious stratification of the town, is a curiously compromised emotional unilaterality. (392)

Gould's sudden conviction that Marathon's concern with escalation and decline only perpetuates a homogeneous "unilaterality" is one of the more curious moments of the documentary. For J. D. Connor, this turn in Gould's philosophy renders him a credible narrator. Connor writes: "at the moments we think Gould is overreaching—at the moments when Gould can't possibly support the kind of distinction he wants us to uphold—he himself falls back" (n. pag.). While I agree there is a falling back, this is not a moment of surrender, but a moment of reconsideration, of revision. To illuminate this revision, it's important to first understand how Gould imagined the meaning of totalitarianism.

Gould's letter to Roy Vogt, in which he describes a totalitarian mode of music, is actually in response to an assertion by Vogt, one of the participants in "Quiet in the Land," that Gould's contrapuntal form might harbour a totalitarian aspect. Gould writes:

> It is of course true that I hope to devise a form for the programme which in musical terms could be called 'contrapuntal.' I really cannot apologize for that analogy, however, because in my view—and I think this view would be shared by most 20th century, as opposed, perhaps to 19th century historians—counterpoint is not a dry academic exercise in motivic permutation but rather a method of composition in which, if all goes well, each individual voice lives a life of its own. (Roberts 150)

Gould here aligns his concept of the contrapuntal with the views of the twentieth-century as opposed to those of nineteenth-century historians. This approach affirms the relationship between Gould's envisioned contrapuntal form and contemporary history. It also tacitly reinforces the political undercurrents of the contrapuntal form, which soon become overt as Gould establishes the form in contrast to the totalitarian ideal. Totalitarianism—a political system based on authoritarian control that first rose in tandem with the Weimar Republic and then subsequently with the Italian and then Soviet Union governments—was indeed a twentieth-century political issue (at least in

comparison with previous eras). A "totalitarian ideal" in music, as previously explained, is perpetuated by a single thematic that "is permitted" to dominate, while "all other voices are relegated to accompianmental [*sic*] roles" (Roberts 150). For Gould, promoting an alternative to totalitarianism was just as important outside of the political public sphere, and his means of promotion was the contrapuntal modality.

While Gould reads Marathon and Clark as exemplars that denaturalize and question the homogeneity of Americanization, I believe that he ultimately decides that their inherent expression is not contrapuntal and that this is the reason for his sudden misgivings about their political and moral import. The individual expression of both Marathon and Clark is limited by Gould's focus on the ways in which they relate to American expressions and forces. Connected to this is Marathon's "emotional unilaterality" (392), as the town's alleged preoccupation with escalation and decline still uniformly orients it in relation to Americanization. Gould's final line in relation to Petula Clark is that her song "Who Am I?" ultimately "evokes the interminable mid-morning coffee-hour laments of all the secret sippers of suburbia" (391). Though "Who Am I?" diverts from the message of Clark's previous songs, the prevailing frame in which it is experienced is still suburban.

The dynamic wherein a preoccupation with escalation and decline reinforces an orientation according to the same guiding system also circulated within discussions over Canadian nationalism during the post-Second World War and Cold War period. Canada's preoccupation with economic success—inseparable from its relations with America—was coupled with national worries over the disappearance of identity largely by Americanization. While this circumstance of nationalism produced what may not have been deemed "emotional unilaterality" in popular discourse, the circumstance nevertheless produced a space of negation that troubled positive definitions of Canadian identity, prompting intellectuals such as George Grant to declare that a distinct Canadian nation would no longer be possible.[10]

For Gould, though, Canada's unstable identity was also the site of its possibility. Gould's vision correlated more closely with Marshall McLuhan's nationalist reflections. In the Marfleet Lecture entitled "Canada and the Borderline Case," delivered in Toronto in 1967, McLuhan states that unlike Americans, whose strong nationalism relies on a coherent identity, the Canadian's relative alienation from a singular identity category enables an incisive perspective that McLuhan likens to an artistic perspective. This multifarious form of identity, moreover, is inseparable from the spatiality

of Canada. As McLuhan reflects at the beginning of his lecture, "Canada is five countries between British Columbia and the Maritimes . . . [I]t's very difficult to address five countries simultaneously, and I think this is perhaps one of our strengths" (106). The intersection of identity and space is of course fundamental to theories of Canadian identity, most presciently encapsulated in Northrop Frye's 1965 displacement of the question "Who Am I?" for "Where is here?" (826). By casting Clark's song "Who am I?" onto the Canadian landscape, Gould similarly emphasizes the role of space. In all three documentaries of *Solitude Trilogy*, community identities are portrayed as grounded in and inseparable from isolated landscapes. While Frye theorizes that a "garrison mentality" persists amidst the Canadian wilderness, perpetuated by an inevitably "closely knit and beleaguered society" that upholds "moral and social values [that] are unquestionable" (830), Gould understands a different relationship between Canadian nationalist identity and land. For Gould, a nation defined by vast and empty land is a nation that necessitates mediation between individualist isolation and community ties. These allegedly "empty" landscapes foster intimate reflection, but necessitate community engagement, too, for survival. What critics cite as Gould's lifelong interest in the North might more productively be seen as an interest in a state of living that contrasts totalitarian impulses by fostering a dynamic of difference at the heart of community—a state of contrapuntal living.

While "The Search for Pet Clark" is not typically associated with *Solitude Trilogy* because of its musical analyses, it is also distanced because for the most part the piece is not considered one of Gould's contrapuntal radio documentaries. It replicates more what Gould has referred to as the "linear" (borrowing a McLuhan term) form of a traditional radio piece. Gould describes these traditional, "linear" radio pieces to John Jessop: "They came out sounding 'Over to you, now back to our host, and here for the wrap up'" (Jessop 374). Notably, the form of "The Search for Pet Clark" shifts after Gould discusses the emotional unilaterality of Marathon. Gould sets off at dusk to visit the town of Terrace Bay. As he travels, the landscape grows dark. In this moment Gould finds himself at the highest point in Ontario, just north of Lake Superior. Here, the clarity of AM reception is excellent, and as he plays with the radio dials, his car picks up a variety of stations, their voices bleeding into one another: he hears the BBC services from London; a weather report and car ad from Grand Bend, Ontario; a description of a piece by Mozart played on a French station; and a special dedication for

several callers—including those of "*HMS* Vagabond*, riding at anchor just a cosy quarter-mile beyond the international limit*"—who also want to hear Pet Clark's "Who Am I?" (393). Clark's song is no longer the only option available on a singular station, but part of a variety of stations and voices, whose presences coexist without collapsing into one another. While the peak in Marathon had been fenced off and while Clark's career peaked with despair, this particular summit—where beyond, "all water flows toward Hudson's Bay and, ultimately, the Arctic Sea" (392)—is not contextualized by decline, but instead offers the full political possibility of the contrapuntal as a Northern gesture. It is hard not to read this moment in relation to the Arctic rendered in "The Idea of North." As Bazzana notes, Gould had completed all five interviews for "The Idea of North" by late fall 1967 (296). With little more than two weeks between the CBC broadcast of "The Search for Pet Clark" and "The Idea of North," Gould would likely have been developing content for both and thinking about them simultaneously. Just as the water in "The Search for Pet Clark" now flows towards the Arctic sea, the flow of the documentary—its discussion of the totalitarian amidst homogeneous forms and suburban social ambitions—has led to this space of the contrapuntal.

In an essay entitled "Toronto," Gould differentiates the Canadian "political mosaic" from the American "melting pot": "the implication is that in Canada . . . however intense the heat, we do not melt" (86). For Gould, Canada, with its alleged political mosaic, offered the possibility for a more contrapuntal community. Moreover, this political promise depended upon the nation's relationship to its land. In "The Idea of North," the North becomes the fulfillment of that possibility and the literal grounds for Gould's showcasing of the contrapuntal. Nevertheless, what "The Search for Pet Clark" demonstrates is that everything indeed has a boiling point, and that the anti-totalitarian promise of the Canadian contrapuntal space also can become compromised by those homogenizing forces that followed the post-Second World War influx of American capital. Gould's views on Cold War totalitarianism aligned with a particularly Canadian perspective, as totalitarianism wasn't simply a regime in the USSR but a force or impulse inherent in the process of Americanization. For Gould, totalitarianism was, to quote one of his letters again, the "tyranny of stylistic collectivity" (Roberts 176)—with the potential for its presence in everything from music to child's play. It was the artist's role to consider the ethical and moral impetus of his or her work and to be tuned in to both the timbre and range of a piece. Gould's contrapuntal Canadian spaces became the moral aesthetic of his *Solitude* documentaries,

as he viewed something inherently ethical in a Canadian identity framed and molded by the nation's allegedly vast, empty spaces.

Canada's own timbre and range offered the ethical potential of the contrapuntal community, as Gould makes clear at the end of "The Search for Pet Clark." After turning away from Marathon and its symbolic representation, Gould drives toward an alternative space, and in its darkness the contrapuntal emerges:

> Traversing that promontory, after sundown, one discovers an astounding clarity of AM reception. All the accents of the continent are spreading across the band, and, as one twiddles the dial to reap the diversity of that encounter, the day's auditory impressions with their hypnotic insularity recede, then re-emerge as part of a balanced and resilient perspective. (392)

The clarity of AM reception in this moment—the response to Clark's "Who Am I?" that Gould has been seeking—embodies not simply a nationalist determination, but an ethical responsibility. Further, this almost musical description of the way voices both recede and re-emerge in a contrapuntal manner elicits a spatial dimension.[11] As "auditory impressions" spread out in the night, they provide an alternative to the Canadian identity crisis: the contrapuntal community. And as these spatialized voices intermingle, as "part of a balanced and resilient perspective," they create a form of ethical community that counters the totalitarian impulse. While the voices light up the darkened landscape, they illuminate much more: for in the nationalist identity they produce, there is also something universal—a utopian form of community that Gould identifies as a bulwark against totalitarianism. The contrapuntal space that Gould establishes in "The Search for Pet Clark" is the same space that defines his *Solitude Trilogy*; but as the documentary foregrounds, it's a deeply political form whose oppositional forces of homogeneity and totalitarian thinking are always relational, always an absent presence. For wherever there is "a balanced and resilient perspective," as "The Search for Pet Clark" reminds us, a different reality is just a short drive away.

NOTES

1 While Gould first published the radio documentary as an article in *High Fidelity* as "The Search for Petula Clark," Kevin Bazzana notes in *Wondrous Strange: The Life and Art of Glenn Gould* that Gould actually preferred the title "The Search for Pet Clark" and only changed the name upon the magazine's insistence. According to Bazzana, Gould's preference was "duly restored in the radio version" (292).

2 In *Power, Politics, and Culture: Interviews with Edward Said*, Said discusses music with a simultaneous melodic structure, such as Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, in relation to *Culture*

and Imperialism and reflects: "This has been a long-standing predilection of mine; it's the kind of music I'm most interested in and one of the reasons why I was so compelled by Glenn Gould, which I think had a direct bearing on this book" (184).

3 While the *High Fidelity* article was called "The Search for Petula Clark" and the radio documentary was called "The Search for Pet Clark," the text used in each is virtually identical.

4 The natural environment of the Canadian Shield is more commonly presented as a preternatural creature: for example, in E. J. Pratt's *Towards the Last Spike* as an ancient lizard.

5 It is worth noting that External Affairs also worried about the potential embarrassment of these tours, as Canada's creative talent pool was considered shallower than Russia's (Carr 10).

6 For Arendt, a truly plural commons was based on a public where self-disclosure through active speech precipitated change; thus change was never forceful but functioned through persuasion. Arendt also emphasized unpredictability in relation to this disclosure (190).

7 This representation refracts back on Gould's own reliance on CBC Radio for the projection of his documentaries and their political and ethical pitch.

8 In the interview Gould classifies the separation of words from deeds as an "occidental notion," one that has helped carry "the Western world to the brink of destruction" (35).

9 Gidget was a fictional teenager introduced by author Frederick Kohner in the novel *Gidget, The Little Girl with Big Ideas* (1957), and thereafter featured in numerous other novels, films, as well as a television show. Gidget, whose driven commitment to surfing was balanced by her girlish conformity, became an American symbol in an era increasingly focused on individual self-realization within youth culture. By referencing the "Gidget Syndrome," Gould is evoking this culture and the teenager's march towards "social-sexual awareness" and "postadolescent survival" (387).

10 In *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*, Grant reflects that the longstanding governance of Canada mid-century by the Liberal party encouraged Americanization in the country to an extent that Canada could no longer be considered sovereign.

11 In *McLuhan in Space: A Cultural Geography*, Cavell analyzes this spatial dynamic as repeated in Gould's *Solitude Trilogy* using Marshall McLuhan's notion of "acoustic space," defined as "empathically aural (and thus non-linear), and a space that was conflated with time—the space you hear, rather than the space you see" (11).

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Vikki Visvis

The Sounds of North
Political Efficacy and the "Listening Self" in Elizabeth Hay's *Late Nights on Air*

Set in 1975 in Yellowknife, Canada, Elizabeth Hay's novel *Late Nights on Air* takes place during a period in Canadian culture when the value of sound and listening is diminishing. The novel traces the experiences of two women, Gwen Symon and Dido Paris, who have travelled to Yellowknife on a quest for self, and are trained as apprentice announcers on CFYK Yellowknife radio by Harry Boyd, an experienced, though emotionally raw, station manager. In part, the centrality of radio and Yellowknife in the novel is attributable to Hay's own experiences: while she lived in Yellowknife in the 1970s, Hay worked at its small CBC Radio station (Johnson n. pag.). Her previous collection of reflections, *The Only Snow in Havana* (1992), reveals her continued interest in the region. However, Hay has acknowledged that the emphasis on radio in *Late Nights on Air* particularly indicates the novel's preoccupation with "listening" and "sound" (Johnson n. pag.). From the outset, sound and the auditory senses are prioritized: "her voice came over the radio for the first time. A voice unusual in its sound and unusual in itself. . . . [Harry] listened" (1). In these affirming representations of acoustics, the novel deviates from broader technological and ecological discourses of the time, which point to a declining appreciation for sound and auditory engagement.[1] This diminishment is partly linked to radio as an auditory technological medium whose cultural prominence is overshadowed by television. Similarly, the ecological discourse of noise pollution that developed in Canada during the 1960s and 1970s also suggested the unfeasibility of positive acoustic engagement. Canadian composer and music teacher R. Murray Schafer particularly contributed to this awareness of noise pollution through his examination of

soundscapes. More generally, North America began to cultivate an ecological definition of sound as hazardous background noise.

In a historical moment when sound and aural senses are reduced to technological obsolescence or sonic waste, Hay's *Late Nights on Air* mounts a defense of sound and listening by foregrounding alternative discourses that derive from the Canadian North. Critics have recognized that the novel, as Marta Wójcik argues, "utilizes appreciative . . . discourses," that is, positive representations of Arctic and Subarctic natural enclaves, "to celebrate the Canadian North"; however, these "laudatory" discourses are most prominently linked to northern sounds and northern listening (101). Hay gestures to the existence of this discursive priority in an interview, where she explicitly recognizes that the novel is influenced by Glenn Gould's 1967 sound documentary "The Idea of North" (Johnson n. pag.). More precisely, by alluding to Gould's method of contrapuntal listening, which was developed in "The Idea of North," and the explorer John Hornby, whose reticence is described by John Moss as the "greatest Arctic narrative [of] silence" (56), the novel configures sound and listening as efficacious, both in terms of political engagement and identity formation. The political and personal efficacy of sound and the aural is revealed through traits associated with Gould's contrapuntal listening and Hornby's Arctic narrative of silence: namely, multiplicity, inclusiveness, indeterminacy, and openness. These sensory characteristics take on pronounced political implications in Hay's work by enabling social organizations that privilege attentive listening and communal dialogue as well as by countering the ideologically reductive elements of visuality, particularly static and stereotypical visual depictions of Indigenous cultures. However, these acoustic traits not only facilitate political agency; they also cultivate individual subjectivity by promoting what David Michael Levin calls "the listening self" (38). As a *bildungsroman*, Hay's novel of formation privileges a model of subjectivity with "a developed capacity for listening" that "decenters the ego and promotes a more enlightened intersubjectivity" (Levin 37). Ultimately, in *Late Nights on Air* sound and aural sensory engagement within a specifically Canadian northern tradition disallow a reductive understanding of Canada's sonic environment in the late twentieth century as technologically obsolete or as ecologically threatening by functioning as valuable political and identity-forming tools.

Hay's novel examines the diminishing worth of auditory engagement by rendering a period of transition between different types of media technology. The novel gestures to a transitional moment in Yellowknife through the

analogue of war: "this summer of 1975 took on the mythical quality of a cloudless summer before the outbreak of war, or before the onset of the kind of restlessness, social, spiritual, that remakes the world" (8). This foundational shift is not the product of war but technology, and it will "remake the world" of media by emphasizing the role of television over radio as the purveyor of knowledge in the North: "A fancy new CBC station was in the works, to be built on the southern edge of the town and to house the new regional television venture, with radio taking second place" (86). The movement from radio to television is emphasized in the novel, influencing both the plight of Yellowknife and the personal as well as professional development of individual characters. Gwen, an apprentice radio announcer in Yellowknife, is denied this shift in media during childhood: "All this was before television, though not technically. But her parents remained in the pre-television era, doing without one, eventually cancelling their subscription to the *London Free Press*. Living in silence, except for the radio" (43). Furthermore, Harry, a radio broadcaster and station manager in Yellowknife, has his career undermined by "leaving . . . radio for a television talk show" (4). However, this cultural shift in media technology has additional implications when interpreted in relation to Marshall McLuhan's theories of the senses. McLuhan posits that changing media affect the interplay among all our senses, what he calls "sense ratios" (*Gutenberg* 24). In effect, differing technologies privilege distinct sensory responses. In keeping with McLuhan's interpretation of "radio [as] an extension of the aural" (*Understanding* 333), *Late Nights on Air* predominately links radio to the act of listening to sound: "And the radio. I always loved the sound of the radio" (303-04). Similarly, audio recording equipment is connected to the auditory senses, personified as an acoustic medium: "the little body of sound, her bag full of tapes" (339). Therefore, when Harry announces that he will "'defend radio from TV'" (68), he is defending against both the cultural marginalization of radio and the declining appreciation of auditory senses associated with this technological medium.

Technological change not only threatens to undermine the value of auditory engagement; developing ecological discourses also risk reducing sound to noise pollution. In his 1970 essay, James L. Hildebrand drew attention to this ecological campaign, which interpreted sound as a ubiquitous pollutant: "noise has always been with us, but it has never been so obvious, so intense, so varied, and so pervasive as it is today" (652). Attributed to urban and industrial development, the sounds of traffic,

commercial airlines, motors, and machinery were cast as an increasing threat to wellbeing. Such hazards also extended to Canada. *Late Nights on Air* refers to these acoustic pollutants through a series of metaphors that rely on urban sources of noise pollution: there is "traffic in voices" (7) and the "highway of sound" (31). The connection between sound and pollution is made explicit when the source of radio sounds is reduced to waste: "a garbage bin full to overflowing with tape so edited, so beknuckled and thickened with white splicing tape as to be deemed unsalvageable" (9). However, the novel's most apparent allusion to this ecological discourse is its depiction of soundscapes, which recall R. Murray Schafer's World Soundscape Project. Hay has described the Arctic setting of *Late Nights on Air* as "a soundscape" (Johnson n. pag.), thereby gesturing to the existence of Schafer's acoustic project in the novel. For Schafer, a soundscape is a sound or combination of sounds that forms or arises from an immersive environment (*Soundscape* 7). The term "soundscape" can also refer to an audio recording or performance of sounds, which creates the sensation of experiencing a particular acoustic environment, or compositions created using the "found sounds" of an acoustic environment (7). Reminiscent of Schafer's project, Gwen creates soundscapes as "seamless joins between ambient noise and particular sounds" (82). This type of soundscape was crucial to the World Soundscape Project when it was established as an educational and research program by R. Murray Schafer at Simon Fraser University during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Truax n. pag.). The World Soundscape Project grew out of Schafer's attempt to draw attention to the sonic environment through a course in noise pollution (Truax n. pag.). This project resulted in two small educational booklets, *The New Soundscape* and *The Book of Noise*, both of which mention the "sound sewage of our contemporary environment" (*New* 3). Therefore, while Hay's novel acknowledges the ecological threat of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline on "critical wildlife habitat" (340), it also recognizes the insidious environmental danger of noise pollution, which became a prominent discourse in discussions of acoustics in the 1970s.

Even though the novel notes the diminishing value of sound and listening as technologically obsolete or as ecologically threatening, *Late Nights on Air* resists reducing their significance. By casting sound and listening as valuable, the novel disallows a reductive understanding of Canada's sonic environment. Hay's work particularly reveals the value of sound and aural engagement by approaching acoustics within a northern context. Through allusions to a tradition of sound and listening in the Canadian North, *Late*

Nights on Air recognizes alternative acoustic discourses in the late twentieth century, and so provides a more comprehensive rendering of Canada's sonic environment. Although these discourses are informed by the perspectives of those who are from the "'outside'"—what the novel explains is "the northern term for anywhere south of the sixtieth parallel"—as opposed to the "'inside,'" and "by implication, the North, itself" (337), they remain important contributions to discussions of acoustics in Canada during the period, and thus serve as central allusions in *Late Nights on Air*. In part, intimations of R. Murray Schafer's soundscapes contribute to the novel's investigation of these northern acoustics. As Patricia Shand recognizes in her analysis of the World Soundscape Project, Schafer's "interests lie less in a program of noise abatement than in the more positive approach which Schafer calls 'acoustic design'" (5). Despite Schafer's preoccupation with noise pollution during this period, he also aimed to develop aural sensitivity by investigating various acoustic regions, including Canada's North. He applied this interest in soundscapes to the North when he travelled to an isolated farm in south-central Ontario in 1975. The product was a ten-page text entitled *Music in the Cold* in which he considers the influence that surrounding sounds might have on a composer's creations.[2] He also acknowledges that the northern environment has its own distinct sounds in *The Soundscape*: "The ice fields of the North, for instance, far from being silent, reverberate with spectacular sounds" (26). Reminiscent of Schafer's project, Gwen records sound collages by manipulating, mixing, and juxtaposing taped environmental sounds: "Then she organized the sounds in a formal way, like music. A phrase, then a repeat of it, then a new sound, and a repeat, then back to the beginning" (81). This northern composition of soundscapes is particularly apparent on the trek taken to recover John Hornby's final journey; the descriptions of northern ice echo Schafer's own on the sounds of the North: "Chunks of ice floated by. Candled ice, the long vertical ice crystals that form when meltwater on a frozen lake works its trickling way down to the water below, had bunched against the shore. The candles tinkled and chimed, and Gwen taped the sound" (245). The onomatopoetic "trickling," "tinkled," and "chimed" in Hay's novel are literary "reverberat[ions]" of the "spectacular sounds" (26) Schafer identifies in the North.

Consistent with this acoustic collage technique, Glenn Gould's method of contrapuntal listening is a further allusion to a northern tradition. In an interview, Hay concedes she was influenced by Gould's 1967 sound documentary "The Idea of North": "as a young girl, I listened to Glenn Gould on the radio. He also had

this fascination with what he called 'The Idea of North'" (Johnson n.pag.). Gould's notion of contrapuntal listening was developed through this documentary, where five speakers provide contrasting views of northern Canada. The piece employs Gould's idiosyncratic technique of simultaneously playing the voices of two or more people, each of whom speaks a monologue to an unheard interviewer. Gould called this method "contrapuntal" radio, or what he explicitly names in the documentary itself as "northern listening." The term contrapuntal normally applies to music in which independent melody lines play simultaneously; this type of music, exemplified by J. S. Bach, was a major part of Gould's repertoire (Dickinson 114). Gould's contrapuntal method, Kevin McNeilly contends, "comments on his use of collage techniques and of multiple simultaneous voices as a spur to listeners, as a call to develop, in ourselves, new (and inherently multiplicitous) forms of attention" (102). In accordance with Gould's contrapuntal projects, Gwen listens to multiple sounds simultaneously, carefully hearing intonations and implications, represented here onomatopoetically: "Gwen went to the town dump near the airport to record the extensive vocabulary of the local ravens, their rasping croaks and rattles and gargles and gulps, their metallic *toks* and *awks* and *ku-uk-kuks* and *quorks*. She discovered in the process how to avoid the wind noises that wrecked the clear sounds she was after" (99). Gwen's taped soundscapes, therefore, both record her acoustic environment and promote a distinct form of northern listening, which, as Gould suggests, involves attentive aural engagement with multiple, often simultaneously occurring, sounds.

This openness to variety and difference is a facet of northern acoustics also associated with the explorer John Hornby. Hay recognizes in her acknowledgements that the John Hornby adventure was always at the back of the novel. A fascination with Hornby and Edgar Christian is also a common interest for Gwen and Harry (21).[3] Hornby's fatal foray occurred in the Barren Grounds in 1926 with two inexperienced companions—his eighteen-year-old cousin, Edgar Christian, and Harold Adlard (Stewart 185). In distinctively Hornby style, the party circuitously meandered up the Thelon River for no explicable reason in the late summer, and missed the caribou migration southward, which was supposed to provide them with food for the winter (185). Consequently, they wintered without adequate supplies, and in the spring of 1927, all three succumbed to starvation in their cabin (185). Most likely, had the manner of Hornby's death and final depletion of strength not been chronicled in Edgar Christian's diary, Hornby's experiences would go unrecognized (185). Due to Hornby's inconspicuous literary output, John

Moss, in his study of the Arctic, has aligned Hornby with the "greatest Arctic narrative [of] silence" (56). Indeed, *Late Nights on Air* also makes this connection by reiterating Hornby's professed affection for silence: "The words that kept ringing in her head were Hornby's *I've come to love the silence*" (131). In part, the silence Moss attributes to Hornby is literal; Hornby's only accounts of two decades of subarctic travel were his "Caribou Notes," a few incomplete diaries, and notes for a projected book, *The Land of Feast and Famine* (Stewart 184). However, Moss also interprets this silence figuratively; Hornby's "refusal of linearity . . . his refusal to extricate his dreams from the landscape, to enter with words the continuum of history and geography, culture and kindred consciousness" (56) suggests, like the Arctic itself, "a world with no centre" (18), whereby a pervasive indeterminacy disallows reductive fixity. As with Moss, Hay's novel associates open-endedness with Hornby. When Dido Paris, another apprentice announcer, attempts to reduce him to the word "masochist" (131), Gwen resists the designation, insisting on indeterminate descriptors instead: "'No! Those labels just give you a fancy reason to stop thinking about people.' 'What would *you* call Hornby then?' 'Complicated'" (130).

These ways of listening and configurations of sound not only allude to a northern tradition; they are also politically effective. If *Late Nights on Air* situates alternative northern discourses of sound and listening from the late twentieth century as valuable, this worth is, in part, examined in terms of political effectiveness. The political efficacy of sound and the aural is suggested through traits associated with Gould's contrapuntal listening and Hornby's Arctic narrative of silence: namely, multiplicity, inclusiveness, indeterminacy, and openness. The connection between these characteristics and acoustics is reinforced by other discussions of the senses during the period. In the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan used a spatial metaphor to distinguish between "acoustic space" and "visual space" (Carpenter and McLuhan 67). For McLuhan, "acoustic space" is "discontinuous and nonhomogeneous" (McLuhan and Powers 45), "simultaneous and everywhere at once" (138). Its traits, thus, resemble those of Gould's northern listening and Hornby's silence. In fact, the novel's descriptions of "transparent fruit" particularly exhibit McLuhan's characterization of "acoustic space" as ubiquitous, with "no point of favored focus" (Carpenter and McLuhan 67). Having canoed on Back Bay, "an extension of Yellowknife Bay" (Hay 27), in the early summer, Harry and Dido paddle to a small abandoned cemetery on the opposite shore, where "Dido first smelled invisible apples" (27). Unable to see the apples, and so identify the source of their aroma, Dido experiences smell as

ubiquitous and unfixed, a characteristic that the novel extends to sound later in the same episode: "'Transparent fruit'. . . . The pleasant odour, pervasive but without a source. . . . She hears him call her name. *Dido*. And she looks around, exactly as she did when she first caught the sweet smell of apples in the air. *Dido*" (27-8). These attributes certainly indicate the existence of "acoustic spaces" in the novel; however, they additionally suggest that the multiplicity, openness, inclusiveness, and indeterminacy associated with sound and the aural are aligned with political power in *Late Nights on Air*.

The positive political potential of northern sound and listening is most apparent in the novel's depiction of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry. *Late Nights on Air* often refers to the commissioner of the Inquiry, Justice Thomas Berger, and the Inquiry itself.[4] In doing so, it emphasizes their political, social, and environmental impact: "At stake was something immense, all the forms of life that lay in the path of a natural gas pipeline corridor that would rip up the Arctic, according to critics, like a razor slashing the face of the Mona Lisa" (83). The Inquiry was commissioned by the Government of Canada on March 21, 1974 to investigate the effects of a proposed gas pipeline that would run through the Yukon and the Mackenzie River Valley of the Northwest Territories, and finally took the form of approximately two hundred volumes of evidence (Gamble 947). The commission recommended that no pipeline be built through the northern Yukon and that a pipeline through the Mackenzie Valley should be delayed for ten years (Gamble 951). Justice Berger heard testimony from diverse groups with an interest in the pipeline. As he recognizes in the first volume, entitled *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland*, released on April 15, 1977, "At the formal hearings of the Inquiry at Yellowknife, I heard the evidence of 300 experts on northern conditions, northern environment, and northern peoples. . . . I listened to the evidence of almost one thousand northerners" (1). Not surprisingly, Hay's novel refers to Justice Berger as "The Great Listener" (103). In doing so, *Late Nights on Air* both acknowledges Berger's extraordinary capacity as a listener and recognizes that this auditory skill enabled the political reach of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry.

The Berger Inquiry can be viewed as a political movement characterized by the inclusion and acceptance of multiple voices, precisely because there was a principle of attentive listening and communal speaking. Hay's novel draws attention to these traits in its depiction of mindful listeners at the Inquiry: "the formal hearings of the Berger Inquiry were instructive and more interesting than you might expect. She went whenever she could to sit in the

audience and listen" (144). This careful listening also facilitates communal dialogue. Like Gould's contrapuntal or "northern" listening, the Inquiry was characterized by "dialogism." Peter Dickinson argues that Gould's "Idea of North" presents a contrapuntal style "with a more dialogical definition . . . encapsulated in the montage of overlapping voices" (112). Deriving his definition of "dialogism" from Mikhail Bakhtin, Dickinson posits that the "dialogic" facets of Gould's sound documentary occur because "both the speaker and the listener . . . [are] reciprocally involved in the act of utterance" (115). Similarly, the Berger Inquiry did not merely answer, correct, silence, or extend a previous work, but was continually informed by multiple voices: "Tom Berger had managed to turn his inquiry into an exercise in democracy, informing, questioning, teaching, listening" (Hay 174). Furthermore, the Inquiry's treatment of radio facilitated a dialogic "acoustic space," thereby "emphasizing dialogue and response rather than statement and counterstatement" (Duffy 25). We know that "each evening when the Inquiry was in session, the CBC northern network broadcast Inquiry news in English and in the native languages. Everyone in the region was thus able to keep informed" (Gamble 949). As a result, it undermined the authority of "the businessmen who believed the North belonged to them . . . [who] couldn't wait for the gas and oil to flow, and so . . . resented the platform [the Inquiry] was giving to natives, environmentalists" (Hay 46) by offering an "aggregation . . . of informants and information" (163). Dialogic principles, indicative of Gould's contrapuntal style and McLuhan's "acoustic space," were foundational to the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, and enabled a politically valuable forum for inclusive, communal interaction. Ultimately, Hay's representation of the Inquiry emphasizes these acoustic traits in order to foreground the political efficacy of attentive aural engagement with the sounds of multiple voices.

The politically efficacious potential of sound and listening is further apparent in relation to the limitations presented by visuality. In his juxtaposition of "acoustic" and "visual space," McLuhan recognizes marked differences between these sensory responses. Unlike "acoustic space," "visual space" has "fixed boundaries . . . [is] homogeneous (uniform everywhere), and static (qualitatively unchangeable)" (McLuhan and Powers 45). These distinctions extend to the political implications of visuality, which, for McLuhan, encode power relations: as he notes, "visually biased technology can also create centre-margin power relations" ("Introduction" 13). Current critical theory by Nicholas Mirzoeff has elaborated the connection between visuality and power. Visuality and visual technologies are, for Mirzoeff,

mechanisms of social power or a "Western social technique for ordering" (*Right* 48). He links visuality—the physical act of seeing—with forms of control, such as the overseer in plantation slavery or the general in war, but recognizes that the authority of visuality is "not composed simply of visual perceptions in the physical sense but is formed by a set of relations combining information, imagination, and insight into a rendition of physical and psychic space" ("Right to Look" 476). Mirzoeff, thus, treats visuality as "a discursive practice for rendering and regulating the real that has material effects, like Michel Foucault's panopticism, the gaze, or perspective" (476).

Hay's novel also betrays an awareness of the political limitations of visuality. Television and the photograph are both forms of visual technology and mechanisms of social authority that can generate fixed and homogeneous representations of northern First Nations cultures. In effect, homogeneity and fixity characterize both sensory responses to visual media, as McLuhan would argue, and the content of visual technologies. The content of television, the novel suggests, risks reducing the diversity of northern culture because its programming is homogeneous and limited in scope, and so will exclude northern First Nations societies, especially Dene culture, and arrest cultural development, both in terms of dialect and social practice. The exclusivity of television programming is revealed in comparisons to radio: "[Harry] wanted one long street of sound that would be interesting to anyone, white or Dene, at any time of day. If radio could be more relevant than ever, he reasoned, then it stood a better chance against television" (Hay 133). Acoustic principles of multiplicity and inclusivity are upheld by radio, a "relevant" technological medium that incorporates dialects that television appears to disregard: "Already [Harry] was picturing Teresa Lafferty's hour of blended Dogrib and English; he wanted to hire another Dene woman, young Tessa Blondin, to do reports in Slavey; and he was tempted to curry more disfavor with the newsroom by carving five minutes off the regular local newscasts and adding them to the Dene allotment" (133). The "disfavor" Harry risks "curry[ing]" from the white senior employees at the station (223) is also indicative of the broader "racism" in the region, which is explicitly recognized by both white and Indigenous characters (46, 47, 168, 84). Although the novel appears to reinforce white privilege by foregrounding North American and European Caucasian characters, it maintains a commitment to diversity by relying on the central Dene protagonist, announcer Teresa Lafferty, to expose the disproportionately high white presence both within the Berger Inquiry and, more subtly,

Hay's novel: "Teresa looked around at the mostly white faces" (175). In a quietly self-reflexive moment, the novel, through Teresa's observation, draws attention to its own privileging of the white presence; however, by positioning Harry as a vocal critic of the colonial potential of television and as an advocate for the culturally inclusive capacity of radio, the novel attempts to address its imbalanced representation of white and Indigenous characters. For instance, the "white frontier mentality" (215), which for Harry is facilitated by television, is questioned by radio; as an "acoustic space," radio is a form of cultural agency that allows First Nations northern societies an outlet for self-expression that would otherwise be absent with television. As Harry explains, "Last March the settlement of Igloolik rejected television in a referendum. They chose instead to have a radio station they control" (180). The inclusive capacity of radio is confirmed with Gwen and Dido's radio documentary about "a Dene play on alcohol abuse" (130), Dido's radio interview with a "native linguist" (186) about his experiences at a residential school, and Gwen's dramatization of "northern legends about Raven, trickster and creator of the world" (184, 217). Such examples illustrate recognition of First Nations issues disregarded by television at the time.

Furthermore, the novel questions visuality by critiquing the reduction of Dene culture to ideologically static and homogeneous photographic content. Although Eddy Fitzgerald, a technician at the radio station, is seemingly committed to Native rights, he reduces the Indigenous experience to the stereotype of the inebriated version of what Daniel Francis calls the "Imaginary Indian," and does so for social recognition:

> A week before he was to leave Yellowknife, Harry opened *News of the North* and read a brief article about an exhibit of photographs in Los Angeles that was causing quite a stir. A series documenting young Dene women, unposed, half-naked, and looking as if they were high on something . . . a young native girl sprawled on her side in what looked like a seedy motel room. . . . He couldn't tell from the article if the photos were true to life, or if Eddy had staged them for his own purposes. (335-36)

When attempting to ascertain Eddy's motives and the implications of the photographs, Harry confides to his friend Teresa: "'But it's all for a good cause, apparently. . . . Art in the service of politics'" (336). Teresa's scathing response reveals the photograph as an ideological tool of both patriarchal and cultural power: "'No,' [Teresa] said. 'It's art and politics as a cover for—you know. His dick'" (336). Her comment confirms John Tagg's summation that the photograph is "a practice [that] depends on the agents

and institutions which set it to work" (qtd. in Ryan 18). Such limitations are highlighted when compared to Teresa's use of radio to create an "acoustic space" that promotes dialogue and social engagement in response to this urgent issue: "She had in mind an on-air manual in English and Dogrib of anecdotes, advice, information—what women faced, what they could do, who they could turn to" (214). Even though a review in the "Canadian Press" supports Eddy's exhibit, stating "'the disconcerting intimacy of the pictures never feels exploitative'" (335-36), the reduction of these Dene women to static and homogeneous stereotypes is, according to Teresa and by implication Hay, exploitative and self-serving.

Despite its awareness of the political and ideological limitations of visuality, the novel does not establish a reductive sensory binary that positions the acoustic over the visual, the ear over the eye. The photographs of the natural world taken by Ralph Cody, a freelance book reviewer, reveal the North as "'always changing'. . . . 'I've taken dozens of pictures and each one is subtly different'" (143). Visual technology here disallows a fixed idea of the North, and like the novel as a whole, explores various constructions of wilderness, revealing the North, as Sherrill Grace has argued, is "multiple, shifting, and elastic; it is a *process*, not an external fixed goal or condition" (16). Instead, we are offered a spectrum of responses to the senses. Gwen and Harry are most affiliated with the aural; however, Harry does not develop the degree of acoustic sensitivity that Gwen achieves. On meeting Harry in New York years after the end of their affair, Dido explains its failure in terms of his aural limitations: "'You weren't listening. You're still not listening'" (355). Ralph represents the more constructive potential of visuality. His reluctance to photograph human subjects suggests his intuitive knowledge of the dangers of objectification and his temptation by these same dangers in a desire to photograph Dido: "'I don't photograph people as a rule,' Ralph said. 'But I'd make an exception for Dido'" (78). Eddy embodies the insidious dimensions of visuality. He is first to acknowledge the male gaze, but identifies it in Gwen when she looks at Dido: "'Your eyes were on her body . . . just like a man's'" (30). However, because the novel examines the affirming possibilities of northern acoustics, it emphasizes the engagement of Gwen and Harry with northern forms of listening, which act as political correctives for the limiting aspects of visuality. In effect, the sensory characteristics of the aural have pronounced political implications in Hay's work by countering the ideologically reductive potential of visuality, such as representational fixity that results in cultural exclusion.

Traits associated with northern listening are not only linked to political efficacy; they are also deemed valuable because they facilitate individual identity formation. In its representation of Gwen's personal and professional development, *Late Nights on Air* incorporates the conventions of the *bildungsroman*; however, as a novel of formation, it privileges a model of subjectivity that has an enhanced capacity for listening. In accordance with the qualities David Michael Levin attributes to "the listening self," such as "openness [and] receptiveness" (45), this paradigm of subjectivity emphasizes the ways listening decentres the ego. This decentering occurs because "unlike things that we see . . . sounds are transitory and impermanent, ever insubstantial . . . they cannot be grasped, held, possessed" (34). Levin, therefore, favours a subjectivity facilitated by listening that cultivates a productive indeterminacy. This indeterminacy, in turn, allows for openness, dialogue, genuine exchange, and "increased awareness of differences and conflicts" (35) or, in Levin's terminology, an "enlightened intersubjectivity" (37). Steven Connor reaches similar conclusions in his discussion of the "auditory self": "The idea of the auditory self provides a way of positing and beginning to experience a subjectivity organized around the principles of openness, responsiveness and acknowledgement of the world rather than violent alienation from it" (219). What Connor calls the "indeterminacy of sound" (209) in the formation of the "auditory self" is not idealized, however. Connor recognizes that a model of subjectivity based on indeterminacy also threatens to create a foundational instability, "insufficiency, and insubstantiality" (213). In effect, for Connor, "the opening of the self to and by the auditory [is] an experience both of rapturous expansion and of dangerous disintegration" (215). Thus, Connor qualifies his analysis by recognizing that listening is complemented by other senses: "The auditory always leads to, or requires completion by the other senses" (220). In sum, for Levin and Connor, "the self defined in terms of hearing rather than sight is a self imagined not as a point, but as a membrane; not as a picture, but as a channel through which voices, noises and musics travel" (207). These principles are evident throughout Gwen's development within the specific context of northern sounds and listening.

Gwen relies on the sounds of the North to cultivate a "listening self," which is accomplished, in part, by decentering the ego. The imperative to listen is made explicit in her professional life as radio announcer: "you have to listen to yourself in a detached way and work to correct what's wrong" (105). By becoming a "rapt listener" (199), Gwen begins to change her

"undeveloped self" (205). Listening encourages her to leave the confines of her own egocentrism: as Harry concedes, "'you won't be any good until you're dedicated to something outside yourself'" (69). In doing so, Gwen begins to understand the nuances of her subjectivity, making distinctions between real self and performed persona: "'No. You're trying to be *almost* yourself. You see the difference? You're giving a performance as your natural self'" (114). This development is not linear, however. Gwen must suffer painful embarrassment after she overhears Dido assert, "'I think she knows exactly how good she is'" (141). Subsequently, Gwen is forced to acknowledge she "felt lost in the enormous gap between how she felt inside and what others thought of her" (144). However, through composing soundscapes and listening contrapuntally, Gwen is able to cultivate a more evolved subjectivity, learning that although she is not "the kind of person . . . 'who truly loves life,'" she is "'the kind of person who never stops trying'" (311). Gwen's development is counterpointed with that of Dido, who is resistant to attentive listening. Dido's listening is often superficial in ways that reinforce her egocentrism: "'Anyway' . . . 'let's get back to me'" (45). At times, it is absent: "The beautiful Dido . . . hadn't stuck around to hear the broadcast" (217) and "'can't listen to [Gwen]'" (44). Unlike Gwen, whose listening opens her to experience, Dido is subsumed by her relationship with Eddy, "her personality darkened" (229) to form a static, fixed self. Dido's personal domination by Eddy culminates in physical abuse (184), thereby literalizing the representational control Eddy imposes with the photograph (186). Thus, like her namesake in Virgil's *Aeneid*, Dido is ruined by a man; however, this tragic end occurs not because a man leaves her, as Aeneas abandons Dido in Virgil's work, but because a man claims and asserts authority over her: "the thousand ships set sail for Troy . . . until Aeneas fled his burning city . . . 'where he broke poor Dido's heart'" (280). The failure of the *bildungsroman* as it relates to Dido is most clearly articulated in her obituary: an "erratic, emotional, beautiful woman who never quite found herself" (363).

Unlike Dido, Gwen refuses to limit her experience, particularly her engagement with sound, and so consistently opens herself to multiple possibilities in keeping with the indeterminacy Moss locates in Hornby as a signifier. This openness to the experience of northern sounds is most apparent when Gwen surveys Hornby's grave and dilapidated cabin. She is confronted with the sounds of the Arctic in the form of a bear, unmediated and intense: "She heard the bear behind her, then beside her. She heard its heavy breathing. . . . [She] heard saliva bubbling in its mouth . . . and heard

the bear moving, and realized it was moving away" (300). Although Gwen also relies on vision in this scene—"Gwen's scream coincided with her seeing a set of small, black, gleaming eyes" (299)—thereby confirming Connor's recognition that "the auditory always leads to, or requires completion by the other senses" (220), Gwen's experience with sounds in this episode is intense and transformative. Here, her interaction with sound changes, as she has no radio booth, no microphone, and no tape recorder to mediate her encounter; instead, she is exposed directly to the sounds and dangers of wilderness.[5] The unmediated confrontation may leave Gwen feeling like "a shell-shocked survivor of the trenches" (300), but it teaches her an important skill set that is refined while in the wilderness, namely, her capacity to listen well. This aural sensitivity is akin to that described by Eleanor and Ralph: "Here in the Barrens there wasn't music, but a hum, a vibration, the sound of the earth. . . . In moments of silence, she'd heard it too" (309). Silence in this context is not simply the absence of sound; silence is what Moss attributes to the explorer Hornby: a refusal to stay fixed and an indeterminate openness to experience. This understanding allows Gwen to learn other essential lessons, such as the permissibility of personal errors. She acknowledges that "she'd done everything wrong . . . fleeing when she should have stood her ground, turning herself into prey. Yet here she was, still alive. The world around her tingled with life" (302). Gwen may lose the shoulder bag containing her tape recorder and tapes, but she gains what these sounds and her new form of listening intended. In short, Gwen learns that she can, in fact, be herself: "what mattered more than sound effects was the effect of sound" (303). Her cultivation of a "listening" or "auditory" self culminates in an "enlightened intersubjectivity" (Levin 37), for Gwen forms an identity as a professional listener in the service of others: "She'd volunteered at a hospice and found her calling. It was listening to people with real problems tell her their troubles" (352).

By focusing on alternative northern sonic discourses from the late twentieth century, those which did not diminish acoustic engagement to technological obsolescence or noise pollution, Hay's novel emphasizes the importance of sound and the aural in power relations and identity formation. Specifically, the multiplicity and inclusiveness associated with Glenn Gould's contrapuntal listening facilitates political advocacy. Further, the indeterminacy and openness indicative of John Hornby's Arctic narrative of silence aids the development of a "listening self." Ultimately, *Late Nights on Air* reminds us of a transitional moment in Canada's history when northern sounds and northern listening were crucial—crucial in responses to mediums

of cultural knowledge, such as radio, in areas of political and social activism, such as the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, and in the formation of a subjectivity willing to hear others.

NOTES

1 Acoustics in this essay is defined as "relating to, involving, or of the nature of sound" (OED) and "relating to the sense of hearing" (OED). Thus, it includes both the production and reception of sound. Sound, which is conventionally defined as pressure waves created by a vibrating body, will be approached as "the external object of audition" (OED). That is, this essay will focus on sound as an external object produced by vocal and environmental forces. Standard definitions of sound often also include the act of reception: "The sensation produced in the organs of hearing when surrounding air is set in vibration in such a way as to affect these" (OED). However, this analysis will rely on references to the aural senses, that is, the sense of hearing, in its critique of reception to sound.

2 Schafer's discussion of the North in *Music in the Cold* tends towards dichotomies that are not apparent in Hay's construction of the North. Schafer's North is in direct opposition to the South: "The art of the North is the art of restraint. The art of the South is the art of excess" (65). Hay's novel, however, complicates an idea of the North that turns on firm divisions between North and South, that is, between nature and culture or the rural and the urban, to provide a more complex experience of place: Yellowknife is "such a curious mixture, the city was, of brand new and raw old, of government buildings and beer parlours and bush planes and little shack houses close to the water, which seemed to lie in all directions, as did the vast wilderness" (12).

3 Gwen and Harry exhibit a particular interest in George Whalley's script for the CBC Radio feature "Death in the Barren Ground: The Story of John Hornby's Last Journey," which dramatized the narrative of Hornby, Christian, and Adlard (21) and was first broadcast on March 3, 1954. They also acknowledge Whalley's subsequent biography of Hornby, *The Legend of John Hornby,* published in 1962 (21). In 1980, this biography was followed by *Death in the Barren Ground: The Diary of Edgar Christian*, Whalley's newly edited version of Christian's diary, which had previously been published in 1937 as *Unflinching: The Diary of Edgar Christian*.

4 See Berger 8, 46, 83, 173, 214-15, 334, 340.

5 The novel, thus, subverts traditional androcentric constructions of wilderness as a space for the male quester. As Margaret Atwood explains, "even though the North itself, or herself, is a cold and savage female, the drama enacted in it—or her—is a man's drama, and those who play it out are men" (90). Instead, Hay's novel reconsiders wilderness as a female quest, containing beneficial elements, such as liberation and transformation.

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David Gaertner

"Something in Between"
Monkey Beach and the Haisla Return of the Return of the Repressed

> You don't have to be scared of things you don't understand.
> They're just ghosts.
> —Eden Robinson, *Monkey Beach*

"**R**epression" can be a dangerous word in Indigenous literary criticism. The baggage it carries, from Christianity, from the Enlightenment, but most of all from Sigmund Freud, immediately raises hackles. And the suspicion is well deserved. To begin from the assumption that psychoanalysis always can be smoothly immigrated into an Indigenous text is an act of *literatura nullius,* an erroneous belief that a given book is not populated with its own systems of knowledge and hermeneutics. Because it rings so loudly with the white noise of European culture, repression analysis risks writing over Indigenous voices even as it attempts to forefront those experiences.

Still, while his grasp on it is tight, repression is not the sole domain of Freud. Indigenous authors have conceptualized their own formulations of repression in their own communities, from their own experiences, and, perhaps most pointedly, in their own relationships to settler colonialism. Settler colonialism is the movement of colonists into a territory with the intention of making that territory their home. What is at stake in this formulation is the repression and appropriation of "Indigenous" presence, which retroactively (and fallaciously) validates the colonialists' "belonging" to place. Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson argue that "the typical settler narrative [has] a double goal. It is concerned to act out the suppression or effacement of the indigene; it is also concerned to perform the concomitant indigenization of the settler" (369). The settler colonial logic of "suppression" is based on a concept of progress that attempts to erase the "inferior" colonized in the service of social advancement. According to Patrick Wolfe, "these are the dying races, whose fragile bloodlines readily dissolve into

the settler stock under post-frontier policies of Native assimilation" (274). Of course, "suppression" and "repression" have different implications: being the difference between conscious and unconscious "forgetting," respectively. However, in supressing Indigenous cultures and rights from the Canadian imaginary—for instance, by employing legislation such as the 1885 Potlatch Ban—colonial governments have also aimed to repress Indigenous knowledges *within Indigenous peoples*, which is to say that they have forced culture, knowledge, and language to be practiced and shared in secret, away from the settler gaze.[1] In its attempts to erase all signs of "Nativeness" in Native subjects, settler colonialism alienates individuals not only from their families, communities, and cultures, but from themselves, enforcing, under threat of violence, a subsistence of *suppression* that began with the *repression* of self-identity and self-determination.

Within the complex system of settler colonialism, then, repression, as a North American literary trope, is significant because it promises the return of Indigeneity out of the ashes of colonial repression. Indeed, as the majority of gothic literature critics agree, "the repressed always returns" (Fowler 96). Given that there is never complete erasure within it, "the return of the repressed" resists settler colonial models that attempt to permanently erase Indigenous presence and proffers instead a future bursting with the potential of Indigenous resurgence. Re-centering the literary analysis of repression from the perspective of Haisla and Heiltsuk author Eden Robinson, this article thus aims to provide a localized means to consider repression and its return as they are represented in the award-winning gothic novel *Monkey Beach*.

In the psychoanalytic tradition of gothic literature, the return of the repressed is traditionally structured around a strict delineation between repressed content and the subject that represses it. For Freud, repression is comparable "to ordering an undesirable guest out of [the] drawing room (or front hall)" ("Repression" 2983). Freud asserts that "the essence of repression lies simply in turning something away, and keeping it at a safe distance, from the conscious" (2978). However, it is not simply the case that the repressed content is relegated "outside" of the home, but rather that it is buried *within* the psychic structure. The repressed then returns, according to Freud, because it requires a large amount of psychic energy to keep it "barred" from re-entry. The longer repressed content is contained within the unconscious, the more pressure it puts on the psychic mechanism, allowing the incursive content to "proliferate in the dark" (2980) before it explodes back out into the "drawing room."

In order to prevent the psychic mechanism from overloading, some of the compounding pressure must be released but in such a way as to protect the ego from further damage. As such, the discharged content must be altered (which, according to Freud can occur through an array of processes) to mask its appearance.[2] For Freud, "if these derivatives [of the repressed moment] have become sufficiently far removed from the repressed representative, owing to the adoption of distortions . . . they have free access to the conscious" (2980). In this sense, what returns is always already "for" the repressor, inasmuch as the repressed content is delimited by the borders of the ego. The *object* of repression remains dehumanized, voiceless, and often, as the European gothic has illustrated, monstrous.

The "monstrous" connotations of the gothic have very real consequences for the representation of Indigenous peoples. Scholars before me have illustrated that Indigenous peoples and communities are often the objects of repression and return in the North American gothic, and are therefore subjected to the dehumanizing effects that the return of the repressed inflicts on those relegated to the margins.[3] Perhaps the most popular examples of this are Stephen King's "Indian" horror stories, particularly *Pet Sematary*, in which vengeful "Indian" (more particularly Míkmaq) ghosts return to torture and haunt settlers. As Kevin Corstorphine writes, "every horror story needs some kind of monstrous Other to provide the threat, and while in *Pet Sematary* the fear King plays on is ostensibly the return of the dead as monster, there is also a symbolic Other [the "Indian"] that appears in shadowy form throughout the story" (n. pag.).

While the return of the repressed may conventionally be portrayed (and analyzed) in North American gothic literature as the chilling revenant of Indigenous peoples to complacent homesteaders, a more radical contention with repression in a settler colonial context explores *the impacts of repression as it returns to the repressed*—i.e., Indigenous peoples. I argue that Robinson's unique intervention into gothic literature, and settler colonial studies, lies precisely in this turn. It is through an indigenization of the return of the repressed (that is, a repressed that returns to the repressee) that critics of Canadian gothic literature can deconstruct "psychoanalytic" readings of Indigenous literature and re-centre readings of "the return of the repressed" on Indigenous texts, cultures, and communities.

Of course, this is not to say that Freud is entirely superfluous to the work we do in Indigenous literature. As Warren Cariou suggests, within the deep system of Indigenous repression enforced under settler colonialism, return is

always already immanent. According to Cariou, the prevalence of the return of the repressed trope in settler novels and films "reflects a widespread and perhaps growing anxiety suffered by settlers regarding the legitimacy of their claims to belonging on what they call 'their' land" (727). He goes on to suggest that "this fear can be described in Freudian terms as a kind of neocolonial uncanny, a lurking sense that the places settlers call home aren't really theirs" (727).

Cariou deftly illustrates that despite Freud's marginalization from certain parts of the modern academy (particularly psychology departments), the models he provides for reading "unconscious" signifiers and narratives remain vital tools for analyzing, historicizing, and contextualizing gothic literature. Freud's work provides one way for critics to read for what isn't explicitly represented in the text, to analyze silences and omissions, and to give voice to the voiceless: "horror appeals to us because it says, in a symbolic way, things we would be afraid to say right out straight . . . it offers us a chance to exercise . . . emotions which society demands we keep closely at hand," writes Stephen King (see Valdine Clemens 213). In Cariou's analysis, horror novels and films can become, with careful reading, unexpected sites of colonial resistance that generate space for Indigenous voices and decolonial critique.

Building on the work of Cariou, the critic currently bringing the most critical insight to intersections between psychoanalysis and Indigenous literature, I argue that a schematic of repression does not have to begin or end with Freud. We do not need to start by attempting to redeem a man and a set of theories that are, in many ways, beyond redemption.[4] My suggestion is that there are better and stronger representations of "the return of the repressed" in communities that have been subject to the effects of their own repression in a colonial state. Indigenous representations provide insider perspectives on the living effects of repression and generate localized ways to consider its return. They take the representation of trauma out of the hands of the detached observer and put it into the hands of the individuals who experience it. What I am suggesting is not so much an "indigenization" of psychoanalytic criticism, which assumes that psychoanalysis came first; rather, I am arguing that "the return of the repressed," as a North American literary trope, is in fact the provenance of Indigenous storytellers and authors. As such, a study of the "return of the repressed" in Canadian literature would benefit tremendously if critics *began* with Indigenous authors and stories, rather than German theorists and the Enlightenment Establishment.

At the heart of my argument is a reconfiguration of the economy of repression and its return. Rather than looking at how repressed subjects (Indigenous peoples) return to haunt the repressor (Settlers), this article considers the implications of a return that *comes back unto itself* and can therefore be considered within the framework of what Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson calls "resurgence": "a flourishment of [an] Indigenous inside" (17). In my configuration resurgence means, simply, that the return of the repressed is not destined or ordained only for the settler-repressor. Or, to put it differently, return is not always unhomely. Taken from this point of view, the return of the repressed need not be a nightmare; it can also be a means to reconnect with the traditional knowledges and cultural practices that have been buried beneath violent colonial histories. Marlene Goldman sums this point up nicely when she asserts that the Indigenous gothic "emphasizes the *repatriation and renewal* of Native people's sacred objects, beliefs, and culture" (243 emphasis added).

Read as a kind of resurgence, Indigenous gothic novels speak to the return of Indigenous culture across the repressive forces of settler colonialism. According to Simpson, the strategic shame inflicted by settler colonialism on Indigenous peoples continues to impede those communities even in the era of purported reconciliation. For her, resurgence is a means to reconnect with the traditional practices and knowledges that settler colonialism has attempted to repress. Simpson writes: "[t]hrough the lens of colonial thought and cognitive imperialism, we [Indigenous peoples] are often unable to see our Ancestors. We are unable to see their philosophies and their strategies of mobilization" (15). Resurgence, Simpson goes on to argue, "re-establish[es] the processes by which we live with who we are within the current contexts we find ourselves" (17). She continues,

> building diverse, nation-culture-based resurgences means significantly reinvesting in our own ways of being: regenerating our political and intellectual traditions; articulating and living our legal systems; language learning; ceremonial and spiritual pursuits; creating and using our artistic and performance-based traditions. (17-18)

In Simpson's framework, resurgence is a process of generating space for traditional Indigenous knowledges and traditions to flourish and grow in the destructive wake of settler colonialism. It is not a practice of retreating to the past, but of bringing the strength of ancestors to bear in the present. Simpson's formulation of resurgence is particularly generative because it insists on the strength and resilience of Indigenous knowledge as it

exists *across* time and *against* settler colonialism, which is not to say that colonialism did not inflict a violent interruption on traditional practices, but rather to emphasize the strength of the people—particularly women—who carried on those traditions despite the threat of colonial violence. Resurgence insists on a power that is present in the histories and traditions of Indigenous people, which survived, as Simpson makes clear, because of the strength and resilience of her Ancestors: "they resisted by taking the seeds of our culture and political systems and packing them away so that one day another generation of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg might be able to use them. I am sure of their resistance," she continues, "because I am here today" (15).

The return of the repressed in *Monkey Beach* is addressed in the critical literature, but the focus is on the effects of the return of trauma, rather than the resurgence of ancestral knowledge.[5] While these readings correctly address the directionality of the return (locating it in the repressed subject rather than the repressor), they emphasize the repression of *the effects of colonial violence* and elide the subtle ways in which, through this violence, *Haisla knowledge and culture* are also subject to repression and—more importantly—return. These "trauma" readings, in their ready application of Freudian theory, risk imposing interpretive colonization on the text in the tacit assumption that psychoanalysis is ahistorical and acultural. While Freud's work may provide insight into the distorting mechanisms of settler colonialism, I argue that Robinson herself offers a much more concrete and localized account of the return of the repressed in her community, which focuses not on the displacement of trauma, but on the return of traditional knowledge.

The shift to Indigenous perspectives on repression and its return is a necessary one, and far too long in coming. With good reason, the application of psychoanalytic theory, which is itself heavily rooted in the subjugation of Indigenous peoples, is, to say the least, exceptionally problematic.[6] In "Learning to Talk with Ghosts," Jodey Castricano illustrates the continued work of imperialism that is implicit to levying psychoanalytic critique against Indigenous literature. It is not only "the longstanding history of government attempts to wipe out Native populations in Canada," Castricano writes, "but also the discursive import of that history via a certain *interpretive* model that continues to do the insidious and coercive work of colonization" (809 emphasis added). For her, the interpretative violence of Western theory is nowhere more evident than in the "European, psychoanalytically inflected gothic" (809).

Robinson herself cautions her readers against the desire they might feel to glibly transpose psychoanalysis onto her novel. The author's reticence towards Freudian models is made most evident in a scene in which Lisamarie's parents send her to an analyst for help with her "problem" seeing ghosts. Lisamarie arrives home from school one day to find that her parents have booked her an appointment at the hospital. When they arrive, Lisamarie is introduced to Ms. Jenkins, a white psychiatrist. Ms. Jenkins is described as looking "more frazzled than [Lisamarie] did" (272) and after a quick greeting she sets into the rationalizing work of psychoanalytic analysis:

> "Do you think . . . that maybe these ghosts you dream about aren't really ghosts, but are your attempts to deal with death?"
> "No," I said.
> Her wide, blue eyes fixed on me. "Then you believe ghosts really exist?"
> "Yes," I said. (273)

While Ms. Jenkins attempts to read Lisamarie's "ghosts" through psychoanalysis, Lisamarie is also caught up in an interpretive act of her own here: a creature that only she can see clings to the analyst's shoulder, whispering in her ear: "Do you think he thinks of you? When he puts his hand on your thigh, does he imagine hers?" Is he—" (273). The short scene with the psychiatrist is a critical engagement with a therapeutic model that attempts to rationalize the supernatural by connecting it to a traumatic incursion in the psyche and rendering it "symptom," but Robinson further problematizes the European model by making Lisamarie an active participant in the analytic moment.

Lisamarie is both analyst and analysand in this scene. Not only does she push back against Ms. Jenkins' Eurocentric interpretation, she simultaneously reads the psychiatrist's own repression against the interpretation she portions out, and she does so, importantly, from a position uniquely counter to the "rationalizing" work of psychoanalysis. Rather than reducing the creature to a metaphor for psychic or emotional disruption, and therefore to a fiction, Lisamarie understands the monster as a thing unto itself: a material manifestation of anger and jealousy. In this, Ms. Jenkins' "monster" is similar to Basil Johnston's depiction of the (Anishinaabe) Weendigo,[7] a creature driven by the unrelenting desire to consume and destroy. For Johnston, the Weendigo is more than simply a metaphor for (or symptom of) greed. Rather, the figure is a much more complex and literal means of seeing and interpreting the wide spectrum of human behaviour. He writes:

> Even though a Weendigo is a mythical figure, it represents real human cupidity. However, as time [goes] by, more and more learned people declared that such monsters were a product of superstitious minds and imaginations. (235)

While we should not be too quick to conflate Haisla and Anishinaabe cultures, Johnston's Weendigo helps to clarify a counter-colonial engagement with "monsters" that does not reduce them to mere symptom. For Johnston, "monsters" are defined by the ways in which they are alienated from the family and community circles that define "human." Moving outside of the circle of one's relations in order to pursue self-interest is therefore "monstrous" inasmuch as it is the community that provides for the definition of humanity. Monsters, in this sense, are not metaphors for behaviour, or symptoms of history, but very literal examples of "humans" that are no longer connected to the sociocultural web that can guarantee them as such.

Like Johnston, Robinson does not employ "ghosts" and "monsters" as a means to aestheticize repression and its return; rather, her "ghosts" are articulations of traditional knowledge crossing the barriers of colonial repression in their return to Indigenous communities. Helen Hoy illustrates that Robinson has inherited her love of horror and the gothic not just from the throng of Stephen King novels she read as a young woman, but, more importantly, from the Haisla history she comes from. Writing before the publication of *Monkey Beach,* Hoy, drawing on Gordon Robinson's *Tales of Kitamaat*, points out that

> a variety of monsters . . . inhabit Haisla stories, the most prominent one being the one protecting the Kitimaat Arm. This monster with a huge opening and closing mouth, which had to be braved for the founding of Kitimaat village, proved to be millions of gulls rising and settling, feeding on herring roe or small fish. (172)

Hoy demonstrates that the Haisla gothic, in terms of monsters and the supernatural, has a long and storied history that reaches far back beyond colonialism and Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*.[8] Indeed, this piece of Haisla gothic is key to the "horror" of *Monkey Beach.* For instance, Lisamarie, in asking her mother about the history of the Douglas Channel, is introduced to the gull story that Hoy notes above: "she [Lisamarie's mother] said that a long time ago, people were afraid to go up the Douglas Channel because this great big monster guarded the entrance. . . . The monster turned out to be just a huge flock of seagulls" (114). The incorporation of this traditional narrative grounds Robinson's gothic in a Haisla worldview and sets the stage for her own story within that framework. In this way, Robinson establishes that at least part of Haisla horror is built around the distortion of the familiar, which stems directly from traditional stories passed from generation to generation.

Of course, Haisla horror is not only of the past. Yet another "monster" that plays an active role in the present tense of *Monkey Beach* is the b'gwus, the "wild man of the woods" (7), also known as a Sasquatch. During her childhood, Lisamarie's father, Al, tells her and her brother, Jimmy, variations of a traditional Haisla story about this figure. Al's b'gwus tales are inflated ghost stories told with the intent of spooking his children: they usually end with him donning a wooden Sasquatch mask and chasing Lisamarie and Jimmy around the living room while they squeal in delighted fear. In *The Sasquatch at Home*, Robinson illustrates how the b'gwus stories are deeply connected to her home: "the Kitlope is famously home to Sasquatch. The territory bordering on Bella Coola or Nuhalk lands is mountainous and remote. Many of the stories passed down the generations talk about the elusive b'gwus" (36). Like the gull narrative, the b'gwus stories connect the "horror" of *Monkey Beach* to a longstanding tradition of Haisla storytelling highlighting the delicious "terror" that arrives out of the easy slippage between ghosts and humans (here Al and the b'gwus): a shift that sparks a sense of wonder and fear in Robinson's characters and firmly establishes her as the author of "some of the most disturbing fiction that Canadian literature has ever seen" ("Playing Rough" n. pag.).

Robinson's conception of the "slippage" between monsters and humans, which she explicitly connects to Haisla storytelling, folds directly into Lisamarie's perception of the world and land around her. She informs the reader, "[w]hen I dreamed, I could see things in *double exposure*—the real world, and beyond it, the same world, but whole, with no clear-cuts, no pollution, no boats, no cars, no planes" (*Monkey Beach* 265 emphasis added). The doubling effect represented here illustrates the spatial distortion that occurs for the Haisla protagonist as she simultaneously occupies two worlds: her pre-colonial inheritance and the colonial reality of the everyday.

The disjunction represented in this "double exposure" also spills out into a larger representational field. For instance, Robinson illustrates the impact of colonial doubling on Haisla homes, manifested in the dissonance created between the two "Kitamaats" in the text (Kitimat and Kitamaat): the *Kitamaat* Village, where Lisamarie lives with her family, is traditional Haisla territory. But right next door to the village is the town of *Kitimat* (also located in Haisla territory), built and named by the Alcan Aluminum company as "a city of the future" (*Monkey Beach* 5). In the most literal sense, this is an example of the home made unhomely as a result of settler colonialism. The doubling of Kitamaat/Kitimat (being both familiar and

foreign, indicated in the hasty colonial amputation and substitution of vowels) draws attention to the ways in which the repressed returns in the settler colonial imaginary and the spatial dissonance that arises out of that return for Haisla people—one of the primary points of struggle that Robinson's protagonist must contend with while she attempts to re-connect with certain elements of her culture.

This same doubling effect also interferes with Lisamarie's ability to engage with traditional Haisla knowledge, culture, and language—although she is learning the Haisla language, Lisamarie infers, " even at one word a day . . . I'd be an old woman by the time I could put sentences together" (211). For Lisamarie, this repression is inherited, passed down matrilineally from her mother, Gladys, to Lisamarie and Jimmy as an intergenerational effect of colonialism. *Monkey Beach* makes plain that the repression enforced in residential schools on Gladys' generation spills out beyond those walls into the community at large. In Gladys' case, repression is most evident in her refusal of the Haisla supernatural. Ma-ma-oo, Lisamarie's grandmother on her father's side, tells Lisamarie that the ability to contact the dead runs strongly in her family. Gladys' own grandmother (Lisamarie's great-grandmother) was a "real medicine woman" (154) whose skill set included being able to talk with the dead. Gladys has also inherited this gift. However, while Ma-ma-oo establishes that Gladys is powerfully connected to this knowledge set, Ma-ma-oo also makes it clear that Gladys is unwilling and/or unable to accept this particular gift because of the residential school system that prohibited and demonized Indigenous practices.[9] Ma-ma-oo informs Lisamarie that Gladys "doesn't tell you when she sees things. Or she's forgotten how. Or she ignores it" (154). She then goes on to explain that Gladys represses her gift because of the death, disease, and suffering brought on by colonization, which was particularly rampant in Kitamaat when Gladys was a child (which would have been at the end of the Sixties Scoop).[10] In this colonial space, the ability to contact the dead was simply too much of an emotional and physical burden for her: "when Gladys was very young, lots of death going on. T.B. Flu. Drinking. Diseases. She used to know who was going to die next. But that kind of gift, she makes people nervous" (153).

Ma-ma-oo's explanation of Gladys' repression helps to clarify one of the earlier scenes in the novel, when Lisamarie asks her mother about "the little man"—perhaps the most significant "monster" in the novel. Here, Gladys insists that Lisamarie's early encounters with this figure "were just dreams and they couldn't hurt [her]" (21). In relegating the little man to the realm

of nightmares, Gladys makes clear her intention to lock this portion of her traditional knowledge outside of her home and away from her family. However, through her assurances that the little man can cause no harm, Gladys also underestimates the potential of the repressed as it returns to Lisamarie. She particularly misjudges the fear it might provoke in her daughter—who, aside from bits and pieces gathered from her grandmother, does not have the skills or knowledge to identify or engage with it. Indeed, inasmuch as Lisamarie is alienated from traditional knowledge in her inheritance of colonially enforced repression, the repressed double is invited directly into her life, in the figure of the little man.

For Lisamarie, the little man, like the Kitamaat/Kitimat double, is represented as a split signifier: "sometimes he [comes] dressed like a leprechaun," but other nights he wears a "strange cedar tunic with little amulets dangling around his neck and waist" (*Monkey Beach* 132). Ma-ma-oo explains that the cedar tunic connects the little man with traditional Haisla stories about tree spirits: in "[o]lden days, [these spirits would] lead medicine men to the best trees to make canoes with" (152). When Lisamarie inquires, "what would it mean if you saw the little man," Ma-ma-oo half-jokingly retorts, "Guess you're gonna make canoes" (153). Ma-ma-oo's "joke" here resonates with knowledge of the repression of Haisla cultural practices, and therefore the unlikelihood that Lisamarie will be building a canoe at that moment, while also foreshadowing a resurgence of such knowledges that might provide for this actuality in the near future.

As a signifier of Irish culture, however, the little man, figured as a leprechaun, is also attached to a complicated history of colonization in Canada—Irish immigrants representing the fourth largest immigrant group in Canada (Smith 219). The Irish played a fundamental role in building the colonial state and the nationalism that supports it, particularly in British Columbia, where conquering the "wild" (a category that historically included Indigenous peoples) also meant establishing the Coast's identity as white, Anglo, and male.[11] Irish immigrants represented nearly a quarter of the South Mainland population in 1881, and 55% of those listed their employment as railway work (Smith 218)—the railway being a significant contributor to the displacement and diaspora of Indigenous peoples (Hanson n. pag.). Of course it should not be overlooked that Irish immigrants are also a historically marginalized group in the context of Great Britain, and it is only in the "colonial tilt" (Coleman 94) of Empire that they "become" British. Indeed, in Canada the Irish were often exploited for their labour and treated

as "wild" themselves for their beliefs and "superstitious" ideas. As Angèle Smith notes, in order to survive in the colonial environment in which "Englishness" was privileged, many Irish immigrants "passed" as "White," and were thus in opposition to First Nations and later Asian identities (225). In her engagement with this particular set of signifiers, Robinson adds yet another layer to the slippage and repression of identity that Indigenous people and other non-English immigrants were forced to navigate within settler colonialism.

Inasmuch as he represents Haisla tradition (as tree spirit) and the complexities of its repression (as immigrant iconography), the little man's leprechaun persona positions him as what Robinson, again highlighting the easy slippage between "human" and "ghost," calls "something in between" (374): a signifier oscillating amid seemingly mutually exclusive binaries, man/animal, death/life, or, in this case, Native/Immigrant. The fluid movement between this latter double thus renders the little man monstrous for Lisamarie when he returns across her mother's repression. This is specifically evidenced when the protagonist refers to him as "a variation of the monster under the bed or the thing in the closet, a nightmare" (27) and when, after her uncle's death, Lisamarie is unable to understand that the little man is attempting to comfort her (132).

It also illustrates why, according to Gerard Moore, it appears at the end of the novel that the supernatural is "praying on Lisamarie's vulnerability" (51): repression has estranged Lisamarie from what would be, without the distorting effects of settler colonial repression, recognizable (if not still disturbing) Haisla figures. To refer back to the epigraph that I open this article with, for Lisamarie, "ghosts" are inextricable from a fear of the unknown, which has been enforced by a system of colonial repression. While there may be, as Ma-ma-oo suggests, no need to be afraid of ghosts, the little man is caught up in a system of signifiers that Lisamarie cannot entirely place but which feel simultaneously familiar and foreign. As such, they offer a particularly discrete sense of terror in their disquieting intimacy and generate a sense of fear that precludes her engagement with them as traditional knowledge.

The *resurgent* potential of the return of the repressed in *Monkey Beach* is made explicit in its final section, "Land of the Dead," when Lisamarie finally overcomes her struggle with "double vision" to reclaim her Haisla ancestry and culture. Here, in her fevered attempt to locate Jimmy, who has gone missing during an ill-fated fishing trip, Lisamarie blurs the boundaries

between the repressed and the conscious, disrupting the binary that has contributed to her alienation from her Haisla culture and further clarifying a Haisla conception of repression and its return.

To this end, the novel's culmination also closes a plot circle that Robinson introduces in its very first lines. *Monkey Beach* begins with six crows waking Lisamarie from a restless sleep: "*La'es,* they say, *La'es, la'es*" (1). The narrator informs readers that "*La'es*" in Haisla means, "go down to the bottom of the ocean" (1), suggesting from the onset an implicit objective for Lisamarie, made all the more significant because it is communicated in her traditional language. At the end of the novel, Lisamarie, now standing on the beach that gives the novel its name, returns to the crows, who now stand "as far as the eye can see, waiting" (370), as if to bear witness to her arrival at their prefatory imperative. At this point, Lisamarie is travelling in her uncle's motorboat to rejoin her parents in their search for her brother. Upon returning to the crows, she is standing on the shore of Monkey Beach, appealing to a supernatural force for assistance (365-66). In these final scenes she answers their call when, full of fatigue, she slips from her boat and sinks semi-conscious beneath the waves: *La'es. La'es.*

Lisamarie's descent into the water here can be read as resurgence inasmuch as the ocean, and what lies beneath it, represents a topography of repression throughout the novel. Midway through *Monkey Beach*, Lisamarie recounts an early experience on the water illustrating precisely how the ocean functions as an allegory for the repression experienced by her community: "Old logs stick out of the water like great, bleached finger bones. The ones you can see aren't as dangerous as the ones submerged just below the surface, the deadheads, which can puncture your keel" (112). The connections between the ocean and repression have been thoughtfully analyzed and unpacked by Sam McKegney in *Magic Weapons* in which he locates repression not just in the hearts and minds of the Haisla community, but in the land itself. In closing, I would like to build on the work McKegney began in order to tease out the nuances of Robinson's Haisla return through the metaphor of the ocean.

Contending with the legacy of residential schools and their continuing impact on Indigenous communities, McKegney argues that what lies beneath the surface of the ocean in *Monkey Beach* is the repressed itself:

> Eden Robinson examines this danger [of repression] through a metaphor of nautical navigation. . . . That which is unseen, as that which is unspoken, poses the greatest threat because the sailor cannot react to it; she or he is literally at its mercy. (11-12)

This analysis is Freudian, I would argue, insofar as it addresses repression spatially, highlighting the potential trauma of a return that has been locked away or buried. Whereas Freud uses the metaphor of the drawing room and its "outside," McKegney uses the ocean as a metaphor for the unconscious—where the "unsaid" lies in wait "proliferating in the dark" (2980). Similar to Freud's theorem, then, the repressed returns in the form of the deadhead that eventually breaks the surface, inflicting damage on the "keel."

In shifting the analytical focus point from Freud to Robinson herself, we can extend McKegney's analysis yet further and locate an articulation of repression that is germane to the text itself, rather than an outside source: if the ocean represents the repressed and the repressed has become, under the imposition of settler colonialism, a space encompassing traditional knowledge and culture, *La'es* is therefore a moment of return for Lisamarie to family, language, and Haisla ways of knowing. Indeed, underwater, Lisamarie encounters the "ghosts" of her ancestors: first Ma-ma-oo, who helps her to rise to the surface, where she struggles to catch her breath before "the water pulls [her] back down" (372), and then her brother Jimmy, who is at this point confirmed to have died at sea. Jimmy does not speak, but he also pushes his sister to the surface, saving her once again from drowning. Coming up from the bottom of the ocean this second time, thus doubly following the crows' imperative to "return," Lisamarie is finally able to experience the resurgence that has been bubbling behind the narrative from page one of the novel. Upon breaking the surface, her uncle, her grandfather, and Jimmy are all on the beach dancing, celebrating, and speaking Haisla—more *supra*natural than *super*natural—and Lisamarie is, for the first time in her many encounters with "ghosts" in this book, unafraid: "I open my mouth, but nothing comes out. They are blurry, dark figures against the firelight. *I can understand the words even though they are in Haisla* and it's a farewell song, they are singing about leaving and meeting again" (373-74 emphasis added).

In returning to the repressed at the end of the novel, Lisamarie finds herself finally at home with her "ghosts" and the connections to Haisla culture and knowledge they represent for her. In this final scene, the binary that once alienated Lisamarie from traditional knowledge collapses in on itself, inasmuch as Lisamarie's descent into the repressed disrupts the delineation between unconscious/conscious, bringing the latter into the former and vice versa. While the figures of her relations are dark and blurry, their indistinct representation is no longer an effect of colonial repression, but of Lisamarie's rebirth into her Haisla inheritance, made most explicit

in her sudden ability to comprehend the language. The metaphor of the ocean—which stands very much opposed to Freud's very European metaphor of the drawing room—allows Robinson to represent a localized, land-based, inflection of repression and its return, one that ensures that Indigenous peoples are reunited with their histories, languages, and cultures in a mental and physical space that escapes the distortions of settler colonialism.

Quite rightfully, gone are the days when psychoanalytic criticism could be applied *carte blanche* to Indigenous literature. Castricano notes that the uncritical application of Freudian literary theory to Indigenous texts recapitulates and reinforces settler colonial ideology in the arrogant and fallacious assumption that psychoanalysis (or Freud himself) "knows better" about Indigenous peoples than Indigenous peoples know about themselves. To begin from the assumption that psychoanalysis can, without careful consideration of its interpretive biases and historical contexts, be imposed on an Indigenous text is a clear reiteration of colonial violence reenacted in the name of "close reading." But we do not need Freud to read repression in this novel, at least not to grasp its significance. Robinson's skilled detailing of Haisla "horror" and the ideological violence of settler colonialism provide a much richer and more pertinent context from which to begin this work. It is right there in the book itself.

What I have aimed to illustrate in this article are the ways in which Indigenous authors are themselves employing what we might have previously called "psychoanalytic" tropes that in fact pre-date Freud and are built out of their own histories, cultures, and experiences. Re-centering repression to illustrate the distorting effects settler colonialism has had, and continues to have, on her community, Robinson establishes a rigorous Haisla conceptualization of the return of the repressed and emboldens the resurgence of Indigenous knowledges in the next generation. The repressed is returning. And Robinson compels her readers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to prepare for and welcome it: "you don't have to be scared of things you don't understand. They're just ghosts" (265).

NOTES

1 "The Potlatch Ban, legislated by the government of Canada in 1885 under the Indian Act, forbid the practice of potlatches under penalty of imprisonment. It remained in effect until 1951. In 1921, Namgis Chief Dan Cranmer held a now famous underground potlatch in Alert Bay. The event resulted in 50 arrests (Hanson n. pag.)."

2 Displacement, condensation, reaction-formation. See Freud, "Repression" 2986-87.

3 For instance, see Sugars and Turcotte; Cariou; Goldman.
4 For more on the disabuse of Indigenous peoples in psychoanalytic criticism, see Julia Emberley in *Defamiliarizing the Aboriginal*.
5 See most particularly Jennifer Andrews.
6 Freud's *Totem and Taboo* is perhaps the most troubling example here in its subjugation of "primitives" as the primary rhetorical tool used to advance the author's argument. Indeed, the opening chapter of *Totem and Taboo* is entitled "The Savage's Dread of Incest." For more on Freud's "primitivism," see Emberley.
7 Alternative spellings include "wendigo," "windigo," "wīntikō" (Anishinaabe), and "wīhtikōw" (Cree). See Brightman.
8 Largely considered to be the first gothic novel.
9 For more on the repressive impacts of residential schools depicted in Indigenous literature, including *Monkey Beach,* see McKegney.
10 The term "Sixties Scoop" refers to the Canadian practice of apprehending high numbers of Aboriginal children and fostering or adopting them out to white families.
11 See Ward, *White Canada Forever.*

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Joel Deshaye

Tom King's John Wayne
The Western in *Green Grass, Running Water*

Mouth-sore with bad breath,
A runny-eyed roan, sway-backed,
What kind of a horse is death?
—Louis Phillips, "Considering the Death of John Wayne"

When the American movie star John Wayne died in 1979 after a long career, the American poet Louis Phillips commented indirectly on the star's historical significance in "Considering the Death of John Wayne." The poem predates by fourteen years Thomas King's even more daring "consideration" in his novel *Green Grass, Running Water*. In 1974, *CBS News* reported that the "conservative Wayne" had visited the comparatively liberal Harvard University upon invitation from the provocative *Harvard Lampoon*, arriving on an "armoured personnel carrier" offered to him by supporters in the reserves ("John Wayne" n. pag.). Phillips remembers the scene in his poem: "He went to Harvard in a tank / Which is one way to get there" (265). If you remember Wayne's voice, you can hear it in the second of these lines; Phillips here is partly ventriloquizing and partly elegizing Wayne's transition from "tank" to "horse" to the grave. The poem and its historical contexts introduce many of the ideas that preoccupy me in this essay, such as the politics of celebrity and the fascination with dead celebrities. I argue, in fact, that King's vision of John Wayne reframes other Canadian Westerns about Billy the Kid and Jesse James *as a collective fantasy of the death of American celebrity*—or at least as an attempted subversion of American pop-cultural influence. In *Green Grass, Running Water* and other later texts, King articulates his stake in a popular culture that has a pernicious influence on opinions of the First Nations and Native Americans. As King suggests, the problem is that figures such as Wayne spin off out of popular culture into history, or at least into popular conceptions of history, and give the false impression that modern Indigenous culture is an oxymoron; it was *supposed* to have died in the nineteenth century.

Popular culture as a threat bigger than history—that is the concern of this essay, and it is one possible motivation for King's wading into the literary end of popular culture: to question it from within. This essay starts with King's reaction against the nostalgia of the Western in *Green Grass, Running Water*, thereby drawing attention to the role of public personas such as Wayne's in manipulating feelings about history through popular culture. It then compares the publicity and politics of John Wayne to those of "Tom King," partly to reflect on how these men appeal to fans. I call Thomas King "Tom" here and in the title as a reminder of the public persona he developed in the late 1990s on CBC Radio's *Dead Dog Café Comedy Hour* and during his candidacy for a seat in Parliament in 2007-08. In *Green Grass, Running Water*, King is teaching us lessons about popular culture and the publicity of "Indians" that he would develop not only on radio but also through his photographic series of "Native artists in Lone Ranger masks" (qtd. in Christie 76) and in the short film *I'm Not the Indian You Had in Mind*.

Green Grass, Running Water is a well-researched text—thirty-seven studies naming it in their own titles, plus many others identified in Eva Gruber's selected bibliography (331-39)—but, while its John Wayne scenes are often mentioned, neither the Western nor especially Wayne are focal points. These points are retrospectively crucial. Reading King's novel today is different from reading it in 1993, partly because he is now much more widely known, and his major reputation is significant to the novel's theme of celebrity. Furthermore, since King turned his attention to the Western through John Wayne in *Green Grass, Running Water*, we have seen the publication of books that rethink Westerns such as major historical trilogies by both Guy Vanderhaeghe and Fred Stenson, George Bowering's *Shoot!* (1994), Gil Adamson's *The Outlander* (2007), Patrick DeWitt's *The Sisters Brothers* (2011), Sean Johnston's *Listen All You Bullets* (2013), Natalee Caple's *In Calamity's Wake* (2013), Emma Donoghue's *Frog Music* (2014), Nadia Bozak's *El Niño* (2014), and most recently Alix Healey's *All True Not a Lie in It* (2015). In Canada's relatively small literary market, any such coincidence of genre fiction is remarkable. Although the Canadian Western can be traced back at least as far as the novels of Ralph Connor and H. A. Cody in the 1910s, through wartime pulp fiction such as *Dynamic Western* magazine in Toronto, and to occasional examples in CanLit by Michael Ondaatje, bpNichol, and later Paulette Jiles and George Bowering (his *Caprice* 1987), the increased activity surrounding the Western since the 1990s raises the question of historical impetus. Why then, and why now? The answers to these questions

could be a book in themselves, but one hypothesis is that the shift to the right in an era of globalization and neoliberalism, leading to the election in 2006 of the Conservative party under Stephen Harper, prompted reflection on myths of the West and the Western world that manifested itself through the Western. The recent defeat of the Harper government in 2015 seems an opportune moment to return to the book that arguably started the trend.

The Western is a historically engaged and nostalgic genre, but the implicit comparison of the present to the Old West is not often made obvious through framing narratives such as those in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (Ford 1962) and *Back to the Future III* (Zemeckis 1990). The Western tends to bring us close to the action. The framing narrative in *Green Grass, Running Water*, however, creates a distancing effect that also helps King's own readers to avoid the nostalgia so crucial to Westerns. Coincidentally, another book by an Indigenous writer published in 1993 similarly avoids nostalgia; in Sherman Alexie's *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, one of the "Indian" characters dreams of being "a gunfighter with braids and a ribbon shirt. He wouldn't speak English, just whisper Spokane as he gunned down Wild Bill Hickok, Bat Masterson, even Billy the Kid. . . . [W]hite and Indian people would sing ballads about him" (232). The nostalgia for an alternative history here suggests that King's fantasy about the death of American celebrity is not simply a "Canadian" affair; it is a concern other Indigenous writers have about the pop culture of the Western. Conventionalized through repetition of narrative and trope, the genre encourages us to appreciate rather than critique nostalgia. When generic conventions are repeated but not challenged, they enable fictional representations to support real-life ideology—a slippage from illusion to reality. Such a slippage is like the biographical fallacy of assuming that the character is like the actor. *Green Grass, Running Water* treats John Wayne distantly, as the Other, refusing to personalize or historicize the man behind the persona. To do so might be to create sympathy in readers and to individualize a key problem of the Western genre: the idolization of gunfighters and the related nostalgia for their passing. Correspondingly, in *I'm Not the Indian You Had in Mind*, King considers "this Indian you idolize" to be the detrimentally kitschy idol of a cigar-store "Indian," an equally problematic figure because of nostalgia for "the vanishing Indian" instead of support for contemporary Indigenous cultures. The nostalgia encourages overly selective memories and distorted histories. In *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema* (2005), Pam Cook argues

that "the distinction between nostalgia, memory and history has become blurred" (3), and that "nostalgia is generally associated with fantasy" (3). She prefers to see history, memory, and nostalgia as a "continuum" (3) on which memory partly validates nostalgia so that it is not dismissed as inauthentic or fantastic. King would probably agree with her in that respect. Indeed, one reason why he disavows nostalgia might be to reduce its effect on notions of history. Another is the likelihood that nostalgia in the Western tends to be imperialistic (Abel 87), and that the West now needs to be won "from the shady forces of illusion and fantasy" (Evans 408). Although David H. Evans argues that such "forces" are to some extent straw men in other revisionist Westerns (408), I find few replications of the problems of the Western in *Green Grass, Running Water*. By refusing to treat John Wayne nostalgically through history or pseudo-history, but rather through a genuinely *alternative* fantasy (I mean as a subversive construction), King minimizes the effect of generic star power on his readers, though some of his Western-watching characters (most importantly Lionel) are under that influence.

When King fantasizes about the death of John Wayne in the novel, he is interfering less with the man born Marion Morrison and more with his persona—which is, in fact, as much a *type* as it is a *trope* that appears often in narratives of stardom. To want to see a celebrity knocked off his high horse is a cliché of popular culture that partly explains the popularity of rise-and-fall narratives. Consider the recent film *Birdman* (Iñárritu 2014), the exemplary *Sunset Boulevard* (Wilder 1950), and of course some of the nine films in which the John Wayne character dies, perhaps most importantly *The Shootist* (Siegel 1976), the last of his career. In the latter examples, the star is a synecdoche for an era, and the narrative comments on history. At other times, the star is allegorical, standing in for a morally charged historical figure, as is the case in *Citizen Kane* (Wells 1941). The problem is that history and popular culture are not separate, nor are the person and persona as neatly divisible as even the stars themselves might hope: *The Shootist* refers semi-autobiographically to the imminent death of the actual man. When celebrities perform deaths while their own deaths are imminent, Thomas H. Kane calls it "automortography" (410) and argues that it is a form of self-promotion that enables stars to set some of the terms of memorialization. It is what some people do when they know that their compulsively followed dramas as celebrities—as public personas—give them the status of historical figures too.

John Wayne had this historical status, and it is almost certainly one of the main reasons that King chose to kill him fictionally at the direction of

the four shape-shifting "Indians" in a movie—a magic realist reversal of the usual fate when cowboys meet "Indians" in Westerns. King could have chosen to re-enact the scene of George Armstrong Custer's death at the Battle of the Little Bighorn, as in the movie *Little Big Man* (Penn 1970), but he chose to kill Wayne. He acknowledges Wayne's historical significance as a public persona when he alludes to how John Wayne movies might have been marketed to kids (214) and refers to real John Wayne movies such as *Stagecoach, Hondo*, and *The Searchers* (Ford 1939; Farrow 1953; Ford 1956). In his work on King, Brian Johnson is wary of "collaps[ing] history into geography" (30), and in parallel I am wary of collapsing history into popular culture. For the character Professor Alberta Frank in *Green Grass, Running Water*, "[t]eaching Western history was trial enough without having to watch what the movie makers had made out of it" (214). Partly because of the depiction of the movie within the novel, Johnson calls for more critical attention to the mass media in *Green Grass, Running Water*, as it "is most explicitly engaged in questioning the effects of Western technology and electric media on Native subjectivity and culture" (n. pag.). In 2012, King wrote in his non-fictional book *The Inconvenient Indian* that "film, in all its forms, has been the only place where most North Americans have seen Indians" (xv). That he chose to rewrite the ending of a fictional movie starring Wayne suggests that non-Native popular culture is one of the real enemies of Native American and First Nations cultures, partly because it influences how we understand history and can even be mistaken for history.

John Wayne's public political stance is also a potential reason that King has been critical of him. Wayne was a Republican "supporter of Joe McCarthy, Richard Nixon, and the Vietnam War" (Newman 158) and "came to symbolize hard-line conservative politics of the 1960s and 1970s" (Meeuf 2), thereby polarizing his reception, according to Meeuf, as "a necessary but benevolent patriarchal and national authority, or . . . a racist, sexist totalitarian who represented all of U.S. culture's oppressive past" (2). Although Wayne himself could be open to being lampooned, Wayne's persona could be as hard and even "indomitable" (Wills 17) as the tank that Phillips relates to him in the poem that opens this essay. Nearer to the liberal end of the spectrum, Thomas King ran as "Tom King" in 2007 as a candidate in the New Democratic Party, which was once a socialist party and is now left-leaning but centrist. His political orientation is in many ways opposite to that which Wayne appears to "symbolize" on the political spectrum, and he presumably sees

Wayne or his persona as a cowboy in something other than the white hat that conventionally identifies "the good guy" in many Westerns.

The differing views of Wayne, however, are not as racialized as one might expect in the context of King, a writer of Cherokee, Greek, and Swiss-German descent who has, in his books *The Truth about Stories* and *The Inconvenient Indian*, often reflected very self-consciously on the racial politics related to his Native heritage. Greg Bechtel argues that most critics are "reductive" (205) in their interpretations of *Green Grass, Running Water* and perpetuate a "'Whites' versus 'Indians'" (206) mentality that does not perfectly reflect a novel in which, for example, some of the enemies of "Indians" are people who could identify as "Indian." And the novel arrived around the same time as JoEllen Shively's 1992 study of Native American and white viewers' responses to *The Searchers,* which revealed that many Indigenous people really like John Wayne movies, especially Wayne's "toughness" (731) in them; they don't interpret it as "totalitarian." King's character Eli Stands Alone in *Green Grass, Running Water* also thinks "he liked Westerns. It was like . . . eating potato chips. They weren't good for you, but no one said they were" (163). In contrast with the study done on the reservation, Shively's pre-test with Native American college students revealed that her viewers did not like John Wayne and associated his character with interview-based comments they perceived as racist (732). Illustrating some of this real-life complexity in fiction, *Smoke Signals* (Eyre 1998), the adaptation of Alexie's *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, includes some people from the reservation who mock but also grudgingly respect Wayne. Some of Alexie's and King's characters know how appealing Wayne can be; others are either ambivalent or, in the case of the warriors in *Green Grass, Running Water*, willing to do much more violence than duke it out with him.

While Eli is circumspect about the Western's appeal, his nephew Lionel Red Dog is enthusiastic about John Wayne. One of the main characters in *Green Grass, Running Water*, Lionel is a TV salesman whose aunt Norma tells him, "I would sometimes think you were white" (7). Among scholars, Johnson states that Lionel is "complicit in his own oppression" (39), and Dee Horne calls him a "mimic" (268). Lionel identifies with Wayne, as fans often do with movie stars. Contrary to his cousin Charlie Looking Bear's depiction of Wayne as a reprehensible killer, Lionel—at the even younger age of six—"knew what he wanted to be. John Wayne. Not the actor, but the character. Not the man, but the hero. . . . The John Wayne who saved stagecoaches and wagon trains from Indian attacks" (241). Lionel's father suggests that he

"keep his options open": "We got a lot of famous men and women, too. Warriors, chiefs, councillors, diplomats, spiritual leaders, healers" (241). But as a child Lionel is set on John Wayne, partly because he has been convinced by advertising aimed at children; King writes that "[o]ne of the cereal companies offered a free John Wayne ring for three boxtops and fifty cents handling charge" (214). Later in life, however, Lionel gets a fringed leather jacket from four tricksters on his birthday that makes him "look a little like John Wayne" (303)—though Wayne's comparatively realistic costuming means that "John Wayne" here signifies any generic cowboy. Lionel himself thinks he looks less like his uncle Portland Looking Bear and "more like John Wayne" (318). At one point, Lionel makes the healthy decision of walking to work instead of driving: "it would be a good way to start the day, a good way to start his new life. . . . That's what John Wayne would do" (243).

The irony of this "good way" is that King seems to recognize a positive aspect of fandom here, but in the movie to which he alludes—1953's *Hondo*—Wayne is not a very positive influence. In *Hondo*, "a good way" is a catch phrase of the main character, Hondo, played by Wayne. Hondo embodies traditionally American and libertarian values such as self-reliance, that Emersonian ideal of most Westerns; but Hondo's ethics are suspect, and his admiration of self-reliant beings requires explanation only in circumstances involving the dog Sam and the Apache people. When Angie (Geraldine Page) wants to feed his dog, Sam, he refuses because he is proud of the dog's self-reliance; when she offers Hondo the food for Sam, he says, "No ma'am. I don't feed him either. Sam's independent. I want him to stay that way. It's a good way."[1] Midway through the film, the Apache kill Sam, but we never see Hondo show grief. Much later, as the pursuing Apache are repelled and the pursued whites comment on the near-imminent arrival of major reinforcements for the cavalry, Hondo's old friend Buffalo Baker (Ward Bond) says, "That'll be the end of the Apache." "Yeah," says Hondo, typically stoic. "The end of a way of life. Too bad. It's a good way." Hondo seems to have character here; Robert Pippin speculates that Wayne is so effective at portraying "great integrity" (243) that most viewers ignore his persona's racism. The repetition of Hondo's catch phrase means he *is* comparing the people and the dog. This comparison might not be so negative given his stated respect for both, but—epitomizing so many North American and Western attitudes—he is nostalgic, not remorseful.

Probably only King, in his humorist guise, would try to find something funny in this scene, if in fact he was thinking of it while writing *Green Grass,*

Running Water. In his novel, King introduces the Dead Dog Café (108), which he later parlayed into CBC Radio's *Dead Dog Café Comedy Hour*, which ran to eighty-five episodes between 1997 and 2000. Michael Enright describes the series as "irreverent, political and sometimes breathtakingly politically incorrect. And funny" (*Dead Dog*). Arnold E. Davidson, Priscilla L. Walton, and Jennifer Andrews describe it in *Border Crossings: Thomas King's Cultural Inversions* as "a show that deliberately highlights the ludicrousness of clinging to reductive racial stereotypes that don't allow for alternatives" (112). On the show, King plays himself, Tom, alongside characters Jasper Friendly Bear (Floyd Favel) and Gracie Heavyhand (Edna Rain). Jasper is a friend while Gracie manages the café-cum-broadcasting studio. One of the show's running jokes is that Louis Riel would appear as a special guest (e.g., as "a famous Indian" in the first episode); however, its *infamous* joke is that the café serves puppy stew. In the second episode, Tom worries about Gracie's plans to "butcher a puppy on a radio show" (*Dead Dog*)[2] and she relativizes about eating one kind of meat and not another. The joke cannot be separated from the show's commentary on the Western; Gracie also relativizes about sentencing in the criminal justice system in the "Trust Tonto" segment of the show, which Jasper introduces by playing some cavalry music. Jasper claims that the Lone Ranger cannot be trusted because he is a white man in a mask, a man who rides around the West to make the world "safe for democracy and multinational corporations" (*Dead Dog*). Speaking for Tonto, Gracie then remarks on a problem common throughout North America: that "natives get tougher sentences for the same crimes as whites" (*Dead Dog*) and outnumber whites in prison. In this context, Jasper asserts again that Louis Riel is alive, indirectly raising the question of the fairness of Riel's death sentence in 1885 following the Northwest Rebellion. King alludes to dead dogs to criticize the low value placed by the government and by Hollywood on the lives of the First Nations and Native Americans—and, in fact, their dehumanization. King's purpose is to accentuate relative harms, as he does by comparing figures and arguing in *The Inconvenient Indian* that "Whites were considerably more successful at massacre than Indians" (5). Not funny—but nothing Western is sacred for King. The image of the dead dog might also be meaningful beyond the Western and into the Western world in general, because it can be associated with the one from Coyote's dream in *Green Grass, Running Water*, which Faye Hammill describes succinctly: "One of Coyote's dreams is about a dog, but the dream gets loose, reverses its name, and proclaims itself GOD" (1).

The controversies and hijinks of *The Dead Dog Café Comedy Hour* helped King to establish a degree of celebrity in the mass media, and this celebrity is theoretically a type of power that might be used against the ghost of John Wayne—or, more accurately, the longevity of Wayne's persona and views. *The Dead Dog Café* had an "average weekly audience of nearly one hundred thousand CBC listeners" (Flaherty 313). As Davidson, Walton, and Andrews argue, King's popularity is partly the result of his challenges to the American-Canadian border (11, 13), and to the accessibility of his work beyond "the book-buying public" (97). The fictional killing of John Wayne is one such challenge to borders. A related challenge is broadcasting, which crosses borders almost by definition. King writes in *The Truth about Stories* (2003) that "instead of waiting for you [non-Indians] to come to us, as we have in the past, written literature has allowed us [Indians] to come to you" (114). Radio and other mass media extend this rapprochement. Although "[t]he elevation to celebrity status for King's Native characters [such as Portland in *Green Grass, Running Water*] requires the submission to commodity status" (Rodness n. pag.), and although King himself has had to resist being stereotyped as Cherokee, American, or Canadian in interviews, the mass media are, it seems, for King an opportunity to influence culture. Johnson explains that "*The Dead Dog Café* not only affords King the opportunity to parody and contest stereotypical representations of Natives for a mass popular audience, it also enables him to do so orally, and thus to revitalize and reinvent oral traditions in a non-traditional medium" (44). King uses the mass media to be simultaneously creative, resistant, comic, and self-promotional.

Davidson, Walton, and Andrews add that "King himself is a newsworthy figure, who does not simply write books, but also is a frequent presence on radio programs, an occasional actor, and a sometimes critic" (76-77). His connection to the "mass public audience" and his status as a public intellectual (for instance in his 2003 Massey lectures, which became *The Truth about Stories*) mean that he has a status that can resist celebrity on his own terms—not as an entertainer among those who "ceased being a people and somehow became performers in an Aboriginal minstrel show for White North America" (*Truth about Stories* 68). He writes in *The Inconvenient Indian* about the "public face" (153) of the American Indian Movement, recognizing the disproportionate effect of publicity on the public's understanding of which movements are influential. In the context of his own activism, King jokes that "Hollywood might even make a movie about us. I wonder who they'd

get to play me" (*Inconvenient* 144). Although he is the underdog in a metaphoric battle against John Wayne and was not yet a celebrity in 1993, he now has star power to fight star power—fire with fire—at least in Canada.

King doesn't apologize, either, when he kills John Wayne in the novel. For someone who campaigned for an erstwhile socialist party in Canada, he is remarkably conservative in the retributive justice at the moment when magic realism meets realism in this novel—quite different from in the realist sections, where his First Nations characters refuse to engage in violence. Let me set the stage, which is "Buffalo" Bill Bursum's audio-video store, where Lionel's cousin Charlie has come to talk about jobs and money; Bursum is playing the John Wayne movie on his wall of televisions, the TVs set up to look like a map of the country. Throughout the novel the only program on TV is this very Western (177, 220), a fictional movie called *The Mysterious Warrior* which Bursum thinks of as "[t]he best Western of them all. John Wayne, Richard Widmark, Maureen O'Hara. All the biggies" (188). The realist and magic realist sections of the novel finally combine when a "group of shape-shifting Indigenous deities" enter into *The Mysterious Warrior* and act out an alternate ending. These deities name themselves after characters in "imperial master-narratives" (Davidson, Walton, and Andrews 88) that have race as a major theme: Hawkeye, Ishmael, Robinson Crusoe, and the Lone Ranger—all characters "paired with indigenous, colonized sidekicks" (Wyile 115). Incidentally, Hawkeye and the Lone Ranger affirm Bill's opinion by saying, rather too innocently, it's also their "favorite" (302) movie. King bases the movie on a fictional novel mentioned in this very novel in which a "stagecoach was attacked by Indians led by the most notorious Indian in the territory, the Mysterious Warrior" (162), a warrior who kidnaps a young woman from the stagecoach. The plot echoes John Wayne films such as *Stagecoach* and *The Searchers*. Whereas the battle scenes of these real movies are grim indeed, in *The Mysterious Warrior* "Hawkeye, Ishmael, Robinson Crusoe, and the Lone Ranger [are] smiling and laughing and waving their lances as the rest of the Indians flashed across the river to where the soldiers lay cowering behind some logs" (221). King's vengeance against the American soldiers is joyful here, not in the slightest remorseful—and why should it be, given that the historical reality of oppression is much worse than the fantasy of surviving it intact?

The death scene's joyfulness dissipates quickly, however. Initially embarrassed to see his father, fictional B-movie star Portland Looking Bear, on screen and about to lose to John Wayne, Charlie starts to identify with him as it becomes

apparent that the four deities have "fixed" (317) the movie. They do so by erasing the cavalry that came to the rescue of Wayne and his party: "There at full charge, hundreds of soldiers in bright blue uniforms with gold buttons and sashes and stripes, blue-eyed and rosy-cheeked, came over the last rise. And disappeared. Just like that" (321). (The inverse appears in King's 1999 novel *Truth & Bright Water* when the artist Monroe Swimmer implies that he dealt with the erasure of Indians from the landscape by painting them back into classic images.[3]) Outnumbered and missing with most shots, John Wayne loses the fight: "John Wayne looked down and stared stupidly at the arrow in his thigh, shaking his head in amazement and disbelief as two bullets ripped through his chest and out the back of his jacket. . . . And then the movie ended and the credits rolled to black and all the screens ran to static" (322). Charlie's intense reaction—"Get 'em, Dad" (322)—is cathartic, a vicarious release of his frustrations with the popular culture of the Western that costumed his father in "a large rubber nose" (217) to suit a stereotype and directed him to perform his own defeat in Western after Western. As Herb Wyile observes, King turns some white men into literalized "cartoon characters" (120) as a revenge against Native stereotyping in the form of Portland with his "rubber nose." And the fantasy is not only as if the Indians had beaten back and humiliated the colonists. It is also as if the Indians had finally been represented as succeeding—no "tragedy or doom" (Cox 220). Charlie is a successful lawyer but realizes that he, like his father, had to sell out for success. Although Lionel registers vague apprehension when his idol dies (322), he later renews his affiliations with his Blackfoot family by going to a Sun Dance. The alternate ending of *The Mysterious Warrior* seems to inspire Lionel to be more involved in tradition, but he does not return to pre-colonial, pre-modern Indigenous ways. Shively argues that "[w]hat makes Westerns meaningful to Indians is the fantasy of being free and independent like the cowboy and the familiarity of the landscape or setting" (729), whereas non-Indigenous people enjoy Westerns as "primitive myths" (729) that affirm that colonization was good. King disputes the historical validity of the "myths" and *partly* aligns with Indigenous viewers who want their "fantasy."

King insistently repeats that a major problem in the majority population's view of First Nations and Native Americans is that the "Indian" remains a "primitive" figure—never a modern and complex figure but a singular reductive figure "trapped in a state of stasis" (*Inconvenient* 78). The alternate ending of *The Mysterious Warrior* represents King's entry into the world of film and of mass media, an entry that is not only his; it is also a communal

entry for Lionel, Charlie, and their relations, giving credence to Johnson's claim that "King . . . remains cautiously optimistic that, like the book, electric mass media can . . . accurately reflect divergent cultural perspectives" (43). Active in the mass media such as the Internet, the hundreds of Indigenous nations in North America could add perspective to the problematic view by sidestepping the cultural gatekeepers of Hollywood movies, as Alexie does with *Smoke Signals*.

Andrews and Walton explain that "[t]he counter-narratives or alternative visions within King's texts also perform a political purpose," which is "cultural resistance to the dominance of nation" (609); elsewhere, they call these narratives "alterna(rra)tives" (Davidson, Walton, and Andrews 87). Despite King's justified resistance to this "dominance," and "the larger issue of the uneasy place of Native writers in 'Canadian' culture" (Wyile 122), I want to conclude by thinking about how the death of John Wayne in *Green Grass, Running Water* encourages Canadians to read American Westerns. Admittedly, these national categories are impositions on King; he writes in his book *The Truth about Stories* that "the border doesn't mean that much to the majority of Native people in either country. It is, after all, a figment of someone else's imagination" (102). It is also likely that he knew he was writing his novel at a time when "many Americans [had recently] been surprised and hurt by reports in the media of or by personally experiencing anti-Americanism on the part of Canadians" (Daniels 87). Whether or not Americans and Canadians generally interpret King as Canadian, university teachers in Canada have Canadianized *Green Grass, Running Water* such that it is the second-most popular text by an Indigenous writer in Canadian literature courses (Fagan and McKegney 36).[4] He could not have been ignorant of the national-political risk of his novel, and in fact he might also have foreseen that its "Canadian" objection to American influence would prompt self-reflective readers to consider the parallel of First Nations' objections to Canadian influence.

Re-reading for American historical figures in the few Canadian Westerns published after the Canadian Centennial in 1967 but before *Green Grass, Running Water* in 1993, I note that the American—the main character—is always killed. There are only three that I know of at the time of writing (the true resurgence of the Western coming after King): Michael Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* (1970), bpNichol's *The True Eventual Story of Billy the Kid* (1970), and Paulette Jiles' *Jesse James Poems* (1988). Although three is a small number and would be dwarfed by the number of American

publications that focus on the death of an American historical figure (John Wayne being a parallel historical figure because of the influence of his persona on popular understandings of history, as I have been arguing), in the comparatively small field of Canadian literary production it is notable. The scene of the warriors killing John Wayne in *Green Grass, Running Water* also makes me wonder if the Western in Canada can teach us something about the interest in dead celebrities in the work of Canadian poets such as Ondaatje, Gwendolyn MacEwen, and Irving Layton, as I have discussed elsewhere (Deshaye n. pag.). For Layton and Ondaatje, the examples are almost always American; many of their texts were published in the 1970s when nationalistic feeling was strong in Canada, which partly accounts for the concern about American cultural imperialism or fears of neo-colonialism. I argue that the Canadian books that focus so much on American cultural figures like Jesse James, Billy the Kid, and John Wayne are part of a general commentary on American-Canadian relations, not only a generic precedent.

Because such figures are not purely fictional, the earlier works are often read as metahistorical. King's novel, however, encourages us to read the texts as critiques of popular culture rather than as revisionist histories. I asserted earlier that King recontextualizes the killings of Billy the Kid and Jesse James in Canadian Westerns as a collective fantasy of the death of American celebrity. The killing of John Wayne in *Green Grass, Running Water* is hardly the restorative justice of the stereotypical leftist Canadian way; it is retributive—but *creative, fantastic,* not *real* retribution. King recognizes John Wayne and the American Western as pop-cultural factors in a representational stigma that perpetuates historical losses. Partly through King, the American Western in Canadian literature is re-written to adjust popular culture's negative effect on history, ultimately to encourage "Indians" not to leave it to the cowboys.

NOTES

1 Dialogue from *Hondo* has been transcribed by the author.
2 Dialogue from *The Dead Dog Café Comedy Hour* has been transcribed by the author.
3 Monroe's tongue-in-cheek explanation appears on p. 137-38.
4 More recent but selective data from the *Open Syllabus Project* suggest it is #1.

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Marlene Goldman and Sarah Powell

Alzheimer's, Ambiguity, and Irony

Alice Munro's "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" and Sarah Polley's *Away from Her*

Dementia challenges the foundation of the modern, Lockean self, which conceives of identity as "consciousness inhabiting a body."[1] Without the bright flame of consciousness and language to illuminate and rationally organize sensory experience, John Locke maintained in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that individuals were mere "idiots," on par with "animals" or worse, "monsters."[2] Locke's concept of personhood is typically understood as a continuity of identity unvarying in time, where "nothing but consciousness can unite remote existences [*sic*] into the same person" (218). Being a person means being and remaining identical to oneself; thus, forgetfulness, at any age, interrupts both memory and personhood. As philosopher Ian Hacking puts it, for Locke "the person is constituted not by a biography but by a remembered biography" (81). By offering an extended close reading of Alice Munro's "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" and of Sarah Polley's filmic adaptation of this story, *Away from Her*, this paper traces the process whereby the narratives of Munro and Polley expand our understanding of the elided complexity of the Lockean view of self. More precisely, the texts shed light on Locke's lesser-known insights into the inescapably fraught relationship between memory and passion. Munro's and Polley's texts do not merely confirm Locke's position, however. Both works present their own ironies and ambiguities that subvert the notion of an autonomous, rational self. Munro's story supplies a complicated representation of both main characters, Fiona and Grant, as individuals who lay a foundation for reading against the Lockean model of selfhood. By contrast, Polley's film installs a less complex portrayal of Grant

as a classic romantic lead, a changed man who is humbled by the chance to rekindle a romance with his wife. By playing into this domestic, nostalgic trope, however, in her adaptation of the story, Polley builds on Munro's foundation to heighten the tensions that emerge between the two characters and between the conventional narrative of the reformed rake, represented by Grant, and the unsettling shadow that Fiona's illness casts over their relationship. By underscoring the intersubjective basis of meaning and identity, both texts offer a two-pronged challenge to Locke's basic conception of personhood. First, in keeping with the ideas of dementia theorists such as Anne Davis Basting and Pia Kontos, Munro's story and Polley's adaptation emphasize the affective and embodied nature of memory.[3] Second, due to their narratives' implicit engagement with and critique of the Lockean model of identity, the works under consideration here also deconstruct biomedical, mechanistic models of Alzheimer's disease (AD), exposing the ironic instabilities and ambiguities associated with the experience of late-onset cognitive decline.[4]

Passion, Memory, and Forgetting

Whereas scholars such as Ian Hacking and Stephen Katz tend to focus primarily on Locke's valorization of memory, both Munro's short story and Polley's adaptation shed light on Locke's account of the challenges to memory posed by passionate eruptions of turbulent emotions. As Locke maintains in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, consciousness itself is susceptible to "being interrupted always by forgetfulness" (302). Indeed, Locke recognized that memory is not solely the product of a voluntary cognitive activity, since memories and remembering are activated and disrupted by passion. Memories, Locke writes, are "roused and tumbled out of their dark cells" by "some turbulent and tempestuous passion" (55). As Ann Whitehead observes, Locke notes that memory is often "non-intentional and seems to initiate a chaotic, if not threatening chain of activity which releases memories from the 'dark cells' within which they have hitherto been secured and confined" (55). The disruptive effects of passion are foregrounded in Munro's story of a marriage plagued by infidelity and in Polley's adaptation, which, due to the addition of two sex scenes, enhances the story's focus on a marriage equally threatened by illness and infidelity.[5]

In Munro's story, Grant, a former university professor and self-confessed philanderer, witnesses his wife Fiona's rapid cognitive decline due to Alzheimer's disease. Knowing that her condition will only worsen, seventy-year-old

Fiona voluntarily commits herself to Meadowlake, a retirement home. The institution's policy stipulates that new residents are not allowed visitors for one month. When Grant visits his wife after the prescribed separation, he is shocked to discover that Fiona has formed a passionate attachment to a temporary resident named Aubrey, whom she knew as a teenager and whose unexpected presence at Meadowlake awakened fond memories. Equally disconcerting, Fiona treats Grant as if he were a new resident, offering him a cup of tea—a beverage he never drinks—and spending the rest of her time fawning over Aubrey at his bridge game. The transference of her affection suggests that she has completely forgotten her attachment to Grant and their life together. Rather than accept that he has been erased from Fiona's memory, Grant wonders whether his wife, known for her humour and ironic approach to life, is actually playing an elaborate trick on him.

In effect, Grant cannot decide if Fiona's feelings for Aubrey spring from her illness or if they are a purposefully ironic and wounding commentary on his own multiple past infidelities. Equally ironic, as Sally Chivers argues, Grant "cares too much now that Fiona no longer desires his attention and now that he has, in a sense, left her" (91). Readers grapple with similar questions: does Fiona's behaviour relate to the past, namely her knowledge of Grant's infidelities and their previous relationship, or does it represent an eruption of desire in the present that signals a complete break with the past and past selves? In Munro's story and, to a greater extent, in Polley's adaptation, it is never clear if, due to illness, Fiona ceases to act rationally and to exert her will. We are left equally uncertain as to whether her husband, Grant, her putative rational caregiver, acts in accordance with reason or passion throughout their relationship. Due to the irony and ambiguity associated with the workings of reason and passion in the couple's relationship, Munro's story and Polley's adaptation call into question the integrity of the simplistic version of the Lockean model of selfhood as well as the disease model, which likewise identifies memory loss with the loss of selfhood. Indeed, the basic connections Locke posits between selfhood, memory, and narration have prompted theorists such as Paul John Eakin to ask whether "'the failed narratives' of those who suffer from Alzheimer's disease reflect a 'failed identity,'" and whether "those with the disease can be said to have 'outlive[d] themselves'" (113, 121-22). In addition to highlighting the possibility of Fiona's enduring, conscious agency, both narratives emphasize the ontological implications of Grant's illicit passions: the fracturing of his identity into, on the one hand, the faithful husband

who prides himself on never having spent a night away from his marital bed and, on the other, the unrepentant adulterer. As Chivers observes, "as Fiona changes more and becomes less reliable, Grant settles into his own unchanging ways, which ironically involve unreliability as a monogamous spouse in order to express his undying devotion" (92). By highlighting these events, the story and the film both reveal ironic lapses in memory on the part of the supposedly rational, healthy, and normal care provider.

Irony, Ambiguity and the Biomedical Model of Alzheimer's

Although many illnesses, particularly mental illnesses, work in ambiguous ways, Alzheimer's has been particularly fraught with irony and ambiguity from the start, when the disease concept was first developed.[6] Few people know about one of the greatest ironies concerning the conception of the disease model, namely, that when early researchers, including Alois Alzheimer himself, found evidence of dementia in an individual who was comparatively young—in her fifties—they did not believe that they had discovered a distinct and novel disease process. Instead, Alzheimer and his colleague Gaetano Perusini repeatedly insisted that they had merely stumbled on an odd case of atypical senile dementia. To the end, Alzheimer and Perusini opposed their supervisor Emil Kraepelin's view that it was a disease entity because they remained unconvinced that they had discovered a new disease at all.[7] Despite Alzheimer's repeated objections, Kraepelin bestowed the former's name on the disease after Alzheimer's death at age fifty-one.

Since then, as medical anthropologist Margaret Lock observes, Alzheimer's disease has remained a "conundrum." To date, there is neither a clear understanding of the cause nor a cure for the disease. In fact, there is growing controversy—a controversy as old as the disease concept itself—as to whether Alzheimer's is even a disease or a part of the process of aging. As prominent and well-respected Alzheimer's researcher Martin Samuel puts it, "If we lived long enough, would we all become demented, with plaques and tangles? Is Alzheimer's just another name for aging?" (qtd. in Groopman 42-43). Recently, several studies have supported Alois Alzheimer's initial position by demonstrating that "there is, at best, a blurred line between normal cognition, mild impairment and full-on dementia—a declining straight line" (Ingram 123). Simply put, there is no clear distinction "between normal mental functioning and Alzheimer's" (Ingram 122).[8] Moreover, without this distinction, it is not possible to apply the Lockean opposition between a wholly rational being and an "idiot."

From the perspective of researchers and clinicians, Alzheimer's constitutes an illness of which ambiguity seems almost a defining factor. With many medical conditions it is possible to point precisely to what a healthy body looks like in comparison to the unhealthy body that requires medical attention. This is how a diagnosis is reached. However, there is no base test for what the healthy or normal person without Alzheimer's should look like. A non-cancerous body versus a cancerous body or an intact leg versus one that is broken display visible distinctions not available in cases of Alzheimer's, of which definitive biological proof can normally only be given after post-mortem exams. Alzheimer's is instead diagnosed by what amounts to a very complex and methodical form of conjecture; its presence is detected through the observation of cognitive and behavioural abnormality. The problem with a method of diagnosis that relies on symptomatology in the case of this particular illness is that the way in which Alzheimer's presents in different individuals is highly variable and unpredictable, but so, too, is healthy behaviour. This confusion around the distinction between normal and abnormal behaviour results in the diagnosis of Alzheimer's being largely determined through a series of cognitive behavioural tipping points, between forgetfulness and memory loss, confusion and disorientation, and illness and selfhood. As Grant wonders of Fiona in *Away from Her*, "What if this is just her? Just being herself?" Drawing heavily on Munro's story, Polley's film explores the instability and limits of diagnosis and the near impossibility at times of distinguishing between illness and selfhood by situating her narrative so that it balances on the liminal tipping point.

Despite the controversies associated with the disease model, both the media's and biomedicine's portrayals of Alzheimer's elide the longstanding ambiguities and ironies that haunt the illness. In his essay on his father's struggle with AD, American author Jonathan Franzen perhaps most succinctly conveys the insufficiency of the biomedical model—which is predicated on a reductive view of Locke's theory of the self—when he bemoans the fact that the media typically portrays the illness as a terrifying scourge that destroys the self by refracting "death into a spectrum of its otherwise tightly conjoined parts—death of autonomy, death of memory, death of self-consciousness, death of personality, death of body" (89). Franzen observes further that both the media and biomedical reports subscribe to the "most common trope of Alzheimer's: that its particular sadness and horror stem from the sufferer's loss of his or her 'self' long before the body dies" (89). In response to this tidy mechanistic model,

Franzen insists that his father's brain was not "simply a computation device running gradually and inexorably amok" (89). Equally important, he wonders whether the various deaths—of autonomy, of memory, of self-consciousness, of personality, of body—"can ever really be so separated, and whether memory and consciousness have such secure title, after all, to the seat of selfhood" (89). Franzen's sense of the inescapable ambiguity associated with the impact of the illness on selfhood—an ambiguity that, as we argue, represents a challenge to Locke's model—is precisely what Munro and Polley explore in their portrayals of Alzheimer's.

As medical anthropologist Michael Lambek observes, "there is often something in situations of illness that resembles irony or that brings the recognition of irony to the fore" (6). In the case of illness, irony entails "the recognition that some of the potentially participatory voices or meanings are silent, missing, unheard, or not fully articulate, and that voices or utterances appearing to speak for totality or truth offer only single perspectives" (6). By addressing the ironies and ambiguities associated with Alzheimer's—specifically those associated with the blurring of the ability to distinguish absolutely between actions driven by passion or reason—Munro's and Polley's narratives deconstruct the Lockean paradigm that attempts to distinguish the normal from the pathological and, as a corollary, may help to diminish dementia's corrosive reputation as a shameful, "identity-spoiling" disease (Goffman).

Irony and "The Bear Came Over the Mountain"

As Linda Hutcheon observes, irony oscillates in semantic terms between the simultaneous "perception of the said and the unsaid" (39)—between literal and inferred meanings. In Munro's story, and to an even greater extent in Polley's adaptation, Alzheimer's serves as a catalyst for the creation of irony in a narrative that raises questions about remembering and forgetting, fidelity and infidelity, the instability of meaning, the workings of ironic discourse, and the abrupt transference of desire. In "The Bear Came Over the Mountain," Grant's view of Fiona accommodates irony, renders her behaviour meaningful and, equally important, implicates Grant—an adulterer—as a person prone to passionate breaks in his consciousness and, hence, his rational self, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between normative and pathological episodes of forgetting.

Munro's story opens with Grant's recollection of Fiona's childhood home and how they met in the town where they both went to university. As a young man, Grant was struck by Fiona's wealth, her irreverence for the

things that other people took seriously, her fondness for jokes, and her generally ironic approach to life: "Sororities were a joke to her, and so was politics" (274). She made fun of the men who were courting her, including Grant, "drolly repeat[ing] some of his small-town phrases" (274). In light of Fiona's "superior" class and sophistication, Grant was surprised that she was interested in him and he thought "maybe she was joking when she proposed to him" on a beach, shouting over the waves: "'Do you think it would be fun. . . . Do you think it would be fun if we got married?'" (275). Gazing at Fiona, now seventy years old, Grant muses that she looked just like herself—"direct and vague as in fact she was, sweet and ironic" (276).

Grant's musings on the gradual and insidious appearance of Fiona's symptoms likewise support his view that Fiona may be playing a trick on him. He recalls how once she went for a walk across the fields and came home by the fence line. On her return, she remarked that "she'd counted on fences always taking you somewhere" (276). Reflecting on her comment, Grant admits that it "was hard to figure out. She'd said that about fences as if it were a joke" (277). He is equally at a loss when she dismisses her symptoms: "I don't think it's anything to worry about . . . I expect I'm just losing my mind" (277). Recalling their first visit to the doctor, Grant describes how he tried "without success to explain how Fiona's surprise and apologies now seemed somehow like routine courtesy, not quite concealing a private amusement. As if she'd stumbled on some unexpected adventure. Or begun playing a game that she hoped he would catch on to" (277). In keeping with Franzen's refusal to view his father's brain as a clock winding inexorably down, Grant similarly assumes that Fiona is playing a strange and potentially wounding game. When he drives her to Meadowlake, she reminds him of the time they had gone skiing at night. "If she could remember that, so vividly and correctly," Grant muses, "could there really be so much the matter with her?" (279).

For Grant, the game of communication continues, although under a different guise. Viewed in this light, the text's repeated references to bridge games emphasize the intersubjective aspects of the production of meaning and identity. As noted earlier, when Grant first visits Fiona, he finds her hovering over Aubrey at the bridge table. To his dismay, Grant finds himself the unwelcome intruder and even the other players look at him with displeasure. Only Fiona greets him warmly: "Bridge," she whispered, "Deadly serious. They're quite rabid about it" (288). After offering him a cup of tea, Fiona gazes in Aubrey's direction: "I better go back," she says, "He thinks he can't play without me sitting there. It's silly, I hardly know the game anymore"

(290). As well as raising questions about her competence, her comments remind us that no one can play the game of generating meaning without the other's presence. Aubrey seemingly depends on Fiona's role as witness to enable him to inhabit his role as a player, an ironic echo of her relationship to Grant. In both instances, the men cannot maintain their identity without Fiona acting as a witness to their games. In effect, her agency and her actions highlight the intersubjective foundation of identity. As represented in the story and in the film, this factor, together with the affective and embodied nature of memory and the instabilities associated with Alzheimer's, undermines the Lockean notion of the autonomous, rational self.

Munro's text continues to underscore the intersubjective facet of selfhood when Fiona, before returning to the bridge game at Meadowlake, tries to console Grant: "It must all seem strange to you but you'll be surprised how soon you get used to it. You'll get to know who everybody is. Except that some of them are pretty well off in the clouds, you know—you can't expect them all to get to know who you are" (290). Again, like the wise fool in a Shakespearian play, Fiona's words are instructive. If, as Jesse Ballenger insists, Alzheimer's "affects us all" (153), then her memory loss and institutionalization are, indeed, equally his experience; Grant is thus akin to a new resident who must work at understanding the Other (his transformed wife and, due to the reciprocal nature of their roles, himself).[9]

For his part, Grant reflects on words of wisdom during their first brief exchange to determine whether he accurately detected the ironic marker: "She had given herself away by that little pretense at the end, talking to him as if she thought perhaps he was a new resident. If it was a pretense" (291). The sly strangeness of Fiona's statements and behaviour eventually prompt Grant to quiz Fiona's nurse, Kristy: "Does she even know who I am?" he wonders, admitting to himself that, for his part, he cannot decide: "She could have been playing a joke. It would not be unlike her" (290-91).

Further ironic complications arise when Aubrey's wife, Marian, decides to take Aubrey back home. His departure plunges Fiona into a life-threatening depression. In an effort to help her, Grant pays Aubrey's wife a visit. Marian mistakenly assumes that Grant has arrived to castigate her for allowing Aubrey to "molest" his wife. Quite the opposite, Grant hopes to persuade Marian to return Aubrey to Meadowlake and to Fiona. During their meeting, ironic reversals abound: Grant praises Marian for being "noble and good" and caring for her husband at home, but she promptly informs him that she simply cannot afford to keep him in an institution. Grant assumes that

Marian will dismiss him as a "silly person . . . who didn't have to worry about holding on to his house and could go around dreaming up the fine generous schemes that he believed would make another person happy" (316). Instead, Grant awakens Marian's sexual interest, and when he returns home he finds a message from her on his answering machine inviting him to a dance for "singles" at the Legion.

Munro's story never reveals what transpires between Grant and Marian, whereas Polley's film portrays the couple in a post-coital embrace—a change that underscores the disruptive impact of passion which does not simply entail the breaking of a marital vow, but, instead, instigates chaotic sequences that disrupt the protagonists' ontological integrity. Both the story and the film, however, conclude with Grant delivering Aubrey to Meadowlake. "Fiona," Grant says, "I've brought a surprise for you. Do you remember Aubrey?" (322). Rather than elicit joy, however, Grant's surprise gift devastates Fiona and, for the first time since she became a resident at Meadowlake, Fiona seemingly remembers Grant. "You've been gone a long time," she remarks. "You could have just driven away. . . . Just driven away without a care in the world and forsook me. Forsooken me. Forsaken" (322). This episode—even more forcibly than Fiona's unwilled memories of her relationship with Aubrey as a teenager, triggered by his unexpected presence at Meadowlake—powerfully dramatizes Locke's insight that memories are "roused and tumbled out of their dark cells" by "turbulent and tempestuous passion" (55). Due to the shifts in verb tense in the passage cited above, readers wonder if Fiona is referring to Grant's reaction to her recent infidelity, to her illness, or to *his* past infidelities. The story concludes ambiguously with Grant's response. He presses his cheek against Fiona's withered visage and murmurs: "Not a chance" (322). Like Fiona's remark, Grant's comment remains opaque; although he seems to be professing his love for her, it is also quite possible that he has just been unfaithful to her again and he is satisfied to have Fiona out of the way so that he can pursue his affair with Marian.[10]

The structure of Munro's narrative repeatedly draws an ironic parallel between Fiona's memory loss and her surprising attachment to Aubrey, and Grant's prior infidelities which he chose to "forget" and which Fiona had also learned long ago to "forget." This parallel forces readers to read the former against the latter in a pairing that highlights how both passion and illness instigate different forms of memory loss and, as a result, lead to forms of ontological and, in this case, marital infidelity. The parallel is evident in both the story and more obviously in the film, in which

"marriage is primary to the secondary plot about Alzheimer's" (Pevere qtd. in Chivers 86). According to Chivers, the film uses Alzheimer's disease "as a metaphor for infidelity" (92). As she observes, while "Grant and Fiona's marriage bond is deteriorating under the pressure of her illness, it also continues to be assaulted by infidelity, this time on the part of both spouses" (92). While acknowledging the complexity of the dénouement of Munro's story, some critics have nevertheless ultimately viewed Grant as absolutely selfless in returning Fiona's lover, Aubrey, to Meadowlake. Héliane Ventura, for example, describes the story as "a reconfiguration of love at twilight" (n. pag.). Yet such readings, which split Grant's character simply into the formerly unfaithful spouse and the newly redeemed husband, are not supported by the text; nor do they do justice to the ongoing ironic oscillations in Grant's character that persist to the end. In the final version of the story, Munro added sections in which Grant reflects on what he stands to gain from using his sexual allure to convince Marian to return Aubrey to the nursing home.[11] Figuring Marian out, he suggests, would be like "biting into a litchi nut" with an "oddly artificial allure" (317). The fact that his sexual satisfaction remains at stake is further clarified when, elaborating on this sexist conceit, Grant insists that his plan "would not work—unless he could get more satisfaction that he foresaw, finding the stone of blameless self-interest inside her robust pulp" (319). The narrative also juxtaposes the final scene in which Grant seemingly selflessly appears with Aubrey in tow to Grant's prior lustful contemplation of "the practical sensuality of [Marian's] . . . cat's tongue. Her gemstone eyes" (321). Ultimately, the extended ambiguities and ironic doubling that pervade Munro's story highlight Fiona's agency, her role as a witness, and her potential status as an ironic trickster figure. This, coupled with the story's emphasis on the impact of passion on memory, call into question reductive medical myths about loss of self and subjectivity through aging and Alzheimer's disease.

Irony and Adaptation: Sarah Polley's *Away from Her*

Though the theme of ambiguity surrounding Fiona's illness is certainly well represented in Munro's story, Sarah Polley's adaptation heightens the difficulty of distinguishing between Fiona's personality and her illness with the addition of several scenes that trouble the definitiveness one traditionally seeks in diagnosis. The memorable line Fiona delivers in a clinic waiting room, "What an ugly baby!" is one of Polley's most thought-provoking additions.[12] In his article on Polley's adaptation, Robert McGill

unambiguously attributes Fiona's lack of social correctness in this scene to her illness, saying, "The moment seems intended to illustrate the intransigence of Alzheimer's by showing Fiona to have forgotten social protocols, a common sign of the disease" (n. pag.). While this is certainly a possible reading, Polley does not approach the moment in question with anything close to the certainty with which McGill reads it. Fiona's exclamation immediately follows her first meeting with the doctor for an assessment to determine whether she may have dementia. In the film adaptation of this scene from Munro's story, Fiona frequently blunders during the meeting. Still, she is shown to be extremely aware of the social protocols McGill accuses her of having forgotten. For instance, when she is unable to determine what the proper course of action would be if a fire were to break out in a movie theatre, she attempts to distract from the fact that she cannot answer the doctor by directing the conversation towards the lack of any decent films to see. When she realizes that she has mistakenly gone to retrieve her coat before the end of her appointment, she insists she is simply cold, covering again for what she realizes a moment too late is not appropriate behaviour. In this scene, Fiona displays an almost heightened awareness of how she should be behaving and of when she fails to do so. It seems unlikely that after Polley makes such a strong effort to draw attention to the struggle between Fiona's attempts to keep up appearances and her confusion that she would suddenly encourage us to see Fiona's composure as completely lapsed. Adding to the ambiguity of the moment is the fact that Grant laughs at Fiona's words, seemingly finding them in keeping with her ironic, occasionally irreverent character.

In another added scene, Polley plays even more blatantly with Fiona's particular brand of humour as an unsettling factor in the attempt to separate her personality from her illness. Grant is talking to Fiona about her impending move to Meadowlake when Fiona turns around and delivers a completely convincing performance that suggests she has no idea what he is talking about. The moment is broken a few seconds later when she giggles, "Just kidding." Grant immediately recognizes and appreciates Fiona's trick as characteristic of her sometimes dark sense of humour. By introducing this small character moment, Polley not only offers a potentially more convincing justification for Grant's suspicion regarding the reality or extent of Fiona's illness than Munro provides, but also plays with the conventions of many dementia narratives with which she can assume her audience will be familiar. If Polley were to follow the conventional narrative treatment of

dementia, Fiona's line would not be undercut, but would act as a moment of tragic drama. In keeping with Munro's story, Polley resists both the simplicity of the supposedly rigid categories of illness and selfhood, and the narrative conventions she finds herself working within and against. The result is the destabilization of the assumptions viewers might make on these grounds.

These two small but significant moments are added to Polley's script to further emphasize and complicate the suspicion Grant holds, present in both the film and Munro's original text, that Fiona might possibly be pretending, taking revenge for his years of infidelity. In her reading of the film, Chivers supports this approach by stressing the significance of the fact that Fiona watches as Grant flirts with the nurse, Kristy: "As Fiona watches her husband flirt—yet again—with a younger woman, his wife's motivations and potential for subversion are palpable" (91). Grant is not only worried that there may be some conflation of Fiona's at times eccentric personality and her illness. Both the Grant of the story and the Grant of the film constantly question Fiona's level of consciousness and, more than that, the possibility of her will and ability to choose. Fiona's will is established as the driving force behind her move to Meadowlake and away from Grant, a story point that already separates her from the convention of dementia narratives in which characters with Alzheimer's are usually placed in homes by their family members. In *Away from Her*, Fiona makes the choice to move to Meadowlake herself, while Grant is shown to be the one who is resistant. Polley's film also uses the added sex scene to enhance Fiona's agency, as she is the one who initiates sex with Grant when she arrives at Meadowlake; she is also the one who insists that Grant leave Meadowlake after they make love.

Fiona's will is also a crucial factor in one of the central plot lines of the film, the love triangle between Fiona, Grant, and Aubrey.[13] The status of this triangle is dependent on Fiona's remembering and forgetting. Through Grant's perspective, the viewer is encouraged to question the source of, first Fiona's forgetting of him, then her remembering of Aubrey, then her complete switch to remembering Grant and forgetting Aubrey at the end of the film. Polley troubles the ease with which the viewer (and, potentially, the reader of Munro's story) might simply decide that Grant is paranoid, self-centred, or in denial in thinking that Fiona in any way wills herself to forget or remember, by frequently hinting at brief flashes of Fiona's will that seem to emerge through her illness. In this way, Polley blocks any attempt to attribute Fiona's behaviour entirely to illness, but she also never goes so far as to decisively indicate with absolute certainty whether it is anything more than that.

It is during the first phase of the love triangle story, as Grant is forced to watch his wife grow closer to another man and move further away from him, that he develops a theory that she may be purposefully performing forgetting him and that her attachment to Aubrey is a punishment for his former deviances. Her forgetting seems so impossible that it does not seem real, particularly since the thirty-day rule at Meadowlake means that Grant does not experience a process of being forgotten, but is subjected to the full brunt of it at once. During this phase, Polley makes adjustments to several scenes from "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" so that the question of the extent of Fiona's agency over her own remembering and forgetting is enhanced. In the car on the way to Meadowlake, Fiona expresses her wish that she could forget some of the more painful elements of her marriage to Grant that seem to linger on while the happy memories of their new life together disappear. This scene restates the lack of control that is often thematically foregrounded in dementia narratives. However, once Fiona has largely forgotten Grant, or at least forgotten who he is to her, several hints of a partially willed forgetting of him punctuate their interactions. When Grant asks Fiona what she is doing with Aubrey, she replies steadily, "He doesn't confuse me. He doesn't confuse me at all," an addition to the film adaptation of Munro's story that implies an at least partially willed focus on the relationship with a man who reminds her not only of a painful past, but also of all that she is losing and has already lost. In another addition of Polley's, a more emotionally charged exchange occurs when Grant attempts to force Fiona to remember that he is her husband. She cries and passionately pleads, "Please, don't." This small but powerful line is Polley's, couched between the polite, repetitive inanities that are present in Munro's story and have come to define Fiona's interactions with Grant. Fiona's illness may make it difficult for her to identify exactly why she is crying or to process the incongruity between her emotional response and her polite conversation, but in *Away from Her*, part of Fiona seems to surface for just a moment to insist that Grant let her forget him.

The evidence of Fiona's willed remembering of Aubrey after their separation is much more solid than the rather ambiguous treatment of her forgetting of Grant, and is drawn more directly from the source text. Fiona clings to memories of Aubrey. She keeps the portraits he drew of her on the wall and seems to be committed to a sustained mourning period. Grant asks her if she could possibly try to let go of her pain, indicating once again his belief that she has at least a modicum of control over what she remembers

and what she does not, despite her illness. Fiona fairly lucidly explains, "If I let it go, it will only hit me harder when I bump into it again," possibly drawing from her experience of forgetting Grant. In "The Bear Came Over the Mountain," the line is originally a part of Grant's interior monologue and reads, "if she let go of her grief even for a minute it would only hit her harder when she bumped into it again" (307). While Fiona's intentionality is still implied, in Munro's story this observation is part of Grant's occasionally questionable reading of Fiona. Polley's redistribution constructs a Fiona who is consciously struggling against her illness, striving not to forget.

The last twist in the triangle storyline occurs in the final scene of the film when Fiona remembers Grant for the first time since her move to Meadowlake and forgets Aubrey, seeming unable to hold both men in her mind at the same time. While it is fairly clear that Fiona now remembers Grant, her forgetting of Aubrey is slightly less definite, a direct reversal of the state of the two men in Fiona's consciousness in the second part of the narrative arc. When Grant asks Fiona if she remembers Aubrey, her eyes glaze over and focus away from him and, during an extraordinarily long pause in film terms (twenty seconds), her hands begin to shake as she nervously taps them on the book she is holding, the beginnings of tears in her eyes. Finally she looks up and smiles weakly, saying, "Names elude me." It is worth noting that Fiona does not refer to Grant by name in this final scene as she does in every other scene throughout the film, or at least in the ones in which she remembers him, suggesting that the forgetting of a name may not mean the forgetting of a person due, in part, to the workings of passion and embodied memory. Once again, Polley creates space for ambiguity and opens Fiona's behaviour up to a series of seemingly unanswerable questions. Does Fiona really not remember Aubrey? Is it the memory of him or the inability to remember him that seems to disturb her? Does she have a vague sense of him that her illness makes it impossible for her to solidify? Or is she, at least in part, willfully choosing to forget him, perhaps to protect herself from the pain of remembering? It is also worth noting that the film closes before showing the probable return to confusion, wherein Fiona might well become horrified by her embrace of Grant. In doing so, the film fleetingly traffics in the same romantic hope portrayed in Hollywood films about Alzheimer's such as *The Notebook*, which likewise concludes with a portrait of a husband embracing his wife, whose mind throughout the film remains clouded by dementia; yet, for one tender moment at the end, her confusion dissipates and she recognizes her beloved.

In the closing scenes of Munro's story and *Away from Her*, however, Aubrey hovers outside the room, raising the question whether Fiona's passion for him will cause her to remember him when he comes into view. Polley refuses to simplify Fiona's character to the point that any of these questions can be answered confidently, and does not seem to suggest either that Fiona is making fully conscious choices or that her illness has completely removed her ability to choose. Instead, the film encourages the viewer to inhabit the space of confusion that seems to characterize the mysterious, almost duplicitous nature of dementia.

As the earlier discussion of Franzen's criticism of the media's treatment of dementia attests, the discourses around dementia are full of ineffectual metaphors. Polley's film draws attention to these discourses by adding narratives from self-help books and biomedical texts, such as the one that Grant reads that posits the disease as being like a "series of circuit breakers in a large house, flipping off one by one," when in reality the "lights" seem to flicker, go out, dim, and turn back on again at random.[14] The circuit breaker metaphor, akin to the analogy of the clock winding down that Franzen rejects, is proven to be inadequate by the film's and indeed the illness' insistence on ambiguity. After Fiona leaves for Meadowlake, the film adds another scene not present in the story. This one portrays Grant contemplating their home, watching the lights go out in each room. Rather than serve as an image of the damaged circuits in Fiona's brain, the image underscores the losses, which include his home and, more generally, his former existence as Fiona's husband. Although the mechanical model proves unsuitable, Munro offers up another organic metaphor that may be more apt simply because it embraces uncertainty. In this case, Polley adheres very closely to the original story. Fiona and Grant take a walk through a nature reserve and when Fiona reaches down to feel for the heat supposedly exuded from skunk lilies, she remarks, "I can't be sure if what I can feel is the heat or my imagination." She follows this thought with a bluntly delivered statement regarding the biological function of the heating mechanism, saying, "The heat attracts the bugs. Nature never fools around just being decorative." The flower and the ambiguous experience it conjures up can be read as a metaphor for Fiona's illness, and, by extension, our own experience of her illness and the uncertainty surrounding illness and selfhood. The heat inside the flower is real, just as the illness inside Fiona is real. *Away from Her* does not seek to dispute biological truths. In both Munro's story and Polley's film, it is rather our very perception and the confusion that occurs when we are

confronted by the ambiguities generated by unwilled illness coupled with "tempestuous and turbulent passion" and willed acts characteristic of a conscious self that remain in question.

NOTES

1 Qtd. in Wright 30; see Katz, Higgs, and Williams.
2 Locke insisted that to be human required the capacity for abstraction; he ranks dementia on the very bottom rung of existence and compares "idiots" to "brutes" in Book II (11:11-12). He also likens "changlings" (a synonym for "idiot") to "monsters" in Book IV (4:15-16). For more information on this subject, see Wright; Goodey.
3 See, for example, Anne Basting's *Forget Memory* and Pia Kontos' and Wendy Martin's "Embodiment and Dementia."
4 Whereas Amelia DeFalco accepts the biomedical model of Alzheimer's in her reading of the story in *Uncanny Subjects*, this essay argues that the works of Munro and Polley expose the ironies and ambiguities that have haunted the biomedical model since the disease concept was developed in the late nineteenth century. DeFalco, for example, argues that Grant willfully misinterprets Fiona's symptoms of dementia as facets of her eccentric or "foreign" nature. According to DeFalco, this willful blindness to the obvious symptoms of dementia suits Grant's self-serving tendency to betray Fiona repeatedly, all the while remaining entirely lacking in empathy for his wife (77).
5 As Sally Chivers observes, Polley adds two sex scenes; in the first, Fiona begins her Meadowlake stay by "initiating sex with Grant, after which Fiona instructs him to leave" (90); in the second, "Marian's advances to Grant are consummated" (91).
6 See Margaret Lock's *The Alzheimer Conundrum*.
7 See Bick et al. 1-5, 82-147.
8 One of the most paradoxical elements that both early and more recent research into Alzheimer's disease (AD) has shown irrefutably is that large numbers of people with so-called AD neuropathology in their brains never become demented in old age (see Groopman; see also Ingram 99-126). This finding, which has been known for many decades, is now undeniable due to neuro-imaging. Yet, as Jerome Groopman observes, it is ignored in the AD research world, and no one can explain what it is that protects some people from dementia (42).
9 As DeFalco states, "it is Grant who now occupies the role of 'reluctant witness'" (79).
10 This essay's reading of the enduring ambiguity of Munro's conclusion recalls Coral Ann Howells' observation that Grant's "Not a chance" is "an echo of his old duplicitous reassurances," emphasizing the indeterminacy of the closing scene (77).
11 There are two extant versions; the short story published in *The New Yorker* in 1999 and the final version published in Munro's collection in 2001. There are notable structural differences primarily due to the additions to the final version. However, none of the changes fundamentally alter the characterization or plot of the original story.
12 Dialogue from *Away from Her* transcribed by the authors.
13 In the film version, Marian is loved neither by Aubrey nor by Grant. In both versions of the short story, Grant's interest in Marian is purely sexual.
14 As Chivers observes, unlike the story, Polley's film includes narration from self-help books and medical information about Alzheimer's in addition to snippets of poetry and

music. Rather than serving as an authoritative discourse, however, as Chivers astutely notes, Grant reads the former "as though they were the Ondaatje poetry featured early in the film" (92). As a result, the medical and self-help materials have the same status as the poetic and musical intertexts.

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Kait Pinder

Difficult Compassion, Compassionate Modernism

Ethel Wilson's *Swamp Angel*

Ethel Wilson's *Swamp Angel* (1954) begins with the end of a mistaken "act of compassion" (11): Maggie Lloyd leaves her cruel husband, whom she had married out of compassion, and sneaks away to begin a new, independent life at Three Loon Lake in the interior of British Columbia. Reflecting on her feelings of guilt, Maggie resigns herself not to think of "the dreadful thing she had done to Edward Vardoe" and concludes that "He is he and I am I" (41). While Maggie escapes her relationship with Vardoe and, seemingly, the feelings of guilt that accompany its end, the tension between compassion as a sacrificial union with another and the insistent subjective autonomy captured in the decisive split between "he" and "I" in the above quotation preoccupies Wilson throughout her novel. This tension drives the novel's plot, inspires some of the most philosophical passages in all of Wilson's writing, and illustrates the difficult nature of compassion that Wilson noted in a 1955 radio program about Joyce Cary. As Martha Nussbaum claims, "[c]ompassion is controversial" (354) precisely because philosophers disagree about the definition and value of an emotion that seems to demand the subject's self-loss in feeling for another. Through her investigation of the tension between Maggie's compassionate self-sacrifice and desire for autonomy, and her reimagining of compassion as a modernist emotion in *Swamp Angel*, Wilson participates in the philosophical and aesthetic controversies surrounding compassion.

Wilson's representation of compassion in *Swamp Angel* is indeed controversial. While most of her critics have discussed *Swamp Angel* as a novel that promotes compassion as a means of reconciling the individual and her community

and as evidence of "Maggie's resolution of the responsibility of the self to others" (Murray 244), Wilson continually complicates the assumption that compassion offers any such resolution, to an individual's life or to the narrative of a novel. Wilson certainly explores the universal and moral character of compassion, but in her novel, as in Maggie's marriage to Vardoe, compassion is always in competition with the individual desires of her characters. Attentive to the challenges compassion poses, especially to female autonomy, Wilson's redefinition of compassion as active, difficult, and unsentimental not only troubles the conventional critical reading of the novel's interest in the emotion, it also underlines Wilson's status as a modernist and philosophical novelist.

Critics have struggled to categorize Wilson as a modernist; although she was born only six years after Virginia Woolf, for example, Wilson published her first novel in 1947, six years after Woolf's death, and two decades after A. J. M. Smith and F. R. Scott inaugurated Canadian modernism in *The McGill Fortnightly Review*. While Wilson's modernism becomes more legible through her representation of compassion, her focus both on an emotion that is often perceived as passive and feminine and on the ways it affects women's lives specifically may appear at odds with the gendered modernist critique of sentimentality, a critique that was so vigorous and widespread that Michael Bell has named it "one of the few threads uniting the internal variety of modernisms" (160).[1] In the years surrounding the publication of *Swamp Angel*, however, Wilson sought to distinguish her representations of emotion, especially of compassion, from sentimentality. For example, in a letter to John Gray, her editor at Macmillan, dated July 25, 1953, Wilson discussed *Swamp Angel* and described "the only way [she could] write—of beauty and emotion and then with a horrid fear of sentimentality, tipping it back on to the other side with a flat statement" (186). Like Smith, Scott, Woolf, and other modernists, Wilson "discriminate[d] *within* the realm of feeling" (Bell 2) by countering a "host of improprieties" modernists associated with sentimentality—including "intellectual softening, nostalgic lassitude, effeminacy, [and] romanticism" (Cuddy-Keane 210)—with a more rigorous and objective representation of emotion.[2] Wilson clearly discriminates between compassion and sentimentality in a talk about Joyce Cary that she gave just one year after *Swamp Angel* was published:

> Mr. Cary's God's-eye view of his created beings is lighted by an understanding that informs us all. He does not judge, he does not explain, he does not use comparison as an argument; and his compassion (which has nothing to do with

> sentimentality) is the true compassion which does not imply only 'a bending down towards,' but takes its human (and possibly divine) place as 'a bearing with' or at least 'a feeling with' people. ("Joyce" 78)

Notably, Wilson admires Cary for qualities her critics would later find in her own writing. Desmond Pacey, for instance, commends Wilson's ability "to arouse our interest in and compassion for the most apparently unsympathetic of characters" (99). Here, as in *Swamp Angel*, "true compassion" may be universal and divine, an "understanding that informs us all," visible from God's omniscient perspective and felt when humans "bear with" one another.

As Wilson further defines compassion, however, she moves from the potentially divine perspective of Cary's "God's-eye view" to the decidedly difficult human perspective. "And yet," Wilson claims, "compassion is not only a passive element; it is active, and we find it to be so in our lives. Compassion is sometimes highly complicated by our discovery in human relations that there is a choice to be made, not always between right and wrong, but between what appear to us to be two wrongs, because there is no right. Then, it is difficult" ("Joyce" 78). Here Wilson considers a model of compassion that does not easily correspond to a divine position. This "difficult" compassion necessitates the compassionate individual's action; it requires "a choice to be made" that cannot be guaranteed by an absolute morality, "because there is no right." As she often does in her novels, in her definition of compassion Wilson also oscillates between divine and human perspectives, and this persistent oscillation inserts Wilson in a philosophical debate about the very nature, possibility, and value of compassion.

Wilson's engagement with compassion's philosophical tradition positions her as a philosophical novelist. As David Stouck notes, the tension between the individual and her community makes up "the philosophical vision of [Wilson's] novels" (*Ethel* 87). Furthermore, compassion forms an important part of the "philosophical resonance" (1) that Anjali Bhelande has identified in Wilson's fiction. Noting the similarities of Wilson's ideas to Indian philosophy, Bhelande's reading of Wilson's work focuses on the subject-object dualism that compassion promises to overcome. Bhelande emphasizes "the change in perspective when one reaches a plane of consciousness that is beyond dualistic logic" and argues that Wilson's fiction transcends "[t]he polarity between the 'self' and the 'other'" (3). Bhelande's emphasis on the transcendent moments of Wilson's fiction, however, diminishes the way in which human relations often rise up to challenge compassion in *Swamp*

Angel. For example, although Bhelande is right to note that "Nell and Maggie are perceived not only as women but as seekers with a spiritual quest" (81), her conclusion that Wilson's "focus" is not ultimately gender (81) brackets the very gendered risks involved in compassion that Wilson seems keen to foreground as part of the emotion's "difficulty" in her novel. Rather, through her focus on the challenges facing female "seekers" in particular, Wilson subtly critiques the philosophical tradition that has defined both women and compassion as passive and sentimental.

Wilson's theory of difficult compassion, particularly as we see in the persistent tension between compassionate union and individual autonomy in *Swamp Angel,* transforms both Arthur Schopenhauer's and Friedrich Nietzsche's definitions of the emotion. Emphasizing compassion as a transcendent union with the Other that dissolves individuality, Schopenhauer defines compassion as a "direct participation . . . in the sufferings of another" and notes: "When once compassion is stirred within me . . . the difference between myself and him is no longer an absolute one" (85). This emphatic identification forms Schopenhauer's metaphysics: he describes it as "the sense which identifies the *ego* with the *non-ego*, so that the individual directly recognizes in *another* his own self, his true and very being" (139). Understood in this way, compassion fully risks the self for the sake of the other, a risk Maggie faces in her relationships with both Vardoe and Vera. For Schopenhauer, however, although compassion is the basis of all morality, it is not necessarily intellectual or rational, and so women, who are "inferior . . . in virtue of justice" and "understanding and holding to general laws" (90), "surpass men in the virtue of loving-kindness; because usually the stimulus to this is *intuitive*, and consequently appeals directly to the sense of Compassion" (91). Schopenhauer thus positions compassion as a passive and universal emotion, one that dissolves differences between subjects and individuality itself. In contrast, Wilson's compassion emphasizes choice and criticizes passivity; thus, while Wilson preserves the transcendent potential of Schopenhauer's model of compassion, she also transforms it into a feeling that occurs in a moment of time and is possible only from the position of the autonomous individual. Moreover, Wilson's theory of compassion importantly corrects Schopenhauer's view of the compassionate and intuitive character of women: *Swamp Angel* presents compassion as a *problem* for women, an emotion that they, like Wilson, must actively redefine.

Like Nietzsche, who famously rejected the self-sacrificial nature of compassion that Schopenhauer celebrates, Wilson also calls attention to

the risks compassion poses to individual autonomy. Christopher Janaway explains that Nietzsche objects to Schopenhauer's promotion of compassion in part "because it can divert one from attending to one's own life and rob one of the sense of a right to one's own well-being" (68). Maggie's marriage to Vardoe and Nell's suspicion about Maggie's friendship with Vera, similarly pit compassion against the flourishing of the strong individual. In fact, Maggie and her friend Nell—who notably "despise[s] sentiment" (104)—are both Nietzschean characters who desire to create their own values outside the social conventions that prescribe them self-sacrificial roles as wife (Maggie) and mother (Nell). Moreover, Wilson's specific definition of compassion as a difficult choice between two wrongs rather than a clear vision of a universal right significantly resonates with Nietzsche's revolutionary argument that "there is no absolute morality" (*Human* 88). Importantly, however, Nietzsche's criticism of compassion, like Schopenhauer's promotion of it, is gendered. Criticizing Schopenhauer's characterization of compassion, Nietzsche claims to oppose its "disgraceful modern softness of feeling" ("Preface" 7), a description that aligns compassion with the effeminate excess of feeling modernists criticized as "sentimental." Although Wilson is interested in female compassion, *Swamp Angel* importantly transforms both Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's gendered definitions of it: no longer "soft," passive, or intuitive, Wilson's compassion is a "difficult" modernist emotion that reflects the moral ambiguity of the modern world.

Commonly, Wilson's critics understand compassion in her fiction as an attempt to create meaning in precisely that morally ambiguous modern world: "her world is the uncompromising real world . . . but it can be modified by . . . compassion and love" (Comeau 38). Brent Thompson acknowledges Wilson's fictional world as one in which, because God does not proclaim himself clearly, the difficult choices of individuals take on extreme importance: "we must employ other human attributes—the intelligent will and compassion—to complete our participation in the 'everlasting web' of creation. The employment of these is based on faith . . . if not in an incomprehensible God, then faith that the intelligent will and compassion will be enough" (29). Wilson's emphasis on the compassionate individual's active choice further indicates that the individual, in the absence of a transcendent morality that illuminates the difference between right and wrong, must fortify her own ethics.

Like Cary's compassionate narrator, Wilson's narrator also takes a "God's-eye view" of the events in *Swamp Angel*. The narrator's omniscient

and detached position has inspired many of Wilson's critics to admire her narrator's compassion; however, they have also ignored the dynamic relationship between that impersonal narrator, who can be as contemptuous as compassionate, and the image of compassion they celebrate in Wilson's work. W. J. Keith, for example, adeptly notes the philosophical nature of the narrator's omniscience—which gives Wilson "the freedom to expand and generalize that only omniscient narrative can provide" ("Overview" 106)—but he reductively concludes that it correlates to a metaphysical understanding of the world. Indeed, the unlimited omniscient point of view allows Wilson to comment upon a situation from a perspective unavailable to her characters. For example, Wilson gives her most direct description of the nature of compassion in *Swamp Angel* in simple, general terms unattached to any one character's perspective: "There is a beautiful action. It has an operative grace. It is when one, seeing some uneasy sleeper cold and without a blanket, bends down, and covers the sleeper because the sleeper is a living being and is cold" (114). Drawing upon passages like this one, Keith argues that Wilson's "is invariably a providential vision, and her authorial intrusions, so culpable to the advocates of modernism, are justified because they reflect and interpret a worldview that presupposes a larger meaning" ("Overview" 113). In other words, as Keith states in a later essay, "Wilson's authorial stance presupposes and to some extent embodies the sense of an imperfectly recognized but still palpable divine purpose" (*Sense* 46).

Wilson's God's-eye view, however, rarely manifests as directly as it does in this brief passage. The elliptical conclusion of the passage, which relates the description of compassion back to Maggie and the strained relationship she develops with Vera at Three Loon Lake, better characterizes both Wilson's style and her interest in the difficulty of compassion: "Maggie was compassionate and perhaps she would serve Vera Gunnarsen in this way, forgetting that she did so, and expecting neither praise nor thanks . . . or perhaps she would not" (*Swamp* 115). The narrator's comments balance Maggie's confidence and remind the reader of Maggie's fallibility. Thus, the providential or divine character Keith finds in the narrator is not one of powerful foreknowledge. Rather, Wilson's intrusions serve as reminders of human failure, including the narrator's, and deny the reader a sure understanding of what is to come and its significance.

More than signalling a divine coordinate, Wilson's detached narrative voice and modernist use of multiple points of view embody the difficulty of compassion as she describes it. That is, rather than uniting opposing

perspectives through her transcendent position, as Schopenhauer might imagine, Wilson's narrator underlines the distinct individualities that might fail to meet each other compassionately. Stouck, picking up on the narrator's occasionally cold tone, argues that instead of reconciling the multiple perspectives offered in the novel, the narrator further troubles compassionate unity: "what . . . involves and disturbs us as we read Ethel Wilson's fiction is a certain *froideur* in the narrative voice, an implied emotional preference for retreat, evasion, and distance, which is always in tension with the author's vision of unity and her theme of human responsibility" ("Novels" 74). Blanche Gelfant best expresses the narrator's ethical position, her denial of a conclusive moral stance, and her implicit call on the reader's judgment:

> 'Perhaps' or 'perhaps not,' 'I think,' 'it was impossible to say,' the omniscient narrator says again and again in Wilson's fiction, implying that even the all-knowing story-teller does not know the truth. Sometimes we as readers have a choice, because the narrator, uncertain of the truth, offers two exclusive possibilities, two adjectives or nouns linked together by *and* though they require *or*. (21)

Notably, Gelfant describes the position of the reader in terms remarkably similar to those Wilson uses to describe "difficult" compassion as a choice between "two [apparent] wrongs, because there is no right." Unable to provide the "right" moral interpretation for her characters and her readers, Wilson's narrator emphasizes the difficulty of choice and judgment. The detached omniscient narrator reminds the reader of the difficulty of interpreting and responding to an indifferent world. In this way and despite the criticisms of Wilson's modernism that Keith notes, the narrator demonstrates both modernist self-reflexivity and skepticism about the potentially passive and self-sacrificial character of compassion.

Wilson's description of the sleeper quoted above provides the most detailed image of an ideal compassionate act in *Swamp Angel*. Initially, the narrator describes this act in general terms that set it up as a universal definition of compassion:

> There is a beautiful action. It has an operative grace. It is when one, seeing some uneasy sleeper cold and without cover, goes away, finds and fetches a blanket, bends down, and covers the sleeper because the sleeper is a living being and is cold. He then returns to his work, forgetting that he has performed this small act of compassion. He will receive neither praise nor thanks. It does not matter who the sleeper be. That is a beautiful action which is divine and human in posture and intention and self-forgetfulness. Maggie was compassionate and perhaps she would be able to serve Vera Gunnarsen in this way, forgetting that she did so, and expecting neither praise nor thanks. . . or perhaps she would not. (114-15)

In her general description of compassion, Wilson repeats many of the characteristics of the emotion that she outlined in her comments on Joyce Cary: compassion is both human and divine, and suggests a universal feeling that links individuals. Like Schopenhauer, Wilson emphasizes that compassion is spontaneous and performed without the fear of punishment or the promise of reward.[3] In fact, Wilson indicates that the virtue of compassion is found in the compassionate person's "self-forgetfulness," which, as Schopenhauer believed to be necessary for compassion, transcends the individual.

As Wilson presents this general image of compassion, however, her referents become more exact and her skepticism of compassion becomes more overt. As she begins, Wilson uses the un-gendered pronoun "one," which signals the philosophical nature of her meditation and the apparently universal quality of both the emotion and its accompanying action. Yet, after the compassionate act occurs, Wilson shifts to the masculine pronoun: "*He* then returns to *his* work" (emphasis added). Finally, Wilson turns to Maggie, a woman whose compassion is in question as the passage ends. This shift in the compassionate subject and the narrator's growing skepticism about the likelihood of a real act of compassion relates to Wilson's transformation and critique of the philosophical tradition of compassion: here, Wilson's female protagonist seems the least likely person to experience or offer compassion.

There is, however, a further philosophical (and more generous) explanation for the narrator's skepticism about Maggie's compassion. In her general consideration of compassion, Wilson emphasizes the self-forgetfulness and transcendence that Schopenhauer praises in the emotion and so implies that compassion occurs in an undivided present moment. This temporality of compassion is important to Wilson's redefinition of the emotion after Maggie leaves Vardoe. According to it, compassion has no past and no future; it occurs only in a spontaneous present moment. This temporality also means that Maggie cannot plan her compassion. Maggie is described as compassionate, but Wilson's definition of compassion here bars that description from determining how Maggie will act in the future; "perhaps" Maggie will show Vera compassion or "perhaps not."

The narrator similarly warns of Maggie's potential failure of compassion when she describes Maggie swimming ten pages later. Maggie thinks of swimming as a metaphor for her relationship with other people and her ability to "swim past obstacles (Vera is sometimes an obstacle)" (*Swamp* 125). Like Wilson's suggestion that compassion occurs in a moment of total presence, swimming allows Maggie to forget "past and future" (126). But,

as in the passage above, Maggie's confidence in her ability to swim—to lead an independent life untouched by the people she "swim[s] round" (168)—is undercut by the narrator who states, "She could never sink, she thinks (but she could)" (126). Thinking of herself as a swimmer, Maggie imagines that she will lead a solitary life in which she will serve others but will not bear the compassionate burden of their pain: "Swimming is like living, it is done alone" (125). Maggie fails to realize, however, that rather than confirm her total independence, swimming, much like compassion, enhances the present and thus brings her into closer relation with the people around her. Furthermore, Maggie's potential to sink signals a moment in which Maggie herself may need the help of another and foreshadows Vera's attempted suicide by drowning, which pulls Maggie into an active participation in her antagonist's pain. Thus, while Maggie cannot plan her compassion, she also cannot count on her independence: the present arises as a moment in which difficult compassion may thwart or foster autonomy.

Two competing ethical maxims further complicate Wilson's theory of compassion. While Maggie's and Nell's credo that "it takes God himself to be fair to two different people at once" (121, 201) signals the individual's desire for autonomy and freedom, Nell's quotation of Donne—"No Man is an Island, I am involved in Mankinde" (200)—suggests that the individual inevitably participates in a community. Nell invokes Donne to warn Maggie that her intentions to fortify herself at Three Loon Lake will inevitably draw her out of seclusion and into a community for which she is responsible: "You won't be immune ever at that lake Maggie" (200). While Nell's allusion emphasizes the inevitable communal obligations of the individual, she intends to discourage Maggie from getting too involved in the community at Three Loon Lake, where Vera's self-pity pulls Maggie into an uneven relationship similar to her marriage to Vardoe. Nell thus advises Maggie not to "spend [her] life drying off fools who get wet on purpose" (198) under the false assumption that she can acquire independence at the lake. Nell's invocation of Donne, made after she has given up her Swamp Angel—the revolver that symbolizes her independence—suggests that Nell has suppressed her own individual interests through an act of compassion for her daughter, Hilda, and also serves as a warning to Maggie that she will "always carry [the Gunnarsens'] load" (202). This inevitability, however, helps Maggie commit to staying at the lake. For this seemingly self-sacrificial reason, Maggie has earned an idealized reputation in Wilson criticism as a "secular saint who fulfills herself through giving herself to others" (Smyth 162-63).

Labelling Maggie a "secular saint" or "compassionate victor" (Pacey 138), however, emphasizes the communal sentiment of Donne's quotation to the point that it eclipses both Maggie's strong desire for autonomy, which Nell points out, and the potential failures of compassion that Wilson underlines. Notably, *both* Maggie and Nell adopt the view that "it takes God himself to be fair to two different people at once" (121, 201), and, although Wilson's critics have had less to say about it, this credo better captures the difficulties of compassion upon which the novel meditates. The maxim emphasizes the fact that in human relations compassion requires sacrifice—that the attempt to ease the suffering of one person in the way Schopenhauer imagines, for example, will be at the expense of another. Underscoring the apparent inequity of compassion, then, the maxim also points to Wilson's concern that the emotion requires a choice between two seeming wrongs: reluctant to further the suffering of anyone, Wilson implies, the compassionate person nonetheless allows one person to suffer in order to help another. More precisely, this choice involves the suffering of the compassionate individual herself, who "bend[s] down" as she "feel[s] with" another ("Joyce" 78). The logic of the maxim, however, might also offer an alibi for the Nietzschean individualist who desires to escape "involvement" with the human community: because I am not God and cannot diminish the suffering of another without sacrificing myself, I will be fair only to myself. While Donne's quotation promotes an individual's compassionate "involvement" with the suffering of another, this aphorism risks excusing self-interest as a human inevitably. Importantly, this tension remains unresolved in the novel and in fact characterizes the contradictory nature of Wilson's difficult compassion.

Furthermore, this maxim illuminates the first example of self-sacrificial and gendered compassion in the novel. *Swamp Angel* begins when Maggie leaves her second husband, Edward Vardoe, whom she had married at the moment of her own ultimate suffering, after the deaths of her father, first husband, and only child: "Maggie Lloyd, with no one to care for, had tried to save herself by an act of compassion and fatal stupidity. She had married Edward Vardoe who had a spaniel's eyes" (11). Wilson's description of this compassionate act is notably ambiguous: Maggie's compassion, an attempt to "save herself," may be for herself or for Vardoe, but as Maggie's own maxim suggests and her marriage reveals, her compassion cannot "be fair" to both her and her husband at the same time. In fact, the narrator's critical assessment of Maggie's "fatal stupidity" suggests that Maggie's marriage leads

to her own self-loss. For example, Maggie's marriage demeans her and so interferes with her sense of autonomy: "in the night, as had soon happened after their marriage, she lay humiliated and angry" (11). As the first (and ruinous) act of compassion in Wilson's novel, Maggie's marriage to Vardoe reveals the vulnerable position in which a sacrificial model of compassion places women. In *Swamp Angel*, however, Wilson attempts to work out a theory of compassion that would correct the "fatal stupidity" of Maggie's compassionate misjudgment. A marriage founded on passive, sacrificial compassion transforms the spontaneous and transcendent character of fellow feeling into a duty that continues to erase Maggie's individuality through time. Moreover, this temporal extension of compassion effectively undoes the ambiguity of Maggie's initial compassion: because Maggie's compassion for Vardoe requires her to sacrifice the self she had attempted to save through her marriage, her marriage causes her to "be fair" to her husband instead of her self.

Keeping Maggie's motives for marrying Vardoe in mind, we must ask why Maggie's compassion for Vardoe is problematic, while her eventual compassion for Vera, who resembles Vardoe in both her self-pity and her "dog's adoration" for her husband (65), is often celebrated as proof that Maggie's "one completely unambiguous and unfailing quality . . . is her compassion" (Pacey 139). In fact, Wilson unites Maggie with the Gunnarsens through a telling simile: "By the time that two months had gone past, Maggie's union with Three Loon Lake was like a happy marriage (were we married last week, or have we always lived together as one?)" (106). Despite the initial happiness of the union, however, Vera's self-pity pushes Maggie into another relationship that threatens to compromise her independence, and Vera soon causes Maggie "to experience some of the self-consciousness she had formerly felt with Edward Vardoe" (133). In order to understand the theory of compassion the novel develops, then, we must look more carefully at the "marriage" between Maggie and Vera.

Vera's and Maggie's opposing characterizations respectively correspond to the embodied and excessive feeling associated with sentimentality and the more intellectual and restrained modernist response to it. In particular, Wilson sets Vera's penchant for resentful self-pity against Maggie's stone-like (59) and reserved demeanour. While Wilson characterizes Maggie, like Nell, as "one of these man's women" (147), Vera seethes with jealousy and the *ressentiment* that Nietzsche criticizes as an effeminate expression of weak sentiment (Bell 168). Vera's jealousy of Maggie is a sensual indulgence: "She

indulged in the pleasure of the pain of her small growing jealousy. Since jealousy is a luxury which soon becomes a necessity to those who have felt its sharp enthralling pain" (*Swamp* 110). Indulgent, luxurious, and without "the support of simple philosophy" (109-10), Vera's jealousy bears the marks of the "excessive indulgence in emotion" that modernists criticized as "sentimental" (Cuddy-Keane 210) and that Wilson also criticized in her discussion of her own writing. Maggie, in contrast, impresses a new friend when she tells her tragic story in the style that modernists celebrated, that is, "plainly and without too much emotion" (*Swamp* 149). Thus, while Vera's self-pity corresponds to the gendered and modernist criticism of sentimentality, Wilson positions Maggie as a modernist subject through her renewed emotional independence. In turn, Maggie's emotion and Wilson's meditation on the nature of compassion take on characteristics that distinguished modernist considerations of emotion from the sentimentality modernists distrusted: Maggie's compassion is difficult, a way of feeling in a morally ambiguous world, and associated with Maggie's more masculine position as a "man's wom[an]"; it has an epiphanic temporality and is expressed plainly by both Maggie's action and Wilson's prose. Maggie's tense relationship with Vera, then, also embodies the tension between sentimentality and modernism in Wilson's writing.

As Wilson transforms compassion into a modernist emotion, then, she repositions it as a feeling between women. Maggie's and Nell's belief that "it takes God himself to be fair to two different people at once" indicates the essential change in Maggie between her relationship with Vardoe and her compassion for Vera. Maggie's relationship with Vardoe requires that she 'be fair' to *either* herself *or* her husband, and when she chooses Vardoe, she loses her autonomy in a humiliating marriage to a man who is uninterested in his wife as an individual. Maggie's departure from Vardoe, as Wilson suggests in the images of birds "returning in migration" (7), returns her to herself as Maggie Lloyd. Maggie's independence at Three Loon Lake helps her to feel for Vera in a way that does not risk her entire self. In Vera's most desperate moment, Maggie spontaneously chooses Vera over herself, but, because her compassion exists only in and through the present, she does not compromise her future autonomy as she had through her marriage vows to Vardoe. Thus, Wilson makes autonomy a requirement for compassion, a seeming contradiction that contributes to the emotion's difficulty.

Despite the earlier suggestion that Maggie will "perhaps . . . not" offer Vera compassion, Maggie does offer her antagonist the "operative grace" of the

compassionate in the description of the cold sleeper. Maggie's compassion occurs after Vera, in an extreme act of hopelessness and regret, attempts to drown herself: "Maggie, hearing the drip and drip of water dropping on the wooden floor of the veranda and looking on Vera's ghostly face, knew with horror that Vera had tried to drown herself and had not been able" (190). Although she is incapable of curing Vera of the jealous "Evil One" that causes her self-pity, Maggie offers Vera "helpless compassion" (192) in her moment of real suffering. However helpless, compassion inspires Maggie to the action Wilson describes in the sleeper passage:

> [Maggie's] spirit was very sore and sad within her, and still angry, and it seemed to her the least important thing that she should speak and make words, and the most important thing that a fire should burn and warm the cabin and then there would be, somehow, a humanity in the room when the fire was burning." (191)

As Wilson had suggested earlier, spontaneous action, inspired by the humanity that the sufferer and the compassionate share, defines compassion. Furthermore, Wilson's description of Maggie's compassion for Vera is free of sentimentality; the narrator focuses on Maggie's actions and communicates the fellow feeling between the two women "plainly and without too much emotion" (149) through the objective image of the fire that warms the room they share.

While Maggie does not totally forget herself in feeling for Vera, her impulse to help another trumps her concern for herself and thus suggests some level of self-forgetfulness. Vera's suffering deflates Maggie's past problems with her; they are "little things . . . nothings, really" (191). In this moment of difficult compassion, then, Maggie balances her self-interest (her own anger and sadness) with her feeling for Vera. Maggie's compassion thus takes on elements of Schopenhauer's—it joins Maggie and Vera in a moment of shared suffering—but it does not result in the self-sacrificial union of her relationship with Vardoe. Wilson thus suggests that the compassionate individual maintains her autonomy so long as her compassion is only momentary. Here is an alternative vision of the necessity of the present moment for compassion: the compassionate present may not overcome the future, as it does in Maggie's marriage, for to do so would compromise the compassionate individual's autonomy. The spontaneous moment of Maggie's renewed compassion thus also restores the epiphanic quality of the emotion that is lost when compassion becomes a duty.

Maggie's redefined compassion does not, however, cure Vera of the destructive self-pity that causes her suffering. Outside the compassionate

moment Maggie and Vera are still independent subjects within the novel: Vera is Vera and Maggie is Maggie. The novel thus concludes not with the resolution of the opposition with which it began, but with a reminder of the tension between Maggie's and Nell's maxims and their bearing on the uncertain compassion Wilson contemplates in *Swamp Angel*. Nell's repetition of Maggie's belief that "it takes God himself to be fair to two different people at once" (201) also connects the maxim to the Swamp Angel, a symbol of "selfhood and power" (Stouck, *Ethel* 199). Nell relates her own difficult choice between juggling her revolver in travelling shows with her husband, Philip, and providing her daughter, Hilda, with a traditional home: "with me it was Philip or Hilda, Philip or Hilda" (201). Although Nell's story suggests that her choice was between her husband and her daughter, her love for her revolver and the independence it grants her suggest that her real choice was between a life defined by the social expectations of motherhood and one she defined for herself. For Thompson, as for most of Wilson's critics, when Maggie throws the gun in the lake at the end of the novel, she fulfills Donne's image of commitment to community and fully curbs the individualism symbolized in the Angel: "the relinquishment of the Angel is an admission of the necessity to limit the individual's wielding of power in the human community" (31).

Yet *Swamp Angel* concludes with the questions and uncertainty that mark Wilson's prose and undermine Maggie's confidence throughout the novel: "whether or not Maggie will succeed, we cannot know. The ending of the novel brings no formal closure" (Stouck, *Ethel* 200). The last pages of the novel, which describe Maggie going out onto the lake and dramatically throwing the Swamp Angel into it as Nell requested, feature numerous questions, as Maggie and the narrator are unsure of the significance of Nell's request and what the future will bring: "There were certain things that Maggie could not settle. Would a recovered but enfeebled Vera return to the lake and to the poignant sight of that memorable and melancholy shore? And if she did not return, could Haldar so far bend his own strong will to stay with her in town?" (*Swamp* 208-09). Maggie's questions return to the uncertainty of compassion: will Haldar compassionately sacrifice his own desires for his wife? Moreover, Maggie's question about Vera's return underscores the momentary nature of the union between the two women: outside of the compassionate moment, Maggie cannot be sure of how Vera feels. Furthermore, as Maggie contemplates the gun and whether or not she will throw it in the lake, Wilson's prose briefly and significantly

switches to the simple present—"Maggie handles the Swamp Angel and looks at it curiously and thoughtfully" (208)—and thereby emphasizes the importance of her spontaneous and uncertain present for ethical action, in this case Maggie's fulfillment of her promise to Nell. Again, Wilson stresses the unpredictability of Maggie's actions. The ending of the novel describes Maggie, having kept her promise to Nell, seeing the lodge from the lake: "Now she stopped . . . to get her direction" (209). Although she resigns to "appl[y] herself to the matters at hand" (209), Maggie knows neither what will come to her next nor how she will respond to it. The last sentence of the novel, which was not included in its first Canadian edition, reinforces Maggie's commitment to work and to the lodge, the locus of both her autonomy and community: "Maggie turned again, took the oars, and rowed hard, straight in the direction of the lodge" (209).[4] Rather than indicate that Maggie possesses an assurance that the narration of the novel has in fact persistently signaled as fallible and indeterminate, the last sentences of the novel describe Maggie committing to an ethical present in the face of the unknowable future, which Wilson's emphatic "Now" underscores.

Maggie's undetermined future makes her further compassion possible but uncertain. But, as Wilson redefines compassion in her novel, she reveals that its unpredictable nature is its very condition of possibility. The virtue of compassion develops from the individual's choice—between two wrongs "because there is no right"—and so, like Schopenhauer, Wilson emphasizes that the compassionate individual does not perform a duty, which would not allow for her free choice and potential failure. Like Nietzsche, however, Wilson also endorses an individualist ethics that denies an absolute morality. Wilson thus transforms the philosophies of her predecessors: while she presents the individual as transcending her ego in the spontaneous moment of compassionate action, she also suggests that compassion can only be temporary, for a state in which one perpetually sacrifices oneself results in the disparaging suppression of the individual, represented by the image of an apparently dutiful but dependent housewife that Maggie refuses at the beginning of the novel. Most importantly, however, as Wilson transforms previous philosophies of compassion, she also reimagines the gendered assumptions that had defined them. Wilson's focus on Maggie and her compassion for Vardoe and Vera reveals the risks a sacrificial model of compassion poses for women and redefines the emotion (and the woman who embraces it) as difficult, active, and unsentimental. Thus, while fellow feeling does not decisively indicate the victory of social obligation over the

drive to individual independence, Wilson demonstrates the way in which autonomy shapes the possibility of compassion, especially for women. Maggie's compassion is momentarily met but never held; this difficulty—which underscores choice, autonomy, and continual process—serves as a reminder that compassion, resistant to closure itself, does not bring Wilson's novel to a definitive end.

Difficult, unsentimental, and narrated in plain language, Wilson's theory of compassion also transforms a traditionally passive and gendered emotion into one that embodies the hallmarks of modernist representations of emotion. As she develops her complex philosophy of "difficult compassion," Wilson also develops what might usefully be called a compassionate modernism. Critics continue to struggle to categorize Wilson's writing: as Coral Ann Howells notes, Wilson's distinctive style combines "conventional realism" and modernism so that "her novels shift almost imperceptibly into modernist territory of epiphany, symbolism, and mythic patterning" (298). Often related to her characters' epiphanies, Wilson's representation of compassion also shapes the "modernist territory" of *Swamp Angel*. Attention to the intricacies of Wilson's theory of compassion reveals the contribution her thought makes to the philosophical history of the emotion. Moreover, it opens up a new path on which critics may reevaluate Wilson's modernism at a moment when critics of modernism are also reevaluating the "still-pervasive notions of modernism's hostility to notions of feelings for others" (Martin 10). Wilson's original and complex theory of compassion, then, illuminates not only her own modernism, but also the ways in which modernist modes of representation and philosophical interests combine to examine rigorously the status of emotion in the indifferent but still meaningful modern world. If, as *Swamp Angel* reveals, compassion may be redefined in modernist terms, then, perhaps controversially, Wilson may also help us rediscover modernism's compassion.

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NOTES

1 Despite modernism's apparently universal disdain for sentimentality, however, feminist critics have attempted to recover sentimentality as part of modernism. For example, in *Sentimental Modernism: Women Writers and the Revolution of the Word*, Suzanne Clark

investigates the gendered nature of modernism's criticism of sentimentality, which she argues "located women's writing with the obscenity of the sentimental" (2) and ignored "the sentimental *within* modernism" (4).

2 For example, in "A Rejected Preface" to *New Provinces*, Smith complains about the emotional excess of "romantic" and "conventional" Canadian poetry, which he claims represents nature as "humanized, endowed with feeling, and made sentimental," and love as "idealized, sanctified, and inflated" (6). Furthermore, according to Smith's acid assessment, the poet who writes such verse "has a soft heart and a soft soul; and a soft head" (7).

3 Schopenhauer disapproves of Kant's idea that an external voice commands an individual into moral action. Schopenhauer claims that such an impetus to morality actually negates virtue: "A commanding voice, whether it comes from within, or from without, cannot possibly be imagined except as threatening or promising. Consequently, obedience to it . . . is yet always actuated by selfishness, and therefore morally worthless" (16).

4 In "The Rival Editions of Ethel Wilson's *Swamp Angel*," Li-Ping Geng describes the changes Wilson made to her novel for her American publishers. Although McClelland and Stewart has now adopted the American edition, as Geng argues, this edition "fail[s] to reflect the author's final intentions" (82).

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Raining Selves

Nelly Arcan; Melissa Bull, trans.
Burqa of Skin. Anvil $18.00

Carellin Brooks
One Hundred Days of Rain. BookThug $20.00

Reviewed by Will Smith

In new works by Carellin Brooks and Nelly Arcan the details of the everyday are potent for considering the various fictions of the self. In *One Hundred Days of Rain*, Vancouver is a mythical rain-filled city. The structuring device of one hundred days, each one defined by the city's relationship with precipitation, gives the narrative a constant in a world where the nameless female protagonist has few. Brooks' central protagonist is in the midst of a breakup with "M," in a complex relationship with a lover, "S," and meanwhile looks after "the child" while keeping in touch with "her son's father." These enigmatic terms are reflected in her troubling history with M, not "her wife" but instead, even after courtroom drama, "her spouse." Such a limited idea of personal names could serve to distance the reader from the social drama, yet they heighten the emotional intensity of break up, love affair, and lives being lived.

The novel's poetic prose observes characters in small, precise, and particular interactions before leaving them to retreat into the interiors of their own worlds. The rain is then the broader gesture, a hint towards a longer time frame: "Rain is the citizenry's inheritance, their boondoggle, their folly, their insurance policy." The rain connects the protagonist to her memories as if she can locate herself in weather data. Past actions and consequences are recollected and structured in an attempt to make visible how relationships are exposed to emotional seepage and wear. The novel's diary-like numbered entries separate these intense bursts of emotional detail and accumulate into a kaleidoscopic portrait of contemporary urban life.

Nelly Arcan's *Burqa of Skin* also entertains the power of rain, invoking it to represent the transitory and yet lingering qualities of the public gaze. In Arcan's first text from this posthumously published collection, "The Dress," it is "walking the streets, or at the supermarket, in cafés, glances skim off my body like rain." That the gaze might skim is cursory, superficial even, and yet uneasily close to the skin, spreading across its surface. Arcan's writing plays with proximity to the self, analyzing the depth of feeling and complexity in performing subjectivity and the external forces creating the interpellated subject.

Containing unpublished work alongside lesser-known articles, the collection coheres around themes of self, body, and gender in Canadian society. A fiction, "The Child in the Mirror" relates the childhood memories of Dominique Mercier. Dominique's own sense of self is partially framed by understanding her forename to be common. By alluding to the similar situation faced by future Isabelles and how they would "have to make themselves up dramatically to be seen," Mercier and so Arcan (née Isabelle Fortier) articulates autofiction to be both

confession and disguise. Similar tensions are made explicit in the third text, "Shame," which highlights how media publicity displays the writer as a continuation of their work and a separate self, commenting on their work for the public. Arcan exposes how the hypersexualized lens of television and talk show host combines with subjective notions of appropriate public presentation to flatten writerly complexity.

Both writers hint at the claustrophobia of self-analysis but ultimately open up to contribute nuanced frameworks of subject formation in contemporary society.

Mourners and Mystics

Gail Benick
The Girl Who Was Born That Way. Inanna $19.95

Sigal Samuel
The Mystics of Mile End. Freehand $21.95

Reviewed by Ruth Panofsky

Debut novels by Gail Benick and Sigal Samuel examine the lasting impact of losing loved ones on individual family members, Holocaust survivors, and the wider Jewish community. They also show the potential for human connection to mitigate the effects of trauma.

The Girl Who Was Born That Way is presented as a novella, but the story feels rooted in personal experience. The first-person narrator, Linda Sue Berk, is the youngest of four sisters. Each sister is defined by her city of birth and formative years. Hetty and Tilya, the two elder siblings, were born in the Lodz ghetto, while Terry Sue and Linda Sue were born in St. Louis, Missouri, following the family's eventual immigration to the United States. Although historical events and experiences separate Terry Sue and Linda Sue from the others, all six members of the Berk (formerly Berkowitz) family are tied psychologically by virtue of the devastating illness that besets Terry Sue and the legacy of Holocaust trauma that imbues their everyday lives.

Linda Sue's narrative lens is focused on her sister. Terry Sue is born with a chromosomal abnormality, identified late in the novella as Turner Syndrome, and she develops anorexia that requires hospitalization. Terry Sue's individual struggles with eating, body image, and the effects of Turner Syndrome are conveyed through letters written from the hospital to her three sisters. The letters date from 13 October 1961 to 2 November 1963 and form the backdrop for the collective struggle of her family that unfolds in the larger narrative. This lament for Terry Sue, who dies tragically on 3 November 1963 at the age of seventeen weighing seventy-seven pounds, is informed by Linda Sue's empathy and sisterly love.

The past impinges on Terry Sue's parents, making it extremely difficult for them to accept their daughter's illness. Her mother, in particular, is gripped by sorrow and ravaged by memories of relatives lost during the Holocaust. Her father is more willing to begin anew and forms friendships in the community, but is hampered by his wife's anxiety. In contrast, Hetty and Tilya embrace life in America. Hetty marries and has two children; Tilya earns a doctorate from Columbia University with a dissertation entitled "Sexual Identity: The History of an Idea," a subject that links her to Terry Sue. It is Linda Sue's narrative of remembrance, however, that commemorates her sister and validates the importance of family history and community. As Linda Sue once wrote to Tilya, the new graduate: "If you ever publish your dissertation, I hope you will reclaim the whole name Mama and Papa gave you in Lodz—Tilya Berkowitz. I've always liked the sound of those names together, and besides, that's the way you were born."

Sigal Samuel's exploration of loss, which is deeper and richer than Benick's, is rooted

in the Jewish mysticism of the Kabbalah. *The Mystics of Mile End* is set in the titular neighbourhood of Montreal, "a mashup of hipsters and Hasidic Jews" that is rendered with colour and accuracy. The novel is told in four parts. Parts one to three are narrated respectively by members of the Meyer family—son Lev, father David, and daughter Samara—while part four is told by a third-person narrator. Like the Berks, the Meyer family is shattered by the untimely death of a loved one, in this case Miriam, their wife and mother, who is killed in a car accident when she leaves the house to buy saltine crackers. This seemingly arbitrary event of immense proportion affects the life trajectories of Miriam's husband and children.

Faith is a point of contact and contention for the Meyers. Miriam is devout and embraces Judaism, while David, a religious studies professor, gradually moves away from his faith and rejects it outright just prior to his wife's death. A heart attack, however, alters his perspective and he becomes obsessed with the Kabbalah, focusing on its Tree of Life and the spiritual meaning it might hold for him personally.

The quest for true spirituality—which Miriam embodied—also drives Lev and Samara, who are so scarred emotionally that they do not fathom how deeply they are touched by their mother's death. Lev follows Miriam's example and finds meaning in orthodox practice, while Samara, after her father dies while out running, takes on his fixation with the Kabbalah's Tree of Life and goes to the extreme of binding herself "*to each of its ten vessels in turn*," seeking unity "*with the divine source of all being*." The need to rescue Samara from misguided spiritual devotion brings about the climax of the novel.

In addition to the Meyers, Samuel's large cast of neighbourhood characters includes Alex, a childhood friend of Lev and Samara who understands the world through science rather than religion; Holocaust survivors Chaim and Chaya Glassman, sweethearts who reunite long after the war and share a loving but silent marriage; and Mr. Katz, an observant Jew whose eccentricities prove prescient. Each turns to the word, in its various forms, to quell personal suffering and find meaning in life: biblical texts, the teachings of Kabbalah, scholarly treatises, scientific studies, even *King Lear*.

In writing this novel, Samuel set herself an ambitious task: to fashion a narrative out of the disparate threads of Jewish tradition and mysticism; the Holocaust; heterosexual and lesbian love; trauma and human resilience. In fact, *The Mystics of Mile End* is beautifully executed. Its thematic focus on faith and human connection is mirrored in its plot, which is carefully aligned across character and events, but is neither heavy-handed nor false. The ending, which unites the various characters—orphaned children, friends, lovers, neighbours—gestures outward toward personal attachment as the way forward through trauma. That the gesture rings true is the novel's great achievement.

Le souffleur de mots

Anne Élaine Cliche

Jonas de mémoire. Le Quartanier 23,95 $

Compte rendu par Chiara Falangola

Jonas de mémoire, texte fragmentaire sur la relation entre l'écriture et la mémoire collective et individuelle, est le cinquième roman de l'écrivaine, professeure et critique québécoise Anne Élaine Cliche.

Jonas, garçon de l'enfance de la narratrice, est l'« enfant dingue », l'enfant-prophète qui, un jour, vient réclamer qu'elle écrive son histoire. Entre les deux la relation est de l'ordre du pacte, celui du « souffleur » et de son « scribe » qui retranscrira la folie mal comprise de l'enfant, l'histoire de sa famille d'origine et de sa juiveté retrouvée.

Mais « rien ne passe à l'écrit qui ne soit détourné » et « l'accompli peut devenir inaccompli » dans la discontinuité des différentes parties, du brouillage des voix narratives et des filières diégétiques. Dans l'écart entre histoire vécue et histoire écrite, la tension est ainsi projetée vers la vérité du récit entrelacé qui s'écrit sous nos yeux, la vérité des prophéties bibliques, celle de Jonas, de la narratrice, de Malka Friedman (la mère biologique), d'Aaron Friedman (l'oncle), de la mémoire de la Shoah qui passe à travers la reconstruction saccadée de la diaspora d'une famille.

Les passages où la voix narrative s'essaie à l'énonciation prophétique et où le lecteur se laisse aller à une rêverie sur l'hébreu sont particulièrement suggestifs. À remarquer aussi ces noms de pays d'or, de lait et de miel, « l'Abitibi terre de roches de minerais refuge pour les peuples du monde », Val d'Or, « Weymontachie un village d'Atikamek », qui réécrivent la réminiscence proustienne dans l'histoire et la topographie québécoises : « Comme toi je suis marquée au sceau des noms de mon enfance rougeurs sur ma peau incises dans ma chair qui s'ouvrent dès que je les entends. Ces noms de plus de mille ans que nous ne savions pas traduire Témiscamingue Machi-Manitou Windigo Baskatong sur lesquels d'autres noms sont venus s'écrire dans l'espoir de redonner à la défaite de notre peuple une mémoire glorieuse. » Et, finalement, les très beaux dialogues entre Jonas et l'oncle Aaron, où le rythme narratif semble rappeler l'euphorie de cette danse de jeunesse hassidique qui s'empare d'Aaron chaque fois que Jonas joue du violon.

Si *Jonas de mémoire* s'inscrit dans une voie du fragmentaire déjà pratiquée par un certain roman francophone du 20e et du 21e siècles, il offre une réflexion et un développement significatifs sur la figure littéraire du Juif québécois. Les « hypothèses de récit », le balbutiement, la redite et le jeu sur la ponctuation en font un texte presque psalmodié, dont la lecture est marquée par la suggestion et la qualité prophétique du langage.

Gikinoo'amaagoowin

George Copway
The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation.
Wilfrid Laurier UP $24.99

Darrell Dennis
Peace Pipe Dreams: The Truth about Lies about Indians. Douglas & McIntyre $22.95

Armand Garnet Ruffo
The Thunderbird Poems. Harbour $18.95

Dorothy Dora Whipple
Chi-mewinzha: Ojibwe Stories from Leech Lake.
U of Minnesota P $21.95

Reviewed by Catherine Rainwater

These books afford readers an education—gikinoo'amaagoowin—in things Ojibwe, past and present. The authors' voices are memorable for how they invite readers to listen and learn. Dorothy Dora Whipple is an elder and a fluent Ojibwe speaker from Leech Lake, Minnesota. *Chi-mewinzha*, a collection of her own stories printed on facing pages in Ojibwe and English, forms part of her lifelong work in Ojibwe language revitalization projects. Transcribed from speech and illustrated with line drawings that Whipple hopes will inspire children to learn Ojibwe, her stories convey the pace and cadence of an oral storyteller and teacher.

In "Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter," printed in two versions, the narrator reminds her audience to attend to seasonal tasks. In the spring, "when the leaves are coming out," the people "used to go after birch bark. It's only for a little while that the birch bark can be peeled off. . . . [J]ust after the spring when it starts to be sunny and hot, that's when it peels. You can't take that birch bark all summer because it won't peel." Version two reviews the rewards for labour: "It's spring. . . . That's the time the Indians get

the . . . birch bark. . . . We made birdhouses and little birch baskets and sold them." A less instructive but humorous story recalls white people wearing wigs and painted to look like "Indians" so they could steal rice from the Ojibwe. A melancholy tale laments how few people nowadays use tobacco in sacred ways, but instead merely smoke it. This entertaining book has a variety of potential uses. The narratives teach readers about Ojibwe lifeways, beliefs, and cultural perspectives. Linguists will appreciate how the tales preserve the spoken language, and the self-taught student of Ojibwe will value the glossary matching Ojibwe with English words and phrases.

While Whipple's voice draws us back into an older world to be preserved, stand-up comedian Darrell Dennis' anchors us in the present one that needs repair. Refreshingly irreverent, *Peace Pipe Dreams* tackles politically charged issues such as terms *du jour* for referring to Native people and to particular tribes: Native American or America Indian? Native? Indian? First Nations or Native Canadian? Ojibwe or Anishinaabe? Ironically, while visiting the "Indian Friendship Centre" (Native Canadian Centre) in Toronto, Dennis reports being chastised for calling himself "Native": "You are not *Native,* you are Anishinaabe!" British Columbian Dennis protests, "I had never heard the word 'Anishinaabe' before in my life!"

Each chapter of *Peace Pipe Dreams* is easy to hear as a comic monologue. Even on a serious subject such as alcoholism, Dennis punctuates factual and statistical information with good-natured *bons mots*. Statistics show, for example, that Caucasians consume more alcohol than Native people do: "Caucasians, you're probably wondering why we're all here today. This is an intervention. . . . [T]his whole time you have been displaying the exact same behaviour you attribute to Indians. Ain't that a bitch?" Informality and wit, however, do not obscure Dennis' serious purpose—to emphasize democratic ideals brought centuries ago to the so-called New World, and to insist we live up to them.

Recalling times when North America was relatively "new," at least to Eurocentric eyes, George Copway's *Traditional History* was first published in 1850. Arguably the first tribal history by a Native author, its perceived incoherence and disorganization have generated skepticism about whether it is truly Copway's, or even any single historian's writing. This Early Canadian Literature edition contains the complete text of the original publication; it also features an afterword by Shelley Hulan addressing Copway's contested rhetorical strategies for managing his non-Indigenous audience. Hulan argues for his authorial control over a deliberately "patchwork" text designed to "interrupt" the history he narrates to achieve intended effects: raising audience awareness of how earlier histories had been narrated from a Eurosettler's perspective that he does not share, and persuading readers that "contradictory" versions of history such as his own merit attention. Hulan argues persuasively for Copway's complex vision and his sophisticated narrative management of it.

A different kind of complex vision is the subject of Armand Garnet Ruffo's collection of ekphrastic poems inspired by the paintings of Ojibwe artist Norval Morrisseau. Ruffo verbally renders the mystical, visual experiences created by his tribal kinsman, whose paintings sustain the worlds the artist dreamed as he sought spiritual knowledge and struggled with alcoholism. In each poem, Ruffo connects an evocative painting with episodes in Morrisseau's life. Ruffo contrives to enter Morrisseau's creative space as if on a shamanic journey of his own. He brings back to the reader a keen understanding of the Ojibwe traditions and iconography informing the artist's work, perceptive interpretations of individual paintings, and an empathetic connection to the painter himself. For example, in a

prose poem, "Sacred Bear from Vision, 1959-60" (also the name of the painting), Ruffo elaborates on a powerful incident in Morrisseau's life. For several days, twelve-year-old Norval, on his first vision quest, is suspended on a scaffold some twenty feet in the air. When the spirits come, he was told, he must keep his eyes closed. Unfortunately, when Bear arrives, young Norval is so frightened that he looks, and consequently he receives only part of Bear's gift, "the message of everlasting life." Ruffo and the adult Norval attribute some of the painter's lifelong suffering to his youthful failure of courage. Ruffo's own gift to the painter he admired is a compassionate representation of his difficult life and celebrated work in verbal imagery accentuating the "dignity and bravery" of the "Great Ojibway" people, traits conveyed by all four of the volumes here under review.

In Search of Indigenous America

James H. Cox and Daniel Heath Justice, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Indigenous American Literature.* Oxford UP $165.00

Reviewed by Armand Garnet Ruffo

Without a doubt Indigenous literary studies is one of the fastest-growing fields in the academy. Testament to this growth is the new *The Oxford Handbook of Indigenous American Literature* consisting of forty-three entries. In short, it is a big book full of weighty essays. Aside from the text's hefty size, what immediately stands out is the title, which the editors presumably adopted to convey the vast range of material covered, and the subject matter, "American," a term used both geographically and politically, which, fittingly, pushes against national borders.

Cox and Justice state the catalyst for the text in the first lines of their introduction: "*The Oxford Handbook of Indigenous American Literature* is a product of the transformation of Native American and Indigenous literary studies during the past twenty years. This transformation was precipitated by the introduction of two new modes of inquiry: tribal nation specificity and American Indian literary nationalism." After providing a short overview as to why these "movements" have been significant, noting that contributions have come from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, they add the third element of "transnationalism" to the mix: "The *handbook* also recognizes the significant development of an inter- and trans-Indigenous orientation in Native and Indigenous literary studies." As one of the three main threads the editors pull together in their conception of the handbook, it provides the reasoning for the international orientation of the text.

So what does this big book offer? Together the forty-three essays literally cover a lot of ground—"geographic breadth is one of the defining features of the *Handbook*"—in describing and/or analyzing important movements, as the editors indicate, "in the last twenty years" from a variety of angles; as such the compilation is divided into four general sections, "Histories," "Genres," "Methods," "Geographies," flexible enough to accommodate an eclectic and diverse range of contributions. That the essays are heavily weighted towards continental USA comes as no surprise given the relative size of its Indigenous literary population, the recognition awarded its writers, and the current scholarship in the field, but it is nonetheless troubling. As Sam McKegney's insightful essay alludes to, what this does is unintentionally create a kind of Indigenous literary centre, where other national literatures appear auxiliary to what is going on, or has gone on, in the USA, the result apparently of little, if any, reciprocal movement.

Still, the text covers a wide, often-idiosyncratic range of topics, and it would be impossible to summarize each contribution,

but certain observations stand out. For the most part the essays are excellent. Consider the two essays that frame the text: Keavy Martin on Inuit literature not only provides valuable insight into this often-overlooked literature, but goes so far as to challenge the orthodoxy of classifying Inuit literature in western terms. While acknowledging that the term "literature" can be strategically useful, she astutely flips the language paradigm, noting, that "rather than saying wistfully that 'there is no word for poetry / literature in Inuktitut,' it might be preferable to say that English . . . struggles to adequately convey" Inuktitut. Likewise the afterword by Hawaii-based Kanaka Maoli scholar and poet ku'ualoha hoʻomanawanui effectively illustrates through Hawaiian cultural specificity, literary nationalism, and a sense of speaking outward to an international Indigenous community, the true strengths of the text. It is here in introducing readers to literatures they may know little or nothing about that I find the handbook most engaging.

As a whole the collection is impressive, and one would be hard-pressed not to find a major topic covered: language, orality, orature, rhetoric, writing, representation, colonization, identity, gender, sexuality, sovereignty, nationalism, transnationalism, tribalism, land, history, development, pedagogy, aesthetics, genre—it is all there—and produced by scholars who, according to their contributor biographies, are all experts in the field. And yet, it must be said that individually some essays are stronger than others, and range from those that provide a complex analysis of a given literature, as noted above, and which will undoubtedly mark the field, to others that are simply lacking—here I'm thinking about the lack of emphasis on the centrality of drama in the development and reception of Indigenous literature in Canada—to essays that are more or less incidental. This point makes me wonder about the purpose and parameters of the handbook, as well as the intended audience. As it stands, the editors have cast a wide net, but if the focus is on "Indigenous America" and includes an essay on Mayan literature from Mexico, then why not criticism from Peru and Brazil, among other territories, which have huge Indigenous populations?

It is safe to say that no anthology can be totally inclusive, and yet one can say in confidence that *The Oxford Handbook of Indigenous American Literature* offers something for everybody with an interest in Indigenous literature. What readers will not find, though, with a few exceptions, are standard handbook-type essays covering major work by major authors. Nowhere will one find a complete essay on the work and influence of N. Scott Momaday or Tomson Highway, for example, which makes me wonder if calling this text a "handbook" is a misnomer. In their acknowledgements the editors mention that assembling the compilation took five years, and we can understand why. Whatever we call this text, it is a massive undertaking that provides a panoply of voices from a new generation of scholars who are opening up Indigenous literature across borders and providing critical insight into all its beauty, diversity, and controversy.

Critical Ecosystems

Birgit Däwes and Marc Maufort, eds. *Enacting Nature: Ecocritical Perspectives on Indigenous Performance.* Peter Lang $61.95

Wendy Gay Pearson and Susan Knabe, eds. *Reverse Shots: Indigenous Film and Media in an International Context.* Wilfrid Laurier UP $42.99

Reviewed by Christina Turner

Two recently published collections of essays examine works by Indigenous authors in an international context. They describe how artists from Turtle Island (North America), Australia, and Aotearoa (New Zealand) are using film and performance

to subvert stereotypes and narrate counter histories. At their best, both of these collections demonstrate how Indigenous authors simultaneously stretch and trouble the borders of extant critical discourses.

Reverse Shots: Indigenous Film and Media in an International Context grew out of a conference of the same name held at Wilfrid Laurier University in 2007. In the volume's introduction, editors Wendy Gay Pearson and Susan Knabe describe how Indigenous film originated with documentary work in the 1960s and how Indigenous filmmakers have worked to subvert the "taxidermic impulse" (shared by the academic field of ethnography and Hollywood alike) to freeze Indigenous subjects in time. The book's title comes from the cinematic term for a shot which frames a character's response, but also describes how "when Indigenous people move behind the camera . . . they are in a sense creating reverse shots—that is, films that reverse and revise from within their own perspective the dominant culture's view of Indigenous people."

The book is organized into five sections that reflect an engagement with recent developments in Indigenous film beyond documentary. The first comprises the introduction and Michael Greyeyes' keynote speech from the 2007 conference. The second, "Decolonizing Histories," addresses works that subvert the colonial gaze, frequently by speaking back against particular films such as *Nanook of the North* (1922), which is responded to by *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*. The third section, "Mediating Practices," examines the political and economic factors that influence the production of Indigenous/Aboriginal film and television. The fourth examines documentary, while the last comprises two essays that perform more traditional academic readings of the films *Heater* and *The Price of Milk*.

Theoretically, the volume's contributors tend to blend ideas drawn from the fields of Indigenous and Postcolonial studies, such as when Pearson and Ernie Blackmore invoke "Aboriginalism" as an extension of Said's "Orientalism" to articulate how a colonizing culture constructs images about Indigenous people. Pearson draws on Michelle Raheja's idea of visual sovereignty in her discussion of films that represent the pre-colonial world in Finland, the Arctic, and Australia. Maeghan Pirie's chapter on Alanis Obamsawin and Shelley Niro, and Gail Vainstone's contribution on the work of Loretta Todd, both underscore the intersection of racism and sexism in Canada's Indian Act.

More so than literature, political and economic factors play a major role in determining which films get made and who sees them. For this reason, the most interesting chapters in *Reverse Shots* are those that attend to pre- and post-production, such as Erin Morton's and Taryn Sirove's chapter on Southern audiences' reception of short films by the Isuma Igloolik Collective, and Stephen Foster's and Mike Evans' discussion of their work with Prince George Métis Elders on a collaborative documentary.

The book's organization according to theme rather than region allows for rich thematic comparison and guards against geographic essentialism. However, it also means that certain pieces of historical or geographical context, like the negative impact of the Howard government in Australia, are unnecessarily repeated. With the exception of Pirie's chapter, which covers one film by Shelley Niro, discussions of Native American film are notably absent.

Like *Reverse Shots*, *Enacting Nature: Ecocritical Perspectives on Indigenous Performance* examines works by Indigenous authors in a comparative transnational framework. For the most part, the book's editors and individual authors adhere to Cheryl Glotfelty's conception of ecocriticism as a reading practice that "highlights the close relationship between nature and culture." Some authors in the collection take

Glotfelty's definition at face value; others, like Marc Maufort (in his concluding chapter), highlight the close interrelationship between nature and culture in Shuswap society to suggest how works of Indigenous performance can help us rethink how we define ecocriticism.

Brigit Dawes' introductory chapter lays the theoretical groundwork for the rest of the volume. Dawes anchors her reading of plays by Yvette Nolan and Marie Clements in the concept of heterholism, which acknowledges the cultural specificity of Indigenous artworks without reducing them to essentialist parameters. As such, her reading of Clements' *The Edward Curtis Project* and Nolan's *The Unplugging* focuses on how these playwrights deconstruct both the stereotype of what Greg Garrard has termed the "Ecological Indian" and a Romantic ideal of nature. Other authors pick up on Dawes' framework without invoking it explicitly; one example is Maryann Henck, who reads Drew Hayden Taylor's *The Berlin Blues* using contemporary tourism theory.

The chapters in *Enacting Nature* can be roughly divided into those which approach culture (and thus, on a micro level, the performance stage) as an ecosystem, and those which read nature as metaphor. In the latter camp, Yvette Nolan's chapter on Laura Shamas' *Chasing Honey* and Diana Looser's on New Caledonian drama both examine nature as an allegory for a polity under threat. In the former, Jay Darby's reading of Lynn Riggs' *Out of Dust* and Ric Knowles' discussion of earthen mounds in North America both attend to the ways in which nature comes into being on stage. Since a dramatic script is merely a blueprint for performance, the strongest essays in this collection attend to stage directions and details of set and lighting in particular productions. While most of the book chapters focus on plays, two, by Lisa Swain and Lisa Warrington and David O'Donnell, discuss dance and performance art. The collection evinces a wide breadth of coverage of dramatic works from Canada, the United States, and Oceania (including New Caledonia and Fiji as well as Australia and New Zealand). With the exception of Looser's chapter, the focus is largely on works written in English.

Both *Reverse Shots* and *Enacting Nature* compare works by Indigenous artists within and across chapters, while attending to local specificity in such a way as to avoid reductionist readings. As such, both books are promising contributions to the field of comparative Indigenous studies, as well as to ecocriticism and film studies, respectively.

Poetics, In Every Air

Amy De'Ath and Fred Wah, eds.
Toward. Some. Air. Banff Centre $21.95

Reviewed by Michael Nardone

Poetics exists in an ambiguous state amid the networks and institutions of North American critical and creative practices. On the one hand, the term signifies a long arc of study from Aristotle to structuralism, in which the poetician is one who deciphers the narratological and syntactical elements of literary production, creating taxonomies of work, or one who examines the abstract and general structures embedded within works and the means by which aspects of those structures are made legible. Hence, we have definitions that claim poetics to be a "scientific" and "systematic study of literature as literature" (Hrushovski), or a questioning of "the properties of that particular discourse that is literary discourse" (Todorov). On the other hand, poetics is "something altogether more changeable, porous, and unpredictable," as Brian Reed writes with particular regard to its usage in the twenty-first century, "namely, the compositional principles that poets themselves discover and apply during the writing

process." These divergent interpretations of poetics are perpetuated in institutional settings—in English departments where the term is often utilized so as to be synonymous with the hermeneutic excavation of a particular body of work, and in creative writing programs where "poetics" is habitually employed so as to connote any extended consideration of poems as unique aesthetic objects. At the core of this sustained ambiguity is the issue of how to teach the subject: What are the sites and modes of poetics? How does one situate it amid an expanded terrain of aesthetic and social engagements? What are the proper resources?

In Amy De'Ath's and Fred Wah's edited volume *Toward. Some. Air.*, we have, at last, an ideal primer on poetics, a collection of writings that addresses the most consequential aspects of contemporary literary production. Grounded by a feminist and decolonial perspective, *Toward. Some. Air.* moves through an array of approaches and concerns for writing: articulations of subjectivity, identity, and collectivity; indigenous, diasporic, and settler-colonial positionalities; the politics of the utterance, of the pronoun, of various systems of meaning-making; practices of listening; labour and affect; digital milieus, publishing, and performance. "The positions articulated in this anthology are vastly different," De'Ath writes in the foreword, "crossing generational, geographical, and theoretical borders," shaping an overall editorial approach that aims "to encourage dialogue by proximity but also to suggest a looking-outwards; not so much to other individual poets but toward other poetics and ways of being in the world." *Toward. Some. Air.* writes outside the confines of a singular aesthetic movement and demonstrates how poets—through works, in practice—confront current ecological, economic, and related social crises. The collection's process of anthologization is not confined by nationalist or nation-centered terms of inclusion, though most of the book's contributors do reside in Canada, the United Kingdom, or the United States. The divergent sites, materials, and subject positions from which the contributors write further deepen Peter Jaeger's description of the book as being "polyvocal," meaning that it takes up a range of generic forms: "poetry, translation, dialogue and interview, artist's statement, critical essay, theoretical burlesque, collaboration, and personal anecdote." This is to say that *Toward. Some. Air.* is an exceptional articulation of Reed's sense of poetics as an engagement with the activity of composition, while accentuating the formalist sense of poetics as an organization of modes and contents.

The breadth of writing in *Toward. Some. Air.* makes it a remarkable contribution to the field of poetics, as well as a useful, if not necessary, collection for classes on contemporary poetry and literary theory. The close readings—Lisa Robertson's essay on the politics of style in the work of recently deceased poet Peter Culley; Reg Johanson's commentary on identity, violence, and syntax in the works of Annharte; José Estaban Muñoz's response to Fred Moten's "the gramsci monument;" Andrea Brady's immersion into Denise Riley's lyric practice; and De'Ath's own dialectical reading of Catherine Wagner's "My New Job"—are exemplary instances of how poets engage the work of their peers. Poem-manifestos, such as Anne Boyer's "The Girl's City" and Liz Howard's poem "~~NORTH~~ ~~NORD~~ GIIWEDIN," meld with provocative statements on practice—such as Caroline Bergvall's "Points and Lines"; Sina Queyras's "Lyric Conceptualism"; and Larissa Lai's "An Ontology and Practice for Incomplete Futures." Finally, the dialogues—between Dionne Brand and Nicole Brossard; Rita Wong and Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm; Stephen Collis and Sean Bonney—further illustrate the book's overall depiction of

poetic practice as a commitment to listening to and responding to the embodied social experiences and aesthetic perspectives of others.

Contextualizing 1759

Frans De Bruyn and Shaun Regan, eds.
The Culture of the Seven Years' War: Empire, Identity, and the Arts in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World. U of Toronto P $65.00

Katherine L. Morrison
Loyalism and the Conquest: Historical Roots. Legas $20.00

Reviewed by Michel Ducharme

Even though the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) was a global war, American and Canadian scholars have traditionally focused on the Conquest of New France when writing about the War. These two books approach the conflict from a different angle; they do not focus on the Seven Years' War itself, but rather on what Frans De Bruyn and Shaun Regan have called the "cultural and political myths engendered by the . . . War."

The essays included in *The Culture of the Seven Years' War* concentrate on the cultural representations engendered by the war in Britain and North America. The authors discuss the cultural impact of the war on nations and individuals, as well as on literature and visual arts. The first section focuses on the evolution of the British Empire in the eighteenth century and the importance of alliances with First Nations in the struggle for the control of North America before 1763. But while the inclusion of two excellent essays about Aboriginal peoples' participation in the war between France and Britain in this collection is noteworthy, the absence of any serious discussion about Acadians and French Canadians is more puzzling. The second section discusses the patriotism of some British authors in the eighteenth century as well as the ambivalence of others, such as Oliver Goldsmith, towards the war. The third section focuses on the wartime experiences of three individuals (the fifth Baron Berkeley of Stratton, Lord George Sackville, and Olaudah Equiano); the authors address issues of class, race, and gender in these chapters. The last section focuses on the commemoration of the war in monuments and paintings. While the book never really gets around to discussing "cultural and political myths" as promised in the introduction, it introduces the readers to a diversity of cultural representations engendered by the war. It also decentres the history of the war and makes for an interesting contribution to the recent scholarship about the Seven Years' War.

Although Katherine L. Morrison also addresses the cultural and political implications of the Conquest in *Loyalism and the Conquest*, she does so from a different perspective. Less preoccupied with the past than with the present, Morrison tries to find the historical roots of the antagonism that has poisoned French and English Canadians' relations over the last two centuries. She argues that these roots can be found in the national myths adopted by both groups. According to the author, these myths were based on two different ways of conceptualizing the "Great Chain of Being" linking heaven to earth. In other words, the roots of the antagonism could be found in the opposition between French Canadian Roman Catholicism and British/English Canadian Protestantism. The author's main argument seems both unoriginal and unconvincing. It is unoriginal because it states the obvious: French Canadians, who were Roman Catholics and therefore shared a Roman Catholic worldview, did not want to be assimilated by British settlers and, later, English Canadians with their Protestant worldview. Even if the author's main point cannot seriously be disputed, her demonstration is nonetheless unconvincing. First, even if the book is supposed to be structured around the concept of "myth,"

it is not: Morrison barely refers to it in the different chapters. Furthermore, she gives different meanings to the word "myth" in different contexts: it refers alternatively to "the Great Chain of Being," to some religious beliefs, or to political principles and ideology. In the end, *Loyalism and the Conquest* is mainly a political history of New England, New France, and the Canadas up to Confederation.

The book is also unconvincing because it compares two different things: a historical event (the Conquest) and a political principle (Loyalism). On a more practical level, the author also fails to explain how the Conquest became a national myth, simply assuming that it somehow did. This assumption is historically inaccurate. Until the 1837-1838 rebellions, the Conquest had seldom been mentioned by French Canadians or had been celebrated as a providential event or for the political freedom it had brought to the colony. The author has the same problem with Loyalism, as she never even introduces the Loyalists, not all of whom had moved to the remaining British colonies for political reasons. Finally, it is worth noting that the author has used very few primary and secondary sources to make her point. In the end, a real comparison between French and English Canadian national myths has yet to be written.

Deep Frye

Robert D. Denham, ed.
Northrop Frye's Uncollected Prose.
U of Toronto P $66.50

Michael Sinding
Body of Vision: Northrop Frye and the Poetics of Mind. U of Toronto P $60.00

Claude Le Fustec
Northrop Frye and American Fiction.
U of Toronto P $55.00

Reviewed by Graham N. Forst

To the 7.5 million words of the Northrop Frye *Collected Works* (CW), Robert D. Denham has added another 200,000 which, "for reasons which are murky," did not get included in the *CW.* Chief among these entries is the almost one-hundred-thousand-word "notes" that Frye composed in preparation for his Norton Lectures of 1973, which led to *The Secular Scripture.* These notes comprise plot summaries, largely of Renaissance and Victorian romance narratives, some of which take up many thousands of words. Denham refers to this note-taking as "spadework," but it seems more as if Frye is back-hoeing, considering just one of these plot summaries takes sixteen thousand words (after summarizing which Frye says "silly story, except for the archetypes").

Literary archetypes of course are Frye's prey, and he finds more than eighty in these "mazelike" plots of shipwrecks, pirates, kidnappings, enchanted islands, and loss and recovery of identity. And although few will want to wade through, for example, a four-thousand-word summary of Scott's *Guy Mannering,* those who do will be rewarded with the interesting references to Shakespeare, and amused by Frye's salty self-deprecations, if not put off by his frequent use of the "f-word." What we have here, then, is a tale of two obsessions: Frye's with romance, and Denham's with Frye (Denham even tells us when Frye changes his pen nibs!).

Other entries in *Northrop Frye's Uncollected Prose* include a newly discovered notebook from the early 1930s, some early book reviews, various cancelled pages, prefaces, and transcriptions of radio addresses and discussions. Northrop Frye's ongoing appeal in Europe is in evidence with the publication of the French scholar Claude Le Fustec's *Northrop Frye and American Fiction* and by *Body of Vision: Northrop Frye and the Poetics of Mind* by the Canadian scholar Michael Sinding, who teaches at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Le Fustec opens her study with a rambling, twelve-thousand-word Introduction (with 153 footnotes) positing the end of secularism and an imminent "return of transcendence in Western culture." To make her case that American Literature is the exemplar of this "transcendence," Le Fustec enlists the later Bible-centred work of Frye—principally the first part of his *Words With Power.* But, no less than those of Frye, her efforts are largely Procrustean. First, the philosophers she uses to set her "post-secularism" theme (Mark C. Taylor, William Connolly, Charles Taylor) are all Catholics; and second, of the six American authors she chooses to analyze, two were raised Catholic (Fitzgerald and Kerouac) and the other four (Hawthorne, James, Morrison, Steinbeck) "absorbed Christianity through their skins," as the latter confessed. Also like Frye, she restricts the word "religious" to "an explicitly Christian, theological frame of reference." Thus, as with Frye, when Le Fustec refers to "the Bible," she means the *Christian* Bible; moreover (again like Frye), her commitment to a Christian point of view directs her to ignore completely the powerful tradition of American Jewish fiction (Roth, Bellow, Mailer, Malamud, etc.), much of which wouldn't fit into her self-defining schemata.

An essential flaw in Le Fustec's argument is this: in openly adopting Frye's "romantic" belief that literature itself is "redemptive," her focus on Christian symbols and references in the chosen authors is simply redundant. In what way is *The Grapes of Wrath* really a gospel of "immanent Christianity"? How definitively "Christlike" is Sal Paradise's (Kerouac's) rebellion? Is his (essentially Buddhist) "beat way" *redemptive* in a truly Christian sense? Is Jay Gatsby really "Jesus God's-boy"; and if so, is Fitzgerald not openly *mocking* traditional Christian redemptiveness? American literature, in other words, is only "haunted by religion" when its ghosts were religious to start with, and it remains a great stretch to say that American literature reflects, as Le Fustec says it does, "the wisdom and love of God embodied in the cross."

Michael Sinding's *Body of Vision: Northrop Frye and the Poetics of Mind* applies the principles of "cognitive poetics" to literary criticism, clearly reflecting the modern European interest in stylistics. Essentially, "cognitive poetics" in Sinding's thought spins off from George Lakoff's conceptual metaphor theory, which holds that metaphors are not merely ornamental but are actually "informative" of the very act of reasoning.

In itself, this view of metaphor squares precisely with Frye's, but Sinding has bigger fish to Frye: he wants to use conceptual theory to defend Frye against (primarily) New Historicism but also against the "shaky" principles of post-structuralism and cultural studies in general. Of course, since Sinding is starting from a cognitive-structuralist position, his approach is largely circular: for example, he sees the metaphor as reflecting a "grammar of the unconscious—a set of fixed, general principles," which of course simply "proves" what structuralism assumes.

Sinding's subtitle is "the Poetics of Mind," but poetics in the narrow sense is not his only concern here; he is equally interested in the larger issues (so prominent in Lakoff) of how metaphor "frames" social thought. This interest leads him to a long analysis of non-literary discourse, primarily of Hobbes'

Leviathan and Rousseau's *Social Contract,* the conservative/liberal conclusions of which are, he shows, determined by inherent metaphorical references to body, city, and family. This part of *Body of Vision* does not refer to Frye, and is better thought out by Lakoff himself in his *Metaphors We Live By* and *Moral Politics*.

Sinding's rejection of New Historicism informs his long fourth chapter, nominally on the genre of the pastoral. He believes that Frye's theories can "bridge" the New Historicism with structuralism. But again he argues *petitio principii*: we may not, he circularly insists, "deny the humanly universal," or, for that matter, "literary universals" which Frye so famously thought derived from myth. Moreover, Frye's theories are said to be inherently "more satisfactory" than those of (the New Historicist) Stanley Greenblatt because they "connect the past with the present" (which of course is exactly what Greenblatt would deny), leaving the New Historicism "hanging in the air." Better to "hang in the air," Greenblatt may respond, than build castles in the air: there's more room for movement.

Le monde en pièces détachées

Nicolas Dickner

Six degrés de liberté. Alto 27,95 $

Compte rendu par Daniel Laforest

Six degrés de liberté de Nicolas Dickner était très attendu par une bonne partie du public littéraire au Québec, vu les succès obtenus par ses deux autres livres les plus remarqués, *Nikolski* (2005) et *Tarmac* (2009). C'est pourquoi il est peinant de le dire : *Six degrés de liberté* est un roman qui ne fonctionne pas. Plus précisément, c'est un livre avec deux idées fortes dont l'une, mal exécutée, broie l'autre et la rend ineffective. De quelles idées s'agit-il? La première est d'avoir placé au centre de l'intrigue une chose incongrue, l'objet manufacturé le plus a-culturel, le plus omniprésent, et en apparence le plus inintéressant qui soit : le conteneur à cargo. La seconde est l'ambition profonde de Dickner qui se poursuit ici : écrire une œuvre sur l'effondrement de l'expérience de la géographie dans le monde globalisé. Désormais cette ambition est encore plus nette qu'ailleurs; les personnages la ressentent eux-mêmes qui tantôt manquent d'« argent pour partir à la conquête du monde », tantôt carrément « éprouve[nt] un furieux besoin d'en finir avec la géographie ». En quoi ces deux points de départ prometteurs échouent-ils? On peut être attiré par un roman sur les objets ordinaires s'il nous murmure entre ses lignes que la banalité n'existe pas, car il faut juste apprendre à mieux regarder. Sauf que voilà : Dickner ne murmure pas mais assène cette proposition, comme bien d'autres. On est en droit de se demander qui peut s'identifier à une telle expérience par procuration du monde contemporain. Entendons-nous bien, tout dans *Six degrés de liberté* est matière à réflexion. C'est un roman, en somme, fort *intelligent*. Mais rien toutefois n'y est tourné vers l'intelligence de la lecture. On est avec lui dans la position non du lecteur, mais du spectateur. Ce serait faire injure à Dickner de nous en tenir à un tel jugement sans essayer de l'approfondir. Le problème est lié non aux thèmes, encore moins aux intentions de l'auteur, mais à l'écriture même du roman.

L'intrigue est composée de plusieurs fils enchevêtrés, mais — c'est éloquent — on peut la résumer en une phrase. Des hackers informatiques qui ne se connaissaient pas (Jay et Eric), à la suite d'une découverte fortuite faite parmi des déchets par Lisa, fille un peu paumée, traquent un mystérieux conteneur à travers le monde en déployant l'éventail des technologies actuelles de l'information, ce qui fait planer le péril d'une interception par les bureaux des affaires criminelles internationales. Aux trois quart du livre, une question qui

résume sa faiblesse est lancée : « Comment narrer une histoire qui se déroule dans un lieu que personne ne peut conceptualiser? » Proposition faussement sagace que le lecteur aurait tort de laisser glisser, car elle est un contresens. Un lieu impensable n'existe pas. Et Dickner fait exactement le contraire avec *Six degrés de liberté* qui est un roman conceptualisé à outrance. À l'arrivée, un seul sentiment nous domine. L'auteur aurait tout fait tourner maintes fois dans sa tête, puis aurait assigné aux idées une place définitive avant même d'approcher la page. Le résultat est un tissu de paragraphes courts qui pour la plupart mènent à une sentence d'ordre général sur le monde. « Magasiner au IKEA constitue une activité . . . profondément enracinée dans ce que nous conservons de l'insecte. » « L'industrie fonctionne comme une base de données en trois dimensions. La dernière chose qui n'est pas automatisée, c'est le consommateur. » « Tout finit par se doppleriser, dans la vie. Même les souvenirs virent au rouge, si on attend assez longtemps. » « Qu'est-ce qu'une carte de crédit, de nos jours, sinon un appareil de géolocalisation sophistiqué? » Ces phrases saisiront peut-être le lecteur pressé, celui qui lit peu d'ordinaire. Pour les autres, elles sont des miettes de table. Elles se veulent audacieuses, décalées, elles sont au fond conventionnelles, égrenées du ton sentencieux de qui sait son auditoire tout disposé à ne pas trop y réfléchir. Chacune est coupée du raisonnement qui lui a donné lieu. Aucune n'émane de la nébuleuse émotionnelle qui réunirait les protagonistes avec leurs gestes et paroles et qui, surtout, les rassemblerait dans une *aventure* au sens fort, là où l'intrigue et l'écriture s'offrent ensemble au partage, à l'interprétation. Ces fausses maximes qui se voudraient pénétrantes sur notre époque nous disent plutôt que Dickner, à son corps défendant sans doute, ne pense pas *en écrivant*. Il semble plutôt essayer de greffer un roman sur quelques associations d'idées du genre que chacun obtiendra en musardant, en se baladant, ou encore dans les transports, ou pourquoi pas dans la douche.

Quant à l'idée séduisante du conteneur à cargo, si on en projette la nature sur l'ensemble du roman, elle résume sa couche thématique la plus profonde. Il n'y aurait plus de lieux ni de transitions dans notre monde, que des « unités de stockage ». Ainsi de la mémoire du père de Lisa, qui justement en perd l'usage avec l'âge : « Il possède une mémoire étagée, dans laquelle il circule à volonté par des escaliers secrets et des trappes invisibles. » Ainsi de la structure du récit en paragraphes disjoints qui voudraient obliger l'œil et la pensée à des sauts de puce. Ainsi de la jaquette du livre, avec les pictogrammes du populaire artiste britannique Tom Gauld qui se meuvent entre les cubes et échelles de ce monde que Dickner nous force à conceptualiser : « Un vaste monde ocre et rouille, constitué de milliers de boîtes, chacune étant son propre monde, ou un fragment d'un autre monde. » C'est joli sur papier. Mais l'imagination rechigne à se faire aguiller de la sorte.

Je dis que l'imagination étouffe dans ce dispositif. Qu'en est-il des personnages toutefois? Sont-ils à même de la sauvegarder, puisqu'ils en sont les principaux dépositaires? Les personnages sont semblables à ceux des romans précédents de Dickner. Ils sont en majorité jeunes (quoiqu'un peu moins qu'avant, la quarantaine étant une obsession pour Jay), et le féminin l'emporte sur le masculin. Il y a là une occasion ratée pour un bel entrelacement de voix sexuées, et ce davantage que dans *Tarmac* ou même *Nikolski*, qui déjà montraient ce problème. En effet, on peine à sentir l'humanité des personnages de *Six degrés de liberté*. La raison est plus que jamais liée à l'écriture. Dickner n'a que deux modes pour produire et penser les déplacements mentaux du monde métaphorique : l'indirect libre et la comparaison. Ni l'un ni l'autre n'est maîtrisé. Les pensées qu'on devrait prêter aux

personnages, ou du moins concevoir sur le même plan que ceux-ci, sont contaminées par l'attrait de Dickner pour les digressions d'ordre général. S'ensuit un débalancement dans les niveaux de narration et de langage, et une prolifération des invraisemblances. Quant à la comparaison, qui est partout, elle est convoquée pour le plaisir de l'image suscitée, rarement pour approfondir la pensée de la proposition narrative qui l'accueille. « La magie du moment se dégonfle comme un coussin péteur. » « Dans les laveuses, le linge tourne sur lui-même comme un tas d'identités entremêlées. » Peut-être que Dickner n'entend pas tout à fait comparer mais accumuler des éléments incongrus, pour ensuite les juxtaposer. Ce procédé fut heureux aux surréalistes parce qu'ils avaient leurs raisons; il ne l'est guère ici car il n'y en a pas, de raison, si ce n'est cette idée d'une géographie morcelée, consumériste. Mais un thème n'a jamais été une raison suffisante pour justifier toute une écriture. Hors contexte, quand elle oublie de servir le récit qui l'accueille, il n'a pas une figure de style qui tienne.

Six degrés de liberté déçoit donc beaucoup. On voudrait attendre mieux, et davantage, d'une telle forme d'intelligence, car la littérature québécoise n'en connaît pas de semblable. Un livre sur l'univers des choses est souhaitable; le thème est chargé de promesses, et réellement contemporain. Mais ce ne sera pas celui-ci, car Dickner essaie trop, trop fort. La volonté de décrypter le monde actuel à travers les choses est vouée à l'échec si elle prétend se passer de la compréhension des êtres. Un tel échec, malheureusement, est celui de *Six degrés de liberté*.

Honouring Two Cooks

Merrill Distad and Caroline Lieffers, eds.
Collecting Culinaria: Cookbooks and Domestic Manuals Mainly from the Linda Miron Distad Collection. U of Alberta P $39.95

Vince Agro
In Grace's Kitchen: Memories and Recipes from an Italian-Canadian Childhood.
Wolsak & Wynn $20.00

Reviewed by Nathalie Cooke

Both of these books were written to honour the memory of women who were drawn to cooking as a way of expressing their appreciation for life and deep affection for family and friends.

For Vince Agro, that woman was his mother, Grace, whose kitchen as he describes it was the bustling and vibrant heart of the community. "Colonia" was a section of Hamilton, Ontario, where Italian was the language of communication, and delicious food the fuel for conversation. For young Vince, childhood was punctuated by church bells and regular family dinners, nourished by simple and healthy fare, and enriched by his family's innovation in sourcing a variety of foods. We hear about hunting ducks, how delicious pigeon can be, tasty ways to cook *babalucci* or snails, and the potential of the common dandelion for health-giving foods and drinks. Along with the recipes are childhood stories and memories, as well as some wonderful cooking tips. Agro describes Grace's culinary philosophy as he introduces readers to the mysteries of favourite dishes from the family repertoire. Grace wisely cooked with vegetable and not olive oil (Julia Child gave similar counsel, warning against 'overheated virgins'), was careful not to overcook tomatoes, remembered not to add oil to pasta before tomato sauce, never added black pepper while cooking sauce (it darkens the bright colour and gives sauce a burnt taste), and would prick a garlic clove before frying

it so that it wouldn't explode. Grace was a purist, believing one herb was best for a dish, and would choose between garlic and onion when cooking. Agro agrees and urges restraint in flavouring to showcase flavours of fresh ingredients.

The woman honoured by *Collecting Culinaria* is Linda Miron Distad, late wife of the book's co-editor, Merrill Distad, and donor of the more than three thousand items in the Linda Miron Distad collection at the University of Alberta. The book opens with a tribute by David Goa and Anna Altmann to the former editor and researcher explaining she was among the rare few who came to the "fullness of character" through helping others, whose "perfection was worked out preparing the table of hospitality and in the vineyard of the word." A remarkably beautiful book with useful flaps on both covers, the volume sheds light on the treasures of the collection and one could imagine it being a handsome gift for a donor or potential donor to the University of Alberta Library. There is no table of contents, so after tributes to Linda Miron, readers are launched immediately into sections offering succinct and illustrated overviews of cookbooks of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. These are followed by sections focusing on topics and categories of books: Manuscript Cookbooks, Mrs. Beeton, Dietetics and Health, Corporate Cookbooks, Flour and Bread, Restaurants, Celebrity Chefs. The volume concludes with a selective list of books that could be of interest to readers interested in exploring culinaria.

Like a complementary website designed by Natasha Nunn (search "Collecting Culinaria: A Taste of Food History on the Prairies"), the book functions as a tasting menu, offering readers tantalizing glimpses of the Collection's treasures, whetting appetites for a longer visit and closer scrutiny. This is an exhibit catalogue, in other words, beautifully rendered by Kevin Zak and curated by two librarians who are the book's co-editors. Pages reproduced from the manuscript cookbooks are particularly intriguing, both because of the exquisite handwriting and period recipes ("To Roast a Swan") and because there is no comprehensive database of manuscripts held in Canadian institutional archives, so seeing even a few scanned pages provides a valuable peephole to the past.

Myth and Memories

Magie Dominic
Street Angel. Wilfrid Laurier UP $24.99

Carole Giangrande
Midsummer. Inanna $19.95

Reviewed by Jan Lermitte

Dominic's and Giangrande's texts share a link between memory and landscape, events, emotions, and impressions that invites readers to experience an emotional connection with the central characters. Readers familiar with current theoretical approaches to literature that examine trauma, memory, and history will find both narratives rich with meaning. Although *Midsummer* is a fictional novella, Giangrande's engagement with memory and traumatic events echoes Dominic's close examination of a young woman's life.

Magie Dominic is an artist, poet, and writer. Her award-winning book, *The Queen of Peace Room*, chronicles Dominic's life story. *Street Angel*, the sequel, focuses mainly on her Newfoundland childhood. Both life-writing texts describe not only her experiences and memories, but also the historical events, politics, and popular culture of the time. In *Street Angel*, Dominic uses short lists that include movie titles, names of celebrities, and pop songs to create an image of her cultural milieu. The daughter of a Catholic Lebanese salesman and a Presbyterian Scottish homemaker with untreated mental illness, Dominic

is unflinching about her stoic navigation of childhood. She poignantly describes enforced silence and daily strappings by the school's nuns, and a home life marred by poverty and her mother's "affliction." Short repetitive accounts of daily life, such as "Pray, supper, pray. Homework, pray, sleep. Up again," capture the sense of drudgery and loneliness that characterize her childhood, but also provide an effective contrast to her poetic reflections on the Beothuk people and Newfoundland's history. Dominic emerges as a brave and determined young woman who finds a way to make her dreams a reality by attending art school and reveling in the "pulsating, neon explosion" that is New York City in the 60s. Dominic's memories, while often sad and traumatic, reveal a child who is inherently brave, hard-working, and optimistic.

Carole Giangrande is a writer and broadcast journalist. Her novella, *Midsummer*, chronicles a young woman's awakening to the influence of family myths and intimate relationships. The atmosphere Giangrande creates is mysterious, mythical, and passionate. The story, narrated by Joy, a middle-aged woman, takes place in only a few days. However, as Joy prepares to join her family and disgruntled father in a celebration of her aunt and uncle's fiftieth anniversary, she reflects on her family mythology, her youth, and the events that altered her life's course. The celebration takes place in the restaurant above the twin towers in New York City. For readers, this location evokes a sense of foreboding as we recognize the connection to the tragic events of 9-11. Giangrande carefully constructs the family myth that centres on the twin towers and becomes tied to a family tragedy that is central to the story. Memories and flashbacks of feelings and experiences swiftly move the plot. Ultimately, family discord, unmet expectations, and compromise ease into tenuous forgiveness. This is a novel that moves gracefully through time and memory, with a cast of characters that is both believable and charming.

I recommend both of these texts as meaningful reflections on childhood, family, and the self-determined lives of two young women.

Glocalizing CanLit in an Era of Austerity

Ana María Fraile-Marcos
Literature and the Glocal City: Reshaping the English Canadian Imaginary. Routledge $140.00

Reviewed by Daniel Coleman

The coinage "glocal" in the title of this book echoes and repositions A. J. M. Smith's mid-twentieth-century complaint that CanLit had sequestered itself in a nativist search for "Canadianness" and thereby failed to participate in a "cosmopolitan" literary world. This volume of essays demonstrates, both in its production and in the arguments of its contributors, how thoroughly immersed Canadian literary production is today, for better or for worse, in an international cultural economy. The book is the result of a conference organized at the University of Salamanca by its Spanish editor, Ana María Fraile-Marcos. It is published by the transnational publisher Routledge. Its contributors hail from Britain, Spain, and Canada, and its subject matter addresses cultural currents that connect Indigenous, Asian, European, Latin American, and Caribbean histories, feminist cityscapes and queer dystopias, urban hipster conservatism and refugee activism, neoliberal traffic between metro Toronto and the Maritimes, shopping mall economics, and Canada's international multicultural image.

Literature and the Glocal City constitutes a significant contribution to CanLitCrit's attention to the challenges posed by urbanization to its traditional focus, since Thomas D'Arcy McGee, on how literature narrates the nation. If the Massey

Commission advocated government investment in the arts to buttress national self-definition, *Literature and the Glocal City* joins works such as Justin Edwards' and Douglas Ivison's *Downtown Canada*, Kit Dobson's *Transnational Canadas,* Smaro Kamboureli's and Roy Miki's *Trans.Can. Lit.,* and Herb Wyile's *Anne of Tim Hortons* in turning attention to the transnational cultural economies of which Canadian cities are major hubs. As Fraile-Marcos writes in her introduction, the collection "adopts an interdisciplinary *glocal* critical perspective from which to interrogate a national culture that can no longer be bounded by the limits of the nation state, but which does not give up on the nation." Deena Rymhs' chapter reads Marie Clements plays about the (neo)colonial violence generated by the nuclear and lumber industries' transnational economies that link northern First Peoples, Hiroshima, and the downtown Eastside, while Michèle Lacombe reads contending concepts of home in Tessa McWatt's Montreal novel about a female Mohawk Oka activist and a displaced Guyanese narrator. Other chapters study urban time signatures: Coral Ann Howells reads Phyllis Brett Young's 1960 vision of Toronto against Maggie Helwig's 2002 version of the city to demonstrate how feminist perspectives on xenophobia, security, and alienation have shifted, while Belén Martín-Lucas reads Larissa Lai's and Nalo Hopkinson's futuristic, queer-cyborg-dystopic novels to trace the alternatives they pose to airless neoliberalism in the present. Several chapters focus on cultural formations—Eva Darias-Beautell on the semiotics of glass in Vancouver's literature and architecture, Kit Dobson on Heather Spear's poetic questioning of West Edmonton Mall's uncertain future, and Brandon McFarlane on gentrification in Toronto hipster writers' anti-nationalism—to demonstrate how dense urban economies generate contradiction, collusion, and contention. All the chapters, but especially Fraile-Marcos' on Michael Helm's *Cities of Refuge*, Herb Wyile's on Michael Winter's *The Architects Are Here*, and George Elliott Clarke's on the representation of Canadian cities in Ian Fleming's Bond novels, consciously trace the flows of people, goods, and ideologies that link cities to their hinterlands, local municipalities to global movements, and multicultural urban imagery to submerged imperial histories glossed by their branding as "global cities." Together, these essays demonstrate, in the editor's words, that increasing analysis of the ways in which "the glocal city acts concurrently as a rooted local/national place and a global unmoored space . . . affects the national imaginary."

The production of *Literature and the Glocal City* itself shows how any national imaginary must negotiate the vagaries of globalization. The conference that launched this book was funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, the Council of Culture and Education of Castilla y León, and Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada in 2011—just in time, because all three austerity governments subsequently reduced (or cut entirely, in Canada's case) cultural funding for these institutions. At the same time, austerity regimes have intensified their micromanagement of scholars' affairs so that EU academics such as Fraile-Marcos are encountering increasing scrutiny, whereby their publications are compared to pre-set lists that rank some presses as significant and others as not. Routledge ranks high as an internationally recognized publisher, but because it cannot rely on the large market of British and American libraries to buy a book about Canada, and it doesn't qualify for Canadian subsidies to support Canadian-based publication, it priced this book at $140.00 USD, out of the reach of everyday readers. This, too, is the glocalization of Canadian literature.

Redefining Audiences

Kathleen Gallagher
Why Theatre Matters: Urban Youth, Engagement, and a Pedagogy of the Real. U of Toronto P $29.95

Jordan Tannahill
Theatre of the Unimpressed: In Search of Vital Drama. Coach House $14.95

Reviewed by Lourdes Arciniega

Given urban youth apathy, Kathleen Gallagher argues for the value of drama as a tool for students to reassert their identity and reconnect with their community. In an extensive and in-depth five-year study of four schools in Toronto, Boston, Taipei, and Lucknow, Gallagher and her team interview students and teachers to chronicle how theatre courses can improve and change students' lives and their outlook on their sometimes uninspiring future.

Often students' confrontational attitudes towards theatre productions or their lack of interest in performing stems from ingrained prejudices and lack of opportunity to communicate their fears, desires, and ambitions. However, through theatre-making activities, students interact with fellow students with whom they would not otherwise consider fraternizing. This collaborative engagement, rather than becoming confrontational, becomes enlightening, as each side discovers and supports others' ideas in achieving a common goal. Second- and third-year students, for example, practiced Verbatim Theatre, "a form of documentary theatre using the actual words of people, often in direct first-person address or testimonial style, to raise issues relevant to a particular community and to activate broader social engagement." As students often interview family members or mentors, students begin to see others differently, and to find their own place in the world.

The introspective nature of drama classes allows students create a persona through which they can work through some of their issues. Students perform their conflicts, and this public performance allows other students in the audience to share in the experience. Gallagher foregrounds the importance of performing "the power of the real," of staging situations with which students can identify and question. These productions therefore allow the individual story to become part of the collective experience, as these plays "served as a catalyst into a much broader discussion about race, youth, and representation," notes Gallagher.

One of the most useful components of Gallagher's research is her focus on pedagogy and the role of the teacher. Through several interviews with instructors, Gallagher notes that a drama teacher has to place students' work and their world as the driving force for pedagogical work. Since teachers are fellow artists, the relationship between instructor and student is also often malleable. Teachers share an artistic bond with students, a desire to foster creative expression, and thus must support risk-taking while also nurturing a safe, respectful environment for theatre-making by the next generation of theatre practitioners.

To combat the commercialism that drives some of the current theatre productions and hinders the work of emerging theatre practitioners, Tannahill eloquently and persuasively proposes a renegotiation of the relationship between playwrights and spectators. In *Theatre of the Unimpressed*, Tannahill justifies the need for more financial, cultural, and audience support for the work of new and multidisciplinary theatre by first showing how theatre practices to date have alienated audiences and/or created a passive and indifferent theatregoer.

By interviewing one hundred theatre patrons across five countries on their attitudes towards theatre, Tannahill discovered that half of them enjoyed predictable, ready-made theatre, whereas the other half wanted more risk-taking, innovative theatre. Tannahill warns against ongoing state

cultural funding for "Museum of Theatre" productions of canonical plays that do not revitalize the story for the audience. When a boring or predictable play, spectators often take a complacent attitude towards the story being told. There is no investment in the experience, and therefore no emotional reward for the theatregoer, who often feels trapped out of a sense of obligation and decorum into watching the full play. Tannahill argues for the value of a theatrical experience that can "disorient and reorient us." In theatre, often a reflection of an ideal or idealized reality, practitioners and spectators can try out failure and learn from the experience.

Tannahill believes that a theatre that challenges and invites an audience to be active participants will be key to reinventing the art form. If theatre is to become vital and relevant, then the infrastructures have to be redesigned, so that "our theatres must conform to the needs of our art, not the other way around," notes Tannahill. In a twenty-first-century environment that prioritizes liveliness, immediacy, and the unexpected, theatre can provide a relevant counterpoint to screen-focused audiences. Ultimately, theatre productions can and should be a medium for personal and social redefinition by valuing the presence of a live audience and rewarding spectators with a unique, immersive, and memorable experience.

Travailler dans le temps

Lise Gauvin

Parenthèses. Lévesque éditeur 23,00 $

Compte rendu par Flora Amann

« La nouvelle, il faut se l'approprier » : Lise Gauvin s'applique depuis plusieurs années à suivre ce précepte d'Annie Saumont, qu'elle a placé en épigraphe de *Parenthèses*. Elle poursuit dans ce troisième recueil de nouvelles la réflexion sur les mouvements intérieurs qui donne toute sa cohérence à son œuvre de nouvelliste. Ses deux opus précédents sont d'ailleurs présents dans la construction même de *Parenthèses*, qui se partage en trois sections. La première rappelle *Fugitives* par son titre (« Déplacements ») et par sa façon d'associer l'exploration intérieure aux voyages (dans une Europe aux décors parisianistes ou fantastiques ou dans une Asie méditative); la deuxième, nommée « Arrêts sur image » tout comme le recueil qui a précédé *Parenthèses*, est celle où la fixité du temps rejoint celle de l'espace. Une psychologie de l'immobilité s'y construit, en dialogue avec d'autres écrivains : Marcel Proust (« Robinson », « L'homme qui dort »), Georges Perec et Stefan Zweig (« Vingt-quatre heures dans la vie d'un immeuble »). La dernière section, « Parenthèses », qui donne son titre au recueil, est consacrée au retour. S'il est à nouveau question d'échapper à soi et à son quotidien en quittant le cadre familier, ce n'est que pour mieux se retrouver : les lieux redeviennent québécois (le Saint-Laurent, un chalet dans la forêt boréale, puis, dans la dernière nouvelle, Montréal) et l'évocation du célibat, de la vieillesse et de l'immersion dans le souvenir sont autant d'indices d'un repli.

Chez Lise Gauvin, l'écriture de « l'expérience intime de la durée » tire sa force d'un travail sur l'image. Aussi le cinéma, la photographie et la peinture sont-ils omniprésents dans *Parenthèses* : ces arts de l'espace auxquels la narration emprunte des effets d'instantanéité et de perspective soutiennent le déploiement de l'imagination et l'analyse des sentiments. Leur convocation permet l'érotisme (« Un Japonais aux pieds nus »), l'exotisme (« Veille »), l'onirisme (« La dame à l'hermine »), voire l'ésotérisme (« La philosophie au café »). La nostalgie, enfin : dans « Rue Bernard, un 24 juin », le personnage d'Amélie invente son rapport au temps de l'Histoire par la vision. Refusant de regarder les « images en plastique et en caoutchouc » de la fête nationale, elle

s'abandonne plutôt aux « images du passé qui tiennent compagnie » et y retrouve intacte « la rhétorique de l'indépendance sur fond de rythme de jazz et de voyageries », à l'époque où « chacun trouvait son espace pour rêver ». *Parenthèses* semble bien être la quête de cet intervalle à soi. Idées fixes, fantasmes, souvenirs ou symboles, les images font se rencontrer la durée intime et la mémoire, qu'elle soit personnelle ou collective. « Il faut travailler dans le temps », peut-on lire dans la première nouvelle du recueil. La réminiscence et l'imagination approfondissent les instants; les nouvelles de Lise Gauvin savent les circonscrire, comme autant de parenthèses narratives.

Lives and Times

Jean-Claude Germain; Donald Winkler, trans.
Of Jesuits and Bohemians: Tales of My Early Youth. Véhicule $18.00

Alicia Priest
A Rock Fell on the Moon: Dad and the Great Yukon Silver Ore Heist. Lost Moose $32.95

Reviewed by Gisèle M. Baxter

The memoirist is a storyteller and a selector of details. Germain and Priest have in common a focus on what could roughly be called the coming-of-age narrative, though there the similarity pretty much ends.

I clearly remember the 1970 Quebec Crisis. The noisy aftermath of the Quiet Revolution and the rise of separatism were part of the ongoing discussions of my teens. I wonder how I might have responded to Jean-Claude Germain's memoirs (translated by Donald Winkler) had this not been the case. The book makes me think of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and my initial horror as a very young reader at the hellfire sermon as well as my shock when an older classmate laughed at it and pointed out Joyce's use of satire. In a way, Germain, a historian and theatre producer now in his mid-seventies, narrates Quebec's Modernist moment: the post-Duplessis intellectual and cultural Quiet Revolution that through the 1960s would evolve and ferment into more direct action, with a lasting impact on the province's (and indeed on Canada's) political landscape. Reading between the lines, the repressive tactics of his Jesuit-run classical education do seem harrowing, but Germain's memoir defines them as an education in liberation: once free, do what you were forbidden to do. Germain writes with the flair of the raconteur, the boulevardier: this slim, anecdotal, richly detailed, joyfully irreverent volume creates a vivid pastiche, with manifesto, of an era when "The Queen of the Night Straddled a Vespa" and young artists aspired to "The Art of Living Like Shooting Stars."

And yet, somehow, journalist Alicia Priest's very personal memoir is probably the more broadly affecting, in speaking that moment when a child realizes its parents might not always tell the truth. She traces how her idyllic 1950s childhood in a Yukon mining company town was effectively a sham: her father proved a liar and thief, perpetrator of a massive heist scheme, eventually unmasked and imprisoned. The setting comes to life through precisely observed detail and anecdote, and Priest keeps the focus on her personal journey. The book is also a compelling piece of investigative journalism with echoes of the mystery novel, not just in its extensive research, filling in the gaps unperceived by a small child, but in its recreation of her parents as characters through her mother's hoarded cache of correspondence. The story does not end as neatly as many coming-of-age or mystery novels: it goes on to the messy aftermath of her father's incarceration, the destruction of the family, her long estrangement from and rediscovery of her father ("[forgiveness] has nothing to do with love"), and his death from dementia. Her attempt to come to terms with this deception and betrayal, and its

consequences, gains a poignant urgency in realizing that Priest wrote it suffering from the ALS that killed her early in 2015.

Temporizing Modernities

James Gifford
Personal Modernisms: Anarchist Networks and the Later Avant-Gardes. U Alberta P $34.95

Jane Nicholas
The Modern Girl: Feminine Modernities, the Body, and Commodities in the 1920s. U Toronto P $27.95

Reviewed by Judith Paltin

A complicated dance with cultural power occupies the subjects of both of these works. Marginalized as late or irrelevant in the one case by a reluctance to conform to developing Cold War antagonisms, and propelled by a constellation of disciplining consumerist forces in the other, these modern subjects negotiate a serious place for themselves in a twentieth-century cultural history that too frequently, these authors argue, has underappreciated their absorbing contributions.

Jane Nicholas' analysis of Canada's early twentieth-century Modern Girl discloses how Canadian cultural regimes depended on the complacent passive voice. Canadian women "were encouraged" or "were warned" without respite through those decades, about their body and their behaviour, about a need to be guarded from dangers to "racial purity" or an overwrought sexuality, and a promise, not to put too fine a point on it, that they could achieve the financial rewards of compliance. These discourses also worked against inclusion of Canadian populations such as the Indigenous Modern Girl, who was barely allowed visibility in the period. Nicholas argues that in spite of these promised enticements, many women performed sophisticated repossessions of their own bodies and their images to abscond from that sanctimonious custody. Nicholas skilfully blends theories of gender and sexuality with close readings of commodified cultural objects, media-driven discursive patterns, and Canadian local practices. Her argument opens with a compelling emblem: a late 1920s photograph of Sylvia Horn, with the bobbed hair and exposed chest that marked the typical Modern Girl, posed in a dance position, and as Nicholas puts it, "precariously balanced and stretched in all directions."

Nicholas has a strong conception of the strategic value of "modern expertise" asserted by advertisers and beauty columnists in producing the Modern Girl's idealized body (and selling the commodities which were to conjure it). Nicholas traces how the industrialization and scientization of beauty fed quite easily into the common advertising conflation of girl body and modern car in the age of mass (re) production. Against that, she observes how difficult it was in fact to regulate from above an ideal formed around principles of modern freedom and fulfilled desires. Recurrent events such as beauty contests brought the same conflicts into public debate over and over. Some of the most fascinating material Nicholas uncovers are of images inscribing this competition between freedom and social control in all its ambivalence, such as an advertisement in which the Modern Girl's body is elongated and dominates a background of skyscrapers. As Nicholas argues, that elastic malleability served the Canadian Modern Girl well in eventually taking control of her own pleasures, energies, and enthusiasms.

Where Nicholas' subjects saw their selves and their bodies become highly public battlegrounds in media-rich conflicts over feminine modernity, James Gifford's networks in *Personal Modernisms* must be discerned in the relative shadow of wartime economies, scattered small presses, private letters, and a decades-long history of critical readings of varying inexactitude. The book concentrates on the relations among

writers associated with Henry Miller's Paris home, Villa Seurat, such as Anaïs Nin and Lawrence Durrell, a London-Oxford contingent, and various expatriate communities in Egypt, New York, and California, perhaps even stretching to China. Gifford makes a set of difficult arguments with enthusiasm and forensic carefulness. He works methodically through the necessary historical context and integrates within a generous rubric various shades of anti-authoritarianism. It is a strategy that mirrors the philosophical quality which allowed the writers in question to sympathize intellectually while refusing to coerce each other (or their readers) into a "movement or school." He argues with reason that these writers, as well as their ideas, for various causes have been undersold, and the extent and influence of their networks repeatedly underestimated, and Gifford successfully puts a great deal of pressure on received notions that they were either apolitical or largely on the wrong side. On the contrary, they were placed in temporizing positions, when being associated with a kind of quietism may be the least poor choice in a war between powers with which they wanted nothing at all to do.

Perhaps the weightiest contribution of Gifford's scholarship in this project is to be distilled from the third and fourth sections, where Gifford insists on the historical, changeable, local, and personal character of the varieties of anarchist and anti-authoritarian thought and vision among these core groups of writers, and rereads them, not to establish who was strongest or best or most influential, but so that "the subject position from which their creative work developed" becomes better understood. In a resonant passage, Gifford shows how and why the anti-authoritarian position resists systemic efforts to contain it:

> However, bodies end and have finite limits without regard to ideology, cultural heegemony, or any exercise of power or needful desire—in this the limits of social authority and the impossibility of its strictures are made apparent. Hence, death or the damaged body become irresistible instances of the individual who has become autonomous from social control, and such bodies give the lie to authority.

Gifford raises a charge that the very name of anarchism seems to bring out the worst "calcified attitudes" against "non-state possibilities" in critics. He notes the comfort we take in the closeness of the social whole, implying a defensive origin for the fear of losing that idea, even if it be false consciousness. In a memorable formulation, Gifford says "We are never without power, yet *we* never fail to resist it." After recalibrating the leanings of late modernism in so thorough an examination, we may feel less surprise at the idea of its connection to, perhaps even revival in, the counter-cultural tactics, writings, and practices of later communitarian movements.

Fictions of Absence

R. W. Gray
Entropic. Newest Press $19.95

Bruce McDougall
Every Minute is a Suicide.
Porcupine's Quill $22.95

Reviewed by Shazia Hafiz Ramji

The nineteen stories comprising *Every Minute is a Suicide* by Bruce McDougall offer a cohesive and lush narrative of individuation and masculinity. Many of the stories are written from the first person point of view of "Bruce," the youngest son of Mary Tobias and Gord McDougall, shaping empathy for the male experience.

McDougall's skill with changes in tense and perspective allows for a sprawling and intricate experience akin to that of reading novels. The opening story "Mom Takes a Husband," circumscribes the insular world of the Tobias family: Mary, her brother Fulton, and the austere matriarch who lived

through the Great Depression, the protagonist's grandmother. Fulton introduces Gord, a congenial autodidact, to his sister. "She wanted someone who would take a risk, who believed in himself enough to defy the accepted norms . . ."; and so he does, by blowing cigarette smoke in the grandmother's face, breaking the guarded resolve of their household. Marriage ensues, followed by domestic abuse fuelled by the trap of expectations about fulfilling normative roles. When Bruce is only eight, his father commits suicide, a fact he learns much later in life.

The father's absence is the ghost in the mouth of these interlinked stories. Each successive story parallels a framework of relations set up in the first. Stories in the middle focus on Bruce's teenage years and life at Harvard in the sixties. Many characters remain connected to each other as patterns of experience and images recur and develop. This dynamic of connection and reconnection creates an internal logic of association and reference, inviting engagement by mimicking the structure of memory, necessitating reminders of absence and loss. With hints of the autobiographical, and a generous imagining that enlivens staid lives through acrobatic time shifts, effectively placed dialogue, and poetic attention to the sentence, McDougall's collection recalls a story cycle by another Ontarian: *Lives of Girls and Women* by Alice Munro.

Though a couple of the stories in the second half felt purposefully written to tie ends together and the final return story was predictable, *Every Minute is a Suicide* is emotionally resonant, carving a meritorious space for McDougall in Can Lit.

Entropic by R. W. Gray is rigged with absence, too. In the opening story "Blink," a couple fabricates each other's perceptions of their relationship to meet perfection; a "graphic kind of love." Self-deception and denial become concrete when the male protagonist confronts the absence of his lover. The absence becomes a literal "hole in the wall" in their bedroom, which houses an editing suite where they splice and delete their flaws. The writing feels jagged and deliberate, conveying the filmic jump cut in fiction. Reminiscent of story lines from *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and *Being John Malkovich,* "Blink" reads like a familiar story of regret and held my interest because of its risk and brevity.

The title story "Entropic" also makes absence concrete, but is more compelling than "Blink." A man of "unmanageable beauty," simply called "M.," is tired of being seen for nothing but his beauty. He asks his ex-lover, the male narrator of the story, to put him in a coma-like state for a weekend. The narrator's task is to protect and wash him after every forty-minute session, during which anyone can touch and spend time with his naked body. Early in the story, we are told that M took a liking to the narrator because the narrator craved intimacy and didn't express sexual desire fervently. Though the performative setup may seem like clear-cut objectification at first, Gray reveals M to be a foil for a possessive strain of intimacy that the narrator longs for, and which intensifies in proportion to the amount of time spent sleeping beside him. Gray is at his best here; scenes broken into time slots in accordance with the visits to M's body offer control and sustained pacing, while psychoanalytic complexity invites complicity through voyeurism. Though it is a trope to choose an obsessive-compulsive character to heighten conflict in fiction, "Entropic" is executed with Cronenbergian deviance, raising tingly questions about the ways lack and absence manifest.

Overall, *Entropic* is enjoyable for the sense of play and risk taken by Gray. The lack of stylistic unity among the stories in the collection is an advantage that displays Gray's potential as a shape-shifting writer, full of surprises.

Death and Disappearing

Julia Leggett
Gone South and Other Ways to Disappear.
Mother Tongue $19.95

Suzanne Myre; Cassidy Hildebrand, trans.
Death Sentences. U of Ottawa P $21.95

Reviewed by Molleen Shilliday

Julia Leggett's short story collection *Gone South and Other Ways to Disappear* (2014) plays with readers' senses and skilfully and imaginatively belies their best efforts at plot intuition. What seems mundane can become uncanny; what's uncanny can turn out to be comforting; what was comforting can swiftly become suffocating and dangerous. It is at once simple and strange, delicate and hard to take, disturbing and beautiful. The stories are thought-provoking in their critique of modern-day ills such as diet pills, divorce, and cancer, but the force of this collection resides in the slightly magical and metaphysical undercurrents. "Into the Blue," for example, is stunning and masterful in its depiction of what it feels like to die: "you catch glimpses: the skin on the inside of your mother's wrist, the taste of your own mouth in the morning, the sensation of laughing." "Lena Reynolds Gets Divorced" reminds us that otherworldly activities can still take us away from our tenuous and basic earthly relationships. "Versus Heart" underscores what is most intimidating about being with another person, falling, or *disappearing* in a relationship: "I had a rule, it was *don't fall in love*. Most people heard that as if the emphasis was on love, but the part that was really important was the falling. *Don't fall*. Rappel down with a safety harness. Tell someone where you are going. Take extra water." The female narrative voices divulge how they each come to terms with decisions that negate their need for love and tranquility out of fear and angst or how they reason failure and pain to keep the peace in a relationship. Each story is connected by the fragility and vulnerability of the human body that can be beaten, broken, and is constantly besieged by our expectations of what it can endure. In short, it's about all the ways we choose to nurture or cease to nurture something crucial to our literal, emotional, or spiritual survival. In her first collection, Leggett skilfully outlines the fractured relationship between self and other, the body and the mind, all the while intertwining a quiet sense of joy and delight in the ephemeral nature of our problems and our lives. It is a funny, thoughtful, odd and enchanting collection that I will surely pick up again.

Death Sentences, published in 2014, is the long-awaited translation of Suzanne Myre's 2007 short story collection *Mises à mort*. As the title aptly shows, the dual meanings the author wove into the intricacies of language transcend from the French to the English version. Each sentence does indeed lead the reader a step closer to some impending doom or gloom, whether it be the murder of a dog or cat, a literal or metaphysical death, or to *la petite mort*, as they say, that moment of ecstasy that brings us one step closer to the experience of death. Thanks to the intuitive interpretations of the collection's translator, Cassidy Hildebrand, the intensely sarcastic and overtly candid narrative voices Myre created maintain their authenticity in the translation. It is these voices that keep the reader deeply entranced by the morbid and intriguing plotlines. The collection begins with "Vile City," a short story that sets the tone for a plethora of conflicting emotions that effect the most lonely and dejected: "The city pulses from every pore; possessed by couples, they're everywhere, entwined, in restaurants, in theatres, on patios. It's impossible to go out alone in a public place without feeling pathetic, like a *nobody*, a *reject*." Jealousy, resentment and bitterness that come from a voyeuristic obsession with other people's happiness are described with wry humour.

Distressing and unsettling stories of geriatric care and end-of-life preoccupations are followed by confusing and enthralling tales of coming-of-age. "Bitter Ashes" is an evocative, unnerving story about the loss of a parent: Myre's depiction of the many facets of grief in this story is forceful and memorable. Death, existential crises, and modern-day weariness are the recurrent threads that bind together the collection; it seems the characters are destined to claw away at some forever-buried, gnawing truths. The only small hiccup in this otherwise darkly delightful collection is the preface, which gives a little too much away and answers questions the readers would have been all the more pleased to figure out for themselves. It offers an interesting take on the collection that is best read afterward.

Listing Grief

Joanna Lilley
The Fleece Era. Brick $20.00

Kayla Czaga
For Your Safety Please Hold On.
Nightwood $18.95

Pearl Pirie
the pet radish, shrunken. BookThug $18.00

Reviewed by Emily Wall

Joanna Lilley, Kayla Czaga, and Pearl Pirie share a common love of language play and a sense of despair about the daily fabric of our contemporary lives. All three books deal with grief and loss on a range of scales, but all three also evidence a keen curiosity and humour.

The Fleece Era by Joanna Lilley is a tapestry of surprise. Lilley's poems evidence a rich, curious mind and imagination. Each poem asks new things and explores some trauma or joy or disappointment of the human experience. She grounds the poems in the physical (rocks, ribs) and in her own loose memoir, but each poem manages to rise beyond the personal into a larger exploration of what it means to live now, in this particular world. She also has amusing moments of magical realism that lift us out of the examination of the mundane. In the James Wright tradition, she often moves from the lyrical into the meditative. Her real gift is for last lines—a line or two at the end that lock each poem: "If she throws all of her rocks into the ocean, / there might be enough for a bridge" ("The Collection").

For Your Safety by Kayla Czaga is a delicate blend of bleakness and humour. Like Lilley, Czaga deals with the dying and death of parents. The opening section tells the stories of her grief, and that backgrounds the rest of the book. Many of the poems take a sharp look at the detritus of our lives: the colour beige, the potato salad, the things we accumulate and hate. Like the objects she writes about, the poems themselves explore the temporary. She has moments of intense pain as in "Victoria Soto," juxtaposed with humorous poems (one that mourns the loss of Blockbuster). One of her most amusing but also poignant pieces is "The Not-Grandfathers": "The not-grandfathers / were rented from other families, rewound/ and returned." But even as she explores the flotsam of our temporary world, each poem carries a larger thematic weight. Her poem "Temporary" beautifully encapsulates her themes and styles; it ends: "How the eggs looked full/until we held them up to the light."

Pearl Pirie's poems in *the pet radish, shrunken* are surprising, fragmented, and also explore loss, but her poems explore the smaller losses of daily life. She touches on larger dislocations—"we see what we want & when. / who we want dies" ("until the components float apart")—but mostly the poems are playful, exploratory. At her best she surprises us with runs of images: a man eating birdseed, hiccups, credit card machines, mosquito nets, pigs in blankets, vellum, cotter pin, scratch 'n sniff. Her strongest poem, "scratch the surface," holds back on the language play and lets the

syntax and diction become more organic to reflect the loss and hope she's exploring. In other poems, though, she loses the thread of intensity by letting the language take over, by letting cleverness dictate the poem: "it had / previously been determined that the purses would dilate in reluctance / to the analgesic of internment in the pigpen" ("how to root out the normals"). In these moments the poems become more about language, and less about the larger, intense conversation she's begun with us.

While all three books take the reader on a pleasurable journey, *For Your Safety* best fulfills the promise the writer brings to the book: each poem is a feast of language, and each poem satisfies our hunger for a deeper, richer look at our current, often disappointing, world.

Petites absurdités de l'existence

Patrick Nicol
La nageuse au milieu du lac. Quartanier 20,95 $

Vincent Brault
Le cadavre de Kowalski. Héliotrope, 20,95 $

Compte rendu par David Bélanger

Nous avons ici deux romans qui tournent autour du vide — le trou, la mort —, et qu'accompagne une forme romanesque tout en sobriété. Le dernier roman de Patrick Nicol, à cet égard, parle beaucoup de ce trou autour duquel on marche; la métaphore existentielle peut paraître un peu molle, mais comme l'écrit bellement Nicol, « ce qui sort de nous est tellement mou, et tellement dur ce qui nous arrive ». Cette dure vérité du quotidien, *La nageuse au milieu du lac* la souligne sans pathos, parce que la réalité est fatigante, répétitive, absurde, il est inutile de lui ajouter du drame ou du tragique.

Ici, on dira volontiers que le livre se fait autour de cette nageuse, la mère, qui s'abandonnait sans radio ni téléviseur, appuyée contre un coussin, le front vers le plafond, pour que recolle sa rétine; ainsi placée, relève le narrateur, elle rappelait une nageuse au milieu du lac. Pourtant, le roman contourne cette nageuse. Elle est là, certes, mais sous forme de perte : c'est le trou que doit porter le narrateur. La mère dont la santé décline, dont la conscience s'étiole, dont le souvenir revient, que la vie quitte, enfin, forme ce trou. Elle circonscrit les escarpements du quotidien du narrateur.

Le trou apparaît rapidement dans le roman. D'abord, par cette analyse qu'offre le narrateur, enseignant au cégep, à ses étudiants. Le trou, c'est un peu Madeleine, la femme du docteur Dubois dans *Poussière sur la ville*, analyse-t-il. Ce vide déteint sur le lieu lui-même où le docteur et son épouse déménagent : Macklin. Là, ce Thetford Mines, ville minière dont la mine occupe le centre, on à affaire à « un trou autour d'un trou » ironise-t-il. Ce trou devient vite, cependant, un mode de vie, une désespérance qui berce les souvenirs familiaux : « [les] dernières envies [de nos parents] étaient de rentrer dans la télé, de boire des bières, de rouler en miles à l'heure comme pour sortir d'un trou pire encore que le quartier où ils avaient échoué, un trou qu'ils refusaient de nommer. *Un trou*. On l'employait souvent, ce mot-là. » Puis, de là, le trou devient un sentiment, un mode de vie : « Aujourd'hui, je ferai cuire un poulet et ce sera ma réponse temporaire au sentiment d'inutilité. » À la fin, le trou prend la forme d'une tragédie collective, Lac-Mégantic, dans laquelle tous « verront la même chose que moi : un trou noir au milieu d'une ville ».

Il paraît difficile de parler autrement de ce roman. À la continuité narrative sont préférées les vignettes qui se répondent, s'attisent. En ce sens, le dialogue souterrain devient garant de la structure du livre. On trouve beaucoup de retenu dans ces textes, une capacité à freiner l'émotion. Le lecteur en retire alors une sorte de leçon sur le roman et le quotidien.

La forme, moins résolument collée au quotidien du premier roman de Vincent Brault, aborde, elle aussi, un certain vide, à tout le moins, une absurdité. Ce roman est bizarre. Ce qui pourrait ressembler à un jugement de valeur s'inscrit plutôt au cœur même du *Cadavre de Kowalski*. Un cadavre parle. Bouge. Exprime des pensées aliénées. Et ce, sans que soient servies les fables du mort-vivant, du fantôme. Un cadavre parle, tout simplement, raconte comment c'est embêtant d'être un cadavre coincé sous terre.

Ce réalisme-magique un brin décalé n'est pas sans rappeler les premières pages de *Mon nom est rouge* d'Orhan Pamuk : là aussi, un cadavre nous raconte sa condition, avant que le livre donne la parole à une tapisserie, à un animal, à d'autres personnages. Ici, rien de tout ça : le cadavre reste l'unique focalisation du récit. La conscience du cadavre tente à la fois de bouger le corps et de bouger dans le corps, ne cessant de rappeler qu'elle n'est pas le cadavre, qu'elle ne peut que l'habiter : les membres semblent sans unité, la main, les jambes, ne forment plus un sujet. De même, à un moment, la conscience du cadavre tente de fuir le cadavre vers la terre; les sinus, une brèche dans le crâne, tout est sondé, jusqu'aux orifices moins nobles : « Je voulais m'échapper et je voulais rester et je voulais partir et je ne voulais pas. Et merde, impossible de trancher. Le rectum, ce n'était pas l'endroit idéal pour réfléchir. »

Évidemment, un récit peut s'épanouir avec difficulté dans cette étroitesse absurdo-mystique; le livre de Vincent Brault y parvient néanmoins, dans l'action et dans la forme. Le cadavre sort de terre. De plus, une intrigue quasi-policière autour de la mort d'une fillette redouble l'assassinat de Kowalski, et un contexte historique agit en sourdine, « je suis mort le 7 février 1941. C'était pendant la guerre », lit-on dans l'incipit, « mais je n'y étais pas, à la guerre. » Dans cette mine québécoise reculée, on sent bien que les camps de la mort agissent dans le lointain, bien que ce polonais, Kowalski, nous oblige à les voir plus proches qu'ils ne le semblent.

Le cadavre de Kowalski réussit l'étrangeté, on y est plongé. Pourtant, il aurait été à espérer que ce parti pris s'accompagne d'une certaine ambition, d'une volonté de mieux mettre à profit ce concept, histoire qu'il se rende au bout de lui-même.

Worlds in Indigenous Words

Elsie Paul, Paige Raibmon, and Harmony Johnson
Written as I Remember It: Teachings (ʔəms taʔaw) From the Life of a Sliammon Elder. U of British Columbia P $39.95

Drew Hayden Taylor, ed.
Me Artsy. Douglas & McIntyre $22.95

Reviewed by Madelaine Jacobs

Artistic expression is indispensable to the perpetuation of healthy societies. Self-reflection is the foundation of understanding and it is artists who shoulder this heavy societal mantle. Elsie Paul, a łaʔamın (Sliammon) elder, authored *Written as I Remember It* in collaboration with historian Paige Raibmon and Harmony Johnson, Paul's granddaughter. Teachings and history are integrated throughout *Written as I Remember It*. Distinguished author, editor, journalist, scriptwriter, and playwright Drew Hayden Taylor belongs to the Curve Lake First Nation of Ontario. His edited volume *Me Artsy* is preceded by *Me Funny* and *Me Sexy*. *Me Artsy* deconstructs traditional and contemporary expressions of First Nations identities in art. It dwells upon the ways in which indigenous "artistic spirit" interprets and reveals the workings of society.

Written as I Remember It communicates *ʔəms taʔaw* ("*our* teachings"): the teachings of the łaʔamın people that are "the very essence" of their "well-being." Paul

is not an "informant" generating primary research material from which academics produce secondary publications. She is a skilled historian in her own right. Paul's authority in sharing these teachings is underscored by a controversial argument that university research ethics boards' requirements that band council consent be given before Indigenous histories are collected undermines individual adult agency. Governing ethical principles of protection may cloak a much older paternalistic wardship imposed on First Nations peoples. Raibmon challenges settler paradigms by invoking "transformational listening" that does not claim a total rational understanding of complex Indigenous teachings. Even settler allies of Indigenous peoples can over-identify with compelling stories to the extent of claiming to embody First Nations experiences themselves. Raibmon explains that this unwittingly denies Indigenous rights to difference.

Indigenous interactions with the nation-state are haunted by a sense of "being fenced in." Paul describes an Indigenous world in which territory matters intensely yet people live with a freedom of movement. Such fluidity was possible even though neighbouring peoples had particular uses for shared territories. Consequently, contemporary state maps of Indigenous lands depict overlapping claims of neighbouring First Nations. Continuing the imperial tradition, these maps are erroneously used to infer inconsistent Indigenous use and to negate claims to sovereign territory. The movement and self-reliance described by Paul nonetheless has order and those "that didn't, you know, abide by the rules . . . were dealt with accordingly." Indigenous sovereign territories were known and put to good use.

The contributors to *Me Artsy* are eminent and multifaceted. Although each has a preferred artistic medium, all have turned to the purpose of artistic edification. Visual artist Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas' contribution is a surprise. He submitted a Haida Manga. Zacharias Kunuk, director of 2001 Cannes Caméra d'Or prize-winning *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*, describes his early life in a sod house on Baffin Island when he believed they "were the only people on Earth." Kunuk's talent is using art to communicate "how aboriginal cultures have always fascinated" him. Taylor's contributors share a sense that Indigenous cultures respect the need for artistic expression. Actor and playwright Monique Mojica's mother recognized that she was born to be an artist and nurtured her development; however, Mojica did not see Indigenous art included as "high art" or as an influence on post-Second World War North American identity. She decolonized her fear that ignorance of certain traditional cultural information would delegitimize expressions of Indigenous identities and learned that, for an artist, "one of the most important things . . . is to be a receptor." Despite her remarkable artistic achievements, Maxine Noel goes as far as asserting that she is "not really" artsy. She is simply "breathing the healing air . . . sharing that air and that healing with the world" now and for "tomorrow's children." Art is part of a full, vibrant, and continuing existence rather than a touristic legacy of traditional craftsmanship.

Written as I Remember It balances Paul's leading voice throughout the bulk of the book with Raibmon's illuminating introduction and other helpful elements that enable readers to immerse themselves more deeply in the written ła?amın language. Its value as a resource is inextricable from Paul's ability to tell a good story. It is this point that so many of Taylor's contributors make through their examinations of art and Indigenous identities. As Thomas King so memorably stated, the "truth about stories is that that's all we are." Children's stories are often dismissed by an adult conceit that separates

itself from childhood and professes utter factuality. The crucial addendum is that the word "story" should connote far more than child-centred narratives. Stories are powerful, durable, and practical artistic articulations of the worlds in which we live. Art permeates life and is a pillar of Indigenous resilience.

"True" Stories and Confidence, or the lack thereof

Elizabeth Renzetti
Based on a True Story. Anansi $19.95

Russell Smith
Confidence. Biblioasis $19.95

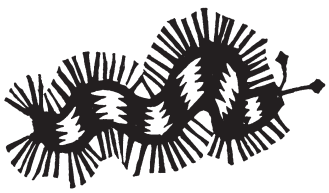
Reviewed by Philip Miletic

Whenever a novel or a film is based on a true story, it is immediately met with skepeticism—how much of the "truth" is that story based on, and how far from the "truth" did it stray. And the word "confidence" or someone displaying such extreme levels of confidence is met with irony and disbelief that anyone could be really that confident. Elizabeth Renzetti's debut novel *Based on a True Story* and Russell Smith's short story collection *Confidence* delve into the skepticism and irony that are now commonly associated with "true stories" and "confidence." And yet, both authors introduce a touch of sadness and sympathetic prose that balances the irony and satire of their stories.

Renzetti's *Based on a True Story* is a satire that sparks with wit and sharp humour, commenting on (our obsession with) celebrity culture and the journalism that chases down those celebrities. The novel follows Augusta Price, a washed-up soap opera actress fresh out of rehab, who has just published her memoir, *Based on a True Story*. Price finds out that an ex-lover of hers, Kenneth Deller—or his radio personality, Mr. Romance—may be writing a book about her. She recruits Frances Bleeker, a struggling American journalist who wrote a damning article on Augusta in a British tabloid, to aid her in her quest for "revenge" that takes them to California. At the centre of the novel, as its title alludes to, is the critique of the celebrity memoir, especially since the memoir boom of the 1990s. Renzetti not only questions the validity of memoirs, but also argues that these memoirs are, as is always the case, one POV of past events and quite often suppress emotionally personal events of the writer. Renzetti demonstrates this by weaving Augusta's memoir, Frances' article on August, and Kenneth's POV throughout the story, establishing the relational web that forms these characters' identity(-ies): the celebrity persona, the personal/private, and the tabloid/journalistic eye. Together, a more intimate portrait of Augusta is created. However, *Based on a True Story* becomes rather tangled as the book approaches its dénouement. Although the woven narratives flesh out and reveal the life of Augusta and bring her down from washed-up celebrity to a human being, the plot meanders and ends rather anticlimactically. Augusta's character comes nearly full circle, remaining the flat satirical caricature of a celebrity that she was in the beginning, and the other characters' subplots feel incomplete. *Based on a True Story* contains moments of hilarity and humorous satire, yet the stabs at fandom and its treatment of drug and alcohol abuse come off as rather callous.

The Torontonian characters in the short stories of Russell Smith's *Confidence* have anything but confidence, looking to lies, drugs, fantasizing about others, affairs, and money (that they do not have) to create an illusion of confidence. The characters in these stories are seeking confidence in themselves, in their relationships, in their city, and in their work. But in seeking

confidence, they defer their work, abuse their relationships, desire gentrification, and/or abuse themselves. Smith's satirical eye of the selfish woes of the Torontonian white middle-class, however, is not without care. Smith's characters are not two-dimensional, unlikable cut-outs. Rather, the reader gets a glimpse into how conflicted, insecure middle-class individuals will slouch towards these affectless and snobbish caricatures in order to gain something like confidence. So while there is critique of these middle-class "troubles," the reader still cares about these individuals, about how they are hurting themselves and those around them. The stories that stand out are "Crazy," whose main character is lauded by friends and family of his girlfriend as a wonderful boyfriend when he is anything but and feels trapped by that lie. "Research" is terrific in the stylistic choice to have its two PhD students (who are coming down from a drug) talk in incomplete sentences, reflecting the deferral and incompleteness of their dissertation, and of their happiness and of realities that they avoid. "Gentrification" contains a couple that hopes that their area becomes gentrified, and the husband expresses happiness once hints of gentrification occur and he is able to sexually fantasize about a black woman tenant of his without having to actually "deal" with her and her friend any longer. At times Smith leans over into heavy-handedness in his satire, yet this is overcome by his rounded characters and poignant prose. *Confidence* is an excellent collection of short stories that delves deeply into the psyche and sadness of those who hopelessly strive for confidence or something like it by any means necessary.



Les langues du roman noir

Patrick Roy

L'homme qui a vu l'ours. Le Quartanier 28,95 $

Compte rendu par Benoît Melançon

En 2015, au moment de la parution du troisième livre de Patrick Roy, *L'homme qui a vu l'ours*, la presse québécoise a insisté sur l'appartenance de cet ouvrage au « roman noir ». Si cette inscription générique est incontestable, elle masque un des aspects les plus étonnants de l'œuvre : sa langue ou, plutôt, ses langues.

L'homme qui a vu l'ours, comme tout bon roman noir contemporain, mêle plusieurs intrigues. La principale est constituée de la biographie que le journaliste québécois Guillaume Fitzpatrick doit rédiger d'un lutteur américaine déchu, Tommy Madsen. La deuxième naît de la première : Hugo Turcotte, un collègue engagé par Fitzpatrick pour des recherches d'appoint, découvre des malversations, qui n'ont rien à voir avec le sport, impliquant le père de Madsen et des acolytes, dont un mystérieux dandy tueur à gages, Beau Lander. Dans un cas comme dans l'autre, la violence et la douleur sont omniprésentes : les enquêtes des deux journalistes, le premier célèbre, l'autre pas, sont là pour mettre au jour cette violence et cette douleur, mais elles sont laborieuses l'une et l'autre. (Il leur en coûtera.) Des intrigues familiales ou amoureuses croisent les deux premières : le père de Fitzpatrick a des ennuis de santé; l'ex-femme de Madsen est une ancienne compagne du journaliste, avec laquelle il renoue secrètement.

La narration n'est pas parfaitement linéaire : c'est encore là une des règles du genre tel qu'il se pratique aujourd'hui. La scène d'ouverture, par exemple, ne trouve son sens que tardivement dans la chronologie de la deuxième intrigue; énigmatique, elle est là pour stimuler la curiosité du lecteur. Les déplacements, surtout en voiture, occupent une place importante dans

le roman, dont une large part se déroule en Nouvelle-Angleterre et au Québec (Sherbrooke, Montréal, Québec), avec une excursion à Aspen, au son de Metallica. Si la lutte est évidemment la discipline sportive (à défaut de meilleur terme) la plus en vue, il est sans cesse question de baseball, de hockey, de basketball, de boxe : *L'homme qui a vu l'ours* est bourré de noms propres venus du monde du sport spectacle. Fitzpatrick écoute de la musique américaine, s'inspire de maîtres d'écriture américains (Gay Talese), connaît la culture populaire américaines (Batman, Gilligan, Iron Man, Letterman). L'Amérique littéraire de Patrick Roy est un genre (bien maîtrisé, pour l'essentiel), un lieu, des pratiques, des références (écrites, musicales, visuelles) — une culture.

En quelle langue dire cela ? En français, bien sûr, mais un français doublement particularisé. D'une part, Guillaume Fitzpatrick est un personnage présenté comme travaillant dans les deux langues officielles du Canada. Diplômé de l'Université Concordia à Montréal, il a collaboré à des journaux francophones et à des journaux anglophones, et il est sous contrat avec un éditeur états-unien pour la biographie de Madsen. Cela est thématisé, mais sans jamais que la langue employée par Fitzpatrick dans les diverses situations romanesques soit précisée. Au lecteur de déduire quand il parle français et quand il parle anglais. Sur ce plan, on peut parfois avoir l'impression de lire un roman noir traduit, ici de l'anglais, comme il en existe tant désormais.

D'autre part, le texte fait constamment appel au lexique populaire québécois. Cela touche autant les dialogues que la narration. Dans la scène décrivant un des moments charnières de la carrière de Madsen, on lit ainsi, dans la bouche des personnages, « maudit frais chié », « chien sale » ou « t'as prouvé ton point », et, sous la plume du narrateur, « rush d'adrénaline » et « pitonnant ». Ce français-là n'est pas celui des traductions françaises auxquelles les fervents du roman noir sont habitués.

Ces histoires d'Américains unilingues et de Québécois francophones, biculturels ou anglophones, racontées en français québécois, offrent une représentation des contacts linguistiques inouïe dans le genre noir.

Poetic Performances

David Seymour
For Display Purposes Only. Coach House $17.95

C. R. Avery
Some Birds Walk for the Hell of It. Anvil $18.00

Reviewed by Susie DeCoste

In his collection *For Display Purposes Only*, David Seymour is truly adept at exploring ideas of representation and performance, and at guiding readers toward their own questions about what is performed and what is real. His poems are rich and multifaceted; they examine various types of artifice, including dreams, photography, film, and false first pages of novels. These pieces perform as the first page of a separate work complete with pagination and the title of the work appearing near the page number instead of at the top of the page. These false starts act as a beginning, but when readers turn the page they find the next poem in the collection, not the next page of the novel. Scattered throughout the collection, the false starts can be jarring if readers apprehend them as a printer's mistake, and they can be absorbing, as readers have to let go mid-sentence and move on to another poem. In themselves, these poems demand reflection on ideas of performance and audience expectations.

Meaning also emerges in the poems when an actor or even landscape enters into a performance and is therein transformed. For example, in "The Photo Double," the speaker says, "They're about to roll again. Pretend. Be unreal. / Be more real than I ever imagined." In a poem about Florida,

Seymour writes about gated communities and the image they provide to inhabitants: "Safe. / Not safe, having purchased / a sense of security." For Seymour, there are blurred lines between the performance, the reality, and the apprehension of that reality. Each of these aspects is worthy of poetic exploration.

In contrast to these meaningful performances in Seymour's collection, C. R. Avery's collection *Some Birds Walk for the Hell of It* is a purely sensationalist performance. Bizarre sexual images are featured in every poem, including a phallic unicorn stabbing a dead horse to emphasize a sexual encounter. Many poems feature a self-important male speaker whose world revolves around late-nights, sexual conquests with women, drugs, alcohol, and rock and roll. "Cold Fire Escape" offers an image of "a woman achieving a bonfire orgasm / by rubbing two hand-held sticks together . . . [surrounded by a] surface scattered with the collected letters of Walt Whitman." The treatment of women as sexual objects may stem from the burlesque roots of Avery's onstage performances. However, these burlesque scenes do not translate well to the poetry. It is impossible to accept poem after poem that treats women this way.

For Avery, the object is the show, the performance, the surface. Whereas Seymour's poems prompt reflection on ways that artistic performances create another kind of meaningful reality, Avery's poetic performance on paper fails to inspire.

Arthur's Struggle

David Stouck
Arthur Erickson: An Architect's Life.
Douglas & McIntyre $34.95

Reviewed by Darrin Morrison

David Stouck's biography of Arthur Erickson ensures that "the complex and contradictory 'starchitect'" will continue to be recognized for his significant contributions to Canadian architecture, despite the controversies that surrounded him and his projects. The Filberg, Smith, and Eppich residences, Simon Fraser University, University of Lethbridge, University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology, Robson Square, and Roy Thomson Hall are among the monuments discussed in the book that propelled Erickson onto the international stage.

Stouck asserts that Erickson was Canada's "pre-eminent philosopher-architect," a brilliant artist whose life frequently careened out of control into excess, and yet who became one of the most well-known and celebrated architects of his time. Written from this perspective, Stouck constructs an accessible and revealing account of Erickson's larger-than-life character, exploring the architect's hard-fought battles to win and maintain clients, his rise to fame with an international practice, his celebrity lifestyle, and ultimate descent into bankruptcy.

The book's four main parts—*A Portrait of the Architect as a Young Man, The Weight of Heaven, Master Builder,* and *Celebrity*—with chapters denoting key periods/projects in the architect's life, provide a well-organized structure that supports Stouck's premise that it was Erickson's philosophical, artistic, and democratic approach to architecture, not his business acumen, that led to his success and celebrity.

Though the book was published four years after Erickson's death, Stouck interviewed the architect in his declining years, along

with friends, family, former colleagues, and clients, gaining access to little-known details about Erickson's development as an artist and a man. He also sourced multiple archival documents, "footnot[ing] only matters that may be regarded as controversial." Yet the book in fact unravels many controversies, including the decision made by close friend and then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to overrule—in favour of Erickson—the selection panel's decision for the design of the Canadian Chancery in Washington—this despite the fact that Erickson did not even make the short list. At times, Stouck's accounts of Erickson's personal relationships and lavish lifestyle veer toward the sensational, but in the context of the turbulent times, his descriptions of Erickson's excesses in the 1970s and 1980s seem entirely appropriate.

Each project described in the book has been carefully researched, offering insight into Erickson's ground-breaking designs—some of which were achieved at great personal cost to the architect, as well as to his clients. While many patrons were thrilled to have Erickson envision their buildings, recurrent problems managing schedules and reining in budgets ended up souring several personal and professional relationships and threatening future projects, even as his international reputation continued to grow. As Stouck suggests: "The matter of patrons would remain crucial throughout the rest of Arthur's career: the path to further major achievements and a direct road to his downfall."

The writer identifies many key influencers in Erickson's life, including his parents, artist/educator and proponent of modern design, B.C. Binning, Group of Seven painter Lawren Harris, artist/clients Gordon and Marion Smith, and even Pierre Trudeau and other celebrities. Stouck links Erickson's extensive travel experience in the Middle East and Europe in the early 1950s and later in Japan and Southeast Asia, to the fundamental design approaches he developed for successive projects. Stouck states that "for the young man from Vancouver, where so little evidence of human time's passage was visible, this experience helped lay the foundation for his sense of architecture as monumental, not only serving the needs of the present but evoking buildings from the past and their relation to a specific site."

Stouck's examination positions Erickson as the consummate artist/architect who, when facing the financial collapse of his practice, was forced to "his retreat position . . . that of the great artist scorned in his time." In a particularly poignant passage referencing Erickson's altered or demolished works, Stouck captures Erickson's thoughts about the temporal nature of architecture: "Architecture is full of heartbreak. Buildings don't usually last that long. Most of them come down, Houses are sold and changed by their new owners. When you really put your heart into something, it can be devastating when it all comes down."

Stouck approaches the controversies and spectacle of Erickson's life with a reasoned perspective and suggests that "Erickson's utopian ideals—a law court to make justice more transparent, an office building to make working conditions more humane, universities to eliminate hierarchies in the quest for knowledge . . . offer a measure by which to evaluate his achievements." Stouck's biography presents a compassionate portrait of one of Canada's first celebrity architects whose life was full of contradiction, and proposes, "probably the outstanding characteristic of Erickson's architecture is its admittance of human potential and possibility, its need for fulfillment."

Individu et collectif

Jimmy Thibault

Des identités mouvantes. Se définir dans le contexte de la mondialisation. Nota bene 39,95 $

Compte rendu par Bettina B. Cenerelli

Dans cette thèse de doctorat (soutenu en 2008 à Ottawa), l'auteur part d'un corpus éclectique de treize romans, représentant pour lui la littérature minoritaire et migrante à travers le Canada, dans le but de définir comment l'identité littéraire s'y défait et s'y reconstruit. L'identité littéraire ne peut plus se baser sur des références claires (« identités mouvantes »), l'histoire et le passé sont donc mis en question comme référents identitaires et la menace d'une homogénéisation dans le contexte de la mondialisation se reflète dans les créations littéraires. Le cadre d'analyse se veut ainsi « axé sur la représentation du processus d'identification dans la fiction à la suite de la mondialisation ». Qui se définit alors? Thibault évite de mettre en avant l'acte d'écrire ou encore l'origine ethnique ou biographique des écrivains; en même temps, il s'intéresse au rapport entre les auteurs et leur communauté d'origine et d'accueil. Il souligne l'importance de la définition du soi littéraire par l'affirmation de sa propre présence au monde et redéfinition au présent : l'histoire du moi et une re-contextualisation du soi prennent le devant et amènent alors aussi à une nouvelle relation entre l'individu et la société dans laquelle ce dernier agit.

L'objectif du livre est d'« analyser, à partir des problématiques que soulève la mondialisation sur le plan des repères identitaires, le discours romanesque canadien-français depuis les années 1980 jusqu'au début des années 2000 afin d'en faire ressortir l'importance qu'y jouent les préoccupations identitaires actuelles ainsi que sa participation au débat ayant cours, dans les différents domaines des sciences sociales, sur les enjeux identitaires de la mondialisation ». La conclusion résume plus clairement l'intérêt pour les littératures minoritaires francophones et le lien entre le discours de fiction et les réalités « idéologiques » : « Partant du principe que le discours de fiction établit, volontairement ou non, un dialogue avec les différentes réalités idéologiques dans lesquelles il est produit, il m'a semblé important d'explorer cette question de l'affirmation des identités contemporaines, tant individuelles que collectives, dans un corpus de romans où la particularité sociogéographique des personnages, c'est-à-dire leur situation de minoritaires francophones sur un territoire majoritairement anglophone, rendait d'entrée de jeu la question du processus d'identification problématique. »

Dans quatre chapitres, Thibault analyse respectivement deux à quatre romans de différents auteurs pour faire ressortir certains éléments d'identification de soi, tels que le discours historiographique (chap. 1: à l'exemple d'un roman de Roch Carrier, Nancy Huston, Daniel Poliquin et Jacques Poulin), l'espace géographique (chap. 2: Antonine Maillet et Guillaume Vigneault), l'espace culturel (chap. 3: Dany Laferrière; Yin Chen et Didier Leclair) et l'espace social (chap. 4: Simone Chaput; Monique Proulx; Daniel Poliquin et Ulysse Landry). Rarement on y établit des liens entre les chapitres; au contraire, les différences reçoivent parfois plus d'attention : « Cette Amérique [chez Laferrière] n'a évidemment rien à voir avec celle que tentent de retrouver Jack Waterman et Robert Martin en articulant leurs parcours autours des repères historiographiques relatant la naissance du continent. » L'utilisation de la même citation dans trois chapitres différents fait naître des doutes quant à la généralisation possible des arguments mis de l'avant.

Sans nécessairement toujours s'y prêter, le corpus littéraire se voit transformé en un discours théorique. S'il y a un lien potentiel entre les romans étudiés, celui-ci se voit

relégué en une remarque à part (un « désenchantement personnel à l'égard des référents qui servent traditionnellement à fonder l'identité des individus »), ou encore en note de bas de page : « Tous les romans étudiés mettent effectivement en scène des personnages qui ne se retrouvent plus dans l'espace collectif et qui, pour se défaire d'un malaise identitaire . . . tentent de s'affirmer en tant qu'individu habitant l'ici et le maintenant. »

Le livre aurait beaucoup gagné par l'ajout d'un index permettant de retrouver les livres étudiés puisqu'ils ne sont pas mentionnés dans la table des matières.

Two Vancouver Writers

John Vaillant
The Jaguar's Children. Knopf Canada $29.95

Sam Wiebe
Last of the Independents: Vancouver Noir. Dundurn $17.99

Reviewed by Joel Martineau

Acclaimed non-fiction writer John Vaillant—his *The Golden Spruce* (2004) underpins Sasha Snow's 2015 film *Hadwin's Judgement* while *The Tiger: A True Story of Vengeance and Survival* (2009) earned numerous awards—turns to fiction in *The Jaguar's Children*. In the "Acknowledgments" he explains that his wife "moved our family to Oaxaca for a year in 2009," where Vaillant apparently collected the materials for this persuasive novel. The narrative is set inside the tank of a water truck intended to smuggle fifteen undocumented migrants into the USA. *Coyotes* abandon the aged truck when it breaks down just across the border between Sonoita and Nogales, trapping the migrants inside. The three-hour clandestine crossing they were promised becomes an inexorable incarceration as dehydration wrings life from those sealed within.

Hector, a young Zapotec from the Sierra Jaurez above Oaxaca, narrates the novel by recording audio files into his *companero*'s cell phone. Initial pleas for help give way to increasingly lengthy personal flashbacks and then meditations about the plight of indigenous peoples. Hector is a believably complex narrator: as a boy he accompanied his father on an undocumented foray to the USA and learned English in an American grade school; caught and deported, then abandoned by his disillusioned father, he has been mentored during his formative years by his *abuelo* Hilario, who has steeped him in indigenous thinking. As Hector bakes during the days and shivers during the nights he reflects upon the stories that Hilario has shared, which date back to the Mexican Revolution and Pancho Villa and provide insight into the convergence of thought worlds. He considers why his father—who migrated to the USA only to be brutally deported back to Mexico—believed himself a failure, and he ponders the possibilities for his current twenty-first-century generation, learned, multilingual, and tech-savvy. The scope of Hector's knowledge allows Vaillant to juxtapose, for example, the goals of a treacherous cartel bent on introducing GMO corn into Mexico alongside Zapotec reverence for maize, and thus address the effects of NAFTA. A kindly (if exploitative) archaeologist had encouraged *abuelo* Hilario to learn to read, "that books were a door into other worlds," and this glimpse into competing thought worlds powers *The Jaguar's Children*.

The title *Last of the Independents: Vancouver Noir* might suggest a historical study or academic treatise but instead refers to a work of fiction, a novel in the whodunnit genre, and Private Investigator subgenre. Michael Drayton keeps a sparsely furnished walk-up office above Hastings Street near Cordova, with nearly enough custom to meet the rent. Twenty-nine, he currently sleeps in the basement of his grandmother's home near East Broadway and occasionally borrows a vehicle from the

mother of his office assistant, whose boyfriend lives in a condo on Wall Street. Street names matter. His two or three current cases involve missing children. Or wives. Or a "corpse fucker" haunting a funeral parlour. He's not quite indifferent to income, but he is prepared to have the mortician subsidize the hunt for a missing boy. The cast includes a philosophical games geek, knowledgeable about pop culture, who provides a sounding board; a *femme fatale* (she lives in a mansion on the UBC Endowment Lands) whose clutches he barely escapes; various kind-hearted hookers; cop contacts good and bad; and, of course, layers of evildoers. So, you see, the title is indeed apt: the novel functions as a compendium for the genre. Geographical specificity and vaguely pertinent current concerns perk enough interest to carry the tale along, at least until the conclusion veers to Vancouver Island, where a series of excessive events play out in fuzzy locations. The novel is at its best when it observes its subtitle.

Home in the Reading Chair

Frank Viva
Outstanding in the Rain: A Whole Story with Holes. Tundra $21.99

Carson Ellis
Home. Random House $19.00

Lili Chartrand; Gabrielle Grimard, illus.
The Fabulous World of Mr. Fred.
Fitzhenry & Whiteside $10.95

Reviewed by Susie DeCoste

In writing my first formal review of children's picture books, I cannot help but mention how my two young children have engaged with each text, and how each work became a catalyst for our interactions as we sat together to look through them. I appreciate how Frank Viva's amazing die-cuts use three-dimensional space to entice my three-year-old to turn page after page, and how Carson Ellis's warm and inviting watercolour home of a "moonian" gets us laughing. I am also struck by my hesitations in reading the English translation of Lili Chartrand's award-winning *The Fabulous World of Mr. Fred* aloud.

While Gabrielle Grimard's illustrations for *Mr. Fred* are wonderfully windswept and evocative, and the story itself quite heart-warming overall, I am uncertain about its intended audience. Mr. Fred of the title befriends a young boy named Pierrot at a park bench. After a few visits, Mr. Fred informs Pierrot that his young son, wife, and cats died in a fire years ago. Later in the story, Mr. Fred also dies. These deaths could be confusing to young children. Pierrot inherits a book from Mr. Fred, and shares its stories with his own child at the end of the work, bringing to full circle his encounter with Mr. Fred. I hoped for more details about the stories, and an opportunity to appreciate them as Pierrot does, but each of Mr. Fred's stories appears only as a title. The recommended age for Mr. Fred is 5 to 8, but I believe it would be better suited for 10 years and older. Older children and adults would be better able to appreciate the sense of time passing, the cycles of life, the chance encounters that have a profound effect on a life, and the ways that loss can affect people.

The focus of Viva's *Outstanding in the Rain* is on oronyms, phrases that sound the same but have different meanings, such as "an ice man" and "a nice man." The illustrations work double duty because there are holes in the pages strategically placed over some words so that when the page is turned, another similar phrase is revealed. The word play is whimsical and fun; and children can enjoy finding out how slight changes in word spaces or letters can produce a completely different meaning. The phrases act as a loose thread that holds the whole work together. There are some rhymes I hesitated over, such as "her ear" and "her rear." The intended humour of

that oronym pair is inconsistent with the rest of the book and it risks tainting the rest of the work.

Ellis's *Home* features lovely watercolours and text composed of simple sentences. The first pages are declarative, describing who or what each home is intended for. The homes include a true-to-life apartment building, a nursery rhyme allusion shoe, and homes for the fun-to-say babushka, Atlantian, and moonian. There is a wonderful section that turns to questions such as, "But whose home is this? And what about this?" My three-year-old and one-year-old both love this book and have asked for it many times since I've received it to review. They laugh at many points, and like to repeat the phrases after me. I particularly enjoy the way the details of the illustrations work together. One of the final images of the book is a self-portrait of the artist in her room surrounded by the objects that inspired each idea of home featured in the text. This sense of cohesion is satisfying and inspiring. At the end, readers are prompted, "This is my home, and this is me. Where is your home? Where are you?" It is a delightful ending that spurred many conversations in our reading chair.

Forms of Passage

David Zieroth
Albrecht Dürer and Me. Harbour. $18.95

John Barton
Polari. Goose Lane $19.95

Reviewed by Catherine Owen

Travel is always a challenging subject matter for poetry, begging the question of how long it takes, or perhaps should take, to steep in a particular locale for poems of merit to emerge. David Zieroth definitely treads the line between creating flitting sketches of itinerant places and moments, and etching deeper engagements with existence that emerge from the stimuli of a temporal encounter or unfamiliar terrain. In *Albrecht Dürer and Me,* Zieroth gifts us with a wide range of travelogue-lyrics, spurred on by the typical "spots of time" the generous-eyed traveller attends to—art, history, landscape—but conveyed in the delicate, sensitive ways only a fully "clicked in" poet can.

The poems are presented in clean stanzas, pared of most articles ("child takes" or "red hair of the guide") and without terminal periods. Both elisions can prove initially irksome but over the course of the book turn almost soothing. The strongest pieces are those that enter commemoration for deceased artists like Georg Trakl, Dürer, and Thomas Bernhard. Sometimes observations verge on the banal, as in the speaker's noting of the names undergoing erasure on tombstones in "Central Cemetery," but are more often droll ("time is tough on noses") or perceptive—"the gift of art/to reflect and reveal each viewer accurately." Zieroth's poetic vocation was launched in the 1980s, an era dominated by accessible narrative-based poetry often dealing with work and family, as in the poetry of Sandy Shreve and Tom Wayman. It is a style he continues to unfold and one that produces equal amounts of potent detail— "later we

eat fish from the crystal lake/and under the calm of local wine speak of/the last war here." The subtle consonance and frequently well-placed line breaks establish a stirringly evocative environment of witness. There is also a tendency to include too many prosy explanatory clauses: "this letter written to console/the widow of Italo Svevo, dead/nine years after a sepia print presents him and his wife on their anniversary (30 July 1919)." Such an excess might have been more sleekly contextualized to consider what the reader rather than the writer requires. The back cover blurb states that Zieroth "unearths the knowledge that can be realized only by leaving home." This is possibly so but it remains more challenging to glean lingering epiphanies from the touch and go motions of the tourist, so, kudos to Zieroth for presenting such a wealth of entrances.

John Barton, like Zieroth, rose to recognition of sorts in the poetry world in the eighties, though his work seems to be receiving less acclaim as Zieroth's obtains more. Barton, whom one might call one of the "New Formalists" (though outside of the Starnino-acknowledged camp)—there are sonnets, glosas, villanelles, rondeaus, and couplets, and even a numbered palindrome in *Polari*—continues to write consistently compelling poems. Among them "La Vie Bohème" (likely the only Canadian poem with a recurring Lazy Susan in it), "Les Beaux Arts, Montreal" with its haunting lines: "Later I still feel nothing. Later still, I don't make a fresh start./why sheets are turned down with tenderness is left unasked," "Into the Wild" for Diana Brebner, "Closing the Gate of Sorrow," whose five glosa lines are drawn from *Gilgamesh*, "Verlaine's Life," and "Criminal Codes," a fusing of form and the textures of gay life that reminds one of Thom Gunn—"marrow / stripped of caution in crammed bathhouses one / dresses down for, no condoms worn if lust / shuns last barriers to love . . . your hard-on stunning / mute depths." Barton, unlike Zieroth, can obfuscate his subject matter unnecessarily at times. The sounds in "ghosting the fictive / no terror so restive / it can't coast among brittle stars" are lovely, yet the abstractions weaken, become weird Ashberian blips. Some of his titles are goofy in a way that suggests a pop culture yearning à la McGimpsey without the punch line follow-up ("If you want closure in your relationship start with your legs"—one of the Diagram Prizes for oddest book title of the year—or "Maj. Tom's Cyberspace Oddity.") And the over-used abbreviation "'til" is affected. Still, quibbles. Barton, more eloquent and elegant than our era often likes to celebrate, can appear like the whale in "Watching the Whale," whose "brief white hint of . . . abundance" slips "beyond our grasp."

Reading André Alexis' *Fifteen Dogs*: An Apologue

Robin Ridington

> As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods,
> They kill us for their sport.
> —Shakespeare, *King Lear*

An apologue is a philosophical fable often involving talking animals. Anansi and Brer Rabbit come to mind. *Fifteen Dogs* is the second in André Alexis' series of five philosophical tales in the genre. The first, *Pastoral* (2014), involved a young Priest, a sacred spring, and a cameo by talking sheep. *Fifteen Dogs* is the winner of the 2015 Giller Prize and well worth the tribute. At first glance I thought it looked like a nod to *The Iliad, Lord of the Flies,* and maybe *Animal Farm* or *Heart of Darkness*, but it's a much deeper book than such facile comparisons suggest. It might be about the transition from the deathless Olympian gods to the Christian God who experiences death as a man. Maybe it's best to start with the poetry rather than the opening scene, which is where reviews often start, although the opening epigraph from Pablo Neruda's "Ode to the Dog" may help: "*why is there day, why must night come . . .*" (*Fifteen Dogs* 8). Neruda's "Ode" recalls a question posed in the Gospel of John, 9:4: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." In his implied response to John, Neruda evokes the way the dog asks questions of his masters. Like wandering Jews, wandering dogs answer a question with another question: Why not? The fifteen dogs of this novel, in their way, answer a question posed to them both by humans and by eternal celestial beings by posing yet other questions. Their questions, like Neruda's, are expressed in the language of poetry. Here are a few more lines from Neruda in another translation by Leonard Durso.

> why is it daytime? why does night always fall?
> why does spring bring
> nothing
> in its basket
> for wandering dogs
> but useless flowers,
> flowers and more flowers?
> This is how the dog
> asks questions
> and I do not reply. (n. pag.)

The novel includes fifteen artful poems composed by a dog named Prince. Each poem poses its own questions and names one of the fifteen dogs to whom the gods have given human consciousness and language. Prince's poems use a poetic genre invented by François Caradec for the OULIPO, "the workshop of potential literature" (*Fifteen Dogs* 142). *Oulipo* uses "constrained writing techniques" related to palindromes and mathematics to release meanings through sound, rather than from the written text ("Oulipo" n. pag.). These poems reflect Prince's experiences and those of his pack. Each poem embeds the name of a dog in a way that is heard in the recitation but is not obvious in print. As an example

I have highlighted the one for Bella below (in bold). The hidden meaning is in the sound rather than in the typography. Kim Maltman (the author of some of Prince's poems) is a poet, mathematician and theoretical physicist. Kim is also the name of Prince's beloved first master with whom he is reunited in his last dream. But I'm getting ahead of the story. Here is Prince's Bella poem:

> Beyond the hills, a master is
> who knows our secret names.
> With **bell a**nd bones, he'll call us home,
> winter, fall or spring. (25)

The alpha male of the pack is a mastiff named Atticus. His name is in this poem composed by Prince, but I haven't highlighted it. Sound it out.

> In the sunny world, with its small
> things moving too fast,
> I shy away from light
> and in the attic cuss the dark. (76)

Some of the names are less obvious, and as of this reading I am in doubt about one or two. Here is a poem containing the name of Rosie.

> The light that moves is not the light.
> The light that stays is not the light.
> The true light rose countless sleeps ago.
> It rose, even in the mouth of birds. (30)

Prince is a mutt who, along with fourteen other dogs, was given human intelligence and consciousness in a wager between Apollo and Hermes about whether or not a being with human language and consciousness can die happy. Olympian gods are obsessed with life and death, death being something they can never experience. Apollo says no, Hermes says yes. The prize is two years' servitude. The fifteen dogs are housed in a kennel in Toronto, near where the Greek gods had been having a beer in Toronto's venerable Wheat Sheaf tavern, founded eighteen years before Confederation. They speak ancient Greek to one another. The wheat sheaf, of course, is the symbol of Demeter: "often described simply as the goddess of the harvest, she presided also over the sacred law, and the cycle of life and death. She and her daughter Persephone were the central figures of the Eleusinian Mysteries that predated the Olympian Pantheon" ("Demeter" n. pag.). Hermes argued that "the human way of creating and using symbols is more interesting than, say, the complex dancing done by bees" (*Fifteen Dogs* 12). Apollo maintained that "Human languages are too vague" (*Fifteen Dogs* 12). Prince, the dog poet, shows that the ambiguity of metaphoric language is not vague but generative.

This wager by the antique gods is an experiment going deep into the paradox of humans having both an animal, instinctual nature and a cultural, linguistic one. Like the dogs that these capricious Olympians transform, we, too, have been transformed by a capricious trick of evolution into becoming sentient beings with animal natures. Our primate natures are in some ways less nuanced than the canine natures of dogs. Their sense of smell is far superior to our own, although we have binocular colour vision. We use dogs as sniffers in criminal investigations. They use us as providers.

The fifteen dogs react differently to their transformation. Atticus, "an imposing Neapolitan Mastiff, with cascading jowls" (9), becomes alpha male and rejects their new language, even while continuing to think in it and occasionally even communicate in it, contrary to the rule he imposes on the others. He reminds me of the hypocritical evangelical preachers who inveigh against homosexuality while secretly indulging in it. Prince is a mutt who composes poetry. Majnoun is a black Poodle who learns about love from Nira, the woman with whom he has an intense bond of understanding and communication. They are avatars of the Arabic/Persian love story of Layla and Majnoun, an inspiration for

Romeo and Juliet among other things. Benjy is a scheming self-interested Beagle who, if he were not a dog, might have been a politician.

Just as the fifteen dogs were given a new language and with it a new way of thinking, *Fifteen Dogs* gives the reader an aural sensation through OULIPO poetry: discovering something that is there but disguised and revealed only in the hearing of it. And, of course, there are the gods. They have a fascination with the mortality that is forever absent in their lives. They give mortal men (and dogs) free will to determine their feelings as their lives end, but not freedom from that fate, just as the gods themselves are fated to be immortal. In the book, the gods are not alone among the Olympians. They cannot control the Fates: Atropos who cuts the threads of mortal lives, Clotho and Lachesis who weave them together. To the Fates, even Zeus is just a "loud-mouthed fornicator" (110). All the dogs die in the end, as, of course, do all humans, but Prince, at least, lives and dies as the poetic Prince of Peace. The Christian God, unlike the Olympians, must die in order to become one with Man, but in his grace he is given to be born again. The fate of Man remains a matter of theological debate.

Am I reading too much into this novella about fifteen dogs? No. On the contrary, at this point I am probably reading too little. Alexis is gifted in voicing ultimate questions about culture and nature, Man and God, without using bafflegab or impenetrable philosophical jargon. He is a storyteller and a poet. The narrative, replete with dog-on-dog violence, carries the book's philosophical message well, and the poems reinforce the importance of communicating meaning through the spoken word. The Olympians' wager reveals that creating and understanding spoken poetry is at the heart of being human. Reading Prince's poems and listening for the *oulipo* names embedded in them led me to think about the process of writing a poem using *oulipo.* I am in the habit of writing sonnets and created one that references *oulipo* as well as a name. Composing a poem with embedded *oulipo* meaning works as a way to engage with both the form and the novel.

Oulipo
You leap over the musty hallowed halls
of prosody. You rob in sight of fate.
A fallow fingered sheaf of foolscap falls
as casements blindly ratiocinate.
Slick scratch of pen or easy tap of key
assembles fonts as diadems of words
that conjugate, that breed and then that flee
into the fastnesses that are absurd
or flacid, or to quicken stiff with sound
that signifies the nought or one—the code
you understand, stand under, and are found
to lie within the textual abode
of sonic sonnetry. Pray, say it's not
the toxic tropic malady I've got.

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"Make Them Up and Ignore Them"? Learning Outcomes and Literary Studies in Canada

Jody Mason

In a 2012 article in *Times Higher Education* (reprinted in the *CAUT Bulletin* in January 2013), Frank Furedi observes somewhat ruefully that, probably like many of us, he is uneasy about learning outcomes but has generally managed to "make them up and

ignore them." I first read Furedi's article in early 2013, as I was preparing to participate in my department's 2013-2014 learning outcomes committee. My experience was something of a head-on collision with the phrase "learning outcomes," which, as I soon discovered, were firmly rooted in Ontario universities in the wake of the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance's approval in 2010 of a Quality Assurance Framework. The Framework introduced offices of Quality Assurance—and their attendant fondness for learning outcomes—at campuses across the province. Just as my colleagues and I were embarking on the process of developing outcomes for an undergraduate degree in English, the Council on Quality Assurance, better known as the "Quality Council," was beginning to push beyond our phase of work toward the *assessment* of course-, program-, and discipline-specific outcomes. Despite the rapid introduction of learning outcomes across the country in the past half decade, Canadian universities have admittedly been relatively slow to embrace them: in Europe, the "Tuning Process," an effort to "harmonize skills and competencies at the subject or program level," was initiated more than a decade ago (Tamburri), and the Australian Qualifications Framework (which implemented "quality assured qualifications" and their attendant learning outcomes for each level of study undertaken in Australia) was established in 1995 ("What Is the AQF?").

Surely there are few of you who have not yet met learning outcomes, but a brief definition might be helpful. According to the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario's *Learning Outcomes Assessment: A Practitioner's Handbook*, program-level learning outcomes are "statements that indicate what successful students should know, value or be able to do by the end of a program" (Goff et al. 8). Outcomes begin with verbs designating observable actions (one cannot "know," but one might "apply" or "identify") and then specify the learning to be demonstrated ("the content") (Goff et al. 8). These outcomes are meant to be observed, measured, and assessed in the context of specific courses, programs, or disciplines. As critics such as Furedi have noted, there are excellent reasons to doubt the predetermined limits that the outcomes-based approach imposes on learning; the emergence of the assessment phase renders this doubt all the more solid. The questions that ensue from the assessment phase for all postsecondary programs, but perhaps for humanities programs in particular, are urgent: for instance, how might provinces tie future funding to the results of such assessments? Somewhat ominously, the *Learning Outcomes Assessment* handbook observes that universities should pursue assessment as a way to "showcase the quality of your program; make your graduates appealing to employers and your program attractive to prospective students and donors" (Goff et al. 8).

Given how nefarious the assessment phase may be in this era of "strategic mandate agreements" between provinces and universities, the question of how to broach the thorny obligation to generate learning outcomes looms large. For many of us teaching in literature and other Arts programs across the country, learning outcomes are still an open question. Many units appear to be in the throes of developing program—and course-specific learning outcomes: for example, in the wake of the establishment of university-wide outcomes in 2014, departments at the University of Victoria will be tasked with generating program outcomes in 2015-2016. How, then, to proceed? Making outcomes up in order to ignore them is likely not going to help us much, especially as we enter the assessment phase, when we will be asked to use our own outcomes in order to justify the "quality" of our programs.

Perhaps my own experience as a recent member of a committee tasked with generating program-level learning outcomes for undergraduate students in English can offer a useful example here. Most unsettling for me in the process was the fact that learning outcomes permit those of us who find ourselves tasked with birthing them to deploy the "active" and "concrete" verbs so favoured by the discourse (e.g., "describe," "compare," "apply"), while settling back into platitudinous statements regarding the politically subversive effects of the reading and writing practices we view as "outcomes." While my experience working on my department's learning outcomes committee confirmed this fact, Carleton's English program has not yet made its outcomes public. But one need not travel far to find a similar example at a neighbouring Ontario university. The Department of English at Wilfrid Laurier University made its "program level outcomes" available on its website several years ago, and the second outcome is as follows: students will "read texts critically in a variety of historical contexts, and recognize the issues raised by them in order to identify and assess their social, environmental and ethical impact on the current global community" ("English Program Level Outcomes" n. pag.). This is a perfectly reasonable and, I think, desirable outcome, but what happens to this outcome when we recall that it is just that—an "outcome"?

Let's be frank, as Stephen Harper was so fond of saying: learning outcomes are really about funneling students as quickly and efficiently as possible into the labour market. According to the "Quality Council," "quality assurance at the national and international levels provides for greater acceptance of Ontario degrees as well as for greater opportunities for employment for graduates" ("Quality Assurance"). Hence, we need to recognize the kind of reading (and writing) we teach to our students does not exist in a vacuum of our own private creation. As Nicole Shukin compellingly argues, reading in the contemporary moment is neither "aestheticized labour" (the opposite of work) nor "subversive pleasure" (24). Our discipline is "now immanent to a market economy and, more specifically, to a knowledge or information economy" (24); it is enmeshed in the "*biopolitics* of producing reading subjects and populations within current contexts of capitalism" (27). Viewed in this way, learning outcomes are just one further institutional layer operating within a postfordist economy that has a voracious appetite for immaterial labour. I hope we can still insist on the subversive possibilities of reading and writing, but surely the genealogy of learning outcomes renders them inappropriate vehicles for expressing these possibilities.

Moreover, as Imre Szeman has pointed out, practitioners of literary study must attend to the shifting terms of the discourse of "creativity" in the context of the global economy. If this term has not been of great historical interest to literary critics, it should be, Szeman contends, because not only has the "social form (as work)" of artistic labour changed (insofar as it has become a model for work in general), the "political challenge" of art has been "domesticated" and "diluted" by the reigning discourse of creativity (33). Widely influential concepts such as Richard Florida's "creative economy" have spread a discourse of creativity that "represents a loss in how we understand the politics of culture—a shift from a practice with a certain degree of autonomy (however questionable, however problematic at a theoretical level) to one without any" (Szeman 18). Yet it is most specifically in relation to the utterly compromised concept of creativity that art encounters difficulties. Szeman concludes:

> Contemporary art and cultural production have a social specificity that plays an essential role in their political function. They don't need to think of themselves as

> creative or as the exemplar of creative acts. Indeed, it would seem that the farther they stay away from the intellectual and political traffic in creativity, the greater suspicion with which they treat this mobile and uncritically accepted discourse, the more likely they are able to continue to challenge the limits of our ways of thinking, seeing, being, and believing. (35)

Szeman's assessment of the fate of the arts in the globalized, postfordist economy is thus slightly more sanguine than Shukin's, but his principal note of caution regarding the discourse of creativity bears recollection, especially as we embark upon the labour of writing learning outcomes.

Bearing Szeman's argument in mind, we teachers and practitioners of "English" should probably be wary of letting ourselves fall into this "traffic in creativity" as we develop our outcomes and endeavour to justify the value and utility of our discipline to upper-level administrators. This danger is very real: if we tweak our language slightly, we can easily pander to the very current idea that creativity is an economic good, or that English graduates are uniquely "entrepreneurial" and "innovative." Accolades for English will ensue! In this era of declining enrolments, many Departments of English across the continent have in fact turned to such logic in the promotion of their programs, drawing implicitly and sometimes explicitly on the now-infamous "Want Innovative Thinking? Hire from the Humanities" article published in the *Harvard Business Review* in 2011 (see, for example, the "Pathways to Careers" section on the University of Ottawa's Department of English website). Surely in many cases such logic is being imposed from upper levels of university governance with considerable force.

There are evidently no easy answers to the problem of learning outcomes. But I do not think that we, as professors of English, need to be resigned to them or to their terminologies and logic. Where collective agreements exist, we need to draw on their resources in order to protect our academic freedom. Perhaps most importantly, we should be wary of what appears to be the possibility of using learning outcomes strategically. We can make outcomes say all manner of things about the politicized nature of language, literacy, and culture, but at the end of the day, it is the way we will be asked to instrumentalize our own learning outcomes that should concern us.

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The Kropotkin Poems

Stephen Collis

"The Kropotkin Poems" is a book or sequence of poems about the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin that the Canadian poet Phyllis Webb did not write; they exist only as a 1967 grant proposal and several fragmentary poems (some titled "Poems of Failure") that lie in the long gap between Webb's 1965 *Naked Poems* and 1980's *Wilson's Bowl*.

I go to see Phyllis—the first time in almost a year, which is too long a gap, when someone is eighty-eight years old. Up early bus to first ferry the grey sea chopping against the causeway—November in August, the power still out at home—lowering and layered sky of various charcoals torn to shreds.

I've tried many times to write about poetry and anarchism. It's too easy to fall into simple associations (the improvisational anarchy of contemporary "free" verse)—or to celebrate heroic figures—a problem Webb found herself up against with Kropotkin and his "saintly" image, the contradiction of "centralizing" anarchism's history and ideas into an identifiable corpus.

I take the bus from Fulford Harbour to Ganges. Salt Spring Island is green in this storm despite the season's long drought. Phyllis, too, is the same as ever, seeming not to have changed much over the twelve years I have been visiting. She is sitting in her chair, books and paintings all around her. By chance or clairvoyance, Kropotkin's *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* is on the table at her side. "I don't know how it got there . . ." she says.

Poetry and anarchism becomes another take on poetry and the political generally. Many poets (myself included) have been writing about this difficult nexus of late. Problems can arise when poets tell other poets exactly how this is to be done, how they are doing it wrong. Struggle is a particularity we each figure out alone or in small groups. Though I think what we all want is the material, the street, real change—not escape into poems, but poems as avenues into the fight and fray. Thing is—one size never fits all, and difference is the difficult days we each must live, often or in large alone.

Phyllis says, off-hand, anarchism brought "messages for my poetry" (channelling William Butler Yeats). It's not always so simply the poem's proximity to action/activism that matters; often, it's the passage walked in both directions between, the nature of the network, the relays that form an array between authors, ideas, movements, and yes, "actual" "actions." We can become so mad for acts to replace words, for words not to supplant acts. Porosity is what I want in the relationship between art and politics. I want to go back and forth, as needed.

In her failed fragments of Kropotkin Poems, Phyllis writes of the "Insurrectionary wilderness of the I / am, I will be"—a temporal and transformative process that ends in being "something other." Poetry pulls in the direction of such transformations, and it's such insurrectionary wildernesses that keep pulling me back to it.

Phyllis and I decipher some of her marginal notes in Kropotkin, look at other books, a bright abstract painting (hers) we haven't paid attention to before, order pizza, and drink beer. With each of us holding a copy of her new *Collected Poems*, me asking something about Kropotkin, Phyllis suddenly remembers a poem where someone is wearing a red hat, and we are both off searching for it, neither of us remembering. We find it at the same exact moment, working our way through the book from opposite ends.

What keeps drawing me back to Phyllis? Her strength to remain alone (which I lack), her resolute withdrawal, her ability to dwell in the glare of her fragments and failures. It's as resistance that she continues. Islanded. Bulwarked. But open, curious.

What a barrage she had to endure—as a single, unaffiliated, unrepentant intellectual woman in her day.

I come to Phyllis for the possibilities of despair, for endurance, for the potentiality that remains in determined resignation (I can't go on / I will go on). And for her poems on Lenin and Kropotkin and the persistent and potent failures of our revolutionary dreams.

Her failures and refusals are fashioned from a position painfully honed in the negative space around the Western patriarchal colonial forward pushing and acquisitive arrow through time. Charles Olson: "it is unfinished business I speak of . . . " Webb: it is the business of not finishing I speak of—the Western and European urge to do, to make, to identify and dictate what is to be done that she undercuts, abandons. Her question is: what is to be *undone*? It's a question for the anthropocene—for this age of geophysical capitalism.

It is a luxury and a privilege to visit her. At just this moment—with the planet careening on its warming arc, spilling storms out of its darkening oceans, with young black men being regularly shot down in American streets and Indigenous land defenders holding the line in the path of numerous pipelines punching their way into the unceded heart of these mountains and rivers without end—it hardly seems the time to escape to an island to visit a solitary and aging former poet. But I do, as I must—holding to the resistances that I can.

Just before I leave, Phyllis mentions that she is getting rid of books, lightening her load. I ask about Kropotkin's *Memoirs*, on the table between us. No, she says, I don't think I can part with it yet. I leave soon after, with George Woodcock's *The Anarchist Prince: A Biographical Study of Peter Kropotkin* (Boardman 1950) in my bag. It's a good second prize.

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