Canadian Literature / Littérature *canadienne*

A Quarterly of Criticism and Review
Number 215, Winter 2012, Indigenous Focus
Published by The University of British Columbia, Vancouver
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GST R108161779

Publication of *Canadian Literature* is assisted by The University of British Columbia, the Faculty of Arts (UBC), and SSHRCC.

Canadian Literature is indexed in *Canadian Periodical Index, Canadian Magazine Index, Humanities International Complete*, and the *MLA International Bibliography*, among numerous others. The journal is indexed and abstracted by EBSCO, PROQUEST, and ABES. Full text of articles and reviews from 1997 on is available from PROQUEST, GALE, and EBSCO Publishing. The journal is available in microfilm from University Microfilm International.

Publications Mail Agreement
NO. 40592543
Registration NO. 08647

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2013 SUBSCRIPTION
CANADA (GST INCLUDED): INDIVIDUAL $56; INSTITUTION $178.50.
OUTSIDE CANADA (SHIPPING INCLUDED): INDIVIDUAL $86 CAD; INSTITUTION $208.50 CAD.

ISSN 0008-4360

Managing Editor: Donna Chin
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Production Staff: Christy Fong, Matthew Gruman, Jennifer Lin, Beth Veitch
Design: George Vaitkunas
Illustrations: George Kuthan
Printing: Hignell Printing Limited
Typefaces: Minion and Univers
Paper: recycled and acid-free

Editorial

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

Margery Fee

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is coming to Vancouver from September 18th to 21st, 2013. The University of British Columbia has suspended classes for a day while the commission is in session to allow faculty, staff, and students to attend. Why is the university taking such an exceptional step? Many Canadians—including UBC students—think Canada has treated Aboriginal people fair and square and that their land has come to us through official channels. Don't they get special treatment in return for all that land? Only if you define "special" negatively, since even after Stephen Harper's apology for the residential schools in 2008, the federal government continues to spend less—often much less—per capita on educating Aboriginal students than the provinces spend on non-Aboriginal students (Sniderman n. pag.). Given that history lessons have tended to focus on Sir John A. Macdonald and the railway rather than Louis Riel and the buffalo, it's not surprising that many Canadians don't know much about Indigenous peoples in Canada. If you read the guide for new Canadians—*Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship*—you will see that although Aboriginal people are now listed as one of the three founding peoples, there's not much there that would help anyone understand the need for a TRC on Indian Residential Schools or the Idle No More movement, for that matter. And yet bureaucratic idling has been a very effective tool of colonization. The motto of the TRC is: "For the child taken, for the parent left behind." It might also add: "For the Canadians kept in the dark."

Harper's apology was part of a larger process: the settlement of a class action lawsuit by former students against the churches that ran the Indian residential schools (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and United) and the Canadian government that oversaw them. Between 1874 and 1996, around 150,000 students attended 141 residential schools; 80,000 of these students are alive today. Those who accepted the settlement, finalized in September 2007, received $10,000 for their first year in the school and $3,000 for each subsequent year. Around 12,000 former students have received further awards of between $5,000 and $275,000 for physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, with only 60 per cent of the cases heard so far (Canada, "Indian Residential Schools" n. pag.). This might seem like a lot of money, but many of these former students are still suffering the traumatic effects of their "education," as are their children, grandchildren, communities, and, indeed, everyone in Canada. Those Indigenous people who helped work out the settlement thought that remedying the years of silence about the residential schools required a great deal of attention, if a proper reconciliation were to take place. Non-Indigenous Canadians were to be engaged in the process, so that it wouldn't turn into yet another bureaucratic exercise.

Thus, the mandate of the TRC is to inform all Canadians about what happened in Indian Residential Schools. For example, the Missing Children Project is working to document the more than 3,000 children who died in school, usually from disease, but also from fires, accidents, suicide, malnutrition, and exposure (when they ran away from school and weren't found until too late). Documentation of the high death rates was stopped by the Department of Indian Affairs in 1917. In 1922, Dr. Peter H. Bryce published *The Story of a National Crime: Being an Appeal for Justice to the Indians of Canada; The Wards of the Nation, Our Allies in the Revolutionary War, Our Brothers-in-Arms in the Great War*. In it, Bryce notes that although he was asked, as part of his duties as Medical Inspector of the Ministry of the Interior and Indian Affairs, to inspect and report on 35 residential schools, "the recommendations contained in the report were never published and the public knows nothing of them" (4). He reports a death rate of 24 per cent for all the schools and of 75 per cent for the school on the File Hills reserve. In 1909, Bryce examined the health of 243 children in 8 schools in Alberta. Tuberculosis was found to be rife, but no action was taken "owing to the active opposition of Mr. D. C. Scott" (5). Bryce continued to prepare reports until 1914; Duncan Campbell Scott was made Deputy Minister of Indian

Affairs in 1913. He soon wrote Bryce to point out that Bryce worked for the Ministry of the Interior, not the Department, and so his reports were no longer required. Bryce continued to pursue the issue, comparing the inaction on Indigenous health with the efforts taken in cities such as Hamilton and Ottawa. He calls the inaction of the Department "criminal disregard for the treaty pledges" and regrets that his civil service oath meant that he could not make the story public earlier. John S. Milloy picked up Bryce's title in his book, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986* (1999). It would be easy to demonize Scott for this behaviour except that issues relating to the abuses in the schools were raised in Parliament, well known to all the mainstream churches, and, in some cases, reported on in newspapers.

The United Church apologized in 1986; the Anglican Church in 1993. In 2009, Pope Benedict XVI expressed "sorrow" to a delegation from the Assembly of First Nations for the abuse and "deplorable" treatment that Aboriginal students suffered at schools run by his church. Phil Fontaine, then the leader of the Assembly, said it didn't amount to an official apology, but hoped it would "close the book" on the issue. However, Pauline Wakeham sees these events as a theatre of apology, part of the "cunning of reconciliation." On a national or world stage, leaders use the metaphor of "turning the page" or "ending a chapter" to firmly locate colonization in the past (222-23). Although apologies are important, they are just the first step if the long-standing effects of racism and colonization are to be overcome at the human level. It seems paradoxical that reconciliation will be managed as a bureaucratic and state-run process, the same process that caused the problem in the first place.

In fact, this has been the ongoing paradox of the Canadian system of colonization. An interested party, Canada, runs the legal system and the bureaucracy. For example, after a particularly tough session with some Indigenous leaders from British Columbia with whom no treaty had been made, Scott spearheaded an amendment to the Indian Act to prevent Indigenous groups from hiring lawyers to act on their behalf. Thus, between 1927 and 1951, Indigenous people were denied the normal route of those seeking justice. Even now, cases taken to court by Indigenous groups or individuals meet a Crown defence supported by taxpayer dollars. This Catch-22 has affected the TRC already. Although the TRC was promised all relevant documentation, and Aboriginal Affairs complied, 23 other departments refused. Because the estimated expense of finding and producing these documents was far greater than the total budget of the TRC, the

Commission went to court. In January 2013, an Ontario Superior Court judge ruled that they must be produced at the expense of these departments. Even when one department of government seems to be doing something for Indigenous people, other departments can be obstructive. This might be funny, perhaps, if it weren't so typical.

This situation explains why Indigenous people have often looked outside Canada for justice: to the Crown (the 1906 delegation of British Columbia chiefs led by Squamish chief Joe Capilano/Sahp-luk to discuss land claims with King Edward VII); to the League of Nations (the appeal of Mohawk leader Levi General/Deskaheh protesting the dissolution of the traditional Six Nations/Haudenosaunee government by the RCMP and Scott in 1924); or to the UN (the 1979 appeal of a Malaseet woman, Sandra Lovelace, against the sexist provision of the Indian Act that took away the Status of Indigenous women on marriage to non-Status men, but not that of Status men who married non-Status women). This pattern shows the need to involve a large audience of non-Indigenous Canadians in the events of the TRC. The segregation of Indigenous people on reserves and in residential schools has blocked relationships that need to be fostered, especially now that most Indigenous people live in cities.

Many Indigenous nations, characterized as in need of "civilization," have been treated deplorably by the supposed "civilizers." After treaties were negotiated, officials instantly began to back off on the fine promises. For example, Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior in the Laurier government between 1896 and 1905, commented, "[W]e are educating these Indians to compete industrially with our own people, which seems to me a very undesirable use of public money—It has to be carefully considered how far the country can be properly burdened with the cost of giving them superior advantages" (qtd. in Barman 172). Certainly, public money was not squandered on a good education for Aboriginal children, if their overrepresentation in institutional care and that of Aboriginal youth, men, and women in prison is any evidence. A punitive school system designed to assimilate Aboriginal people and destroy their languages and cultures led to this situation; despite the TRC, many state institutions are continuing the punitive colonial tradition that will ensure another lost generation. Over 11,000 Aboriginal children were adopted out of their communities between 1960 and 1990 (Canada, *Royal Commission* n. pag.). This process, called "the Sixties Scoop," has since turned into the "Millennium Scoop" ("First Nations Children" n. pag.). More Aboriginal children are in care now than were in residential schools at their height.

The TRC is one way to change Canada's ongoing resistance to restorative justice, but only if the government that funds this positive initiative ensures that the new attitudes fostered by the TRC are followed by new policies that protect rather than punish the coming generations. Both the image of closing a book and some of the ideas around apology ("forgive and forget") imply that after the apology and the TRC hearings, mainstream Canada will be able to return to "normal," once again acting as if Indigenous people don't exist—as if they are not part of the body politic. The TRC will deprive mainstream Canadians of the excuse that they were kept in the dark. Thomas King says in *The Truth about Stories*, "Take it. It's yours. Do with it what you will. But don't say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now" (167).

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Jordan Abel

The silhouette of a pole on the shore of the Nass River

"The pole of 'Neesyoq and 'Neeskyinwaet, members of a Wolf clan at Gitlarhdamks, on upper Nass River. It stood seventh from the uppermost in the row of poles along the river front.

Description. It stood in front of a house called House-of-the-Sky (wilplarhae) and belonged to the ptsaen type (hollow-back and carved all over). Its figures, from top to bottom, are: (1) mythical man with the deep sea cockle adhering to a rock (kal'own) holding his hand fast—illustrating a myth; (2) the head of the Sperm Whale (hlpoon), the jaw hanging down; (3) Person (gyet) wearing a garment with many faces on it, probably the Garment-of-Marten (gwisha'dao'tk); (4) the bird Gyaibelk, at the bottom of the pole. This mythical bird was also used as a head-dress (amhallait) and as a spirit (narhnorh or narhnok).

Function, carver, age. Erected in memory of a former 'Neesyoq by the present (in 1927) chief of the same name, an old man. It no longer exists. Carved by Paraet'Naerhl, assisted by his son, about eighty years ago.

(Informant, Dennis Wood of Gitlarhdamks.)"

—Marius Barbeau, Totem Poles: 1950 page 442

(wilplarhae) (
) ( )
(kal'own)
( ) (hlpoon)
( ) (gyet)
(gwisha'dao'tk) ( )
(amhallait)
(narhnorh narhnok)

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language readjusts to
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(casualty)
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(a
description of)

(all)

The silhouette of a pole on the shore of the Nass River. When I was satisfied with the day (field notes completed) and when my ears were sufficiently exhausted by the translations (a process wherein an informant evaluates the qualities of a speech in one language and readjusts them to suit another language), I made my way back to the river. The branches from the trees overhead dipped onto the path (noteable), and the needles bristled against my palms (a casualty of the ethnological process).

My informant (Dennis Wood), caught up with me at the bank of the river. He was out of breath, offering up my notebook in his hands. "You forgot this," he said, handing the book back to me. This gesture (a description of a bodily action) took me a moment to comprehend, but once I gathered myself, I patted him on the back and said, "Thank you." This affirmation was not lost on him, as he began to speak at once about the crested column that stood against the river. He explained that the man on the top was telling a story, and I gathered that he was comparing me to this man (as I had been endeavoring to learn all of their stories). Although I knew that I must be nothing like this man, I was flattered all the same, and did not object as my informant continued to speak.

Renate Eigenbrod

The "look of recognition"
Transcultural Circulation of Trauma in Indigenous Texts

> You know, that Billy Frank tells me, this story about the Enemy Aliens have their property taken away by Coyote and the Whitemen and get moved from their homes to someplace else reminds me of another story.
>
> Yes, I tell Billy Frank, me, too.
>
> You remember how that story goes, says Billy Frank.
>
> No, I says, but maybe if we think about it, that story will come back.
>
> —Thomas King, "Coyote and the Enemy Aliens"

"**W**e didn't know we were going to Canada that sun-blasted afternoon. We thought we were going to Auschwitz" (Cariou 17). In this startling opening to his essay about his visit to Auschwitz, Métis author Warren Cariou describes how he found out about a Canada he had not previously known. Informed by the Auschwitz guidebook, he discovered that a section of the concentration camp was called "Kanada," "the name of a warehouse used to store valuables taken from newly arrived prisoners" (18). Right at that moment, while at Auschwitz, he did not want to think of Canada; he had come to comprehend, in some way, Auschwitz, and Auschwitz alone, but was involuntarily confronted with the multidirectional power of a traumatic memory that "takes on meaning precisely in relationship to other memories in a network of associations" (Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* 16). He therefore compares this moment of his discovery to "something from a W. G. Sebald novel: a tiny quirk of history that grabbed onto me in that moment and wouldn't let go" (Cariou 18).[1]

Traumatic histories happen in certain places, at certain sites, in certain times, and to certain groups of people. However, as Michael Rothberg argues, the memories of them may become re-contextualized "as rhizomatic

networks of temporality and cultural reference that exceed territorialization (whether at the local or national level) and identitarian reduction" ("Introduction" 7). Not a Jewish survivor or descendant of a survivor, but a Métis from northern Saskatchewan in Canada, Cariou found himself at a place where seemingly different sites and memories were knotted together in one of the "*noeuds de mémoire*" (Rothberg, "Introduction" 7) and he was left with the task of unravelling its significance. Explicitly stepping away from arguments of "comparability" between Fascism and the genocide of colonialism, Cariou remembers instead the power of creative works by Aboriginal authors which evoke—similar to texts by black Canadian writers[2]—the "multiplicitous story of Canada" (20), constituting a counter-memory that unsettles the official version of "Canada's unwavering commitment to recognizing, promoting and celebrating human rights," as it states on the website of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (qtd. in Cariou 21).

I chose that episode from Warren Cariou's life—a "real" situation—and his way of re-presenting it by narrative movements that underline linkages, multiple directions as an introduction to my own explorations into literary representations of transcultural travels of trauma and the power of multidirectional memory, including Cariou's "Kanada," the collection *In Honour of Our Grandmothers*, Thomas King's "Coyote and the Enemy Aliens," Marie Clements' *Burning Vision*, Shirley Sterling's *My Name Is Seepeetza*, and Richard Wagamese's *A Quality of Light*.

Born and raised in Germany at the end of World War II, I have never been in Auschwitz, but I visited the Dachau concentration camp close to Munich, where, as I learnt as an adult, my father had been a guard—if only for the last few months of its existence. I never found out what exactly had happened, why he ended up there; he never spoke about his war experiences and many important records have been destroyed. The history of my country lies heavily on my generation, the generation "who came after" and grew up with too many silences and unaccounted ruptures of family lives.[3] As an immigrant in Canada, it took me a long time to make the connection between Fascism and colonialism; it was not my positionality as "second-generation inheritor of the Holocaust legacy of guilt and condemnation" (Worthington 208) that generated my interest in Canada's colonial history and literature by the colonized, but my experiences as an instructor of a class of Cree students who made me aware of a huge gap in the humanities curriculum. Also, it was only by teaching a course at the Oji-Cree

community of Sandy Lake in northwest Ontario that I became more strongly aware of connections between Jewish and Aboriginal histories, as it was at their school library that I found the book *In Honour of Our Grandmothers*, a collaboration—now out of print—between poets and artists from both groups (Schneider and Gottfriedson). As pointed out by Rothberg, "on the grounds of Jews' presumed 'whiteness,'" Jewish people are usually excluded in minority and postcolonial critique, but in this book, artists of Jewish and Aboriginal ancestry bring together memories of "[s]hared histories of racism, spatial segregation, genocide, diasporic displacement, cultural destruction" (*Multidirectional Memory* 23) as well as resistances to them. Reisa Smiley Schneider's poem "Paths of Reawakening" links both groups in the following way:

> Rejected as a young child
> because he was an Indian
> Rejected as a young child
> because she was a Jew.
> They were dark They were different.
> ridicule disdain humiliation alienation
> Blankets tallitot worn as shawls
> enwrap gaunt bodies as eagle calls.
> Souls emerge in disguise seeking empathy in sensitive eyes
> striving for unity in natural signs.
> (qtd. in Schneider and Gottfriedson 24)

The smooth parallelism of the opening lines of this excerpt from the poem with their straightforward "explanation" for social censure is followed by a halting style, as if searching for the right words, the gaps or pauses reflecting the unspoken or unspeakable and undermining an easy flow of similarities. These lines undercut simple comparisons initially suggested and point to more complex connections between both the cultures—blankets worn by Native people and the Jewish prayer shawl—and the peoples' suffering: the image of "gaunt bodies" evokes associations of Native people afflicted by smallpox and starvation and of the concentration camps. The language reveals "an intertwining of darkness and light," as is stated in the preface to the book (Schneider and Gottfriedson 2) and illustrates a "look of recognition" which Kirsten Emiko McAllister identifies as a connective element in her own story about cross-cultural relations (441).

In an essay published in the third and last volume issued by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation—*Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation through the Lens of Cultural Diversity*—McAllister tells the story of an encounter between

her Japanese Canadian family and Aboriginal people at a blockade in British Columbia, on their way to East Lillooet where her mother's family was incarcerated during the war. When their car approached the blockade, the Lil'Wat man in charge of stopping cars "didn't come over to inspect us, ask for our identification, and then deliberate over whether we had permission to pass; rather, in one glance his look took us in and beckoned us through . . . into what I now know to be Lil'Wat territory" (428). Interpreting that incident, which she had experienced as a child, years later, she comes to the conclusion that this Indigenous man "gave us neither a look of pity, empathy, or sympathy" but a "look of recognition," which "entails another type of relation. It starts with an understanding that the very possibility of one's existence in this world is fundamentally interconnected with all other beings."[4] Approaching historical trauma of "the other" through the look of recognition "does not relate to others just in terms of their injuries" (441), but leads to the potential of solidarity and the building of new communities, a "Reawakening" toward "Harmony and Peace," in the words of the Jewish/Aboriginal collaborative publication. Or, understood within Rothberg's theory, "multidirectional memory is often the very grounds on which people construct and act upon visions of justice" (*Multidirectional Memory* 19). As a scholar based in the United States, he acknowledges the failure to confront "continuing dispossession of Indians" among Americans, who are concerned about genocides elsewhere, but also asserts (quoting Jodi Byrd) that "memory's multidirectionality provides a critical resource . . . for contesting that unequal distribution of attention" (*Multidirectional Memory* 311).

In spite of the landmark gathering of Aboriginal writers and "writers of colour" in the 1994 *Writing Thru Race: A Conference for First Nations Writers and Writers of Colour* chaired by Roy Miki, there are not many crossovers in the literatures of each group[5] nor has there been much work done on the intersection between multiculturalism and postcolonial studies, or, as Rita Wong puts it, on the need for "unpacking the specific problematic of racialized subjects who have inherited the violence of colonization" (158). Rejecting a superficial version of multiculturalism in Canada and Australia by underscoring the legacies of imperialism and colonialism, one of the few critics in this field, Sneja Gunew, argues in *Haunted Nations* "that the Australian state fails its 'multicultural' subjects as much as it does its indigenous ones" (44). Choosing a similarly telling title for her own critical analysis of relationships between "immigrants of colour" and Aboriginal peoples and of Canada's discourse on multiculturalism, Himani Bannerji

states in her book *The Dark Side of the Nation*: "It is the nationhood of this Canada, with its two solitudes and their survival anxieties and aggressions against 'native others,' that provides the epic painting in whose dark corners we must look for the later 'others'" (93). Her point that the suppressed legacies of colonialism shape Canada's relationship with its immigrants of colour is echoed by Cherokee author Thomas King who, in his narrative "Coyote and the Enemy Aliens," looks in those dark corners of the nation for "the later 'others'"—in this case, the Japanese Canadians—by telling a story about them through his lens of the "native other."[6] In the publication of this story in *Our Story*, he states in his preface:

> I know the story of the Japanese internment in Canada. I know it as most Canadians know it.
> In pieces.
> From a distance. (158)

In his own narrative, he crosses this distance between him, an Indigenous person, and the Japanese Canadians by making his character Coyote both a victimizer and a victim in the internment history. He takes the Japanese Canadian story out of its isolation and creates a knotting of traumatic histories—so much so that he conveys to us in his preface that whenever he hears either of these stories, "a strange thing happens. I think of the other" (158). In the original publication of the text in *A Short History of Indians in Canada*, the opening story of the collection with the book's title satirically tells the history of "Indians" as being labelled, tagged, and confined when they come falling from the sky. In "Coyote and the Enemy Aliens," it is the Japanese Canadians who are labelled, tagged, and confined, but eventually the Native characters—who had offered their homes for the displaced Japanese Canadians—are considered enemy aliens as well, including Coyote. Published in 2005, this story reminds of the branding of all non-white people as potential "terrorists" in "the war against terror," an echo that Paul Gilroy captures in the subheading "Enemy Aliens" in his chapter on 9/11 (19-22) and that King himself alludes to with the reference to Los Alamos at the end of his story.

In the last story of *A Short History of Indians in Canada*, "Another Great Moment in Canadian Indian History," a group of "Indians" is mistaken for a group of Japanese tourists. In "Coyote and the Enemy Aliens," the theme of mistaken identities is a literary strategy for deconstructing concepts of race and foregrounding instead the systemic nature of oppression that connects colonialism with "anti-terrorism." Native people are seen as enemy aliens although they are not Japanese and Coyote himself is captured by the

RCMP. Further undermining the importance of race, Coyote is a Native character but very much involved in the oppressive measures against the Japanese Canadians, through his jobs as "Custodian of Enemy Alien Property" and as the one to "Disperse Enemy Aliens." The fact that he is Native does not exempt him from becoming an oppressor—although he does not acknowledge his complicity. He does not want to own this story but distances himself from the Canadians, the "Whitemen" who gave him this job and "a commendation" for a job well done: "No, no, says Coyote. This story is not a good Coyote story. This story is a good Canadian story" (166). With Coyote, King uses an ambiguous transformer character that in oral traditions is never idealized but rather shown as making mistakes (from which listeners/readers can learn). In King's earlier story "The One About Coyote Going West," he is responsible for the "big mistake" that creates a consumer culture; in this story, he falls for the government's propaganda and considers his job of confiscating Japanese Canadian property and of displacing people from their homes as legal. The narrator has a different view:

> Canadian story. Coyote story. Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference. All those words begin with C.
> Callous, carnage, catastrophe, chicanery.
> . . .
> Cold-blooded, complicit, concoct, condemn. (166)

These and other c-words that he lists reflect the narrator's disagreement with both the government's racist policy and Coyote's role as perpetrator; he places the c-word "cupidity" emphatically at the end of his list (166). Although colonialism, another c-word, is not mentioned here, it is implied if one reads the story in a multidirectional manner. The narrator clearly distances himself from Coyote and his stories of denial, suggesting that Coyote makes another "big mistake" by continuing the dehumanization he and his people had experienced:

> They are not like you and me.
> They look like you and me, I says.
> Oh no, says Coyote, you are mistaken. They look like Enemy Aliens. (167)

In spite of being victimized himself when he was arrested by the RCMP, Coyote further collaborates with the "Whitemen" after he reappears: "I'm going to that New Mexico. I'm going to that Los Alamos place in New Mexico, help those Whitemen want to make the world safe for freedom" (176). Ironically, the narrator comments that since New Mexico is "mostly that desert and those mountains," there is "[n]othing much in that Los

Alamos place that Coyote can mess up" (176). As a conclusion to his story that contains "another story," King inspires readers to learn from Coyote's mistakes and practise their own multidirectional memory in this discourse on national security. Los Alamos is well known for its National Laboratory that specializes in national security science and in which computer technology simulates terrorist attacks. Even more significantly related to the theme of the story, it is also the site of the research centre that created the atomic bomb that fell on Japan.

While the poets in *In Honour of Our Grandmothers* tell two stories—the Jewish and the Aboriginal one, albeit in an interconnected manner—King tells only one story while, at the same time, telling/bringing forth another one. Both texts deconstruct the hierarchy among hi/stories by showing how they are intertwined. The story of the Japanese Canadian internment got the Canadian public's attention in a Prime Minister's apology twenty years earlier than the story of the displacement of Aboriginal children into abusive institutions (1988 vs. 2008). The Jewish/Aboriginal "comparison" is unsettling, as the Holocaust—implied in this connection—is much more recognized as a horrific event in European history than is the genocide of colonialism in North America.[7] One may agree with Rothberg that the authors' particular linkages speak to "memory's multidirectionality," which "provides a critical resource . . . for contesting that unequal distribution of attention" (*Multidirectional Memory* 310) and which is opposite to "competitive memory" (which we see in Winnipeg right now in the discussion about displays at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights[8]). His theory of multidirectional memory echoes influential critics like James Clifford and his concepts of travelling cultures as well as Edward Said. Said's statement in *Culture and Imperialism* about "ideas of counterpoint, intertwining and integration" support Rothberg's argument that multidirectional memory does not take away from but enriches the understanding of oppression: "If, for example, French and Algerian or Vietnamese history, Caribbean or African or Indian and British history are studied separately rather than together, then the experiences of domination and being dominated remain artificially, and falsely, separated" (259).

McAllister asserts that "colonial history has shaped the realities for postwar British Columbia, *marking anyone who is not recognized as some variation of an ideal British subject* as a perpetual outsider who threatens the integrity of what is imagined to be this province's social body" (425; emphasis mine). Her observation is reflected in King's story but also in the

aggressive assimilation policy put into practice in residential schools. The residential school novel *My Name Is Seepeetza* is set in British Columbia and written by Nlaka'pamux (Interior Salish) residential school survivor Shirley Sterling. The fictionalized narrative, based on the author's own experience, is framed as a "secret journal" written for one year in the school by a twelve-year-old girl. Although the Aboriginal story is foregrounded, the author alludes to "the other story" of the Japanese Canadians by telling about her father who beat her brother for calling them "Japs"—her father, who had been "a guard" at the internment camp. The style of Sterling's novel is allusive, capturing the limited view of a child who could observe but not interpret what she saw. Jo-Ann Episkenew explains that "by refusing to dramatize situations that clearly have sensational potential, Sterling subtly executes her socio-pedagogical goals. What Seepeetza portrays is her norm, and readers are forced to look beneath the matter-of-fact descriptions to understand how the events described would affect a child" (128). Therefore, readers have to read between the lines in order to understand not only the extent of the disturbing school experiences, but also the significance of the cross-cultural theme. The mentioning of her father being a guard "in a camp near Firefly during World War II" (41) brings up the question asked by McAllister, a child of *Nisei*, second generation Japanese Canadians and internment survivors, "how the First Nations would have viewed my mother and her generation, interned on their territories" (438). McAllister also mentions close relations between some First Nations and the Japanese Canadians; similarly, Sterling emphasizes the friendly relations her father had with the people he guarded. Still, as a guard, her father was on the side of the perpetrators, complicit like King's Coyote character albeit not in an equally dehumanizing manner. His guarding is presented very differently than his role as sharpshooter in World War I. Like many other Aboriginal men, he not only had to endure residential schools but also, following right after, the war from which he came home carrying the guilt of the perpetrator: "He said once that the Germans they killed were just boys" (Sterling 103). Another episode in the novel that includes Japanese Canadians relates Seepeetza's hospital stay in a room that she shares with a Japanese girl. Again, Seepeetza only briefly comments on the difference that she observes between their lives: while the Japanese parents are visiting their daughter every day, Seepeetza assumes that her parents are not coming because they were not even told about her stay at the hospital. She rightly assumes this as Native peoples were considered wards of the state, governed by the Indian Act and

hindered from governing their own lives. The continued oppression, in the 1950s and later, through the continuing existence of colonial legislation, sets Native peoples apart from the Japanese Canadians, even if the latter experienced racism long after their designation as enemy aliens was lifted.

Multidirectional memory of historical traumas may make us aware of "debts and interdependencies that most of us were trained to ignore" (Wong 160). In her play *Burning Vision*, Métis playwright Marie Clements, a descendant of the Sahtu Dene, fictionalizes the interdependence between colonialism and the imperialism of World War II by exposing the link between resource exploitation (uranium mining) on Dene territory and the use of this resource in the creation of the bombs that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Like Sterling, she opens her text (the published version of the play) with a map. Sterling's novel shows a map with a drawing of the residential school on one side and her home, the family ranch, on the other. Although at first glance the binary seems to be clear, looking more closely, similarities reveal themselves. The drawing of the ranch is rendered in a similar style to that of the school, as if to say that while home is different from the school, it is tainted by a long history of "cultural oppression and coercive change" of which the residential school is "merely an important cog" (J. R. Miller qtd. in McKegney 17). After reading the story, it also becomes clear that the father's experiences during the two wars impact life at home. Clements' map shows the setting of the play, the Northwest Territories (NWT), where the uranium was found. However, this map also illustrates interconnections as it is overwritten by a textual map, statements about intersections of Indigenous and Japanese history—from the discovery of the uranium to its implication in cancer among the Indigenous people in the NWT to the bombing of the Japanese cities to the travelling of six members of the Deline community (a Sahtu Dene and Métis community) to Hiroshima in 1998; inserted as well are texts on the branding of Japanese Canadians as enemy aliens and their internment in British Columbia. This emphatic representation of the play's theme of interconnections of trauma that travel beyond a specific geographic site and time period is further enforced by the play's structure into "Movements," rather than Acts:

Movement One:	"The Frequency of Discovery" (19)
Movement Two:	"Rare Earth Elements" (42)
Movement Three:	"Waterways" (75)
Movement Four:	"Radar Echoes" (102)

It was on First Nations land that Japanese Canadians were interned and it was on their territory that uranium was "discovered"—a word loaded

with connotations of erasure in the name of "progress" and "civilization."[9] In each case, their stewardship of the land and their title to the land were not honoured. Although the plot of this play is carried by the varied (and positive) relationships between Japanese and Aboriginal (Dene and Métis) characters, the opening and the subtitles emphasize the land as the central focus. This point is made strongly in the discussion of the play by Rita Wong, who positions herself as "a writer and critic who lives on unceded Coast Salish territory otherwise known as Vancouver" (160). The play's imagining of a transcultural circulation of trauma foregrounds the destruction of the land as the root cause of traumatic events happening to different peoples. Wherever we direct our memories, we will always be on the land, on the one shared Earth. The conquest-based ideology of imperialism as an extension of colonialism created wars that made peoples into both perpetrators and victims. (Pearl Harbor is mentioned on the play's textual map of conquest, "discovery," and trauma as well.)

The narrator in Thomas King's story, whose list of c-words culminates in "cupidity," points out that mostly "those White people . . . like to fight. They fight with each other. And then they fight with those other people. And pretty soon everyone is fighting. Even some of us Indians are fighting" (*A Short History* 53). Similarly, in the preface to his historical novel *Crazy Dave*, Anishinaabe author Basil Johnston condemns the two world wars as caused by European greed for land, in other words, as the action of indestructible Weendigos who "wanted land, and all of it and *more*" (18). Because of the importance of the land, Clements' play ends with images envisioning not the coming together of the two peoples—Japanese and Aboriginals—but of representations of non-humans from each land: "*Glowing herds of caribou move in unison over the vast empty landscape as cherry blossoms fall till they fill the stage*" (122). Wong points out that this conclusion refers to "not only shared suffering but also the one Earth on which they all live" (170). However, while the conclusion is hopeful, it is also haunting with its allusion to radium in the glowing of the herds. As well, the "vast empty landscape" is reminiscent of the apocalyptic vision in the novel *Fool's Crow* by Blackfoot author James Welch, set in the 1870s, with its prophecy of a "vast, empty prairie" with no animals, only people dying from smallpox (356). In each case, multidirectional memories of history emphasize the Indigenous philosophy of "all my relations" by pointing to the need for inclusion, not only of the suffering of different peoples but also of non-humans. As Wong states: "May there still be enough time for us to deeply learn and understand ecological interdependence" (211).

Richard Wagamese is an Anishinaabe author from Wabaseemoong, Ontario (White Dog First Nation), a community seriously affected by hydroelectric developments in the 1950s and by mercury poisoning, known as Ontario Minamata disease, in the 1960s. As has been documented with regards to other communities, these developments generate community traumas on many levels.[10] Kai Erikson argues that communal trauma is "different from (and more than) the sum of the private wounds" (185) and means a damaging of "the texture of community" (187). Together with the residential school legacy, these communities have a high rate of family breakdowns[11] so that children were (and are) removed into the foster care system in great numbers. Wagamese himself was taken into care as a toddler and separated from his siblings, as was often the case in the so-called Sixties Scoop (Fournier and Crey 87). Unlike authors Cariou and King, who do not address the collective memory of a specific colonial trauma but the "trans/historicity" of a colonial trauma that is centuries old and nationwide (Van Styvendale), Wagamese imaginatively works through the collective and individual trauma caused by the removal of children through the child welfare system.

Having been robbed of a sense of belonging as a young person, he imagines in his fiction new identities, families, and communities in which the wounded come together to heal each other. The formation of new relationships as a result of a multidirectional approach to traumatic memory constitutes a major theme in his work. It could be argued that the spatial and ideological diaspora (McLeod 19), into which he was thrown through colonial policies, forced him to look beyond a "fixed national and ethnic sense of identity" (Levy and Sznaider 1) and to move from a collective memory of his people to a "cosmopolitan" mode of memory, since "diaspora opens possibilities for memory that reach beyond national modes of identification" (Levy and Sznaider 15). Wagamese "came home" through stories, as Neal McLeod would put it, reimagining again and again in his four novels published to date different ways of belonging. Kristina Fagan explains in her essay on trauma in the texts of three Aboriginal novelists the importance of fiction as an indirect way of working through a traumatic past. She argues that while "the repetition of traumatic experiences may be painful or harmful, humour and storytelling can provide a more distanced and self-aware form of repetition, allowing repeated and indirect revisiting of a trauma" (211). She discusses Richard Van Camp, Tomson Highway, and Eden Robinson, but I want to argue that Richard Wagamese also chooses this "indirect revisiting." *Keeper'n Me*, his

first and most widely known novel, is a fictionalized autobiography (as he explains in his interview with Paula Kirman) allowing him, to borrow from Fagan, "to speak of one's own painful experience while treating it as fiction" (216). It is also a text known for its humour. In subsequent novels, he revisits his trauma of being separated from family and community by telling stories about losses and dysfunction in non-Native families, positioning Native world views as sources of strength for everyone's wellbeing. Although each of his novels includes a character's "look of recognition," of seeing the other's story in one's own, I will focus here on a novel that did not garner much critical attention, *A Quality of Light*. It is a work of fiction that highlights cross-cultural movements but also reveals their challenges and limitations.

Even in his first novel Wagamese gives an example of the potential of multidirectional memory "to create new forms of solidarity and visions of justice," as Rothberg claims (*Multidirectional Memory* 4), by including black people in the main character's restorative journey. In his second novel, *A Quality of Light*, Wagamese shows—through a narrative about entangled lives—how ethnic boundaries may be crossed through the commonality of "brokenness," as the narrator intimates in a description of a street scene in Toronto:

> It was summer and there were children everywhere on the streets. I found myself searching among them for a face like Johnny's until I realized that the faces of the lonely, disenfranchised and afraid are everywhere. Their faces passed in clumps of browns, blacks and white. There didn't seem to be a whole lot of movement between the races. The color lines were drawn indelibly everywhere, even in playgrounds. (106)

While highlighting the "lack of movement" between the races, the narrator starts out with the perception of people's commonality in their woundedness. In this novel, Wagamese rewrites the "Indian/white" binary as a reflection of the colour lines in Canadian society. It is through their disenfranchisement that the two characters, Joshua Kane, the Aboriginal boy adopted by a non-Aboriginal, devotedly Christian farming family, and Johnny Gebhardt, a white boy growing up with an abusive, alcoholic father, become friends. When the two boys meet, it is only Johnny who goes through a hard time; Joshua is at that point unaware of any loss in his life, as he is well cared for by his adoptive parents. However, as they do not tell him anything about his Ojibway identity and Canada's colonial history, he is totally unprepared for the racism he encounters in high school. Ironically, it is his friend who had learned about "Indians" in library books into which he retreated as an escape from his abusive home who is the first to make Joshua aware of his

difference. However, this is an unsettling novel with a tragic ending. Johnny appropriates the collective trauma of colonialism, which victimized his Ojibway friend, as his own, and this leads to his demise. Reminiscent of Levy and Sznaider's question about homeless, ahistorical individuals who in our globalized societies collect memories in an ad hoc fashion from TV, books, and movies (23), this character who grew up with "no history" (Wagamese, *A Quality* 201) does exactly that: fashioning for himself a history and a collective memory that gives his life meaning. As well, this novel is set at the time of the Oka Crisis, which was more than a mere "crisis" but the result of "400 years of colonial injustice" (Ladner and Simpson 1).

Johnny understands this and responds in a confrontational manner by taking hostages and making demands on the government. However, the standoff fails and instead, Wagamese puts the emphasis on unity; at the end, the Native character Joshua "disappeared into the words" of "the other," his non-Native friend Johnny (317). The novel does not end with the death of a person who crossed the colour line but with a story from the oral traditions about how the coming of the light into this world brought awareness of difference: "The Animal People . . . could see each other for the first time and they were scared. . . . The coming of the Light meant that they had more to learn of each other and their world. But they learned it and they continue to pass on these teachings to each other, and especially to Man, the newest and strangest of the Animal People" (327). In spite of the tragic ending, the plot of the novel encourages living "with each other's differences" (327) and strongly undermines a validation of unidirectional memory, namely that "the only memories and identities that are . . . possible are ones that exclude elements of alterity and forms of commonality with others" (Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* 4).

To conclude, I have cited from and interpreted the writings by five different Indigenous authors as examples of literary representations of transcultural circulations of trauma. Although each one of these authors is affected by collective memories of colonial trauma in varying degrees, they approach that history in a multidirectional manner that goes beyond their own hi/story of suffering. Warren Cariou writes about his unsettling insights when he experienced a de-territorialized Canada, re-territorialized in the context of a concentration camp. Although he is well aware of Canada's colonialism and neo-colonialism, the discursive knotting of seemingly disparate realities made him look more deeply into suppressed stories. Thomas King, on the other hand, takes the experience of colonialism out

of its specific context of victimization and instead reads it through the lens of another story, which is ambiguous about the boundary between "Coyote story" and "Canada story," making Coyote a victimizer in another traumatic chapter of Canada's history, undermining racial boundaries. Similarly, Shirley Sterling, a residential school survivor, shows in her fictionalized life story not only her and her family's spatial and ideological diaspora, as Neal McLeod identifies the residential school experience, but also includes a father's troubled memories of being a guard of a Japanese Canadian internment camp and the guilt of a soldier in a war that killed boys. Both Sterling and Marie Clements open their texts with maps. Sterling shows the school and the home ranch as separated yet related images and Clements presents a map of the NWT that is overwritten by conquest, resource exploitation, and subsequent deaths—in Japan through the bombing, in Canada through cancer caused by uranium mining. Clements adds another layer to the multidirectional memory theme by emphasizing the land as the basis for all life and the significance of interconnections with all of creation. Building on the notion that, as the original inhabitants of this land, Indigenous peoples are the hosts for the newcomers, Richard Wagamese imagines in his novels communities of the disenfranchised and the broken. In *A Quality of Light*, he leads his readers into "the dark corners" of the history and legacy of colonialism, as Himani Bannerji puts it, while revealing the light in the friendship of two people from different backgrounds.

None of these narratives can be read in one direction, so to speak, but engage readers in movements between different sites and sights of trauma. Readers are taken from Auschwitz to Canada, from an Aboriginal Coyote story to the Japanese Canadian internment history, from a residential school narrative to the two world wars, from uranium extraction in the NWT to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, from perpetrators who are also victims to victims who are also perpetrators, from colonial trauma experienced by Indigenous characters to traumatic events in the lives of other disenfranchised, broken people. With Paul Gilroy, one may sum up these narratives as stories about "the universality of our elemental vulnerability to the wrongs we visit upon each other" (4). Coming back to my own positionality as the interpreter of these stories, they speak to me because when doing my work in Aboriginal studies, I keep hearing "the other story" that happened in my country of origin and the impacts of its intergenerational legacy on both victims and perpetrators.

NOTES

1 Eva Wiseman, in her young adult novel *Kanada*, uses this place in Auschwitz as the setting for her story, as Cariou mentions; Jewish Canadian playwright Jason Sherman inserts in his play *None Is Too Many* a scene ironically titled "Welcome to Kanada," in which a Canada refusing entry to Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany is seen in approximation to Kanada, the place in Auschwitz. The point is made that not as many people would have perished, with their belongings left in Kanada, if the country Canada had accepted more Jewish people: "Beware the tyrant, I say. He does not live in a foreign land stained with blood; he lives amongst us, dripping with ink" (Sherman 154).

2 Christian J. Krampe: "African-Canadian literature thus constitutes a counter-memory whose goal is a restructuring of the prevalent 'whitewashed' national memory of Canada" (63).

3 This is well documented, for example, in Ursula Hegi's collection of interview-based stories in *Tearing the Silence: On Being German in America*.

4 This "look of recognition" is very different from, actually the opposite to, Charles Taylor's condescending "politics of recognition," which Himani Bannerji critiques as "a recognition from the patron, . . . an elitist form of self-deception" (149). It is also different from struggles for recognition over injustices in the context of competitive memory, "over whose history and culture will be recognized" (Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* 20).

5 Besides the authors discussed in this article, I want to mention Lee Maracle, Sky Lee, and Hiromi Goto. The multidirectional view on genocide as a theme in the work of Anishinaabe artist Carl Beam is also noteworthy in this context: for example, his painting *Columbus Chronicles* (1992) that links the bombing of Hiroshima with colonialism in North America.

6 Before I go on with my discussion, I want to acknowledge as inspirations for this article not only Terri Tomsky and Jennifer Bowering Delisle—the organizers of the seminar on "Cosmopolitan Memory and Travelling Trauma" as part of the 2011 Annual Conference of the American Comparative Literature Association—but also my international MA student Keiko Kusamoto from Japan, who defended her thesis in 2012 on the topic *How Can I Read Aboriginal Literature?: The Intersections of Canadian Aboriginal and Japanese Canadian Literature.*

7 The understanding of colonialism as genocide is still being debated. I concur with sociologist Chris Powell who states in his recently published book *Barbaric Civilization: A Critical Sociology of Genocide* that "the systematic study of genocide in Canada would make up a book in itself," but that "the simplest argument for understanding Indigenous experiences as genocide concerns the Indian residential school system (IRS)" (6).

8 The construction of the museum is accompanied by many public debates about the content and space of the displays. Which atrocity, which genocide should be especially emphasized? (See, for example, the article in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, 24 Mar. 2011, "Most oppose separate Holocaust gallery.")

9 Richard Van Camp from the Tlicho nation in the NWT comments in an interview with Japanese scholar Junko Muro on his short narrative "The Uranium Leaking from Port Radium and Rayrock Mines Is Killing Us": "that's our connection to Japan. . . . The uranium that was used to develop the bombs that were dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki came from our land," and that is why "there is so much uranium sickness in the Northwest Territories" (300).

10 Kai Erikson's article "Notes on Trauma and Community" not only mentions his research in communities in the United States and in Haiti, but also in the Grassy Narrows First Nation community in Ontario, which was also affected by the Minamata disease.

11 Sylvia Morrisseau, an MA student in Native Studies at the University of Manitoba, is involved in thesis research on the link between the high ratio of children in foster care and environmental devastation, specifically in her community of Wabaseemoong.

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Salvatore Difalco

Cat Jacket

A red snail travelled away from the hot air balloon before it lifted from the mud. A man expressing wonderment with a silent black hole and two red dots actually wore a jacket of a manly deep blue that set him apart from the other observers. Will we fly today? I mean, float. For we float in the balloon. We float over the town and over the country and hope the winds stay calm and that our silks do not catch flame. If they catch flame we will light up the sky. People in distant villages and enclaves will look out their windows and admire the fireworks. We travel nevertheless, travel far and wide. We meet people from distant lands who wear strange headwear, how outlandish they seem! And they speak in musical tongues which pacify any anxieties caused by the long trip. Are we hungry? Of course we are hungry, but we are strict carnivores and scoff at the vegetable and herbal offerings. Where are your chops and steaks? Where are the big-boned ribs charred to perfection over burning wood? Our hosts laugh and bring us roasted local birds. How tasty! But all those bones! We are presented a splendid garment adorned with gemstones and brocade. We are told this garment must be worn by a feline in order for "the prophecy" to come true. This is the first we've heard of such a thing but we have no reason to doubt our hosts, though they smell peculiar as they state their case. When they stop talking the odour dissipates and a scent of lilacs and rose cream infuses the air. Perhaps they produce

this fragrance with some kind of machine, for we take great stock in machines these days, we use them for everything. The balloon is not a machine, strictly speaking. On our return the skies are sleek, the moon translucent. We see the green flag of our campsite and descend. We are happy to be back. We call for a cat. Bring one immediately! Then we see that the red snail has scarcely moved since we departed but we aren't certain if it's the same red snail or a clever impostor.

K. J. Verwaayen

Appropriate Appropriations?
Reading Responsibility in Joan Crate's *Pale as Real Ladies*

When I teach Alberta Métis writer Joan Crate's 1989 collection of poetry *Pale as Real Ladies: Poems for Pauline Johnson* to my mostly second-year Women's Studies students in a course on Feminist Theory and Practice in the Arts, I always begin with the comment that I am astonished at how Crate's work is so critically underexamined.[1] We study the text's use of image and sound, deployment of metaphor and simile, as well as of other rhetorical devices, and the patterns of idea that repeat across the collection. I break from a distanced relation to the work by telling my students that the text represents, for me, some of the most gorgeous writing in the English language. But I also use the work to discuss issues of ethical responsibility in acts both of representation and reception. We explore how, in a feminist aesthetic, the value of a work is indissociable from the meaning(s) that it makes, how art both produces and is produced by particular values, norms, and assumptions, and how feminist readings of artistic production (visual, literary, musical, theatrical, or otherwise) fundamentally engage questions of responsibility. In particular, my purpose in this endeavour is to understand with the students how "appropriation" works in Crate's text. It is typically understood as a seizing of something for one's own purposes without permission or, in Deborah Root's analysis of Western dominance, as an inexorable cultural taking or taking over that consumes human bodies in capitalism's "cannibal system" (7). Yet, appropriation can function at once as an act of violence *and* an action against it. Reading Crate's work thus offers a critical exercise in questions of historical, material-discursive, and hermeneutic accountability. Reading

"appropriation" this way, I locate Crate's work as a critical intervention against Canadian colonialism, not simply as a crucial primary literature of resistance, but also as a decolonizing form of literary and canon criticism.

The text poses particular sets of challenges in confronting this very question of responsibility in representation—in literary art proper and in its critical "taking up." In *Pale as Real Ladies*, Crate "re-invents"—indeed, she *appropriates*—in first-person voice the life and work of Emily Pauline "Tekahionwake" Johnson (1861-1913). A woman of mixed heritage (her father was a Mohawk chief and her mother was English), Johnson was born on the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford, Ontario. She became a widely recognized, much celebrated, canonically acknowledged poet and performer, but Crate's "Johnson" is hardly recognizable to many readers familiar with this historical and literary personage. As David Stirrup suggests, Crate's figure "stands in stark distinction to the refined observer of her mother's upper-class etiquette that we know Johnson to have been" (64). In Crate's work, he argues, "[t]he Johnson of the singing paddle, national icon, pristine and proper like the providential puritan, meets the tainted vessel of commodification" (65). What is immensely difficult in Crate's collection, in a poem like "I am a Prophet," for example, is that Crate's language contentiously, even shockingly, images "Johnson" as a cultural sex worker/prostitute, a type of culturo-literary sell-out who offers the Indigenous female body as object for "display"—a sustained trope across the poem. What follows in this paper is my grappling with this representation and my reading of it in relation to larger questions of ethical responsibility in/of representation. I work to understand how Crate's text forces readers to confront their place(s) in the scene of reading, to engage questions of identity, difference, and appropriation and their articulation in relation to particular operations of value and power in order to *better* understand, not Johnson's life, identity, and work expressly, but the conditions of their production,[2] in terms both of literary and material Canadian history. Crate's Johnson is, tautologically, as much a construction of the contemporary poet's imagination as she was (Crate suggests) created by the prevailing assumptions and conventions of her largely white, Western, late-nineteenth-century audience.[3]

In so many ways, Johnson was able to "speak" within the Canadian literary canon and certainly, at least, to the Canadian stage-going public. Veronica Strong-Boag and Carole Gerson recognize that in compilations of great Canadians like *Maclean's* "One Hundred Most Important Figures,"

"Aboriginals and women are sparse enough, but First Nations women are utterly absent" (6). Nonetheless, Johnson holds prominence as the first published Aboriginal poet in Canada and as the Aboriginal performer who, as Greg Young-Ing claims, "gained the highest level of notoriety in the literary world *and* sold the most books in Canada" (182; see also Margolis 179). She is one of the few women of her era who made a living by writing and performing her poetry, and Beth Brant claims in her a vital literary and spiritual (grand)mother (176): "Pauline Johnson began a movement that has proved unstoppable in its momentum—the movement of First Nations women to write down our stories" (175). Strong-Boag and Gerson write,

> [i]n the high age of Anglo-Saxon imperialism and patriarchy she was . . . a figure of resistance, simultaneously challenging both the racial divide between Native and European, and the conventions that constrained her sex. Her vision of Canada, of First Nations, and of women, articulated in print and on stage, was very different from that set forth by the Fathers of Confederation in 1867. (236)

But without in any way detracting (I hope) from Johnson's integral place in both the history of women's and Aboriginal writing in Canada or from the excellent work of scholars who take up her acts of resistance, it can be argued that Johnson's ability to achieve the kind of (full) agency often popularly ascribed to her is questionable, given the racist and assimilationist disposition in Canada in her time—and this is a complexity, I argue, that Crate's text *performs*. It was of course difficult for women artists generally to gain reception for their work, particularly so for women of minoritized groups—especially those artists working to trouble entrenched gendered and racialized conceptions of cultural and literary value in their time. For example, William Lighthall's "Indian" section in the canonical *Songs of the Great Dominion* (1889) contains, as Charlotte Gray has noted, an overwhelming number of contributions (9 out of 12) by non-Aboriginal writers; the other three selections are translations of traditional native songs (147). In other sections, Lighthall includes two of Johnson's poems: "In the Shadows" (a paddling poem) and "At the Ferry" (set on the Grand River), neither of which treat Indigenous issues. I'm not commenting on the value of the pieces included in texts like Lighthall's—rather identifying, as other critics (like Gray) have recognized, that what gets disregarded are more overtly politically polemical works, such as Johnson's "A Cry from an Indian Wife" or "The Cattle Thief" (often performed in the first half of her recitals) in which the poet forcefully castigates British violence against First Nations

peoples; these are works more threatening to entrenched racisms contained both in the canon and by the broader culture. Brant recognizes the way Johnson's work is historically used/taken up in the literary canon: "[I]n reading Johnson, a non-Native might come away with the impression that she only wrote idyllic sonnets to the glory of nature, the 'noble savage' or the 'vanishing redman,' themes that were popular at the turn of the century" (176). There appears a discernible tension between what was sought after, valued, and reproduced in Aboriginal *writing* and what was actually being demanded by Western "consumers" from First Nations *oral performance*, which, in the latter, is the staging of more violent encounters with the Other—that is, explicit representations of conflict and the aggression of colonial injustices.

Several scholars have traced the predilection among American and Canadian audiences for "Wild West" shows, performed by "showmen" like Buffalo Bill Cody and the once exiled Sioux Chief Sitting Bull; as Betty Keller writes, "[R]ecital by an Indian was something of a freak show, a chance to show their children *what a real live Indian looks like*" (112; emphasis added). This desire is taken up in relation to discourses around authenticity and the vanishing Indian, which converge in the Anglo-Canadian imagination. As Root identifies, "authenticity" was linked in popular understanding to ethnological assumptions that the "bona fide" Native was/is exemplified in pre-European contact (116). Typically, Johnson executed the last portion of her performances, while reciting verse about birdsong and landscapes, in classically upper-middle class Victorian garb for women: corset, silk stockings, ball gown, and heels; in the earlier half, where she recited highly political poems about white brutality in the appropriation of Indian lands and peoples, she performed in beaded dress with furs, hairfeathers, bearclaw necklace, and both a "souvenir" scalp and hunting knife. Her Aboriginal "costume,"[4] described by Gray as combining "shapely femininity with exotic appeal" (158), had the potential both to shock her Victorian audiences and fulfil their cultural stereotypes. The knife and scalp functioned as signifiers of Indian "savagery" and the low bodice of her dress facilitated exposure of the body; indeed, "[a] bear-claw necklace . . . modestly filled the expanse left by [her] low-cut neckline" and her skirt was "daringly short for the time" (Adams n. pag.).[5] As Diana Brydon argues, "Natives dressed as Europeans were disappointing, ridiculous, or boring to British observers in this period; Natives in supposedly authentic dress were thrilling commodities" (par. 19). The titillation of difference marked as "savagery" is symbolized not simply in the bearclaw necklace and

more obviously the scalp that Johnson wore but, too, in an amalgamation of assumptions around sexual/racial otherness. I am careful to note here that I am not suggesting that Johnson's wearing of the bearclaw necklace may not have had deep symbolic/spiritual/community significance for her. On the contrary, I am speaking to Crate's taking up of Johnson's work/performance in relation to assumptions about her "spectators." As Patrick Watson contends, "[H]ere was the . . . appearance of a voice that could accuse us of our genocidal behaviour but at the same time forgive, and even say in effect: it's really alright" (96). Julie Rak, too, contends that Johnson's audiences "connected her outrage with the violence of a desirable, but mercifully vanquished lawless Wild West, one which could be lived through vicariously in a performance" (165). Ultimately, it can be argued that the "scandal" transposed on the racialized body marked as exotic other is resolved by the closing metamorphosis of her performance—that is, Johnson's absorption into the Victorian lady, visual reassurance of the efficacy of the Canadian government's policies on assimilation. Thus, surely at least some of her audiences consumed her politics as performances—the "work is transformed into pure commodity," as Root claims—that is, aestheticized moments; white guilt over the violence of white racism could be purged within the comfortable space of theatre. Root argues that "[t]he process of exotification is another kind of cultural cannibalism. . . . feed[ing] particular cultural, social, and political needs of the appropriating culture. . . . The consumption of the spectacle of difference is able to make the alienated Westerner feel alive" (30). As Rak asserts, mainstream attention to Johnson largely functioned to mask non-Native interest in Indigenous production indeed "lifted away from the context of colonization" (163)[6]—a staging of colonization's operations as art rather than truth.

This is in part what Daniel Francis means in *The Imaginary Indian* by his troubling claim that Johnson was a "White Man's Indian"—that she "demanded little from her audience beyond sentimental regret, which was easy enough to give" (117). To better understand this assertion and Crate's "rendition" of Johnson in *Pale as Real Ladies,* it is important to note that Johnson herself recognized her lack of autonomy, her inability to realize the full, whole, artist/person of her choosing; she described herself to a friend as "the mere doll of the people and a slave to money" (qtd. in Keller 45). In a private letter to her friend Harry O'Brien, she exposed this recognition: "More than all things I hate and despise brain debasement, literary 'pot-boiling,' and yet I have done, will do these things, though I sneer at my own

littleness in so doing. . . . You thought me more of a true poet, more the child of inspiration than I have proved to be. . . . *I could do so much better if they would let me*" (qtd. in Keller 50; emphasis added). Margolis argues that Johnson "offered a rare glimpse into Native culture for mainstream Canada, albeit in conformity with her White audience's expectations and the mores of the times" (179). Lorraine York takes up Francis' idea of the "celebrity Indian," a type of the "imaginary Indian," to explore these critical interpretations of Johnson as having "slavishly fed her public whatever image they desired" (14). York suggests that, while critics variously differ in their understanding of Johnson's real control or autonomy in relation to her self-presentation, it was the poet's commercial success—her stardom, fame—that is significant to her interaction with audiences (14). For York, it is precisely Johnson's popularity and commercial profitability that "reified her as a commodifiable 'Mohawk Princess' for non-native consumption" (9). Certainly, Francis contends that ultimately Johnson's voice was one "that White society *could* hear" (119). Thinking about these interpretations, I argue not simply that what Johnson's audiences wanted of her was a "*plume* of tepid verse" (Crate, *Pale* 33; emphasis added), the exhibition of Native "authenticity" against Victorian femininity in the most simplistic renderings of these, *nor* that this is what/all Johnson offered—but that in Crate's re-invention, she stages the literary-material conditions of Johnson's historical context to explore the violence not simply of her representation, but of representation itself, self-reflexively "performed" across Crate's pale pink volume of poems.

Indeed, Crate's text frames the ability to "represent"—or perform—one's marginal culture/dominant culture as determined by operations of power and disciplinary practices, performing, then, a critique of Euro-Canadian culture and canons—and Johnson's "authentic" place within these. In "I am a Prophet," Crate addresses this historical commodification of First Nations identity and culture within Anglo-Canadian society (*Pale* 60). In a first reading, text written on/as the Aboriginal female body appears to mark its speaker not as the prophet suggested by the title, but as a literary-cultural prostitute instead,[7] selling the body as spectacle, the body to be seen. And yet, the body on display is history's text; inscribed on this (broken) form of the "prophet" in *Pale* are the discourses of cannibal consumption of culture and racist genocide. The effects of herded peoples and nations contained on reserves are "spelled out" in the peddling of the last vestiges of autonomy—the human body, will, and spirit:

No, don't go yet!
You haven't seen it all.
For ten bucks I will show you
every scar on my body.
Another ten, you can make your own.
I will dance for you in a veil
of red waterfalls. (60)

Here, violence done to land and nation becomes writ on the body; her readers (Crate's, Johnson's) might be invited to see that Johnson's (certainly "Johnson's") narrative performances are not (just) an act of selling out—but rather an insistent resistance ("No, don't go yet!") against effacement. But this is not a salvage project; Crate's depiction troubles any one-dimensional reading of Johnson's capacity to imbue her white audiences with Indigenous culture and history. In the poem, the speaker tries to carve out a space for herself/her history—the names of the lost tribes of her people, she says, can be read (for a dollar) across her toes. And, too, ironically in a bitter pun, the spirits "will speak to you from my mouth / if you will just buy me a drink" (*Pale* 60). That "Johnson" has little left to give/barter in a historical commerce that, as the poem avers, has resulted in an almost but also never total eradication of Native *being* makes it ironic—but powerfully poignant—that the speaker's last act of resistance in Part II of the collection is to offer *herself*—the age-old "trade" in/of women—in/as exchange in a representational trope for material violence. In these relations, it can never be a fair "exchange": "ten bucks" signals as a trope the abusive historical terms of trade for Indigenous peoples in this country. Significantly, that her body is marked by "*pen* knives" (*Pale* 60; emphasis added) is another urgent acknowledgement that this material violence is deep-rooted in representation—including *this* one. Such "double" disfigurement, Stirrup argues, "leaves us with a disquieting spectacle" (65). Thus, in *Pale as Real Ladies*, we see a displacement of the pornographic gaze of Western dominance onto the female body (of the text) as a way to signal a problem with representation *itself*—including Crate's recognition of her own acts of "taking" and distorting. Critically, the image of Johnson as literary-cultural prostitute is "overwritten" into one that refuses to rob Johnson wholly of agency (nor fully inscribe her with it), since she is marked in the poem's title—its governing, directive, framing apparatus—as the "prophet," as one not simply caught as specular object of the gaze, as the "seen," but as herself an actor—*as one who sees*, and one who *knows*. She occupies deeper structures of recognition, tied to knowing out of trauma. And in

this way, the worst of racist-sexist stereotypes of the Aboriginal woman as "easy squaw" (see, for example, work by Marilyn Dumont and Janice Acoose, among others)[8] made to serve/service as object are exploded. The prophet's (the poet's?) message, then, is this: positioning the prostitute here exhorts *recognition* of the violence of "pimping" (even, I argue, of Crate's acts of "selling" Johnson on display, self-reflexively addressed here)—of the aggression in representation-as-pornography when there is no full freedom of consent by those trapped within its f(r)ame. Crate as author acknowledges the politics of appropriation, self-reflexively staged in the poem "The Society Page," a poem ostensibly about a gossip rag reporting on the historical Johnson's breakup with one of her lovers but which, in its reference to text (page) and society, pushes broader metacritical recognition of representational violence, including that of individuals and systems:

> Someone writes poems about me,
> words lying on the page, small corpses.
> . . . . . .
> She reels me into the late twentieth century
> where I am quaint as . . . disintegrating
> paper lace . . .
> . . . . . .
> As I wait now in someone else's hands
> for another betrayal. (*Pale* 27)

That words *lie* on the page is telling; that they function as acts of erasure/"disintegration" is signified in the trope of ultimate destruction: small corpses. Further, Crate not only implicates herself as scriptor in this violence but also draws us as readers into its complicity: the "Johnson" figure waits in *our* hands for betrayal as we hold the book in this very moment of reading. Thus, it is not only writers/representers but also receivers of the work who must register accountability. Without, I hope, relying on self-reflexivity as an alibi for damage, I argue that it is in part precisely this recognition of violence that best serves to undo its effect. In Crate's adroit pen carvings, it is not the figure of Johnson that is degraded in the text, but any dis/ingenuous and simplified rendering of her (full) agency, made to satisfy hegemonic interests in the service of an epistemic violence, that is refused, and the viciously oppressive contexts of her production that are ultimately "exposed." Stirrup argues, "[T]he national literary 'tradition' in which Pauline has taken a place becomes a sentimental romance" (65); this tradition/romance becomes deeply ruptured in Crate. Thus, I argue that this appropriation of the "historical"—what might be seen by some as linguistic

violation—Johnson interrupts *in its violence* our complacency (whoever "we" in the act of reading might be), interrupts the satisfaction of our desire by which we feed on other subjects, forcing a confrontation *with*, not simply *in*, the act of reading itself.

Further in my work on Crate with students, I place readings by Root on cultural appropriation and Gayatri Spivak on subalterneity as "framing" strategies of my own for working through these issues of representational violence alongside Crate's book.[9] I recognize this as another "directive" manipulation of students' interpretive freedoms—as perhaps all pedagogical choices must be—but my purpose is to suggest how "contexts" function as more than historical situations and that structure as well as content produces particular ways and "whats" of knowing. In grappling with Spivak's revised text, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," students confront the issue of violence perpetrated in the assumption that the oppressed can transparently assume agency in a voice that is recognizable in/to dominant discourses. Specifically, Spivak suggests that the subaltern cannot speak—that is, more properly, she cannot be *heard*—since in colonial discourse, her subjectivity is necessarily produced according to the terms and norms of dominant culture. But Julia Emberley argues that the "Spivakian paradox" is confrontation with the redundancy that recognition of the *silencing* of the dispossessed "does not necessarily *address the voices* of the dispossessed" (74). Here, we are confronted with the question of agency and the imperative to responsibility. I suggest to my classes that probably we must recognize, as Rey Chow might propose and I argue Crate does, that Johnson is *not the non-duped* (Chow 344). In so recognizing, Chow argues, we return to the subaltern "a capacity for distrusting and resisting the symbolic orders that 'fool' her, while not letting go of the illusion that has structured her survival . . . not to neutralize the massive destructions committed under such orders as imperialism and capitalism" (344). I understand, then, in this rendering of the subaltern as the *not* non-duped, that Crate, by performing the conditions by which the subaltern cannot speak, produces "Johnson" in the paradoxically double negative, in the space of silence speaking (silence) even as "Johnson" can never be fully absorbed into it. She is not made to stand in as some universal phantasm of the "third world" victim, as Chandra Mohanty might phrase it.[10] While it might seem more to the point to situate Johnson as Spivak's "native informant," that is, the subject who speaks (and is received) within the dominant discourses of the age (recall Francis' claim, cited earlier, that Johnson's was a voice "that White society could hear"), I rather argue that

Crate's construction of Johnson is a staging of the subaltern speaking silence. The "Johnson" imaged here is very much a product of Crate's contemporary imagination—a metacritical positioning of the violence of representation. In "The Censored Life of a Lady Poet," "Johnson" articulates the distinction, central to Spivak's re-writing of her understanding of the position of subalterneity, between speaking and having the cultural authority to be *heard*:

> This is all I'm allowed—
> allusions glimpsed through a child's sketch
> in condensation—a circle, two eyes,
> a smile that opens my reaching mouth,
> the taste of peppermints on my tongue. (*Pale* 33)

In this tightly-closed semaphore, there is never "fullness," only a stick (stock) figure and a silence: it is a smile—not sound—that opens the poet's lips and the peppermints act as a kind of cold English sanitization on her tongue; "tongue" is, of course, a metonym—part for the whole—for language. Further,

> When my voice breaks
> I sip distilled water
> my reflection imprisoned in glass—
> lips gulping
> at a sound freezing in my fingers. (33)

"Breaks" here signals at once pause/emotion/fracture; her reflection is "imprisoned" in "distilled" water: again, the "sanitizations" of racist white Anglo-Canadian society allow little space in their pale clarity (water, glass) for unmediated (*reflection* of or on) her own representation. The figurative hand over her mouth, "lips gulping / at a sound freezing in my fingers" is another image of silencing/stifling, and is an intratextual reminder of fingers that sing for money in an earlier poem, "Gleichen" (*Pale* 20); she is being made to *eat her words*. In a staging of this stifling, Crate's "Johnson" gestures to the "screen of silence" through which she cannot speak: her poems are an "opaque window" and she must reach "[t]hrough a frost of words"; all she can afford the audience is a "glimmer of sweat at curtained edges" (33). Again, it is body rather than voice that Crate's "Johnson" must offer/trade to her audiences.

"The Poetry Reading" is another poem about speaking/silencing in Johnson's efforts to record "a world swallowed in one quick gulp" (*Pale* 18). While this poem is about recitation, we are drawn into this (as) re-citation: we enter into the act by "Reading the Poetry"—that is, *we perform* the "Poetry Reading" *in* the act of reading the poetry—and thus, method becomes

meaning as meaning makes a method. But the violent act of absorption, of a world/history voraciously consumed by a cannibal culture, her dominant Anglo-Canadian audience becomes, for a moment, re-incorporated and projected/transferred/reversed outward: "Johnson" has an important story to expel (if, as subaltern, the ability to be *recognized* is also always under question/erasure: "Can you hear me?"). This abject telling, this (non)recognition is not a reconstruction but a rewriting—that is, writing as revision—that neither confers a subject status nor wholly robs *the object* of power. We are confronted with the image of the small girl shivering before her shack, whose "daydreams are bruises behind her eyes" and whose "unfinished womb" "oozes songs of suicide" (*Pale* 18). The text requires us to ask, to speak, to interject: is hers an "unfinished womb" because she is still a young girl, thus resisting the "full" exigencies of white middle-class nationalist-assimilationist femininity? Perhaps the speaker is performing the materiality of violent representation in the intimation she is not a "whole" woman in racist discourses on the gendered Aboriginal body? It is also possible that readers of this line will bear witness to it, in considering the violence of robbed reproduction and bodily violation in the horrifying history of forced sterilization of women globally and particularly of Native American women in the 1970s (see Burn 61-66, especially 63). "Johnson" *appeals* to the "powdered" woman (powder, of course, functions as a mask for sweat, expression, oil, acne, scars, and age; in this way we see that the "divide" between "real"/ladies and their manufactured Others is always and already false, that "difference" here is locatable not in some biology or bloodline but in the politics of deceit or cover, regulated by the technologies of racialized femininity), whose "plucked eyebrows" further indicate a purging of the material body and who sits in the *first row* (she occupies a primary space) to:

> look at me, diseased,
> scarred with smallpox
> seeping gonorrhea, lungs smothered with T.B.,
> drunk,
> pushed into a sewer, a reserve,
> the weed-choked backyard
> you never walk through,
> listen. (*Pale* 18)

What is on display here is again racist discourse written on the Indigenous female body, the violent effects (smallpox, gonorrhea, tuberculosis, alcoholism, land/life confiscation) of contact with Imperialist bodies and

racisms, against which—even through which—the Other still struggles to speak a history "pieced from a jigsaw of flesh / torn from *dumb tongues*" (*Pale* 18; emphasis added). Still more defiantly,

> Under my skin
> blood beats along roadways
> barred with DO NOT ENTER signs
> walls of small scars.
> I will not return to silence. (*Pale* 18)

But again lest we romanticize full agency in the claim "I will not return to silence," the text exhorts us to note in "return" that the space from which the voice emerges *is* one of silence, and that refusal *not* to not speak does not ensure reception. In the context of nineteenth-century white privilege, the audience will be entertained and (thus) exculpated: they rise and clap. The woman whom the speaker addresses dusts "biscuit from the corner / of [her] mouth," which brings us painfully back to the poem's opening lines: "Tonight let me tell you of / a world swallowed in one quick gulp / with only crumbs remaining" (*Pale* 19, 18). There is a kind of benumbed sense of this erasure and the "Johnson" speaker dissolves into mute inactivity, for "I stare at pelts / hanging from my shoulder, / and sip from fine bone *china*" (*Pale* 19; emphasis added). The china for tea functions metonymically as artifact of cultural theft/consumption of art (and function itself) in the West; in "The Poetry Reading" especially, what appears in the world of the theatre is a microcosm of larger ingestion that "eats" tracts of lands—and her (the speaker's) words.

Indeed, Crate's poetry compellingly recognizes (and requires recognition) that cultural death can also be quite literal. In almost the exact centre of her second collection, *Foreign Homes*, stands the section, "Loose Feathers on Stone: for Shawnandithit," the suite of poems written for the "last of the Beothuk" (43). The caption/epigram on the subcover for the suite makes the sense of loss in the larger text specific: "The Beothuks, a First Nations tribe of Newfoundland, were the victims of European disease and genocide" (43). In "Unmarked Grave," the unidentified speaker (likely Shawnandithit) mourns unqualified eradication: "There is no stone, no word or prayer to mark / Our fleet lives, our staggering deaths" (*Foreign* 45). But without, I hope, myself carving an epitaph of her words, I will say that the "Shawnandithit" voice (a telling which had little cultural authority to be heard, but whose articulation it is for us as readers to discover, to listen for the speaking/silence) is one of resistance to the internalization of Imperialist

discourse around her. As a maidservant in her white captors' house, she both recognizes and contests the violence of the startlingly racist and sexist language of the foreign "home" that contains her, in the "*whores, witches, niggers, injuns*" that she tastes in the goblets, the "fine" things around her (*Foreign* 47). *She will not drink from these cups.* Instead, she chooses (in a life of little choice) to drink only from her own hands at the pump; she "would not drink from cut glass / that reflected her misery / and shoved it down her throat" (47). The refusal to drink from her masters' glass is a symbolic repudiation of their harmful languages/ideologies (the "Heirlooms" of the title is less a literal reference to the fine glass imported from England than it is to the Euro(ethno)centrism that is passed down the line): Shawnandithit refuses to internalize their lib(el)ations.

Crate further reinvents "Shawnandithit" as a simultaneous victim/rebel (both/and: her resistance situates in relation to and not impossibly outside the power nexus of her reality) in "Working for the Peytons":

> Like the others captured before me—
> Demasduit, Oubee, and the boys they named
> Tom June and John August for the time
> of year they were found—
> I am lost. . . . (*Foreign* 48)

Although the content of the lines addresses her powerlessness, the act of naming lost tribe members "Demasduit" and "Oubee" in their Beothuk translations—or even simply *speaking loss*—is a linguistic defiance of their erasure, even if, as we know from "The Naming" in *Pale as Real Ladies*, our appellations may not effect material change. Although "Johnson" (like the historical woman) tries to name herself differently in the first collection, working to resist Western assimilation in her reclamation of the Native name of her grandfather, Tekahionwake (see "The Naming," *Pale* 39, and "Prairie Greyhound," *Pale* n. pag.), self-appellation cannot protect her from the racism of her largely white English audiences, as Crate's opening speaker identifies: "'Hey squaw,' they called from the foot of the stage. These relics [her father's pride, her grandfather's name] were not enough to protect you from voices in the dark" ("Prairie Greyhound," *Pale* n. pag.). But for Shawnandithit in this suite, personal and cultural memory function in the poem as a counter-strategy in the face of absconded agency. While she has difficulty eating "English" food—and we might read here in her self-starvation the anorectic's attempt to assume control in its otherwise absence, or the prisoner's hunger strike where the body speaks refusal—she sustains

herself with cultural recollection: "I fumble with memories, already / a memory, chew legends I heard / lifetimes ago, my entrance into the cavity of tomorrow" (*Foreign* 48).

In "Sentences: at the Culls'" (also from the *Foreign Homes* collection), the speaker reveals that her "sentence," the condition of her imprisonment, is to write "sentences" in English recording Beothuk history (50); again, there is a link explicitly made here between demand for cultural preservation (in writing) and the violence of its eradication that serves intertextually as a trope for Crate's reading of Johnson. Indeed, for "Shawnandithit," this sentence is a bitter irony, for the culture that orders of her an archive of her nation is the same one that is responsible for its *literal* disappearance through colonization's devouring of lands and its pushing of the Beothuk inland, its spreading of sickness, and its readiness to attack/destroy Indigenous populations:

> Our only choice was
> nothing
> left
> for me to reveal
> on these vast white sheets. . . . (50)

She is torn between her own, personal desire to remember and record the pride of her people—and the appropriation of such in the annals of their slayers. But Crate's text avoids this latter ethno/anthropological "inspection" in the poem on the facing page, "She is crying in a corner," by collapsing subject and object in intimate connection (*Foreign* 51). Here, the speaking voice has shifted from first person "Shawnandithit" in the rest of the suite to an "outside" speaker (Crate?); the "appropriator" intervenes to comment on a brutal reality: that Shawnandithit is made at once "everything that must be scoured, / cast-out, shelved, and treasured" (51)—the abject. But this crying out against the eradication of a person, a people, is not part of the "objective" record of the colonizers' history (unless its urgent politics might be performed, removed, and "aestheticized" in/as theatre). Rather here, as we see, the poem's title becomes fused with its speaker (and accordingly the speaker with her subject) thus: "She is crying in a corner" heads the page in bold face, as do all the pieces in the collection, but the opening line begins: "of my mind . . ." (51). The concluding lines of the poem announce: "but she is with me, with us all. / Shawnandithit?" (51). Shawnandithit, then, is both on—and in—the speaker's mind, an incorporation (or ironic anti/cannibalism?) of Shawnandithit's loss: not to fix or an/aestheticize, but to constantly be reminded of her anguish, to bear it, a kind of mnemonic

resistance as act. In this intersubjective moment, I believe the ability to "other" is transcended, but without the violence of saming—that is, without conflations of difference across space and history, and other locations. "Shawnandithit" is, in this representation, no longer "cast out" but harboured within both the speaker's mind and writing. It is not easy, thus, to "escape" her anguish. This "incorporation"—"screams sinking like a scalpel through sense / and absence" (51)—is not an undemanding or complacent act, not an aesthetically pleasant consumption; rather, the difficult, trying, contesting confrontation with questions of violence, agency, and subjectivity that Crate's work requires is made to come—from inside. In this way, the responsibility for acknowledging the brutal conditions of Canada's racist past/present, including the conditions of its canonical values and historical record, must fall to the "listener" who takes up Shawnandithit "in *my* mind" (*Foreign* 51; emphasis added) in the very moment of reading—a subjective and deeply personal encounter. The text refuses a violent over-identification or erasure of difference, for "she is with me" is a location of contiguity ("with") rather than an identity ("as"); moreover, ultimately, the speaker's "assimilation" (as ours) with Shawnandithit is never total and only offered as a question, the mark at once of possibility and indeterminacy, in the closing articulation of the poem: "Shawnandithit?" Thus, work to recover must continue as an open-ended, enduring, and always uncertain process.

Thus, in these renderings of "Johnson" and "Shawnandithit," I read Crate's work not so much as biography in poetic form, not simply literary ventriloquism, nor even "interpretation" of historical lives, but as a metacritical reflection on the (im)possibilities of speaking. Ultimately, Crate's "renditions" remind me that appropriation is, but also is not just, a taking and receiving, or even a taking over: it is also a taking *up*. To enter in a relation with *these* texts entails grappling with conditions of production and reception, of the *situating* of voices, indeed selves (including *our* selves) within regimes of truth and nexuses of power. For appropriation is also an engagement—a way of meeting in the text—which stages the scenes of production and reception as entrenched in a chain of locations. We can never *simply* (in all resonances of that word) take up Pauline Johnson's life and work—and in this, I see not a violence *in* representation but the representation *of* violence. That is, I see a deep, responsible commitment to acknowledging the complex conditions of production and reception for Indigenous women writers in Johnson's day and now, in the very scene of reading here—as for all acts of inscription. To take up Crate's "Johnson," there is no immediacy without mediation, and

perhaps no intimacy without immediacy; we co-create. In this "meeting," we as readers also take up Johnson's *Crate*, the performing, self-reflexive reader-critic-poet produced both by Johnson's life, work, historical and aesthetic contexts, and our own conscientious exegesis. This, then, is a staging of silence that itself speaks more than—

(whatever it is that dominant culture calls for).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Pamela Banting for introducing me to Crate's work, and Manina Jones, Diana Brydon, and Frank Davey for generously sharing their ideas on Crate when I first began writing on her. I am also grateful to *Canadian Literature* for the excellent suggestions of my anonymous reviewers, and the careful editing of my text by their editors.

NOTES

1 Diana Brydon's "Empire Bloomers" (1994) and David Stirrup's chapter in *A Usable Past* (2010) are among notable exceptions. I recognize, of course, that *Pale as Real Ladies* is published by an outstanding—but small and regional—press: Brick Books is originally located in Coldstream, Ontario, co-founded by Stan Dragland and Don McKay. But while the press is small, its reputation is national. Brick has published prominent authors like P. K. Page, Marilyn Dumont, Michael Ondaatje, Dennis Lee, Robert Kroetsch, and others, and so I cannot make a certain correlation between distribution and critical reception. (For information, see *Organizations of Book Publishers of Ontario*.) Joanna Mansbridge suggests that, while Crate's oeuvre is relatively small, her significance is not; Mansbridge claims in Crate "an important voice in prairie, Métis, and women's writing in Canada" (74).

2 In this way, I see Crate's work taking up, in part, Norman Shrive's call, made already in 1962, for assessment "not of her [Johnson's] verse in isolation, but of her verse in reference to the conditions *by* which it was written" (38; emphasis added). It is noteworthy, I think, that Shrive uses "by" rather than "in"—the suggestion not that the work should be placed in a socio-cultural context but understood as its effect. But Crate's work departs from Shrive's call for "unprejudiced, dispassionate assessment" (38); *Pale* is very much an (inter)subjective engagement.

3 For an insightful and important understanding of the meaning of Johnson's work and impact for audiences and readers outside dominant white Anglo-Canadian culture, see Rebecca Margolis' text, cited in this paper. In particular, Margolis suggests, through readings of Jewish responses to Johnson's work, that "Johnson represented a promising way for Jews to reconcile their own 'mixed heritage.' . . . Johnson's writing offered a positive model for otherness" (180). Deena Rymhs' work is also interesting in her suggestion that Johnson's "intercultural mediation befits a personality who assumed various cultural poses" and whose "survivance bears the signature of the trickster" (53). These readings appear at odds with Crate's representation of Johnson, which stages Johnson as a subaltern subject—and yet I do not see these positions as contradictory, which I hope becomes clear in this paper.

4 I am of course *not* referring to traditional historical clothing worn by Aboriginal women

in Canada as "costume"; rather, as other critics have noted, Johnson's stage attire was never representative of Indigenous women's apparel, despite marketing claims of "authenticity" in her publicity posters/press releases (see Gray 157). Here, Johnson's "authenticity," I argue, can be read as a kind of museumization, locating "Native" in relation to a pre-contact past, and attached to a particularly gendered exotification. I make this not as a charge against Johnson as a performer, but place the criticism within popular conceptions of "the Indian" as a "dying race" in her time.

5 Adams, though, points out that Johnson was costumed in buckskin leggings under her skirt.

6 See also Rak's brilliant and self-reflexive analysis of contemporary appropriations in a web resource of Johnson and her work for current Canadian schoolchildren, which Rak was invited to build. Rak argues that "[t]he ambiguities of her identity as a native/Canadian, those already apparent during her own evocation of the Wild West in an earlier period of imperialism, are highlighted and concretized as pleasing performances. This means that their political implications are flattened, and within hypertext rhetoric, written out *while* they appear to be highlighted because they turn E. Pauline Johnson's work into another Internet spectacle" (156). As Rak argues, current packaging of Johnson for maximum "entertainment" supercedes even the educational aims of the Internet resource.

7 Of course, I do not mean to demean sex workers but rather to read Crate's staging of "Johnson" in relation to a particular selling of self/body evident in the poems. Neither the analogy in Crate nor my assessment here is meant to suggest all sex work/"prostitution" functions in the same register of oppression, nor to deny agency or respect to those engaged in sex work.

8 Cf. *A Really Good Brown Girl* (Brick, 1996) and *Iskwewak—Kah' Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princesses Nor Easy Squaws* (Women's, 1995), respectively.

9 Of course, I recognize the urgency of reading (for) cultural differences across the literatures and theories we take up; it is thus crucial to address the very different geo-discursive locations of "Indian" in Spivak's and Crate's works, and of "native" in Rey Chow's. But because, for Spivak, "subaltern" is the speaking space that is not/can not be heard by dominant culture, it is germane for our work in the course to explore Johnson's—and "Johnson's"—relation to subalterneity.

10 Mohanty's definition of "third world" is largely geographical (but also geopolitical): "the nation-states of Latin America, the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, South and South-east Asia, China, South Africa, and Oceania constitute the parameters of the non-European third world." But she also includes minoritized groups living in the "first" world, for "black, Latino, Asian, and indigenous peoples in the US, Europe, Australia . . . also define themselves as third world peoples" (5). I include Canada in her enumerated list, although I recognize this classification generally in the West is also problematic.

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Bill Howell

All The Way Down Here

Refusing to be pushed around, this is a leftover from falling off
Humpty Dumpty's wall. Vaguely recalling that last big step
as a Matterhorn of choice, a matter of your own matter:
Don't just slay the dragon; punish it for being a dragon.

How's that for a foreign policy? Anything to keep from drowning
in abashment or some other self-inflicted anesthetic. Plunk, plunk,
plunk, mea culpa ninja banjos: moths pelting picture windows
like lonesome snowflakes. Shameless repeat offender fuzz-bugs

with trippy attention spans, trying to get in. Ever-tighter circles
redefining everything they don't know they really know after all.
Known to police, hanging on with an oily, stubborn exhaustion
more than any wish that's beyond them. Ending up on screens,

sills and doors disguised as grey, hooded wood. Pretending
to get extra points for not being here. And all those
post-Oscars postures: "Thank-you, thank-you, we've been here
all night long." Offhand, as if they've been caught

moving out in front of the neighbours. Lack of consideration
is a kind of greed, forever open
to further circumstantial interpretation and something
that can never be taken back.

Paul Murphy

Coming Home through Grandmother Rosa's Story

Basil Johnston's *Crazy Dave*

Despite having published seventeen books in English and five in Anishinaubae, Basil Johnston has suffered from critical neglect. Indeed, Johnston's greatest recognition comes as a primary source with corresponding citations, references, and acknowledgements numbering into the hundreds. Recently, however, Johnston's eighth book in English, *Indian School Days* (1988), his account of his incarceration at St. Peter Claver's Residential School for Boys during the late 1930s and 1940s, has begun to receive critical attention.[1] Johnston's fourteenth book, *Crazy Dave* (1999), also deals with the residential school experience from an autobiographical perspective, but in this case, Johnston's main concern is not with describing the experience itself or how he and his schoolmates survived it, but rather with the devastating after-effects and how he overcame them and reintegrated into his community, eventually becoming a writer committed to his Anishinaubae heritage. *Crazy Dave* is also a biography of Johnston's uncle David McLeod, who had Down Syndrome, and how the Anishinaubae community coped with David's condition through the 1930s, 40s, and 50s.[2] *Crazy Dave* has received no critical attention apart from a handful of reviews, though it provides insight into Johnston's own life as well as his family history and the ways in which Anishinaubae culture and its treatment of his uncle helped Johnston to decolonize his mind.

In one sense, *Crazy Dave* is an elaborate mapping of Anishinaubae society, both its past and its place. Johnston begins the novel with an introduction constituting the opening frame of the narrative and providing the context

for the story that follows. In the opening frame, Johnston tells how, when he is ten years old, he is taken away to St. Peter Claver's Indian Residential School in Spanish, Ontario, where he remains for five years until his release in mid-winter of 1944. Johnston is not the only member of his family sent to residential school. As his subsequent narrative reveals, Johnston's sister Marilyn accompanies him to Spanish. Moreover, twenty-five years earlier, his father Rufus and Rufus' brothers Bobby, Walter, and John had all been sent to residential school. When released, the brothers return home to meet varying degrees of success. Rufus never fully recovers from his residential school experience; after his release, he is a restless and ruthless individual, alienated from his family and community. Bobby, too, unable to readjust, leaves the reserve to find work and is ultimately killed. On the other hand, John, while he initially pursues the priesthood, returns home when the experience sours and integrates back into the community. However, it is Walter who, despite his nine years of residential school incarceration, makes the best adjustment. Johnston, most closely following Walter's experience, feels uncomfortable after his return home, but he moves in with Grandmother Rosa and gradually readjusts. Besides their residential school experience and affection for Grandmother Rosa, Walter and Johnston share another bond: "Uncle Walter and I were the only ones in our family to whom Grandmother related the family history" (7).

According to William Bevis, Indian identity "includes a society, a past, and a place" (585). As Johnston makes evident at the outset, Grandmother Rosa's history lesson is one of the key beginnings to the process of his mental decolonization: "Unforgettable . . . is the lesson she passed on to me in my teenage years; that is, to know who I was by getting to know my people's history. When I must have seemed inattentive to her, she reminded me sharply that 'You'd better get to know where you came from. It's the only way you're going to get to know yourself'" (9). The teaching relationship between Grandmother Rosa and Johnston is similar to if not prototypical of the model Leanne Simpson envisions as an integral part of her "Indigenous resurgence" strategy: "I believe one of our most critical and immediate tasks in building an Indigenous resurgence is ensuring that the knowledge of our ancestors is taught to the coming generations" (74). Grandmother Rosa ensures that her Indigenous knowledge is taught to her grandson. The lesson she shares connects Johnston to his past and people because it provides him with Anishinaubae history and genealogy and helps Johnston recover his Anishinaubae identity.

The narrative proper begins with what Grandmother Rosa tells him:

> "Grandson! Listen! I'll tell you what my grandmother told me," Grandmother said to me one night as I stared gloomily at the rain beating on the windows and pounding on the roof. I wasn't really interested in Grandmother's stories about the past, but I didn't have much choice. . . . Thus began the first lesson in the history of our people, yet I didn't put much stock in it. (17)

The history Grandmother Rosa tells Johnston is about the "exodus of the Pottawatomi from Green Bay, Wisconsin." It is a history illustrating "the dispossession and dislocation" experienced by "North American Indians, not only in Wisconsin, but elsewhere" too (9-10), and it is a history Johnston interprets throughout his narrative. In effect, Johnston "emplots" his own, Grandmother Rosa's, and the community's memories about the past, turning occurrences and events into what Anthony Paul Kerby calls "moments in a narrative composition" (28). Doing so allows Johnston the opportunity to interpret memory through narrative and to understand how the resulting story generates a sense of self.

Grandmother Rosa conveys the history of dislocation when she tells Johnston about "her grandmother, Misqua-bunno-quae (Red Sky Dawn), and her flight from Wisconsin; [and] the troubled times for Indians in those days a hundred years before" (7).[3] Grandmother Rosa's grandmother and kin were forced to take flight because the "White People" they initially pitied and assisted became "greedy": "They wanted land. They bought land, and if they couldn't buy it, they stole or killed for it" (17-18). When the European immigrants/colonizers came to the Green Bay area of Wisconsin desiring to buy land, they proposed that the Pottawatomi "relocate in Indian territory to the southwest" in exchange for "payment and the protection of the American government." The Pottawatomi were told that if they "refused to sell their land, settlers and speculators would confiscate it as they had done to other Indians and the American government would be powerless to help." The Pottawatomi "protested that this land was their home; it belonged to their forebears and it belonged to their descendants. . . . It was not an easy matter to uproot one's home and life and transplant it to another place." In response, the Europeans told the Pottawatomi to "[t]ake [the offer of relocation] or leave it." The Pottawatomi "were divided in their thinking": some wanted to stay and defend the land; others wanted to accept the proposal; still others wanted to strike out "for another part of the Anishinaubae nation's vast territory" (19-20).

Grandmother Rosa's grandmother was a member of a "small party of fifty or sixty people, made up of six families" who left the Green Bay area,

because they lacked the "power or the means to refuse" to sell their land and were forced to relocate (19-20). This small group made a long trek through Chicago and lower Michigan until, heading north, they eventually reached "Owen Sound, then known as Great Sturgeon Bay, the principal town of the Saugeen-Nawaush Chippewas," where they met with the "chiefs and headmen" who "after much debate . . . agreed to admit the refugees on condition of good behaviour." Twenty years later, the Saugeen-Nawaush Chippewas themselves were "pressured to surrender their homeland in its entirety and migrate to Manitoulin Island, which was envisioned by the colonial government as Canada's very own Indian territory" (22-23). The Saugeen-Nawaush Chippewas initially resisted but eventually "gave in, surrendering the greater part of their homeland, the Bruce Peninsula," retaining the Saugeen reserve on the Lake Huron side of the peninsula and the Cape Croker reserve on the Georgian Bay side, as well as hunting grounds, islands, and shorelines (24).[4]

In telling Johnston how "[h]er own grandmother and . . . kin fled Wisconsin sometime in the early 1830s to seek sanctuary, peace, security, and beauty in another part of Anishinaubae-akeeng" (10), Grandmother Rosa reveals a long history of colonial dislocation. She also passes on to Johnston the family genealogy, which helps him to locate himself in time and place. Misqua-bunno-quae, who initially fled Green Bay and eventually settled in Cape Croker, is Johnston's great-great-grandmother.[5] Her daughter, "one of the local princesses," is Johnston's great-grandmother.[6] After the Saugeen-Nawaush Chippewas surrendered their land, Fred Lamourandiere, a trilingual "half-breed," became a member of the Cape Croker band, thereby satisfying a need for an interpreter. He was subsequently "appointed band council secretary" and, once settled in Cape Croker, permitted to marry "a local princess," Misqua-bunno-quae's daughter. Lamourandiere is Johnston's great-grandfather. The marriage between the "local princess" and Lamourandiere produced Christine, Louis, and Rosa (25). Rosa is Johnston's grandmother.

When Grandmother Rosa first instructs Johnston in Anishinaubae history and family genealogy, he is not interested. Johnston would have heard a different version of history at school: the history of colonization from the perspective of the colonizers. *Crazy Dave* does not tell us what Johnston learned at residential school, but we do learn about Walter's experience. He "heard nothing of Indian history. What knowledge he had was confined to snippets of incidents in British and Roman history carried in the public

school readers for grades six, seven, and eight. . . . There were no comparable stories about Indians in any of the books he'd read" (282-83). We also learn about Johnston's individual experience from *Indian School Days*, another of his first-person narratives.[7] The academic instruction Johnston received at residential school did not include a history of his own people; whatever history lessons there were focused on the glorious events in Europe (65).

Theorists of colonialism also help us understand the version of history Johnston would have learned at school. As Edward Said indicates in *Culture and Imperialism*, in the dominant version of history, North America's original inhabitants are an inferior race—without an "independent history or culture," occupying a "vast and . . . empty" land and "in need of *la mission civilisatrice*" (xiv-xix). From this perspective, Johnston's lack of interest in Grandmother Rosa's version of history is understandable; his mind was effectively colonized during the time he was away at residential school. The result is that following his release from residential school, Johnston is "uncomfortable" and doubtful about his "heritage" (*Crazy Dave* 6-8).

In contrast to the often incorrect and self-serving monumental histories and official discourses of colonialism, Grandmother Rosa's lesson in Anishinaubae history tells the history of colonization from the perspective of the colonized and hence discursively challenges colonial history. In voicing previously unacknowledged history, Grandmother Rosa places her ancestors in their proper context and engages in a project of cultural reclamation. Specifically, she reinscribes a past on a presumed empty continent and challenges what Emma LaRocque calls the "civ/sav dichotomy." As LaRocque continues, "[C]ivilization is consistently associated with settlement, private property, cultivation of land and intellect, industry, monotheism, literacy," whereas "savagism" delineates "Indians . . . as wild, nomadic, warlike, uncultivating and uncultivated, aimless, superstitious, disorganized, illiterate" (41). In other words, Grandmother Rosa's story about the exodus of the Pottawatomi from Green Bay becomes an act of "opposition and resistance to imperialism" through history as culture (Said 200).

While Grandmother Rosa tells the history of the initial dislocation of her Pottawatomi ancestors, Johnston expands on it. The story he tells is one of transgenerational dislocation extending from his great-great-grandmother's generation up to and including his own. Johnston is dislocated from his family and community because of his removal to residential school. But he does not remain so. Although he leaves Cape Croker in 1947 to finish high school, his narrative reveals, "From 1948 to 1954 I returned home once a

year, at Christmas" (*Crazy Dave* 332). While working in Toronto after 1955, Johnston "came home more frequently" (332). The effect of these repeated visits over the course of so many years is that Johnston eventually adds to the knowledge he initially learns from Grandmother Rosa. This process continues Johnston's mental decolonization and helps him to develop the anticolonial analysis of dislocation he eventually narrates.

Even before Johnston is old enough to attend school, Grandmother Rosa begins another aspect of his education when she instructs him in Anishinaubae spirituality. She tells him "that there are realities in the world other than the physical, that every being and thing has an unseen principle of life" (8). She also tells him about "God, the Manitous, and the Little People" (239-40).

At the time of Grandmother Rosa's telling, Christianity has infiltrated both Anishinaubae culture and spirituality. Johnston's maternal grandmother Philomene is not immune to the infiltration. Although she tells Johnston "about God" and teaches him "to pray," she tells him nothing about Anishinaubae spirituality (240). Even Grandmother Rosa has been indoctrinated by the Christian missionaries living at Cape Croker. Nonetheless, she tries to give her grandson an education in Anishinaubae spirituality, but that education only causes him to ask, "Who is God?" and "What are the Manitous?" Because the colonizers' religion makes no mention of the Manitous and the Little People, Johnston is, to borrow Armand Garnet Ruffo's phrase, "entangled in the torment of . . . conflicting visions of Christianity and Native spirituality" (Ruffo 102); he is "staggered . . . trying to sort . . . out" the conflict between what he hears from his two grandmothers (Johnston, *Crazy Dave* 239-40).

Johnston's education in Anishinaubae spirituality is halted when he is removed to residential school, where what he is taught works within the colonial binary of civilized/savage. He reveals that during his years at residential school, he was "given to understand that the Roman Catholic Church's teachings on spiritual matters represented the only way of looking at life, the afterlife, and any other kind of life." The "teachings" emphasized that there "was but one God" attended by "angels and saints in heaven." At the same time, Johnston was instructed that to "believe in Weendigo, Little People, Nana'b'oozoo, Manitous, and Thunderbirds, and to offer tobacco to trout, beavers, bears, partridges, corn, and blueberries, bordered on idolatry, pantheism, and paganism, deserving of eternal damnation" (8).

While *Crazy Dave* provides some detail about Johnston's religious indoctrination at residential school, *Indian School Days* provides greater

insight into how residential schools worked in terms of relentless regimentation, what Jo-Ann Episkenew refers to as "mind-numbing routine" (91), with the aim of deracination. Johnston attended mass every day (*Indian School Days* 47). Thursday night was reserved for confession "regardless of guilt or innocence." On Sunday, he attended "two masses in the morning, one at 7:30, the other at 10:30, plus Benediction in the evening." High Mass at 10:30 included prayer and Gregorian chants (54-58). Johnston's religious education at residential school destroyed what he knew of Anishinaubae spirituality.

However, as *Crazy Dave* indicates, after finishing school, Johnston resumes his education in Anishinaubae spirituality when he comes to understand Grandmother Rosa's spiritual anxiety. Since Johnston does not know what has gone on in his community while he has been at school, his visits home allow him the opportunity to hear the "stories" and "anecdotes" about life at Cape Croker while he was away (12-13). Among other things, Johnston learns about Father Cadot's unsettling visits. The priest assumes the superiority of European culture and religion, and as such seeks to delegitimatize Anishinaubae culture and spirituality.[8] Grandmother Rosa is anxious about the priest's visits because she is afraid he will find her wanting. She does not want to give the priest the "chance to criticize her house or her housecleaning," and she does not want to "be condemned for performing what was looked on by most of her people as an act of respect for God's creation" (36).

Grandmother Rosa has internalized the colonial gaze and, as Michel Foucault might say, has come to surveil herself. This is evident whenever she questions her own Anishinaubae spiritual customs. Thus, Grandmother Rosa worries about "her practice of offering tobacco in thanksgiving whenever she picked plants or roots or cedar boughs" (36). Ultimately, Grandmother Rosa does not abandon her observances. Rather, in an act of mediation, she follows when possible what the priest tells her about prayer and attending church (36-38) by incorporating them into her spiritual routine. Gail Guthrie Valaskakis would fully appreciate Grandmother Rosa's liminality. When reflecting on her Lac du Flambeau family, Valaskakis writes, "[W]e were suspended between Christian ritual and Chippewa custom" (27), "caught in a clash of cultures" (15).

Johnston begins to deal with the religious confusion brought about by his indoctrination when he starts making regular visits to his community. Joseph Couture's examination of the "increasing numbers of Natives engaged in a return to their roots" helps explain why Johnston's repeated visits to his community are so important. Like the individuals Couture examines,

Johnston too needs "insigh[t] and guidance" (42) in order to alleviate his confusion. The visits home allow Johnston the opportunity to learn about the painful obstacles Grandmother Rosa faces and overcomes as she tries to maintain her Anishinaubae faith.[9] Grandmother Rosa maintains her faith despite considerable pressure to abandon it, and in doing so demonstrates to Johnston that it is possible to recover and enhance his understanding of Anishinaubae spirituality, even though his religious indoctrination at residential school works against such recovery.

The visits home also allow Johnston the opportunity to understand the cultural values upheld by Anishinaubae society. As he comes to realize, Anishinaubae society operates according to the principle of inclusion. However, as Grandmother Rosa's history lesson indicates, colonial society operates in terms of its opposite. Johnston sees his Uncle David as the paradigm case of that exclusion. Born in 1921, David is Grandmother Rosa's youngest child. He is diagnosed with "Mongolism," currently called Down Syndrome. Throughout his life, the colonial authorities—the doctor who diagnoses him, the priest, and the Indian agent—all attempt to have him institutionalized. Because of the colonizers' desire to exclude Uncle David, he reminds Johnston "of the place and situation of the North American Indian in Canadian society":

> It was assumed that Uncle David didn't know much about anything, or what he knew didn't count; what North American Indians knew didn't amount to a jar of jelly beans, and did not have any larger relevance. As long as Uncle David stayed where he belonged and didn't bother anyone or interfere with anyone's business, neighbors could put up with him; and as long as the North American Indians kept the peace and didn't rock the boat, society could tolerate them. Uncle David didn't belong in the community. He wasn't one of the normal human beings; he was dumb and couldn't talk; didn't and couldn't understand. He didn't belong in the society of sensible people. He belonged in some institution where he could learn to perform simple tasks and operations. (11)

Uncle David's relationship with colonial society is based on exclusion, just as Anishinaubae society's relationship with colonial society is based on exclusion. Colonial society wants to exclude Uncle David from his community in the same way colonial society excluded the Anishinaubae from their territory. These parallels help explain why Uncle David is the key figure in terms of the central theme of inclusion versus exclusion, and why the narrative itself is named after him. Jennifer Andrews has a related appreciation of Uncle David: "Dave is a model of stubbornness that the Ojibway need to heed, if they are to retain their unique culture and language

in an era of white pressure to assimilate" (151). Uncle David's batting is a humorous example of his stubbornness. When the school kids tire of David's many failed attempts at hitting the ball, they demand that he return the bat. David refuses. After all, hadn't they "asked him to play" (*Crazy Dave* 253-54)?

From the moment the Indian agent first sees Uncle David, whom he refers to as a "half-wit" (169), an "idiot," and a "crazy man on the loose," he wants him "locked up" (200-03). After Rufus abandons his wife and five children, they move in with Grandmother Rosa and Uncle David. Uncle David's presence so "disturb[s]" the Indian agent that he concocts a scheme to have him removed. According to the Indian agent, Uncle David is a danger to his family because he might "touc[h] or moles[t] one of those girls" (267). In collaboration with the priest, the Indian agent decides "to defuse the situation" by removing two of the older children from Grandmother Rosa's house. When Grandmother Rosa objects, she is told that Uncle David will be removed instead. The Indian agent's scheme to remove Uncle David ultimately fails: Johnston and his sister Marilyn are removed in his place (267-70). The irony is that while the Indian agent professes his concern for the safety of the young girls, he undermines his credibility when he moves only one sister, leaving the other girls in Grandmother Rosa's home. The removal of Johnston and his sister subtly exposes the hypocrisy of colonialism; the children are removed from Grandmother Rosa's home over fears of sexual abuse, but they end up at a residential school where such abuse is rampant.[10] While Uncle David is not removed from his home, colonial society continues to exclude him. Even the missionary schoolteacher excludes Uncle David by removing him from the schoolyard (254).

In contrast to the treatment Uncle David receives from the colonial authorities, family members respect and include him in their lives. Uncle David's family lets him have the same possibilities in life everybody else enjoys: "freedom, equality, independence . . . pride . . . and the chance to show and say, 'This I can do'" (14). His brother Walter, for example, expands Uncle David's "world and vocabulary" by taking him on "field trips" and instructing him in language, mime, and mimicry (102-04). But it is Uncle David's relationship with his brother John that is the model of Anishinaubae inclusion. John teaches Uncle David patience and ways to pass the time by instructing him in soccer (129) and horseshoes (123). He also teaches Uncle David practical skills, such as sawing wood and cutting down trees (144-46). The relationship between Uncle David and his family is based on the principle of reciprocity; Uncle David benefits from the family's inclusion and the family

benefits by including him. For example, the skills John teaches Uncle David keep Grandmother Rosa from having to cut wood herself or to hire someone to cut it for her (145). At the same time, they allow Uncle David the opportunity to make a living and become a productive member of his community.

Uncle David's relationship with his community is also based on reciprocity. He cuts his neighbours' wood and receives payment (154). He plays baseball with the local kids (253) and attends community functions (162). Furthermore, all members of the community stand up for Uncle David when the Indian agent first raises the idea of sending him away. Stephen Elliot, "Cape Croker's finest orator," accurately captures the community's sentiment: "What you intend to do, Mr. Agent, is what cowards do. You pick on David McLeod because he can't defend himself, he can't even talk for himself. He does not belong in an institution. He belongs here, not in an asylum or reform school where he'll be abused. He belongs with his mother" (qtd. in *Crazy Dave* 210).

The relationship Uncle David shares with Grandmother Rosa is particularly important. Grandmother Rosa never once entertains the idea of institutionalizing her son. Instead, she "looked after him, worried about him, subordinated her life to his so that he could lead his life and existence as well as he could" (13). She is willing to sacrifice her life for Uncle David when, at great risk to her own "strength and health" (323), she comforts and nurses him following a vicious, racially motivated beating (317-18).[11] She treats David like a normal human being. When she finds out that he stole money from her, "Rosa snapped at David and chewed him out as she had never done before. . . . She didn't raise him or look after him so that he'd be a common thief" (196). When Uncle David, in a fit of pique, purposely cuts a neighbour's firewood incorrectly, Grandmother Rosa immediately tells him to "get back down to Resime's and saw that wood properly" (157). Uncle David is Grandmother Rosa's responsibility, and she competently raises him in a way that challenges the colonial assumption that she is incapable of raising her children, an assumption that precipitated the removal to residential school of her older children many years before (118).

According to Bevis, the protagonist in all the Native American texts he examines "seeks an identity that he can find *only* in his society, past, and place" (591). *Crazy Dave* conforms to this model. In Bevis' analysis, this narrative pattern is a reflection of an inherent aspect of Native American subjectivity, what he calls "tribal identity" (585). In *Crazy Dave* more specifically, the "homing in" plot—that is, the way in which Johnston returns home and finds his identity—is associated with colonization. Johnston's

identity is incomplete because of the colonial dislocation he has experienced. If he is to (re)construct his identity, he must reintegrate into his family and community. In other words, he must come home.

Johnston's repeated visits to his community are absolutely crucial to the process of reintegration. Not all former residential school inmates return to their communities after serving their time. Those individuals who manage to return do not always successfully reintegrate into their communities. Johnston's father Rufus is one such individual. Following his release from residential school in 1917, Rufus returns to Cape Croker and leaves two months later (55). He returns again after an absence of almost twenty years (229), but this return is also unsuccessful. Johnston's narrative offers no explicit explanation as to why his father's literal return does not prompt a metaphorical one. Instead, Johnston poses a series of questions: "Did Father lose whatever capacity to love he may have had during his confinement at Spanish? Did he ever have much to begin with? Was he really as indifferent to law, church, and family as he seemed to be?" (258). Johnston's narrative does, however, make two suggestions. First, whereas Johnston's initial visits restart the process of his mental decolonization, Rufus' visits do not because the damage he suffers at residential school is so utterly complete. The place to which Rufus returns does not become home the way it does for Johnston: a "place of understanding and culture" (McLeod 33). Rather, it remains a site of injury, the place where his dislocation began. Second, Rufus does not benefit from inclusive relationships with his family or community the way his son does. By returning frequently to his community, Johnston has a chance to re-experience inclusive relationships and understand why he is confused, while Rufus, who seldom visits, does not have that opportunity. As Couture indicates, the process of decolonization requires time because "There are no shortcuts to attitudinal and spiritual change, no possible end-runs around phases of inner change" (51).

Johnston ends *Crazy Dave* with an epilogue constituting the closing frame of the narrative. In it, he tells about his eventual return to Cape Croker and how Cape Croker as place and community influences his identity. In researching Grandmother Rosa's story, Johnston learns how closely place is implicated in the construction of identity. Grandmother Rosa knows and appreciates Cape Croker as home. One of Johnston's earliest memories of his grandmother is of her sitting "down, as she did every evening, in her rocking chair in front of the window that faced the south and the limits of our world, the ramparts of the bluffs of the Niagara Escarpment, six to seven miles away" (7). Seated

there, Grandmother Rosa maps her reserve. From her "rocking chair in front of the window," Grandmother Rosa occupies what Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin call "a position of panoramic observation, [which is] itself a representation of knowledge and power over colonial space" (227). It is a position Grandmother Rosa accepts with pride not least because of the considerable obstacles she overcomes in order to get there.

The epilogue begins:

> From my vantage point a thousand feet or so above sea level I saw the entire "Cape," as the locals knew and called Cape Croker. My eyes followed the shoreline from behind King's Point Bluff to the southeast, swerved toward and around King's Point, then swept into Little Port Elgin Bay before snaking out toward Lighthouse Point. (331)

Like Grandmother Rosa before him, Johnston maps the reserve. As previously mentioned, *Crazy Dave* is an elaborate mapping of Anishinaubae society and it is through this mapping that Johnston reconstructs his Anishinaubae identity. Johnston's narrative mapping suggests that it is possible to stop the dislocation that characterizes so much of his family's history. To do so, the Anishinaubae must tell their history and map their place from an Anishinaubae perspective. Grandmother Rosa does this when she tells Johnston what her grandmother told her (17) and when she surveys the world from her rocking chair. Johnston too does this when he surveys his world from his vantage point and when he writes his narrative. Right at the end of *Crazy Dave*, Johnston explicitly claims discursive control over Cape Croker by naming it "Naeyaushee-winnigum-eeng" (331) as his ancestors once did.[12]

Valerie Alia's study of the coerced renaming of Canada's Inuit populations, known as Project Surname, helps us understand how Johnston's onomastic act furthers identity reconstruction and Anishinaubae cultural continuity: "Current efforts to retrieve and reinstate personal and place names reflect Inuit determination to reclaim both land and people" (92); "[n]ames do not just continue individual lives; they continue the life of a community" (18). As Alia also indicates, Inuit do not differentiate between personal and place names; they see "no power discrepancy between the two kinds of names" (99). Johnston too shares this appreciation, especially when his naming act is considered along with his explorations of Anishinaubae naming where he writes, "a name [i]s not merely an appellation, or a term of address; it [i]s an identity" (*Ojibway Ceremonies* 15). Johnston demonstrates his pride of place and identity and the growth he experiences as a result of learning about his place and reconstructing his identity by coming home and writing Grandmother Rosa's story.

NOTES

1 Johnston's *Indian School Days* has begun to receive critical attention in such collections as Sam McKegney's *Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community after Residential School* (2007), Deena Rymhs' *From the Iron House: Imprisonment in First Nations Writing* (2008), and Jo-Ann Episkenew's *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing* (2009).

2 Thanks to early anonymous reviewers for suggesting this sentence.

3 In "The Algonquian Farmers of Southern Ontario, 1830-1945" (1994), Edward S. Rogers provides an account of these "troubled times":

> During the 1830s and 1840s, several thousand Algonquian-speaking Indians living in the United States immigrated to Upper Canada. The United States government passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830, permitting it to relocate Eastern American Indians. Accordingly, the government pressed Amerindian groups to sign treaties with provisions stating that their communities must migrate to the prairie country located west of the Mississippi River. This clause generated great dissatisfaction. Many of the Amerindians south of the Great Lakes refused to leave and remained in what became the states of Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois. But pressures for their removal mounted. In 1837 the US government informed the Indians that no further annuities would be given until they complied with the terms of the treaties. By moving north they could remain in the Great Lakes area. (122)

4 Rosamond M. Vanderburgh's *I Am Nokomis, Too: The Biography of Verna Patronella Johnston* furnishes specific chronological information detailing the Pottawatomi removal and the Saugeen Territory and Bruce Peninsula land cessions:

> 1833 Treaty of Chicago: Potowatomi lands in Illinois territory ceded to the United States of America: subsequent dispersal of the Potowatomi westward, and north to Ontario.
> 1836 The Saugeen territory is ceded to the Crown: the Bruce Peninsula is reserved for the Indians.
> 1854 Laurence Oliphant Treaty: The Bruce Peninsula is ceded to the Crown, with lands reserved to the Indians at Saugeen, Chief's Point, Big Bay (Owen Sound), Cape Croker and Oxenden (Colpoy's Bay). (16)

5 Incidentally, Verna Johnston and Basil Johnston share the same great-great-grandmother: Misquo-bunno-quae, "the woman from Wisconsin." Verna Johnston's great-grandfather Francis Nadjiwon and Basil Johnston's great-grandmother Mary Nadjiwon Lamourandiere were brother and sister (Vanderburgh 10).

6 Johnston's references to "local princess(es)" could benefit from some cultural context. As Raymond William Stedman explains in *Shadows of the Indian: Stereotypes in American Culture* (1982), except for maybe in one instance, "Indians in what is now the United States had no perpetual aristocracy in the European sense." He continues, "Yet in power and domain grand caciques or territorial masters . . . were every bit as much kings as were hundreds of ancient monarchs of Europe. And authority often did remain within principal families." Stedman also adds, "[M]any of the famous Indian princesses of fact and fiction were indeed the daughters of chieftains" and that "[o]ften, however, the designation was one of convention" (24-25). From Vanderburgh's biography of Verna Johnston, we learn that Philomene Nadjiwon married William B. MacGregor, "a grandson of Chief Wahbadick." Philomene is the sister of Francis Nadjiwon and Mary Nadjiwon Lamourandiere. We also learn that William B. MacGregor and Fred Lamourandiere enjoyed a very successful relationship, with both political and economic rewards. Although Mary Nadjiwon Lamourandiere, the "local princess," might not have been the daughter

of a chief, she was, through her sister's marriage, related to one of the region's "most influential families" (Vanderburgh 24-25).

7 *Indian School Days* was published in 1988, but it had been on Johnston's mind since at least 1976. In a June 2, 1976 letter to Mr. Al Potter, Johnston's editor at McClelland and Stewart, Johnston lists "some projects that [he had] in mind." Johnston describes one such project in the following way:

> 5. An Indian Residential School at Spanish Ontario. I know that Indian Residential Schools have been the subject of books and studies. All have been non-complementary [sic] or academic. Having been confined eight years to one, I think I can offer another viewpoint, the humorous side (presuming I can handle humor). The idea, of course, is not to absolve such schools of their mortal sins. It may tarnish priestly images. (*Letter from Basil Johnston* n. pag.)

The remaining ideas that Johnston had in mind all eventually became published books, but there is no indication that he envisioned a book on Uncle David at this time.

8 Verna Johnston's biography references Father Cadot's "perceptions of the Indians" in Cadot's own, unambiguous language: "The Indian often not only does not pay any heed to the morrow; he even lets the afternoon look after itself. A great number of them are, through all their life, children; an Indian greybeard of sixty is but an infant" (qtd. in Vanderburgh 242). Cadot's paper "Bruce County and Work Among the Indians," which was published in *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records* 18 (1920), has been reprinted in *I Am Nokomis, Too* in its entirety.

9 Johnston uses the term "faith" after Grandmother Rosa prays to "Kizhae Manitous" on learning that David is "a Mongoloid" (88-89).

10 Johnston details the horrific abuse he suffered at residential school in his Foreword to Sam McKegney's *Magic Weapons* (xi).

11 Johnston writes that in 1980, he "dall[ies] with the idea of writing a series of stories about some of the misadventures of Uncle David" (10). In fact, Johnston more than dallies; one story about Uncle David is committed to paper. Johnston's collection of humorous stories, *Moose Meat and Wild Rice* (1978), contains "Good Thing We Know Them People," which is an earlier version of the *Crazy Dave* episode where Uncle David is mistaken for a Japanese soldier. Uncle David is not identified by name in the *Moose Meat* version of the story.

12 In *Honour Earth Mother* (2003), Johnston glosses Naeyaushee-winnigum-eeng as:

> Naeyaushee-winnigum-eeng (Cape Croker, ON)—Portage Point
> Naeyaush: a point
> Winnigum: to portage
> Eeng: at the place of (167)

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Catherine Owen

Moving through
for Chris Matzigkeit (1981–2010)

Who could have known this would be us.
Ghosts on a road trip.
The way the dead have entered me and suddenly I am many crows
in one crow, feasting on the beautiful dropped prey of this hawk-life.
What we have left.
Driving into another cold town in the middle of the night
I stop for two deer picking through the crystals of ice
that keep forming.
They vanish. You don't.
I only have to speak your name in the rhythm of wheels that push
me across this unimaginable land
and you have not left.
Broken only to vision.
As if the frozen lakes I am passing were not
clear water underneath.

Sylvie Vranckx

"I Carve My Stories Every Day"

An Interview with Richard Van Camp

In this interview, the Dogrib (Tlicho) Dené author Richard Van Camp talks to a Belgian doctoral candidate, Sylvie Vranckx.[1] It was conducted over Skype, which explains the informal or rather oratorical tone. Indeed, Van Camp is a contemporary Dogrib storyteller before he is a writer or an educator. The interview covers all of his published fiction, including his two recent comic books as well as his new collection *Godless But Loyal to Heaven*, whose manuscript he generously shared with Vranckx. While he is starting to be studied seriously in the academic world (see Fagan, Haladay, Kelly, McKegney, Neuhaus, and Vranckx), he has generally been neglected by literary critics and mainly been interviewed by magazines, possibly because young adult fiction tends to be treated as subliterary (Vranckx 292).

At twenty-four, Van Camp became the first Dogrib writer to publish a novel—*The Lesser Blessed*. He belongs to the second generation of Aboriginal Canadian authors—the first generation that was not sent to residential school. He has been praised for bringing sophisticated new forms to Aboriginal, Arctic, and Canadian literatures (Hobson 78). The inventive vernacular spoken in the semi-fictional NWT town of Fort Simmer in *The Lesser Blessed*, "Raven Talk," alludes to the Trickster Raven. Raven Talk, which has given its title to a scholarly study,[2] "[i]s a patois of French, English, slang, Chip[weyan], Cree, Dogrib, Slavey and the south. It's fun and sexy and sleek as an oil spill. To speak it is to be in the know" (Van Camp, "Re: Hi + Questions" n. pag.).

Van Camp's career has been a journey across audiences, age groups, media, genres, aesthetics, voices, mythologies, cultures, and subcultures (Vranckx 292, 300-02)—consistent with his En'owkin International School of Writing training that a good storyteller should be able to work in any genre (Van Camp, "Living in a Time for Celebration" 298). Fittingly, he describes his craft as a process of carving, which slowly reveals the final shape of the project. Just as sculptures take their full meaning when placed together in an exhibition, his stories remain unfinished until they are juxtaposed in a collection (Van Camp, "Where I'm at" n. pag.) and meet the readers' eyes or ears. The use of the concrete art of carving also hints at his view of writing as experimenting with formal characteristics. He enjoys "pushing form": for him, short stories should not be reduced to the "a + b = c aspect of constructing" with a buildup of tension, a climax, and a denouement ("Pushing Form" n. pag.). He demonstrates that Eurocentric conventions can set obstacles to Aboriginal writing and he hopes to enchant the readers with the "riddle" that results ("Where I'm at").

Van Camp also writes to work through his pain concerning the psychosocial problems among the communities with which he has formed connections. A red thread is the intergenerational legacy of the residential schools: his characters' dilemmas convey the need to find hope and peace for oneself in the aftermath of such personal and collective traumas. This is epitomized by the notion of "letting go" evoked by the title of *The Moon of Letting Go and Other Stories*—where Dogrib, Dené, Slavey, and Northern protagonists go through mourning, divorces, and heartbreak but find ways of welcoming love into their lives again. The key is putting your anger behind you:

> I have just learned . . . that anger is really fear and I have let go. I let go of so much bubonic fear so long ago. Deal with the fear and the anger dissipates. Writing helped me in so many ways. Writing, truly, is the best therapy. . . . *The Lesser Blessed* is a story of hope; [*Sword of Antlers*] will be about forgiveness. I am on my way to peace. ("Where I'm at")

Godless But Loyal to Heaven, which "[i]s part Western part Samurai part action movie and all Torchy brilliance" (Van Camp, "Re: Hello + mods" n. pag.), further focuses on "faith," and his characters "are at the crossroads": "most of [his] characters have faith in humanity, a respect for the Creator and a wish for a 'master plan' that finds them all at peace" ("Thoughts on My New Collection" n. pag.).

Sylvie Vranckx (SV): Good day to you. I suggest that this interview be structured into two parts. First, I'm interested in how you approach stories as an author who has worked in many different media and who's adapting some of his stories into movies, so the first part would be about your craft. Then, I'd like to ask about your main themes of trauma, grief, and resilience. They tie in with the notion of evil, as epitomized in your work by the horror tropes of zombies and the cannibal monster Wheetago. You also link these images with bullying as a potentially deadly social problem. But then, violence is also present in traditional rituals and in shamanism—from there, I'd like to segue into Dogrib notions of medicine in your work.

Richard Van Camp (RVC): Good day to you! I'm happy to help you.

SV: Thank you! What are you working on at the moment?

RVC: The novels I'm working on right now are *Furnace* (Torchy's epic story); *The Strongest Blood* (Leo's epic story); *Sword of Antlers* (Bear's epic story); along with *Night Moves* (my new collection) and a graphic novel tentatively called *Wheetago War*. *Wheetago War* is spec fiction and it's brutal and poetic and loving all at the same time.

SV: And how are the movies of *The Lesser Blessed* and "Dogrib Midnight Runners" coming?

RVC: *The Lesser Blessed* premiered on Sept. 9, 2012 at TIFF. TIFF was mind-blowing. The adaptation was more than I ever imagined. The movie is tender, sensual, haunting, brutal, and everything I love about movies about youth. Anita Doron captured what it's like to be young and falling in love every day, and how a look or a brushing of hands with someone you have a crush on can save your life. I'm so proud of everyone who worked so hard for seven years to make this movie happen. *Dogrib Midnight Runners* is now *Mohawk Midnight Runners*, as the director is Zoe Hopkins. Zoe's Mohawk (Kanien'kehaka) and Heiltsuk and lives in Six Nations, Ontario. Zoe wanted to put the Mohawk interpretation on the big screen and it's going to be brilliant.

SV: How does it feel to have worked in so many different media?

RVC: The secret to what I do is I create art every single day of my life, whether it's through writing, or uploading photos, or tweaking short stories or novels or beginning some new essay. Ultimately, when somebody approaches me and says, "We've got a new anthology on Canadian literature, can you send us a story?" I've got seven ready to go. Or if they say, "We need a poem from you," it's very easy for me to say, "I've got twenty done but there're four that I'm very proud of," then I can send several things to choose from. That's what a lot of artists do. Commissions are wonderful: sometimes, there's a story that's

in the back of your mind or in your heart, and you may be too chicken to write it, but when you have support from somebody who wants you to create something brand new. . . . Some short stories take a year to create properly, and some stories have taken years before getting published, but that doesn't mean I love them any less because I'm like a carver in a workshop, carving many things, and some are more polished than others.

Sometimes, the pieces are so big, I'm looking for the right editor. At forty-one years of age, doing this for half of my life, I think the key to my success is also working very carefully with very tough ones, like Barbara Pulling from Douglas and McIntyre, or Maurice Mierau at Great Plains, or Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm at Kegedonce. It's mahsi cho magic! I've earned every single word, and that's how I want to keep going, because I don't want to recoil in horror and shame when I see my name on a book. I want to be very proud of it, so the new comic book *Kiss Me Deadly* has taken me two years to create from beginning to end and it's beautiful. Chris Auchter's gone beyond the call of duty to create a gorgeous comic book and Sean Muir, to publish it well: the right paper, the right team for colouring and lettering, and everything we're creating together is a work of art. And I'm very proud, when I'm on tour or on stage, and I see all my books, they're like my children and I love them all dearly because every genre has its own rules and that's half the fun, figuring out how to write a comic book or a radio play, or being told, "You have to work with only forty lines." The overcoming makes me very happy. And short stories are their own secret society with subsonic rules. When crafted carefully, they can achieve tracings of light and forever.

SV: What's specific to expressing yourself in each medium? Why comic books, for example?

RVC: The story's the boss. First, it's the spirit of the story and then seeing how best it fits: is this a baby book, a comic, a novel, a novella, a short story? Then I take it to my publishers once it's done, and I'm so grateful to all of my publishers who believe in me.

SV: And you honour stories constantly. In your edited collection *Tracking Heaven*, you even work as a transcriber for storytellers. It's like a *mise en abyme* of storytelling.

RVC: I don't want to publish it, as I want it to be free, a gift. These are the stories that inspire me all the time.

SV: And it's online! What about *Kiss Me Deadly*?

RVC: It's free on www.thehealthyaboriginal.net/comics/KMD.pdf in English and it'll be translated into French too. It's a huge coup for myself because I'm very

proud to have been commissioned by the Government of the NWT to create a comic book on sexual health, and they're giving away ten thousand comic books for free. There's still a lot of shame with our bodies, with our sensuality, as Aboriginal peoples. I think the Church has a lot to do with that, and I can say that, I still go to church for midnight mass and every New Year's Eve, that's got to count for something. I'm not calling down the Church, but our shame is harming us because there isn't a lot of sexual self-esteem where people are willing to speak up for themselves and say, "Wait a minute, we need to use the proper protection." The NWT has eight times the national average of STIs, and we have to address this because it's crippling lives, and no amount of sorries can make you feel better once you've contracted something that's perceived as shameful, but is also physiologically very dangerous.

SV: It's one of the main themes of *The Lesser Blessed*, the way Larry has to grow up while the community's collapsing on itself. But there's hope for him, right?

RVC: Yes. I love hearing from people that though it's a brutal read, at the end you have a character who's so resilient. Aboriginal peoples are so resilient. When you look at the residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, the Indian Act, and everything that's been used to try and break us, it's actually made us stronger and Aboriginal peoples are the fastest growing demographic in Canada. So the love is strong, and stories are medicine. *The Lesser Blessed*'s a story of hope, and everything that I'm worried about with my community, my family, my Nation, the North, that's what I love putting in my adult writing. And for children and babies, I always look to put my hope, and love for humanity, into words.

SV: It's a good time to segue into grief and healing. *The Moon of Letting Go and Other Stories* is so infused with light and the medicine in it is so strong, the main theme would be how characters mourn horrifying traumatic events. . .

RVC: *The Lesser Blessed* was my beginning of writing about my own sense of discovery of what it means to be an Aboriginal person alive today, in 2012, and in the world. Aboriginal peoples walk in two worlds: we have the spiritual world, our own astrology, astronomy, beliefs, and at the same time we're e-mailing or Skyping, as we are right now. So, we're carrying (I hope) the best of two worlds forward into this modern age right now. As an Aboriginal writer who's the first novelist to ever be published from the Dogrib Nation, with that comes incredible responsibility because I don't want to write propaganda: "There were no hunchbacks before Contact!" or "There were no wars before Contact." We all know we were warring nations. There was starvation, and times of abundance, and peace treaties. That's

what interests me the most, writing about the hard issues: STI education, elder abuse, our medicine wars. In "The Moon of Letting Go," what would you do if the most dangerous medicine man in your community were sitting in the back seat of your car while you have your eight-year-old son beside you? "Dogrib Midnight Runners" is funny, but it was inspired by a suicide. As far as I know, that's the first published story that ever takes place in Fort Smith. And I want to talk about what a great thief suicide is: the huge, never-ending echo of its fatal decision. "Born a Girl," published in *Coming Home*, is about bullying from the bully's point of view, and everybody knows bullying's bad but I want to break people's hearts with how close the main character comes to killing somebody by accident. I'm not afraid to go into the really dark places, and we need to go there. Sometimes I hear such heartbreaking stories from home about homophobia and I'm usually haunted by them, then I stick with them, then I write about them.

SV: I'm struck by how commonplace suicide, self-abuse, and substance abuse are in your work. The North sounds like a very tough place.

RVC: Yeah it is. Fort Smith used to be the STI capital of the North so I grew up fully aware that "the dose" lurked around every corner! That's why I wanted to write a sexual health comic book and arm people with information, not power-load them with more fear and anxiety about their bodies or possible infection.

Also, there's a lot of success and perceived abundance with the diamond mines and all the work that's out there. There's a saying that there're lots of new trucks in the North but also lots of empty cupboards. That's what interests me the most, writing about those homes where the parents are flying up to their work in the diamond mines, so they're two weeks gone, two weeks home. So, we have gangs and prostitution now in Yellowknife. It's very depressing to go downtown Yellowknife. And it never used to be this way. Yes, there were people who were drinking, but now I just see such heartbreaking hopelessness. And it's crystal meth, it's crack cocaine, and it breaks my heart that we have Dené, Métis, Aboriginal people, Northern families struggling with this new poison.

SV: Your writing's also about the downward spiral ordinary people can get engaged in when their communities are steeped in psychosocial problems. It's like something's contaminating Larry or *carving* at his heart, while many of your gangster characters turn out to be okay people. How does it feel to write from the voice of a thug or someone who's becoming very violent?

RVC: The two stories you're referring to are *Path of the Warrior* and "I Count

Myself Among Them." *Path of the Warrior*'s based on a drive-by shooting in Hobbema here in Alberta. The bullet struck a baby in the heart while in her crib. She lived, her name's Asia Saddleback, and she's a young lady now. The bullet's still inside her body and they have to wait so that it grows away from the heart. I was so horrified with this story that I asked, "What if?" What about that gangster who realizes, "The bullet that was meant for me struck a baby next door"? And what if he was a father himself but he'd never claimed responsibility for his own child? I ended up working with the multitalented Steve Sanderson on my very first comic book. And what I learned was what gangs call "blood in, blood out": when you join a gang, you're half stomped to death to draw blood for the gang. What I really appreciated about Anishinaabe author Jennifer Storm's novel *Deadly Loyalties* was how hard it is to actually leave an Indian gang or *any* gang. So, I wanted to satisfy the mandate, talking about how physical fitness, team sports, our culture, and family support can be used to detour our youths away from gangs. *Path of the Warrior*'s about the human story about why people get into gangs and what happens when you try and get out. Cullen's faced with a decision: either you help and be a coach at the Friendship Centre for the kids that you've been terrorizing, or you go to jail. And he knows if he goes to jail, he's probably going to die. So, he decides to become a coach.

In "I Count Myself Among Them," we have a giant telling the story, his name's "Flinch," and he's a gang enforcer. He goes to a community they call "Outpost 5," but it's really Agassiz, BC, at the base of Cheam Mountain. And he's very naïve, there's an innocence about him much like Larry's, but he's capable of *great* harm. He has a Biblical experience of epic proportions, where he's part of something he can't even imagine. And lightning hunts his family to kill them, and as he goes to execute his final contract, the sky starts to rumble. So that was a very interesting carving to sculpt because I felt like I was led, much like Flinch, into a field where anything could happen, and it was a beautiful story to write. It's one of my most mysterious stories ever, I think about it a lot, and maybe I'll write a couple more stories about Flinch when he was younger, and things that were trying to visit him. Because remember, he's a doorman for sweat lodge ceremonies. He's a man between two worlds—a Contrary. So, very shamanistic and ancient stuff—that's what I love to write about.

SV: What's a Contrary?

RVC: A Contrary's also a "Clown," a teacher, one who lives his/her life backwards to remind others of many things.

SV: All in all, isn't your writing mostly preoccupied with evil? It's epitomized by the parthenophiliac abuse committed against Wendy, a mentally challenged Dogrib teenager, by the school principal to whom she was entrusted in Fort Simmer ("Love Walked In," "The Contract," "Feeding the Fire," and *Sword of Antlers*).

RVC: I'm noticing a theme of social justice, especially in *Godless But Loyal to Heaven*. Torchy raises my question in "Feeding the Fire." Who calls the warriors forward now? I call Bear and Torchy my gladiators. Larry's, well, Larry: he's the Ambassador of Love, a Soldier of Passion, and he calls himself "The Destroying Angel." Torchy's a bareknuckle brawler who's welcomed into medicine power very slowly. All of these characters are finding their own power and grace in the shadow of some horrible people and situations.

SV: There's a sense in your writing that pure evil could waltz into a room any time. One of your first published short stories, "Birthmark," is about an involuntary deal with the Devil.

RVC: Can you tell I was an altar boy? You have a lot of time to think when you're serving the people. I also love a great horror movie or ghost story so I'm always interested in what happens when someone's faced with someone or something who's an agent of evil or darkness or calling (or culling) you into "their way."

SV: You also connect the idea of evil incarnate in the Wheetago mythos with zombies in "On the Wings of This Prayer" and the forthcoming radio play "Zombies 911." What drew you to this image?

RVC: I think zombies are already here. We see it with our family and friends who're lost in their addictions. Have you ever talked to someone you love who's high on OxyContin? It's their body but they're gone. So zombies are a manifestation of who we love and knew and "the other" as coming to eat you alive.

SV: How does it feel to use an Algonquian story like the Wheetago while the Dogrib are traditional enemies with the Cree?

RVC: I think because we have such a new migration of animals, it's opened up borders for me on new visitors who find my characters or communities. We now have coyotes in Yellowknife, a new walrus in the Eastern Arctic who hunts seals and not clams, and hummingbirds visiting Fort Smith for the first time. There's a story about an encounter between a man and a Wheetago outside of Smith published in *Tapwe*, a former newspaper in the NWT, so I used that chilling account as a springboard for "The Fleshing." And I love collaborating with Cree artists like George Littlechild on our kids' books, or

Steve Sanderson on *Path of the Warrior*, or Haida artist Chris Auchter on *Kiss Me Deadly*. We have come together in partnership, knowing we need to work together to reclaim our languages and traditions. We have a lot to share and learn from one another.

SV: Isn't the language of the Gothic as you use it paradoxically the most realistic way of representing colonialism, since people really went through an apocalypse that overwhelmed their belief systems?

RVC: I don't consider myself an eco-warrior, but re-reading "On the Wings of This Prayer" made me realize how horrified I am that we're letting the exploitation of the oil sands of Alberta happen. We're giving our Mother cancer. Not only that, we're all witnessing it every day and it's causing cancer with the effluent and it's so sad that we have a measured-in-minutes slow-motion mutilation of paradise.

SV: In the case of STIs and cancer, people are literally contaminated. You spoke out about uranium mining, for example. "The Uranium Leaking from Port Radium and Rayrock Mines Is Killing Us" is a kind of feverish dream about a derelict town. In "Godless But Loyal to Heaven," Lester dies from cancer of the heart after picking uranium rocks in the "circle of death."

RVC: Yes. I'm interested in what could possibly inhabit us, like a ghost, a Wheetago spirit, medicine power, a virus. It's spooky, hey?

SV: Yes, very! And in "The Fleshing," the one who turns Wheetago, Dean, is a bully—bullies as Wheetagoes, Wheetagoes as bullies. . . . Your adult writing seems very concerned with what Lee Maracle calls "implosion," when a community blows *inward* instead of up (132), and a lot of it has to do with bullying.

RVC: Yes. I can't stand bullies or when people are made to suffer so I enlist my gladiators to help in my fiction.

SV: But you don't gloss over the link between violence and traditional ways. In "I Count Myself Among Them," Flinch has a near-death experience during a shamanistic initiation. And "On the Wings of This Prayer" has a graphic ritual for killing the Shark Throats, zombies, or Wheetagoes with a "Decapitator."

RVC: Yes, Flinch stumbled upon his inheritance as a Contrary and a bridge to the end of humanity. And the Decapitator may be our only hope when we run out of shells during the apocalypse and batteries for blaring the sound of running water to scare the Wheetago!

SV: Rituals and secrets are central to your writing. You've also written the foreword to Dogrib Elder George Blondin's *Trail of the Spirit*, which refers to medicine wars (27-37).

RVC: Medicine power intrigues me because it's whispered about. And where there're whispers, there're great stories.

SV: So medicine power still exists? Mr. Blondin was afraid not (10-11).

RVC: Medicine power is still here. We all have power every day to help others. Storytelling's medicine power. So are forgiveness, making amends, trust. So are children. I like how in some of my stories even the most marginalized person can be given medicine power. There's hope for everyone in my stories (well, except for the characters in "I Count Myself Among Them," "Snow White Nothing for Miles," Icabus in "Sky Burial," . . .).

SV: But this use of rituals is not limited to shamanism: Larry tells "How [He] Saved Christmas," Richard creates the baby ritual in "Show Me Yours," and the "Dogrib Midnight Runners" have an epiphanic experience while streaking to commemorate a man who committed suicide. Is creating new rituals important in a community?

RVC: Yes, I was told once that there're three kinds of medicine: what you say about, think about, and do for someone. You can keep people weak by how you think of them or spreading gossip or the tone in which you speak to them directly. You can also raise someone's spirits quickly by surrounding them with light when you think of them, only praising them, and helping them directly. Many of my characters find their own medicine through modern-day rituals. Some invent them with the best of intentions like Grant in "Dogrib Midnight Runners," and he finds himself along the way. Richard helps his community in "Show Me Yours" with the spreading of a ritual of having a picture of yourself as a baby on a necklace so everyone can see how beautiful you used to be. Larry decides to save Fort Simmer and bring back Santa so he picks up the phone. Sometimes ceremony's about action and not waiting. Sometimes all it takes is to call an old enemy and say, "I'm so sorry. Let me make up my mistake to you. Let me cook for you. Come over. See my life. See my family. You'll know that you're always welcome here and that we deserve to grow older together, to care for one another, to help each other. Let me show you how much I care for you now and how lost I was back then. Tell me what you need right now and I'll do my best."

SV: In "Snow White Nothing for Miles," I laugh when the Métis policeman, Morris, talks about his "rat-faced weasel fuck brother-in-law Richard." Did the Richard who's definitely not a weasel fuck create the baby ritual in real life?

RVC: There're two Richards I've written about. I hope I'm not the Richard in "Snow White Nothing for Miles" but I do hope there's a little of me in "Show Me Yours." One night I was leaving the WildCat Café in Yellowknife and

I had this flash of everyone carrying baby pictures around their necks and never being able to forget that when you were talking to someone, you were talking to their future selves from those precious days of being pure and precious. How could you take anyone seriously after that? How could you ever betray or harm anyone? How could you ever take anyone for granted?

SV: Also, a lot of the medicine in your stories is tied to animals. For example, in "The Power of Secrets," a man plays the flute for a porcupine but breaks the spell when he tells about him to other people. In "Wolf Medicine: A Ceremony of You," the narrator explains to his beloved how he will weave his wolf medicine around her as part of his courtship ritual.

RVC: Fort Smith was and is a great place to grow up because it's still traditional. The people know animal secrets and stories and I'm drawn to any partnerships or meetings between humans and animals. Look at "Wolf Medicine: A Ceremony of You" in *The Moon of Letting Go*. Talk about sensuality!

SV: I'm reminded of Richard Wagamese's comment that animals are the Ojibways' (Anishinaabe people's) first teachers (142). Do Dené peoples have a similar belief?

RVC: I'd say they're teachers through and through in partnership with what the land and seasons can teach you.

SV: In *The Lesser Blessed*, Larry tells the Tlicho Creation story: a human woman delivers six puppies and realizes that they turn into toddlers when she's not looking. She manages to catch three of them when they're still human, and they're the first Dogribs. Sam McKegney's take is the three puppies who turn back into dogs and are killed by their mother are those who wanted to escape from their responsibilities as part of the People. So the three living puppy children may be associated with Larry, Juliet, and Johnny, even if Johnny's a Métis and Juliet's Caucasian (206, 216-17).

But Larry speaks from his experience and sees it as a story about child abuse (Vranckx 301). Is it a misreading or part of his role as a traditional storyteller—adapting traditional stories to new contexts?

RVC: Wow. I've never considered it before. I have great respect for Sam and he's just brilliant. I never tell anyone they're wrong with their interpretations of my writing. I support him always!

SV: Speaking of animals and impish figures, you've written a lot about Raven—who's a Trickster on much of the West Coast, among very different landscapes and peoples. You wrote "Why Ravens Smile to Little Old Ladies as They Walk By" and adapted your short story "Raven" into a children's

book, *A Man Called Raven*—not to forget Raven Talk in *The Lesser Blessed*. What are the specificities of the Dogrib Raven?

RVC: I can't speak for the Tlicho Dené, but ravens are way smarter than they let on. My buddy Mike Mahussier told me they can remember faces, and that line made it into "The Fleshing" and "On the Wings of This Prayer." Ravens are Contraries biding their time. They're dethroned from something ancient and they're winged wonders all at the same time.

SV: "Why Ravens Smile to Little Old Ladies as They Walk By," about a woman Elder who hides Raven's tongue up her "unmentionables" (!) and comes to enjoy it, is a very naughty story![3] It ties in with the need to have healthy representations of Aboriginal sexuality, and with your work in *Kiss Me Deadly* and Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm's *Without Reservation*. The sexuality of elders is a very taboo topic.

RVC: I love writing erotica. It's fun and sexy and taboo and I always have this wish that when you read one of my books, you're being welcomed into "an event." I don't want it to be one steady hum for you all the way through. I want gossip stories, funny stories, blushing stories, scary stories, wondrous stories. I want you to recognize past stories making their way into new ones and if you never read one of my stories again, my wish is that you wonder about the ones you did years later. Now that's medicine power!

SV: And I love your own "Trickster spirit": you looked like you wouldn't answer my earlier question about Larry, but you've done so indirectly when you've just said "past stories making their way into new ones"—mahsi cho!

RVC: You're welcome.

SV: Since we're talking about supernatural entities, the Plains Cree have a concept of the artist as "tapping into the Great Mystery / the Life Force" (mamâhtâwisiwin) (McLeod 11, 97-100) . . .

RVC: I think of the word "orgasm" when I hear that sentence. Ha ha!

SV: This is very deep either way. Well, I'm reminded of this when you say the characters walk into your life. Do Torchy, Larry, Bear serve you, or is it the other way around?

RVC: When it comes to me and my characters, we enlist and honour each other. If I hear a heartbreaking story, I think, "Hmm. Which one of my gladiators shall I send into battle?" But then, in the crafting and combing of tangled hair of a story, the right voice and life emerges. It's alchemy and sorcery all rolled up into one.

SV: Maybe every good writer "taps into the Mystery"?

RVC: The Lakota have a saying: "May the Great Mystery always put a sunrise in your

heart." My wish is that's what my writing and storytelling does for all who discover my work. My stories, ultimately, are my love letters to and for humanity.

SV: How would you define "the Mystery" and "inkwo"?

RVC: "Inkwo"'s translated as medicine power. My grandparents had medicine power and I'm honoured to always hear how they helped people when they were alive.

SV: A lot of the medicine in your stories is also tied to Louise Erdrich's "survival humour," like Bear training to be a ninja to avenge Wendy's molestation in *Sword of Antlers*.

RVC: I think many young men don't know how to be "warriors" now and that families have lost how to honour young men and women and welcome them into their inheritance of power and grace and—for Bear who's outraged that his cousin was molested—the ninja is the only image he has of a warrior who can take revenge. But many of my characters set out to do one thing and they're welcomed into another. Perhaps that's my definition of "the Great Mystery."

SV: Mahsi cho, Richard!

RVC: Mahsi cho! Be safe!

NOTES

1 This interview uses the term "Native" to designate the peoples formerly known as "Indians," while "Aboriginal" also encompasses the Métis and Inuit. "Indigenous" is used as a broader term for the tribal descendants of the original peoples of the world. Finally, "Tlicho" and "Dogrib" appear interchangeably as Van Camp's preferred terms for his Nation, which is part of the Athabascan group like the Slaveys, the Chipweyans, and the Navajos.

2 *"That's Raven Talk"* by Mareike Neuhaus studies the holophrase (one-word sentence in Amerindian languages) and its phrasal equivalents in Aboriginal Canadian literatures in English. It includes a chapter on *The Lesser Blessed*.

3 For an in-depth analysis of this short story, see Kelly.

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Dave Margoshes

Darkness*

"I have faith in nights," Rilke wrote, his eyes
on the great power he felt moving beside him.
He was one of many, a slender man alone
on an endless horizon where the chances
of thicker men are better. Thick, thin, the power
he felt makes no distinction now, leveling
all it comes across without bias or favour,
pulling in everything to fire's bright circle
of light, fencing in the world, trumping
darkness. But Rilke's night, the darkness
he came from, endures, it gathers
its own power, sees itself through to dawn,
when it's safe to shut its eyes.

* After "You darkness," by Rainer Maria Rilke

Mareike Neuhaus

Reading the Prairies Relationally

Louise Bernice Halfe and "Spacious Creation"

How do you read the literatures emerging from the prairies, literatures that are just as diverse and contested as the land itself? An exploratory answer is offered in the following discussion that examines the question of how prairie criticism might engage in a meaningful, ethical way with the Aboriginal texts growing out of the prairie region. For this purpose, I will read the work of Cree poet Louise Bernice Halfe as a performance of mamâhtâwisiwin—"the process of tapping into the Great Mystery" (McLeod, "Cree Poetic Discourse" 109)—before discussing how such a nationalist reading of Cree literature may be put in relation to prairie writing, while maintaining the distinctness of each tradition. In its attempt to make sense of the relationship between different literary traditions growing out of the same region, my essay relies on two critically distinct approaches—one grounded in Cree traditions of language and thought, as explicated by Neal McLeod (Cree), and the other based in Euro-Western literary theory. Ultimately, this essay argues for such a relational approach—an approach that, modelled on Creek scholar Tol Foster's notion of relational regionalism, has literary critics negotiate and move between different literary and critical traditions, assuming the role of translators.

How to Read the Prairies?

As Alison Calder and Robert Wardhaugh have aptly pointed out, prairie literary studies have long taken "the moment of settler contact with the prairie environment . . . as the originary moment of prairie culture" (10). As a result, the field has largely ignored the work of Aboriginal writers and

scholars growing out of the region. In order not to "risk obsolescence," Calder and Wardhaugh argue, prairies criticism therefore needs to "diversify the field" by including Aboriginal voices in its exploration of prairie regional culture and "to explore why our field has become so narrow" (10). It is important to remember that Calder and Wardhaugh's observation points to a concern shared primarily by non-Indigenous scholars. (Indigenous literary scholars will likely and, one may add, understandably have little interest in the state of prairie literary studies.) Risking obsolescence is one thing, but there is more at stake, as I am sure Calder and Wardhaugh will agree: acknowledging the existence and legitimacy of alternative sets of stories being told on the prairies is ultimately a matter of respect. Indeed, this circumstance also points to the critical challenge implied by Calder and Wardhaugh's call, for a blind inclusion of Aboriginal voices into prairie literature and criticism will only risk silencing the very voices prairie critics seek to engage. The ending of Rudy Wiebe's "Where is the Voice Coming From?" may be used to illustrate this issue. Wiebe ends his reconstruction of the story of Almighty Voice with the following description of Almighty's death chant:[1]

> And there is a voice. It is an incredible voice that rises from among the young poplars ripped of their spring bark, from among the dead somewhere lying there, out of the arm-deep pit shorter than a man; . . . a voice so high and clear, so unbelievably high and strong in its unending wordless cry.
> . . .
> I say "wordless cry" because that is the way it sounds to me. I could be more accurate if I had a reliable interpreter who would make a reliable interpretation. For I do not, of course, understand the Cree myself. (143)

In this passage, the phrase "of course" would have passed without question at the time the story was published. Of course, someone who was not Cree did not speak the language and, sadly, many of Wiebe's Cree contemporaries did not speak it either, as a result of the residential schools' enforcement of the speaking of English. Yet, for a writer who has engaged so intimately with Cree and other Indigenous traditions throughout much of his career, the phrasal adjunct "of course" is strangely out of tune—almost ironic. Why *should* it almost go without saying that a white person would not speak Cree? At the time Wiebe wrote the story, this ending may have marked his realization that his almost obsessive interest in the Indigenous past in "his" region might be seen as appropriative. He may be using his inability to understand the Cree language as a way of marking a national boundary. Furthermore, his implication that a "reliable" translation of a Cree man's

death song might be possible is either blinkered or ironic. Forty years after the story's publication, however, its ending can also be read as a challenge to prairie critics to learn Cree as part of their regional critical education. They should become translators or Aboriginal literatures will remain to them but one powerful but "wordless cry." To ethically engage with Aboriginal stories emerging from the prairies means, above all else, to learn to listen to these stories; and for non-Aboriginal critics, this implies learning a new language, one that has both literary and critical dimensions.

Non-European voices turn the prairies, as they have long been theorized, into a space where Warren Cariou (Métis) notes, "alternative set[s] of parameters and paradigms" are brought into play ("Occasions" 29). Writers such as Suzette Mayr, Hiromi Goto, Sally Ito, Ven Begamudré, and Madeline Coopsammy offer new perspectives on the writing produced on the prairies, as do Aboriginal poets and novelists such as Louise Bernice Halfe, Tomson Highway (Cree), Gregory Scofield (Métis), Neal McLeod, or Marilyn Dumont (Métis). It may be tempting to group the works of these diverse authors under the heading "prairie literature"; yet Cariou rightly questions whether the term can "remain useful, . . . given the multicultural differences and the decolonizing imperatives of much contemporary literature that emanates from this region" ("Occasions" 29). The one alternative term that has been suggested, Jon Fiorentino and Robert Kroetsch's "post-prairie," seems inadequate to engage the specific concerns of Nêhiyawak (Cree), Métis, Tsuu T'ina (Sarcee), Nahoda (Stoney), Saulteaux (Plains Anishinaabe), Siksika, Kainai (Blood), or Pikuni (Piegan)[2] storywriters and storytellers. Whatever the term used, Indigenous nationalist critics—such as Robert Warrior (Osage), Craig Womack (Muskogee Creek), or Jace Weaver (Cherokee) in the United States and Janice Acoose (Cree-Métis), Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee), or Neal McLeod in Canada—have made a very strong argument against the corralling of Indigenous literatures into Euro-Western canons, whether national or regional. Indigenous nations of the Plains are distinct peoples with distinct literary and intellectual traditions that need to be read from within those very traditions in order to adequately address the particular concerns and forms of these literatures, particularly as they relate to the politics and histories of specific tribal or national communities. To subsume these literary traditions into the body of prairie literature therefore amounts to colonialism.

To further complicate the question of "inclusion," "prairies" as used and understood in prairie studies is a word foreign to the peoples indigenous to

this part of the country. "Prairies" describes a region whose very political, cultural, and social specificities always also imply a colonial project. More specifically, the word conjures up the politics of regionalism in a modern settler nation-state and, by implication, the histories of colonialism and settlement: the hunting to extinction of the buffalo, the different waves of immigration, the homesteading, the numbered treaties, the two Métis resistances, the building of the railway, etc. The peoples indigenous to what is now referred to as "the prairies," on the other hand, share a *storied* connection to this land. Aboriginal stories emerging from the prairies are not so much about the land as they grow out of it, defining and anchoring the people who tell these stories. Story thus becomes a performance of peoplehood, which is commonly theorized as "a holistic matrix" of four interdependent social concepts—language, sacred history, land/territory, and the ceremonial cycle (Holm, Pearson, and Chavis 15)—that keep the people in balance with themselves and the world around them. Further, the storied connection to the land shared by the Plains Indigenous nations proves to transcend colonial political borders and thus further complicates the "project of inclusion" advocated by Calder and Wardhaugh. Blackfoot/Blackfeet literary traditions are home to what is now Alberta *and* Montana, but "including" the work of Blackfeet writers in Montana would certainly upset settler conceptions of the prairies as a Canadian region that ends at the 49th parallel. The question of "inclusion" ultimately points to much larger issues, then, such as the notion of what constitutes the prairies in the first place and, more importantly, how to theorize the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal literatures.

Indigenous literary nationalists have made a very convincing argument that Indigenous literary traditions are best theorized as sovereign traditions, but sovereignty need not by definition imply separatism at the political level. In fact, I believe that prairie criticism will have to address the fact that the stories it has studied in the past are not the only stories growing out of this region. The different sets of stories I am concerned with in this essay—one Aboriginal, the other non-Aboriginal—are usually imagined as contraries, as two entities that contradict each other. What if one were to imagine this relationship using a different perspective? One in which these sets of stories are constructed not as contraries but as *relatives*, using a different topos, that of *difference*? In other words, I suggest focusing, as J. Edward Chamberlin proposes, on "com[ing] together in agreement not about what to believe but about what it is to believe" (240). Chamberlin's argument for accepting the

validity of both sets of stories, Aboriginal *and* non-Aboriginal, is modelled on Aboriginal intellectual traditions ("all my relations") and has profound ethical consequences for the work of non-Aboriginal literary critics. It requires them to move between distinct literary and intellectual traditions and, thus, to honour that the relationship between Indigenous literary traditions of the prairies and prairie writing is of an *external* nature: they are not two parts of a whole. Rather, they are distinct entities that exist within a larger context, the legacy of history. Thus, "prairie culture" will always be prairie culture because the very notion of "prairies" as a unique historical, cultural, and social category is non-Aboriginal; and yet, there are contexts in which prairie critics will need to *engage with* Aboriginal texts—for example, when teaching prairie literature and history or in such new and vibrant fields as ecocriticism. Not only are these contexts of encounter unavoidable, but they will also become increasingly important for the future of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations on the prairies and beyond.

The model I am advocating here is, then, a relational model that allows prairie scholars to study Aboriginal texts wherever they see connections to prairie texts, without silencing the very voices they seek to engage with. As such, this model borrows from an emerging strand in Indigenous literary criticism focused on relations—a central category in Indigenous intellectual, spiritual, and political traditions (reflected, for example, in "all my relations"). One such relational approach, "relational regionalism," has been proposed by Tol Foster in order to argue for region as a critical tool in examining the relations between communities and the issues that result from these relationships. For Foster, region is a significant frame for critical inquiry, but he also notes that he understands "a regional framework as one that is not actually coherent without more specific tribal studies that serve to buttress and challenge it": in order to understand the world around us, we need to know ourselves first, and that knowledge may indeed include all the intellectual tools needed to understand that outside world (269). When Foster points to relations as a central tool "through which we can understand ourselves and each other" (277), he does so by emphasizing that relationships always imply both "interactions and conflicts between communities" (273). The notion of relational regionalism is, then, neither simplistic nor conciliatory. As Foster emphasizes, the aim of making relations a main lens through which to read literature and history "is emphatically *not* the leveling of distinction or hierarchy, the contention that we are all the same, but that even within the constraints of hierarchy and different levels of maturity

and expertise we are nonetheless intricately bound to each other" (278). Indeed, what makes relational regionalism a radical approach is its intention to read Indigenous-settler relations from a decidedly *Indigenous* point of view by "privileg[ing] the local and the tribal" (268). It thus offers positions that discussions of this relationship tend to undermine because they are dominated by settler traditions of writing and thought, which have long marginalized, suppressed, disregarded, and appropriated Indigenous voices and intellectual traditions.

Similarly, the relational reading of the prairies I discuss here involves not just any kind of comparative literary approach, but one that also builds on specific traditions of Aboriginal thought and thus allows Aboriginal voices to exist in their own stories and traditions. Like Tol Foster, I believe that a relational framework can be successful in putting alongside each other the different sets of stories emerging from a particular region, but only if this framework is based on studies that pay close attention to the specificities of these sets of stories. More specifically, I want to argue that the only way for prairie critics to dialogue with the Aboriginal voices is to translate and navigate between specific Aboriginal and Euro-Western literary and intellectual traditions, giving each the same careful attention as the other. Doing so, they would follow the example of Aboriginal thinkers who, more often than not, know both intellectual traditions, their own and the colonizers'.

As suggested above, such a relational reading of the prairies will require critics to learn a new language of criticism. In order to discuss this relational model of criticism, I will thus offer a reading of Louise Bernice Halfe's poetry as grounded in Cree traditions of thought, before examining how this nationalist reading differs from Euro-Western approaches to Aboriginal texts. Finally, I will discuss why these differences should matter to non-Aboriginal critics. For this purpose, I will explore specific contexts of encounter in which prairie critics may find themselves engaging with Aboriginal texts. Though a challenge to prairie literary studies—they require critics to navigate between different literary and critical traditions—these contexts of encounters ultimately have much to contribute to prairie criticism in the twenty-first century.

The Poetic Dreaming of Louise Bernice Halfe

English is neither *lingua franca* nor *lingua nullius* but a highly varied language whose national and regional nuances carry a large bundle of meaning. Rather than becoming willing subjects of (neo)colonial linguistic practices,

Indigenous peoples have claimed English for their own purposes of exercising rhetorical sovereignty, defined by Scott Lyons (Anishinaabe/Mdewakanton Dakota) as "the inherent right and ability of *peoples* to determine their own communicative needs and desires in [their] pursuit [of sovereignty], to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse" (449-50). Rhetorical sovereignty is not restricted to speaking or writing but concerns the whole process of communication, including the very ways in which language is viewed and valued. In her poetry, Louise Bernice Halfe switches between English, Cree, and a Cree-inflected English, not so much to produce polyphony as to create a decidedly Cree voice in the English language. Thus, Halfe's "Cree-ing loud into [her] night" (*Blue Marrow* 16) gives birth to poems deeply involved with the continuation of Cree stories on Cree terms—stories whose origins lie in Cree literary and rhetorical traditions or mamâhtâwisiwin.

Neal McLeod links mamâhtâwisiwin to what he calls "Cree poetics." For McLeod, the process of poetry constitutes "a first order act of theory and critical thinking" ("Cree Poetic Discourse" 117). Storytellers are kâ-mamâhtâwisiwak, those that tap into the Great Mystery; as "poetic dreamers," they function as the keepers of the "ancient poetic pathways" that constitute Cree ancestral knowledge (113). This knowledge is based not in discourses of science but in a "metaphorical discourse, composed of symbolic and poetic descriptions of the world and [Cree] experiences, [that] saturates and permeates Cree narrative memory" (109). Cree poetics, McLeod further writes, "link human beings to the rest of the world through the process of mamâhtâwisiwin, the process of tapping into the Great Mystery, which, in turn, is mediated by historicity and wâhkôhtowin (kinship)" (109). In Cree contexts, storytelling is therefore intricately linked to the creation and keeping of knowledge, including the people's collective memory. The poetic pathways that constitute Cree knowledge, according to McLeod, are always "embodied understandings": they indicate the storyteller's "location in understanding the world and reality" (113). At the heart of this embodied understanding of the world therefore lies "'wâhkôhtowin' (kinship/relationships)," which McLeod translates as "poetics of empathy": "Through relations we are able to create the web of understanding of our embodied locations and stretch it outwards to a wider context of collective historicity and through a poetics grounded in dialogue and an open-ended flow of narrative understanding" (114). In other words, kâ-mamâhtâwisiwak ê-ânisko-âcimocik: those that tap into the Great

Mystery, "they connect through telling stories" (110); evoking ancestral knowledge, contemporary poetic dreamers fulfil their "moral responsibility to remember" (111). McLeod describes this process as "intra-narrative dialogue (âniskwâpitamâcimowin 'the act of inter-textual connecting')" (117). âniskwâpitamâcimowin[3]—connecting through story—is central to mamâhtâwisiwin because it marks that process through which Cree poetic and intellectual traditions grow and develop organically: "retravel[ling] and indeed expand[ing]" ancestral knowledge, contemporary Cree storytellers perform kinship and create a future for their people through narrative imagination, which becomes the driving force of Cree memory (117, 121).

In her most recent collection, *The Crooked Good*, Louise Bernice Halfe ê-âniskwâpitamâcimot ("she connects through intertextual dialogue") in order to recover the female voices that have become hidden and oppressed in the process of colonization. More specifically, *The Crooked Good* engages directly with Cree mythical past through an elaborate retelling and interpretation of the story of cihcipiscikwân (Rolling Head), an âtayôhkêwin (sacred narrative) that forms part of the wîsâhkêhcâhk cycle, the Cree story of Creation. It tells the story of a woman whose husband beheads her upon learning that she has been having an affair with a snake. The husband ascends to heaven, becoming the morning star, as does his wife's torso, which turns into the evening star, forever chasing after the husband in the sky. The woman's head, on the other hand, rolls over the land in search of her two fleeing sons (one of them turns out to be wîsahkêhcâhk, the Cree culture hero and elder brother). Equipped with four powerful gifts from their father, the boys eventually manage to escape into safety, while Rolling Head drowns, her head sinking to the ground of a deep lake and becoming a sturgeon (Halfe, "Keynote Address" 66-68).

The Crooked Good's retelling of cihcipiscikwân-âtayôhkêwin ("the sacred narrative of Rolling Head") is framed as a storytelling performance: the collection's first-person narrator ê-kwêskît ("Turn-Around Woman") remembers her mother telling her children the story of Rolling Head one winter night (19-29). *The Crooked Good* is therefore clearly marked as embodied understanding, and doubly so. For the narrator's remembering of her mother's storytelling performance frames her own interpretation of cihcipiscikwân-âtayôhkêwin in the light of her own life story, "this story" that she tells the readers (3). *The Crooked Good*, then, is âcimisowin, a "story about oneself" or autobiographical story (Wolfart 246). Since Cree notions of identity are always communal, however, the life story ê-kwêskît shares in

the poem is also the story of her family, particularly that of her mother and sisters—a story of sexual and racial abuse that is representative of the stories of many Cree and other Aboriginal women across North America.

Framed as an interpretation of Cree sacred history from a Cree feminist perspective—that is, as âniskwâpitamâcimowin—*The Crooked Good* is a perfect example of mamâhtâwisiwin, the process of poetic dreaming that involves the retelling and interpreting of ancient stories in the light of new experiences: in this case, colonialism and its gendered violence against Cree iskwêwak and other Aboriginal women. Halfe highlights the very process of mamâhtâwisiwin through the use of meta-fiction. ê-kwêskît makes references to her performances of memory in the text—"The embers are starlight / in memory's cave" (29); "I am old. Old. / I've devoured my eggs / every mating moon. Lost my memory" (79); she even names the ancient story keepers (âtayôhkanak) when she points to them as "the origin of stories and the source of poetic insight" (McLeod, "Cree Poetic Discourse" 112-13).

> In Rib Woman
> stories are born.
> The Old Man called it psychology. Me,
> I just dream it.
> *These gifted mysterious people of long ago,*
> kayâs kî-mamâhtâwisiwak iyiniwak,
> my mother, Gone-For-Good, would say.
> *They never died. They are scattered here, there,*
> *everywhere, somewhere. They know the language,*
> *the sleep, the dream, the laws, these singers, these healers,*
> âtayôhkanak, *these ancient story keepers*
> I, Turn-Around Woman, am not one of them. (Halfe, *The Crooked Good* 3)

Particularly noteworthy in this passage is ê-kwêskît's use of the verb mamâhtâwisi, "to tap into the Great Mystery," which is repeated twice in the collection (22, 26) and, according to McLeod, also describes wîsâhkêhcâhk, the Cree elder brother and "first ceremonialist" who is said to have been the first to mamâhtâwisi ("Cree Poetic Discourse" 112). Most importantly, however, Halfe pursues the process of mamâhtâwisiwin through the deliberate rooting in cihcipiscikwân-âtayôhkêwin of the women's stories shared in *The Crooked Good*. cihcipiscikwân and her presence in contemporary life as "Rib Woman" ("In Rib Woman / stories are born") are the origin of âniskwâpitamâcimowin, the intertextual connecting that Halfe practises in *The Crooked Good*. The result is nothing short of creating a tangible future for nêhiyawak, the Cree people.

Learning a New Language of Criticism

Relying on the work of Neal McLeod, my discussion of Halfe's poetry has deliberately avoided using critical models and terms that grow out of Euro-Western intellectual traditions. "Names define and articulate a place within society and the world," McLeod writes. "Indigenous names are absolutely essential for the description of Indigenous realities" ("Cree Poetic Discourse" 111). The late Cree elder Sarah Whitecalf said it best when she argued that "kinêhiyâwiwininaw, nêhiyawêwin": "our Creeness [is] our Cree language" (28-29). What is interesting about Whitecalf's observation is her use of the second word, nêhiyawêwin, which is generally translated as "Cree language." A closer analysis, however, reveals that nêhiyawêwin is really a nominalization of the verb nêhiyawê, which is best rendered as "nêhiyawing" or "Cree-doing": "The language, as a core activity that differentiates *nêhiyaw* people from all others . . . is the most natural thing to think of when thinking of 'doing *nêhiyaw*'" (Muehlbauer n. pag.). But of course, Cree-doing also extends to other activities and realities, such as mamâhtâwisiwin and âniskwâpitamâcimowin. To "translate" Euro-Western critical terminology into Cree terms is, then, not a mere linguistic exercise, replacing one word with another; rather, it amounts to learning new critical tools which are fully grounded in Cree traditions of thought and without which non-Indigenous critics will never be able to understand and teach Cree literature.

For example, understanding Louise Bernice Halfe's work means to become fully aware of its literary and intellectual contexts. Of course, *The Crooked Good* showcases lyric and documentary uses of language. From a Cree perspective, however, it is a continuation of Cree traditions that only happen to fit the characteristics of the long poem. Because "genre is quintessentially intertextual" (Briggs and Bauman 147), reading Halfe's poetry within the generic framework of the long poem creates a discussion that is mediated through other texts of this genre, such as Robert Kroetsch's *Seed Catalogue*, Eli Mandel's *Out of Place*, Aritha van Herk's *Calgary, This Growing Graveyard*, or David Arnason's *Marsh Burning*. While establishing such relationships is valid (regardless of the fact that Halfe is familiar with these traditions), strictly Euro-Western-based approaches to Halfe's work fall short of engaging the Cree intellectual traditions informing her work, thereby cutting it off from prior Cree discourse. To read *The Crooked Good* respectfully therefore is to read it as grounded in Cree intellectual thought. By re-telling and interpreting Cree traditions and linking them to new experiences, such as colonialism, Halfe contributes to the Cree "body poetic"

which, for McLeod, is not just a more or less loose ensemble of works but a textual body that "connects [Cree] living bodies to the living earth around [them]" ("Cree Poetic Discourse" 109). mamâhtâwisiwin produces Cree narrative memory that, McLeod writes, "is more than simply storytelling" (*Cree Narrative Memory* 7): it creates kinship, not just among Crees, but also between the people and the land. To ignore the groundedness of contemporary Cree texts in Cree traditions thus risks undermining Cree peoplehood.

Similarly, what McLeod calls âniskwâpitamâcimowin may be described as "metonymic intertextuality," one central type of intertextuality distinguished by Renate Lachmann that is created through participation: old and new "texts, in a sense, enter into one another" (305). Deeply concerned with the struggle toward decolonization, Halfe engages Cree traditions through participatory processes, creating memory by explicitly linking new experiences to ancestral knowledges. Again, it may be asked what is gained from theorizing Halfe's tendency to use primarily metonymic intertextuality in her work as âniskwâpitamâcimowin. For one, our reading of her work becomes grounded in nêhiyawêwin; two, we avoid the fixity of much Euro-Western literary terminology by emphasizing a process rather than a result, namely, the process of creating a connection between past, present, and future generations—what might well be called wâhkôhtowin. A reading of Halfe's work as based in âniskwâpitamâcimowin points to the role of language and stories in the creation of memory and its importance for the continuance of nêhiyawak. In short, the notion of âniskwâpitamâcimowin helps focus attention to the lived experiences of contemporary Cree people, thus bridging the gap between literature and real-life issues and concerns.

Finally, there is the notion of mamâhtâwisiwin. McLeod provides a definition of the term, describing it as "Cree poetics" without, however, really explicating his notion of "poetics" ("Cree Poetic Discourse" 109). His point, I assume, is to provide readers, especially non-Aboriginal scholars, with a frame of reference. Curiously enough, McLeod's account of mamâhtâwisiwin makes *interpretation* the underlying frame for the process of making art (*poiesis*, "to make"): poetic dreamers ê-mamâhtâwisicik; they produce "poetic descriptions of the world" based on "embodied understandings" ("Cree Poetic Discourse" 113). All these observations point to an effort to explain, to learn the meaning of something. The same motivation is found in Halfe's description of *The Crooked Good* as her "efforts to unravel the . . . philosophy" of cihcipiscikwân-âtayôhkêwin, "its psychology and spirituality" ("Keynote Address" 73). There

are no descriptions in McLeod's discussion of mamâhtâwisiwin of the specific elements of language that are inevitably part of the process of making art in Cree contexts, such as figures of speech, narrative structures, or the generic conventions of âcimowin and âtayôhkêwin—all those rhetorical features that ultimately denote Cree rhetorical sovereignty. Obviously, mamâhtâwisiwin describes not just the art of making and reading poetic discourse (as poetics is usually theorized in Euro-Western contexts); rather, mamâhtâwisiwin also denotes a particular way of being in the world, the lived space of Cree experiences.

Learning a new language of criticism is the first step for prairie critics who seek to engage with Aboriginal voices emerging from the prairies in a respectful and ethical way. The relational model of criticism I am envisioning here is not just built on difference, however; as a comparative approach, it cannot work unless critics move and navigate between Euro-Western and Indigenous traditions of thought when reading the prairies—which brings me to the question of where a relational model of criticism might be applied in prairie contexts.

Contexts of Encounter: Reading the Prairies Relationally

There are various contexts in which prairie critics may find themselves engaging with Aboriginal voices. One such important context of encounter between prairie and Aboriginal literary traditions, though one that is often neglected, is the university classroom. Although I argue against subsuming Aboriginal texts under the heading of "prairie literature," I believe that, respectfully done, courses on prairie writing may benefit from the inclusion of Aboriginal texts because they provide alternative voices that challenge common conceptions of the region. One could imagine numerous different scenarios here, such as reading Rudy Wiebe's *The Temptations of Big Bear* right next to Cree elder Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw's discussion of oskiciy (pipestem) and its use during the signing of Treaty Six at Fort Carleton in 1876. Or studying Roger Epp's "We Are All Treaty People" alongside *City Treaty* by the late Cree poet Marvin Francis. In fact, reading all four of these texts in dialogue with each other raises important questions regarding conceptions of history and society. How do non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people interpret pivotal events on the prairies? Filtered through a perspective that is essentially Christian (Wiebe, *Temptations*; also see Howells 162) or as grounded in Cree spirituality (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw)? How do they read the treaties and their relevance for people living on the prairies today? As

a social contract à la Hobbes and Locke, granting rights to both parties (Epp), or as a promise to share with strangers what can ultimately never be possessed, a promise that fell on deaf ears ("How about a / mcTreaty™ / Would you like some lies with that?" [Francis 6])? Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw's speeches contribute to Cree linguistics and ethnography, but read from a Cree perspective, they are kakêskihkêmowina ("counselling texts"; Wolfart 246). When Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw turns to Cree notions of spirituality—the pipestem's presence during a meeting or gathering turns any promises made into sacred vows (Muehlbauer n. pag.)—and Cree oral history (the signing of Treaty Six) in order to criticize contemporary issues (the breaking of the treaties), he is practising nothing other than mamâhtâwisiwin. Similarly, Francis' poetry has been described, applying postmodern models, as work of "an insurgent, a shit-disturbing trickster" (Fiorentino and Kroetsch 13). From a Cree point of view, however, Francis relies on âniskwâpitamâcimowin when he re-interprets Cree mythical past in order to offer a contemporary, urban rendering of the Cree elder brother that argues against the continuous exploitation of Indigenous peoples in what has essentially always been a global, corporate, and capitalist undertaking (Cariou, "How Come" 151, 155-56). A truly relational reading of these four texts does more than juxtapose conflicting positions, then; it also relies on two distinct critical sets through which to analyze the texts, thus emphasizing the very conflicts raised by them as well as what causes these conflicts in the first place: different ways of knowing and looking at the world.

Louise Bernice Halfe's poetry, too, works well in the classroom when, for example, juxtaposed with such prominent prairie poems as Robert Kroetsch's "Stone Hammer Poem" or John Newlove's "The Pride." The argument put forward in these poems—that the poet invents the prairies by turning it into a poem, thus claiming ownership of the land (Fee 19-21; Dyck 80-81)—marks an expression of settler nationalism in prairie literary history that has been criticized by both Indigenous scholars and postcolonial critics. In a course on the history of prairie poetry, including a discussion of Halfe's poetry as the product of a process that her people have always engaged in can serve very meaningful purposes, not just of critiquing the underlying presumptions in "Stone Hammer Poem" and "The Pride," but also of exposing students to other forms of knowledge-making and -keeping besides Euro-Western traditions. Reading *The Crooked Good* from within Cree intellectual traditions points to the existence of those very elements that Kroetsch and Newlove construct as absent in Aboriginal traditions—

spiritual and poetic relations to the land. As Kroetsch describes it, Aboriginal people see the stone, and by implication the land, as purely functional: "it is a million / years older than / the hand that / chipped stone or / raised slough / water (or blood)" (2). Further, reading Halfe's poetry from within Cree intellectual traditions also highlights those very connotations that make mamâhtâwisiwin and âniskwâpitamâcimowin such potent descriptors of Cree literature.

Those very spiritual and poetic relations to the land also play a pivotal role in another context of encounter between prairie and Aboriginal literatures. One important area in which prairie criticism is already working with Aboriginal texts is ecocriticism. Jenny Kerber's analysis of the writing of Louise Bernice Halfe and Thomas King (Cherokee) in *Writing in Dust* comes to mind here, though her analysis is still largely focused on what Kristina Fagan (NunatuKavut) has called a "'cultural' approach" that separates Aboriginal cultures from Aboriginal politics (13-14), and hence from the lived experiences of Aboriginal peoples and the political dimensions of such issues as climate change. When, after years spent in Toronto, the narrator in Halfe's *The Crooked Good* drives west, she speaks of returning "to *nêhiyânâhk*," Cree country (70). Interestingly, the word "prairies" does not figure in her description of home, which she refers to either as nêhiyânâhk or, more notably, as tawinikêwin (69), a word that is translated in the poem's glossary as "spacious beautiful, abundance of land; a cleared space; spacious creation" (130). Halfe's description of the land as "spacious creation" has both spiritual and political undertones. Euro-Western intellectual traditions have a history of ignoring, undermining, and downplaying Aboriginal notions of kinship which include, as suggested in *The Crooked Good*, relationships to the other-than-human, particularly the land. As noted above, Aboriginal models of people- and nationhood are built as an intricate web of four interdependent social concepts: language, sacred history, the ceremonial cycle, and land/territory. If any one of these elements is diminished or destroyed, peoplehood is at stake. Thus, environmental issues on prairies are always also political issues and ultimately concern the question of Aboriginal sovereignties. In *Writing in Dust*, Kerber rightly argues that "Environmental issues . . . can serve as key points of entry into a series of difficult-yet-necessary conversations" between different groups of people inhabiting the prairies today, including Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (19), but these conversations will be fruitful only if people are willing to listen to each other. As far as settler society is concerned, this

listening to Aboriginal perspectives and concerns implies acknowledging and respecting Aboriginal notions of peoplehood and, by implication, Aboriginal sovereignties. All of which is to say, a prairie ecocriticism that acknowledges and respects Aboriginal ways of knowing when engaging with Aboriginal texts could serve as an important role model for the kind of conversations to which Kerber is alluding. It is true that Aboriginal literary nationalism is a challenge to prairie literary studies because it complicates traditional notions of the prairie region. At the same time, this complication actually has much to offer the field, particularly such subfields as prairie ecocriticism. For one, Aboriginal literary nationalism promotes Indigenous ways of knowing and thinking which should play an important role in addressing the environmental issues facing the Canadian prairies today. Further, by challenging Euro-Western constructions of the prairies/plains region in North America, nationalist approaches to Aboriginal literatures emphasize the transnational dimensions of environmental issues, such as climate change. Finally, Aboriginal literary nationalism focuses attention on the political dimensions of ecocriticism: how do we make sure that resources are shared fairly and that the effects of climate change are distributed evenly?

Non-Indigenous critics cannot assume that the tools of their trade are the only critical models available to read and understand texts, however broadly defined. Nor can non-Indigenous critics assume that their traditions of reading—primarily grounded in discourses and practices that originate in Western Europe—are adequate for an ethical approach to texts that originate in intellectual traditions very different from their own. Hence, my argument for a relational model that will allow prairie literary studies to engage with Aboriginal literary voices, all the while respecting that these voices form canons of their own. Proposing this relational model, I do not mean to suggest that all prairie criticism be relational or engage with Aboriginal voices; at the same time, however, prairie literary studies cannot turn a blind eye to the other stories emerging from the region and needs to learn how to engage with these stories—just as much as the future of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations will depend on whether non-Aboriginal people will learn to listen to and understand Aboriginal people. Learning to understand alternative ways of theorizing is naturally a process that may arguably never really end, but it is a worthwhile project. How else is reconciliation to work if non-Aboriginal people, whether they live on the prairies or not, refuse to acknowledge that there may be more than one way of reading, whether of stories, history, the land, or the world as such?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An earlier draft of this essay was presented at "Spaces/Memories: 2nd Colloquium of the Canadian Literature Centre" (University of Alberta, 14-15 Oct. 2011); the conference organizers and the Gesellschaft für Kanada-Studien (Association for Canadian Studies in German-Speaking Countries) provided travel grants for which I have been very grateful.

NOTES

1 In 1895, Almighty Voice, a Cree man from the One Arrow reserve, was arrested for killing a government cow but he escaped from jail, thus unleashing a manhunt that eventually ended with his death in gunfire in 1897 (Hanson, "Kitchi-Manito-Waya" n. pag.).
2 The Siksika, Kainai, and Pikuni are the three nations of the Blackfoot/Blackfeet.
3 Cree is still very much an oral language and does not rely on punctuation and capitalization as does English. To reflect this, I have avoided italics and capital letters for all Cree words and sentences throughout the text, unless they appear in quoted matter.

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Jeff Steudel

Scape

The garden's Salvador Dali. An invitation
to an early supper. You marvel at his thin, horse hair
paintbrush, his exacting flair with his moustache. You
set down the Pinot Gris. A fresh cut tomato sprinkled
with pepper. You say, it's the Irish way. He says,
all the salt in Almeria. You take a bite as you look out
at the Mediterranean. It shimmers. Fresh sheets on a long line.
You think, Jesus must have also looked people in the eye.
That the oceans allow for the roots of this world. Glaciers.
You twirl the bulb. Mint leaves on the endive,
the olives glisten. Still, sleep is near. He smiles
as you bite down on the scape. Garlic light, a zinger
of onion, clove. Your mouth warm all the way back
to the village. The moon rises red from the water.
This will not be the last supper. Every five minutes
together, a new world.

Angela Van Essen

nêhiyawaskiy[1] (Cree Land) and Canada

Location, Language, and Borders in Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*

In Harold Cardinal's politically charged response to Pierre Trudeau's "White Paper," he claims, "There exists a great need for knowledge in the white society about Indians and similarly a need in Indian communities for more information about white society" (80). In light of this reciprocal need for education, I would like to make it clear that I am not a Cree person. However, I have been studying the *paskwâw* (Plains) Cree dialect for several years and spent some time in Winnipeg learning *mushkêgo* (Swampy) and Woods Cree. In preparation for writing this paper, I consulted Dorothy Thunder at the University of Alberta, who helped me with the translation of some of Highway's more colourful names for places and people; in these ways, my reading is a response to Renate Eigenbrod's call to take up Highway's use of Cree as an "invitation to learn about his people *with* his people" (77).

Anishinaabe scholar and language teacher Basil Johnston says, "Language is crucial. If scholars are to increase their knowledge and if they are to add depth and width to their studies, they must study a native language and literature" (11). Although scholars have written at length about Tomson Highway's novel, few have addressed his use of Cree, although Kristina Fagan's work on code-switching humour has begun to take a closer look at bilingual Aboriginal literature. A careful study of the glossed and unglossed Cree in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* will help readers understand how Highway uses language to establish and trouble the boundaries between different readers, different communities, and different power relations. His novel reveals how languages set up and map out these borders; at the same time, Highway uses language to trouble and disrupt these maps and boundaries.

Dialects play a crucial role in mapping human communities. According to J. Edward Chamberlin, "Language is the signature of both individual and collective identity, and even small differences of accent identify speakers of a community or a country" (15). This cartographic potential is especially true among Cree speakers in Canada, since Cree communities are spread across the land, from Quebec to British Columbia. Within this large territory, linguists map approximately five primary dialects (Hunter and Karpinski iii). *paskwâw* (Plains) Cree is, according to Highway, "[w]idely considered to be the 'classical' dialect, the Castillian, shall we say, of Cree. . . . If the Queen of England were to speak Cree, for instance, she would speak [the Plains Cree] dialect" (*Iskooniguni* x). Plains Cree is spoken in central Alberta, central Saskatchewan, and southern Manitoba. Woods Cree, which is Highway's dialect, is spoken in a smaller area that straddles the northern Saskatchewan/Manitoba border. *mushkêgo* (Swampy) Cree is spoken in northeastern Manitoba and northern Ontario, along the southwest lowlands of Hudson Bay and the west coast of James Bay. Moose Cree is spoken in a smaller area in north-central Ontario, and Eastern Cree is spoken in Quebec, along the eastern coast of James Bay and Hudson Bay. These dialects differ in a few sounds, idioms, and occasional words, and several speakers (including Highway) and linguists claim that fluent speakers of any dialect can usually understand a speaker from a different dialectic region (Hunter and Karpinski iii; Wolfart and Carroll xvii; Highway, *Iskooniguni* xi). However, this is debatable: some linguists suggest that Cree dialects are *not* mutually intelligible (Ahenakew 2-8). For a straightforward example of how Cree dialects differ, we can see that the Cree word for "not/no" differs systematically by a single sound in each major dialect:

namôya (Plains/*paskwâw* Cree)
namôtha (Woods Cree)
namôna (Swampy/*mushkêgo* Cree)
namôla (Moose Cree)
namôra (James Bay/Eastern Cree)

Therefore, a reader or a listener can quickly decipher approximately which region in Canada a Cree speaker is from by noting these distinguishing dialect markers. These linguistic differences function cartographically, since they locate and demarcate particular speech communities. Indeed, the borders of these speech communities often follow natural boundaries in the landscape, rather than the unnatural borders set up by European colonizers, and if one were to look at a map of Canada along these linguistic lines, one

would see the dialect territories pointing to a map of Canada that predates all the maps created by European explorers and Canadian settlers.

Highway's dialect maps his characters within the broad territories of the five main dialects, and his idioms and description of the language locate them more specifically in a small Cree community in northern Manitoba. For example, when Jeremiah says, "*Mootha nantow*" (it's all right or not bad) (70), readers can see that he is speaking Woods Cree (since a Plains Cree speaker, for example, would say *môya nântow*). This example also demonstrates elision in common fluent speech, since a textbook example of this phrase would be spelled *namootha nantow*. It is also important to note that Highway does not use the Standard Roman Orthography (SRO)[2] that has been designed and adopted by (predominantly Plains Cree) language educators and linguists (in SRO, this phrase would be *namôtha nânitaw*). As a result, his spelling reflects the language phonetically as he hears it and reminds readers that Cree is a language that varies from community to community. However, because his spelling is not standard, speakers of other dialects or students still learning the language may have difficulties reading it.

Thus, Highway's Cree dialect maps his characters onto the land in northern Manitoba Woods Cree territory. This exclusive linguistic mapping is corroborated in Highway's "Note on Dialect" in his recent publication of *Iskooniguni Isweewuk (The Rez Sisters in Its Original Version: Cree)*, where he explains that his Cree records precisely how his mother and sisters, those women of Brochet, talked (x). He then goes on to explain that that "is precisely how *we* talk up in those parts to this very day. It is, in other words, the dialect that I feel most comfortable with, the dialect I dream in" (xi). This dialect marks members of the community even when they are far from home, and even when they are not speaking Cree, since to Gabriel's ears, "the northern Manitoba Cree [is] unmistakable in the rising and falling of [Madeline Lavoix's] English" (*Kiss* 132). Highway's Woods Cree therefore functions as a signature of belonging to a community; at the same time, it maps his characters onto the land and evokes their connection to it even when they are elsewhere.

Highway's Cree also functions cartographically on a more complex level beyond general and particular dialect and community locations. In the first few pages of the first chapter, Highway uses English and Cree to create a complicated map of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. This map includes commonly accessible names of places in Manitoba, such as Flin Flon, Cranberry Portage, and Reindeer Lake. These place names are relatively familiar to many Canadian readers; furthermore, readers who are from

Manitoba will feel the thrill of recognition when they read them. This pleasure immediately evokes a sense of belonging because the familiar names suggest that the reader and the characters share an experience of the landscape. However, Highway also includes names of places that are less accessible to a non-Cree speaking reader, and the names of these places cannot be found on published maps of the area. This esoteric map includes non-fictional places such as Oopaskooyak[3] (the Cree name for The Pas) and fictional place names such as Moosoogoot[4] and Eematat.[5] These Cree place names immediately trouble the sense of familiarity that a reader may have established through the recognition of the factual English place names and creates an insider readership of Cree speakers, because Cree readers will be laughing at these names. With these Cree place names, Highway is defining the land as Cree territory, for they create a linguistic boundary between Cree people and the rest of the world; his repeated references to Oopaskooyak are particularly interesting because, like Cree dialect distribution in Canada, they point to a map that predates European contact and hence trouble the English names and the colonizer's claim to the land. According to Kenneth Paupanekis, a Cree language instructor from Norway House, the French name "Le Pas" (and subsequent English name "The Pas") comes from the French mispronunciation and shortening of the original Cree name: when the French tried to pronounce *ohpâs* (short for *ohpâskowêyâhk*), it became, over time, Le Pas ("Cree Place Names").

Through the stories of his ancestors, Cree theorist Neal McLeod remembers how "with the coming of newcomers to the territory of the Cree, the landscape was transformed. . . . Today, the road maps of western Canada show little evidence that Indigenous people dwell in the territory, or that we have marked the place with our memory" (*Narrative Memory* 6-7). By using the original Cree name Oopaskooyak, Highway is reversing colonial appropriation and possession and reasserting Cree cultural memory by recalling the names that have been erased by the colonizing language(s). Highway's map of the territory functions as a hybrid counter-map, because it includes names from both the dominant English-language map and an older Cree-language one. By including both Cree and English place names, Highway creates coordinates of common understanding between the dominant culture and Cree culture; nonetheless, he also unsettles and destabilizes a non-Cree reader through his inclusion of Cree place names.

Highway's fictional Cree place names set up borders between insiders (Cree speakers) and outsiders (Cree and non-Cree people who cannot

understand the Cree language). Because these place names are not included in the glossary of Cree terms at the back of the book, their meaning remains hidden from a non-Cree-speaking reader; their inaccessibility is significant because Highway's fictional place names are often humorous. Highway's decision not to include any proper nouns in his Cree glossary may imply that names are meant only for a Cree-speaking audience, and suggest that Highway uses unglossed Cree to include his fellow Cree-speaking readers in some intoxicating, silly, and giddy humour ("Funniest" 161), while excluding those readers illiterate in Cree. To be sure, by setting up this double-layered map, Highway arranges disparate experiences of the text, where readers who understand Cree will have comic relief but readers who cannot understand Cree will not, unless they consult a Cree speaker. For example, to foreign ears, Wuchusk Oochisk might sound impressive or distinguished, with the soft musical rising and falling of the beginning vowel sounds, the alliteration of the middle "ch" (/tʃ/) sound, and its appealing near rhyme. But a Cree reader will know that the name means "muskrat anus." Notably, this name is mentioned during scenes where Roman Catholic priests vigorously assert their narratives and ceremonies: in Abraham Okimasis' deathbed scene (225) and during Jeremiah's lesson on Hell at the residential school (60). As a result, Cree readers may simultaneously laugh and recall the story about the weasel and the Weetigo (118), since an *oochisk* (the boys translate the word as "bumhole") is the gateway to a body's innards. The association with this censored Cree myth continues in both of these scenes, with Abraham's posthumous experience in the body of the beast (235) as well as Jeremiah's thoughts on the tunnels of hell (60). Cree readers will thus link the image of the weasel in the Weetigo's *oochisk* with Abraham's turn towards Cree mythology on his deathbed and Jeremiah's internal struggle with white narratives at the residential school and in the shopping mall. Indeed, since Highway includes many of these funny Cree names in scenes that explore the sinister influence of white society on Cree communities, I imagine that these jokes not only invoke humour for Cree readers, but they also inspire resistance to the destructive powers that the novel works to reveal.

Of course, this trend cannot be applied to every instance of Highway's unglossed Cree (in keeping with the complex and disruptive nature of the novel in general). For instance, Nigoostachin Island, three miles from "the island where Father Thibodeau's men caught Chachagathoo" (90), means "I am afraid" in Cree.[6] The last Cree Shaman's name also works to trouble a totalizing reading of the text, such as Sherrill Grace's theory that "Highway

links the priests (black robes) and their rape of the boys with black, and the spirit world of the Cree with white—white fur, white Stanfield's, white snow, and so on" (296), because Chachagathoo[7] means "blackbird," so her name troubles a simple black/white binary. In this case, the Cree names are not humorous, but they point to a sinister power. The memory and enforced silence surrounding Chachagathoo's story and the boys' sexual abuse are two powerful examples of the haunting effects of colonialism. Like the scenes where Wuchusk Oochisk is mentioned, this scene suggests a site of spiritual warfare, where colonial narratives seek to overpower Cree narratives (as we later learn some of the censored Cree history concerning Chachagathoo and her conflict with the priest [246]). At other times, the Cree names are simply funny: for example, Bad Robber Gazandlaree's dog is named Chuksees[8] (which means penis), but he is not mentioned in the context of any sinister threat or destructive force. Consequently, Highway's Cree disrupts an easy reading of the text, on many levels.

For the most part, Highway's Cree names seem to evoke resistance and laughter. Indeed, the comical sketches of Annie Moostoos,[9] the one "renowned throughout the north for the one tooth left in her head" (16), are symbolically linked to the enduring spirit of the Okimasis' reserve Eemanapiteepitat,[10] because this Cree place name means "s/he is pulling his/her tooth out."[11] Thus, her one tooth and her resilience (she is declared dead after the airport outhouse door slams her head, but later shows up to welcome the boys home with her shiny Javex-whitened tooth) inspire hope for the small northern reserve, despite its complex problems. Accordingly, she embodies what Gerald Vizenor describes as Native survivance, since her presence in the novel "renounces dominance, tragedy, and victimry" (vii). Along the same lines, McLeod asserts, "Through humour, through words which capture fragments of eternity, we will continue to survive" ("Coming Home" 64). For McLeod and Highway, Cree language and humour are powerful tools of resistance. Without doubt, these insider jokes affirm and connect Cree readers.

If the Cree names of people and places inspire hope and laughter in a Cree-speaking audience, what do they inspire in a non-Cree-speaking one? Certainly Highway's use of Cree (both glossed and unglossed) unsettles the anglophone readership. On a material level, anglophones' experience of reading the novel is disrupted by the continual need to flip to the back of the book whenever they need to search for a Cree word in the glossary. Although some critics argue that glossaries give "the translated word, and thus the 'receptor' culture, the higher status" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin

65), for readers illiterate in Cree the continual disruption often leads to feelings of frustration and alienation. These feelings may be heightened if readers notice that proper nouns are not glossed. These readers are thus reminded that their knowledge and understanding are limited. On a deeper level, many Canadian readers may be reminded that we live in traditionally Aboriginal territory. Cree people who do not have Cree-language skills may feel a deep sense of loss, of being excluded from their linguistic community and culture. On the other hand, humbled or intrigued, they may feel inspired to learn Cree. In her dissertation on Native humour in Canadian fiction, Fagan suggests that code-switching humour cautions outsiders "against being too certain of any culturally distanced interpretation. More specifically, we are warned away from thinking that we can always understand humour that passes through or from a language that we do not understand" (146).

Highway's Cree names create boundaries between various sorts of readers, but also have the potential to inspire hope and healing, or humility and awareness. Indeed, later in the novel when Kiputz (the boys' dog) disrupts the Okimasis brothers' "church service" with his barking, the reader is reminded that "[w]ars start when two parties haven't taken the time to learn each other's tongues" (95). This humorous scene can be understood as a gentle reminder to non-Cree speakers that their linguistic knowledge is limited, and it suggests that these limitations have political ramifications. A more radical interpretation of this scene might see it as a call for non-Cree readers to take the time to learn the language.

Even though the Cree language jokes may not be accessible to all readers, the humour, as maintained by Highway, is not entirely lost on a non-Cree speaking audience. According to Highway, the Cree language is intrinsically funny: "It is as if a clown lives inside [the syllables]" ("Funniest" 161). Highway believes that an audience is not required to understand the meaning of the words; the simple act of reading them out loud with friends will cause readers to be laughing, and "laughing not lightly, but from the pit of [their] respective groins" (161). Although linguists, fluent speakers, and critics may not all agree that the Cree language is inherently funny, there is something funny about a foreign language and about the nonsense humans experience when linguistic sounds are separated from any knowledge of that language—Highway clearly knows this, because he demonstrates this sort of nonsensical humour with the Okimasis family's understanding of English.

Chamberlin has suggested that, in general, human beings tend to "dismiss others who haven't grown up exactly like us as incorrigible babblers," and

that this distinction is "one of the ways we divide the world into Them and Us . . . [so] there are those who speak properly, . . . like Us; and those who babble, more or less meaninglessly, as They do" (8). Highway frequently exploits this divisive human instinct in his humour. Throughout the book, he subverts the English language by relegating it to noise or nonsense: for example, as Abraham Okimasis wins the World Championship Dog Derby, he experiences the English announcer's words as noise, and the "syllables become one vast, roiling rumble" (6). Similarly, for Jeremiah, English sounds "like the *putt-putt-putt* of Happy Doll Magipom's pathetic three-horsepower outboard motor" (52). Along these lines, Highway draws readers' attention to the divisive nature of languages, because both of these examples demonstrate that the characters experience English as noise without meaning, and thus English speakers as barbarians (or babblers). In this way, Highway overturns the dominance of English and shows readers a perspective of the world where Cree speakers are insiders and English speakers are outsiders. On another level, Highway's playful reversal mirrors non-Cree speakers' experience of Cree, so while these readers are prompted to realize that English may be babble for some, they have at the same time encountered words in a language that *they* cannot understand. Hence, Highway reminds readers that human communities draw borders based on language, but he also troubles this concept with his presentation of the English language (in a primarily English text) as a foreign language. By giving non-Cree anglophone readers a glimpse of a Cree perspective of English, Highway disrupts a simple reading of either language or either perspective.

Highway also explores linguistic perspectives by creating nonsense out of English. At the residential school, Gabriel innocently apes Brother Stumbo's recitation of the Roman Catholic "Hail Mary" by chanting, "Hello merry, mutter of cod, play for ussinees, now anat tee ower of ower beth, aw, men" (71). This comical scene forces readers to think carefully about the nature of languages as it illustrates some differences between Cree and English, and some challenges a Cree English-language learner might face. From the perspective of a monolingual Cree speaker, one of the English language's challenges must be that there are so many small words (because Cree is a polysynthetic language based on verbs) that can carry multiple meanings. Gabriel's parroting of the prayer highlights some of these slippery little words, such as "hour" and "our" or "Mary," "merry," and "marry." Similarly, in Cree there is a less clear distinction between the velar consonants *g* and *k*: there is no letter *g* in SRO, and the syllabic system also does not

differentiate between the two sounds. A *k* at the beginning of a word is usually pronounced as a /k/ sound, but if it occurs in the middle of a word, it is usually pronounced with a /g/ sound. Therefore, it is completely natural for Gabriel to hear "cod" instead of "God." Finally, Gabriel hears Cree words in the nonsensical English—another natural response to a foreign language. In a few lines, Highway clearly illustrates how English is understood (or not understood) from the perspective of a Cree child, and Gabriel's lack of understanding emphasizes the linguistic and cultural boundary between the boy and the Roman Catholic brother. On a more serious note, however, Gabriel's lack of understanding also points to the boys' staggering powerlessness at the school, because Cree is forbidden and English lies (at this point) beyond their grasp.

At the same time, the gap between Gabriel's understanding and the reader's perspective is funny; as Fagan points out, "Highway's joke works because we can make sense of [Gabriel's] strange syllables, even though he cannot" ("Code-Switching" 36). Readers laugh because they are included in the group that understands English. Readers may be more amused (or shocked) if they are also part of the group that knows the original Roman Catholic prayer. However, a Cree reader may see black humour in this scene, since *ussinees* (little rock or pebble) can carry sexual connotations[12] (in Cree, as in English, "rocks" can refer to testicles) that foreshadow Gabriel's sexual abuse at the hands of Father Lafleur. Here, the gap between the child's understanding and the reader's is less funny: the English nonsensical humour appears innocent and cerebral juxtaposed with the disturbing reference to Cree *ussinees*.

The boys are not the only ones rendered powerless through language: when Ooneemeetoo is baptized, the priest uses his knowledge (and Annie Moostoos' ignorance) of Latin to suppress and dominate the Cree community. Ironically, Annie Moostoos understands what is happening during the baptism, though she does not understand the language. She confronts the priest by emphatically stating that his name "is Ooneemeetoo. Ooneemeetoo Okimasis. Not Satanae Okimasis" (37). Readers can laugh at this point, but by the end of the page, the priest has blasted the child's godmother and gone ahead and done what Annie Moostoos had feared: he renames the boy Gabriel.

Just as Highway's place names remind readers of colonial power in Canada, the baptism scene, along with Highway's other scenes and references to the Okimasis children's name changes, poignantly reminds readers of the power dynamics involved in naming or renaming. In his

essay on Cree poetic discourse, Neal McLeod asserts: "One of the key components of Indigenous Studies involves the use of names. Names define and articulate a place within society and the world" (111). In order to reframe reality into a Cree world view, Highway works to subvert the Cree community's disempowerment by continually referring to white positions of power by their Cree names. For example, Annie Moostoos whines to her cousin about "*awa aymeegimow*" (this priest, literally "this prayer chief") after he rebukes her during the baptismal ceremony. Similarly, the nuns are called "*aymeeskweewuk*" (prayer women), and Indian agents are consistently dubbed "*sooni-eye-gimow*," a particularly subversive term because the word literally means "money-chief." In these instances, Highway's Cree words work to subvert and resist the dominant power, particularly for a Cree-speaking audience (since they will understand the humorous undertones to the word "*sooni-eye-gimow*"[13]).

Even though Highway often uses language to explore the divide between characters and to include or exclude readers, the boundary between English and Cree is not always clear. For example, the characters' Cree dialect often bears the markers of English or French influence. Abraham hears his daughter shout *nimama!* (29) instead of *nikâwiy!* and Gabriel calls his father *Papa* (190) instead of *nôhtawiy.* In these examples, the European influence on the characters' Cree is not something Highway invents (these English or French loan words have become part of fluent Cree speech in many dialects), but it is noteworthy that Highway has not chosen the "original" Cree words. These linguistic markers support what Jennifer Henderson and others have pointed out: "Highway is insistent . . . that there is no pure, uncompromised Aboriginal culture available to be recovered" (182).

Highway also humorously assimilates English (and French) words, thus troubling the assumption "that things Indian are always swallowed up by European culture . . . [and] the supremacist notion that assimilation can only go in one direction" (Womack 12). For example, Highway often appropriates English words in his names, invoking the mix of Cree and English called "Creenglish": Jeremiah's sister is named Chichilia (a common Cree name, according to Thunder, who suggests it is a Creenglish version of Cecilia), their neighbour is called Choggylut[14] McDermott (Choggylut, again, a Creenglish version of the word "chocolate"), and Ann-Adele Ghostrider's Cree nickname is Poosees[15] (a Creenglish version of "pussy"). Finally, Abraham and Mariesis Okimasis' names are also both Cree and Judeo-Christian: Abraham is of course the name of the Israelite patriarch,

and Mariesis means "little Mary."[16] Their family name Okimasis[17] means "little chief" or "boss." This hybridization blurs the lines between English and Cree and resists a simplistic understanding of their relationship. Moreover, Highway plays with these languages in ways that suggest that the Cree language and Cree people are powerful and adaptable.

At the same time, Highway's novel indicates that both languages are limited. Jeremiah struggles with the English language's lack of humour (273) and the Cree language's limited vocabulary (as the brothers do not know how to say "concert pianist" [189] or "AIDS"[18] [296] in Cree). While they are at the residential school, Jeremiah also wishes his English skills were better: he curses himself "for not sounding more impressive, more stentorian" (64-65), and he wishes he "could toss off an English sentence just as jazzy" as the priest's (69). This desire for "white knowledge" points to the complex struggle that Cree people have faced for many years, and the one that Cardinal refers to in *The Unjust Society.* The late Cree Elder Peter Vandall explains, "*mitoni nitawêyihtamwak nêhiyawak kahkiyaw, tâpiskôt otawâsimisiwâwa môniyâw-kiskêyihtamowin kit-âyâyit*": all Cree people really seem to want their children to have white knowledge (36, my translation). His words articulate the troubled relationship Cree people have with English: English offers powerful skills for success in mainstream society, but these skills are often gained at the cost of fluency in Cree. Highway's novel does not call for (or allow) a return to a pre-contact Cree way of life, and despite the horrors of the residential schools, the boys do gain western skills (piano-playing and ballet dancing) that allow them to fulfil their destiny (193). Highway's vision is not simple; his novel resists an idealized return to the past as well as trite images of "Native authenticity."

Chamberlin explains that "[l]anguage . . . is supposed to nourish communication, and yet often it does just the opposite. It is supposed to sustain communities, but often it breaks them apart" (113). Readers can see the destructive power of language in the novel, since the boys' English skills have been gained at the expense of their Cree language development, which divides them from their parents. Mariesis tells her sons that when she first heard English on Father Thibodeau's radio, "the words sounded like music, . . . 'Great war, great war,' I used to sing and skip—I was five years old—until my father, your grandfather Muskoosis, told me to shut up, that the words meant death" (195). Her English-language skills do not develop much further than this; as a grandmother, "[a]ll she knows in English are 'tank you' and 'fuckin' bullshit'" (289), and she cannot read English at all (and as a result she mistakenly buys a microwave, thinking that it's a television) (289). Abraham

also lacks English-language skills; even the word "'salt' in English was beyond his ken" (196). As a result, the boys can use English as an exclusive weapon for confrontation and restraint: Jeremiah confronts Gabriel about his ballet lessons (and indirectly about his sexual orientation) in English (195), and Jeremiah uses English to exclude his parents from their discussion when Gabriel tries to talk about Father Lafleur's sexual abuse (92). Sadly, in this scene, the Cree-speaking parents become outside audience members, even though the English speakers are seated on either side of their mother, ironically making English the language of insiders in a landscape that is intimately Cree territory (89-92). At the same time, Highway continually makes it clear that the boys' English fluency is gained at the expense of their Cree language development. In contrast to their parents' impeccable and exquisite Cree (189), their Cree remains stunted (191) and grows rusty (226). And Abraham can see this: "Visit by visit, word by word, these sons were splintering from their subarctic roots, their Cree beginnings" (193). Just as Highway's Cree place names have the potential to divide Cree readers along lines of fluency, so the boys' English fluency and limited Cree language skills divide them from their parents and each other. This, of course, was the intention of the founders of the Indian residential school system.

However, language is not always divisive, and at other times in the novel the brothers find joy and comfort in their ability to speak Cree to each other (114). Indeed, for Jeremiah the language is soul food: each vowel like jam and "the consonants great gobs of peanut butter" (241). Cree also helps the boys establish a deeper sense of their identity; we see Gabriel's Cree bloom when he discusses Cree religion with Jeremiah (182) and it is even more eloquent when they attend a powwow together (241). The Cree language also becomes an important element in Jeremiah's plays and the brothers' performances. Near the end of the novel, Jeremiah works as a "Cree-language revivalist" (270) for the Muskoosis[19] Club of Ontario, where he teaches urban Aboriginal children Cree legends in the Cree language (269). Interestingly, Muskoosis means "bear-cub," and this name is noteworthy because it puts a Cree name on the traditionally white youth group, Boy Scouts (where boys are taught wilderness survival skills, and the younger members are called "Cub Scouts"). Muskoosis is also the name of Jeremiah's maternal grandfather (195). The name can therefore be understood as subversive, yet working within an Anglo paradigm; at the same time, it is also in line with Cree narrative memory, where knowledge and survival skills are passed down from generation to generation through stories and language. Thus, Highway

exemplifies a way for Cree people to survive and adapt by remaining powerfully Cree in a world that seeks to assimilate them.

Even though much of these scenes (and the majority of the novel) is written in English, Highway's use of language (including unglossed Cree and Creenglish) resists colonialism and complicates the dominant anglophone perspective. In various ways, English-speakers become outsiders while Cree-speakers become insiders, and Highway creates different experiences of the text, depending on readers' fluency in both languages. For Cree readers, the linguistic play arouses laughter and resistance, and the Cree place names remind readers how Cree language, narrative, and land are intimately connected. For non-Cree readers, the untranslated names and missed humour are a reminder to be humble: our linguistic limitations have political consequences. Readers may be encouraged to learn Cree, and all are encouraged to seek to understand each other's perspectives.

NOTES

1 Following the example of Cree scholars such as Neal McLeod, I have put most Cree words into italics, and in keeping with established Standard Roman Orthography, I have used only lowercase letters for these words and phrases. However, I have kept Highway's proper nouns capitalized and not italicized them, to be true to his text. Note that Highway italicizes the Cree he has included in his glossary, but keeps the unglossed Cree in roman font.

2 Arok Wolvengrey, along with members of the Cree editing council, has done important work in standardizing written Cree. Although some may argue that standardization endangers diversity and creativity, proponents argue that it advances larger goals such as official language status in Canada.

3 For the reading pleasure of linguists, language learners, and Plains Cree readers, I will transliterate some of Highway's Cree into both Plains Cree SRO and Cree syllabics. For all translations, unless otherwise noted, I have used Wolvengrey's dictionary *nēhiýawēwin: itwēwina / Cree: Words (Volume 1: Cree-English)*. At the same time, I am aware of some of the problems that come with standardizing and translating the language. The name Oopaskooyak highlights some of them: Wolvengrey spells "Oopaskooyak" *opâskwêyâhk* (ᐅᐹᐢᑫᐧᔮᕽ), and I have heard that the name can be literally translated as "a place where two rivers meet" (from *paskêhtin*—a verb meaning to be a small river branching off from the main). Meanwhile, Paupanekis' phrasebook spells it *ohpâskowêyâhk* and he translates the name as "a high ridge" from the Cree root *ohpâs*. At the same time, Dorothy Thunder and I saw the root for prairie (*paskw-*) in Highway's spelling. His spelling could support any one of these transliterations and translations, and his decision not to use SRO might be to preserve the language's potential to act as a marker of specific communities, histories, and places.

4 *môsokot* (ᒨᓱᑯᐟ) literally means "moose nose." There is, however, a non-fictional place in Manitoba originally called Moosocoot Lake, located southeast of Split Lake, so I am reluctant to declare this place indisputably fictional.

5 *êmâtât* (ᐁᒫᑖᐟ); *mât* is a transitive animate verb meaning "to have sexual intercourse with someone," and here it is conjugated in the conjunct mode with a third person singular actor and an obviative object. Although this name is not italicized, this phrase is used later on in the novel, where it is italicized (203). Highway glosses the phrase as "he/she's fucking her/him" (307).

6 *kostâci* (ᑯᐢᑖᒋ) means "to be afraid." *nikostâcin* (ᓂᑯᐢᑖᒋᐣ) means "I am afraid."

7 *cahcahkayow* (ᒐᐦᒐᐦᑲᔪᐤ). Thanks to Thunder for translating this word for me.

8 Thanks to Thunder for translating this word for me.

9 Moostoos is a common family name and is also funny in Cree: *mostos* (ᒧᐢᑐᐢ) means "bovine" or "cow."

10 *êmanâpitêpitât* (ᐁᒪᓈᐱᑌᐱᑖᐟ); *manâpitêpis* is a transitive animate verb, meaning "to loosen, pull, or knock out someone's tooth," and it is conjugated in the conjunct mode with a third person singular actor and an obviative object. Note that in this form of the verb the final "s" changes to a "t," hence you read or hear *êmanâpitêpitât* and not *êmanâpitêpisât*. Thanks to Thunder for helping me translate this word.

11 Thunder and I laughed a lot when we figured this one out. I later read that Heather Hodgson's mother and Tomson Highway also had a good laugh at Eemanapiteepitat. Highway explains, "In English it would mean 'he pulls her teeth or his teeth,' as a dentist would. . . . It sounds really funny in Cree" (par. 5).

12 Thanks to Thunder for telling me the connotations of "rocks" in our discussion of "Ootasneema Saskatchewan" (Highway, *Kiss* 25).

13 *sôniyâwikimâw* or *sôniyâw-okimâw* (ᓲᓂᔮᐎᑭᒫᐤ or ᓲᓂᔮᐤ-ᐅᑭᒫᐤ); *sôniyâw* means "money" and *okimâw* means "chief," so the word is literally "money-chief."

14 Thanks to Thunder for making the connection between Choggylut and "chocolate."

15 *pôsiy* (ᐴᓯᕀ) from the English loan word pussy: a domestic cat, with the diminutive added to make *pôsîs* (ᐴᓰᐢ): kitten. Again, this European loan word has been part of many Cree dialects for years, and can be found in Faries' Cree-English dictionary, which is based on Watkins' 1865 work.

16 Her name is Marie+sis; as noted above, *-sis* is the diminutive ending in Cree.

17 *okimâw* (ᐅᑭᒫᐤ) means chief, and *okimâsis* (little chief) is the same word with the diminutive suffix. When you add a diminutive suffix, the semivowel (*w* or *y*) is dropped and the preceding vowel is lengthened. Okimâsis is also a common Cree family name.

18 Kenneth Paupanekis' 2009 *Pocket Cree* phrasebook includes a Cree word for AIDS: *nînamisîwâspinêwin*, thus illustrating the Cree language's vitality.

19 *maskosis* (ᒪᐢᑯᓯᐢ).

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J. A. Wainwright

Second Poem for Hart Crane

S.S. Orizaba 27.04.32

1.

You don't jump, but dive
In clean, aspiring arc
Hands cupped
To receive the waves
Lips parted
To blow the buffets down
Shining in salt mirrors
Like an imaged child
Who'd swim forever
Gilled, inviolate

2.

All surface engines stop
While lifeboats tend
The closing circle
And survivors drag
Prim nets to trap
Lost sailor cries of love

3.

No one above can breathe
A sea-watered poem
Of motherless peace
Or glimpse again
The drowning, plangent soul

Anouk Lang

"A Book that All Canadians Should be Proud to Read"

Canada Reads and Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road*

In 2004, Laura Moss described Canada Reads as taking its place "beside the 1978 Calgary Conference and the 1994 Writing Thru Race Conference as a recognizable point in Canadian literary history," which successfully "expanded public readership and recirculated works of Canadian literature to a wider audience" (9). Eight years later, in its eleventh year on the air, the program continues to be a significant cultural phenomenon that not only provides insights into the ways that literature can be used as a ground to talk about cultural preoccupations, but is also an object lesson in the marketing and selling of contemporary fiction.[1] Scholars, however, have received the radio show with something less than the enthusiasm of radio audiences, book clubs, and publishers. For Danielle Fuller and DeNel Rehberg Sedo, for example, the model of the nation put forward by the choice of texts and the debates is uncritically multicultural and ideologically conservative (7). Locating her unease about the program in the disjuncture between its rhetoric of nation-building and its tendency to depoliticize the texts, Moss argues that Canada Reads "has become a new instrument of culture formation," intent on "drawing Canadians together by creating a shared cultural background" and "reinforc[ing] certain popular notions of Canadianness" (7). That these shared notions of nationhood are applicable to the whole country is emphasized by the show's much reiterated tag line: its mission to find the book that "all Canada Reads."

If the show never explicitly stakes a claim to the middlebrow for itself, its invocation of the entire population—"all Canada"—has generally resonated with the texts that have been selected as contenders: works of literary

fiction and occasionally poetry that are situated above the level of popular fiction but which remain accessible to a wider readership.[2] Virginia Woolf's famous 1942 dismissal of a middlebrow as an individual devoted to an undistinguished conglomerate of life and art "mixed indistinguishably, and rather nastily, with money, fame, power, or prestige" (180) has echoes in some contemporary responses to Canada Reads, which voice their suspicion of the way the program mixes literature with celebrity, personality, and promotion. These are domains that, though they influence considerations of what is valorized in academic settings just as they do for other institutions in the cultural marketplace, can be disavowed in favour of precisely those aesthetic questions that lie beyond the reach of untrained readers who could be thought of as the latter-day equivalents of Woolf's scorned middlebrow reader.[3]

If the middlebrow as a concept is useful for identifying historical antecedents of contemporary suspicions about Canada Reads, however, it also obscures the way that reading practices placed within its purview will always be heterogeneous and contingent, and that no clear line can be drawn to separate it from the categories of lowbrow and the highbrow. Another way to consider the interpretive modes that emerge around Canada Reads, then, is to think of them as being inflected to a greater or lesser degree by specialist academic training. Rather than Woolf's distinction, underpinned as it is with differences rooted in socioeconomic class, this designation takes a constructivist view of the differences between various reading practices, seeing them as arising from a specific habitus in which interpretive habits have been developed, and through which readers have been socialized into foregrounding some textual features in favour of others. Specialist readers, for example, could be thought of as those who have been taught how to recognize, and question, representations that make some claim to historicity, and who are aware that histories have elements of fiction and narrative within them, but who have also absorbed the lesson that the affective dimension of a text—its capacity to produce an emotional response—is generally not a valid subject for discussion. Of course, there is no hard and fast distinction to be made between reading practices inside and outside the academy either, a point made by Fuller when she observes that many of the comments about Canada Reads posted by academics to the scholarly CANLIT-L listserv echoed those of the readers posting on the Canada Reads discussion boards. Unpacking some of the reading practices that have been modelled on the program, Fuller argues that while academic reading

practices are not uniformly followed, endorsed, or rejected, they are certainly a presence, and that the way the show is edited references their authority and reinforces their value. She also identifies the emergence of vernacular reading practices, which include valuing books for their ability to induce moral empathy and subjective identification, reading in order to understand different worlds, and reading as a way to provoke reflection on contemporary social issues (Fuller 12-26). These kinds of interpretive practices were also on show during the iteration of the program considered in this essay, but the ones I focus on here are those that connect, in some way, to the project of nation-building. As Renée Hulan points out, the capacity of Canadian literature to articulate truths about the country's peoples and cultures has been a central preoccupation of Canadian cultural critique (38-39), so the fact that this interpretive focus is shared by readers both inside and outside the academy is yet another indication of the porousness of the boundary between them.

While keeping in view the fact that categories such as "middlebrow," "academic," and "specialist" are far from objective and can function to elevate one group of cultural participants over others, I would still maintain that there *are* meaningful differences in the ways we read, and in the ways that various reading contexts call forth diverse kinds of interpretive practices. This essay aims to elucidate what the broader significance of these differences might be. As one such reading context, Canada Reads is an important site for reception studies not only for the insights it offers into the way literature can be co-opted for nationalist and ideological purposes, but also for what it reveals of the interplay of reading practices at different points on the continuum from specialist to non-specialist. Given that these kinds of reading practices are so often kept separate from one another—in classrooms, in book clubs, in the columns of book reviewers—exploring the collisions between them both casts light on the wider significance of Canada Reads as a cultural phenomenon, and also helps to illuminate how, and why, different interpretive modes might be segregated into different contexts.

To explore this clash of reading practices, I focus here on the interpretations of readers whose comments were featured on the CBC website in relation to one of the texts featured during the 2006 debates: Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road*. While this novel did not win the vote of the celebrity panellists, its popular appeal was such that it won the audience vote. As it deals in part with the legacy of residential schools and with the writing-out of First Nations peoples from mainstream history—focalized

through a narrative about two Cree soldiers fighting for Canada during World War I—*Three Day Road* offers the opportunity not only to see how readers engaged with a text that posed some troubling questions about the nation, but also to observe their reactions to questions that have preoccupied scholars of Canadian literature, particularly those that have emerged in conjunction with investigations informed by postcolonial theory and critical race theory. Critics including Linda Hutcheon, Herb Wyile, and Dennis Duffy have explored the ways Canadian fiction of the last several decades has questioned, deconstructed, and rewritten the nation's foundational narratives and grappled with the political ramifications of the fact that "to write history—or historical fiction—is equally to narrate, to reconstruct by means of selection and interpretation" (Hutcheon 231). Such texts reveal an anxiety about what can be "done" with the historical past when it is increasingly clear that not only is this history contingent, partial, and biased, but also that deconstructing it reveals the impossibility of making something meaningful of it (Gordon 119-20). For Wyile, novels from the 1990s and 2000s "seem less inclined to participate in creating a collective mythology than to question traditional narratives of Canadian history and any notion of a collective, consensual experience of the past" (6), and this shift has particular relevance for current debates about the place of First Nations within Canadian history. As Deena Rymhs argues, such historiographical questions resonate with growing attention to Aboriginal peoples' presence—and absence—within accounts of nationhood across a range of global contexts (105). Boyden's novel does not fit particularly comfortably into the category of historiographic metafiction: as a largely realist representation of a historical episode, it exhibits no particular preoccupation with its own fictive qualities or the relationship between its own constructedness and narratives of the historical past. But it is nonetheless worth examining its reception with this body of critical work in mind, not least because it serves as an illustration of the way that debates under the sign of Canadian historiographic metafiction have largely overlooked the ways in which readers other than professionally trained literary scholars have responded to texts that raise questions about how the historical past can be known.

Recuperating History or Reinscribing Stereotypes?

Boyden's novel tells the story of two young Cree men, Xavier and Elijah, who fight as snipers in World War I. The narrative of their time on the battlefields is interwoven with the story of Xavier's return to Canada,

wounded and addicted to morphine; his aunt Niska takes him on a three-day canoe journey and eventually heals him with stories from their shared heritage. The novel presents "a little-known history of Aboriginal presence in one of the grand master narratives of colonial construction that imagines Aboriginal experience as an absence" (Allan J. Ryan qtd. in Boyden, "Writing Survivance" 297-98), and is framed by its author and others as bringing to light elements of history that have been submerged in the written record. In an interview published in 2007, Boyden states that he wanted to address the way that Native soldiers were not given credit for their service:

> I think it's one of the greatest overlooked parts of Canadian history that so many of us know nothing about and that shocked and amazed me . . . I didn't want to go into the novel thinking "I'm going to teach every Canadian about Native involvement in the war," but it was definitely a passion of mine to want to shine a little light on a part of our history that so few know about. ("Pushing Out the Poison" 222)

Boyden also concedes that elements of the novel come very close to cliché: "the storytelling old woman and the silent Indian who has this best friend who is a talkative Indian" (237), while the Cree characters are also connected to the supernatural via magical realist techniques not applied to the white characters.[4] In other ways, however, the text is more radical: in code-switching between Cree and English, it explains some but not all of the Cree terms so that there are some things that the reader is not permitted to know about Xavier and Elijah's world. Neta Gordon sees the narrative as countering the pernicious trope of First Nations as a "dying race," as the ending of the novel shows Xavier's descendants living on (125, 130). While the novel plays with historical reality—engineering a meeting between its two main protagonists and Francis Pegahmagabow, the decorated Ojibway First World War hero on whom they are partly based—it also contains a critique of the way Native soldiers' participation in the war was downplayed or omitted outright from historical accounts. Vikki Visvis gives an indication of the problematic nature of the novel's representational strategies: while inverting the discourse of savagery associated with the Windigo by exposing violence as a product of white colonial culture, it also "risks replicating the problematic discourse of savagery by uncritically mobilizing the Gothic sensationalism traditionally used to render Native aggression" (240).

This is all to say that the novel is a text that, while clearly critical of the way First Nations people have been recorded in history, also leaves itself open to critique. My aim here is not to propose an authorized critical

reading against which other readings can be measured and found to be wanting. Rather, I want to consider two kinds of readings that the text invites—the celebratory and the critical—and the tension between them. To do this, I examine the responses to the novel voiced by the Canada Reads panellists and by readers who wrote to the CBC about the book. I seek to explore the pleasures articulated by readers and how these might relate not only to cultural nationalism and what Smaro Kamboureli terms "national pedagogy" (39), but also to the kind of appropriative reading practices identified as problematic by scholars of ethnic and minority literatures. I argue that assertions that the novel is "a book that all Canadians should be proud to read" are worth attending to, as they suggest that instead of taking the book's recuperation of previously submerged histories as symptomatic of a much wider set of issues in present-day Canada still to be resolved, they indicate a different kind of interpretation entirely: a sense of satisfaction at the telling of a history that can be appreciated uniformly across the nation.

Readers' Reactions to the Novel and Its Paratextual Framing

In its paratextual framing, the edition of *Three Day Road* published several months prior to Canada Reads foregrounds the close relationship between the narrative and "real life." The top-most quote on the cover, from Chippewa author Louise Erdrich, characterizes the book as "a devastatingly truthful work of fiction," while the back cover states that the story was "[i]nspired in part by real-life WWI Ojibwa hero Francis Pegahmagabow." Picking up on these putative mimetic qualities, the panellist championing Boyden's text, filmmaker Nelofer Pazira, emphasized on several occasions during the debates why the novel appealed to her, in the process almost completely eliding the fictiveness of the text:

Nelofer Pazira	[*Three Day Road*] taught me something about Canadian history, that despite the fact that coming from outside and being very very sort of thirsty for wanting to know about this country, I had never heard about it before. . . . I really was not thought about, um, how an, an entire community of Canadians were, were, [with] the stories we have been sort of overlooking for quite a long time. Or we have been telling them from our perspective, of—
Bill Richardson	That community being . . . ?
Nelofer Pazira	The community being the Native, um, Canadians. Um, so this book taught me something about the involvement of the Native community in the larger history of, of this country. ("Canada Reads 2006," Day One 12:00)

This framing of the text as historically recuperative was in turn taken up by readers who wrote to the CBC and had their correspondence published on the "Your Say" page.[5] Many of these responses celebrated the text for its corrective to Canadian history, with comments such as, "This story is a huge part of Canadian history" and "*Three Day Road* is real life," presenting the novel not as a fictionalization of history but as a text that exceeded the fictive and that restored the historical record to a state of completion. Other responses characterized the novel as providing a resolution of sorts:

> . . . I also felt very moved by Boyden's *Three Day Road*. Even though I was saddened by the violence in the book it took me for an intense ride and made me want to read more. I especially appreciated that even though there was much trauma, as happens in life, the end ultimately showed the power of healing. (Kelly McLaren qtd. in "Your Say")

By proffering a textual "solution" to the suspense that builds throughout the latter part of the narrative as Xavier's enforced morphine withdrawal approaches, the text drew this reader's attention away from other unresolved issues. Not all responses, however, latched onto the "happy ending" or the recuperation of overlooked history as a resolution device. The two readers below signalled a recognition that there were still things left undone, and unsaid, in the relationship of First Nations to Canadian history:

> . . . Given that we just finished celebrating the year of the veteran and First Nations communities across this country had also celebrated and honoured their veterans, perhaps the timing of bringing all of Canada's attention to this book could not be more appropriate. We often forget the sacrifices First Nations made to forge this country despite Canada's treatment of the First Nations. . . . (Trevor Sinclair qtd. in "Your Say")

> . . . How many Canadians know that the First Canadians were not even entitled to a pension if they returned from the conflict? This story is a huge part of Canadian history. It demands to be told and to be heard. *Three Day Road* must win on the subject alone. For how long are we going to neglect our history and our identity? (Jim Gray qtd. in "Your Say")

Readers do differ, evidently, and the CBC's selection of correspondence acknowledges that difference, to a limited extent. These two commentators draw attention to the fact that although Boyden's book goes some way towards addressing some of the gaps in the historical record, it does not solve the problem. They were, however, in a minority compared to the more celebratory responses.

Reading these miniature reception narratives, one question that arises is the extent to which Canada Reads might itself have contributed to these

ways of reading the novel. The paratextual material produced by the CBC included a reader's guide and various other kinds of information provided online, which framed the novel—unsurprisingly—as a text which restored to history missing details about First Nations peoples' achievements in World War I. A further prominent element of this paratextual framing was an emphasis on Boyden as an authentic Native informant. The reader's guide quotes him as follows: "I split my life between the Gulf of Mexico and the gulf of the Arctic. . . . My heart is part Irish, part Ojibwa. I'm a Canadian in America. I'm grounded by history, and I am inspired by legend" (qtd. in CBC n. pag.).[6] As well as an exemplar of multicultural hybridity, Boyden positions himself—or is positioned by the mechanisms of the publishing industry—as a legitimate interpreter of First Nations life and literature to other Canadians. In the reader's guide, he is asked, "What is life like for the Cree people in Canada today?" and "Are there any writers of Cree or Ojibwa ancestry you would recommend to your readers?" He also describes how pressure was put on him by his editors to "Aboriginalize" his narrative:

> In different conversations with the editors Marc Cote and Francis Geffard, as well as speaking with my wife, Amanda, it struck me that I was applying a Western style of storytelling to an Aboriginal story. And so I thought about what is important to the Cree and Ojibwe. Life evolves around a circle. . . . The seasons travel through spring, summer, autumn, winter, and back to spring again. . . . And so I decided to begin this story near the chronological end and then trace through the circle around to where I started. . . . (qtd. in CBC n. pag.)

The form of the novel is now, we are told, more "authentically" Native—circular rather than linear (see also Boyden, "Writing Survivance" 303).

These questions of authenticity and appropriation came up during the radio debates. Two of the other panellists, lawyer and activist Maureen McTeer and poet Susan Musgrave, voiced critiques of *Three Day Road* for presenting a "noble savage" stereotype of Native people, and for drawing attention to Boyden's ethnic background on the book's cover:

Bill Richardson	Let's talk about the portrayal of Native characters in this book . . . How did you react to the portrayal of Xavier and Elijah . . . ?
Susan Musgrave	Well, initially I was put off by the fact that it's not usual to put an author's ethnic background on the book. So when I was told that Joseph Boyden was part Métis I felt I was being given that political correct, "It's OK for him to write about this because he has Métis blood." And I was annoyed. I thought, "Why do I need to be told this? I'm not a stupid reader." [*interjections from other panellists*] . . . Now that's not the fault of the book at all, or his fault—some publicist or publisher

	has decided to do this 'cos it's going to help. But I'm aware, as a reader, of all, of taking all these things in. I felt that the book was written by a twentieth-century white man. I didn't feel the Native-ness of those characters. . . . I didn't have a huge feeling of First Nation-ness from these characters. [*interjections*] . . .
Maureen McTeer	. . . One of the things that really concerned me about the book was when we got to the point where we did the noble savage number—
Susan Musgrave	Mmhm, mmhm.
Maureen McTeer	—where in fact we had to have the scalps—
Susan Musgrave	Mmhm.
Maureen McTeer	—and of course we were going to blame that on the whites, because they're the ones who made us have the idea in the first place, to show our manliness. But I just felt there was a point where the gratuitous snipering—
Susan Musgrave	Mmhm.
Maureen McTeer	—took away from the history, which was a noble history of First Nations people's involvement in both world wars. ("Canada Reads 2006," Day Three 11:30)

Part of what is interesting about McTeer and Musgrave is that they occupy ambiguous positions as readers. The reading practices on display here have affinities with academic hermeneutic habits: pointing to the way the paratextual material essentializes "Native identity" and locates it in Boyden; identifying the trope of the "noble savage" and its function as a stereotype, which is to say locating these representations in the context of a particular tradition of representation; and attending to the instrumentality of portraying certain groups of people in certain ways. Moreover, as literary celebrities, McTeer and Musgrave occupy a different position in the literary field to academic readers, and as Canada Reads panellists they have an additional imperative: to point out the flaws in the other books in order to increase their chances of winning. Pazira objected strenuously to their critique, and her defensive response was echoed by many readers. Whether or not one agrees with Musgrave and McTeer, it would seem that putting these issues on the table for discussion is a legitimate thing to do on a program that devotes five half-hour slots to discussing works of literature. Yet in their responses on the CBC website, readers demonstrated their unwillingness to engage with these critical questions that asked them to think beyond the recuperation of history, even where the consideration of the politics of representation was legitimized as a reading practice by being put forward for discussion by the moderator—for example, "Let's

talk about the portrayal of Native characters in this book." Other readers, dismissing Musgrave and McTeer's critique, indicated that far from a feeling of culpability at the treatment of First Nations people, the book had imbued them with a sense of national pride. For one reader, for instance, the novel appears to have occluded the possibility of thinking further about how Native peoples are represented, rather than opening up questions about where else the written record may have been less than reliable:

> . . . I didnt agree with Maureen Mcteer's critisism that the book portrayed natives in a stereotypical way. It makes me wonder if she really read it seriously. I think this is a book that Canadians can be very proud of. I agreed with Nelofer's passionate defense of the book. It transcends the Canadian experience and tell us and the world about who we are. I won't soon forget the relationship between the two young men and the aunt. The war story was imaginative and riveting and the first nations story was especially pleasing for the dignity and magic it transmitted. As a Canadian I am very proud of this novel. (William Caithness qtd. in "Your Say")

As a book for Canadians to be "very proud of," the novel is presented as generating a reassuring image of the nation that acts as a rallying point behind which "all Canadians," their differences ironed out, can feel themselves unified. The fact that this national "unity" excluded the Cree characters in Boyden's text—a point repeatedly made by the narrative in its depiction of the prejudice Elijah and Xavier face on and off the battlefield—is an irony that goes unnoticed by this reader. I read this reaction—pride and warmth—as evidence of the powerful influence of Canada Reads in recontextualizing the novel within a nationalist multiculturalist framework, where the project of national unity mandates the erasure of meaningful differences. In their discussion of the framing of the 2002 winner, *In the Skin of a Lion*, Fuller and Rehberg Sedo identify similar processes at work: potentially disconcerting questions raised by Michael Ondaatje's novel about race, power, and difference were passed over in favour of interpretations that asserted a normative portrait of a happily multicultural Canada (23). Another reader also mentioned being "proud" of *Three Day Road*:

> . . . This is a book that all Canadians should be proud to read. It is a book that is difficult to put down and yet difficult to keep reading. It brings to the forefront once again what the ordinary soldier was asked to experience day after day while fighting in the trenches and how that experience is life changing if not fatal. No wonder drug addiction for returning soldiers is so prevalent. (Robert Dionne qtd. in "Your Say")

The particularities of Elijah's and Xavier's situation are again elided in favour of a putative universal experience: as a novel about "the ordinary soldier," "all Canadians should be proud to read" it. To claim Native experiences as

common to all Canadians in such a way is, as Margery Fee observes, to dodge any acknowledgement that structural racism privileges those who occupy the demographic mainstream (686). What this response also reveals is that in making heroes of Canadian soldiers in general, the narrative can be read as more broadly nationalistic. Thanks in part to their skill as snipers, Xavier's and Elijah's unit succeeds in winning ground from the Germans where the English and French forces have failed, and while there are some losses on their side, the Canadians are generally portrayed as the most accomplished on the field of battle. No wonder, then, that all Canadians should be proud of this book, as it demonstrates their superiority over other nations.

Elsewhere in the "Your Say" responses, another reader deployed the "universal" elements in the text in an attempt to refute McTeer and Musgrave's critique:

> . . . Maureen McTeer's commentary was all over the map—yet continually wrong. I did agree with Susan Musgrave that drawing attention to Joseph Boyden's aboriginal heritage on the cover was off-putting.
>
> However, Musgrave & McTeer completely missed the point. It was not a book about native (or white) stereotypes. Only you, Bill, even touched on the primary theme of the novel: the Wendigo. It was about the way adversity (particularly war) can make a monster of anybody. It was about the way, when Evil abounds, good people must sometimes take extreme steps—even at the costs of their own lives or souls. (Derek Broughton qtd. in "Your Say")

For this reader, the reminder of First Nations specificity on the book's cover is "offputting." What is offered in its place is yet another reference to a heritage which is unproblematically shared by all Canadians. Phrases from the responses of other readers such as "For how long are *we* going to neglect *our history* and *our identity*?" and "bringing *all of Canada's* attention to this book could not be more appropriate" (emphases mine) function to subsume individual and group identities under the one umbrella of the nation. One final comment is worth quoting in full, as it touches on many of the themes discussed above while performing the familiar depoliticizing move whereby the aesthetic elements of the text ("the writing" and "the story telling craft") are prioritized over the subject matter ("First Nations people"):

> . . . Best book of the bunch. Best because of the writing, and the story telling craft not because it is about First Nations people. Of course it is violent. It deals with war and the racist treatment of First Nations people. Too bad if we can't just read "happy happy" stories. *Three Day Road* is real life. The ending of the book is a great sense of hope after so much darkness. Boyden is a great novelist. . . . (Boyd Drake qtd. in "Your Say")

This return to textual resolution forms an insistent pattern in this collection of responses: as narrative tension is resolved—the "darkness" superseded by "a great sense of hope"—so the problems with history recede from view. Debate over questions of identity and representation disturb this sense of closure, so it is not surprising that readers voiced their disapprobation of them so strongly.[7]

By bringing the interpretive practices of non-specialist readers into visibility, these responses flesh out the critique that Canada Reads depoliticizes the texts through its rhetoric of nation-building. Rymhs argues that similar processes are at work in public "performances" of reconciliation, suggesting that the ideological function of such events may not lie in deconstructing national master narratives so much as it does in reimagining the nation by reconstructing national imaginaries (105-06). She sees public reconciliation processes—such as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Marshall Inquiry—as forming part of one such reimagined national narrative and acting as "a discursive balm for historical injustices that have profound, and potentially unsettling, political implications" (107). In their articulation of a master narrative in which *Three Day Road* occasions patriotic pride, the readers considered here take the novel as precisely this kind of "discursive balm" in lieu of engaging with the more discomfiting ideological implications of its narrative. Here, the questions posed by Laurie Kruk in relation to First Nations literature—who is reading it, and for what purposes?—take on a particular force. Do these readers, and do we, seek "to engage honestly and fully with its differences or difficulties? Or, to seek out a reflection of our own needs, questions, concerns?" (304). The responses considered here lend weight to Kruk's claim that we routinely read in search of reflections of ourselves (304). Encounters with others are welcomed, but they are used in the service of reinforcing national unity: a liberal, multicultural unity in which difference is neutralized as the sign under which everyone is brought together.

Reading Practices and Readerly Desires

What these responses suggest to me is the importance of accounting for readerly desires in order to understand the appeal of this text and, indeed, other texts. In her investigation of why regionalism has such a strong appeal for readers, for example, Wendy Griswold maintains that the regionalist aesthetic—with its "rural settings, wise-but-unsophisticated characters, suspicion of outsiders, pastoral escapism, nature and weather" and other

factors—resonates not with readers' experiences but with their desires (174). For Tabish Khair, too, desire is a central optic for understanding contemporary novels with cultural otherness at their centre, such as Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*. Discussing the feel-good sensation engendered by these texts, Khair argues that their naïve portrayals paper over the problems of a world "undergirded by the myth of multiculturalism," and in so doing, pander to readers who do not wish to confront the problems of history but rather want to feel good about who they are. A knowledge of history, Khair remarks, does not always deliver the requisite sense of pleasure (2). Lurking behind many of the Canada Reads responses is something akin to the experience Khair describes, which is seen in responses such as this: "Albeit violent, Joseph Boyden's version of WW1 is a part of Canadian history and needs to be told. It was especially refreshing to read about First Nations. . . . This is such a wonderful event to connect Canadians from coast to coast" (Clare Dugas qtd. in "Your Say"). What I see emerging from this and the other interpretations I have been considering is a desire for history to be put right, and for the opportunity to achieve some kind of symbolic redress without needing to face up to the economic and material realities of atonement.

In a different national context, Kim Middleton Meyer examines the rising popularity of books about Japanese and Chinese people such as *Memoirs of a Geisha* and *Snow Falling on Cedars*, seeing this phenomenon as evidence that book club culture in the United States has fostered similarly conservative reading practices. Finding in the popularity of these "neo-Orientalist" books evidence of a sincere desire to learn about cultural others, Meyer sees these kind of texts as fostering appropriative reading strategies in putting forward representations of non-Europeans that are mythic rather than real, and in which stereotypical qualities are overvalued. The cachet that accompanies awareness of multicultural difference in contemporary North America comes with a certain irony, given that

> members of reading group culture prize their multicultural awareness and their understanding of difference, which, enhanced by these novels, provides the very information they depend upon to set them apart; the form of multiculturalism that they practice, however, is simply a more subtle kind of the behavior that they purport to disdain. (91-92)

On the other side of the Atlantic, the UK book club members surveyed by Jenny Hartley also bore this out. One group who read *Memoirs of a Geisha* reported, "We were fascinated (and at times horrified) by the exposition of

this closed world and we were amazed that a male author could have 'got inside the skin' of his female character so convincingly" (69). Evidently, these are not the same kinds of cultural differences as those showcased in *Three Day Road*, and the national projects differ in significant ways: settler Canadians are much more intimately bound up in the ongoing relations of inequality that structure the relationship between Native and settler Canadians, while British and American readers have more historical and geographical distance from the nations of Asia. What these contexts share, however, is the ability to satisfy readerly desires for knowledge about the unfamiliar other in an expression of the same underlying impulse to dominate. Meyer observes that this search for "authentic" knowledge of Asian cultures is simultaneously hampered and spurred on by the inscrutability of the mysterious East, and the desire to comprehend it and possess it (91), an analysis that also holds for the inscrutable Indian. If part of the pleasure of reading *Three Day Road* derives from the sincere wish for historical accuracy, her findings suggest that another aspect of that pleasure may derive from knowledge about Native peoples that can function as "an object of value to be possessed by the multiculturally literate" (106). These impulses can be connected back to the middlebrow through their promise to separate readers from mass culture. If knowledge of cultural difference is expected of "educated" people living in multicultural nations, these texts hold out to readers the enticing possibility of enhancing their positions in the symbolic economy of multicultural awareness (92, 103).

The Broader Cultural Significance of Canada Reads

As academics' interest in Canada Reads—as both scholars and readers—shows no sign of abating, it is worth continuing to try and grasp its broader cultural significance within the literary field, both as a structure that mediates literary value and as a dynamic cultural artifact in its own right. One element that *Three Day Road* brings into visibility is that Canada Reads complicates the view of popular culture that derives from Frankfurt School suspicions that the commodified products of the culture industry are incapable of fostering critical awareness on the part of their readers. For one thing, as we have seen, the ability of Canada Reads to draw readers from a range of backgrounds into its orbit demonstrates that the line between popular and what might be termed "hermeneutically challenging" literature is far from clear. What the case of *Three Day Road* also suggests is that the desire for resolution articulated by readers—the "great sense of hope after

so much darkness"—can be taken as evidence of an awareness that there is much that is *not* settled between First Nations and other Canadians. The need to insist that historical wrongs have now been put to rights, I argue, would not be expressed in such definitive terms if the power relations between Native communities and settler Canadians were more equal. Even as it provides an occasion on which to claim that the gaps in the historical record have been adequately closed, then, the reading context for *Three Day Road* provided by Canada Reads reveals readers' awareness of this gap.

There are of course limitations to this small-scale study. Without being able to more fully contextualize the readers considered here—by specifying their socio-economic position, gender, education, location, and other demographic detail, much less identify how Canada Reads fits into their daily lives—this analysis is not generalizable to a wider body of readers. Moreover, my own re-narrativizing of these responses has shaped and made them meaningful in ways that illustrate my own perspective and preoccupations. As decontextualized as they are, however, these responses are able to illustrate something of the way "texts constitute readers through the seductive education that makes us social subjects" (Sommer 547): how the everyday activity of listening to a favourite radio program might shape the way a reader makes sense of a text. Clearly, taking a single book as a case study is insufficient for addressing a sociology of literature question, especially as little can be known about the demographic positions of the readers. Rather than a representative study, then, I offer the above as an example of how a sociology of literature approach can be productive in illuminating how readers engage with ideas around nationalism, identity, and history, questions with which scholars of Canadian literature and culture have long been concerned. I offer it also as a provocation of sorts, to foreground the need for more work in the area of reception study in order to more precisely understand the cultural meanings of texts such as *Three Day Road*, which receive wide exposure through cultural programming disseminated via the mass media.

NOTES

1 Adams provides some indicative statistics from BookNet Canada. When *Lullabies for Little Criminals* by Heather O'Neill won Canada Reads in 2007, its sales jumped by 192 per cent; in the month following its win, sales were up 621 per cent compared to the previous month. Another winning novel, Frank Parker Day's *Rockbound*, had been selling about 200 copies a year prior to its win in 2005; since its win it has sold over 35,000 copies (n. pag.).

2 One exception to this was Hubert Aquin's *Next Episode*, championed by Justin Trudeau in 2003, which provoked strong reactions from readers and panellists alike due to its stylistic difficulties.

3 The relationship between literary taste preferences, middlebrow reading practices, and structures of cultural production in the US has been most thoroughly investigated by Janice Radway in *A Feeling for Books*. In the Canadian context, Candida Rifkind has written about how the bestselling poet Edna Jaques was relegated to the margins of literary history for being perceived as too closely aligned to a middle-class female readership. An extensive bibliography of other work on the middlebrow can be found in the bibliography of the Middlebrow Network website, www.middlebrow-network.com.

4 In his interview with Herb Wyile, Boyden states, "I'm fascinated by magical realism, in small doses, and I wanted to apply my own kind of magical realism to this text, but not in a big way. I wanted it to be a small but underlying part of the novel. . . . Niska's epileptic fits . . . are a doorway for her to see into the future a little bit, which is part of where her power comes from as a medicine woman, as a healer" ("Pushing Out the Poison" 236).

5 These responses originally appeared at www.cbc.ca/canadareads/yoursay.html. An archived version of this page as it appeared on 26 May 2006 can be found at the Internet Archive. I have retained the original spelling and orthography of these digital postings.

6 In their interviews with Boyden, both Wyile and Ryan remark on his ethnic background and note that he has Irish, Scottish, and Métis ancestry ("Pushing Out the Poison" 219; "Writing Survivance" 298).

7 In a different reception context, I have written about how the desire for narrative resolution can be a powerful influence on readers' interpretive strategies ("'The Status is Not Quo!'").

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Robin Richardson

Monte Carlo, Mississauga

Synesthesia keeps my honorary uncle
focused on the game; four is Merlot, nine
the dentin on his mentor's molars.

A game of pool's the way
I first learned to look a good
curve straight on, watched
my uncle's oak-skinned opposition

sitting coked-up at the barstool,
steadied by the slow hoist of a cue
as he stood to take his shot. Green
was the sound of a hustle, cue ball

hop-scotched across a string
of solids, sunk for five grand.
Two-years-old and barely tall
enough to reach the rail when

I learned to rack. They said
my mother was a shark. She kept
my teeth in jade containers. Jade
and mean was how she played.

National and Global Mythologies in Canadian Theatre

Kamal Al-Solaylee, ed.
Tonight at the Tarragon: A Critic's Anthology. Playwrights Canada $29.95

Dorothy Figueira and Marc Maufort, eds.
Theatres in the Round: Multi-Ethnic, Indigenous, and Intertextual Dialogues in Drama. Peter Lang $54.57

Michael Healey
The Nuttalls. Playwrights Canada $16.95

Celia McBride
So Many Doors. Playwrights Canada $16.95

Erin Shields
If We Were Birds. Playwrights Canada $16.95

Reviewed by Anne F. Nothof

The necessity of constructing a national theatre in Canada through the identification of a seminal founding company is implicit in a Toronto critic's anthology of Tarragon plays. An ongoing construction of a Canadian canon is evident in the publication of three more plays by the prolific Playwrights Canada Press. Locating Canadian drama in an intertextual global landscape is the objective of two essays in a comparative critical anthology with an international purview.

In his introduction to *Tonight at the Tarragon*, former *Globe and Mail* critic Kamal Al-Solaylee posits that the Tarragon has fulfilled the function of a national theatre in respect to its development and production of Canadian plays since the 1970s and has placed Canadian drama on the world stage. By way of example, Al-Solaylee offers five plays aimed at students of drama, selected on the basis of his own reviews. All but one of the playwrights are located in Toronto, although their plays have been developed and performed across the country. Canadian drama is a collective creation—the work of many theatres and individuals, and it has a broader reach than this collection assumes. Although he notes the paucity of multicultural and Indigenous works at the Tarragon, Al-Solaylee asserts that it constitutes "a barometer of Canadian theatre in general."

Some of the plays in the anthology afford more insight into Canadian living and dying than others. John Mighton's *Half Life* (developed with da da kamera and Necessary Angel) is one of the most insightful and moving plays I personally have experienced on any stage, in this case, the Citadel in Edmonton. Through the relationship of an elderly couple in a nursing home, it explores the meaning of time in terms of memory and the nature of love and of happiness in the face of death. *Rune Arlidge* (workshopped by the Shaw Festival) enacts the corrosive, angry side of old age in its portraits of a cantankerous, incorrigible mother and her two dysfunctional daughters in a Canadian formulation of Greek tragedy that offers no catharsis. Playwright-in-residence at the Tarragon for twenty years, Michael Healey resigned in protest after the artistic director, Richard Rose, decided against producing his new work based on the life of Stephen Harper, entitled

Proud. *The Optimists* by Morwyn Brebner, also a long-standing playwright-in-residence at Tarragon until her resignation in 2012, premiered at Theatre Junction, Calgary in 2004. It presents the very different marital perceptions of two couples in a "state o' chassis" in a Las Vegas hotel.

Kristen Thomson's *I, Claudia*, in which the playwright performs an adolescent rebelling against her father's second marriage, has enjoyed a long cross-country run since its beginnings in Tarragon's tiny Second Space. Serge Boucher's *Motel Hélène* is included as an example of the Tarragon's introduction of Quebec plays to an English audience, even though it was eclipsed by productions of works by Robert Lepage and Michel Tremblay at other Toronto venues. *Motel Hélène* follows the tragic life and escape fantasies of a young woman whose son has gone missing, as observed by her sympathetic gay neighbour. Its intensity and pathos are evident on the page. Although Jason Sherman's *It's All True* explores the nature of making theatre against all odds, it is a baffling inclusion. First produced by Necessary Angel, it tracks the story of Orson Welles' direction of *The Cradle Will Rock* in New York in 1937, and the conflict between art and politics. Al-Solaylee believes it to be the pinnacle of Sherman's career as a playwright. Conceived in Brechtian style, it is difficult to access on the page.

The three individual plays under review exhibit a similarly wide range in Canadian theatre. Healey's *The Nuttalls* (2009), commissioned by the Blyth Festival, depicts a farcical and dysfunctional relationship between mother and son in an Ontario summer resort. Erin Shields' *If We Were Birds* (2010) replays the horrific story of Procne and Philomena in global terms of atrocities perpetuated against women in times of war, much like Timberlake Wertenbaker's *The Love of the Nightingale* (1989) and Joanne Laurens' *The Three Birds* (2000). Celia McBride's *So Many Doors* (Nakai Theatre, Whitehorse 2007) is a therapeutic play that shows how two couples respond to the deaths of their young children.

The two essays that address Canadian theatre in the critical anthology *Theatres in the Round* focus on multicultural and Native theatre, typically the preoccupations of scholars outside of Canada. In "Land and Cultural Memory," Caroline De Wagter analyzes "the continued and perpetual struggle for belonging to the Canadian nation state" in Djanet Sears' *The Adventures of a Black Girl in Search of God*. In "Celebrating Indigeneity," Marc Maufort demonstrates how Marie Clements' spiritual portrait of Norval Morrisseau, *Copper Thunderbird*, avoids "the pitfalls of homogenizing Eurocentrism." As the amplified proceedings of a comparative literature conference, the anthology is eclectic and global—including essays on Norwegian Poetic Edda and the production of Beckett in China. In his essay on black and South Asian theatre in the United Kingdom, Geoffrey V. Davis raises issues pertinent to the Canadian multicultural experiment: in its productions of black plays and its employment of black actors, Britain's National Theatre is "altering the country's perception of itself" and redefining the concept of "national." Several essays address plays grounded in Greek tragedy, concluding that such intertexuality "argues kinship between cultures rather than alterity," "breaking down stereotypes of colonial oppressors and Indigenous victims" (David O'Donnell, "Quoting the 'Other'"). "Global" subsumes "national" in the interplay of diverse cultures.

Enduring Colonialism in Canadian News

Mark Cronlund Anderson and Carmen L. Robertson
Seeing Red: A History of Natives in Canadian Newspapers. U of Manitoba P $27.95

Reviewed by Candis Callison

No one would want to look in a mirror to see a reflection that is unflattering, ghastly even, and inconsistent with one's own sense of self. Yet, *Seeing Red* by Mark Cronlund Anderson and Carmen L. Robertson produces such a mirror. While many Canadians are likely to perceive their newspapers as reflective of long cherished values of racial tolerance and multiculturalism, Anderson and Robertson find disturbing, persistent, and enduring colonial stereotypes in Canadian newspapers.

Seeing Red is a wonderfully dense and rich historical work that situates itself equally amongst journalism history, colonial histories in the Americas, and scholarship on representations of minorities and race in Canadian media. It begins with the sale of Rupert's Land in 1869, and in the following eleven chapters, methodically walks through other major historical moments in Canada: the signing of Treaty 3 in 1873, Louis Riel's death and the North-West Rebellion in 1885, the Klondike Gold Rush in 1898, the death of Mohawk poet Pauline Johnson in 1913, the unmasking of Grey Owl (Archie Belaney) in 1938, post-World War II coverage of Aboriginal people in 1948, the White Paper in 1969, the Anicinabe Park Standoff in 1974, the passing of Bill C-31 in 1985, Oka in 1990, and the Prairie Centennial in 2005. The conclusion ends with a scathing critique of Margaret Wente's long-running column in the *Globe and Mail*. The authors argue that Wente's "common sense" approach reflects many of the same—now naturalized—colonial predilections for binary comparison, where Aboriginal people are always found wanting morally, physically, mentally, historically.

Anderson is a historian, primarily of Latin America and American film, and Robertson an art historian and curator with Lakota and Scottish roots. They view the press as agenda-setters who not only frame issues for an "imagined community," but also provide the public with "ready-made consumable opinions." Gramsci's idea of hegemonic ordering provides a key theoretical framework for understanding what lies behind the "othering" process, where inequality is consistently used in various ways to "promote a nation."

Methodologically, Anderson and Robertson approach historical news coverage slightly differently in each chapter. This should not be seen as a deficiency, but rather as a way of investigating both national and regional journalism in ways that reveal the durability and malleability of stereotypes. For example, the first several chapters look at coverage from the Toronto *Globe* and the Montreal *Gazette*, while the Klondike chapter focuses on five newly established Yukon newspapers. As Canada and its reporting capabilities expand, Anderson and Robertson enlarge their terrain too, for example, looking at the coverage of the White Paper in 1969 in eighteen regional and national dailies.

The book covers a vast historical landscape in terms of the development of journalism, beginning in the partisan (and often yellow) period through to the more professionalized objective version of the early twenty-first century. That this shift hasn't eradicated deeply held colonial attitudes towards Aboriginal people is a critique that remains productive, and could be applied as well to recent coverage of the crisis in Attawapiskat.

Envisioning Resurgence

Jennifer Andrews
In the Belly of a Laughing God: Humour and Irony in Native Women's Poetry. U of Toronto P $55.00

Marie Clements and Rita Leistner
The Edward Curtis Project: A Modern Picture Story. Talonbooks $24.95

Reviewed by Dory Nason

Jennifer Andrews' study of North American Indigenous women's poetry focuses on uses of irony and humour as devices through which Native women represent both the joy and pain of the contemporary Native experience as well as channel political critique and assert transformative agency in their work. Andrews argues that in addition to the unique deployment of these discursive strategies, Native women trouble and expand generic categories, reworking poems into song, songs back into poems, inserting Native chants and rhythms onto the printed page, and expanding into the visual art through the addition of photography or artwork in their written collections.

Andrews focuses her readings by tracing these writers' transformational aims, in which irony and humour sometimes play a part. And though these two concepts sometimes prove inconsistent in application and relevance, the insight, care, and quality of her close readings bring an important focus to the gendered critiques of colonialism's impacts that Native women's poetry and performance convey to a contemporary audience. For example, her first chapter, "Spiritual Transformations," takes as its focus the poetry of Diane Glancy and Louise Bernice Halfe, two writers who write against Christian imperialism and patriarchy by creating sacred texts about powerful women. Another significant chapter focuses on Jeannette Armstrong and Joy Harjo's "Generic Transformations" as they merge their written work with musical performance—an aspect of their work that has long been overlooked. While I found some applications of humour and irony forced, Andrews' readings are a welcome engagement with the aesthetic brilliance of works by women such as Marilyn Dumont, Wendy Rose, Kimberly Blaeser, and Marie Annharte Baker.

Andrews' framework does not preclude a discussion of the more overt political aspects of these poems; indeed, it leads to it. However, sometimes the weight and force of the poems' critiques is almost masked by the playfulness that these concepts seem to suggest. Andrews is careful to draw out the critical and defiant "I" of Native women's poetry when appropriate as they take aim at legacies of residential school and other colonial traumas. At the same time, she highlights the creative capacity of these poets to remap Indigenous spaces and recall ancestral bonds, affirming contemporary Indigenous women's varied identities. In the end, this study's significance will stand, filling an important gap in the criticism of Native women's poetry, written and performed.

Photography, Andrews writes, pushes beyond poetry's limitations, invoking "ghosts" and links to a non-physical world. At the same time, she notes that when Native poets place photography in their text, they often do so to underscore the audacity of survival in spite of the genocidal forces of colonialism. These candid family photos work against the hegemonic romanticized image of the "Vanishing Indian" celebrated in nineteenth-century American portraiture by photographers such as Edward Curtis. This leads me to the next text under review, Marie Clements and Rita Leistner's *The Edward Curtis Project: A Modern Picture Story*. A collaborative text, the first half is taken up by Clements' play, followed by Leistner's photography. While Andrews focuses on Native women's uses of family photographs to connect to family and community, Clements and Leistner take up this subject to reflect on the burden of representation

that Curtis' narrative and images of the "Vanishing Indian" lay on the shoulders of Native cultural producers today.

In a provocative and beautifully written play, Clements portrays one woman's struggle with witnessing and writing about the tragic deaths of three young children, whose father, in an alcohol-induced haze, leads them to die in the snow. This story is partly based on the tragic deaths of two young girls in Saskatchewan in 2008, and it is one that haunts and horrifies anyone once they know of it. In Clements' play, the protagonist Angeline is a Dene/Russian journalist and the volunteer searcher who finds the young girls' bodies. Burdened with this horrific story and these images, the play opens with Angeline frozen between taking her own life and finding the hope to live. Her journey in the play is facilitated by the ghost of Edward Curtis, who haunts Angeline in order to force a reckoning and reflection on the convergence of colonialism's need to "eliminate the Native" and a Native woman's need to create affirming narratives of survival in the face of such crushing tragedy.

Angeline's boyfriend Yiska is Curtis' foil in the play that works to bring her back from the depths of despair into the world of the living. In one scene, he tries to lift her burden by reminding her that as a journalist, she is simply to write the "facts." Angeline's response reveals her pain: "I should have written that the father of those children was so young, so poor . . . living in a house that was so contaminated . . . with no food, no clean water, . . . Do you think it was all his fault? Or maybe we all should own a little piece of it?" Obviously, this question is one for everyone to consider as it reminds us that images like Curtis' or a news story about a child's death or a community's appalling lack of adequate housing can never really carry enough context and history to fully represent the past and present consequences of settler colonialism. Indeed, such limitations remind us of our responsibilities not only to deconstruct such damaging representations, but also to address the material conditions they reflect.

The play ends with a note to project on the walls of the stage images that Rita Leistner photographed in the summer of 2007. These images are full colour vibrant photos of contemporary Indigenous communities and the people Leistner and Clements met as they visited the places Curtis once tried to document as vanishing. These images construct a new narrative of resurgence that echoes the opening statement by Clements: "I saw what I always knew to be true—there is no Vanishing Indian, never was, but for a convenient thought. . . . We are everywhere and it is beautiful."

The Sins of the Father

Anita Rau Badami
Tell It to the Trees. Knopf Canada $29.95

Lynn Coady
The Antagonist. Anansi $32.95

Wayne Johnston
A World Elsewhere. Knopf Canada $32.00

Reviewed by Beverley Haun

Fathers have a lot to answer for in these three novels. They hector, bully, abuse, and contort the lives of their offspring. It is the work of their children to recognize that the circumstances they find themselves in and the choices they are making are largely as a reaction to their treatment by their fathers. Not all manage to do so.

Wayne Johnston's *A World Elsewhere* (the place you inhabit when you have been rejected by your father) is a serio-comic picaresque tale set in the late nineteenth century and told in the third person, largely from the point of view of Landish Druken, the only son of the captain of the *Gilbert*, the most successful sealer in St. John's, Newfoundland. Landish is the sole member of the youngest generation in the Druken dynasty of sealers. But he is mindful, not

harpoonish. He wants above all to be a writer. Father and son strike an agreement. Landish will have four years at Princeton and then return to take up his life aboard the *Gilbert*. The story opens after Landish has already reneged on his side of the bargain. As a consequence, he has been disowned. He has also been sent down from Princeton in disgrace, preventing him from finding any scholarly employment. What follows is a string of incidents, often comic, often poignant—such is the storytelling art of Wayne Johnston—that build up the image of Landish as a man who affects a disinterested attitude toward his own fate, but who fails in the process to disguise his concern for others. Johnston gives him the wit of Oscar Wilde, the heart of Matthew Cuthbert. It is coming to understand the abortive nature of his creativity that forms the background of the novel and of Landish's story.

Landish is not alone in his father-imposed exile and ill-focused creative ambitions. A young man who befriends him at Princeton, Van, has also failed to live up to expectations. As the novel progresses, we follow the lives of both of these young men, each rejected by and rejecting their fathers, each setting out to prove themselves special, to prove their fathers wrong. Into this tale of men not finding their way in life enters a third character, Deacon, a foundling in need of a father. Young Deacon has the frail physique of Van and the bright mind and heart of Landish. The destiny of these three forms the foreground of the narrative.

The title works very hard for this novel. *A World Elsewhere* reflects the isolation of these three and resonates as we move from one out*landish* incident to the next. It denotes unknowable interior lives; the demons of the mind and heart that keep us awake at night and that shape waking behaviours, often to the detriment of self and others. It signifies the two-room attic hovel at the end of Dark Marsh Road in St. John's that provides the setting for the first half of the novel, and provides a backdrop against which Landish daily fails to fulfil his writing goal. It stands briefly for Princeton, definitely a world elsewhere. As well, it stands for Vanderland in North Carolina, Van's self-absorbed project and the physical setting for the last half of the novel, a setting based on the 250-room Biltmore estate of George Vanderbilt that was completed in 1895. Vanderland, with its Ozymandianish proportions and attitude, stands as an empty echoing mockery of Van's creative purpose when set against the teeming creative powers of Landish's brain. Yet Vanderland continues to grow and ring hollow while Landish works on his book every day, but burning those pages every night.

In *A World Elsewhere*, Wayne Johnston has created a wonderfully realized world of fathers and sons and egos trying to, vying to, find a purpose. It is a story of extremes of excess and deprivation, of succumbing to and resisting manipulation. It is a story of innocence and depravity. It cautions against the vibrancy of a lively mind settling into an uneasy alliance with the overwhelming power of wealth and privilege. The result is a book of consequence.

Lynn Coady's *The Antagonist* is epistolary, or, given its setting in the twenty-first century, e-pistolary: it consists of a series of e-mails sent to an old friend last seen at university twenty years before. The correspondence is all in one direction, from Rank to Adam. Adam is now a published author and Rank has just finished reading his book, several times, in great detail. It quickly becomes apparent that Rank is very angry with Adam. He perceives himself as a character in Adam's novel and he is not happy about the way he is portrayed. Rank feels doubly abused by Adam's fiction. Their friendship at university ended when he was socially abandoned by Adam, and he suffered from that rejection twenty years ago, only to find himself now feeling both abandoned afresh and betrayed because he

reevaluates the Adam he knew, university Adam, not as the friend he had seemed, but as a future author mining him for a future text. What follows is Rank's series of e-mails, written over several months, to set the record straight about just who Rank is and how he came to be that way, and to emphasize just how much he differs from the character in Adam's book. What Coady is creating here is a character as a writer berating an author.

The narrative that develops through the e-mails, however, is much more nuanced than Rank intends. There is the layer that is Rank's anger at what he freely gave, his life story, being re-purposed by Adam. Added to that is the subtext of anger at others whom Rank perceives as responsible for the disasters in his life, most notably his father Gord. *The Antagonist* is above all the story of a son who physically grows so large so young that his size, as far as his father is concerned, dictates his destiny. What else could he possibly want in life than to become a bouncer or a hockey enforcer? As Rank writes to justify himself to Adam, we see a life against his father's wishes. The parallels between Adam and Gord become apparent. Just as Gord created a role for Rank to play and a narrative in which he was forced to perform, so has Adam in his novel. It helps explain the extent of Rank's antipathy.

Coady has Rank keenly aware that he is now the author writing his own work: "This is where I, the all powerful author, get to explore my exciting new character" (Adam, of course). At one point he declares, "Let's press the pause button here. An omnipotent narrator can do that sort of thing." But like so many first-person narrators, Rank is unreliable. He does not remember the past as clearly as he thinks and, as he rehearses his own story, he comes to recognize his own unreliability. Through that recognition, he begins to have new insights into his own experience. As Rank writes about, rails against, Gord and Adam, he becomes aware of two aspects of the writing process that he hadn't been considering. He finds that his narrative is taking on a life of its own and he finds himself deviating from the record and embellishing, both of which improve the story. He is creating fiction. Through this process, Rank has the revelation that Adam may have been carried away by the pen as well, thus accounting for the gap between Rank's sense of self and what he reads in the character based on him in Adam's novel. When Rank recognizes this aspect of the creative process, he realizes that he is not the story and his tone toward Adam shifts.

The e-mails' content does not follow a chronological sequence. Some revisit the period in Rank's life when he was at school with Adam, some reach further back in time to his childhood, others fill in details about his life since university, and some describe events in the present. Rarely are these events described just once. With each new e-mail, Rank rehearses the story of his life elliptically looping out and returning again and again to specific incidents, each time advancing his narrative and adding new details that extend a bit further until finally a whole flower has been transcribed and all the petals are in place, allowing the full picture to be seen. Coady's sophistication and nuance in putting together the narrative is breathtaking. As the details build, she withholds two key points until very close to the end of the correspondence, revealing both in tandem in a tour de force of narrative structure and timing.

It is difficult to know how to engage a review of Anita Rau Badami's *Tell It to The Trees*, a book that is so finely written and well-structured but so unsettling, so uncomfortable, as the narrative unfolds. It is primarily the story of systematic abuse through three generations of the Dharma family, but it is also a mystery novel. To write about the ways the novel explores generational abuse would be to reveal the mystery. To write about the book as a mystery would be to do a disservice

to the psychological drama that Badami has so carefully wrought. The novel opens with the discovery of a woman frozen to death just outside the family home and the unanswered question, "How did this happen?" Anu Krishnan is the victim, an aspiring writer who wanted seclusion to work on her prose. She had taken a twelve-month lease on a one-room furnished cottage behind the Dharma house, a house the Dharma grandfather had built in a remote mining town in the interior of British Columbia, "on a road that goes nowhere, in a place where nobody cares what happens behind the closed doors of a house. Where family business is the business of the family." Or as Varsha the thirteen-year-old daughter of the family says at the end of the first chapter, "[T]ight as a fist, we are, and as hard if you get in our way."

Three generations live in the Dharma household. Grandmother Akka is an invalid who never leaves a room off the kitchen. Her son Vikram is the current head of the house and has one daughter, Varsha, with his first wife. Suman is his second wife with whom he has a seven-year-old son, Hemant. We only know grandmother Akka and father Vikram through the interior monologues of the rest of the family and through Anu. The story of the Dharma family unfolds predominantly through the voices of Varsha and the stepmother Suman. Through a series of interior monologues that go back in time as well as responding to the present crisis, Badami introduces us to the events that have shaped the family dynamic and shaped the characters' behaviours and personalities. The interior monologues also provide intense introspection about the psychological processes that have shaped these children and their stepmother. All three must assess each move they make in relation to the reaction it may elicit from Vikram, who combines obsessive jealousy with a distorted sense of male honour and family honour. Suman, who entered the family as an adult in her thirties straight from her family home in India, cowers in fear and does everything she can to appease her husband. The children, each born into the family dynamic, know their father is abusive, suffer at his hands, but also know their family life as their norm. Varsha, for example, is very matter-of-fact as she takes her beatings. Actions have consequences.

Tell It to The Trees is emotionally intense without being emotionally manipulative. Badami achieves this intensity through her demonstration of generational abuse: abused children becoming abusers in turn as a coping mechanism and as the only model they know. Even as you read of the horrors revealed in the minds of these victims, and see what they are capable of thinking, planning, executing, you can find sympathy for them because you see how they have been shaped into monsters. They excite both sympathy and revulsion. Gothic horror in this remote setting also shapes Badami's narrative as the reader is confronted with the rising unease of the family's recurrent misreadings of Anu's intentions, even as her benign nature is revealed through her own interior monologues. As with the other two novels under consideration, the sophisticated and powerful use of structure drives the narrative rather than merely delivers it.

Dark Chapters and Illuminating Characters in Canadian Child Welfare History

Karen A. Balcom
The Traffic in Babies: Cross-Border Adoption and Baby-Selling between the United States and Canada, 1930-1972 (Studies in Gender and History). U of Toronto P $35.00

Reviewed by Richard Sullivan

With *The Traffic in Babies*, Karen A. Balcom illuminates several shameful chapters in the history of Canadian child welfare. The title

of her book may initially strike the reader as hyperbolic and intended to sell books, which indeed it might, but her meticulous scholarship and thoughtful inquiry into the ways in which commoditization can enter cross-border adoption quickly reveals the aptness of her title. She combines the instincts of a muckraking journalist, the discipline of a consummate scholar, and the skills of a master storyteller. This is more than the history of jurisdictional lacunae that gave rise to abuses in the provincial systems of adoption. This is also the story of a profession trying to assert itself in the spaces created by those lacunae. And it is the story of that sorority of short-haired women in sensible shoes upon whose tailored shoulders the profession of social work rests. Their informal networks were as important as their professional alliances in trying to move two nations and their respective states and provinces toward closer regulation of adoption and tightening the legal loopholes through which abuses occurred. In addition, Balcom examines the tension between the impulse to do right by children and cultural resistance to the changes needed to give substance to those efforts. The shame and secrecy that accompanied childbirth out of wedlock was a significant factor in the coercive and abusive practices that separated women from their infants, practices promulgated with only slightly less vigilance on the protestant side of the veil that separated Canada's prevailing cultural traditions.

Balcom has a viewpoint. She rightly numbers herself among a coterie of feminist historians examining social policy and social movements through the lens of gender. She is first and foremost a disciplined scholar who does not draw inferences beyond her data. Rather, depth of scholarship and narrative skill allows the data to speak for themselves. Nowhere is this more evident than in her treatment of key figures in the movement toward reform, where she is at once both compassionate and unsparing. In her accounting of the efforts of Canada's irascible Charlotte Whitton, for example, we are left with the impression of someone who was admirable but not entirely likable, a product of her times who left an indelible imprint on those times. Balcom benefitted from the fact that some of Whitton's most important personal papers were made available in 1999 by the terms of Whitton's will. Her preparatory scholarship positioned Balcom to integrate that material seamlessly and insightfully. The work required to produce a volume of such incisive depth is inestimable, but in its production, Balcom positions herself to join the ranks of historians like Tamara Hareven, Blanche Wiesen Cook, and James Leiby, all with distinct viewpoints expressed through meticulous scholarship.

Literature in BC

Antonia Banyard
Never Going Back. Thistledown $16.95

Alan Twigg
The Essentials: 150 Great B.C. Books & Authors. Ronsdale $24.95

Caroline Woodward
Penny Loves Wade, Wade Loves Penny. Oolichan $18.95

Reviewed by Mark Diotte

Alan Twigg's *The Essentials* is the fourth volume of his literary history of British Columbia, and is preceded by *First Invaders*, *Aboriginality*, and *Thompson's Highway*. Initially, the title may seem presumptuous, given that Twigg's "panoramic approach . . . necessarily omits hundreds of books and authors." Furthermore, writers like Jean Barman, Michael Turner, Patrick Lane, Eden Robinson, and Sky Lee do not appear here. Twigg claims that many authors were not included because they have "achieved prominence elsewhere," yet still present in the volume are writers such as Emily Carr,

Jack Hodgins, and Douglas Coupland—writers who, despite their national and international reputations, are perhaps "more essential" for Twigg than others. Despite the obvious issues surrounding anthology selection, Twigg's work is itself essential. While many authors are absent, he successfully draws attention to little-known individuals such as writer George Godwin, novelist and poet Susan Musgrave, and science fiction author William Gibson, whose novel *Neuromancer* (1984) won Hugo, Nebula, and Philip K. Dick awards. Twigg also includes entries that range across genres and media to include playwright George Ryga, photographer John Vanderpant, historians Rolf Knight and Douglas Cole, and journalist Barry Broadfoot, who is described by Twigg as the "pioneer of oral history in Canada." It is in locating these lesser-known individuals as essential that Twigg's volume finds excellence.

Antonia Banyard's debut novel *Never Going Back* revolves around five friends who reflect on the childhood experiences and memories that have shaped their adult lives. As Evan, Siobhan, Lea, Mandy, and Lance gather to commemorate the death of Kristy, Evan's cousin, they begin to question the roles they may have played in her possible suicide and how they were blinded to the sexual abuse she endured from their teacher, Albert Hiller. The novel is set primarily in Nelson, BC, and is told from the perspectives of Evan, Siobhan, and Lance with the chapter titles signalling a shift between characters. Despite the change in point of view, the narrative remains in the third person, however, and sometimes, the nuances of each character are lost as a result. The beginning of the novel seems strained in places as Banyard develops her characters and their particular relationships to one another. Yet, as the plot unfolds, the initial awkwardness drops away and Banyard's characters begin to drive the plot forward. Banyard's talent for developing a multi-layered narrative of secrecy, betrayal, family conflict, and romance is impressive in this debut novel. Especially successful is the story of Siobhan who has kept in touch with Hiller throughout his incarceration; the continuing connection between student and teacher is particularly compelling in relation to his conviction, and the role he played in Kristy's death—a role Siobhan is either unaware or wilfully ignorant of. While at times I wanted a more intimate portrayal of small-town Nelson, I find the novel to be an important contribution to the continually evolving literary landscape of British Columbia.

Set in the Peace River region of British Columbia, *Penny Loves Wade, Wade Loves Penny* by Caroline Woodward is reminiscent of the fiction of Gail Anderson-Dargatz as well as *When She Was Electric* by Andrea MacPherson. Woodward's poetic style immediately captures the attention of the reader with Penny's first impression of Wade's "laughing spray of lines curving down the cheekbones." While the author describes her novel as a retelling of Homer's *The Odyssey*, the strength and success of the narrative is Penny's struggles with work, poverty, and isolation on the family ranch while Wade is long-haul trucking. Penny runs the ranch seemingly on her own by "selling good quality hay, raising and boarding horses, having bees . . . keeping two hundred purebred Angus cattle, a dozen chickens, a few pigs and a huge garden," in addition to working as a substitute teacher. Penny also contends with her "creepy neighbour" Evers and the attentions of Mort Granger while Wade is away. Wade's trucking journey ranges from the rescue of an abused woman to an encounter with his trucking partner's sex-club venture, and he begins to realize that his cargo may not be the potatoes, honey, and salmon he expects it to be. Despite Wade's adventures, Penny is the hero of the novel. As she edits a volume of community history that begins with first settler William Good, Wade's grandfather,

she is simultaneously "rewriting" the male-dominated history of the region through her work on the ranch. The triumph of the novel is the way that Woodward dislocates the male world of ranch labour through Penny's independence and by positioning her as the central presence and controlling force of both the ranch and the novel.

Fiction from Saskatchewan

Byrna Barclay
The Forest Horses. Coteau $21.00

Darcie Friesen Hossack
Mennonites Don't Dance. Thistledown $17.95

Larry Warwaruk
Bone Coulee. Coteau $18.95

Reviewed by Paul Denham

In *Bone Coulee*, Larry Warwaruk gives us Mac, a retired Ukrainian Canadian farmer from Central Saskatchewan, who fifty-seven years ago participated in a drunken fight after a ball game—a fight in which Thomas, a young First Nations man, lost his life. Mac is ready to consider that his family's ownership of Bone Coulee, the site of an ancient buffalo jump, may be merely provisional. His recognition that "one scoundrel has no right to beat on another" is reached as he delivers the eulogy at a memorial for Cameron, a local boy who died of AIDS in Vancouver. Conventional prejudice is no guide to action.

Personal grievances nursed for a lifetime are fruitful material, as are historical wrongs against a people—just ask Alice Munro or Guy Vanderhaeghe. Warwaruk does not fully realize his material's potential, however, perhaps because he sticks too closely to a plain, realistic mode of narration. Except when Mac is quoting Taras Shevchenko, the characters all sound pretty much alike: the New Democrat sounds like the Saskatchewan Party candidate, and Roseanna is barely distinguishable from the local farmers. Saskatchewan speech is quirkier than this.

Most of Hossack's stories are set in an agricultural community of Mennonites near Swift Current, with some characters turning up in more than one story. They are focused on the generations—on how parents, children, and grandchildren interact and shape each other's existence. The title, *Mennonites Don't Dance*, implies a traditional suspicion of the pleasures of the flesh. But in fact many of these Mennonites do take delight in food, in music, in "a family that laughed together often," and, we are invited to surmise, in sex as well. Those who refuse these delights cast an oppressive shadow over the others, but the reasons are not primarily theological or even cultural. After we have met a couple of mothers who are clearly suffering from depression, we may be more inclined to recognize the role of mental illness in these stories. The pinched, mean-spirited father in "Luna" and the emotionally abusive stepfather in "Ice House" exhibit pathological symptoms, and their families suffer for them. Nevertheless, the book celebrates some hard-won triumphs over grim situations, moments in which joy and love outlast pain and darkness.

Barclay's *Forest Horses* is the most ambitious of the three, reaching from the present century back to the early years of the Russian Revolution and the harrowing siege of Leningrad by the Nazis during the Second World War. Signe, the central figure, "born on the ice" of Lake Ladoga during a desperate expedition to bring supplies to the starving city, is returning in 2004 from her comfortable life in contemporary Saskatchewan to investigate her origins. Her father was Russian, her mother Swedish; they escaped from the Soviet Union just after the war when Signe was five and took up residence on a remote Saskatchewan farm. Signe acquired an education and became a teacher of Russian literature in Regina—somewhat unbelievably in view of her uncertain grasp of the Russian language. The story of the forest horses is at the heart of the novel—how

her bandit father Pyotr kidnapped her mother Lena and rustled her much loved horses from the Swedish island of Gotland to Leningrad; how the two fell in love; and how the horses became instrumental in bringing food into Leningrad and enabling some people to escape across the ice.

Signe returns to the city, now again named St. Petersburg, in a quest to discover her parents' story, which she knows is remarkable but only dimly apprehends. Her narrative, which is interleaved with those of Lena, Pyotr, and Pyotr's sister, is, perhaps inevitably, less compelling than theirs. Their accounts of a Soviet orphanage in the 1920s, of the rustling of the horses by boat, of a city besieged, and of a daring mission across a frozen lake are credible, stunning, and unforgettable. Signe's story provides a frame for them, but lacks their urgency.

Poèmes (1975-1984)

Michel Beaulieu

Poèmes (1975-1984). Noroît 22,95 $

Compte rendu par Jean-Noël Pontbriand

Il faut saluer l'initiative des Éditions du Noroît de rééditer les poèmes de Michel Beaulieu écrits entre 1975 et 1984. Cela nous permet de les relire, en dehors du contexte immédiat qui les a vus naître, et de les entendre d'une façon plus détachée des contingences historiques pour les situer vraiment dans l'espace poétique auquel ils appartiennent.

Il s'agit, dans ces textes, d'une voix qui module la langue et le langage selon une prosodie singulière qui fait large la place réservée à la narrativité, comme tous les critiques l'ont écrit. Ce qui leur confère une proximité qui les rend plus accessibles, principalement dans le beau recueil intitulé *Visages*, le plus achevé, je crois, qu'ait écrit l'auteur. « Il ne reste rien des alentours, écrit Beaulieu, qu'un halo de lumière. » Et c'est ce halo que le texte tentera de rendre présent et efficace par « l'invention d'un monde en le vivant jusqu'aux racines de l'imagination ».

Il y aura donc, dans ce recueil (de même que dans les autres qui composent cette réédition) une transposition du monde quotidien rempli d'ennui, un ennui lourd, glauque, avec lequel la conscience incarnée (y compris le corps grave dont parle *Kaléidoscope*) doit composer, dont elle va tenter par tous les moyens (drogue, érotisme, voyage, etc.) de se libérer afin de rencontrer un *toi* rédempteur qui lui permettra d'envisager la mort autrement. « Nul jamais ne mourra qui a su naître en toi. »

Le lecteur se laisse emporter par ce mouvement grâce auquel toute cette angoisse, ces déceptions, ces culs-de-sac explorés jusqu'au bout du voyage sont quelque peu estompés, réduits en quelque sorte à un certain nombre d'accidents de parcours nécessaires à la poursuite de ces voyages qui se succèdent de ville en ville. Pas moins de trente-et-une villes sont parcourues, à la recherche d'on ne sait quoi au juste et dont on ne rapporte que quelques impressions fugaces ou quelques souvenirs souvent tristes, qui n'ont point permis que les murs de la prison enfin s'effondrent.

L'essentiel était, à ce qui semble, le bruit des pas sur l'asphalte, des roues sur les rails, des pneus sur le macadam, de l'air dans les ailes de l'avion, des mots dans le grand espace du langage grâce auquel la conscience peut enfin retrouver son souffle en même temps qu'une certaine coïncidence passagère, certes, mais non moins réelle pour autant : « Peut-être après tout s'agit-il / de vivre masqués », « Je m'enfonce palpable dans les mots / toujours plus profondément ». Tout cela, même « si rien ne comble jamais cette faille ».

Plusieurs ont insisté sur le fait que Michel Beaulieu a été l'un des premiers et des plus illustres poètes de l'urbanité. Dans cette poésie, en effet, où tout se passe dans des lieux clos, la ville est l'un de ces espaces les plus éloquents. Finies les grandes envolées

dans l'azur gaspésien, les infinis cosmiques que Grandbois fréquentait autant dans ses poèmes que dans ses textes en prose. Avec Beaulieu, le lecteur est définitivement ramené à la ville et à ses paradis artificiels, la promiscuité des corps même si l'âme, l'esprit, la conscience n'y trouvent pas souvent leur compte. Sous la peau, il n'y a rien, « La pierre au fond du fleuve interdiction ».

C'est surtout dans *Kaléidoscope* que s'exprime cette fermeture avec une sorte de résignation. Les portes sont fermées, les murs élevés, mais au moins il y a du bois dans le foyer et les corps peuvent s'abandonner au jeu de la séduction de la chasse gardée, de la déception, etc. « La fluidité de la ville / où se rétrécit ton territoire / jusqu'à la peau de chagrin. » Tout cela jusqu'à la dernière ville « où tu reviens au bout du compte des voyages des séjours », la ville de l'enfance retrouvée avec une certaine nostalgie.

Sans oublier le fait que dans ces textes, comme il en est chez tout poète authentique, il s'agit d'une sonorité, d'un langage qui tente de devenir parole et le devient aux moments les plus forts du texte. Cet art propre à Beaulieu de mêler le banal avec le sublime, le prosaïque avec un certain mythique camouflé sous les traits de villes et de femmes toutes plus ésotériques les unes que les autres, alimente ce langage dans lequel une voix singulière et originale nous parle d'un lieu qui, maintenant que le poète n'est plus, se manifeste à nous avec une évidence qui était passée presqu'inaperçue au moment de la première publication de ces textes.

L'utopie de Beaulieu

Victor-Lévy Beaulieu
Antiterre : Utopium. Trois-Pistoles 29,95 $

Compte rendu par Michel Nareau

Longtemps, la « Saga des Beauchemin » de Victor-Lévy Beaulieu débutait par le roman *Race de monde*, dans lequel une « Tribu » était mise au monde pour décrire l'enfer québécois et le projet littéraire, mené par Abel, révélant une voie de sortie à l'aliénation. Avec *Antiterre*, Beaulieu réaligne ce cycle romanesque, en coupant des titres lui appartenant et en ajoutant d'autres. Il en résulte une relecture entière de son œuvre, et de ce seul fait, *Antiterre* occupe une place majeure dans sa production, d'autant plus que cet « utopium » clôt la saga et remplace *Le clan ultime* auparavant prévu. Suite de *Bibi*, *Antiterre* est le « livre b'abel » selon la belle image de Beaulieu : l'ouvrage qui détermine Abel dans sa trajectoire, qui dicte une finalité relative au projet romanesque. L'œuvre subsumerait l'équivocité québécoise et recentrerait les mots de la Tribu dans un cadre compréhensible. Sa forme procède des longues phrases-paragraphes sans ponctuation, centrées sur le soliloque d'Abel, ses déplacements physiques et mémoriels, autour de segments narratifs liés à la mort de Judith, à sa relation à Calixthe Bélaya, à sa « meson » de Trois-Pistoles.

Le titre fait référence à Pythagore et à sa cosmogonie vouée à l'équilibre, où il ajoute une planète invisible (Antiterre) pour harmoniser l'univers : Abel réintroduit ce besoin, en cherchant un lieu imaginaire (l'origine dans son cas) pour restituer au monde sa beauté et sa totalité perdues, d'où la tonalité utopique qui couve dans le roman. Les envolées qui constituent la matière du roman reposent sur une opposition entre la logique du ressentiment, avec sa rage et son désespoir, et le besoin de créer un alliage de beauté, de nature et de liberté. Abel cède certes à la colère (souvent risible dans ses généralisations et son didactisme), mais il fuit ce mur des lamentations sur lequel s'érige l'impuissance afin d'opter pour le recours à une pensée désirante, marquée par la nature, les animaux, le concret, la recréation. Contre la politique qui entérine les inégalités, Abel choisit un modèle utopique, qu'il puise au siècle des Lumières chez Nicolas Ledoux, modèle qui court-circuite l'histoire au nom d'une communauté du

repli. Si ce modèle fait danser Abel, il y a lieu d'interroger ce passéisme.

Plus intéressantes sont les parties sur la table de pommier et les écrivains français. La table, comme objet pulsionnel, transmet à Abel des visions pour constituer l'œuvre. Elle relève du registre de la parole sacramentelle, ritualisée. En faisant l'histoire de cet objet d'écriture, Abel recompose autant la saga familiale que le procès d'une narration qui n'est pas encore libérée de la pourriture. De leurs côtés, les multiples allusions et citations des poètes Rimbaud, Michaux, Éluard, Jarry, Reverdy et Char, scandent le roman par une continuité de mots-béquilles qui relancent le récit et suppléent au réel en apaisant l'angoisse et en fondant l'harmonie dansante recherchée par Abel. *Antiterre* est une utopie mal arrimée au projet romanesque de Beaulieu et apparaît comme une conclusion forcée à la « Saga des Beauchemin », en élaguant une part des tensions qui structuraient son écriture.

Des solitudes parallèles (scènes de vies de province)

François Blais

La nuit des morts-vivants. L'Instant même 22,95 $

Compte rendu par Krzysztof Jarosz

La nuit des morts-vivants, titre du dernier roman de François Blais, suggère une histoire de zombies ou de vampires, alors qu'il s'agit en fait d'un récit sur des riens quotidiens. La fausse annonce du titre se désamorce lorsqu'on apprend qu'il ne s'agit que de deux personnages de noctambules vivant à Grand-Mère, en Mauricie. Chacun d'eux écrit une chronique détaillée de son existence archi-plate. Lui, écrivant sous le pseudonyme de Pavel, travaille la nuit comme employé d'entretien de magasins à grande surface; elle, Molie, à cause de problèmes avec la ponctuation, a calqué son pseudonyme sur celui de la célèbre héroïne joycienne à la parole échevelée. Névrotique et incapable d'établir de nouvelles relations interpersonnelles, elle passe la plupart de ses nuits à errer à travers la ville. Bien que vivant tous les deux dans une petite ville et partageant les mêmes goûts esthétiques, ils rateront toutes les occasions de se connaître. Le seul suspense, dans ce livre sur la banalité de l'existence, est la conviction du lecteur que ces deux âmes sœurs finiront par s'unir en un couple androgyne parfait. Or, on n'est pas dans une comédie romantique *made in Hollywood*, mais dans ce qui se veut une peinture de la vraie vie, sans ces coïncidences romanesques qui mènent à un dénouement heureux. Corie, une cousine de Molie, recule paniquée devant une relation amoureuse et, comme elle, s'avoue incapable de croire à ces deux « bullshits » que sont l'amour et la religion. Pas un seul couple heureux dans ce livre où les solitudes sont tout au plus animées par des velléités de trouver l'âme sœur, dans un mouvement qui évoque la métaphore schopenhauerienne des porcs-épics : voulant se rapprocher pour se réchauffer, ils se blessent avec leurs piquants, s'éloignent donc, avant d'essayer à nouveau de se rapprocher pour ne pas souffrir du froid.

« Longtemps je me suis couché de bonne heure », la première phrase du roman, reprise fidèle de l'incipit de la somme proustienne, thématise d'emblée l'insignifiance des événements adroitement filés, tout en inaugurant un long chapelet de références intertextuelles dont le nombre et l'étendue contredisent aisément la prétendue ingénuité des narrateurs qui se révèlent être, au cours de leurs récits successifs, de fins connaisseurs non seulement de la philosophie allemande, mais aussi de la grande littérature mondiale. En parfaits usagers de la culture postmoderniste, ils sont d'ailleurs tout aussi passionnés — et experts — du joystick, en jouant compulsivement au jeu de Phantasy Star, sans se priver de temps à autre d'une séance nocturne de films d'horreur. Pavel (qui a choisi son sobriquet

en l'honneur d'un joueur de hockey) se passionne aussi pour les émissions sportives et pour les jeux qui ont pour sujet les sports nord-américains, tandis que Molie, lectrice et spectatrice compulsive, est incapable de résister même à la série de *Hannah Montana* apportée à la maison par une petite cousine, une série aux « intrigues . . . si simples que cela pourrait être en polonais et on arriverait quand même à ne pas perdre le fil ». Non contents de résumer et de vanter les avantages des ouvrages à lire et à écouter, Molie et Pavel sont particulièrement sensibles à traquer la frontière mouvante entre la fiction et le réel. Molie invente à l'usage de sa petite cousine Jaja une version moderne de conte de fée dont les personnages principaux sont la petite fille elle-même et sa meilleure copine. Cette série de récits vespéraux à fonction primitivement didactique (raconter une histoire pour endormir l'enfant) se transforme vite en un jeu baroque dans lequel la frontière sacro-sainte entre le réel et la fiction devient étrangement perméable et incertaine.

Finalement, on se retrouve dans un monde où, suivant une boutade perversement attribuée à Nietzsche, « Rien n'est vrai, tout est permis », le créateur réfléchit à sa création et où le récepteur, bien qu'apparemment happé par toute fiction, ne cesse de se poser des questions sur la vraisemblance de celle qu'il est en train de consommer. On peut se demander si Pavel et Molie pourraient former un couple heureux dans ce monde de « porcs-épics » qui ne croient plus à aucune « bullshit », deux notions qui sous-tendent cet univers de monades quasiment autosuffisantes dont chacune est préoccupée par son propre divertissement.

Tons de blanc

Antoine Boisclair
Le bruissement des possibles. Noroît 19,95 $

Compte rendu par Thierry Bissonnette

C'est à un raffinement lucide de la discrétion que nous convient les poèmes d'Antoine Boisclair, dont certains échantillons ont paru depuis quelques années en revue ainsi que dans une plaquette confidentielle en 2008. Également auteur d'un essai sur les liens entre poésie et peinture, Boisclair manifeste une prédilection évidente pour les portraits verbaux les plus sobres de Saint-Denys Garneau, de même que pour le poème « réaliste » promu par Robert Melançon, un mentor dont il adopte la posture marginale, à l'écart du vacarme contemporain et de ses avalanches d'images rapides. À l'écoute du « bruissement des possibles », attentif à la puissance des détails, on s'exerce ici à entendre un réel dont on semble toujours trop pressé de se détourner, et à capter l'événement au cœur même du banal apparent. Cela se fait à travers des vers généralement amples, où transparaît toujours l'expérience du souffle, et dont le rythme continu s'arrête au seuil de la prose.

Une majorité des poèmes débutent par une brève proposition sur les circonstances temporelles, ou encore par un constat philosophique ou moral qui sera ensuite développé, alors que l'inventaire de perceptions entre en contraste productif avec une volonté de rigueur. S'il s'agit de retrouver l'ouvert et les sources de la spontanéité du regard, il est d'emblée déterminé qu'on prospectera dans l'en-dessous, sous une démesure désormais normalisée, et que les refus de faire de l'effet seront autant sinon plus valorisés que les représentations proposées, comme en témoigne cet exercice combiné de présence et d'abstraction : « Il a plu. Un édifice fragile d'effluves s'élève / dans les rues pour nous accueillir / derrière chaque porte qui s'ouvre // à chaque bouffée d'air. Nous entrons en nous / comme dans une maison retrouvée /

après longtemps d'errance. // Nous respirons l'air et, respirant, / prenons conscience d'habiter notre respiration ». Comme chez Garneau, « la nature se renvoie une image d'elle-même / devant l'homme qui la contemple », et le poème est autant un moyen d'échapper à la prison du Je qu'au chaos pur des phénomènes.

Malgré le risque occasionnel d'une tonalité précieuse ou scolaire, le recueil remporte finalement ce pari de modération grâce à un juste dosage d'ironie (voir « Métaphysique d'Acapulco ») et à une dimension diachronique permettant de faire de cette galerie de tableaux un parcours. Mobilité méditative d'un sujet résistant, dont la conscience à la fois défensive et exploratrice joue la carte d'un absolu en pointillés.

To Teach and Delight

J. Brooks Bouson
Margaret Atwood: The Robber Bride, The Blind Assassin, Oryx and Crake. Continuum $29.95

Reviewed by Danette DiMarco

As part of the Continuum Studies in Contemporary North American Fiction, J. Brooks Bouson's edited collection includes essays considering female villainy, male violence against women, female self-sacrifice, genre crossings, narrative multiplicity, and scientific and corporate violence against the natural world.

Bouson, who identifies Atwood as "part trickster, illusionist, and con artist" and an "author-ethicist with a finely honed sense of moral responsibility," has selected essays of scope and depth that showcase the interesting interpretive possibilities available to readers engaging in close examinations of Atwood's works. The essays—nested in a three-part structure with one section devoted to each novel—confirm Atwood's ability "to teach and delight," "for to [her] a text is 'alive' if it can not only grow but 'change' through its interactions with readers."

Part 1, *The Robber Bride*, considers Zenia's shifting significance. Bouson explains this cohesive choice in the context of Atwood's own vision of Zenia, a "psychic projection" of the novel's main female characters Tony, Charis, and Roz. Sharon R. Wilson identifies Zenia as "a magical realist character," another indication of how the technique, narrative mode, and genre has "permeated" Atwood's works, although this fact is "largely ignored by critics." Hilde Staels describes Zenia as a "female trickster" and "trickster artist." Zenia transgresses gender boundaries established by the dominant culture and serves as a manifestation of Atwood's own parodic genre crossings to "liberate literary genres from rigidified conventions." Laurie Vickroy, meanwhile, understands Zenia as a necessary "symbolic challenge" in the lives of the female trio who must confront her, and by extension their childhood traumas, to overcome "their urge for vengeance and destructive power."

Part 2, *The Blind Assassin*, shifts critical exploration of "female badness" to "female goodness." Fiona Tolan, recognizing Atwood's "fractious relationship with feminism," especially second-wave, rights-based feminism, argues that Iris' narrative is fraught with tensions regarding sisterly collectivity and individualism. Magali Cornier Michael examines the complexity of Iris' narrative as evidence of Iris' multi-dimensionality. Iris' appropriation of combined generic forms, once unavailable to a woman of her class in Canada in the earlier decades of the twentieth century, "form[s] a textual version" of her that will "be the multi-layered self she can offer her granddaughter and the world." This discussion of narrative depth broadens to include a proliferation of novelistic phototexts in Shuli Barzilai's essay. Barzilai reveals the greater purpose for photographic *ekphrasis* in discussing the detective story and elegy. Phototexts serve as clues and resolution in the former and as remembrance in the latter.

The final section, *Oryx and Crake*, explores "humanist and posthumanist concerns." The novel fictionalizes scientific and corporate violence done against the natural world. Reading *Oryx and Crake* through the lens of Atwood's critical work *Payback*, Shannon Hengen calls attention to the "insurmountable debt to nature" that humans have accumulated. Atwood's new cross-disciplinary discourse includes religious study, and although at odds with her past voice, it is an avenue back to "traditional wisdom" and provides an "ethical vocabulary" that science has erased. Karen Stein also critiques an out-of-balance scientific world, comparing Crake with Victor Frankenstein, and argues that as "trickster-scientist[s]" both lack empathy because of their faith in reason and science. Finally, Mark Bosco situates the novel squarely in an eschatological tradition of "oracular literary texts in Western culture" that raises questions about end times. It incites responses about the future by "impel[ling] the reader to act, to direct the future by transforming the here and now."

This volume, like the author it discusses, teaches and delights while contributing to Atwood scholarship.

Hockey Margins

Michael Buma
Refereeing Identity: The Cultural Work of Canadian Hockey Novels. McGill-Queen's UP $29.95

Audrey Laurin-Lamothe and Nicolas Moreau, dirs.
Le Canadien de Montréal : Une légende repensée. PUM 24,95 $

Michael Robidoux
Stickhandling through the Margins: First Nations Hockey in Canada. U of Toronto P $21.95

Reviewed by Jason Blake

Michael Buma's fine *Refereeing Identity* is the only one of these three recent hockey books to focus on literature. Buma's own shorthand rendering of the book's broader argument is: "[Canadian hockey] novels . . . typically work in the service of homogenizing nationalism and traditional masculinity." If that sounds both grandiosely programmatic and simplistic—as if novelists worry more about national unity than language or plot—Buma builds a solid case in showing how, collectively, hockey fiction often does tend to champion a Don Cherryesque image of Canada.

The freshest part of *Refereeing Identity* explores masculinity. Yes, there is intelligent discussion of the usual hockey fights and "ol' time hockey" here, but even more captivating are the fuzzy on-ice cases Buma highlights. He insightfully points out where, and how, violence, traditional masculinity, and gender issues converge. Among the boys, he quotes Mark Jarman's *Salvage King, Ya!* Bleeding and in need of help, the rough-and-tumble Drinkwater is nevertheless choosy about the first aid product: "A tampon? You put a tampon on my face?" "Sure," replies the referee, "they're efficient at soaking up blood." Among the girls, there's Hal in Cara Hedley's *Twenty Miles*, who grew up playing contact hockey with boys. At her first university women's team try-out, she forgets the no-contact rule and coolly bodychecks a future teammate. The victim recovers and declares, "I was just laid out by a fucking Barbie doll." At such moments, traditional "masculine toughness is interrupted or diminished by the intrusion of unexpected items or thoughts associated with femininity."

Buma is a clever reader and there are plenty of enjoyable interpretations in *Refereeing Identity*. Sometimes, however, he under-emphasizes the mixed textual messages being sent. When discussing Robert Sedlack's *Horn of a Lamb*, he quotes a jingoistic anti-America rant by a feisty old fellow nicknamed Badger (pesterer?). The pensioner's slippery slope argument is that losing an unnamed Manitoba-based NHL

team means that soon "we'll be stuffing our faces with Big Macs and singing the 'Star Spangled Banner.'" Buma writes that the "speech goes on for almost a full page and is intended to be taken at face value (i.e., Badger isn't offered as a caricature or satire), and lays the groundwork for what will later become a campaign to save the team." No reason is given for *why* the reader "is intended" to take the cliché-ridden speech "at face value." More significantly, Buma does not mention that Badger, like so many fervent anti-Americans, is American—a fact that adds an ironic edge to this blade of anti-Americanization.

Nit-picking aside, *Refereeing Identity* is an excellent book. Exactly 300 pages of text and endnotes, *Refereeing Identity* flows well and smoothly. The index and endnotes are thorough, and page 297 rewards the reader with a very funny Leafs joke. Buma neatly and helpfully divides his ample bibliography into primary and secondary sources, and the only hockey novel neglected is John Geddes' crystalline *The Sundog Season*.

Stylistically speaking, Robidoux's *Stickhandling through the Margins* is a potpourri. Highly theoretical in some chapters, Robidoux uses ideas about the "colonial imaginary" to inform his discussions of First Nations hockey. As Robidoux relates his hockey journeys to tournaments in Sioux Lookout, Ontario, and Alkali Lake, BC (among other places), he moves from a traditionally academic tone to a more anecdotal style of argument. Chapter 1 is redolent with "dialectics of cultural formation" and "epistemic paradigms." In chapter 3, he provides immediacy by quoting his "field book": "*It's a good thing this tournament is not body contact, otherwise these guys would get killed*." If this shift in voice is surprising in an academic study, it reflects a scholar who is truly and bodily involved in his work. After all, Robidoux's field research took him to many a First Nations tournament, many a post-game social affair, a sweat lodge, and of course the odd game of shinny.

Robidoux is extremely careful not to appropriate First Nations hockey by stamping a clear, singular meaning on what he calls "other ways of being through sport." For example, he describes a fight involving former NHL enforcer Gino Odjick at a First Nations tournament and notes cautiously that his "Euro-Canadian" outsider's view "of the event made little sense to the [First Nations] people, . . . exposing the cracks within my own Western imaginary." Often, Robidoux is a neutral recording angel. He quotes frequently from (often funny) interviewees to provide a sense of other brands of hockey being played in Canada. Every reader of this book will learn something about First Nations hockey cultures.

The collection *Le Canadien de Montréal : Une légende repensée* primarily reconsiders the social history of the fabled red, white, and blue. Though there is no weak essay in this volume, a few stand out because they show the long cultural reach of the Montreal Canadiens. Olivier Bauer provides an overview of hockey reverence—"entre la foi et l'idolâtrie"—between those who (misguidedly) pray for the Habs to win and those who (*very* misguidedly) make a religion out of their beloved Habs. Jonathan Cha's "'La ville est hockey' : Au-delà du slogan, une quête d'identité urbaine" examines how North American cities compete to be *hockier* than thou by designating particular streets to ice hockey. Not content just to dominate the airwaves, hockey takes over cities in geographical terms.

Le Canadien could have benefitted from cross-referencing of essays. At least three times one is re-informed about the famous Richard Riot of 1955—a topic capably covered in Suzanne Laberge's lead-off "L'affaire Richard/Campbell : Le hockey comme vecteur de l'affirmation francophone québécoise." In one chapter, Howie Morenz, "né à Mitchell en Ontario," has his 1937 funeral

"devant 50 000 personnes"; in another, he becomes a "vedette[] locale[] anglophone[]" whose funeral was attended by "25 000 personnes" at the Montreal Forum. But what's a mythical few thousand among fans?

Happily, all three of these volumes contain recent hockey-themed artwork on their cover, a sure indication that hockey is finally fueling traditional culture; even if one of these artworks is a massive graffiti-homage to *le Canadien*.

Signifier Desire

Clint Burnham
The Only Poetry That Matters: Reading the Kootenay School of Writing. Arsenal Pulp $23.95

Reviewed by Gregory Betts

The Only Poetry That Matters is the first scholarly book on the Kootenay School of Writing (KSW), the longest running avant-garde literary collective in Canada's history. It is an important addition to a field in which critics have been surprisingly reserved; the field at present includes only a small number of anthologies and essays and one special issue of a journal. There is still very much to say about the KSW. This book jumps without reservation into its topic, only tersely and rather late in its discussion summarizing the history and personalities of the KSW. Consequently, this book will grow in significance as the conversation around and about the KSW catches up to it.

While it is a long overdue extended effort, it is immediately remarkable for what it avoids in that ripe terrain. Burnham has opted not to tell the story of the group, in however nuanced a fashion he might have chosen from the rich palette of post-modern historiographic techniques. He has, however, attempted to establish some parameters or terms for a conversation about the KSW. He does not systematically catalogue the names of all the principal figures involved in the collective, nor has he attempted to catalogue the texts and contexts of their work, but he does isolate a small number of potent exemplars to illuminate his theoretical frame. *The Only Poetry That Matters* thus reads more like the third or fourth book on a topic: eschewing the establishmentarian phase—the obvious *what is it* and *why is it interesting* approach—for an idiosyncratic fresh angle on a well-travelled topic.

What does Burnham write about then? Charles Bernstein says it well in his back-cover blurb: "This book could be subtitled 'Dr. Lacan in British Columbia.' Burnham ventriloquizes the old master." Indeed, the greater part of this book is spent explicating Lacan's theories and methods and then applying them to a very small number of poems written by a few members of the collective. Why Lacan? Well, ignoring the personal anecdotes that the author occasionally references as justification, I note that the close readings themselves present enough compelling evidence for this vantage point: Burnham demonstrates significant overlap between Lacanian concepts and KSW aesthetics, particularly through the linguistic interrogation of the semiotic. There is a shared endeavour to confront the cultural basis of meaning-making, eschewing a more digestible nomenclaturist conceptualization and expressivist use of language. The language of KSW poetry includes a politically perhaps ontologically engaged writing of absence, a "breaking off of discourse . . . that brings about full meaning" through negation and contestation.

Burnham's book identifies three recurring techniques in KSW writing, which he describes as empty (and full) speech, social collage, and neo-pastoralism. While he resists making any totalizing proclamations about the relation between these three and KSW writing as a whole, he demonstrates how Lacanian approaches to each can be useful in reading difficult poems. Even his exegesis of Red Toryism (a Canadian

political concept that he articulates in the context of representations of the landscape in work by Peter Culley, Dan Farrell, and Lisa Robertson) approaches that concept through Lacan's notions of desire and split subjectivity. A similar framing occurs in his discussion of the KSW archives.

Who is this book for? Literary theorists will find it instructive as a case study in using Lacanian models as the template for literary analysis and exegesis. While it does not serve as a general introduction to the KSW, it does offer a number of pedagogical close-readings of KSW authors and texts sprinkled throughout the book, teaching readers how KSW (or Language, or L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E) works. These sections are fascinating exercises in unpacking dense linguistic nuggets without sacrificing their nuanced language. To be clear, the book presents these as exemplars of its theoretical frame(s), putting the theory first, without explaining why it addresses some works over others. Instead, this book works from an unstated assumption about the KSW as a known phenomenon with recognized contributions to literature. This is a book, then, that will grow in significance as—and admittedly if—a broader conversation about North American literature grows in its direction, learns who and what the KSW is, was, and are, and recognizes significance in its ongoing impact in Lacanian terms. Bernstein's blurb on the back cover describes the KSW as "an absolutely crucial, compelling, and provocative poetry collective that emerged on Canada's West Coast in the 1980s." After *The Only Poetry That Matters*, there is still room for that kind of "first" book on the collective to make the case explicitly.

Between I and I

George Elliott Clarke
I & I. Goose Lane $24.95

Endre Farkas and Carolyn Marie Souaid
Blood is Blood. Signature $19.95

Shane Rhodes
Err. Nightwood $18.95

Reviewed by Katherine McLeod

George Elliott Clarke's verse-novel *I & I* is a psychedelic love story of the 1970s. It is a "pop-song opera" that sings of Malcolm and Betty, whose teen romance takes a serious turn once they uproot to Corpus Christi, Texas. Here, Betty's plans to study scripture are violently halted when she is raped by her misogynistic teacher, Lowell Beardsley. After taking revenge upon Lowell, Malcolm, a former boxer, becomes an outlaw. The lovers flee to the "canaan" of Canada and the poems documenting their Trans-Canada journey home to Halifax provide an inventive imagining of the nation through eyes of returned exiles. In this section called "Canada," a poem describes Vancouver as "Istanbul with snow, with mountains / With saki" and includes a nod to the city's literary landscape with a reference to Daphne Marlatt having "just released the photogenic *Steveston*." In Ottawa, a poem called "Parliament," penned by Malcolm, speaks of "Hansard 'blues'" after he and Betty are invited to a Question Period in the nation's capital.

Opening with an epigraph by Pain Not Bread (Roo Borson, Kim Maltman, Andy Patton), "Beauty is concentrated by order and wildness," the poetry of *I & I* explores the meaning of "Beauty," or, rather, it explores Malcolm's question: "I yearn for *Beauty*. Is it only a word?" One way of reading *I & I* is that it asks where the place is for "Beauty" within that "disreputable decade"—a time when "wine was chrome, guitars were machetes, music was sex, TV was the Bible, neon was ink, and poetry was James Brown growling out a midnight

radio." Musical references from the era permeate the text, ranging from Stephen Scobie's *Alias Bob Dylan* ("The singer is always divided into I and I," echoing the title of Bob Dylan's song "I and I") to Charles Mingus ("an I and an I and an I that we do comprehend"). Significantly, Mingus' words open up further permutations of "I and I," layered upon the meanings already offered by the text itself—"I and I, / Says Betty, is Rastafarian for 'you and me'"—along with the formal enactment of "I and I" in that nearly all of the book's poems are written in couplets, a continuous duet on the page.

Another kind of poetic duet resounds from the pages of *Blood is Blood* by Endre Farkas and Carolyn Marie Souaid. Published as a poem and video-poem on CD, *Blood is Blood* speaks through two voices, each placed on opposing pages with the words "Jew" and "Arab" written above each voice. These words gradually fade until they have disappeared for the final line: "Let us take an eye for an eye until everyone is blind." In the video-poem, Souaid and Farkas speak this line in unison, powerfully conveying togetherness even though conflict persists. The authors met at the Trois-Rivières International Poetry Festival, where a shared interest in writing led to discussions of their differences: "One of us was Jewish and a child of Holocaust survivors; the other, a Lebanese Christian with family still living in the 'old country.'" For Farkas and Souaid, collaboration created a space through which to confront histories of violence, prejudices, and misunderstandings, just as the words in the poem intersect in dialogue both on the page and off.

On the page, Shane Rhodes' poetry collection *Err* catches the reader's eye with innovative linguistic performances that beckon to be read out loud. Invoking the spirits, Rhodes sets a whimsical, inebriated tone for a series of alcohol-themed poems:

> Stagger up from caudled cups, fuddled sops
> Revive & sway from allsorts pots,
> debauched sots
> Crawl from bar stools & tabletops . . . o rise
> Intoxicants, rise up & speak

Playing upon the chemical composition of alcohol, "Choreographed Echoes" exclaims, "OH C_2H_5OH (aka alcOHol), alOHa!" The second section continues formal and sonic experiments but speaks with a sombre tone, turning its attention to AIDS, "a virus [and its 33,000,000 faces] / that loves everything it erases." Still, playfulness mixes with seriousness, as in a found-poem composed of questions posted on an HIV/AIDS web forum. *Err*'s final poems range in subject matter but all explore and explode language: "F is frayful friction, like the fighter jet F-16 / while two fingers (V) fake the fiction of peace or victory" or "*Umpah! Umpah!* our tuba-wallah / hammered polkas while, on our howdah, / our hooters hooted, *Hooshtah! Hooshtah!*" Reflecting upon poetry itself, *Err* concludes with "Dark Matter": "it's bright / it's brilliant, / it's it." This elusive "it" takes on multiple metaphors but in the end, "it's had it, it means it, it quits." The poem is over—"it" is done. Yet, returning to Clarke's title *I & I*, the doubling of "it's it" resembles the doubled "I and I," whether heard as seeing eye to eye, or as speaking (or reading) between you and me. The poem may have "quit" but *it* has now been passed over to you, the reader.

Quelques mots du Québec

Monique C. Cormier et Jean-Claude Boulanger, dirs.
Les dictionnaires de la langue française au Québec : De la Nouvelle-France à aujourd'hui.
PUM 32,95 $

Compte rendu par Bruno Courbon

Les dictionnaires de la langue française au Québec rassemble quinze contributions (440 pages) écrites par des lexicographes,

des langagiers ainsi qu'un historien du livre pour la *Troisième journée québécoise des dictionnaires*. Cette Journée commémorait le quatre centième anniversaire de la ville de Québec (2008). La première moitié du texte aborde la dimension historique, la seconde porte sur la lexicographie québécoise des trente dernières années.

Claude Poirier montre à quel point la vision qu'ont les Canadiens / Québécois de la langue nationale de France influe sur leur production lexicographique. Il décrit l'oscillation entre la conformation à « la doctrine normative des Français » et « la volonté de libération culturelle ». Louis Mercier étudie quatre ouvrages de l'époque des glossaires (1880-1930). « [M]oins stigmatisante » que par le passé, l'approche des glossairistes consistait à inventorier les particularismes canadiens dans une visée patrimoniale et descriptive. Gabrielle Saint-Yves relève dans ces ouvrages la façon dont est définie l'identité féminine. Elle classe les représentations lexicographiques de la femme selon des critères précis (rôle social, état civil, âge . . .) et note la vision traditionnelle qui en ressort. Après avoir présenté le contexte de diffusion du livre en Nouvelle-France, Marcel Lajeunesse ouvre les portes de quelques bibliothèques de l'époque en répertoriant les dictionnaires qui s'y trouvent à partir de catalogues et d'inventaires après décès. Jean Pruvost examine les façons dont est présentée la réalité canadienne dans la lexicographie française des dix-septièmes et dix-huitièmes siècles. La mention du Canada dans les premiers monolingues est rare; *Trévoux* décrit plus en détail certaines réalités canadiennes (animaux, commerce), mais c'est dans l'*Encyclopédie* que les références au Canada sont les plus nombreuses, avec un intérêt marqué pour la faune et la flore.

L'ouvrage se tourne ensuite vers la lexicographie québécoise. Un examen des marques, des commentaires et des textes périphériques de quatre dictionnaires du français au Québec permet à Elmar Schafroth de dégager les modes d'expression de la normativité. Le *Multidictionnaire de la langue française* (2003) est le plus normatif; le *Dictionnaire québécois-français* (1999), présenté comme descriptif, est en fait implicitement normatif. Le *Dictionnaire du français Plus* (1988), et le *Dictionnaire québécois d'aujourd'hui* (1993) tendent à être plus descriptifs. Toutefois, la sélection et le marquage des anglicismes ne sont satisfaisants dans aucun dictionnaire. Dans son examen du *Dictionnaire québécois-français* (Meney 2003), Henri Béjoint observe le caractère hétéroclite de sa structure. Esther Poisson présente ensuite la genèse et les visées du *Dictionnaire québécois d'aujourd'hui* (1992), adaptation québécoise—linguistique et culturelle—d'un Robert. Elle explique les réactions suscitées par l'ouvrage. Monique Cormier présente le *Multidictionnaire de la langue française* de Marie-Éva de Villers, et avance quelques raisons de son succès. Comparant cinq dictionnaires scolaires québécois, Pascale Lefrançois note le traitement inégal de faits lexicaux comme les québécismes. L'auteure propose des recommandations relatives au marquage et à l'intégration morphologique et syntagmatique des usages. Monica Barsi et Cristina Brancaglion présentent des façons d'exploiter la BDLP pour traiter la variation diatopique dans l'enseignement du français langue étrangère. Jacques Maurais démontre l'utilité de marquer les usages québécois dans un dictionnaire. La comparaison d'une enquête réalisée en 1983 puis en 2006 révèle que les Québécois sont plus conscients des usages qui leur sont propres et qu'ils utilisent aujourd'hui un plus grand nombre d'équivalents lexicaux non québécois. Pierre Martel et Hélène Cajolet-Laganière présentent le dictionnaire qu'ils dirigent à l'Université de Sherbrooke (visée, structure, corpus et critères de sélection). Le recueil se clôt avec une bibliographie de dictionnaires de la langue française parus

depuis le dix-huitième siècle au Canada. Myriam Côté et Geneviève Joncas y présentent les monographies par ordre chronologique et alphabétique.

Diasporic Imaginaries

Pilar Cuder-Domínguez, Belén Martín-Lucas, and Sonia Villegas-López, eds. *Transnational Poetics: Asian Canadian Women's Fiction of the 1990s.* TSAR $28.95

Reviewed by Donna McCormack

Transnational Poetics marks the 1990s as the decade when Asian Canadian women's literature flourished both inside and outside of Canada. Intertwining literary analysis with a discussion of the politics of publishing, the authors elaborate on how Canada's multicultural policies have enabled a proliferation of Asian Canadian fiction. Conversely, they also demonstrate how this somewhat positive outcome of multiculturalism is restrained by the expectations of publishers, the public, and academics that often remain attached to limited ideas of what constitutes Asianness in the Canadian literary context. Analyzing both a remarkable number of texts and a broad range of genres, *Transnational Poetics* offers an excellent introduction to Asian Canadian women's fiction and to its predominant themes.

The text is divided into three accessible chapters, the first focusing on Indo-Canadian literature, the second on Chinese Canadian fiction, and the third on Japanese Canadian texts. This division allows the authors to explore the relevant historical, biographical, and cultural contexts. Although the second and third chapters cohere neatly around histories of migration to Canada from China and Japan respectively, the first chapter more awkwardly explores women authors whose texts broadly explore a historical tie to India. While all three chapters examine the complex histories that bring diasporic peoples together or that fail to unite communities, chapter 1 gives much more space to the ambiguous and multilayered meaning of the term "Indo." In contrast, the categories of "Japanese" and "Chinese" are offered as much less complicated terms in their seemingly unambiguous connections to the countries of Japan and China respectively. There is, however, some analysis of how the term "ethnic" has both been positively promoted in a Canadian multicultural era and how it has enabled the reconsolidation of the invisible category of whiteness as synonymous with Canadianness. Yet the shift to the use of "race," while potentially politically necessary, is inadequately explored. The reader is given little information about relevant debates and instead expected to endorse the authors' position.

Indeed, one of the problems with this text is the lack of authorial voice throughout. Despite extensive quotation, there is little commentary on why these quotations have been selected or how they consolidate the proposed argument. Although the extracts from the literary texts are often lyrically beautiful, the authors rely too much on other people's work as self-evident explanation. This lack of critical engagement is further exacerbated by a limited range of theoretical material. The over-reliance on Julia Kristeva's work when dealing with issues of sexuality, gender, disability, and the body reveals a lack of engagement with contemporary debates in these extensive fields of study. Reading "his daughter Miyo's disability [as] a punishment" for another generation's ills in Kerri Sakamoto's *One Hundred Million Hearts* and queer desire between women as a "sisterhood of the heart displac[ing] a sisterhood of the body" in Hiromi Goto's *The Kappa Child* are just two examples where disability and queer sexuality are inadequately informed by contemporary theories and conversations. *Transnational Poetics* does not offer an interrogation of the deployment of disability in Asian Canadian women's fiction. Further,

it fails to engage with, on the one hand, the debates in queer theory regarding female friendships and sexuality, and, on the other hand, with the idea that queer sex may challenge familial discourses. Many of the selected fictional texts explicitly deal with disability and queer desires and embodiments, and therefore this gap in critical and theoretical material is both striking and disappointing.

While this text's strengths may not be situated in its capacity to offer critical insights to existing debates on sexuality, gender, disability, and the body, its appeal is located in the focus on thematic trends in Asian Canadian women's fiction and the politics of Canadian multiculturalism. The main points of discussion are mother/daughter relations, the (female) body politic, histories of migration and diasporas, and familial and sexual relations and violence. For students starting out in Canadian literature, diasporic studies, and/or feminist analyses, this text would be an excellent resource in enabling students to grapple with multiple and sometimes conflicting histories; women's desires, social roles, and power; and the complexities of contemporary Canadian belonging. In brief interludes of aesthetic and formal inquiry, the authors also explore the form of the texts and the potential interrelation of style, language, and genre with politics. While there is little comment on why the short-story cycle is a prominent genre among Asian Canadian women writers (except to broadly claim that it constitutes "a significant irruption in a well-established Canadian tradition"), these short forays into poetics offer concise points for students to reflect on both in the selected fiction and in broader literary studies.

Transnational Poetics displays a willingness to engage with a large corpus of fiction and is exciting in the breadth of literature covered. It offers an excellent survey of Asian Canadian women's literary texts and chapters 2 and 3 establish a very useful genealogy of East Asian Canadian fiction. The chapter on Indo-Canadian literature draws connections between multiple South Asian diasporic literary productions, thereby connecting Canada to histories of colonization and slavery in Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean. The text is original in its desire to bring together such varied genres, authors, and histories. However, a reader searching for a critically and theoretically informed analysis of queer desires and sexualities and/or disabled subjectivities in fictional texts that are evidently concerned with these issues will be disappointed. Indeed, a reader looking for original analyses of "poetics," as suggested by the title, will find the brief discussions of form very dissatisfying. This is a very useful resource for introductory courses, but is not a text that will shake the parameters of existing critical thinking in the study of Asian Canadian women's fiction.

The Hybridity Revolution

Adebe DeRango-Adem and Andrea Thompson, eds.
Other Tongues: Mixed-Race Women Speak Out.
Inanna $24.95

Reviewed by Michelle La Flamme

Societies that pride themselves on an imagined monoracial norm have rare glimpses into the multiracial experience. The contemporary literary phenomenon some refer to as the "boom in biracial biography" (Spickard) has offered nuanced reflections on the ontological impact of this liminal hybrid position. At their thematic core, most bi-racial and multiracial narratives demonstrate the complexity of this form of embodiment and the semiotics of a body continually affected, and constructed, by the racializing gaze. Several thematic issues are repeated in both Carol Camper's seminal anthology *Miscegenation Blues: Voices of Mixed Race Women* (1994) and the more

recent *Other Tongue: Mixed-Race Women Speak Out* (2010). The writing in both anthologies is a bold testament to the pervasiveness of multiraciality and ultimately counters many social scientific conclusions. The interest in such anthologies is also in keeping with the rise in autobiography and critical race theories. In both fields, there is a consistent tendency to privilege personal accounts of the mixed race experience and, as Camper claims in her preface, the importance of "speaking for ourselves" as "experts on our own lives."

The women writers in *Other Tongues* outline moments of interpellation, the power of the racializing gaze, and the stages of their shifting notions of self based on diversely-coded bodies that challenge monoracial definitions of identity. The work accounts for various individual experiences of "passing" and the complexities of a body that is repeatedly read for signs of authenticity. These writers contest the notion of a "post-racial" world in that these poems, memoirs, short stories, and artwork continually reference the fact that visual identifiers of race are understood within "always already" historical and cultural conditions that lead to the racialization of the body despite the individual's efforts (or best intentions) to defy these norms. The editors of *Other Tongues* suggest that it offers unique perspectives on the "changing racial landscape that [has] occurred over the last decade" in order to offer a "snapshot of the North American terrain of questions about race, mixed-race, racial identity, and how mixed-race women in North American identify in the twenty-first century" in a time that is marked by "the inauguration of the first mixed-race Black president in North America." However, the anthology is more personal than critical, privileges women's voices, and fails to represent the range of mixedness in North America. Given that the themes and content echo Camper's 1994 anthology, the uniqueness of this collection is perhaps overstated.

The editors have arranged the anthology in three distinct categories: 1) "Rules/Roles," where writers grapple with the question "what are you" and the ontological implications; 2) "Roots/Routes," where "location, immigration, diasporic moments and family" take centre stage with the "politics of hair"; 3) "Revelations" features words of wisdom and "vision[s] of the future." Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, black, and Aboriginal mixed-race writers express their identities here in writing and visual art. Every North American anthology of racial mixedness addresses the persistence of the question "Where are you from?" and "What are you?" Here, Kali Fajardo-Anstine playfully and ironically suggests, "You will hear this question 9,652 times in your life." The work addresses white privilege and the unique negotiations involved in "passing" and otherwise responding to the colour line from within and outside of various communities of colour. Some writers, like Amber Jamaica Mosser in "Contamination," refer to their very bodies as symbols of the historical legacies of interraciality: "my very existence offers tangible proof of the sullying of various bloodlines; it evokes histories of colonization, conquest, invasion, and pain." Mosser, like many of these writers, ironically reflects on the "un-(w)hol(e)liness" that the mixed-race body signifies. Others identify the numerous painful and sometimes comic reactions their bodies have evoked.

The utter loneliness of being lost in a sea of monoracial faces and the quest to find community is a staple part of these narratives. Such efforts include searching for the self in photographs of family and deeply personal tableaux involving penetrating ontological questions as one faces the mirror. Photographs and visual art appear throughout *Other Tongues*, forcing the reader to notice their own reading of these mixed-race bodies.

Transcriptions of several conversations document the "malleability of [our] racial

identities" and are predicated on the body being "racially indecipherable" (Quinn). Advice for other mixed-race people is offered by several writers, but most explicitly in "The Half-Breed's Guide to Answering the Question" by M. C. Shumaker. "Open Letter" by Adebe DeRango-Adem playfully and ironically lists the names that are used to categorize mixed-race peoples, causing the reader to reflect upon the semantics involved in the racialization of mixed race bodies.

Countering the "tragic mulatto" and "tortured half-breed" narratives of yesteryear, writers here identify moments, sites, and places where people find solace and comfort and describe carefully crafted means to negotiate racial boundaries and still feel whole. A challenge to racial essentialism is offered by Erin Kobayashi: "the truth is, I am not a 'half' or 'bi' or 'multi' human being. I have always been whole. I am 100 percent mixed. Final answer. I hope that answers your trick question."

While this anthology offers new voices, the content on the whole echoes the symbolism, themes, and quests for selfhood in Camper's earlier anthology. I am still waiting for an anthology that will include writing from Canadian hybridity theorists like George Elliott Clarke, Lawrence Hill, Wayde Compton, Fred Wah, and Drew Hayden Taylor, who have written poetry, prose, and critical essays on notions of mixedness. Is there a gender difference in the way in which racial hybridity plays itself out in Canada? Do Canadian writers offer new paradigms, symbols, and themes on racial mixedness that are useful in the larger frame of postcoloniality or hybridity theory? What are the unique features of North America that drive our interest in the experience of mixedness and feed our critical engagement with this form of identity? In what ways is Canada distinct from the US and Latin American articulations of these multiplicities? What are the specific socio-cultural frameworks that define and condition these women's experiences of multiraciality? What are the future directions for narratives as the hyphenated identity becomes increasingly complicated? Will the mestiza consciousness that asserts mixedness as the norm evolve in other North American sites? What effect would such paradigm shifts have on the lived experiences and semiotics of the multiply-coded and polyracial body?

The next generation of writers will at least have anthologies like this one to digest and reflect upon when they navigate their own experiences of racialization. If it is true that all people require some form of mirroring to develop a stable identity, then these anthologies *become* the very mirrors that the collected writers themselves searched for while they were growing up.

De la maïeutique des idées

Fernand Dorais

Le recueil de Dorais : Volume I — Les essais. Prise de parole 39,95 $

Compte rendu par Stéphanie Desrochers

Fernand Dorais était professeur, animateur social et homme de religion; sa prose essayistique franche, résolument « cognitive », pour reprendre la typologie de l'essai proposée par Robert Vigneault, reflète chacune des dimensions de l'intellectuel complexe qu'il était. Bien que né au Québec, celui qui a enseigné plus de vingt ans à l'Université Laurentienne a fait du Nouvel-Ontario et de l'émergence d'une affirmation identitaire franco-ontarienne le foyer de sa réflexion sur la culture et la littérature.

Il faut ici entendre « foyer » au double sens de lieu, de domicile et de point focal de la pensée. C'est du moins ce à quoi nous invite la division de ce recueil des essais de l'auteur, en posant comme « Pré-scriptum » et « Post-scriptum » les premier et dernier tomes du volume, dans lesquels se trouvent les essais précédant et suivant la venue de

Dorais en Ontario. Conformément à la logique de cette dénomination faite sur le mode d'un avant et d'un après de l'écriture, le cœur du projet essayistique de Dorais se trouverait dans les écrits sur le devenir ontologique et identitaire du fait francophone en Ontario, que renferment les tomes II et III. L'ouvrage comporte quatre tomes au total.

Cet avant de l'écriture, le pré-scriptum, décline différentes réflexions sur la Nouvelle Critique française et sur l'épistémologie de la recherche en littérature. Entre l'essai érudit « La lecture gréco-romaine des textes », prolégomènes à un ouvrage plus élaboré sur la lecture des textes, et celui intitulé « D'un discours de la méthode possible en recherches littéraires » se définit la posture de chercheur de Dorais, qui, tout en reconnaissant l'apport des sciences du langage dans l'appréhension des textes, n'a jamais cessé de faire valoir l'importance de la subjectivité humaine dans les études littéraires. « Mais qui a tué André? » inaugure le deuxième tome du volume et donne l'exacte mesure de la finesse avec laquelle l'essayiste analyse la situation franco-ontarienne, tout autant que les dangers de l'acculturation et d'un bilinguisme soustractif. La référence à la figure d'André Paiement, autour de qui se sont cristallisées bon nombre d'initiatives de CANO, rappelle le rôle d'animateur culturel qu'a joué Fernand Dorais pour la jeunesse franco-ontarienne, rôle qui structure l'ensemble des essais de cette partie. Dans le troisième tome, qui forme un tout assez homogène, à la façon d'un roman dont « chaque chapitre [est] un essai qui tente de cerner [l']expérience [de Dorais] dans la francophonie canadienne », se dessine la vision de la littérature du professeur en milieu minoritaire francophone et de l'homme en situation, au sens très sartrien de l'expérience décrite, qu'est Dorais. Enfin, les essais du quatrième tome, proches de l'étude critique de l'œuvre de Thérèse Tardif et de la réponse que lui a adressée Marie de Villers, seraient de façon cryptée une grille de lecture anticipant l'œuvre de création en cours d'écriture de Dorais lui-même.

Heureuse façon de conclure ce premier volet d'un projet bipartite, appelé à être complété par un second volume réunissant les œuvres de création de Fernand Dorais. Pour l'heure, les trente essais ici réunis et commentés par Gaston Tremblay permettent de passer en revue les jalons du parcours de Fernand Dorais et de mettre en lumière une conception de la culture et de la littérature sans doute datée, mais néanmoins fondamentale dans la constitution de l'identité franco-ontarienne.

Silent Casualties of the Great War

Susan R. Fisher

Boys and Girls in No Man's Land: English-Canadian Children and the First World War. U of Toronto P $29.95

Reviewed by Sherrill Grace

Many books have recently been published about Canada and the Great War, but few are as good as this one. Susan Fisher has done an enormous amount of original research and written a fascinating account of the ways in which children were influenced, through education, fiction, and propaganda, to support the war effort. Her narrative and analyses are exceedingly well written and accessible to anyone interested in the war, in Canadian cultural history, or in the impact of the war on young people. At the same time, the information she has gathered from early textbooks, Salvation Army publications, children's literature, poetry, and her superb illustrations provides invaluable data for an academic researcher or a teacher who wants to expand the classroom study of the war.

Fisher draws many important conclusions from her study, and chief among these are that adults viewed children as targets for political propaganda, that the impact of the

war on these children was profound and long-lasting, and that kids (sometimes as young as toddlers of two) were dressed up as tiny soldiers to sell various articles of clothing, games, and toys. The cover of this book shocked and moved me: it shows, on a white ground, a forlorn boy of about five dressed in full uniform, from boots and puttees to cap, saluting the person behind the camera. This image, like others Fisher includes, raises a compelling question for twenty-first-century readers: is the boy a child soldier? Did Canada actually promote such a phenomenon?

But Fisher is not writing a simple anti-war study. Her scope is much broader and more complex. She is writing cultural history, and her tone is nuanced, her research multi-faceted. She examines what children were given to read in the war years, in their school textbooks, Sunday-school papers, the Eaton's catalogue, and in popular stories, and she identifies some key themes in these materials: an appeal to patriotism, an encouragement of anti-German sentiment, and the reinforcement of unquestioning respect for duty. Children, especially boys, were being trained to obey the demands of the church and state. The Cadet Corps, important in most schools of the period, played a strategic role in grooming boys to idealize the role of the soldier, while encouraging girls to admire a cadet. Poems like "The Charge of the Light Brigade" or "Recessional" were staples of the curriculum, and not until Jack Hodgins' *Broken Ground* (1998) and Stephen Massicotte's *Mary's Wedding* (2002) have Canadian writers begun to question the consequences of such literature for the young.

There is a wealth of material in Fisher's book, but I want to single out two chapters that I found valuable. In chapter 6, Fisher examines national identity in detail and concludes that young Canadians were being told to consider themselves British and as loyal to the British king, not to anything or anyone Canadian. She found one exception—a novel by William Lowery—that celebrated being Canadian. Is it any wonder, then, that a confident sense of national identity was devalued because of the war or that appeals to Canadian pride were problematic (Vimy Ridge notwithstanding)? In her last chapter, "A War for Modern Readers," Fisher brings her study of children's literature up to the present and notes that revisitings of the Great War have made "an astonishing comeback." Moreover, she provides a list of such works and analyzes many of them to determine how the contemporary treatment of war, national identity, education, and propaganda differs from the works disseminated almost a hundred years ago. This chapter, like her entire book, is very timely, especially in light of the enormous popularity of *War Horse*, originally a British children's story by Michael Morpurgo and now a stage play and film that may try to critique war but turns it into a sensational, seductive spectacle.

This contemporary pressure is one more reason why I highly recommend the reading of Fisher's book. In addition to informing us about Canadian cultural history and the place in it of those young, silent casualties of war, who are often forgotten, Fisher asks us to see history as living now, all around us, a text from which there is much to learn. *Boys and Girls in No Man's Land* won the 2012 CFHSS prize for the best book in English-language Humanities, and when you read it you will understand why.

Imagining Newfoundland

Jamie Fitzpatrick
You Could Believe in Nothing. Vagrant $19.95

Nicole Lundrigan
Glass Boys. Douglas & McIntyre $22.95

Nico Rogers
The Fetch. Brick $19.00

Reviewed by Susie DeCoste

Nicole Lundrigan's skilled and beautifully told novel *Glass Boys* depicts two families intimately related through proximity and history in a small isolated Newfoundland community. The novel revolves around a young boy's buried secret that, once released, evokes such rage in his father that he murders a neighbouring man who wanders into the yard on a jovial bender. The narrative studies the impact of this event on members of the two families over two generations. While at the novel's opening, the murderer Eli Fagan seems to be the root cause of the cascade of evil in the text, at its close, readers see him as just as much of a victim of his circumstances as the other characters. Lundrigan's timing and ability to depict the evolution of the characters is exquisite, and her style is impressive. Each sentence is as carefully crafted as a line in poetry, and each propels the next one forward in rhythm and sound. This seductive style covers over any of the concerns readers might have about the rather stereotypical themes that readers have come to expect from literature of the East Coast—poverty, alcoholism, desperation—not to mention the aestheticized depiction of such rural experience.

In his debut novel, Jamie Fitzpatrick is seemingly self-conscious about how he portrays Newfoundland, Newfoundlanders, and Newfoundlanders playing hockey. This text does not have the same interest in metaphor, imagery, or language as *Glass Boys*. Instead, it is a plot-driven character study about an early-middle-aged man obsessed with his penis who languishes in the mundane. His only saving grace is his amateur hockey team in St. John's. As much as the novel actively resists the kind of regionalism that would see Newfoundland in light of what one character calls "the rhetoric of Newfoundland transcendence, in which a people of mighty spirit prevail through shit weather and blundering history to find a deeper level of consciousness," the novel is equally interested in entertaining the idea that Newfoundland might be such a place, and these characters such a people.

The novel's critique of "the Newfoundland card" is strongest in its exploration of the men's relationship to their hockey team, their CBC interview, and subsequent spot on *Hockey Night in Canada.* As characters are asked in the interview to consider their relationships to both hockey and Canada, their responses ebb and flow between resistance to the story of their team as special because of Newfoundland's unique position in the country, or as ordinary because of the way they could be, as Ron MacLean in the novel says, "any hockey team in Canada, really."

Unlike Fitzpatrick's attempts to separate his novel from rural and folk traditions, Nico Rogers' *The Fetch* situates itself firmly in a rural Newfoundland of the past. It is a superb collection of prose poems and vignettes about life in outport Newfoundland during the nineteenth century. Rogers has the wonderful ability to capture the nuances of distinct voices within the first few words of a piece. *The Fetch* presents itself as an archive; an aged black and white photograph is placed next to each prose poem, and readers are encouraged to imagine that the voice of the piece comes from or involves the person depicted. One of the most compelling is "Olive Oil," about a premature baby. The scene seems sinister: the boldness and oddness of a palm-sized baby soaked in olive oil and kept in a hot pot near the fire seems like a Grimm's fairy tale. The speaker and

reader both curiously watch the scene unfold as a midwife cares for the baby; the photo of a thin little boy and a dirty dog placed before the poem reassure readers that the baby survives.

Like folk collectors of the early twentieth century, Rogers acknowledges his own ventures to Newfoundland to conduct research with extended family and in archives. The place is indirectly treated as a museum in need of preservation, and the people depicted in the prose vignettes are separated from many aspects of modern life. These relationships to folklore indicate that readers and writers still long for representations of such a folk character and mindset in regional literature. While *Glass Boys* and *The Fetch* relish the otherness, the isolation, and the social problems that have populated regional literature of the Atlantic provinces over the last century or longer, *You Could Believe in Nothing* comes close to a critique of these representations, but ultimately settles in ambivalence.

Play's the Thing

Northrop Frye

Northrop Frye's Writings on Shakespeare and the Renaissance. Ed. Troni Y. Grande and Garry Sherbert. Vol. 28. U of Toronto P $195.00

Reviewed by Graham N. Forst

Northrop Frye was not primarily known as a Renaissance scholar but he wrote voluminously on Shakespeare, whose plays proved a successful testing ground for the literary theories he developed in *Anatomy of Criticism*. The appeal is natural: Frye, the "invisible critic," meets the paradigmatic "invisible author," both moving in T. S. Eliot's "air of Cimmerian darkness," achieving in their different ways an almost complete "wiping out" of personality in their labours. Shakespeare is "nothing but mask," says Frye, and the description could equally apply to him.

Frye always accepted the fiction of the ahistorical universality of taste. Thus, there is no mention here of the materiality of theatre nor of identity politics ("homosexuality" and "feminism" are not listed in the enormous index, nor are "Jew," nor "Black," nor "ethnicity," etc.); nor colonialism (even in his discussion of *The Tempest*); nor does Frye ever seriously consider history as a contributing critical criterion. Textual issues, that fixation of late-twentieth-century criticism, are also muted in Frye; he's content to cite his Riverside edition, leaving matters of "foul papers and drunken compositors" to "scholars."

Frye's interests in Shakespeare are, as throughout his work, focused on "structure," to the point that the plays can almost appear as empty signifiers. One sometimes wonders if he knew or cared what the plays were *about*; he reads like an art critic who feels that a commentary on *Guernica* could consist solely of a discussion of its Cubist techniques.

This obsession with structure led Frye to a close reading of the "crafted" plays of Shakespeare, especially the Romances. Similarly, the very structured *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well* are referred to here more than *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It* taken together. It's easy to see why: the passage in these plays from crime to forgiveness and from condemnation to redemption is very "exposed"—the bony skeleton of form poking up out of the thematic body, easing the anatomical task, but at the expense of muting the immorality and misogyny of the plots. Thus, the licentious satisfaction of the male libido in *Measure for Measure* becomes in Frye detumesced into "a myth of deliverance, in the form of redemption" and the morally noisome "bed-trick" into "an image of a passage through earth to new life."

Future historians of literary criticism will, on reading this volume, certainly credit Frye with demarginalizing the genre of comedy.

Frye attributed this preference for comedy to his being "temperamentally an Odyssean critic" rather than "an Iliad critic" (an oddly uncritical acceptance of Coleridge's distinction, which certainly hasn't limited Harold Bloom, for one). This predilection, however subjective, inspired the brilliant and influential 1948 essay, "The Argument for Comedy," which still rewards re-reading, as do the two monographs on comedy it inspired: *The Myth of Deliverance* and *A Natural Perspective*, both included here.

Also included here is Frye's so-called "Shakespeare teaching book": *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare.* This book, as Frye admitted on accepting the Governor General's award, "will not tell a Shakespearean scholar anything he does not know" (it was cobbled together from his undergraduate course lecture notes), but re-reading it reinforces how closely Frye read Shakespeare—has anyone ever read him more closely?—and how successfully he could make Shakespeare "accessible" to a young audience.

One notes a sadness in Frye's later writings on Shakespeare—in fact he almost sounds like Jaques himself at times—sensing for example, at the end of his life, that *Antony and Cleopatra* would be to the twenty-first century as *Hamlet* was to the nineteenth and *Lear* to the twentieth—representing as it does a world fixated less on the "universal peace" promised by Caesar than on "the separations and reunions of a pair of horny lovers."

Frye's gloom notwithstanding, signs are emerging in the early twenty-first century of Shakespeare developing into a kind of secular scripture. If this proves to be so, Frye's criticism may well return to vogue, especially given his conviction that the humanist vision of forgiveness and reconciliation of the late Romances "lies at the bedrock of drama."

In this, the last (except the index) of the volumes of Frye's *Collected Works* to be published, editors Troni Grande and Garry Sherbert have done a magnificent job in supplying the footnotes so annoyingly missing in Frye's monographs (their footnotes run over one hundred pages), and their scholarship and research are generally meticulous, although they cite abbreviations that are annoyingly missing from the introductory legend, misspell the name of one of Frye's favourite authors (Johan Huizinga), and allow some of Frye's own small errors to remain.

Haunted Histories, Storied Selves

Gabriella Goliger
Girl Unwrapped. Arsenal Pulp $22.95

Gail Scott
The Obituary. Coach House $19.95

Reviewed by Erin Wunker

"What haunts are not the dead but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others," write psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, and indeed both of the texts under review are haunted by the secrets of others. At first glance, Gail Scott's most recent publication, *The Obituary*, and Gabriella Goliger's new offering, *Girl Unwrapped*, have little in common. Scott's novel is a beautiful cipher haunted at the level of the sentence. Goliger's novel, also set in Montreal, opens with the clear and compelling voice of Toni, the young narrator whose coming of age story is the narrative arc of the text. The reader will find no experiments at the level of the sentence in *Girl Unwrapped*—it is a stylistically straightforward text—but Toni's coming of age and coming out story is nuanced. These novels tackle the trauma of the past through the indelible and often strangely ephemeral present tense. Historical injustice, family secrets, and the ineffable search for self drive—rather than ground—these two texts.

Goliger's novel is set in Montreal in the 1960s. The childhood of the protagonist, Toni, is steeped in sepia tones and hung against the backdrop of her Holocaust-surviving

parents' struggles with the long reach of trauma. Toni's story opens with her mother's insistence that the family "choose life!" Yet, for the young Toni, aware of her sexuality early on, her mother's demand is complicated. The reader follows Toni's grapple with her sexuality as she first prefers playing with the boys, then, while at camp, falls in love for the first time. Her inability to articulate her attraction to her counsellor Janet leads to one of the most poignant and heart-wrenching scenes of the text. *Girl Unwrapped* follows Toni through high school, to Israel after the 1967 war, and then back to Montreal where she discovers the underground lesbian bar scene. Goliger draws subtle tensions between Toni's coming of age, her coming out, and the backdrop of global and familial histories.

The Obituary is Scott's most experimentally innovative text to date. Set in Montreal, the opening page is set under a reoriented cross, as though the "X" that marks the spot is the shadow of Mt. Royal's own strange and iconic adornment. The past hovers and insists throughout Gail Scott's seventh publication, an inexorable presence to be expected in a book called *The Obituary* (2010). As one of Scott's characters implies, the past is like a *roman* à *clef*: it carries a key to its subjects and events. However, that secret key only reveals itself if the reader lingers in the shadows of speech and at the interstices of languages and cultures. To unlock the narrow narrativizations of history, the reader must acquaint herself with the spectres that worry the very syntax scripting that past. She must be a detective, a translator, and a medium. Scott's text enacts a poetics of contestation. It draws from the practices and conventions of translation and literary techniques to craft a narrative that is neither English nor French, but multilingual.

The Obituary is a polyvocal, multilingual text. Though grounded in the local—a central portion of the novel takes place in a Montreal triplex—its polyvocality enacts a rhizomatic narrative structure that deterritorializes language acts and reorients readers away from dominant discourses and towards margins and memories left in the shadows. Coming as it does after six previous publications, *The Obituary* marks not only her most recent, but also her most intensive interrogation of the issues of narrative, language, and history. *The Obituary* refuses to clarify its central subjects just as it refutes any singular narrative plot. Indeed, the text is better described as an assemblage of narratives performed by spectres from the shadows.

The story is on one level a noirish murder mystery. As the title intimates, there has been a death, and the narrative works as a kind of obituary, though it is only through the process of navigating the text that the reader learns who—or what—has died. There are other stories that make their way into the central narrative: "crazed family members," for example, insert themselves into the space of the novel. Though the text deliberately resists traditional linear framing devices, the plots are architecturally anchored in Mile End, Montreal, where the triplex is located. The Montreal triplex is an architectural structure unique to the city, and it anchors the narrative in the present. As the intervening Bottom Historian observes, the triplex is an "architectural peculiarity" such that "each exit, no matter how high, permits unique access to the exterior, so that every tenant may call her flat her house." Like the past, which contains secret indices, the triplex likewise presents a unified structure from without, while concealing multiple spaces within. Spatially and architecturally, then, the triplex locates the central narrative in Montreal and houses several important characters, both literally and figuratively.

Wilderness as Myth and Form

Pascale Guibert, ed.
Reflective Landscapes of the Anglophone Countries. Rodopi $83.53

Wayne Larsen
Tom Thomson: Artist of the North. Dundurn $19.99

Reviewed by Richard Brock

In October 2011, the first exhibition composed exclusively of the Group of Seven and Tom Thomson's work to be held overseas opened in London. Iconic and ubiquitous at home, these paintings and the wilderness aesthetic they helped to inspire have taken the best part of a century to garner an appreciable international presence, but a body of work exploring their global significance in the histories of modernism and landscape art is emerging. Two books published in 2011 demonstrate the diversity of contemporary responses Thomson and the Group excite, from the national to the global, from the mythologizing to the deconstructive.

Wayne Larsen's *Tom Thomson: Artist of the North* is the latest Canadian art-related entry in Dundurn Press' Quest Biography series on remarkable Canadians, to which Larsen has previously contributed volumes on A. Y. Jackson and James Wilson Morrice. Focusing on Thomson as national icon, the book at times seems to have taken a checklist of tropes directly from Sherrill Grace's masterful study of Thomson biographies, *Inventing Tom Thomson*. It begins with an extended fishing metaphor ("The artist can lose a painting on the panel just as easily as an angler can lose a fish off the hook") and an epigraph from Izaak Walton's *The Compleat Angler* before transitioning into a mystery-novel style opening in which Thomson's remains, long presumed buried near his family's home in Owen Sound, are unearthed beside Canoe Lake by a small group of aging but devoted friends.

The novelistic treatment of Thomson's life proceeds in the episodic fashion standard to accounts of Thomson: the brooding loner finds inspiration in the wilderness, meets and mentors the future Group of Seven at Toronto commercial art firm Grip, and dies just as he is reaching the peak of his artistic powers. The novelistic touches are a mixed blessing: occasional hints of Thomson's complexity are quickly reabsorbed into a portrait of unambiguous heroism—hence Thomson's violent temper and misanthropy become virtues of the same order as a (surely apocryphal) magnanimity in the face of armed robbery—and the use of uncited direct speech throughout blurs the distinction between fiction, conjecture, dim recollection by Thomson's contemporaries, and archived history (though there is an extensive bibliography of the latter two categories at the end of the book). The novelistic style does, however, create at least one moment of genuine poignancy: when the masterpiece *The West Wind* sits on its easel in Thomson's iconic shack, waiting in vain for its drowned artist to return and apply his finishing touches. The book's most compelling moments, in fact, are those in which its accessible narrative style is juxtaposed with authoritative descriptions of the paintings, as Larsen's keen landscape painter's eye imagines now-iconic works in progress.

The peculiar appeal of Thomson underlines the paradoxical nature of wilderness depiction, juxtaposing an insistence on an inaccessible space of human absence with a desire for human identification with this absence. The mediation between these desires, and between the human and the physical/social environment, is embodied in the "reflection" that forms the focus of Pascale Guibert's edited collection, *Reflective Landscapes of the Anglophone Countries*. This volume contains two substantial contributions on Canadian landscape. The first, by Claire Omhovère, uses Augustin Berque's

concept of *médiance* to reimagine Northrop Frye's "garrison mentality" as "a symbolic relation between the materiality of geographical space, the fictions that address its specificity, and the aesthetic response they elicit from the reader." While Omhovère to some extent retreads familiar territory (with reference to familiar texts), her emphasis on the *mutual* construction of social identity and geographic environment is welcome, as is the essay's demonstration of Canada's central role in global discussions of space and identity.

Much of the work of Jonathan Bordo, the collection's other Canadianist contributor and arguably the most important contemporary critic of the Group of Seven's art, has been devoted to exactly this point: that Canadian landscape depiction, and the Group and Thomson's works in particular, represent exemplary articulations of the symbolic value of wilderness. In "The Wilderness as Symbolic Form," Bordo uses his definition of wilderness as "a landscape without a witness"—developed in his work on the Group and Thomson—to read Grünewald and Thoreau and to demarcate a contradictory form that is "an intrinsic quality of nature itself," "abhuman," "archaic," and "the name of the earth in so much as it is a commons." A valuable theoretical piece applicable to a diverse range of situations, Bordo's essay, in the broader context of Guibert's collection, is of especial interest to Canadianists because it demonstrates the centrality of Thomson, the Group, and Canadian landscape depiction, not only to settler-national mythology, but to the global discourse of space and identity.

Écrire octobre

Louis Hamelin
La constellation du lynx. Boréal 32,95 $

Compte rendu par André Lamontagne

Septième roman de Louis Hamelin, *La constellation du lynx* s'attaque à l'un des épisodes les plus marquants de l'histoire du Québec moderne, la crise d'Octobre 1970. Pour aborder cet événement traumatique de la mémoire nationale, l'auteur fait le choix esthétique de la « faction », pratique littéraire qui amalgame faits et fiction et qui a été popularisée aux États-Unis par Robert Coover avec sa célèbre reconstitution de l'affaire Rosenberg. Les pages liminaires du roman signalent cette orientation romanesque en proposant au lecteur une table onomastique qui travestit les noms des acteurs du drame (ainsi Jacques Lanctôt devient Lancelot) et une chronologie réelle des événements, tandis que la page de remerciements témoigne de l'exactitude de la recherche effectuée par l'auteur.

Si le récit s'ouvre sur le meurtre d'un militant indépendantiste qui a caché les frères Rose (ici appelés Lafleur), le véritable ressort diégétique est le décès de Chevalier Branlequeue, poète du pays et professeur à l'UQAM, personnage composite qui emprunte ses traits à Jacques Ferron, Gérald Godin et Gaston Miron. Samuel Nihilo, écrivain dont le patronyme révèle l'idéologie, reprend les travaux de son ancien professeur et mentor, qui cherchait à prouver la collusion des autorités dans la crise d'Octobre. L'enquête de Samuel, qui vit dans la forêt abitibienne des amours intermittentes avec une actrice du nom de Marie-Québec, le conduira à Montréal, en France et au Mexique sur les traces des protagonistes de la crise, notamment Richard Godefroid (alias Francis Simard), l'un des geôliers de Paul Lavoie (alias Pierre Laporte, le ministre québécois mort en captivité).

Roman polyphonique, *La constellation du*

lynx nous fait entendre de nombreux personnages : felquistes, hommes politiques, mafiosi, policiers, militaires, avocats, juges et témoins. Au gré des nombreux allers et retours dans le temps, le lecteur est entraîné dans la préhistoire du FLQ et l'enfance de certains de ses militants, dans la dynamique des cellules Rébellion (Libération) et Chevalier (Chénier), dans les milieux affairistes et politiques corrompus, au cœur des appareils étatiques de répression et de propagande et dans la vie post-carcérale des ex-felquistes. S'il se définit un « conspirationniste réticent », Samuel constituera néanmoins la preuve d'un complot politico-militaire : le gouvernement fédéral aurait infiltré et manipulé le FLQ, sacrifié le ministre Lavoie et provoqué le scénario de la loi des mesures de guerre, planifié depuis longtemps, à la fois pour freiner le mouvement indépendantiste et protéger l'alliance entre Ottawa, le parti libéral du Québec et le crime organisé.

Fresque historique aux accents carnavalesques, récit particulièrement fécond dans sa structure et son style, *La constellation du lynx* est l'œuvre d'un écrivain accompli. Empruntant à ses romans antérieurs — au *Soleil des gouffres* par sa thématique conspirationniste et son épiphanie mexicaine, et à *La rage* par sa thématique animale et la nature thoreauiste de son personnage principal —, Louis Hamelin peaufine sa représentation de héros problématiques dans un Québec incertain. Fidèle à ses habitudes intertextuelles, il convoque de nombreux auteurs et textes pour construire son univers référentiel, parmi lesquels *Les justes* d'Albert Camus, l'*Odyssée*, Joyce, Mallarmé et le roman de chevalerie. *La constellation du lynx* s'affirme ainsi comme un roman doublement mémoriel, sollicitant l'histoire du Québec et la littérature universelle dans une quête complexe d'individuation. Dans une société en perte de repères, l'œuvre de Louis Hamelin dessine une constellation partagée entre l'épique et l'identitaire.

Le méchant à l'examen

Simon Harel
Attention écrivains méchants. PUL 24,95 $

Compte rendu par Marie-Hélène Larochelle

Dans son dernier essai, Simon Harel examine l'écrivain méchant pour appréhender les droits et limites de la fiction littéraire.

Comme Baudelaire dans ses *Fleurs du mal*, Simon Harel commence son essai par un avertissement, puisque la préface « À Monsieur L'auteur » anticipe les reproches du lecteur. La méchanceté, nous dit Harel, n'est ni une notion ni un concept, mais plutôt un « inventaire émotionnel . . . disparate ». D'emblée, le lecteur comprend qu'*Attention écrivains méchants* est un véritable essai : l'auteur y soutient une réflexion engagée dans laquelle apparaissent les doutes et les heurts de l'analyse, l'autoréflexion étant au cœur de sa démarche critique.

Le premier chapitre, « Être méchant », définit la méchanceté comme une « posture ». On regrette qu'Harel n'ait pas situé son propos par rapport aux récents travaux de Jérôme Meizoz sur les « postures d'auteurs », mais on comprend qu'il conduit volontairement une réflexion personnelle sur son objet, choix qui se confirme partout dans l'ouvrage. Audacieux, Simon Harel affirme que « celui qui est cruel, celui qui est méchant, ne le dit pas. Il est, de façon délibérée, dans l'action, dans le geste de la cruauté », ce qui l'amène à traiter Maurice G. Dantec, Michel Houellebecq, voire Cioran ou Sade, de « pleutres, de couards » qui « jouent avec le mal ». De fait, la méchanceté littéraire, telle qu'il l'imagine, n'est pas « l'expression d'une posture dont la violence coïncide avec une certaine désinvolture », c'est plutôt l'impact d'une violence vive qu'il veut décrire. Pour comprendre le *machisme* de la violence, Harel met face à face le principe masculin de la méchanceté, vu chez V. S. Naipaul, Bernhard, Céline ou Artaud, et la subjectivité au féminin,

de Linda Lê, Catherine Mavrikakis ou Christine Angot, pour conclure que la méchanceté « projette hors de soi » le sujet. En effet, la part de jouissance liée à la méchanceté et la fascination qu'elle exerce, solution à la « banalité ambiante », ne se révèle pas proprement masculine.

Dans la lignée des travaux du philosophe Clément Rosset, Simon Harel considère que les œuvres des écrivains méchants nous informent sur la réalité plutôt que de nous en distraire. « La cruauté du réel », qui fait l'objet du second chapitre, serait liée à « une politique du pire » à laquelle participe l'écriture méchante. Ceux qui entretiennent un rapport problématique au lieu, Naipaul et Chatwin, entre autres, souffriraient d'une « exacerbation sensorielle » — que le critique compare par ailleurs à celle de Van Gogh ou de Giorgio de Chirico — qui peut mener jusqu'à la méchanceté. Les différentes acceptions du réel ont des conséquences sur la production littéraire et on comprend avec Harel que donner le pouvoir de la création à des « dénégateurs d'existence » est dangereux. La gratuité de l'acte d'écriture est illusoire selon lui, l'autofiction se révélant ainsi un écueil du littéraire.

Les trois chapitres suivants — « De l'écorché-vif à l'emporté-vif », « Homme-machine, homme-phénix » et « Culture et crépuscule » — proposent une lecture de la méchanceté fortement influencée par la psychanalyse, Simon Harel s'imposant de nouveau dans son champ de recherche à la frontière des études littéraires et des études culturelles. Il interprète les pulsions et les fantasmes du méchant en considérant l'intolérance comme le fondement de la méchanceté. La méchanceté qui concorde avec une « redéfinition de nos espaces de vie » est un machinisme qui ne va pas sans une certaine régression selon Harel, ce qui l'amène à marquer une pause pour avouer son trouble.

Les deux derniers chapitres de l'essai questionnent « La place de l'autre » et « Les conséquences de l'abjection ». On comprend alors que « la méchanceté extravertie, la plupart du temps intempestive, le ressentiment seraient une pathologie sociale de l'intériorité ». Profondément affective, cette littérature méchante pousse le lecteur à vivre au plus près de ses « limites psychiques », et souvent lui fait mal, pour repenser les rapports de la réception.

À terme, Simon Harel ne prône pourtant pas la censure des œuvres méchantes quoiqu'il n'ait pu, dit-il, ignorer le malaise qui l'habite à leur lecture. Sa conclusion sur le « Bon usage de la méchanceté » demande toutefois si on peut enseigner la méchanceté, le risque étant de créer des étudiants endurcis, insensibles. L'essai se conclut ainsi comme une invitation à la réplique, une ouverture au dialogue, comme si tout dans cet essai, jusqu'à sa structure même, luttait contre la contamination de son objet, intolérant et intolérable.

Staging Québécité

Erin Hurley
National Performance: Representing Quebec from Expo 67 to Céline Dion. U of Toronto P $45.00

Reviewed by Pamela V. Sing

What comes to mind when you read or hear the expression "distinctly Québécois"? Would Expo 67 or Michel Tremblay's play *Les belles-sœurs* qualify as possibilities? How about Céline Dion? Exactly how, why, and according to which or whose criteria does something or someone come to mean and matter as Québécois, even when it, she, or he does not appear to correspond to the national Québécois imaginary? Erin Hurley's inventive and innovative award-winning book—in 2011, *National Performance: Representing Quebec from Expo 67 to Céline Dion* garnered the NeMLA Book Prize, the International Council for Canadian Studies Pierre Savard Award, and the Ann Saddlemyer

Award—seeks answers to those questions in the field of theatre and performance, and in so doing, effectively "revises the terms by which performance defines its relationships to the nation" and raises important questions regarding historiographic practices in studies of national performance.

Hurley's study focuses on the period from the mid-1960s to the mid-2000s, when the concept of Quebec-ness or *québécité* having taken root, the "idea of Quebec-as-nation solidified in cultural, political, social, and economic practices." Paying close attention to the formal operations as well as the reception of chiefly five emblematic theatre or performance productions, the latter englobing a broad spectrum of framed or displayed human actions, the essay examines how, "in response to altered hemispheric economic relations and an increasingly globalized cultural field," the notion of *québécité* has evolved and required that critics and audiences reassess and redefine their consideration of what constitutes theatrical *québécité.* The importance of the question stems from chiefly two facts: first, that as a nation without a state, Quebec has often relied on its cultural production in order to establish its nation-ness, and second, each of the performance case studies to be discussed has attracted international attention to Quebec. These are the three mentioned at the beginning of this review, i.e., Expo 67, *Les belles-sœurs*, and Céline Dion, but also "immigrant and polyglot author Marco Micone's" 1980s triptych of plays about Quebec's Italian immigrant condition as well as his manifesto poem "Speak What" and Carbone 14's image-theatre. Hurley's discursive analysis of each performance, discussed in relation to that performance's critical reception by different interpretive communities, reveals interesting and ofttimes surprising insights about the perceived legitimacy or illegitimacy of the national image deemed to have been projected by each of them.

The eight-page introduction specifying the book's intentions and objectives includes two black-and-white photographs of the Quebec Pavilion at Expo 67, a national project whose Quebec-ness is conventionally accepted without question. Its preliminary discussion allows Hurley to confirm that the two dominant figures used for the theorization of performance-nation relations are reflection and construction, and that through the introduction of three new figures, she intends to alter "not only what can be recognized as national, . . . but also the conditions of perception for national performance." The second chapter, entitled "Marginals, Metaphors, and Mimesis," provides a clear explanation of the study's conceptual and historical groundwork. Some historians of national performance establish a "naively mimetic relationship between cultural production and ideas of nation" by postulating that culture "represents" nation, and that, therefore, national cultural productions "mirror" various aspects of a nation, such as its "geography, language(s), aesthetic(s) and ethnicity(ies)." By eschewing the requirement of reproductive or imitative iconicity as a governing principle, Hurley is able not only to study complex cases involving productions that are not immediately perceived as depicting the nation's "real-life" likeness, but also to recast hitherto neglected social categories that, most often, have been relegated to object positions deprived of agency.

While reminding us that cultural productions predicated on realistic social mimesis cannot but portray a culturally dominant national self, the essay underscores the fact that such productions tend, perforce, to jettison "women and marginalized others" to the nation's periphery. Interpretative models rooted in the search for likenesses between performance and nation see socially sidelined figures merely as metaphors for marginalized social categories, and therefore fail to create or produce new

meanings or ways to imagine the nation in "feminist, anti-racist [or] otherwise non-reductive terms." Hurley's theoretical model revises conceptions of the national by including three alternate figures: metonymy, simulation, and "affection," a term used to refer to that oft unmarked aspect of national labour known as "emotional labour," which "makes, manages, and distributes relationships through affective appeals; it draws people and objects, real and imaginary, into affective webs," thus creating "national sentiment." By effectively exposing woman and her emotional labour as constituting the infrastructure of Québécois national performance, the introduction of these figures enables an interpretive shift that liberates "woman—as fictional figure and lived reality—from a limited and stereotyped form of national 'service.'"

The following chapters, as their titles indicate, chart a critical history of performance's national labours, grounding the discussion of each case study in one of the five figures. Chapters 3 and 4, entitled respectively "National Construction: Quebec's Modernity at Expo 67" and "National Reflection: Michel Tremblay's *Les belles-sœurs* and *le nouveau théâtre québécois*," reveal the gendered terrain favoured by nationalization's common figures. Thereafter, the discursive analysis of productions characterized by "increasingly oblique and strained" links between performance and nation is grounded in one of Hurley's alternate figures, whence the last three chapters, entitled respectively: "National Simulation: Marco Micone's *culture immigrée*," "National Metonymy: Arresting Images in the Devised Works of Carbone 14," and "National Affection: Céline Dion." The essay tellingly concludes with a study of Quebec's feminist experimental theatre of the 1970s and 1980s, which portrayed women not as representations of men's imaginings, needs, or desires, but in relation to "women's bodies, emotions, and experiences," that is to say, in terms of uniquely female realities that prevented the appropriation of woman for other purposes.

This compelling and lucidly written study makes an important contribution to Quebec and Canadian Studies, as it is certain to change the way we will henceforth recognize a performance as being "national."

Diaspora and Indigeneity

Christine Kim, Sophie McCall, and Melina Baum Singer, eds.
Cultural Grammars of Nation, Diaspora, and Indigeneity in Canada. Wilfrid Laurier UP $49.95

Reviewed by Paul Lai

Christine Kim, Sophie McCall, and Melina Baum Singer have assembled a collection of essays that turn a critical eye on the dominant discourses in Canadian cultural politics, focusing on keywords like *post-colonial*, *nation*, *Indigeneity*, and *diaspora* to examine the importance of language in defining the concepts and arguments available to critics. The editors write, "The title of our collection, *Cultural Grammars*, is an attempt to make discernible the language rules governing our critical choices and the conceptual frameworks we mobilize, consciously or not. Cultural imperatives in language evidence assumptions about differences and identity, of self and other, and inevitably produce unstated hierarchies." The strongest essays in the collection thus trace the intellectual history of these keywords and identify important incommensurabilities or differences of definition in their use. These essays map the fields of debate about nation, Indigeneity, and diaspora to clarify the stakes of discussion rather than simply to choose a singular definition for these complex concepts. Their contribution to critical discourse is therefore not to advocate one interpretation of a term, though some of the essays certainly

make such preferences clear, but to reassemble the language that critics use in the project of decolonizing the nation.

In this vein, one of the essays comes in the form of a multi-author, roundtable discussion on "Canadian Indian Literary Nationalism?," presenting a range of statements about the origins, stakes, and uses of Indigenous literary nationalism by critics Kristina Fagan, Daniel Heath Justice, Keavy Martin, Sam McKegney, Deanna Reder, and Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair. The format of the piece models the kind of open-ended, multivocal analysis of the language of Indigeneity that the volume offers for various keywords in Canadian cultural studies. In an essay on A. M. Klein's poetics in *Hath Not a Jew* and *The Rocking Chair and Other Poems*, Melina Baum Singer similarly queries the uses of the term *diaspora*, tracing a genealogy of its critical development and offering a corrective to certain aporias around the racialization of Jewishness and "coercive whiteness." Christine Kim provides a different perspective on diasporic identities through an analysis of misplaced attachments in Kyo Maclear's novel *The Letter Opener*.

A secondary focus of the volume, and one that has the potential for far greater reconceptualization of various subfields of cultural studies, is the editors' identification of a critical tension in contemporary discussions of Canadian literature as a national project—the interplay between diaspora and Indigeneity. On the one hand, literary critics studying multiculturalism and visible minorities have turned towards the concepts of diaspora, mobility, and transnationalism in reframing the nation. On the other hand, critics studying First Nations have developed Indigenous sovereignty perspectives to question claims to the region in the settler colonial logic of the Canadian nation. While both approaches seek to dismantle hegemonic visions of Canada, the assumptions and arguments mounted by the two are at times at odds. More than simply exploring how Indigenous studies might pay attention to diasporic interventions or vice versa, how diasporic studies might address Indigenous interventions, the editors suggest that the very terms of discussion employed in the two approaches need to be queried, reconceptualized, and considered together to understand the full extent of Canada's settler colonialism.

In the volume's introduction, the editors write, "[A]s many of the chapters of this volume demonstrate, there are more ways in which debates about Indigeneity and diaspora in Canada connect with each other. The deployment of common terms or concerns in different ways produces valuable tensions and debates that we believe might be generative for ongoing and future work." Sophie McCall's essay offers one of the more dedicated explorations of how the approaches and investments of Indigenous studies and diaspora studies collide in attempting to make sense of complex dislocations in the work of Gregory Scofield, a queer Métis/Jewish poet. Renate Eigenbrod's essay identifies how Richard Wagamese's work pays particular attention to weaving together various histories of displacement such as black diasporas and Indigenous dispossession.

Some of the other essays are less directly concerned with the central keywords of the volume or the intersection of Indigeneity and diaspora, but they offer provocative, immanent critiques of topics related to the volume's focus. Belén Martín-Lucas' essay considers the cultural capital of the "Oriental woman" in the publishing industry's global market, especially the movement of Canadian literature abroad. Christopher Lee turns a critical eye on the 2007 Anniversaries of Change events to reconsider activist and community investments in the act of commemoration, arguing for a shift in relation to time and history. Instead of foregrounding narratives

about learning from the mistakes of the past or even simply challenging hegemonic versions of Canada's past, activists and critics should acknowledge the present's debt to the past while always envisioning transformations for a more just future. Jody Mason, also considering the importance of temporality, offers an intergenerational reading of Afro-Caribbean writers Austin Clarke and Cecil Foster in their representations of mobility and labour.

As a whole, this collection's charge to think deeply about terms of critique challenges critics not only to question the assumptions and stakes of various projects, but also to look outside the shibboleths of cultural studies subfields in order to avoid blindspots and to envision alternative futures free of corporatized modernity. While the volume as a whole is thus decidedly comparatist, the individual essays are less evenly rigorous in this approach, and indeed, the range of topics in the volume might make it a challenge for many readers whose interests may be more singular. If the volume is to succeed, however, it will have to instigate a greater appreciation of cross-disciplinary work (where disciplines are subfields often defined by singular ethnic identity) that is more than simply an invocation of intersectionality.

(Inter)National Art

Ross King
Defiant Spirits: The Modernist Revolution of the Group of Seven. Douglas & McIntyre $36.95

Reviewed by Richard Brock

It is perhaps reflective of the insularity of Canadian Studies as a field that studies of the Group of Seven and Tom Thomson—arguably Canada's foremost contributors to modernism in any area of the arts—continue to be conducted almost exclusively within a national frame of reference. Scholarship has tended to examine the Group's international contexts only to evaluate their claims to uniqueness, with any resemblance to non-Canadian peers read as evidence of a lack. Ross King's *Defiant Spirits: The Modernist Revolution of the Group of Seven* positions itself against this orthodoxy, arguing that the continued assessment of the Group's works with respect to a nationalist agenda—by critics and apologists alike—undermines the aesthetic value of "works of virtuoso design and emotional intensity that would grace any art museum in the world."

Written as a companion to a 2010 McMichael exhibition, King's text is, predictably, unabashedly celebratory of the Group's art. Perhaps unexpectedly, however, it shares a revisionist spirit in common with the most radical interventions in Group scholarship. Stripping away layers of nationalist rhetoric, King finds a collective that was aware of, participated in, and contributed to work important to the development of international modernism. Exploring an influential art collective from the perspective of art history rather than national myth shouldn't be revolutionary, but in this case it is. Restricting his analysis to the aesthetic domain allows King to sidestep controversial socio-political issues attached to the Group, except where these issues obscure a complete understanding of the works as aesthetic objects. What a pleasure it is for the literary critic who routinely dabbles in visual studies to be schooled in the Group's use of line and form—to appreciate, for example, fine textural distinctions between J. E. H. MacDonald's industrial smokestacks and Lawren Harris'.

The major obstacle to understanding the Group's aesthetic, for King, is the construction of the Group as independent spirits engaged in the production of a definably "Canadian" art devoid of outside influence. Emphasizing this narrative's spuriousness entails dispensing with a criterion for evaluation cherished not only by critics, but also by the artists themselves, and contesting

now-canonical utterances that created and sustained an association with national destiny. In a cherished episode from Group lore, a reviewer's satirical characterization of A. Y. Jackson as an adherent to the "hot mush school" is met with a stinging rebuke from MacDonald, trumpeting the Group's patriotism and chastising a deeply conservative viewing public for its lack of authentically Canadian vision. King interprets this as mere "artistic flag hoisting," arguing that MacDonald "was sincere in his desire to forge a new Canadian style, but his manoeuvre was disingenuous: patriotism was used as a stalking horse for an international style of art that, as reactions at both the Armory Show and the Art Association of Montreal revealed, the North American public was not prepared to accept."

King's arguments are supported by detailed visual analysis and meticulous research. In support of the assertion that "Harris was eager, later in his career, to shake the dust of Europe from his shoes, to cover his artistic tracks and present himself as a wholly indigenous talent," King offers both informed speculation about Harris' likely exposure to the art of German industrial modernist Franz Skarbina and a persuasive formal comparison of a Skarbina canvas with one of Harris' early Toronto industrial scenes. Unburdened by the imperative to locate artistic merit in a mythic connection to the land, King treats the North as a logical source of subject matter rather than a quasi-spiritual source of spontaneous inspiration. More mischievously, Tom Thomson is cast as a canoeist of profound enthusiasm and average ability, whose overestimation of his own skills would repeatedly endanger himself and others long before his famous drowning. Instead of a focus on the "mysterious North," King explores the Group's considerable artistic achievements in applying their "foreign-begotten technique" to depictions of the Canadian Shield.

As King demonstrates, the national-heroic narrative of the Group's success shortchanges both artists and nation. Acknowledging the Group as products of international modernism makes it possible to recognize them as significant *contributors* to this movement, a stature conferred convincingly upon them by King's aesthetic appraisals. And removing the nationalist elements from the narrative of the Group's noble struggle against a recalcitrant art establishment recasts this struggle as part of a broader battle for the acceptance of modern art. As a result, early-twentieth-century Canada is no longer required to function as an atypically conservative colonial backwater juxtaposed with the forward-thinking US, emerging instead as home to an art-viewing public at least as progressive as that south of the border.

If King's detailed research and convincing synthesis of primary and secondary material provide a solid basis for his revisionary history, it is the novelistic structure and momentum of his book that makes it compellingly readable. The major protagonists are introduced separately, the strands of their narratives gradually converging around the commercial design industry in 1910s Toronto, camping trips in Algonquin Park, and a shared purpose. While this novelistic style enhances the book's readability, it also contributes to its one substantial weakness. Like any good novel, the plot of King's book is sustained by its conflicts, and as such this history of the Group, like many before it, ends with the 1923 British Empire Exhibition in London. Here, the symbiosis between content and structure becomes strained: while the history suggests that the Group's victory against their opponents with regard to the selection of Canada's contribution to this exhibition was one among many small triumphs, the exhibition's iconic associations (*national* associations, ironically enough) assign it the role of a climactic battle in the narrative structure, slipping into the orthodox mode

scrupulously avoided elsewhere. This is a relatively minor quibble, though: overall, King's book functions spectacularly, both as compelling biography and (more importantly) as internationally contextualized art history, and the thoroughness and quality of its research are sure to make it a standard reference work for students (of all stripes) of Thomson and the Group.

Textures

Theresa Kishkan
Mnemonic: A Book of Trees. Goose Lane $19.95

Melanie Siebert
Deepwater Vee. McClelland & Stewart $18.99

Reviewed by Laurie Ricou

Ursula Le Guin contrasts the spear story, "starting *here* and going straight there," with the "carrier bag" story: "A holder. A recipient." For Theresa Kishkan, that bag is most often a basket, woven, sometimes by her own hand, of vegetable materials. The basket is usually small, a container for "quiet" narratives, not capable of holding "much more than memories." But, then, "the world is constructed of such things dreamed into being and remembered in all their textures." The method of *Mnemonic,* as Le Guin would put it, is to put into each bag or basket (there are ten in this book) things "useful, edible, or beautiful, . . . and then take it home with you, home being another . . . container." For people.

The method of *Mnemonic* is interrupted memory: a holder of not-quite-story, not-quite-poem, slipping and shifting from one factoid to another, some observed, some researched, some quoted. Here and there and cumulatively, it's memoir and travelogue and autobiography, a gathering to take home. One tree and then another becomes the archive and stimulus to memory—the bark-shedding arbutus for the art of the female nude, the versatile *Thuja plicata* for the construction of a house. Sometimes the connections of tree to imperfectly remembered life are "natural," sometimes pushed strenuously toward an analogy often disappearing (the invisible circulating inside the tree) for long stretches.

Kishkan writes no guidebook to trees, however informative, but a pondering, here soaring, there awkwardly self-conscious, frequently defined by Classical authors, of the work and play of remembering. The trees are from her West Coast rainforest home, but we also learn of olive trees on Crete and the copper beech (dreamed of) in the Carpathian Mountains. One of Kishkan's epigraphs quotes Pliny: "The heart is the warmest organ." It's the one she depends on to maintain the beat and movement inside each of these studies of her listening to the process of remembering.

The jacket of Melanie Siebert's *Deepwater Vee* might be a photograph of a painting of a photograph. Three frames (or more?) seem both to overlap (irregularly) and fuse. This study in layering is entirely apt for the poems it encloses, given that Siebert is the most compound-conscious poet I've read since Gerard Manley Hopkins. The compounding is most evident in the diction. But the inclination to layer and fuse is also essential to thematic and poetic sequence. The poems evoke the navigating of rivers, especially in the far north, where Siebert has worked as a wilderness guide. Rippling through these rememberings are the longer memories of navigating with Alexander Mackenzie and J. W. Tyrell, or more recently, Barry Lopez. Beyond and within these, always the stories, and travels, and place-naming of the peoples who have lived on and through these lands for millennia. Think of the image of "a sandbar building its ghost below the surface of the water."

Another ghostly layering in the book builds from Siebert's enthusiasm for multiplying poems with the same title. Seven poems titled "Busker" sing on and off through the first half of the book; four poems are titled "Grandmother"; "Mackenzie's

Dream" appears on page 23 and again six pages later; there are six "Letters to Kitty, Never Written." So, reading the book front to back (not particularly critical here) is to read one poem that is several: a compound of takes that blur and confuse and fuse and overlap into some frustration of memory.

Rivers are running everywhere in these poems, and so the flow moves the diction with words endlessly running into and over one another. Compounds, of varying novelty, are everywhere: "downstream" might be expected, and maybe "eddy-in"; but "windskin" and "gull-flush" and scores of others surprise. Nouns serve as verbs—another form of compounding. And English speakers try to translate the voices with which the people name themselves: "coast-dwellers-where-bones-abound." The effect throughout, as we hear in one of the Busker's songs, is the music of "perpetual / dispersal." Two are two, but joined into a quite other one.

With their "throat-singing" and "sand-seep," Siebert and Kishkan are word-mapping their landscapes in perpetual dispersal. "Silence: The maps you are making / when you don't know where you are."

Finding St. Demetrius

Myrna Kostash

Prodigal Daughter: A Journey to Byzantium. U of Alberta P $34.95

Reviewed by Lindy Ledohowski

On picking up Myrna Kostash's *Prodigal Daughter: A Journey to Byzantium*, I thought I knew what to expect. I expected the story of a prodigal daughter: a feminist retelling of the parable of the lost son who finds home again, written in Kostash's pioneering creative non-fiction style, likely with some forthrightness about desire as in her *The Doomed Bridegroom* and a left-leaning stance in keeping with Kostash's progressive ideals. After all, in their 2002 interview with her, Sneja Gunew, Margery Fee, and Lisa Grekul call Kostash a "Ukrainian Canadian Non-Fiction Prairie New Leftist Feminist Canadian Nationalist," and I knew all of this. I knew about Kostash's groundbreaking study of Canadian-born Ukrainian Canadians across the prairies *All of Baba's Children*, which has never been out of print since its first publication in 1977; I knew about Kostash's travel memoirs from the 1990s, both *Bloodlines* and *The Doomed Bridegroom*, that weave narratives of Eastern Europe and large socio-political struggles into something very personal and intimate; and I was very familiar with Kostash's writing style, at times pithy and wry and at others heart-wrenchingly earnest. Armed with all I knew about Kostash, I made assumptions about *Prodigal Daughter*.

I was wrong.

Prodigal Daughter is both like and unlike anything Kostash has written before, and I think it may just be her best book to date.

Prodigal Daughter unfolds as a historical exploration into the origins of St. Demetrius of the Eastern Orthodox Church. While Kostash journeys to the Balkans to research the mythology, cults, rituals, and hagiography of St. Demetrius in all its complicated and competing variations, she explores more than Church history or ideology. By focusing on the Balkans, that place where "east" meets "west," she begins to unpack some of the most complicated strands of ethnic identity informing twentieth- and twenty-first-century geopolitics. Who are the "cultured" Byzantines? Who are the "barbaric" Slavs? Indeed, who is she? In asking these questions as she engages in her journey-cum-investigation, she begs her reader to ask those very same questions about the assumptions we make about nationalism, ethnicity, language, and ultimately religion.

For at its heart, Kostash's journey into discovering who and what St. Demetrius may be—both in a historical and contemporary sense—is a shockingly honest and open articulation of a spiritual quest, one that is rich with possibilities.

Ultimately, this book ends up being about possibilities, because Kostash does not find clear, historical truth about the St. Demetrius whose trail the book follows down twisting corridors and dead-end hallways. Instead, the final chapter of the book offers two mutually exclusive imaginings of Demetrius, both equally plausible and equally significant. The juxtaposition of these two stories offers us a world of possibilities that lie amidst all that is unknown and indeterminate, posing the question whether or not Kostash (and her readers) are ready to take a proverbial leap of faith.

"Unhinge yourself"

Ken Kowal
Gimp Crow. Turnstone $17.00

Eli Mandel
From Room to Room: The Poetry of Eli Mandel. Wilfrid Laurier UP $16.95

Andrew Stubbs
Endgames. Thistledown $17.95

Reviewed by Hilary Clark

In Eli Mandel's poem "The Meaning of the I CHING," there is a command that poets could keep in mind: "bow down, unhinge yourself." Poems should take risks. In different ways, these three books of poetry evince a poetics of the unhinged and off-kilter.

From Room to Room: The Poetry of Eli Mandel is an introduction to the poetry of Mandel; it is one of a series published by Wilfrid Laurier University Press, each dedicated to a major Canadian poet. Peter Webb introduces Eli Mandel as a poet of the Cohen-Layton-Purdy generation, a major poet whose work has not been as visible because it evades categorization and has the reputation of being difficult. Webb quotes Robert Kroetsch's description of Mandel "as Houdini, finding his way out of chains, and then back in again"—a trickster both in his forms and in his relation to Canadian poetry.

The poems included in this volume illustrate several threads in Mandel's work: the poet's use of myth and allusion to structure his experience; his repeated return, both nostalgic and uncanny, to an origin (the Estevan, Saskatchewan, of his childhood) that no longer exists or returns only in glimpses; and his concern with traumatic histories of war and genocide. The poems selected illustrate the formal evolution of Mandel's work, which began in the 1950s with the high rhetoric of poems such as "Estevan Saskatchewan," dense with allusions to *Hamlet*, *Oedipus Rex*, and the story of Cain and Abel:

> A small town bears the mark of Cain,
> Or the oldest brother with the dead king's
> wife
> . . . . . .
> While the farmer's chorus, a Greek
> harbinger,
> Forecasts by frost or rings about the moon
> How ill and black the seeds will grow.

An odd poem, beautiful but unbalanced, a prairie town bristling with myth. Over the years, Mandel's poems loosened up rhythmically; like other Canadian poets, he was experimenting with forms growing more organically out of place and occasion. In the collection *Out of Place*, for instance, he revisits the place of his origin. The poem, "the return," presents a dream vision, and in doing so it treads lightly:

> the flowers coloured
> and
> my father appears
> my mother appears
> saying no words
> troubled
> and all
> the ghostly jews
> of estevan

Unsettled forms, uncanny visions: Mandel's work was socially committed and yet also evasive—a poetry not difficult but restless, unhinged.

Endgames is Andrew Stubbs' second collection of poetry. In both this and Stubbs' first book, *White Light Primitive* (2009), the reader encounters a formal disturbance that pushes against a fairly ordinary subject matter of parents, childhood memories, and prairie winters. Only in the final section, "schreber poems"—on Daniel Paul Schreber, whose paranoia so fascinated Freud—does this disturbance find its subject. Stubbs' poems are often short in length and line, and given to odd line-breaks that unsettle the reader. For instance, here is the latter half of the poem "second glance: turning some corners then," referring to *The Wizard of Oz*:

> . . . at
> the end, the wiz turns
> up as
> the fat geek behind the drapes—god /
> evil, love /
> hate, all for the
> sake of plot. If
> not for the dog
> none of us'd ever see
> kansas
> again.

With that final period, we are set back on the ground. The poem is a spinning house, "off / centre, floor tilted" ("moonlight serenades"); Stubbs reminds us that by simply breaking lines in counter-"intuitive" ways, tripping rhythm, the poet can unhinge a world.

With the challenge of his title, *Gimp Crow*, and dedication, "*this book is for the birds*," Ken Kowal lets us know his book is trickster territory. His questing hero is a crow with a "bad leg" and an "Ol Lady hen / -peckin." Crow leaves the nest with a "BC cravin" to visit his "Cawsin Raven." On the way he picks up Muddy Magpie, a "mighty pretty bird," and promises her adventures:

> Let's rob some nest
> Break fast eggs suck
> Blue ones be best
> Red sky swells luck
> Bring down eagle
> Feathers sky fly
> A'int quite legal
> Giver best try
> ("muddy's proposition")

Many poems in *Gimp Crow* are short-lined, rhyming ones like this, but there's an array of looser forms as well, plus Shakespeare in crow-speak (or vice-versa): "Sweet breath neath wing / Clear dark eyes see" ("Shakespeare's crow"). The poems are very funny; they're made for rowdy oral performance. They do not invite deep study, as Ted Hughes' *Crow* poems do. But Kowal's crow is much more fun than Hughes'.

Ce monstre, Ducharme

Marie-Hélène Larochelle
L'abécédaire des monstres : Fragments de Réjean Ducharme. PUL 23,95 $

Compte rendu par Kenneth Meadwell

Lire Ducharme, c'est découvrir des monstres et entrer de plain-pied dans des univers monstrueux, loufoques et peu conventionnels, résultats de la créativité extravagante que l'on y retrouve. Dans *L'abécédaire des monstres : Fragments de Réjean Ducharme*, Marie-Hélène Larochelle offre vingt-six antisèches érudites qui nous permettent de prendre connaissance des aspects monstrueux essentiels de ses neuf romans publiés entre 1966 et 1999 : le questionnement systématique de toute norme; le refus de la conformité, des codes et des attentes de toute collectivité sociale. Aussi l'auteure jette-t-elle une lumière nouvelle sur cette œuvre insolite afin de la relire à la façon d'un négatif d'une photographie que l'on scrute pour en tirer une image singulière, composée de contrastes renversés qui révèlent des éléments insoupçonnés.

Ducharme, lui-même monstre — dramaturge, scénariste, parolier et artiste plasticien —, est perçu comme une énigme, refusant de se manifester en public ou

auprès de ses éditeurs montréalais et parisiens. Il refuse donc de participer à la hiérarchisation de l'intime et du littéraire, refus qui se transcrit sous de multiples formes et de multiples façons dans son œuvre.

Cette œuvre, qui occupe une place monumentale dans la littérature canadienne d'expression française et dans celle de la francophonie, s'inscrit magistralement sous le signe de la langue monstrueuse, de l'innovation langagière, de la néologie et de la richesse de chacune des vingt-six lettres. Ainsi, Larochelle présente ce point d'accès inexploré que peut constituer l'abécédaire comme un moyen de nous faire entrer dans ses univers romanesques au sein desquels se débattent leurs personnages. Ceux-ci sont dotés d'un lexique et de connaissances encyclopédiques pour sauvegarder leur monstruosité, cet acharnement à rester autonomes dans leurs subversions, à faire l'éloge de l'unicité identitaire et à troubler les sensibilités dites normales. Ainsi, on lit les entrées « Adulte », « Bérénice », « Colombe Colomb », « Père », « Questa » et « Walter », entre autres, car elles renvoient toutes à des êtres qui peuplent les mondes étonnants que crée Ducharme. Mais l'individu, qui se trouve au centre de cette créativité dialogique à plusieurs degrés et qui la déchiffre tant bien que mal, est double : son lecteur et son personnage qui lit. C'est donc avec un plaisir d'autant plus grand qu'on découvre l'entrée « Lecteur » et qu'on y apprend que, « [p]artenaire, complice témoin, traître, hypocrite », le lecteur chez Ducharme s'adonne à cette même activité que nous, qu'il « condense un projet esthétique qui touche les représentations de la littérature et une démarche qui érotise les processus de la lecture ».

En effet, lire et relire l'auteur de *L'avalée des avalés*, c'est tomber sous le charme des monstres. Dans son ouvrage, Larochelle jette un éclairage original sur cette énorme pellicule pour en faire ressortir la lumière dans l'ombre, et l'ombre dans la lumière, signes de la complexité de notre engouement devant cette belle œuvre monstrueuse.

Emancipatory Theory?

Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, eds. *The Creolization of Theory.* Duke UP $23.95

Reviewed by Rachael Gardner

In *The Creolization of Theory*, Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih excavate the possibility of "achieving a truly democratic understanding of intellectual, scholarly, and political work in a planetary context." Taking up Édouard Glissant's concept of creolization, Lionnet and Shih advocate situating theories relationally within geohistorical contexts. The framework emerging from interdisciplinary entanglements, they maintain, will move scholarship beyond available methodologies inextricably linked to oppressive thought regimes. Their double aim is to map these entanglements in academics and politics as well as resurrect theory from its current melancholic stagnancy. The essays, collected in two parts along with two appendices, successfully execute the first of these aims and make a compelling effort at the second.

The book's first part, titled "Creolizing Methodologies," challenges dominant theories through its interdisciplinary approach and insists on academia's ethical mandate. Its five essays embrace multiple disciplines, ranging from economic theory to music. Barnor Hesse reads the Haitian revolution as a creolized political movement that entangled anti-monarchist, anti-colonial, and antislavery strands, while Pheng Cheah brings trauma theory to Asian financial crises to challenge dominant interpretations of both. Anne Donadey and Liz Constable conduct close analyses of literature and film, respectively, discussing several disciplinary approaches to localized oppression. Ping-hui Liao studies David

Henry Hwang's canon to unveil the paradox of cultural identity, simultaneously flexible and bounded in the transnational world. In this eclectic mix of material and method is a common and persuasive insistence on conducting equitable, non-oppressive scholarship through creolized approaches.

Part 2, "Epistemological Locations," collects four essays that parse the political and ethical effects of knowledge production on identity. Walter Mignolo and Étienne Balibar take a macro view to map international trends. Mignolo outlines the developments of "global linear thinking": a universalized historical narrative that empowers asymmetrically. Balibar, meanwhile, considers globalization's effects on the concept and experience of citizenship. Leo Ching and Fatima El-Tayeb apply similar frameworks to local situations. While Ching analyzes Taiwan's role in global politics, El-Tayeb exposes the fractured experience of transnational existence in contemporary Europe. All essays locate political imbalances and agree that the theoretical act of opening postcolonial comparisons will work toward remedying injustices.

In an appendix, Dominique Chancé criticizes Glissant's optimism, shared by Lionnet and Shih, that creolized theory can maintain the endless entanglements it needs to avoid reproducing hegemonic discourses. If Creole languages form under inequitable, rather than open, interactions, perhaps creolized methodologies are similarly implicated in undiscovered power relations. Chancé suggests that entanglements may be merely unpredicted and uncomprehended, rather than unpredictable and incomprehensible. Lionnet and Shih, however, draw on enormous intellectual resources that will only grow as academic conversation continues. Limiting this emergent theory to its linguistic origins or attempting to totalize its effects works against creolization's own mandate for diffuse and ever-morphing methodology. *The Creolization of Theory* persuasively revives theory through entanglement. Ultimately, however, creolization will have to be measured by its own ethical standards as it continues to develop in academic discourse.

"field poetics sky blue"

rob mclennan
Glengarry. Talonbooks $17.95

Andy Weaver
Gangson. NeWest $14.95

Reviewed by Sean Braune

Andy Weaver's *Gangson* and rob mclennan's *Glengarry* each approach the problem of space and the significations of a space in relation to language, history, poetry, and memory. In the title poem from *Gangson*, Weaver mines material from Herbert Asbury's *Gangs of New York*, thus poetically creating a space of violent affectation. rob mclennan's *Glengarry* (named after the Glengarry county of his youth) exists as a paradisiacal, Elysian field of memory and escape. mclennan references the pastoral as an influence, but the "threat" of a *Gangson*-esque modernity hovers on the other side of the "discursive / field" where there is a "lawnmower big as cars." mclennan asks, "[I]s it possible to be pastoral in a city?" This question, posed in the afterword, frames *Glengarry* as its own "field" of poetry: the county of Glengarry is beautifully presented as a post-Wordsworthian (almost neo-Wordsworthian) oasis. *Glengarry* is as comforting as the brightest childhood memory. Modernity encircles Glengarry, positioning it on the outside of an unspoken gangland Babel—the topic of discussion for Weaver. In "Weavings," Weaver begins with an epigraph from mclennan that reads: "*I could get here, but I could not get there.*" Perhaps the "there" is the "there" of Glengarry. Both Weaver and mclennan seem aware of Gaston Bachelard's

The Poetics of Space, which argues that space is always "traversed by the simple impetus of words that have been experienced." Words then, in the Bachelardian sense, tattoo spaces and construct them in relation to a symbolic order that is entirely unspoken, sometimes unread, and only felt or experienced.

The spaces Weaver and mclennan reference are not only large, chaotic spaces (such as a country or a city), but also smaller spaces, such as the spaces in which we experience love. There are several "love poems" in *Gangson*: Weaver's "you and i" is one of the best love poems written in years. Weaver and mclennan speak to each other's work when they write about sex (as homages to Barry McKinnon's work). In *Glengarry*, mclennan discusses the poetic space constructed by the experience of "*sex at thirty-six*," while in *Gangson*, Weaver writes "Homage to Sex at 31."

Henri Lefebvre argues in *Rhythmanalysis* that "[e]verywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm." Lefebvre's observation can be contrasted to Weaver's poem "Theory," which reads: "Theory on / the radical / importance of / spatial geography / to the meta/ / physical act / of love." The metaphysical act of love is an expenditure of energy, defined (or organized) in a rhythm that signifies a space. Poetry is pure rhythm: both Weaver and mclennan are cogently aware of this—the words dance on the page and embrace Olson's famous call to "compose by field." Weaver and mclennan not only compose by field, they also *create* various fields as spaces of poetic escape.

Un homme rapaillé

Pierre Nepveu

Gaston Miron : La vie d'un homme. Boréal 39,95 $

Compte rendu par Jean-Sébastien Ménard

Gaston Miron, à l'instar d'Octavio Paz, « aimait répéter que les poètes n'ont pas de biographie et que ce sont leurs poèmes qui en tiennent lieu ». Se raconter lui permettait toutefois de mettre « en relief des épisodes marquants, exemplaires [de son existence], qui révélaient la vie d'un homme et d'un poète, et, à travers elle, le destin d'une société ». En parcourant les recueils *Un long chemin*, qui regroupe la prose qu'il a rédigée de 1953 à 1996, et *L'avenir dégagé*, qui rassemble divers entretiens qu'il a accordés de 1959 à 1993, le lecteur constate qu'au cours de sa vie, l'auteur de *L'homme rapaillé* s'est beaucoup révélé. À force de le lire et de l'entendre, il est donc possible de « rapailler » les morceaux du casse-tête de sa biographie, immense labeur que Pierre Nepveu a réussi avec brio après avoir accumulé et parcouru d'innombrables papiers intimes, notes, lettres et témoignages. Grâce à lui, le lecteur peut ainsi découvrir, ou redécouvrir, le parcours d'un homme qui a profondément marqué à la fois son pays et son époque.

Né le 8 janvier 1928 à Sainte-Agathe, dans les Laurentides, Gaston Miron est le fils d'un menuisier, Charles-Auguste Miron, et de Jeanne Raymond dit Michauville, d'origine modeste. Malgré la crise économique, le jeune Miron passe une enfance heureuse avec ses parents et ses quatre sœurs. Par-dessus tout, il aime alors se promener dans sa petite ville, dans les champs et dans les bois. L'un des événements marquants de sa jeunesse est le moment où il apprend l'analphabétisme de son grand-père qu'il admire. La scène est éloquente : alors qu'il lit les journaux que son père lui a rapporté de Sainte-Agathe, son grand-père passe derrière lui et dit : « Moi, je donnerais toute ma vie pour savoir lire et écrire . . . tu sais,

quand on ne sait pas lire ni écrire, on est toujours dans le noir ». Miron a alors dix ans. Il est sur le point d'entrer dans une communauté religieuse, chez les frères du Sacré-Cœur, dont l'école est à Granby, afin d'y recevoir une bonne formation dans un cadre catholique. Il faut dire qu'en ces années, il est encore très prestigieux pour une famille québécoise d'avoir en ses rangs un fils prêtre.

À Granby, Miron devient le frère Adrien et cherche à être digne de sa vocation qu'il ne remet en question qu'en 1947, année où il revient chez lui avec le projet de devenir écrivain. Il veut alors « rendre la sonorité de son époque ». Toutefois, il lui faut aussi gagner sa vie. Il trouve d'abord un emploi qu'il occupe brièvement au journal *L'Écho du Nord* puis il se rabat sur des emplois manuels qui ne lui conviennent pas vraiment. Le jeune homme décide alors d'aller à l'Université de Montréal étudier les sciences sociales. Dans la grande ville, Miron apprend la vie et multiplie les rencontres importantes comme celle des frères Carle.

Au cours de ces années, Miron fréquente de nombreux cercles, collabore à quelques publications, s'essaie à l'enseignement puis devient fonctionnaire tout en continuant à vivre sa bohème. Malheureux en amour, relativement pauvre, il se surnomme lui-même « pauvre Cadou », se percevant comme un être misérable et miséreux. C'est en 1953 qu'il publie avec son ami Olivier Marchand un recueil intitulé *Deux sangs*, fondant à la même occasion les éditions de l'Hexagone, maison au sein de laquelle il assumera tout au long de son existence plusieurs rôles dont celui d'éditeur.

Tranquillement, la petite boîte commence à rayonner. Le critique Gilles Marcotte affirme même bientôt qu'elle fait entrer la poésie québécoise dans « l'âge de la parole » en donnant une voix à une nouvelle génération « née au tournant des années 1920-30 et pour qui la poésie [est] un moyen privilégié d'expression ». Persuadé de l'existence d'une littérature canadienne-française, Miron affirme alors qu'il faut « nationaliser [la] littérature et, ce faisant, le peuple ». Le poète est un homme engagé qui n'hésite pas à sortir sur la place publique faire entendre ses revendications. Ainsi, il va même vainement tenter sa chance en politique en 1957 et en 1958 avec le Parti social-démocratique. À la même époque, Miron participe à la rencontre des poètes, qui deviendra éventuellement un forum annuel connu sous le nom de « Rencontre québécoise internationale des écrivains ». Le désir de discuter et d'échanger y est tel que cela va notamment donner naissance à la revue *Liberté*.

En 1959, comme de nombreux intellectuels de l'époque, Miron séjourne en France où malgré l'angoisse de l'éloignement, il continue à mener une vie active, découvre la pensée d'Albert Memmi et adhère, comme beaucoup d'autres, aux thèses de ce dernier portant sur la décolonisation. En ces jours, Miron rêve d'autonomie et de liberté. Et si sa carrière d'écrivain lui semble encore péricliter, celle d'éditeur prend littéralement son envol.

À suivre ainsi le parcours de Gaston Miron, le lecteur revit la mutation que la société québécoise a vécue au tournant des années 1960. Lire cette biographie, c'est donc l'occasion de revisiter l'histoire du Québec et de revivre d'une manière intimiste et personnelle la Révolution tranquille, de la montée du nationalisme aux débuts du FLQ à la crise d'Octobre, à la Nuit de la poésie de mars 1970, à la contre-culture, au référendum perdu de 1980 jusqu'à l'autonomisation de la littérature.

Lire cet ouvrage, c'est également découvrir dans quel contexte a vécu et a écrit cet homme « répandu comme une légende, animateur et agitateur de première force, dont le visage se confond presque avec le visage de notre société ».

Si Gaston Miron est un incontournable de la poésie voire de la culture québécoise, cette biographie l'est tout autant pour quiconque s'intéresse à ce poète. C'est une entreprise

qui permet de mesurer à sa juste valeur la grandeur de l'homme et qui donne envie de relire *L'homme rapaillé*, cette « manifestation d'un psychisme collectif longtemps déficient et désormais en voie de guérison. »

Un parent affectionné

Louis-Joseph Papineau; Georges Aubin et Renée Blanchet, dirs.
Lettres à sa famille : 1803-1871. Septentrion 49,95 $

Compte rendu par Michel Ducharme

En 2000, Georges Aubin et Renée Blanchet débutaient une œuvre monumentale : la publication de la correspondance intégrale de Louis-Joseph Papineau. Au cours de la dernière décennie, ils ont ainsi publié les lettres adressées à Julie, sa femme (2000), à ses enfants (2004) et à divers correspondants (2006). Avec *Lettres à sa famille*, Aubin et Blanchet mettent un terme à leur entreprise. Ce dernier volume inclut plus de 400 lettres envoyées par Papineau à divers membres de sa famille (père, sœur, frères, cousins, neveux, nièce, etc.). Les lettres sont annotées, démontrant l'admirable érudition d'Aubin et de Blanchet. Elles sont également accompagnées par des notices biographiques des différents correspondants et plusieurs photographies.

Les lecteurs avant tout intéressés par la vie politique bas-canadienne et la pensée du leader patriote seront déçus : cette correspondance ne contient que quelques commentaires épars et sans profondeur sur la vie politique de son temps. De toute évidence, Papineau considérait que la politique n'était pas la chose la plus importante à discuter avec sa famille. Dans ce contexte, deux grands thèmes ressortent de cette correspondance. Le premier concerne la situation financière, toujours assez précaire, de la famille Papineau. Le développement de la seigneurie de la Petite-Nation fait ainsi l'objet d'un très grand nombre de lettres. Les agents de Papineau (son frère Denis-Benjamin, son neveu Joseph-Benjamin-Nicolas et son neveu par alliance François-Samuel MacKay) comptent parmi les destinataires privilégiés dans cette correspondance. Les lettres leur étant destinées portent essentiellement sur la concession de terres, la construction et la gestion du moulin seigneurial ainsi que les poursuites intentées contre les mauvais censitaires. Durant l'exil parisien, de 1839 à 1845, c'est la gêne dans laquelle se trouve la famille qui domine la correspondance, alors que Papineau craint la confiscation de ses biens par le gouvernement.

Le deuxième thème central de cette correspondance est la souffrance, la maladie (physique ou mentale), les grossesses qui peuvent mal se terminer et la mort. On ne peut s'empêcher de réaliser en lisant ces lettres jusqu'à quel point la souffrance était normale au dix-neuvième siècle; la mort, omniprésente; la résignation, nécessaire. Ceci dit, si les lettres de Papineau font régulièrement référence à la maladie ou à la mort d'êtres aimés, elles sont habituellement assez sobres et retenues. Papineau s'épanche peu et n'exprime pas ses émotions par écrit, si ce n'est à la mort de son père en 1841, qui l'affecte tout particulièrement. Les lettres de Papineau deviennent toutefois un peu plus personnelles, plus longues et plus triviales à la fin de sa vie. Il est alors clair que le seigneur de Montebello s'ennuie.

Il est intéressant de noter certaines lacunes dans cette correspondance. Ainsi, très peu de lettres sont adressées à Denis-Benjamin Papineau après 1838, même si la relation entre les deux frères semble être demeurée cordiale. De la même manière, rares sont les lettres adressées à André-Augustin et Toussaint-Victor, les deux autres frères de Louis-Joseph, ainsi qu'à Louis-Antoine Dessaulles, son neveu. Il est difficile de déterminer les raisons qui expliquent l'absence de correspondance entre Louis-Joseph et ces destinataires : peut-être ne leur a-t-il jamais rien écrit ou peut-être

est-ce que ses lettres ont été perdues. On ne le saura probablement jamais.

Dans l'ensemble, cette correspondance nous en apprend beaucoup sur Papineau le seigneur et le parent « très affectionné » qu'il était. Ce volume complète donc à merveille les cinq précédents. Ne reste plus qu'à remercier Aubin et Blanchet pour avoir effectué un travail magistral. Des générations de chercheurs leur en sauront gré.

Fragile Lives

David Adams Richards
Incidents in the Life of Markus Paul. Doubleday $32.95

Cynthia Holz
Benevolence. Knopf $29.95

Reviewed by Irene Gammel

The lobster trapped in the cage is the overarching allegorical figure for the characters caught in the mesh of local and national media, justice, and politics in David Adams Richards' new novel: "He would come through a large door to find a small one, and then a smaller one still, always looking forward, always finding himself able to fit in, not knowing he would never be able to back out." A brilliant tour de force, *Incidents in the Life of Markus Paul* has the inexorable logic of a Thomas Hardy or Theodore Dreiser social novel, mixed with a postmodern ambiguity of ethics and justice.

Set in the Miramichi, New Brunswick, punched with the familiar smell of herring and crab and salt, *Incidents* depicts First Nations RCMP officer Markus Paul's dogged efforts to solve a crime that happened on the reserve twenty years earlier, in 1985, when his grandfather, Amos Paul, was the chief. A teenager, Hector Penniac, rumoured to be gay, was killed on the cargo ship *Lutheran,* buried underneath a load of wood that had been "hooked" by Roger Savage, the town loner and a white man. Immersed in a dispute over fishing rights with the band, Roger becomes a target for Hector's violent half-brother, Joel Ginnish. In this deeply felt and deeply textured story, which pointedly challenges notions of inherited racial guilt, both Roger and Hector are *pharmakos*, or scapegoat, figures.

Incidents paints its characters vividly with glaring, and purposeful, weaknesses. The talented and ambitious young journalist Max Doran aims to tell the story of his era, exposing First Nations peoples' suffering at the hands of white people, but gets the story dramatically wrong. Chief Amos Paul is a savvy negotiator and builder of community but is painfully ineffectual when confronting cold self-interest and century-old sedimentations of rage. The suspenseful crime story carries the reader forward in a forensic search for the truth of Hector's death, a search deftly initiated by Amos Paul, who collects evidence such as photographs and reports; the search is continued twenty years later by his grandson Markus, whose own personal life has been left in shambles by the vortex of chaos caused by Hector's death. The events destroy the love relationship between Markus and Sky, turning both into wounded souls. In the end, we are haunted by a profound sense of waste: of life, of good will, of opportunities, of talent. When an intoxicated yet still beautiful Sky lobs her anger at Markus from behind the bars of a holding cell, the novel's final line sums it up: "'Fuck you,' she said."

In contrast, the fragile psychological world conjured up by Toronto author Cynthia Holz is laced with humour, forgiveness, and a sense of possible solutions. *Benevolence* begins with the harrowing account of a train accident, as relayed by Stella Wolnik, a survivor traumatized by the images of bodies in pieces. As she puts it to her psychologist: "We're no better than melons, I thought—thin rinds and squishy inside, so easily sliced up. Growing, ripening, rotting . . . " But what further compounds the sense of shakiness of the patient, and the reader, is that

the psychologists in this novel, who are overworked and frazzled, are caught up in pains of their own. Stella's psychologist Renata Moon and her husband, Ben Wasserman, a psychiatrist who deals with organ transplant donors, overstep professional boundaries when their own emotional and marital problems compel them to get privately and secretly involved in the worlds of their respective clients. Stella's pregnancy seriously unsettles forty-year-old Renata, reminding her of her own inability to conceive a child. Meanwhile, Ben, who is entrusted with examining the motives of a putative kidney donor, is a poet at heart hoping to find evidence of benevolence.

The novel's most fascinating character is lusty and impervious Molly Wasserman, Ben's seventy-three-year-old judgmental mother, named by her late husband after Molly Bloom. Refusing to accept the loneliness of widowhood, Molly takes in a boarder, Saul, with whom she had had an affair fifty years earlier while married. Saul (rightly) thinks Ben is his son (Molly's well kept secret). The psychologically unstable world of *Benevolence* is reminiscent of the work of Toronto author Tish Cohen, who delves into obsessive-compulsive disorders such as agoraphobia. The secrets are expected to break apart the family, and yet, the ultimate ability to forgive and move beyond disappointments keeps the world of *Benevolence* humane and precariously intact. As one of the characters puts it, "Laughter's good for the garden."

A New Internationalism

Gillian Roberts
Prizing Literature: The Celebration and Circulation of National Culture. U of Toronto P $45.00

Reviewed by Andrew David Irvine

This is a thoughtful, engaging book. It's also fun. Here's what Roberts says about the rivalry between the Governor General's Literary Awards and the Giller: "Public denunciations by jurors of the rival shortlist have emphasized the differences between the prizes: witness 1998, for example, when Giller juror David Staines dismissed the Governor General's shortlist as 'embarrassing—again,' to which Governor General's Award juror Susan Swan responded, 'To allow a tweedy Poo-Bah like David Staines to define the country's literary tastes would keep us in the wooden tracks of nineteenth-century traditional realism forever.'"

It's also in this context that Roberts quotes Paul Gessell's observation that, unlike the Giller, the Governor General's awards have often included "emerging authors who experiment and live beyond the shadow of the CN Tower," although it remains unstated whether it is the resulting literature or the living beyond the shadow of the CN Tower that is seen as experimental.

Of course, the heart of Roberts' book is about not just awards and prizes, but identity and belonging in (to borrow Guillermo Verdecchia's memorable phrase) this big "Noah's ark of a nation." It's also about the celebration of a nation's literature and about how international recognition of individual writers can be conscripted for the purpose of nation building, especially at a time when Canadian authors are looking outward rather than inward.

This maturity of yet another generation of immigrant authors (have we ever had any other kind?) is apparent in Roberts' choice of subjects: Michael Ondaatje, Carol Shields, Rohinton Mistry, and Yann

Martel. As Roberts reminds us, these four writers "offer very different case studies of celebrated belongings constructed out of international recognition." And, one might add, out of international inceptions—Ondaatje's Sri Lanka, Shields' United States, Mistry's India, and a handful of countries associated with the academic and diplomatic itinerancy of Martel's early upbringing. The result, says Roberts, is that "if Canadian culture circulates globally through these celebrated writers, it does so in conjunction with their critiques of the nation and its discrepant invitations."

Roberts' final chapter also discusses Martel's *What is Stephen Harper Reading*, a book that chronicles the author's "one-sided correspondence with Canada's prime minister" and in which Martel "champions the support of the arts and the welfare state." Annoyed that Mr. Harper hasn't, in Mr. Martel's opinion, shown sufficient interest in the arts, Martel took it upon himself to mail a book to the prime minister every two weeks for "as long as Stephen Harper is Prime Minister of Canada." Martel's patience lasted only about two years. The hook for publishing his letters as a book was that Martel was shocked that Mr. Harper never once took the time to reply personally to Martel's thoughtful but unsolicited gesture.

Upon learning of Martel's project, I undertook a similar experiment. About a year ago, I sent an unsolicited book and accompanying letter to Mr. Martel who, I suspect, is slightly less busy than the Prime Minister. I'm still waiting for my reply.

Les pieuses reliques

Denis Saint-Jacques et Marie-José des Rivières

L'heure des vaches et autres récits du terroir : Choix des textes et présentation. Nota bene 14,95 $

Compte rendu par Serge Fournier

L'anthologie, préparée par deux spécialistes du régionalisme en littérature québécoise, laisse bien voir que l'idéologie du terroir, comme élément d'identification et de vie, imprègne le Québec français pendant près d'un siècle, de *La terre paternelle* de Patrice Lacombe (1846) au *Survenant* (1945) de Germaine Guèvremont. Célébrant l'espace des campagnes de la vallée du Saint-Laurent, les valeurs préconisées par les terroiristes s'articulent autour de l'accroissement de l'agriculture, de l'observance des règles de la religion catholique, du développement de la famille — nœud de l'organisation sociale — et de la transmission du patrimoine à la postérité. Le mouvement s'organise autour de la célèbre conférence que Camille Roy, grand ponte de l'époque, prononce en 1904. Les principes énoncés par Roy se concentrent sur un objectif : la nécessité pour les auteurs d'écrire sur le pays en montrant la vie rustique des devanciers. La promotion des valeurs rurales étant le nouveau mot d'ordre, poètes, romanciers et conteurs exploitent les souvenirs d'enfance, insistent sur le pathétique des situations. De toutes les figures de style, la prosopopée s'impose comme forme rhétorique privilégié. Elle permet aux objets d'éveiller les souvenirs, et de construire l'effet émotif attendu. Le « récit du terroir » renvoie obligatoirement au passé, « trait hiérarchiquement dominant », et à « l'exaltation d'une vie campagnarde idéalisée. En ce sens, il paraît bien relever du régime de la louange, de l'épidictique. Aucune objectivité moderne n'y a cours ». Ce sont les transformations intimes qui vont provoquer le rappel et la sacralisation des origines,

l'affirmation de la pérennité des coutumes et la commande d'une conduite à emprunter en regard d'un horizon plus lointain. Il n'empêche qu'une fois devenues pôle d'attraction dans la littérature québécoise, ces thématiques feront partie du paysage pour longtemps. Elles hanteront la collectivité sans indices visibles de transformation. Le courant va dominer toute la scène littéraire et ne sera guère menacé par l'École littéraire de Montréal et les « Exotiques » dont l'influence restera somme toute assez faible.

Si on emprunte un autre angle, le rapprochement qu'établissent les essayistes entre le terroir d'hier et les altermondialistes d'aujourd'hui ne manque pas de susciter l'intérêt. « Il y a un siècle, il se trouvait au Québec, et ailleurs il faut dire, des gens pour croire que le monde était en danger, que tout allait vers les villes et l'industrie envahissante, que la centralisation allait tout tuer . . . , et qu'il fallait préserver la terre, menacée. » Les « verts » d'hier, du coup, nous apparaissent moins comme un groupement droitiste et rétrograde. Les intentions qui motivent les écologistes de la planète diffèrent certainement des tenants du terroir, mais le lien tissé avec les ruraux demeure accrocheur. Il faut dire que les deux groupes se ressemblent, même si les moyens de diffusion de leur idéologie respective diffèrent. Le domaine d'intervention principal des terroiristes, alors « qu'on ne pouvait chahuter de réunions mondiales de banquiers ou de politiques inexistantes et que radio, télévision ou toile tardaient encore, fut la presse ». Sa réalisation emprunte à un principe de protection du sol nourricier qui s'accommode de la prédication des curés, ces derniers voyant là « une voie pour mieux encadrer et protéger [leurs] ouailles ». Mais le combat ne se limite pas aux articles et discours, il se transforme aussi en contribution à la littérature nationale. Outre des succès de librairie comme *Maria Chapdelaine* de Louis Hémon et *À l'ombre de l'Orford* d'Alfred DesRochers, les essayistes donnent à lire des textes qui comptent parmi les « plus grands best-sellers de la première moitié du vingtième siècle au Canada français ». D'ailleurs, les documents formant l'anthologie balisent tout le cheminement terroiriste, depuis « Le vieux hangar » de Camille Roy (qui d'autre?) jusqu'à « L'héritage » de Ringuet, en passant par Adjutor Rivard avec « Le poêle ».

C'est ce pays physique et idéologique qui forme l'objet de l'ouvrage. Tous les chemins empruntés conduisent à la fois à une meilleure compréhension et à une définition plus précise du régionalisme québécois. De « pieuses reliques » qu'on entretient avec un soin admiratif et qui valent, à nouveau, le détour.

Le théâtre à Montréal

Sylvain Schryburt

De l'acteur vedette au théâtre de festival : Histoire des pratiques scéniques montréalaises 1940-1980. PUM 34,95 $

Compte rendu par Jean-Marc Larrue

Cet ouvrage propose un tableau détaillé d'une partie de l'activité théâtrale montréalaise entre 1937 (et un peu avant) et le début des années 1980. Il s'agit d'une période de grande effervescence qui mérite effectivement l'attention des chercheurs. Sylvain Schryburt a choisi une approche de type linéaire, organisée autour de trois « régimes théâtraux » successifs, celui de « l'acteur vedette », celui du metteur en scène et celui du « collectif », pour rendre compte de ce demi-siècle au cours duquel le théâtre montréalais serait passé d'un état embryonnaire à celui d'institution solidement implantée, l'ère du « Théâtre québécois ». Cette évolution repose, selon l'auteur, sur le développement de la mise en scène. Schryburt accrédite ainsi la thèse des modernistes — le père Émile Legault en tête — qui ont fait de ce concept de mise en scène l'un des

fondements de la modernité théâtrale mais qui ont, en même temps, largement ignoré, voire déprécié, ce qui les a précédés ou qui ne correspondait pas à leur conception du théâtre (ce que Schryburt semble assimiler, dans le cas montréalais, à ce qu'il nomme « théâtre populaire », sans le définir davantage). En ce sens, son étude minutieuse d'un « certain » théâtre montréalais vient enrichir et réactiver un discours historien né il y a plus de cinquante ans avec l'essai de Jean Hamelin, *Le renouveau du théâtre au Canada français* (paru en 1961), et relayé par l'étude phare de Jean-Cléo Godin et Laurent Mailhot sur le « théâtre québécois » en 1970. L'organisation et les arguments de Schryburt en sont une mise à jour approfondie, qui les enrichit et les renforce, mais est-elle opportune? On s'étonne, vu l'abondance des recherches menées depuis lors, qu'on puisse encore réduire une réalité théâtrale si riche et si complexe à trois « régimes », d'autant plus discutables qu'ils sont successifs, et qu'on ne soit pas plus critique à l'égard de la perspective moderniste et ses arguments clés : il n'existe pas de définition simple et universelle de la mise en scène. Si Pierre Dagenais et le père Émile Legault faisaient des mises en scène, que faisaient donc Gratien Gélinas ou Julien Daoust?

Reprenant à son compte ce que le père Legault avait dit avant lui — et qu'ont répercuté Bélair, Godin et Mailhot —, Schryburt minimise ce qui a précédé l'année de fondation des Compagnons de Saint-Laurent (1937). Étonnant paradoxe puisqu'il ne s'intéresse *a priori* qu'au théâtre professionnel. Consacrant la première partie de son ouvrage à une analyse très sensible de l'œuvre des Compagnons et de celui de l'Équipe de Pierre Dagenais, il ignore complètement ce qui pourtant faisait courir les foules à la même époque (parfois sur la même scène, celle du Monument-National de Montréal) : les revues *Fridolinons* de Gratien Gélinas! Rien non plus sur le burlesque et les drames populaires qui remplissaient le Saint-Denis et le Théâtre National. Cette *Histoire des pratiques scéniques montréalaises 1940-1980* (c'est le sous-titre de l'ouvrage) se limite donc, pour une bonne part, au théâtre de la modernité telle qu'elle s'impose à Paris. Des autres manifestations (non parisiennes) de la modernité, pas un mot : celle, par exemple, du Montreal Repertory Theatre qui produit également des spectacles en français et mobilise des artistes francophones (dont Gélinas), celle des théâtres montréalais non francophones (anglophones et yiddish en particulier).

À la constellation Compagnons-Équipe-Théâtre du Nouveau monde répond, en deuxième partie d'ouvrage, celle des Apprentis sorciers-Égrégore-Saltimbanques-Théâtre du Nouveau monde. C'est dire la place prépondérante qu'occupe cette institution découlant de l'œuvre des Compagnons dans cet essai historique. L'étroitesse du propos déçoit, mais la finesse et la précision des analyses esthétiques et des analyses de stratégies sont très intéressantes.

L'ouvrage se termine avec l'avènement du théâtre québécois et du Jeune Théâtre. On s'étonne que Jean-Claude Germain (les Enfants de Chénier et le Théâtre du Même nom [TMN]), qui occupe un rôle central dans cette période tumultueuse, soit exclu de l'analyse sous prétexte qu'il dispose d'une scène fixe! De la même façon, l'auteur balaie des troupes majeures comme l'Eskabel, Omnibus, les Enfants du paradis (qui deviendra Carbone 14), la Veillée, les troupes de femmes et les troupes pour jeune public, sous prétexte qu'elles ne font pas partie du Jeune Théâtre. Ce motif est plus que discutable et l'exclusion de certaines de ces troupes marquantes de Montréal réduit considérablement la portée de cette « histoire des pratiques montréalaises » qui se termine d'ailleurs sans que la question des festivals (voir le titre) ne soit vraiment abordée.

On le sait, l'histoire du théâtre est complexe, celle du théâtre au Québec l'est plus encore en raison de la multiplicité des

influences qui s'y exercent, de la nature de ses publics et de leurs langues. On ne peut espérer ni tout dire ni tout couvrir, il faut faire des choix.

Le premier mérite de Schryburt est d'avoir rassemblé en un même ouvrage des informations qui se trouvaient dispersées dans des publications diverses réparties sur plus de cinquante ans. Le second est d'avoir enrichi et approfondi ces informations, de les avoir mises en contexte avec rigueur et précision. Mais on regrette qu'il n'ait pas été plus critique à l'égard du concept de modernité théâtrale qui fonde son approche et qui l'amène à exclure de ce parcours, écrit avec vivacité et élégance, certains des créateurs et des organismes les plus remarquables de l'histoire du théâtre montréalais. Il ne nous propose pas l' « histoire des pratiques montréalaises de 1940 à 1980 » mais celle d'une quinzaine de troupes déjà bien connues et reconnues. Les « pratiques montréalaises » sont autrement plus riches et diversifiées.

Reading the City

Stephen Scobie

The Measure of Paris. U of Alberta P $29.95

Reviewed by Christine Lorre-Johnston

The Measure of Paris started as an account of "the city as it appeared in the writing of certain Canadian writers who had lived there." But the book takes on an elegiac form, with heartfelt tributes to and memories of the author's late wife Maureen. Sections on cultural history have also been added to frame the author's interpretation of the layout of Paris. The result reads "sometimes as literary criticism, sometimes as cultural history, sometimes as personal memoir. What holds the book together is Paris itself: Paris as the measure of all that I attempt to say about it."

The title "sets Paris up as the definitive standard . . . by which many things (cities, cultures, histories, literatures) may be measured." Had a Parisian adopted this stance, s/he would immediately be called egocentric—and rightly so. What makes it acceptable is the fact that Scobie is an outsider and is obviously in love with Paris, with his late wife, and with literature. And his book, which is tinted with nostalgia despite his efforts to resist it, is a measure of his love.

The book is organized into six parts. "Paris perdu" (1) is a cultural history focusing on the Haussmannian period and arguing against nostalgia for a hypothetical old Paris. "Parisian autobiography " (2) is about the personas writers create in autobiographical writing about Paris. "What Pleasure in a Name! The Long Poem of Walking" (3) elaborates on the figure of the flâneur and the importance of street names, before examining writings by Canadian authors Sheila Watson, Mavis Gallant, Gail Scott, and John Glassco. "Parisian Sites" (4) follows the steps of Gertrude Stein and Djuna Barnes, before focusing on the building where Scobie, like other Canadian artists and scholars, stayed during two extended stays in Paris. "Canadian Visions" (5) provides literary analyses of writings by Lola Lemire Tostevin and Gerry Shikatani. "Personal Postscripts" (6) focuses on Scobie's first and latest visits to Paris, one with Maureen, the other after her death, alone.

The structure of the book fails to give it a clear direction as a whole, and some editorial restructuring would have been salutary. The notion of "the measure of Paris" appears as a contrived device to tie these varied pieces together. Scobie's central focus is "the long poem of walking" on Parisian streets, or to put it differently, "the metaphor of the city as text." This is when the chapters come into their own: how other writers have apprehended and written about Paris is Scobie's core material, and the book is at its best, for instance, when the author retraces the steps of Gertrude Stein on her way to Picasso's, speculating along the way on what

would have been different in her days. Because Scobie knows those literary parts of Paris inside out and generously provides details along the way, he is able to vividly recreate the writers' routes and lives, thus adding his own contribution, indeed, to the literature inspired by the city of his dreams.

Dreams and Inspirations

Gregory Scofield
Louis: The Heretic Poems. Nightwood $18.95

Richard Wagamese
The Next Sure Thing. Orca $9.95

Richard Wagamese
Runaway Dreams. Ronsdale $15.95

Reviewed by Renate Eigenbrod

The Next Sure Thing by Anishinaabe author Richard Wagamese is a story about a twenty-three-year-old Native man, Cree Thunderboy, who has two dreams: becoming a famous bluesman on his guitar and picking out "a sure thing" at the racetrack. When he meets a man who promises to pay for a recording studio, his first CD, and a promotional tour on the condition that he will find him a winning horse on the racetrack every so often, it seems that he has made his luck. However, as it turns out, the man is not as nice as he appears and soon becomes dangerous—not only for Cree, but also for his friend and his family. In the end, Cree successfully frees himself from this bondage. As the Native identity of the main character is not emphasized, the story is an uplifting read for anyone who refuses to become a victim. The fast-paced plot and engaging conversational style is well suited for a novel that is published as a "Rapid Reads" book, i.e., a book for reluctant readers. However, although it is a fast and easy read, it is for me still a Wagamese story, as it touches on themes in his other works—for example, the importance of the blues, a cross-cultural theme in *Keeper'n Me*, or the role of fate so important in *Dream Wheels*. Also, the friendship between Cree Thunderboy and Ashton Crooker, who grew up "poor in a trailer park at the outskirts of Montreal," is reminiscent of the cross-cultural friendship theme in *A Quality of Light* and the many encounters Wagamese had on his travels, as told in *For Joshua* and in *Runaway Dreams*.

The "Rapid Reads" genre is a first for Wagamese, and *Runaway Dreams* is his first collection of poetry. His email signature citation of "changing the world one story at a time" expresses his belief in the importance of stories; experimenting with different genres may be his way of diversifying his audiences. His poems tell stories lyrically, the pauses of the line breaks making room for a reader's reflection, with images enhancing the impact—"my skin is broken territory / and my heart went along for the ride." If there is one theme that runs through this collection, it is movement: as physical and spiritual travelling, as journeys toward the Old Ones, as displacement and as reconnection, as search for home and identity—"so that planting flowers becomes an Injun thing"—set against the theme of simply being, on the land and embraced by love.

Long before Wagamese, Métis leader Louis Riel prophesied the importance of Aboriginal artists. Riel's own poetry is not well-known but became a source of inspiration for contemporary Métis poet Gregory Scofield after he found a copy of the first edition of Riel's *Poésies religieuses et politiques* in McLeod's Books, a second-hand bookstore in Vancouver. Using Riel's poetry and diaries as well as other documents of the time, he created the poetic biography *Louis: The Heretic Poems*—his choice of genre reminiscent of Armand Ruffo's *Grey Owl.* In each case, the use of poetry instead of a more straightforward narrative allows for the expression of ambiguities and complexities in a person's life. In Ruffo's case, Grey Owl became more than simply a "wannabe," and for Scofield, it was

important to portray Riel as "a man" ending his own heretic writing about Riel's heresy against church and government by giving voice to Riel's fear of being "put in a box":

> I wish only to stretch out
> as a man who is lying with his head
> above ground.

The Dark Side of Progress

Michael V. Smith
Progress: A Novel. Cormorant $21.00

Richard Wagamese
Indian Horse. Douglas & McIntyre $21.95

Reviewed by Renate Eigenbrod

> Houses were moved around the map like toys. How does one live in a remade world . . . Helen was irritable every time she saw it. There could be no authenticity in the new town. It would be Disney. A fake, because it was designed by foreigners with no interest or understanding of who they were, how they got to be where they were. (Smith)

The novel *Progress* by Michael Smith takes a strong stand against a corporation that imposes the building of a dam on a community through the character of "irritable" Helen, who "didn't welcome the change" that requires removal or demolition of houses (including her own) and cemeteries and the displacement of people. She had grown up in her house close to the river and had nursed both her parents there when they were terminally ill. One might argue that she is reluctant to accept the fact that life unavoidably changes, but she is also the character with a special view—quite literally—on this dam that strengthens her resistance. Through her deceased father's binoculars, she watches the workers on the "astounding" construction site and witnesses the death (or murder) of a worker. She sees him falling, presumably to his death, and the concrete poured on top of him a short while after. Her strong physical reaction to this scene pulls readers into her viewpoint of resisting the potential destructiveness of "progress." It seems that the company represented by the "Power Authority," which demands that people give up their homes, does indeed not care about human lives. Significantly, Helen watches this horrific scene through the binoculars of her deceased father, with whom she had a troubled relationship, and near the gravesite of her fiancé, who died in an accident. The holding of the binoculars makes up the cover image of the novel as the viewing provides the lens, literally and metaphorically, for the story to unfold and to be interpreted. Helen understands the shocking scene in front of her through a family history of secrets and lies, which unfolds as the plot develops. The story of Helen's brother, who returns home after fifteen years and whose reason for leaving and whose relationship with her fiancé was unknown to her, adds another layer to the notion of progress. Different from his sister, he welcomes change in the town as "a great relief, that things had moved on." At the same time, he feels "cheated, nostalgic for the progress he'd missed." As it was only after leaving his home that he could live his gay identity openly, for him, change of an oppressive environment carries the promise of progress.

Smith combines the different strands of the plot in an ending that brings closure. By taking the (re)burial of her parents into her own hands, Helen performs a small act of resistance against the Power Authority—all she can do, as neither the construction company nor the media want to publish her story about the death she witnessed. The dead worker is a missing body, something that she also creates by leaving an empty grave after reburying her mother: "A missing body. It's a slap in his face." As the reburial is done with her brother's help, one might argue that the ending of the novel shows progress on a personal level, but the siblings' reconciliation is set against

the backdrop of the questionable progress of "the new dam, lit up bright as day. He marvelled that he hadn't noticed it." Also, in this novel about change, both progressive and destructive, the concluding image of sameness (of the sky), seen as a good sign, renders a thought-provoking ending.

"Easier ain't better. It's just easier." This utterance is taken from *Indian Horse*, the sixth novel by Ojibway author Richard Wagamese of the Wabaseemoong First Nation in northwestern Ontario. It refers to easier conditions for playing hockey, i.e., on arena ice in white towns versus outside skating rinks on reserves where the Ojibway boys used to play. Hockey is a central activity and theme in this novel, which traces the story of the Ojibway character Saul Indian Horse of the Fish Clan of the northern Ojibway from his life in the bush—where his family had chosen to live in order to protect the children from being taken to a residential school—to his eventual attendance at the school and his life afterwards dealing with the legacy of the abuse he experienced. His extraordinary hockey skills lead to his adoption by an Ojibway family on a reserve where he makes the hockey team so much better that they are asked to play against a white team in a town nearby. Although his team is excited about this opportunity, Saul expresses his concerns about their apparent progress and the changes that come with it:

> "We're not the same team," . . .
> "What's the problem with that? We're better."
> "It doesn't feel better."
> . . .
> "We've never had a chance to be great before."
> "We were great."
> "Against teams that couldn't push us."
> "Great's great."

In the overall context of the novel, the hesitation to "become better" is not only specific to this situation but indirectly criticizes the colonial agenda of progress that underlies and generates the plot of the novel: residential schools were disguised as a "civilizing" mission taking a boy like Saul Indian Horse away from the "primitive" life of his people to something better. On different plot levels, Wagamese reveals that greatness happens in different ways and contexts: the strength and survival skills of his grandmother are a sign of greatness as is a hockey team's passion for a game on rough ice and with second-hand equipment. On the other hand, Saul's path to stardom as a hockey player comes with a heavy price, and his progression toward being accepted by a major league team is ended by his defeat by racism. The novel clearly reveals that the creation of residential schools was not an exceptional event in Canada's history but embedded in a racist ideology in society at large. Attending the school with its supposedly civilizing education did not make Saul a better person but made him feel inferior and worthless.

In this novel, Richard Wagamese, an intergenerational residential school survivor, tells a story about Canada: it highlights Canada's national sport of hockey as well as the silenced story about the residential schools, "the scar on Canada," as he said at a book launch in Winnipeg. It reflects our society's desire for reconciliation that three reviews of this novel all emphasize progress as the main narrative thrust. Hockey is Saul's path to "redemption" (*Globe and Mail*), "the sport that helps save him" (*Windspeaker*) and that "helps [an] aboriginal boy escape racism" (*Winnipeg Free Press*). Hockey saves Saul for a while—as does his grandmother; it becomes an escape but one tainted by abuse and racism that deeply traumatize him. Since there is no easy closure to Canada's history of colonialism, there is no easy closure in this character's life. He will "get on with life"—but first, he will have "to write things down."

Abject Hero

Roderick Stewart and Sharon Stewart
Phoenix: The Life of Norman Bethune. McGill-Queen's UP $39.95

Reviewed by Alan Filewod

Norman Bethune was not a literary man, although he was a spirited writer of doggerel when occasion demanded, and he was an obsessive writer of letters. As his life channelled towards the final months in China that have become his legacy, the ferocity of his letters increased, and he began banging out stories and poetry on his portable typewriter. Far removed from the manic excesses that had driven him through his rollercoaster life—chief among them alcohol and seduction—"Beth" began to be an author when the horrendous hardships of combat surgery in the Chinese mountains cleansed his life.

The theme of cleansing is one that recurs in this masterful biography. Bethune himself provided the title in his own invocation of the phoenix who is reborn "clean and pure & free" from the fire. As a shaping metaphor for a biography, the phoenix may be a bit of a cliché, but it is true that Bethune's mission to China drew him out of the flames of disgrace and abjection that had resulted from his famous service with the Canadian Blood Transfusion unit that he had founded in the Spanish Civil War. He had gone to Spain pumped with pride in his newfound communism and energized by a return to a kind of military service. (As a young man in the First World War, he had joined the Canadian Army on the day war was declared and served as a stretcher-bearer at Ypres; later, after returning home wounded and finishing medical school, he served as a surgeon in the Royal Navy. At the close of the war, he donned a different uniform as a medical officer in the nascent and not yet royal Canadian Air Force.)

Scandalized by his rough social behaviour, financial mismanagement, and adversarial relations with the Spanish government, the Communist Party ordered him home—shortly before, as the Stewarts document, the Spanish republic planned to expel him. The joint American Canadian medical mission to China—two alcoholic doctors and a nurse-translator—could have been a disaster. But for whatever reason—an inner phoenix, deep vocation, or simply the existential reality of living in crisis—Bethune met the challenge of providing medical service to an impoverished peasant army with genuine, if reckless, heroism. On the eve of his forty-ninth birthday, working in an improvised field hospital, he performed nineteen operations. He had often been accused of recklessness, primarily with women and with the lives of patients. In China, that recklessness became ferocious energy in an increasingly depleted body. A careless cut with a scalpel brought sepsis and death.

There have been several biographies of Bethune since Ted Allan and Sydney Gordon's 1952 myth-making *The Scalpel and the Sword*, several of them written by Roderick Stewart. For Stewart, finding Bethune and traces of Bethune has been a life's work. This latest biography, co-written with Stewart's wife and fellow researcher, began as a revision of his earlier *Bethune* (1973) but, as described in the preface, turned into a wholly new project that revisited old archives and found new ones. The research behind it is exhaustive and compelling, particularly in the presentation of recent findings regarding his time in China. The result is an extremely engaging—at times enthralling—page-turner.

Bethune loomed large in the lives of people who knew him, and many wrote their impressions in letters and memoirs. These coalesce into a persuasive consensus of an obsessive, manic, and grandiose personality who was also brilliant, inventive, and charming. He was an adversarial figure in just about every realm of his life

(as Marian Scott—wife of F. R. and his great unconsummated passion—remarked, the women he slept with he fought with). It is hard to escape the conclusion that Bethune was one of those men who fell in love with war, and the more it angered him, the more he needed it.

Bethune was avid in his writing, as he was in most of his activities. Although he was not a literary author, his final letter to his closest friends before leaving for Spain, in which he wrote that "the function of the artist is to disturb," became a widely circulated manifesto after his Canadian rehabilitation in the 1970s, as did his short essay, "Wounds," published in *The Daily Worker* after his death. But he haunts Canadian literary culture, rubbing shoulders (and sometimes more) with writers and painters in his lifetime, and personifying a radical, intemperate, and tantalizingly un-Canadian political masculinity to writers, playwrights, and filmmakers since. In the pages of this biography, he emerges as yet more human and more abject, and more admirable because of it.

Living in a Learning Way

Drew Hayden Taylor
News: Postcards from the Four Directions. Talonbooks $24.95

Richard Wagamese
One Story, One Song. Douglas & McIntyre $29.95

Reviewed by Sylvie Vranckx

Drew Hayden Taylor and Richard Wagamese are Anishnaabe authors and journalists inhabited by different landscapes. In *News: Postcards from the Four Directions*, Taylor recounts his move from Toronto back to his central Ontario reserve of Curve Lake. A survivor of the Sixties Scoop—about which Taylor has written in his play *Someday*—Wagamese hails from the Wabaseemoong First Nation in northwestern Ontario and lives close to Kamloops, BC, in Salish territory. In *One Story, One Song*, the sequel to *One Native Life*, he returns to his displaced childhood and his recovery journey back to the Ojibway worldview, Enendamowin. Mixing memoir, travelogue, essay, and hints of manifesto, these two authors' series of vignettes were originally published in newspapers. They are both structured into four parts according to the Four Directions of the Ojibway Medicine Wheel. East stands for the colour red, humility, youth, and the rising sun, while South is yellow, trust, the journey of the sun across the sky, and thus "the direction of exploration and discovery." West is associated with black, the sunset, introspection, maturity, and responsibility. Finally, North is the colour white, wisdom, and the spiritual processes associated with getting older. While Taylor starts with North—home and medicine—Wagamese conveys a circular motion and a progression to the culmination of the teachings: the understanding "that knowing and not knowing are one" and the renewal of the wheel.

The columns from Taylor's (typo-riddled) *Postcards* stay in the spirit of his *Funny, You Don't Look Like One* series: a collage of witty, politically incorrect reflections on the life of a "blue-eyed Ojibway" who is a renowned playwright. Several articles are logs of his trips to festivals, conferences, and museums in China, Austria, or the US, with didactic but never preachy passages. One learns that Australian Aborigines are called Kooris and Murris and that they used to be "handled" by the Department of Flora and Fauna. Taylor bonds with Indigenous and disenfranchised peoples throughout the world, from impoverished children in Mexico to the Dalit ("untouchables") in India. He establishes parallels between the stolen children in Canada and Australia and, more controversially, between the Holocaust and the treatment of North America's Indigenous peoples. Also noteworthy are his articles about

Aboriginal Canadian theatre and identity politics, especially cultural appropriation and who defines Aboriginal artists for whom. He appreciates the irony of finding a West Coast art exhibition in Prague or dreamcatchers in Brisbane and remembers blessing a walking stick by counting to ten in Anishnaabemowin. He makes fun of his detractors, especially those who view him as inauthentic because he identifies as "mixed-blood," and he often satirizes the "Academics Anonymous"—which might intimidate or estrange literary critics. He comments in tongue-in-cheek fashion that sovereignty is gained one smoke shack at a time as he observes the "colour-challenged people" who buy cigarettes illegally on his reserve. The readers' laughter might turn hollow when he presents the Starlight Tours as tourism opportunities, but they will appreciate his ability to make the best of situations. ("Starlight Tour" was a nickname for the police practice of abandoning drunken Indigenous men far from town on freezing winter nights.) Taylor takes Aboriginal laughter seriously: he quotes Louise Erdrich as speaking of "survival humour." He opposes the "B-cubed" (bingo, beer, bannock) and "R-cubed" (rape, residential schools, reserves), and often mentions that his collections *Me Funny* and *Me Sexy* resist stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples as dysfunctional. However, ninety articles of his wry voice might be overwhelming, and their lack of publication dates is a weakness.

Wagamese adopts the slice-of-life format. His tone is contemplative and lyrical: *One Story* is like a philosophical treatise. Whether he writes about improving his mountain home with his wife Debra, living on the street as a teenager, or working with the disenfranchised tenants of his rooming house, he displays tenderness towards people and situations. He remembers childhood friends with nostalgia and nurtures the stories and medicine of his loved ones—teachers at school and sweat lodges, elders, neighbours, foster and birth families. This bond extends to non-human persons, such as the bears and crows who live close to his house or Molly, the Story Dog. As Wagamese argues in *Life*, animals are the Ojibways' first teachers. He traces this grounding to the spiritual teachings of the land. His depiction of Beedahbun, the colour "that appears where the sun meets the horizon" at dawn, contains awe and a Zen-like philosophy: this "impossible blue" represents both emptiness and fullness, thus "boundless possibility." Like the sound of the drum on his wall, this nuance strikes a chord deep within and restores the self-knowledge with which he argues that he was born. He discusses candidly his struggle with alcoholism and post-traumatic stress disorder as well as the hollow feeling of instability, rage, and self-doubt, the result of his adoption by a Presbyterian white family who depreciated him, the child of residential school survivors. Wagamese gives no formula for resilience, but his gentle writing soothes the soul and shows that "liv[ing] in a learning way" resides in appreciating the magnificence and intricacy of simple things, like a roller coaster ride with Debra or a stroll by the lake. He demonstrates this through the fresh eyes of someone who has let go of anger and is on his way to wisdom—grateful for each experience.

These authors navigate the paradoxes of being Anishnaabe freelance writers in a market-driven world: for Taylor, advertising oneself contradicts the virtues of humility and giving freely. Both books are further textured by popular culture. The writing of Taylor, an avowed "trekkie," teems with musical allusions that will have younger readers searching in Wikipedia. Mel Gibson's *Apocalypto* and the light-skinned actors on the Mexican and Indian television are staples of his writing. Wagamese describes himself as a "technogeek" who listens to the blues, Johnny Cash, and Pink Floyd,

and who loves baseball. Both value Canada, thereby striving for reconciliation and a future where the "mosaic" comes true. However, the Taylor who writes "Why Did the Indian Block the Road…?" and two columns about Ipperwash might take issue with Wagamese's utopian idea that the National Day of Protest should be replaced by a day of communication.

Contact Zones

Julie Wheelwright
Esther: The Remarkable True Story of Esther Wheelwright—Puritan Child, Native Daughter, Mother Superior. HarperPerennial $19.99

Pauline Holdstock
Into the Heart of the Country. HarperCollins $32.99

Reviewed by Pilar Cuder-Domínguez

Written over years of painful fact-gathering and transatlantic visits from her native England to several North American locations, *Esther* is the engaging result of Julie Wheelwright's efforts to give a full account of the multiple lives of her eighteenth-century ancestor, first as a Puritan seven-year-old child abducted during a French and First Nations raid on her village in Maine, later as adopted daughter to a Catholic Abenaki family, and eventually as a nun in Quebec City. While Esther's experiences are more than enough on their own to keep the reader interested, we are drawn in from the very first pages as the prologue takes us on a taxi ride in a frenzied search for Esther's grave in Belmont Cemetery, interspersed with the author's rising fear that she is going to miss her plane back home. Thus, the book has the added appeal of those works in which biography may occasionally blur into memoir, as the author weaves into the fabric of Esther's tale her own fragmented story of travel and fact-finding, her pangs of guilt at leaving her two young daughters in England as she hunts for information, her reactions to people and places where Esther may have left a trace, and even her bewilderment over some of the material collected. The author explains that she subscribes to Alison Weir's notion of "ocular history," that is, retracing a subject's footsteps in order to find some vestige of his/her essence. In her case, however, the personal investment is the more intense because of the family connection between biographer and subject. Julie Wheelwright puzzles over the central role that Esther's story has played in her own family, determined to challenge a general understanding that it is just another rags-to-riches tale of "a lost child who made good in French Canada."

However, neither does she downplay the fact that Esther was rather unique insofar as most women's lives of the period were left unrecorded in their short, domestic journey from childhood into adolescence followed by marriage and maternity. Instead, Esther generated a stream of documents, first and foremost those in which her New England Puritan parents attempted to negotiate a successful return of the captive child. Her experiences at this time appear to be roughly similar to those related in other captivity tales, such as those gathered by Cotton Mather in *A Memorial of the Present Deplorable State of New England* in 1707. Yet, the author ponders the psychological impact that living among those she had been brought up to believe her mortal enemies must have had on Esther, as well as the strong appeal that Abenaki culture and lifestyle must have held for her. Julie Wheelwright never loses sight of the big picture, either, providing readers with a more general overview of Esther's situation as part of the spoils of war, and emphasizing how both English and French took captives to ensure "the survival of their own captive people [and to enable them] to organize exchanges."

Nevertheless, Esther's fate proved to be exceptional once more when, despite protracted negotiations for her return home,

she took the decision to enter the Ursuline order, within which she would rise from novice to Mother Superior. Before the British conquest of New France, the author argues, Esther's role changed from a spoil of war to an asset for the commercial interests of the Wheelwright family, due both to the prominent role that the Catholic Church held in French society and to the economic exchanges between New France and New England in times of peace. A final transformation took place when the British took over New France in the 1760s, and the Ursulines became the uncomfortable object of suspicion and rejection, teetering on the brink of expulsion. They seem to have triggered wonder too, and even more so in the English-born visitors, judging from the fact that they make an appearance in British author Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* (1769). One century later, William Kirby would get in touch with the Wheelwrights to find out more about Esther while doing research into this period for his novel *The Golden Dog* (1877).

Above all, Julie Wheelwright's biography stresses her ancestor's survival skills and her insight into three different cultures and languages, which allowed her to keep playing a major role as an ambassador and go-between, bridging differences and misunderstandings throughout the radical historical changes taking place in eighteenth-century North America. Her book is thus of great interest not just because of the "remarkable true tale" of Esther, but also because it charts the changing landscapes and mindscapes of the contact zone, as described by Mary Louise Pratt in her 1992 study *Imperial Eyes*, i.e., "not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices."

Pauline Holdstock's historical novel *Into the Heart of the Country* pursues similar goals in its complex portrayal of identity in flux. Here, the contact zone shifts west to the trading posts established by the Hudson's Bay Company on the Churchill and Nelson rivers in the eighteenth century. Between 1717 and 1783, three men governed the Prince of Wales Fort: Richard Norton, his mixed-race son Moses, and Samuel Hearne. While the three male colonizers anchor the account of the fort's history between its foundation and its reconstruction following a French attack, their accounts are framed by the voice of Molly Norton, the mixed-race daughter of Moses Norton and Hearne's common law wife. It is her disembodied consciousness that holds together the narrative, creating links between past and future, and addressing us from within the heart of the land for which she stands. By means of the implicit dialogue between colonizer and colonized, Englishman and First Nations, Holdstock gives readers a powerful insight into how her subjects are, in Pratt's terms, "constituted in and by their relations to each other."

Her portrayal of this historical contact zone stresses the mutual dependence of their inhabitants. Englishmen in particular are shown to rely heavily on the skills of the Southern and Northern Nations (Cree and Dene) to live off the land. On his arrival in this hostile country, Richard Norton must put all his trust on his guides; his complete lack of useful skills means that they regard him as a child. The same unequal power dynamics are impressed on Samuel Hearne when he decides to explore the land to the northwest in search of minerals and has to admit failure twice. It is only by humbly admitting that he has much to learn from the Aboriginals and by painfully and slowly acquiring from them some of the most basic skills that Hearne can finally claim success in his third expedition. Holdstock builds a strong contrast between the claustrophobic garrison where the Englishmen spend most of their time, hardly ever venturing outside and never far from the fort, and the freedom of movement of the First

Nations people. Embodying this astounding freedom is the character of Matonabbe, particularly as seen from the admiring perspective of Samuel Hearne, whose life he saved, and the jealousy of Moses Norton, who, though born and raised as a child at the fort, was sent to England to obtain a gentleman's education, and as a result now feels out of place. Holdstock has painted an intriguing portrait of Moses Norton too, stressing his eagerness to make up for his sense of deprivation caused by the early separation from his nurturing mother and aunts. The First Nations female world Moses yearns for is also depicted as both enticing and strangely exciting for the male outsiders, not the less because it offers them some escape from their crippling isolation. Native women endure the most hardship and do the most work: they walk behind the hunters carrying heavy loads, they make the winter coats essential for survival, and perform a thousand other tasks. By means of Molly's haunting voice, Holdstock shows them as not simply coping, but also as managing to forge deep solidarities and leading intense, fulfilling lives in strong connection with their communities and with their land.

Yet, the novel avoids idealizing Native lifestyles. Balancing their superior skills is their growing dependence on the fort, as they start relying more and more on food and tools they trade for their furs, while their vulnerability to European diseases also puts them at a disadvantage. The destruction of the fort by French ships in combination with a smallpox epidemic entails the destruction of this contact zone, too. The tragic ending of the powerful leader Matonabbe and his band resonates in the final pages of a novel that stands out as a complex tale of interwoven destinies.

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Articles

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Paul **Murphy** is a PhD student in the Department of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba. He obtained BA and MA degrees in English literature from the University of Regina. Reflecting his strong interest in Indigenous Canadian literature, his PhD work includes a biography of Basil Johnston. He recently participated in an Idle No More-related Symposium at the University of Manitoba where he "busted myths" by presenting the facts on Aboriginal taxation, housing, and education.

Mareike **Neuhaus** specializes in Indigenous literatures of North America and Canadian literature. She is the author of *"That's Raven Talk": Holophrastic Readings of Contemporary Indigenous Literatures*.

Angela **Van Essen** is a PhD student in the English and Film Studies department at the University of Alberta. She has been studying nêhiyawêwin (the Cree language) for the past three years and plans to write her dissertation on bilingual Cree-English poetry. She teaches junior English courses at The King's University College and the University of Alberta in Edmonton. She also writes poetry.

K. J. **Verwaayen** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research at Western University. She has published articles on Isabella Valancy Crawford, Margaret Atwood, Anne Michaels, Nicole Brossard, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman in *Feminist Studies in English Literature*, *Canadian Poetry*, *Open Letter*, and *Essays on Canadian Writing*, among others.

Sylvie **Vranckx** holds an undergraduate degree in Germanic Languages and Literatures from Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) and a Master of Arts in English from the University of British Columbia. She is currently an F.R.S.-FNRS Research Fellow at ULB, where she is working on a dissertation titled "'Colonization Is Such a Personal Process': Historical Trauma, Aboriginal Resilience, and Community Empowerment in Native Canadian Literatures, 1985-2010" under the supervision of Dr. Marc Maufort. She also recently contributed to editing Dorothy Figueira and Marc Maufort's *Theatres in the Round: Multi-Ethnic, Indigenous, and Intertextual Dialogues in Drama* (2011).

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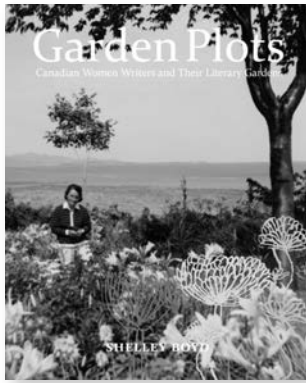

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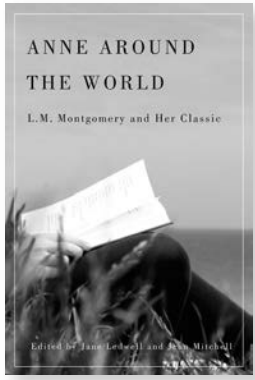

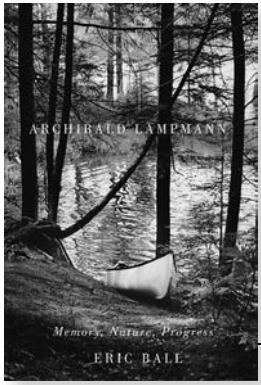

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