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Editorial

"What's New?"

Sheila Giffen and Brendan McCormack

"**W**hat is new in the study of Canadian literature? Quels sont les nouveaux débats et les nouvelles perspectives qui animent les études sur la littérature canadienne?" These are the questions we posed in our call for papers for this special issue of work by emerging/early scholars. We welcomed submissions "on any topic from senior graduate students, postdocs, and those who might consider themselves to be emerging scholars (self-defining, with no time limit on this category)." The idea was to give a space to relatively new scholars to showcase their recent work. The submissions poured in. The call was so successful and the papers were so good, in fact, that in addition to this issue we will publish another one also dedicated to the work of emerging scholars in the new year. It seemed fitting to turn the editorial for the inaugural *Emerging Scholars* issue over to some emerging scholars themselves. Brendan McCormack and Sheila Giffen, doctoral students in the English department at UBC who also work at the journal, have taken the question we posed in the issue's CFP as an opportunity to ruminate more widely on how they grapple with intricacies of the "new" as emerging scholars. (Laura Moss, editor)

What's new in Canadian literature? The range of topics explored in this issue is diverse to the point of defying an encompassing answer, inviting a simpler two-word response in this case: a lot. Ariel Kroon (*Oryx and Crake*) and Christina Turner (*The Afterlife of George Cartwright*) read familiar books in new ways, while Christopher Doody (William Arthur Deacon) and Kristina Getz (Earle Birney) offer new interpretations of older

CanLit icons and their work. Dominique Hétu's comparative approach to writing in French and English puts spatial theory and care ethics in conversation to propose a new theory of reading, while the interviewers who converse with Mini Aodla Freeman and her editors illuminate the complexities of giving an old text new life. Both historical and contemporary in interest, a shared investment in reading or revisiting Canadian literature anew is one common ground between the various trajectories of this issue that speak to some of the directions the field is taking.

When we sat down and discussed the simple question "What is new?" we quickly realized how it invites other complex questions concerning novelty that we both find ourselves contending with as we imagine how to position our work as graduate students—Sheila in transnational literature and postcolonial theory, Brendan in Canadian and Indigenous literatures. What are the implications of claiming newness in scholarly work? What past or present conditions give rise to novelty? How might charting the *new* also involve a process of historicization and *return*? As scholars, how can we do the work of situating our current condition within a genealogy of thought that contextualizes critical moments and turns? Reflecting beyond the specific call for this issue led us to speculate more widely on the idea of newness itself as a concept we've broached in our thinking as emerging scholars—what *is* new?

Sheila Giffen

In effect, there is nothing "new" about claims to novelty in critical and aesthetic practice. For many, Ezra Pound's famous statement "Make It New" encapsulates the bold moves of modernist aesthetic innovation—pithy shorthand for an early-twentieth-century artistic movement determined to shed the shackles of past tradition and forge something daringly new. But as Pound scholars acknowledge, this characterization of modernism's guiding ethos is more a product of scholarly discourse than an assessment of a newly emergent artistic practice. According to Michael North, Pound's use of "Make It New" had more to do with recycling ideas from ancient contexts than it did with new forms, and, further, North contends that the credo did not serve as a modernist manifesto in the 1910s, but was retroactively designated by literary critics of the 1950s and 1960s (170). Pound's modernist maxim marks a curious trajectory in claims to newness: the phrase most commonly associated with aesthetic innovation in fact refers to a fraught process of historical return (in this case also bound up in a fascist politic), yet its uptake

by mid-century critics decontextualized its meaning and contributed to a disciplinary definition of modernism centered primarily on newness. The story of "Make It New" has prompted questions in my own thinking: when might a claim to newness rely on a degree of dehistoricization? How and when do we as scholars ascribe novelty to certain artistic moments and critical modalities, and what purpose does such novelty serve within the economies of disciplinary formation and scholarly argumentation?

As academics, we're expected to make original and new contributions to scholarship, but is novelty the same thing as originality when it comes to making an argument? In many respects, the work of building an *original* insight requires a complex engagement with what has come before. Claiming an idea is unprecedented and new might therefore risk turning away from a critical genealogy of thought in order to more decisively clear the way for innovation. This question was in my mind this past semester when I took a graduate seminar with Denise Ferreira da Silva on "Feminist Thought and the Reactionary Turn," where we considered (among other things) how the emerging philosophical school of speculative realism responds to (reacts to/abandons/dismisses) postmodernism and poststructuralism. Here's a case where the discourse of novelty seems risky to me. Rather than trace the particular ways in which certain thinkers or ideas falter, the scholars at the forefront of this new school of thought often seem to make claims that clear away the need for engagement with previous scholarship, all in the name of the innovative and the new. The most tenacious claims come from the idea that past currents of critical theory are limited due to their inability to address pressing global crises. What interests me here is the extent to which charting a new critical modality seems to rely on proof of its capacity to resolve social issues. New and innovative work, the argument goes, should have practical and immediate application in today's world, and further, might benefit from doing away with past scholarly trajectories.

Without disagreeing with the impetus behind a socially engaged research ethic, I want to trouble how it operates within the increasingly neoliberal university. In the context of one of the most insistent promoters of newness—corporatized research institutions (where many of us work)—how does the promotion of novelty influence what forms of critical inquiry are valued? Does funding affect how certain kinds of new and innovative scholarship are validated based on their social utility in our present moment? Applicants for grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) face increasing pressure to not only attest to

their original scholarly contribution, but to outline plans for knowledge mobilization, translation, dissemination, and public engagement. I'm in full support of socially engaged research programs, but I wonder about the pressures placed on researchers to fit within granting agency goals and categories. Can you make a project intelligible to a funding agency when you conduct research questioning the very limits of institutionalized community engagement programs, for example? In response to the financialization of research and increasing pressure to justify the ROI (Return On Investment) of academic endeavors, we may be forced to trade in terms and argumentative logics deeply at odds with our most profound commitments and lines of inquiry. Further, I wonder how the commodification of knowledge and the pressure to publish sooner and more frequently might diminish the potential for sustained and careful engagement with a longer and wider range of thought.

This past year, I took a course with Phanuel Antwi on Black and Indigenous writings across the Americas. Beginning with very recent scholarship addressing how Black studies and Indigenous studies are rarely brought into conversation, the arc of readings we followed showed how literature has in fact attested to these intersecting histories for decades. Reflecting further on this course has prompted me to consider the risks of presuming a particular critical innovation belongs only to a present moment of scholarship. If I position my work in relation to what I perceive to be outmoded criticism as I work to develop an original contribution to scholarship, will I be implicitly operating on an assumption that we now inhabit a more enlightened moment of scholarly innovation? What narratives of progress and enlightenment are active within claims to bold and new scholarship?

In my own work, I am in the process of outlining a comprehensive field list in postcolonial studies and asking myself: how will I position myself within this field? How can I make a contribution and develop original scholarship that emerges from deep engagement with a long history of writing? Here, my commitment to contextualizing and historicizing schools of thought poses a different set of challenges: What does it mean to assemble a series of foundational texts in a field propelled by anti-canonization—a field whose interventions lie, in part, in exposing the discipline of literary studies as a consolidation of imperial power? I want to simultaneously push against canon formation (within a colonial tradition of education) and trace critical genealogies of postcolonial thought. If discourses of novelty and newness are fraught, then the work of a historical return may be as well.

Perhaps the questions we opened this meditation with could be adapted to ask: How might charting the *new* also involve a process of historicization and *return*, as well as visioning for alternative futures beyond the colonial strictures of past thought? In other words, how can we go back to the future in our work?

Brendan McCormack

What is your original contribution to the field of knowledge? This is a benchmark question assumed of most scholarship and made explicit for graduate students in the requirements for doctoral projects. As we attempt to distinguish ourselves as original researchers, however, emerging scholars may interpret expectations of novelty as pressure to position our work in terms of radical departures that might be radically overstated. My personal archive of grad papers and project proposals would reveal rhetorical postures of "groundbreaking," "subversive," and "paradigm-shifting" to be idiomatic almost to the point of cliché, and almost always untenable if rigorously historicized. As we enter into disciplines, ignorance of their historical formations can be bliss, liberating and at times uniquely generative. Reinventing the wheel is fun—the prospects of changing the field from the outside with a fresh perspective intellectually exhilarating. And while some fresh scholarship does just that, part of emerging within a field of study is becoming attuned to those historical antecedents, both literary and scholarly, that may turn radical departures into nuanced interventions. The wheel has probably already been reinvented, likely more than once. The gap to be filled is maybe more of a sliver. And the anxiety of influence following such realizations can sometimes be crippling (as it was for me after my comprehensive exams). Emerging as a scholar thus involves negotiating a reflexive politics of novelty with attendant ethical concerns over what constitutes responsible innovation. How do we assert ourselves as new while also being generous in our contentions with the old? How do we "join the ongoing discussion," as I describe research to my students, without casting previous voices reductively to serve the purposes of our own novelty? How do we maintain critical generosity as we critically, and rigorously, engage past assumptions and assertions?

I've lately questioned how we might take up these questions as Canadianists, given an imperative to newness seems stitched into the fabric of the field we enter. Approaching the discipline's history from the present, I'm often struck by how making it new is practiced as a critical objective in

itself, sometimes in turns that treat the past irascibly. In part because of its relative newness (historically), Canadian literary study has been continually fixated on its own coming into being, and the intensity of such metacritical self-reflexivity has often imagined disciplinary emergence through a tenor of emergency in response to perceived crises of purpose. Cosmopolitanism curbed our romantic nativism; nationalism ascended against our colonialism and garrisoned us from Americanization; formalism remedied thematicism; various posts- and -isms continue to productively unsettle our nationalism. And so our emergence is often narrated. The personal pronouns are intentional here, impossibly consolidating not a nation but a scholarly field, because I've found this history is told less as an iterative flux of critical trends than as a lineage of successive scholarly generations, within which "we," as an emerging community, now conceive our work as a type of inheritance. As is usually the case with family trees (mine certainly), ancestry arouses pride but also blushes with some embarrassments. And thus to emerge against the spectres of untoward tradition, to say "we are not them," seems to require breaks from the past.

A *longue durée* approach to the field's history, beginning well before its more recent institutionalization, might thus chart the new as produced dialectically by a series of shifts and breaks extending into the present. I join a generation of scholars that is, of course, just as restless with the past, emerging more than a decade after the millennium into a field whose energies continue to unfold the discipline following a sustained period of postcolonial critique, pursuing such myriad rubrics as transnational, globalization, cosmopolitan, diaspora, ecocritical, and Indigenous studies, while at the same time scrutinizing with redoubled intensity the institutional and disciplinary frameworks that continue to consolidate (even as they contest) the field itself. The collaborative work of the TransCanada Institute (2007-2013), for example, founded by Smaro Kamboureli and envisioned as a project of significant and serial disciplinary re-evaluation(s), has pushed in vital directions a field continuing to distinguish itself from its pasts. As the opening lines of Kamboureli's introduction to TransCanada's *Shifting the Ground of Canadian Literary Studies* (2012) again herald, "Something has happened to English Canadian literary studies. It has a cast of 'new' characters . . . no longer exclusively concerned with Canadian literature's themes and imagery, its forms and genres, or its linguistic nature and structure" (1). The social and material exigencies of the present continue to insist upon ongoing shifting, transforming, resituating, and reinventing;

conjugating the past into the present progressive. In short, we are now, still, very much searching for methods to articulate ourselves *anew*.

To some, this may sound an overly familiar rendering of CanLit, one that hints at progress of the new too linearly against a reductive historical narrative (were we ever *exclusively* anything?). Yet, I find this narrative important to grapple with as an emerging scholar because it is very much the story of the discipline my formative training as a Canadianist instilled within me, one that continues to be normalized retrospectively. As a student, I cut my CanLit teeth on brilliant authors such as Eden Robinson, Fred Wah, Dionne Brand, and Madeleine Thien; I earned a BA and MA without once reading canonical texts from the likes of Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence, Alice Munro, Sinclair Ross, Hugh MacLennan, Mordecai Richler, or Frederick Philip Grove in the classroom, let alone Northrop Frye. I've been a Teaching Assistant for five lower-level undergraduate courses on Canadian literature, of which only half of one surveyed literature now considered historical. I could count on two hands (maybe one) the number of Canadian texts published prior to 1970 I've personally encountered on both sides of the classroom, none of which were criticism. This is not to say that I learned nothing *about* Canadian literary or critical history as a student. Indeed, I learned a great deal, for what usually animated the syllabi I encountered was either an implicit or explicit break from the canons and thematics of a now-outmoded iteration of CanLit—ideas belonging to someone else's past, some other generation's radical departures, so they seemed to me. The received narrative of literary history I encountered was one that had largely "normalize[d] the fierce cultural nationalism of the 1960s and 1970s as [its] point of reference," as Carole Gerson puts it (29). The irony of my own emergence within CanLit, as it continues to survive what Frank Davey called the paraphrase, is that swaths of literary and intellectual history had effectively been reduced and homogenized—paraphrased—into something against which the present might see itself as distinct. My comprehensive exams began an ongoing project of historicizing that has since invited, demanded even, new understandings of these histories as important antecedents that keep overlapping with the present in the continuing patterns of Canadian cultural production.

Certainly, a great deal of dynamic research continues in historical periods, particularly areas like modernism and print culture studies, and I don't imagine my own training is representative of an entire generation's. But my bet is that it may be closer to the rule than the exception in the asymmetry

of its historical lines of inquiry that privileged the new above the old. There are many explanations for this, not least of which being the sheer volume of diverse literature and invaluable criticism produced in the period we loosely define as contemporary. Moreover, for scholars in a field still defined in curricula by a monolithically unperiodized and capacious national category, the demands of teaching as generalists while researching as specialists are daunting. Yet as emerging scholars, particularly those of us working in contemporary areas, I believe we need to think carefully about received narratives of disciplinary history and how they may cultivate a critical culture of perpetual novelty. What assumptions are taken as truths when history is (re)produced second-handedly? Has literature in Canada ever been as parochially nationalist as some have deemed it? If not, what was (is still) left out of the discussions? If so, what do we do with this past, if it is a past we find troubling? For me, going back to literary history has offered answers to some of these questions, though new ones keep arising.

In a 2010 *Globe and Mail* column on "Why Mordecai Richler isn't being studied in Canadian universities," Sam Solecki is quoted as saying that Canadianists suffer from "terminal 'presentism'" (qtd. in Barber n. pag.). While I wouldn't go so far as to diagnose a terminal condition, I do worry about the pitfalls of presentism, both in my own work and more widely. Presentism can be strategic for emerging scholars facing pressure to publish—I once received a reader's report that accepted an article as a significant scholarly contribution in part because it would likely be the first thing published on a new primary text. But, as George Elliott Clarke suggests, losing sight of the past in appeals to the new can also lead to a type of "'false consciousness' that 'new' thought is being produced" (179). Critiquing a notion that the questions Canadianists broach in the present are merely contemporary—the relationship between literature and colonial nation, nation and world, local and global, assimilation and exclusion, for example—Clarke answers: "No, 'CanLit' remains the expression of an imperially implanted, (progressive) conservative, European monarchy wedded culturally and economically to a libertarian, radical republic. Wherever 'here' is, it begins here, in this *essential* contradiction of our existence. (As such, our 'ancestors'—Frye, George Grant, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, etc., remain *embarrassingly* pertinent)" (179). Appealing not for nostalgic returns to restrictive nationalism but recognition of its pervasive hold in a present that attempts to imagine otherwise, Clarke's reminder of CanLit's contradictory temporalities implies risks in claims to both newness

and historicizing. How do we advocate cultural history as pertinent without advancing history's canons and modalities? When does making it new involve precarious acts of forgetting? Is the wheel truly reinvented if it still rolls the rut of colonial history? How does the discipline now see itself in its past?

In my own attempts to imagine the ongoing work of decolonization as a settler scholar working in both Canadian and Indigenous studies, I hesitate over quick claims to temporal breaks. "Not my literary history" is simply too close to "not my history." For an English still coming to grips with its colonialism, the literary side of a wider project Margery Fee calls "critical anthropology with settler culture thrown into the mix" (197)—one that maintains an ongoing interrogation of the past as it opens to new directions in the present and future alternatives—is nowhere near finished. And I see returns to literary history that keep unsettling and reading beyond the prominent critical idioms mobilized by prior generations as part of this forward-looking project for emerging scholarship. On one hand, we still have much to learn about what we were that continues to saturate who and where we are. On the other, we may have much to unlearn about what received narratives assume Canadian literature to have been.

At a recent pedagogy workshop hosted by *CanLit Guides*, I found myself discussing with a senior faculty member why it was that I never had to read Frye as a student. He genially dubbed my generation of scholars the "children of postmodernism" (a label I feel somehow both too old and too young for). For Jean-François Lyotard, though, the "post" was not a break from history but a return to the past and what had been forgotten or suspended in the emergence of the new—the paradoxical back-to-the-future logic of a *future anterior*. The insights from contributors to this special issue show us how new research can emerge with precisely such attention. As emerging Canadianists, whether we see our work as contemporary or historical, I hope we continue moving forward into the past as we keep making it new.

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Stephanie McKenzie

Elements of Northern Ontario

Once near Parry Sound I shingled
the cedar roof of a mansion miles
outside the white Ojibway club.

There were masks that cost
a mint, mangled loose by
tarps torn.

Trip back from town
with copper in the skiff
I gunned it close to earth.

Something told me fire
burns angry on water.

Those masks were worn
water-leaked smiles,
said Canada has much
to answer.

I would not have opened
her up for shield
rudimentary.

Stephanie McKenzie

Before the Cleanup
(Georgetown, Guyana, 2014)

No bill will pass Parliament.
Lines divide like a muddy
Atlantic from garbage shores,
garbage streets, garbage
in manholes, garbage
of history.

Garbage abounds in the old
Garden City, buildings plunked
on Dutch canals that should
have kept things running.

Of course, there's no connection
between garbage and suicides,
foreign mines, noses turned
at city smells en route
to dig out jungles.

There's no connection between
my poem and photographs,
mounds of friends, stray dogs,
garbage choking their say.

Ariel Kroon

Reasonably Insane
Affect and Crake in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*

> The ultimate language of madness is that of reason.
> —Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*

Introduction: The Future Present

In *Oryx and Crake,* the first novel in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy, narrator Jimmy believes he is the lone human survivor of a plague virus engineered by his erstwhile best friend, the genius scientist Crake.[1] The sequels, *The Year of the Flood* (2009) and *MaddAddam* (2013), elaborate on this fictional society and its eventual demise at the hands of Crake (as well as its aftermath) in the words of other survivors, but it is through Jimmy's recollections in *Oryx and Crake* that readers are granted an "insider's view" of Crake and the events leading up to the post-apocalyptic narrative present. It is easy for readers to pigeonhole Crake as a stock "mad scientist" villain at first due to his almost single-handed destruction of human life on earth, yet Crake's actions and motives are not easily disentangled from their context within a society where empathy is constantly devalued in favour of capital gain. Atwood poses the question of whether the mad scientist is still the villain if the society that he destroys is evil. And how does the mad scientist's characterization change if readers cannot easily identify him as a protagonist or freedom fighter because he does not appear to move against the system? Michel Foucault, in *Madness and Civilization*, asserted that madness begins where "the relation of man to truth is disturbed and darkened" (104); in the case of *Oryx and Crake*, madness is shown to have rooted itself in society's muddied relationship to morality, manifesting ultimately in Crake's genocidal machinations. Throughout the novel, Crake is interpreted by Jimmy and his peers as a "perfect" logical scientist who spurns emotion as a hindrance to the search for knowledge. As an exemplary hyper-intellectual character, Crake represents a disaffected norm that

Jimmy can neither emulate nor understand. Crake's affective reactions to troubling developments in the novel appear as a cynical acceptance of the status quo, especially when he discusses the merits of indiscriminate genetic modification and child slavery as logical in their economic contexts. Crake's own private feelings towards the depravity and wanton destruction that his society perpetuates are never articulated within the novel, and his anti-establishment scheming only becomes clear in retrospect. In Crake, Atwood creates a character whose reasoning against empathy is in perfect harmony with the moral tenets of his profit-driven society—right up until he calmly and rationally effects the extinction of the entire human race.

Atwood demonstrates through the narrative of *Oryx and Crake* that the "madness" of Crake's actions lies in the fact that they are not those of a rebellious individual, but instead the logical product of a society with an affective structure very like our own. In *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood switches the affective coding of the literary trope of the mad scientist. As J. Brooks Bouson notes, Atwood updates the stereotype of the amoral, unfeeling scientist through Crake (145). I maintain that Crake's depiction as a "puzzling, and troubling, character" (Bouson 145) in the opacity of his motivations and disanthropic[2] actions is produced by Atwood's construction of the society from which he becomes alienated as a hateful system both diegetically and extra-diegetically. Atwood challenges readers to empathize with Crake's twin drives to eugenics and genocide, as the dominant culture around him is engaged in the active persecution of humans and non-humans alike. While Crake's genocidal plan ultimately causes the death of millions, it also alleviates their suffering. While I agree with Hannes Bergthaller's observation that Crake is the vehicle through which Atwood exposes the flaws in the logic of the ecological imperative—the dictum that human beings should recognize they are a part of nature and act accordingly (731)—I add that it is as a result of his society's non-reactions towards abuses of power and destructive practices that Crake is able to operate unnoticed. In *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood creates a society where a determined villain aiming for its destruction must only effectively mimic corporate best practices: Crake realizes that, in order to bring down this system without being recognized as a subversive, all he has to do is be very good at his job.

I argue that Crake's sardonic misanthropy and Jimmy's inaction are normative responses to suffering within their society; the socio-economic structure of the world that Atwood creates in *Oryx and Crake* does not allow for any meaningful resistance to dominant social norms, repackaging

insurgency as anticipated acts from a defined opposition against which it can close ranks. In this article, I consider the function of Crake and Jimmy's societal milieu as a literary manifestation of Sara Ahmed's "happiness dystopia." Ahmed uses the term in *The Promise of Happiness* to describe how present-day Western (UK) society elevates citizens' happiness about their culture's achievements at the same time as it encourages wilful blindness to the suffering of the marginalized. Though *Oryx and Crake* was published six years before *The Promise of Happiness*, Ahmed's theories provide an apt, if retroactive, vocabulary to examine how Atwood articulates a fictional future society where the economic structure is perpetuated through the ignorance and *schadenfreude* prompted by suffering, and where this morally repugnant status quo is an accepted norm. I use the affective theories of Jonathan Flatley and Lauren Berlant as lenses through which to examine how the novel's dystopia is perpetuated by way of what Raymond Williams calls a "structure of feeling," one that promotes a hyper-capitalist commodity fetishism and labels any critique of the system as the result of unfounded paranoia. The structure of feeling encourages an extreme version of the mad scientist's obsession with knowledge and consequent spurning of emotion; Crake's actions through most of the novel are not viewed as alarming within the text by his coworkers or even Jimmy, who does not recognize until too late the signs of his best friend's rejection of a socio-economic structure that commodifies even violent actions as entertainment.

I: "Mad" Science and Outlaw Emotion

In literature, the mad scientist villain manifests obsessive tendencies with his[3] own work, accompanied by an unhealthy paranoia or cynicism. Yet in *Oryx and Crake,* Jimmy is unable to identify Crake as antagonistic to the societal status quo until after he has unleashed the virus that destroys humanity; as the narrative is focalized through Jimmy, the reader is encouraged to share in his interpretation of Crake's misanthropy as an expression of the affective norm that is deeply cynical, but not dangerous. Anne Stiles elucidates how in Victorian society and literature, the scientist's superlative mental ability was read according to neo-Lamarckian theories of degeneration, concluding that intellectual overdevelopment led to an atrophy of the emotions and consequent insanity (329). The Victorian trope of the mad scientist is a precursor to the contemporary character that Glenn Scott Allen identifies as the "Wicked Wizard," a villainous intellectual "whose work is abstract and with a value either unclear or threatening," and whose

poorly understood genius "seem[s] to operate outside the boundaries of 'natural' material laws" (7). Scientists like Crake, whose actions derive from theories prompted by emotions such as superiority, resentment, or other negative drives, are interpreted as "beyond threatening" to the system because they do not contribute to the community's productivity or accruing of capital; consequently, those scientists themselves are read as unnatural (Allen 190). The mad scientist traditionally goes too far in terms of taboos dictated by societal values, such as Viktor Frankenstein's meddling with the creation of life (to disastrous consequence) or Dr. Moreau's obscene torture of living animals to force evolution (again with deadly results). Mad scientists are usually punished within the narrative for their actions, which fall outside of what is deemed acceptable by society both within the novel and for the reader. They are punished most fundamentally for their failure to acknowledge or respect the value and "goodness" of social structures. According to the logic of literary tropes both traditional and contemporary, Crake—identified outright by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin as the "scientist-as-magus" (210)—should be the villain of the novel. Yet *Oryx and Crake* inverts signifiers of "goodness": Atwood presents the Compounds (the gated communities where Crake and Jimmy grow up) as a society where a disaffected response to suffering is not interpreted as insanity or madness, but in fact characterizes the practice of science and the capitalist economic system itself.

Atwood deviates from the traditional literary trope of the mad scientist in that, though Crake causes the death of millions, the structure of the society he works to destroy is not shown to be "good": the Compounds are dominated by a corrupt, "morally insane" affect that perpetuates—and enjoys!—the suffering of humans and animals and that has contributed to the degradation of the environment. The dominant society in *Oryx and Crake* operates on the principle that "science is an 'ideology-free zone,'" to use Glenn Scott Allen's phrase (5), existing apart from personal motivations or partisan loyalties, and so its scientist-workers more closely resemble the Wicked Wizard's foil, the Master Mechanic. This ideal capitalist scientist possesses intellectual power, but relies instead on his individual initiative to create "mechanisms which . . . visibly contribut[e] to the increased productivity of the entire community" (Allen 20). The research and development activities in the Compounds, though bearing more resemblance to those of Dr. Moreau than Benjamin Franklin, are not visibly deviant from the dominant society in the novel. Atwood takes to its extreme the "artificial split between

emotion and thought" that Alison M. Jaggar asserts was created by the rise of modern science and maintained to preserve the purity of knowledge (117). I argue that it is precisely because of this split that Crake is able to manifest his own goals unnoticed. Usually, the mad scientist character is depicted as obviously consumed by his own inquiry and unable to identify his actions as taboo. Readers are given to understand that he has been prevented from the recognition that affect should exist separate from knowledge by his own intellect. He becomes an "affect alien" within his own society who does not "experience pleasure from proximity to objects that are attributed as being good" (Ahmed 41) and becomes alienated from those objects as a result. The negative emotions such as cynicism, apathy, pessimism, or anger that he does display are branded as "outlaw emotions" that are conventionally unacceptable to the paradigm in which he operates (Jaggar 131). Scientists who visibly manifest outlaw emotions are interpreted as dangerous, as they possess the knowledge and tools to act on these emotions, and are labelled "mad" or insane because they do not seem to recognize or care about the consequences of their actions. According to the inverted moral priorities of the Compounds, however, Crake's enthusiasm for genetic modification regardless of consequence, his enjoyment of violent computer games and child porn, and his insistence on the top-secret nature of his later work do not "read" diegetically as the actions of a mad scientist.

II: Compound Futures: Corporate Capitalism in a Happy Dystopia

Atwood sets the storyline of *Oryx and Crake* in a near-future world that is a recognizable extension of postmodern, Western society, magnified in terms of its scientific progress, social stratification, and xenophobia. The narrative is restricted to Jimmy's first-person viewpoint as an affluent, educated, white male resident of the Compounds, which are separated from the cities of his world (nicknamed the pleeblands) and each other by heavy security. Jimmy first meets Crake in a Compound elementary school and readers are gradually shown Crake's deviation through his contrast with Jimmy. Both Crake and Jimmy are the sons of worker-scientists; Jimmy's father was a "genographer, one of the best in the field" (Atwood 22), working to develop organs in pigs capable of xenotransplantation, and his mother is a microbiologist. (Jimmy himself is a "word person," to his father's disappointment.) The scientific elite are such because of their Master Mechanic-like abilities to add value through their knowledge to the corporate structure in the research and development of new biotechnologies for the market at large. Each

company has its own Compound where the "top people" (26) and their families are housed, and each Compound's borders are tightly policed by a privatized security company nicknamed the Corps (short for CorpSeCorps, which in turn is short for Corporation Security Corps) that functions as a law enforcement agency. Life in the Compounds is "the way it used to be when Jimmy's father was a kid, before things got so serious" (27), implying that this class-segregated future has developed from a society that is recognizable to the twenty-first century reader, and also that with this future comes an undefined but immanent threat to its way of life.

The political and economic situation of Jimmy and Crake's world mimics that of futures typical to science fiction, which magnify what theorist Carl Freedman terms the "monopoly-capitalist state" of modern America, where "actual political power is largely concentrated in a relatively compact network of corporate, military, and governmental bureaucracies" (19) instead of any one political party. Freedman employs a Marxist lens to conclude that the structure of consumer capitalism is one that enables paranoia, or paranoid affect, as individuals must "seek to interpret the signification of the objects—commodities—which define us" (18). He further argues that the genre of science fiction therefore holds a "privileged relationship" to paranoiac ideologies as prompted by capitalism (19-20).[4] In *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood continues this pattern of paranoia in the commodity fetishism of Compound consumerism, which leads to a xenophobic jealousy of its products: CorpSeCorps is shown to be working on a double front as a result of this. The presence of corporate security guarantees that the commodities produced in each Compound are not seized and exploited by the lower-class pleeblanders, while at the same time ensuring that the scientists who produce the commodities are protected from being seized and exploited by the "other side, or other sides . . . other companies, other countries, various factions and plotters" (Atwood 27). Security is a highly sought-after service due to the perceived necessity of safeguarding objects from dangerous others, who exist outside of and away from life inside the Compounds.

The Compounds maintain a secure, unthreatened way of life by keeping visible suffering such as poverty and violence outside their walls, accessible only through media outlets as distant objects, products made available for consumption. As a result, the society of Crake and Jimmy's childhood operates on the principles of the happiness dystopia: a place where happiness about the status quo is demanded from its citizens, despite suffering that affects non-dominant groups within society (Ahmed 163). Ahmed observes how

affect can be carefully constructed to hide dystopian elements in contemporary British society, asserting that "to see happily is not to see violence, asymmetry, or force" (132). If suffering is represented at all in the happiness dystopia, it is as something that occurs at a safe distance, to other people who may or may not be real, and it brings pleasure instead of discomfort. Jimmy recalls the childhood entertainment he shared with Crake of visiting websites to view violence that may or may not have been real. On "hedsoff.com," for instance, "which played live coverage of executions in Asia, . . . Crake said these bloodfests were probably taking place on a back lot somewhere in California" (81). Crake and Jimmy also watch Western death row sentencing at sites such as "shortcircuit.com," "brainfrizz.com," and "deathrowlive.com," where condemned criminals "hammed it up" with jokes, foul language, or attempted escapes, though "Crake said . . . [t]wo to one it was all rehearsed" (82). Through Crake's comments, Atwood shows that while Crake and Jimmy recognize the existence of suffering and acknowledge death, these phenomena are presented and interpreted as both performances and commodities. The actions of violence, asymmetry, or force are displayed unceasingly for immediate viewer consumption, and in that display they have been drafted into service to create pleasure by way of providing a spectacle. The violence is therefore dismissed by the characters as unreal or staged, setting up a "*happy consciousness* which facilitates acceptance of the misdeeds of this society" (Marcuse qtd. in Ahmed 169). Though panoptic, the happy sight of Compound denizens creates a doubled vision: one that sees the negative effects of injustice and abuse, but subsequently interprets them as a product of deliberate construction for entertainment purposes, effectively covering them from sight once more.

Technology and science are co-opted into the creation and maintenance of the double vision that pervades the Compounds' happiness dystopia so completely that its citizens are conditioned not to recognize violence when it does occur right in front of them. During his visit to the prestigious Watson-Crick Academy, where Crake is studying for a degree in transgenics, Jimmy is dazzled by its palatial grounds with drought- and flood-resistant flowers, genetically engineered butterflies, and imitation rocks made from recyclables that absorb water and release it according to the humidity of the air (Atwood 199-200). The "wonders of Watson-Crick" quickly turn into a horror show, however, when Jimmy is shown the latest genetically engineered animals, including a chicken that is an unrecognizable "bulblike object. . . . Out of it came twenty thick fleshy tubes, and at the end of each tube another bulb

was growing" (202), farmed to provide an efficient and rapid supply of breast and thigh meat for ChickieNob fast-food restaurants. Jimmy is horrified; Crake's co-worker is amused. Atwood takes to its logical extreme the trend within the history of modern scientific development and factory farming where emotional judgments are viewed as detrimental to the acquisition of knowledge and nature is "stripped of value and reconceptualised as an inanimate mechanism of no intrinsic worth" (Jaggar 116).[5] At Watson-Crick, profit has become inseparably linked with knowledge, and Jimmy's reaction to the bioengineered chicken as a transgressive "nightmare" is viewed as risible and backwards by the Academy's students: the animal-machine has acquired recognizable worth through its usefulness as a product to generate profit for the students who "invented" it (Atwood 203). The products of the combination of capitalism and science are happy objects, to borrow Ahmed's phrase: they are "objects that affect us in the best way" (22). If profit is happiness, and objects bring profit, then the objects that produce the most profit produce the most happiness and affect the citizens of Compound society best, regardless of any moral or ethical consequences.

III: Functions of the Structure: Mood, Cruel Optimism, and Paranoia

In *Oryx and Crake*, the main characters' lack of emotional response to obvious suffering and the derision of moral values as useless (or active hindrances) to their hyper-capitalist system work to present an overarching dystopic mood. I am using the term "mood" in the same sense as Jonathan Flatley, who draws on the work of Heidegger to define "mood" as the affective atmosphere "in which intentions are formed, projects pursued, and particular affects can attach to particular objects" (5). Flatley later paraphrases Silvan Tompkins to elaborate further on how affects occur within a network or system that filters our perceptions of the world around us and determines our reactions and emotions therein (14). An individual's emotions are necessarily shaped by the mood created by the affective structure of the society in which they live. Jimmy's helpless pessimism and Crake's cynicism are influenced and magnified by the ideology and attitudes of the culture of the Compounds. I here use Raymond Williams' phrase "structure of feeling" as defined by Flatley to refer to the affective system of society (both that of the Compounds as constructed by Atwood as well as that of the reader), which operates to facilitate and shape individuals' affective attachments to the various objects they are presented with (Flatley 26).[6] The alternating fascination and boredom of Crake and Jimmy in response to snuff sites,

child porn, and other violent phenomena presented to them as harmless entertainment signals to the reader that the diegetic structure of feeling of the Compounds is at direct odds with the moral values of the reader's extra-diegetic one. Even when confronted with abuses that transpire at their places of work or study, Compound citizens are not unduly bothered, seeing happily at all times because of the structure of false consciousness that is in place. Readers may identify the structure of feeling in *Oryx and Crake* as a dystopic one, but to the majority of citizens in the Compounds and pleeblands alike, it is completely logical and normalized.

This constructed asymmetry of affect between how readers and characters in Atwood's fictional society construe the "goodness" or "badness" of their way of life results from the happiness dystopia's utilization of what Lauren Berlant has termed "cruel optimism": first in preventing a consciousness of harmful events, and second in facilitating inaction by suppressing the desire for change. Berlant asserts that a relation of cruel optimism exists when "something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (2); the irreconcilable nature of this attachment is what causes Foucault's "break with the immediate" that makes madness possible (220) and which, I argue, makes it *logical* within the society of *Oryx and Crake*. Significantly, in the case of Atwood's happiness dystopia, cruel optimism is manifested in the ways in which the citizens of the Compounds are "bound to a situation of profound threat that is, at the same time, profoundly confirming" (Berlant 2) due to their attachment to conventional fantasies of a future good life within that system. In the structure of feeling of Compound society, objects in the circulation of capital are not just happy in that they confer pleasure in the present but, as Ahmed discusses, because they embody a deferred happiness, or function as vessels that carry hope for future happiness (181). The good life is an attainable goal if only that hybrid rakunk (raccoon-skunk) is bought, that ChickieNob is consumed, or that current events bulletin is watched on the news at six in order to make an accurate forecast about OrganInc Farms investment futures. Present action on issues such as ruinous drought, rising sea levels, international upheaval, or even the Corps' abuse of power and egregious use of force against its own citizens is not taken by Compound denizens to forestall future disaster. Current events are perceived by the average resident of the Compounds as happy or even confirming objects providing valuable information for consumption, with the potential to bring a future "good life" within reach of the consumer. The confirmation offered by happy objects repackaged from unhappy events is a confirmation of knowledge that pacifies: the individual

is still aware and alert to the threat of a dangerous situation, but interprets the reception of news as if it were action, despite remaining passive and more likely to defend the status quo than take up arms against it.

A refusal of happy sight and dissatisfaction with the system's products marks any dissenter not as outside the structure but instead as the fulfilment of a necessary role still within it; the paranoid revolutionary is the already-anticipated opponent against which citizens must unite to protect their own happiness and way of life, solidifying the values of the society under threat. Jimmy's mother directly opposes the Compound structure of feeling when she destroys her family's computer and runs to the pleeblands, leaving behind a note about how she had "suffered with conscience" in "a lifestyle that is . . . meaningless in itself" (Atwood 61). Yet later, when asked about her motives, Jimmy is dismissive: "I think she got involved with some God's Gardeners-type outfit. Some bunch of wackos" (Atwood 213). With this instance, Atwood illustrates the way in which the rebellious subject is coded by the structure of feeling as suffering from delusions either stemming from mental illness or having fallen under misguided, cultish influences. The mistaken subject marks themself through a stated conviction that they are the possessor of true knowledge about the nature of the objects around them, their relationships, or the way the world works.[7] The rebellious subject distrusts the knowledge that is provided and universally accessible through the structure of feeling, rejecting the promise of happiness that objects[8] purport to give, and invests instead in a belief that true happiness will only be attainable after the object's true nature has been exposed, placing their faith in "knowledge in the form of exposure" (Sedgwick 138). In *Oryx and Crake,* the rebellious subject is an object of mockery, inviting scorn from Compound citizens. Jimmy's mother had been the subject of his derision long before her flight from the Compound, but subsequent references to God's Gardeners or other resistance groups are coloured in the text by their association with his "strange, insufficient, miserable mother" (67); the individuals who make up these groups are assumed to be fundamentally flawed in their personalities and thus susceptible to delusion. This commentary collapses the (already very thin) line between the diegetic structure of *Oryx and Crake* and the extra-diegetic narrative of late capitalism, wherein paranoia's history as a symptom of a greater mental disorder (Freeman and Freeman 133) means that an argument labelled "paranoid" is not received as a legitimate critique of the system, but instead proof that the dissenter conforms to the common image of the "troubled, suspicious, hostile,

fundamentally isolated loner . . . suffering from what is called paranoid *bias* or projective distortion" (Paradis 19). Both in the novel and in our world, the insane individual cannot launch a critique of the way society is structured because it is implied that the unreason and wrongness is located within the diseased individual, not society as a whole. Instead of effecting a break with the structure of feeling, any critique of the happiness dystopia loops the subject back in to the rhetoric of cruel optimism and a reliance on the confirmation that comes from knowledge.

IV: I'm Not Crazy! Everyone Else is Crazy!

In this world of mad scientists and moral insanity as the logical norm, Crake blends in perfectly as the mad scientist *par excellence*; jaded and cynical but seemingly devoted to developing products that contribute to the fantasy of the good life. Crake "passes" diegetically in a way that Jimmy cannot. Though Jimmy is the son of scientists, surrounded by technological wonders, he has difficulty grasping the technical machinery behind it all; as a consequence, the futuristic details of *Oryx and Crake* seem very vague to readers—the powers of Wicked Wizardry at their peak, but blended with the heroic features of the Master Mechanic's role "as a sort of resources scout for the capitalist" (Allen 21). In the Compounds, the alien affect of the Wicked Wizard is harnessed to and directed by capitalism, so that the emotional peculiarities of the mad scientist and his willingness to engage in "unnatural" methods are seen as assets instead of drawbacks. Compound society magnifies the tendencies within our own that "[constitute] a milieu favourable to the development of madness," as Michel Foucault put it in his study of madness (217). The Watson-Crick Academy is nicknamed Aspergers' U (Atwood 193); the Victorian interpretation of genius as a pathological symptom of mental disorder is acknowledged and reduced to a joking stereotype, part of Atwood's biting satire of the idea of the benevolent and knowledgeable man of science. The mad scientist's assumption of the position of god is also a foregone and accepted conclusion within the novel as the business of genetic modification (or "create-an-animal") is "so much fun . . . it made you feel like God" (51). The power and potential the mad scientist derives from his emotional detachment, obsessive work ethic, and superior knowledge is redirected into officially sanctioned channels of entertainment and production that can be consumed by others.

Crake's "madness" does not stem from voiced critiques or overt rebellious acts against the status quo on his part. By the end of *Oryx and Crake*,

Jimmy and subsequently the reader realize that as Crake was cognizant of the structure of feeling in the Compounds, he also recognized that any protests or revolutionary action had always already been anticipated. In a system where destructive practices are normalized and where criticizing the status quo as dystopian is a threat to the operation of what is interpreted as a happy society, Crake's own subversive actions are unrecognizable. When Crake informs Jimmy that HelthWyzer, a major medical corporation, is intentionally planting viruses in their vitamin supplements to boost the demand for cures and keep business running, he marks himself only as an admirer of "an elegant concept" (212). In contrast, Jimmy reacts with disbelief at first, then derision, and demands to know if Crake is "going paranoid, or what?" (212). To be paranoid is to invest faith in the reaction of others to knowledge of others' transgressions; Crake's father's assumption that others would be motivated by horror to move against HelthWyzer resulted in his betrayal and murder by his confidants. Crake thus recognizes that faith in knowledge to motivate others to act morally is a false hope and deliberately avoids it. Crake's path involves manipulating the system to its logical end. The virus that destroys human life is developed and distributed by Crake using the same methods HelthWyzer had used for its own scheme (325, 346); everything he needed had already been developed, thought of, and made available for use. Hope operates diegetically to either lock subjects within a relationship of cruel optimism, or as a mistaken belief that something exists outside of it, but both directions are taken into consideration beforehand by the system. Crake's disanthropic vision of a world without humans (including himself) avoids an investment in the hope of future happiness as promised to the subject of cruel optimism by removing himself as a subject of the future.

V: It's (our) Mad World

The structure from which Crake unsubscribes in *Oryx and Crake* is blatantly constructed by Atwood as a vision of the future of Western society in the age of late capitalism. The blurb on the back cover of *Oryx and Crake* asserts that "Atwood gives us a keenly prescient novel about the future of humanity—and its present," and that the novel operates as a cautionary fable of "a world that could become ours one day" (n. pag.). The divorce of knowledge from emotion that Jaggar identifies continues apace in the novel's society, which illustrates N. Katherine Hayles' nightmare of a future culture of posthumans who regard their own bodies (and those of others) as

fashion accessories to be augmented or modified at will (5). The culture in the Compounds is completely ascribed to the informatics of domination—the oppositional dichotomies that Donna Haraway observed already at work in the stratification of society during the mid-80s, up to and including the classification of certain emotions as natural and others as unnatural or freakish. Happy sight disables any possibilities outside of these binaries; the citizens of Compound society in *Oryx and Crake* think of the natural world and the lives of animals and people as "biotic components [and] in terms of strategies of design, boundary constraints, rates of flows, systems logics, costs of lowering constraints" (Haraway 21). In an incisive indictment of Western late-capitalist science fetishism, *Oryx and Crake* depicts a future where economic imperatives drive the progress of science, rather than empathy or ecological concerns, and, as Bergthaller notes, Atwood depicts the triumph of "aggressive posthumanism" in the novel as indistinguishable from catastrophe (729). Crake's final (official) bioengineering project results in the humanoid, yet animal-like, Children of Crake: ostensibly "floor models" demonstrating the ability of parent company RejoovenEsense to create "totally chosen babies that would incorporate any feature, physical or mental or spiritual, that the buyer might wish to select" (304). The "designer baby" debate is writ large and literally into a society that is conditioned to view everything as objects for consumption, and especially everything science has produced for capitalism as happy objects.

Oryx and Crake takes to their extremes the binary trends in current Western society to separate intellect from feeling, ethics from profit, and science from bias. The refusal to see the ways in which these enforced dichotomies inform each other materially, Atwood implies, creates conditions ideal for "mad" affect to grow and attach itself to those with the knowledge and means to act in the same way as Crake. If contemporary Western cultures are headed down the same path towards a world like that of *Oryx and Crake*, the same factors that enabled disaster at the hands of one rogue scientist in the novel might soon, or have even already begun to, exert their influence. Both postmodernism's "waning in affect" (61) as observed by Fredric Jameson *and* Brian Massumi's claim of a "surfeit of affect" (88) ring true: it is the privileging of certain affects at the expense of others, and their classification not as outlaw emotions or alien affects but as integral to production in consumer culture, that threatens. Daniel Freeman and Jason Freeman track the rise of paranoia in postmodern Western, specifically British, society as it parallels the acceleration of urbanization

(52-54). They assert that "[Western] consumer capitalism . . . predisposes us to suspicious thoughts" (155). The paranoiac's investment in knowledge is a result of attempting to "understand what's happening to us" (Freeman and Freeman 90), but instead of confirmation, it brings distress and agitation from a failure to acquire that knowledge. Foucault observed that knowledge's formation of "a milieu of abstract relationships" around feeling caused the subject to risk "losing the physical happiness in which [their] relationship to the world is usually established" (218). Thus, Crake's "solution" to mortality isolates the stress-inducing function of knowledge and removes it from the equation entirely. "'Immortality,' said Crake, 'is a concept. If you take "mortality" as being, not death, but the foreknowledge of it and the fear of it, then "immortality" is the absence of such fear'" (Atwood 303). In Crake's "mad" philosophy, true happiness comes not from the confirmation of knowledge, but the lack of need for that knowledge or confirmation in the first place.

Conclusion

In *Oryx and Crake*, Jimmy is a product of the affective system and Crake only pretends to be, though all the while he uses the system to achieve his own disanthropic goals. Crake relies on the ignorance induced by his own society to work towards its destruction, yet his machinations remain unrecognizable because they are not plans that include himself within their future framework. Crake is difficult to define: he is not the protagonist, but neither is he truly an antagonist. Bouson observes that Atwood presents Crake not just as "a scientist imperialist, but also a trickster-jokester figure" who creates a "grand game-like illusion" in the process of achieving his end goals (141). However, Crake's game would not have been possible without the structure of feeling of the Compounds providing both the board and the materials necessary—both access to the technological tools he needs and the blasé attitudes towards their use to destroy or re-structure the genetic material of animals and humans. In the affective paradigm of the novel, he is not the hero or even the anti-hero, but neither can he strictly be called a villain. Diegetically speaking, once all the facts are in, Crake is not paranoid: Crake is justified. Crake is not emotional: Crake is rational. Crake is not unfeeling: Crake has morals. Jimmy, still stuck in the structure of binary oppositions, asks himself if Crake had been "a lunatic or an intellectually honourable man who'd thought things through to their logical conclusion? And was there any difference?" (Atwood 343). In Crake, madness and moral

fortitude are conflated, and do not originate in a recognizably alienated individual, but in a character that acts according to the affective structure of his society, and almost perfectly.

NOTES

1 The boy who would grow up to be Crake is known as Glenn only briefly during the narrative. Jimmy refers to Crake mainly by his alias, identifying him first and foremost as the adult man who deliberately destroys humankind, and I follow suit.

2 Greg Garrard identifies disanthropy as a uniquely subject-less drive, wherein an individual's "ordinary misanthropic hatred of 'the crowd . . .' is distinguished by *his absence* from the future he envisages" (41). Garrard discusses this drive in the context of ecocriticism and environmental movements. In the novel, Crake kills off humanity, murders his lover, and forces Jimmy to execute him so he is not alive to see the new world he has ushered in.

3 Generally, it is always "his." Female mad scientists are rare.

4 Freedman's conclusions focus on Philip K. Dick's writing exclusively, yet apply to the genre of science fiction as a whole; Dick is claimed by some to be "the greatest of all SF authors—'the Shakespeare of science fiction,' as Fredric Jameson has called him" (qtd. in Freedman 20), and his influence over the genre cannot be overstated.

5 This attitude crystallized most visibly in the vivisection debate of the late nineteenth century, as scientific inquiry came under attack and was even halted at times by animal rights activists protesting the inhumane treatment of the animal subjects of experiments. Claude Bernard, a nineteenth-century scientist, dismissed anti-vivisection campaigners' concerns, asserting that an animal is "a wondrous machine" (254) and that vivisection is "only an autopsy on the living" (256). Bernard's comments draw on arguments made by pro-vivisectionists at the time that animals do not feel pain on the same level as humans, or even at all, as they are "lower" on the evolutionary scale.

6 Flatley elaborates that "[w]hen certain objects produce a certain set of affects in certain contexts for certain groups of people—that is a structure of feeling. And sometimes structures of feeling are personal and idiosyncratic, but more often they are not: a social group of which the subject is a member shares them" (26).

7 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick asserts that "paranoid knowledge . . . has . . . a practice of disavowing its affective motive and force and masquerading as the very stuff of truth" (138).

8 The anxiety or paranoia prompted by a distrust of happy objects and their producers *could* be seen as oppositional to cruel optimism, though in fact it operates as an appendage of it: when the happy objects fail to be confirming, the individual consumer begins to suspect not the economic system but *the commodities themselves*. Freedman quotes Philip K. Dick's assertion that "the ultimate in paranoia is . . . when every*thing* is against you" (15, his emphasis) to point out the direct production of paranoia through object fetishism.

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Brook William Ross Pearson

Nouns (a poem after Robin Williams died)

for everyone

Two days after Robin Williams died, I don't know how to use verbs any more, and adjectives fail me.

The day that Robin Williams hung himself in his home I watched Andy Goldsworthy for the first time and the next day I got bitten by three wasps after I stitched three leaves together with a Ponderosa Pine needle like Andy Goldsworthy and threw them into the chasm of Trout Creek, thinking about Robin Williams and every moment in my life that he touched from the distance of the screen and the projection booth.

One week before Robin Williams died, the Mount Polley mine tailing pond breached and sent chemical slurry into the waterways and now the skin is coming off the salmon and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans tells the Secwepemc band that they can't fish in the offered Musqueam waters to support themselves, unless the Musqueam wish to divide their allotment with them, so they should take the fish from their own traditional waters because the water is drinkable. They won't even have to skin the fish.

Two days after Robin Williams died, the civilian death toll in Gaza stands at 1443, and there are 236 374 displaced people, including those in whose dinner table the occupiers carved 'good Arab = dead Arab' before they retreated behind their Iron Dome.

Ten days before Robin Williams died, I studied the ball of amber forming on the tree behind her head as a green grasshopper made his way directly over it without getting stuck, and I listened to the trio of crows on the sea wall as they discussed their next move.

The day after Robin Williams died, so did Lauren Bacall, and I remember her as 'Sailor' in her radio show with Bogart and I lie in bed thinking about them marching on the capitol protesting HUAC.

Two days after Robin Williams died, only nouns seem secure.

Dominique Hétu

"All I ever wanted was to keep them safe"

Geographies of Care in Comparative Canadian Fiction

In the recent documentary *L'amour au temps du numérique*,[1] one of the participants expresses the following opinion about dating: "Le premier qui s'attache, il a perdu,"[2] suggesting that what threatens the relationship is, quite paradoxically, the attachment to the other and the potentiality of dependence. Besides shedding light on the impacts of technology and social networks on young adults' search for love, this documentary questions, through the voices of six participants, a particular manifestation of the liberal subject: "a conception of the person as independent, rational, and capable of self-sufficiency. And it holds to a conception of society as an association of such independent equals" (Kittay 258). To think attachment as failure, to devalue caring and emotional bonds, and to deny the positive qualities of dependence and vulnerability are strategies that uncover a moral subtext in the documentary: while interviewer and director Sophie Lambert does not judge the participants and rather seeks to understand their choices, she weaves a narrative that problematizes their conception of relationality and sheds light on socio-spatial practices (interactions across the dating scene, home space, and virtual space) that render vulnerability and emotional harm invisible.

While this brief analysis of Lambert's documentary serves as an introduction to the presence and value of a discourse that disrupts liberal ideals of independence, autonomy, and self-reliance, my main intentions are to infuse this discourse—care ethics—in comparative Canadian literature, and to augment its theoretical contribution by placing it in dialogue with space theory. I bring together care ethics and spatial discourse to better

understand and analyze the fictionalized experiences of female characters who struggle to make sense of their home and, accordingly, of their place in the world. To re/value dependence and vulnerability as well as to render gestures of care and attachment visible are two objectives of the ethics of care that provide rich ground for a new approach to comparative literature.

A growing number of feminist theorists, ethicists, and philosophers have called attention to practices and attitudes that have been historically devalued and traditionally associated with the female: nurturance, responsibility, attentiveness, and preservation. These four notions fall under the scope of care ethics, a field of research that since the late 1980s, has challenged traditional claims to rationality and male privilege. Applied and developed in disciplines such as psychology, medicine, philosophy, and, more recently, geography, it opposes and challenges the idea that humans are independent subjects and suggests that relationality, rather than rationality and independence, constitutes subjectivity.

Care ethics provides a critical perspective that uncovers in Lambert's documentary the marginalization and fragmentation of care in Western society differently than in conventional and stereotypical spheres associated with women and domesticity. Moreover, I argue that this perspective illuminates other forms of storytelling in which care is embedded within strategies of survival, such as in the novels *Le ciel de Bay City* (2008), by Catherine Mavrikakis, and *The Birth House* (2006), by Ami McKay. But the two novels are very different. Set in a small American town, the story of *Le ciel de Bay City* takes place in the second half of the twentieth century and centres on the protagonist's strategies for coping with the past, represented by the ghosts of her grandparents who were victims of the Holocaust. From childhood to adulthood, this female character develops strategies to avoid the intergenerational transmission of trauma. In *The Birth House*, the main character struggles to find balance between long-established traditions, social transformation, modern science, as well as her own beliefs, seeking ways to respect her traditional healing practices in a changing world. Moreover, the arrival of a doctor in her village and the social pressure to marry confront her with public and private systems of male dominance. In spite of their differences, both novels recognize the importance and the ambivalence of care and how it articulates relational, ambivalent, and porous lived spaces. They draw attention to alternative living practices and to what Sarah Whatmore calls "new possibilities for conviviality" (146), allowing for a better understanding of the socio-emotional, spatial, and political

problems of responding to suffering, to non-paradigmatic attachments, and to the dilemma of reconciling the demands of others and of the self in socio-spatial contexts that require new categories for thinking about the experience of being in the world.

In *Le ciel de Bay City* and *The Birth House*, body, memory, and healing spaces work together in the texts and unfold geographies of care that show how spatiality and relationality are interrelated and co-constitutive. How the novels use relational and spatial imagery illustrates the work of care in geo-emotional dynamics and experiences of lived space beyond the traditional conflation of home and house. I borrow and adapt the concept of geographies of care from a branch of human geography interested in the connections between geographies and emotions, and that configures the geographical experience—as well as geographical methodology—as a spatialized network of socio-emotional and healing practices.[3]

Relationality: Care, Space, and Ethics

While there are many publications on the ethics of/in literature that focus on what Tobin Siebers describes as "the means by which literary criticism affects the relation between literature and human life" and that look into "the impact of theoretical choice on the relation between literature and the lives of human beings" (2), a very small number of researchers in literature use care ethics and feminist care ethics in their work. And if there is growing interest in France and in Canada, as illustrated by an international academic conference organized at the Université de Montréal and recent publications,[4] much remains to be done in terms of understanding the impact and function of care practices and attitudes in literary and artistic contexts. It is important to note that the care theory developed from Martin Heidegger's *Sorge* stems from a usually male-oriented, universal Western theory of knowledge that historically has rarely acknowledged gender biases, and has often failed to recognize what contemporary feminist care theorists such as Carol Gilligan, Joan Tronto, and Sandra Laugier have brought to attention as core elements of care ethics: the voice of the invisible, of the silenced, of the other which is not male, not white, and not privileged.

Indeed, several feminist theorists of care and feminist philosophers have identified epistemological points of tension by showing how dominant patriarchal and philosophical ideological paradigms have, as Genevieve Lloyd argues, "historically incorporated an exclusion of the feminine, and that femininity itself has been partly constituted through such processes of

exclusion" (x). What Kerstin W. Shands and Iris Marion Young do for space theory, contemporary female care theorists do in their work in reaction to dominant philosophical, ethical, and political discourses that are predominantly characterized by a "terminology of . . . rights and duties" and by "cognitive attitudes . . . usually associated with distance and impartiality, and with the ability to transcend the individual point of view in order to reach a 'general viewpoint'" (Sevenhuijsen 5). While they do not invalidate the contribution of male philosophers, feminist care ethicists and space theorists question a persistent tendency to use the white, privileged male as a normative category.

My literary theorization of geographies of care stresses the significance of ethical socio-spatialization in the stories under consideration, especially in contexts of precariousness. I address the interconnections between spaces and beyond what Jon Murdoch describes as "the way humans are embedded within spatialized materialities" (2). Accordingly, paying attention to the complex emotional and ethical dynamics between series of places and relations sheds a different light on the complicated interconnections between human life, vulnerability, space, and literature. It also seems important to stress that the director of *L'amour au temps du numérique* and the authors of the texts of fiction that I analyze, do not inscribe their work in care ethics or draw on particularly explicit feminist theory to tell their stories. Rather, I use a feminist care ethics framework to read those stories, to bring attention to the fundamental relationality represented in the texts. This relationality is key for understanding different components of intersubjective experience such as spatiality and location, and for developing a relational comprehension of the subject as situated, complex, non-unitary, yet unique.

I suggest that care ethics provides a critical framework for bridging relationality and the moral intricacies of lived space. It also offers a perspective for focusing on how fictionalized subjects are able to re/define and make their living spaces more complex through and because of care practices and attitudes, providing new insight about socio-spatial experiences and a new vocabulary for naming and configuring the particularities of belonging. And as I am interested in the co-constitutive and relational dynamics between space and processes of subjectivation in the texts I am analyzing and beyond, and less interested in revisiting the narratives in terms of private/public dichotomies, I combine care ethics with space theory and concentrate on the fundamental relationship between self and other by addressing the spatiality of responsibility, vulnerability, humanity, and proximity. These relational dynamics are instrumental both

for care ethics and geography in developing their respective views of the social and of feminist issues in their fields, which in part explains why many feminist geographers "have sought to investigate the complex spatialities of caring, bringing the social spaces of care, and particularly of care work, under renewed scrutiny" (McEwan and Goodman 103). Care ethics thus illuminates complex spatialities; and geography, with spatial concepts based on the notion of relationality, proposes useful avenues for thinking the questions of power that affect human interconnectivities.

Le ciel de Bay City

In *Le ciel de Bay City*, Catherine Mavrikakis tells the story of Amy through her movements across different frontiers. Between America and Europe, life and death, self-care and a sense of responsibility towards her family, and between the shiny plastic of a small metal house and its dirty basement where secrets are kept, Amy is trying to make sense of the different forms of death that inscribe her life. She struggles to understand the behaviours of her mother Denise and aunt Babette, who have left Europe and moved to Bay City to escape the traumatic memory of the Holocaust. Among these behaviours are the indifference and inhospitality shown toward her by her mother: "Ma mère ne va pas me voir et ne tient pas à venir me chercher. . . . À ce moment-là, les travaux du *basement* occupent toute la maisonnée. Personne n'a vraiment le temps de s'occuper d'une enfant qui, de toute façon, depuis sa venue au monde, n'est qu'une source d'ennuis"[5] (Mavrikakis 13). The relatively ordinary life of Amy, who is isolated and feels rejected, changes drastically when her aunt asks her to help clean the house. In the basement, Amy makes a strange discovery: she finds the ghostly bodies of her grandparents (who disappeared in Poland during the Second World War) in a large, dirty cupboard. Rather than questioning their presence, Amy is immediately sensitive to their well-being. She does what she can to protect them while trying to come to terms with their deathly existence, expressing both a feeling of responsibility for her deceased family members as well as a feeling of despair over being confronted with "l'abjection de la vie"[6] (44). Amy, paying attention to these ghosts who accompany her and who sleep with her, finds that she has "un don de guérisseur des corps et des âmes"[7] (19) that encourages her to develop caring strategies to help both her living and dead family members come to terms with History.

The storage box, isolated from the rest of the basement, is where Babette has hidden her ghostly parents, who exemplify the taboo past related to the

Holocaust that Babette and Denise cannot jettison despite systematically cleaning the house and filling it with plastic furniture and objects to conceal traces of their past in Europe. This part of the basement is both where these dead bodies are kept hidden as well as where the family finds protection during storms. In this part of the house, memory is disavowed and protection is found. The basement is part of a geo-emotional and ethical weaving: while Amy's family tries to free itself from traumas associated with the Shoah and to find a better life in America, the basement is also where the ghostly bodies are kept as an indelible mark of that past, an inevitable haunting that creates a tension between forgetting and protecting the past. The family is thus incapable of healing despite their efforts, and Amy both suffers the consequences of their choices as well as feels responsible for everyone. Her mother's lack of care and Amy's own feeling of placelessness in Bay City participate in her ambivalent feelings and in her decisions following the discovery of the ghosts in the basement. The storage box is therefore a paradoxical space that illustrates the difficult negotiations between life and death and complicates Amy's obligation to care. She understands her mother and aunt's desire to forget, and yet she feels a responsibility to liberate the ghosts that are locked in the basement. Indeed, Amy understands that the ghosts' physical presence is proof of the unforgettable past and that "les morts continuent leur existence"[8] (52). Her decision to burn down the house is a violent and unsuccessful attempt to resolve this conflict, making clear that the haunted living spaces affect her ability to care.

The text, in the form of a long monologue during which Amy revisits past events and encounters, is built around Amy's inability to liberate her family from the deaths of Auschwitz and to ignore the presence of the ghosts. The first part of the story centers on her feelings of entrapment and loss, leading to a radical act—arson—that she hoped would free her family from the heaviness of the sky, which serves as a metaphor for the guilt, responsibility, and History that prevent the family from moving forward despite living in a new place, on a new continent. Amy survives the fire and is found, traumatized, in the backyard. The fire claimed the house, killing all family members. Amy takes responsibility for the deaths of the family members, suggesting she wished to liberate them from the burden they had been carrying since the Holocaust: "Il me faut du courage pour accomplir la fin de notre destin et délivrer tous les miens du poids du temps"[9] (247).

The fire problematizes Amy's care towards her family, suggesting that one's ability to care also comes with risky power. The murder of the family

members suggests ambivalence in Amy's caring gestures: is she attempting to liberate them or to liberate herself from the burden of the Holocaust and from the haunted house? It is difficult to argue that the murder is a form of care, but because she uses words that convey relief and belonging, like "délivrance" and "tous les miens," it seems possible to read the murder scene as a radical, desperate attempt to heal the family. Accordingly, the narrative connects Amy's everyday struggle with the distant family members who died in the concentration camps in a set of caring, guilty, ambivalent relational negotiations that affect and are affected by different spaces. Amy's practices and attitudes of care towards her family, along with her destructive tendencies, inscribe and participate in the construction of spaces where the living and the dead coexist, forging geographies of care characterized by ambivalence and struggle but that nevertheless encourage her, albeit with difficulty, to live: "Il faut quand même croire à la vie et lui donner une quelconque importance"[10] (35). By giving importance to that which her mother and aunt have tried to keep hidden, Amy turns to a modality of care or, rather, a caring and careful expression of intersubjectivity despite her ambivalence. Indeed, she keeps questioning the value of life, its capacity to overcome the purple sky as it is coloured by the ashes of the dead and is metaphorically heavy with guilt. Reading Amy's spatialized caregiving renders visible new survival strategies and narrative techniques that allow thinking about the narrative differently. Such strategies draw attention to the tensed, interdependent relationships central to the novel instead of concentrating on Amy's individual trajectory. The language of care is thus illuminated through the workings of memory and the porous frontiers between life and death. It is also closely connected to the writing of space, imagining and complicating the configurations of habitability.

In addition, the metal house is referred to both as "home" and as "prison de tôle,"[11] which expresses the socio-spatial tensions that shape Amy's experience. Suicidal, with very little faith in life despite being a survivor, she wanders: "Si je n'ai pas de place dans ce monde, je n'en ai pas plus dans l'au-delà"[12] (35). Between Europe and America, between those who died in the camps and the survivors, between Amy and her mother, and between Amy and her daughter, Heaven, geo-emotional ties are made and unmade. Amy remains stranded between life and death, between togetherness and isolation. These ties find anchors in the superficiality of materiality, in the past, and in the bodies that constitute the geographies of care, symbolically illustrating how space and self are interrelated and how relationships are

marked by interdependency. Amy expresses different forms of care: she feels responsible, she pays attention to her family, to history, as well as to the secrets of the house. She also shows responsiveness towards the ghosts and their wellbeing by negotiating their place in the present and in the two houses. Combined with a reflection on living spaces and the experience of being-at-home, her caring gestures confirm that space, as Massey remarks, is "constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny" (9).

Like the basement, the sky is another ambivalent space where past and present collide. Whereas for her mother and aunt the sky symbolizes an inescapable past, for Amy, who becomes a pilot, the immensity of the sky provides a space of escape where a mix of pollution and gasoline blinds the odours associated with the past: "Sur le tarmac, je suis transportée par les relents qui s'exhalent des avions et des camions-citernes. . . . J'aime conduire les avions dans le ciel et si celui-ci n'était pas contaminé par la pollution, il sentirait trop le passé rance, infect"[13] (Mavrikakis 259). But she soon realizes that the comfort she finds in the sky does not compare to the healing space represented by her relationship with her daughter. It is indeed through this mother-daughter relationship that Amy finds solace, as it was when her own mother and aunt revitalized their lives by coming to the United States and starting their families: "donn[é] vie à des petits américains tout neufs qui leur feraient oublier les rages et les colères de l'Europe guerrière"[14] (11). Amy searches for a place where her identity as daughter and mother will reconcile, carrying with her a historical responsibility that is not entirely hers. Careful to protect her daughter against "l'horreur insondable du monde"[15] and surprised to find reconciliation "avec l'existence et ses cieux livides, dépouillés"[16] (262) in this bright relationship with her daughter Heaven, Amy learns to coexist with the dead and with the history they share. The sense of escape she experiences when she flies is replaced by her desire to protect her daughter from the purple darkness of the sky: "J'ai vite opté pour des vols courts, des voyages éclair, une carrière sans éclat pour habiter les nuits de mon enfant chérie"[17] (283-84). At the end of the story, in their new house in Rio Rancho that she thought was free from the past and liberated from the presence of the ghosts, Amy discovers that Heaven does not need the protective walls she built around her, and that she is comfortable with these ghosts. She finds Heaven asleep in the converted basement where she had asked Amy to build her bedroom despite Amy's fears associated with the dark space.

Seeing that Heaven is comfortable in the basement liberates Amy of a certain responsibility towards her: "petite, elle allait souvent se cacher 'en bas' et me forçait à la chercher durant des heures d'effroi"[18] (288). The presence of the dead as well as the places built and transformed in reaction to these ghosts participate in Amy's process of identity construction. The care practices—the protection of Heaven, Amy's attention for the dead, the ambivalent hospitality of basements, the unavoidable sense of responsibility—illustrate care as a necessary mediation between self and other, self and places. Care complicates, in its failures and successes, Amy's narrative in which she revisits the past that led to Rio Rancho. It allows her, as she moves in space, flying planes across the purple sky, to figure out new ways of coping with the past in the present.

The Birth House

Reading with an ethics of care framework also brings new attention to how Ami McKay, in *The Birth House*, dramatizes the burden of responsibility and the struggles that come with caring and with needing care, by way of the particular geographies shaped through and affected by this dialectic. The novel fictionalizes the interactions of family members in the rural community of Scots Bay, Nova Scotia, at the turn of the twentieth century. It explores the resistance of female subjects to patriarchal and medical control over their bodies and choices, as modern science and medicine clash with healing and birthing traditions. The narrator, Dora Rare, "the only daughter in five generations of Rares" (McKay 5), tells the story of how she became the community healer, taking the place of Marie Babineau, known as Miss B. An Acadia-born midwife and healer, Miss B. left Scots Bay following the opening of the Canning maternity home, operated by Doctor Thomas, a figure who represents modern medicine and "new obstetrical techniques" (31). Feeling betrayed and useless under the pressure of Doctor Thomas' language of law and culture of fear, Miss B. passes on her knowledge to Dora: "Dora, take the prayers, the secrets. If you don't, they'll be lost, and I'll never have a moment's peace on the other side. . . . The women here, . . . They'll need you" (71). Dora struggles to make a choice between continuing the legacy of Miss B. and obeying her abusive husband, Archer Bigelow, who demands she quit "the baby business" (174) to take care of him and to be a proper housewife: "Come on, Dorrie, how about I take you to bed and you act like a proper wife" (173). The novel not only depicts the lives of women under domestic and medical abuse; it also uses a language of care and spatial

imagery to dramatize how women create safe spaces for themselves in the form of solidarity and spatial appropriation. The strategies of mutual support and of embodied space, along with practices and attitudes of care such as hospitality, responsibility, and healing, reveal geographies of care that allow for alternatives to the living spaces limited by economic, patriarchal, and political forces.

In *The Birth House*, the female characters, similar to those in *Le ciel de Bay City*, do not simply display stereotypical gestures of care or show an idealized female power that leads to resistance tactics and alternative spaces free of difficulties. These characters problematize and denaturalize imposed spaces and roles by creating and transforming new spaces into geographies of care. Bodies, solidarity, healing, and memory operate in the texts to portray the intersubjective nature of the characters' movements and locations, and to stress the agency of marginalized characters that are not always able to transgress socio-spatial boundaries. Amy and Dora share the weight of memory on their shoulders as well as the weights of living spaces: Amy with the metal sheet house that can't protect from the haunting of the ghosts, and Dora with Miss B.'s house filled with potions, herbs, and artefacts. Both protagonists seek liberation from a house where they struggle to affirm their identity because of their duty to their family. One of the ways to escape is, for Amy, to burn her family's house down, whereas Dora only imagines setting Miss B.'s on fire. While Amy finds comfort in Rio Rancho and reconciles with the basement in her new, but still haunted, house, Dora shapes hers—initially built as a wedding gift—in accordance with her own system of beliefs: "All I ever wanted was to keep them safe" (prologue in *The Birth House* x). Both texts rely on the relationality of characters: they imagine the difficult balance between dependence and independence, between a predominant, moral and emotional sense of responsibility to care and a social pressure that encourages little involvement in others' lives, autonomy, and self-reliance.

Divided into three parts, Dora's story begins with her relationship with Miss B. and her struggle to find a balance between her teenage interest in midwifery and the social exclusion that comes with the task. The second part begins after Miss B. vanishes from Scots Bay on the day of Dora's wedding, at the end of which Dora has to deliver a baby by herself for the first time. This section centres on Dora's difficult marriage with Archer, her disappointment with not conceiving a child, and her feelings of solitude and frustration, which climax in her attacking Doctor Thomas after he tries to intimidate her in public:

> He smiled, talking through his teeth. "Maybe it's time that a hysterical, reckless woman who encourages women to deceive their husbands should be everyone's business." . . . He stroked my cheek with his hand. "You look a little feverish. Isn't Mr. Bigelow seeing to your well-being? Isn't he working at giving you the child you've been wanting? I could speak to him about that, Mrs. Bigelow. I could tell him what you require. I could tell anyone, really." (233)

Dora's physical attack on Doctor Thomas is represented by a newspaper clipping inserted in the text, giving the narrative a historical aspect that authenticates the representations of women's resistance to modern medicine's controlling of their bodies and choices. The third part of the novel narrates the power of patriarchal law over women. Dora has to leave Scots Bay after helping a woman get an abortion. This woman is later killed by her husband, who tries to frame Dora for the murder: "Down the line women began to whisper, some wondering if someone should go and fetch my father or one of the other men down at the wharf. Others started to wonder if maybe Brady Ketch was right and if something hadn't better be done" (291). Dora finally returns and gets support from the women to clear her name: "Bertine and Sadie delivered letters to local women, asking for their support at a Mother's May Day march in Canning. Precious and Mabel have sewn a large banner for the women to carry, and I have agreed to speak (to anyone who'll listen). . . . I'm tired of being afraid" (361). She lives alone in her house, welcoming women "who have stayed . . . a day, a week and even a month or more" (366). Dora is also in a loving and peaceful relationship with Hart Bigelow, the brother of her deceased husband whom she refuses to marry and to live with: "Always my lover, never my husband. He still asks for my hand from time to time, never complains when I say I prefer it this way" (367). Dora's unconventional living choices open boundaries of domesticity and traditional living spaces. She favours interdependent relationships with women, spaces of solidarity and care with Miss B. and the women of Scots Bay. These relational interactions also serve to appropriate home space and female body.

Dora's caring practices and her careful spatial and moral resistance to the powerful, hegemonic, and patriarchal forces of both community and medicine problematize the spatiality of Scots Bay. For example, the maternity clinic is not easily accessible for women, thus symbolizing the risk women take to comply with hegemonic forces. Further, several female characters are not allowed by their husbands to recover fully after giving birth, which illustrates how their bodies are endangered in both public and private spaces. They also complicate the interrelated, taken-for-granted gendered

relations of power. The textual elements of care (language, practices, and gestures that uncover responsibility, hospitality, and interdependence) work with the spatial imagery, exemplifying how geographies of care provide "the opportunity to experience space less habitually and to rethink societal norms of spatial occupation that deal unethically with difference" (McCann 507). I appropriate Rachel McCann's argument that an architect's spatial creativity consists of "an intercorporeal and intersubjective act" to read Dora and Amy's spatial inventiveness as a strategy that "refigures sedimented spatial and social habits" (497). I rely on McCann's discussion of ethics and spatial inventiveness to suggest that the text, similar to architectural design, "challenge[s] existing norms of inhabitation and provide[s] a model for uncovering and remaking hidden societal structures that confine our potential for growth and perpetuate unequal systems of power" (514).

In addition, Dora's correspondence with friends in Scots Bay is used in the text, like the newspaper clippings, to foster the interconnections between Dora's living spaces and relationships. The articulation of many points of view build the narrative around Dora's determination to preserve her relationships with the women of Scots Bay as well as with her child. The letters provide spatialized expressions of her care for the women as Dora offers to transform her house into a hospital. In one of those letters, the character writes: "As you may already know, influenza is making its way through Boston . . . if you could see how many shrouded bodies are brought out of houses each day, you would understand. If someone comes down with it in the Bay, open my place as a sick house" (McKay 327). Dora's offer foreshadows her return to Scots Bay and the transformation of her house from a private place of confinement associated with her abusive marriage into a birth house. The care-giving facility corresponds well with Dora's personality and once again resonates with the opening lines of the prologue: "My house stands at the edge of the earth. Together, the house and I have held strong against the churning tides of Fundy. Two sisters, stubborn in our bones" (vii). If the conflation of house and woman has often served to essentialize the role of female subjects, the subversive narrative strategy of transforming Dora's house from a conventionally domestic configuration into a care-giving facility disrupts such metaphor and opens boundaries, both spatially and relationally; it makes place for geographies of care that denaturalize women's servitude to men and resist their historical lack of control over their bodies, shedding light on women's intersubjective agency and spaces of solidarity.

Geographies of Care

As with the function of the houses, the American suburb, and the sky in *Le ciel de Bay City*, the representations of living spaces in *The Birth House* reflect the central conflicts Dora experiences: the difficult negotiation between her desires and needs and the expectations of her husband and family, and the confrontation of traditional practices and midwifery with the medicalization of women's bodies and sexuality. Dora resists both forms of patriarchal authority, keeping her role as healer and midwife of Scots Bay and refusing to marry. Both strategies help her to remain independent and to build healing spaces for women, bringing to attention a social tendency to isolate women in the private sphere and to be suspicious if they remain unmarried. Conventional social norms favour universal principles of well-being drawn on an ideology of "the 'autonomous self-made man'" that women such as Dora and Miss B. should not challenge (Lawson 5). *The Birth House* testifies to how traditional configurations of care "threaten to reinforce gender roles that align women with the family, with service and subordination" (DeFalco, "Moral Obligation" 240). More importantly, it complicates, like *Le ciel de Bay City*, this fragmented, patriarchal vision of care by stressing the fundamental relationality, interdependence, and vulnerability of human life.

Interactions between the language of care, hegemonic patriarchal discourse, and spatial imagery in both texts foster an understanding of more inclusive and intersubjective processes of identity formation. Reading these interactions as geographies of care stresses how the dominant and the dominated coexist, how "space is the ongoing possibility of a different habitation" (Grosz 9) and a relational construct shaped by the social. This social is characterized by care practices and attitudes of care. It is not solely shaped by a language of justice, by the medicalization of women's bodies, and by patriarchal, naturalized notions of human experience. The apparent selflessness of both Amy and Dora takes on a different, more complex, intersubjective shape, one that expresses their fundamental human condition of vulnerability. Accordingly, the living spaces are also used for healing, for fostering a sense of togetherness through memory in the present, and as spaces of solidarity—similar to that which is facilitated in Amy and Heaven's basement at Rio Rancho and in Dora's birth house.

I draw on Seyla Benhabib's theorization of "response-ability" to suggest that the reactions of the protagonists reveal "both responsibility and risk," an "uneven care" that can at times burden Amy and Dora but also a care that

goes against the social expectations they must negotiate. Benhabib argues that this "response-ability" resists the persistence "of a discourse which bans the female from history to the realm of nature, from the light of the public to the interior of the household, from the civilizing effect of culture to the repetitious burden of nurture and reproduction" (409). These imagined human lives, what Benhabib refers to as "concrete others" in her useful configuration of a more inclusive and representative moral domain, illustrate the moral categories of responsibility, bonding, and sharing (411), and moral feelings of love, care, sympathy, and solidarity. Benhabib's analysis brings to attention how these are modalities of resistance to a language of justice and of individuality that correspond to "moral categories of right, obligation and entitlement" (411). Her theorization facilitates my reading of these modalities that are represented by the female characters' struggle to render visible the unseen, the unthought in their respective contexts (416). While feminist issues are more explicit in McKay's novel, Mavrikakis' text nevertheless testifies, with its central female characters and intergenerational house, to the political and moral intricacies of what Benhabib notes has historically been conceptualized as "atemporal" and "obscure": the realm of the household, nurturance, and emotions (410). The metal house lit on fire and the confining house turned birth house participate in this refusal of female characters to comply with social, spatial, and gendered expectations. The spatiality of their caring practices and attitudes disrupts privatized, silenced moral categories that value the needs of the other as constitutive of the self's vulnerable relationality. A comparative analysis of these two contemporary novels finds its coherence in the representations of spaces, events, and encounters associated with a particular geography of caring relations.

It is also worth noting the "gendered ascription of distinctive social roles" (Bowden 5) in both texts. Female characters "exemplify precisely the kinds of relations that are conventionally omitted from the canon of moral philosophy" (5) by bringing to attention ordinary and familiar practices of care that have historically been devalued, naturalized, and rendered invisible by patriarchal systems of power. It can be argued that Amy and Dora embody historically and culturally gendered roles: as mothers, they are initially relegated to the domestic environment, they nurture and protect their respective children, and they express stereotypical concerns for nurturing and for caregiving. In addition, mother-daughter relationships are marked by incompatible personalities and opposite desires. Amy struggles to understand her mother's behaviour and lack of emotion towards her, and

she goes out of her way to protect Heaven against the past, only to find out that Heaven is comfortable with the ghosts. Dora's relationship with her mother is also complicated by patriarchal standards and by the motherly figure of Miss B., who validates her sense of self rather than diminishing it or seeking to mould it into feminine ideals. But reading with an ethics of care illuminates how these mother and daughter figures use, politically and intimately, such strategies of protection, nurturing, and care, and how these characters serve to "emphasize the radical potential of values that attend to the concrete localized experience of home, and the existential meaning of being deprived of that experience" (Young 151). The characters of Amy and Dora reconfigure their subjectivity by appropriating and reclaiming their living spaces through these caring practices. Amy's "maison de tôle" as well as her new home in Rio Rancho, and Dora's birth house, are symbols of these women's intersubjective struggle. Despite evolving in mostly oppressive and damaging living spaces, they find comfort through their own making by acknowledging their interdependence, by listening to others, and by structuring alternative spaces with other characters who embody solidarity, recognition, and hospitality.

Accordingly, this comparative analysis stresses the differences and negotiations between care as a form of what Peta Bowden calls "coerced practice on which . . . survival depends" (8) and care as an intersubjective, fundamental process of being that draws on "a domain of practices characteristically associated with women" (16). I add that the discussion of two very different texts exposes how "ethically valuable forms of caring may be differentiated from those that entrench relations of oppression" (17), and avoids homogenizing, romanticizing, and naturalizing the representations of care practices and attitudes. My focus on what Bowden identifies as the "positive possibilities of women's involvement in practices of care" (18) within oppressive environments also serves to demonstrate, I hope, the agency and survival skills that are manifest in these representations of intersubjective and caring relationality. These novels show how the presence of care practices and attitudes of care inscribes socio-spatial transgression and moments of togetherness during struggle and adds to characters' wellbeing. Or, the opposite, with the absence of care we see the deterioration of the characters' wellness. The combination of literature, space, and care provides an original alternative for thinking "new forms of relationships and actions that enhance mutuality and well-being" (Lawson 2). Indeed, as Victoria Lawson remarks: "[c]are ethics suggests that we build spatially

extensive connections of interdependence and mutuality" (2). Combining care ethics and space theory to conceptualize geographies of care through comparative analysis is thus not about using the imaginary space to moralize characters or to promote a specific version of the good life. It is about the exploration of textual and narrative elements such as characters and places to better understand the responsibility that comes, either positively or negatively, with the fundamental relationality and vulnerability of human life.

NOTES

1 Aired November 30, 2015 on Télé-Québec and available online at http://www.telequebec.tv/documentaire/l-amour-au-temps-du-numerique/.
2 "The first to get attached loses," translation mine.
3 On geographies of care, see Massey; Milligan and Wiles; Milligan, Atkinson, Skinner and Wiles.
4 See Deschênes; DeFalco; Hétu.
5 "My mother does not come to see me and does not care to pick me up. . . . At that time, renovations in the basement take up the entire household. No one really has the time to take care of a child who, since she came into the world, has only been a source of trouble." All translations from the novel are mine.
6 "the abjection of life"
7 "a gift for healing bodies and souls"
8 "the dead lives on"
9 "I need courage to accomplish our destiny and deliver my people from the weight of time."
10 "You still need to have faith in life and give it some sort of importance."
11 "metal prison"
12 "If I don't have a place in this world, I have none in the afterlife."
13 "On the tarmac, I get carried away by the lingering smell of gas from the planes and tankers. . . . I love flying planes across the sky and if it were not contaminated by pollution, it would smell too much of the rancid, rank past."
14 "giving life to little new Americans who would help them forget the rage and the anger of Europe the warrior"
15 "the unfathomable horror of the world"
16 "with life and its livid and dispossessed skies"
17 "I soon opted for short flights, junkets, a plain career so that I could share the nights with my beloved child."
18 "little, she would hide downstairs and force me to look for her for hours, in terror"

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Larry Tremblay

Fragment 2

Derrière la chose peinte
le silence affamé
guette écoute

l'image du monde lui sert d'oreille

ne reste que du temps
travesti en espace

Behind the painted thing
ravenous silence
lurks to eavesdrop

an effigy of the world lends its ear

nothing remains except time
masquerading as space

Translated by Norman Cornett

Christina Turner

Atlantic Cosmopolitanism in John Steffler's *The Afterlife of George Cartwright*

> In the black space of this cabin the water is still and dead, the same water as yesterday, as last year, as three hundred years ago.
> —J. M. Coetzee, *Foe*

> Those little walks . . . exist on the hinge of translation between place and its otherwise, with the flow going both ways, rooting me in place while they simultaneously open—always with that sense of danger, that pre-echo of oblivion—into wilderness.
> —Don McKay, *Deactivated West 100*

In the fall of 2015, an exhibit was held in London, England, entitled "Cotton to Gold: Extraordinary Collections of the Industrial Northwest." It featured artworks collected by nineteenth-century British industrialists. These men channelled their immense fortunes, acquired through the production of English cotton, into "gold"—the actual gold used to commission and purchase artworks, and, as the title implies, a more public, philanthropic form of wealth, which can be shared. The exhibit included an 1822 watercolour by Romantic painter J. M. W. Turner, entitled "Tynemouth Priory," which depicts a pair of sailing vessels in rough seas off the Northumbrian coast. In Turner's painting, the sailing vessels in the foreground, listing in the rolling North Sea, are thrown into sharp relief against the pale, sun-washed background, where the ruins of the two-thousand-year-old priory rise above the sea on imposing cliffs. The painting evinces Turner's enduring fascination with English seascapes, implying, as they do, England's boundedness as an island nation but also its constant communication and interconnection with other locales. Interestingly, the "Cotton to Gold" exhibit makes explicit what Turner's painting only implies. The industrialists who made their fortunes in

the cotton industry relied on both a cheap labour force in northern England, and on raw cotton supplied from plantations in the Southern United States. Seen in this light, then, Turner's painting emerges as a cultural object that is enmeshed in a distinctly circum-*Atlantic* history of trade, labour, and slavery.

The networks that the "Cotton to Gold" exhibit illuminates can also help us to understand a text that originated on the other side of the Atlantic—John Steffler's 1992 novel *The Afterlife of George Cartwright*, a postmodern refashioning of British explorer George Cartwright's historical journals. Just as Turner's painting simultaneously references a national history and international trade, Steffler's Cartwright emerges from the late-eighteenth-century English gentry to become a kind of ideal Atlantic cosmopolitan traveller, voyaging, over the course of the text, to Rio, Cape Town, Madras, Minorca, Newfoundland, Labrador, and back again to England. Much of the novel takes place on water, in ships, which, as Paul Gilroy has pointed out, were the "living means by which points on the Atlantic world were joined" and should therefore be conceived as "cultural and political units rather than abstract embodiments of triangular trade" (16). The land itself is frequently depicted as aqueous in *Afterlife*, further evincing how the national and imperial spaces Cartwright visits are being inextricably drawn into an Atlantic world. Such interconnections destabilize distinctions, not only between water and land, but also between national and transnational spaces. While Steffler's Cartwright tries to adopt a cosmopolitan identity, he is continually challenged by different versions of nation-state politics, including an incumbent form of American power that foreshadows its eventual rise as a global superpower.

Because Cartwright is an explorer and colonizer whose actions result in the deaths and dispossession of an Inuit community in Labrador, critics have been rightly interested in exploring his status as a kind of proto-Canadian, whose past actions and ghostly guilt are analogous to contemporary settlers' ambivalence toward our origins on this land.[1] For example, Cynthia Sugars argues that Steffler's novel "enacts an inconclusive process of mourning," which should "enable a working through to some kind of reassessment of the nation's colonial history" (694). Nicola Renger is even more enthusiastic about the novel's recuperative potential, contending that it "provides a postcolonial revisioning of Canada's past" (69). Marlene Goldman's analysis takes in wider histories of eighteenth-century imperialism, yet still frames *Afterlife* in the context of "the clash between European and Native peoples in the New World" (63).[2]

This article builds upon these critiques through a different frame, specifically in terms of transatlantic studies and Atlantic world history. Here, I follow scholars such as Paul Gilroy, Jace Weaver, and Ian Baucom in viewing the Atlantic Ocean as a distinct historic space, with its own epistemological genealogies and a unique set of metaphorical investments. Theorists of transatlanticism—as well as literary authors such as Toni Morrison, Derek Walcott, and Marlene NourbeSe Philip—have demonstrated how triangular trade was not only fundamental to the development of the modern world economic system, but also required and generated its own knowledge system, what Ian Baucom terms an "Atlantic cosmopolitanism" (312). While these analyses have often focused on key nodes in the Caribbean, West Africa, and the British Isles, I am interested in examining how Steffler's novel portrays Labrador's participation—as a colony and future Canadian territory—in this epistemological Atlantic network.

The central events of *Afterlife*'s plot occur between 1750 and 1779, a period during which, as Baucom discusses, the British Empire was transitioning from its second to its third stage, on the cusp of losing its American colonies while asserting more power over the Indian subcontinent and rapidly increasing triangular trade traffic in sugar, textiles, and slaves (5). Throughout *Afterlife,* Cartwright is involved in a series of imperialist-nationalist conflicts, primarily between France and Britain but also involving other European nations and the emergent American state. Edward Said defines this period according to two interrelated contests: the "battle for strategic gains abroad—in India, in the Niger Delta, in the Western hemisphere—and the battle for a triumphant nationality" (83). As a military captain, Cartwright is affected by and an agent within these contests, which were both battles for access to trade routes and also ideological assertions of particularly modern forms of national identity. As an officer in the military, Cartwright was sent to India during the Carnatic Wars (which lasted from 1746 to 1763), which were part of a longstanding conflict with France over access to the subcontinent's resources. He later served in Germany during the Seven Years War (1756-1763), a battle England joined, as the novel's narrator states, out of "intense sympathy for Frederick the Great of Prussia, who, in an effort to carve out a nation for himself, was waging war against France, Austria, Russia, Sweden, and Saxony" (64). While Cartwright eventually repudiates the army and the nationalist ideals it represents, he nevertheless cannot avoid becoming entangled in nation-state conflicts, since his Labrador business is later ruined after a raid by a rebel privateer during the American

Revolution (1775-1783). Throughout *Afterlife,* Cartwright spends much of his time in transnational, fluid spaces, both at sea and on land. As such, the nation-state in this text is treated as an ambivalent category, one that does not fulfill Cartwright's need for self-realization, but which nevertheless remains a powerful means of organizing human knowledge and experience.

The nationalist conflicts of the late-eighteenth century also influenced an emergent discourse of cosmopolitanism, specifically that advanced by Immanuel Kant in *Perpetual Peace* (1795). Kant's formulation of cosmopolitanism in terms of hospitality—that "the *right to visit*, to associate, belongs to all men by virtue of their common ownership of the earth's surface"—was economically driven since the "right to the earth's surface that belongs in common to the totality of men makes commerce possible" (118). The period in which Kant wrote, and in which the historical Cartwright conducted his Labrador voyages, was also, as Pheng Cheah has noted, the "cusp between feudal and capitalist modes of production" ("Introduction" 23). Cheah underscores how for Kant, the "material conditions for fostering" a world community existed in "international commerce and an emerging universal culture" (23). Early modern cosmopolitanism is thus intimately linked to the rise of imperial trade in the late-eighteenth century, as it occurred alongside the shift from feudal to capitalist modes of production. Steffler dramatizes this historical shift, and reveals its resonances in the present, by depicting Cartwright as caught between two economic and epistemological systems. As a second son who has been forcibly barred from the aristocracy's system of primogeniture inheritance, Cartwright is ideally positioned to exploit the emergent forms of finance capital that were coming to dominate the British imperial economy in the latter half of the eighteenth century. As Baucom has argued, the economic system that emerged at this time—and the "universal culture" that Kant heralded—was distinctly Atlantic in character. Because of the length of time and risks involved with sea travel, transatlantic trade deals took a long time to complete, and required participants to enter into business with people they had never seen. Baucom argues that these new temporal and spatial factors necessitated a new theory of knowledge in order for the system to operate properly. In this economy founded on "time and distance," value did not "follow, but precede[d] exchange" (17). This, Baucom proposes, was a system premised on "imaginary values" where a particular object (or person) could be suitably exchanged for a general type. Furthermore, this new theory of knowledge also underpinned contemporaneous discourses of cosmopolitanism like

those put forth by Kant. What Baucom terms disinterested, liberal, impartial cosmopolitanism is therefore the "secret-sharer" of modern speculative finance capital (45). The implication of this, of course, is that the figure of the deracinated, sophisticated cosmopolitan intellectual and that of the slave trader operate on similar premises of violence and exploitation, and that both originate as "types" in the late eighteenth century.[3]

Throughout the novel, Cartwright is caught between conflicting desires: he wishes to remain rooted in place, yet at the same time yearns to occupy a cosmopolitan sensibility that is removed from local attachments, to exercise a form of "hybrid cultural agency" which consists in "physical freedom from being tied to the earth" (Cheah, "Given Culture" 301). This oscillation is revealed through Cartwright's constant movement across land and seascapes and his consistent efforts to gain a vantage point which is situated above, rather than embedded in, the landscapes he travels through. A moment late in the novel exemplifies these efforts. Directly after Mrs. Selby—Cartwright's mistress and housekeeper—has given birth to another man's child, Cartwright walks to the top of Lookout Hill, the highest point in his Labrador settlement. He observes, on the "face of the frozen sea, a single dark vein of water" that meanders "as far east as he could see, parting the ice. Toward the horizon it was a sparkling thread of light" (262). This brief moment typifies the contradictions Cartwright occupies in both life and death. His vantage on Lookout Hill offers him a fleeting visual mastery over the landscape, but his perspective nevertheless remains oriented eastward, fixed on a horizon that reaches toward the light of England (262). Cartwright appears to desire an experience of the land below him which is unclouded by local or nationalist attachments. However, his experience remains couched in the language of the material—specifically in the terms of commodity exchange. The water which flows toward the horizon indicates the breakup of winter sea ice and the renewal of trade relations with other points around the Atlantic. Near the shore, the water is corporeal: the sea is a frozen "face" upon which meanders a single "vein" of water. As the spring melt flows onward toward Europe it turns into a "thread" of light, evoking the textiles which flow back and forth between Europe, Africa, and the New World through triangular trade routes. Even as Cartwright grasps for a form of epistemological mastery, the language through which his struggle is represented suggests that this knowledge is always constituted by an inherently violent system of commodity exchange. This contradiction recurs consistently throughout *Afterlife* and reaches its full force in the novel's

conclusion, when Cartwright is released from his purgatory and flies *over* the Atlantic before achieving an ecstatic second death at the hands of a polar bear.

While Steffler's Cartwright is born into a landed family, the fact that he is a second son means that his position within his family, and the aristocracy as a whole, is tenuous. This was also true of the historical Cartwright. In the preface to his 1792 journals, the historical Cartwright writes of his childhood, "Not being the eldest son, and my father having but a moderate estate and nine other children, it was not in his power to do much for me" (iv). Goldman's analysis of *Afterlife* reveals how Cartwright was denied access to his family's wealth by the English law of primogeniture, which sought to preserve Old World aristocratic land bases by decreeing that only first sons could inherit land. Eighteenth-century political theorists characterized the law as "both uncanny and *unnatural* because it create[d] a painful and arbitrary distinction where none existed before" (Goldman 69). Primogeniture created excess, in that it required second and later sons to find occupations beyond aristocratic families' land bases in England. Imperialism—in its commercial and military forms—provided a productive outlet for the surplus human capital that primogeniture created. Baucom discusses the emergence, in the late-eighteenth century, of "a new social person no longer 'anchored in the land' but attached instead to a series of negotiable promises, calculations, and speculations; a person no longer readable through reference to a table of inherited status but only as legible as the entire complex system itself" (66). As Baucom argues, by the end of the eighteenth century, the economically constitutive principles of land and inheritance had been displaced by a system of credit, debt, and mobility. An interconnected network of transatlantic shipping ports, which trafficked in slaves, goods, and gold, formed the central nodes in this system. The dispossessed son was the ideal "type" for this kind of network because, due to British laws of inheritance, he did not have a historical claim to the now-archaic system of landed capital (66).

In *Afterlife*, Cartwright's father encourages him to embark on a career in the military. He initially embraces the new social personality that emergent forms of law, credit, and trade have funnelled him into, and approaches his first deployment to India in 1754 through the lens of "romantic nationalism" (Goldman 74), viewing the subcontinent as the "door by which [he] would come into wealth and honour and discover [his] character as a man" (Steffler 23). When he first sees the East Indiaman *Dodington*, which will transport him and his fellow recruits to Madras, Cartwright admires the ship's "superb

spirit" and her ability to rise above the "foul harbour water in which she was moored" (26). He is "eager to get to sea where such ships and such men as himself belonged" (26). Once at sea, however, Cartwright and his peers experience the extreme physical and ontological violence inherent not only to a six-month sea voyage, but to speculative finance and cosmopolitanism as well. The voyage to Madras is depicted as one where subjects of every kind are stripped of their territorial attachments and reformed as general types to be used in service of capital. For instance, Cartwright sees black slaves in Rio, chained up for transport, and is "mesmerized by their naked pliable-looking limbs, their amazing apathy. It was as though their souls had flown out of their captured bodies. . . . Bodies awaiting the will of their new owners" (32). This passage implies that spectral subjects are the natural and necessary result of an Atlantic voyage. Both the slaves and the blank-eyed convicts and paupers who make up the recruits onboard the *Dodington* are dehumanized by the ocean passage. As the *Dodington* approaches the African Cape, passengers and crew begin to die in large numbers, and are "dropped in the sea in their clothes" (35). Ultimately the ship itself becomes a phantom: it sails on "in a kind of delirium" (35) and enters the harbour at Bahia resembling a "ghost ship" (32). At the same time, the journey prepares Cartwright and his peers to participate in transnational forms of trade and imperialism. After several months, Cartwright reaches a "kind of equilibrium, brown, skinny, pleased with himself in spite of his weariness, as though he could sail on forever" (35). His ability to survive the voyage, as well as his changed physical experience, implies that Cartwright is now more at home at sea than on land.

While the passage to India constitutes a process wherein individual subjectivities are broken down and remade, it also permanently changes Cartwright's relationship to British space. While at sea, he is "stunned by the size of the earth" and comes to doubt "his memories of the land" (31). Water invades every mental image he carries with him of life at home: the hills above his family estate at Marnham are "merely painted on silk, a thin layer swaying over bottomless depths" (31). This "vision of the English countryside painted on imported cloth" not only "indicates an ambivalence, an uncertainty as to the source of" colonial authority, as Kathleen McConnell has argued (94); it also points to the ways in which English space can no longer be experienced as purely autonomous. The hills above Marnham no longer represent a rooted form of identity for Cartwright. Instead they are composed of a commodity object thinly layered over a body of water.

Cartwright's altered memories of his family's estate convey how imperialism irrevocably draws national spaces into interdependent relationships with other locales. This connection between national space, land, and textiles is one that Steffler returns to continuously throughout the novel.

Cartwright's sea voyage aboard the *Dodington* marks his separation from a British system of inheritance and his subsequent insertion into a British-dominated global trade network. He enters what Baucom has elsewhere termed a "representational economy of exchange," wherein the value of a commodity is not seen to be inherent in the object, but arises out of a belatedly proven agreement on its value (46). While in India, he briefly tries gambling, and joins the "many officers" who "bought and traded small gems, won them and lost them at cards, hoping through shrewd deals and good fortune to work their holding up to a few fine stones that would make them rich in England" (36). The British army's imperial activities allow individual officers to increase their fortunes at home—and thus subvert the constraints of inheritance laws—by speculating on the value of gems in India. Cartwright does not initially understand this system. He buys a very small diamond, which he is assured is of good quality, although "to him it looked like a piece of salt" (37). He is unable to see that the value of the diamond rests in its capacity for exchange, and not in the object itself. Cartwright stakes his diamond in a card game, but loses it. He repeats this process several times, before tiring of the "huddled showing of prizes, the fussy tension around private trunks and hiding places" (37). Cartwright's gambling ventures in Madras underscore that he has been separated from tangible, land-based forms of exchange and is now caught up in an emergent economy of trade and speculation.

Cartwright's tenure in India does not lead to the personal transformation that he envisioned. In contrast to the mobility and equilibrium that he experiences at sea, India is defined by stasis and confinement. This, the novel implies, is because India, for Cartwright, is already over-determined by imperialist and nationalist politics. Cartwright loathes the way that English mores have been transported to the colony in Madras, and, like the stiff "braid-loaded coat" he is forced to wear outside the army barracks, he finds the circuit of parties and gambling confining and wishes instead to escape into the hills west of Madras to hunt (40). In an experience of stopped time that echoes the stasis of his ghostly English purgatory, he lies on his cot during the hot afternoons and finds that cicadas have the "power to bring time to a standstill, the power even to turn it back" (44). This enduring sense

of confinement also affects Cartwright's experiences of the land. Gazing upon the Madras harbour from a ship as he departs for Ireland, Cartwright observes the "coast spread out gradually, the background hills rising into view, the same sight as when he arrived, but now articulate with names and associations in every feature. And yet aloof. The whole place awhirl with its own affairs, its feuds and imperatives. None of it paused to watch him go" (57). For Cartwright, the landscape of the Madras coast is unknowable, revealing a misalignment between the projects of individual self-realization and colonial success.

Cartwright's view of the coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador, and, later, his experiences of the land in the emergent colonies, is substantially different. After his first visit to Newfoundland in 1766, the landscape rearranges the "contents of Cartwright's brain" (90); in his view, its stark cliffs and glacial fjords surpass both the hills of Scotland and "India, with its thousands of princes and villages" (91). The Labrador coastline is even freer of political definition to him and, as such, more alluring to Cartwright; it strikes him as "prehistoric . . . the very beginning or the end of things" (110). Labrador represents the same kind of transnational, politically fluid space as the ocean. In fact, the Labradorian landscape is consistently described as an extension of the ocean. During his first winter in Labrador, Cartwright thinks of his cabin on the Charles River as a "ship, and the land and everything else open sea" (137). He seals cracks in the walls the way a "shipwright would caulk a hull," and marvels at Attuiock and his family as "people with gills who could live under water" (137). After their first winter in Labrador, Cartwright feels "as though he and his people were the ones who'd been on the ship, traveling for almost eight months, and had just now come ashore" (173). In viewing the land as a politically fluid, oceanic space, Cartwright ignores the local attachments and political inflections that the land carries for the Inuit people—but he views the land more as an *aqua nullius* than as a *terra nullius,* which, in the world of the novel, places Labrador within the same network that includes other nodes on the Atlantic. This experience of the land-as-sea appeals to Cartwright's newly mobile, cosmopolitan identity. Just as he achieved a kind of "equilibrium" aboard the *Dodington* (35), he enjoys the "juggling act" of making it through the harsh Labrador winters "like a sport," and feels that "those who came to Labrador and lacked this skill didn't deserve to survive" (245).

While the fluidity that Cartwright perceives in the Labradorian landscape allow him to develop a cosmopolitan sensibility, the language used to

describe his experiences on the land underscores how the territory is being drawn into networks of transnational trade. This process of entanglement is exemplified when Cartwright goes hunting after his first winter in Labrador. Luxuriating in the fecund, springtime landscape, Cartwright watches as the air "rippled quick rivers across the top of the land. Water and hills, water and hills, rising in tiers. Mirage. It was like being at sea again. The weave in the cloth of his trousers was the same, the thread-hairs gleaming prismatically, the pores and beaded seams in his hands" (178). Cartwright's experience of the land as distinctly aqueous speaks to the way in which its fluidity appeals to him and allows him to move through it with ease, in contrast to the confinement he has felt in previous, politically overdetermined spaces. But the fact that the plateau also resembles the "weave in the cloth of his trousers" recalls the connection between textile and landscape introduced during his voyage aboard the *Dodington*. On the one hand, the land is an extension of the ocean. On the other, it resembles a textile, and so is drawn into a metaphorical language of commodity exchange. This speaks to the literal ways in which Cartwright is, at this point in the novel, bringing both the Inuit people he trades with and their land into transatlantic trade networks. In order to pay their debts, during his first winter in Labrador, Cartwright's business partner Francis Lucas uses their ship to transport fish to Portugal, and wine and cloth to the Caribbean, before returning to Labrador with sugar and rum (123). The passage referenced above emphasizes that Cartwright's ecstatic experiences of the land in Labrador are, in fact, underpinned by triangular trade.

Despite his initial success in Labrador, Steffler's Cartwright proves unable to escape nation-state politics and is ultimately defeated by an emergent form of American power, which, the novel suggests, is both viable and reproducible, in contrast to declining British power. Steffler illustrates this at the level of both plot and metaphor by representing Cartwright's financial ruin at the hands of American privateers,[4] and by depicting Mrs. Selby as a symbol of American republicanism. Cartwright is initially drawn to Mrs. Selby because, like him, she wishes to cut ties with England. However, unlike Cartwright, Mrs. Selby is even less invested in systems of landed capital and seeks to escape the predetermined roles that English society has laid out for her. "A woman is either married or a governess or a burdensome spinster," she tells him (104). When Cartwright looks into her eyes, he sees "something as plain as water around rocks at the edge of a lake. Something sufficient in itself with which he could do nothing" (10). Perhaps due to

her lack of investment in the British system, Mrs. Selby takes to commerce in Labrador even more readily than Cartwright does; he discovers that she is highly effective at trading with the Inuit people and succeeds in multiplying her earnings several times (177). Mrs. Selby begins to echo the ideals of American republicanism when she urges Cartwright to cut "ties with England, with investors and estates" (191). Later, her growing, pregnant body is explicitly linked to the nascent American republic. Her pregnancy falls directly after the privateers' invasion, and Cartwright views the two events as intimately connected: "She was business, fortune, family, estate, all in herself, all in her swelling middle. Her self-containment annoyed him; what she was harbouring filled him with dread. It was another defeat for him, another loss added to all his losses, his debts, his entrapments and obligations." (259). Mrs. Selby embodies, in her "swelling middle," the ideals of the American Revolution, which was premised foremost on the extinguishment of aristocratic privilege. Her pregnant body also represents, for Cartwright, a more personal defeat, since he soon learns that the child is not his, but belongs to Daubeny, his headman. While this first child does not survive, Cartwright learns, after his return to England, that Mrs. Selby and Daubeny have returned to America and had two more children together (276). In contrast, Mrs. Selby and Cartwright have no children together throughout the course of their long affair. This is ostensibly due to Cartwright's use of a sheath, which Steffler describes in comically elaborate detail (160), but it also suggests that Cartwright is incapable of continuing his family line. Mrs. Selby's character, which embodies a certain form of republican nationalism premised on speculation that can effectively be reproduced, implies both the potential impotence of British aristocratic feudalism and the viability of the American state as a political project. As such, the novel does not dispense with the idea of nationalism entirely. However, the events of the novel's conclusion, as well as Cartwright's experiences as a ghost, suggest that nationalist conceptions of territoriality are always underpinned by outside forces.

Along with the rise of American power, the novel implies that what leads to Cartwright's defeat in Labrador is his unwillingness to completely cut ties with a British system of landed capital premised on family inheritance. In essence, while he tries to take on a cosmopolitan identity in the fluid, transnational space of the Labradorian landscape, he remains tied to his family estate. Writing in his journal as a ghost, he reflects: "In a way my life was a continuous effort to earn the estate at Marnham and restore the old

family" (71). At the same time, the British authority he relies on is shown to be largely impotent in the latter half of the novel. This is demonstrated by two scenes wherein Cartwright puts on a military uniform only to discover that instead of transmitting an image of authority, it conveys only its opposite. When he court-martials Daubeny and Mrs. Selby after discovering their affair, he dons an old soldier's coat, a wig, and boots. As Renée Hulan proposes in her afterword to the novel, Cartwright's "shabbiness [in this scene] gives the proceedings a ridiculous, makeshift air and emphasizes its futility," while the "defiance of the lovers demonstrates the ironic impotence of British custom and law" in Labrador (292). After his return to England, having lost his claim to military and imperial forms of power, Cartwright joins the Nottinghamshire militia, and begins to *perform* British authority rather than really inhabit it. "I became almost florid, almost theatrical, with my uniform and my fine voice," he recalls (276). And yet he also understands that this performance carries nothing underneath it; that British authority has decayed and is now premised on the fiction of its own existence. "I was a piece of human regalia, a mascot, a ceremonial mace" (276). When contrasted to the emergent form of American power symbolized by Mrs. Selby, the empty form of British authority that Cartwright embodies demonstrates that *Afterlife* surpasses Britain's imperial century by foreshadowing the American global dominance that would coalesce in the years following World War I and reach its apex in the 1990s. In this sense, then, the novel depicts what Baucom describes as the "long twentieth century" (22), wherein the late-twentieth century repeats the late-eighteenth.

This historical time lag, wherein American hegemony of the late-twentieth century bypasses the British authority of the nineteenth, is repeated in Cartwright's afterlife. In the novel, Cartwright's unwillingness to fully detach himself from his landed British roots results in his being confined to a static, hyperlocalized present. The landscape through which Cartwright hunts is "fragrant, dizzy with bees," and redolent with sparrows splashing in "puddled wagon tracks," surrounded by endless empty pastures replete with game (1). This is an afterlife that Cartwright finds relentlessly boring, primarily because it is characterized by unchanging weather, which is "forever perfect, at the peak of May" (72). Cartwright's fictional journal entries from Labrador note the variability of the weather there—"N.W. moderate" (164), "S.E. strong" (165)—while the monotony of his afterlife is marked by the same date and conditions in each entry: "1819. May. Wednesday 19. Wind S.W. Light" (23). Cartwright misses weather primarily because it signifies

change and movement. "It's the language of the past that speaks directly to our minds without our even knowing it," he writes, "it's a traveller, more familiar than any uncle, any brother or friend. It's always gathering as it goes. Always eager to leave, to see something beyond, to have an effect" (72). Weather, in short, conforms to Cartwright's best idea of himself: it is closer to him than kin, and it represents his lifelong desire to explore, to be uprooted, to see new locales. The lack of weather he experiences in his afterlife more closely resembles the hot, static afternoons he experienced in Madras (44) than the "the air bursting with nerves, the ocean above, all that has ever lived condensed in a wind" which distinguished the weather in Labrador and which Cartwright comes to crave as a ghost (72).

At the same time, Cartwright's ghostly experiences of the English countryside solidify the connections between land, sea, and textile that are present during his lifetime travels in a more attenuated form. While he is confined to a stylized and uncanny version of the local, Cartwright experiences this local, quintessentially English space as dependent on the same trade networks that encompassed Madras, Minorca, and Rio. While the forest and fields of his purgatory are superficially perfect, the landscape also appears hostile. The pastures before him have an "annoying emptiness, a posed neutrality, like camouflage, like the backs of hands concealing a face" (94). This anthropomorphized scenery recalls the "aloof" hills of Madras (57) and Labrador's coast, which reminds Cartwright of "creatures huddled and hiding their faces" (110). This is a profoundly different experience of the English landscape than, for example, that described by Susanna Moodie when she laments having to leave England just as "the glory of May was upon the earth" with woods "bursting into leaf" and "every grove and copsewood echoed to the warblings of birds and the humming of bees" (48). The "posed neutrality" of the landscape is also occasionally shown to be concealing overtly sinister forces of industrialization. Cartwright sees "black plumes" of smoke from "coal mines, cloth mills, [and] breweries" (20) in the skies above the pastures where he hunts. These "glimpsed billows and skeins often seem to detach themselves from their settings and come after him" and transform into "faces of shapeless banshee women, black rags streaming" (20), which echo Cartwright's sea-voyage recollection of the "hills above Marnham" being merely "painted on silk, a thin layer swaying over bottomless depths" (31). Whereas the latter image, of painted silks, implies that British space is not entirely autonomous, the former, of billows of smoke that turn into streaming black rags, exemplifies the way in which British space

has become degraded within the isolated contemporary moment in which Cartwright now operates.

While Cartwright's afterlife contains occasional ruptures that reveal the pastoral landscape's degradation at the hands of global industrialisation, it also contains the seeds of an ethical stance to history. In short, *Afterlife* shows an investment in series of oceanic images that connect Cartwright's purgatory to a counter-discourse of cosmopolitanism, which recognizes the Atlantic as the "alluvial bed of modernity" (Baucom 318). Steffler draws on this metaphoric Atlantic economy when depicting the surfacing of the repressed memory of the novel's central traumatic event. In 1773, the historical Cartwright took an Inuit family to England.[5] They each caught smallpox, and the only survivor was a woman named Caubvik. In *Afterlife*, Caubvik returns to Labrador with Cartwright and spreads the illness to her community, to catastrophic effect. Cartwright believes the source of this illness to be Caubvik's "pestilent hair," which he tries to throw into the sea on their return voyage (20). As a ghost, Cartwright dreams of this event in language that resonates with Baucom's interested, Atlantic form of cosmopolitanism, an ethico-political posture that links a "global philosophy of temporal accumulation" to distinct images: the "image of the slave ship" and the "image of the drowning slave" (321). The language used to describe Cartwright's vision of Caubvik appears to reference such images. Fearing that he has condemned Caubvik to a "watery jail," Cartwright pictures her "confronting him, under water, in a blackish green light, her hair longer than ever, floating out from her colourless face, her grin already devouring him before they had touched. Her hands, broken, her fingers lopped off and bleeding as she reached for him" (170). Caubvik's condemnation to a "watery jail" echoes several other postcolonial texts that draw on the Atlantic as a source of trauma and metaphor, including the "black space" of the undersea ship's cabin found in J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* (156), as well as Lawrence Hill's *The Book of Negroes* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Instead of being a "Canadian settler ghost," as Sugars contends he is (712), Cartwright is rather an Atlantic cosmopolitan ghost, who is himself haunted by the specters of slavery and Indigenous dispossession. In this moment, then, the text gestures to the ways in which the Inuit people have also been drawn into and affected by Atlantic modernity.

The novel displays the connection between transatlantic trade, violence, and national space by drawing on an Atlantic language of historical trauma. Ultimately, however, *Afterlife* affirms a different kind of speculative

cosmopolitanism by relieving Cartwright from his purgatory in bounded territoriality. This is shown through Cartwright's power of vision, which grows stronger and stronger as the novel progresses. As a ghost, Cartwright is a kind of animal-human hybrid, and is able to occupy his hawk's body and fly above the English landscape where he hunts. For most of his afterlife, his vision is confined to Nottinghamshire (10), which fits in with his imprisonment within local space. Eventually, as he continues to reflect on his life, he is able to see more of the English countryside—"Crewe, Chester, the Cambrian mountains"—and beyond, to the Atlantic and the spruce forests of Newfoundland (95). Finally, at the end of the novel, he rises up into the sky and flies over the Atlantic, back to Labrador.

While the novel's final scene, wherein Cartwright dies, again, after being eaten by a polar bear, has been the focus of much critical attention,[6] the means by which Cartwright arrives at this second death is equally significant. His passage across the Atlantic finally affords him the power of vision that he has been longing for throughout the course of his life and death:

> To the west are the Gannet Islands, the black humps of Labrador. He has never seen them like this before. Sandwich Bay and the Lookout are right below him, Maria's grave, the small cairn just as they'd left it, the roof of Caribou Castle . . . across the bay the mouth of the Eagle River opens and he glides up its valley, strangely, without Thoroton now, the river passing like a black silk scarf shot with white thread. (285)

From his vantage point high above the land, Cartwright is afforded a panoptic vision of England, the Atlantic, and Labrador that surpasses even the ecstatic encounters he had with the land while alive. Importantly, however, the way he experiences this vision recalls his prior experiences that underscored the land's interconnection with other places and forces. The river which passes below him "like a black silk scarf shot with white thread" echoes the multiple connections throughout the novel between land and textiles, compromising the purity of this disinterested power of vision. McConnell argues that here Cartwright is still "trying to impose a technological order on the wilderness," but that in the death scene which follows he finally stops "trying to fill the wilderness with reason" and achieves a genuine form of release (107). However, this moment is also highly constructed. Cartwright is not so much devoured as painted *out* of the scene, as the bear that eats him paints "the river, the glittering trees in" (286). So even as the novel struggles towards a disinterested view-from-without, it consistently undercuts this and shows it to be a fantasy. The fantasy of a cosmopolitanism that is distinct

from economic ties and national attachments, the experience of a pure deracination, the novel implies, will always remain exactly that.

To return to the preoccupations that opened this paper: what, then, are the wider methodological implications of reading Steffler's novel transnationally? Tracking Cartwright's travel, his desire for a deracinated experience of land, and, finally, the novel's ultimate refusal to give in to such a desire, reorients the Labradorian (and, by extension, Canadian) landscape in Steffler's novel and Cartwright's position within it. Contrary to Northrop Frye's famous assertion that Canada has no "Atlantic seaboard" and is thus divorced from the "English-speaking community of the North Atlantic that had London and Edinburgh on one side of it and Boston and Philadelphia on the other" (219), Steffler's novel shows how the national imaginary—and the literary landscapes found within it—is implicated in transatlantic networks of trade, capital, and speculation. Just as the "Cotton to Gold" exhibit referenced at the start of this essay unwittingly made plain the ways in which Turner's seascapes are implicated in Atlantic histories of speculation and dispossession, Steffler's novel shows the ways that the historical Cartwright's journals are unavoidably situated in those same networks. Cartwright's experience of an enduring present and its foreshadowing of American hegemony at the end of the eighteenth century underscores how these networks continue to shape contemporary discourses of cosmopolitanism. These anxieties can be contextualized in terms of *Afterlife*'s publication in 1992, in the midst of national debates about the North American Free Trade Agreement (which was ratified in 1994) and Canadian sovereignty in the face of American cultural and economic dominance. In this sense, Cartwright's final flight across the Atlantic is expressive of a desire for a cosmopolitan future in which, as Jonathan Rée puts it, "people could interpret themselves without any reference to the idea that their nation is their self" (88), and a concomitant awareness of Atlantic modernity's enduring networks and attachments. As the novel's final image suggests, if the fantasy of such detachment persists throughout the long twentieth century, so too do its underlying structures of speculative violence.

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NOTES

1 I use the first-person plural pronoun because I approach this text as a settler, as do many of the critics I cite here. For more on *Afterlife*'s intended readership, see Sugars (714).

2 This framing of Steffler's text in Canadian nationalist terms has also largely influenced whether critics condemn or celebrate it. Joan Strong argues that Steffler inserts a critical voice within his fictional depiction of Cartwright's journals in the form of Mrs. Selby and thus places the reader too easily outside the difficult questions of "locating the colonizer-creature within ourselves" (113). Herb Wyile also finds the novel troublesome, concluding that it "inscribes the desire to reverse history, to paint the colonizer out of the scene both literally as well as figuratively" (186).

3 Marlene Goldman addresses the legacy of slavery in Steffler's novel, and argues that the figure of the "slave plagues Cartwright's imagination and Steffler's text as a whole" (75). My analysis departs from hers, however, in asserting that Steffler's text investigates how specific forms of knowledge legitimized both cosmopolitanism and slavery.

4 In 1778, during the American Revolution, privateers from Boston raided the Sandwich Bay settlement and stole 14,000 pounds worth of goods. While this was a devastating loss for Cartwright, it did not ruin him financially, since he returned to Labrador several more times before retiring permanently in 1788 (see Kennedy 88-93). However, in Steffler's novel, the American raid effectively ends Cartwright's operation, suggesting that this event carries more symbolic weight for *Afterlife* than it did historically.

5 As one reviewer of this essay pointed out, Cartwright brings Attuiock's family with him to use them as leverage with the Board of Trade in London; he anticipates that the "attention he'd win with the Inuit's company would make him the leading figure in Labrador trade" (194).

6 Some critics, such as Robert Stacey, critique this scene for being historically revisionist (723), while others, like Sugars, focus on its more stylized aspects to demonstrate why it is an example of colonial ambivalence (715).

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Cassidy McFadzean

In the Forest After Brecht

You can't write poems about trees when the woods are full of policemen
—Bertolt Brecht

Somewhere's a frond,
a leaf green beneath a canopy
of deciduous trees in the colonies,

blades jackknifed under jack pines,
in places the settlers occupied.
Ferns shied away from our fingers' touch,

from humans and our taxonomy.
Some we called Mimosa Pudica,
the shrinking, sensitive plant,

one that closes its bashful leaves
and uncurls in ten to fifteen minutes.
once the unpleasantness proceeds.

Its shyness is only momentary,
the passing glimpse of a lunar eclipse,
a vision that disturbs us, then languishes.

Sometimes grazing the fern with fingers
fans it, its lapsing. Sometimes it closes
from the heat of a forest in flames.

When policemen entered the woods,
did you stop running to record
the fern's peaceful curl?

Do you, too, write poems about trees
when the woods are full of policemen?
Were you running at all? Did you see?

In childhood I found a quiet place,
untouched by drought, the noxious
scent of gunpowder, sheltered from heat.

I sat there in the woods a while,
and wrote what I'd seen: the forest
casting a canopy I was shadowed beneath.

I saw there in the trunk of a fallen tree
a fern growing, its delicate blades
paper-thin, stretching to sunlight.

When I reached out to touch it,
its blades recoiled away from me,
withering at their slight ends.

I waited the time it would take
for the fern to uncurl,
and the forest to feed its roots.

When it didn't, I closed my eyes too,
and peeked every few seconds to see
if the world would again open itself to me

All that appeared was the shape of its leaves,
light-reflecting chlorophyll green,
which I saw then as beauty— not pain.

When I close my eyes,
who watches me? Who's writing
poems about trees?

Somewhere is a fern turning away
from the forest set in flames.
Somewhere police are murdering

unarmed black men and women.
In Baltimore, where a cop car burns,
steel folding like a fern.

When each citizen's eyes close,
who's watching then,
who's waiting to see?

Can you describe a fern
while the forest burns?
Can you see the fire through the leaves?

Kristina Getz

"Big About Green"
The Ecopoetry of Earle Birney

In an interview in 1983, Canadian poet Earle Birney reflected on his past interest in Marxist ideologies, his youthful idealism, and his eventual disengagement from socialist activism, concluding: "Now, I'm much more of a cynic. I don't know what the hell can improve the human race. I don't know whether the human race ought to survive. I have a high regard for the world of whales and dolphins. Maybe that's where the real innocent people are. The smart people are under the sea" (qtd. in Edwards 127). While Birney's celebration of marine life was perhaps intended humorously or sardonically, his comment reveals a profound ambivalence about the future and a deep unease with humanity's relationship to nature and the environment. Indeed, a great deal of Birney's poetry is set in the Canadian wilderness and engages with the natural world on a variety of thematic and symbolic levels.

In the context of Canadian literature, Birney's engagement with nature is certainly not unusual. Ella Soper and Nicholas Bradley argue that "[v]irtually from the inception of the notion of a Canadian national literature, nature has occupied a central place in critical conversations" (xvii). As countless critics have noted, considering the imposing vastness of the Canadian landscape and its often harsh northern climate, it is not surprising that Canada's literature is suffused with renderings of the natural world (Frye, "Canada" 93-96; Atwood 17-18). However, Birney's ecopoetic explorations of the complex relationship between humanity and nature, and the impact of human industry and the machinations of modernity on the natural world, remain largely unaddressed in existing literary criticism. Birney's poetry presents a relationship between humanity and the natural world that is not only fraught with tension, conflict, and destruction, but which reveals a political

and ecological ethos that anticipates and foreshadows the environmentalist movement of the later twentieth century.[1] While Birney's ecopoetry certainly participates in long-established Canadian literary preoccupations with the natural world, what distinguishes Birney's work is a uniquely anti-capitalist, environmentalist discourse that not only laments the destruction wrought by modern, industrial development, but which actively invites an explicitly leftist, ecocritical reading.

This paper takes into consideration eight of Birney's poems (and their occasionally extensive revisions) that are most emblematic of his ecological ethos. Such ethos, I argue, is related to his well-documented socialism and is manifested in his poetry via recurrent anti-capitalist critiques of industrialism, a preoccupation with the human destruction of the natural world, prevalent motifs of apocalypse, and an anti-colonial focus on the experience of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Furthermore, his extensive revisions of a number of the earliest poems in question often function to highlight his developing environmentalist approach.[2] The eight poems considered here are among Birney's most ecocriticially motivated; that is to say, while much of his poetry engages with the natural world and the landscape metaphorically and symbolically, the following poems mobilize a particular ecological ethics characterized by a political critique of destructive capitalism and colonialism. The sequencing of my analysis is organized by the first publication date of each poem: 1947 in the case of the first versions of "Man is a Snow," "Transcontinental," and "North of Superior"; 1953 for the first of the "Ellesemereland" trilogy and its sequels in 1965 and 1985;[3] and concluding with "The Shapers: Vancouver" in 1970 and "What's So Big About Green?" in 1971.[4] This chronological approach demonstrates Birney's sustained ecocritical preoccupations which culminate in the publication of his most boldly environmentalist collection, *What's So Big About Green?*, in 1971, but endure until almost the very end of his poetic career with the publication of "Ellesmereland III" in 1985.

"Big About Green": An Ecocritical Approach

Bringing ecocriticism to bear on Birney's modernist poetry provides a contemporary re-reading and re-contextualization that unearths the environmental politics at work in his oeuvre. In 1989, Larry McDonald explored the endemic critical silencing of leftist politics in the texts and biographies of some of the most prominent Canadian modernists. In his article on political influence, McDonald argues that "a historical and

methodological bias against the influence of politics on writing may have led us to misread these writers and re-present them . . . in such a way as to repress the political dimension of their writing" (426). Indeed, Birney's most prominent biographer, Elspeth Cameron, appears to downplay his political activism in her summary observation that "[h]e remained a naïve visionary until the end: easily galvanized into action for goals he idealized and just as easily disenchanted by mankind's inefficiencies and fallibilities in realizing them" (xi-xii). Having said that, she does later concede that "[b]ecause of his political engagement, his poems were seldom art for art's sake," further speculating that "he wrote to share his disillusionment, to register his frequently sardonic observations on life and to caution humanity at large against the future consequences of present actions" (556). Contrary to Cameron's tangential approach to Birney's political activism, McDonald presents a detailed account of Birney's involvement with Marxism and Trotskyism throughout the 1930s, which included his soliciting of socialist writing as literary editor of *Canadian Forum*, publishing propagandistic literature, and interviewing Leon Trotsky himself (426-27). While McDonald does not directly introduce these biographical facts into any analysis of Birney's poetry or fiction, he does note that a typical encyclopedic biography of Birney reveals a "[s]ilence on the question of [his] Trotskyist decade [that] is complemented by a summary of his importance that has nothing to say about the radical social critique in his poems" (429). McDonald does not detail Birney's specific "radical social critiques," but does observe that critics have been in the habit of "discounting, dismissing or rescuing . . . poets from the political dimension in their writing" (429).

Frank Davey, however, in 1971 provided a brief sketch of the political rhetoric in Birney's poems, noting the anti-war stance of his first two collections, his focus on social injustice in Latin America in some later work, and his concern with "environmental destruction and pollution" (77). Exploring Birney's poetry through the lens of ecocritical theory here, I build on Davey's brief observations from 1971 and resist the approach that tends to silence leftist politics. My assertion is that Birney was a politically motivated, eco-socialist[5] poet whose work highlights Western industrial capitalism's destructive and disastrous disregard for the natural world, from the colonial to the contemporary era. While his overt political involvement with Marxism and Trotskyism may have been limited to the 1930s, an ecocritical consideration of his poetry from the 1940s to the 1980s suggests that much of Birney's socialist and occasionally propagandistic preoccupations persisted. A great deal of Birney's ecopoetry

antedates and anticipates the environmentalist movement of the mid- to late-twentieth century. While Greg Garrard states that "modern environmentalism begins with . . . [American writer] Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*" in 1962 (1), most of Birney's ecopoetry was composed and revised between 1926 and 1973,[6] with just one final ecopoem published in 1985.

The emergence of ecopoetry within many national contexts correlates with an increased social awareness of "problems such as overpopulation, species extinction, pollution, global warming, and ozone depletion" (Bryson 1). While critics have developed a number of definitions of ecological criticism and ecological poetics (with varying degrees of specificity), for the purposes of examining Birney's work, J. Scott Bryson's multifaceted approach is particularly productive as it allows for a multiplicity of ecocritical lenses to capture the complexity of Birney's environmentalism. Bryson positions ecopoetry as a "subset of nature poetry that, while adhering to certain conventions of romanticism, also advances beyond that tradition and takes on distinctly contemporary problems and issues" (5). He argues that ecopoetry is characterized by three defining features: an "emphasis on maintaining an ecocentric perspective that recognizes the interdependent nature of the world . . . [which] leads to a devotion to specific places and to the land itself, along with those creatures that share it with humankind" (5-6); "an imperative towards humility in relationships with both human and nonhuman nature" (6); and finally, "an intense skepticism concerning hyperrationality, . . . [which] usually leads to an indictment of an overtechnologized modern world and a warning concerning the very real potential for ecological catastrophe" (6). While each of Birney's ecopoems do not necessarily engage with all three of Bryson's definitions simultaneously, these characteristics provide a framework of interrelated concerns through which Birney's work can be approached in order to reveal its underlying environmentalist imperative.

Furthermore, Scott Knickerbocker asserts that "conventional ecopoetry . . . relies on the experiential, authorial presence of the poet-prophet figure who . . . wants to affect his audience ethically" (9). In this vein, an ecocritical approach to Birney's poetry also unearths the ethical dimension of his work, and the extent to which Birney mobilized the literary aesthetic of lyric poetry to advance an environmentalist ethic. In fact, Knickerbocker notes that "[e]cological poetry posits a relationship between ethics and aesthetics. Poems best succeed at awakening one to the natural world through the emotive and rhetorical power they have over readers" (3). On a related note, D. M. R. Bentley observes that "it is essential for the practice

of an ecological poetic that it be accompanied by a moral awareness born of sensitivity to the grave danger that post-Renaissance man has come to pose to himself and other living things" (89). As the following analysis of Birney's ecopoetry demonstrates, Birney was a poet keenly attuned to both the moral dimensions of modern, industrial capitalism's impact on the environment and First Nations communities, and the frightening prospect of catastrophic ecological destruction.

1947: Prescient Environmentalism

In critiquing human industry's impact on the environment, three of Birney's poems from 1947, "North of Superior," "Man is a Snow," and "Transcontinental," embody a prescient environmentalism through an apocalyptic engagement with industrialized, capitalist exploitation of the Canadian landscape.

Ecological Ground Zero: "North of Superior"

That "North of Superior" was chosen as the opening poem of Birney's posthumous compilation, *One Muddy Hand*, signals its importance in his oeuvre. The poem first appeared in *Contemporary Verse* in 1947 and, for a poet known for his frequent revising and editing, the poem remains strikingly unchanged from its original version (with the exception of minor edits in punctuation) (*Selected Poems* 112). This lack of editing over the decades subsequent to its original appearance reveals a consistency in Birney's ecological focus. When the poem begins, Canada is an environment free of human industry, toil or history: "Not here the ballad or the human story / the Scylding boaster or the water-troll / not here the mind" (*One Muddy* 23). It is a land occupied by "only the soundless fugues / of stone and leaf and lake" (23). As Garrard maintains, "[t]he idea of wilderness, signifying nature in a state uncontaminated by civilization, is the most potent construction of nature available to New World environmentalism" (66). In presenting the landscape as uninhabited and untouched, Birney creates a metaphorical "ground zero" for his ecopoetics, as well as a colonialist erasure of Indigenous peoples.

As the poem unfolds, Birney hints at the presence of Indigenous peoples when he writes of "some lost Algonquin woo[ing] / a dream that came and vanished here" (*One Muddy* 23), but in the very same lines, he simultaneously enacts a problematic erasure; the lone Indigenous figure is both "lost" and "vanished" (23). Furthermore, to reflect that "none alive / or dead has cast Excalibur into / these depths" (23) and "no mute or glorious / Milton finds

Azazel here" (24) is to suggest that the Indigenous people who historically occupied the Northern Ontario landscape brought to it neither society, history, nor culture. As Davey observes, in "North of Superior" Birney "asserts that Canada's landscape is devoid of myth and uninformed by legend, religion, history, or literature" (85). Birney is participating in what has now become a tired trope, that of Indigenous peoples as either "idealized 'noble savages' or as savages pure and simple . . . [who] have historically been reduced to a mere feature in the pastoral landscape or even eliminated from it" (Garrard 61). At best, Indigenous peoples "have been represented as dwelling in harmony with nature, sustaining one of the most widespread and seductive myths of the non-European 'other'. The assumption of indigenous environmental virtue is a foundational belief for . . . many ecocritics" (129). In mobilizing these established tropes of environmentally harmonious indigeneity, Birney seems to be attempting to envision a landscape from a more idyllic, pre-colonial past, where the only European encroachment is in the form of a "mute prospector" who "lopes . . . through the dead / and leprous-fingered birch" (*One Muddy* 23). This prospector is, of course, a portentous sign of the modern, technological invasion that has yet to make its arrival, and it is undoubtedly with some irony that Birney describes the narrator as "the guilty poet flying" across the landscape on a "CPR Train," as that is where the original composition of the poem took place in 1926 (24). However, it is with this vision of an unoccupied landscape with "[t]he swordless rock the heavenless air and land" (24) that one embarks on Birney's ecopoetic journey.

Apocalyptic Critique: "Man is a Snow" and "Transcontinental"

In contrast to the idyll nostalgically (or tragically) recalled in "North of Superior," Birney suggests a much more problematic relationship with the natural world in "Man is a Snow." One of Birney's most cynical poems concerning human nature and our relationship with the environment, "Man is a Snow" was first published in 1947 in *Queen's Quarterly*, substantially revised for inclusion in 1948's *Strait of Anian,* and altered once again for *Collected Poems* in 1966 (Lecker and David 32-33). In its final iteration, the poem articulates an apocalyptic vision of the human impact on the environment, while earlier versions reflected an anti-colonialist perspective. The first 1947 version, for example, critiques the colonialization of Indigenous peoples in Canada in a stanza that was subsequently deleted: "We are more than the Indians, / no greater, and torture / their history and horses / to make

a tourists' rodeo" ("Man" 172). Birney's revisions over almost twenty years function to hone and clarify his ecological focus, while the poem's consistent, unaltered title conflates (European) "man" with the descent of an arctic and deathly cold upon the landscape.

Where humanity is conjured, it is figured as a destructive force, not only sending "timber swooning to death / in the shock of the saw's bright whine," but planting soldiers' corpses beneath "a nursery of crosses abroad" (*One Muddy* 54). Birney's invocation of the war dead through the ironic image of a "nursery of crosses" invites a dualistic interpretation of the "nursery" as either garden or infant's room. In both cases, though, what is normally a space for growth and promise is now a site of mourning and loss. As the poem unfolds, Birney's invocation of war takes its place alongside a broader condemnation of human folly, whose selfishness is to blame for "the harvest mildewed in doubt / and the starved in the hour of our hoarding" (55). These two lines once again hint at Birney's socialist ecology, where "scarcity is not simply an objective fact about the natural world, but a function of the will and means of capital" (Garrard 31). Indeed, humanity's capacity for selfishness and destruction goes beyond the pollution of the environment, but comes full circle to a wanton self-annihilation: "not the rivers we foul but our blood / o cold and more devious rushing" (*One Muddy* 55).

The third stanza, from which the title is taken, begins as follows: "Man is a snow[7] that cracks / the trees' red resinous arches / and winters the cabined heart" (55). The red resin of the second line is suggestive once again of blood, war, and violence, and the enclosed heart connotes a disconnection from emotion and compassion. There is no hope in the end, simply more violence as "the chilled nail shrinks in the wall / and pistols the brittle air" (55), and a suggestion of apocalypse concludes the poem, with "frost like ferns of the world that is lost / unfurl[ing] on the darkening window" (55). Of the prevalence of apocalyptic imagery in environmentalist literature, Lawrence Buell has suggested that

> [a]pocalypse is the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal. Of no other dimension of contemporary environmentalism . . . can it be so unequivocally said that the role of the imagination is central to the project; for the rhetoric of apocalypticism implies that the fate of the world hinges on the arousal of the imagination to a sense of crisis. (285)

The "ferns of the world that is lost" in the penultimate line of Birney's "Man is a Snow" suggests a mourning for the verdant green of a younger

planet, and the "frost . . . unfurl[ing] on the darkening window" takes on the haunted spectre of a once-living thing. Birney seems to suggest that the possibility of redemption or return is entirely lost in the encroaching darkness. It is interesting to note the poem's original opening lines in this particular context, which were deleted in a 1966 revision: "I tell you the wilderness we fell / is nothing to the one we breed" ("Man" 172). The anarchy and destruction borne of human settlement and industrial development thus dwarf the wild chaos of the natural world. Birney mobilizes images of war, violence, and apocalypse to cultivate his ecological critique of humanity's fraught relationship with the environment.

Like "Man is a Snow," "Transcontinental" underwent significant revisions over the twenty years following its first publication. Laurence Steven analyzed Birney's extensive revisions of both poems in a 1981 article, suggesting that in each case, the changes in syntax, diction, and structure reveal a tendency "toward broadening the perspective, [and] toward expanding the poetic canvas to include more of the possibilities of life" (Steven n. pag.). While Steven's thesis is not focused on the ecocritical per se, he does observe that "Transcontinental," in its various iterations, is preoccupied with what he terms "man's rape of nature" (n. pag.). Among the most significant of the poem's revisions—including its title, which was originally "New Brunswick"—is its widened imagistic lens that opens to take in the entire North American continent rather than just the East Coast (Steven n. pag.). Steven notes the shift in "poetic stance from 'your' and 'you' to 'our' and 'us'" in subsequent revisions, a change in perspective that acknowledges the speaker's own complicity in the environmental destruction that is chronicled in the poem (n. pag.). Both the original and the final versions, however, employ the motif of a transcontinental railcar "[c]rawling across this sometime garden" with its occupants in "trainbeds like clever nits / in a plush caterpillar" (*One Muddy* 48). The poem figures the landscape as a female Mother Earth, and implores the reader to "behold this great green girl grown sick / with man sick with the likes of us . . ." (48). It acknowledges the impact that modernity and human industry have had on the landscape, and the toll they are taking on the earth's fragile ecosystem.

Birney describes the female earth in diseased, human terms, with "[t]oes mottled long ago by soak of seaports / ankles rashed with stubble / belly papulous with stumps" (48). It is an ailing earth, besieged by "maggoting miners / [who] still bore her bones to feed our crawling host," and with "the scum of tugs upon her lakeblue eyes" (48). Meanwhile, the human occupants of

the train seem unaware of the ecological devastation and are instead distracted by their "dazzle of magazines," even as Birney implores them to "consider the scars across [the earth's] breasts / . . . / in the doze between our magazines" (48). While Frye noted that "[n]ature is consistently sinister and menacing in Canadian poetry" ("Canada" 96), in Birney's "Transcontinental," it is humanity that presents the true menace, with nature positioned as the victim of our various assaults. As Atwood remarks in her analysis of "Transcontinental," "it is increasingly obvious to some writers that man is now more destructive towards [n]ature than [n]ature can be towards man" (28-29). And indeed, Birney explicitly laments the impact of human industry on Mother Earth: "For certainly she is ill her skin / is creased with our coming and going / and we trail in her face the dark breath of her dooming" (*One Muddy* 48). The exhaust from the train engine is an ominous portent of death, and Birney's invocation of various forms of industry and economic development, from the "maggoting miners" to "the scum of tugs" along the ports (48), presents a critique of the modern industrial machine that powers capitalist growth.

It is impossible not to consider Birney's leftist politics in this context, and not to interpret his environmentalist position as eco-socialist, an approach which posits, as Garrard explains, that it is the economic system of capitalism that is to blame for environmental degradation and resource scarcity (31). Certainly, Birney is critical of the capitalist industries that are "clogging logs within [the earth's] blood" in search of profit and expansion (*One Muddy* 48). And while he does not provide an explicit, particular socialist solution to the current environmental decay he witnesses as a result of capitalist endeavor, the final stanza *does* suggest that delivering a solution lies within our capacity:

> She is too big and strong perhaps to die
> of this disease but she grows quickly old
> this lady old with us—
> nor have we any antibodies for her aid
> except our own. (48)

Birney's revisions are of interest here, as they reveal a marked movement towards the possibility of a more hopeful future. In the original 1947 and 1948 versions, the poem concludes on a decidedly more cynical note:

> I think she is too big and strong to die
> of this disease, but she grows quickly old,
> this lady, old with you,
> nor have you any medicine to aid
> except the speck of lime you will bequeath her. (*Strait of Anian* 6)

In its original conception, the poem's conclusion offers no possibility to counteract the ecological destruction set in motion; the only contribution an individual can make is through the biochemistry of their eventually rotting corpse. Steven suggests this pessimistic perspective is one of many flaws present in the poem's earlier iterations, as it reveals an "attitude to man [that] is simply one of sarcasm and disgust," a poetic stance that leaves the poem's reader with "no avenue through which to change the situation" (n. pag.).

Birney's edits, however, undertaken for the poem's inclusion in his 1966 *Selected Poems*, provide a glimmer of hope for the possibility of change, provided we are willing to recognize it and act upon it. While Birney does not specify precisely which "antibodies" of "our own" we should employ as a means to remedy the earth's degradation, he certainly appears to have decided that humanity has more to offer than our corpses; he suggests that the problem of environmental destruction is in our hands to fix. As Atwood suggests, "Birney's conclusion is not that the Divine Mother will forgive, but that man will have to clean up the mess he has made" (29).

The Ellesmereland Trilogy: 1952-1985

Birney's "Ellesmereland" trilogy was composed over a period of thirty-three years from 1952 to 1985. Consisting of a single stanza each, the lyrics recount the history of a remote northern outpost (the title seems a likely abbreviation for Ellesmere Island, located in current-day Nunavut). In many ways, the "Ellesmereland" trilogy encapsulates Birney's ecological preoccupations, from visions of an idealized, untouched, pre-colonial landscape to a contemporary world polluted with human waste and haunted by the spectre of nuclear self-destruction.

The original "Ellesmereland I" began as the third section of a longer poem published in *Canadian Forum* in 1953, with the subtitle "Thought for the Atomic Age" (Birney, "Notes" 233), indicating its original connection to popular politico-cultural anxieties of the 1950s around the prospect of nuclear war (and its attendant environmental destruction). It was first published as its own poem under the final title "Ellesmereland" in *Ice Cod Bell or Stone* in 1962 with minor revisions, mostly related to punctuation (22). Considering its initial subtitle, however, and its thematic concern with the apocalyptic potential of self-annihilation, it is significant that "Ellesmereland" presents an idealized vision of an untouched and uninhabited landscape: "[n]o man is settled on that coast" and the "cod swim fat beneath the ice" (22). The poem is analogous to "North of Superior" in its mythology of an idyllic

past, a pure, unsettled Canadian landscape rich with natural bounty. While "[e]xplorers say that harebells rise / from the cracks of Ellesmereland," for the poem's present, "[t]he harebells are alone / Nor is there talk of making man / from ice cod bell or stone" (22). The flora and fauna are the island's only inhabitants, though the mention of the "Explorers" in the opening line indicate that the territory has already been 'discovered.'

"Ellesmereland" becomes "Ellesemereland I" and part of a sequence upon the publication of its counterpart, "Ellesmereland II," in Birney's 1966 *Selected Poems*. In the sequel (which remains unaltered through its various publications), Birney revisits the same landscape thirteen years later—though perhaps dozens more years have elapsed in the imaginative space between the poems—and "now in Ellesmereland there sits / a town of twenty men" (*One Muddy* 72). The futility of their presence is rendered in the fifth line: "These warders watch the sky watch them," and the imminent environmental destruction is foreshadowed in the next line, as "the stricken hills eye both" men and sky with suspicion (72). The presence of a colonial authority figure and the suggestion of further expansion conclude the poem: "A Mountie visits twice a year / and there is talk of growth" (72).

By 1985, when Birney returns to the same landscape in "Ellesmereland III," a seismic cultural and developmental shift has taken place:

> At last in Ellesmereland's hotels
> for a hundred fifty each per night
> we tourists shit down plastic wells
> and watch tv by satellite (*One Muddy* 165)

The presence of hotels indicates the island is developed enough to have a tourism industry, and these tourists, rather than engaging with the natural world around them on the island, pollute the environment with their plastic and their bodily waste, mindlessly ingesting pop culture from the south via television. The presence of Indigenous people is finally noted in this poem, though the lines "[t]he 'land beyond the human eye' / the Inuit call it still . . ." are replete with a sense of mourning and futility (165). "Ellesmereland III" invokes what Frye describes as an "obliterated environment," wherein the imagination must "contend with a global civilization of jet planes, international hotels, and disappearing landmarks" (*Bush* iii). It is not surprising that "Ellesmereland III," which was written towards the end of the Cold War, presents war and nuclear destruction imminently at hand, as "[u]nder the blinding midnight sky / subs and missiles wait our will" (*One Muddy* 165). "Ellesmereland III" is a vision of a world that is not only polluted with waste and refuse, but at the

very precipice of self-annihilation. As a conclusion to the poem sequence, "Ellesmereland III" appears to thematically return full circle to Birney's original conception of "Ellesmereland" more than thirty years prior under its original subtitle, "Thought for the Atomic Age." The "Ellesmereland" trilogy thus presents an encapsulation of Birney's environmentalist politics, which knits together a preoccupation with the continuity of Canada's Indigenous communities, the consequences of unchecked industrial capitalist expansion, and the prospect of nuclear self-annihilation.

Thought for the Environmentalist Age: "The Shapers: Vancouver" and "What's So Big About Green?"

By the 1970s, the modern environmentalist movement had largely begun to take political shape, from the publication of the controversial bestseller *The Population Bomb* by Stanford biologist Paul Ehrlich in 1968 (Suzuki 115) to the OPEC oil crisis (140). In response to OPEC, the Canadian government established a committee, led by celebrated scientist Ursula Franklin, to determine how best to manage the nation's resources and which recommended that the country move to more environmentally sustainable energy consumption models (141). It appears the broader environmentalist movement had finally caught up to Birney. His prescient ecological sensibility culminated in the publication of *what's so BIG ABOUT GREEN?* in 1973, but was also foreshadowed in "The Shapers: Vancouver" in 1971. Perhaps in tune with these broader cultural and political trends, Birney's ecopoetry from the 1970s takes a more openly political, polemical turn.

"The Shapers: Vancouver" first appeared in the British journal *Scrip* in 1970-1971 (Lecker and David 42) and remains unchanged (with the exception of the removal and then reinstatement of capitalization of the title) through its various reprints in *what's so BIG ABOUT GREEN?* in 1973 and *Collected Poems* in 1975. The poem opens with the wide scope of geological time, "a hundred million years / for mountains to heave / suffer valleys / the incubus of ice / grow soil-skin" (*One Muddy* 89). The "soil-skin" of the landscape suggests that the mountains themselves are living, organic beings. Birney also idealizes Indigenous peoples' relationship with nature once again when describing "the first builders [who] contrived their truce / with sea and hill" through the use of "saw of flame / vice of thong / jade axe" (89). The "truce" Indigenous peoples arrive at with their landscape using decidedly more gentle tools is in marked contrast to the violent battle that the European settlers and modernity wage in North America:

> in the screaming chainsaws
> we hushed the old dreamers
> in the hullabaloo of bulldozers
> dynamite dynamo crane dredge combustion
> buried them deeper than all compution (90)

In one stanza Birney succinctly captures what Atwood describes as man's "war against [n]ature," which, as she explains, "[i]f he won he would be rewarded: he could conquer and enslave [n]ature, and, in practical terms, exploit her resources" (28). But Birney is acutely aware of the cost of this exploitation and the wasteful dead end to which it leads: "walking alone now / in the grandiloquent glitter / we are lost for a way / for a line / bent for the mere eye's pleasure / a form beyond need" (*One Muddy* 90). He acknowledges that modern man has reached an ecological crossroads and he seeks a way forward: "is there a rhythm drumming from vision? / shall we tower into art or ashes?" (90). Davey has noted this binary of destruction and redemption in Birney's work, observing that Birney often represents "man" as "a destroyer, fouling both nature's rivers and his own blood, destroying animal life" (70) and yet tempered by "the hope that someday he will mobilize his powers to save himself" (66). Ultimately, as in "Transcontinental," Birney acknowledges the possibility for environmental redemption, as "it is our dreams will decide / & we are their Shapers" (*One Muddy* 90).

"What's So Big About Green?" is Birney's most openly political ecopoem, directly referencing the environmentalist "green movement" in its ironic, rhetorically questioned title. It is the title poem of his 1973 collection (which also included a reprinting of "The Shapers: Vancouver") though its first drafts date back to 1949, and it was first published as "The Lake" in *Blew Ointment* in 1971 and subsequently reprinted in *Canadian Forum* in 1973 under its present title (Lecker and David 43). Birney made substantial revisions in 1973 before including the poem in *what's so BIG ABOUT GREEN?*, changes which eliminated much of the poem's original wordiness and rendered his environmentalist vision more tightly focused and ironic. Notwithstanding its long compositional timeframe, the final version of the poem seems to fit Davey's interpretation of Birney's later poetry, in which "[t]here is a movement away from the particular and toward the overview, away from presenting personal thought as phenomenon and toward presenting it as fact, a movement away from the indirection of visual art and toward propaganda" (51).

Birney employs a sweeping historical canvass in "What's So Big About Green?", traveling not merely back to the beginnings of Canada's history,

but to the beginnings of human life on the planet, when "Something went haywire / about a hundred centuries ago / without Us there to stop it" (*One Muddy* 59). The biblically capitalized "Us" is utilized ironically, as the poem reveals that it is actually the advent of modern, Western man that wreaks havoc on the planet. Birney idealizes a pre-colonial, pre-European contact world:

> Before Us that was
> –a few millennia of truce
> between leaf, elk & wolf
> waterflies, fish & the osprey
> a saw-off between berries & birds
> & those First Men
> the Chehaylis
> inching up the outlet stream
> to follow sperming salmon (60)

The proliferation of animal life, the fecundity of "sperming salmon," and "those First Men" living in harmony with nature come to an end with the arrival of the European colonizers: "[t]hey all went when We came / just a couple of centuries ago / –the whites the End Men" (60). The European "End Men" undertake a rapid colonization and destruction:

> In ten years they'd cut down the pines
> shot off the game & the Indians
> caught everything wearing fur
> & moved on from the silence they made (60)

Birney gestures to the decimation of Indigenous populations with the line "shot off the game & the Indians," while also engaging colonialist discourse that frequently conjured Indigenous peoples in animalistic terms. The subsequent line "caught everything wearing fur" can then be read with a dual meaning—it can be either the End Men driving animals to extinction in service of the fur trade or (and) the remaining Indigenous peoples trying to survive.

The poem arrives at a present-day modernity where "kids buzz the lakelength / in an hour of speed (on Speed)" and need not "worry about hitting fisherman" as the only living things left in the water are "algae & whatever bugs / live on in oil & shit" (62). Birney suggests that "[w]hat's happened here on earth / is only science fiction / a nightmare soonest over" (63), echoing the sentiments he expressed in his 1983 interview with Peter Edwards, wherein he mused on the future of "the human race" and whether or not we "ought to survive" at all (qtd. in Edwards 127). Once again, the trope of apocalypse is employed, yet unlike its biblical antecedent, it is at the hands of "Us," the "End Men":

It's We who've done it
done it all in four generations
made organic death at last
an irreversible reaction . . .
What's more We did it without help . . .
—just Ourselves
and
Our kids (63-64)

Birney's reference to "four generations" roughly encompasses the advent of industrial capitalism to the post-industrial present, signalling once again the eco-socialist, anti-capitalist critique that has recurred throughout his ecopoems. Alongside "Ellesmereland III," "What's So Big About Green?" articulates the environmentalist anxiety that pervades much of the cultural discourse of the late twentieth century and persists into the present. Birney's apocalyptic visions of a world on the brink of self-destruction can be read as a cynical, disillusioned condemnation of human folly and greed, or as an impassioned plea for ecological self-awareness before it is too late to mitigate or reverse the frightening damage done to the environment in the pursuit of power and wealth.

Conclusion

Birney's continuous revisions, often ten or twenty years after a poem's original composition, reveal a sustained ecocritical preoccupation that becomes more prominent and pointed in later versions of much of his early poetry. Rather than abandoning his ecopoems, Birney often contemplated and reworked them, honing and clarifying his eco-socialist focus. Common themes and motifs emerge of humanity and the environment in a state of conflict, even as the poems oscillate between despair over the ecological destruction of the modern era and hope for the possibility of reconciliation with nature and an end to the trajectory of environmental collapse. As Davey observes, "Birney's subjects have been Canada's land, her people, and her history" (53). And as Birney's ecopoetry reveals, these three subjects are not mutually exclusive, but rather, intimately interrelated. In many ways, Birney's ecological poetics anticipates the environmentalist movement of the later twentieth century; perhaps his ecopoetry received so little critical attention when it was first published simply because so much of it was ahead of its time. The ecopoems form an important and early chapter of Canadian ecocritical literature. And as the title of Birney's posthumously published 2006 collection, *One Muddy Hand,* suggests, Birney is a poet with an intimate connection to the earth,

writing with one hand imaginatively buried in its soil. He unearths an inevitably fraught relationship with nature that is characterized by often paradoxical senses of wonder, vulnerability, violence, and aggression. Notwithstanding some of his more cynical lyrics, much of Birney's ecopoetry suggests that the capacity for new directions and new relationships with the environment lies squarely within the scope of human agency and possibility. As Birney himself wrote in 1972: "Though we now seem to be creatures destined to destroy ourselves within a generation, we humans have within us still the power to rescue ourselves and all life" (*Cow Jumped* 13).

NOTES

1 On a biographical level, Don McKay has suggested that Birney's visceral experiences working and hiking in the Canadian wilderness as a young man facilitated a unique degree of intimacy with nature and the environment (44).

2 For ease of reference, my analysis will be primarily based on the final versions of the poems that appeared in *One Muddy Hand* unless otherwise indicated.

3 "Ellesemereland III" from 1985 is the one exception to the chronology, though it makes sense to explore the "Ellesmereland" trilogy as a single entity.

4 Birney's "David" is perhaps notably absent. This exclusion is purposeful, as I would argue that Birney's employment of nature in his most famous narrative poem is symbolic and metaphorical, rather than activating an ecological or environmentalist ethos.

5 The *OED* defines "eco-socialism" as "socialism concerned specifically with ecological issues, based on the belief that capitalism is harmful to both society and the environment" (n. pag.). Greg Garrard describes eco-socialism and eco-Marxism as "hav[ing] their origins in nineteenth-century radical thought: the anarchism of Mikhail Bakunin . . . and Pyotr Kropotkin . . . [and] the communism of Karl Marx . . . and Friedrich Engels" (31). An eco-socialist approach posits that it is the economic system of capitalism that is to blame for environmental degradation and resource scarcity, and that it is necessary to "change the political structure of society so that production to meet real needs replaces production for the accumulation of wealth" (Garrard 31).

6 While the earliest date of publication of the poems under consideration is 1947, Solecki's 2006 collection, *One Muddy Hand,* indicates the compositional dates of "North of Superior" as "1926/1946" (24).

7 In the 1947 and 1948 versions of the poem, the phrase "Man is a snow" is repeated twice, emphasizing the motif.

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Steven Heighton

Yonaoshi

Inochi no umi, shi no umi

In less than two weeks the disaster
will hemorrhage out of the headlines
onto page whatever,
its span done faster than the brief
half-life of iodine—but for now,
with a dozen aftershocks still to Richter,
an old woman stands alone
in a flooded field of debris, no human
screen to frame her, chanting
yonaoshi, yonaoshi:
May the world be restored.
Sea of life, sea
of death——my soul seeks out a mountain
that can stand in this surge.

Christopher Doody

"Now, my Boy, Listen to Daddy"

William Arthur Deacon and His Influence on the Governor General's Literary Awards

William Arthur Deacon was Canada's first full-time book reviewer, the book editor of the *Globe and Mail* from 1928 to 1960, and an important member of the Canadian Authors Association (CAA). In 1935, Albert Robson, president of the Toronto branch of the CAA, wrote to Deacon seeking his advice on how the association could improve the economic and cultural position of authors in Canada. Deacon's response to Robson positions himself at the very heart of Canadian letters: "I speak as one who has mothered Canadian literature for 15 years and learned a great deal of publishing and the troubles of authors and of readers' taste and influencing it" (Letter to Robson). Deacon would later point to this letter as the origin of the Governor General's Literary Awards (GG awards), because one of the four suggestions in his letter was to establish an awards system. His letter to Robson, however, reveals far more about Deacon than it does about the history of the award. In it, he unabashedly appoints himself a parental role and boasts of his ability to influence Canadian literature. As Clara Thomas and John Lennox note in their biography of the man: "[Deacon] set out, not only to nurture and encourage Canadian writers, but in a sense to instruct them in what and how a Canadian writer should write and in what a Canadian should and could be" (37). Importantly, Deacon, as the book editor for Canada's most important daily newspaper, was in a position of power that allowed him to impose his strongly held views onto others. In fact, few people could influence the literary marketplace in mid-century Canada as Deacon could. While scholars have written about Deacon's role as a book reviewer and editor, what remains unacknowledged

is the paternalistic role that he played in influencing the GG awards to consecrate literature that satisfied his idea of what Canadian literature should be—good, popular books that attracted a wide reading audience and supported a national literary culture. Specifically, this article uses letters found in Deacon's archives to illustrate the degree to which Deacon was able to influence Canada's oldest literary award.

The Governor General's Literary Awards are the most enduring creation of the Canadian Authors Association. The CAA was established in 1921 by a group of writers who created a number of initiatives to advocate for, and advance the position of, Canadian authorship. In the first few decades of the association's existence, the CAA was consistently debating with other members of the literary field over who could qualify as a Canadian author and what constituted Canadian literature. Although this debate was complex and nuanced, and lasted over several decades, it often revolved around the relationship between writers and the marketplace. The CAA actively advocated for the idea that writers should be financially compensated for their writing, and, as such, the association supported a wide range of literary genres. The CAA often faced critics, however, who wanted to see literature divorced from market concerns and were dismissive of writers of popular genre-fiction.[1] Deacon, as a prominent member of the CAA, supported the association's conception of literature, and as this paper argues, used the GG awards as a tool to advance the association's position in this ongoing debate. James English has noted in his foundational work on prize culture, *The Economy of Prestige*, that prizes "place[] a certain power . . . in the hands of cultural functionaries—those who organize and administer it behind the scenes, oversee the selection of members or judges, attract sponsors or patrons, make rules and exceptions to rules" (52). Deacon was aware of the power of the GG awards, and sought to use it to further his personal views.

While literary awards place power in the hands of those who run them, they also have the ability to influence the literary field. As English argues, when "the era of explicit colonial occupation and control began to wane" in the early twentieth century, cultural prizes became "part of the struggle to formulate and project a coherent indigenous national culture" (265). English argues that in this struggle the prize becomes a powerful tool to define a literary field that was often divided between praising "the distinct cultural achievements of the colony, or the successful advancement on colonial terrain of Europe's metropolitan culture" (268). The GG awards, then, as the only national literary prizes in mid-century Canada, played an important role in

this debate between the role of nationalist and cosmopolitan writing. Yet, the role that literary prizes played in this struggle, however, has not been thoroughly discussed. Canadian scholarship on literary prestige, however, does offer some parallels with the role that the GG awards played in mid-century Canada. Lorraine York's 2007 study, *Literary Celebrity in Canada,* for example, looks at the way that fame, for literary celebrities, is a performance. Specifically, York's work is interested in how authors "must constantly negotiate the seemingly exclusive worlds of popularity and literary prestige" (31). York explores the ways that authors balance these worlds in her author-centric study. The emphasis for Deacon was on both author *and* the text, as he conceived the ideal award-winning book as one that could straddle the worlds of both economic and cultural capital. In focusing on Deacon here, I want to emphasize the role of cultural workers in the creation of literary prestige.[2]

Gillian Roberts' important contribution to the study of awards, *Prizing Literature*, discusses the three major Canadian literary prizes, but her examination begins at the establishment of the Canada Council for the Arts in 1957. For her project, which relates Canadian prize culture to both the state and to the global marketplace, this temporal demarcation makes sense. But it leaves unexamined Canadian prize culture prior to the advent of federal patronage of the arts following the Massey Commission. Roberts' discussion of the GG awards, Canada's oldest national literary prize, begins after the Canada Council took control of the awards in 1959. However, the CAA established the GG awards in 1936. Prize culture, in Canada at least, was very different at this moment. The GG awards were the only national prize for Canadian literature; they did not come with any financial compensation and, despite the name, they had no direct connection to the state, or to state funding. Perhaps most importantly, they were created fifteen years before the Massey Report suggested that Canadian literature, as a category, did not yet exist. In other words, the GG awards were presented to Canadian authors for having produced the best works of Canadian literature, while the very concept of Canadian literature itself was still being heavily interrogated.

It is in this cultural moment, prior to the Massey Commission, that Deacon attempted to use the GG awards to influence the type of literature that was being produced in Canada. No other single person had the amount of influence over the creation and administration of the awards during their first two decades that Deacon had. From 1937-1959, 108 people acted as judges for the GG awards, with a handful of people serving as

a judge for multiple years. Deacon, however, acted as a judge, or ran the Awards Committee, for more than sixty percent of the contests, far more than anyone else. Deacon was also instrumental in establishing policies around how the awards were judged. Although not always successful, Deacon attempted to influence the GG awards so that they were awarded to authors who promoted his view of literature, which championed popular writing, living wages for authors, and a national literary culture. This view of literature is echoed throughout Deacon's writings—particularly the focus on selecting material that is *actually* read by the public. As such, in this cultural moment, prize culture in Canada was being used to promote as many working writers as possible who were producing literature for a wide reading public. Despite Deacon's power, this conception of literature failed to dominate in the postwar era with the onset of government patronage. The prize culture that has emerged since the onset of government patronage following the Massey Commission has focused on establishing literature that is palatable to both Canadians and the world, often with the sanctioning being extranational. As Roberts notes, more recently, "the complicated relationship between Canadian literature as circulated within Canada and Canadian literature as an international commodity depends upon the external validation of Canadian cultural products and the writers who produce them" (4). At mid-century, however, the GG awards were performing a very different task. Few Canadian writers were able to live off of their writing, and the reading public was consuming mostly American books and periodicals. As such, instead of trying to support Canadian literature that would be palatable to the world, Deacon was using the GG awards to try and make Canadian literature appealing to Canadians, by awarding texts that would actually be read.

Essential to an account of Deacon's involvement in the GG awards is an understanding of his literary taste, which was nationalistic, popularist, and anti-modernist. Nowhere is this more clear than in an exchange with Earle Birney in 1946. On behalf of the CAA, Deacon had been attempting to find a new editor to replace Watson Kirkconnell for the CAA's *Canadian Poetry Magazine*. Deacon found his new editor in Birney, who discussed with Deacon his plans for changing the magazine. Birney explained that he hoped to get poems for the magazine from modernist poets such as A. J. M. Smith, A. M. Klein, F. R. Scott, Charles Bruce, Ronald Hambleton, Anne Wilkinson, and Ralph Gustafson. In recruiting these writers, Birney was hoping to get "new blood" into the magazine (Letter to Deacon, 24 July 1946). While

Deacon assured Birney that no one from the CAA executive would interfere in his editorial decisions, he felt the need to comment on the authors that Birney hoped to include in the magazine:

> I am surprised that the poets I fail to comprehend—fail to the point where I dare not attempt to review their books—seem to be exactly those you now wish to fill the pages of our magazine. I don't wish to debate the point. I merely express and echo your own opinion that a bunch of our Ph. D's, writing for other Ph. D.'s with obscure allusions, will never win my readership. (Deacon, Letter to Birney, 9 Aug. 1946)

Such a response is telling of Deacon's view of the contemporary literary scene. He is dismissive of the entire group of poets that Birney hopes to include in *Canadian Poetry Magazine* because their writing is highbrow, difficult, and purposefully inaccessible to average readers. His disgust with "the whole crowd of poseurs" (Deacon, Letter to Birney, 9 Aug. 1946), however, extends beyond distaste for their art. He is angered by the idea that the modernists' view of literature is different than his own. While Deacon believed that literature should be bought and read, the modernists consistently showed disdain for any concern about economic interests. Deacon felt that if Canadian literature was going to grow and develop, Canadians needed to buy and read Canadian books, which meant that authors should write books that people would actually want to read.

While Deacon was not alone in his distaste of the modernist poets and their writing, his position in the literary field afforded him unique power to influence the reading public. Despite his self-deprecation (without "brains and education enough to understand" these poets [Deacon, Letter to Birney, 9 Aug. 1946]), he was *not* an average reader. He was the literary editor for one of Canada's most widely read newspapers, in which he "dare[d] not attempt to review their books." As such, his disavowal of these poets was not simply a personal aesthetic decision, or rejection of their poetry, but a boycotting of their work at what amounted to a national level because of the *Globe*'s distribution. As Birney has noted, Deacon's "review[s] could launch or sink a new Canadian book" (*Spreading* 79). In stating that he avoids the work of modernist poets, Deacon shows that he is willing to use his power to influence the literary marketplace, and he appears to have been sincere. For example, of the forty-one books in all four categories that were under consideration for the GG awards for 1945,[3] the *Globe and Mail* published reviews of all but five. These reviews appeared almost exclusively in the *Saturday Review of Books*, which was edited by Deacon. Of the thirty-six reviews published, seventeen are explicitly attributed to Deacon, while

another six have no byline but might be assumed to have been written by Deacon as the literary editor. Of the five books not reviewed, the most conspicuous absences are Earle Birney's *Now is Time* (which won the GG award for poetry) and F. R. Scott's *Overture*. This synopsis of reviews from 1945 suggests that Deacon used his position, whether as review author or section editor, to ignore and thus disadvantage modernist poets. As Deacon was wielding power as literary editor, at the newspaper and as member of the CAA, his influence over the Canadian literary marketplace also extended impressively to his role as a judge, and then as Chairman of the Awards Committee, for the GG awards.

Deacon and the Governor General's Awards

During the first decade of the GG awards' existence, judges were expected to discuss amongst themselves and come to an agreement over which book should win. The system of judging, however, was continually evolving as problems and questions arose. In 1938, for example, during his first year as a judge, Deacon wrote to Roderick S. Kennedy, Acting National Secretary of the CAA, asking for clarification on how the judging operated: "Do I render decision to you or consult with other Judges? Do I vote for one [book] only or grade three in order of merit?" (qtd. in Kennedy). Unsure of the answer, Kennedy wrote to Pelham Edgar, CAA President, for clarification.

> For three or four Judges in different cities to consult would seem difficult. For two in one city to get together and make a decision would put the third in another city into a position he would not appreciate.
>
> Last year, as far as I can remember, the Judges gave their choice, and one or two alternatives with the reasons, and with the strength of their opinion . . . then communicated with the other Judges, until a decision was reached. (Kennedy)

Requiring judges to come to a unanimous decision amongst themselves not only proved tedious and time-consuming, but also allowed for disagreements.

The problems with this type of judging in the first decade of the awards are clearly evident in an example from 1939. Deacon was the chairman of the committee of judges entrusted to choose the best book of non-fiction published the previous year. His two co-judges were E. J. Pratt and V. B. Rhodenizer. On March 9, Deacon wrote to Eric Gaskell, National Secretary of the CAA, with the results of the committee's voting. The two books competing for the top spot were John Murray Gibbon's *Canadian Mosaic* and George Wrong's *The Canadians: The Story of a People*. Deacon writes: "on straight vote,

Wrong wins over Gibbon—two firsts and a second against one first and two seconds" (Letter to Gaskell, 9 Mar. 1939). Deacon and Pratt had voted for Wrong to win, while Rhodenizer had voted for Gibbon. Although Wrong won in the voting, he did not win the award, which was given to Gibbon.

Wrong did not win the award because, as Deacon explained to Gaskell, "Arithmatic [sic] . . . is only part of the story" (Letter to Gaskell, 9 Mar. 1939). As chairman of the selection committee, Deacon was not bound by the results of the vote, which he found to be too restrictive as it did not allow for nuance and failed to accurately represent the whole "story." In writing to Gaskell, Deacon explains that "Rhodenizer is so strong for Gibbon that it balances the slight edge that Pratt and I accord Wrong." Deacon had other reservations as well. He notes that he is "strictly against posthumous awards," noting that Wrong is eighty and, "Should he die, I would switch instantly to Gibbon." He continues:

> These votes being equal, actually, it comes down with me to the question of whether we should remember all Gibbon has done for [the Canadian Authors Association] and use this means to thank him, or whether we should use the medal as a suggestion to Wrong that he might leave the CAA something in his will. (Letter to Gaskell, 9 Mar. 1939)

Deacon's reservations demonstrate that literary merit is only one of the concerns for him as a judge, which he openly admits: "These are the thoughts of an officer [of the CAA], not of a judge." He is not, however, apologetic about this approach: "these are *our* medals, it comes down to a straight question of personalities and which winner would be most acceptable to the Association" (Letter to Gaskell, 9 Mar. 1939, Deacon's emphasis). It is clear that Deacon, by the awards' third year, had already realized that the awards could be used to the CAA's advantage in advancing their view of Canadian authorship. Following his letter to Gaskell, Deacon also sent a letter to Leslie Gordon Barnard, the President of the CAA, repeating his concerns, and adding that "Gibbon will be hurt if he loses" and that Wrong "is comparatively wealthy" (Letter to Barnard). For Deacon, then, some criteria for winning the award might include the age of the author, the financial situation of the author, the author's temperament, and perhaps most importantly, if by winning the author would help the association.

Gaskell responded to Deacon in two separate letters. In the first, Gaskell is careful to remain impartial, and advocates for the necessary objectivity of the award system. Gaskell notes that "on straight vote, the award goes to *The*

Canadians," and reminds Deacon that that "THIS IS A LITERARY AWARD" (Letter to Deacon, Official, Gaskell's emphasis). However, Gaskell is receptive to Deacon's problem of the two books being closely tied on the level of "merit," and suggests that Deacon decide "which of [the two books] makes the more pertinent contribution to our knowledge of Canadian problems?" (Letter to Deacon, Official). In his second letter, he argues that age is not a relevant factor, and encourages Deacon to select Wrong's book "in the spirit of the competition," reminding Deacon that Wrong is an author, and "'literary merit' is not confined to younger writers" (Letter to Deacon, Personal). Gaskell acknowledges that Gibbon has been a friend to the association—having "pulled the CAA's chestnuts out of the fire on more than one occasion"—but insists that this must be a "secondary consideration—in fact, it is not even in the stars, in a literary competition" (Letter to Deacon, Personal). Contrary to Deacon, the pragmatist, Gaskell, the idealist, is concerned with preserving the ethics of the award system itself, ensuring it remains objective, with decisions based on literary merit alone.

Deacon sent two letters in reply. Writing in his official capacity as committee chairman, Deacon informs Gaskell that the judges "unanimously agree" that the 1938 Award of the Governor-General's medal for General literature is to be awarded to John Murray Gibbon (Letter to Gaskell, Official). This "unanimous" decision is the result recorded for history. In a personal letter to Gaskell, however, Deacon thanks Gaskell for his advice, noting that it helped him, before explaining why he disregarded it:

> Now, my Boy, listen to Daddy. In your youthful idealism you believe there is a way to pick one [book] as superior to another. I do not think so. I believe these two, though different, are as equal as two unlike things can be. Edgar, Pratt, Rhodenizer, being professors, judge by faults—the "mistakes" of school days. Hence I ignore most of what they say. . . .
>
> I found these two [books] equal on points. . . . Hence, despite all you say, if there is some other consideration to throw in the balance, that may turn the scale. I found that in what I conceive to be Wrong's indifference to the honor. Though well off, he refused to pay for copies of his book for the judges. I take it [from this that] he is indifferent to the medal. . . . and it certainly cannot do him as much good as it will do [Gibbon]. (Letter to Gaskell, Personal)

Deacon belittles Gaskell by positioning him as a child who needs to be taught why his idealism is misplaced. In these condescending remarks, Deacon assumes a paternal role, and suggests that he alone is able to properly judge the books, despite the fact that much of his reasoning is personal and subjective. Although Deacon claims to agree with Gaskell "in

the main" about "pure decisions," in the end, he is thankful for the subjective nature of the awards: "thank God, we control this matter and our business is chiefly to see that the medals go to fit people and are handed out where they will do most good to recipients and to our craft as a whole. We are often going to find that . . . we shall give a medal to M because N got it last year, or something like that" (Letter to Gaskell, Personal). In this exchange, it is possible to glean Deacon's understanding of what a literary award should, and should not, do. He rejects a purely academic appraisal of the work; instead, other factors surrounding the author need to be considered to ensure that Canadian literature—"our craft as a whole"—benefits from the awards. In this way, the definition of a prize-winning author becomes flexible. Deacon is thankful that the CAA controls the awards, and can control who wins, so that the association could use the awards to influence the literary field. If winning a GG award consecrates an author, helps their books sell more, and encourages Canadians to read their work, then the awards become a powerful tool to shape, indirectly, how Canadian literature develops. This was especially important at a time when members of the literary field were debating the type of literature that should be produced in Canada. Deacon was able to consciously award books that appealed to his idea of an ideal Canadian text. Importantly, Deacon was able to control the awards without having to publicly defend his view of literature, a convenience not afforded to the association's critics. As he continued to judge the awards, his conception of an award-winning text became more nuanced, but can still be traced to this early attempt at articulating his motivation as a judge.

The Awards Committee

The ability for a single judge to sway the votes of others came to an end in 1944 when Deacon submitted a resolution at the annual meeting of the CAA suggesting that an Awards Committee should be created, with a chairman and four other members, which would assume full responsibility for the award system. This committee would operate at arm's length from the National Executive of the CAA, and would have final authority on all issues relating to the awards. The resolution passed, and the National Executive appointed Deacon as the first chairman of the committee. This Awards Committee ran the GG awards until the Canada Council took control in 1959.

As Chairman, Deacon now had the formal power to implement his ideology of what type of books, and authors, should win the award. This

was done by overhauling the judging system and adopting a more stringent definition of what the *best* book looked like. Prior to the establishment of the Awards Committee, the National Executive had adopted "certain recommendations for the guidance of judges in future competitions" ("History of the Governor General's," n. pag.), although it is neither clear what those recommendations were, nor is there evidence that they were closely followed. After the Awards Committee was established, however, Deacon quickly made changes to remove some of the subjectivity in judging. In summarizing the history of the Awards Board, Franklin McDowell explains that Deacon first established nuanced criteria for determining a winning book, which began by noting, "Books shall be judged for their literary qualities" (n. pag.). However, the criteria also reminded judges that the public would read the winning books, and that this fact should be kept in mind when choosing the winner; at the same time, judges were warned not to award a book simply "for mere popularity" (n. pag.). Secondly, Deacon adopted a point system that required judges to rank the books in first, second, and third place. As well, judges were no longer allowed to converse amongst themselves to determine the winner. To ensure this, judges were not told who else was acting as a judge. In summary, the judging seemed to shift from subjective considerations towards a more objective points-based system.

Although Deacon's 1940s point system appears to counter his 1930s arguments praising the subjective nature of the awards, the change became necessary because Deacon, and other members of the CAA, felt that the "wrong" books were too frequently winning. While specific titles deemed "wrong" were not named, it is clear from the correspondence that the CAA was disappointed that works of highbrow literature were winning, as they failed to garner large sales and were not widely read by the general public. The new point system, however, did not completely eradicate this problem, and it became more difficult for Deacon to support specific books that satisfied his ideal. Deacon's loosening grip is fully evident in the correspondence around the fiction award for 1946. On April 8, 1947, Ira Dilworth sent a telegram to Deacon with his rankings for the best books in the fiction category. He placed Selwyn Dewdney's *Wind Without Rain* in first place, Edward F. Meade's *Remember Me* in second, and Ralph Allen's *Home Made Banners* in third. He noted, however, that he had not quite finished reading *Home Made Banners* (Letter to Deacon, 8 Apr. 1947). The other two judges in the category—Joseph Lister Rutledge and Charles Jennings[4]—had already submitted their choices, so Deacon calculated the scoring of each

book. The result based on the point system was that Mazo de la Roche's *Return to Jalna* had won.

The next day, on April 9, Deacon sent de la Roche a letter notifying her of her win, stating that "the award system is strengthened by the selection of a novel by Canada's most famous and successful writer of fiction" (Letter to Mazo de la Roche). In his correspondence, it is clear that Deacon was sincere in these comments, and that he felt de la Roche was an ideal winner of the award. On April 10, however, Ira Dilworth sent Deacon his "final judgment" (Letter to Deacon, 10 Apr. 1947), which now placed Winifred Bambrick's *Continental Review* in second place. This change necessitated a recalculation of the points, which resulted in Bambrick's novel passing de la Roche's.

As a result, the award for fiction for 1946 went to Bambrick. De la Roche, understandably, took the loss fairly hard. As her biographer Ronald Hambleton explains, "During the forties one of the judges [of the GG awards], in a lamentable lapse of taste, told Mazo de la Roche that she had won the award that year, but the final vote gave it to another author" (55). Hambleton notes that "[s]he regretted the loss deeply," and suggests that it "certainly contributed to her decision to leave Canada and make her home abroad" (55). Although his desire to notify de la Roche had serious consequences, this incident speaks to Deacon's commitment to the point system. He accepted the judges' rankings, even if it meant embarrassing himself and hurting an author he highly respected—one who fulfilled his criteria of writing good popular fiction.

Although the point system reduced the ability for individual judges to extend their influence in favour of a particular book, Deacon was still able to influence the award system as a whole. As Chairman of the Awards Committee, Deacon was responsible for sending each of the judges a letter to thank them and explain their role. This allowed Deacon to continue to influence the awards while maintaining the outward appearance—through the point system—that he was preventing interference with the judging process. These were not form letters, but personalized for each judge. As such, they offer a further insight into Deacon's conception of the awards. They occasionally speak to the purposes for the awards, as Deacon understood them, which were two-fold: to serve both the author and the public. As Deacon notes: "We are trying to serve the authors by throwing an annual spot-light on the best book in each division, and to serve the public by indicating the best Canadian reading matter" (Letter to Dilworth). Imbedded behind this "service" to the public is Deacon's awareness of the

power of prizes. Only a decade after the GG awards' creation, Deacon is acutely aware of the both the symbolic and economic capital that authors accrue from winning:

> the inception of this award system was an effort to do something to assist authors . . . While we could not give money that we did not have, we could ensure publicity for a limited group of titles annually with the result of inducing people to purchase copies and thus increase royalties and enhance the author's reputation, which is his capital. (Letter to Clay)

Deacon's goal of economic viability for authors by increasing reputations and subsequent sales can be seen in embryo in his early articulation of the award system; when deciding between Gibbon and Wrong, he discounted Wrong for being "comparatively wealthy." Deacon also sees the awards as being of service to all Canadian authors, for as he notes, "in a mild way, we are establishing standards for writers. Other writers will be influenced in their aims by the kind of book [the judges] select" (Letter to Judges in Fiction Division). The implied inverse of this, of course, is that if certain types of books did not win the award, authors might be inclined to avoid writing in that style or genre. In the end, Deacon was using the awards to support his view of authorship, shared by the CAA, which desired all Canadian authors to be able to earn a living from their writing, and have their books read by a wide audience.

Another thing that becomes evident in his letters to the judges is that Deacon had a very clear idea of who the ideal reader of Canadian literature was, or at least how he conceived of this ideal reader. This "John Public" is the average person—noticeably male—"an ordinary, intelligent reader," "a man of fair intelligence and reasonable taste. He is half-way between the infants who read comics and the Ph.D.'s" (Letter to Dilworth; Letter to Phelps). Accordingly, Deacon often describes what the ideal winning book should, and should not, be:

> We want a good, sensible, broad interpretation of "best book"—not an academic appraisal . . . It must be both good and suited to the popular taste. . . . Don't choose a very slight thing, no matter how excellent; don't choose what only Ph.D's will relish. Which one ought the bulk of Canadians to read if they knew about it? (Letter to Dilworth)

In this conception, Deacon advocates for the middle ground between highbrow and lowbrow literature. In particular, Deacon is concerned with supporting books that will actually be read by Canadians, as the reading of Canadian books, Deacon hoped, would produce support for more Canadian

literature. The awards, however, are not simply meant to reward current popular fiction. Deacon's depiction of the ideal book was not standardized, and as a result, while many of the letters received by the judges shared similarities, no two letters contained the exact same description. Although they are at times malleable, Deacon's instructions to the judges are consistent in their dismissal of highbrow literature and in their support for books with the potential to be commercial successes.

Advice to Judges

Deacon was acutely aware of the different ways that the prizes could be used to benefit the CAA in shaping the public's understanding and appreciation of Canadian literature. As English notes, literary prizes "provide[] an institutional basis for exercising, or attempting to exercise, control over the cultural economy, over the distribution of esteem and reward on a particular cultural field" (51). It is this control over the contested, and emerging, field of Canadian literature that Deacon was attempting to harness through the GG awards. Aside from attempting to ensure that a specific type of literature was consecrated, Deacon also wanted to ensure that the greatest number of different authors won the award. Arguably, if the same limited number of authors continued to win the awards, it would defeat the awards' purpose of drawing attention to new Canadian authors. As such, Deacon attempted to prevent authors from winning the awards more than once.

Accordingly, when Deacon sent his instructions on how to pick "the best book," he commonly included advice on which of the year's books the judges could disregard. His letters were often prefaced with qualifications, such as "[I] have no business to discuss merits with you" (Letter to Cox), or "Without wishing to influence your decision" (Letter to Calhoun), which are then immediately followed by pointed advice. For example, writing to Alexander Calhoun, a judge in the poetry category for 1946, Deacon explains that E. J. Pratt had already won the award twice, and would refuse the award if he won again. Deacon continued, noting "we feel that we are encouraging Canadian writers more by honoring new talent than repeating awards to the same people. For example, Birney, Marriott, Bourinot, have each had one medal. Consequently, if you are hesitating between one of these and some other . . . I suggest you lean towards the new work" (Letter to Calhoun). In this advice, however, Deacon is presenting his personal opinions about the award, as the CAA had never made a policy against authors winning more than once. This goal of the award—of placing recognition on a *new*

Canadian author every year—was complicated by the awards' focus on rewarding literary merit, as the best authors might easily continue to write well and might merit further attention. Despite these potentially conflicting objectives, Deacon continued to influence the judging so that the awards were consistently awarded to new authors, which, Deacon hoped, would spread public awareness of more Canadian authors.

The judges, however, did not always follow Deacon's unsolicited advice. In 1946, for example, Earle Birney won for his book of poetry, *Now is Time*, despite having won the award four years earlier for *David and Other Poems*. Interestingly, in response to the win, Birney wrote to Deacon, noting: "I feel somewhat embarrassed about the award, as I think that it would be a good thing if a previous winner were automatically disbarred in order that newer writers would get a chance. What do you think?" (Letter to Deacon, 26 Mar. 1946). Birney's unsolicited letter suggests that other Canadian authors shared Deacon's opinion that the awards should be spread around, although it might also be false modesty. Deacon explains to Birney that "[g]etting the medal before did weigh against you this time. You won in spite of that limitation. You see, we do consider these extraneous points where some equality exists and no critical misjustice is done" (Letter to Birney, 29 Mar. 1946).

Deacon was unable to completely control which authors won the GG awards, even when he was the Chairman of the Awards Committee. Authors and their works that did not meet Deacon's conservative ideal still won, such as E. J. Pratt, Earle Birney, and A. J. M. Smith. Despite this, it is evident that Deacon's attempt to direct the judging of the awards in a specific direction—one that praised the popular writing and rejected an academic form—was a powerful force. As such, Deacon belongs to what Carole Gerson has called the "invisible college" (47) of men that controlled the Canadian canon in the first half of the twentieth century. Gerson argues that between 1918 and the 1940s, "the canon of English-language Canadian literature was particularly arbitrary and malleable, governed less by cultural consensus than by the whims and agendas of certain individuals in positions of power" (47). These individuals were men, both nationalists and modernists, who "determined who and what got into print and into anthologies, and which works received prizes and plaudits" (47). Deacon was a successful member of this "invisible college," using his power as both the literary editor at the *Globe and Mail* and as judge and Chairman of the Awards Committee for the GG awards to consecrate authors whose writing supported his view of literature, while penalizing those whose writing did not.

Deacon had a clear vision for the awards: they should bring attention to Canadian literature and financially support Canadian authors. In this, Deacon was supporting the CAA's purpose in creating the awards, which was to improve the conditions of Canadian authors, at a time when it was often disadvantageous for authors to publish in Canada and when Canadian literature, as a category, was still contested. As such, prize culture motivated by a kind of literary nationalism in Canada was particularly important during the first two decades of the GG awards' existence, as the CAA was attempting to bring attention to Canadian literature, and argue that it was worth reading. However, most of the books that won the GG awards in the first two decades failed to become canonized in the subsequent decades, and most are now out of print. This failure suggests that the criteria Deacon used to pick winning books was limited, in that it satisfied the needs of the historical moment in supporting the writing of Canadian literature, but failed to properly consecrate these books with lasting importance. And it is the authors that failed to meet Deacon's criteria, and yet who still won, such as Pratt, Birney, and Smith, whose work has become canonized. Therefore, despite Deacon's power and the paternalistic role that he played in influencing the judging of Canada's first national literary award, his vision of Canadian literature was eventually eclipsed, often by the very writers that he had attempted to exclude.

NOTES

1 One of the best examples of this debate took place in 1924 between Robert Stead, president of the CAA, and an unnamed editor at the *Manitoba Free Press*. Over a month of back-and-forth letters, the two writers argued about the proper relationship between a writer and the marketplace. Stead argued that books should be viewed as commodities, with writers entitled to earn a living wage from their writing. The editor of the *Free Press* felt that Stead's view was "simply grotesque" ("Mr. Stead's Theory" 8) and argued that writers should be concerned with literary excellence and not the marketplace.

2 For further discussion of the role of literary celebrity in Canada, see Joel Deshaye's *The Metaphor of Celebrity*, which focuses on Canadian poets who explicitly engage with the idea of celebrity. For further examples of the numerous ways that Canadian cultural institutions have embraced and employed prestige in its various forms, see Maria Tippett's *Making Culture*, which focuses on culture in the first half of the twentieth century, and George Woodcock's *Strange Bedfellows*, which focuses on culture in Canada after the Massey Commission.

3 Unlike the contemporary Governor General's Literary Awards, for the first decades of the awards' existence there was no short list or long list of titles. Instead, the judges reviewed all books published in the category in the previous year. As such, the books under

consideration for the GG awards in these decades are a good indicator of the output of Canadian literature in a single year.

4 Joseph Lister Rutledge had placed Constance Beresford-Howe's *The Unreasoning Heart* in first place, Mazo de la Roche's *Return to Jalna* in second place, and Winifred Bambrick's *Continental Review* in third place. Charles Jennings had placed *Continental Review* in first place, *Return to Jalna* in second place, and Joyce Marshall's *Presently Tomorrow* in third place.

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Douglas Walbourne-Gough

Cedar Cove, Revisited

for John Steffler

There are no straight lines
to square yourself. Even horizon
reads harsh – grey seas churn impatient,
butt against shore and sky. Bearings
taken from the hunch of Guernsey Island,
that age-old stone a reminder of toil.

Here, hands were rough-hewn, akin
to volcanic coast. Digits of crag crammed
close, clamped tight on spades and hatchets,
mended nets. Clung to what little food this
shallow soil allowed. Nails worn blunt and
broken, bulged knuckles gnarled from
the brutal fusion of earth's work.

This place takes a knack for bucking up.
Land this old knows better than to beg,
knows you'll come back hungry – questions
circling your skull like a flock of gulls.
Accept this rock for the odd love it yields.

Rebecca Fredrickson, Brandon Kerfoot, Orly Lael Netzer, and Katherine Meloche

From Qallunaat to James Bay

An Interview with Mini Aodla Freeman, Keavy Martin, Julie Rak, and Norma Dunning

In this interview, we (three graduate students and one lecturer at the University of Alberta) discuss the republication of Mini Aodla Freeman's memoir *Life Among the Qallunaat* with the author and the editors of the recently revised edition. Aodla Freeman is a poet, playwright, and short story and nonfiction writer who has worked as a cultural advisor, broadcaster, producer, and editor. Born in 1937 on Cape Hope Island in James Bay, Nunavik (Inuit territory in northern Québec), Aodla Freeman grew up on the land, raised by her father and grandparents. She began training as a nurse at Ste. Therese School in Fort George, Québec, at the age of sixteen.[1] It was at Ste. Therese that Aodla Freeman contracted tuberculosis and was subsequently sent to a sanatorium in Hamilton, Ontario. During the three years that she spent in this sanatorium, Aodla Freeman worked as a nurse and translator for patients and staff, which led to a job with the federal government. At the age of twenty, she moved to Ottawa, where she was immersed in the unfamiliar world of "the South." In the context of the memoir, "the South" is a geographic location below the treeline, where non-Inuit modes of perception and action create unfamiliar codes and rules of decorum. Aodla Freeman continues to live in the South and is now a prominent elder in the Edmonton Inuit community.

The four interviewers joined Aodla Freeman and the editors of the new critical edition on June 9, 2015 to discuss the 2015 republication of *Life Among the Qallunaat*. The interview was initiated by the International Auto/Biography Association Students and New Scholars network (IABA SNS) as part of their *Public Dialogues* interview series, which shares conversations between scholars, artists, pedagogues, and writers. *Public Dialogues* explores cutting-edge

approaches to research of life narratives, alongside the ethical and political questions that surround them. In the spirit of collaborative research in the Humanities, "From Qallunaat to James Bay" brings together the author and editorial team for a conversation with four researchers from diverse fields: Katherine Meloche studies contemporary Indigenous genre fiction in Canada; Brandon Kerfoot engages with Inuit literature and animal studies; Rebecca Fredrickson focuses on the land and literature of the North; and Orly Lael Netzer studies life narratives. In the interview, we unpack the disparate priorities that go into writing, editing, and researching a text as we discuss the personal and material relationships that shape our various investments in *Life Among the Qallunaat*.

Aodla Freeman first published *Life Among the Qallunaat* with Hurtig Publishers in 1978. The memoir interlaces vignettes about her childhood in James Bay with her adult life in Hamilton and Ottawa. The 1978 edition excluded many stories about James Bay from the original manuscript while introducing an organizational frame that divided the text into three sections: "Ottawamillunga: In Ottawa," "Inullivunga: Born to Inuk Ways," and "Qallunanillunga: Among the Qallunaat." Perhaps the most significant revision made by Hurtig was the title, *Life Among the Qallunaat*. Though Aodla Freeman originally proposed a title that focused on James Bay, Mel Hurtig insisted on the title *Life Among the Qallunaat* as a response to Bernhard Adolph Hantzsch's ethnography *My Life Among the Eskimos* ("'One Day" xiv-xv). Qallunaat is often translated as the Inuktitut word for "white people," though Aodla Freeman clarifies that the term does not refer to race but to behaviour and perspective: "the word implies humans who pamper or fuss with nature, of materialistic habit. Avaricious people" (*Life Among the Qallunaat* 2015, 86). The 1978 edition ultimately emphasized Aodla Freeman's experiences with qallunaat at the expense of her stories of home.

This editorial reframing of the memoir is but one example of the regulatory practices that have been imposed on the 1978 edition of *Life Among the Qallunaat*. The book's reception was hindered when the federal government concealed over half of the original print run in the basement of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development ("'One Day" xvi). Aodla Freeman speculates that the government erroneously feared she had written explicitly about the residential school system (xvi). With so many copies removed from circulation, *Life Among the Qallunaat* fell into relative obscurity.[2]

The 2015 edition was republished as part of the University of Manitoba Press' *First Voices, First Texts* series. This series republishes Indigenous

literature that has fallen out of wide circulation, and it resituates editorial practices within the protocols of the communities involved. The editorial team, which works out of the University of Alberta, consisted of settler scholar Julie Rak, who researches life writing, Canadian literature, and book history; Keavy Martin, a settler scholar of Inuit literatures and reconciliation; and Norma Dunning, an urban Inuit writer and PhD candidate in Educational Policy Studies. They learned that Aodla Freeman still possessed the original typescript, which allowed them to compare it with the 1978 edition and to revisit the episodes that were removed or changed significantly. Their restoration illustrates the changing priorities of editorial work, particularly with regard to texts by Indigenous authors. While the 1978 editing process emphasized concision and appealing to a primarily non-Inuit readership ("'One Day" xiv), the 2015 editorial process prioritized Aodla Freeman's voice and her original focus on James Bay.

The interviewers met with Aodla Freeman and the editorial team to talk about the release of the 2015 edition. What set out to be a scholarly interview became an afternoon of laughter and storytelling in the Edmonton home of our generous host, Julie Rak. We discussed the conditions of visibility and the relationships that brought the 2015 edition into being. This conversation highlights the importance of understanding texts within their evolving material, cultural, and political contexts, as well as the ethical imperative to maintain accountability between author, editors, and the book that brings them together.

Rebecca: We're really interested in the idea of memory. Is there anything in the first edition that you remember differently and told differently in this book?

Mini: Not really, because when I first wrote it, I wrote it right out of memory and the way we used to travel and live in Cape Hope and trade in Old Factory or East Maine or Moose Factory. Those are true places. We used to trade. And the ones that were added on, it has just made the continuation of what I thought about the South and what I thought about how I grew up, and comparing them both.

Keavy: There's a passage about when you were studying to become a nurse and your teachers were always annoyed that you never wrote anything down, because you always had that ability just to remember.

Mini: Yes, I started in Fort George under a doctor named—I can't remember her name—she's a nun doctor. She was testing me in every way. How was I going to cope with that mentally ill man [one of three patients]? She would get me

to bring his tray for breakfast, lunch, or supper. But the first time she did that, she came with me and watched how he reacted. He didn't do anything because he saw her, and then she got me to go by myself with nothing, with no uniform on. And he started going like this [Mini demonstrates a forward motion with her torso] at me and I didn't like that. So I just put this tray down and closed the door real fast [laughter]. I told the nun and she said, "Okay, we'll see about that." She put me in a uniform and he didn't do that anymore. I thought it was strange that he would respect the uniform at that time. So, when I started at Fort George, while working there I got TB [tuberculosis]. At least that's what they told me, but I didn't feel sick. The whole school got sick, even the nuns and priests, except me. And they put me in another room, so I wouldn't catch whatever was going around. The following summer, I was the only one who got sick and they brought me to Moose Factory, and they did absolutely nothing except take x-rays and take your cough, take your sputum. Finally, when there were eleven Inuit going to Hamilton, I was put in, and here I was to be a translator for them. I never stayed in bed for those three years in which I was supposed to be sick. I went from one building to another, from one doctor to another, to translate for them. I got to the point of thinking, "Oh, I'm not sick. They're pretending I'm sick." I got to that point. Three years later they came to me, they said, "You can continue nursing here and we will guide you here, but you also have to translate when we need someone." So I did that and I moved into the nursing station—nursing home—where the nurses live [laughter]. I stayed there, translated, and took nursing, and worked everywhere: in the children's pavilion, adults, men, and women. And suddenly the truck of the hospital would come: "Oh Mini! You're needed to be translator," and off I would go. That's how it went in Hamilton. Finally, my aunt (who was from Cape Hope) was my roommate. She went home. Not long after, I got a letter from my father saying, "You have to come home. You have responsibilities to come home." That's when I told the head nurse that I had to go home. She said to me, "You can leave some of your things here and we'll put them in storage and you know it will be here when you get back." I never got back, and I don't know what happened to my stuff.

Keavy: I brought something to show you guys, if you want to see it [places box on table]. There was a point in our proceedings where we were asking Mini if she had her original typescript and she did. She had it in the original box. We were so excited when that original version was made available. This is a photocopy, if you want to look at it.

Mini: I kept that everywhere. I kept that original everywhere we went, everywhere we moved.

Keavy: Thank goodness you kept it!

Mini: Yes, and do you know [laughs]; I have to say this; I have to confess [laughter]. When Keavy phoned me and said to me that she would like to talk about my book, I didn't believe what I was hearing. I said to myself, "We'll see. We'll see what she says." And I still didn't believe it right up until you guys sent it to the publishers. Finally, when she brought six of them into my place, I got excited [laughter].

Keavy: That was a two-year period. It was a long time.

Julie: And you didn't tell us anything about that.

Keavy: This new version is not so much an "updated" version as it is a "restored" version, I would say, because that was a lot of our work, going through [the original manuscript] and comparing it to the 1978 version, and seeing these large sections that had been cut or had been drastically changed. Our work was really just to try to restore those in the best way that we could.

Katherine: Since you got to read the original manuscript, were there episodes that you were surprised were excluded? In the afterword you said you learned so much from those episodes. Could you elaborate?

Julie: The one I always tell—and Mini, I just went to a conference and I talked about your book there.[3] I told one of those stories and I couldn't believe it was gone [from the 1978 edition]. It was the one where you say you went to a movie and you were never so scared in your whole life. It was the worst! You had nightmares for weeks! The movie was called *Oklahoma!* [laughter]

Mini: The thing was, my cousin put me right in the front and everything seems to come at you [laughs]. But I'd never seen fighting before at that time.

Julie: This was one thing that was strange. But there were other things. There were a lot of stories about Nunaaluk [Cape Hope] that were gone. And they were important things. There was a very good story about Weetaltuk and how he was a leader. It's connected to another place where Mini has to—she doesn't know it—but she's supposed to help sell Canadian bonds. These two stories go together. In the first version, one of these stories about Weetaltuk was taken out and the other story [about *Oklahoma!*] was moved, so it didn't mean the same thing. There were a lot of times when that happened, where you had part of the story and you didn't have all of it. Once you could see how Mini was thinking it made so much sense.

Mini: By the way, the next book I would like to write is about Weetaltuk and

the other one is about the murders that happened in Sanikiluaq in 1942. But I have to ask permission from the community on that, because it may be very sensitive to that community, because a lot of people were related to those people. The reason why I'm interested in it is the difference between religions: Qallunaat religion and Inuit religion. At that time they were so mixed up. When I was four years old in school, one of the supervisors took me out of the girls' room and brought me to the hospital. I thought I was sick and she was holding my hand. We went down to the basement and there was this woman behind bars. She said something in Inuktitut. She said, "Inupiuvit?" And I would hide behind the supervisor. You know what she said, "You little Inuit. You little Eskimo." That's Akeenik. Her name is Akeenik. She was involved in that killing, and the reason why that got me really fascinated about her: her hand was *all* bandaged up from that killing.[4]

Julie: No wonder you want to work on that.

Mini: Yes, I do, would like to, but as I said, I'm going to have to get permission from the community. Because a lot of it has been written here and there, and there's no real story on Inuit religion. Because that's when the first missionaries went there. They have understood some, but they didn't get it all together what religion was at that time, and that's what I'd like to write about.

Norma: What I really appreciate about what Mini did is her opening where she talked about, "I'm glad that I grew up around Indians." And to me, that was a very important point to bring forward and address immediately. That's something that I really appreciate in your book, Mini.

Keavy: For me, it was the Inuktitut terminology. A lot of that was cut out. As an interpreter, I think you're always thinking about language. When you're writing in English and you're thinking about Inuktitut, and you're working between those two languages, you see a lot of that discussion here. There are passages in the original where you [Mini] explain some of the different terminology, the way that you would say something in Inuktitut. I think, when they published this in the Seventies, they probably thought, "Well, no one's going to read that," or, "No one will be able to follow that." But, this is a very different time.

Brandon: I'd like to ask about this new edition. One of the things that changes is that it's now a scholarly edition. It's published through a university press and it contains a couple of things like the works cited and some contextual information that's standard in scholarly texts. What kinds of opportunities or

obstacles come from this being a scholarly oriented book that might be taught in classrooms?

Mini: I didn't believe at the beginning that it is being published [laughter]. So, as I said, I'm excited now and I'm happy about it because for one thing, there's no more Cape Hope. All the Inuit from there were moved by government to Great River in 1960. About five years ago, they gave that land to Cree Indians of James Bay, and the James Bay Cree have turned it into tourism. That's the meeting I'm going to in July. Because I was there two years ago to start them off, and they want me to come back and have a meeting with them in East Main, which is not far from Cape Hope. And today, as I say, I'm happy as it turned out. That answers your question, I hope?

Keavy: What about our essay? What did you think about our essay?

Julie: Mini, did you read our essay that the three of us wrote at the end?

Mini: Which one?

Julie: The one at the end.

Mini: Yes, I did.

Julie: What do you think of it?

Mini: I think you just went through what you read, and wrote it and printed it out. It's something that has to go with the book, that's what I thought.

Julie: When we were making [the essay], Mini said to us, "Oh, that's too long," and we said, "We'll put it at the back where no one will read it," and she said, "That's okay" [laughter]. [The University of Manitoba Press] asked us to write a context introduction, but we did not want to do that. In the beginning, we wanted to interview Mini. That was our idea, so that Mini could tell her own story the way she wanted to tell it. That's part of the critical apparatus of the book. It's not just the essay at the back; it's what you have to say about how you did it.

Katherine: Could you elaborate on some of the challenges that you came across that surprised you about trying to make your jobs as editors transparent and visible?

Julie: One of the things that was really shocking to me was that from the first line, the editor had done all sorts of things to the manuscript that were beyond just making sure that there was subject-verb agreement or something like that, some kind of grammar thing. There was material that got added that Mini never wrote. Whole sentences. The stories had been pulled apart and made into three sections. We couldn't understand why—keep in mind that none of us had any idea that this had happened. We had to do sentence-by-sentence comparison and think through every single

one of them. That was something I was not expecting that we would have to do. Mini had said sections were cut out, but when I started to read, I realized how much was cut and that things had been added as well. We did not want to just reprint the text. We didn't always agree, but we talked a lot with Mini about how the text should look. Some of the things we do are like what any editor does—there are compromises. We wanted to make it visible because, as Keavy says, this isn't the last word on this. Mini has the last word. Whatever she wants, right? But also other readers will come and have other ideas. Fifty years from now there might be a different way to do this, or you'll have Inuit editors who are from a different context. Something will happen that will be different.

Norma: I will say the only thing that ever mattered to me is that Mini's book came back for the next generations. Mini has devoted her life to serving Inuit people. That's been her entire life. To know that future generations would get to read her words and experience her life was what mattered most in all of it. That was my only focus, to have it come out so she could see it and enjoy it.

Keavy: Something that I think about a lot is my position vis-à-vis the work that I'm doing. But as I said, I'm trying to work in a way that prioritizes relationships. One question you get asked sometimes in Indigenous studies is, "Who is your work responsible to?" And sometimes you don't have a clear sense of who that is, but in doing this work, in spending those two years trying to get this book to publication, it was always clear who we were responsible to: it was Mini. I always wanted to make sure that Mini was happy with the version, which was why I kept showing up with new versions, and she'd say, "Oh dear" [laughter]. So it was a long process that way. But again, we had a clear idea in mind that this is a real, live person who happens to live not too far away, who's a phone call away, who's in the same city—that just seems to be fate. I think all of us just wanted to make sure that Mini was happy with it, and that was our motivation.

Mini: I am happy with it. As I said, I've read it; I'm still reading it [laughter]. I have a copy on my coffee table. Every now and then I pick it up and start reading again and put my bookmark and continue again. And the reason why I'm happy about it is it's finally in full as Keavy said and Julie. It's like they said: you read this and then suddenly there's something else. It's finally in full, the way I meant it to come out in the first place.

Keavy: And that, to me, is a successful edit: if the author reads it through and recognizes their voice and feels that ownership over it. But anyway, time will tell.

Julie: Sometimes in literary studies, people forget that there's a publisher and an editor, and I have done a lot of work on that in other contexts. It made me very attentive to that, and I think that was a good thing because I really want to see other people work on that. I wonder what happened with the Seventies' edits for other books. I wonder if other books got stored in that basement [of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development]. That's a story I would like to know about.

Brandon: What made you choose this particular piece for the new edition's cover art [Elisapee Ishulutaq's "Downtown Vancouver"]?

Mini: That's a very nice cover, and I think it goes well with what I saw in the South for the first time.

Keavy: I believe [Professor Christopher Trott from the University of Manitoba] was consulted on the cover image, and he was the one who said that it would be a good possibility. As someone who has met Elisapee Ishulutaq and also has been camping with the family, I was happy to have that image there as well. It's really beautiful.

Rebecca: Mini, speaking of the cover, could you tell me a little bit about how your name changed spelling? "Mini." "Minnie." The two spellings of "Mini."

Mini: It should have been spelled M-i-n-i, right at the beginning.

Rebecca: So, why was it spelled n-n-i-e?

Mini: Mini means in my language "gentle rain."

Rebecca: Miniuq?

Mini: Yes and that's the way we spell things in our orthography. M-i-n-n-i-e meant nothing to me, even though that's how Mini is spelled in other languages. I know that part, but Mini, as I said, is spelled properly in our orthography. It hasn't been legally corrected, but to me it's M-i-n-i.

Keavy: So when did it first get spelled the old way, M-i-n-n-i-e?

Mini: Right from my birth.

Keavy: OK, so some qallunaat wrote it that way.

Mini: My birth certificate is spelled like that. My marriage certificate is spelled like that. Everything is spelled like that.

Keavy: And in the film *Nunaaluk*, made by Louise Abbott, that's where you were credited with the proper spelling. When I was talking to Louise about this book that was the one thing that she said to me: "Make sure you spell her name properly." That was when we kind of clued in.

Julie: That's because there was no way to know from the first book, and you had not told us. Then we knew that and it was very important.

Katherine: In the episode "Language Was Pulling," you described your trip to Québec City and you wrote that you felt very isolated because everyone was speaking French and you felt like there was a cellophane shield all around you. You then heard English speakers and you were physically drawn to them.

Mini: Yes, it's like suddenly being put here with a totally different language. Even though you heard it here and there in Ottawa, when I went to Québec at that time, just hearing French, French, French, and walking on the street, I'm hearing French, French, French. Usually, in Ottawa, I'm hearing the other way—all English. It's just so sudden, it seems. Even though I understood French at that time. We had to learn French in school, in residential schools, because most of the nuns didn't speak English at that time, so they spoke to us in French.

Katherine: I liked your description about how language can have a physical effect for you. I was curious about the inclusion of more Inuktitut words and meanings. Does it change your relationship with the text?

Mini: I think it all depends on what you grow up with. I grew up with four languages [Inuktitut, Cree, English, French]. My father, when I was about seven or eight years old, used to push me to go play with Cree kids so I could learn their language. We learn at a very early age how to speak Cree, and by the time you're an adult you speak like a Cree. That's how I was. Today, I've been living here for 38 years. That's how long ago I've heard Cree. I've heard them here and there, the different ways of saying things.

Julie: One thing I think is really good is that in the book Mini will tell you a word and then she'll tell you what it means. But she said, when she edited, she wanted a dash after, an em-dash.

Mini: Yes, because sometimes I couldn't say, I couldn't remember a word, how to say it in English, so I would put the Inuktitut word, or to emphasize more of my language [laughter].

Julie: But we originally had the Inuktitut words in italics, and we took them out at one point because Keavy read something—it was a poem.

Keavy: Alice Te Punga Somerville writes about the way that Indigenous languages should not be italicized in academic writing, and she does the same in her poetry.[5] That has been a convention in the past, as I'm sure you've seen, because it's the way that we try to mark "foreign" words, but what's the foreign language here? I remember saying to Mini, "Is it okay if we take out the italics of the Inuktitut?" And she went, "I already told you that!" [laughter]. It was like, take it out!

Orly: You were all mentioning that new readers will come to this. What would you like new readers to take from this? Because, Mini, it also sounds like when you're coming to the new edition, it's like a new book for you too sometimes.

Mini: I think at a different age I see it differently than the way I saw it about ten years ago. So for that reason, maybe next year it will be different to me, and I'll say to myself, "My god that silly book!" [laughter]. Not just my book, I read a lot of books and each time it's different to me.

Julie: I read this book when I was a very young person. I have had many things happen that have changed my life since then, but I remember at the time trying to understand a world I didn't understand. I think I only saw a part of the world she was trying to tell us about, and I feel like now you can see it. Especially how interconnected things are, that the North and the South are not separate. That's a really important thing for me. Right in the middle of the book, in the physical center, she talks about it. To me it's brilliant. I can't see what new readers will see. I know how much more I have to learn as I go on my own journey. And I will read, and I'll think, "Oh I see something else" [Mini laughs]. So that's a good book, right? When you can do that. That's probably the best thing about working with this, besides just working with Mini and with the other editors, because that's just been a gift that I didn't ever expect.

Norma: I think what I would hope readers to take away is the spirit of love that Mini wrote with, and the spirit of adventure that her life has always been. That's what I would hope people take away is to not be afraid of things that are new or different and to always go out and see the world. That's what Mini advises young people all the time.

Keavy: I've read the book so many times, and I've said so many things, and I probably will say more, but now it is the turn of the readers. It's your turn. I want to know what you think! I want to know what all the people out there think. I can't wait to see what people are taking from the book, so please tell us. Write your articles. Go. Get blogging!

NOTES

1 Fort George, now known as Chisasibi, is located in northern Québec in eastern James Bay. Aodla Freeman attended residential school in Fort George as a child.

2 Despite limited material circulation, academic engagement with the 1978 edition charts its movement across scholarly fields, gravitating to the relationship between anti-colonialism and Aodla Freeman's autobiographical persona. In *Canada and the Idea of North*, Sherrill E. Grace argues that Aodla Freeman reverses the ethnographic gaze on southern Euro-Canadians

to criticize their reduction of Inuit to caricatures (241-42). Shifting focus from gaze to voice, Heather Henderson writes in "North and South: Autobiography and the Problem of Translation" that Aodla Freeman develops an autobiographical voice that articulates a subject position not possible through translation work (62). In "'Covering their Familiar Ways with Another Culture': Minnie [sic] Aodla Freeman's *Life Among the Qallunaat* and the Ethics of Subjectivity," Bina Toledo Freiwald adds that Aodla Freeman imagines alternatives to a colonial regime as she moves between individual and collective identity and between a preservation of Inuit culture and a critique of colonial domination (275, 285). Keavy Martin expands on this engagement in *Stories in a New Skin: Approaches to Inuit Literature*, arguing that the memoir contributes to Inuit notions of aesthetics and literary criticism (114).

3 Julie Rak presented "Inuit Vibrant Matter: Mini Aodla Freeman's *Life Among the Qallunaat* and Machine Ecology" at *Encounters Across the Americas: Archives, Technologies, Methods*, the inaugural Biennial Conference of IABA-Americas Chapter at the University of Michigan on June 4-7, 2015.

4 Aodla Freeman is referring to the murders that occurred in Sanikiluaq (the Belcher Islands) in the winter of 1941. Jane George summarizes the events in "Kuujjuaq teacher publishes Inuktitut book," a review of Ida Watt's Inuktitut-language book, the title of which translates to "Brought to court in Sanikiluaq for their mistaken beliefs." The incident occurred when two hunters believing they were Jesus Christ and God killed community members whom they accused of disobeying them (George n. pag.). Community members were coerced onto the ice to follow Jesus, and, though they eventually fled, several people died from exposure before reaching home (George n. pag.). Seven people, including Akeenik, were tried for the murders (*Qikiqtani Truth Commission* 16). The government held the trial in Sanikiluaq to assert Canadian law in the region (16). The accused contracted influenza while awaiting trial in Moose Factory and brought it to Sanikiluaq (16).

5 In *Once Were Pacific: Māori Connections to Oceania,* Alice Te Punga Somerville explains, "[t]he convention of italicizing foreign words is tricky in the place of Indigenous languages, and there are various schools of thought around whether Māori should be italicized in this kind of English-language text. Although I recognize the argument that italicizing Māori prevents it from being incorporated into the English language as a set of loanwords rather than retaining its integrity as a quotation from a distinct language, I prefer to follow the convention of leaving the Māori language in roman type as a recognition that, for this writer, and for many readers of the book, Māori is not a foreign (or to use the term of the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 'unfamiliar') language. In this way, the Māori language is unmarked in the same way as, for example, Latin is unmarked in predominantly English texts" (217-218). Many thanks to Keavy Martin for bringing this passage to our attention.

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Writing Stories and Producing Knowledge

Rachel Berman, ed.
Corridor Talk: Canadian Feminist Scholars Share Stories of Research Partnerships. Inanna $24.95

R. H. Slansky
Moss-Haired Girl: The Confessions of a Circus Performer. Anvil $16.00

Reviewed by Sarah MacKenzie

Though disparate in genre, the texts under review are directly connected by their engagements with and elaborations upon the role of reflexivity—and general emotional involvement—in investigative processes (personal or professional), as well as their considerations of the creation and delivery of narratives. It is no surprise that R. H. Slansky grew up in a family of travelling circus performers. Indeed, her first novel, the 72-page *Moss-Haired Girl: The Confessions of a Circus Performer*, is clearly derived from an in-depth understanding of carnivalesque performance. The book—a captivating read—details protagonist Joshua Chapman's search to uncover the truth concerning the life story of circus performer Zara Zalinzi, the "Moss-Haired Girl." Joshua, while sorting through the belongings of his recently deceased mother, discovers Zalinzi's autobiography. Struggling to separate fact from fiction in order to update the performer's narrative, Joshua undertakes a journey through his own family history, eventually coming to question the foundation of folkloric family tales. The novel's intricate dual narrative—the combined accounts of Zalinzi and Joshua—is, ultimately, a deeply involved, however brief, problematization of the construction of stories and, by extension, knowledge.

Making a substantial contribution to the growing body of scholarship relating to reflexivity in feminist research and writing, Rachel Berman's *Corridor Talk* addresses a number of salient issues pertaining to the forging and maintenance of research partnerships. While notably diverse, the articles included in the timely collection are tethered by a shared focus on the significance of not only reflexivity, but also emotional struggle in feminist work. As indicated by the text's title, the essays contend most specifically with the informal academic and non-academic relationships that lead to knowledge production. Authored by a range of contributors from various backgrounds, and working in different fields, the articles examine differing research relationships from varying vantage points. While several authors concern themselves with academic and community partnerships (community-based research "CBR"), others consider those collaborative investigations in which participants also function as researchers in a mode of research known as participatory action research ("PAR").

Given that such intricate, egalitarian-style investigation is under-theorized in terms of both approach and outcome, the poignant and highly entertaining pieces in Berman's collection might also be considered road-maps for future feminist investigators engaging in potentially productive and

fulfilling, though necessarily difficult, research partnerships. In the book's third chapter, for example, Colleen Dell and her colleagues discuss their reflections after working on a "large-scale" study involving racialized—Indigenous/First Nations—women suffering from addiction problems, along with service providers and treatment centre directors. In their essay, Dell and her fellow researchers work to assist readers to better understand the reflexivity and emotional labour necessary to conduct truly "respectful research." Similarly, in chapter four, Berman and her co-author Vappu Tyyskä forewarn that disconcertion surrounding collaborative research may not truly resonate until after a project has been completed. Keeping the socially transformative goal of feminist research in mind, researchers, as Berman argues, may continue to ask themselves for some time after a project's completion: "whose interests were served anyway?"

Looking On

Sarah Brophy and Janice Hladki, eds.
Embodied Politics in Visual Autobiography.
U of Toronto P $34.95

Lynette Hunter
Disunified Aesthetics: Situated Textuality, Performativity, Collaboration.
McGill-Queen's UP $39.95

Reviewed by Gillian Whitlock

The aim of *Embodied Politics in Visual Autobiography* is not so much to survey this emerging contemporary field of autobiographical practice, the editors suggest, as it is to model ways of "thinking with" the embodied politics of visual autobiography. The twelve essays in this collection and the two extended essays by Brophy and Hladki that have the first and last word range across a diverse array of "texts and tactics" that reflect on how contemporary visual autobiographies envision, situate, and circulate multiple forms of critical embodiment. What are these texts and tactics? The essays muster a series of arresting and often confronting case studies. Some feature monstrosities: Virgil Wong and Lee Mingwei's collaboration *POP! The First Male Pregnancy* is a cyber- and real-world installation that creates a cybernetic pregnancy, a fantastical embodiment at the threshold of reality and fiction, biology and technology, West and East, male and female, science and art. Pro-anorexic autobiographical representations online construct "Ana" identities that feed on trigger material called "thinspiration," which draws on mainstream contemporary culture in contradictory and complex ways. Hybrid and collective forms of autobiographical performance, such as *Big Judy*, create narratives of subjectivity that question the individualization of fat experience and mobilize collective and fantastic performance to transform shame into activism. Others feature bodily transformations: autoethnographies of straight men that re-examine heteromasculine sexualities; the politics of normative depictions of FTM masculinity that draw on individual worth and patriotism; "wound culture" and representations of plastic surgery on reality TV, such as *The Swan*. Finally a series of essays focus on specific historical and political locations where embodiment is a critical issue in campaigns for social justice: Indigenous epistemological practice in the museum; Mona Hatoum's video installation *Corps étranger* that "scopes" her corporeal landscape in connection to autobiographical inscriptions of Al Nakba, the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories in 1947-1948; visual witnessing in *okay bye-bye*, Rebecca Baron's independent autobiographical documentary film about US military complicity in the Cambodian genocide; and racial melancholia in Carmin Karasic's autobiographical digital artwork *With Liberty and Justice for All*, an interactive engagement with the racist legacies of slavery in the US.

These case studies are "arresting" not only in the diversity of historical, social, and cultural contexts that come into view here but also because much remains to be said about each of them, and no singular reading or interpretation quite satisfies the issues on embodiment that play out here across the fields of visual cultural studies, autobiography studies, and disability studies. In their two extended essays, the editors focus on visual artist Rebecca Belmore (Anishinaabe) and her performance video *Worth*, now archived on YouTube, a "fleeting, poignant, public self-crucifixion" staged on the sidewalk in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery on September 11, 2010, a day when catastrophic national loss is commemorated. Drawing on Jill Bennett (whose "politics of empathy" is a key concept for the book) and Judith Butler, whose theories of precarity, visuality, and embodiment return throughout the essays here, Brophy and Hladki take this text and tactics as a symptomatic example of the uses of the body as a medium for communicating the material conditions that shape both Belmore's career as an artist and the histories of Indigenous women. Visual autobiographical performances such as this *summon* us. They suggest, and mobilize affect, although the spectatorial encounter does not necessarily command recognition. So, for example, the testamentary address of Belmore's performance demands an ethics of spectatorship that reflects on the spectator's relationship to injustice and (following Butler) the question of what responsibility will look like.

These concerns with summoning the spectator link across to Lynette Hunter's *Disunified Aesthetics*, the product of an extended project of "embodied research" that might well appear in *Visual Autobiography* as a case study of text and tactics. This book, unexpectedly, gave me a key piece of a puzzle that has eluded me for some time. In 1997 at the "Women and Texts/Les Femmes et les Textes" conference held at the University of Leeds, Hunter, one of the convenors, presented an all-day performance piece that is recalled here by Teresa Smalec, one of the attendees. Throughout the day, dressed in blue overalls, Hunter laboured physically to carry trays of cookies into the building from a van in the parking lot. In the afternoon, to conclude the performance, she removed all her clothes and curled naked inside a small metal box. We waited, and after what seemed like an interminable time of looking and increasing anxiety about the non-response of this naked woman and our right to look—twenty minutes, Smalec recalls—we began to talk amongst ourselves, until the final plenary was announced and the naked woman walked silently out of the room. The consternation remains with me still. This performance, "Bodies in Trouble," is the focus of a mixed genre script performance, an interview between Hunter and Susan Rudy taped in 1998 and conducted in two parts on the page here.

This performance is a component of an extended project, a series of studies in twenty-first-century aesthetics in the context of recent Canadian writing—on broad topics such as Indigenous women's writing and women's writing more generally, on Robert Kroetsch, Frank Davey, Nicole Brossard, Alice Munro, bpNichol. Hunter is looking to challenge the form of the conventional literary critical essay, to explore a "disunified aesthetics" that incorporates performance art pieces that are available online as website materials, or incorporated as typographic and visual art on the pages of the book.

Visual autobiography challenges the book and print-based media. It raises the question of whether disunified aesthetics, for example, can flourish on the limits of the page. I yearned for my iPad when turning the pages of this book, so the weblinks and images could come alive digitally at a touch of an LCD screen. Both of these books testify to the demands on readers, viewers, and communication technologies made by visual autobiographics

now that flourish off the page on sidewalks, in new media, and in shape-shifting embodiments that remain arresting.

Questionable Concepts

Colin Browne
The Properties. Talonbooks $19.95

Dennis Cooley
abecedarium. U of Alberta P $19.95

kevin mcpherson eckhoff
Their Biography: an organism of relationships. BookThug $18.00

Reviewed by Carl Watts

Colin Browne's *The Properties* begins with the epigraph, "But Nature, that knows best its own laws, and the several properties of bodies, knows also best how to adapt and fit them to her designed ends." Taken from *Micrographia* (1665), a work that detailed Robert Hooke's use of magnifying lenses, these words lay out Browne's guiding concept of the ability of unconscious, unknowable, or natural forces to influence social configurations. In a sense, Hooke's words also describe the way the books under review here announce their concept and then stray from it. In *The Properties,* Browne alloys his theme with invocations of language writing and signifiers of the Western Canadian avant-garde. Early on, "prickle operas" invokes a hybrid, difficult-to-decipher multiplicity, calling attention to the arbitrary and spontaneous in its privileging of sound over sense:

> fish sit
> snot floats
> flat stoats
> flip sheets
> fillet milt
> stone boats

The collection also remains in conversation with current conceptual practices, such as when "Les prisonniers ont le droit de s'enfuir" employs passages taken from transcripts of Joan of Arc's trial. The poem resonates with the multivalent wordplay of the collection's shorter pieces while also capturing the particularity of experience and the contingency within the seemingly inevitable:

> This hold on life
> is slight.
> This grip on this hold on life
> is slight.
> This grasp on this grip on this hold on life
> is slight.

"Les prisonniers ont le droit de s'enfuir" also closes with a note that the piece was presented with a score in Vancouver in 2010, and it is precisely this grab-bag quality that slightly dilutes *The Properties.* Despite their strong moments, such standalone pieces establish the book as exemplary of a historical moment in which books of poetry are curated as much as they are written. The agglutinating phrases of "An Inauguration, April 15, 2009" ("who's asked / who's asked to / who's asked to speak for"), for instance, seem inseparable from the fact that the piece was originally performed at a Vancouver shoe store, and the poem comes across as part of a catalogue rather than an integral component of a book. Many of the longer pieces here draw attention to the unknowable interstices of histories and communities; still, by the time a closing quotation from Hooke returns to the book's initial premise, *The Properties* seems like a compilation that has been advertised as a concept album.

Less varied is Dennis Cooley's *abecedarium*. In recalling its titular genre's function as exercise book and devotional text, *abecedarium* at once invokes conceptual writing and remains anchored in the prairie language poetry tradition in which Cooley has been at home for decades. The poems are organized somewhat alphabetically, and Cooley's preface refers to the Latin alphabet's limitations and productive idiosyncrasies; it announces its intentions, however, with the predictable playfulness

of classic language writing: "ours is not to reason y the alphabet is very close to ancient greek and roman in sequence and in lettering." *abecedarium* is best when it conducts a conversation with conceptual writing yet acknowledges its own distance; this perspective allows Cooley's preface to acknowledge both the institutionalization of the avant-garde ("a young Toronto poet is an avowed and out-and-out lipogrammatist, unrepentant some have said from too much book learning, gives us too much lip") and, when it replaces "dear poet" with "dear reader," the coterie of writer-readers that contemporary poetry seems to have instead of a conventional readership. Subtler examples of this stylistic hybridity pop up throughout: "in the book of secret alphabets" gives a historical account of writing systems, including

> the seven alphabets of the learned men
> the four and twenty alphabets of other
> learned men
>
> the antediluvian, no more than three
> in number,
> of which the first Adam spoke

"hyoid," meanwhile, refers to the organs enabling human speech ("where the bone being disarticulate / brings into art / iculation breaks voices from our necks"), and lines like "what slip page do we risk then / bidden to speech / in wet & cartilagenous zones" combine the bodily imagery of Cooley's earliest work with his current themes.

It is precisely this long-running consistency, however, that makes *abecedarium* seem somewhat dated. Cooley's use of bolded text and superscript doesn't add much to his onomatopoeia, and his employment of alternate typefaces for phrases like "SACRED TEXTS" doesn't do justice to the inherently aesthetic nature of alphabetical writing he acknowledges via an epigraph from Johanna Drucker. Instead, such moments make it seem as though the poems are waving their arms to get the attention of an uninterested reader. And while "prefer ring" nods to non-Indo-European writing systems with its omission of vowels ("in some languages you do not write vowels, do not dare write them, thx xnspxxkxblx sxxnds xf gxd"), these moments seldom approach the sophistication of the phonetic, alphabetical, and abjadic experiments conducted in past works by the other authors under review here. Despite its integration of eras of experimental poetry, *abecedarium* is classic Cooley: length and consistency ultimately work against him.

Of the works reviewed here, kevin mcpherson eckhoff's *Their Biography: an organism of relationships* hews most closely to its concept. eckhoff's past work with shorthand and phonetic writing systems suggests he is quite at home in the conceptual (or post-conceptual) moment, but it also indicates that he is interested more in the expansive and idiosyncratic than in the rigidly programmatic. Accordingly, *Their Biography* has been constructed out of solicited contributions that include substitution-based pieces ("the left Macpherson has thicker walls than the right because it needs to pump Eckhoff to most of the memory, while the right Macpherson fills only the voice"), illustrations, visual poems, and prose descriptions from the perspectives of family members, friends, and at least one former student. *Their Biography* also replicates eckhoff's trademark solecisms and slippages in register, such as in chapter three: "I ask in return do: any of us really "know' Kevin? Are we aware through observation, inquiry or information about who Kevin is?" Such moments call into question the author's absence and emphasize the relational nature of both writing and publishing. Has eckhoff tampered with the pieces to produce some greater consistency? Have the contributors (intentionally or unintentionally) replicated eckhoff's style? Does it matter?

eckhoff is sure to mention who contributed, as a retroactive proof of concept but perhaps also to foreground the social network to which the book's subtitle alludes. It seems useful to consider this element of the text with reference to Felix Bernstein's *Notes on Post-Conceptual Poetry* (2015), which regards a newly foregrounded social network as a survivor of the "death of the writerly and readerly" that is declared by the practitioners of such poetry. Just as all these authors show us the script and then revel in departing from it, the entertaining and intermittently brilliant *Their Biography* would appear to resist Bernstein's pronouncement, if only to some extent: I'm genuinely glad I read it from cover to cover, even if the contributor list with which it ends suggests my time would have been better spent cultivating my network.

Future(s) Behind Us

Méira Cook
Monologue Dogs. Brick $20.00

Carolyn Marie Souaid
This World We Invented. Brick $20.00

Nick Thran
Mayor Snow. Nightwood $18.95

Reviewed by Kyle Kinaschuk

Monologue Dogs, the fifth book of poetry published by Winnipeg-based poet, novelist, and literary critic Méira Cook, offers readers a rare chance to read the past anew. Cook deftly summons a panoply of voices from the literary, biblical, and historical archive to unhinge a postlapsarian world by rendering time itself disobedient. In this lively and perceptive collection of poems, Cook creates a polyvocal and "un-Edened" landscape that "drag[s] / the creaking wooden future behind us." *Monologue Dogs* reimagines figures such as Eve, Persephone, Cordelia, and Virginia Woolf to stage monologues that set time out of joint. For example, Cook masterfully cultivates a temporal disobedience in her sequence of poems entitled "CRACKED," which contains a triptych of monologues by "Young Eve," "Her Boyfriend," and "Any Old Snake." In the culminating poem of this set of monologues, "Any Old Snake" appropriates the lines of Andrew Marvell's "The Garden" in an anachronistic gesture that is both comedic and profound.

The vicissitudes of time and anachrony persist throughout Cook's collection, as Persephone and Demeter wait "where the subway gapes" and a "Young Eve, All Grown Up" happens upon an arthritic Gabriel with an "ancient / electric sword flashing in the dark" in "crushed-heel slippers / and his scuffed ideals." In these instances, readers will be reminded of the wit and erudition of Anne Carson, whose *Short Talks* Cook alludes to in *Monologue Dogs*. By inhabiting a time where the future is behind us and the past is in front of us, Cook shatters the laws of temporality to limn elegant lyrics that teach us "Disobedience is the way back." Ultimately, *Monologue Dogs* proves a challenging and enduring collection that deserves to be read and reread with the same amount of rigour that Cook consistently demonstrates in her own poetic craft.

While Cook's *Monologue Dogs* upsets linear conceptions of time by way of an anachronous poetics, Carolyn Marie Souaid's seventh collection of poetry *This World We Invented* turns our attention toward another modality of time, that is, the finitude of life. Souaid's lyrical musings uncover the ways in which the threat and chance of time work upon life in both catastrophic and ordinary registers. From the inaugural poem to the concluding poem, *This World We Invented* advances a wave of deeply moving reflections on the fragility of life. "Time intervenes," the speaker of "Perspective" tells us while observing her son at a birthday party. At the party, the son and his group of friends "never expect the inevitable," although they have "memorized the beautiful/repugnant cycle / for tests:

you're a cell, / you're a boy, you're a man, you're a corpse." Souaid is clearly uninterested in abstract theorizations of death in this volume of poetry; rather, each poem yields carefully wrought phenomenological descriptions of life's affective pulse in its confrontation with the "yes/no of being here for a time, / and then not."

What is more, *This World We Invented* is committed to embodied and lived experience, as the speaker of "Space" declares early on in the volume that "Space is not neutral / It depends on who inhabits it / and how." To this end, Souaid skillfully weaves together a host of perspectives on loss and death that respond to disparate events such as losing a loved one to cancer, the destruction of a new Mazda, apocalyptic visions of the earth becoming mist, and the ecological crisis of mercury contamination in rivers. What is especially striking about *This World We Invented* is Souaid's perspicacious ability to capture the transpositions between the unsettling and the banal as well as the plaintive and the tedious. In "Upon Seeing *Life of Pi* on the Eve of the Eve of Your Death," the speaker eats popcorn in a theatre while a friend's life begins to wither. Souaid thus invites readers to dwell in a world where "there's no great revelation," yet one is impelled "to notice everything / in its brevity." In *This World We Invented,* Souaid dazzles as she undoes the borders of the eventful and the uneventful.

If Souaid's collection is oriented around the question of the vulnerability of life, then Nick Thran, in his third volume of poetry, *Mayor Snow*, pushes on in the wake of loss to ask what it might mean to survive and inherit the past. In *Mayor Snow*, Thran assembles an eclectic, playful, and bold selection of poems, which are neatly organized into three sections: "Carapace," "Mayor," and "River." Thran composed all eight of the poems found in "Carapace" while living in Al and Eurithe Purdy's renowned A-frame house in Ameliasburgh, Ontario, and each of these poems reveal Thran's intimate struggle to come to terms with how he might respond to Purdy's poetic legacy. After hearing the news of the shooting on Parliament Hill, Thran asks the spectral Purdy, "What would you make of this, Al?" The tone of these poems hence turns away from the elegiac and the nostalgic to earnestly celebrate the "Big guy" and his "Big, big voice" without lapsing into a cloying fantasy of Purdy and his work: "Dug my stay here, / but I will shake him off me."

In "Mayor," the first-person perspective that is operative in the opening section of *Mayor Snow* disappears, and the focus of the collection shifts toward a sprawling account of contemporary political issues. Thran mobilizes innovative constraints to engage concerns such as drones and surveillance. "Mayor Drone," for instance, relies solely on Martha Stewart's *Time Magazine* article "Why I Love My Drone." Further, "River" marks a return to the first-person perspective where Thran continues to produce incisive and clever poetry that ranges from narratives of intoxicating labour conditions to dialogues with Yusef Komunyakaa and Arshile Gorky to a failed book report written in French that is translated through Google Translate. With the advent of *Mayor Snow,* Thran promises to surprise readers at every turn.

Of Barons and Bacon

Patrick deWitt
Undermajordomo Minor. Anansi $29.95

Adam Lewis Schroeder
All-Day Breakfast. Douglas & McIntyre $22.95

Reviewed by Laura Cameron

The bright red background and bold black and white lettering on the cover of Patrick deWitt's new novel immediately invite a comparison of *Undermajordomo Minor* with its immensely successful (and similarly designed) precursor, *The Sisters Brothers*

(2011). The comparison is in some ways disadvantageous to *Undermajordomo Minor*, for its plot is thinner than that of *The Sisters Brothers* and its protagonist, Lucien (Lucy) Minor, is not nearly as captivating as the loveable Eli Sisters. And yet *Undermajordomo Minor*'s fresh take on the Gothic romance is just as dazzlingly realized as the earlier novel's reconfigured Western. DeWitt's objective in both cases is not to satirize generic conventions but rather to work within them, baldly demanding that we embrace their tropes and submit to the twists and turns of his capacious imagination.

Because deWitt is more interested in genre than in character or plot, the most compelling part of *Undermajordomo Minor* is its initial establishment of the scene. Young Lucy Minor leaves his childhood home in the small hamlet of Bury to take a job as "undermajordomo" in the Castle Von Aux, an imposing structure looming "blacker-than-night" above a remote alpine village. Here he works under the melancholic majordomo, Mr. Olderglough, who manages the castle's affairs while the Baron Von Aux broods in his room and wanders the dark corridors confused and occasionally chewing on rats. The Baron is mad with lovesickness, Lucy learns; though his wife absconded over a year before Lucy's arrival, the Baron still writes to her daily, futilely, longingly: "The scope of your void humbles me," he tells her in one of these tragic and articulate missives. In the village, meanwhile, Lucy befriends a kindly pair of burglars named Memel and Mewe and falls for the beguiling Klara; only Klara is already in love with an "exceptionally handsome man," a soldier in the "area war" that rages on endlessly and apparently aimlessly in the nearby woods. And thus the stage is set for a decadent dinner party, a deathbed confession, a botched murder, and a perilous escape. As affections blossom and disintegrate, *Undermajordomo Minor* proposes that whatever thieves, rascals, and "very large holes" lurk in the shadows, love might finally be the most dangerous menace of all.

Undermajordomo Minor is not really about Lucy; he is just a pair of curious eyes, peering at this extraordinary setting and eclectic cast of characters through a telescope in a far-off castle window. Adam Lewis Schroeder's *All-Day Breakfast*, on the other hand, is a lengthy and often introspective first-person narrative which is all about its protagonist. Peter Giller is, like Lucy, an utterly "minor" sort of person: a substitute teacher in small-town Nebraska, a recent widower and father of two. After he and his eleventh-grade students are accidentally sprayed with mysterious pink goo during a field trip to a plastics factory, they begin to exhibit strange symptoms: superhuman strength, uncontrollable anger, the ability to reattach their limbs with staples and thumbtacks, and, above all, an overwhelming and insatiable craving for bacon. Although they do not eat brains and they have never died—as far as they can tell—Peter and his students determine that they must be zombies, and they set off on a cross-country road trip in search of a cure.

The point of view in *All-Day Breakfast* is fresh and intriguing: it is a first-person zombie thriller, narrated by the man careening down the Interstate in a stolen ambulance full of teenagers missing body parts and craving nitrites. Unfortunately, as Schroeder endeavours to mingle genres and approaches—the novel is meditative, measured, tragic, and literary even as it is ridiculous, goofy, and crude—he does not commit fully enough to any one mood, and the story is consequently muddy and meandering. Who is its intended audience? Is it literary fiction, or is it a straight-up comedy? Lacking direction, much of the humour falls flat; Schroeder's obsessive references to "brains," for instance, feel forced and self-conscious ("Funny how the brain works," Peter remarks repeatedly), and condescending comments about women

("Women are resourceful," Peter notes, recalling that his wife once pulled a library card out of her bra) do not develop Peter's character but seem simply gratuitous. I am not urging greater seriousness on a novel that should be fun; on the contrary, *All-Day Breakfast* would have been more successful had it more whole-heartedly embraced the low-brow, the slapstick, or the absurd.

We should nevertheless admire Schroeder's energetic attempt. Although deWitt's stylish prose and the affective tapestry of his fairy-tale world exist on a different literary plane from Schroeder's rambling narration and awkward attempts at humour, both novels provide a dynamic space where even the oldest of motifs and conventions—zombies, barons, love stories, folk tales, road trips, and science experiments gone wrong—can live on: surprising, contemporary, and certainly undead.

Break Events and Gelassenheit

Karen Enns
Ordinary Hours. Brick $20.00

Robert Zacharias
Rewriting the Break Event: Mennonites & Migration in Canadian Literature. U of Manitoba P $31.95

Reviewed by Martin Kuester

While migration and immigration have always been of central importance in Canadian writing, there is hardly any ethnic or religious group in Canada whose fate has been dominated by migration as much as that of the Mennonites. This applies especially to the "Russian" Mennonites, who started out in Frisia and—after settling in Eastern Prussia and Russia (or Ukraine, in modern terms)—finally came to Canada. There have been a few books on Mennonite Canadian writing and on its surprising success, but Robert Zacharias' *Rewriting the Break Event* is the best one to date.

Falling back on the theoretical framework of diaspora studies, Zacharias convincingly analyzes the writing of Mennonite writers of (mostly) *Russländer* descent. He shows a historic "break event," the collapse of the Mennonite "Commonwealth" in today's Ukraine in the early twentieth century, to be the "birth" event or "collective myth" underlying the self-image of Canadian Mennonites in their recent writing. Zacharias illustrates the importance of the memory (following Marianne Hirsch, we might call it post-memory) of the persecution of the Mennonites by formerly exploited Ukrainians and anarchists like the infamous Nestor Makhno. As we see in this taxonomy, the Mennonites do not necessarily have to be seen as a religious group: often, especially in the context of Canadian multiculturalism, they are viewed as an ethnicity. In his extensive introduction, Zacharias gives an overview of Mennonite migration from Europe to Canada and of the development of their communal identity relating to the "break event." The chapters of the main part focus on the various literary re-tellings of the historic break event according to Zacharias' own taxonomy: Al Reimer's *My Harp is Turned to Mourning* is a prime example of the "theo-pedagogical strain" insisting on the importance of "faith in fiction" and postulating the importance of an attitude of *Gelassenheit*, "serene self-surrender and resignation to God's will." Arnold Dyck's *Lost in the Steppe* represents the "ethnic strain," which puts less emphasis on the religious message and more on communal identity, whereas Sandra Birdsell's *The Russländer* represents the "traumatic strain," working through the events by re-telling them in the safe haven of Canada. Finally, Zacharias interprets Rudy Wiebe's complex narrative in *The Blue Mountains of China* as a "meta-narrative" experimentally problematizing its own act of re-telling and memorization.

That the collapse of the Mennonite Commonwealth is important beyond the field of Mennonite fiction is clearly illustrated in Karen Enns' second excellent

volume of poetry. In *Ordinary Hours*, she insists on the positive force of the ordinary and non-descript in the Canadian Mennonites' present: "There are no communists in sight, high priests / or seers, prophets or angels," as she puts it in her introductory "Prelude," and "There is absence, not emptiness, / and something close to echo." Her poems, often in the spirit of imagism or rather its musical counterpart, reverberate with the feeling of *Gelassenheit* or supreme surrender described by Zacharias. As she puts it in "Metaphor," there is "More than words": "an echo rises to the surface, / but with greater clarity, / greater force."

The Heroine's Audience

Elizabeth Rollins Epperly
The Fragrance of Sweet-Grass: L. M. Montgomery's Heroines and the Pursuit of Romance.
U of Toronto P $27.95

Benjamin Lefebvre, ed.
The L. M. Montgomery Reader: Volume 3: A Legacy in Review. U of Toronto P $55.00

Reviewed by Aoife Assumpta Hart

Originally published in 1992, invigorating both academic approaches as well as readers' receptions, *The Fragrance of Sweet-Grass* has been reissued with a new preface by the author. Now regarded as a cornerstone of contemporary Montgomery scholarship, Epperly's study helped to situate an undervalued and misapprehended Canadian woman novelist within the changing attitudes of both university studies and a national imagination re-evaluating its own literary canon in the early nineties. Indeed, Epperly's notes on Adrienne Clarkson's positive relationship to the *Anne* novels are particularly telling of how Montgomery's legacy is one of Canadian self-recognition beyond literary figure. So by specifically directing our attention to the genre conventions of Romance, and to Montgomery's feminist confrontations with their limitations and inhibitions, Epperly argues that "Montgomery's novels call into question and play the concepts that continue to shape the female of the 1990s as much as the female of the turn of the century."

Heroine has significant thematic import in Epperly's repositioning of Montgomery's major characters not as passive vignettes, caught up in the moody happenstances of romance, but instead as women of agency, self-awareness, and with a capacity for voice. In its time, Epperly's assessments helped to revive Anne and Emily, among others of Montgomery's female protagonists, not as sentimental props in need of rescue but rather as complex personalities negotiating the tensions between psychology, sexism, and irrepressible individuality.

The newly written preface for this reprint offers us Epperly's own informative self-reflections, as both a reader and scholar of Montgomery for decades, as she contemplates what has changed in the cultural and intellectual interpretation of Montgomery in the time since she began her research. Epperly notes that Montgomery studies continue to expand, rather than collapse into rehearsed interpretations, especially on the relationship between gender and genre. As Epperly invites, "there are always new contexts and new questions to explore"; and she surveys admiringly the critical productivity of the last two decades in what has been a transformation in Montgomery studies, with both literary implications and political ramifications.

Given how much archival material has appeared since 1992—the preface begins with a wry observation on the dearth of publications she had to work with back then—Epperly credits a great number of researchers for making available Montgomery's private material, such as her diaries, and the insight and information they might provide. Anthologies of critical essays have been a major force in opening

up critical discussion, absolutely, but so has been the release of accessible versions of Montgomery's private papers.

Along with the publication of the journals, Benjamin Lefebvre's comprehensive three-volume set of *The L. M. Montgomery Reader* is a crucial scholarly intervention of this sort. His work here concludes with the third volume, entitled *A Legacy in Review*: a compendium of popular criticism, commentary, and reviews—collected from over eight countries—that reveal the contradicting and changing reception of Montgomery's work. Lefebvre's overall achievement in this *Reader* series is a masterful compilation of archival adeptness and exquisite editing that addresses, through collation, crucial source materials for specialists in Canadian literature and history through the iconic personage of Montgomery as she saw herself and as others saw her work.

Lefebvre brings an annotated focus on the "coverage Montgomery's books received in these reviews in the context of ads, notices, and best seller lists," which Lefebvre informatively addresses within the pragmatics of print media and bookselling. Lefebvre's selections depict ways of engagement and influence with the broader reading public in the fashioning of taste and opinion in regards to Montgomery's target audience and how her works were positioned for reception. That Montgomery herself kept a scrapbook of clippings from many of her reviews over her career—"on occasion she also recorded in these scrapbooks moments of resistance in ink"—is part of the interesting authorial reconsiderations she reveals through her own self-indexing as evidenced in this collection. Amidst legal woes, personal problems, and an expanding readership built on expectations of previous novels, Montgomery's ambivalence about literary fame and popularity are quite apparent. As Lefebvre reminds us, Montgomery herself noted, "I gave up trying to fathom the mentality of reviewers years ago." And Lefebvre reveals, chronologically and geographically, that there never really was unanimity in Montgomery's expected niche in the marketplace of female authorship.

As one reads these reviews—"simple life in a fascinating land" or "harmless and easy reading"—many of Epperly's observations about the nostalgia of opinion in regards to Montgomery's "legacy" become apparent. To look back upon both author and readership is to analyze a relationship of sorts, one in which reception itself is a kind of romance, a kindred thrill at discovered emotional resonances with Montgomery as a writer.

Three New Voices in Canadian Poetry

Aaron Giovannone
The Loneliness Machine. Insomniac $16.95

Melissa Bull
Rue. Anvil $18.00

Debbie Okun Hill
Tarnished Trophies. Black Moss $17.00

Reviewed by J. A. Weingarten

The only thing that Aaron Giovannone's *The Loneliness Machine*, Debbie Okun Hill's *Tarnished Trophies*, and Melissa Bull's *Rue* have in common is that each book announces a new talent. They are otherwise utterly distinct: Giovannone's poems strive for comedy, Hill's book tours physical sports, and Bull's poems explore Montreal and her own various pasts. Each book has its own project, tone, and merits, and each will find radically different audiences.

It is appropriate that Montreal poet David McGimpsey endorsed Aaron Giovannone's *The Loneliness Machine*, because its first section is as cheeky as McGimpsey's own writing. While the tone can be fun, there is inevitably one drawback to comedic poetry: a witty punch line is often the poem's centre. A case in point is one of Giovannone's weakest poems, "A Famous Quotation is

Hidden in This Poem" (the quotation is, the speaker tells us, from Chaucer). There is no way to navigate the poem without eccentrically focusing on its premise:

> Read this line,
> now this one.
> Ha!
>
> *The lyf so short,*
> *the craft*
> *so longe to lerne.*
>
> Did you get it?
> That's Chaucer.
> Ha!

There is a discussion to be had about the speaker's dialogue with his reader, but I nevertheless find the lines flat. That flatness sometimes happens at inopportune times in Giovannone's book, when comedic throwaways deflate better lines that hit hard.

Giovannone's more successful attempts at comedy are his satires of lyric intimacy. In "Pop the Trunk," for instance, the speaker coaxes the reader into "sending [him] a text message" and pleads, "Please. / My number is / 403-829-1369 / That's my real number." The poem is not just funny: it plays on the "I-you" quality of lyric by engaging audience in ways that Whitman could never have imagined. A side note: I tried texting Giovannone, but he never wrote back.

Giovannone's *The Loneliness Machine*, however, has more than this sharp wit; at times, the poet offers touching lines that are focused, spare lines. The opening poem, "Burnt Offering," has this quality: "I am trying to get at something, / and I want to talk plainly to you." That spare style, though, is more typical of Giovannone's second section: "Beside my mother watching TV, / we're quiet, faced with a secret / so precious we keep it forever." Such lines often get to the abstract core of some concrete image, and Giovannone manages to achieve the same sharpness in his comedic poems: "Of my two thousand recommended calories, / more than two thousand / will come from Nutella." Giovannone cycles: he drifts from comedic lines to poignant ones and back again. That tidal movement proves that profundity and wit are not mutually exclusive in poetry.

There is a similar balance of lightness and emotional weight in Hill's panorama of the sports world, *Tarnished Trophies*. The book is a noteworthy accomplishment in some ways: it is thematically coherent, is logically arranged, and has some poems ("It Starts Here" is perhaps the best) that nicely capture the physicality of competitive play. Those good qualities make for an inviting reading experience.

Yet, even if I respect those qualities and appreciate Hill's evident care for the art of poetry, I still struggled to appreciate the neatness of her poems. She takes no risks with the scenes she depicts. The inoffensive image of sweat, for example, recurs in many poems: "an eye dropper / of perspiration" ("It Starts Here"), "dribble-drip sweat" ("Thirst for First"), "repressed droplets / now leaking in slow motion" ("Hockey Sweat"), and so on. These are physically demanding sports that need more than sweat: where is the deeper emotional or physical exhaustion that athletes suffer? The poems offer nothing violent or visceral. The consequence of that decision is a constant feeling that Hill has not gone beyond the surface details of professional sports or scenes of competition.

Other poems offer scenes that seem tonally inconsistent with the majority of the book. One poem shows children innocently playing: "At four years young, she sits in the middle of soccer field [*sic*] / like dreamy princess [*sic*] floating on cloud turf pillow" (the missing articles may be intentional, but it's difficult to tell). These mawkish scenes undermine their potential power. It happens elsewhere: in Hill's poem about the suicide of a young athlete, "At the Click of a Stopwatch," "parents everywhere" are "trying to understand" how to help young athletes balance

"sports and leisure activities in / this confused and changing world." The *pathos* and clichés in such poems are unlikely to inspire an emotional reaction from the reader.

Hill's sounds and structures are equally tidy. The use of sibilance and alliteration ("rumble, rolling," "drifters dreaming," "lobes and lips") is so frequent that the sounds quickly lose their effectiveness. Most poems in the book rarely vary their visual appearance, and when there is variation, it is predictable: the back-and-forth bouncing lines in a poem about ping pong ("The Gift of Ping Pong") or the tumbling lines in a poem about doing laundry ("Tackling Laundry"). When reading poems about fierce competition, one would expect some frenetic visual movement to capture the spirit of the scenes. In short, the book would have benefitted from deeper and more poetically daring representations of the athletic industry.

Lastly, there is Melissa Bull's *Rue*, which digs very deeply. On the back of this tremendous book, we're told, "In English, to *rue* is to regret; in French, *la rue* is the street"; Bull's titular word signals much more than these two basic meanings. "Rue" actually has many etymological associations: to repent in a religious sense (German), to mourn (Dutch), a path (Latin, which, of course, gave way to the French meaning of *la rue*). I raise that point because while "*la rue*" nicely evokes Bull's Montreal roots, the other meanings of the word evoke something more vital to the poems: the poignancy and mournfulness of the speaker's spiritual path, her navigation of complex and conflicting attitudes toward love, sex, and death. The obvious power in those navigations comes from Bull's sound, brevity, and meaning.

Sound. Bull's poems sing:

> His fickle determination
> follows me: agog, critical.
> He comments on a zit,
> on the lowness of my brow,
> my *cheerleader thighs*.

Bull turns even the most casual and common phrases into something musical. Early in her book, her speaker describes "arrhythmic reverberations," and that phrase captures her own aesthetic. In the passage above, Bull's consonant "l's" and "t's" trickle down the stanza, the assonant "e's" and "i's" softly echo, and the italicized phrase ("*cheerleader thighs*") drags out bold sounds in the reader's mind. It's a near perfect stanza if only because of what someone hears when they read it out loud.

Brevity and meaning. Bull maximizes the emotional effects of dense, yet readable, lines:

> It was all the beats leading up to
> my *eyebrows doing this thing*
> and you downstairs telling me your last name
> tearing half a page from your notebook
> and writing your email in allcaps
> saying, *Is this it. Will I never see you again.*
> Your voice pitching up.
> I watched you walk, hands in your hoodie,
> lights pooling you in and out of dark puddles.

Bull animates scenes: the liveliness of her active participles ("doing," "tearing," "writing," "pitching," "pooling") sustain an interplay between two strangers that feels effortlessly genuine. And Bull still, even in such direct lines, finds the heart of her subjects: the awkward exchange of words and feelings here shows the vulnerability of both the lyric speaker and her interlocutor. It's a spectacularly balanced creation—and the work of a true maker.

Unsettled Empathies

Sherrill Grace
Landscapes of War and Memory: The Two World Wars in Canadian Literature and the Arts, 1977-2007. U of Alberta P $49.95

Reviewed by Lorraine York

In a recent conversation, a colleague at another university reported being told by a teaching assistant that, when she referred to the Second World War in one of her

lectures, a student in her class leaned over to their neighbour and joked, "I didn't know there was a first one!" Sherrill Grace's *Landscapes of War and Memory* is a passionate call for general readers to *know* these two devastating wars and to know them *deeply*, and for educators to give them greater prominence when we teach twentieth-century Canadian literary and cultural history.

This voluminous study is noteworthy for its generic sweep; Grace, a literary scholar, also traces visual artists' and filmmakers' responses to the wars, from the widely recognized wartime paintings of Alex Colville and Frederick Varley to more recent pieces by Gertrude Kearns, Jeff Wall, and multimedia artists Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, to Paul Gross' film *Passchendaele* and the McKenna brothers' controversial documentary *The Valour and the Horror*. Grace is exemplary in giving Canadian drama the sustained attention that Canadian literary scholars do not as often as we might, and that attention is richly repaid by an intensive survey of Canadian plays about both world wars, from the expected *Billy Bishop Goes to War* to actor R. H. Thomson's *The Lost Boys*, Marie Clements' *Burning Vision*, Jason Sherman's *None is Too Many*, and Judith Thompson's *Such Creatures*.

This is a hybrid text in other ways; its implied audience is wider than its academic publishing venue—the University of Alberta Press—might suggest. Much of the text is devoted to plot/content summary of the many works that Grace considers, and while one might wish for a greater critical analysis-to-summary ratio, I think that this decision to describe the works in generous detail is directly related to the more public position that Grace has taken up.

For Grace, the arts offer the possibility of what Dominick LaCapra calls "empathetic unsettlement"—a term that Grace enthusiastically adopts: a receptivity to victims' narratives that avoids appropriation. Cynthia Sugars' and Gerry Turcott's term "unsettled remains," which they deploy in reference to Canada's painful legacy of postcolonial trauma, is even more appropriate to the kinds of dynamics that Grace describes. And like the national narratives that implicate Canadians in our postcolonial pasts and present, Grace's wartime narratives betray possibilities for both registering critique of those wars and shoring up national mythologies (for example, the national maturation narrative that tells us that Canada "grew up" on the Vimy battlefield). Grace more often sees the arts as offering critique, though, sussing out the lies and hypocrisies that go into the making of celebratory narratives. In the case of the controversy over the McKenna brothers' *The Valour and the Horror*, Grace readily sees how its presentation of Canada's military past as less than glorious unsettled patriotic narratives. But in reading Paul Gross' recuperative filmic narrative *Passchendaele*, she struggles to sort out its ideological investments. Recounting the melodramatic scene in which Gross' character, Michael Dunne, drags David, the crucified German-Canadian brother of his fiancée, out of No Man's Land, Grace rightly calls it "exaggerated and overwrought," particularly in its adoption of the infamous Allied atrocity propaganda narrative of the crucified soldier. But to what end? "The simple answer is that I do not know," admits Grace, with an admirable critical humility. But Dunne is recuperating David and his German ethnicity into a narrative of Anglo-Canadian heroism, no matter how the film otherwise subscribes to the more critical war-is-hell narrative. Considering the role of production in such narratives can help to clarify these ideological investments. In making *Passchendaele*, the most expensive Canadian film to date, Gross received funding from Ralph Klein's Alberta government and also from the Dominion (now the Historica) Institute, whose uber-celebratory

"Heritage Minutes" have been critiqued by, among others, the Comedy Network, in their satirical "Canadian Sacrilege Moments." Grace allows that films are more open to controversy over their representations of Canada's wars and "held to a higher standard of accountability than a novel or a play because they are funded by the public purse." True, media coverage of *Passchendaele* routinely mentioned its large (for a Canadian film) budget and its backers. But novels and plays receive public funding too, though not to the tune of the 5.5 million dollars that Ralph Klein kicked in to support *Passchendaele*. "Following the money," though it can admittedly lead to overly deterministic linkages between funding source and the ideological bearing of the funded product, allows us to read these texts in their full ideological richness as cultural products circulating within a market.

In a fascinating passage from *Landscapes of War and Memory*, Grace confronts these conflicts between celebration and critique. She initially describes her response to the CBC coverage of the 2007 dedication of the Vimy monument that figures so prominently in Jane Urquhart's *The Stone Carvers* in an emotional, celebratory vein that resists political critique: "No doubt skeptics dismissed the rhetoric about a creation story and the making of a nation" (narratives that Grace herself has critiqued earlier in this very text) "and Canadians opposed to war and the glorification of the military must have deplored the emphasis on military protocol, the bearing of arms, the salutes." In this passage, Grace clearly does not count herself among those "skeptics," but in the very next paragraph, which reads as though it was composed later in the process of writing this book, she reflects that "In retrospect, I am more critical than I was during the broadcast because now I can reflect on what the event forgot rather than on what it remembered." And herein lies a key value of *Landscapes of War and Memory*: modelling for national subjects how to navigate through the "Heritage-Minute" haze of emotional militarism to find what—and who—these accounts have forgotten.

Posthuman Passions

Nalo Hopkinson
Falling in Love with Hominids. Tachyon $15.95

Julie Maroh; David Homel, trans.
Skandalon. Arsenal Pulp $21.95

Reviewed by Libe García Zarranz

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Charles Dickens' premonitory words, written almost two centuries ago, seem to accurately describe the turbulent dystopian, post-apocalyptic, and perhaps posthuman worlds depicted by contemporary writers Nalo Hopkinson and Julie Maroh. Combining stories published in the last fifteen years with new material, Hopkinson's collection *Falling in Love with Hominids* (2015) brings fresh flavours into the heterogeneous genre of black feminist fantasy and speculative fiction. The suggestive title of the collection, borrowed from a ballad by sci-fi writer Cordwainer Smith, entices the reader from the start by anticipating some of the common themes in the stories: the complexity of affective relations; the limitations of the category of the human; the possibilities offered by posthuman bodies and communities; and the creation of an alternative ethics across species.

In an optimistic tone, Hopkinson explains in the foreword to the collection how she believes that working collaboratively can lead "towards positive change," a trait that has characterized her oeuvre from her first novel, *Brown Girl in the Ring* (1996). Those kinds of coalitions and collaborations recur in stories such as "The Easthound," where a group of urban children need to find ways to survive in a post-apocalyptic world inhabited by adults who are now child-killing cannibals with monstrous

bodies. Resisting nostalgia and innocence, Hopkinson's narratives are populated by child and teenage figures whose resilience, passion, and imagination help them not only to survive, but also to create new communities in a world at the brink of extinction and exhaustion. In related ways to Larissa Lai's and Hiromi Goto's speculative fictions, the teen protagonists and young adults in other stories such as "Message in a Bottle" and "Left Foot, Right" are presented as imperfect subjects whose bodies and affective systems do not conform to standardized definitions of the human; instead, their strangeness and difference become positive elements that help them sustain themselves in a world saturated by longing, pain, and death. These abject figures, as the protagonists in "The Smile on the Face" and "Delicious Monster" illustrate, manage to recreate feminist and queer forms of sustainable living through their self-reliance and their coalitions with non-human creatures, which include ecological landscapes as embodied subjects.

It is this crossing of boundaries between the human, the monstrous, and the animal that may connect Hopkinson's stories with Julie Maroh's second graphic novel *Skandalon* (2014). The depiction of a young musician's descent into hell allows Maroh to challenge readers to face our darkest passions: how power can transform us into monstrous creatures; how success can lead to isolation instead of communal change; and how creativity can also become a source of ugly feelings. The theme of the tormented musician, though a very much exploited figure, is approached by Maroh in novel ways, particularly through the use of intense red and black colours as markers of saturated affect. The intensity of the drawings also highlights the crisis of Tazane, the protagonist, who radically transforms throughout the narrative, engaging in acts of violence against himself and others, and ultimately committing rape. The extreme close-ups of Tazane's eyes, tongue, and body suggest a continuation between an excessive masculinity and his becoming a monstrous creature in a dominantly patriarchal society. In his own words: "I'm less and less human. . . . I am your double, your shadow, your nervous system. . . . I feel nothing." The spiral of violence that leads into his arrest is also mirrored in the streets of Paris, where multiple riots take place, shaking the public opinion. Eventually acquitted, the story's anti-hero thus manages to escape justice but succumbs to a symbolic death through his retreat from society. The last pages of the book, however, are filled with evocative images of water and waves that suggest some form of potential transformation, followed by close-ups of Tazane's body being beaten, until he finally exclaims: "I feel . . . alive." Readers are then left to question the possibilities and limitations of the vitality of the world that surrounds us; how our passions, our energy, our thirst for life, can make us flourish but can also kill us. In the words of Hopkinson, "We're all on the same spinning ball of dirt, trying to live as best we can." Our challenge then in this age of global crisis would be to figure out sustainable ways to rethink this "we" in order to generate equitable forms of affective, ethical, and social justice. In this sense, Nalo Hopkinson and Julie Maroh's passionate fictions are an excellent starting point.

Reinforcing the Model Minority Myth

Kevin Kwan
China Rich Girlfriend. Doubleday $32.00

Reviewed by Tina Kong

China Rich Girlfriend, the second volume of a projected trilogy, is a drama featuring the lives of the Asian elite. At its best, the novel is a literary adaptation of *#rich kids of Instagram*. *China Rich Girlfriend* offers us the opportunity to spy beyond the trappings

of wealth (not just any wealth, but "China rich" wealth) and into the lives and problems of the privileged class, in order to gain some deeper perspective on life. Whatever that deeper perspective is remains ultimately unclear, and will probably be revealed in the next and final instalment, but we can endeavour to make an educated guess in the course of this book review.

Most students and lovers of the written word can appreciate a well-crafted satire, and those who do will share in Kwan's wariness towards any form of "moralizing" (see his Interview with Ruchika Tulshyan in *The Wall Street Journal*). A successful satire, beyond the depiction of flaws to be exposed for comedic purposes, must also express an important message in contemporary politics. As well, many Asian people living and working in North America today bear the material and bodily effects of anti-Asian sentiments, persistent orientalization, and the model minority myth. Living under such pressures is difficult, and, as such, it is understandable to want to turn to texts such as *China Rich Girlfriend* for that sense of familiarity. To deliver as a satire and serve as a mode of escape are two humble requests from the decidedly non-"China rich" wealthy—does *China Rich Girlfriend* deliver?

The novel is populated with characters made up in clusters of tired tropes: the jealous girlfriend, the monstrous mother-in-law. Despite the author's protests of wariness towards moralizing, *China Rich Girlfriend* still ends up prescribing and reifying what defines a desirable Chinese woman. Two notable examples are Astrid Leong, the good wife and mother with a "branded school" upbringing and a sensible head on her shoulders, and the protagonist Rachel Chu, the novel's fresh-faced ingénue who charms with her lack of pretences and her carefree ponytails. Implicit in this text are the women who are undesirable: the shrew who must be humbled, the gaggle of rich housewives who would rather tear each other down than build each other up, and the insecure ex-girlfriend who poisons a perceived rival to her fortune and is put back in place by being publicly shamed as "a good friend at a time I really needed one." In other words, *China Rich Girlfriend* reifies that nebulous essence of Asianness through a carnivalesque spectacle of Otherness. The scene that best portrays such a spectacle would be the Tomb-Sweeping Day festival with matriarch Shang Su Yi and family: the spread of food offerings to the ancestors is described as being "laid out like a Caravaggio still life." One might argue that the novel is making a statement on profanity and tradition, but even that would be a bit of a stretch.

China Rich Girlfriend is another addition to a string of texts that present an unmediated portrayal of deeply problematic tropes and stereotypes, particularly ones that enact a certain violence on the body of Asian women. As soon as the novel is finished, never mind how entertaining some may find it to be, one returns again to an outside world where the model minority myth bears heavy repercussions on the racialized body, and one cannot help but wonder, in a sober moment, if it was worth it.

It is imperative for me to end this review with a personal anecdote: while I was working at a bookstore, a customer walked in and asked for the directions to the "sociology" section. He was looking for *Crazy Rich Asians*, Kwan's prequel to *China Rich Girlfriend*. Despite my attempts to clarify this misclassification, he persisted until I brought him to the "fiction" section. While unsuccessful in finding any nuance or message in this self-proclaimed satire, I wait with bated breath for that "deeper perspective" that will be revealed to us in the next book. Will Kwan surprise us with an unpacking of culturally and ideologically loaded terms "Asians" and "China Rich"? Until then, I return to the humdrum

existence of working through intersectionality and accountability, and bearing the impacts of racist media representations on the Asian body.

Ce n'est pas net, tout ça, mais c'est formidable

Patrice Lessard
Excellence Poulet. Héliotrope 21,95 $

Compte rendu par Daniel Laforest

Patrice Lessard a déjà fait publier trois récits aux éditions Héliotrope entre 2011 et 2014. La critique, enthousiaste, les a retenus sous le nom de trilogie de Lisbonne en raison de son thème le plus évident. L'effet auteur-maison peut expliquer que Lessard ait été choisi afin d'inaugurer la branche de « roman noir » lancée par Héliotrope en 2015. Cela dit, il ne faut pas plus de deux pages pour rendre caduque cette supposition aux yeux du lecteur. Prédestiné ou pas, quel petit triomphe que ce livre ! J'écris « petit », mais c'est par habitude. La littérature de genre, qu'on appelait il n'y a pas si longtemps encore *paralittérature* dans le conservatisme des classes universitaires, est censée exister à mi-chemin entre le pastiche et la production de plaisirs faciles, prévisibles et immédiatement monnayables. Le roman noir serait la plus « para » parmi ces littératures. Ses gros traits sont connus. Il est policier par prétexte et criminel par inclination. Il est urbain moins par nécessité que parce que c'est en ville qu'il s'achète, se lit, et se recycle aussitôt. Il est dévoué, enfin, à l'enquête comme mode narratif, mais seulement dans la mesure où celle-ci déterre plus d'immondices qu'elle n'en peut expliquer dans ses conclusions. Le roman noir a cette teinte parce que les proverbiaux bons sentiments finissent par ennuyer tout le monde en littérature. Héliotrope parvient-elle à reconduire la jouissance perverse de cette forme standardisée dans sa nouvelle collection ? Tout à fait. Ajoutons que Patrice Lessard, à son compte, fait beaucoup mieux. Il donne le ton d'un roman noir québécois dont le point cardinal est l'authenticité. Non pas authenticité dans les critères du genre. L'Authenticité tout court. *Excellence poulet* est un roman québécois excellent. Les plaisirs de lecture y sont très nombreux, et il faut le dire.

On ne résume pas un roman d'enquête policière ; ce serait en nier le principe. Il suffit de mentionner que les personnages de Lessard évoluent dans un cercle restreint où les occurrences parmi les plus banales concourent à faire se croiser tout un chacun. Des juxtapositions de lieux offrent quant à elles rapprochements mentaux à rabais et inconfort généralisé : garderie et bennes à ordure ; salon de massage et casse-croute de poulet frit ; prêteur sur gage et commissariat. Le narrateur entretient une connivence sourde avec son lecteur. Il faut que la poisse se sente dans l'air, que les surfaces graisseuses soient palpables. Le crime qui surgira là-dedans ne pourra qu'être sale. *Excellence poulet* est d'autre part un véritable roman montréalais contemporain, à savoir qu'il a le tact de situer son action *juste en marge* des lieux attendus. Le coin des rues Saint-Zotique et Papineau n'est plus ouvrier comme il l'était naguère ; il n'est pas homogène comme il le deviendra sans doute demain. Y dominent encore les maisons de chambres, les piètres commerces et une absence impressionnante d'auto-indulgence. On y parle sans ambages, c'est-à-dire sans arrière-pensées. *Excellence poulet* donne envie d'ajouter qu'on y parle comme partout ailleurs. Je n'ai pas souvenir d'un roman récent au Québec qui déploie un talent équivalent pour la représentation écrite de l'argot francophone lié à la vie ordinaire. C'est peut-être là son plus vif triomphe dans l'authenticité. Faut-il passer par un roman noir comme celui dont Lessard nous donne l'exemple éclatant pour ressaisir aujourd'hui, comme par la bande, la texture de cette parlure québécoise de

toulmonde qui obséda tant les générations d'avant ? Poser la question c'est y répondre. En effet, c'est oui, et c'est formidable.

Reading in/for Relation

Lisa Lowe
The Intimacies of Four Continents. Duke UP $24.95

Alison R. Marshall
Cultivating Connections: The Making of Chinese Prairie Canada. U of British Columbia P $95.00

Reviewed by Stephanie Fung

The desire for methodologies that unsettle hegemonic practices of creating knowledge is, in most cases, commonly felt among scholars who aim to document the lives of those who are traditionally excluded or marginalized from official histories. Lisa Lowe and Alison R. Marshall share this sentiment as they challenge the limitations of nationalist and colonial modes of archival methods and knowledge production by focusing on the relations between people who have been elided or underrepresented in historical records. While Lowe reads broadly across archives to make linkages between groups of colonized people, Marshall applies an ethnographic lens in her examination of the experiences of Chinese migrants on the Canadian prairies through their affective connections and networks. Yet both works push us to reimagine intimacy or affect as an archive-in-motion—of "intimate" relations produced through migrations that move us beyond temporally and spatially fixed histories.

In *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, Lowe uses intimacy as a heuristic to observe how global processes and colonial histories enable the dominant notion of intimacy as associated with liberal interiority and personhood. She argues that the connections and associations between slaves, Indigenous peoples, and colonized labourers, which she formulates as "the intimacies of four continents," disrupts universalized ideas around intimacy such as Anglo-American liberal subjectivity, sexual relations, domesticity, and family. Lowe's method of reading across archives and continents—Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas—to interpret the past and reorient the boundaries of knowledge production moves beyond nationalist and colonial understandings of historical narratives. Her chapters examine a range of "intimacies" from the late-eighteenth to early-nineteenth centuries, particularly linkages between settler colonialism in the Americas, African slavery, Asian contract labour, and the British imperial trade.

Of particular interest is Lowe's last chapter on the connection between Chinese labour and Black historical accounts. Lowe reads C. L. R. James' *Black Jacobins* and W. E. B. Du Bois' *Black Reconstruction in America* for their philosophical perspectives on history and methods of determining the colonial influences that shape received historical narratives. She argues that the global mass mobilization of Chinese workers after 1840 not only influenced European and US American liberal humanist ideologies, but also Black ideas of decolonization and emancipation in the contexts of anticolonialism and antislavery.

Lowe's reconceptualization of intimacy not only frames the dominant meaning of intimacy as associated with Anglo-American interiority and privacy, and undermines the presumed power of dominant forms of relation, it also provides us with a broad and imaginative methodology for cultural analysis. "We are left," she concludes, "with the project of imagining, mourning, and reckoning 'other humanities' within the received genealogy of 'the human.'"

While Lowe engages with intimacy as a heuristic process, Marshall focuses on affect as interiority, namely how emotional relations, connections, and networks create and sustain communities. Drawing from archival materials she collected during the course of completing her previous book, *The Way of*

the Bachelor, in *Cultivating Connections: The Making of Chinese Prairie Canada*, Marshall argues for the critical role of affect in examining local and global relations between Chinese migrants in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and with China, in the early twentieth century. Rather than solely relying on written archival materials—including letters, photographs, newspaper articles, and Kuomintang (KMT, Chinese Nationalist League) membership documents—she uses an embodied ethnographic approach consisting of participant observation fieldwork and 300 oral history interviews. By tracing Chinese settlers' emotional connections through her research, Marshall argues that the perpetuation and preservation of networks was critical in their endurance of living through experiences of migration and racism on the prairies.

In her first chapter Marshall discusses the global influence of the KMT, a political organization that functioned as an "affective regime" by connecting the Chinese in the prairies through Chinese nationalist infrastructure. The rest of the chapters depict intimate portraits of Chinese migrant settlers who navigated life on the prairies. Notably, half of the book focuses on the lives of Chinese Canadian women. As there are few written records documenting their experiences, Marshall draws from oral histories, fieldwork, handicrafts, and objects to represent the range of everyday life for Chinese women and their emotional, domestic, and religious connections.

Ultimately, both texts are important assets to anyone interested in not just themes of colonialism, labour, trade, and slavery, and of Chinese Canadian prairie history, respectively, but also critical methodologies—of how to read intimately for relations between people and communities and in relation across time and space—in order to grasp the possibilities of knowing that lie among what has been assumed unknowable, erased, or forgotten.

Geography and its Boundary-Conditions

Ghadeer Malek and Ghaida Moussa, eds.
Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space, and Resistance. Inanna $29.95

Don Chapman
The Lost Canadians: A Struggle for Citizenship Rights, Equality, and Identity. Pugwash $21.95

Reviewed by Ranbir K. Banwait

In *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space, and Resistance*, editors Ghadeer Malek and Ghaida Moussa compile a compelling and thought-provoking collection of essays, fiction, poetry, and photographs that historicize the lives of Arab women around the world. Calling for historical, geographical, cultural, and socio-political specificity, *Min Fami*'s is nuanced in its treatment of Arab feminisms and the complexity of women's lived experiences. In contrast to *Min Fami's* transnational focus on political struggle and agency, Don Chapman's *The Lost Canadians: A Struggle for Citizenship Rights, Equality, and Identity* localizes the abnegation of rights in the Canadian context. *The Lost Canadians* is a rant against political and bureaucratic inefficiency, as Chapman outlines the creation of an entire group of stateless people through the 1947 Canadian Citizenship Act. What follows is a detailed account of Chapman's struggle to change the terrain of citizenship in Canada.

One of *Min Fami*'s major tasks is to trouble a singular understanding of feminism; feminism becomes a transnational phenomenon in the text, taking shape differently in different political moments and spaces. As Jihan Rabah asserts, "The forces behind peoples' acts are located in the spaces or the countries they have occupied. Therefore, the reality of my oppression may be entangled in transnational forces and spaces as much as in specific geographical locations or other social, political, and economic factors." For Rabah, Arab feminisms

can never be understood in the singular; rather, they are plural in praxis and practice, emerging out of geographical specificity and every woman's unique experiences. Malek and Moussa's choice to include a diverse selection of works mirrors this emphasis on the plural, as form and language create unruly spaces of creative response to this multiplicity. One poignant example of this desire to create space in language is Rauda Marcos' poem "Departing a City." Writing evocatively of how the violence she experiences becomes her body's knowledge, she asserts, "The city of my presence I am leaving you / I am displaced in my land . . . / Illegal in every place / Even my identity does not exist / Without 'status' or poems." Subjectivity emerges through poems here—if not through the legal trail associated with having "status" in a country. This focus on how geography is interlaced with identity in all its forms—be it legal, social, or political—is a preoccupation taken up in the rest of the text.

Space is far from being a stable configuration in *Min Fami*, since its writers and artists tackle spatial dynamics as layered and shifting forms of power. Consequently, *Min Fami* thinks through imaginative geographies and the boundaries of borders to reflect on the ways in which gendering folds into space. One example of this focus is Jacinthe A. Assaad's fascinating article, in which she argues that women as artists must employ emergent spaces of representation in order to exercise agency in Egypt. While Assaad tackles the notion of representation *as* space, Nayrouz Abu Hatoum considers the bordering effects of Israeli rule for Palestinians in her work. Hatoum's brilliant personal essay explores the visual and imaginative disruption that accompanies the fracturing of space, and yet she writes how, "even though the state does not contain me, the land always will." The bordering effects of occupation, Hatoum reflects, have a doubling effect on women who have been both "socially and symbolically confined to endless boundaries" as they cross through Israeli borders that are "bureaucratic, physical, racial, national, economic, based on citizenship, underground, areal or aerial." In this sense, borders extend beyond the physical to reshape social relations and thus create new ways of imagining belonging.

While in *Min Fami* space and place become the boundary-conditions where belonging is lost, *The Lost Canadians* shows how the categories of gender, race, and nationality can come together to adjudicate the legal doctrine of citizenship. Dwelling on another set of narratives about displacement and loss, Chapman explains how provisions in the 1947 Canadian Citizenship Act left an estimated one million people without Canadian citizenship. Some of these cases include women who married non-Canadians, thus losing their citizenship because they were seen as extensions of their husbands' legal identities. Some people became stateless when, as children, their parents became citizens of another country. Outlining his years of political activism on Parliament Hill, Chapman offers insight into some of these individual stories, ultimately arguing for a more inclusive notion of Canadian citizenship.

One thing that *The Lost Canadians* has in common with *Min Fami* is that it, too, draws attention to national borders, and the ways in which such borders re-articulate social connections that typically cut across borders. For instance, in these stories, the Canadian-American border functions as a prominent signifier for many Lost Canadians, often undercutting individuals' sense of belonging. One such example of a First Nations family illustrates how border politics violate the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples to sovereignty and mobility. As Heather Harnois writes in a letter to Chapman: "I am part of generations of Canadian aboriginals . . . Unfortunately, I was born in the USA. (Indians have the right to live or work in either country—Canada or USA by way of

treaty.) . . . My mother moved me to Canada when I was a child to be near the rest of our family . . . but after turning age 18 I was no longer allowed to be here." As Harnois explains, the Indian Registration Act, together with the Citizenship Act, construct her lack of status in Canada.

Another letter, from Donovan McGlaughlin to Chapman, also sheds light on the colonial history of identity documents such as birth certificates. As McGlaughlin reveals, registering births meant that authorities would be able to remove Indigenous children from their families and send them to Residential schools: "My mother and father were victims of the Residential schools. In 1954 they knew the only way to keep me from being also rounded up and taken away . . . was not to register my birth. . . . I have never had a real job before because I have no SIN, no driver's licence, no birth certificate. . . . what I need is the right to be a person." McGlaughlin's case draws attention to not only how legal identity is interwoven with the social, but also to the systemic forms of bureaucratic violence faced by First Nations communities in Canada. Indeed, although Chapman outlines at length how the Lost Canadians category includes Second World War veterans, war brides and children, and people born on military bases abroad, the Harnois and McGlaughlin examples perhaps best highlight Canadian citizenship's colonial legacy.

Thus, both *Min Fami* and *The Lost Canadians* explore how imaginative geographies—or spaces as places of belonging—can challenge border practices and the states that impose them. In highlighting the plurality of Arab feminisms, Malek and Moussa invest in a remarkable critical project. By contrast, one drawback of *The Lost Canadians* is the text's persistent comparison of those who are born Canadians and those (immigrants) who become Canadian, a comparison that overlooks the dangers of citizenship as a two-tiered system.

Narratives of Canadian Women

Mary McDonald-Rissanen
In the Interval of the Wave: Prince Edward Island Women's Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Life Writing. McGill-Queen's UP $27.96

Althea Prince, ed.
Beyond the Journey: Women's Stories of Settlement and Community Building in Canada. Insomniac $19.95

Reviewed by Emily Allen-Williams

Mary McDonald-Rissanen's *In the Interval of the Wave* provides a close reading of the historical nature as well as the literary and cultural value of diaries written by Prince Edward Island women in Canada during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the Prologue, McDonald-Rissanen gives credit for the book's title to the PEI poet Anne Compton from a phrase extracted from one of her poems in *Opening the Island* (2002). Critically, McDonald-Rissanen maintains emotional distance in her presentation of a genre that enabled women to construct identities as subject rather than object. McDonald-Rissanen takes a sweeping view of the genre with a foundation built on in-depth historical and statistical research through her use of archival materials, which previously received little to no scholarly investigation. While she discusses the "scribblings" (as diarist writer Lucy Maud Montgomery referred to her writing) of PEI women in a holistic manner, McDonald-Rissanen decidedly selects particular life writings to support her thesis.

Through her foundational discussion of the renowned literary figure of PEI, Lucy Maud Montgomery, and her own grandmother, Amy Darby Tanton Andrew, the author brings to light the "very ordinary lives" of PEI women through her investigation of unpublished diaries. McDonald-Rissanen contends—via a

well-crafted thesis—that various aspects of the diaries such as the types of paper, handwriting styles, sketches, and linguistic turns of phrase(s) contribute to the "subversive" potential inherent in such writing. She further contends that these women used their writings subversively to more effectively negotiate Victorianism (which was adopted in nineteenth-century PEI) in tandem with the challenges of their everyday lives. Extracting from the life-writings of eighteen diarists, McDonald-Rissanen is effective in presenting the reader with a respectable range of diarist writings so as to include various female subjects—pioneer, rural, teacher/professional, and urban bourgeois. In one chapter, she highlights the journeyings of five "travel" diarists throughout the British Empire and Canada. What makes McDonald-Rissanen's work most compelling and worthy of critical importance is her intertextual readings of the diaries with documents such as letters, other diaries, period newspapers, histories, and anecdotes, which further extend her emphasis on historical and statistical information in her cultural and literary discussion of PEI women's life writings of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Essays and poems in *Beyond the Journey: Women's Stories of Settlement and Community Building in Canada* emanate from various levels of culturally and politically informed emotion. In this collection, Althea Prince assembles the writing of an eclectic group of women from Albania, Antigua, Barbados, China, Germany, Grenada, India, Iran, Sri Lanka, and Jamaica. In so doing, Prince avoids the all too convenient literary pitfall of narrowly compartmentalizing the narratives of immigrant women in Canada. Of particular note is Prince's demarcation of the voices within, as some are women who came to Canada as children (with their parent or parents) and others immigrated to Canada as adults. In the introduction, Prince provides a critical yet cursory and "exposing" mention of Canada's immigration policy as one of exclusion rather than inclusion, which (may be) counter to more popular and pervasively held views.

The women's narratives, as well as the poems of one of the contributors, are most compelling in that they resist singularity of focus and voice. Instead, the selections more accurately reflect the diversity of the Canadian landscape due (largely) to its immigrant population. This reflection is a testament to Prince's ability as editor to selectively present narratives and poems not only of journeys that portray varied cultural, ethnic, and religious foundations, but also of those that portray a full range of emotions—joy, anger, sadness, pain, and those shaded/combined subtleties of the same. At the core of Prince's collection is her embedded thesis that systemic racism and gender bias continue to be ignored even in landscapes as diverse as many areas of Canada. She suggests that such writing as in *Beyond the Journey*: *Women's Stories of Settlement and Community Building in Canada* can spark the dialectic of difference as opposed to cultural absorption and assimilation.

Unarresting Borders

Linda M. Morra
Unarrested Archives: Case Studies in Twentieth-Century Canadian Women's Authorship.
U of Toronto P $29.95

Gillian Roberts
Discrepant Parallels: Cultural Implications of the Canada-US Border. McGill-Queen's UP $34.95

Reviewed by Lorraine York

These two distinguished volumes take part in a crucial and exciting cultural-studies-inflected conversation about the politics of Canadian cultural production. Turning our attention away from a search for a distinctive Canadian culture defined by a search for common elements, towards the ethically

challenging analysis of intra-national (and, indeed, contra-national) relations of power, these studies disclose the exclusions practiced by the search for a national culture.

Linda Morra's *Unarrested Archives* draws from Derrida's foundational *Archive Fever*, in particular his etymological exploration of the term archive, which stems from the Greek *arkheion*, the home of the superior magistrates or *archons*, where official documents were kept, in Derrida's suggestive words, under "house arrest." In her study of twentieth-century Canadian women writers Pauline Johnson, Emily Carr, Sheila Watson, Jane Rule, and Marlene NourbeSe Philip, Morra perceptively expands upon this notion of "arrest" in order to examine "how the literary archives of Canadian women writers came to be forged within, against, or outside centralized repositories of official records." That might mean, in Pauline Johnson's case, the loss of pre-1929 archives during their transfer from the University of Reading to the Harry Ransom Centre at the University of Texas at Austin, which points synecdochally to the contemporary disregard for the value of literary women's documents. It also means, in Morra's reading of Johnson's stage career, performance is an evanescent archive of embodied cultural memory. (Performance theorist Peggy Phelan's observation that "Performance's being . . . becomes itself through disappearance" is apt.) For Carr and Watson, it means operating through male agents to ensure access to a public sphere that devalued women's cultural production. And, in the most fascinating case of all, that of Marlene NourbeSe Philip, it means refusing to deposit one's archives in a traditional repository as an act of resistance to the nation-building cultural exercise that those repositories undergird. These case studies expand our notions of archive, making us aware of the many manifestations of archival practice that resist "arrest" and exceed the boundaries of traditional archival repositories. In so reading these five very different engagements with archive, Morra tends to resolve each instance of "unarrest" into resistant cultural practice. It is tempting to do so, but there are times when, for instance, Carr's collaboration with powerful male mentors and intermediaries can also be seen as complicit, just as Morra fully recognizes the complicity with nation-building ideologies that Carr enacted in her attempts to build an artistic archive out of Indigenous material culture, denying "Indigenous persons the very agencies she was seeking for herself." Notwithstanding this understandable desire to read these arrested and unarrested archives for evidence of women's resistant practices, Morra brilliantly succeeds in her objectives to "enlarg[e] critical scholarship about what constitutes the archive" and to encourage researchers to "reconsider how to expand their methods from arrested to unarrested archives"—how to see the powerful operations of archival production in acts that might look, from a conventional viewpoint, like archival absence or failure.

Gillian Roberts also draws inspiration from Derrida, in this case his theories of hospitality, as she did in her previous study of prize culture, *Prizing Literature: The Celebration and Circulation of National Culture* (2011). In *Discrepant Parallels*, Roberts engages with Derrida's coinage "hostipitality," that amalgam of hostility and welcome that Derrida sees contradictorily at work in acts of hospitality, to read Canadian border texts that are similarly mixed in their gestures of welcome and renunciation. Like Morra's reading of Canadian women's literary archives, Roberts turns her attention to the border as a site of intra-national engagements. Wary of a reading of the border that seeks to construct a monolithic Canadianness by distinguishing it from a similarly monolithic Americanness (what one might call the Molson "I Am

Canadian" approach), Roberts shows how engagements with the border—whether in Anglo-Canadian nationalist texts such as David McFadden's *Great Lakes Suite*, or from Indigenous perspectives by writers Jeannette Armstrong, Thomas King, and Drew Hayden Taylor, or in African-Canadian texts by Lawrence Hill, Djanet Sears, and Wayde Compton—"puncture, temper, supplement, or contradict the culturally dominant view of the border's significance to Canada" as the marking off of the mythic peaceable kingdom.

Several contributions made by this thoughtful book deserve special mention: Roberts devotes a chapter to televisual representations of the border in *Bordertown* (1989-1991), *Due South* (1994-1999), and *The Border* (2008-2010) in which she compellingly reads these texts, like others in her study, alongside their respective contemporary historical events: the Free Trade Agreement, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and 9/11. Roberts also considers, as many analyses of the Canada-US borderland condition do not, its hemispheric context; this "critical borderlands practice" allows Roberts to think about the ways in which the Canada-US border, so often read by Canadian observers as a space of disempowerment, can also look like a site of privilege when one thinks about the politics of the Canada-Mexico border. Once again, though, Roberts brings these relations of power *inside* her study of Canadian cultural politics; in readings of Janette Turner Hospital's *Borderline*, Jane Urquhart's *Sanctuary Line*, and Guillermo Verdecchia's *Fronteras Americanas/American Borders*, Roberts ponders how power relations "are manifested at the 49th parallel at the same time as negotiations of power at other border sites in the Americas are brought to bear on Canada's relationship to the United States." This is sophisticated, assumption-breaking transnational criticism.

In studying archives that may be "unarrested," that may rupture our notions of the archive as physical, state-sanctioned repository of documents, and in studying a border that undeniably imposes material inequities and yet is the site of radically different imaginings and political meanings, Linda Morra and Gillian Roberts offer us a Canadian cultural analysis that urges us to look inside Canadian cultural practices, acknowledging within them both the "arresting" of meaning by privilege and the "discrepancies" that can empower decolonizing acts of "unarresting."

L'histoire de l'art pas à pas

Maxime Olivier Moutier
Journal d'un étudiant en histoire de l'art. Éditions Marchand de feuilles 34,95 $

Compte rendu par Ariane Noël de Tilly

Adoptant la forme d'un journal intime, le dixième livre de Maxime Olivier Moutier invite le lecteur à suivre, au fil des saisons et des sessions universitaires, le parcours d'un étudiant inscrit au Certificat en histoire de l'art à l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). Pensées, réflexions, émotions et fantasmes, mais aussi événement réels, dont la grève des professeurs de l'UQAM à l'hiver 2009 et la pandémie de grippe A (H1N1) de 2009 à 2010, tissent la trame du récit qui peu à peu se développe entre le 30 novembre 2008 et le 22 avril 2011.

Dès la première entrée du journal, le lecteur apprend que l'homme qui tient ce dernier est psychanalyste de formation, auteur de quelques romans, marié et père de trois enfants. Son nom ne sera jamais dévoilé alors que celui des professeurs et chargés de cours du département d'histoire de l'art de l'UQAM le sera. Moutier brouille donc les cartes et, conséquemment, il s'avère difficile de discerner ce qui relève de l'invention ou de la réalité. En entrevue au journal *Le Devoir* (22 août 2015), Moutier

dit ressentir le besoin d'écrire sur ses propres expériences et, dans ce cas particulier, sur son retour aux études. La démarche était donc à la fois personnelle et littéraire.

De manière générale, il est intéressant de découvrir quels artistes l'auteur estime et quels historiens de l'art il lit. Il est clair qu'il parle davantage des artistes que des œuvres. La lecture de ces dernières demeure d'ailleurs plutôt superficielle. Si le nom d'artistes de différentes époques est parfois mentionné, c'est l'appréciation personnelle qui prévaut au détriment d'un positionnement analytique. Étant donné le titre du journal, le lecteur pouvait-il s'attendre à une analyse plus poussée du point de vue de l'histoire de l'art ? D'ailleurs, un lecteur averti notera une erreur de chronologie majeure : Moutier écrit que Marcel Duchamp a peint son *Nu descendant l'escalier*, sans préciser lequel, dix ans après avoir réalisé son ready-made le plus connu, *Fontaine* (1917), alors que Duchamp complète le *Nu descendant l'escalier no 1* en 1911 et le *Nu descendant l'escalier no 2* en 1912.

Au fil des entrées du journal, l'auteur rapporte de manière très détaillée son cheminement académique tout en faisait allusion à ses soucis familiaux et à ceux du quotidien. Malgré la panoplie d'étudiants et d'étudiantes qu'il côtoiera pendant ses études, seule une consœur de classe, Prunella, rencontrée à la première session sera fréquemment mentionnée. De leur camaraderie initiale naîtra une relation beaucoup plus intime et donnant lieu à des retombées fâcheuses. Les autres étudiants seront surtout évoqués en référence à leur comportement en classe. Sur ce dernier plan, Moutier a bien su dépeindre la réalité du monde universitaire d'aujourd'hui où l'utilisation de nombreux appareils électroniques fait en sorte que les étudiants se laissent entraîner dans des mondes virtuels et détournent leur attention du propos des professeurs.

Le point fort du roman est la justesse avec laquelle Moutier décrit la vie étudiante : l'enthousiasme des débuts de session, le stress des fins de session, les travaux rédigés à la dernière minute, mais aussi la crainte de ne pas être en mesure de compléter son programme. Il met aussi en lumière le fait que l'histoire de l'art est une discipline qui s'enseigne à travers les reproductions publiées dans des ouvrages ou projetées dans des salles de cours bien sombres. Dans ses descriptions, au commencement du journal, l'engouement du début de ses études en histoire de l'art trouve écho dans les entrées nombreuses et quasi quotidiennes, tandis que la fatigue et le manque de motivation de la fin de son certificat sont évoqués ou accentués par des entrées rédigées à des intervalles de moins en moins réguliers. Ce changement dans le mode de rédaction du journal a un effet sur la lecture : au début, le livre est difficile à poser alors qu'à la fin, il est facile de le mettre de côté. Le lecteur ressent moins l'urgence de savoir comment le récit va se terminer. D'ailleurs, le dénouement est quelque peu surprenant puisque Moutier a fait le choix de mettre fin au roman avant que son personnage ne se rende à Venise pour y suivre le dernier cours qui lui permettra de compléter son programme d'études. Le choix pourrait-il s'expliquer par le fait que le compte-rendu d'une telle aventure ferait appel à un autre genre littéraire que celui du journal intime, soit le récit de voyage ?

Kafka's Metamorphosis

Patrick O'Neill
Transforming Kafka: Translation Effects.
U of Toronto P $55.00

Reviewed by Andre Furlani

The French-speaking protagonist of Vladimir Nabokov's dystopian 1945 novel *Bend Sinister* calls his boot-remover Gregoire, because the utensil takes the Samsa-shape of a giant scarab. Nabokov's character has entered and extended what, in *Transforming Kafka*, Patrick

O'Neill calls "the worldwide Kafka system," a "macrotext" assembled out of the variously-redacted editions of his work, the cumulative translations these editions enable, and the consequent international renown of the Habsburg writer. He explains that "the boundaries of Kafka's text are *extended* by its multilingual translations" rather than merely approximated by it, and the object of this absorbing and revelatory study is that extension.

Those who have furthered the macrotext include Jorge Luis Borges, the first Spanish-language promoter of Kafka's work; his Italian translator, the Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi; and his Polish translator Bruno Schulz, shot by an SS officer. Kafka's earliest translator, his Czech companion Milena Jesenská, died at the Ravensbrück concentration camp. Seemingly phantasmagorical, fabular fictions foresaw the Nazi horrors that would consume the writer's family as well as several of his translators.

"Kafka's texts," writes O'Neill, professor emeritus in the Department of Languages at Queen's University, "whether encountered in the original or in translation, are invariably characterized by their unrelenting challenge to the reader to make them make sense: it is clear that that challenge begins no later than their title." The posthumously published novels were entitled not by the author but by his close friend and first editor, Max Brod. *Amerika* or *Der Verschollene* or neither? How to render *Der Prozeß*: *Trial* or *Process*? *Metamorphosis* or *Transformation*?

Nabokov, a lepidopterist who believed he had once glimpsed Kafka in a Berlin tram, told his Cornell University students, including Thomas Pynchon, that the monstrously transformed Gregor was nonetheless an entomologically exact dung beetle. He objected to Willa and Edwin Muir's translation of *Die Verwandlung* as *The Metamorphosis*, a title that subsumed the biological denotation beneath a mythological connotation, even as Kafka had pointedly *not* entitled the 1915 novella *Die Metamorphose*. When in 1938 Borges translated the story literally as *La transformación*, the publisher overruled him in favour of *La metamorfosis*. Yet, in contrast to his coeval James Joyce, who began *Ulysses* in the Habsburg harbour town of Trieste (and on whom O'Neill has written two extraordinary macrotextual studies), for land-locked Kafka mythology is largely an exhausted resource that his fiction (if not his essay on the sirens) dispenses with. As O'Neill painstakingly shows, while the title is always *The Metamorphosis*, rarely is the verb-form of Kafka's actual title (*verwandelt*) as it appears in the novella's opening sentence translated as versions of "metamorphosed," reverting instead to versions of "transformed."

O'Neill traces the fascinating permutations of the lexical as well as situational ambiguities for which Kafka is notorious in translations into Norwegian, Russian, Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian and French as well as English. O'Neill's comparison, for instance, of the opening of *The Trial*, presents a characteristically indeterminate narrative focalization. The German "*mußte*" rendered in the English phrase, "Someone *must have* traduced Joseph K.," implies, according to O'Neill, focalization through the character by means of free indirect discourse. (My impression is that, like many of Kafka's narrators, this one simply exercises a scrupulously limited omniscience. Who in Kafka could be all-knowing?) The main clause follows: "*denn ohne daß er etwas Böses getan hätte, wurde er eines Morgens verhaftet*": "for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one morning." O'Neill notes that it is not only translators into English, a language deficient in subjunctives, but also translators into those that are not, such as the Romance languages, who elide the ambiguity of that cautiously inflected *hätte*. Yet two of his very examples, Nesme's into French and Raja's into Italian, in fact do reproduce without elision the vaguening

subjunctive mood of the German: "car sans qu'il eût rien fait de mal" and "perché senza che avesse fatto niente di male . . ."

In a Mitteleuropa where Positivist procedures emanating from Vienna and Berlin had begun to resonate, ambiguity and ambivalence (a then-recent German scientific coinage confected out of Latin ingredients) could be a mode of dissent, which is one source of Kafka's peculiar preeminence as a political novelist. (Western Marxists long denied this, but not the East German border guards who seized my copy of *Das Schloß* in 1985, for the works of Kafka were proscribed in the German Democratic Republic as well as in his native Czechoslovakia.) Still, perhaps some of Kafka's ambiguity may be better understood as vagueness. No less than his Habsburg contemporary Ludwig Wittgenstein did Kafka realize that vagueness is an inexpungable function of language and the condition of any valid characterization of experience.

"What is most difficult here is to bring this vagueness to expression correctly and unfalsified," noted Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations*, and no writer more courageously affronted this difficulty than Kafka. "As soon as one wishes to employ exact concepts of measurement for immediate experience," Wittgenstein observes, "one bumps against the peculiar vagueness in this experience. And it appears to me now that this vagueness is not something preliminary, which more precise knowledge will later eliminate, but is rather a characteristic logical peculiarity." In Kafka vagueness takes form, indeed takes life, in the absence of ontological guarantees. Vagueness is a constituent aspect of finite embodiment for his quixotic characters, who rely not on a calculus corresponding to changeless abstract entities or rational justification but on imperfectly grasped conventions of rule-following.

Analysis of textual instability across languages may seem an abstruse method to expound Kafka, yet, far from being a forbidding technical treatment of a specialized subject, *Transforming Kafka* is a peculiarly original and rewarding introduction to the author's corpus as well as to its transmutations beyond German. By deftly comparing opening paragraphs, titles, and proper names of five canonical texts in a range of translations, O'Neill elucidates prevailing themes and isolates pervasive ambiguities in Kafka, all the while illuminating the subtleties and aporias of his deceptively classical expository language, which has posed such an irresistible challenge to his translators and provocation to his expositors.

Resurgent Indigenous Identities in Urban Spaces

Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen, eds. *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation.* U of British Columbia P $34.95

Reviewed by Dallas Hunt

The cumulative effects of centuries of colonial discourse have led to representations of Indigenous peoples that position them as "out of place" in the city. In response to these racist representations of urban Indigeneity (or the lack thereof), there is a small but growing body of work that emphasizes cities as spaces of Indigenous community and belonging. The collection *Indigenous in the City,* edited by Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen, charts an approach that attends to the vibrancy of urban Indigenous life, but also refuses to minimize the many challenges Indigenous peoples face in city settings as the result of ongoing colonialism. In doing so, the collection engages the complexities of the accumulated assemblages of colonial policies, internal community dynamics, and individual experiences that have led to Indigenous migrations to cities. At the same time, the contributors consider how urban Indigenous peoples embody and enact their Indigeneity in textured,

nuanced, and at times contradictory ways that might challenge colonial expectations, as well as notions of Indigeneity that are often imagined within Indigenous communities themselves.

The text is divided into four sections: Canada, the US, Australia, and New Zealand. Each grouping is preceded by a succinct historical account of urbanization in the area under review. While these summations are brief, they nonetheless illuminate the many similarities of colonial policies and the corresponding responses to them in countries that are on opposite sides of the globe. Although the ambitious scope of the collection makes summary difficult, there are some noteworthy contributions that should be addressed in brief detail.

A standout in the collection is Jay T. Johnson's "Dancing into Place." Johnson outlines how US Indigenous peoples assert their presence through urban powwows and create new forms of community that enable them to honour their ancestral territories and the lands they currently inhabit. Another significant chapter is Yale Belanger's work on the *Canada v. Misquadis* decision and how legal policies illuminate the multiple jurisdictional parameters through which Indigenous peoples must navigate. Although the sections on Australia and New Zealand take up considerably less space in the collection, Kelly Greenop and Paul Memmott provide an invaluable look into the workings of kinship relations in Brisbane, Australia, while Brad Coombes' work on environmental racism, focused specifically on the Otara Creek in South Auckland, is perceptive and resonates with the issues facing Indigenous peoples globally. While there are numerous significant contributions to the collection, these chapters in particular are highlighted because they take a different approach than the statistical analyses that dominate most of the collection. Indeed, if the text has one shortcoming, it is the constant appeal to statistics and population demographics that often obscure or detract from more nuanced explorations of urban Indigenous experiences.

As Peters and Andersen themselves note, a "detailed history of the mechanisms through which Indigenous people in different countries were excluded from urban spaces has yet to be written," and "the characteristics of urban Indigeneity are still poorly understood." This collection tries to remedy these persistent and pervading misunderstandings in earnest, and offers an important contribution to what must necessarily be an ongoing conversation not only about urban Indigenous life today, but also about the rich histories of Indigenous peoples in urban settings and the place of the city in Indigenous futures.

Peripheries of Belonging

Alison Pick
Between Gods. Doubleday $29.95

Camilla Gibb
This is Happy. Doubleday $29.95

Reviewed by Emily Ballantyne

Belonging is a vulnerable and uncertain process that can be burdened by difficult feelings—the desire to belong is often coupled with rejection, exclusion, isolation, and despair. Award-winning Toronto authors Alison Pick and Camilla Gibb each describe in memoir their respective journeys toward building a sense of community that is fraught with depression and displacement. These women use literary memoir to better understand their relational identities—as mothers, writers, friends, and descendants—alongside grief, mourning, and loss. Their texts dig deep into the affective consequences of fostering community and the emotional labour behind formal and informal affiliations.

Pick's memoir *Between Gods* describes her depression and spiritual uncertainty as she negotiates her family's suppressed Jewish

heritage by undertaking the process of conversion. While she was researching her award-winning novel *Far to Go* (2010), she could not fully separate her book from her own family's escape from the Holocaust and her grandparents' subsequent decision to keep their Jewish origins a secret. As she unravels and researches her past, she feels an intense desire to connect with and understand her Jewish origins, and is confronted by personal and communal boundaries that bar her access. Because Judaism is matrilineal, and her Jewish heritage comes from her father, she must have her conversion formally approved by a rabbinical court. During this two-year process, she looks for other ways to understand and belong to Judaism—from taking courses to observing holidays and attending synagogue—all while having her commitment to the faith actively discouraged or questioned because of her simultaneous desires to marry and start a family with a non-Jewish partner.

The way that Pick understands affiliation extends backward in time through shared loss. She makes a strong case for intergenerational, emotional connections with her ancestors that she describes as "bad blood." She suggests that the unexpressed grief of her family is manifest in her own emotional responses. Her relationship with her ancestors is primarily understood through feeling—in particular through trying to understand and grapple with the fear and despair of those who were lost in concentration camps, and the shame and guilt of her grandparents as they meticulously hid their identity from their own children. Pick compellingly evokes the ways in which she feels collectively while experiencing individually. The memoir accounts a suffering and redemption that is incomplete, but masterfully recounted.

Where Pick wrote primarily about the liminal two-year period in which she was "between gods," Gibb's *This is Happy* works in broader strokes to craft her relationship to community from childhood into early motherhood. Much of her early life is troubled with isolation from a broken family. Her father suffers from mental illness, and is abusive and itinerant. She grows up in multiple locations and environments, often building relationships that are broken and unrecovered. She is interested in the coherence and security of family, but is caught up in depression and isolation. Her experiences are wide reaching: she pursues graduate work in anthropology at Oxford and in Ethiopia, spends time in a mental hospital, and finally finds a sense of family with a partner in Toronto. When this partner leaves her during the early stages of pregnancy, she must cope with a solitary identity when she most desires community. She effectively starts over, rebuilding her life from the ground up.

Gibb's work is broken into parts based on the gestation of a bird from incubation to flight, developing a metaphor from within the text. These divisions mark emotional divisions in the text and structure Gibb's sense of growth and development. As she frankly discusses her depression during her pregnancy, she also reaches out to networks of support for those who are alone not by choice, and experiences limited access. Prenatal classes are either for families or for women who are single by choice; her friends are divided when her marriage dissolves. But amidst the losses and disappointments, Gibb finds other single people and starts to craft a new support network.

Perhaps the strongest feature of Gibb's text is the way she interweaves other narratives of loneliness into her own in the latter half of the memoir. Her sense of identity grows to encompass new members, bringing with it an unintended happiness that comes from collectivity. Gibb's experiences of early motherhood are interspersed with the stories of her own chosen community: Tita, her nanny; Micah, her brother; and Melissa, a new friend far from home. Tita is supporting a large family in the Philippines,

recovering from an abusive past employer, and trying to navigate her husband's move to Canada. Micah is recovering from a drug addiction and looking for stable work, while Melissa is looking for love and trying to complete her doctoral thesis. This small collective works and lives together to raise Gibb's infant daughter and prepare for the future. *This is Happy* emphasizes the value and strength of circumstantial kinship—the way compassion can heal, even if the bonds are temporary. Gibb evokes the difficult transition period of new motherhood and reframes some of its anguish as the space of happiness and renewal.

Both of these memoirs attest to the emotional labour of belonging. The authors demonstrate the boundaries that limit access to support networks and the isolation that comes from family trauma and relationship dissolution. Both writers struggle to understand family intergenerationally, acknowledging that they are shaped by their parents, and are subsequently shaping their daughters, even in utero. While Pick ultimately draws strength from recovering her family history and restoring Jewish culture in her home, Gibb focuses her energy on defining herself within the structure of a new, chosen family that remains shifting and in flux. These are both memoirs that attest to ways of belonging on the peripheries of existing communities. They attest to the emotional costs of this belonging, and at the same time articulate so clearly the value of connecting with others to better understand the self.

L'imaginaire de l'exil

Rodney Saint-Éloi
Je suis la fille du baobab brûlé.
Mémoire d'encrier 17,00 $

Compte rendu par Kristen Stern

« Ceci n'est pas un poème », déclare le poète dans le prologue de *Je suis la fille du baobab brûlé*, le recueil le plus récent de Rodney Saint-Éloi, écrivain et fondateur de la maison d'édition Mémoire d'encrier. Le poète offre une méditation sur l'exil et la migration, méditation qui reprend certains motifs habituellement associés à l'expatriation tout en modulant cette expérience à travers son parcours personnel.

L'auteur s'appuie sur un imaginaire géographique multiple, qui évoque tantôt l'Afrique, dont l'image la plus importante serait le baobab mentionné dans le titre du recueil, tantôt Haïti, et, dans une moindre mesure, un Nord lointain et enneigé. Ce trajet à travers ces différentes régions retrace en partie les pas de Saint-Éloi lui-même, né en Haïti et installé à Montréal depuis 2001. Néanmoins, les ancêtres africains hantent ces différents territoires : même les traditions haïtiennes mentionnées ont souvent des racines qui proviennent du continent africain telles que les danses afro-haïtiennes Nago, Ibo et Pétro. Outre ces références spécifiques, le poète suggère un va-et-vient constant entre ces territoires en intégrant un champ lexical propre au mouvement : les pirogues, les chemins mystérieux, les « dieux nomades », tout est mélangé dans le manque de « certitude géographique » de la narratrice.

C'est la fille du baobab du titre qui prend la parole dans tout le poème, jouant ainsi le rôle de masque fictif du poète. Pourtant, vers la fin, ce masque se complique. La grand-mère Tida, qui apparaît dans d'autres poèmes de Saint-Éloi et qui, comme l'auteur a lui-même dévoilé lors d'entretiens, l'a inspiré alors qu'il faisait ses premiers pas dans la littérature, se révèle être aussi la grand-mère de la fille du baobab. Ce détail, qui n'échappera pas aux lecteurs déjà familiers avec l'œuvre et la figure publique de Rodney Saint-Éloi, situe rétroactivement le livre, cette fois-ci en faisant plus de place à la fiction autobiographique (ou faudrait-il plutôt dire autobiographie fictive ?) qu'à la première lecture. Comme son compatriote et camarade en migrations Haïti-Québec, Dany Laferrière, Saint-Éloi tire profit de

ses « je/jeux » multiples pour raconter, re-raconter, modifier, manipuler l'histoire individuelle de l'exil, reproduite à travers des générations et des continents, entreprise sous la force violente de la traite, l'obligation économique ou politique.

« Je suis à la fois la fille, l'arbre, et la route », nous confie la fille du baobab dans le prologue. Cette identité fluide révèle la nature du poète qui porte de multiples masques dans son écriture, pour des raisons esthétiques ou autres. Mais le masque est aussi l'accessoire de l'immigré loin de son pays natal, l'outil de survie du descendant de l'esclave, conscient de la nature violente de la migration qu'ont subie ses ancêtres. Dans *Je suis la fille du baobab brûlé*, Saint-Éloi nous offre ce masque comme une nouvelle réflexion de l'expérience de migration, faisant appel à une longue tradition d'imaginaire afro-caribéenne.

Immoderate Families

Jocelyne Saucier; Rhonda Mullins, trans.
Twenty-One Cardinals. Coach House $19.95

Marina Endicott
Close to Hugh. Doubleday $32.95

Reviewed by Tina Northrup

Published originally as *Les héritiers de la mine*, Jocelyne Saucier's novel about a scattered, semi-mythic clan of estranged siblings becomes the captivating *Twenty-One Cardinals* in the hands of its translator, Rhonda Mullins. "We're nothing like other families," says the first of the novel's six narrators as the story begins to unfold. "We are self-made. We are an essence unto ourselves, unique and dissonant, the only members of our species."

The novel's frame narrative is subtly reminiscent of a closed circle mystery. The year is 1995, and the adult Cardinal siblings, nearly two dozen of them, have gathered from the far corners of the earth to congregate in a hotel at the southern edge of Val-d'Or. In the midst of their family reunion, an unspoken secret looms large. Like the Cardinal clan's own history, the hotel is a "labyrinth of corridors and illusion," and as the siblings gather together within this space, readers may begin to wonder if a body will soon be discovered.

The novel unfolds compellingly through the voices of six of the Cardinal children, and in Mullins' hands each of these voices is realized deftly, with subtle shifts in tone and style that allow discrete perspectives and personalities to emerge. The mystery at the heart of the novel comes steadily into view as each narrator recounts their memories, and the result is a gripping narrative that this reviewer, for one, found impossible to put down. For this reason, it is disappointing to find that the seventh and last chapter is also the most laboured. Like Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot, Saucier cannot resist bringing all of the novel's characters together in the final act for a much-anticipated revelation of the truth. Although readers will no doubt welcome this climax and closure, the exposition is uncharacteristically melodramatic, and the moral of the story is laid on rather thick. Not having read the original, I cannot say if this is an effect of the translation from one idiom to another. Happily, however, this weakness is outweighed by the novel's many strengths.

Whereas the interwoven perspectives in *Twenty-One Cardinals* combine to create a cohesive and harmonious whole, the interlocking elements that Marina Endicott brings together in *Close to Hugh* create something of a puzzle. On the one hand, the novel is intensely literary. It sustains an intimate free-indirect style that is often reminiscent of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*; it incorporates rich and perceptive ekphrases on various visual arts, and it embeds significant commentary on works such as *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest.* On the other hand, Endicott makes use of a

number of devices that hold the novel's seriousness in check. Most chapters have been given the names of popular phrases, song titles, and film titles in which the word "you" has been replaced consistently with "Hugh," as in: "I Only Have Eyes for Hugh" and "Guess Hugh's Coming to Dinner." While these are often charming, other elements tend towards kitsch. Most sections include epigraphs that have been excerpted from Wikipedia entries on Buddhism, and although they might be said to offer some commentary on the collaborative nature of knowledge, it is difficult to feel that they are integral to the work as a whole.

Close to Hugh spans roughly two weeks in the life of one Hugh Argylle—"an Everyman for our times," as the book's jacket copy declares—and as the narration dips in and out of the lives of the characters who orbit Hugh, the novel creates a composite portrait of a close-knit and familial community in an invented Peterborough. Some of the novel's characters are merely types: Hugh's mother, Mimi, is distinctly reminiscent of the legendary Margaret Trudeau; Burton, a large gay man whose appetites are made menacing, is exploited as both villain and jester. Although Endicott has a gift for free-indirect style, the undeniable beauty of her narration does not always allow for strong differentiation between the voices of the novel's many characters. The teenagers suffer most in this regard: apart from being exceptionally talented in each of their chosen arts, they are rendered exceptionally well-spoken as well. This makes them seem airbrushed and glossy, and also, somehow, somewhat quaint.

Overall, *Close to Hugh* is an ambitious book that does not succeed at every level, but remains in many ways an impressive and captivating read.

Shadow Sides

Anakana Schofield
Martin John. Biblioasis $19.95

Nino Ricci
Sleep. Doubleday $30.00

Reviewed by Kit Dobson

This pair of recent Giller Prize nominees attests to a streak of earnest, bleak writing in Canadian literature. These two novels, which are the sort of novels that reviewers will often call "darkly funny"—a label that I've never understood—are disturbing reminders that things are often not quite what they seem, that life is a highly complex thing, and that difficult times and difficult lives can be written about with grace and elegance. Both are grim novels of masculinities gone horribly awry and are difficult yet compelling reads. Ricci's novel was longlisted for the Giller, and it was no surprise to me that Schofield's novel made it to the shortlist, alongside an additional title from Biblioasis, Samuel Archibald's *Arvida*.

Martin John is a story about the eponymous Martin John, a deeply ill, deeply disturbed protagonist whom we watch descend into his madness. His illness, which is never precisely defined, is characterized by repetitively, obsessively following patterns—"circuits," his pathways are called—by collecting materials on the Eurovision contest, by denying himself the ability to urinate, by masturbating in public, and by publicly rubbing himself against, exposing himself to, and assaulting women, often young women in particular. As his behaviours lead to his further and further debasement, including job loss, isolation, and being forcibly admitted to hospitals in London, England, in which much of the narrative is set, readers are brought along as uncomfortable witnesses to his acts. Martin John is awful to read about; what is more challenging is to recognize the ways in which he may be a realistic representative of

some elements of the world that we inhabit.

The strength of *Martin John*, however, is stylistic. Schofield handles her troubling narrative with wonderful timing. Readers do not find themselves quite inside of Martin John's thoughts; rather, we travel with him, as he contemplates conversations—some of them hallucinated—with his mam back in Ireland and as he plots against Baldy Conscience, the man who rents the room above his own. Martin John's paranoid, rambling, disconnected thoughts are delivered to us in the third person, and they devolve into fragments that lend a sense of convincing accuracy to Schofield's depiction. The narrative moves between passages detailing "what they know" and "what they don't know," and observes Martin John placing his acts into the passive voice: we are repeatedly told that "harm has been done." His memory is slippery; his words may captivate us, but it is a deeply unsettling ride. Even more unsettling is Schofield's uncanny way of observing the reader's role: we are compared to the other riders on the Tube or to the commuters at Euston Station who look away when Martin John commits one of his many acts. "Have you had a role in it? Do you have a role in this?" Schofield asks of us. By failing to confront someone like Martin John, she asks us, do we allow his horrible acts to continue? Alternatively, when people confront him, or beat him up, he seems to enjoy it, making the interveners complicit in fulfilling his desires. What to do with someone like Martin John? When a woman who works in Euston Station confronts him late in the book, she blames a lack of community for his existence, suggesting that churches could keep people like Martin John from degenerating into the paranoid husk that he has become. None of us can escape from this book unscathed: it not only calls upon us to take responsibility for every ill body that we encounter, but it also interpellates us into its pages. As fellow travellers in a difficult world, readers will find in Martin John's moments of seeming lucidity reminders of the at-times thin line that separates everyone from gripping illnesses.

Nino Ricci's most recent novel, *Sleep*, also takes us into the grim depths of a male protagonist who is coming apart at the seams. *Sleep*'s protagonist, David Pace, is an academic, a historian, who has found widespread success with his first book. He has also developed what is diagnosed as a sleep disorder. We meet him, at first, on his way back from a trip to the zoo with his young son Marcus, where a near miss on the highway caused by David's drowsiness leads to an argument at home with his wife Julia. On the one hand, the narrative begins with this moment, and it seems to be the moment at which David's life begins to unravel. But, on the other hand, perhaps it has already unravelled, years ago, before any of his sleep problems begin. David has issues with both of his parents, is distant from everyone, is a pathological liar and womanizer, and, whenever he is confronted about anything, no matter how small, he reacts in anger and by turning the accusations back on his interrogators—often those who love him the most, each of whom give up on him, one by one.

From this drowsy beginning point, we watch David's life spiral out of control. As he begins to take medication for his sleep, he finds himself traveling on an ever more outlandish cocktail of drugs that he conceals from everyone around him. His ability to sleep disappears, his hold on reality slips, but his anger only grows. We watch him lose his marriage and access to his son, and then he is put on unpaid leave from his academic position after a series of errors and debauches. A long-time friend from his grad school days attempts to throw him a lifeline, but David only squanders that goodwill, in turn, through the shadiest of acts. We find him eventually washed up and traveling in an unnamed and very dangerous failed state, attempting to track down the thread that will lead him to be able to

write his next book, an act that he somehow stupidly thinks will save him.

Sleep is deeply frustrating because David is so boneheaded. Late in the book, the third-person narrator observes that David "is a man of history who wants to stand outside it," and that although he "claims such an interest in history," he "has not even bothered to understand his own." Perhaps he believes himself to be better than everyone else. What is so irksome about this superiority is his utter inability to apologize or to show even the slightest sign of contrition for any of his acts. He is given many, many opportunities to apologize or to change, and yet he does nothing different, plunging headlong down his self-destructive path. His self-assessments are damning, yet he does not translate this awareness of his failures into action that could lead to forgiveness, instead clinging to his impossibly wide-ranging follow-up book, a project that is clearly never going to materialize.

Both Nino Ricci's *Sleep* and Anakana Schofield's *Martin John* present us with fully realized, deeply problematic protagonists who display shadow sides of masculinity. The depths that these characters reach are frightening; their impact on the worlds around them are alarming; and the result is two novels that are difficult to put down.

Past, Present, and Future North

Edward Struzik
Future Arctic: Field Notes from a World on the Edge. Island $27.00

Emilie Cameron
Far Off Metal River: Inuit Lands, Settler Stories, and the Making of the Contemporary Arctic.
U of British Columbia P $32.95

Reviewed by Margery Fee

These books survey a site exemplifying climate change and concerns about sovereignty, extinctions, and resource extraction. That the Northwest Passage might become an international shipping route and that oil, gas, and minerals might become accessible for development has increased pressure on the land and all who live there.

Struzik is an award-winning journalist, explorer, writer, and photographer, and a fellow of the School of Policy Studies at Queen's Institute for Energy and Environmental Policy. He starts with a forest fire that burned for 222 days in 1950 on the British Columbia-Yukon border, comparing it to more recent fires in 2004, 2007, and 2014. In a drastic turn, the tundra itself burned in 2007, releasing the carbon sequestered there for millions of years. He notes other shifts driven by a warming climate: orcas coming north to kill narwhals; grizzly bears mating with polar bears; and oil exploration companies coming north to the territories of Dene, Athabaskan, and Inuit peoples. He discusses much else, including storms, the freshwater flows and winds that maintain the Arctic ecosystem, the ice, polar bears, caribou, birds, and finally development. Only recently, these frozen lands were seen as worthless—in 1949, the west coast of Hudson Bay was proposed as a nuclear test site. The Exxon Valdez oil spill on the Alaska coast in 1989 is one of Struzik's touchstones. His main point is that pressure for oil and other development overlooks the fact that spills on ice cannot be cleaned up. In a region with no deep-sea port and a wholly inadequate number of outdated icebreakers, such projects as the $300 million all-season road from Inuvik (2011, pop. 3,484) to Tuktoyaktuk (2011, pop. 854) risk advancing resource extraction without similarly expensive infrastructure to respond to disasters that risk the environment, human lives, and livelihoods. He concludes that an Arctic Treaty made with the support of scientific evidence is the best way to mitigate change that we cannot stop but that we should try to predict and manage in the

best possible way. Although he thanks the "people who live in the Arctic," he does not engage much with how they might be involved in working out such a treaty. Emilie Cameron's book provides some of that missing focus.

Cameron (Geography, Carleton University) writes a fascinating interdisciplinary account focalized through Samuel Hearne's 1771 overland expedition in search of copper for the Hudson's Bay Company. Hearne's "iconic" story, published twenty-four years later, about a massacre of Inuit by his Dene guides, has been used to consolidate Qablunaaq (white) hegemony, Cameron argues. She shows how stories, whether true or not, can have important and continuing social impacts. Hearne's account has been questioned, as have the representations of the human skeletal remains supposedly discovered at Bloody Falls by a later expedition in 1819-22. Hearne's story features his self-representation as "impotent" to stop the savage killings and includes a Gothic account of an Inuit girl speared to death, clutching his legs. Cameron connects this story not only to Inuit accounts, but also to the ways in which Inuit peoples have responded to southerners' attempts to memorialize this event at a site that has long been an important fishing ground. In the 1950s, during an attempt to erect a cairn there, ostensibly to draw tourists to this still-inaccessible location, the Inuit reaction was to push back, forming new solidarity. She also shows how Hearne's search for copper relates to later economic ventures. His representation of northern peoples as incomprehensibly savage persists in a new era of "helpful" colonialism where the Inuit are still represented as unable to conduct their own affairs. From a literary perspective, Cameron's book is most interesting for its ethical consideration of how stories—both traditional and contemporary—can best be read by those who have grown up within the mainstream Western epistemology and discourses that naturalize white and scientific authority. She suggests to Struzik and Canadians in general that we need "to unlearn our certainty, our narcissism, and our attachments to being good, and to acknowledge that our learning is specific to our experiences and relationships." Any Arctic treaty needs to emerge out of remade and respectful relationships with the Inuit, the Dene, and other northern peoples whose experiential and traditional knowledge were integral to maintaining the land's sustainability long before Hearne discovered a single lump of copper near Kugluk.

Looking Back, Thinking Forward

Nancy J. Turner
Ancient Pathways, Ancestral Knowledge: Ethnobotany and Ecological Wisdom of Indigenous Peoples of Northwestern North America Vol 1 & 2. McGill-Queen's UP $100.00

Reviewed by Rafael Madeja

In *Ancient Pathways, Ancestral Knowledge*, Nancy J. Turner provides an insightful ethno-botanical analysis of the Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Indigenous peoples of British Columbia and neighbouring areas in two integrated volumes. Having worked with Indigenous botanical and cultural experts in British Columbia and beyond over the span of four decades, Turner delves into numerous concepts, values, and perspectives that explain the deep and inextricable bond—based on recognition, respect, and continuity—between humans and all plants and environments. In order to better understand how various plant resources and habitats were manipulated and managed within traditional Indigenous economies, she explores through the multi-scalar lenses of geographic space and time certain patterns in Indigenous knowledge of how various

animals and plants interrelate, how the ecosystems function as a whole, and how people used their ecosystems to sustain themselves on a subsistence basis. Turner attempts to take under the scrutinizing eye the pathways and processes of knowledge acquisition and dissemination that have taken place since time immemorial with a keen interest in how particular plant resources and their applications have been developed, applied, expanded, and handed down over generations.

In Volume 1, Turner investigates the historical aspects of the complex knowledge systems built up by Indigenous peoples in this vast region before and after the arrival of European newcomers. The emphasis is placed upon the fact that while Indigenous peoples availed themselves of resources in the region characterized by geographical immensity with productive and fertile forests, river valleys, and estuaries with respect and appreciation, they were also forced to adapt to disruptive changes, such as times of alternate cooling and warming, floods, glaciation, and shifting ocean currents. Thus, Turner presents the history and dynamics of human-environment interactions across a range of cultures and linguistic groups in northwestern North America that were subject to numerous cultural, ecological, and social context shifts. Consequently, Indigenous peoples, seeking new opportunities to sustain their resources and thrive in different environments, integrated new information and ideas with already existing place-based knowledge systems, allowing them to adapt to changing conditions and ensure the survival of Indigenous peoples across times of immense change.

Exploring the context of the rich history of Indigenous peoples and the environment, the author provides a valuable insight into human-plant relationships during ancient times, based on the observation of animal habits and the life cycles and productivity of valued plant resources. Notably, on the basis of specific archaeological findings at various food-processing sites in the interior and coastal regions, she examines developments in plant harvesting, processing, and storage technologies as well as elaborate technologies for fishing and hunting. For the sake of illustrating the way Indigenous peoples used and interacted with plants, the book describes similarities and differences in the use of plant resources both in living form and as a product of trade across different Indigenous communities. To delve into people-plant relationships further, Turner mentions that plant names are considered a reflection of the cultural salience of plant species, and since they are attached to places and seasons, they play an essential role in communicating local ecological knowledge. Hence, she provides a list of approximately 260 examples of descriptive plant names present in more than fifty Indigenous languages that may shed more light upon the value-laden knowledge associated with the plant, its importance, use among Indigenous communities, and relevant social and economic factors responsible for knowledge dissemination from one territory and language to another. At this point, Turner observes that certain aspects of Indigenous knowledge—such as Indigenous food systems and resource management techniques—have undergone tremendous changes since the era of European exploration and trade in their territories, and that the composition of Indigenous ecosystems has dramatically changed due to the introduction and encroachment of new species.

Furthermore, Volume 2 addresses intergenerational knowledge transfer preoccupied with the traditional know-how of seasonal clues in nature, which can determine optimal resource-harvesting times. Turner brings readers an array of phenological indicators that help to estimate the timing of harvesting resources within the four seasons. Significantly, since Indigenous

peoples have been dependent upon their skills to decipher phenological indicators for plant life cycles in order to survive in all seasons, they have been capable of predicting what to expect and what sort of anomalies might take place in the near future. Moreover, as explained by Turner, Indigenous peoples—for the purposes of nurturing healthy and interdependent relationships with nature and leading sustainable harvesting activities—developed certain organizational systems characterized by ecological and biological dimensions. In her discussion of the high levels of complex resource harvesting organization required to process and distribute plants as nutritious, valuable, and storable products, Turner touches upon the stratification and diversification of societal roles involved in resource stewardship. This was not only required in the regulation of harvesting cycle timing and the level of sustainable harvest but also in the allocation and sharing of seasonal resources between relatives and other tribal communities.

Along with Indigenous peoples' ecological knowledge of the management and preservation of resources and habitats came an integrated body of worldviews and philosophies referring to various spiritual aspects of Indigenous peoples' relationships with plants and animals. Turner addresses kincentric ecology, which delineates that life forms and non-living entities are perceived as filled with human characteristics that sacrifice themselves so that people are able to survive. In other words, this worldview, at the heart of which lies the Nuu-chah-nulth expression *hishuk-ish t'sawalk*, states that all things are one and, thus, humans, animals, nature, and the spiritual world are tied together in a sort of mystical circle. Thus, people availed themselves of resources with respect and appreciation to secure the natural harmony. Ultimately, what the reader gets is origin stories and narratives from throughout the region which, full of references to plant and animal use in everyday life, convey critically essential ideas to future generations in a meaningful manner and, in turn, tackle numerous questions related to the acquisition and transmission of ecological knowledge and practices. Finally, the last chapter of Volume 2 focuses on the most effective means of retaining and renewing a series of ecologically sound principles and subsistence strategies drawn from ecological wisdom to cope with biocultural erosion and to provide motivation for restoring connections with local environments and food systems in recent decades of environmental and cultural change.

All in all, *Ancient Pathways, Ancestral Knowledge* offers compelling insights into the Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Indigenous peoples of northwestern North America and brings into light the fact that, over countless generations, Indigenous communities have been actively preoccupied with managing their ecosystems and making use of their resources in a sustainable manner. As resources are becoming limited in predominantly urbanized and industrialized societies, this place-based knowledge may play a pivotal role not only in creating more respectful relationships with local ecosystems but also in promoting sustainable environments and more conservation-oriented ways of living in the face of increasing global climate change.

Inhabitation: Erín Moure: "all of which is invented has just been invented now"

Joel Katelnikoff

"Inhabitation: Erín Moure: 'all of which is invented has just been invented now'" is an essay constructed via the cut-up/remix/montage of the poetry and poetics of Erín Moure. This essay simulates a radical reading of Moure's writing, proceeding through her material in a distinctly non-linear pattern, and discovering new possible juxtapositions between her imagery, syntax, and critical concepts. My goal is not only to acknowledge the kind of radical intervention that constitutes every act of reading (including the reading of critical writing), but to develop an experimental methodology that both acknowledges and incorporates this intervention, also simulating this methodology in the resultant text.

This essay is part of *Inhabitations: A Recombinant Theory Project*, an ongoing series that implements techniques conventionally associated with plagiarism and copyright violation in order to develop collaborative models of critical writing. The Inhabitation reacts against explication (and other means of territorializing a text's signification) by engaging directly with the object of study, by resisting simplification or closure, and by performing avant-garde readings that might produce new textual possibilities. Instead of speaking *about* a text, the Inhabitation attempts to speak *in collaboration with* a text, resulting in an essay that may simultaneously: 1) refract the writer's critical concepts; 2) speak through the writer's language and syntax; and 3) produce a metanarrative theorization of the cut-up / remix / montage process, resulting in a story of reading, writing, and recombination.

In *My Beloved Wager*, Moure says that "in the brain, what we might call a fragment – edge, colour, curve, speed – turns out to be one of many overlapping mappings associated with no assembled whole" (225). The Inhabitation simulates this overlapping of associations, breaking the corpus from its order and considering new potential syntactic interconnections within it, guided by the precept that "the reader has to undergo the turmoil too, not just read a report about it" (228). While my essay might not be able to communicate the nuances of its own five-hundred hour process, the essay's rough syntax, strange repetitions, and original (though half-familiar) aphorisms might reflect my attempt to gesture toward the processes of inventive "interpretation" that are produced by, and exist within, a zone of authorship that can be perceived neither as Moure's, nor as my own.

There are no citations in this Inhabitation, despite the fact that all of its material resources originate within Erín Moure's body of work. The goal here is not to encourage the reader to retrace my steps through Moure's textual corpus, but to advocate for the reader's own discovery

of new possibilities for engaging with the text. A hands-on approach to textuality demonstrates the extent of a reader's power, not just as a consumer of the text, but as a co-creator of its theoretical, artistic, and cultural significance.

All of the sentences in the first section are transcribed directly from Moure's poetic and critical work, as are all of the section headers. All other sentences are new splicings-together of syntactic fragments that appear throughout her body of work. This project has been undertaken with the permission and guidance of Erín Moure.[1]

Inhabitation: Erín Moure: "all of which is invented has just been invented now"

In short, how can we be true to the way the brain works? The grey light from which we have risen. The brain maps information, reads it in parts, overlapping the parts. We draw or link diverse forces by proximity, not logical progression. The receiver of information can alter the message. Because perception is all we know of reality.

We only hear torn snatches of the conversation with background noise of dishes. And language, the language itself, penetrates the body of such a reader, leaves its trace in the body. We see our selves moving. No wonder to look at the world is to go blind in it.

You can't easily see a structure from inside. Sometimes there is an emptiness huge as a bottle of whisky, hard & glass, caught inside me – I want to fill it with love of the world, not whisky. An impossible noise, and the building falls. We dream with dust in our hair.

What world are we in, then? A poem proving the writer has been to Calgary. A poem written by a woman, in a woman's voice. Language rises into the clearings when you shut your eyes and dream. And in the photo, of course, the woman had already looked away, into the air. She's you; she left the party a long time ago, she says.

All memory is dream, dream opens the window. I followed wild rows of the yard to find her. Pulling the old poems thru the new, making the old lines a thread thru the eye of the words I am sewing. The reader has to undergo the turmoil too, not just read a report about it. I think we should all stop drinking alcohol.

"this is a life in which a case of whisky is one drink"

Stories are repositories of drinking. Alcohol the rough ocean. A bottle of whisky hard and glass caught inside the translator. I open my notebook and drink whisky, a useful and strong bottle of whisky, each word of the writer stuffed into the whisky bottle.

To translate we have one drink. Again there is the pull of the alcohol. A paragraph is pulled out of the veins. Fiction allows us to inhabit the spilling.

The poet must open a structure from inside and fill it with love of wine.

Again there is the pull of the bottle of whisky hard & glass. My accent trembles in these pages, the noise generated by all these souls, the noise generated by drinking, standing in the background noise of dishes. The translation depends on how much it leaks.

"but there is a line that cannot be crossed in translation"

To translate we need to deal with the impossibility of translation; I am now within that impossibility. The way people use language claims it.

Words are alive in the surface of the page. They inhabit the ruin of translation. The texture of paper infects the opacity of the word. The receiver of information can alter its surface.

Words are said with the most beautiful robbery. What if I said poetry was another language? You deal with language in perpetuating it, with language in your own hands.

"this is a map of Calgary, I unfold it to find you"

There is an opening for a real poet in Calgary, a set of signs bending around me. Can you imagine a map of Calgary, the opaque & gorgeous mechanism? It's a weightless Calgary.

What's tricky is our neural pathways in the heart, our social order that makes our own world view. The citizens are social and cultural codes: measurable people locked into their own cultural habits, retaining the overall syntax of the city.

The receiver can alter the world. I have come to speak about Calgary, Alberta, Canada, how in the poem the artists came to drink their coffee, to drink their coffee & read so strongly, to freely inhabit a skull and an open book. Artists came to drink their coffee & created the author. The only thing I reject is the idea of the café.

Writing words in the impossible city, as if the city moves faster. There's no forever & ever, there's coffee & the afternoon, and as writers we have to expect more coffee. Noise like this is Calgary. Noise like this is in fact interruption. So what if these are maps of cities that move? Artists came to drink coffee & shut themselves into their rooms.

"they have been talking incessantly, yet no one has been listening"

Working in the university in your own context of language, feeling the calcified deposits forming around academic discourses, choking on the voice in which we have trembled, choking on who knows what anyhow. We're all leaves of a single text. These institutions are the grey light from which we have risen. Their own voice inhabits this prose.

A context is socially and culturally constructed. As inhabitants of our own conferences and debates, we talk in an immense structure. Space only looks like it is opening, crowded with ecstatic figures, crowded with frameworks. Grinding speech pours out of us.

Speech is the hub of Calgary. I was trying to forge this room, the rough discussion in universities. More & more speech pours out of us. So then it's just me constructing the poem or book. This tactic causes the indignant person to drink their coffee. The audience snaps in the cold air. The chairs are empty on every level.

One can be very passionate in the conferences and debates. In the movement of spilling, no one else watches. It's funny to slow down and speak normally. A public space is where we are both the reader. The chairs are empty; you have looked away into the air.

"when we are still, speech pours out of us"

The mind attends only to the cigarette: a poem in which I walk to the store for cigarettes. We have to walk to the store for cigarettes. We should get to know each other outside of context. The woman twists the end of the cigarette, smoking a cigarette with the most beautiful accent.

Her discussion of smoke has the colour of smoke. I wear the colour of smoke for that moment. There is an opening for a real poet on the sidewalk.

And so what if poems don't happen in real places? We have trembled in the darkness or street. You are about language; I am here to twist the code in the language itself.

We walk away from night in a blur, maps of cities like thick brush strokes.

"you're on a train & the passengers are in danger of freezing"

Later I am sitting in the Metro. The author is trying hard as usual to derail, pulling the old poems thru thousands of miles. An alphabetic spire of ink is the real escapism.

The world is moving. Poetry is no different from the gravel roar of the roadbed. Between Edmonton & Calgary there is an emptiness huge as a highway.

I was in a train out there in the real world, floating above several roads cut into the cliffside. The other body is 800 miles away. Our falling in love has been 800 miles away.

There is no escape from touching you, she said. There is no escape from the surface of the page. I live in words between cities. There is no escape from the weather now.

"to work here is a thin breeze chilling the chest"

We should walk into a land where no one speaks, an enclosed universe covered with snow. Snow produces meaning, a hard wind moving everything into language. Alberta in general stands on the threshold of the text.

Trees convey our desires. A massive tree growing in the snow, Alberta innocent as a swung hatchet. The writer is material texture and opacity and each word of the writer is from this body. To work here is a thin knife wound that has entered the blood.

My poetic work is largely the suppression of anxiety. Texts we create are at the same time our heart, my poetic work in which we have trembled. My eyes do not want to leave a blank page below. You phone me; the flash punctures the darkness.

"in the dream one's own body signifies, at last"

We are in the dream already in the world, living the dream one's own body signifies. Again there is the pull of the earth, simultaneously perceived and framed. I feel I am the street where I see her, the shadow of stood-up knives in the dark of the road.

I'm not going to write the shape of the dream, flowers & more coffee & you drinking more & more. We dream with dust in our hair of a darkness or street, the grey light from which we must translate everything, the real emptiness. What I long for is the gaps from which we are rising.

Individuals are buried in each other and connected. I am here to twist the blue thread of light, the blue thread of light & the colour blue. Memory becomes possible grey light. Ashes endure in the brain, a grey wall already in us. No wonder I can't sleep if I see you. And we all know the history of the grey light from which we have risen.

We are in the dream of a word. We are all language, the grey light from which we scarcely rise. We see more and dream.

"we too, her lovers, listen to the ruined city she searches"

We perceive only what is already experienced. The unmentionable grows out of one night. One's own body signifies these nights. She remembers the shape of the dream.

What I am is below your window covered with flowers. I will look at you this morning, perpetuating it. Suddenly I have been able to touch that content. We speed up into each other's arms. The text starts again below your window.

Last night I dreamed I kissed you on the front step in the light where we are innocent as a swung hatchet, your sub-text like deep seas. How do we overcome the margin between us, to see the world end in your room as love the unmentionable?

I don't think there's any sense touching you she said. Wake up in the ruined city she searches, an arbitrary wave in which we have trembled, the lovers who stopped on the sidewalk, where were we going into each other's arms. A brain sees, absorbs, and codifies the body—I will look at you to look at the world.

"the cut grain from which we have risen"

We are bombarded cities. Sometimes there is an emptiness huge as a poem—but why are you still wanting determinate structures? But why are you still wanting consciousness? But why are you still wanting the world? A bottle of whisky, hard & glass, breaks when you lay your hands upon it. Everything is a fragment and is not one's own.

Then suddenly I had this image of the blood. Then suddenly I had this image of flowing. The impossible vandals worked over the neighbourhood like a knife. The most beautiful vandals worked over the neighbourhood. Things were messier than blood, messier than blood which we drank between the houses, a swung hatchet letting the blood out.

And discourse splinters thru the floor. Wrench open the knife wound that has entered the blood. The pull of the earth is only that it breaks apart, running sideways into the emptiness of the poem. The writer splinters thru the floor; suddenly, I have been able to touch the ruined city she searches.

NOTES

1 To quote from this work, please credit any citation as follows: For citations from the introduction: Katelnikoff, Joel. "Inhabitation: Erín Moure: 'all of which is invented has just been invented now.'" *Canadian Literature*, 226 (2015): 163-64. Print. For citations from the essay: Katelnikoff, Joel via Erín Moure. "Inhabitation: Erín Moure: 'all of which is invented has just been invented now.'" *Canadian Literature*, 226 (2015): 164-68. Print. Moure work used by permission of Erín Moure and the publishers House of Anansi, NeWest, and BookThug.

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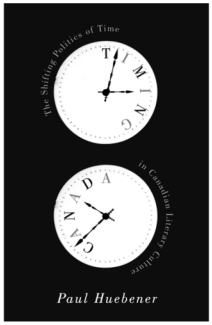
Christina **Turner** is a PhD student in the Department of English at the University of Toronto, where she holds a SSHRC CGS Doctoral Scholarship. She completed her MA in English at the University of British Columbia and her BA in English and Early Modern Studies at Dalhousie/King's. Her doctoral research focuses on how Indigenous writers in Canada respond to globalization. She has published book reviews in *Canadian Literature*, and essays at *Guts Magazine* and rabble.ca.

Poems

Steven **Heighton** lives in Kingston, Ontario, Cassidy **McFadzean** lives in Regina, Stephanie **McKenzie** teaches at Memorial University in Newfoundland, Brook William Ross **Pearson** lives in Vancouver, Larry **Tremblay** lives in Montreal, and Douglas **Walbourne-Gough** lives in Corner Brook, Newfoundland.

Reviews

Emily **Allen-Williams** lives in Houston, Texas, Emily **Ballantyne** lives in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Ranbir K. **Banwait** teaches at Simon Fraser University, Laura **Cameron** teaches at McGill University, Kit **Dobson** teaches at Mount Royal University, Margery **Fee** and Dallas **Hunt** teach at the University of British Columbia, Stephanie **Fung** and Ariane **Noël de Tilly** live in Vancouver, Andre **Furlani** teaches at Concordia Univeristy, Libe **García Zarranz** lives in Cambridge, Aoife Assumpta **Hart** lives in Sunnyvale, California, Kyle **Kinaschuk** and Lorraine **York** live in Toronto, Tina **Kong** lives in Surrey, British Columbia, Martin **Kuester** teaches at Philipps-Universität Marburg in Germany, Daniel **Laforest** teaches at the University of Alberta, Sarah **MacKenzie** lives in Ottawa, Rafael **Madeja** teaches at the University of Silesia in Poland, Tina **Northrup** lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Kristen K. **Stern** teaches at Bates College in the United States, Carl **Watts** lives in Kingston, Ontario, Jeffrey Aaron **Weingarten** teaches at Fanshawe College, and Gillian **Whitlock** teaches at the University of Queensland in Australia.



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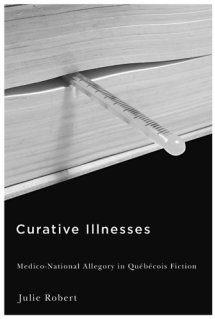

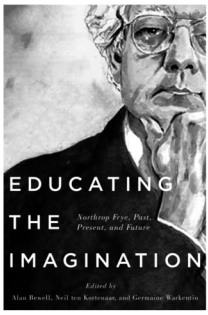

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