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Editorial

How Anarchist is *Canadian Literature*?

Margery Fee

In November, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the year of our founding editor's birth (see canlit.ca for more). Of course, George Woodcock's life work consisted of far more than putting out seventy-three issues of a quarterly critical journal between 1959 and 1977. Alan Twigg's remarks at the celebration focused on the remarkable success of the non-profit aid organizations founded by him and his wife Inge, for example. What interests me here, however, is how the journal is still shaped by his commitments. Somehow, I just never get around to reading all the back issues of the journal. What I'm basing my remarks on, then, is what has come down to me from working as an associate editor and editor, and reading here and there about its history.

W. H. New, Woodcock's successor, spoke at the celebration about how Woodcock wrote every day, pounding away on a typewriter. He was a professional rather than a scholarly writer, a British "man of letters" (Potter 153). He never got a degree, refusing his grandfather's offer to send him to Cambridge because it was conditional on his becoming an Anglican clergyman (Fetherling 7). These facts explain the journal's dedication to a general as well as an academic readership. Woodcock's first editorial made this position clear:

> Proust's Madame Verdurin thought that the ideal hospitality was that which restricted itself to the exclusiveness of the "little clan." *Canadian Literature* seeks to establish no clan, little or large. It will not adopt a narrowly academic approach, nor will it try to restrict its pages to any school of criticism or any class of writers.

> It is published by a university, but many of its present and future contributors live and work outside academic circles, and long may they continue to do so, for the independent men and women of letters are the solid core of any mature literature.

Despite his public persona as a slightly rumpled, tweedy academic, Woodcock was an anarchist, a pacifist anarchist, I hasten to add, rather than the stereotypical bomb-thrower. It is sometimes difficult to see how this perspective might still affect the journal. His experience as a editor came from founding and editing *Now,* a literary magazine that ran from 1940 to 1947, in its heyday selling as many as 3000 copies, mostly from London newsstands. It was intended for "young writers and . . . writers who went against the grain of the times: pacifists, anarchists, dissident socialists" (qtd. in Fetherling 23). Through this journal, he became connected to a group of like-minded writers, most famously George Orwell, about whom he wrote in *A Crystal Spirit* (1966). One of Woodcock's most translated and important books is *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, published by Penguin in 1963. Anarchism is characterized by a "denial of rigid ideology, bureaucracy and hierarchy," a stance which makes it resilient in the face of change (Fetherling 100). This explains Woodcock's refusal to found a clan. He came to see anarchism not as an attainable political goal so much as a philosophical perspective, "a restorative doctrine, telling us that the means by which we can create a free society are already there in the manifestations of mutual aid existing in the world around us" (qtd. in Fetherling 98-100). Journals, with their dependence on volunteer labour, can be seen as nodes in such a network of mutual aid in thinking about important intellectual and cultural issues.

Woodcock's optimistic belief in the ability of human beings to help each other without the intervention of the state explains his editorial stance—"unflappable and infinitely patient helper"—and his practice, as George Fetherling describes it:

> He was not the sort of editor, a kind he himself must have encountered on scores of occasions, who dismissed outside ideas out of hand, believing that only those generated in-house could contribute to the realization of some secret overall design, which only the editor was in a position to see and understand. On the contrary, a rejection by Woodcock almost always carried with it an assignment to do something else instead, while an acceptance was an implicit solicitation for further ideas. (93)

I certainly experienced this tradition when my first submission to *Canadian Literature* was kindly rejected by Bill New, not because of any weakness in the argument, apparently, but because the journal had just published another

similar article on the same topic. (Of course, when I read it, I realized it was a much better article than mine, alas.) From reading old files of letters stashed under my desk with a view to culling, I also realize that a myth of a giant backlog was constructed to turn back material that didn't meet the standards without hurt feelings. Of course, some might see this as cowardly dodging, but many submissions we get are from graduate students, for whom even the gentlest of rejections is a blow and who have a lifetime of writing ahead of them. Not surprisingly, Woodcock's maxim was, "Nurture the positive trends" (Ward 204).

Woodcock's anarchism, then, explains the journal's eclecticism and its policy of editorial openness. However, the journal's title did limit its range to writing on Canadian literary matters. As Bill New said at the celebration, in the early days, some wits described the journal's name as an oxymoron. But it has also been seen as an answer to a question put by the Massey Report of 1951: "IS THERE A NATIONAL LITERATURE?" (qtd. in Potter 222-23). Although time has certainly answered this question affirmatively, Woodcock did not share the anxious nationalism that impelled the question, as his 1972 article "A Plea for the Anti-Nation" makes clear. In fact, Woodcock's anarchism was seen as near treasonous by some nationalists, notably Robin Mathews, who successfully campaigned for a Canadians-first hiring policy at Canadian universities. For him, American professors such as Warren Tallman (whose influential essay "Wolf in the Snow" appeared in issues five and six of the journal) were corrupting the young by exposing them to American ideas and attitudes. These young were exemplified by the student poets who founded and published in *TISH* (1961-69), including Frank Davey, George Bowering, Fred Wah, and Daphne Marlatt. For the Marxist Mathews, "anarchist" was a synonym for "American individualist imperialist" (see Dart). At least Woodcock could not be accused of being American, since he was born in Winnipeg (his family returned to England while he was still an infant). It is fair to say that his political and literary attitudes were formed in Britain, well before he returned to Canada aged thirty-six, but he made an odd sort of imperialist, since he spent World War II as a conscientious objector, dividing his time between working on the land and writing.

That is not to say that his British experience always applied well to Canada. The community of "independent men and women of letters" that Woodcock referred to so positively in his first editorial never got a secure toehold in Canada, colonized as it always has been by cheap book and magazine publications imported from the US and the UK. Woodcock himself relied

on his British agents and connections for much of his income (he was paid a half-salary for editing the journal after 1966). Competing in the literary market in Canada—a small population spread over a large distance—has always meant competing with the best of writing from the US and Britain. (Quebec's experience with French publications has been similar.) Now major publishers such as Vancouver's Douglas & McIntyre are going out of business and Canadian bookshops are closing as the result of e-publishing and internet book sales. The result of this ongoing economic stress has been an unfortunate narrowing of perspectives on literature in Canada and the resort to simplistic forms of nationalism as a marketing strategy.

Dependence on state subsidies, the solution found to the problem of a structurally feeble cultural sector by the Massey Report, has become a normal state of affairs for most Canadian cultural producers. For an anarchist, this situation is at best a necessary evil. And given the federal government has announced that it will soon cut all support for international Canadian studies programs, in place for the past forty years, we will soon have to see how mutual support works instead. In *Strange Bedfellows: The State and the Arts in Canada* (1983), Woodcock points to the continuing poverty of most artists, noting two dangers of their reliance even on the small amount of state support they got. The first was "of the arts becoming increasingly the servants of the state" and the other "of artists becoming victims of the profit motive" (18-19). He points out that the apparent neutrality of arm's-length peer review becomes a problem when bureaucrats choose "safe" establishment figures as the reviewers. Are the peers really peers or are they conservative gatekeepers? And how can writers and other artists devote themselves to their art when they have access only to scarce competitive grants? He proposes several solutions that do not involve providing grants up front (as the Canada Council does), but that reward writers for what they have written (the Public Lending Right, based on the number of works held in libraries); artists for what they have created (*droit de suite*, or a share of profits made on sales of works after the first one); and purchase assistance (for the purchase of papers and works of art by libraries and other state-supported institutions). Notably, one of the aid associations he and his wife founded supports young writers in need (Fetherling 199). In other words, Woodcock kept a sharp eye on the state hand that fed artists and their projects, even though, as a pacifist, he did not bite it. But a constant concern about where bureaucratic "reason" might lead animated his writing about how best to sustain the arts and intellectual life.

In one of my editorials, "Beyond Boomer Nationalism" (*Canadian Literature* 206), I considered the idea that the name of the journal might have moved from manifesto to straitjacket. The straitjacket is the idea that the modifier "Canadian" entails that all articles will focus on what makes Canadian literature distinctive, rather than seeing the word "Canadian" more neutrally—at least in the first instance—as simply meaning literature written by Canadians. I have received at least one peer review report that noted that the Canadian novel under consideration could well have been replaced by a similar British or an American novel—and that therefore, the article wasn't suitable for *Canadian Literature*. Woodcock certainly didn't see things this way. If we rely on a nationalist framework to limit our selections, the journal is in trouble because this approach—however valid—excludes many others, particularly the formal and theoretical ones. This is the point of Frank Davey's "Surviving the Paraphrase," published in *Canadian Literature* in 1976. This broad perspective, although it shouldn't mean critical airbrushing of the relevant local, regional, and national context, releases authors from being seen from only one point of view, one that incessantly asks, "How Canadian are they?"

Nowadays, the journal is no longer the only or even the most obvious outlet for many articles about Canadian writers. This is a welcome development since Canadian writers are also world writers, whose concerns are relevant to many different audiences. Woodcock's Britishness—anarchist or not—gave him a broad perspective that was, in 1959, prescient. But his anarchist interests in the local and in pacifism led to a focus on Indigenous peoples and pacifist religious groups that were unusual at the time for most Canadians—witness his *Ravens and Prophets: An Account of Journeys in British Columbia, Alaska, and Alberta* (1952), his and Ivan Avakumovic's *The Doukhobors* (1968), and his *Gabriel Dumont: The Metis Chief and His Lost World* (1975). Interestingly, Rudy Wiebe, a Mennonite, was another to pursue such interests in pacifism and in small self-sufficient peoples early on, at a time when the focus of most media ignored the history of the colonization of Indigenous peoples while locking into a Cold War patriotism. Anarchism can be seen as an antidote to the blind spots of a nationalist—or indeed, of any narrow perspective.

When I was interviewed for the position of editor, one question I was asked was how I planned "to put my mark" on the journal. Even then I realized that the days of a solo editor "marking" a journal were severely constrained by peer review on the one hand and critical fashion on the other. The main ways for editors to improve and broaden journal contributions

are encouraging submissions from good scholars, choosing the most expert peer reviewers, and putting in a lot of copy-editing time. (This work is the "added value" that means online self-publishing is unlikely to replace journals, whether electronic or print.) The journal always had an informal peer-review process, generally using the expertise in-house or at UBC; by the time Eva-Marie Kröller took over as editor in 1995, one major funder, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), had begun to press for more formal processes. As Laura Potter points out, "The peer-review process challenged *Canadian Literature's* longstanding commitment to a general readership" (155). Where this commitment most obviously continues is in the publication of poems in every issue, in the woodcuts by George Kuthan that adorn its open spaces, in the publication of interviews and author's accounts of their craft along with scholarly articles, and in the online book reviews.

Reflecting the ways in which articles now are disseminated electronically, SSHRC has recently shifted from funding journals based on numbers of subscribers and good management to funding them specifically for publishing peer-reviewed scholarly articles, reflecting this agency's mandate to fund scholarly research. In order to get the same amount of funding as in the past, we have had to increase the number of articles we publish from twenty to twenty-four a year, which entails either accepting more from the same submission pool (and lowering standards) or getting more submissions. The latter choice (the only one possible!) has required us to market our journal not only to subscribers (general readers or not), but also to researchers. One way we have worked to do this is with an electronic submissions system. But thinking of Woodcock, I realize that, in fact, we have revised our procedures to suit SSHRC. And SSHRC bases its procedures primarily on social science models, where the solo article is the chief currency. However, the humanities are "book cultures," which embody a slower and less presentist form of scholarship. What SSHRC has left in our hands—at least for now—is the definition of an article (which is why some interviews and "writer's craft" pieces are now peer-reviewed) and who reviews what. SSHRC doesn't really care whether we publish poems or reviews (although the latter are the lifeblood of a book culture), since all they are funding is peer-reviewed scholarly articles.

Some might argue that this focus on peer-reviewed articles is a good thing. Lorraine Weir's criticism of the journal in 1986 was that it supported what she called "Kerrisdale values," values that failed to challenge the

complacency of its readers. She talks of "*Can.Lit.*'s problem of split identity: on the one hand, a magazine for anyone interested in Canadian culture; on the other, an academic journal funded by a university and publishing essays almost exclusively by academics" (5-6). Her view was that general readers were well-served by magazines; what was needed, she felt, were more specialized academic journals. The journal's commitment to general readers entailed a failure to present theoretically sophisticated articles that of necessity used difficult language: "Neither Leavis nor Orwell (nor, for that matter, Matthew Arnold) is adequate any longer to the task of dealing competently with the complexities of contemporary theoretical and literary debate. Adherence to Kerrisdale values and neo-Aristotelian essay conventions render the writer singularly unfitted to the task of thinking about contemporary writing in Canada or anywhere else" (3). Laurie Ricou, then the Associate Editor, replies, "No, I think the split or multiple identity is what is needed. Now, especially, when we recognize that 'there isn't *one*,' that Canadian literature and theory are plural" (6). Weir had, in fact, given a nod to Woodcock's politics, saying that the journal had been "founded to counter" dominant values. However, I think she misses Woodcock's mistrust of the limitations that her embrace of theory might entail, which is reflected in his desire to involve non-specialist general readers and creative writers in the life of the journal from the outset. Certainly this debate (held over one hundred issues ago) raises questions about where theory has travelled and whether *Canadian Literature* has attracted theoretically sophisticated articles. One way of judging this might be by reading *From a Speaking Place: Writings from the First Fifty Years of* Canadian Literature (Ronsdale, 2009), an anthology of the journal's best and most representative writing. However, I have a few more points to make about how we have recently come to appreciate *Canadian Literature*'s eclectic—anarchist—tradition.

When we put most of our back issues up for free download on our website in 2009, we could tell that many people were accessing them from many countries whose libraries did not hold print or electronic subscriptions (yes, we have fans in Burkina Faso). Unfortunately, we can't tell what these readers make of the material they download. We decided that the journal should do more to promote these issues, still a record of the history of Canadian literature and still useful in understanding it. We are now developing *CanLit Guides*, a teaching and learning resource that is aimed at first- and second-year students in Canadian literature courses. Funded by UBC's Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund, the guides draw heavily on

the poetry published in these issues, as well as directing students to critical articles, sometimes to several articles with differing viewpoints. Without the consistently eclectic approach of the journal, this project would be considerably less practical. We have one guide online that Laura Moss, one of our associate editors, and Mike Borkent, one of our graduate researchers, have been testing out in classrooms last term, to very positive response. I think that Woodcock would have been pleased that someone in Burkina Faso might be reading the journal without charge, but also pleased that what once might have been seen as dead issues are now being revitalized for a new purpose, one that allows us to continue international outreach despite cuts to state support for the development of international curriculum in Canadian literature. The guides are at canlitguides.com.

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M. Travis Lane

Cenote

The title scrolls: the shadow of a plane,
wings slant: a blue eye on knot green,
a lid of silver, a deep pond,
an entrance into an underworld.

Cenote: a thumb hole in earth's crust,
a labyrinth, a serpent of blue water threading sea
through limestone to this button-hole,
this back door to a mangrove swamp
where the red-throated frigate birds
soar over the beach like water-flies.

Back here, in the forest, photographers,
trucks bumping over the ant-scoured trails
beneath the dark lianas, ferns, and spines,
great hulking roots like mastodons,
deliver the diver with her cord,
her needle for the water's eye.

Her errand is the rainbow come around,
a kind of fine embroidery
for which she is the needle, pulse,
or like the figures of a prayer.

Descending into the ancestors,
her neck, extended, is a probe
into the fluid mother's lap,
a serpent herself, or a plumed bird,
a worm, a vein, a ligament.
It gathers her like a sacrament.

Germaine Warkentin

"The Age of Frye"
Dissecting the *Anatomy of Criticism*, 1957–1966

On April 30, 1957, Benjamin F. Houston of Princeton University Press wrote to Northrop Frye in Toronto that the printing of his *Anatomy of Criticism* was almost finished, and the book would be published on May 6.[1] On September 7, 1965, the English Institute, then at Columbia University, opened its first conference on a single—indeed, living—writer, and the subject was "Northrop Frye in Modern Criticism"; selected essays from the conference would be published in 1966. These dates bracket a phenomenon with little precedent in theorizing about literature. Within eight years, a Canadian professor whose first major work, *Fearful Symmetry* (1947), was in that standard academic genre, the book on a single author, had made himself an international phenomenon by appropriating the whole of literature as his subject. Northrop Frye had moved from pastoral to epic.

In the ensuing five decades, the critical climate has sometimes proved icy for the Wizard of the North, yet Frye has retained an audience: the *Anatomy* continues to sell well and has never been out of print.[2] Frye remains one of the most cited figures in humanities research; his *Collected Works*, including his revelatory unpublished notebooks, have been edited in thirty volumes, and in 2012 the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, where his first academic article had appeared in 1942, issued a gathering of fresh new articles reflecting on his criticism, *The Future of Northrop Frye: Centennial Perspectives*. But what about the *earliest* critics of the *Anatomy of Criticism*? What do they tell us about criticism as practised in the academy at the moment when Frye challenged it fifty-five years ago? The moment is important, for the early reviewers of the *Anatomy* were shortly to be challenged even more arrestingly

than they had been by Frye. On October 21, 1966, just as the essays from the Frye symposium were published, Jacques Derrida gave his famous paper "Le structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines" during a conference at Johns Hopkins. Today, tracing the earliest responses to Frye's monumental work provides us not only with a micro-history of that moment, but a chance to engage in the very debate itself.

In 1957, the impact of continental critical theory had yet to be felt in Anglo-America, but after 1966, Derrida would become the most influential of the generation of French critics Hélène Cixous called "les Incorruptibles," among them Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Paul de Man, Emmanuel Levinas, and Gilles Deleuze.[3] The responses of most early reviewers of the *Anatomy* make it evident why their well-established critical community was vulnerable to the Incorruptibles, and few of them predict the direction criticism would take under the influence of post-structuralism. As for Frye, he rarely allowed himself to be entangled in controversy over the *Anatomy*.[4] "From the very start," writes John Ayre, "he was prepared to let the book go its own way" (262). "It is only those who have embarked on some critical path," Frye wrote in 1971, "who are living in the history of their time" (*"Critical Path" and Other Writings* 157; *Collected Works* (*CW*) 27:108). He had chosen his critical path, and it did not lead to New Haven, London, or Paris.

The *Anatomy* on the Dissecting Table

In the 1950s, journal reviews of each other's books provided the chief arena in which academics jostled for primacy with their colleagues, a space partly taken over today by the vigorous growth of specialist conferences (the English Institute was an early example) and international literary journalism. In 1957, Frye was already an experienced reviewer himself, writing in many of the journals to which Princeton would send the *Anatomy*.[5] His first book had been generally praised, indeed, was so well-known that reviewers of his second could not resist in-jokes about the "fearful symmetry" of Frye's critical system; clearly, this was a group in conversation with each other. An accident of book history limited the conversation, however, for Princeton seems to have sent very few copies to Canadian review media, even though *Fearful Symmetry* had been widely and generously reviewed north of the border.[6]

Frye's first reviewers were actually the two external readers for Princeton. In accepting the book, which he had been angling to publish for several years, Houston warned, "You are aware, I am sure, that this book is not going to meet with unqualified praise";[7] though it is doubtful he expected

anything like Philip Hallie's later outburst in the *Partisan Review*: "It seems plain that Frye's 'supreme system' cannot be taught or learned, let alone further developed, because it is made up of impenetrable paradox, profound incoherence, and a bold but ultimately arbitrary disregard for the facts of literary experience" (658). Princeton's readers had been enthusiastic, yet as Douglas Bush wrote (anonymously), "It is not at all clear, when one has finished the book what the new instrument is or what the critic's role is going to be."[8] He recommended a synthesizing conclusion, and Frye obliged. The other reader (name unrecorded) asked for a glossary, and this too was forthcoming. Evidently, both commentators were feeling around uneasily for routes through an unfamiliar critical landscape.

A similar unease characterized the critical Sanhedrin that addressed the book in the following months; the many American reviewers included Hazard Adams (twice), Robert M. Adams, Harold Bloom, Cleanth Brooks, Kenneth Burke, and David Daiches. In England, there were at least four, including an important one by Frank Kermode in the *Review of English Studies*. In Canada, there were only the poet and critic Eli Mandel in the *Canadian Forum*, the Coleridge scholar George Whalley in the *Tamarack Review*, and Frye's old friend, philologist Margaret (Roseborough) Stobie in the *Winnipeg Free Press*; the long assessment in the *University of Toronto Quarterly* was by an American, M. H. Abrams. Most of the reviewers were critics of substantial or rising reputation, representative of their times and more or less of Frye's generation. Most of them belonged to the audience Frye, as his contemporary letters, diaries, and notebooks attest, had been addressing since the late 1940s: American academic critics and, to a lesser degree, their English cousins. As a young man, Frye took a healthy interest in his professional reputation and career path,[9] and though by 1957 he was already sensing that his real audience was a more general one, these were the colleagues he regarded as his peers, and who had been prepared by his previous work to assess the book.

What did their reviews reveal about the critical ideas of the august group that first encountered the *Anatomy*? Almost all of them, despite troubled reservations, acknowledged how striking the book was; David Daiches wrote,

> This is a brilliant and provocative book—brilliant because it is an original, learned, and witty introduction to "a synoptic view of the scope, theory, principles, and techniques of literary criticism," the product of fresh and hard thinking; provocative because its classifications, categories, terminology, and encyclopedic cross-referencing constitute a challenge to all modern ways of thinking about criticism known to this reviewer. (69)

Kenneth Burke, however, took no risks, writing amiably, "With this author, new slants on things come easy, urgently, with a rush—and the best policy for the reader is to relax and enjoy them" (324). Two decades later, A. Walton Litz would observe that the *Anatomy* was "the first great work of English or American literary criticism not produced by a practicing artist" (66). He could not have known that Frye's diaries, prayers, sermons, and unpublished fiction—above all the coruscating glee and wicked self-criticism of the notebooks—have since revealed the strong creative drive behind both his exfoliating schemas and his witty, demotic prose.[10] In 1958, Frank Kermode sensed this drive, though it made him sarcastic: "It would be reasonable to treat this as a work of criticism which has turned into literature, for it is centripetal, autonomous, and ethical without I think being useful" (312). Frye, it appears, was writing like a Sidney, a Shelley, a Poe, but as events transpired, his audience was expecting a guidebook to their accepted verities.

Few of the Sanhedrin could figure out how a theory like Frye's enabled them to say why they enjoyed literature, perhaps a just complaint in 1957, when Frye's many volumes of essays and lectures, with their genial spirit and wealth of practical criticism, had yet to appear. Nor did it help explain why, despite their massive reservations, they enjoyed reading Frye so much, because with one or two exceptions they certainly did. W. K. Wimsatt, even as he called Frye's criticism a "verbal shell game," still praised the speed and energy of his style, and "its freedom and swash and slash" (84). George Whalley too recognized the virtuosity of Frye's prose, though marking what he thought were its vices as well: "a sustained posture of unhesitating authority, a persistent tone of irony, the use of a subtle rhetoric, a habit of clearing the ground by the use of invective" ("Fry's" 96). Yet the poet Hilary Corke, writing in *Encounter,* thought Frye brought criticism startlingly alive: his prose was "sharp, spare, clear, precise, flexible, accurate without loss of wit. Indeed, I even laughed aloud on a large number of occasions (and how often can a critical work make one do that?)" (80).

Though they hardly spoke with a single voice, most of the Sanhedrin were sure they knew what literature was, and what reading was about. Despite admitting that "the text is often brilliant with wit and penetrating in observation" ([Review] 319), Frank Kermode thought the whole theory fundamentally mendacious, and wrote crushingly that for Frye, "questions of fact or truth are subordinate to the primary aim of producing a structure of words for its own sake. . . . poetry is always ironical because it never means what it says" (320). For M. H. Abrams, the problem was a kind of

mad consistency: "In its fearful symmetry Frye's critical system repeatedly raises the question: to what extent are the inevitable sequences of repetitions, variations, parallels and antitypes genuine discoveries, and to what extent are they artifacts of the conceptual scheme?" (191-92). Harold Bloom's three brief pages in the *Yale Review* welcomed Frye as the initiator of an entirely new poetics, but Bloom was almost alone, and as we shall see, he would later find himself struggling with the implications of that poetics. Most of the reviewers took refuge among issues more immediate to them at the time: myth criticism, the problematic term "science," the role of evaluation in literary study, and the historical and personal contexts in which they believed literature ought to be read and analyzed.

Myth criticism was the easiest to discuss and the hardest to dismiss; it had a long history, an established canon of authors, and a familiar subject-matter. But accepting Frye's concept of the archetype was difficult, because with it came the synoptic system Abrams objected to: "The whole is reminiscent of the medieval encyclopedic tables designed to comprehend the *omne scibile* [all that can be known]. . . . the reader looks for an appendix that will open out into a square yard of tabular diagram" (191). Despite his amazement at the ambition of the whole, Daiches thought Frye's schematizing profoundly reductive, and Kermode dismissed it as large-scale primitivizing. Though very skeptical, R. M. Adams accepted Frye's parallels as a necessary aspect of categorization and description, but concluded "none of them have anything to do with making *The Charterhouse* [*of Parma*] the kind of novel it is" (615). Frye's invitation to "stand back" in order to see the structure of the whole had not helped, perhaps because a generation of critics trained on and teaching within the framework of the "New Criticism" (an approach blithely ignored in the English Department at Toronto) resisted raising their eyes from the text itself. When they did, they found the likenesses between Hermione, Florimel, Esther Summerson, and Lorna Doone—Frye saw them as Proserpine figures—implausible, particularly in view of his apparent indifference to any ordinarily causal explanation of the origins of the archetype. Abrams finally dismissed Frye's dextrous analogies as mere "wit criticism" (196).

Even those at ease with the concept of myth resisted the kind of rigour that Frye insisted was essential to a mythopoeic approach. In his 1951 essay "The Archetypes of Literature," Frye had naively used the term "science," and expecting trouble when the essay gained quick renown, included in the *Anatomy* the caveat, "If there are any readers for whom the word 'scientific' conveys emotional overtones of unimaginative barbarism, they may substitute

'systematic' or 'progressive' instead" (*CW* 22:9; *Anatomy* 1957:7-8). Most rejected Frye's insistence that the criticism he was advocating merely stood in relation to fiction and poetry as the science of physics stands in relation to the nature it studies. Those who did grasp the analogy found it distasteful; for most of them the word "science" required a set of epistemological absolutes at odds with the actual experience of literature. They viewed reading as epistemologically unproblematic; ironically, they employed the rationalistic terms of science—evidence, demonstration, proof—to say so. R. M. Adams wrote, "The fact that infinite order can be imagined is no evidence that it exists," and referred confidently to "the rules of literary evidence" (617, 618).

The concern about criticism as a "science" was closely linked to puzzlement over Frye's rejection of what, for them, was the heart of literary criticism: its evaluative function. Cleanth Brooks, while warmly praising Frye's system of archetypes as both inclusive and useful, still insisted that "we can never learn enough to do without a criticism that makes evaluative judgment" (173). Years later, Frye would privately confess that his reluctance to assign value partly originated in his encounter with the snobbery of "taste" among his fellow academics at Toronto in the 1940s and 50s.[11] There was an element of that snobbery in a couple of the reviews; the *Times Literary Supplement*, for example, deployed the usual smug quotation from "Mr. Eliot" (Cox 2). Nevertheless Frye, Hazard Adams thought, had raised the epistemological stakes. In one of the most acute reviews the *Anatomy* received, Adams mused that if we know the difference between good and bad art, "Some value-judgments must not be examples of mere taste; only their expression is. We do know the difference between good and bad, and there must be some way we know. And the way we know might be described, even though specific efforts at evaluation might remain merely assertions." For him, Frye's system thus led "us as close as criticism probably can to a grasp, if not a formulation, of value" ([Review] 534). If asked, the original reviewers would probably have described evaluative criticism as progressing towards some goal. As Kermode wrote, Frye "rejects as fallacious all doctrines of cultural decline, but equally rejects all possibility of development in the arts; the best that can be done has already been done, though it may be repeated. What can be steadily improved is the understanding of the arts, and so the critic's task," he concluded with derision, "is associated with the ultimate purpose of civilization" (322).

Shocked by what they believed was Frye's lack of interest in the actual experience of reading, his reviewers had almost nothing to say about his

evident enjoyment of the texts he referred to. Though to disagree with a work of such momentum seemed to him almost physically painful, Kermode wrote that the *Anatomy* "fails, or refuses, to convey anything of what might be called the personal presence of any of the works discussed" (318). R. G. Cox, writing in the *Times Literary Supplement*, understood many of Frye's goals (no determinism, no reductionism, no intentional fallacy, no abstraction of content from form, no false historicism) but he still had obstinate doubts: "What is wanted is the constant check of experience," so that theory would not become an end in itself (82). And despite their insistence on the need to take experience into account, none of Frye's early reviewers—all English-speakers reading in a specific time and place—applied this advice critically to themselves, except for Harold Bloom. Later a seasoned critic with growing reservations about Frye, Bloom recalled at least one reason for his original enthusiastic response to the *Anatomy*: "As a young scholar starting to teach at Yale in the mid-fifties, I welcomed Frye as a sage who, unlike most of the Yale faculty in literary study, did not believe that T. S. Eliot was Christ's vicar on earth" (Bloom, Foreword, viii).

Most of the reviewers were generous readers, ready to follow if they could, but too-quick classification of Frye as yet another Aristotelian, the dead weight of literary fashion (the example of Arnold, the influence of the Symbolists, the ever-present "Mr. Eliot"), elitist distaste for the blending of high and popular culture, the conviction that any firmly articulated structure inevitably meant stifling closure, and a simplistic concept of the nature of evidence and proof, all were heavy baggage. The *Anatomy*'s reception in Canada, with one exception, was no different, but it had intellectual and social consequences Frye did not have to confront elsewhere.

The *Anatomy* on Native Ground

The sparse reviews by Canadians in Canadian journals were from a philologist, a major scholar of the Romantic period, and a practising poet and critic, all three well-known to Frye. The *Winnipeg Free Press* allowed Margaret Stobie to review her old friend's book; she may well have had to use her own copy. Stobie, who had taught Frye his Anglo-Saxon when they were fellow students, possessed all the rigour of her discipline. Within the limited space available, "Mr. Fry [sic] Stands Well Back" attacked the *Anatomy*'s "lack of proportion" (43) and pointed crisply to Frye's inability to escape value judgments. George Whalley wrote at greater length in the leading Toronto literary journal the *Tamarack Review*,[12] surveying with scrupulous fairness the book's central

ideas—the assumption of total coherence, the search for an inductive approach—but objecting to both of them. Though generously praising various features of the book, he attacked Frye's advocacy of scientific method, which, like his fellow reviewers, Whalley took very literally: "This book does not impress one with the scientific possibilities of criticism. . . . The *Anatomy* is not using scientific method, it is using 'science' as a suggestive analogy" (98, 100). Furthermore, Frye seemed to want to destroy all relationship between literature and experience, which for Whalley was where value judgments, for good or ill, took place. "Without value-judgment there can be no sense of fact in criticism, no sense of relevance; and I had always supposed that one of the main educative virtues of criticism was in the refinement of value-judgments" (100). In one of the most closely reasoned attacks on Frye's rejection of the evaluative, Whalley linked fact, relevance, and educative value in a single process, one that this "perverse, ingenious, desolate" (101) theory seemed to be setting aside. But "refinement" was not the educative value Frye, with his gargantuan appetite for every kind of literature high and low, had in mind.

However, for the poet Eli Mandel in the *Canadian Forum* (the left-wing monthly Frye had once edited),[13] the *Anatomy* looked to the future of criticism: "The concern of a writer with the foundations of his subject seems curiously modern, and criticism of criticism has a contemporary ring to it," and "Throughout the four essays one is constantly being jolted into new awareness by Professor Frye's individual, precise use of words and by the dazzling (I had almost said fearful) symmetry of his argument" (128). Acknowledging that one of the work's two central themes was the conventional formality of art, Mandel also pointed to the other—the centrality of the arts in civilization: "Ultimately what all archetypal criticism suggests is that if there can be an intelligible body of critical knowledge, there must be an intelligible form of literature, which in turn implies an intelligible form of nature" (129). Mandel had recognized the excitement of Frye's desire to see criticism as a whole. But here, as well as in a longer article in the same year, he indicated he was uncertain what lay ahead: "Whether [Frye's] work proclaims a real apocalypse in art or criticism, I do not know, but that it is accompanied by all the sounds of that wonderful time, there can be no doubt at all" (Mandel, "Toward a Theory" 66).

Yet it was the very tough-mindedness of Frye's insistence on seeing literature as a whole, and on the largest possible canvas, that led to the awkward position he occupied in Canadian criticism in subsequent decades. Despite his public stature in Canada from the 1960s onwards, students and readers

resented the ruthless verdict of Frye's "Conclusion" to the *Literary History of Canada* (1965) that "Canada has produced no author who is a classic in the sense of possessing a vision greater in kind than that of his best readers. . . . There is no Canadian writer of whom we can say what we can say of the world's major writers, that their readers can grow up inside their work without ever being aware of a circumference" (821; *CW* 12:340-1). Nevertheless, for young Canadian writers like Margaret Atwood, the possibilities implied by that kind of ambition were breathtaking, and they raised the stakes for every Canadian author who wanted to be taken seriously. The sharp upsurge in serious Canadian writing in the early sixties made Frye moderate his wording in the second edition of the *History* (1976), but it was too late; despite his position on the political left, during the 70s and 80s it was a struggle not to dismiss his vision as elitist, formalist, and out of step, first with the nationalistic goals of the new English-Canadian literature, and, subsequently, with the skepticism that arrived with post-structuralism.

The gnawing problem of his refusal to excuse provincialism in either Canadian writing or Canadian criticism ensured that at home, Frye could never be forgotten, whereas in the England and America of the post-structuralist decades he could be, and for a while, almost was. In 2006, reminiscing at eighty-seven about his life in criticism, Frank Kermode told John Sutherland, "The leading academic literary critics were, in those days, very famous people. Think, for example, of Northrop Frye. Frye's is now a name that you never hear mentioned but which was then everywhere" ("Ideas Interview"). In 1958, Hazard Adams had recognized that Frye's *Anatomy* marked some kind of turning point. Reviewing the book in *The American Scholar* along with new studies by several other members of the Sanhedrin, he ventured that "criticism . . . has arrived at one of those periodical moments of crisis. Where will it come from and where will it go, these writers seem to be asking" ("Criticism" 226). In the furious acceleration of all phases of learning in the 1950s, Adams detected the early senescence of the New Criticism. But unlike Eli Mandel, discovering an essential modernity in the book, Adams saw only a door closing: "Perhaps even what seems to many so unique and great a book as Frye's *Anatomy* . . . represents the completion rather than the beginning of an era that enjoyed its summer in the thirties and forties" (238).

The View from 1966

The English Institute's *Northrop Frye in Modern Criticism* (1966) shows four major critics reflecting on Frye's rise during the brief eight years that

had passed between the *Anatomy*'s publication and the conference of 1965. Frye's ideas had now been widely discussed and he had begun to publish the practical criticism of his later essays.[14] In his introduction, Murray Krieger referred to Frye without irony as "The Master," and he and Angus Fletcher both placed Frye in a wider and proto-theoretical scene. Krieger saw him as fundamentally a Romantic, resisting the neo-classicism of the then dominant modernists. Fletcher situated Frye as a Utopian historiographer, gathering the experience of the past into a single vision (62). W. K. Wimsatt wrote in profound opposition, but noted wryly that "the devil's advocate is not called in until the prospect of canonization is imminent" (75).

One essay, however, marks a definite divide between earliest reception and later commentary on the *Anatomy*: Geoffrey Hartman's "Ghostlier Demarcations," which approached Frye's work with greater insight, and consequently deeper questions, than anyone had so far done. The essay's reappearance in his influential *Beyond Formalism* (1970) had a long-lasting effect on the troubled understanding of Frye's work. Hartman accepted Frye's newly authoritative position in the world of criticism, but insisted that "its promise of mastery" also brought with it an "enormously expanded burden of sight" (109). "What must . . . be judged is not his comprehensiveness, which is extraordinary, or his intentions, which are the best since Matthew Arnold, but how well he has dealt with problems every literary critic faces whatever his attitude to systematic thought" (114): the need for philosophical rigour, a sense of cultural positioning, an awareness of historical particularity, and the assumption of responsibility both for close analysis and the give and take of contrary arguments. Restating the very conditions of practice for the serious critic, Hartman went farther than any of his colleagues: "Is there room in Frye's criticism—which has many chambers and not all opened—for that radical doubt, that innermost criticism which art brings to bear on itself? Or does his system circumvent the problematic character of verbal fictions?" (129). It was just such radical doubts that would occupy literary criticism for the next forty years.

In 1958, R. M. Adams had described Frye as "one of the strangest and most interesting literary minds in existence. . . . He is the most exciting critic around; I do not think he is capable of writing a page which does not offer some sort of intellectual reward. And yet his work seems to me wholly unsound." He saw that work as "engaged, like a good deal of other contemporary criticism on a search for conceptual unity at a level that can lead only to exaggerated, strained and confused interpretations of literary fact" (616). Unwittingly,

Adams was pointing to the essential epistemological problem of criticism for the next four decades: the relationship between the drive for explanatory coherence and the doubtful ontological status of that which is being explained. It was this relationship that would become the great subject of the Incorruptibles. In Derrida, it produced the concept of "freeplay" and the spreading skepticism characteristic among his followers. In Frye's middle years, however, it would lead to a social vision marked by interplay rather than freeplay: interplay between the myths of concern and freedom, conducted in a dialogue with the reader that took place—in the spirit of the original anatomist Robert Burton—in an elegantly perspicuous prose shot through with satirical glee.

The "Age of Frye" Revisited

Among the early reviewers the one most ready to see Frye in an entirely new framework had been Harold Bloom. In the *Yale Review*, he presented Frye not as the feeble representative of an era ending, nor the stern law-giver of the current dispensation, but as the undetermined "rough beast" of an approaching era of criticism, whatever that might be. Characteristically, Bloom saw Frye as a rebel against the criticism dominating the academy in the 1940s and 50s. Frye, he decided, was not an Arnoldian, but the intellectual heir of Ruskin, seeking, like him, a conceptual framework genuinely independent of the object of study. For Bloom, Frye's touchstone in Blake was the product of a fundamental empiricism, but one rooted in a total experience of literature. Alone among the early critics, he was alert to Frye's musicality, comparing him to the music historian Donald Tovey, at work on "a rational account of the structural principles of a western art in the context of its heritage" ("New Poetics" 131). His only reservation was that Frye had been too kind to the New Critics. "His very great book, which will be widely read and used, but mostly by critics under forty, will not much affect the dogmatism of the now Middle-aged Criticism" (133).

Unlike most of the other early reviewers, however, Bloom maintained a career-long engagement with the critic he has termed his heroic precursor, one that replicates the central theme of his own criticism, "the anxiety of influence." If in 1957 he described the *Anatomy* as a very great book, by 1976 he had severe reservations about *The Secular Scripture*. "There is always a shadow side to any critical virtue," he wrote, and Frye's shadow side is that "he assumes that each story or poem is always unified in itself, and that there is nothing particularly problematic about the way in which meaning is brought about, in any single text, by resisting the meaning of previous

works" ("Northrop Frye" 21). As with Hartman, it was this seeming absence of a sense of dialectic, of the vicissitudes of meaning, both of which are central to Bloom's own work, that seemed to limit Frye's vision of romance, and his criticism as well. In 2000, Bloom wrote the foreword to Princeton's reissue of the *Anatomy of Criticism*, and related how he fell in love with *Fearful Symmetry* as a freshman and absorbed the *Anatomy* "in ways I can no longer apprehend" (Foreword vii). Bloom eventually saw through Frye's (to him) frustrating tendency to reconcile differences, recognizing him as "in his own charming way, a very vicious ironist indeed" ("Interview" 81). In 1986, he had told Imre Salusinszky, "Northrop Frye does seem to me—for all my complaints about his idealization and his authentic Platonism and his authentic Christianity—a kind of Miltonic figure. He is certainly the largest and most crucial literary critic in the English language since the divine Walter and the divine Oscar: he is really that good" ("Interview" 79-80).

But like Kermode, Bloom eventually adopted the elegiac mode: "All this is now quaint; Frye and his opponents have been folded together, as Antique Modernists inundated by the counter-cultural flood of feminists, queer theorists, sub-Marxists, semioticians, and the ambitious disciples of Foucault, Lacan, Derrida, and other Parisian prophets. . . . Poetry, demystified, has been leveled" (Foreword viii). Elegiac, perhaps, but far from nostalgic: "universities, in my youth, were staffed mostly by an assemblage of know-nothing bigots, academic impostors, inchoate rhapsodes, and time-serving trimmers. . . . And yet literary study, in what I am prepared to call the Age of Frye, nevertheless flourished" (ix). "I am moved despite myself," he finally confesses, "when Frye writes as if we had all eternity to absorb the Great Code of Art" (xi).

What the "Rough Beast" Brought

Neither Frye nor the early reviewers of the *Anatomy* deserve to be "folded together as Antique Modernists." As Branko Gorjup recently wrote, "Frye's criticism was, paradoxically, a product of the central intellectual currents that shaped Modernist thought, while at the same time, disrupting it" (26). But in 1958, only Harold Bloom, Hazard Adams, and Eli Mandel were able to move outside the safe boundaries of criticism as the Sanhedrin understood them. Adams concluded that the *Anatomy of Criticism* marked the closing of a door to the past, but that it still looked to that past. Mandel found Frye's theorizing distinctly modern, though he was not yet able to define in what way it was modern. It fell to later observers to recognize in Frye neither the voice of an expiring modernism nor that of a critical dictator who could be

dismissed as simply *sui generis*, but the precursor of an entirely new phase in criticism.[15] In the face of cautions against making theory an end in itself, Frye for the first time, for this particular critical audience, had insisted on theory's rich possibilities. As for Frye himself, responding in 1966 to the essayists of *Northrop Frye in Modern Criticism*, he said of society's pressure towards conformity: "No one person, certainly not one critic, can kill this dragon who guards our word-hoard, but for some of us, at any rate, there can be no question of going back to our secluded Georgian quarters" ("Reflections" 146). Having chosen his critical path, Northrop Frye was fully engaged in living in the history of his time.

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NOTES

1 Northrop Frye Fonds, E. J. Pratt Library, Victoria University: 1988/61/1, BFH to NF, 30 Apr. 1957.
2 Royalty statements indicate that up to June 30, 2009, Princeton alone had sold 143,378 copies of *Anatomy of Criticism*, and there are other editions and translations. *Fearful Symmetry* still sells three hundred or more copies a year. (Personal communication, Jennifer McCann, Victoria College's Controller, 25 Jan. 2012).
3 Cixous is cited by Lawlor, "Jacques Derrida." I include additional names mentioned by Derrida in "The Last Interview."
4 Frye's (invited) response to the English Institute essays—he stayed away from the conference itself—is one of the few times he ever responded directly to his critics. See "Reflections in a Mirror," Krieger.
5 From the 1930s to the 1960s, Frye reviewed almost monthly for the *Canadian Forum,* but by 1950, he was also appearing in *Poetry*, the *Hudson Review*, the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, *Modern Language Notes*, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, *Philological Quarterly*, and others; see Denham, *Bibliography of His Published Writings*.
6 For a complete list of the reviews of the *Anatomy,* see Denham, *An Annotated Bibliography.* Careful research has not identified further Canadian reviews, and Princeton's list no longer exists. Possibly copies were sent to Canada but the book was left unreviewed; however, the extent of the silence would suggest otherwise.
7 Northrop Frye Fonds, E. J. Pratt Library, Victoria University: 1988/61/1, BFH to NF, 14 Oct. 1955.
8 Northrop Frye Fonds, E. J. Pratt Library, Victoria University: 1988/61/1, BFH to NF, 14 Oct. 1955.

9 See Ayre, particularly 202-08; Warkentin in Frye, *Educated Imagination*, 2006, xxv; and especially Frye's diaries of the period in *CW*, Vol. 8.
10 See Dolzani, "Blazing with Artifice," and his editions of various notebooks in *CW*, vols. 9, 15, 20, and 25.
11 Northrop Frye, personal communication, Apr. 1988.
12 Whalley also published a briefer, chiefly descriptive review in the English *Modern Language Review*, in which he lamented the *Anatomy*'s "lack of any informing theory of value, knowledge, truth and belief" (109).
13 Mandel has often been counted among the "mythopoeic" poets Frye was supposed to have influenced, but he was notoriously independent as poet and critic.
14 John Grant's checklist in Krieger lists seventy-four items discussing Frye's theoretical work between 1960 and 1966.
15 On Frye as innovator, Richard Stingle ("Northrop Frye") cites particularly A. Walton Litz, Ian Balfour, Daniel O'Hara, and Murray Krieger.

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M. Travis Lane

The Ogre's Yard

We were so small in that stone yard,
creeping as if our shadows scratched.
The barn, black keep, steamed silently
behind us as we ran. Away from it
the outer field, a blue head, mounted,
a dome of snow, stared down at us.
The frost-scorched cedars stretched toward us
where birds in their clenched stupor hung,
wind-shrouded. We ran, a centipede of print
across the page of moonlight. Open ground
was dangerous. But in the woods
the sonorous footsteps of huge beasts
lurked in the creaking of the trees.
We climbed the ice-brown armoured streams,
and found no paths, the maps
we hoped to follow damp, long
out-of-date, unclear.

Andrea King

Haunting Love in Anne Hébert's *Les fous de Bassan* and Mary Novik's *Conceit*

Though the two novels hail from different socio-historical and linguistic traditions, Québec author Anne Hébert's *Les fous de Bassan* (1982) and Canadian author Mary Novik's *Conceit* (2007) demonstrate striking similarities when it comes to their staging of haunting.[1] Hébert's novel—a keystone of the Québec literary canon—is of course the better known of the two works. Divided into six sections narrated by five different characters,[2] *Les fous de Bassan* recounts the events leading up to the murder of two adolescent cousins, Olivia and Nora Atkins, in the Protestant village of Griffin Creek in the summer of 1936. One of the sections is narrated by Olivia's ghost, whose "text" is signed "Olivia de la Haute Mer." This spectral Olivia inhabits an all-female oceanic realm, where the voices of her female ancestors caution her against voyaging back to Griffin Creek. The ghosts have good cause to warn her, for Griffin Creek is rife with violence towards women, of which the most obvious example is the 1936 murder. However, because Olivia is drawn to her cousin Stevens, the murderer who threw her body into the ocean, she returns repeatedly to that traumatic telluric space in search of him. While she claims not to find him ("the one I am seeking is no longer here" [149]),[3] Stevens himself indicates in his last letter to his friend Old Mic that he is indeed haunted by both Olivia and Nora.[4] Mary Novik's novel—published in 2007 to warm critical reception[5]—focuses primarily on the character of Pegge Donne, daughter of the Jacobean poet and Protestant clergyman John Donne. Pegge is haunted by the ghost of her mother, Ann, who died at thirty-three while giving birth to her twelfth child, and whose bitter ghost narrates a few first-person sections of the novel.

In these sections, Ann expresses her anger towards her husband with regard to the gendered, passive role he expected her to play in their relationship. Pegge herself also plays the role of the revenant in the novel, impersonating her mother in her relationships with her father, her unrequited love interest, Izaak Walton, and her husband, as well as in her literary endeavours.

Both Hébert's and Novik's novels portray female revenants who have suffered the violence of patriarchal relationships and whose intervention draws attention to flawed gender binaries. In both, the spectral desire of the female character is expressed through a poetic language that disrupts patriarchal discourse. Both novels also depict a daughter who is at once the agent and the object of haunting. Perhaps what is most interesting, however, is the important role that love plays in spectrality in the two novels. Indeed, Olivia and Pegge express a strong desire to experience love, and when its possibility is disrupted or destroyed by patriarchal discourse or practice, the feminine spectral apparition appears as though to highlight this loss.

As Julia Kristeva writes in *Tales of Love*, "The psyche is one open system connected to another, and only under these conditions is it renewable. If it lives, your psyche is in love" (15). Kristeva is describing a basic psychic need: the loving connection to the other. The love that nurtures the psyche, according to her theories, involves a "heterogeneous" process (15, 17), the destabilizing but enriching integration of the other into the self. This type of love is "a state of instability in which the individual is no longer indivisible and allows him [or her]self to become lost in the other, for the other" (4). For Kristeva, the stagnation of this love is analogous to death: "If [the psyche] is not in love, it is dead" (15). The haunting that Olivia and Pegge experience and enact is the flipside of this loving connection: a living death, love's shadowy underbelly. The open system to which Kristeva refers—the integration of other into self, and its correlative, the integration of self into other—is blocked by the fissure of inherited gendered psychic wounds that Olivia and Pegge either experience or to which they bear witness. In Olivia's case, the violence that pervades Griffin Creek will ultimately lead to her (literal/material) death, but this death will leave her in a state of suspended psychic animation. Indeed, it is in this ghostly state that she expresses her deep longing for the other, Stevens. As for Pegge, she hears the voice of her dead mother when she is most engrossed in a romanticized and therefore misogynistic vision of love, a vision that mirrors the relationships described in her father's poetry. In the case of both Olivia and Pegge, the heterogeneous love that Kristeva describes is foreclosed. This article will privilege the

figure of the daughter as medium and revenant in order to examine the complex relationship between love, gender, and haunting in the two novels, for regardless of Olivia's and Pegge's part in the ghostly encounter, in each instance the revenant is conjured or ignored, embodied or expelled, from within the damaged space of the couple.

Olivia: The Haunted Revenant[6]

Olivia de la Haute Mer—despite having suffered through rape and murder—is far from a vengeful ghost. On the contrary, she is plaintive, nostalgic. She is also full of desire, and it is this desire that hauls her up from the depths of the ocean (149), despite her female ancestors' warnings, and deposits her on the shore of the murder where she is confronted with her past. In this section of the novel, Olivia revisits a childhood moment spent with Stevens on the beach. The young Olivia is ebullient, "made for life, from the tips of her nails to the roots of her hair" (153), a description that stands in stark contrast to her later fear and cautiousness in the presence of men. The reconstruction establishes Stevens' character before he becomes violent and murderous: instead of thinking in terms of the possession and abjection of his female counterpart—as he will do when he grows older—Stevens is able to take joy in Olivia's presence and admire the sandcastles she has created. The encounter is characterized by sensuality, mutual happiness, and openness. "Who will be the first to shout with joy in the wind, amid the clamor of the sea birds?" Olivia wonders as she watches the scene unfold in her memory (153). Here the misogyny that Stevens demonstrates as an adult is entirely absent.[7] He is sensual, gentle, and curious with regard to the other:

> Now he is crouching in the sand before her. Looks closely at the sand castles. Looks closely at the little girl. Doesn't know which he admires more, the sand heaped up in tidy rows or the little girl herself, who has built it all. She is breathing against his shoulder, hiding behind her bangs. With his fingertips he grazes the little girl's cheek. The little girl's cheek is cool as a shadow. (153)

The omniscient point of view of the passage is worth noting: though the scene is recounted in the section of the novel entitled "Olivia de la Haute Mer," the point of view is not exclusively Olivia's: it shifts between first-person and third-person omniscient. Thus, the reader is privy not only to Olivia's (subjective) perception of the young Stevens, but also to the more objective view held by the narrator. This narrative detail is important, for it prevents the reader from assuming that Stevens' gentleness in the early years is pure projection on Olivia's part.

Olivia's longing for Stevens may come as a surprise to the reader—one would expect her to feel anger towards her murderer. Her feelings are explained, however, by the fact that Stevens was not always hateful and violent. As a ghost, Olivia mourns the loss of the boy she once knew. The scene on the beach also serves as an important turning point in the novel and a microcosm of the problematic gender dynamics that pervade Griffin Creek. Although it begins with a positive interaction between the two characters, the potential for love is quickly destroyed by paternal violence:[8] Stevens' father swoops down and shakes the boy like a tree in a storm (154) because he didn't respond to his father calling his name. This act of violence represents a point of rupture in Olivia's memory, the moment where the videotape begins to rewind itself in order to record new content: "Too many old images, colors, sounds . . . He whistled for him, like a dog. No, I won't tolerate it. Let us leave this shore. Let memories disappear in the sand . . . Flee. Rejoin the tide as it draws back to the deep water's highest point" (154). Male violence triggers Olivia's retreat into the protective realm of the feminine, but the above passage also demonstrates her ambivalence with regard to fleeing Stevens and Griffin Creek. The first few words ("Too many old images, colors, sounds") evoke her desire to relive the loving encounter with Stevens, and the first-person negation that follows ("No, I won't tolerate it") at once acts as an acknowledgement and a denial of the destruction of that love. Finally, the first-person plural imperative ("Let us leave this shore. Let memories disappear in the sand") signals Olivia's escape back into the collective, feminine aquatic space, but also reveals her sense of regret and loss, for this withdrawal marks the relinquishment of the possibility of a loving relationship with the other.

The mistreatment that the young Stevens endures on the beach is in fact part of a larger pattern of paternal abuse in the novel. When Olivia returns to Griffin Creek, she reconstructs not only the scenes in which Stevens plays a prominent role—thus betraying her desire to slip closer to him—but also those that suggest that her mother was mistreated by her father. Here the reader observes the same sort of voluntary amnesia[9] that marks Olivia's reaction to the episode on the beach. In one of these scenes, the teenaged Olivia discovers bruises on her mother's body, and the reader comes to understand that the father's violence is at the origin of these marks. Referring to these bruises, André Brochu has furthermore pointed out that the mother's mysterious death most likely occurred at the father's hand (183). However, although it is Olivia who, in her narrative, provides the details leading to this interpretation, she nonetheless seems to have

repressed the knowledge of this ultimate violence. Thus, when she examines the scenes from her past and thinks, "If I look carefully, . . . [t]he mystery of my mother's life and death will have no more secrets from me" (157), she is searching for a truth that has always been there before her, and to which she has voluntary blinded herself.

Throughout Olivia's narrative is threaded a tension between the lure of love and the knowledge that it will inevitably be rendered impossible by violence. The female ancestors express themselves at moments where the tension between these two forces is at its highest: Olivia's mnemonic slide towards Stevens causes the voices to grow increasingly insistent in their admonitions. I count five instances in Olivia's text of this kind of ghostly warning (160, 161, 163, 164, 165), in addition to the use of the spectral "nous" that blends the daughter's voice with that of the ancestral women (152, 154, 155, 161); in each case, the "nous" form is employed to indicate the urgent need to flee patriarchal violence. Neil Bishop describes this ancestral voice as that of a "*féminin*-féministe." According to Bishop, the voice speaks to "le refus, par les femmes, de la tendance sadique des hommes à leur endroit, cette attitude sexiste si manifeste chez Stevens" (126). Bishop's position is reinforced by the fact that the ancestral women defy certain gender stereotypes. Although they play traditional feminine roles (Olivia describes her female ancestors as "patient women, ironers, washerwomen, cooks, wives, pregnant, giving birth, mothers of the living and the dead" [159-160]), they are also "desiring and desired in the bitter wind" (160), that is to say, at once the subjects and objects of desire. Felicity Jones, Olivia's aptly named grandmother, is perhaps the best example of a "feminist" character in *Les fous de Bassan*, one whose inner life is rich and desire-filled. "Sharper than salt" (25), Felicity demonstrates her independence and self-sufficiency by spending each morning on the beach, radiantly content in her solitude. She is one of the many female ancestors whose counsel Olivia hears over the course of the narrative.

However, while the female ancestors certainly raise their collective voice and denounce the misogyny of the men of Griffin Creek, they do not propose any solutions to the relational problems that plague them, aside from a retreat into their exclusively feminine community:

> My mother and grandmothers moan in the wind, swear that they've warned me. I had only to flee before Stevens even gazed at me with his child's eyes. Those women talk drivel, keep repeating the same thing. Drops of rain on the water's surface, they sink into the black depths of the sea, counsel me henceforth to dwell there with them, to be obedient and not make use of the tide to return to Griffin Creek. (163)

According to the ancestors, the only possibility open to Olivia is an "obedient" escape into their own realm. Olivia's mother, on her deathbed, also asks her daughter to be obedient—in this case, she is referring to an attitude of self-effacement and domesticity ("she made me swear to be obedient and take care of the house" [156]), even though this is the very problem that has led to the mother's own demise. Not surprisingly, Olivia's efforts to follow her mother's advice leave her feeling secluded and controlled. While her father is "all taken up with his mental calculations of the price of milk and potatoes" (156), her brothers "[m]erely stand on guard around [her], keeping [her] a prisoner in the house" (156). A living death under patriarchal rule is the mother's legacy to her daughter, and thus Olivia's murder renders concrete a much earlier symbolic death. By the time Olivia becomes Olivia de la Haute Mer—by the time she narrates her story and thus adds her voice to the chorus of spectral female voices that ring through Griffin Creek—she has already played the role of the ghost, having assumed the deadly feminine position that her mother left vacant.

The mother's death, according to Anne Ancrenat, opens up a feminine communication that challenges patriarchal discourse: "La petite fille, en perdant sa mère biologique, gagne le pouvoir d'entendre l'infralangue maternelle (cette voix multiple des femmes qui ne s'érige pas à partir du seul discours patriarcal) intransmissible à partir du lieu de la famille dont elle doit s'exiler" (*De mémoire de femmes* 22). However, Olivia's mother hands down this very discourse, and it is not called into question by the voice of the ancestral women, who favour the same gender binaries that are upheld by the men of Griffin Creek. Theirs is far from a "feminine-feminist" voice, and it is perhaps for this reason that Olivia does not always take comfort in it. "Who watches over me now, spies on me rather and constantly troubles me?"[10] she wonders after having sworn to her dying mother that she will remain obedient to her father. The mother and other female ancestors "watch over" Olivia—"spy" on her—but they seem to do so in order to ensure the enforcement of an ancient patriarchal law and the continuation of feminine segregation.

Pegge: Her mother's daughter?

The collective ancestral voice in Anne Hébert's novel is a source of disquiet for Olivia. In the case of Mary Novik's novel, on the other hand, the female revenant is welcome: Pegge conjures her mother's ghost because she believes her to be a potential source of sexual knowledge. When her younger sister begins to menstruate before her, Pegge invites the ghost into her body

so that she, too, might be married and experience carnal love. She visits her mother's tomb and "beg[s] Ann's melancholy damp to creep into her childish, reluctant womb" (108), thus expressing her desire to feel her mother doubled within her like a fetus.[11] This gothic maternal image is repeated and inverted in a later scene, however, when Pegge attempts to slip into her mother's skin via role-play. As her father lies dying and she washes his body, Pegge's words and actions cast her in the role of the (dead) lover: she answers to her mother's name, massages oils into her father's groin, and the language she uses to describe the scene is pulled from one of her father's famous erotic poems: "I licensed my roving hands and let them go—before, behind, between, above, below" (395).

The cleansing of the paternal body is recounted in two parts—the first narrated from a third-person limited point of view (Pegge's); the second narrated by Pegge herself. This second telling—from which I have just cited—provides the more detailed and erotic account of the incident, and also serves as the novel's dénouement, a structural choice that heightens its thematic importance within the novel. The second account also places some of the responsibility for Pegge's incestuous actions on the mother's ghost: "My mother drove me forward, but oh! I was willing" (396). This incestuous encounter is in fact the sexualization of a role that the daughter has played since her mother's death: "I had taken her part for so long, I hardly knew which was my mother or myself" (393). From that day forward, Pegge "takes the part" of the ghost in all of her sexual relations, a choice symbolized by her refusal to sleep in any bed other than her father's after his death. Pegge seduces both her husband, William, and her childhood love interest, Izaak Walton, in their sleep, caressing each of the men to the point of ejaculation and then returning to her own bedchamber. In the morning, the men are convinced that they have experienced nothing but a dream, a fact that pleases Pegge, for in her mind, "no visitor is so sweet as a night-walker" (390).[12]

Waking, lucid sexual relations in the world of Novik's novel are fraught with difficulty. The parts of the novel that are narrated by Ann Donne's ghost reveal the gendered constraints that are inherent to relationship structures in this representation of seventeenth-century England, constraints which manifest themselves in intimate contexts. These sections—which recount the famously passionate relationship between Ann More and John Donne—depict the stifling physical and intellectual limitations placed on Ann in the name of couple, family, and Church values, and also literalize the Freudian

metaphorical association between tomb and womb. As her husband's desires shift from the carnal to the ecclesiastical, Ann feels increasingly abandoned and imprisoned inside a body that has become a performance space for Protestant ideology. Following Church doctrine, John refuses to visit Ann's bed while she is pregnant, as well as during certain periods of the Church calendar, and thus the couple is only ever reunited long enough to conceive another child. Ann despises this arrangement, as indicated by her bitterness when she describes the context of her twelfth and final pregnancy: "[Y]ou begat another child on me," she cries from the grave, "and I died from it" (113). The grammatical structure of this recrimination leaves no doubt as to who was the agent of the conception and who was the object: John Donne "begets" a child "on" Ann, and this child becomes a sort of weapon in an implicit, gendered murder ("and I died from it").

The ghost-narrator is categorical in her anger as she reflects on her conjugal role: "I was slain for love, at far too young an age" (112). She does not romanticize her marriage to John Donne, and it can therefore be said that when Pegge "takes the part" of the ghost in her relationships, it is a spectre of her own making—she has internalized the stuff of her father's literature. Her father's erotic dreamscape has inked itself onto her conception of her mother, and Pegge is left pregnant with a desire that cannot be fulfilled except in fantasy. Perhaps this is why the last few passages of the novel—which describe Pegge's move from her father's bed into that of her husband William—feel overwritten. I cite here a few sentences from the novel's ultimate paragraph: "Come, William, I see Venus rising like a pink nipple on the plump horizon. Shall we make that clock of yours run faster? Let us bed down together in this new dawn and weave a silken tent of arms" (398). The pun "Shall we make that clock of yours runs faster?" is evidently an allusion to Andrew Marvell's poem "To His Coy Mistress" (and thus to the notion of *carpe diem*), and the "pink nipple" evokes an aroused clitoris. This intentional deployment of allusion and euphemism nonetheless causes the novel to slip away from what Flaubert termed "le mot juste"—understood here as the language that would come closest to the character's palpable, lived experience—precisely because there is no "real" carnal love to refer back to. This is a case of art imitating art: Pegge the character can only love by way of erotic representation, and thus the only language available to Pegge the narrator is overly poeticized. All of Pegge's relationships have been triangulated through her father's poetry; the Oedipal associations in the novel are all too evident.

Ghostly Conceits

The gendered, spectral elements of Novik's novel converge around the notion of the "conceit." Subjected to the narcissism of the male poet and patriarch, the Donne women are expected to exist only under the sign of erasure. Ann fulfills the function of child-bearer and muse,[13] and while John initially asks Pegge to be his secretary, once he falls ill, he insists that Izaak Walton take her place, and Pegge is shunted towards purely domestic duties that serve as the practical but invisible foundation for her father's self-aggrandizement. While Pegge is busy taking care of her father's physical needs, Izaak Walton writes his biography, and the result—at least from Pegge's viewpoint—is pompous and mythologizing.

The "conceit" of the novel's title evidently refers not only to a personality trait (i.e. male egocentricity), but also to a rhetorical device: it evokes the imaginative playfulness of the language of John Donne's poetry and sermons. As K. K. Ruthven reminds us,

> [d]uring the years when conceits of one sort or another were practically the staple of English poetry, the word *conceit* possessed a variety of meanings which made it fruitfully ambiguous in the hands of a poet. At the end of the sixteenth century, it was still being used . . . as a synonym for *thought* . . . ; but it was also applied to such diverse things as a completely unfounded supposition, a witty remark or idea, a clever act of deception, and the products of the artistic imagination. (1)

These terms certainly characterize John Donne's writing as it is highlighted by Novik. However, the polysemy of the novel's title does not stop there, for the reader comes to suspect Pegge of the same kind of "conceit"—in the rhetorical sense of the term—that is better associated with her father. Pegge is not only a narrator, but also an author: she scribbles in her late father's folios and keeps her work locked in a cabinet in her bedchamber, out of reach from her curious and disapproving husband. In the novel's final chapters, the reader comes to the slow realization that Ann Donne's first-person account must in fact have been written by her daughter. The character Samuel Pepys confirms the reader's suspicions when William shows him Pegge's writing, and he responds, "If I am not mistaken, . . . this is written by the woman who became John Donne's wife" (337). Thus Pegge not only emulates the ghost, conjures her and speaks to her, but from an authorial standpoint, she also *is* the ghost. This is the most clever conceit of all: Novik uses Pegge's deception and extraordinary imagination to create a (ghostly) female artistic legacy, one that disrupts and competes with the patriarchal artistic tradition.

The *form* of Pegge's intervention further upsets this tradition, for Pegge's writing is marked by the type of nonlinear, corporeal writing that Hélène Cixous termed *écriture féminine*. "Why d[o] men always begin their stories at the start?" Pegge thinks as she reads Izaak Walton's account of her father's life. Pegge "[c]los[es] the folio" and "sp[ins] it round" before picking up a plume to write (273), and the result is tumultuous: " . . . words quickened within her and the nib skittered across the page, explosive, blurting out syllables, quarter-words, half-words, then galloping phrases that outpaced sense." The tools that Pegge uses are masculine—the text is Walton's, the method her father's (who taught her to scribe), the ink her husband's—but she decides that "[t]omorrow, she w[ill] get up before dawn to mix ink of her own" (274), thus asserting her distinctive authorship. Her creativity in this inaugural writing scene is further punctuated by concrete marks of her femininity: "She felt the blood begin to gather and drip along the inside of her thigh, then the familiar release as the first spots hit her feet" (274). For Pegge, writing represents a secret act of pleasure that flows from the body, during which she "will[s] [her husband] not to come near enough to see the spots, or the book she ha[s] defaced with ink" (274). The product of her efforts is spectral, hidden away as a guard against male interference and judgment. What is more, the correlation between menstruation and writing in this passage evokes Pegge's earlier desire to feel her mother's "melancholy damp" within her. Once again, the ghost of the mother moves through the (artist) daughter and escapes the gendered confines that imprison her; the metaphorical association between ink and blood effects this breach of boundaries.

Pegge has reason to protect her art. William thinks of her writing as "nonsense" (326), a "very inconvenient business" (378), "the inchoate scribblings of a woman" (384), "abandoned, deranged, indecipherable, full of animal cunning" (327). This last description calls to mind the figure of the witch; the connotation is reinforced by the physical and behavioural portrayals of Pegge over the course of the novel. Pegge cuts a wild figure indeed, with her dishevelled looks, disregard for propriety, and predilection for morbid activities, such as fabricating insects from hairs collected from the head of Izaak Walton (304-305, 310-314, 329), handling dead rodents (320), or stealing and transporting her father's effigy (11-18). It is this wilful marginalization that allows Pegge the character—and Novik the author—to move, create, and think more freely within the confines of this fictional seventeenth-century society.[14] As Lori Saint-Martin points out, the depiction of the witch by women authors constitutes a reappropriation of a traumatic, repressed event

in women's history (i.e. the witch hunts)[15] and a symbol of resistance to patriarchal power (167). Novik participates in this tradition by giving Pegge a distinct weirdness, the better to make room for her strange symbolic alchemy.

According to her husband, who cannot decipher her tachygraphy, Pegge "muddl[es] the system by introducing symbols of her own" (351). In this way, she resembles the twins Pam and Pat in *Les fous de Bassan*, who are assigned the task of painting the female ancestors in the reverend Nicolas Jones' family gallery, and who take advantage of their seclusion to represent Olivia and Nora's floating heads all over the walls, as well as that of Nicolas' late wife, Irene (Hébert 16).[16] Just as John Donne introduces a flaw into his own masculine, logocentric system by giving the young Pegge the job of secretary—for this is how she learns to write—the Reverend Jones, as Ancrenat has pointed out, undermines his own patriarchal creation by leaving the paintbrushes in the hands of the twins ("La galerie des ancêtres" 15), and through this choice, I would add, leaves himself vulnerable to the female spectral apparition. Pam and Pat exploit this vulnerability to its fullest, taking a "malicious pleasure" (11) in tearing open the spectral wound of the 1936 murders and stitching it up again with symbols of their own making, symbols which leave gaps large enough for all the female ghosts of the past to walk through. "Over and over, in sparkling letters formed with care, Nora, Olivia, Irene, they dance before my eyes, as I walk through the room" (11), writes Nicolas, observing the scene. He continues:

> As for the coal-black garland, patiently worked and unfurled all along the baseboard, if you bend down and look carefully you can distinguish the numbers, always the same ones, joined together in a single endless graffiti: 19361936193619361936193619361936. (11)

Pam and Pat's "graffiti" constitutes not only an act of vengeance, but also an insistent call, one that "bends Nicolas low" and forces him to be attentive to the patriarchal violence that haunts Griffin Creek. This is particularly important from a symbolic standpoint, for Nicolas is Stevens Browns' surrogate—he is, in 1982, the last bastion of misogyny in Griffin Creek.

Pam and Pat's trickery, imagination, and malevolence create a space for Olivia's halting, nostalgic intervention later in the novel. Because past wrongs have been inscribed on the walls of history and acknowledged, Olivia can forgo vengeance and concentrate on the lost relationship with the other, which, in the end, remains evasive. "In vain do I whistle at keyholes, slip under beds stripped of blankets and mattresses, blow fine dust, . . . the one I am seeking is no longer here" (150). The scattered traces of the lost

relationship with the other are most visible in the gaps in Olivia's discourse. "I who never finish a sentence" (150), she observes, self-aware, and in all those unfinished or broken sentences lie infinite possibility and infinite loss. Thus, when Olivia thinks, "Someone has *certainly* . . . Cast me still alive into the calm lunar depths of that deep bay, between Cap Sec and Cap Sauvagine" (154, emphasis mine), there is nothing "certain" about her statement, for in the ellipses between the two halves of the sentence lies a denial of history as it has already unfolded and the hope that aggression is not the only possible outcome when it comes to heterosexual relations. The reader can imagine many loving, alternative conclusions to the lead-in clause ("Someone has certainly…"), lapping like waves across Olivia's mind before the hard reality of the murder breaks through and snaps language and meaning in half. Indeed, whereas Novik's Pegge is at her most vibrant when engaging with language, Hébert's Olivia feels shut off from it, given to symbolic stasis: " . . . am I not absent from my name, from my flesh and bones, limpid as a tear upon the sea?" (158) she asks herself. For Olivia, language is an empty shell, and no matter how loudly her ancestors cry out to her, she will never be able to speak back, because the words available to her are devoid of love and therefore of meaning: "Only love could turn me into a full-fledged woman, communicating as an equal with my mother and grandmothers in the shadow of the wind, using veiled terms, a knowing air, telling of the mystery that ravages me body and soul" (160).

Conclusion

Anne Hébert's Olivia de la Haute Mer and Mary Novik's Pegge both *haunt* and *are haunted*, and in each instance the revenant signals an amorous *lack*: she always appears within the distorted space of the couple, and at the moment where the daughter gropes towards that which she most desires. In Hébert's novel, the revenant points to Olivia's longing to relive a loving connection with Stevens. Olivia's plaintive narrative grows out of a rupture in the patriarchal discourse that dominates Griffin Creek; the twinned survivors Pam and Pat facilitate this breach. As for the voices of the female ancestors, they mark a sort of double denial on Olivia's part: a denial of violence against women, and also of the necessity to protect oneself against that very violence at the cost of the relationship with the other. The voices also constitute the pseudo-return of what must remain hidden: if Olivia is to continue to seek out what Kristeva terms an "open system," heterogeneous love, she must also ignore her ancestors' warnings.

Whereas Hébert's Olivia is ambivalent to her ancestors' intervention, Novik's Pegge conjures and incarnates her late mother through her interactions and her writing. This spectral version of Ann Donne, imagined by Pegge, expresses anger and regret at never having experienced heterogeneous love, even as Pegge herself, in her "real" relationships with men, role-plays at a different kind of passion, a simulacrum of the love described in her father's poetry. Pegge's situation is highly ironic, for her exclusion from the creative and intellectual world—she can only write her mother's story secretly, in the margins of her father's texts—is correlative to the romanticized heteronormative love that she so desperately seeks. Indeed, female passivity—rather than creativity—is inherent to romantic discourse: the female object of desire cannot be a writer, only a silent muse. Pegge overcomes this constraint by projecting her creativity onto her mother, who can no longer occupy the position of object of desire because she is a ghost (nor would she wish to take on this role again). Pegge's projection creates a ghostly juxtaposition that throws into relief her own problematic conception of relationships.

Thus in both *Les fous de Bassan* and *Conceit*, the revenant tracks the female character's compulsive movement towards a loving encounter with the other and the various ways in which this quest ends in failure due to patriarchal violence (as in the case of Olivia and Ann Donne), or the internalization on the part of the female character of romantic representations of love and courtship (as in the case of Pegge). Love in both novels is turned inside out, and from its underbelly, the revenant emerges to trace a common wound and lend her uncanny voice to a gendered silence.

NOTES

1 This article draws on the theories that I put forth in my dissertation, entitled "La *revenance* dans le roman québécois au féminin après 1980."
2 The recounting of the village idiot, Perceval, is interrupted from time to time by an omniscient voice, a sort of village chorus.
3 Unless otherwise noted, throughout this article I quote Sheila Fischman's English translation of *Les fous de Bassan*, entitled *In the Shadow of the Wind*.
4 Stevens writes : "At times I'd swear the Atkins girls are here. Came in who knows how. . . . All this time they've been chasing me. . . . And yet I threw them in the sea, on the night of August 31, 1936" (176).
5 The novel received a starred review in the literary trade magazine *Quill & Quire*, won the Ethel Wilson prize, and was long-listed for the Giller prize.
6 Some of this analysis of *Les fous de Bassan* dovetails with the observations made in my article "Invasion, fuite et faille subjectives: La figure de la revenante dans *Les fous de Bassan* d'Anne Hébert", which appeared in *Les Cahiers Anne Hébert* 11.

7 While Stevens does not express affection or admiration for women as an adult, he does so with regard to a male friend he knew in Florida, Old Mic: "And that's where I met you, old buddy, . . . You were always laughing and your face was all creased from laughing, and on those rare occasions when your face was still for a moment, there were little white lines all over your sun-tanned cheeks, especially around the eyes. Your laughter had woven a web of pearly scars, protected from the sun" (42).

8 Katri Suhonen also examines the heterosexual relationship in *Les fous de Bassan* as it relates to patriarchal violence. In Griffin Creek, male and female characters alike receive what Suhonen terms a "patriarchal education" ("une education patriarcale") (70). Built into this education is a dynamic of male aggression and female retreat (Suhonen 70-77). Evelyne Letendre, constructing her own argument regarding Stevens Brown's predatory behaviour around Suhonen's premise of learned violence, reads Stevens' perverse actions as the result of the disastrous gender binary that is upheld by the men and women of Griffin Creek. According to Letendre, "Anne Hébert élabore un personnage qui *devient* prédateur parce qu'il souffre trop de ne pas pouvoir exprimer des pulsions identifiées comme féminines" (68).

9 Olivia is not the only character in the novel to repress a traumatic past. Scott Lyngaas has observed that "there is no escape from [the] communal trauma" that the murder of 1936 represents for the inhabitants of Griffin Creek (107), and that the characters of the novel repeat and express this trauma in similar ways, as though their voices spoke to the discomfort of a single psyche (104-105).

10 Translation mine. Original French: "Qui désormais veille sur moi, m'espionne plutôt et me tracasse sans cesse?" (Hébert, *Les fous de Bassan* 210).

11 Marlene Goldman in her study *Dispossession: Haunting in Canadian Fiction*, which deals with texts written by several English Canadian authors, argues "that women's ghost stories are . . . written in response to the long-standing psychological associations between femininity and the uncanny—associations that date back to classical conceptions of hysteria, a disorder supposedly caused by a pathological 'wandering uterus.' Since patriarchal contests of power based on lineage and inheritance are fought on the grounds of women's bodies—the womb being the site of legitimate and illegitimate modes of social reproduction—it is useful to appreciate how contests over property and propriety relate to hysteria, a disorder whose name refers to the Greek term for uterus" (19). Pegge's fantasies, which conflate her dead mother's womb and her own, therefore situate Novik's novel within a longstanding gendered trope, one that points to women's "dispossession" in private, political, and socioeconomic realms.

12 The wordplay in this passage—the primary definition of the term "night-walker" is of course "prostitute"—further points to Pegge's desire to slip in and out of various feminine roles, particularly those that are forbidden.

13 Much has been written about the muse, the erasure of the feminine, and male creativity. See for example Elisabeth Bronfen, Mary DeShazer, and Nancy Huston.

14 It would be interesting to contrast the way in which the characters in Hébert's and Novik's novels move through time and space. In this regard, Philip Stratford's observations regarding Canadian novels in French and English are relevant. Stratford notes that "[t]he sense of time is . . . disrupted in the Québec novel" (99), and "the sense of space is . . . restrictive" (99), whereas the English Canadian novel is characterized by an "[e]volution in time" and a "mobility in space" (101). Indeed, the action in *Les fous de Bassan* is limited primarily to the village of Griffin Creek, where time is short-circuited by the 1936 trauma,

and the characters are trapped inside a dream-like, haunted mnemonic space. Novik's novel, on the other hand, has a strong temporal thrust and is varied in its settings; the only immobile character in *Conceit* is the female revenant herself, who feels stifled and angry as the world bustles atop her grave.

15 For a sociological discussion of the legacy of the witch hunts, see Silvia Federici.

16 Irene commits suicide not long before the murders.

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Chris Hutchinson

Henry the Forgotten

After his snowdrops are trampled, Henry
The historian sulks, as though the air is wet
Cardboard he must punch through with an oddball wit he hasn't
The energy or keenness to produce. He feels like falling
Into an old Dutch painting where light rays pioneer a hornbeam
Countertop to chance the rim of a servant girl's lip.
But there are so many sharp memories he should soften
Then replicate, postcards he'll address to himself amid
The jade statues furred with dust, the bound-in-leather
Gilt-edged classics tumbling off imaginary
Shelves. Perhaps he will soon be bitterly drunk
On whatever it is that ventures beyond his
Protestant past to become one in the crowd stepping
In time to the maniacal megaphone chants
Pierced by the protesting squelch of
Québécois French. The truly faithless suddenly
Leaping out of themselves into daylight
And springtime buds and fists sprouting
White knuckles. Everywhere, the same pink
Squalling baby flashes its gleaming front teeth!
Is this the motherless infant he will become
Without a soothing voice, flattery, or someone
To assure that all his technique has not been merely
To trace another civil account? Sulking
Behind a lead-paned window overlooking his
Minced garden and the paving stones where blue horses
Once drew carriages of tourists through a mélange
Of brick warehouses and across the cantilevered
Bridge—he wonders, was it ever his wish
To be adored for all his late night revisions
Or to be torn from his childish fits like a page
From the book of Old Montreal?

Joanne Leow

Mis-mappings and Mis-duplications

Interdiscursivity and the Poetry of Wayde Compton

In her seminal work on historiographic metafiction, Linda Hutcheon argues that the genre simultaneously enshrines and ironically undermines its intertexts of history, literature, and popular culture. In particular, she notes, "the ontological line between historical past and literature is not effaced, but underlined" (10) and "the loss of the illusion of transparency in historical writing is a step toward intellectual self-awareness that is matched by metafiction's challenges to the presumed transparency of the language of realist texts" (10). In effect, the use and "ironic *abuse*" (12) of the intertexts lead to a more profound engagement with history, literature, and popular culture by questioning these received discourses. Taking Hutcheon's idea that intertexts can be used as ways to challenge existing discourses and realities, in this paper I posit that it is productive to place her analysis in dialogue with the poetry of African Canadian writer Wayde Compton. Compton attempts to rewrite official histories of identity creation through his work and undermines historical narratives and discourses through the ironic re-use of both poetic forms and cultural intertexts. In the context of the official histories of British Columbia, Compton's work interrogates assumptions in order to remember what has been lost and excluded.

Hutcheon's sense of the writer's agency in destabilizing the ontological boundaries between history and fiction is particularly relevant when one considers how Compton's poems bring diverse intertexts together, and poetic and cultural frameworks. With his "mis-duplications" of these sources (Compton, "Turntablism"), the conventions of official histories and literatures are, as Hutcheon puts it, "simultaneously used and abused,

installed and subverted, asserted and denied" (5). Compton shows us the fictiveness, hypocrisy, and limitations of official histories and attempts to create new and confabulated ways of approaching the complex, multicultural, and diasporic society that he lives in. It is also useful here to consider Michel de Certeau's idea of "tactics." For de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life,* a tactic "insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. . . . The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them" (xix). De Certeau emphasizes the possibility of acting within a system where a certain meaning or narrative has already been imposed, speaking very much to the situation that Compton's intertextuality, or rather "interdiscursivity" works within (Hutcheon 12). Winfried Siemerling makes a similar point about Compton's work in the context of "transcultural improvisation," hip hop, "lit hop," and turntablism, seeing his ability "to combine transcultural and migrant resources in a rooted, historical and social aesthetics that forces . . . a rethinking of narratives of Canadian culture" (31). While building on Siemerling's work, my own analysis will also look at how the particular cultural, theoretical, and geographical contexts of Compton's writing have played a seminal role in shaping his poetic oeuvre. Additionally, while Siemerling suggests the powerful improvisational quality of Compton's earlier work, I argue that Compton's more recent work presents a more carefully considered, constructed, and performed approach to black identity, history, and memory in Canada. This reflects an important influence of Compton's appropriation of hip hop poetics, something that Adam Bradley argues, "embodies a series of opposites: predictability and spontaneity, repetition and revision, order and chaos. These creative tensions help define the specific values and conventions that govern rap" (207). While Siemerling rightfully acknowledges the power of Compton's improvisational strategies, "predictability," "repetition," and "order" are a notable part of the dynamic tensions that contribute to Compton's poetics.[1]

I propose that Compton is a tactician in de Certeau's sense, using the array of popular and critical sources and references available to him to create new approaches to remembering and defining community and place. This is particularly evident in his poems "Performance Bond," "The Reinventing Wheel,"[2] and "Rune." These works are taken from Compton's 2004 collection *Performance Bond*, a book that is engaged in a re-appropriation and recovery of history and memory through its ironic use and re-use of a rich array of intertexts, both of genre and of content. While Compton began similar work

in his 1999 *49th Parallel Psalm*, his poetic voice appears more assured and wide-ranging five years later in *Performance Bond*, moving beyond narratives of arrivals and cultural discoveries to longer, more complex mixings of history, historiography, street culture, voodoo, the Bible, intellectual theory, political slogans, and philosophy. Compton is concerned with recovering, remapping, and re-performing official histories in ways that question fixed ideas of nationhood, identity, and belonging. His semi-fictional accounts of Hogan's Alley in "Rune" highlight how texts like Daphne Marlatt and Carole Itter's *Opening Door in Vancouver's East End: Strathcona* are bleeding together memory and history in their oral interviews, and the inherent instability of both categories. "Performance Bond" and "The Reinventing Wheel" challenge received ideas of multiculturalism, and explore the tensions and contradictions inherent in official discourses and in transnational Afro-diasporic influences. The works appropriate and interrogate multiple sources and references in order to come to a more profound understanding of identity and belonging.

In doing so, Compton contributes to a longstanding conversation among black Canadian critics such as André Alexis, Rinaldo Walcott, and George Elliott Clarke, who have combatively debated the nature, origins, and future of actually existing blackness in Canada. Compton does not align himself completely with any one particular school of thought—choosing neither Clarke's historical localism nor Walcott's own "diaspora sensibilities" (22). Instead, Compton is crucially rooted in the textured urban spaces of Vancouver, while simultaneously positioning himself on the West Coast of Canada with its expansive Pacific histories and ties. This geographical and historical positioning also comes with its ambivalent perspectives on both the physical proximity of the American border and the perceived gap between the "boondocks" and the apparent centres of black culture, like New York. The poet is conscious of Alexis' claim that Canadian blackness is, in many ways, "borrowed" from African American culture and must be considered with a certain scepticism. Perhaps his efforts are closer to the optimistic yet complex point David Chariandy makes in his work on second-generation black writing in Canada, "that we have moved into a moment in which belonging has been revealed as a fiction" (828). Chariandy acknowledges the "very real feelings of disaffection and unbelonging" (827) that Afro-diasporic subjects may harbour, but remains hopeful that second-generation black writers still "[approach] everyday life in inspiringly creative and sensitive ways" (827).

In Compton's case, this means the meaningful construction and confabulation of an identity and a belonging that is cognizant of its literariness and its interdiscursivity. With his work in *Performance Bond*, he is literally creating and enacting a "bond"—a word that has both affective and legal implications—in the performance of his craft. "[A]n assertive Afroperipheralism" permeates Compton's work, which counters "the redemptive drive of Afrocentrism, which iterates everything but a narrow set of perceived traditions as inauthentic and culturally ersatz" (*Canaan* 15). Peter Hudson argues that Compton's "Afroperipheralism" and his "sense of isolation and alienation" in British Columbia means that his work can fight "any sense of blackness as a known shape, an *a priori* entity, whose main goal is to police its own limits and the terms of its membership" (Hudson, "Lost Tribe" 156). Compton's efforts at collage and bricolage are techniques that he also sees in Barack Obama's memoir *Dreams from My Father* (1995), of "growing up and piecing together . . . black identity from a mix of popular culture representations, books and fleeting encounters with other blacks" (*Canaan* 14). In the context of these multiple discourses, Compton also brings to bear a sense of geographic specificity of the "complicated terrain" (*Canaan* 17) of British Columbia, where he sees "being an afterthought minority has left open a modicum of space for self-definition—if, that is, one can take it as an exhilarating opportunity rather than a deficiency" (*Canaan* 17). Being "of colour" in British Columbia is to be simultaneously excluded from historical discourses within the province and to be left out of global discourses of black history and culture. Yet, the poem "Performance Bond," with its call-and-response format and its range of intertextual references to historical, popular, cultural, and theoretical intertexts, enables these exclusions to be interrogated and incorporated into a complex self-creation.

Besides these intertexts, "Performance Bond" and "The Reinventing Wheel" are also influenced in their tone and form by hip hop aesthetics. Adam Bradley's work on the poetics of rap is useful here with its careful consideration of the various literary and stylistic elements of the art form: rhythm, rhyme, wordplay, style, storytelling, and signifying. In particular, Bradley's "Prologue" to his *Book of Rhymes* intuits the visual power of rap lyrics when he relates a rap performance where lyrics were "*projected in bold print against the back of the stage*" and "*you notice new things in the familiar lyrics: wordplay, metaphors and similes, rhymes upon rhymes, even within the lines. You notice structures and forms, sound and silence*" (x). Compton's production of a CD recording of "The Reinventing Wheel" to accompany

Performance Bond makes it clear that he is aware of the aurality and orality of his hip hop influences. However, my analysis of Compton's poems shows that his words predominantly function as literature on the page, with its attendant attention to lineation, punctuation, orthography, and certain types of wordplay, such as homophones and visual puns. In "The Reinventing Wheel," for instance, he plays with puns that are only obvious in their written form: "Every ear shall here. Every eye shall sea" (106).

Of course, Compton's engagement with the intertext of hip hop aesthetics and black American culture is not one-dimensional. "[A]s a kind of first step," Compton has said in an interview,

> hip hop is a really useful thing to grab on to, the most visible form of black culture. . . . But it's disturbing to me at the same time, because it's really foreign to me and my sensibilities; it's not about here. It's all created by conditions that are very different from the conditions of Western Canada. So I'm kind of ambivalent about it that way. Okay, you're going to seek out black culture if you're a black kid growing up in Vancouver, and if that's the first one you find, then that's cool, use it. But there has to be some intervention with your whole experience at some point. ("Epic Moment" 142-43)

Compton identifies the heart of the paradox inherent in his use of hip hop, that it is "really foreign," "not about here," and yet, it is "useful" as "the most visible form of black culture." Compton engages with an intertext that is transcultural and transnational, which also involves shared history, tradition, and ideological struggle (as seen in Compton's musings about Obama's memoir). Compton's work moves beyond conceptions of rap music and hip hop by American scholars like Tricia Rose, who see it as predominantly "a black cultural expression that prioritizes black voices from the margins of urban America" (2). Rose might see "Rap tales" as referencing "black cultural figures and rituals, mainstream film, video and television characters, and little-known black heroes" (3)—Compton's work, on the other hand, broadens this scope considerably, while rooting it in the particularity of Black Vancouver, an urban space that perhaps speaks to Rose's conception of hip hop as "black urban renewal" (61). Compton's grappling with these issues shares greater commonalities with the sociologist and musician Sujatha Fernandes' definitions of a global hip hop culture. Fernandes traces the evolution of global hip hop through its nationalist, gangsta, and corporate strands before arguing for a "communitarian strand of hip hop culture" that "exists as a counterpoint to the grossly materialistic, individualist nature of corporate rap" (21). Fernandes also points out a tension that is a central theme in Compton's work and common to the global use of hip

hop culture—"the incongruity of the desire for unity and fellowship across borders and the need to be grounded in a specific place and experience" (21).

One other crucial intertext that Compton is heavily invested in is what he calls the "character/god/theory called Legba" ("Epic Moment" 138), which he sees as another "literary method, a heuristic process" (138) that privileges the tropes of "indeterminancy, . . . crossroads, and chance" (138).[3] He sees this as "a sharp deviation from the hip hop aesthetic, which is marked by extreme confidence and firm constructions of identity" (138). In her 2009 book *Legba's Crossing: Narratology in the African Atlantic*, Heather Russell sees the tropes of African Atlantic modernity such as "gateway" or "crossing" as epistemologically and conceptually tied to Legba, "god of the crossroads—residing literally at the gateway, the interstices of truth, meaning, and interpretation" (9). She argues that Legba's power "is derived from his strategic duality—his mastery of discourse and attendant recognition of its gross limitations" (9).[4] Russell makes a case for a "*Legba Principle*" as a "metonym for African Atlantic narratives whose episteme is engaged in freeing praxis at both the level of form and of theme—in other words, texts whose narratologies interrupt, disrupt, erupt Euro-American literary convention for sociopolitical, ideological purposes" (12). Compton's poetry is making the same theoretical moves by working with its diverse intertexts, its reappropriation of the Afro-diasporic genre of hip hop, and its focus on the indeterminacy of Legba's crossroads. The sheer density of his *tactical* intertexuality and referentiality speaks to the multiple openings and pathways that his poetry provides the possibilities for, in the creation of the past and the present. And in works like "Rune," Compton's destabilization of historical truths is an example of how Compton sees his work as a celebration of

> repetition, knowing that you will mis-duplicate—and that the mis-duplications are the closest achievable thing to an actual you. . . . The remix is a way of—in one moment and one performance—re-enacting the manipulation of history and source culture. ("Turntablism")

What I am particularly interested in is how this precise combination of intertexts, rooted in Compton's version of a black British Columbia, produces new ways of performing and remembering identity, culture, and place.

Performing Mis-duplications and Indeterminacy

The complexity of Compton's poem "Performance Bond" means that any analysis that is not a critical edition cannot point out each and every reference in his lines. My close reading of the poem will draw on the ones

that I deem most relevant to how Compton embeds the "mis-duplication" of hip hop aesthetics and indeterminacy in the poem. Opening the poem with a reference to the song "As time goes by" from the movie *Casablanca*, Compton mis-duplicates the chorus of the song, substituting "multicultural" for "fundamental":

> The multicultural things apply
> as time goes by
> when the I itself
> will not abide
> eternal solipsism.
>
> Everybody's a migrant.
> Every body gyrates
> to the global bigbeat.
> It's sun
> down in the Empire, and time has done
> gone by,
> and multiculturalism can't arrive
> by forgetting , but remembering
> every hectare taken, every anti-Asian defamation,
> because those who don't remember
> repeat. (42)

Compton's language echoes the rhyme, rhythm, and repetition in hip-hop lyricism, and his opening lines further indicate the re-mixing and sampling that his poem will partake in. However, his use of enjambment and the visual placement of the text on the page complicate the orality and aurality of hip hop. For instance, Compton locates the pun in the word "everybody" by simply separating "every" and "body" in the following line, conflating ideas of identity and corporeality, and creating equivalences between the ideas of national origins and popular culture. Compton connects the ideas behind the terms "migrant" and "multiculturalism" to the physicality of "gyrat[ing] / to the global bigbeat." Compton invokes Vancouver's place on the "edge of empire" (Adele Perry) with the lines: "It's sun / down in the Empire," the presence of black vernacular English: "time has done / gone by," and the historic slave trade: "The cracks are filled / with the bodies of those fallen through." These vertiginous combinations reflect an overwhelmingly complex field that is located between the terms "multicultural" and "migrant." "Performance Bond" does not shy away from its central premise that remembering, and especially remembering specificities of "every hectare taken, every anti-Asian defamation," is most important of all. Issues of geography are implied here, whether these are hectares taken from First

Nations peoples or non-white communities in Vancouver who lost their neighbourhoods to urban redevelopment. Forgetting, on the other hand, is equated with erasure and elision, in order to create a seamless whole or an authorized history, and dooms one to "repeat."

Ironically, Compton spends much of the poem repeating: literally, as he quotes other thinkers, activists, and cultural artefacts, and also formally, with his poetic constructions. These are tactical repetitions, as when Compton quotes the Canadian poet Jamie Reid, and proceeds to rewrite and appropriate his argument on the criminalization of poverty:

> It's a crime
> to be poor, to be broke, to float, to colour
> outside
> the lines, to cross, to coast, to confound
> the order, the entrance, the ocean, the border, to be
> unrestrained,
> uncontained. (43)

Again here, Compton's poetic construction and language echo the rhythm and rhyming structures of hip hop and rap. His use of caesuras and assonance in "to be poor, to be broke, to float, to colour" drive the line forward in beats that end suddenly with an abrupt line break at "outside," which demarcates "colour" from "the lines" and recalls W. E. B. DuBois' famous proclamation in *The Souls of Black Folk* that "the problem of the Twentieth century is the problem of the color line" (n.p.). The rhythmic effects of each caesura also recall the rhythms of rap and the balance between flow and rupture that Rose points out. Further, this construction formally reflects what Compton is emphasizing about the transgressive nature of being "outside" the boundaries, "the lines," and on the margins. He goes on to show, however, that these boundaries are merely constructs, since it is possible "to cross, to coast, to confound / the order, the entrance, the ocean, the border." Again, with each caesura, Compton introduces ideas that progressively increase in size and scope. Here, the poem refers to the idea of being at a crossroads or in a landscape of indeterminacy, with the wordplay between the similar sounding "unrestrained / uncontained." It is important to note that Compton began from Reid's quote on the criminalization of poverty and intervened with this intertext to improvise a grand gesture of exploding meaning, borders, and carefully demarcated hierarchies.

This movement from a singularity to a plurality is repeated throughout the poem, drawing ever larger circles in time and space, in history and

geography, bringing temporal and spatial intertexts into play. This is especially clear in Compton's explorations of "the history of BC," which he sees as a performative "history of whiteness" unable to affect "the watcher" (43). Compton is quick to point out the slippages in this closed definition of history, which features its share of erasures in the image of "whiteness." He utilizes the poetic stanza break to emphasize a history "of colour" and reverses the structure of the sentence construction, where now

> . . . the history
>
> of colour is the history of BC
> as it's watched and created, assimilates
> as it changes the watchers in the shadows,
> the whiteness. The history
>
> of whiteness is the history of colour
> as it changes BC
> which it watches
> and estranges, as it changes
> in stages,
> history performing
> as race
> in BC
> is created. (43-44)

Here, arguably, Compton references important discourses about the place of "whiteness" and "blackness" in North American history and literature that have been already put forward by thinkers like DuBois and Toni Morrison. Crucially though, Compton replaces the idea of "blackness," "darkness," and "Africanism," which Morrison sets up against "whiteness" in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, with "colour." This reflects the more complex demography in BC, where South Asian and East Asian populations have to be considered in conjunction with the African Canadian minority. Compton works in the spirit of Morrison's project,[5] but complicates it by placing "the history of colour" at the heart of "the history of BC." This, he argues, is the true history that has the power to "estrange" and "change." Later in the poem, Compton also enlarges the idea of "whiteness" beyond a literary context, seeing its "invisibility" (45) and non-existence, as part of its ability to be omnipresent: "it is universal because it is without perimeter; / its perimeters are that which is not (non-)" (45). Compton conflates ideas of a white gaze with those of surveillance technologies, where "whiteness is the camera; / whiteness is the eye that creates the panorama; / whiteness encompasses; / whiteness, if seen, implodes" (45).

This sinister combination of "whiteness" with its unnatural "epidermis" and "the perimeter" which has "[acquired] eyes" allows Compton to introduce additional historical intertexts regarding the arrival and assimilation or rejection of immigrants to BC. However, as critic Reg Johanson argues with great validity, Compton's challenge to British Columbia's "primacy of whiteness" with his "many different overlapping Columbias" is inadequate because it fails to take into account a proper consideration of First Nation claims. Compton performs a palimpsest-like territorialization of British Columbia, where "Chinese Columbia / Haida Columbia / Punjabi Columbia / Japanese Columbia / African Columbia / Vietnamese Columbia / Squamish Columbia / Jewish Columbia / Salish Columbia" (44) are superimposed onto each other, erasing chronological and geographical hierarchies. He points out that the motto of British Columbia, "*Splendor Sine Occasu*" (44)[6] already has a "myriad" of translations intrinsic to it, emphasizing the plurality that has already been secretly entrenched. Arguably, even though the issue of First Nations is somewhat elided here, Compton is still doing important work in collapsing the constructs of official history and geography, allowing for new insights and ways of thinking about how history and territory can be reconciled. In some ways, he is attempting to move beyond what Hudson sees as an "overprivileging [of] the black experience at the expense, especially, of the racial conflicts over space fought by the Aboriginal and Asian communities of the province" ("Lost Tribe" 158). *Performance Bond* represents larger concerns than those of *Bluesprint* or *49th Parallel Psalm*. Indeed, with his use of the word "colour" as opposed to simply "black" and his attempts (albeit, as Johanson points out, incomplete) to encompass a multicultural British Columbia, he is perhaps taking a larger view of what Hudson sees as "the very meaning of black British Columbia" (158) and "blackness" "as always foreign to any place—as always remaining the lost tribe of a lost tribe" (172).

Part of this more expansive view of history is greatly influenced by Kamau Brathwaite's "tidalectics," which Compton sees as "a scrambled neologism for a dialectic that does not move forward, but rather transforms statically" ("Turntablism"), "a way of seeing history as a palimpsest, where generations overlap generations, and eras wash over eras like a tide on a stretch of beach . . . [where] we do not *improve upon* the past, but are ourselves *versions* of the past" (*Bluesprint* 17). Certainly, the repetition of the various Columbias echoes Brathwaite's vision of a tide coming and leaving, as various groups repeatedly transform the territory of "Columbia." History becomes "tracers,

flashbacks, and ripples in time," which "ring the screen" (*Performance Bond* 45). Compton uses both "tidalectics" and the historical arrival of immigrants and explorations of First Nation peoples as intertexts that interact and evolve to complicate how history unfolds and the various claims that ethnic groups have made on British Columbia over time. This kinetic concentric imagery recalls Brathwaite's own insights, where "in the culture of the circle 'success' moves outward from the centre to circumference and back again: a tidal dialectic" (qtd. in Torres-Saillant 704). In an interview with Nathaniel Mackey, Brathwaite further explains how tidalectics are "dialectics with my difference. In other words, instead of the notion of one-two-three Hegelian, I am now more interested in the movement of the water backwards and forwards as a kind of cyclic, I suppose, motion, rather than linear" (44).

Oceanic movements also pervade Compton's focus on ships and vessels, which invoke Paul Gilroy's ideas of the Black Atlantic, where "routes" are literally "roots" and culture is embedded in the image of a ship as "a living, microcultural, micro-political system in motion" (*Modernity* 4). Compton uses Gilroy's critical framework, but replaces the slave trading ships with "Haida[7] vessels", which sail into the death that is "museumization" (45); the Japanese steamliner *Komagatamaru*,[8] with its would-be immigrants unable to reach a utopian "*terra sine occasu*" (45); and the "[e]picanthal Japanese vessels" (45) that brought Japanese Canadians to the fishing port town of Steveston. These seafaring vessels represent major ethnic groups in British Columbia, from the First Nations to the South Asians and the East Asians. Each group, Compton points out, suffers from its interactions with "whiteness" and the enforced boundaries of British Columbia. Yet, as befitting a poem that has indeterminancy and tidalectics as intertexts, Compton shows how the tide can deliberately shift and turn. Here it is again useful to consider Gilroy's ideas of "the sea's liquid contamination," which "involve[s] both mixture and movement" and stands in direct contrast to the land "where we find that special soil in which we are told national culture takes root" ("Black Atlantic" 2). By focusing on ships and vessels, Compton evokes Gilroy's notions of the ocean "as an alternative form of power that confined, regulated, inhibited, and sometimes even defied, the exercise of territorial sovereignty," where "the Black Atlantic opens out into theories of diaspora culture and dispersion, memory, identity, and difference" ("Black Atlantic" 2). Compton complicates the Black Atlantic, turning our gaze instead to the Pacific, where similarly significant movements and mixtures were occurring: ships arriving from Hong Kong with passengers from India; Japanese populations stepping

off boats to play a significant role in the fishing industry, and the First Nations themselves, setting out from the coast of British Columbia to launch their own explorations. This is a radical re-appropriation of the intertext of the Black Atlantic, which also situates the experience of British Columbia in a greater historical context of global mixtures and movements, and challenges the imagined isolation of the province.

Throughout "Performance Bond," Compton remains aware of the difficulties and compromises that occur as he uses the intertexts of history, global black culture, and critical theory. He includes a quote by Tseshaht actor, activist, and writer George Clutesi[9] in the poem: "*The old folks used to say that it's not good, it's not wise, to copy other people. You just gotta be yourself. Okay?*" (47); yet Clutesi's position as a promoter of Tseshaht traditions, with his advice to "be yourself," is not tenable for Compton, who is only able to see a reality that has been complicated beyond "self," compromised by the "borrowed finery" of these critical and cultural frameworks, with "Africans from America, then Canada, wearing the Caribbean" (47). This is not to say that Compton is not hopeful, as his poem returns to the potentiality of the sea, where walking across the ocean seems to be walking to a kind of promised land. This movement is purposeful, as he enters as a "contraband" and remembers as an "anti-racist" (48).

Spinning Words on "The Reinventing Wheel"

Like "Performance Bond," the poem "The Reinventing Wheel" explores questions of identity in the context of globalization, insisting that their complexity comes from the "wheel" itself and not from any master "inventor" or single official narrative. In effect, the multiplicity of influences, inflections, and histories inherent in the "wheel" of history and culture acts as a continual source of renewal and reinvention. This is immediately clear from the opening of the poem:

> The reading of the Red Sea bleeds into me
> as parable. The parabola
> of the word crossing water,
> *Kamby Bolongo*. The perambulation
> of call and response,
> the word made vinyl. The Nile,
> like the culture,
> overflows, the line secedes. Jordan,
> like papyrus,
> tears or folds. (100)

In these lines, Compton deftly weaves strands of biblical, literary, and popular culture references so that they become intertwined, each reference lending another greater import. The biblical tale of Moses parting the Red Sea is conflated with allusions to a Christ-like figure who "bleeds" and speaks in "parable[s]." Compton pushes the text itself to unexpected places, as the word "parable" morphs into "parabola"—a mathematical concept that speaks to multiple possibilities since a parabola can open up in any geometrical direction and which further recalls oceanic imagery as it is the shape of a wave. Indeed, Siemerling points out that these open possibilities speak to the "improvisation" that is at the core of Compton's work as he constantly spins the "reinventing wheel," moving effortlessly from intertext to intertext. Thus, from the Red Sea, we move to the river *Kamby Bolongo*, a reference to Alex Haley's work in the novel *Roots*, where the words "Kamby Bolongo" literally function as a keepsake of diaspora that eventually leads Haley back to his origins in Gambia. Compton moves to "the word made vinyl," a play on biblical language and a reference to hip hop culture and what he see as the instinctive development from the gospel genre of "call and response." As in "Performance Bond," Compton returns to the initial preoccupation with tides and water, recalling Brathwaite's "tidalectics" while emphasizing its connections to waves of culture and history. Thus, both the rivers Nile and Jordan as profoundly allusive symbols continue to be sources of artistic inspiration.

However, Compton does not take these tides for granted, or the fact that there can be "safe passage" through them. The poem's opening gambit also embeds a sense of the ephemerality that is associated with the ebb and flow of the water:

> Snatch It Back and Hold
> It," Junior Wells told us,
> And Arrested Development sampled
> it. The passage is collapsing
> and Moses' magic for passing as African
> is the fashion
> among blacks.
> The lighter skinned, the damned-
> near-white among us blush
> with pride when called "nigga," flushed
> out. Snatched back and held. Elemental.
> And all there is to say to that is
>
> *It be's like that sometimes*
> *cause I can't control the rhyme.*
> (Keith Murray) (101)

Tracing a genealogy from blues to hip hop and rap and melding biblical stories with slave narratives, Compton attempts to encompass the stereophonic qualities of contemporary black culture as seen through the eyes of an African Canadian poet writing in Vancouver. Thus, while the influences of black American culture weigh heavy in his work, Compton also speaks to a more borderless idea of black culture and its complex *inclusivity*. Reversing racist binaries of skin colour, Compton describes a restorative inversion where "the lighter skinned, the damned- / near-white among us" are recuperated and reappropriated "with pride" with the loaded term "nigga." The poet simultaneously acknowledges the complicated history of blacks "passing" as whites, while contemporizing the idea of "passing" with a racial reversal that seems to occur as a "rhyme" reaches out and "holds" people of mixed race. Indeed, a great deal of "The Reinventing Wheel" is about this re-appropriation and re-evaluation of the difficult and painful nature of black history and present. Compton continues later in the poem,

> The rupture is the inscription, the brokenness the tradition,
> the repetition the affliction, the body the preserved fiction.
> The script the friction. (103)

With the repetition of the strong end rhymes, Compton achieves an incantatory mode that blends an oral tradition with "the script" of the poem. His conflations of traumatic images of "rupture" and "brokenness" with ones of continuity like "inscription" and "tradition" destabilize the binaries that have been associated with these terms. Compton recuperates "rupture" and "brokenness" while remaining ambivalent about their effects on black history. And while "repetition" with a critical difference may be a postmodern means of re-appropriating culture and master narratives, Compton also emphasizes that it is an "affliction," indicating a certain inevitability in the matter.

Throughout "The Reinventing Wheel," Compton's conflations of various cultures and histories are not simply hybridities—his intertexuality and interdiscursivity function more as an expansion of Gilroy's Black Atlantic, where, as Compton puts it, "[t]he speakers are feeding back" (104) to his "hip hop / in the boondocks" (108). Compton's vision is one of "a communion" that "is happening worldwide, a whirlwind / of performances, Black English, black expropriation / scattered to the four corners" (106). This vision of a "whirlwind" challenges the strict categorization of art, culture, race, and immigrant that Compton sees as detrimental to a real engagement with the complexity and richness of life in British Columbia. In a stanza that begins

with traditional categories paired into binaries, Compton plays with the reader's expectations before collapsing into the ambivalent word "split" (105):

> Lyrical / prosaic,
> settler / native,
> American / North American,
> nationalism / segregation,
> gold / pyrite,
> familiarity / contempt,
> ocean / border,
> sub / urban,
> dispersal / determinancy,
> mulatto,
> mestizo,
> metis,
> cabra,
> Eurasian,
> creole,
> coloured,
> colored,
> split. (105)

In these lines, Compton challenges not just traditional boundaries between concepts of "settler" and "native," but also draws our attention to the fact that some "split[s]" occur within words themselves, where for instance, "sub / urban" highlights both the fracture and ambivalence in the word "suburban." Compton also lists terms to describe a situation of mixity, showing a multilingual yet elusive struggle to pinpoint an exact way to describe mixed race people like Compton himself. Compton's subtle juxtaposition of "coloured, / colored," which changes only the spelling of the word from American to British, further emphasizes the nuances between being black in America and being black in Great Britain or its former colonies. With this play on words and understated mis-duplications, Compton remaps the spaces and words that form the borders between countries, cultures, and races.

With his insistence on interdiscursivity, Compton also rejects the idea of a singular historical narrative, even autobiographically, noting how,

> My family history is fractured, impure,
> history imported with deft warp and weft.
> You don't know your past, you don't know your future. (106)

In this line, Compton quotes a vocal sample from the opening track of the Public Enemy album *Fear of Black Planet* (1990),[10] recalling the hip hop group's sound collages of a diverse range of song samples and media recordings.

Familial knowledge is all that Compton aspires to here, but he grapples with his real lack of knowledge of either his "past" or "future." What he does have in "The Reinventing Wheel" is "the global click track" (110) and "the lingua franca, the stutter" (110). Compton may be ambivalent about being "a cargo cult / of reception. A buffer / between selves" (110), but what he has achieved with this ambitious poem should not be discounted. Compton is aware of how black history can be commoditized and re-appropriated with

> The packaging of our trauma, blood,
> our bastardizing of the scripts from the metropole, the black ones:
> these are the ready-made blues in the backwoods, backwards.
> A spiral lineage. A root through. (110)

However, his attempts to move "backwards" in the "backwoods" to trace this "spiral lineage" have already created a rich, multifaceted, nuanced engagement with what it means to be black in British Columbia.

Rune: Confabulation and Black Vancouver

The dense layers of historical, literary, and theoretical intertexts that inform Compton's work, both in form and content, allow him to have them interact and create new ways of understanding his contemporary contexts. In essence, the intricacy of his work reflects the complexities of a site such as British Columbia, where, as he notes, one is at "an integrated outpost, / a province of edges, / a contact zone" (*Performance Bond* 48). Most significantly, Compton is not content to simply document the multiple layers and ways of approaching British Columbia's history; in writing about such a space of diversity, he is conscious of the fact that "the visuals / won't stay still" (*Performance Bond* 48), and that the intertexts in his poetry estrange, change, and perform to constantly alter and challenge themselves and perceptions of fixed identities and heritages. In this instability, Compton's work reflects on the tensions and contradictions in creating a context for a multicultural British Columbia in a space dominated by American popular culture, global black culture, and official Canadian histories.

In the last section of *Performance Bond*, Compton goes one step further in his active improvisation and mis-duplication of culture and history. Entitled "Rune," Compton's literary and visual memorial to the historic black Vancouver neighbourhood of Hogan's Alley consists of both historical and "factitious elements" (10). While Compton makes the artificiality and fictionality of these elements (a newspaper article, four landmarks, and two transcribed interviews) clear in the introduction to the book, the way

they are presented without preamble or other mitigating factors in the text gives them an aura of authenticity. Compton's astute confabulation of various historical voices, visuals, and records of Black Vancouver fleshes out the gaps and silences in its history. His invention and re-interpretation of what these historical documents might look like continues in the mode of interdiscursivity that I outlined above, but also points to the complexities, slippages, and referentiality inherent in the process. Remixing and misduplicating the work of Daphne Martlett and Carole Itter's oral histories in *Opening Doors in Vancouver's East End: Strathcona,* citing Andrea Fatona and Cornelia Wyngaarden's moving documentary on Hogan's Alley, and taking up the challenge of Peter Hudson's whimsical essay "Natural Histories of Southwestern British Columbia"—Compton performs what he calls

> a satire on Afrocentrism. (The title is an allusion to the "Lost-Found Nation of Islam," for example.) Afrocentrism is often fascistic, so maybe I'm attracted to satire as a method of de-railing those tendencies. You certainly can't assail Afrocentrism with rational argument, because it usually rejects rationalism, in an essentialist or religious way. ("Black Writers")

Yet, while Compton's quotation here suggests a certain cynicism and ironic playfulness, in an essay for *West Coast Line* also published in 2005, he reveals an emotional attachment to Hogan's Alley that proves that the crossroads that lead to various versions of this historic Afro-diasporic neighbourhood in Vancouver are also capable of more affective readings. In "Hogan's Alley and Retro-Speculative Verse," Compton reveals his anxiety about his "experiment" with "notions of historiography and cultural memorialization" (115). He is worried that readers might see it as a simple "hoax" (115), when what he intends for the work is an exploration of both "displacement" and "self-enculturation" (115).

In fact, particularly affecting are Compton's stagings of the "Lost-Found Landmarks of Black Vancouver"—a series of carefully composed tableaux of old shop and house-fronts in Vancouver disguised with fictitious signs, like "Strathcona Coloured People's Benevolent Society of Vancouver," "False Creek Moslem Temple," "The Far Cry Weekly: Voice of the Negro Northwest (Since 1957)," and "Pacific Negro Working Men's Association." Compton gives these imaginary communities a real physical address in Vancouver, firmly mapping their presence and absence in the urban landscape. His choice of names for these sites speaks to the lack of black voices and organizations, or at least a lack of a memory of them in the city. The poet creatively misduplicates history and memory in the absence of

any other official or available archive. Like the poems "Performance Bond" and "The Reinventing Wheel," the histories and records that Compton invents in "Rune" have a performative element to them that is conscious of their improvisation and mis-duplication of historical records, cultural expectations, and intertexts. Taking things a step beyond the use and abuse of the intertext, Compton imaginatively creates in "Rune" something new from an unstable sense of the old. This seems fitting in the wake of Vancouver's rich and complex contemporary setting, as the poet's work seeks to open up radically different ways of approaching history and memory.

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NOTES

1 Another way of considering a hip hop aesthetic is put forward by Tricia Rose, who quotes Arthur Jafa pointing out that the "flow, layering, and ruptures in line" (39) that structure graffiti, breakdancing, and rap music. Again, there is a balance here between the improvisational qualities of "layering" and "rupture" with the underlying sense of the "flow."

2 Donna Bennett and Russell Brown have anthologized Compton's poem "The Reinventing Wheel" in the third edition of *An Anthology of Canadian Literature in English* (2010). Their footnotes to the poem represent the most comprehensive annotated edition of Compton's work, with sixty-four notes devoted to a single poem, mostly explaining Compton's intertextual sources and reflecting the dense intertextuality of the piece.

3 See Siemerling for a more extensive reading of how Legba influences Compton's earlier poems in *The 49th Parallel* and the section "Vévé."

4 Art historian Robert Farris Thompson points out that to achieve "àshe" or a divine gift "to make all things happen and multiply," (18) "one must cultivate the art of recognizing significant communications, knowing what is truth and what is falsehood, or else the lessons of the crossroads—the point where doors open or close, where persons have to make decisions that may forever after affect their lives—will be lost" (19). While acknowledging her debt to Thompson's work, Russell extends Legba's possible influence to narratology, seeing how concepts of indeterminancy and crossroads affect African Atlantic narratives.

5 Compton here seeks to rechart certain cultural, historical, and geographical boundaries. While Morrison's text seeks to show how concepts of "blackness" were necessary for white American writing to create a discourse of white supremacy in the American context,

her use of cartographic and geographic metaphors in her study seem to speak to certain aspects of Compton's project:

> I want to draw a map, so to speak, of a critical geography and use that map to open as much space for discovery, intellectual adventure, and close exploration as did the original charting of the New World—without the mandate for conquest. I intend to outline an attractive, fruitful, and provocative critical project, unencumbered by dreams of subversion or rallying gestures at fortress walls. (3)

6 The British Columbia Province's website translates the motto as "splendour without diminishment" (See "B.C. Facts—Province of British Columbia." 9 Dec. 2010. Web), but Compton is referring to the plurality of meanings inherent in the original Latin.

7 An Aboriginal people indigenous to Alaska and the islands they call Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands). There is archaeological evidence that they have been there for up to 8,000 years. See *Haida Gwaii: Human History and Environment from the Time of Loon to the Time of the Iron People*. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 2005. Print.

8 For a detailed history of the incident involving the Komagata Maru and would-be Indian immigrants in 1914, see Hugh J. M. Johnston, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: the Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar*. Delhi: Oxford UP, 1979, and the more recent book by Ali Kazimi, *Undesirables: White Canada and the Komagata Maru: An Illustrated History*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011. Print.

9 For more on Clutesi, see "Influential Figures." History and Culture. *TSESHAHT First Nation.* 9 Dec. 2010. Web.

10 *Fear of a Black Planet* is an album that expands on the sample-laden work of *It Takes Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* (1988), which Compton mentions in *After Canaan* as an album that "thoroughly rocked my sense of identity" (146) and led him to the library to track its references to Malcolm X and the Black Panthers.

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Melanie Pierluigi

Heaven-sent

When I finish collecting
bits of conversation,
when you angle
your body up and toward
the sun,
the light will pause
and adjust just for you.

This solitary movement
is collapsible. You always
meant to lie hidden
behind words
but you question
your hand against the table,
your own salvaged

sketching of trees. You painted
pictures to stay still
longer, to extend into this
pale embrace,

That July,
you watched your prayers
come in the form of
wounded animals,

heaven-sent
they burrow
even now.

Ana María Fraile-Marcos

Urban Heterotopias and Racialization in Kim Barry Brunhuber's *Kameleon Man*

Michel Foucault elaborates on the concept of heterotopia—a compound term derived from classic Greek meaning *other space*—in his 1967 lecture "Des espaces autres." He used the term, initially coined in medicine to refer to normal tissues that grow in unexpected places in the body, to denote "real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" ("Of Other Spaces" 4). The term's penchant for ambiguity was already present in its medical use, "questioning binary divisions between healthy/normal and sick/abnormal" (Cenzatti 75). Following Foucault's discussion of heterotopia, the concept has attracted widespread interest in social theory, connecting, for example, with Henri Lefebvre's work on the production of space, as Edward Soja remarks when he himself undertakes the study of heterotopias as particular spaces of representation "linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life," retaining "a partial unknowability . . . mystery and secretiveness" (67).

Focusing on *Kameleon Man*, a first novel by Kim Barry Brunhuber, a CBC reporter and investigative journalist turned fiction writer, I aim to explore the mixed race body as a heterotopia of *difference,* a third term in the equation normality/deviance on which Foucault based his theory of heterotopias, thereby underlining the relationship between place, positionality, and race. Heterotopias of difference, Marco Cenzatti argues, "are still places in which irreconcilable spaces coexist," but in a context where what constitutes

irreconcilability is constantly contested and changing (79). Accordingly, I consider the mixed race body as heterotopic, an irreconcilable, fluid space in constant transformation, which blurs the boundaries between normalcy and deviance, sameness and difference, invisibility and recognition, contested by the gaze of others and contesting received notions of race, class, and even gender and sexuality. *Kameleon Man* probes the shifting positionality of mixed race subjectivity in terms of the production and consumption of culture, racialization, and identity in the globalization era through the figure of Stacey Schmidt, a twenty-one-year-old part-black college student, turned fashion model. Upon its publication, the book received strong reviews by renowned critics such as George Elliott Clarke, and was excerpted in Donna Bailey Nurse's anthology of black Canadian writing *Revival.* However, it has hardly elicited any critical attention since then, despite the novel's interesting problematization of Michel Pêcheux's notion of *disidentification* in terms of "pheneticizing," a neologism recently coined by Wayde Compton to refer to the phenomenon of "racially perceiving someone based on a subjective examination of his or her outward appearance" (*After* 25). Under the influence of the pheneticizing gaze, Stacey's mixed race subjectivity is caught between the performance of what Pêcheux calls the "good subject," who *freely* identifies with the dominant ideology and willingly assimilates into it, and the counter-identification of the "bad subject," who, though rebelling against dominant ideology, often reinscribes it by simply reversing its tenets. However, Stacey's attempt to control and thrive on pheneticizing leads him initially to embrace what I call *deceptive disidentification*, which proves as threatening to his freedom of self-definition as both identification and counter-identification. If for Pêcheux *disidentification* involves a third mode of relating to dominant ideologies by simultaneously working on them and against them, Stacey's early move is that of the disidentifying subject who opts for subversion rather than for a direct struggle to put an end to racialization. Hence, he tries to turn pheneticizing to his advantage, allowing himself to be misrecognized by the subjective gaze of others in his longing for approval and success, while keeping his secret self to himself. Like a chameleon, he attempts to preserve his integrity by changing colours on the surface, thus passing for whatever race he is perceived as belonging to. However, Stacey's agency is put into question when considered in the light of Compton's *pheneticizing,* which by shifting the racializing gaze from the viewed to the viewer corrects the misleading implications of the term "passing"—a term that "grammatically absents the person who reads someone's race" (*After* 22). Stacey's quest for

self-empowerment and control also foregrounds the role of the viewer in turning mixed race subjectivity into a fantasy locus, but the novel more importantly highlights the ambiguous status of the mixed race subject who hovers between the agency of passing and the objectification of pheneticizing. I argue that in the early stages of the novel, Stacey practises a deceptive disidentification because he fools himself into believing that he can practise deception as a subversive strategy, complying with people's misrepresentations of him in order to become a famous model. All along, he believes he can keep his inner self untouched by the pheneticizing gaze. His disidentification, however, proves a treacherous strategy, because his chameleonic strategy of passing for whatever race or nationality is in demand in the fashion business reinforces rather than deconstructs racialization, resulting in the expropriation of his own complexly blended identity. Consequently, Stacey evolves from his initial tentative strategy of deceptive disidentification to attempting counter-identification as black. Yet, neither his light colour nor his socio-cultural background allow for his uncomplicated assimilation into blackness and the oppositional performance attached to black nationalism. Only at the end of the novel does Stacey eschew his prior deceptive disidentification and subsequent counter-identification in favour of an honest disidentification that exchanges his previous chameleonic strategy—which aimed to melt with his surroundings by adapting to or complying with outer expectations of who he is or should be—for one of metamorphosis. Unlike the chameleonic surrender to pheneticizing, metamorphosis does not imply mimicking and adaptation, but transformation and evolution, even self-affirmation against the pheneticizing gaze. Thus, metamorphosis implies the rejection of both the instability of compliant chameleonic change, and the fixity or immutability of essentialisms.

My reading of Stacey's chameleonic racial quality brings Foucault's theories about the utopian body, heterotopian spaces, and the panopticon into conversation with the theories on dominant ideology interpellations forwarded by Michel Pêcheux, Judith Butler, Fred Wah, and Wayde Compton, among others, as well as with the thought of black intellectuals such as Aimé Césaire, W. E. B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, and Toni Morrison. This interdisciplinary methodology reads the presence of the mixed race body in various heterotopian spaces that amplify the effects of pheneticizing, making it evident for the reader that race is a pseudoscientific "folk taxonomy," only as real—or unreal—"as our current social consensus" (Compton, *After* 25), but also dispelling any claim that we have entered a post-racial era.

Stacey's pilgrimage through various cityscapes becomes both trans-national and trans-racial—and arguably trans-sexual—when he moves from his native small-town Nepean-cum-Ottawa suburb to Toronto, and from there to Europe, where he briefly visits Munich, Germany, and later, Alicante and Granada, Spain. In the process, the presence of his heterotopic body in other typical heterotopias, such as the mirror, photography, the fairgrounds, the airport, the train, or the fashion show runway, boosts the recognition of the racializing forces that imprison him, jeopardize his sense of identity, and even put his physical and mental health at risk. As a *flâneur,* Stacey is a detached but highly perceptive bourgeois dilettante, as Walter Benjamin would have it. However, class and race collide in his racialized body as his identity as a middle class, suburban ("white") Canadian is unsettled, questioned, and practically dissolved by the social thrust to make him, first, an icon of urban male blackness, as distant as this identity may be from his own experience, and later on, a racialized unidentified *other*, signifying both difference or uniqueness, and sameness or the common human condition. As a result, although Stacey continues performing his role as a *flâneur* for the rest of the novel—i.e., as the stroller of global urban landscapes who ambiguously acts as both a disengaged, cynical voyeur on the one hand, and as a full participant in the urban reality he portrays, on the other—he is denied the social class and economic status attached to this figure. Thus, while offering poignant social commentary as he captures the life around him with his camera—the tool of the modern *flâneur*, according to Susan Sontag—he stands unsteadily between his middle-class origins and aspirations, and his precarious economic situation as a mixed-race model, which leads him to literal starvation and to take huge risks running drugs to pay for cosmetic surgery. Stacey's status as an unconventional *flâneur* is further accentuated by the way in which the different urban spaces he briefly inhabits, revealed as heterotopias, transform him under the pressure of the pheneticizing gaze, since he is not just a viewer but also the conscious—and complicit—object of the commodifying stares of others. In his quest for *recognition* (Fanon, *Black Skin* 210-222), he will drift between trying to conform to racializing expectations—linked to *identification* with the dominant ideology in Pêcheux's terms—and resisting the cooption of his mixed racial self—*counter-identification* and *disidentification*. The ambivalence and instability of heterotopias, described as sites with "the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspend, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they

happen to designate, mirror, or reflect" (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 3-4) aptly matches and reverberates with the ambiguous social position Stacey occupies as a mixed-race subject. Thus, Stacey's tour through the physical geographies of urban space foregrounds "the very contradictions that this society produces but is unable to resolve" (Dehaene 25). Among these contradictions and paradoxes are the coexistence of the progressive policies of multiculturalism vis-à-vis the conservative multiracial discourses aiming at a colour-blindness that denies difference and makes it impossible to address inequalities and racist discrimination.

The Fashion Show as Heterotopia

The novel's first heterotopia is the mall, this semi-public *space of representation,* in Henri Lefebvre's terminology, where mass consumption is the social norm. At the novel's opening, the mall has been transformed into a fashion platform in order to promote the consumption of articles sold by the firms that sponsor the show. The fashion show appears as a heterotopia, a thrilling space that instils imagination as it erases time. According to Foucault, the "heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time" ("Of Other Spaces" 7) and find themselves in a type of heterotopia that he terms "heterochrony." Thus, as the models walk down the runway wearing wedding dresses, tuxedoes, and other clothes for different social events at various stages in life, different times and spaces coalesce and overlap, creating the effect of a counter-site which reflects all the real sites and times found in a person's life. The runway is transformed into a heterochrony where time appears "in its most flowing, transitory, precarious aspect," as in festivals ("Of Other Spaces" 7), holding for Stacey the promise of freedom: "For some reason, the runway is also called the ramp, which evokes images of takeoffs and landings. Magical properties. Models suddenly gifted with the power of flight" (*Kameleon* 4). Stacey hopes to fly away from mediocrity and stagnation by simultaneously thriving on and subverting racial essentializing on a runway that he envisions as the locus of his "enacted utopia" (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 4). The in-betweenness of his hybrid self allows for the creation of a shifting, ambiguous, and elusive persona, similar to that of the trickster, a role in which Stacey excels when he is given the chance to perform on a similarly transformative runway. Thus, to Stacey the ramp is "[a] perceptual illusion. It bends light, it's curved. It's tilted, enabling models to ascend or descend to different levels" (4), reminiscent of the different stages in Dante's quest from Hell to Paradise in his *Divina*

Commedia. Furthermore, the fashion show appears throughout the novel as a symbolic as well as a physical space, not just for the transformation of models, but as an escapist site for the spectators, who project their illusions or aspirations onto the models, thus reflecting Stacey's own dreams of success, admiration, and recognition.

At the novel's starting point, Stacey is determined to leave Nepean, a town he describes as "a model's purgatory" (9) because of its homogenizing parochialism, and to try his luck in Toronto. In contrast with suburban Nepean, Toronto appears as a place of plurality where he could thrive on his alterity and reclaim places of otherness without eschewing his role as "both a deceptive insider and deceptive outsider" (Minh-ha 74) destabilizing ethnic/ethic paradigms. Therefore, from the beginning, Stacey's stance regarding the dominant symbolic system is that of deceptive *disidentification*, because despite his critical awareness of the nefarious racialization processes at work in society, he becomes complicit with pheneticizing, attempting to comply with the ever-shifting distorting misrecognition of his mixed-race body in order to draw social approval and professional success.

The Heterotopias of the Mirror and the Body

After defining heterotopias, Foucault proceeds to consider the mirror as an in-between experience set between utopias and heterotopias. The utopia of the mirror allows him to see himself where he is not, "in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface . . . a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent" ("Of Other Spaces" 4). However, he adds, the mirror "is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position I occupy" (*"Of Other Spaces"* 4). Aptly, one of the novel's central tropes is that of the mirror. Hence, the mirroring effects of reflection, inversion, fragmentation, agglomeration, and distortion are produced not just by everyday reflecting objects, but also by our subjective projections upon the body, and more specifically, upon Stacey's racialized hybrid body.

Interestingly, Foucault's radio lecture "Les Hétérotopies" in 1966 was followed by another titled "Le corps utopique," where he establishes the body as a utopia, "a fragment of imaginary space, which will communicate with the universe of divinities, or with the universe of the other . . . the product of its own phantasms" ("Utopian Body" 232). Despite Foucault's insistence on presenting the body as a utopia, its own materiality—which he both

acknowledges and eschews—rather inscribes it in the realm of his previously theorized heterotopias, as the mirror assigns "a space to the profoundly and originally utopian experience of the body" (233).

Under the transfiguring mirroring effect of his audience's pheneticizing gaze, Stacey's body is, in Foucault's words, "torn away from its proper space and projected into an other space" (232). Moulded and consumed by the stares of others, his body becomes an ontological and epistemological site through which he can get to know himself in relation to others in what he perceives as a densely racialized space. While on the runway, Stacey becomes "a great utopian actor" (Foucault, "Utopian Body" 231), wearing a mask and enacting the utopian dreams of his audience, who in exchange return to him an image of desire and admiration. Hence, Stacey's body disappears, only to reappear as a utopia in the heterotopian mirror of the gaze of others: "All staring back at me. What do they see, anyway? They are not looking at Stacey—he does not exist anymore" (7). Thus, his biracialized and imperfect body—uneven teeth, inconvenient bodily hair—is transformed into Foucault's utopia of the "incorporeal body" (229), which allows for the fantasy of eternity, invulnerability, and perfection. Stacey is keenly aware that he is precious for the fashion industry because his mixed race body is considered "a rare breed" (6), charged with the legacy of violence and desire associated with miscegenation in the history of Western colonial imperialism, which makes even grubby kids and old ladies wish to touch him, while wondering, "is he real?" (9). However, much as he wants to peddle his brownness in exchange for recognition, Stacey cannot allow for this complete erasure of his self. He is confronted with Du Bois' conundrum of "double consciousness," immersed in "a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world" (Du Bois 2). Nevertheless, he fools himself into believing that he can avoid being trapped in the mirage produced by the mirroring effect of the gaze of others—or "the ruse of the mirror," as Foucault puts it ("Utopian Body" 231)—and thinks: "Or maybe I'm still there. Essentially Stacey, but made up, dressed, camouflaged, disguised by the art of powerful illusionists, obeah men. Maybe the disguise is really my own. I'm a chameleon. A mimic, like a stick insect, like those yellow-and-black-striped flies that pretend to be bees" (7).

By means of the (military) technique of camouflage, Stacey actively tries to oppose, disturb, dislocate, or displace "a nationalistic [Canadian] aesthetic that continually attempts to expropriate difference into its own consuming

narrative" (Wah 75) while profiting from it. The novel foregrounds the nationalistic dimension of this aesthetic in the scene where Stacey poses as a Canadian Olympic runner at Pearson Airport. Again, the setting chosen functions as a heterotopia. As Steen Christiansen explains, "[t]he ontology of the airport is peculiarly split between a sense of placelessness, while at the same time being a place of material organization and social complexity. It is a system of interconnected material worlds, and thus a heterotopia; a blending space of overlapping ontologies" ("Airport Heterotopias"). In the novel the airport is portrayed as a fantasy locus of smug Canadian nationalism packaged and sold to travelers moving in a network of national and international flight connections. In the context of the duty-free shops, selling "novelty jams, maple syrup, maple jelly, maple mustard; spoons of all kinds; cups that say DAD; Lilliputian SkyDomes and CN Towers" (107), the group of models posing as the black sportsmen who won the gold medal for Canada at the Olympics sell an ideal multicultural Canada, where blackness is embraced and extolled as representative of the country's best. However, the heterotopia of the airport reveals the superficial, banal quality of this nationalism, which turns into an "inadvertent charade" (115) when passersby passengers mistake the black models for the real athletes and ask them to sign autographs and to be photographed with them. The misperception of Stacey as black demands that he pass as Floyd Stanley, although in Stacey's opinion, the Olympic runner is as "[u]gly as this terminal. Dark as my sneakers" (115). Due to the pheneticizing processes at work in Canadian society, the models are pushed to become impostors, and deprived of their individuality. They become also interchangeable, disposable, with no identity of their own, something the fashion Mogul Chelsey Manson confirms when he fires Stacey, telling him that anyone can replace him. The airport as heterotopia promising movement and flight paradoxically reflects the immobility inflicted upon racialized subjects who, like Stacey and his team, are only allowed to run "stationary relay races" (151), remaining fixed in space, essentialized in the social imaginary.

Stacey's technique of camouflage is a dangerous move, as Siemen, a successful part-black fellow model who has clearly chosen to adopt a black nationalist stance, warns him: "'[N]ever let them create your image for you. I don't have to tell you what happens when they do. Why do you think black people are so messed up? Our image has been repackaged and sold off to the highest bidder. Soul is for sale. Our own souls are disposable, like gloves. . . . You can't carry two faces under one hat'" (135). Stacey's plight lies in this

impossible negotiation of space and race famously articulated by Du Bois as a "two-ness—an American [or, in this case, an unmarked (white) Canadian], a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (2). Disregarding Siemen's advice, Stacey is sent "wooing false gods," to continue using Du Bois's religious imagery, "and invoking false means of salvation" (5), those of global capitalist commodification, in the hope that he be allowed "into the invisible network of society" (Foucault, "Utopian" 232). Hence, the heterotopia of the gaze of the audience gathered around a runway, or around the models in the airport, becomes suffused with symbolic violence and turned into Stacey's battleground, as George Elliott Clarke persuasively argues in "The Perils of Pluralism" (17).

The ambiguity produced by the heterotopia of the mirror raises the important question of authenticity, repeatedly alluded to by Canadian mixed race critics and writers such as Wayde Compton, Lawrence Hill, and Suzette Mayr, and made explicit in Fred Wah's title *Faking It: Poetics & Hybridity*. Stacey's complicity with his audience's pheneticizing turns his utopia into a recurrent dystopian nightmare in which, as he walks down an endless runway, his face freezes into a smile that is described as "an impossible rictus stretching from ear to ear" (7). Like Fanon, Stacey seems determined "to laugh [him]self to tears, but laughter had become impossible" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 112). As a result, "no one's fooled. The audience sees through my face, howls at the deception, rushes the stage, tears me to bloody ribbons" (Brunhuber 7-8). Reversing Fanon's metaphor of black skin in a white mask, Stacey sees himself as a minstrel show white actor in a black face, impersonating ludicrous—but also potentially violent—black characters for the benefit of a white audience. His bad conscience as an impostor is enhanced by his flawed impersonation of black masculinity for his white girlfriend, Melody Griffin, who is portrayed as a consumer of Stanley Fish's "boutique multiculturalism," lured by the exoticism of the racially different, but rejecting *essential* or *pure* blackness as represented in the novel by the couple of loud Jamaican Canadian young men in the "exotic" clothes of urban blacks. Whereas Stacey "sniff[s] to inhale their negrosity" (165), Melody whispers, "'I'm glad you're not like them'" (165). So, Stacey is first troubled by his own insincerity: "I'm not the genuine article. I come with no pedigree of negritude" (49), until he understands that what Melody seeks in him is a tamed blackness, less threatening or disturbingly *different,* obligingly packaged to be consumed as palatably exotic: "She told me on our

first date," Stacey recalls, "that she liked me because I wasn't too dark. I took that as a compliment then. Now I know better. I'm not like 'them'" (169), referring to the Jamaican Canadian youths. Rebelling against the distortion, commodification, and appropriation of his persona, as well as against the disparaging stereotyping of black maleness, Stacey reaffirms his black nationalism by acting out the socially construed role of the black rapist. In a retaliatory move reminiscent of Fanon's "lust for revenge" (*Black Skin* 14), Stacey uses the morally suffused Western colour imagery to describe his symbolic rape of his white girlfriend as she poses for him naked while he uses his camera to shoot at her, penetrating her inner self: "Stepping out of the light and into the shadows, I can hardly see my hands. I'm black like me" (169). The reference to John Howard Griffin's book *Black Like Me* (1961), where the author describes his experience as a white journalist passing as a black man in the segregated South of the US, underlines the fact that Stacey, too, is performing a role, putting on a black mask that confirms the racist stereotyping of the black man, as a way of embracing black nationalism. Rather than grasping "white civilization and dignity" (Fanon 63) with the symbolic rape of Melody, Stacey completely reverses Fanon's terms and "across the zebra striping of [his] mind surges this desire to be suddenly" *black*, rather than white (*Black Skin* 63). Melody's symbolic violation takes the shape of a photo shoot in which the tables are reversed and she, instead of Stacey, becomes the object of desire and is reduced to "abject game" (Clarke, "Perils"). This time, Stacey thinks, "[i]t's somebody else's turn to be the beast" (169), in a clear allusion to Fanon's affirmation that "[t]he white man is convinced that the Negro is a beast" (*Black Skin* 170), and to his own experience as a mixed-race model. However, as a result of his impersonation of the stereotypical black rapist, he does not recognize himself, nor his hands, the perpetrators of Melody's abuse.

If, as Fanon—and Toni Morrison after him (see below)—argues, "The Negro is comparison" (*Black Skin* 211), Melody's white womanhood also becomes at this point a mediating symbol used to capture those "uncontrived, unalloyed states a photographer searches for, almost never finds" (Brunhuber 170). The photographs Stacey takes of her encapsulate "[a]n ideal. Vulnerability. Shame. Contempt" (170). As a conveyor of purity and authenticity Melody becomes a sacrificial figure—"My ideas are expressed through her. She's both the medium and the message" (170)—foreshadowing Stacey's acknowledgement of his own objectification as a mirror to and a redeemer of society at the end of the novel: "I'm both the genius and the masterpiece" (274). It is this

agency as a "genius" that he struggles to keep all along his quest for recognition, minimizing the effects of his objectification into "the coloured clown . . . ready for [his] final tumble" (8).

Torontonian Heterotopias and Heterochronisms

As Stacey tours the megacity in search of his opportunity to be picked up by a major fashion or advertising firm, Toronto appears as a multicultural capital of extremes. Emerging from the subway onto Bloor Street, he is confronted with the polar realities of luxury in the shape of "Lexuses and BMWs" (16) and, on the other hand, with an army of bums "gumming for change" (16). He feels trapped in the junction of these binary realities, unable to cross the street because the drivers of luxury cars, "distracted by falling stock prices and cell phones" (16) tend to "ignore streetlights" (16), while one of the bums abuses him, calling him "Nigger" (17) when he politely refuses to give him money. "I can't escape" (17), Stacey thinks while he waits to cross the street. The scene foregrounds Stacey's emplacement for the rest of the novel, standing in an in-between space hovering between bare survival and the glamour and glitz of modelling, but also between his acculturation as a white Canadian and his racialization as black, and between his middle-class status and that of the destitute.

In Toronto, Stacey drifts between the fashion shows and a number of other public and private heterotopian spaces such as the basketball court, night clubs, ethnic diners, the Caribana Festival, a fashion workshop, and the annual Wines of the World trade show, all of which fit the definition of *heterochronisms* due to their suspension of traditional time-coordinates (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 7). This break with traditional time takes two opposing representations, according to Foucault. On the one hand, there are heterochronies of indefinitely accumulating time, such as museums and libraries, the result of a "will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes" (7). Following Foucault, the fashion district, which Stacey compares to a museum, is a product of modernity as it constitutes "a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages" ("Of Other Spaces" 7). From Stacey's perception, the fashion district appears as a heterochrony conflating Canada's colonial past as the site of fur trading posts for Western consumerism with a present of commodified models: "Walking through that neighbourhood is like strolling through a museum exhibit of an old trading post: ancient warehouses storing pelts of animals long extinct, stores with racks of petrified furs in the windows. Then I arrive at

the audition—a warehouse packed with petrified models" (140). As a result, Stacey appears entrapped in the historical perpetuation of the processes of objectification, commodification, and consumption.

On the other hand, there are heterotopias that instead of being oriented toward the eternal—like museums and libraries—are rather linked "to time in its most flowing, transitory, precarious aspect, to time in the mode of the festival" (7). Foucault sets the fairground as the epitome of such a heterochrony, and like him, the novel, too, foregrounds the Scarborough Fair as a paradigmatic heterochrony. Fairgrounds, described by Foucault as "marvelous empty emplacements at the outskirts of cities, which fill up, once or twice a year, with stands, displays, heteroclite objects, wrestlers, snakewomen, fortune-tellers" (7), appear as ephemeral spaces for merrymaking, which interrupt the apparent continuity and normality of ordinary everyday space. However, when Stacey gets to the Scarborough fairgrounds, it is an ordinary day, the carnies are "everywhere, putting up tents, assembling booths" (146), and all the magic and suspension of disbelief are deferred until the following day, when the fair opens. For Stacey, too, it is a working day. He is first photographed in a roller coaster carriage where the models pretend to be "traveling incredibly fast while [they] remain stationary" (151). Later on the photographer will digitally blur the background to give the impression of speed. This "heterotopia of illusion" which is the cart with the models within another "heterotopia of illusion"—the fair—is further enhanced by the feelings of fear and ennui experienced by the models while up in the rickety roller coaster. The scene is a *simulacrum* reflecting a society that pretends to be happy in the face of existential ennui. The mirroring of society becomes even more revealing when the photographer decides to recreate a circus scene, with the models as lion tamers. However, when Stacey—the only non-white model—puts on his bathing suit exposing his skin and all his chest hair (a symbol of his masculinity), the photographer decides to transform him into "The Beast," as the caption under the ensuing published picture announces, thus making explicit society's historical, though apparently subdued racism (cf. Fanon, *Black Skin* 170). Through the exaltation of Stacey's difference, the heterotopias created at the Scarborough Fair effectively work to exclude him from the modeling business. Utterly humiliated, he thinks, "Because of the Beast, Toronto's fashionables are looking and laughing. Who's going to hire a beast to launch their new lines? This is not the way I drew it up. What are my choices? . . . My window of opportunity is being sealed" (158). Thus, Stacey's

transformation into the beast reveals the racism underlying the celebration of plurality and ethnic and racial diversity.

However, as Marco Cenzatti puts it, "power, in Foucault's words, also 'percolates upward' and thus the imposition of deviance (subjugation), with its rules, spaces and times, is countered by the making of self-identity (subjectification) by the 'deviant' groups who re-code these other spaces with their own informal and often invisible meanings, rules and times" (77). Stacey senses in his buddies' performance of blackness a certain empowerment that he wishes for himself. However, on the edge of the black and the white worlds, he is not able to identify completely with his black mates, nor is he accepted by them as a *brother*. Involved in the strenuous game of disidentification with whiteness, he wishes to be able to counter-identify as black, but has to struggle with the fact that, "[m]y negritude is invisible to everyone but myself" (172).

Art and Photography as Mirror

Stacey's racial dilemma is built upon the concept of *artistic creativity*, where art is used for the double purpose of expressing one's self and for reflecting the world. To Stacey, photography is the ultimate heterotopian space that allows him, on the one hand, to express his perspective of himself and of life around, and on the other, to create an illusion when he poses as a model. Invisible, camouflaged within his mixed-race body, Stacey only feels close to expressing who he really is—a chameleonic figure on whom to project one's illusions/delusions—when he is photographed on the reflection of everyday objects, "Reflected in the penthouse windows. Reflected in the shiny toaster. Reflected in a large soupspoon. The light bends, I'm Dalíesque, melted, like time" (92). Hence, his utopian body is actually a "phantom that only appears in the mirage of the mirror, and then only in fragmentary fashion" (Foucault, "Utopian" 231). Although as a model, Stacey wishes to "show some personality, tell the camera who I really am, establish an identity" (92), he is usually "condemned to explore and exploit sex and vanity, everything that's most narcissistic, superficial and unsavory" (168), thereby not exerting control but being controlled by the gaze of others, or as a friend photographer puts it, "by the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" (92). By quoting Hamlet at the moment when the Shakespearian character is considering suicide, the novel points to Stacey's tragic plight, foregrounding death as the ultimate site for his utopian body once the mirror—his alternative heterotopia—only produces the erasure of his self by denying control over his own life.

The Panopticon

Seeing, but above all, being seen is the theme running through all Stacey's experiences. His feeling of imprisonment is easily understood if we read his total exposure to the pheneticizing gaze through Foucault's discussion of the panopticon effect. Like the panopticon, race difference induces "a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" by never letting the profiled person know "whether he is being looked at at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so" (Foucault, "Discipline" 201). Consequently, both the inmate and the racialized subject, aware of the possibility of being constantly under surveillance, are led to modify their behaviour to either conform to or subvert their watcher's expectations. In Foucault's parlance, all the mechanisms of power "are disposed around the abnormal individual, to brand him and to alter him" (199) with the objective to make him fit smoothly back into a highly hierarchically segmented society. Before Foucault, black intellectuals such as Du Bois, Césaire, and Fanon had theorized about the panopticon effect on the racialized black individual, noting that he/she is fixed to stereotypes by white definition, which leads, first, to double consciousness—"this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois 2)—and, secondly, to accepting the objectification of oneself—"One day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 112). Similarly, Stacey allows himself to be observed, singled out, and altered by the pheneticizing gaze that commodifies him.

This is most apparent when Stacey is videotaped at an audition to choose the next season's model for Kameleon Jeans. Isolated in a dark room, facing a video camera, Stacey is asked to talk about himself. The physical conditions he finds himself in recall those of the inmate in the panopticon, allowing for the obvious differences between the inmate's physical incarceration and Stacey's professional option to be the object of a commodifying gaze: "The klieg lights in front of me are blinding. I have no idea if the video camera has even started recording my pitch. A man in a short pink sweater told me to begin talking once the little red light went on, and to stop when it went off, but I don't see a red light of any kind. I'm alone in the room. What to do but keep going?" (143). Unable to decide whether he is being watched or not, Stacey continues playing his assigned role. After talking for a while, he sees

from the corner of his eye the light indicating the camera is recording, but he notices, "when I try to peer at it directly, it disappears" (144), again denying him the possibility to relax and be himself off the record. Stacey finds himself totally exposed: "I wasn't ready to talk about me" (144), he confesses while he starts taking off his clothes and revealing not just his minor and intimate bodily flaws but also his psychological vulnerability. Feeling totally powerless and controlled by the supposed gaze behind the camcorder, Stacey outspokenly expresses his disidentification when he gets angry and rebels by rejecting all the clichés about black maleness he is made to conform to: "'I don't play basketball. I hate rap music . . . and I pretend I like to talk to cameras. To tell you the truth, I hate talking to cameras, especially when there's no one behind them'" (145). All of a sudden, he does not care about the job any more, and vents his fury and frustration against the camera, only to find himself finally trapped by it. Unexpectedly, his challenging attitude in this moment of utter exposure and vulnerability is exactly what the fashion firm is looking for and he is chosen as the new Kameleon Man.

By reacting against the oppressing gaze of the camera or of the unidentified/absent observer behind it, Stacey inadvertently turns into the constructed (invented) punk, "hip, sophisticated, ultra-urbane" (Morrison 52) and racially ambiguous figure he is expected to perform or be, thus appealing to adolescents of all nationalities who will buy Kameleon jeans and imitate his defiant urban attitude. His disidentification with both whiteness and blackness is co-opted anew by the mercantile system in which he chose to try out his dreams of success, allowing for the panopticon mechanism to be definitely installed in his life when he yields to Kameleon's conditions and agrees to perform an assigned ambiguous identity which differs from his authentic one in that he is made to hide or suppress his black component.

Stacey's eventual rise in the modeling industry is intrinsically linked to the evolution of racialization in the West at the end of the twentieth century, from the celebration of racial difference to the enhancement of racial sameness, of a *new ethnicity* in which "individuals who, in some way or other, represent all races in one are held up as ideals . . . [in] an attempt to erase the political significance of race" (Lury 163). Stacey's agent Dat Win makes this explicit when he explains: "A couple of years ago everyone was caught up celebrating difference, the exotic. The blacker the better" (204). Now, however,

> [t]hings are different. We're done with the idea of legitimacy, pureness. The essential African, the essential Asian. All of that's done. Our ideas about race are changing. Gradually the world is swallowing the idea. That we're all the same.

> And I don't mean that we're all the same inside. One day, we'll all be the same outside. If we stir the pot long enough, you're what's left at the bottom. Kameleon isn't just about jeans anymore, it's about us. It's about humanity. It's about the net result, and you're it. (204)

Stacey's wish to succeed and be accepted, and his experience of belonging neither in the white nor in the black worlds—"you can't have the best of both worlds when you belong to neither" (169)—problematically leads him to accept Dat Win's terms—"You want me to say I'm not black?" (204)—even when he had previously longed to belong with his black pals. Hence, by agreeing to downplay his blackness in favour of the indeterminacy of his phenopolysemic looks, he becomes complicit with multiracialism's anti-blackness, somehow confirming Fanon's branding of the mixed race black as "a ready *collaborateur* with white supremacy" (Clarke, "Canadian Biraciality" 213). Stacey himself recognizes his mistake at the end when he says, "[m]y punishment is hereditary. I belong to a half-race of traitors," and decides to change: "I've learned my lesson" (274). At this point in the novel, Stacey travels to Germany, his white grandfather's homeland, where he expects to officially become the new Kameleon Man. Again, however, his body is torn away from its proper space of social recognition and acceptance—to paraphrase Foucault ("Utopian" 232)—and projected into the space of the marginal outlaw when he is slashed on the face after a skirmish with American Marines. Because, instead of being considered a "mark of distinction" (220)—the symbol of one's manliness—Stacey's scarred face threatens to put an end to his career just as it is about to take off, he agrees to smuggle drugs into Spain so that he can pay for the plastic surgery needed to fix his now imperfect face. Stacey Schmidt, the gentrified Carlton College student of his Nepean days, readily becomes in Germany a black thug cliché. Paradoxically, however, this happens when he has just been led to eschew his incipient adherence to blackness. Trapped in this nonbeing zone, his circumstances worsen in a train bound for Spain when the drug-filled bag he has concealed in his rectum breaks and, unable to deliver it to his contact person, he becomes sick and paranoid, thinking that the drug dealers are after him to kill him. From then on, feeling constantly observed and threatened, he starts a descent into hell which, according to Fanon, could nevertheless be his chance to transcend the polarities of racialization that imprison him, and be reborn: "There is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinary sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born. In most cases, the black man lacks the advantage of

being able to accomplish this descent into a real hell" (*Black Skin* 8). Yet, the protagonist may be better suited to transcend racial objectification than Fanon's black counterparts due to his mixed race condition. The answer to Stacey's ontological question seems to lie in adopting an uncompromising, albeit engaged, attitude from his embattled position as a mixed race subject, to enact a forthright disidentificatory subjectivity—rather than his previous devious one—that may situate him in a position to work on, within, and against the cultural form that imprisons him, to paraphrase Pêcheux.

Unsurprisingly, the train appears at this point as another classic heterotopian space, a nowhere place, a "heterotopia without geographical markers" (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 3) that is at the same time self-enclosed and moving through geography and across national borders, and where history conflates in the shape of the multifarious stories, places, and times which are the baggage of its mobile passengers. The spatial suspension and indeterminacy starts already in the train station, where Stacey cannot find his departure gate, and after consulting a map that tells him "YOU ARE HERE," he thinks to himself, "Only I can't tell where that is" (226). His spatial disorientation recalls Northrop Frye's famous question "Where is here?" (338) and suggests a parallel between the nation's grappling with its colonial legacy in the Western context and Stacey's hybridity. Thus, Stacey's unspecified or ambiguous racial status appears as a colonized and dislocated site. In the train, Stacey turns into a clandestine, marginal character linked to the Western notion of blackness when he finds out that his Eurorail pass is no longer valid and he is compelled to hide in the washroom for most of the trip to avoid the conductor, losing track of where he is at any given moment, losing also his criminal merchandise, and inadvertently going past his destination, Barcelona. Interestingly, Stacey's experience in the train echoes Fanon's when the latter becomes aware of his body not just "in the third person but in a triple person. In the train I was given not one but two, three places. I had already stopped being amused. It was not that I was finding febrile coordinates in the world. I existed triply: I occupied space. I moved toward the other . . . and the evanescent other, hostile but not opaque, transparent, not there, disappeared. Nausea…" (*Black Skin* 112). Like Fanon's, Stacey's dislocation leads him to make himself "an object" (112), and to be physically nauseated by the drugs he is carrying inside.

Still feeling under constant surveillance, Stacey will confusedly struggle to regain control over his own image and his soul. The myth of the soul is, according to Foucault, the most important of all the utopias of effacement of

the body created by adults, lodged in the body but able to escape in order to see out of the windows of the eyes, "to dream when I sleep, to survive when I die—It is beautiful, my soul: It is pure, it is white" ("Utopian" 230). It is not surprising then that "eyes" become an important trope in the novel. While stranded in Alicante, Stacey decides to earn some money by posing as a naked model for an art class. The lesson is about eyes—though, ironically, he is still required to pose naked. While the instructor reminds his students that "*Los ojos son el espejo del alma*" (248)—The eyes are the mirror of the soul—Stacey glimpses through a mirror on the wall at the drawings of his body the students are working on, and, in an ontological experience of platonic overtones, discovers himself doubly removed from his self-image as, first, the students' subjectivity and then the mirror, totally distort and transform him.

At this point a new heterotopia is created, which both erases the present time as it incorporates a long shared history of colonization of black subjectivity and commodification of the black body. When an African American woman called B (an initial that could stand both for an ontological command to *be,* and for the embodiment of a black Beatrice finally guiding Stacey through Heaven in his particular Divine Comedy) enters the room, he wishes he could paint himself painting her (249), and when their eyes finally meet, "there passes between [them] that unmistakable flash that happens between two black people who find themselves outnumbered. The invisible nod, acknowledgement of the past" (249). After this spontaneous connection, Stacey feels that this woman artist can really see his true self, and not the distortion of self he performs compelled by panopticism. His impression is confirmed at the end of the novel, when B uses Stacey's photographs in her installation to create a tableau depicting a beach scene, where everybody is on the verge of a catastrophe. Stacey discovers himself there as an existential figure pointlessly sweeping the sand on the beach. Through the heterotopian mirror of his own photographs, B's installation reveals in a way that cannot be obviated the negative result for the mixed race subject who underplays the ongoing impact of race in the construction of his/her own subjectivity. As Wayde Compton puts it, to concede that "'race doesn't matter,' . . . will leave you absolutely powerless and abject" ("Epic Moment" 135), something that Stacey himself had eloquently pointed out at the beginning of the novel:

> [W]e're shades. Insubstantial images of something real. Reduced almost to nothing. The only thing worse than living in that black-and-white world is living in a grey one, in which *race doesn't matter except to everyone else.* In which

> nothing's black or white and everything's both. The problem with living in grey is that one does not grow natural defences. Growing up grey is like growing up weightless on the moon. To return to earth is to be crushed by the weight of one's own skin. (49) (Emphasis added)

Although Stacey initially panics and runs away from the exhibition, feeling indeed crushed and torn apart by his biracialized condition, he will try to be saved from becoming a ghost, an individual "without an anchor, without a horizon, colorless, stateless, rootless" (Fanon, *Wretched* 218) by following Fanon's advice and turning "backward toward his unknown roots" (218). Embracing his blackness and its historicity implies becoming also thoroughly aware of his role as what Morrison has termed *an Africanist persona,* an interpreter of society whose very racialized body serves as a reflection of that society's fears, anxieties, and desires (Morrison 17). This happens while he contemplates the use B has made of his photographs. In this epiphanic moment, Stacey comes to understand himself as a sacrificial figure, very much like his former girlfriend Melody when she posed for him: "the sole purpose of my life is to make a statement about life itself. I'm the real exhibit here. Temporary art that falls apart before your eyes. I'm both the genius and the masterpiece" (274).

Stacey's Christ-like role emerges in the context of another heterotopia of mythical and historical dimensions that sets Granada as a zone of ethnic and cultural confluence, both a real and unreal space where the architecture becomes the repository of history and ethnicity. While Stacey looks down on the city of Granada from the Sierra Nevada, he establishes a parallel between his vanished "distant cousins, the Moors" (273) and himself, implying that just as Europe profited from the civilization created in Al-Andalus by the Moors, his racialized persona is being appropriated and exploited as a means of ontological meditation on contemporary culture and society.

However, counter-identification, or wanting to embrace a strategic black essentialism, only leads Stacey to the reversal of the established order and to renounce "the present and the future in the name of a mystical past" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 14). When he wakes up from a sunstroke convalescence after running away from B's installation and he finds B at his bedside, he eschews the invisibility provided by camouflage and his complicity with the establishment. In Du Bois's words, "[H]e began to have a dim feeling that, to attain his place in the world, he must be himself, and not another" (5), which is exactly the advice he was given before leaving Nepean (*Kameleon* 16). This implies the rejection of willingly lending oneself to be transformed

by the pheneticizing gaze. Determined to "learn to see the world through compound eyes" (281), like butterflies after their metamorphosis, Stacey faces the challenge of revaluing his hybridity and its inherent "synchronous foreignicity" (Wah 83), hence embracing disidentification—"the ability to remain within an ambivalence without succumbing to the pull of any single culture" (83)—as his key strategy for the assertion of his own subjectivity. Moreover, because disidentification "tries to transform a cultural logic from within, always laboring to enact permanent structural change while at the same time valuing the importance of local or everyday struggles of resistance" (Muñoz 11-12), it holds the promise of "a more democratizing affirmation of internal difference" (Butler 219).

This reading, therefore, differs considerably from George Elliott Clarke's conclusion that "*Kameleon Man* allows a stereotypical black salvation," through which Stacey emerges as a "decidedly *black* artist" and "an unambiguous heterosexual" ("Perils"). While agreeing with Clarke that, "[a]lthough he reinforces his heterosexuality by aligning military and fashion-industry metaphors, Stacey is as apparently a 'chameleon' sexually as he is racially" ("Perils"), my reading of the novel's ending as a reaffirmation of the in-betweenness attached to Stacey's hybridity runs contrary to Clarke's conclusion that "No in-between status—racial or sexual—is permitted" ("Perils"). Actually, Stacey is last found in "what appears as an evening gown" (Brunhuber 277) while he lies down in bed, convalescent after a sun stroke, and his enumeration of all the instances in which he has cross-dressed does not help to disambiguate his sexual orientation. The sight of a weak, sick man lying in bed in an evening gown does not accord with that of a Black Panther or a Malcolm X. On the contrary, I contend that Stacey's resolution to learn to see through compound eyes indicates his rejection of essentialisms, including a black nationalism that just reinforces white Eurocentric essentialism by reversing it.

The novel's open ending has Stacey imagining himself taking a 360 degree photograph encompassing B, the window, the mountains, the greenhouse, but also himself: "That's it. The first shot. I raise the loupe, hold the picture to the light, examine it from all angles. This single photograph almost makes up for everything that went into the taking" (282). Stacey's metaphor of inclusion and self-visibility based on his imagined use of a wide-angle lens indicates that he will keep his position on the hyphen as a comprehensive site of resistance. It thereby anticipates his engagement with a poetics of opposition based on what Fred Wah calls "the poetics of the 'trans-'" (90),

which, by situating the mixed race subject "in an aperture . . . offers a greater depth of field, a wide-angle lens that permits distortion at the edges" (91), allowing perhaps for what Daniel Coleman calls a *wry civility* (*White Civility* 42), or an ethical stance that is aware and critical of the historical project of normative white civility in Canada. Thus, positioned on the edges of a forthright disidentification that shuns his former attraction to the exploitation of pheneticizing, Stacey's new control over his fluid subjectivity gestures toward self-assertion. The result of his journey through the various multilayered heterotopian spaces he briefly inhabits serves to further magnify the mirroring effect produced by his heterotopic mixed-race body, which tests (Canadian) multiculturalism, but also the Western constructions of space and race as they intersect with history. "For a beginning," Stacey thinks, "it's not a bad start" (282).

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Bill Howell

An Absence of Team Spirit

Now starts to mean *then*
the moment it's written down.
(You completed all their forms two weeks ago.)

You send them a cheerful first-thing email,
followed by a crisp but pleasant lunchtime
voicemail. How much can you afford to care?

There seems to be an organic relationship between
a line's rhythm as measured by the breath pattern
involved in speaking it, and the emotional impact

of that line: *Making the team,*
then making it win: low self-esteem
sure beats chagrin.

So much of what we hope we want
has no need of us. The parts of the fishhook:
eye, shank, bend, point, barb, gap and throat.

The spaces between cutthroat numbers.
Last, lest, list, lost, lust. Prosperity
through repression.

"Not a single Taliban prisoner turned over
by Canadian Forces," the Defence Minister says,
"can be proven to have been abused."

Meanwhile, it's 5:03, Mr. Retread. At a cartoon
crossroads, two portly snails commiserate about
speeding tortoises coming out of nowhere—

Forum

Thinking Together

A Forum on Jo-Ann Episkenew's *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing*

Introduction: Indigenizing the "Author Meets Critics" Forum

Susan Gingell and Deanna Reder

The current forum on Jo-Ann Episkenew's *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigen*ous *Literature, Public Policy, and Healing* is the fourth in a series initiated when Jill Didur brought back the idea—and name—of such an event from two interdisciplinary conferences in the United States.[1] She suggested to members of the Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (CACLALS) that they hold their own forums to stimulate conversation about a recently published work perceived to be of broad interest to the scholarly community of the association and beyond. Each Author Meets Critics forum centres on a book that represents one scholar's take on issues to which she or he has devoted years of thought, and then brings into the conversation other members of the scholarly community who can offer the insights of different generations of academics who have been thinking in related areas.[2]

Following the live event, the panellists submit written versions of their contributions to the convenors of the forum, prompting all centrally involved to reflect further on the thoughts of the other panellists and of those in the audience who offered further ideas. The opportunity to respond more fully in writing can be especially important to the authors because they do not know before the live forum what the critics are going to say and have to respond off the cuff.

The live forum on Episkenew's *Taking Back Our Spirits* invited conversation about only the second monograph of literary criticism on Indigenous writing by an Indigenous critic in Canada, the first being Janice Acoose's 1995 book *Iskwewak: Kah'Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princesses nor Easy Squaws*.[3] Episkenew herself challenged the format of the forum as anti-Indigenous—a position she grounded by citing the traditional Cree practice of discouraging direct commands in order to avoid conflict and preserve relationships—and thus brought into the open questions about the nature of the live events. Her observation that critics who took part in the panel seemed decidedly nervous or uncomfortable at the unusual circumstance of delivering a critique of a book with the author in the room certainly reflected the experience of critics on earlier panels, and authors have typically and understandably found themselves anxious in anticipation of the experience of having their books discussed live and then being expected to respond immediately. Asking how the structure and the exchanges of the forum affect the critics and the author of the book under discussion takes up an issue literary theory seldom if ever addresses, and Episkenew's encouraging organizers to consider the affective impact of participation in the forum is in keeping with her focus on the physical, emotional, and spiritual effects of reading.

She prompts us to rethink how we might best balance three broad concerns: the need to preserve the space for dissent and non-coercive discussion, which Daniel Heath Justice in "Kinship Criticism and the Decolonization Imperative" remarks is an important part of self-determination (166); critics' accountability to the author; and minimizing anxiety and academic competitiveness, thus helping to achieve the goal of building and maintaining a lively, healthy, productive, and respectful critical community. Ways of better serving the goals of the forum while trying to meet Episkenew's challenge could include reconceiving and renaming the event from a meeting of author and critics, which sets up an (at least initial) opposition between sides in which the author is badly outnumbered, to a thinking together as a community of intellectuals on analogy with the Native Critics Collective's *Reasoning Together* (Acoose et al.). Had we named the forum "Thinking Together about *Taking Back Our Spirits,*" we could have signalled that we had not presupposed the levelling of direct criticism and explicitly addressed the emotional and professional tensions provoked by the event.

The choice of Episkenew's book for the present forum reflects the convenors' sense of its timeliness and importance in addressing multiple social needs. At a time in which Canadians are engaged in a state-sponsored

reconciliation process, encouraging more Canadian scholars and members of the educated public to read and talk about and/or continue to think about the claims and arguments of Episkenew's book seemed to us desirable for three main reasons:

1. Reconciliation can hardly succeed if many Canadians continue to think that the harm done to Indigenous people in Canada by compulsory residential schooling was an isolated phenomenon, and *Taking Back Our Spirits* does an excellent job of informing readers that residential schools were just one part of networked public policy initiatives to incorporate Indigenous peoples into the Canadian state by systematically erasing their differences from Euro-Canadians.
2. Episkenew offers a compelling diagnosis of the colonial pathology in our national body, pointedly asserting Euro-Canadians' unearned advantage and clarifying that public policy has been an engine for conferring that advantage.
3. *Taking Back Our Spirits* points out a persuasive route to healing, articulating a dual imperative for decolonization, namely that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are in need of that process.

Undoubtedly, Indigenous peoples need to heal from colonially and neocolonially inflicted damage, and Episkenew's book argues the idea that Indigenous prose and drama can effect narrative repair to the damaged spirits of Indigenous people, allowing them to reclaim healthy identities.[4] However, until non-Indigenous Canadians recognize that Canadian public policy damages *them* by setting them up as normative and perpetuating injustices in their name, thus structuring their complicity in ongoing colonizing relations with Indigenous peoples, and until settler-Canadians act on that recognition to decolonize themselves, reconciliation will remain a pious hope.

As the essays of the forum elaborate this line of thinking, they make clear the social *work* that *Taking Back Our Spirits* does, thus confirming that critical literature by Indigenous people in Canada acts in the same way as Episkenew argues other forms of Indigenous literature do. Both are agential and potentially transformative. However, as the thinking together of the forum also foregrounds, we need to consider the power for ill of our literary and critical words.

These Shared Truths: *Taking Back Our Spirits* and the Literary-Critical Practice of Decolonization

Allison Hargreaves

Like the literary and creative work to which it responds, criticism can itself constitute an act of both imagination and responsibility—and it is with a great measure of each that Métis literary scholar Jo-Ann Episkenew approaches the critical task of connecting contemporary Indigenous literary practice to public policy and healing in Canada. Tracing Indigenous literature's place in decolonizing the minds and spirits of First Peoples and settlers alike (Episkenew 19), *Taking Back Our Spirits* offers more than a robust expository account of colonial public policy as it is imaginatively engaged in the autobiography, fiction, and theatre of the post-*Halfbreed* canon; this book also invites reflexive consideration of the transformative properties of Indigenous literary practice itself (15).

Rejoining oral epistemologies that understand story as having the power to "change the course of events in both the material and the spiritual worlds" (4), Episkenew charts literature's potential for transforming the colonized imaginaries of those people Indigenous to this continent, and those who are—by complex and varied means—part of its ongoing invasion and settlement. In accounting for colonialism as the systemic and "pathological" condition by which First Peoples and settlers are joined in mutual but distinctly unequal relations of injury and gain, of harm and privilege (72), Episkenew suggests at once the power asymmetries in which colonialism embeds its subjects; the profound disavowal performed by settlers in order to legitimize, naturalize, or otherwise refute the "terrorism and theft" upon which the Canadian nation-state is fundamentally premised (5); and the prospective role of Indigenous literature in supplying a corrective truth to dominant forms of settler disavowal. She states: "Colonialism is a pathological condition, a sickness that requires a cure, and taking the shared truths of Indigenous people to the settler population comprises a component of that cure" (72).

Moreover, Episkenew's analysis accords Indigenous literature a public truth-telling capacity that is both prospectively therapeutic and socio-pedagogical (193), because such literature is thus generative of a dialectical

site into which both Indigenous and settler subjects are enfolded—along with the dominant competing narratives of the Canadian nation—such that Indigenous people might emerge healed from colonial trauma, and settlers cured of their pathological denial. Canada's official narratives naturalize settler unearned advantage, rationalize the occupation of Indigenous land, and justify the resultant "social and environmental consequences" that have accrued (Episkenew 5). Indigenous literature, for its part, furnishes a curative counter-narrative that affirms the truths of Indigenous readers, while educating settlers toward the kind of reflexive empathy Episkenew finds necessary to the cause of social justice and the ideal of decolonized relations (191). And it is here, in this transformative process as facilitated by Indigenous literature itself, that Episkenew discerns the genuine possibilities of rapprochement, if not "reconciliation," between Indigenous and settler communities (7; 73). Literature, she contends, both constructs among Indigenous and settler readers alike "a common truth about our shared past" (15), for all that we are differently positioned by it, and offers one space in which Indigenous and settler readers might together witness this shared past, reckon with its manifestation in the present, and critically align ourselves toward a different "vision of possibility" for the future (Justice, "Conjuring" 5).

In this way, *Taking Back Our Spirits* takes up the critical challenge that Creek-Cherokee critic Craig Womack envisions "of relating literature to the real world in hopes of seeing social change" (96). But Episkenew also avows, with frank and compelling pluck, that Indigenous literature itself "changes the world" (191). A bold claim for the material implications of imaginative work, this statement both recalls and extends existing notions of literature as reflective of lived contexts of struggle and hope to suggest the pedagogical and healing power entailed by those "extratextual" and inextricably *social* lives that stories lead (McKegney 57). For Episkenew, contemporary Indigenous literary practice is rooted in an intellectual tradition wherein the concept of material and imaginary transformation through story is a matter of inherited responsibility and truth (194).

The truths told by Indigenous literature—that Canada is founded upon systemic, state-sponsored violence and expropriation, and that this legacy is as much a lived inheritance in our present as it is a historical fact—these are truths belonging not only to Indigenous people, but to settlers as well. In advocating the transformative potential of these truths, especially insofar as they "implicate" those who read them in storied form (16-17), Episkenew articulates as an entry point into prospective "reconciliation" (73) a public

truth-telling process through literature that is, I think, epistemologically *distinct* from the asymmetrical exercise of cathartic release and unearned absolution in which the dominant rhetoric of truth and reconciliation arguably embeds its participants—colonial "victims" and "oppressors," respectively—in this post-apology moment (Chrisjohn and Wasacase 226).[5] Significantly, *Taking Back Our Spirits*' contribution to literary criticism and to the theorizing of Indigenous literature's transformative potential emerges in a moment redolent with the guarded hope and fitting scepticism that characterize many public and critical responses to the federal Government of Canada's June 2008 apology to former students of residential schools (as well as responses to the subsequent inauguration of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC]). Speaking inescapably to this context, then—even as its formal engagement with the apology and the TRC proper remain confined in large part to some concluding remarks in the last chapter—*Taking Back Our Spirits* perceives a different context in which Indigenous stories about Canada's colonial past and present have meaning and a discrete (and decidedly more anti-colonial) outcome toward which such shared truths could be told. Of the "long overdue" apology (188) and the broader settlement of which it is a part, Episkenew says:

> I fear that, since Canada has closed the residential schools, is paying compensation, and has apologized, the onus is now on Indigenous people to pull up our collective socks and heal ourselves, our families, and our communities . . . [O]ne benefit of White privilege in this country is the right to a guilt-free existence, and Canada's apology has done much to free even the most liberal Canadians from guilt for the sins of the past. (190)

Against this wilful "therapeutic amnesia" (Martin 57) that pervades state-authored gestures toward contrition, resolution, and closure (Henderson and Wakeham 7; Martin 61), *Taking Back Our Spirits* envisions Indigenous literature as redistributing the asymmetrical burden of responsibility for colonial trauma. Because literature's therapeutic and instructive functions figure so prominently in this project of collective reckoning and prospective reconciliation, the specific means by which both healing and cure here ostensibly occur is a matter to which I will turn now, before offering by way of conclusion some further comments on the possibilities and limits of the conciliatory project, particularly where the invader-settler subject is concerned.

In the first place, literature acts as a vital site of validation, reciprocity, and communion for Indigenous readers whose collective though diverse experiences of systematized colonial trauma have been pathologized,

disavowed, and individualized (Episkenew 11). Literature heals, Episkenew contends, but this process is more than a matter of mere "catharsis" (75). Rather, for Episkenew, literature enacts politicized sites of imaginative community wherein those who have been dislocated by colonial policy from tribal relations, traditional knowledge, and ancestral land and language might find, if not models by which to articulate those relations anew, then some way to theorize their forced displacement from them (16). From the Indian Act of 1876, which served to both consolidate and expand upon pre-existing assimilative legislation intended to limit and define Indigenous identity (28), to the child-welfare policies of apprehension and removal epitomized by (though not limited to) the emblematic "Sixties Scoop" (65), Episkenew accounts for historical "policies of devastation," first as outlined in an early chapter of that title, and then as explored in a series of subsequent chapters that chart colonial public policy as recounted, contested, or opposed in an eclectic body of contemporary Indigenous-authored literature.

In each case these policies have been designed, in the words of Mi'kmaw scholar Bonita Lawrence, to manufacture the "elimination of Indigenous peoples as a legal and social fact" (31). Not so much the elapsed side effect of colonialism's assimilationist project, then, as its ongoing and deepest ambition, the intergenerational repercussion of these policies thus figures as an open and "unresolved" site of injury and prospective repair toward which Episkenew orients her readers in the present (148). Against the conspicuous characterization of residential schooling as the primary site of colonial injury (and as one that the dominant discourse of apology and redress would now locate firmly within Canada's "past"), *Taking Back Our Spirits* occasions a different way in which to conceive of our colonial legacy—not as the finite and now remedied outcome of the unfortunately damaging but ostensibly benevolent practices of an earlier settler-colonial state, but rather as an enduring set of genocidal policies as presently proliferated across a number of contexts, both material and imaginative.[6] Episkenew thus asks that the "onus" be placed not on Indigenous people to narrate for the sake of settlers, but on settlers themselves who are then called to witness *their part* in these truths.

This refiguring of responsibility and recognition runs as a central critical undercurrent throughout *Taking Back Our Spirits* and constitutes the primary means by which Episkenew theorizes Indigenous literature's instructive function relative to its settler readers. Rather than suggesting that settlers read literature simply in order that they might enact an externalized form of recognition relative to Indigenous peoples' truths, Episkenew argues

that settlers must read Indigenous stories of colonial trauma in order that they might recognize *themselves* (their own unearned advantage, their own complicity). Beyond offering a "window into the daily life of Indigenous people" (190) through which the "vicariously" experienced reality of social suffering is ostensibly gleaned (114), Indigenous literature is generative of transformative knowledge because the "empathy and understanding" (186) it promotes among settlers also invites the more profound recognition of their "complicity in the continued oppression of Indigenous people" (17).

Episkenew thus envisions in the literary-critical context a politics of recognition that differs substantively from, and may also have the potential to reshape, the accommodative policy and legal strategies by which the Canadian state presently seeks to reconcile "Indigenous claims to nationhood with Crown sovereignty" (Coulthard 438). Rather than a prospective politics of social transformation enacted by Indigenous peoples as equal partners in the nation-to-nation model recommended by the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* ("Restructuring"), liberal modes of recognition as currently constituted by the Canadian state are premised upon strategies of multicultural inclusion and representation that effectively "reproduce the very configurations of colonial power that Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend" (439). Whether through the selective redistribution of land, capital, and resources, or through the provisional rhetorical acknowledgement of certain "past" colonial harms, the state arguably recuperates Indigenous demands for justice as an opportunity to demonstrate its progressive virtue while nevertheless leaving systemic forms of colonial oppression intact. Though land claims, cash settlements, and other forms of material or symbolic restitution do have ameliorative effects, such measures take shape within the institutions of colonial society itself, and as part of a context of redress that would seem to be geared toward promoting among Indigenous peoples a reconciliation with ongoing colonialism and among non-Indigenous Canadians a dissociation from their part in this truth (Alfred 183). As Gerald Taiaiake Alfred has recently remarked, "Real change will happen only when settlers are forced into a reckoning of who they are, what they have done, and what they have inherited" (184); with *Taking Back Our Spirits*, Episkenew suggests a vision of recognition wherein the knowledge of (and empathy for) Indigenous dispossession is meant not to secure but rather to *militate against* liberal disavowal. And yet, to the extent that Episkenew's work also asks us to consider how settler denial has been integral to colonialism's persistence, I

wonder if there isn't some way in which this disavowal has been subtly refigured in the contemporary, "neo-colonial" moment (Episkenew 114). I see this as one of the central questions precipitated by the vision of mutual decolonization implicit in Episkenew's work, especially as it pertains to the invader-settler subject. For, if *Taking Back Our Spirits* compellingly theorizes the *possibilities* of how literature might cure settlers of their entrenchment in colonial ideology, I want to meditate, however briefly, on the prospective limits of this model, and to suggest, in closing, some thoughts for further consideration as occasioned by this important book.

If Indigenous literature proffers to settlers a "competing myth" to Canada's "authorized" national myth (156) and stimulates in them an appropriate empathetic response, they might come to understand their place in a legacy of colonial violence. But what if the surface acknowledgement of this legacy is in some cases *integral* to its deepest disavowal? What if the empathetic response of settler subjects is at times less a means of owning "guilt" or responsibility than of assuaging or effacing it? For, I would argue that the enduring myth of liberal benevolence and inclusivity (now, as currently configured in Canada's conciliatory projects of redress) actually requires as its antecedent, and thus projects as its very probable outcome, the continuation of colonial relations. Ongoing colonial violence, ongoing violations of Indigenous peoples' rights, and government-authored acts of strategic acknowledgement and erasure relative to its own participation in these realities—these might be productively regarded as instances that would not so much contradict as *make possible* certain forms of liberal empathy and contrition. In this sense, the fact of ongoing white supremacy makes possible our regret for it, and the project of imaginatively witnessing our part in that truth occasions perhaps a more profound therapeutic amnesia that is all the more insidious for its seeming affinity with the project of decolonization.

To consider the limits of this model is not to discount the political power of empathy as a starting point from which settlers might reflexively politicize their relation to both Indigenous peoples and the colonial state, but rather to draw out in its practicable implications the significant but sometimes understated distinction upon which Episkenew's call for a differently constituted settler consciousness necessarily depends: a distinction between a liberal individualist model of empathy that surreptitiously shores up rather than transcends asymmetrical social relations, and those rarer forms of critical empathy through which anti-colonial solidarity in "social justice initiatives" and policy critique might be pursued (191). This is to distinguish

between what Audra Simpson observes as the "consumptive pleasure" of Indigenous disappearance for dominant settler memory—where contrition might be performed and the status quo of colonial relations be confirmed (208)—and a more radical reckoning with settler privilege that offers no immediate redemptive comforts, but instead, much uncertainty and work. As a settler subject who shares with Episkenew a belief in literature's capacity to do such material work in the world, I want to highlight as integral to its socio-pedagogical function and to its capacity to promote decolonized forms of recognition and empathy, this unsettling of the consolatory security of a "hopeful, shared (now liberal) future" (Simpson 208) in favour of a reckoning with the shared truths of an ongoing colonial legacy (the eradication of which we must all labour for). The project of decolonization, as Daniel Heath Justice reminds us, is a "difficult, multifaceted, and multigenerational struggle that demands ongoing discussion, argument, and debate" ("Conjuring Marks" 10). I am grateful for everything that *Taking Back Our Spirits* offers to this cause.

Literature, Healing, and the Transformational Imaginary: Thoughts on Jo-Ann Episkenew's *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing*

Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee Nation)

It is both a personal pleasure and a professional privilege to offer these words of response to Episkenew's extraordinary book, and I particularly appreciated the opportunity to share these thoughts with her directly in the live forum rather than at the comfortable but artificial remove of time and distance. I hope that my words will do honour to the ideas and concerns presented in the volume, and that it will help further the important discussions underway here and elsewhere on the role of literature in the decolonizing politics of Indigenous healing, sovereignty, and self-determination.

I want to begin with a rather broad question that roots the subsequent discussion quite firmly in the book's conceptual foundation: *what is literature good for?* This is one of the existential questions that literature professors struggle to answer. It's a question that some of our students ask in the classroom, or in their assignments; it's a question sometimes asked of us by faculty in other departments. (One of the most memorable professional conversations I ever had with a historian friend was posited on her rather loaded question: "How do you people in English justify your paycheque?") On occasion, when a book or a writer or even a university or college course becomes a topic of controversy, it's a question that shapes the actions of vote-watching politicians, money-conscious parents, and morals-guarding community members. Literary studies as a discipline is a relatively recent addition to the university curriculum in Europe and North America, a latecomer compared to history, linguistics, law, theology, and medicine.[7] And from its nineteenth-century beginnings, the discipline has always struggled to articulate its significance in the academy and the world.

So, what *is* literature good for? The very question assumes a utilitarian purpose, that literature should in some way serve a purpose beyond itself. It's a fair distance from "art for art's sake," the call-to-arms of Oscar Wilde and his Decadent compatriots in their aesthetic warfare against the stifling

moralism of the Victorian age. Yet questions of utilitarian value are difficult to avoid, especially when writers and artistic types of all sorts so often depend on the public largesse of taxpayer-funded grant agencies for funding to support their work. Given that complicating context, we should be able to offer a meaningful response to the question of value, whether or not we're fully comfortable with its implications. While I am certainly sympathetic to and sensible of the original context of resistance in which the Decadents presented their bold challenge to the reactionary prudery of their time, "art for art's sake" seems to me now something of a bankrupt notion that is too often trotted out by self-important and disaffected cynics who mistake narcissistic pretence for a true artistic commitment.

Episkenew is far from a literary dilettante, and her work far from a self-indulgent screed. She is a scholar and an activist, a teacher and a grandmother, a voice for justice and a vision-maker of transformative possibility. In *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing*, Episkenew offers a book-length response to the question of literature's purpose, arguing for the transformative power of literature by Indigenous writers in Canada to effect healing from the ravages of colonialism. While the main focus is on the woundings suffered by Aboriginal communities, Episkenew notes that settlers, too, suffer from the dehumanizing effects of colonialism, though in different ways and to differing degrees. Policies and practices of racism diminish *everyone*, and they undermine the possibilities of building good, healthy, and mutually respectful relationships between peoples and across difference. In a study both thoughtful and provocative, she insists that "contemporary Indigenous literature cannot be divorced from its contextual framework" (186)—indeed, she points out that this framework is a rich source of inspiration for Indigenous writers today, as it has been historically. Episkenew places Indigenous writing in conversation with the present reality and the long history of public policies inflicted by the Canadian settler government upon Indigenous communities, and argues that these invasive "policies of devastation" are the inescapable backdrop for Indigenous literary resistance. She writes:

> Not only does Indigenous literature respond to and critique the policies of the Government of Canada; it also functions as "medicine" to help cure the colonial contagion by healing the communities that these policies have injured. It does this by challenging the "master narrative," that is, a summary of the stories that embody the settlers' "socially shared understanding." This master narrative is, in fact, the myth of the new Canadian nation-state, which valorizes the settlers but which sometimes misrepresents and more often excludes Indigenous peoples. Indigenous literature acknowledges and validates Indigenous peoples' experiences by filling in the gaps and correcting the falsehoods in this master narrative. (2)

This master narrative is, in many ways, a product of and source for an oppressive literature of settlement—popular of works of literary fiction as well as policy papers, laws, procedures, and administrative directives—that has worked to diminish the humanity of Indigenous peoples and fuel the self-absorbed sense of triumphalism that has accompanied the colonial enterprise. Literature has power and, in settler narratives of Canada, that power has too often been used as a weapon that simultaneously brutalizes Indigenous peoples and erases their history while masking that violence under the self-deceptive guise of benevolent uplift.

Episkenew is not so reductive as to claim that colonialism is the only context of significance to Indigenous writers. Yet she does make a compelling case for its importance, tracing the long and sordid history of settler policies in Canada, from the civilization imperative of the nineteenth century to forced settlement of mobile communities, imposition of European gender and sexual mores, surveillance and denial of resource access, the reserve regime, land loss, residential schools, theft and adoption of Indigenous children, identity policing (especially in the case of Métis and non-Status "Not-Indians"), and numerous other assaults on Indigenous peoples and their sovereignty. In so doing, and in placing literary texts in response to many of these policies and practices, she forcefully reminds us that, "[d]espite the ferocity of the colonial regime's attack on [Indigenous peoples] using public policy as a weapon, Indigenous people have not assimilated or disappeared. [They] have appropriated the language and literary practices of the colonizers, which they use to expose the consequences of imperial policies on their people." Even so, "Indigenous literature is not merely an exposé of past and present injustices." Rather, "Indigenous people have learned that the creative process has restorative powers" (67-68).

Herein is the moral and intellectual heart of the book. Colonialism has undeniably assaulted Indigenous communities and wounded untold numbers of individuals for generations. Yet Indigenous people—individually and in community—are not simply passive victims of settler violence, but are instead active respondents to both the troubling and beautiful aspects of their world, respondents who draw on rich cultural, intellectual, spiritual, historical, and aesthetic wellsprings to effect healing of self and society. In telling their own stories, in asserting their own imaginative sovereignty and placing themselves, their communities, and their worldviews at the centre of concern rather than the margins to which Indigenous subjectivities have so long been relegated, Indigenous writers affirm their own humanity and

dignity, thus countering the "national collective myth" of the settler nation, and helping both Indigenous people and settler descendants "learn that the national collective myth of [Canada], and by extension its societal foundation, is flawed and that its prosperity is built upon the suffering of others" (73). If the supremacist literature of Euro-Western settlement is part of the problem, then a decolonizing and culturally affirming literature can, and to some degree must, be part of the solution. Such a literature offers a different perspective on the world, one that makes space for other voices to tell of their experiences and to insist on their own narrative presence. To cure oneself and one's community from the sickness of colonialism requires the healing power of truth—personal and communal, contemporary and historical. That healing extends outward as well: "to cure settlers from the pathology of colonialism, Indigenous people must make public the alternative collective myth that comprises our truths," for "[w]ithout truth there can be no reconciliation" (73).

Episkenew therefore argues for literature's transformative truth-value, in that it presents the storied imaginations, experiences, worldviews, and perspectives of Indigenous peoples to a wounded colonial world that has too long erased, dismissed, or ignored those stories. So, whether autobiography, fiction, drama, or testimony, Indigenous literature *by its very existence* asserts that there are other stories, other histories, other visions of community than those authorized by the colonialist "overculture." She explores the transformative, healing power of Indigenous writing through careful close readings of numerous contemporary texts, some with an established scholarly archive, others largely neglected by literary scholars who dismiss the works as "mere 'protest' literature, literature about 'issues' rather than aesthetics, and therefore more suitable for study in Native Studies programs" than in English departments (146)—a clear case of a politically evacuated and self-serving version of "art for art's sake" serving the very oppressive ends that the original philosophy had itself risen to challenge.

Episkenew does not try to present an authoritative list of creative works by Indigenous writers in Canada in making her argument. Instead, her aim is more focused, attending primarily to those works that most directly address the public policies that have so demeaned and dehumanized Indigenous communities. Her close readings are thus of autobiography—"an act of imagination that inspires social regeneration by providing eyewitness testimony to historical injustice" (75)—such as Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* (1973) and Basil Johnston's *Indian School Days* (1988); autobiographical fiction that blends the testimonial

authority and subjective perspective of personal experience with the broad-reaching narrative conventions of popular fiction, such as Beatrice Culleton Mosionier's *In Search of April Raintree* (1983), Shirley Sterling's *My Name is Seepeetza* (1992), and Richard Wagamese's *Keeper 'n Me* (1994); and the communal works of Indigenous drama in Canada, by companies such as Common Weal and the Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company, and playwrights Daniel David Moses, Vera Manuel, and Ian Ross. In each case, the artists and artworks under analysis not only offer testimony and affirmation of personal and historical truth, but they also lay the foundation for building healthier communities that are both challenging colonial narratives and creating their own.

In the final chapter of the book, Episkenew argues that in addition to "documenting Indigenous peoples' reality in a way that promotes empathy and understanding, Indigenous literature also has the ability to shape history, politics, and public policy" (186). These writers and texts do not simply look inward, but extend their imaginative purpose outward to shift the perspectives and understandings of *all* readers, not just Indigenous readers. In this way, Episkenew asserts, Indigenous literatures can change the world, in part because they

> [enable] settler readers to relate to Indigenous peoples on an emotional level thereby generating empathy. By reading Indigenous literature, settlers come to understand Indigenous people as fellow human beings. Empathy, in turn, has the potential to create a groundswell of support for social-justice initiatives to improve the lot of Indigenous people. . . . Indigenous literature also changes the world by helping Indigenous people heal from the trauma that colonial policies have caused and by educating settler society and its governments. (190-91)

The healing power of Indigenous literature is thus directed inward as well as outward; to work toward one's own healing without dealing with the source of ongoing wounding is to leave oneself vulnerable to further harm, but to focus only on the source without addressing the impact is to remain in a state of hurt, which can only corrode and spread outward towards others.

Such literature is, in Episkenew's words, "applied," in that it "serves a socio-pedagogical function as well as an aesthetic one" (193), thus "promoting social justice for Indigenous people" (193). Moreover, drawing in part on the work of Joseph Gold, who advocates "reading fiction as a means of improving mental and emotional health" (13), and in dialogue with scholarship emerging from what was the Association for Bibliotherapy and Applied Literature, now called the Canadian Applied Literature Association (see CALA website), Episkenew argues that there is a moral and ethical imperative in the sharing of stories that create rather than disfigure us.

These are things that literature is good for, and they *are* good things . . . when they happen. As a scholar and teacher of Indigenous literatures, I have been fortunate to see the minds and hearts of readers change as a result of their engagement with Indigenous texts. I am a firm believer in the power of literature to effect change, and I am thoroughly committed to the modest claim that literature can change the world. But such change is not a certainty, and much depends on the special alchemy of receptive reader and accessible writer (and, sometimes, helpful teacher) to provide the necessary conditions for such transformative potential to be fully realized. In many ways, the application of the literature to these important purposes is every bit as important as the content and socio-pedagogical potential of the texts themselves.

Taking Back Our Spirits is an engaging work of both scholarly sophistication and ethical challenge, and one that can and should inform the understanding of anyone doing work in this field. Yet Episkenew's provocative assertions about the healing power of Indigenous literatures bring with them particular challenges that made me wonder how she might respond.

For example, while I certainly agree that Indigenous literatures have the potential to effect healing, I wonder if there are texts within this literary body that *do not* heal, or that actively offer harm. Like many medicines—traditional and pharmaceutical alike—many things that serve to heal can also wound or even kill, depending on the patient, the dosage, and the use. I have found nourishment and healing balm in Indigenous texts, but I have also found hurtful works by Indigenous writers that replicate the pathological savages of reactionary settler fantasies, or that select certain groups—mixedbloods, queer folks, women, etc.—as targets for scorn and abuse.

Take Tomson Highway's 1998 novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. Though a brilliant novel in many respects, the ethos of sexuality it presents is both easy and dangerous, for in the representation of gay dancer and rough-trade sex seeker Gabriel Okimasis (and, to a different degree, his repressed brother Jeremiah), the novel insists on the inextricable association of pedophilia and assault with either twisted and exploitative homosexual desire or excruciating self-hatred, repression, and denial. Though wrapped in lush prose and evocative imagery, the message is ultimately indistinguishable from that of gay-baiting bigots and reactionaries who falsely conflate the two. There is no room in the novel for gay desire that is not deeply condemnatory and compromised by abusive relations. Whatever its auto/biographical inspiration, this is, to my mind, a failure of the book, and one that is far too easy a shortcut for a writer of Highway's calibre. Taken in isolation, this wounding power

of the book might not be a significant issue, but the book is part of a network of literary meaning-making, and in that context, the characters in Highway's novel join a long and inglorious line of toxic queers in Indigenous literature.

I am not asking for cardboard saints and all happy, smiling characters without problems or difficulties; I am not expecting characters to always come from positions and perspectives devoid of pain and wounding. But I *do* want depth, diversity, and counter-narratives to the too-familiar toxic queers that dominate so much of our literary offerings. We deserve to have literature that is as richly textured and complex as our real lives, and frankly, there are many queer Indigenous folks who are hungering to see healthy, sexually precocious, and emotionally rich queer Indigenous characters in fiction.

Just as our hopes, loves, dreams, and inclusive ideals can inform our imaginations, so too can our unresolved anxieties, our fears, and our narrow hatreds corrode our imaginative possibilities. So I wonder how Episkenew would respond to the question of "What do we do with the harm/wounding performed or facilitated by some works by Indigenous writers? Would she suggest that we still teach/study/share them? What is the role of 'application' here? If *all* works offer some measure of healing, does this mean that *any* work by an Indigenous writer makes a contribution to the continuity of the people, even if it is problematic (racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.)?" If this is the case, healing is a more complicated idea than simple recovery from harm or injury, taking on an almost epistemological significance. This seems a topic worthy of further discussion, and certainly something that I would have liked to have seen featured a bit more prominently in the book.

Further on that point, I wonder about the dangers of looking to literature for individual, community, and generational healing, not because it does not work but because it *does*. Emotional trauma can often erupt like an infected pustule; sometimes that can be a cleansing experience, but it can also simply spread the infection wider. I am wary of asking too much of the literature, especially in a classroom environment where people come from various life experiences and are not always prepared or willing to engage one another with care and sensitivity. In such contexts, the opening up of emotional wounds can actually be counter to the purpose of healing and can add another layer of trauma to the wounded individual. Literature teachers are not counsellors or therapists; for all that we might be empathetic, we are not generally trained to provide the necessary assistance for people in search of healing. If we begin with the stated objective of finding healing through the literature, are we prepared to deal with the traumas that will inevitably arise? If we are not, we run

the risk of simply adding more burdens to those seeking respite; if we have been insistent that this literature is healing, and by our ignorance left students to come away even more wounded, then we may have inadvertently deepened their sense of self-blame and despair. This is not an argument against the applied value of literature to provide the possibilities of healing, but it is a cautionary note about the ethical obligations that accompany such work.

Finally, I wonder if it might be useful to distinguish between the imperatives of healing and *justice* in Indigenous writing, because they are not necessarily the same thing. While they may cross trajectories at certain points, they are also distinctive in their purposes and effects, and necessarily so. A work—such as Annharte Baker's "Bear Piss Water" and "Me Tonto Along," or Randy Lundy's "20th Street after Dark"—might be invaluable in the cause of justice, but not offer much in the way of applied healing. Similarly, Marie Clements' surrealist play *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*, which takes as its focus the murders of women in Vancouver's "Skid Row," is much more a story about uncovering the past and giving voice to the silenced than it is about the healing of the murdered characters; although healing may be a side effect, it is not a necessary precondition or the driving impulse for seeking acknowledgement of wrongdoing.

Taken further, a writer might rightly be quite angry and wounding in her or his work, and not be at all interested in being healed, but rather with being *heard*, and in so doing serving the cause of justice. And, sadly, there are some who are so damaged that they will never find healing in this lifetime. They, too, deserve and demand to be heard, to give witness to the world, and to challenge us to prevent the suffering they experienced from continuing for others. The distinction between healing and justice seems to me to be vitally important, and it offers a complementary understanding of the value that applied literature can bring to our lives.

These questions and extrapolations bring me back to my initial query: what is literature good for? In considering *Taking Back Our Spirits*, I might presumptuously posit that Episkenew's possible answer would be that literature is good for many things, but none perhaps more precious than to help us imagine otherwise, to help us realize in our lived realities the very best hopes and dreams of our imagined lives, to provide a transformative vision of *possibility*. Such work is dangerous and difficult, but all liberating transformations are. And if literature can help us in that struggle, then it is good for very much indeed.

What Stories Do: A Response to Episkenew

Kristina Fagan Bidwell (NunatuKavut)

The title of Episkenew's *Taking Back Our Spirits*, as a verb-based phrase, emphasizes the working assumption that this book makes about stories: Episkenew believes that stories *do* things. They not only reflect reality; they create it. And in her subtitle—*Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing*—she points to the particular aspects of reality in which she is interested. Her book reveals the ways in which Canadian "Indian" policies have been based in a pervasive story: "The myth [of white superiority underpinning] the colonization of the Americas is truly a dangerous story, which continues to have disastrous effects on the health and well-being of Indigenous people" (2-3). But she also argues that Indigenous literature can function as a "counterstory" (2) to this oppressive myth, thereby acting as a "medicine" for Indigenous communities and helping to heal the wounds caused by colonial policies.

In studying the social functions of stories, Episkenew is taking an approach to literature significantly different from the usual one within the discipline of English. We all know that stories can change our lives, but this transformative effect is not something we often talk about in academic settings. In English, there is a widespread assumption, strongly influenced by New Criticism, that the object of study ought to be the text itself, and not the responses and motivations of its author and its reader. And, while New Criticism has to some extent fallen from grace, literary critics are still primarily focused on what a text *means* rather than what it *does*. The text is something that we may read, listen to, or watch, study, analyze, or evaluate, but it is rarely seen as having direct and concrete consequences.

Episkenew, in contrast, argues convincingly that stories matter deeply because "we *are* our stories" (13); it is through storytelling that we give meaning to the facts of our lives. With this focus on the social functions of stories, she is moving towards an approach to literature that is grounded in Indigenous approaches to storytelling. The literary critical view of stories as "texts" is profoundly different from how stories are traditionally treated in Indigenous communities. In these communities, the assumption is widely shared that stories are social actions. As Thomas King puts it in *The*

Truth about Stories, Indigenous traditional stories are "public stories," told in a social context with social consequences, both good and bad. Stories may help and heal, but storytellers must also avoid telling stories that are inappropriate or even dangerous.

Indeed, if we *are* our stories, then the stories are surely every bit as complex as the people who make them. In this response to *Taking Back Our Spirits*, I wish to honour the important move that Episkenew has made in reading Indigenous literature in terms of its social functions. I believe that this ground-breaking book points to an approach to Indigenous literature that has the potential to make literary criticism much more positive and meaningful for Indigenous people. But I also wish to explore the limits of the story that is told in this book. In telling a story, whether it be personal, collective, or scholarly, part of the process is necessarily leaving things out. Episkenew, for instance, points to what has been "taken away" from Indigenous people through colonial policies. But I want to ask, what has not been taken away? Or, to put it differently, what have we held on to? Similarly, she explores how stories can heal. But what about the stories that do not heal? And what if healing sometimes means not telling a story?

Taking Back Our Spirits tells us a story about colonialism and anti-colonial resistance. In a clear and grounded voice, the early chapters of the book lay out the roots and practices of colonialism in Canada, particularly as it has been enacted through policy. I look forward to using this book in my classes, where many students lack a background in the history of colonialism in Canada, and therefore perceive many of the situations described in Aboriginal texts as somehow "natural." For example, I have taught Ian Ross' *fareWel*, a play about a failed effort at self-government, and have had many students read it as being about the inherent impossibility of Indigenous self-governance. However, Episkenew offers an alternative, historically grounded reading; she shows how exactly the "colonial regime set out to destroy Indigenous governance," replacing working systems and traditional leaders with imposed band councils (178). This play, she shows, presents the challenges involved in self-governing today and the need to find models that are not based on colonial structures and beliefs. She clearly shows what has been "taken away" from the Partridge Crop community by the destruction of traditional systems of governance. This kind of grounding of the works in their historical context is exactly what is needed to combat the negative generalizations that are at the heart of racist stereotypes.

But this is not just a book about what has been done to Indigenous

people. Rather, this is a book about how Indigenous literature can act as a powerful counterforce to destructive public policies. Episkenew points out that stories are the basis of our personal identity, but that we can also change the stories we tell about ourselves. We each construct what she calls a "personal myth . . . to bring together the different parts of ourselves and our lives into a purposeful and convincing whole" (15). In addition, we create and carry collective myths, such as the story that Métis people tell themselves about what it means to be Métis. When we encounter other people's stories, whether oral or written, they can then interact, sometimes in powerful ways, with our own personal and collective myths. Episkenew's chosen texts are ones with which Indigenous people have had powerful interactions, either through national readership, as with *Halfbreed* and *In Search of April Raintree*; in the classroom, as with *Keeper'n Me*; in Indigenous conferences, as with *The Strength of Indian Women*; or in particular communities, as with community theatre projects. She explores how these works of literature can interact with readers' myths, strengthening or challenging them. Through this process, she argues, Indigenous literature can have a transformative effect on the myths of both Indigenous people and settlers in Canada: "Contemporary Indigenous literature serves two transformative functions—healing Indigenous people and advancing social justice in settler society—both components in the process of decolonization" (15).

In revealing the ways that Indigenous literature responds to and critiques Canadian policies, Episkenew is participating in what Daniel Heath Justice has elsewhere called the "decolonization imperative" ("Go Away" 150). As she so carefully shows, great harm has been done to Indigenous people in what is now called Canada—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The myths and effects of colonization are still powerful in this country, and we have an ethical imperative to combat them. Yet, as Justice has also pointed out, this imperative "is not the root of indigenous people and self-determining sovereignty" (152). He argues that it would be an error to see the lives and stories of Indigenous people as primarily shaped by colonization and decolonization, and cites an unpublished manuscript by Amanda Cobb: "Tribal sovereignty existed before colonization and does . . . exist after colonization. Sovereignty is *the going on* of life—the living" (qtd. in Justice 152, italics hers). If we focus too much on colonization, we risk ignoring the ways in which Indigenous people have *gone on*, even in the face of great challenges. The continuity of Indigenous people is what I am thinking of when I ask the question: What has not been taken away?

In the panel on *Taking Back Our Spirits*, I described a conversation that I had with a Cree friend in Saskatoon. Upon hearing the title of *Taking Back Our Spirits*, she commented, "But our spirits were never taken away." In thinking about this comment, I wondered how Episkenew is using the word *spirit*. Although she does not explicitly define the term in her book, she appears to be using it not to refer to specific spiritual beings or practices, but rather, as Duran and Duran use the word *soul*: "The core essence is the fabric of the soul and it is from this essence that mythology, dreams, and culture emerge" (qtd. in Episkenew 8). She also writes that stories themselves are spirit, living things with the power to change people (15). If then by spirit we mean the essence of ourselves, our desire to live and to be happy, our sense of peoplehood, our connections, our stories—then I would argue that our spirits have not been taken away. I do not say this to deny or minimize the way, as Episkenew points out in her piece here, that Canadian policies "were consciously designed to attack our spirituality by attacking our relationships with self, with others, and with our environment," and that this attack did indeed do terrible damage. Some individuals have unquestionably been destroyed by the effects of colonialism. But collectively, *as Indigenous peoples*, we have also gone on, living in our families and communities, telling our stories, insisting on our rights and responsibilities as the Indigenous peoples of this land. We, and our spirits, have carried on.

This continuity of Indigenous peoples is perhaps obscured by the fact that, while *Taking Back Our Spirits* describes colonial policies throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the first Indigenous work that it looks at is Maria Campbell's 1973 *Halfbreed*. While acknowledging that Maria Campbell was not the first Indigenous person to publish a work of literature, Episkenew does not mention any earlier writers or storytellers (76). Yet, even if we look only at written texts in Saskatchewan, before Maria Campbell, we have Edward Ahenakew (1885-1961), who wrote down the stories of Chief Thunderchild and was also a journalist, poet, and novelist; James Settee (1841-1883) who wrote vividly descriptive journals and short stories; Charles Pratt (1851-1884), a Cree missionary who kept extensive journals; and Joseph Dion (1888-1960), who wrote down many Cree traditional stories and histories. Many other Indigenous people from coast to coast also continued to write through the darkest days of colonialism. And, of course, many, many oral storytellers continued, in the face of oppression, to pass on their people's stories. These were the people who kept our stories and spirits alive, through some very difficult times. By describing the

"colonial story" of the nineteenth and early-mid-twentieth centuries without also discussing the Indigenous storytellers in that time, we risk losing sight of what was not taken away.

In fact, despite her book's title, Episkenew's *Taking Back Our Spirits* refers more often to the spirits of Indigenous people as "wounded" rather than "taken away." She draws on Duran and Duran's concept of the "soul wound," the damage that colonialism has done to Indigenous peoples' sense of self and self-worth. *Taking Back Our Spirits* hypothesizes that Indigenous literature can help to heal this wound: "Reading contemporary Indigenous literature enables Indigenous readers, and audience members of theatrical productions, 'to make sense of the text' of their lives" (16). The book's readings are based on this hypothesis. But, as Episkenew points out, it would be valuable to have studies that document, in practice, the way that stories, whether in the form of literature, theatre, or film, can affect Indigenous peoples' thoughts and lives; when we observe how stories function in an actual social context, the results are often unexpected by the professional literary critic and likely other highly educated readers, too. Janice Radway, for example, reports in *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* her discovery that the ways that women read romance novels are quite different, and more complex, than the ways that she had hypothesized they would. In the case of Indigenous literature, might there be cases in which the healing hypothesis is not confirmed? Might some works by Indigenous writers not be healing?

Episkenew does cite Terry Tafoya, who says that "stories are a type of medicine and can be healing or poisonous depending on the dosage or type" (13). But she then goes on to argue that "poisonous stories" come only from colonial discourse. But surely Indigenous people can tell poisonous stories too, as folklorist Barre Toelken discovered in his extensive study of Navajo Coyote tales. He spent thirteen years analyzing the ways in which Coyote stories functioned in the Navajo community, looking in particular at the ways that they reinforce Navajo values and are used to literally heal sickness. Finally, after he had presented the results of his research at a community gathering, one of his Navajo friends told him that he was taking grave risks by delving so deeply into these stories. The reason was that these traditional stories could also be used in witchcraft to cause illness or death. Literary stories can similarly be limiting or hurtful, or they can be read in ways that cause harm. In the panel, both Daniel Heath Justice and I brought up the example of Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. In teaching that novel,

I have found that some Indigenous students find it hopeful and affirming, while others find it deeply hurtful, and have explicitly said that they do not think that it is a healing text. If we are to examine the social functions of texts, we need to try to understand such contradictory responses.

In *Taking Back Our Spirits*, the readings of the individual texts do in fact acknowledge that the texts are not uniformly positive in their effect. Episkenew does point out the potential of texts to limit, rather than expand, our understanding of "the text of our lives." For example, she points out the way in which Campbell's *Halfbreed* legitimizes the colonial division between "Status Indians" and "Halfbreeds" by "construct[ing] a personal myth in which [Campbell] attempts to persuade herself that the Métis are superior" (82). Often, however, the complexity arises out of what a text *does not* say. And these areas of silence seem to create a critical dilemma within *Taking Back Our Spirits*. For example, Episkenew points out that *In Search of April Raintree* does not give us a clear understanding of why Cheryl commits suicide, commenting that "Cheryl's rapid descent is perplexing for readers" (125). Similarly, she points out the ways in which *Indian School Days* does not reveal anything about Basil Johnston's relationship with his family, adding, "That he is so reticent about his immediate family is perplexing" (103). She also comments on how, in *Keeper 'n Me,* Wagamese "remarkably" (145) creates family members that are oddly one-dimensional and how, in *For Joshua*, he is "uncharacteristically silent about his birth family" (144).

Because *Taking Back Our Spirits* views storytelling as inherently healing, it is unable to fully account for these areas of textual silence as anything other than a sign of unhealthy repression. For instance, in the case of Wagamese, Episkenew argues that his silence about his family is a sign that he is "unable to face the whole truth of his past" (145). This view is in keeping with the book's overall view of silence as harmful: "Silence leads to isolation, causing many Indigenous people to suppress their feelings, believing that they are alone in their experiences and responses" (16). And in describing the responses of an all-Aboriginal audience to Ross' *fareWel*, Episkenew cites a review that states, "There were moments when the audience watched in ineffable silence" (185). Yet, perhaps, seen from another perspective, silence is not necessarily ineffable.

There are many Indigenous teachings about the importance of sometimes not telling a story. In Indigenous traditions, the telling of stories is often governed by protocols about what kinds of stories can be told under what

circumstances. Pueblo scholar Paula Gunn Allen explains that she was raised with these kinds of restraints around communication:

> Among the Pueblos, a person is expected to know no more than is necessary, sufficient and congruent with their spiritual and social place. One does not tell or inquire about matters that do not directly concern one. I was raised to understand that "street smart" around Laguna meant respecting privacy and modesty, and that to step beyond the bounds of the respected propriety was to put myself and others at risk. (379-80)

In such cultural contexts, where speaking is seen as risky, not speaking can become the preferred response to an uncomfortable situation, a response that may be responsible for the stereotype of the stoic and silent Indian. Pomo-Miwok writer Greg Sarris says that this is "the Indian's best weapon": "Be an Indian, cut yourself off with silence any way you can. Don't talk" (81). Of course, such silence can be easily misinterpreted, as Rupert Ross learned when working as a Crown Attorney in Northern communities. Ross recounts how he regularly confronted silence among Aboriginal witnesses, many of whom were unwilling to testify in court, even against people who had done them wrong. The accused also often refused to speak of the crime, and their psychiatric assessments, Ross recalls, almost invariably read something like, "in denial, unresponsive, undemonstrative, uncooperative" (33). These assessments, however, Ross came to realize, revealed more about cultural differences in communicative practices than they did about the accused individual. Both the accuser and the accused were part of a culture that discouraged the open discussion of painful events, while the culture of the court and the psychologist's office valued disclosure. Helen Hoy similarly has contemplated whether "discursive reticence" (64) in Indigenous literature may be "not only a withholding before an appropriating white gaze . . . but also the enactment of an alternative metaphysics" (80).

I offer these brief thoughts on silence to suggest that there may be ways of looking at the literary decision *not* to tell a particular story as healthy. For instance, might the decision not to speak about one's immediate family in one's work, as we see in Johnston and Wagamese, be a way of maintaining privacy, showing respect, or protecting oneself and others from pain? Of course, in some contexts, the act of revealing one's pain can be essential. And stories often focus such dilemmas on sites of tension and contradiction. *Taking Back Our Spirits* moves us towards thinking about how stories live, how they can change our lives and even change our world. But as we make this move, we should keep in mind the power of the "social lives of stories,"

as Julie Cruikshank writes, to "destabilize commonsense categories, to promote non-confrontational ways of re-evaluating hegemonic concepts, to encourage dialogue rather than monologue" (154). I believe that stories often disrupt our "commonsense" understandings of concepts, including concepts like colonialism and healing. But I also believe that this healthy disruption occurs through the process of dialogue, of thinking about and talking about stories. I would like to thank Episkenew for opening up a whole new area of dialogue for readers of Indigenous literature with *Taking Back Our Spirits*. And I am also thankful for the opportunity to be part of the dialogue that this forum represents.

Indigenizing Author Meets Critics: Collaborative Indigenous Literary Scholarship

Jo-Ann Episkenew (Métis)

My first response when asked to participate in the CACLALS/ABAL Author Meets Critics event was fear. Although we tell our students that we "critique" rather than "criticize," a history of academic warfare and wounding with words combine to haunt the word "critic." Although feminist and minority scholars have done much to add humanity—that is to say, an emotional aspect—to scholarly practices, the prospect of being judged unfavourably by three esteemed colleagues, in public, in front of my peers was still terrifying. Not surprisingly, when I walked to the front of the room, my legs felt, as my Glaswegian grandmother would have said, "like two stalks of stewed rhubarb." What surprised me more was that my colleagues, the critics, were also exhibiting the physical manifestations of stress. The critics seemed even more frightened than I. Apparently the ghosts of the word "critic" haunted them as well. Their collective discomfort confirmed my belief that language does, indeed, have the power to effect change in the material world.

Upon reflection, I have come to think that the "Author Meets Critics" panel process is antithetical to Indigenous intellectual and social traditions. Indigenous people, for millennia, lived in mutually dependent societies that relied for their survival on the maintenance of harmonious relationships. Harmony was supported by social conventions that prevented conflict by discouraging direct communications. Remnants of this practice continue today. My husband tells me that, when he was a child on the Standing Buffalo Dakota reserve, it was not the practice to speak directly to one's mother- and father-in-law. When communication was required, a third party was recruited to deliver the message. Likewise, it was not the practice to issue direct orders. For example, when the wood box was empty, my father-in-law, Paul Whiteman, would call his son, point to the wood box, and mention that it would be cold that night. He would never say, "Go cut wood." The child had a choice of what to do next. By communicating indirectly, Indigenous people respected the autonomy of the individual while avoiding conflict

and preserving relationships. Having said that, traditional Cree or other Indigenous relations were not always idyllic, and I am not merely setting up a simple binary of "good Indigenous" vs. "bad Eurocentric" traditions. Kristina Fagan's study of Indigenous humour effectively reveals how humour is a form of indirect communication that Indigenous people often use to coerce and even bully people into behaving in ways not of their choosing.

That three of the four members of the Author Meets Critics panel were Indigenous people is notable. I suspect that much of our discomfort stemmed from the direct communication and direct criticism inherent in a process grounded in Eurocentric ideology. However, I think that the organizers of the Author Meets Critics panel set the stage so that we would, consciously or unconsciously, follow Len Findlay's advice and "indigenize" the experience, not by sitting in a circle (even more frightening!) or by speaking indirectly, but by adding a degree of holism into our very personal exploration of Indigenous and settler relationships. As a multi-national, multi-generational, and multicultural panel, we embody the very issues that we critique. This was not merely an intellectual exercise, because we live these issues. I want to thank Deanna Reder and Susan Gingell for organizing such a respectful dialogue. I also want to thank my critics, not merely for their kind words, but even more so for their respectful yet thought-provoking challenges. I am painfully aware that the solutions to the issues facing Indigenous people will come from communities working together, not from any one individual. Mine is just one voice in a larger conversation.

Kristina Fagan challenged my choice of title *Taking Back Our Spirits*. She reported that one of her students had objected to the title, arguing that Indigenous people have never lost their spirits. I had no answer for her at the time and am embarrassed to say that I abdicated responsibility completely by crediting David Carr of the University of Manitoba Press with the creation of the title. It is true that David suggested the title, but I accepted his suggestion so I must take responsibility for it. Likewise, I take responsibility for its implications and, therefore, must respectfully disagree with Kristina's student. Let me explain.

Even though, for most of my life, I felt as if I completely understood what the expression "wounded spirit" meant, the definition of the term "spirituality" eluded me. I am neither a mystic nor a religious person. I needed a definition of spirituality that could function for me in the "real world." I am eternally grateful to my friend and colleague Daniel Coleman for providing such a definition. He defines spirituality as relational: "spirituality is the way we live

out our relationships with our environment and with other people, as well as with our secret selves" (9). This is a definition I can apply to my life because it explains both my past and my present, and it draws my attention to the importance of relationships. It is also a definition that is germane to Canada's colonial policies and their effects on Indigenous peoples' relationships as spirituality. Using Coleman's definition, it is clear that these policies were consciously designed to attack spirituality by attacking our relationships with self, with others, and with our environment. Not surprisingly, the resulting historical trauma is almost always made manifest in damaged relationships.

Despite Prime Minister Stephen Harper's claim to the contrary (qtd. in Wherry), Canada does, indeed, have a colonial past. As I mention in *Taking Back Our Spirits*, Canada is the Johnny-come-lately nation state that, in 1867, imposed itself, its structures, and its ideology on the Indigenous people of this land. Sounds like colonialism to me. The Canadian government created policies to address "the Indian problem" by forcing assimilation, and assimilation required, firstly, a breach in those avenues of cultural transmission, specifically our relationships. Residential school policies, for example, which Allison Hargreaves rightly identifies as "the primary site of colonial injury," were consciously designed to separate Indigenous children from the influence of their families. Importantly, relationships with family were not the only relationships that this policy damaged—also under attack were the students' relationship with self. In order for students to assimilate willingly, they had to be convinced that every aspect of the settler/invaders' way of life was superior to theirs. Conversely, the students had to be convinced of their peoples' inherent inferiority. Although the residential schools have closed, the attitudinal foundation of the policy continues. The bloodthirsty savages mentioned in curricula of old have been replaced with trite descriptors such as "a proud and independent people,"[8] presumably an improvement. For the most part, however, Indigenous people, our history, our cultures, and our contributions are rarely mentioned outside of Native Studies classrooms. Educational institutions are more concerned with "trying to create a culture on campus in which aboriginal students [feel] comfortable" (Mason) as if they were merely guests in the invader-settler educational institutions.[9]

Successors to the residential school policy are the provincial child welfare policies that continue to attack Indigenous peoples' spirits again by attacking relationships. More Indigenous children are in the care of provincial ministries of social services today than there were children in the residential

schools at the height of their operations (Trocmé, Knoke, and Blackstock 579). Provincial child welfare policies, like those of their nineteenth-century predecessors, "imagine" the white bourgeois nuclear family—"civilized man (the father as patriarch), bourgeois woman (the mother as commodity consumer), Oedipal son, and dutiful daughter"—as "the ideal family" (Emberley 6). Emberley explains how

> [d]uring the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, European imperial powers enlisted various disciplines of knowledge in order to justify and assert their right to govern "colonized peoples." The duality of savagery and civilization shaped English ideas about indigenous cultures as essentially ones that existed in a savage infantile state in need of the governing rationality of more advanced and enlightened bourgeois society. (8)

Although social work education is steeped in the rhetoric of social justice, the Indigenous families that fall under the gaze of child welfare authorities are typically the most powerless in our society, families headed by poor Indigenous women. Child welfare policies damage and, indeed, sever relationships within Indigenous communities by separating Indigenous children from their families. Likewise, child welfare policies injure Indigenous peoples' relationships with self by continually positioning poor Indigenous families, typically headed by women, and implicitly their children, as inferior to the invader-settler ideal.

Other attacks on Indigenous peoples' relationships include the policies that govern Indigenous peoples' identity. These have been so successful in driving a wedge between the First Nations and their Métis relatives that animosity has become normalized in Indigenous communities. My deceased mother-in-law, Amelia Episkenew, would quote Chief Ben Pasqua, last hereditary chief of Pasqua First Nation and signatory to Treaty Four, who expressed concern for the fate of the Métis at the time of the treaty negotiations and predicted that there would come a time when we forgot to treat each other as if we were related. That time is today.

In addition to colonial policies are the practices of the colonial bureaucracy, again designed to wound spirits by damaging relationships. The chiefs and counsellors who deal daily with the autocratic bureaucracy of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada tell stories of soul-destroying policies that thwart their attempts at self-determination and sow the seeds of division within First Nations communities. The cumulative effect of colonial policies and oppressive colonial bureaucratic practices are the social divisions and violence that are commonplace in Indigenous communities. In a study that

is the outcome of community-based research with Aboriginal women to examine cultural identity and wellness, Alex Wilson quotes a participant who describes the problem of lateral violence in our communities:

> We're guilty of lateral violence. We're not happy for someone's success—we're jealous! That stems from our historical treatment—now we're doing it to each other, as Aboriginal people. The Metis against First Nations, First Nations against each other, family against family. Lateral violence is like a disease among our people. We treat each other so badly, yet we should be grateful for their successes because they're making pathways for us. (18)

Recently, the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council Health Services, one of my community research partners, identified lateral violence as one of the greatest health issues facing the eleven First Nations it represents. Indeed, my home institution, the First Nations University of Canada, has been all but destroyed, not by corruption or fraud as the media would like people to believe, but by lateral violence that began with one First Nations politician who could not tolerate the success of the institution. By implementing policies that attack Indigenous peoples' relationships with self, others, and the environment, the invader-settler governments have, in effect, damaged Indigenous peoples' spirits and, I would argue, metaphorically stolen those spirits away. Using in the title of the book words ascribed to Louis Riel, I suggest that it is time that we take them back by repairing our relationships.

Please, permit me a moment to digress and mention a policy direction recently touted as the latest solution that Canadian colonial policymakers are proposing to solve the eternal "Indian problem," another poorly conceptualized and poorly researched policy direction that constitutes yet another attack on Indigenous peoples' spirits. Conservative politicians are now proposing that reserve land be privatized to enable individuals to own and sell the land that is currently owned by Her Majesty the Queen but reserved for "status Indians" as a collective.[10] Although the new Conservative government has plans to emulate many policies of the United States government, they have not done their homework. They need only to look at the Dawes Act of 1887 and its outcomes. That Act was designed to destroy Native American nations by refusing to deal on a nation-to-nation basis and, instead, dealing with individual Natives. The US government saw this as a step in readying Natives for American citizenship. Individual Natives were allotted tracts of reservation land, which they could sell if they so chose. Given that all were poor and many starving, they did just that. They sold the land. The result was disastrous, and today large tracts of reservation

lands are owned privately by white people. Given that most status Indians living on Canadian reserves are poor, they would likely sell their land if the Canadian Government were to implement a similar policy. The result for Indigenous peoples would be even more disastrous because such a policy would, in effect, drive a stake through the very heart of Indigenous cultures, communal life, and communal ownership—again, relationships. Yet Conservative politicians and their supporters speak as if this is an inevitable step in the social evolution of Indigenous people and the only solution to social and economic problems. But if collective ownership is untenable in today's world, why do Hutterite colonies thrive economically and socially? And, why do Conservative politicians not try to dismantle them? Perhaps the reason is that Hutterites do not file land claims.

But, I digress. Let me address some of the specific challenges from my critics.

Allison Hargreaves asks, "But what if the surface acknowledgement of this legacy is in some cases *integral* to its deepest disavowal? What if the empathetic response of settler subjects is at times less a means of owning 'guilt' or responsibility, than of assuaging it?" She goes on to argue "that further distinction might productively be made between a liberal individualist model of empathy that surreptitiously shores up rather than transcends asymmetrical social relations, and those rarer forms of critical empathy through which anti-colonial solidarity in 'social justice initiatives' and policy critique might be pursued." I agree. Yet, I think my age influences my notions of progress. I was a child in the 1950s before there was a Canadian Bill of Rights and before any provincial human rights legislation was enacted. My elementary and secondary school teachers would have been fully within their rights to attribute my rebelliousness to my Métis identity. I was taught that Halfbreeds were inherently untrustworthy, and prone to treasonous behaviour and mental instability. Having grown up in that era, my bar for progress may be significantly lower than Allison's. When white students arrive in my classroom espousing knowledge of structures of privilege and their complicity in the oppression of Indigenous people, I see progress, even though I know that we must continue questioning and challenging.

Both Daniel Heath Justice and Kristina Fagan raise the issue of works by Indigenous writers that do not heal. Daniel asks, "[W]hat do we do with them? Do we still teach/study/share them? What is the role of 'application' here?" Again, I agree. In the same way that lateral violence is a hugely damaging factor in our communities, so are some works by Indigenous authors. Indigenous authors are not immune to internalized racism, sexism,

and homophobia, and there are some works that I just do not teach because the potential to hurt is too great. There are others that I teach with great caution, such as Ian Ross' *fareWel* and Robert Arthur Alexie's *Porcupines and China Dolls*. Both of these are, I believe, incredibly important works of literature; however, there is the possibility of things going very badly and the works ultimately reinforcing negative stereotypes at the very least and further traumatizing Indigenous students at worst. This situation speaks to the need to develop a compassionate, decolonizing pedagogy.

Daniel states that, "Literature teachers are not counsellors or therapists; for all that we might be empathetic, we are not generally trained to provide the necessary assistance for people in search of healing." I disagree with both the statement and the perceived need for professionalizing our relationships as human beings.[11] Several years ago, I attended a workshop on teaching effectiveness with James McNinch, now the Dean of Education at the University of Regina. James presented us with higher education research showing that our ability to attend to our students' affective needs has a direct effect on their academic outcomes. When teaching difficult texts, such as Ross' and Alexie's, attending to all of the students' affective needs is particularly important because reading these texts could well be traumatic. For Indigenous students, the occasion of reading these works may be the first time they really understand the extent that Canada has oppressed our people. If we are effective, our non-Indigenous students will come to realize that, although they may have never committed an act of personal racism, they benefit daily because of racist colonial policies, and they cannot extract themselves from continuing to benefit from structural and systemic racism. We must find ways to attend to our students' inevitable suffering when they understand these hard truths. If, through fear of their strong emotional responses, we avoid our students' pain, the results could be catastrophic: Indigenous students might never want to read another work of Indigenous literature or ever again study their history, and non-Indigenous students might leave feeling resentful for "being made to feel" guilty. I want students to leave my classroom as allies who accept the harsh truths but are ready to fight the good fight together. It is, therefore, my responsibility to develop a decolonizing pedagogy based on teaching the whole student—intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and yes, even physically.[12] Granted, there are times when a student may be so wounded that he or she might need professional help, but I've found these times to be rare, and the wounding usually pre-exists their arrival in my classroom. Literature teachers should not fear emotions in the classroom. Most of us

love literature because of the feelings that it evokes. We are humanists, and to be human is not only to think, but also to feel.

Finally, and the most difficult criticism to which I must respond, is Kristina's comment that

> [t]hese close readings are sensitive and complex, but they are not fully taken into account in the book's overarching theory of healing. How can stories that are somehow limited, unrealistic, or present a somehow problematic vision of Aboriginal communities be healing? Perhaps they become healing through the process of thinking about them, discussing them, and coming to a critical understanding of why the text works the way it does. *Taking Back Our Spirits* does engage in this process of critical understanding, but it does not attempt to conceptualize how to deal with a wide range of readers' responses. (see Fagan's article above)

Kristina is correct, and I realize that the theory of healing that I construct is most effective in a classroom where I can implement a decolonizing pedagogy that supports students in "thinking about [the texts], discussing them, and coming to a critical understanding of why the text works the way it does." I do not take into account the response of readers who read in solitude without a community to help them process their response. This is both a limitation of my theory and of literature as an aid to healing. Worse yet, I can do nothing to change this situation other than acknowledge it. Perhaps this is why my research focus has shifted to applied theatre, an inherently communal endeavour.

Once again I must thank my critics for inspiring me to think, to re-examine my position, and to develop my ideas. I think of you as kindred spirits who walk the same path. By sharing in these conversations, we have become a community, and as a community, we support healing for Indigenous people and a cure from the ills of colonialism. Kinanâskomitinawaw.

NOTES

1 The conferences were that of the Society for the Social Studies of Science in 2003 and the Conference on South Asia in 2004.

2 Forums to date have appeared on J. Edward Chamberlin's *If This Is Your Land, Where are Your Stories?* in the online journal *Postcolonial Text* 3.2 (2006); Daniel Coleman's *White Civility* in the *International Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue internationale des études canadiennes* 38 (2008): 183-242; and on Julia Emberley's *Defamiliarizing the Aboriginal* in *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 23-24 (2010): 388-428.

3 While Thomas King's *The Truth about Stories* is frequently cited by literary critics, it is in fact a print published version of the Massey Lectures rather than being conceived as a monograph of literary criticism.

4 We borrow the term "narrative repair" from professor of bioethics Hilde Lindemann Nelson in her book *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair*.

5 For a critical historicization of Aboriginal redress as predating Canada's "so-called reconciliatory present" (Henderson and Wakeham 8), please see Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham's introduction to their 2009 *English Studies in Canada* (*ESC)* issue on *First Peoples and the Culture of Redress in Canada*, "Colonial Reckoning, National Reconciliation?: Aboriginal Peoples and the Culture of Redress in Canada." For a discussion of the government of Canada's June 2008 apology to students of residential schools, and of the rhetoric of truth and reconciliation in particular, see Roland Chrisjohn and Tanya Wasacase's contribution to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's 2009 publication, *Response, Responsibility, and Renewal: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Journey*.

6 In her "Afterword" to Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham's *ESC* issue on Aboriginal redress, Episkenew asserts: "Yes, there is a need for the survivors of residential schools to speak their truth and have Canadians acknowledge and affirm that truth. Yet, the residential schools were only one element of Canada's colonial policies" (198). Similarly, Gregory Younging, Jonathan Dewar, and Mike DeGagné remark in the Epilogue to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's *Response, Responsibility, and Renewal: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Journey* that reconciliation cannot be "about residential schools alone; this long history did not exist in a vacuum and cannot be addressed as if it did" (341).

7 Though largely US-focused in its analysis, Gerald Graff's *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* is an essential text in understanding the disciplinary genealogy of literary studies in North America. In *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University*, William Clark offers a broader perspective on the internecine power struggles between various disciplines in the academy, including the upstart discipline of literature (as distinct from linguistics).

8 I once reviewed a Social Studies textbook for the Alberta Department of Education. The four pages devoted to Indigenous people made such claims. In my marginal comments, I asked, "As opposed to those people who are not proud and independent? Who are those people?"

9 Thanks, Tom MacIntosh.

10 The Honourable Andrew Scheer, Member of Parliament for Regina-Qu'Appelle, the constituency in which I live, explained the plan to me at a meet-the-candidates debate. He had never heard about the Dawes Act and was nonplussed when I explained that the outcomes had been so destructive that the allotment process had to be repealed in 1934.

11 See Danika Overmars' article for a warning about pathologizing Indigenous peoples' emotional responses to historical trauma.

12 I've incorporated a physical aspect into my classrooms by using theatre techniques adapted from Augusto Boal's "rainbow of desire" (2003) for teaching character analysis in literature.

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Chris Hutchinson

Legion

In service to the people, pressing my ear against the wall
I think I hear the poor scarabs trapped in amber celluloid.
This is after the uprising, but before the arrival
Of warships, and the wolf-like helicopters come
To *gawp-gawp-gawp*. In this room there are
Other rooms with walls made of yellow dust lit
By glowing screens. The doors are voices, all of them
Locked. In service to the people, lead reporters
Are sacking museums and on my orders they will escort
The mummified dead back to their network executives.
Only one throat can trumpet through these ancient gramophones.
Only my song can pierce the galvanized hummingbird's skull.
In the street there is smoke, human forms, shapes of blue
Twisted metal, and police. What I say makes history
Obsolete. Like Herodotus on stilts I seek that white-haired
Raconteur who once swam with sharks and swallowed African
Hornets on a dare. Where is he now? Probably weeping in some
Sunset Strip hotel, his pinpoint oxford shirt spangled
With the blood of the silenced. In my absence, silence
Is my legion in service to the people.

Canada: Migration and Exile

Eugen Banauch
Fluid Exile: Jewish Exile Writers in Canada 1940-2006. Universitätsverlag C. Winter n.p.

Maria Löschnigg and Martin Löschnigg, eds.
Migration and Fiction: Narratives of Migration in Contemporary Canadian Literature. Universitätsverlag C. Winter n.p.

Reviewed by Susanne Marshall

These two excellent volumes, both published in 2009 by Universitätsverlag C. Winter, contribute to the growing body of transnational approaches to Canadian literature, emphasizing the construction of fluid identities across ethnicities, cultures, communities of interest, and national borders. As such, they expand Canadian literary studies both in content and in concept, advocating a critical approach that emphatically links and contextualizes Canadian works, both historical and contemporary, within global networks.

Migration and Fiction comes out of the conference of the Centre for Canadian Studies at the University of Graz, Austria, in 2008; it gathers a diversity of perspectives from international scholars on representations of migration in Canadian literature. Throughout, these scholars note the transition in migration studies from an often dualistic understanding of migration, exile, and cultural contact—here and there, origin and present—to the current emphasis on process and transformation, the "Third Space" that Homi Bhabha identifies.

Accordingly, these papers focus on the constantly shifting ground of the "contact zone" of movement and transculturation. They explore the consequences of migration for the construction of identities, and of strategies of literary representation. Much attention is paid throughout the volume to the relationship between migration's production of multiple subjectivities and migration literature's tendency to multiple narratives and a conscious exploration of the use and truths of fiction. Further, the collection considers the ways in which the insights of migration studies are increasingly applicable to studies of modern culture in general, with its emphasis on "instability and relativity in its conceptions of individual and communal identities." Examples include Martin Löschnigg's examination of Munro's use of migration as a metaphor for individual movement through the stages of life, and Armin Wiebe's discussion of migration as a key to his novels' subjects and styles.

Maria Löschnigg, focusing on form and genre, considers the suitability of the short story cycle for migration narratives. Smaro Kamboureli's opening paper also reflects on form, bending the boundaries of genre to include space within criticism for the affective and subjective realms, while her work meditates on our understandings of "diaspora." The papers of Konrad Gross and Elisabeth Damböck trace shifts in terminology and paradigms as migrant literature moves toward the transcultural and "transmigrant." Klaus Martens examines

the variations in Frederick Philip Grove's representations of migration—fictional, autofictional, and allegorical.

Some papers investigate the roles of specific cultural objects, ideas, and metaphors: Carla Comellini looks at the idea of the garden, food, and other significant markers of belonging, while Jason Blake examines the tension in hockey literature between narratives of inclusivity and the sport's white, male image. Tanja Cvetkovic considers representations of place and home within Rohinton Mistry's migration narratives, while Birgit Neumann explores spatial imagery. The essays point, too, to the need to further complicate categories: Anna Pia de Luca, Yvonne Völkl, and Michelle Gadpaille consider the intersection of transcultural experiences and gender; Gadpaille and Natalia Vid also explore the role of language as a cultural and class marker. Völkl's work further explores francophone Jewish Canadian writing against a largely Anglophone tradition.

Eugen Banauch's *Fluid Exile: Jewish Exile Writers in Canada 1940-2006*, adapted from Banauch's dissertation research at the University of Vienna, focuses upon the works of Jewish Canadian writers Henry Kreisel, Carl Weiselberger, Charles Ulrich Wassermann, and Eric Koch, all of whom fled Nazi Germany, arrived in Canada as "enemy aliens" in the 1940s, and subsequently made their lives in the country. Banauch's approach is interdisciplinary: he reads his subjects through the lens of German exile literature, stressing, as his title indicates, exile as a fluid concept, differentiating it from earlier approaches that focus upon the influence of points of origin. Banauch's subjects have been marginalized within the study of German exile literature—he is the first to examine the Canadian exile—and this is at least in part because they do not conform to expectations: they are written (mostly) in English; many are written long after 1945; and their authors left Europe in their youth, falling between the usual categories of first- and second-generation writers. Banauch emphasizes the ways in which his subjects' works are characterized by "complex and divergent trans/cultural strategies" that constantly re/construct cultural spaces, roles, and positions, preventing their essentialization within any category.

At the same time, Banauch examines the works of Kreisel, Weiselberger, Wassermann, and Koch within their Canadian context: here, they too have been given little attention in the fields of Canadian literature and Jewish Canadian literature (with the exception of Kreisel). Though seldom studied in Canada, they are significant in that they precede the surge in literary investigations of transculturation that has flourished since the late twentieth century. Banauch also traces the changes in Canadian society and culture throughout the course of six decades that influence the changing foci of his subjects' literary production.

Fluid Exile begins by sketching the history of the internment of Jewish refugees in the UK and in Canada, and Canadian social norms at the time of their arrival. It then provides biographies of Kreisel, Weiselberger, Wassermann, and Koch. Banauch situates his approach in the exile studies of Germany and Canada, and in Holocaust literature. The studies of individual works are approached through four principal categories: "Writing the Holocaust," "Writing Exile," "Jewish Worlds," and "Inter- and Transcultural Writing." The thematic approach works very well here, as we see the coherence of these subjects as a group and yet their diversity and complexity as cultural subjects and producers.

True and Not So True

James Bartleman
As Long as the Rivers Flow. Knopf Canada $29.95

Linda Goyette
Northern Kids. Brindle & Glass $12.95

Janet Romain
Grandpère. Caitlin $24.95

Reviewed by Karen Charleson

Well-written fiction has the power to convey truth with heightened sensitivity and insight. With these three works, however, it is the single non-fiction work, the truthful stories of *Northern Kids*, that provide the inspiration and pique the interest. The fictional novels *As Long as the Rivers Flow* and *Grandpère* fall short of fully engaging our imaginations and expanding our thinking.

Northern Kids is a series of short stories told from the perspectives of youth living or formerly living in northern Canada. Linda Goyette hears the stories personally or reads them in archives, books, and libraries. In her introduction, Goyette talks of tragic stories pouring south as though through a funnel, and how hearing only these stories distorts the truth. The stories she collects and presents aim to remedy that situation. Though some are about tragic events—deaths, disease, fires—overwhelmingly they are positive. They celebrate survival and the sheer joy of life and living in the North.

Goyette retells stories in her own words in the first person. At the close of each, she includes a section entitled: "What do we know for sure?" Here she relates how she found the particular story, what eventually happened to the children involved, what parts of the story she embellished, and what parts she verified in her research.

Northern Kids would be enjoyed by both younger and older readers. The stories recognize, respect, and illuminate the worldviews and ways of life presented in the different stories. The "What do we know for sure?" sections provide a model for thinking about, analyzing, and further researching the subject matter. Goyette suggests additional resources (including her own website) for further exploration of story topics. Potential historical, cultural, and geographical lessons are varied and numerous.

As Long as the Rivers Flow is also a work with an educational aim. James Bartleman seeks to teach readers about terrible living conditions, and specifically the issue of youth suicide, in northern Ontario First Nations communities. A member of the Chippewas of Rama First Nation of Southern Ontario, former diplomat, and Lieutenant of Ontario, he gained a fuller understanding of northern Aboriginal communities later in life. Reading Bartleman's novel, I couldn't help asking myself why the author chose to tell this horrific story of the Indian Residential Schools, and their enduring effects on Native people, as fiction. There is so much actual "truth" in Bartleman's descriptions of life for residential school students, that I suspect the actual stories of former students could readily replace this fictional one.

Writing fiction set in the Indian Residential Schools is akin to writing fiction set in the Rwandan genocide or the Holocaust. In Bartleman's attempts to maintain historical accuracy, he crams too much background information into too few pages. He seemingly tries to fit "everything" about Native communities and cultures into his story. As a result, much in the novel is not covered in sufficient depth. For example, Bartleman tries to close on a positive, hopeful note. After all the pain and death, however, the movement to reconciliation and healing seem overly simplistic. I can't believe that a single encounter between priests and community is able to completely resolve the emotional and moral issues.

Grandpère is the first person narrative of Anzel O'Flaherty, the granddaughter of SiMon Wakim/Simon Walker. While

author Janet Romain leads us to believe that the primary subject of this novel is Simon, except for the specific passages in which he relays one of his stories (in which he becomes the first person narrator), the actual protagonist is Anzel.

In the last part of his life, Simon lives on Anzel's farm. He retains his independence and self-sufficiency at the age of ninety-eight. His determination is contrasted throughout the novel with others of his age and younger that live in the local retirement home. We hear Simon's stories as he relates them to Anzel, and we learn more about him through his interaction with Anzel, but he remains largely a flat character. It is Anzel and Anzel alone who we come to know well. Her children and grandchildren, her friends, even the man who becomes her partner, all remain simple characters as though presented solely to better reflect Anzel.

Compared to *As Long as the Rivers Flow*, *Grandpère* is a much lighter story. Grandpère has lived a full life. Overcoming loss and tragedy, he has maintained his identity as a free Carrier man. His overall story is a positive one. His family—as clearly evidenced by Anzel and her children and grandchildren—continues to survive and to thrive.

Unfortunately, both *As Long as the Rivers Flow* and *Grandpère*, despite lofty and well-intentioned purposes, suffer from common pitfalls of new novelists. Dialogue is often unnatural or presented only for the purpose of conveying information. While many individual events ring true, the depth to which these events are revealed and the manner in which they are strung together, too often make them less than plausible.

I know that the subjects Bartleman and Romain write about are based in actual events. I am disappointed that—aside from brief glimpses—neither author illuminated their truth more fully for me. Goyette, on the other hand, told me in her introduction that northern kids have shaped Canada. Through re-telling their individual, unique stories, and showing some genuine interest, she unpretentiously showed me truths I would not otherwise have seen.

A Green Turn: Western Canadian Writers and Ecofiction

Jamie Bastedo
Sila's Revenge. Red Deer $14.95

Ann Eriksson
Falling from Grace. Brindle & Glass $19.95

Stephen Legault
The Darkening Archipelago: A Cole Blackwater Mystery. NeWest $19.95

Michael Nicholl Yahgulanaas
Flight of the Hummingbird: A Parable for the Environment. Douglas & McIntyre $16.00

Reviewed by Rebecca Raglon

Culture, compared to nature, at first glance appears oddly malleable. Culture, after all, is often described as being socially constructed. Thomas King once famously and happily suggested if you don't like a particular social ill—change the story. The discovery of the power of stories, the malleability of cultural forms, and the social construction of everyday life also invigorated green thinking: here was another avenue by which people could be persuaded to change their attitudes toward the environment, and with changing attitudes would come changing behavior. Furthermore, this could be a particularly effective way to teach people about environmental ills. Bitter ecological lessons could be coated with the honey of language, the charm of a children's story, or the accessibility of a romance novel. Eventually, culture would be transformed as the "green message" got out in multiple forms including poetry, popular novels, music, movies, and television shows. Such a premise is partially what lies behind the books under consideration here: books delivered to my mailbox and clustered under the label "Eco BC."

Of course this kind of optimism comes with certain caveats; US poet Gary Snyder pointed out that cultural change in fact occurs about as quickly as the movement of glaciers (he was writing before the true nature of global warming had revealed itself in rapidly disappearing glaciers around the world). But perhaps the metaphor is still useful. Cultural attitudes do appear to be strangely stubborn things and often resistant to change until disaster strikes. The issues facing humans, from climate change to massive species extinction, are daunting indeed. Will green books help chip away at the stubborn self-absorption of humans and the centuries of self-referential literature and philosophy that have nourished these attitudes?

The second caveat regarding the turn towards green cultural production has to do with how such literature is to be read. On the one hand, we have the desire to "change our story" from the domination of nature to one more in line with ecological realities. Yet decades into this project, there is still a need to distinguish between the crudeness of propagandistic utterance and truly new expressions signaling change. This perhaps is the measure by which to judge any new "green" book. Of course, it seems a measure of progress to have any attention at all drawn to the grave problems facing us. But perhaps we are past the initial naive stage where such attention in and of itself suggests that we are now well on our way to developing a "new story." The word is out and yet the crisis continues. How effective have we been in creating genuinely new stories?

Stephen Legault's novel *The Darkening Archipelago* is a good mystery (the second one featuring the hard drinking and fighting Cole Blackwater). Occasionally, however, the eco aspects seem grafted on. Archie Ravenwing has his skull pierced with a gaff hook in the first chapter, but not before he has time to ruminate on grizzly bears, dead fish, and the BC ecosystem. "Archie sipped his coffee, thinking about this cycle of existence." The mystery is a fine, cracking one, but Archie's moment of reflection seems awkward. Often information of this type is put into a character's thoughts or dialogue—a way, perhaps, to get information about ecology to the reader. (Similar informative moments are found in *Sila's Revenge*—a lecturer's entire talk at the United Nations is reproduced for readers—and in *Falling From Grace,* "Orangutan means 'person of the forest,'" Paul earnestly tells Faye, who is a sophisticated scientist.)

These quibbles aside, the plot of *The Darkening Archipelago* brings together concerns about sea lice, survival, and economic progress skillfully, the mystery highlighting the constant tension between economic and ecological interests. The detective genre is a good one to use for green themes; the fact that evildoers are found out in itself suggests a certain hope that environmental catastrophe, too, may be averted if certain people simply care enough to uncover the truth. In fact, this is a theme running through all four of these books.

Jamie Bastedo's canvas is larger, as befitting an adventure novel that ranges from the Arctic to New York and Australia. *Sila's Revenge* is a sequel to *Thin Ice,* and in this novel for young adults, Bastedo lives up to his aim of "taking science and culture to the streets." Perhaps there is no better way to deal with some of the complexities of global warming than through the eyes of an eighteen-year-old from Canada's Arctic. Turning climate change into something that must be faced and that nevertheless has an affirmative ending perhaps makes the "idea" of an overwhelming calamity easier to approach.

Falling from Grace by Ann Eriksson takes a literally "small" protagonist and pits her against larger ecological problems. The book is an engaging one, where a prickly Faye is caught up in the messy lives of protesters who arrive at her work site to save some old growth trees. Life doesn't stop just because you are busy saving the world.

Finally, Michael Nicholl Yahgulanaas' lovely *Flight of the Hummingbird* is a parable "for the environment"—a traditional story, with a preface by two respected elders of the environmental movement, the late Wangari Maathai and the Dalai Lama.

The range of "eco" books here is remarkable. None of the authors slip into despair, which is also remarkable, given the state of the environment. All of these are good signs indeed if we hope to one day truly change "our story."

Texte et image

Réjean Beaudoin, dir.
L'essence scripturale du trait gravé : les livres d'artiste de Lucie Lambert. Noroît 17,95 $

Compte rendu par Emmanuel Bouchard

Ce livre rend hommage à une artiste graveur et éditrice qui, entre 1976 et 2005, a fait paraître onze livres préparés avec la collaboration d'écrivains québécois et canadiens. En ouverture et en conclusion de cet ouvrage, les textes de Réjean Beaudoin et de Jean-Pierre Duquette présentent le travail de Lucie Lambert, mais surtout l'esprit qui anime chacune de ses entreprises, ses sources d'inspiration et, plus généralement, le sens qu'elle donne à son art : « Lucie continue de concevoir son art comme ce qui se meut dans un monde de signes et de symboles dont le propre est de dépasser l'aspect sensible des choses pour pénétrer dans un monde "supra-naturel". » L'ensemble du collectif met pourtant moins l'accent sur le geste individuel de l'artiste (son esthétique et ses techniques, par exemple) que sur la relation qui s'installe, dans chacune de ses œuvres, entre le texte et l'image. Réjean Beaudoin le signale d'emblée, et les autres collaborateurs le redisent à leur tour : tous les textes que Lucie Lambert a commandés aux auteurs ont été écrits d'après les gravures qu'elle leur a d'abord fournies. Ce principe ne vise pas tant à « renverser l'ordre établi par la tradition de l'illustration, qui consacr[e] le pouvoir séculaire de l'écriture, [qu'à] affirmer l'essence scripturale du trait gravé », note Réjean Beaudoin. Pour Yvon Rivard, les gravures de Lucie Lambert relèvent directement de la création littéraire : elles « étaient autant de mots nés d'une phrase qu'ils ignoraient et que je devais formuler. » Constat semblable chez Robert Melançon, qui, dans son « Éloge de la commande », fait état de l'heureuse difficulté à laquelle le soumet la contrainte de l'image : « ces estampes m'ont dicté ce que j'ai fini par écrire, mais elles m'ont aussi imposé de raturer des trouvailles que j'aurais sans doute gardées en d'autres circonstances. Entre le poème auquel je m'efforçais de donner forme et les neuf bois auxquels ses neuf strophes allaient faire face devait s'établir un rapport qui tenait de la rime. » Quant à lui, Jacques Brault considère ce rapport entre l'image et le texte sous un angle différent, soumettant plus qu'aucun autre l'écriture à sa matérialité ou à celle du travail artistique : « Enfant imagé, imageant, je demeure. C'est ainsi que j'écris, non seulement à l'écoute de la langue, mais aussi en grattant les mots, en mâchant les vers, en respirant les phrases, et que tout autant je perçois tactilement "l'essence scripturale du trait gravé". » Le va-et-vient entre le texte et l'image que nécessite la réalisation du travail de Lucie Lambert et de ses collaborateurs produit des effets chez lecteur, qui reconnaît dans ses œuvres « l'âme, le regard, l'esprit » d'une artiste accomplie. C'est peut-être là l'essentiel, le « chemin par où . . . quelque chose [a vraiment] lieu », selon l'expression de Réjean Beaudoin.

Revisiting Demeter and Persephone

Sharon Morgan Beckford
Naturally Woman: The Search for Self in Black Canadian Women's Literature. Inanna $29.95

Reviewed by Maureen Moynagh

In *She Tries her Tongue; Her Silence Softly Breaks* (1989), Marlene NourbeSe Philip structures the speaker's quest for self and voice around an adaptation of the Ovidian myth of Ceres and Proserpine. The first cycle of poems opens with an epigraph from Ovid, in which Ceres "*with panic in heart vainly sought her daughter over all the lands and over all the sea*," following Proserpine's abduction by Pluto. The speaker of Philip's sequence is, however, Proserpine, whose quest for a mother/tongue is redemptive, adaptive, and transformative. It was Philip's adaptation of the Ceres-Proserpine myth (Demeter and Persephone in the Homeric variant) that led Sharon Morgan Beckford to explore the myth as a means of narrating loss and redemption in several works by black Canadian women writers. In novels by Dionne Brand, Makeda Silvera, and Tessa McWatt, and in long poems by NourbeSe Philip and Claire Harris, Demeter and Persephone (or Ceres and Proserpine) are key figures in the development of a gendered and sexualized selfhood for migrants from the Caribbean to Canada.

As Beckford acknowledges, there is a lengthy literary tradition of figuring women's journeys to selfhood in terms of a mother-daughter relationship modelled on Demeter and Persephone. Some of these writers—Adrienne Rich, Hélène Cixous, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, to name a few—have addressed same-sex desire and racialized identities through their adaptations of the myth, as do the writers in Beckford's study. What Beckford adds through her attention to five black Canadian women writers of Caribbean origin is consideration of the way psycho-geography maps onto the social and historical geographies of diasporic migration, and in this case, a very specific history of diasporic migration within the Americas. Not surprisingly, Canada is frequently figured as the winter of Demeter's mourning for her lost daughter, though Canada is also often the realm of Pluto or Hades, where the daughter must work out her independence. Canada's figuration in these terms constitutes a useful departure from the convention of representing Canada as the North Star or the Bush Garden, although Beckford ultimately seems less interested in narratives of nation than she is in narratives of self.

The readings of Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*, Philip's *She Tries her Tongue*, McWatt's *Out of My Skin*, Harris' *Drawing Down a Daughter,* and Silvera's *The Heart Does Not Bend* are essentially allegorical. Beckford traces out the elements of the myth, focusing primarily on the daughter figures, and points to the social significance of the ways each writer adapts the mythic variants to her purposes. The reading of Brand's novel is particularly good, and it is nice to see McWatt's work accorded literary-critical attention. Silvera's is the only work among the five that does not explicitly allude to the Demeter-Persephone myth, but Beckford makes a persuasive case for reading her novel in these terms. While Beckford sets out her interest in "the aesthetic qualities" of these works in contradistinction to what she sees as "the lack of engagement that [takes] this literature [by black Canadian women writers] beyond the politics of race and racialization in a confrontational way," there is relatively little attention to form in her discussions of the novels and poetry sequences. Particularly in the case of the poetic works, more attention to formal matters could have enhanced the readings.

Beckford's first chapter is titled "Myth Criticism: A Rationale." In it, she sets out

the two main variants of the Demeter-Persephone myth and turns to feminist myth criticism to model her approach to the works encompassed by her study. Beckford is especially indebted to the work of classicist Lillian Doherty, who is interested in updated variants of the myth that explore gender and sexuality in ways that depart from the hierarchical values found in Ovid and Homer. While Beckford makes clear her own interest in such variants, and in addressing questions of race, she stops short of offering a "rationale" for myth criticism. There is scope here for a more explicit discussion of method and of the value of doing myth criticism at this historical juncture. Nonetheless, even in the absence of a more fully developed consideration of a literary-critical method, focusing on the mythic intertexts as allegories of the quest for selfhood in the context of migration illuminates these works in a productive way.

Vues sur l'ossuaire

Frédérique Bernier
La voix et l'os : Imaginaire de l'ascèse chez Saint-Denys Garneau et Samuel Beckett. PUM 34.95 $

Compte rendu par Daniel Laforest

Publié en 2010, ce premier ouvrage de Frédérique Bernier relève avec brio le double défi méthodologique de faire se rencontrer des œuvres littéraires renvoyant d'une part à des contextes culturels forts distincts, et d'autre part à des traditions de lectures absolument foisonnantes, donc étouffantes. Le livre entend illustrer que la proximité avec l'ascèse des œuvres de Hector de Saint-Denys Garneau et de Samuel Beckett est à l'origine de leur modernité esthétique tout à fait originale. L'angle choisi par Bernier, fort habile, consiste non pas à chasser les idées reçues sur les deux auteurs, plutôt à les prendre à revers. L'œuvre de Saint-Denys Garneau s'est peu à peu muée, au gré des travaux universitaires dans les décennies récentes au Québec, en symbole d'une littérarité radicale minée par l'inaccomplissement de la figure du poète pris au carcan du catholicisme d'avant-guerre. Celle de Beckett oscille entre l'affranchissement salutaire face à un Joyce qui menaçait d'incorporer les lettres irlandaises à lui seul, et le lieu commun d'un minimalisme scriptural sans autre référent que le langage même. Bernier, dans un travail de documentation exemplaire et nuancé, retrace ces calcifications critiques puis les met à l'écart. Le trait distinctif de son livre consiste en une réhabilitation de la pensée chrétienne en tant qu'outil de lecture dont les rapports souvent mésestimés avec la philosophie continentale servent ici à poser d'une manière neuve les questions du dénuement, de la pauvreté, de l'engendrement, et partant, d'une persistance *malgré tout* de la subjectivité chez les deux auteurs.

La perspective de Bernier s'étend bien au-delà d'un comparatisme simple. Prenant appui au départ sur le concept de « littérature mineure » proposé par Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, et plus loin sur Fichte, elle cherche à montrer que les ponts interculturels, s'ils sont envisageables entre le Québécois et l'Irlandais, ne le sont qu'à partir du moment où l'interrogation sur la culture refuse de céder à une « logique d'accumulation et d'appropriation », choisissant plutôt de gratter l'os sous les significations, c'est-à-dire les moments où les textes « s'avancent au bord de leur impossibilité ». Cette démarche, menée à travers des analyses détaillées, met finalement au jour un lieu conceptuel où les deux œuvres se rencontrent en ce qu'elles font voir un « religieux et [un] moderne qui cessent de s'opposer. » Aboutissement loin d'être négligeable en regard de deux auteurs au nom desquels on aura sans cesse, ailleurs, cherché à opposer élan moderne et spiritualité. Face à ce livre très maîtrisé, on aura donc en définitive que peu de réserve, si ce n'est le refus étrange

d'affronter la dimension humoristique de Beckett (Bernier « prend au sérieux le scrupule dans [ses] boutades »), et une propension intermittente à vouloir se tenir trop obstinément dans l'ouvert, au point de faire tourner l'ensemble en une défense et illustration de la littérature comme pure irréductibilité à toute entreprise critique. Mais cela n'est déplorable que dans la mesure où le talent justement critique de Frédérique Bernier est grand; et son livre, en définitive, très réussi.

Critical Ecology and Critical Theory

Andrew Biro, ed.
Critical Ecologies: The Frankfurt School and Contemporary Environmental Crises. U of Toronto P $35.00

Reviewed by Lisa Szabo-Jones

With the Canadian government's formal withdrawal in December 2011 from the Kyoto Protocol, an internationally binding treaty on reducing greenhouse emissions, optimism about positive environmental change grows more elusive and, if I can indulge in a brief fit of hyperbole, my frustration an ever-widening pit of despair. So, when I came to review Andrew Biro's edited collection *Critical Ecologies: The Frankfurt School and Contemporary Environmental Crises*, I prepared for a freefall into that pit. This was not going to be pleasant reading. I was right. Biro's collection was not a calming study; it made me cranky. But that is what makes this such a necessary read for anyone who has an interest—no, an *investment*—in changing the habits of mind that have led to this global environmental mess.

Critical Ecologies brings together fourteen contributors who engage primarily with the works of Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, and Jürgen Habermas. Biro divides the book into four sections: 1) "Science and the Mastery of Nature," 2) "Critical Theory, Life, and Nature," 3) "Alienation and the Aesthetic," and 4) "Critical Theory's Moment." The connecting theme—domination of nature, humans and nonhumans—undergoes reassessment through critical theory's contributions to the conceptualization of the nature/culture dialectic. Starting from various Frankfurt School concerns—aesthetic, scientific, spiritual, and technological, for example—each contributor calls for an updated framework for or adaptation of critical theory to address current environmental and political crises. When modified to embody historical and current struggles and issues particular to the times, through theoretical argument and case studies, the contributors illustrate how critical theory remains relevant and useful today. Engaging current environmental challenges, critical theories are regalvanized in novel and politically pragmatic ways, specifically in relation to a reiterated paradox: as human power to manipulate the biophysical world increases, so does human vulnerability to the risks caused by these manipulations. Current political praxis requires change to the social and political relationships that shape current perceptions of the environment; this collection offers cognitive models that can help shape policies that affect those relationships.

For environmental and literary critics, *Critical Ecologies* provides methodological frameworks in which to incorporate political ecology into literary analyses. The volume offers a range of subtle variations on debates about labour, historical changes, capitalist practices of extraction, production, marketing, and consumption, and the innovation of technologies and subsequent failure of transformative thinking to keep up with that "progress." What I find refreshing about these arguments is their resistance to any retreat to radical ecology (or deep ecology), or to the other extreme, techno-fix-it models as solutions. Rather than

reject human rationality wholesale, they advocate methods to push and reconfigure its current limits to disrupt unequal nature/culture power dynamics. They explore oppressive and relational political and social tensions that affect and ultimately inspire "collective action" to help recognize "the need for far deeper attitudinal changes that would embed behavioural changes and ensure they are 'sustainable.'" Central to this understanding, and repeated throughout this collection, is how "not the mastery of nature but . . . the relation between nature and man" (Benjamin) has created global environmental crises.

Lack of space limits a detailed summary of each essay; thus, what follows is a few, but not all, of the highlights. William Leiss' "Modern Science, Enlightenment, and the Domination of Nature: No Exit?" examines the disconnection between scientific innovation and scientific ethic as a human (mis)understanding of the control and the construction of our relationship with the biophysical world. The essays written by Shane Gunster, Steven Vogel, and Andrew Biro in part three contribute to ecoliterary analyses in that they explore such topics as beauty, alienation, and cultural production within technological, social, and historical contexts. As a result, they collectively advocate a more complex "understanding of reconciliation and its obverse, alienation" and the contemplation of the possibility of radical social, environmental, and political transformation. Concerning the global/local, Jonathan Short's essay innovatively brings together Adorno's thoughts on identity thinking and Giorgio Agamben's ideas on sovereign power. He illuminates how "under the twin imperatives of survival and domination, revealed in both identity thinking and the political form of sovereignty, . . . most of humanity is still living out its prehistory"—a situation Short argues is both "intolerable" and open to necessary change.

Because contributors present clear overviews of the critical theories they address, previous engagement with the works of the Frankfurt School is not required but would certainly enrich readers' critical engagement with and appreciation of the collection. As contributors are frequently in direct conversation with one another, the volume unfolds as an ongoing open dialogue between interdisciplinary environmental thinking and critical theory. If I have one criticism, it is the absence of feminist perspectives. Inclusion of an environmental feminist analysis would benefit a reassessment of critical theory. Pertaining to issues of gender coupled with environmental justice, feminist critique would offer greater scope to this collection's already rich expositions, which elucidate the diverse ways in which human domination of nature "conceals contradictory or unequal social relations." In fairness, I am displaying my own political and scholarly biases: Biro never promises this to be the definitive word on environmental crises and critical theory; instead, he offers the beginnings of a new conversation in environmental studies. As a result, that free-falling, sinking feeling becomes a little more manageable to face and to renegotiate.

Formally Enlightening

E. D. Blodgett
Apostrophes VII: Sleep, You, a Tree. U of Alberta P $19.95

E. D. Blodgett
A Pirouette and Gone. Buschek $17.50

E. D. Blodgett; Marzia Paton, trans.
Praha. Athabasca UP $19.95

Reviewed by Neil Querengesser

In an age dominated by open poetic forms, E. D. Blodgett, Governor General's award winner and Edmonton's former poet laureate, creates within strict formal limits. The three books under review are limited to a few stanza patterns, with regularity not just

in line length, but in metrics and syntax. In lesser poets, this could be a fault leading to sustained monotony, but as with Dickinson's creative use of common metre, the effect is often illuminating and intellectually satisfying.

Sleep, You, a Tree is the seventh in Blodgett's *Apostrophes* series. The poet addresses an unnamed listener in whose presence the meanings of these interrelated poems gradually evolve. Their imagery is often straightforward: stars, leaves, snow, and other natural images are ubiquitous, but each time they are transformed into an elegantly satisfying visual music that pulls the consciousness of the willing reader into a fresh perception of the connections among mind, language, and the world. The sixty-six poems (counting "Faces" twice) consist mainly of doubled seven-line stanzas that play upon technical aspects of the traditional sonnet. While the subtle repetitiveness of certain themes and images places a justifiably high demand on the reader's concentration, many lines pay rich dividends, as these words on infinity: "the start / of it an echo of that other breath that God might have exhaled / when stars burst forth and suns fell out of space invisible to us."

A Pirouette and Gone is a moving and disturbing book inhabited by children slipping into and out of a tenuous and tragic existence. Many of the poems appear to be set in drought-stricken Africa, but their often archetypal imagery can serve to locate them anywhere that innocents are neglected and abused. Although this book departs from some of the themes and techniques of Blodgett's earlier work, the effects are otherwise similar. The repetitive untitled triplets with their often beautiful image variants may lull the readers at times but may just as suddenly shock their consciences into an awareness of their neglected responsibilities toward the helpless and suffering through verse that is simultaneously aesthetically powerful and *engagée*.

Finally, *Praha*, a beautifully designed book complemented and enhanced by several evocative paintings by Robert Kessner, comprises a sequence of elegantly wrought poems about Prague, a labour of love resulting from Blodgett's deep attraction to that city's culture, architecture, and history. While individual poems out of context often lack clear references to Prague, read as a sequence they offer illuminating insights into its influence on the poet. Each poem is carefully crafted with an eye and an ear to the nuances of manifold sensory and intellectual details, but as with Blodgett's other collections, the reader must attend with all faculties to avoid a certain sameness of impression precipitated by the strict form. This collection is notable for Marzia Paton's Czech translation opposite each original page, the quality of which readers of Czech may judge for themselves; strangers to that language with an ear for poetic cadences should at least be able to appreciate the translation's inherent musicality.

Familiar and Strange

Stephanie Bolster
A Page from the Wonders of Life on Earth. Brick $19.00

E. Alex Pierce
Vox Humana. Brick $19.00

Jennifer Rahim
Redemption Rain. TSAR $17.95

Reviewed by Moberley Luger

These books, by three established women poets, showcase new lyric poetry published in Canada. Together, these collections span diverse histories, geographies, and mythologies; they deliver multiple worlds in poetry—our everyday world, as well as worlds hidden, imagined, and lost.

Stephanie Bolster's *A Page from the Wonders of Life on Earth* was my favourite —although I should disclose that Bolster is a mentor and friend. It has been thirteen

years since Bolster won the Governor General's Award for her first book (*White Stone*, 1998) and her poetry keeps getting smarter, more assured, more surprising. The thrill of this collection, her fourth, is in the way it perches (and invites readers to perch) so precariously in places at once familiar and strange. The poems are mainly set in zoos, botanical gardens, aviaries, and museums, places themselves balancing the natural and artificial. Bolster's voice here is forthright and sure, yet also subtly distant. Indeed, the perspective in the poems is often elusive: who is the perceiver? the perceived? In one early poem, "Comfort," a man "who rides the metro daily, / open-palmed" stares, almost longingly, through the glass of a chimpanzee's cage at the "warm hay and tires, oranges" inside. As readers, we're watchers here too, onlookers. We watch the chimpanzee and, surely, we've watched the man opening a hand to us on the metro. As the poem ends, the man is, once again, the one looking on. Bolster closes with this startling image: "Underneath, the metro runs / faces he could spend an hour watching / if the earth were made of glass." Bolster's readers will appreciate poetry that transports them to such curious places and so delicately suggests, as a floor made of glass might suggest, new ways of seeing the world.

E. Alex Pierce's *Vox Humana* also transports the reader: this collection spans generations of memory and centuries of intertextual worlds. These poems teem with personal, historical, and mythical stories that begin on Canada's east coast (Pierce lives in East Sable River, Nova Scotia) and venture into Hamlet's Denmark, Madama Butterfly's Japan, and mythical Greece. The first poem, a sort of *ars poetica*, stands out for its launching of the collection so dynamically. With attention to sound, and to the poetic project itself, the poem begins, "Down in the dunes is a language place, lost U-vowel of the sound turned round, / guts of the rabbit strewn over ground." The three sections that follow are quieter, but maintain a concern for place, memory, and the lyric voice. The "vox humana" of the book's title refers specifically to a pipe organ reed that, in its sound, resembles the human voice; it also represents, for Pierce, an investment in tradition, music, and speech (the title poem begins "The thing which has no voice, refuses to speak, is a thing / flayed and pitiless"). The "vox humana" is also an emblem of Pierce's preoccupation with absence. This organ reed, "flayed and pitiless," only *resembles*, cannot ever actually *be,* the human voice. At the end of the book, a "Notes and Sources" section glosses the multiple intertexts while also revealing how many of the poems were written "after" other poems or "in memoriam" to the dead. In fact, many lives haunt this book—not only the famous characters of Shakespeare and Greek myth, but also lives close to the poet. This is a collection full of history and memory, and with the absences that produce them.

Trinidadian poet Jennifer Rahim's *Redemption Rain* is also a book of history and memory; some poems weigh heavily, especially those addressing the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, while others offer moments of wit, irony, and play. The opening poem, "Earthquake 2010," one of the strongest, brings the poet to Haiti. Here, even before the earthquake, she sees "Everywhere rubble, white dust / like an upturned sepulcher." A few pages later, in an "An Ode to SPAM," Rahim writes of emails that "promis[e] the revelation / of amazing details / once you click attachments." These excerpts represent the collection's larger sweep across the sublime (memory, redemption, prayer, blessing) and the mundane (email, a continental breakfast, L'Oréal hair colour). The *Caribbean Review of Books* has suggested that Rahim is "well on her way to becoming Trinidad and Tobago's best poet at home." Canadians may also want to claim Rahim for ourselves for poems set in Toronto, at the St. Lawrence

Market, or in the glare of CTV. When the speaker, reading a travel brochure, recognizes the "holidays from where I came," the reader is reminded of the many worlds we all inhabit: the dream and the real, the present and the past, the near and the far, the familiar and the strange.

Telling, Retelling, and Rebelling

Brian Busby
A Gentleman of Pleasure: One Life of John Glassco, Poet, Memoirist, Translator, and Pornographer.
McGill-Queen's UP $39.95

Reviewed by Patricia Godbout

This biography is the result of a very thorough and time-consuming research. The recounted life of "Buffy" Glassco is doubtless that of a man who had his own way of dealing with pleasure. As the reader soon realizes, the word "pleasure" almost always contains its opposite, displeasures of all kinds—including guilt, self-doubt, and downright anguish. Thus, the "gentleman of pleasure" of the title is a complex figure, as the slightly awkward combination of attributes in the sub-title indicates. One of the phrases that most aptly captures Glassco comes from Margaret Atwood, who described him as a "decadent aesthete." In those two words, Atwood articulated the tension at the core of this man of letters, both fascinated and familiar with aesthetics of various kinds and the exploration of enjoyments outside of the realm of conventional morality. Atwood met Glassco in the late 1960s in Montreal where she had just accepted a teaching position at Sir George Williams University (now Concordia). In an interview with Busby, she emphasized the fact that, above all, being a "decadent aesthete" was a role Glassco enjoyed playing: "He enjoyed being that person," she said. This interview is one of many conducted by the biographer, along with exchange of correspondence and queries of various types put to a host of people such as Barry Callaghan, Dennis Lee, and Peter Dale Scott.

Alongside the quest for pleasures and their undersides, there is a formidable search throughout Glassco's life that Busby identifies and traces for the reader: that of the troubled relation between memoirs and memory, living and telling, the truth of an instant, and the requirements of narration. Almost as soon as he arrived in Paris with Graeme Taylor at the end of the twenties, Glassco started to memorialize and fictionalize his own "movable feast." Thus, the biographer's endeavour consisted not so much in trying to separate fact from fiction as in tracking how Glassco constantly blurred the lines between them. With respect, in particular, to his encounters with Gertrude Stein, Peggy Guggenheim, or James Joyce, Busby writes: "There is no evidence that he was so much as in the same room with even one of these eminent expatriates." However, as the reader learns, Glassco actually crossed paths with important figures such as Norman Bethune, who was one of his doctors in the thirties when he came back to Montreal suffering from tuberculosis, and Heinz Lehman, an eminent psychiatrist who treated his wife Elma for mental illness.

As Busby shows, for Glassco, retelling sometimes amounted to rebelling. Of primary importance in this respect, of course, is the story of those Americans and Canadians in Paris in the summer of 1929. When reading other people's account of the period, Glassco wanted to ascertain, to start with, that his own presence had not been overlooked. For instance, on first reading, in 1942, Robert McAlmon's *Being Geniuses Together*, he "was greatly disappointed that neither he nor Taylor figured among the grand cast of expatriates." And when he did appear in certain stories or memoirs, such as Morley Callaghan's "Now That April's Here" (and, much later, *That Summer in Paris*), he took exception to the way he was

portrayed and fictionalized. This is one of the reasons why he decided to offer his own take on the whole scene in *Memoirs of Montparnasse*, excerpts from which were published in *The Tamarack Review* in the spring of 1969. In a letter to Kay Boyle, Glassco doesn't hide the fact that many of the events told in his memoirs were "rearranged, telescoped, speeded up and dramatized." More than factual accuracy, then, what mattered to him was catching the spirit of the period—at least some of it.

Busby examines in detail the difficulties Glassco faced in order to become a published writer of erotica, which became a lifelong quest for an appropriate literary outlet. Translation is put to use more than once to help Glassco's writing along. We learn, for example, that a French text, *La Gouvernante*, is at the source of *Harriet Marwood, Governess*, which means, as Busby notes, that "*Harriet Marwood, Governess* marks Glassco's debut as a translator of prose." However, despite the importance of the erotic/pornographic element in Glassco's aesthetics and literary activity and the expected titillated response on the part of the reader, the biographer's extensive exposition of various versions of "flagellant literature" produces ennui at times.

The importance of Glassco's poetry—both for himself and for his readers—comes across very strongly in this biography. The role played by a certain form of socializing is also rightly underlined, for example the many summers Buffy spent, from the late fifties onward, "drinking with [A. J. M.] Smith, Frank Scott, and others by the shores of Lakes Memphremagog and Massawippi," in Quebec's Eastern Townships. We are also reminded that it was at Frank Scott's invitation that Glassco began to translate Hector de Saint-Denys Garneau's journal and complete poems. However, the biographer doesn't delve sufficiently, in my mind, into the very different ways in which Scott and Glassco approached the translation of poetry. Also, the reasons why Glassco would have felt such a pull toward the poetical and ontological universe of Garneau are left largely unexplored. Busby does quote, for instance, an excised portion of a draft letter to Scott where Glassco writes: "I detect in [Garneau] a curious vein of natural, delicate sadism, and I think his horrified consciousness of this was the real cause of his sense of guilt." One wonders whether the translator isn't drawing the poet a little too close to himself here, but no further light is shed on the matter in the biography. In the same spirit, one feels that the description of certain events surrounding the October Crisis of 1970 treats the Francophone and Anglophone poets involved somewhat superficially. I'm not sure, for one thing, that when Glassco and Smith repeatedly refer to poet Michèle Lalonde as "la belle Lalonde" in their letters from the period, they are simply using an "affectionate epithet."

On the whole, however, the biography is stimulating. After having tracked Glassco's own unashamed re-arranging of previously existing material, whether in print form or recomposed from memory, Brian Busby adds yet another spin to the narration of Glassco's life, skilfully interconnecting the memoirist, poet, translator, and pornographer.

Digital Innovation

Fiona Cameron and Sarah Kenderdine, eds. *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage: A Critical Discourse.* MIT P $22.00

R. Douglas Francis *The Technological Imperative in Canada: An Intellectual History.* U of British Columbia P $32.95

E. Dianne Looker and Ted D. Naylor, eds. *Digital Diversity: Youth, Equity, and Information Technology.* Wilfrid Laurier UP $34.95

Reviewed by Karl Jirgens

These three books offer valuable insights into technology as it applies to heritage institutions, a history of thought and

culture in Canada, and the potential for information technology in present-day education.

Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage: A Critical Discourse, edited by Fiona Cameron and Sarah Kenderdine, provides a range of critical and theoretical appraisals of digital media as used by cultural heritage institutions, including archives, museums, art galleries, and scientific institutions. Both editors hail from Australia: Cameron is a Senior Fellow at the Centre for Cultural Research at the University of Western Sydney and Kenderdine is the Coordinator of Special Projects at the Victoria Museum in Melbourne. For those interested in the digital preservation *and* presentation of cultural artifacts, this book provides cutting-edge perspectives on the flexibility of digital innovations including websites, interactive technologies, holographics, and computerized audio-video. This book is tastefully designed and provides valuable case studies of progressive institutions around the globe. Well-placed photos, charts, graphics, and tables serve to illustrate the range of perspectives. Providing balanced and remarkably well-researched cross-cultural perspectives that are inclusive even as they provide intelligent insights, these twenty-two essays illuminate topics such as virtual space, contextual information frameworks, spatial morphologies, tangible virtualities, hyper-documented archives, and automatic archaeologies. This book is outstanding in the range of thought it presents. Included are discussions of oral literary traditions, ecosystemic options, the ontologies of virtual reality, Indian spatial cosmogonies, epistemologies of cyberspace, algorithms of virtual memory, haptic interfaces, and nano-sciences. I could go on, but will say here that *anyone* interested in digital technology and its applications to the preservation *or* presentation of cultural expression will find a treasure-trove of stimulating perceptions included here. On surface, this book covers the uses of digital media in cultural heritage institutions, but it is *much* more than that, encompassing multi-racial and multi-cultural perceptions that resonate with fundamental worldviews as they interact with contemporary digital technologies. For layperson or expert, for archivist or artist, this book will provide a refreshingly unrestrained array of luminous ideas that will inspire even as they enlighten. Bravo!

The Technological Imperative in Canada: An Intellectual History by R. Douglas Francis offers a historical survey of Canadian views on emergent technologies. Francis, a professor of Canadian history at the University of Calgary, provides perspectives on the metaphysics of technology covering the late-nineteenth and the entire twentieth century. Included are discussions of cultural imperialism, power politics, military endeavour, the emergence of communications technologies, and the volition of technology itself. This book features prominent Canadian thinkers who share an interest in what might be termed a moral imperative as it is affected by technological imperatives. Included are detailed accounts of early figures such as Sandford Fleming, Thomas Haliburton, and Alexander Graham Bell, as well as summations of later thinkers such as Marshall McLuhan. Francis forwards paired discussions of Mackenzie King and Frederick Philip Grove, Stephen Leacock and Archibald Lampman, Harold Innis and Eric Havelock, Northrop Frye and E. J. Pratt, as well as George Grant and Dennis Lee. This book examines the subservience of humans to machinery, connections between technology, myth, and the human psyche, as well as US cultural imperialism and the impact of war. Perhaps more could have been said to contextualize the historical effects of technology and war. For example, Eisenhower's 1960 warning concerning the "military industrial complex" as an immoral technological force,

might have lent an additional impetus to the discussion of war in the final chapter on George Grant and Dennis Lee's *Civil Elegies*.

The analysis in this book is nuanced with perceptions on spirituality as it relates to techno-culture, thereby providing an overarching theme throughout. Francis concedes several exclusions, noting there was insufficient room to include francophones due to the overwhelming wealth of material within that cultural matrix. The focus here is largely on white Anglo-Saxon Protestant males. Arguably, in a genealogical study of a moral or technological imperative, exclusions in discourse serve to skew the perspective. When speaking of technologies and moral imperatives, thinkers and writers such as Basil Johnston, Jeanette Armstrong, Linda Hutcheon, Josef Škvorecký, Dave Godfrey, Barbara Godard, Nicole Brossard, Margaret Atwood, Joy Kogawa, Daphne Marlatt, and M. NourbeSe Philip come to mind. The exclusions here are perplexing and one is left wondering about alternate "intellectual histories." Perhaps such writers will be included with the Francophones, in a sequel to this engaging study. And, such absences are compensated to a degree by the book's conclusion which provides commentary on Heather Menzies' feminist critique of technology as well as Ursula Franklin's recommendation that we initiate concerted discourse on justice and equity in the face of the burgeoning forces of technology. Overall, the wide-ranging philosophical, mythological, ideological, and historical connections in this book are impressive, providing thought-provoking perceptions that highlight the struggle between the will to power, and the moral will to freedom.

Digital Diversity: Youth, Equity, and Information Technology, edited by E. Dianne Looker and Ted D. Naylor, provides perspectives on the use of digital culture and information technology in education. Information and communications technologies (ICT) are investigated here in order to provide perspectives on pedagogical trends and modes of digital application. Included are perspectives on usages between genders, various racial groups, and geographic patterns such as urban as opposed to rural regions, including the Canadian far north. As a collection, these seven essays challenge conventional assumptions concerning the application of digital media in schools, while examining disparities between educational policies and practices, and highlighting equity issues as they are affected by information technologies. Looker serves as a Canada Research Chair in Equity and Technology, and Naylor specializes in interdisciplinary studies, biopolitics, and health policy at Dalhousie University. This book examines topics such as emergent cultural identities as revealed through computer Internet access, with attention to questions of equity, race, and cultural background. Of special interest to educators and sociologists will be the chapters on how ICT is integrated into our educational system. There is also a useful discussion of street youth and their relationship to social media. Convincing arguments are provided here involving ICT based pedagogies, how they are transforming our educational system, and how we need to re-think current approaches. Included are lucid and well-argued perspectives on the relative applicability of curriculum-based software and the increasing need for institutional support to better integrate accessible and interactive computer based technologies in the classroom, in order to generate improved student achievements. Wilfrid Laurier University Press is to be commended for its intelligent layout and design of this book. These seven essays include coherent presentations of salient facts and arguments, helpful visual charts and graphics, and detailed numerical tables, along with clearly stated conclusions and tightly worded summative notes. All of these are supported by comprehensive

Works Cited pages, contributors' notes, and a detailed and comprehensive index. This insightful set of essays successfully examines the importance of integrating information and communications technologies within our evolving educational system.

Entre essai et roman

Mario Cardinal

Pourquoi j'ai fondé Le Devoir *: Henri Bourassa et son temps.* Libre Expression 36,95 $

Compte rendu par Sébastien Couvrette

Publiée à l'occasion du centenaire de la fondation du journal *Le Devoir*, la biographie d'Henri Bourassa rédigée par Mario Cardinal annonce par son titre un projet original. Dans *Pourquoi j'ai fondé* Le Devoir, la vie de Bourassa est en partie évoquée par l'entremise de dialogues imaginaires inspirés pour l'essentiel de propos contenus dans les écrits et les discours de l'homme politique. Ce procédé littéraire se greffe à des descriptions savantes d'événements historiques qui mettent en contexte les prises de position et les idées de Bourassa, ainsi que ses motivations à fonder un quotidien d'information. Mêlant fiction et réalité, cette biographie oscille entre l'essai proprement dit et le roman. L'idée est intéressante. Elle permet, d'une part, de rendre un récit vivant de la vie de Bourassa et, d'autre part, de situer ce dernier dans l'univers politique et social du Québec au tournant du vingtième siècle. Au fil des pages, Cardinal fait donc valoir le rôle d'acteur sociopolitique incontournable de Bourassa en dressant un portrait intime de l'homme. À cette fin, l'auteur a notamment consulté les mémoires de la fille d'Henri Bourassa, Anne, et a eu le privilège de s'entretenir avec un de ses fils, Bernard.

La biographie est divisée en quatre parties, chacune étant dédiée à un thème particulier. S'étalant sur soixante pages, la première partie présente les principaux épisodes de la vie familiale de Bourassa et les débuts de sa vie publique. Les deux parties suivantes, qui constituent l'essentiel de l'ouvrage, couvrent respectivement la fondation et les premières années de gestion du *Devoir*, ainsi que les combats politiques et idéologiques menés par Bourassa sur les questions concernant notamment l'impérialisme britannique, la colonisation du territoire québécois et les minorités francophones hors Québec. Les idéologies fondatrices de la personnalité de Bourassa font l'objet de la dernière partie de l'ouvrage dans laquelle il est décrit sur une cinquantaine de pages comme un ultramontain antiséparatiste et nationaliste canadien. Le livre prend fin avec sa démission du poste de directeur du *Devoir* en 1932 et son retrait progressif de la vie active. Du portrait général dressé par Cardinal, l'ultramontanisme de Bourassa apparaît à juste titre comme un facteur déterminant de sa pensée et de ses actions. Le biographe montre très bien que lorsque cette obéissance à l'autorité papale et à l'Église se heurte à d'autres valeurs fondamentales, Bourassa se voit contraint d'adopter des positions morales et idéologiques parfois difficiles à soutenir. Enfin, tout au long de l'ouvrage apparaît en filigrane l'influence des journaux sur la formation de l'opinion publique et les jeux de coulisse politiques. Le cas du *Devoir*, qui se voulait indépendant des pouvoirs politiques et économiques, est particulièrement révélateur à cet égard.

Le choix d'un traitement thématique plutôt que chronologique dans le récit permet de cibler les événements décisifs de la vie de Bourassa, mais entraîne également d'incessants sauts dans le temps qui rendent la compréhension difficile par moments. La trame narrative, bien servie par les dialogues et le style alerte de Cardinal, y perd également un peu de son impact. De plus, certains lecteurs auront peut-être quelques réserves quant à l'effet produit par les changements de ton d'une écriture hésitant entre l'essai et le roman historique. En ce qui

concerne les sources qui ont servi à la rédaction de l'ouvrage, la bibliographie retenue par l'auteur est plutôt pertinente, mais date quelque peu, ce qui traduit bien l'état de l'historiographie sur Bourassa. On s'étonne toutefois de ne pas y retrouver des références plus récentes et indispensables comme des monographies sur l'histoire des idées au Québec et des ouvrages collectifs consacrés aux premières décennies d'existence du *Devoir*. De même, malgré le souci de l'auteur de rapporter les faits avec rigueur, certaines erreurs factuelles apparaissent à l'occasion, tout particulièrement lorsqu'il est question de la famille de Bourassa. Par exemple, la remarque voulant qu'il ait eu « peu de relations avec ses frères » laisse sous-entendre des liens familiaux déficients, alors qu'en réalité Bourassa n'avait qu'un seul frère, Gustave, décédé en 1904. Enfin, puisque *Le Devoir* occupe une place importante dans cette biographie, il aurait été souhaitable d'aborder plus en détail la décennie précédant le départ de Bourassa de la direction du journal, période qui n'est ici que brièvement esquissée.

Destinée au grand public, la biographie de Mario Cardinal représente une contribution intéressante qui vient combler l'absence d'études récentes sur la vie d'Henri Bourassa. Toutefois, ceux et celles qui attendaient, avec le centenaire de la fondation du *Devoir*, la parution d'un ouvrage érudit puisant principalement dans des sources demeurées inexploitées devront encore patienter.

YA Books a Mixed Bag

Eleanor Catton
The Rehearsal. McClelland & Stewart $19.99

Lesley McKnight
Vancouver Kids. Brindle & Glass $12.95

Kim Moritsugu
And Everything Nice. Raven $9.95

Reviewed by Lynn (J. R.) Wytenbroek

There are good books for kids, great books, and mediocre to poor books, as is true of every genre. The good and great books are by far the exception. However, there is a new kind of book, the very twenty-first century, self-consciously clever book. The three books reviewed here cover the spectrum of good, poor, and clever.

One of the problems with books in a publisher's series is that there is an automatic prejudice that the book will be mediocre at best. This is not the case with *Vancouver Kids*, by Lesley McKnight, part of the *Courageous Kids* series put out by Brindle & Glass. Each chapter of this book tells the story of a different child or young person, starting with a pre-contact First Nations story and going through to a story that takes place in 2010. All are set in what is now Vancouver, although some of the early ones are barely in the city as we know it. Each story tells about the life and experiences of a child to whom something extraordinary has happened, or whose name has gone down in history for assorted reasons. The book is well written and engaging, and is a great way to get young readers interested in history, especially if they live in Vancouver or know it. The chapters are short, so they can be read as individual units. However, each one is intriguing and holds the reader's attention. This is one book not to be missed, by the history buff and the "I don't like history" reader alike.

Eleanor Catton's *The Rehearsal* has won at least two awards and has been much acclaimed as clever, funny, "smart, playful," and

"perfectly-crafted" by different critics. It is a story set in a community after a sex scandal at a local high school. It features the local saxophone teacher, who seems to teach most of the girls from the school who are most affected by the scandal. The book tells the story of the various young students' reactions to the scandal through chapters, or sections of chapters, devoted to each of the students and the saxophone teacher, in turn.

The Rehearsal is, indeed, clever and witty. It is also highly self-conscious in style, and very confusing at times as the chapter sections switch from one person to another without always giving information on who is now speaking. The book is written well but lacks sincerity. This is a book that will appeal greatly to some tastes and not at all to others.

Kim Moritsugu's *And Everything Nice* is simply a poor book. Part of the "Rapid Reads" series from Orca, it is simplistic, shallow, and banal. The main character Stephanie is unlikable, with attitude a mile high, and therefore, it is thoroughly unbelievable when she becomes the confidant of a local television personality who then, of all things (gasp!), loses her notebook. The search for the stolen notebook and the rather obvious search for the blackmailing thief through deduction and then entrapment is predictable and uninteresting. Orca usually publishes much better material than this and Moritsugu is, apparently, a good writer, having been nominated for an award for another book. This book simply fails to deliver on any level.

Canada has a great reputation for its children's books. *Vancouver Kids* certainly lives up to that reputation, while *The Rehearsal* is very much a matter of taste and has, obviously, been very much to the taste of award-granters. But there is no excuse for books of the calibre of *And Everything Nice* being published when good writers struggle to get published all the time. However, two out of three is not so bad, after all.

Le bonheur des chats

Ying Chen
Espèces. Boréal 22,50 $

Compte rendu par Ziyan Yang

Selon les croyances populaires asiatiques, le chat est un animal de mauvais augure, capable de tuer les femmes et d'en revêtir la forme. Dans le dernier roman de Ying Chen, *Espèces*, par « un pur hasard », la forme féline s'empare de l'héroïne, femme anonyme qui, depuis *Immobile*, accablée de la mémoire de ses multiples vies antérieures, n'arrive toujours pas à s'enraciner dans son présent, un présent auquel son mari l'archéologue A. cherche en vain à l'accrocher.

Transformée en chatte, l'héroïne continue de vivre auprès d'A. tout en goûtant la richesse que le monde déploie devant son nouvel état d'existence : son rapport conjugal avec A., autrefois difficile, et dans lequel la communication quotidienne était réduite au minimum, semble plus « supportable » dans cette nouvelle relation entre maître et chatte, relation dans laquelle l'absence de communication verbale rend enfin possible un attachement sans pareil. Les voisins, autrefois hostiles ou indifférents à son endroit, n'hésitent point à la combler d'affection, grâce à sa nouvelle forme d'existence « mignonne » et « moins problématique ». Toute notion de temporalité perdue, la filiation et la mémoire se vident pour elle de sens; n'ayant plus la faculté de parler ni de penser, elle s'éloigne de la futilité des préoccupations humaines. La quête de l'appartenance, de l'origine et des racines qui ne cessait de se compliquer autrefois dans les réminiscences de la protagoniste, n'a plus aucune importance pour cet être félin, d'où une harmonie existentielle, même un certain « nirvana » grâce à la rupture du cycle de réincarnation.

À travers les yeux d'une chatte, Ying Chen met en lumière, avec une moquerie

piquante, l'inquiétante étrangeté au sein de l'espèce humaine d'aujourd'hui : la définition problématique de la féminité, l'impossibilité de la communication et de la compréhension interpersonnelle, la tension entre le collectif et l'individuel ainsi que celle entre le majoritaire et le minoritaire.

À la fin du récit, la chatte redevient un être humain pour rejoindre son mari, comme si rien ne s'était passé, comme si l'histoire de la chatte n'était qu'un rêve. Cependant, on pourrait à ce propos poser la question du philosophe taoïste Zhuang Zhou qui, ayant rêvé qu'il était un papillon, se demandait : « Qui suis-je, en réalité? Un papillon qui rêve qu'il est Zhuang Zhou, ou Zhuang Zhou qui s'imagine qu'il fut papillon? »

The Silvering Screen

Sally Chivers
The Silvering Screen: Old Age and Disability in Cinema. U of Toronto P $55.00

Reviewed by Josephine Dolan

Given the aging population of the West and the proliferation of both aging stars and narrative films featuring old age protagonists, Sally Chivers' book, *The Silvering Screen*, provides a vital, significant, and long overdue intervention into current scholarship about cinematic old age. Chivers' perceptive analysis of Hollywood representations of old age—and stylistic derivations from elsewhere—is firmly grounded in a clearly mapped, interdisciplinary methodology derived from the well-established field of cultural gerontology, where aging and old age is formulated as socially constructed, rather than biologically determined. As Chivers stresses, "Construction does not mean fabrication, but rather the manipulation of existing material in relation to values." In mapping such theoretical and methodological concerns, Chivers provides a lucid exposition of material that may well be unfamiliar to many readers.

With culturally produced old age firmly identified as the focus of the book, Chivers forges crucial parallels between old age and disability, and identifies a conflation of the youthful and the able body: a conflation that serves as a normative and adjudicatory mechanism in the pathologization of visible old age and the gendered regulation of on-screen aging bodies. *The Silvering Screen* acutely exploits the slippages of the term caring—caring *about* old age issues; caring *between* the elderly; and caring *for* the elderly—with Chivers' analysis tracing normative emotional responses to the decline and losses that are cinematically aligned with old age disability—horror, guilt, fear, dread—and various attempts to alleviate the perceived suffering of the elderly disabled through care and support. But as Chivers observes, on-screen caring is rarely more than a strategy to foreground the cares of the carer, and effectively, the cared for are displaced by their carers.

The elision of disability and old age identified by Chivers is substantiated in chapter one, "Baby Jane Grew Up," which, as the title suggests, is concerned with films from the 1950s onwards that represent older female stars as pathologically horrific and old age as something to be dreaded and feared. Two subsequent chapters, "Grey Matters" and "Sounds Like a Regular Marriage," also trace discourses of dread and horror—frequently allied to cognitive disability resulting from the onset of Alzheimer's—through concerns with the losses of aging that mobilize a guilty awareness of caring responsibilities whilst highlighting the strains placed on heteronormative structures by the persistence of the heterosexual union in the context of caring. The remaining two chapters, "Yes We Still Can" and "As Old As Jack Gets," focus on stardom and a privileged white masculinity that, despite the disabling frailties of old age, continues to be secured in its dominant position by problematic

representations of women and racialized men. Or, as with Jack Nicholson's star persona, formations of masculinity are seemingly expanded before recuperation into juvenile, reductive, and limiting norms.

The strategy of focusing on femininity in the first half of the book and masculinity in the second has a clear logic and it does lead to a cumulative line of argument as each chapter unfolds. However, this strategy does slightly undermine the book's overall coherence. This is most evident in the transition from chapter four and its concerns with caring and old age within heterosexual coupledom to chapter five, with its focus on aging masculinity in that this structure allows no reflection on masculinity within monogamous heterosexuality, or on masculinity in relation to the enforced caring role and how these representations might add weight to, or unsettle, the mapping of white, masculine privilege in the latter half of the book. But this is a minor caveat. Overall, Chivers convincingly argues that old age films shore up and privilege aging masculinity by representing an increasingly passive femininity; that old age films represent death as less fearful than a disabled old age, and that Hollywood's focus on care and caring is a displacement of economic anxieties related to a political rather than a moral economy. *The Silvering Screen* is an important book that makes a well-conceived and realized contribution to scholarship. It is a book that addresses some urgent concerns about the imbricated discourses of disability in gendered and racialized cinematic representations of old age. More importantly, it foregrounds some of Western culture's pressing concerns about aging, its problematic meanings, and troubling material practices. *The Silvering Screen* deserves to be widely read.

Queer Retrospectives

Susan G. Cole, ed.
Outspoken: A Canadian Collection of Lesbian Scenes and Monologues. Playwrights Canada $19.95

Nairne Holtz
This One's Going to Last Forever. Insomniac $19.95

Rosalind Kerr, ed.
Queer Theatre in Canada. Playwrights Canada $30.00

Reviewed by Moynan King

The title of Nairne Holtz's short story collection, *This One's Going to Last Forever*, makes a promise that its characters can't keep. Each of these brilliantly insightful stories drops intimately into the lives of a series of characters whose passions lead them on a queer search for love—but none of these loves seem to last forever. Love, at times a drive by affair, zooms through a Sudbury wedding chapel, a Toronto parking garage, an Ottawa lesbian bar, and a west coast drug run. These provocative stories traverse the country and almost two decades—from dial phones to gay marriage rights—of fragile, impulsive, and engaging characters that draw the reader willingly into their worlds. Holtz has deftly brought to life a succession of vivid and often marginalized characters whose very identity is marked and made by their pursuit of desire and love. These sharply crafted stories—all compassionate, sometimes gritty, and often very funny—leave one feeling strangely satisfied even in the face of unrequited longing and very sticky romantic conflicts.

Outspoken, a collection of lesbian monologues and scenes edited by Susan G. Cole, offers a transnational, retrospective survey of the lesbian character in Canadian drama. A collection of excerpted dramatic texts such as this is generally aimed at the performing artist—offering a fresh supply of audition material—but Cole's collection extends its purpose to a historical overview

of dramatic texts, and includes multi-character scenes and anecdotal ruminations. *Outspoken* is a useful tool for the actor, yes, but further, it supplies a unique context for Cole's critical analysis of the lesbian character in Canadian drama and contemporary culture. Pedagogically, it could serve as a sort of flash-card lesbian dramatic history lesson. The book opens with a monologue from Sarah Anne Curzon's 1882 drama about a young woman's infiltration of the academy, with a dream in her heart, a nifty motto ("if she will, she will"), and a "divided skirt," then leaps into the late 1900s to cover a sampling of contemporary lesbian work. While the chapter titles tend to dilute the significance of the individual voices, styles, and cultures of the artists represented, the material in the collection provides an excellent introduction to some of Canada's most important female, lesbian, and queer theatre voices, including d'bi. young's poetic emulation of miss merle from *Androgyne*; Natalie Meisner's syncretic representation of Virginia Woolf's relationship to both her long time lover Vita Sackville West and the title character of Woolf's novel, *Orlando*; Ivan Coyote's anecdotal tale of coaching straight actors for the lesbian roles in the TV series *The L-Word*; and a scene from Sonja Mills' hilarious play *Dyke City*.

Dyke City is also taken up as the topic of Ann Holloway's shrewd essay "Potluck Feminism: Where's the Meat?" in the critical anthology *Queer Theatre in Canada*, edited by Rosalind Kerr. This anthology is an "overview of where Canadian queer theatre is today and how we arrived here." The emergence of LGBT and queer identities, and their reciprocal influence on theatre and performance, Kerr suggests, find contiguity with the larger topic of national and regional identities. To this end, the collection includes an array of critical voices including Neil Carson's examination of John Herbert's uniquely Canadian trajectory from fame to obscurity; Sky Gilbert's expression of a sense of isolation in the increasingly post-gay climate of professional Canadian theatre; Elaine Pigeon's exploration of the shifting semiotics of queer in productions of Michel Tremblay's *Hosanna* from the 1970s to the 1990s; and Susan Billingham's investigation of gender in Tomson Highway's hit play *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*. Later in the anthology, we get a glimpse into some Canadian experimental and populist performance events such as *Cheap Queers*, Toronto's radical festival of "bizarreness and fun," discussed by Mariko Tamaki, and *The Greater Toronto Drag King Society* chronicled and critiqued in Frances J. Latchford's excellent essay "Get Your 'Boy' On!" Kerr's inclusive anthology, covering material from the 1960s to 2007, is a must-read for students and enthusiasts of queer theory, theatre, performance, and cultural studies in Canada.

Why Study the Humanities?

Daniel Coleman and Smaro Kamboureli, eds.

Retooling the Humanities: The Culture of Research in Canadian Universities. U of Alberta P $49.95

Reviewed by Nathalie Cooke

One early wintry morning almost three decades ago, I remember being asked by my undergraduate English professor: What is the point of reading the "great" works of fiction, by which he meant those on the course syllabus, by Conrad, Joyce, Faulkner, Fowles, Barth, and Pynchon? We were hard pressed to formulate an answer even though compelled by deeper motivation than marks to read the novels closely, rather than skate by on cover blurbs and *Coles Notes*.

This past term, I taught a class on poetic forms. Students read, explicated, memorized, recited, and wrote poetry. They, too, came to class on wintry days. The classroom space and midday slot were better, but in some ways the challenge for my students

was far greater than the one I had faced. For them, the choice to study poetry flew directly in the face of escalating pressure, both from outside and increasingly from within the academy to acquire and develop applied knowledge.

During the intervening three decades, the rise of what Daniel Coleman and Smaro Kamboureli call "research capitalism" in Canadian universities—by which they mean the need to leverage external funding through grant applications, technology transfer, and industry partnerships—has put increasing pressure on the core disciplines to articulate their use value. This is true of the sciences as well as the arts. The latter, however, is the specific focus of Coleman and Kamboureli's *Retooling the Humanities,* in which they gather together a cast of Canadian literary scholars that includes academic administrators (Findlay, Pennee), Canada Research Chairs (Brydon, Coleman, Kamboureli, Mathur), senior (Brown, Stone) and junior faculty members (Dobson), as well as a writer (Wong) and graduate students (Danyluk, Stephens), to identify the value of humanities scholarship, and its way forward in Canadian Universities.

What, precisely, do they mean by "humanities" scholarship? Answer: the vital study of languages, literatures, and cultures, judging from a carefully crafted statement of the humanist's ideal: "to envision a just and lively future out of a self-aware and informed understanding of the antecedents that have shaped the present context." A more precise definition of the humanities is not possible, in part for reasons astutely explained by Susan Brown, who writes about the "digital turn"—when, today, we engage with textual culture through digital, visual, and oral interfaces. Brown notes that the very nature of humanities scholarship is itself changing: "Many in the humanities cling to the notion that culture is our province of expertise, in fact responsibility for culture as currently understood has largely migrated into anthropology, communications, film, sociology, area studies, and even business schools."

What, then, should be the form and function of the humanities today? Answers on offer are various and at times can fall flat. Some key issues were left largely out of the discussion: SSHRC's "new architecture," for example, which came into effect only as the book was being finalized; and the recent decision to move funding of all health-related research to CIHR, which can leave humanists scrutinizing medical ethics in a funding limbo. Melissa Stephens' exploration of the role of personal testimony in professional practice is promising, but needs to be expanded. L. M. Findlay's contribution is significant, but could be paradigm shifting were the chapter to lean less heavily towards critique (though his phrasing is so caustic as to be almost entertaining): only in the last pages does he begin to propose an alternative model of scholarship that would "feature three streams bearing distinctive histories, epistemologies, and forms of knowledge keeping on a common ground." Most compelling, to my mind, are chapters that defended the humanities by privileging the value of knowledge dissemination. Donna Pennee argues that higher education must "equip subsequent generations—many of whom still want to study and produce culture—with the repertoire and skills to contribute to necessary debates about democracy in a capital security state." Susan Brown is more specific in her appeal that humanists foster new literacies without abandoning older ones, and that they "contribute to evolving literacies," and "foster active engagement with new technologies rather than passive consumption of them."

Contributors spend considerable time commenting on secondary literature that engages the changing role of universities (e.g., Readings' *The University in Ruins,* or Neilson and Gaffield's *Universities in Crisis*),

cultural education (Boyer, Massey, and Smith reports), as well as the changing mandates of SSHRC—the most significant funding body for humanities scholarship in Canada—since its creation in 1977. They recognize that SSHRC has a dual mandate: to explain and justify humanities and social science scholarship to the federal government, and to rationalize the necessity of accountability to its constituency of scholars. So, too, contributors to this volume make twinned arguments. On the one hand, they articulate their needs to the academy and to SSHRC itself (a restructuring of the academic reward system, more time, financial support, and advocacy). On the other hand, they present a case to readers about the continuing centrality of humanities scholarship and teaching to the academy and beyond.

My own sense is that the value of humanities scholarship lies in the dialogue it engenders, and this provocative book will surely do just that. It puts a range of opinions into dialogue. It also gives voice both to the central question—Why study the humanities?—and to multiple variations of the inevitable answer: Because we must.

A Young Woman Hungers

Maggie De Vries

Hunger Journeys. HarperTrophy Canada $14.99

Reviewed by Jan Lermitte

Maggie De Vries' first young adult novel, *Hunger Journeys*, winner of the 2011 Sheila A. Egoff Children's Literature Prize, offers readers a vehicle for greater understanding of war's impact on families. It is a novel about physical hunger, but also about the emotional hunger of a young woman: for friendship, love, and autonomy. *Hunger Journeys* is a coming-of-age story about Lena, a teenager who endures various hardships in German-occupied Holland during WWII. It also vividly demonstrates the gender roles and specific struggles of women (and children) in domestic spaces during wartime. The threats of starvation, sexual abuse, rape, violence, pregnancy, and even falling in love with the enemy, are realistic and pressing. Lena's character, De Vries acknowledges, is loosely based on the life stories of her mother-in-law, Lin.

Lena's story begins at home in Amsterdam, where she witnesses and experiences the daily challenges to feed the family, care for children, and still engage in normal activities such as spending time with friends. When Lena's friend, Sarah, disappears along with the other Jews in town, Lena awakens to the injustice the war has brought, and to her own feelings of complicity. In an effort to assuage her guilt, Lena befriends Sofie, a new student who is more interested in boys and escaping her own family troubles than in doing schoolwork.

As food becomes scarce, Lena and her sister Margriet are sent into the rural areas nearby to beg for food. These "hunger journeys" are dangerous, and the young women who take them are vulnerable to theft, harassment, rape, and even death. When one of their bicycles is taken by soldiers, Margriet is forced to make the journeys alone—and Lena becomes frustrated and upset by her sister's vulnerability, her mother's pregnancy, her father's selfishness, and her brother Piet's involvement in the Resistance movement. This frustration prompts her to escape Amsterdam and her family's expectations with her friend Sofie. They embark on a hunger journey to Almelo, a town close to the German border. But the realities of that journey and the dangers they encounter are far more frightening than expected. When the girls are caught trying to pose as Germans, they are helped by two young German soldiers—but their involvement with the men has consequences that neither of them expect. When the girls arrive in Almelo, they are forced into domestic service to pay for their keep and Lena is exposed to sexual harassment

and later, resistance. Sofie also finds herself in trouble when she is caught with her German boyfriend, Uli. The ways in which the two girls handle their circumstances provides an opportunity for provocative discussion of morality, courage, loyalty, and personal responsibility in difficult situations.

De Vries convincingly portrays a young girl's emotional response to the hardships of a war-torn life. The contrast of Lena's moral and ethical convictions with Sofie's desire to "snatch a little bit of hope, of warmth, right here in hell" through her relationship with Uli, provides an opportunity for meaningful exploration of complex relationships and moral decision making. Lena's romantic interest in Albert, the German soldier that helped her, also creates turmoil for her because of his complicit role in the movement and murder of Jews, as well as his identity as a German, and thus, an enemy. Lena, unlike Sofie, is convinced that even in wartime she must hold to the values and morals that she has been taught. However, her emotions and desires continue to press her to explore how to trust her own judgement. Lena hungers for friendship, for love, and for truth and self-confidence; her story is as relevant today as in the past.

De Vries' novel provides a meaningful contribution to the genre of Canadian war fiction. Discussions of the novel's themes, especially in a classroom setting, may open up conversations about traditional gender roles, ethnic and racial prejudices, and the power of individuals to make a difference. It also offers an introduction to the study of the German occupation of the Netherlands. Although the story does not deal specifically with a Canadian context, the role of Canadian troops in the final liberation of Holland is also depicted. In *Hunger Journeys*, De Vries provides an insightful examination of divided loyalties, complex relationships, and personal responsibility—a perspective which could lead readers to a greater understanding of the plight of women and children in current global war zones, as well as insights into one's responsibility to others in these situations.

David Meet David

David Donnell
Watermelon Kindness. ECW $16.95

David W. McFadden
Why Are You So Long and Sweet: Collected Long Poems. Insomniac $19.95

Reviewed by Douglas Barbour

I suspect that David Donnell and David McFadden have met; these two books suggest they would get along just fine. In their different ways, they both acknowledge and celebrate the dark and light comedies of life as perceived by highly aware writers who grew up in the second half of the twentieth century.

Edited by Stuart Ross, *Why Are You So Long and Sweet* collects a bunch of McFadden's book-length poems, most of them originally published between 1967 and 1984. They are all highly entertaining works of deadpan comic understanding that may appear superficial, but always find a way to dig below the surface of things. It's hard to know how to define McFadden's poems: perhaps slightly surreal comedies of poetic manners: "A long poem begins when a poet accepts his ignorance / and moves out into all the magic space he can afford / with longing for the capture of a moment so perfect / all moments will submit forever to his will." That's in "I Don't Know," the title of which gives his game away. The tone catches something all these poems seek, a kind of wit that is both self-aware and worn too lightly to offend.

Juxtaposition of wildly disparate events, possibilities, perceptions, and figures makes these poems easy to read, difficult to "interpret" (something I suspect McFadden resists). He often creates little scenes from fragmented dramas that never quite resolve,

but keep both the writer and the reader on their toes. The trilogy of "Night of Endless Radiance," "A New Romance," and "Country of the Open Heart" form a deep core of McFadden's work in this form. They inquire into the possibilities of writing at length with no plan, yet they also circle around phrases and poetic possibilities, finding in certain repetitions no sense of redundancy. They offer readers with open minds a delightful ride with an imagination teeming with thoughtful love for the various worlds it continually encounters through language.

In "Poems I've Thought of Writing," David Donnell writes, "You can see at a glance how spread out I am between nostalgia / & whole wheat bread & love & secular days"; all of which doesn't quite sum up the poems in *Watermelon Kindness*, but it does provide a broad hint. Donnell is a deeply Toronto poet, a kind of warped-tale teller, whose vast knowledge of high and low culture allows him to swerve across many different "scenes." Highly intellectual in his interests, he understands that philosophy is a form of comedy, so he plays a sly and wacky Socrates to contemporary life, and to his readers, whom he likes to leave bemused but entertained by his questioning tales of urban life near the turn of the century.

He owes something to Frank O'Hara, but he has taken O'Hara's walking/talking poems and turned them into something very much his own, and very Canadian, even Torontonian. Most of these poems invite us to identify the speaking "I" with the author, but to do so is to accept a false naïveté: like McFadden's, Donnell's I is too slippery and sly to be caught that easily. In poems that talk about living in the city, love, and friendship, and the delights of Egon Schiele as well as pop movies, Berg as well as Neil Young, Donnell demonstrates that what entertains can also provoke intellectually and emotionally.

Wonderfully discursive, full of wild and widely ranging asides, Donnell's and McFadden's poetry is deeply humanistic at its core, asking the questions philosopher-clowns have always asked while they get us to laugh at ourselves and our foibles.

Faith or Doubt?

Susanna Egan
Burdens of Proof: Faith, Doubt, and Identity in Autobiography. Wilfrid Laurier UP $34.95

Reviewed by Kate Douglas

Why do we still believe in autobiography in this post-hoax era? Why do readers, *en masse,* continue to succumb to hoaxes, believing in fraudulent texts and authors? The hoax has fascinated many life-writing scholars in recent years with the publication of a plethora of articles, book chapters, and journal issues on autobiographical hoaxes, particularly in relation to legal, ethical, and moral standards. Susanna Egan's *Burdens of Proof: Faith, Doubt, and Identity in Autobiography* is, however, the first full-length exploration on this subject.

For Egan, the central issues in understanding how and why hoaxes have proliferated autobiographical (and indeed, literary) practice over hundreds of years are faith, doubt, and identity. Egan is interested in the relationship between the author and the text, how this has been constructed historically, and how autobiography has become a test case for considering the availability of truth in non-fictional storytelling.

Egan locates imposture within historical and cultural contexts, asking: Why have particular hoaxes emerged at certain cultural moments? According to her study, imposture reveals the sorts of identities we believe and invest in at particular historical moments. Imposture shows what readers expect from and believe about people who tell their life stories. As Egan argues, imposters exploit the so-called "truth" of autobiography, as well as cultural norms about what readers will believe and care about.

Egan presents different types of imposture, and in suggesting their implications again locates imposture within history and culture and also shows how imposture is relational: it is never only about the writer nor will it only affect them. Egan is careful to demarcate between deliberate and overt "imposture" and other literary issues that have affected life-writing genres, such as memory loss, literary crafting, and the deliberate fictionalization of true stories. The author rightfully contends that imposture is different because it is a "pretense; impostures are frauds, fakes, plagiarists, and phonies." What is fascinating here, as Egan suggests, is that despite everything we know (and have known throughout history) about the proliferation of astonishing stories and our ideological predispositions towards doubt (the need for proof, for witnesses), these tall stories continue to arise and are believed. Egan reminds us that faith and doubt share a long and intricate history (that is perhaps mutually sustaining).

Burdens of Proof is a literary history of autobiographical fraud—from the beginnings of Western civilization through to a series of pertinent case studies (for instance, on the media, on textual identities, and on European Jewish identities during World War II). Egan covers a lot of ground; however, her chosen foci are explored with great attention—offering a depth of discussion that is impressive for a single book. For example, a recurring theme is the complexities that ethnic imposture brings to a discussion of hoax, revealing (in particular) moral and ethical questions on the role of non-fictional literature in redressing social inequalities in post-settler nations.

Egan's arguments here are topical and consistently persuasive. The strength of this book lies in Egan's expansive knowledge of life-writing scholarship. As one of the pioneers of contemporary life-writing theory, Egan seamlessly integrates the theories of her life-writing peers with her own hypotheses to produce sophisticated and thoughtful inquiries. The most fascinating of the chapters (for me) is chapter three, which explores the role that the media plays in exacerbating imposture. Egan reminds us of the degree to which many hoaxes were "made" by the media (we wouldn't know about them otherwise). Further, the media has worked to instill particular types of faith in readers when it comes to autobiography: for example, a belief in Western redemption narratives and in setting norms for acceptable levels of pretense in non-fiction. Egan points to the damaging effects of imposture (and indeed the media's focus on it): its harmful effects on autobiographical writing.

Burdens of Proof is an intriguing study which will be of interest to scholars and students of life writing and contemporary literary studies in particular. As always, Egan's prose is what academic writing should be: sophisticated and challenging whilst clear and accessible. Egan writes about what is both topical and intellectually exigent. She reminds us of the continuing relevance of autobiography to our everyday lives and cultures.

Recovery and Repression

Daniel Francis
Seeing Reds: The Red Scare of 1918-1919, Canada's First War on Terror. Arsenal Pulp $27.95

Bert Whyte; Larry Hannant, ed.
Champagne and Meatballs: Adventures of a Canadian Communist. Athabasca UP $29.95

Reviewed by Bart Vautour

Published under a Creative Commons License, *Champagne and Meatballs* is part of a larger project aimed at recovering alternate histories in Canada in a series called "Working Canadians: Books from the Canadian Committee on Labour History." Whyte's memoir spans six decades of active involvement in political climates in Canada

and abroad. The scope of these conditions is usefully introduced and contextualized by Larry Hannant, who has once again provided historians of the left with some fresh material. The book is not a series of historical documents presented in indexical fashion. No, the book traces one man's romp through a politicized life. Indeed, some rather uncomfortable reading comes in the chapter on his early years, wherein Whyte uncritically reflects on his emergent sexuality and relations with women. Aside from these disclosures, the book provides much important information to add to a growing scholarly reconstruction of Canada's leftist history. Because the book narrates historical events and often deviates from chronological order, a simple timeline mixing events in Whyte's life with historical events would have been a useful resource, making discontinuous reading easier while also facilitating a return to the book for its rich primary historical material.

One of the many useful resources for piecing together the milieu around leftist activism in the early-twentieth century is the chapter on the 1930s, wherein he gives personal and historical accounts of some other organizers and friends: Jimmy Black, who died in Spain during the Civil War; Sam Scarlett, who transitioned from the International Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) to the Communist Party of Canada (CPC); Harvey Murphy, the communist trade union leader; and Dewar Ferguson, who helped form the Canadian Seamen's Union (CSU). This chapter is particularly adept at presenting a productive mixture of historical account, personal anecdote, and organizational experience. In writing about Ferguson, Whyte pauses to reflect on his own purpose:

> I am not writing a history, or even a sketch, of the birth of the CSU. Nor am I trying to present a shorthand version of Fergie's life. My aim is more modest; to pay tribute to a friend of more that thirty-five years. I have known many trade unionists who were better public speakers than Fergie, many who were better strategists, better negotiators. None more honest, though.

It occurs to me that this is the purpose of the memoir. Whyte neither aims at hagiography, an exhaustive history of the communist movement in Canada nor, really, at a simple telling of his own life. The point of the book—and what makes it useful *and* interesting—is to present an amalgam of personal, social, historical, and organizational possibilities that are available to the political left and that look outside strict party lines or programmatic politics. Whyte's memoir—like all good memoirs—isn't just about him.

The point of Whyte's book is clear. Less clear are the intentions of Daniel Francis' *Seeing Reds: The Red Scare of 1918-1919, Canada's First War on Terror*. When I began reading Francis's book, I immediately puzzled at the evocation of a "war on terror" as a guiding metaphor for an exploration of this important moment in Canadian history. My puzzlement continued: the use of the terror of the book's title is not contextualized until the final chapter. Questionable and imprecise use of language in this book is not confined to the title. Francis rightly states that the so-called "red scare" of 1918-19 was a massive public relations campaign and "a conspiracy by the government of Canada against its own people." Francis' language, though, often re-inscribes the very hyperbolic language of that campaign, which may be sarcastic (a possibility, I suppose), but the reader approaching this topic for the first time may be left confused. And I *think* that is Francis' intended audience: readers new to this moment in Canadian history who do not want to be burdened with extensive parenthetical, scholarly contextualization—readers who want the bigger picture. Indeed, Francis provides a big picture. Presented with a swath of diverse materials, readers are

sometimes forced to connect some fairly disparate dots. For example, I remain unconvinced that the six-page, chapter-ending overview of European Dadaism will help readers better understand the particular crisis that arose in Canada in 1918-19. Nevertheless, the wide view of Francis's book is ambitious, informative, and sufficiently evocative to incite further reading into any number of different aspects surrounding this particular moment in Canadian history.

L'Ethos de la fin

Bertrand Gervais
Comme dans un film des frères Coen. XYZ 24,00 $

Hans-Jürgen Greif
M. L'instant même 24,00 $

Compte rendu par David Beaudin-Gagné

Le plus récent roman de Bertrand Gervais, dont l'œuvre est traversée des thèmes de l'agonie, de la mort et d'un esprit social apocalyptique, reprend les idées de déclin et de ruines intérieures. Le personnage de Rémy Potvin, écrivain « *has been* », assiste plus ou moins passivement à la rapide désagrégation de l'ensemble des facettes de son existence : sa femme le quitte, son fils adoptif, Alexandre, lui refuse son statut de père, il n'écrit plus, n'est plus lu. Les derniers vestiges de son existence résident en des objets épars, dont ses carnets, qui rassemblent par fragments ses pensées et réflexions issues des vingt dernières années — cette fragmentation n'est pas sans rappeler la forme du roman lui-même, constitué de courtes bribes narratives. La disparition de ces carnets, qu'il croit dérobés par Alexandre, achèvera d'ailleurs l'effacement symbolique de l'identité et de la mémoire du narrateur : il ne sera plus désormais qu'un homme « mort », isolé de la plupart de ses fréquentations, en proie à des problèmes de santé, et projetant tous les fantasmes de sa propre existence dans des films et romans auxquels il s'accroche avec un cynisme délirant et un humour noir, décalé, qui rappelle l'œuvre des frères Coen — d'où le titre du roman. La vie de Rémy Potvin est ainsi perçue à travers le prisme de jeux de rôles, de mises en scène déphasées, grotesques, qui traduisent la vision eschatologique d'un homme situé dans une forme d'après-vie. Certains des personnages de *Comme dans un film des frères Coen*, tels que l'écrivain Victor Tracas et Alexandre, matérialisent d'ailleurs les fantasmes de succès (à la fois artistique et sexuel, social et médiatique) du narrateur, qui se projettera en eux à quelques reprises; il n'existera plus que par l'intermédiaire de ces identifications à des corps et des imaginaires extérieurs à lui, et dans lesquels il risquera une totale dissolution. Au bout du compte, cette communication entre la fiction et le réel sera brillamment condensée dans le surgissement d'une lectrice de Rémy vers la fin du roman : celle-ci prétendra avoir entretenu une aventure avec lui, mais le récit de cette inconnue se révèlera plutôt le calque maladroit de l'intrigue d'un des précédents romans du narrateur. Rémy devra tracer la ligne qui sépare l'imaginaire et la réalité; ainsi commence la tentative du narrateur de renouer avec le monde, de retrouver et de réaffirmer sa place dans l'existence.

Le roman de Hans-Jürgen Greif, sobrement intitulé *M.*, aborde pour sa part une facette plus romantique de l'éthos de la fin. À la manière du roman policier, l'œuvre s'ouvre sur un meurtre en apparence énigmatique, dans une scène opposant deux personnages antinomiques : l'ensemble du roman consistera à retracer leur parcours respectif, qui explique le crime. M., l'assassin et le personnage principal du roman, est un adolescent aux tendances agressives, qui fréquente un collège huppé, et qui tente de se construire une identité propre, en marge des normes sociales, et fondée sur ses ambitions philosophiques démesurées. Cette identité nouvelle, il l'imposera à ses semblables avec la violence d'un adolescent obnubilé par ses principes, dégoûté par la

complaisance et l'amitié : dans tous les milieux où il évolue, il suscite la crainte et la fascination. Nulle part dans le roman, il n'est fait mention de la nature spécifique des idéaux de *M.*; le personnage ne constitue pas l'outil d'une révolution sociale particulière, mais il incarne plutôt l'essence même d'une jeunesse rigide et romantique, portée vers les extrêmes et les absolus. En ce sens, la lettre « M » fait essentiellement référence à des concepts associés à la révolution et à une idéologie militariste, mots que la copine de M. relèvera dans un cahier de notes : « marteau », « mythe », « marxiste », « massacre », « méticulosité », « mutiler »; ainsi M. n'apparaît-il pas à travers une identité individuelle circonscrite, mais par l'intermédiaire de concepts généraux.

Parallèlement à l'histoire de M. sera tracé le parcours de Robert, victime du meurtre, quinquagénaire homosexuel lubrique, qui paie M. pour ses services sexuels. Robert constitue l'antithèse même du personnage de M. : figure anti-charismatique, physique relâché, âge mûr, personnalité discrète, il ne voue pas son existence à un quelconque principe transcendantal, mais est entièrement animé par son désir sexuel refoulé. Au final, à la suite du meurtre, le roman s'achève de manière assez prévisible sur le suicide de M., réfugié dans un hôtel de villégiature cerné par la police, symbole d'un monde incompatible avec les préceptes d'une adolescence sans compromis.

Genus Envy

Sara Gruen
Ape House. Spiegel & Grau $32.95

Jeffery Round
The Honey Locust. Cormorant $21.00

Reviewed by Owen Percy

Jeffery Round is a writer well-versed in the self-consciousness of genre; on his website, he distinguishes this novel from those in his mystery series by placing it "in the tradition of *The English Patient*." Unfortunately, his deliberate foray into the "literary novel" in *The Honey Locust* often resonates too loudly with echoes from the works of the giants upon whose shoulders he stands. In fact, in its densely lyrical style, *The Honey Locust* reads like the love child of Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* and Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces*. A blurb from Michaels praising the novel's "insightful humanity," in its navigation of "our frailties" and "courage" does little to dispel direct connection, but unfortunately, the comparison does not work in *The Honey Locust*'s favour. The plot revolves around the life of Angela Thomas, a seasoned war photojournalist who, at novel's opening, is trapped in the exploding, smoking ruins of Bosnia. As a photographer, Thomas provides Round with a virtual feast of metaphor and metonymy, as—again, after Ondaatje and Michaels—that which she captures on camera, and the personal trove of photos she keeps amongst her spare belongings become the keys to memory, escape, and the narrative gaps that punctuate the novel. In another life, or rather, her life in Canada, we see Thomas navigating the politics of family—a dying father, a distant and antagonistic mother, and a summer cottage on Ontario's Bruce peninsula that acts as the stage for the playing-out of Angela's family turmoil.

The Honey Locust is the kind of novel that critics, readers, and publishers tend to praise as "elegant," "poetic," and "heartfelt" in its lyricism and fragmented structure. It strains to draw connections between worlds of large-scale political violence and singular emotional turmoil and strife. However, in one example, Angela wonders, whilst driving a Range Rover from her family's summer cottage into town, "how [her undergraduate sister] would cope if [she] had to face any of the world's real problems: starvation, genocide, illiteracy." *The Honey Locust* becomes, in such examples, the very kind of novel lambasted by Stephen

Henighan as escapist, unrealistic, and artificially überpoetic in *When Words Deny the World*. To be fair, such novels are defended by Ian Rae in *From Cohen to Carson: The Poet's Novel in Canada*. Perhaps the most telling connection to invoke here, though, would what Alex Good, in *Canadian Notes & Queries* 73 (2008), dubbed the "Giller Bait" novel: "very serious . . . emphasizing history and geography, generally without any sense of humour, and written in a vague, pseudo-poetically lush and highbrow style." This is not to denigrate the subject matter or story itself, but to observe that *The Honey Locust* tepidly strikes too many of the predictable stylistic and thematic CanLit notes (the exoticism of exile, the struggle for belonging, the fragmentation of identity, the politics of the family) in its quest for so-called literary status. Thus, it fails to offer much evolution or breadth of style and storytelling. Round remains an accomplished and capable writer, but here his major accomplishment is in swapping genre for genre: *The Honey Locust* might be the best "CanLit" novel you've already read.

Vancouver-born Sara Gruen also seems to aspire to her new novel's generic other-yet-to-be in *Ape House*, though this trajectory seems generally to move in the opposite direction to *The Honey Locust*. That is, Gruen seems to write with a cinematographer's eye and a directorial voice already just off page/camera. Having seen her previous novel, *Water For Elephants*, become a major Hollywood film, she seems to have crafted *Ape House* directly for the screen. Opening with a couplet of epigraphs that demonstrate the articulate linguistic echo of the famed 1970s research chimp Nim Chimpsky in the lyrics of Britney Spears, the novel sets up an intriguing framework by testing its weight on the ethical tightrope of human-primate politics. Isabel Duncan is research scientist at the Great Ape Language Lab in Kansas City, where she works with a group of six bonobo apes to develop their language and communication skills through the use of American Sign Language. When animal-rights terrorists bomb the lab, the apes are quietly sold and Isabel is left to recover from her significant injuries and ponder the implications of her life's work and her possible futures. The novel's sustained and admirable conflict, then, seems at first to be embodied in the multi-faceted struggle to protect the apes from exploitation by the likes of the lab-bombers and Ken Faulks—an arrogant porn producer who acquires the highly-sexual apes and produces the Big Brother-style reality television from which the novel takes its name. Threaded through and around all of this is the narrative of John Thigpen, a journalist in a self-consciously dying world of newspapers (not to mention a husband in a dying relationship which inexplicably garners a significant word count) whose initial special interest story on the bonobos quickly becomes front-page material after the bombing. And this is just the ambitious tip of the iceberg—an iceberg that quickly abandons tightrope-testing questions of ethics, animality, and ecological politics in order to become an entertaining breakneck thriller revolving around Isabel's quest to free the bonobos from their latest form of captivity.

As a "literary novel," though, *Ape House* lacks the delicacy of perception and the genuine craft of *Water for Elephants*, and it often moves at a too-quick cinematic pace with little time for psychological or emotional development of any particular character; Duncan is meek and uninspiring as a protagonist under siege, Thigpen is a cardboard cutout of both a journalist and a husband, and Faulks is the very caricature of an exploitative schlockmeister villain. Instead, the novel's seams burst with action and new developments that prioritize plot over narrative. Although *Ape House* is exciting in both premise (its fascination with the politics of language, ethics, and animality) and promise (a philosophically and ethically

complex meditation on the relationship between animals and humans), it abandons both to plot and action. One assumes, then, that the highest praise the novel might garner is that it has the potential to make a good film (the rights to which have recently been purchased by Ellen DeGeneres). But that which is so often lost in the translation from page to screen—ambiguity, metaphor, subtlety, complexity—is largely absent from *Ape House* from the provocative promise of its evolutionary beginnings.

Theatrical Criticism in Montreal at the Turn of the Century: Trapped Between Ideology and Aesthetics

Hervé Guay
L'Éveil culturel : Théâtre et presse à Montréal, 1898-1914. PUM 34,95 $

Reviewed by Dominique Lafon

In this reworked version of his doctoral thesis, the author reviews and analyses articles published in Montreal's daily press during the first fifteen years of the twentieth century devoted to theatre. Guay first describes the different types of articles or the ways in which theatre was described, and then studies the roles of seven critics within the larger ecology. Thus, he determines how and to which extent his seven case studies participated in the definition of French-Canadian identity through their respective positioning in regards to Catholicism and Modernity, as well as French and American cultural influences. His objectives and methodology are clearly explained in the introduction and serve, first, to develop a typology of articles, and subsequently, to describe the journalists themselves. These two sections read as lists, a fact that reinforces the descriptive tone of a book that follows in the footsteps of works penned by Jean-Marc Larrue on theatre and André Beaulieu and Jean Hamelin on the analysis of the written press in Québec. In regards to the definitions of his circumscribing vectors, Guay draws heavily from well-known studies written by Yvan Lamonde, Gérard Bouchard, Pierre Savard, and Micheline Cambron. The author does provide a more detailed and more focused version of known events, but makes no original contribution to his field. This is particularly evident in the sparseness of his concluding comments in which he simply summarizes previously provided information. This paucity can also be felt in the second part of this study in which the last chapter includes a résumé entitled *Portrait de groupe : des critiques partagés* (Portrait of a Group: Ambivalent Critics), in which a large part of the information provided in the preceding seven case studies is repeated. In short, this book represents a modest contribution to scholarship that complements prior studies: it draws further attention to writers better described as observers then critics and explains the intellectual limits, prejudices, and snobbery of a particular group of writers during a specific era.

Alphabet's End

Joan Houston Hall, ed.
Dictionary of American Regional English, Volume V: Sl-Z. Harvard UP $85.00

Reviewed by T. K. Pratt

Fifty years in the making, the *Dictionary of American English* has reached in volume V its last entry, *zydeco* (from Louisiana French, "now widely known[:] A kind of dance party; a style of dance music," with twelve citations from 1949 to 2005). This is wonderful achievement for a wonderful book.

First, some disclosures: I have already reviewed the first four volumes for the *Canadian Journal of Linguistics*; my own *Dictionary of Prince Edward Island English* is among their sources; through the

Dictionary Society of North America, I am a colleague of the principal editors; and I am a financial contributor.

DARE, with its splendid acronym, may not yet be as well known in Canada as it should be. It is a collection of words that are less than national in the United States, dialect words basically, but excluding terms strictly occupational. Defining and holding to the criteria for entry is always problematic for dialect dictionaries. But such is the wealth of evidence in *DARE* that the reader quickly learns to trust it, even when, for example, it includes the phrasal verb *sleep in* "remain in bed longer than normally." By studying the accompanying map dotted with the locations of informants, one sees that there are no dots in Alabama, Georgia, and Missouri, only one in Florida and Louisiana, and few in New England. Hence the label: "widespread, but chiefly Inland Nth, N Midl, West." One minor complaint is that only the first volume includes in its front matter the maps that lay out the editors' thirty-seven overlapping regions, and only through these maps can one clearly see how, say, "West" is distinguished from Upper MW, SW, Desert SW, Pacific, and Pacific NW. Most entries do not have their own map to illustrate the regional labels that lie at the heart of this dictionary.

To sum up briefly *DARE*'s wealth of evidence, I quote from my review of volume III:

> over 40,000 potential entries accumulated by the American Dialect Society since 1889; a painstakingly-designed 1847-item questionnaire for selected informants in 1002 American communities; from this fieldwork, 2,500,000 oral citations; more citations from 5,000 regional novels, diaries, reports, and newspapers; more again from several large personal collections, *Linguistic Atlas* material, previous dialect dictionaries, and thousands of volunteered items; and a total citation stock of something like 5,000,000— close to the number for the first *Oxford English Dictionary*. *CJL* 43 (1998): 245.

And now, for this volume came thousands upon thousands of electronic citations, the sifting of which delayed publication but added still more wealth and weight to the final product.

A flyer from the publisher asks "Who uses *DARE*?" and lists in answer many types of people, including novelists, linguists, librarians, crossword puzzlers, and even "a northern doctor transplanted south, trying to make sense of a patient's complaint of 'dew poison.'" To this list could be added anyone attempting to describe any aspect of Canadian English. Such a person simply cannot afford not to look at *DARE* for possible overlap and for much additional information. I have already estimated that, had it been available, it would have influenced one entry in four of my PEI dictionary and one in eight of the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*. An example from the present volume is *slumgullion*, "a thick, makeshift stew," which is in the *Dictionary of Canadianisms*, citing first a Jack London novel of 1902 and then two similar sources from 1919 and 1966. But is it a Canadianism at all when *DARE* enters it with a first citation from an Oregon newspaper of 1884, follows that with the same Jack London source, as well it might since London was American—and here a much fuller, more explanatory quotation—and then adds five other print and electronic sources and eleven answers to questions from the *DARE* fieldwork? The *DC* editor-in-chief, Walter Avis, speaks in his preface of having "constant recourse" to the *Dictionary of Americanisms*. There can be no doubt that the editors of *DC*'s second edition have to be equally constant with *DARE*. (Another minor complaint is that its editors do not always return the compliment. Surely readers deserve to know that their *slash* "to clear land of trees" is not wholly a regional Americanism: it is also in *DC* with an earlier citation.)

All in all, *DARE* is more than worthy the many celebrations that have attended this volume, and admirers anticipate volume VI

for much valuable background information, and, after that, this dictionary's triumphant entry into the digital universe.

Recuperating the City

Amy Lavender Harris
Imagining Toronto. Mansfield $21.95

Lawrence Aronsen
City of Love and Revolution: Vancouver in the Sixties. New Star $24.00

Reviewed by Maia Joseph

If we have witnessed what might be tentatively called an "urban turn" in the recent discourse on Canadian literature, Amy Lavender Harris is certainly a vital voice in the emerging conversation. With a background in geography, urban planning, and labour relations, Harris is also a passionate and indefatigably curious reader, collector, and teacher of Toronto-based literature. She first started researching Toronto literary texts when she was asked to create a course on the topic for York University's Department of Geography; thinking that she would discover only a few dozen texts, she soon began to amass an extensive library of books. The surprising abundance and diversity of literary production in Toronto, both historical and contemporary, led her to develop an impressive (and ever-expanding) online inventory of Toronto literature and, eventually, a book, *Imagining Toronto*.

In *Imagining Toronto*, Harris sets herself the task of recuperating the literature of a city that—despite the presence of a lively community of writers, a healthy publishing culture, and a widespread love of reading—often fails to recognize and celebrate its rich tradition of locally-based writing. The goal of recuperation seems to drive Harris's tendency to privilege, in the book, extensive quotation and brief discussion of multiple texts over sustained close reading and critical analysis. Her geographical interest in place is evident in her decision to organize her readings topographically: in the first half of *Imagining Toronto*, she explores literary representations of the natural and built landscape, from Toronto's lakefront, ravines, and islands to its streets, downtown towers, and neighbourhoods. Brought together in this way, Harris proposes, the texts create a meaning-laden map of the city. In the second half of the book, she uses thematic associations to link her discussions of texts, focusing on multiculturalism, sex and relationships, social class, and the suburban experience. Over the course of *Imagining Toronto*, Harris develops an engaging, polyphonic literary portrait of the city.

Imagining Toronto and its companion website are important resources for future scholarship on the literature of Toronto. However, some literary scholars may be disappointed with Harris's thematic approach, which is out of step with current literary criticism. Also concerning is her tendency to treat literary texts as transparent windows onto the city; Harris does not devote much attention to the aesthetic dimension of literature, nor does she seem to see critical engagement with the text as a foundational dimension of reading and analysis. But the recuperative impulse is an important one, especially in the face of, as Harris puts it, the "compulsion of cities to consume themselves, to demolish and [rebuild] . . . in an unceasing quest for civic greatness that sometimes seems indistinguishable from cultural nihilism." In this sense, *Imagining Toronto* is a valuable contribution to the effort to bring the cultural resources of the past forward into an uncertain future.

Lawrence Aronsen's *City of Love and Revolution: Vancouver in the Sixties*, for its part, is not an explicitly recuperative project; however, as the first book-length history of the Sixties counterculture in Vancouver its publication is timely, with the Occupy movement inspiring renewed

interest in grassroots activism and what sociologist Kristin Lawler describes as "counterculturally oriented spaces"—spaces "where people (uselessly and inefficiently) converse, enjoy one another's company, make their voices heard, eat food, play and listen to music, connect, engage in the experimental practice of radical democracy, and generally contribute nothing whatsoever to the production of profit."

In *City of Love and Revolution*, Aronsen explores earlier examples of such spaces and forms of activism in Vancouver, in a study that spans from 1963 (the year of John F. Kennedy's assassination) to 1975 (the end of the Vietnam War). Aronsen foregrounds the continuity of the Vancouver scene with the broader 1960s countercultural movement, but he also notes the ways in which the movement manifested in Vancouver in distinctive ways. Over the course of the book, he offers locally specific discussions of the rise and decline of hippie culture, the free university movement, the sexual revolution, experimentation with drugs, psychedelic rock music, Yippie (Youth International Party) activism, and the anti-war and environmental movements.

City of Love and Revolution is an informative and highly readable introduction to the 1960s Vancouver counterculture, but it is not without its elisions. Surprisingly, the city's vibrant and innovative literary and visual arts scene is largely overlooked in the book. A comprehensive history of the arts scene during this period has yet to be written, but the web archive *Ruins in Process: Vancouver Art in the Sixties* serves as a wonderful introduction to the artworks and artist communities of the era. Readers may also wish to turn to other sources for more rigorous critical analysis of particular aspects and outcomes of the Vancouver countercultural movement. David Ley's *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*, for instance, offers an in-depth discussion of the relationship between the counterculture and gentrification, while the new collection *Stan Douglas: Abbott & Cordova, 7 August 1971* (which features essays responding to Douglas's public artwork about the 1971 Gastown Riot) provides a range of perspectives on the social tensions of the period and their legacy.

Still, *City of Love and Revolution* is a fine overview of an important period of social change in Vancouver. As such, it is required reading for those interested in transforming the city through countercultural practices and radical activism today.

Not Just for Children

Tomson Highway; Brian Deines, illus.
Fox on the Ice / Maageesees Maskwameek Kaapit. Fifth House $19.95

Ibi Kaslik; Louise Flaherty, ed.; Anthony Brennan, illus.
Tales from the Tundra: A Collection of Inuit Stories. Inhabit Media $12.95

Pete Enzoe and Mindy Willett; Tessa Macintosh, illus.
The Caribou Feed Our Soul. Fifth House $16.95

Reviewed by Dee Horne

The authors of *Fox on the Ice*, *Tales from the Tundra*, and *The Caribou Feed Our Soul* each take a different approach to celebrating the cultures represented in books the publishers have identified as children's fiction. However, the best children's books are not just for children, but are ageless stories.

Written in English and Cree, *Fox on the Ice / Maageesees Maskwameek Kaapit* describes a northern winter day when two brothers, Joe and Cody, go ice fishing with their parents. Here, as in Tomson Highway's other plays and novels, a trickster shows up as a fox that shakes up what might otherwise have been a restful afternoon. After a picnic, while Papa and Cody are ice fishing, Mama cuddles Joe who is dozing off when the eight sled huskies spy the fox across the lake and give chase. Drawing on oral

storytelling, Highway's story is informative, humorous, and engaging. In addition to describing the food the family eats—bannock, whitefish, and tea—the story explains how to cut two holes far apart from one another in the ice and how to set the net and jigger. In the tradition of oral stories, a dilemma is presented: Papa has to choose whether to retrieve the jigger out of the hole or rescue the runaway sled. He chooses the latter, cursing the fox, but Ootsie the dog saves the day when he retrieves the net. Brian Deines' oil paintings of northern Manitoba are beautiful and his depiction of Mama's fright while holding on to a clearly delighted Joe on the runaway sled will bring a smile to parents and children alike.

Tales from the Tundra is a collection of five Inuit stories that are retold by Ibi Kaslik. The illustrations by Anthony Brennan are full of action. He draws on anime and Inuit art. His treatment of colours is often, but not always, hard edged and he uses perspective and other techniques to create the impression of a third dimension. Each story is preceded by a short summary in which Kaslik identifies the geographic locale for this version of the story. The first story tells of a siksik (squirrel) that outwits an owl that boasts too soon of trapping the squirrel for dinner. The following four stories each explain how and why animals came to be the way they are. Here, too, there are lessons to be learned but they are never didactic. For instance, "Origin of the Caribou" demonstrates the importance of community and of taking responsibility, while "The Raven and the Loon" is a humorous reminder to practice and cultivate patience.

Pete Enzoe and Mindy Willett's *The Caribou Feed Our Soul* is the sixth book that Willett has co-authored in *The Land is Our Storybook* series. In the face of the caribou population decline, Enzoe shares traditional knowledge and contemporary practices to protect the caribou and open minds to "other ways of knowing." He gives credit and thanks to all who have participated and contributed, and practices the respect for his elders and relations that he encourages in his nephews and nieces. He describes how he lives off the land: fishing, hunting, and trapping. Enzoe and Willett illustrate how the Densoline practice self-determination from a short history about the Indian Brotherhood to the more recent efforts to work with Parks Canada to protect the land from development by creating Thaidene Nene (The Land of Our Ancestors), a new park. Tessa Macintosh's photographs convey the people and the beauty of the land. These Densoline, Inuit, and Cree stories will resonate with readers for years to come.

Contemplating Nostalgia

Inge Israel
Beckett Soundings. Ronsdale $15.95

Richard Lemm
Burning House. Wolsak & Wynn $17.00

Ann Scowcroft
The Truth of Houses. Brick $19.00

Reviewed by Alexis Foo

Nostalgia is a prominent theme in the collections of Richard Lemm, Inge Israel, and Ann Scowcroft. This attention to the past, to the delicacy of memory and the question of its existence in the present is expressed in varying forms. Lemm's collection *Burning House* evokes a sense of nostalgia that is quintessentially North American in flavour. In "Where Were You," the speaker recalls a school mishap of a broken formaldehyde jar and the way in which "we carried those passed out from the formaldehyde / fumes down flights of stairs / to the lawn, the blue sky clear / of bombers, blinding lights." The following lines in the poem "next day, with the football team, I donated / blood, proud American. Adrenalin pumping / under my pads Friday night on the sideline" epitomizes and mythologizes American youth culture. The varsity football player becomes

the ultimate hero and symbol of masculinity and patriotism.

In "Heroes from the Burning House," the speaker recalls being "crouched / behind the neighbour's hedge / with a trash can shield, a broomstick spear, / water pistol with Amazon poison, / or curling iron converted to atomic zap." It is through this comical image of a child's game that the underlying trope of heroism or rather, the *desire* to be heroic, surfaces in this collection. "I'm ready for the mortar shells of dirt clods falling . . . and if needed, to dash to my home, / wake my grandmother, napping. / and carry her from the burning house." *Burning House* leaves the reader with a yearning for more of Lemm's undeniably masculine poetic voice. In "Curtain," the speaker addresses a woman, possibly a lover, who mourns the death of Pavarotti. "You wore the red dress with cleavage / Luciano would have rapturously / serenaded, and gold-trimmed high heels / to board the barge on the Nile of your patio." It is his frankness and refusal to romanticize the key moments in his poems that allows his verse to take on sensuousness that is as authentic as it is provocative.

Scowcroft navigates the terrains of personal history and aging with poise and acceptance in *The Truth of Houses*. Her collection is heavy with meditations on architectural spaces that are inseparable from the memory of the body, as well as the enigma of time itself. Though the collection aims for profundity, certain emotionally charged poems such as "Dear Leah" lose their poetic momentum and begin to rely on prosaic phrases. "His grief was immediate and profound. / I rocked him in my arms / but all I could find to say was / *I know, I know*."

In "How to Begin," the speaker contemplates the redundancy of everyday life, yet finds solace in the filaments of her existence. "The telephone answered again and again . . . again and again the sun leaps above the dark swathe of forest." The poem concludes with insight, "and all is new again— / as long as the heart can crack and scar, / bear the world into the world / just one more day." Though the span of Scowcroft's contemplations is impressive, and there is a constant sense of arrival and of maturation in her poetry, *The Truth of Houses* lacks in its ability to challenge the reader as we are handed thoughts and conclusions so blatantly in the form of narrative statements.

In *Beckett Soundings*, Israel boldly attempts to capture the essence of Samuel Beckett's paradoxical character. Her poems are laden with references to the late poet's works. In "Waiting for Godot," Israel succeeds at perpetuating the play's infamous ambiguity through her verse. "What a free-for-all this play / has led to—with no end in sight." Israel then adopts the "I" voice in the last stanza with the lines, "all I claim is to present / the way it is: / most can only wait / and yes, some serve." The reader assumes that the voice is intended to echo Beckett, yet it is difficult to give the late poet this level of false authority.

The voice of the collection also changes drastically in tone. In contrast to the flowery adjectives of "Wordlessly"—"in the blackness / of pain, of deep anguish / and resignation, each exquisite / note becomes a candle"—"What Is This" concludes with the conversational phrase: "as if we didn't have / enough to cope with!" There is something unsettling about reading a collection of poetry that attempts to capture the voice of another poet and make it current. It is as if the reader is getting a dose of "fan fiction" rather than an authentic look into Beckett's psyche. If a reader is curious about the inner workings of Beckett's mind, he or she should read Beckett.

Anishinaabenendamon

Basil Johnston; Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm, ed.
Think Indian: Languages Are Beyond Price.
Kegedonce P $22.00

Reviewed by Margaret Noori

"Anishinaabenendamon," Basil Johnston would say if all readers spoke his language. "Anishinaabe" is the term for the people of the Great Lakes and "enendamo" implies the act of thinking. In his latest book, *Think Indian*, Johnston explains how Aboriginal identity is a combination of language, life, and literature. "Thinking Indian," he says, "is not so much a mode of thought as it is an understanding of one's duties and fulfilling those duties." In a series of essays written over several decades, Johnston describes the duties he considers important for preserving and continuing Aboriginal identities. He began his journey as a cultural philosopher and language teacher when he was asked to speak to schoolchildren in the 1960s and has become an honoured leader in the field. His audience today still includes the young and curious, but also the members of Aboriginal communities who seek to know more about their own cultures, and scholars who focus on the Anishinaabe people.

Johnston's narratives include events that span a century: the racism surrounding the Jim Thorpe scandal in 1912, Native veterans in WWI and WWII, Hollywood's creation of the Indian stereotype, and the eventual civil rights movement inspired by Kahn-Tineta Horn and carried forward by the pan-tribal leaders of the American Indian Movement in the 1970s. Looking back to a time before his own, he quotes the 1805 speech of Seneca leader, Red Jacket, who pointed out the differences between Aboriginal and western religions, as well as the importance of diversity. He also discusses distant times, arguably thousands of years ago, when storytellers shared complex knowledge systems with younger generations through word choice, performance, and memory. By taking this broad view of history and culture, Johnston "thinks Indian." He sees it as the duty of the Anishinaabe to ensure that their identity not be understood only through material artifacts of the past and present. According to Johnston, Anishinaabe lives must be examined in connection with the many cultures around them, across a broad range of time.

Johnston has encountered many well-intentioned individuals who have not grasped the complexity of his culture. His essays warn that learning the Anishinaabe language is essential to understanding the people. To support this belief, he has created many teaching tools and sets of curriculum for those "willing to invest an hour a day." Johnston describes Anishinaabe words as medicines with many meanings used to create narratives that explore the mysteries of life. "We are the offspring of 'manitous,' best translated as 'mysteries,'" he writes. Stories about manitous of the sky and earth trace spiritual and scientific beliefs. Translation risks diluting or disguising the truth. This message is consistent with the contents of several of his previous books, but here in *Think Indian*, Johnston shares his reasons for writing *Manitous*, *Ojibway Ceremonies*, *Ojibway Tales*, and *Ojibway Heritage*. His vision is to inspire action, not merely archive the tales and practices of the elders. For this reason, *Think Indian* is a welcome addition to his works.

Elemental Voices

Evan Jones and Todd Swift, eds.
Modern Canadian Poets. Carcanet $32.95

Susan McMaster, ed.
Pith & Wry: Canadian Poetry. Scrivener $19.00

Reviewed by Robert Lecker

I like to think of poetry anthologies as narratives. They are not only collections of specific poems, but also structured and plotted expressions of their editors' desire to define a place, to locate a community, to establish boundaries that will keep their highly selective worlds defensible and safe. From this perspective, it makes little sense to complain about what an anthologist left out or put in, since what we are reading is a story with its own tensions, patterns, and archetypes. The heroes are the poems; they are who they are.

Evan Jones and Todd Swift (both Canadians now living in Britain) edited *Modern Canadian Poets* with British readers in mind. For them, international audiences have overlooked Canadian poetry, mainly because "Canada has no national poet who is also internationally renowned." Writers such as Margaret Atwood, Leonard Cohen, or Michael Ondaatje don't figure here because Jones and Swift are promoting a deliberately modernist aesthetic. As editors, they want to contradict what they see as "a long-standing Canadian cultural myth that to be a Canadian poet is to be part of the country's geography, whereas elsewhere to be a poet is to be part of poetry's history."

If this sounds close to the arguments made by A. J. M. Smith in his introduction to the groundbreaking *The Book of Canadian Poetry* anthology (originally published in 1943), that's because it is. Smith favoured the "cosmopolitan" tradition over the "native." Jones and Swift similarly support a "wider cosmopolitan tradition" that "seeks open and free trade with the tradition of high modernism and its heirs." Although they claim a "spirit of openness," they are in fact no more open than other anthology editors: this is their world and it is off-limits to many of the figures one might associate with recent Canadian poetry. No poets born after 1962 are included, which means the youngest poet in the volume is David McGimpsey. If British readers want to find out more about poets born after that date, or many of the names usually associated with modern and contemporary Canadian poetry, the editors suggest they should put aside their curiosity because "readers need first to visit the grounds out of which the best new work springs: the tradition of Canadian modernism."

I could make a list of all my favourite Canadian poets who are excluded from this volume because of the editors' high modernist interests. But they have defined the story they want to tell, and they have every right to do so. There is no rule saying that editors have to be democratic or representative in their choices. And, given those choices, I like what they have done. I don't even have to be British to appreciate it!

The anthology brings together thirty-five poets, many of whom do not figure prominently in English-Canadian poetry anthologies. There are strong voices here: Joan Murray, Richard Outram, Robert Allen, and Mary Dalton, to name a few. The book opens with some of W. W. E. Ross's stark Imagist poems; they give the narrative a sharp, naked start. Ross is so clean, so inviting. We want to enter this story. With him, we are under water, drifting, looking up at shimmering moonlight. Jones and Swift are attracted to depth, height, light, and rivers. Alfred Bailey (nice to see him here) writes that "Blue is my sky peter / and white my frayed gull." His speaker in "The Unreturning" is "Drugged by water and wind / into the dream of the water's vertical eye." A. M. Klein's magical missing writer in "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" has "climbed / another planet, the better to look /

with single camera view upon the earth" (the editors say that in making their selections "we sought poets within the Canadian tradition who follow similar paths and aspire to those Kleinian standards"). With Anne Wilkinson, the editors continue their narrative of sky, earth, sun, and sea. Her self-reflexive poems in the collection present us with metaphysical journeys into elemental worlds. And so the voyage continues to a powerful conclusion. *Modern Canadian Poets* ends with David McGimpsey's magnificent "In Memoriam: A. H. Jr.," which is worth the price of admission in itself.

Susan McMaster's *Pith and Wry* is a much happier collection than *Modern Canadian Poets*, perhaps because the editor has no worries about the reputation of Canadian writers abroad. For her, "our poetry is read and honoured at home and around the globe." It embraces "several thousand practitioners in all styles and delivery methods" and our authors "draw standing room only audiences and win international awards." This is a poetic utopia and the anthology is here to celebrate it. McMaster brings together forty-five poets in 158 pages, which means that we don't get much exposure to any single poet; the range of subject matter and the quality of the material is diverse. In contrast, Jones and Swift are more severe and exclusive in their choices. The poems in their anthology are demanding. McMaster's celebration is less consistent and elitist, but there are several fine writers here, and many I met in these pages for the first time. Do these two anthologies have anything in common? Yes. Out of the eighty poets included in both collections, the three editors manage to agree on a single choice: Mary Dalton. In the world of anthology making, radical consensus is always revealing.

How to Be Here

Frances W. Kaye
Goodlands: A Meditation and History on the Great Plains. Athabasca UP $34.95

Don Gayton
Man Facing West. Thistledown $18.95

Reviewed by Alison Calder

Frances W. Kaye's *Goodlands: A Meditation and a History on the Great Plains* could be retitled *Good Ideas: How They Were Systematically Ignored on the Great Plains*. In her wide-ranging book, Kaye argues convincingly that Euro-American culture, from settler times onward, has overwhelmingly defined the Great Plains region as deficient, and that this definition continues to inform cultural policy and economic practice. The belief in regional deficiency, expressed time and again in "improvement" projects aimed at the region and its inhabitants, has led to a political rhetoric of reclamation and repair, where a belief in the failings of both Aboriginal people and landscape is built into the political system at the ground level. These improvement plans, however, which are carried out at tremendous cost to both the Great Plains landscape and the Indigenous people who had been very successfully inhabiting it, are not only doomed to failure because of the false premise on which they were based, but they also create and then exacerbate social and environmental problems. The result, Kaye writes, is a "region that has neither a sustainable economy nor an aesthetic that will produce a sustainable economy or a humanly satisfying way of living."

Kaye points out that the commonly accepted equation of prairie/plains with hinterland is a recent phenomenon: "Full of sacred sites as well as both faunal and vegetal abundance, linked to trading routes that provided any wants that the Prairie did not produce, this region was no hinterland until it was encountered by Europeans." Her

study details various ways in which the economic and social hardships that the region now experiences are the product of specific economic and political policies, and not the "natural" outcome of living in a particular place. For example, the institution of the arbitrary grid system to facilitate homesteading failed to accommodate local knowledge about the suitability of particular places for farming, and especially alienated groups such as the Métis, who already had a sophisticated farm structure in place. However, with both Métis and landscape judged deficient by those in power, the Canadian government pursued policies that not only evicted Métis farmers in the short term, but in the long term have failed to produce agricultural stability and regional wealth. Yet government policies continue to be formulated within the same context, and thus produce no change.

Kaye counters the deficiency model with ideas of sufficiency grounded in Aboriginal concepts of justice. This turn to Indigenous knowledge suggests a five-point approach: solutions must be "(1) land-based; (2) restorative; (3) community-centred; (4) decentralized; (5) holistic." By keeping these principles in mind, Kaye suggests, we can generate new ideas about how to live meaningfully in this place. She offers no specific solutions, as her purpose is to propose an experiment: begin with a new philosophy of place, and see where those thoughts take you. Such an approach is suggestive, and the evidence Kaye provides from both sides of the Canadian/American border shows that new ideas are badly needed.

Don Gayton has done important work as a writer and activist concerned with ecology, culture, and the fraught coexistence of the two in the North American West. Growing up in a conservative American family, Gayton early discovered that he did not fit in with the kind of culture his father represented. A stint in the Peace Corp, followed by opposition to the Vietnam War and eventually a move to Canada, cemented these differences. In *Man Facing West*, he brings together autobiographical sketches with short historical fiction and fantasy pieces to critique Western ideas of environmental domination and social hierarchy.

While Gayton's autobiographical sketches provide a brief but important look at how political differences can affect family relationships, *Man Facing West* does not overcome its fundamental structural problem. The short, disconnected chapters, interspersed occasionally (and seemingly at random) with heavy-handed fictional sections, rob the narrative of momentum. Gayton's life of political commitment has led him into conflicts of all kinds, with family, politicians, and the conservative general public, but too often the book shies away from actually depicting the crux of those encounters. For a book framed as a memoir, it is curiously without introspection. Gayton tells us there is conflict, but we never see it. So, when he ultimately tells us that he and his father have reconciled their differences, the reader remains unmoved. *Man Facing West* raises many crucial questions about how we are to live in North America, but the text ultimately feels like it is avoiding the heart of the matter.

Comme dans un film de Sergio Kokis

Sergio Kokis
Clandestino. Lévesque 25,00 $

Compte rendu par Krzysztof Jarosz

Avec son dernier roman, *Clandestino*, publié récemment par Gaëtan Lévesque, son ancien-nouvel éditeur, Sergio Kokis confirme sa maîtrise. Même si au bout de la première cinquantaine de pages son lecteur fidèle retrouve certains motifs récurrents grâce auxquels on reconnaît immédiatement le cachet de l'écrivain, Kokis est l'un des rares romanciers à savoir sortir de

l'autofiction par un art de la fabulation qui le hisse au rang des véritables créateurs. *Clandestino* est l'histoire d'un sergent de l'armée argentine, mécanicien expert dans le maintien d'instruments de précision, qui consacre ses loisirs à forcer des coffres-forts, histoire de joindre les deux bouts. D'origine allemande (un autre avatar du moi auctorial qui, de roman en roman, aime mettre de l'avant ses origines centre-est-européennes), Tomás Sorge considère son métier de militaire de carrière comme un simple job, tout en portant sur son pays et sur ses supérieurs hiérarchiques un regard lucide qui lui permet de dévoiler des motifs ignobles et égoïstes que les généraux argentins cachent derrière une façade de patriotisme cocardier et leur lutte contre des éléments « subversifs ». Dénoncé par un officier sur l'ordre de qui il a dévalisé le coffre d'un sénateur influent, il est condamné à six ans de travaux forcés à Ushuaïa, camp de travail situé dans la région fuégienne, qui joue le rôle de la Sibérie argentine. Quand sa peine touche à son terme, on lui propose de servir, après la libération, les intérêts louches d'une organisation militaire clandestine fondée pour assurer la sécurité des généraux de la junte, forcés de démissionner suite à la guerre des Malouines lamentablement perdue, et craignant à juste titre que les civils au pouvoir ne tentent de débusquer et de punir les crimes de la dictature. Tomás, animé par un désir de vengeance, le gardera secret (donc clandestin) pour tous, au sein de l'organisation clandestine fondée par des officiers des services secrets de l'armée. De retour à Buenos Aires, sous l'identité nouvelle de José Capa que ses nouveaux maîtres lui ont procurée, il se met au service du capitaine qui l'avait dénoncé et accomplit consciencieusement pour celui-ci et pour l'organisation des tâches qui nuisent à la récente démocratie argentine. Plusieurs articles de presse parus à la sortie du roman insistent sur la similitude entre Sorge-Capa et Edmont Dantès, célèbre héros du *Comte de Monte-Cristo* d'Alexandre Dumas. Il se peut que l'auteur joue sur cette ressemblance au début, mais ce n'est que pour mieux la défaire ou plutôt pour mieux la démonter discrètement, tout au long du récit, et surtout dans sa fin abrupte. D'ailleurs, sauf erreur, Dumas n'est jamais mentionné dans le roman, tandis que l'est au moins deux fois le western de Sergio Leone de 1966, *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*. La première partie du roman, qui raconte l'exil de Tomás Sorge au bagne, laisse supposer que le héros, une fois libéré, mettra en œuvre son plan de vengeance qui lui permettra de survivre dans un milieu hostile, tandis que dans la seconde partie José Capa doit se soumettre à d'odieuses compromissions avec ses bourreaux, décide de punir par l'attente jamais comblée sa bien-aimée qui l'a abandonné lorsqu'on l'avait emprisonné, et règle à sa manière, sans doute réaliste mais combien cruelle, la mission d'éviter des souffrances à sa fille, que lui a confiée un ami casseur avant de mourir. Ce redresseur de torts en puissance devient donc, forcé il est vrai par les circonstances mais sans éprouver trop de remords, un exécuteur subalterne au sein d'une sorte de mafia. Seul le grand talent de l'auteur qui focalise sa narration sur le personnage principal ne permet pas de mesurer dans toute son ampleur l'ignominie des actes commis par Tomás-José à qui on finit par pardonner toutes ses actions. Deux pistes russes accompagnent l'intertexte filmique : *La défense Loujine* de Nabokov, à cause de la fonction inestimable que le jeu d'échecs représente dans la vie de Sorge-Capa, et Dostoïevski dont le souvenir irrigue explicitement ou implicitement chaque ouvrage de Kokis et qui semble servir ici, de concert avec les films de Leone, à relativiser la dichotomie morale des romans d'aventures et des westerns classiques dont *Clandestino*, un roman noir, démontre et démonte le schématisme et la naïveté pour les remplacer par un inquiétant réalisme psychologique.

Flânerie, Tragedy

Dany Laferrière
Tout bouge autour de moi. Mémoire d'encrier
19,00 $

Reviewed by Mark Harris

All of Dany Laferrière's previous books have been written in the voice of a dandy, even if that voice has varied significantly from work to work. The author of *Comment faire l'amour avec un négre sans se fatiguer* was a droll cocksman, while the narrator of *Chronique de la dérive douce* was a cultivated but impoverished *flâneur*; the essayist behind *Cette grenade dans le main du jeune négre est elle une arme ou un fruit?* took positions on various issues of the day that were almost aristocratically idiosyncratic, whereas the atypical third person narration of *La Chair du maître* suggested a Marlow on the other side of the colour bar. The immature chronicler of *Le goût des jeunes filles* was wise beyond his Caribbean years, while the overworked novelist of *Je suis fatigué* was pretty close to the end of his ink-stained tether. As for the magic realist manufacturer of *Je suis un écrivain japonais*, ethnic identity had become a football which could dribbled with insouciant panache. Only in *L'énigme du retour*, an account of the author's return to the island he had been forced to leave thirty-three years before, do we encounter a Laferrière with fewer disguises and masks (despite a number of haiku-like constructions that are redolent of Heian serenity, not to mention a certain degree of cultural dislocation, à la Aimé Césaire).

None of these personas are found in *Tout bouge autour de moi*, a book about the Haitian earthquake which the author witnessed at first hand. For once, one of life's vicissitudes was sufficiently large to defy irony of every kind. This time out the gate, Laferrière had to take the role of reporter more seriously than he ever had before (which is ironic, in a way, since the man was a journalist long before he became a writer; not only that, he was a journalist brave enough to drive the Tonton Macoutes to hunt for his life).

Thus, *Tout bouge autour de moi* begins with a highly objective account of what Laferrière experienced when the earthquake struck. Facts are laid out as dispassionately as possible: "Une secousse de magnitude 7.3 n'est pas si terrible. C'est le béton qui a tué." This said, Laferrière's detachment from the events can't help but be mitigated by the fact that he was actually *there* when the catastrophe struck ("Je ne savais pas que soixante seconds pouvaient durer aussi longtemps"). What's more, Port-au-Prince is a city where family matters a great deal: "Autour de moi, les gens n'arrêtent pas de crier dans leur portable: 'Où es ton frère?' 'Où est ta soeur. . . . '" The titles of the short chapters into which this book is divided could not be more matter-of-fact: "LES PROJECTILES"; "LA NUIT"; "LA RADIO"; and "LES PREMIERS CORPS." Laferrière himself was ensconced in a hotel that was less damaged than most, but even here life assumed the dimensions of a post-apocalyptic J. G. Ballard novel. "La salle de bains est située au dessous du restaurant. Personne, à part les employés de l'hôtel, ne s'était encore adventuré jusque-là. On a trouvé deux grandes serviettes blanches près de la piscine."

Soon, however, the author returns to the subject matter that propels most of his work, the people in his life who mean something to him, this time with few, if any, disguises standing in the way. These include his mother and the aunts who raised him, old friends (some of whom had previously served as mentors), and a nephew with literary aspirations who does not entirely trust his uncle's motivations: "J'aimerais que vous n'écriviez pas là-dessus" (a travel journal would be okay, it soon turns out, but *not* a novel about *this* degree of human suffering and loss).

While most of this book is set in Haiti, there are side trips to Montreal, Paris, and

even Tallahassee that are equally instructive. Thus, the author's wife makes one of her extremely occasional cameos, even though "[s]a seule obsession c'est de protéger sa vie privée. C'est rare que je parle d'elle en public, plus de cinq minutes." As for his eldest daughter, it seems that she's now studying francophone literature at an *American* university because "'Les universités américaines sont bourrés de fric. . . . '" Along the way, the author even manages to make offhand—but intensely interesting—comments on everything from Amos Oz to the truly unbounded Haitian passion for Brazil's national soccer team.

It's the friends and relatives who still live on the island, however, who are the real subject of this book: the quiet, stubborn, cantankerous, superstitious, and ultimately indestructible heroes who always make sure that Haiti survives, no matter what happens. Laferrière prides himself on not wearing his heart on his sleeve, but here he does just that. In a dry-eyed, dignified fashion, of course, but that aesthetic choice that only makes the half-concealed feelings of this former dandy all the stronger.

Writing Chinese Diaspora

Yan Li

Lily in the Snow. Women's Press Literary $24.95

Reviewed by Shao-Pin Luo

Chinese Canadian literature may be divided into two categories: works by the children of earlier immigrants and those by recent immigrants from China and elsewhere. The first has been documented by critical works such as Lien Chao's groundbreaking book, *Beyond Silence: Chinese Canadian Literature in English* (1997), which introduced into the Canadian literary canon writers such as Paul Yee, Jim Wong-Chu, Fred Wah, Wayson Choy, Denise Chong, and Sky Lee, and defined Chinese Canadian literature as a collective voice, whose "interior landscapes are emotionally connected with the historical Chinatowns in which the stories and characters are situated." In narrating the experiences of Chinese railroad workers and representing life in Chinatowns, the main literary strategies had been to anthologize and mythologize in order to construct identities that "abrogate the existing racial stereotypes and to appropriate them by constructing the heroes and heroines of the community." Susanne Hilf's *Writing the Hyphen: The Articulation of Interculturalism in Contemporary Chinese-Canadian Literature* (2000) shifted from an articulation of distinctive traditions of the historical experience of the community, the search for a collective voice and its distinct themes and motifs, and the emphasis on race and ethnicity, to reading the intercultural elements and individual and hybrid identity in works such as Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, Larissa Lai's *When Fox Is a Thousand*, and Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill*.

The Chinese Canadian community has been undergoing rapid change with the influx of new immigrants from Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and Mainland China. While still concerned with immigration, displacement, the politics of identity, and cultural clashes, literary writing by recent Chinese immigrants has become more diverse in terms of subject matter, genre, and style. For example, Lien Chao (born in 1950 and came to Canada in 1984) published a bilingual narrative long poem, *Maples and the Stream* (1999); Ting-Xing Ye (born in 1952 and moved to Toronto in 1987), after a memoir, *Leaf in a Bitter Wind* (1998), writes young adult fiction; Ying Chen (born in 1961 and emigrated to Montreal in 1989) writes in French. What distinguishes Yan Li, who came to Canada in 1987, is that she writes fiction in both Chinese and English. Her first English novel, *Daughters of the Red Land*, was a 1996 finalist for the Books in Canada First Novel Award and was subsequently translated by Li into Chinese. Her

Chinese novels include *Married to the West Wind* and *The Lambs of Mapleton*.

At the centre of Li's *Lily in the Snow* is the tension between Grace and Lily, mother and daughter, who quarrel as soon as Grace, retired from her editorship at a Beijing magazine, lands in the small town of Mapleton, Ontario. At her mother's question, "'What's good about Canada?'" Lily finds herself at a loss for words. Inspired by "the spirit of Norman Bethune" to come to Canada, with her two Master's degrees and a background as a journalist in Beijing, Lily, after having had Baby, has been unemployed and she makes her daily trips, dressed in jeans and old sneakers, to the government Human Resources Office. In this opening chapter, we already detect the deep differences between mother and daughter in their ideas about career success, child rearing, and love. Interlaced with Lily's life in Canada is a parallel history of her mother's eventful life in China.

Yan Li portrays with sympathy and humour a range of immigrant characters, and the difficulties and disappointments they encounter in their new life in Mapleton. Besides Chinese figures, we come across immigrants such as an Indian woman who works at a clothing factory; a Jamaican lady who works with Lily as cleaning woman in a hotel, who studied child psychology "back home" and wanted to be a teacher; and a Vietnamese grandma who lives in Lily's building nicknamed the "refugee camp," as it is full of recent immigrants. Yan Li displays her sharp observational powers through the amusing and colourful way she names her characters: the penguin-shaped minister in a snow-white shirt and ink-black suit; an Egyptian seahorse; a brandy-nosed immigration officer; and a pretentious martial arts instructor, Grand Master Iron. Yan Li describes thus the tenants in the building: "Besides Master Iron, there were a few other Chinese men in the same building. Lily didn't know their names, but remembered a few who had unique features. One man has two protruding front teeth in his sun-tanned face, so she silently named him Beaver-teeth. Another one impressed her deeply with his sharp chin on a narrow pale face so she nicknamed him the Mouse" (48). The names not only capture vividly the characters' physical attributes but also convey their sorry stories of immigration. It turns out that Mouse-colonel fled to Canada after embezzling money from the Chinese government and now operates a restaurant; while Beaver-teeth had to tunnel into Canada by paying smugglers to transport him circuitously first to Vietnam, then to the jungle in Thailand for months, and finally to Spain for two years before he eventually landed at Pearson International Airport in Toronto.

Yan Li writes with insight about the important role religion plays in the Chinese immigrant community. The church acts as community centre for those who feel alienated from mainstream society and need practical help in settling in a new land, notwithstanding the zealous proselytising efforts of Mrs Rice from Taiwan of the local Chinese Christian Church, a character who is generous not only in spreading the word of god, but also in dispensing tips on personal appearance, morality, and relationships. "How did you turn into a Christian after being a staunch Communist Party member," Lily asks former colleague Jade, a news editor at Radio Beijing, who escaped to Canada after the "June 4th Incident" in Tiananmen Square in 1989. It is perhaps not so surprising that Jade and others find in the church a strong sense of fellowship: "Just like me, Lily thought, Jade was brought up in the collective-styled communist society. Though we all had a hard life and wanted, at least theoretically, to get rid of the dictatorial system, we had actually become accustomed to its life style: a life of unity, collectives, instructions, orders, control, and mass

mobilization. Psychologically, we were still afraid of being isolated and being independent" (91). Even Lily, once secular and privileged in her native land, now impoverished and struggling in Canada, overrides her scepticism about the dogma of the church and gradually embraces the Christian faith, which ironically rejects her because of her divorce.

What sustains Lily ultimately, and staves off her sense of loneliness and homelessness, is her writing: "Literature was a holy and magic world. She could not find any other field where she could create and feel great" (53). Yan Li's English is simple and direct, crystal clear and lively, albeit laced with Chinese imagery and expressions: something is "soft and gentle as silk and over-cooked noodles"; Lily's slow progress in her writing is compared to "a snail crawling persistently searching for something unknown on the other side of a peaked mount." In the end, Lily survives and finds strength and beauty in the snowy Canadian landscape: "The snowstorm was over and the whole world was tranquil. The meadow under the bright moonlight shone like a crystal garden. The big cedars by the house breathed silently as they stooped under the heavy snow bending their limbs. She caught her breath, entranced, as a red fox snuck out from behind a tree and jumped onto the fountain edge. Looking around, it caught sight of the figure inside the window. Startled, it fled. A trail of footprints was left on the snow."

Resignation or Wonder?

Alexander MacLeod
Light Lifting. Biblioasis $19.95

Terence Young
The End of the Ice Age. Biblioasis $19.95

Reviewed by Kathryn Carter

Biblioasis, self-appointed purveyor of "indie-lit," released last year two accomplished collections of short stories. They look fairly identical in format and cover art; both feature vague, moody, and abstract covers—one in sepia tones and one in grays. Is this to suggest that the world of indie lit is the world of the indistinct? Misgivings about the marketing of the books aside, the two collections differ in tone as soon as covers are opened.

Let's start with the colder book. I notice that female and male reviewers have had differing reactions to the collection by Terence Young. He is praised by Mark Anthony Jarman and compared to Raymond Carver, in tones that suggest Young's brand of self-detached commentary is well suited for a bleak world. Female reviewers find less to praise about his male characters. His vision is bleak, as expressed in this disheartening and unsympathetic vision of the "usual" library crowd as "a few welfare mothers; this young couple with their first kid; a history buff with his cane and his Nazi belt buckle." And while the narrator is quick to add that he is "no better than any of them," one smells the damp rot of human disconnection. Narrators who have different agendas sometimes, hopefully, portray the disconnection as fragile. An example of this is found at the end of "That Time of Year," featuring an aging couple who mourn the passing of their youth. The final words are given to the wife in the story, who cannot decide on how best to calm the warning waves that ruffle their contentment: "She opened the oven door. A wave of warm air wafted out and covered her face and arms as she placed the pie on the rack. The last of the season's blackberries. She could almost taste them." The bleak vision is softened by being made more tenuous, but the elegy writ by blackberries is almost too pat, the potential title of a made-for-TV movie on aging marriages. Thankfully, Young's worldview is frequently leavened with humour, as when he describes the shape of ginger root as "the kind of thing the insane would sculpt." You should

read these stories. But consider this a warning: you will find yourself nodding your head in agreement that the world is a sad and messed-up place. These stories leave a stain on the heart.

Alexander MacLeod's collection of short stories has been busy garnering awards and accolades, and rightfully so. He, like Young, acknowledges living to be a messy affair, but there is a kind of muscular optimism afoot in these stories, running side by side with tragedy. The narrator of "The Miracle Mile" tells readers that, "We have to scrounge for meaning wherever we can find it and there's no way to separate our faith from our desperation." The act of scrounging is often rendered as a vividly physical act on par with Mike Tyson biting off Evander Holyfield's ear, running the miracle mile, or learning to swim, as it erotically and tragically unfolds in the lengthy story "Adult Beginner 1." The narrator of "Adult Beginner 1" puts it to us another way: "There is a living tension, a line running between what can be achieved and what we cannot do." MacLeod's stories live at, weave around that place of physical, metaphorical, and existential tension, and reach out to pull in all the sparkling souvenirs of worlds gone wrong: the father who encounters all the bric-a-brac of family anew after they have been killed in an accident is weakened, detail by heartbreaking detail, in "The Number Three." In another story, the father of an ill infant scrutinizes the mass-produced items that provoke such attachment in his children: "Can't sleep without the stuffies. Essential part of the night time ritual. Sacred objects made in a Bangladesh factory. The soft places where children dump their love for the first few years." In each case, the details speak to an almost unbearable intimacy, and intimacy is a word MacLeod uses more than once in these short stories.

MacLeod tells readers that life requires lifting, made light only if you have arms strong enough to hold the grace of intimate but heartbreaking details; Young intimates that for many of his aging narrators, the end of the ice age is near, but having moved on, it will leave very little trace, and even the recollections and the telling might well be forgotten.

Textual (De)colonizations

Sophie McCall

First Person Plural: Aboriginal Storytelling and the Ethics of Collaborative Authorship. U of British Columbia P $32.95

Reviewed by Renate Eigenbrod

In the early 1980s, I was introduced to Native literature by reading Wilfred Pelletier's biography, *No Foreign Land* (1973), written in collaboration with Ted Poole; I never taught it in my Native Literature classes because I privileged texts written solely by an Aboriginal author. McCall, however, in her study on collaborative authorship, challenges notions of voice as "singular" and "pure" and values forms of intersubjectivity throughout her readings of a wide variety of Aboriginal (co-) authored texts—from literature to reports to films. Her emphasis on composite texts corresponds with her composite, interdisciplinary methodology of reading several texts in tandem instead of focusing on isolated, singular works.

In her opening main chapter on appropriation and subversion of the "Native Voice," she discusses literary and anthropological "salvage projects" in early Canadian anthologies and the denial of power imbalances between recorder and teller in "colonial textualizations" of Aboriginal orality. However, in spite of her acknowledgement of differences between "insider" and "outsider" perspectives, she argues, like representatives of the literary nationalism movement, for a turn away from the Native/White binary in favour of a more in-depth

analysis of differentiations within Native cultures. It is in this sense that she considers her study of the complexity of "the Native Voice" as supportive of literary sovereigntist arguments, a point that is illustrated in her chapter on the legacy of Oka. Reading Alanis Obomsawin's four films on the "Oka crisis" in tandem with Lee Maracle's literary works, she shows how their double-voiced and multiple strategies of representation disrupt dichotomies and "the oppositional aesthetics of the standoff" in favour of underscoring the diversity of Aboriginal communities.

The main part of the book starts out with a chapter on Justice Berger's Report *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland* read together with community hearings associated with the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry and Hugh Brody's ethnographies and documentary films. This chapter is of interest to anyone who wants to "produce politically transformative work" as an outsider. McCall is critical of the way both Berger and Brody downplay their function as mediators in cross-cultural exchanges. This criticism is part of a larger argument in her study throughout. Re-defining the role of the "outsider," McCall often points out the fallacy of the argument about the silent recorder who lets the tellers speak "in their own voices," or the urgency for the "outsider" to understand his or her implication or complicity. The last point is emphasized in her discussion of the RCAP report paired with *Night Spirits* by co-authors Ila Bussidor and Üstün Bilgen-Reinart. In a compelling analysis of both texts, "produced under different terms of authorship," she shows how the report does not actively engage listeners or readers, whereas in *Night Spirits*, this tendency is reversed, "thus encouraging the listener to remain accountable to history" (a challenging form of witnessing as she explains with regards to Bussidor's non-Native collaborator). The story of the forced relocations of the Sayisi Dene is embedded in cultural and linguistic misunderstandings. In her discussion of the Delgamuukw court case, McCall comes back to this theme, reading the court's mistranslations of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en oral traditions and Aboriginal land title through the corrective lens of the collaboratively produced texts by Harry Robinson and Wendy Wickwire and *Life Lived Like a Story* by Cruikshank, Sidney, Smith, and Ned.

Just recently, I read a new Inuit collaboratively authored text, *Fatty Legs*—with some scepticism. McCall finishes her book with a discussion of Zacharias Kunuk's *Atanarjuat* as a "counterethnographic" film; in his collaborative, cross-cultural, community filmmaking he creates, she argues, "mediated Inuit voices" instead of "a singular cultural essence." She reads this as a potentially decolonizing strategy, inspiring me to re-evaluate first-person plural texts.

Beyond Domesticity

Norah McClintock
She Said/She Saw. Orca $12.95

Michell Mulder
Out of the Box. Orca $9.95

Trilby Kent
Stones for my Father. Tundra $21.99

Reviewed by Suzanne James

Traditionally, the heroines of "girl's books" are firmly ensconced in the domestic realm, but in these contemporary YA novels, home is presented as a place of discord and betrayal which the teenage protagonists must transcend.

The premise of Norah McClintock's *She Said/She Saw* is that Tegan, a senior high school student, has witnessed a double murder. Yet she refuses to provide the details, which everyone, including her sister Kelly, believes she is deliberately withholding. The novel is fast-paced and dramatic as chapters of first-person narrative are juxtaposed with

a movie-script portrayal of events. The underlying question—what did Tegan really see?—provides forward momentum, and characters and dialogue are generally convincing. However, the conclusion—Tegan's successful, yet risky, ploy to discover the murderer's identity—seems rather facile, and references to the dangers of drug dealing seem imposed rather than integral.

Michelle Mulder's *Out of the Box* is a more subtle work, blending an exploration of mental instability and a dysfunctional family relationship with a subplot involving an Argentinian immigrant and the parents he lost in the "disappearances" of the 1970s and 80s. Refreshingly, the unhealthy dynamics of the protagonist's family (in which her overly dependent mother insists on treating Ellie as a confidante and partner rather than as a child) are contrasted with her aunt's completely normalized long-term lesbian relationship. Although plot details such as the mystery of the *bandoneón* (a traditional Argentinian accordion) are perhaps too readily resolved, Mulder's novel avoids easy solutions to the more serious problems of Ellie's family and her mother's (admittedly vague) mental-health issues.

The protagonist of Trilby Kent's *Stones for My Father* is also abused by her mother, though her situation is both clearer and more brutal. Living on a rural Transvaal farm during the Anglo-Boer War with a hardened mother who favours her younger brothers, Corlie Roux is tough and capable. But nothing can prepare her for the loss of a childhood friend, suffering at a British internment camp, her brother's death, or the realization that she is the child of a British father who deserted her pregnant mother.

In a clear and poetic style, Kent traces Corlie's growing awareness of the complexities of her family situation, of the war, and—to a lesser extent—the inequities of Black/White relationships in South Africa at the turn of the twentieth century. Eventually, having been completely rejected by a mother who can neither love nor forgive her for "who . . . [she] was," Corlie is adopted by a soldier from a distant land with cities called "Lacombe and Medicine Hat."

All three works share a desire to convey social and historical realities: drug-related violence in *She Said/She Saw*; mental illness and the plight of Argentina's *desaparacidos* in *Out of the Box*; and the horrors of the Anglo-Boer war and racism in colonial South Africa in *Stones for My Father*. As well as presenting realistic problems without fairy-tale solutions, these novels bring to life feisty, flawed female protagonists who thrive outside of the domestic realm.

"good lip / service"

Kevin McNeilly
Embouchure. Nightwood $18.95
Reviewed by Paul Watkins

Ornette Coleman—a progenitor of 1960s free-jazz—describes harmoldic music as a performance where "no one player has the lead," reminding us that jazz is often less about who is speaking than it is about the listening impulse. Kevin McNeilly's debut poetry collection, *Embouchure*, rhapsodizes upon that listening impulse vis-à-vis poetic vignettes depicting the interlacing lineages of trumpet players in the States during the pre-bop era (roughly 1890-1939): edited in are jazz geographies, histories, stories, anecdotes, highpoints, and tragedies ("Bix": "oblivion and fame / at the same time, / dead by 28"). Swinging from "nastier dulcets" to "shouting blues," the collection sounds trumpeters as diverse as Buddy and King through to Sweets, Bix, Valaida Snow, Cat, with three poems dedicated to Louis "Satch" Armstrong. Like a blue note, McNeilly worries the lines between history and depiction, lines which are blurred by many of the musicians in their own mythopoeic "horn folklore" ("Buddy"). McNeilly's poetic vignettes remind us that art is largely

about how you wish to interpret the truth: "'Play the horn wide open; / you cannot lie'" ("The Other Red").

In "Spit Key," a self-reflexive compendium in *Embouchure*, McNeilly elucidates that "To play a trumpet you've got to develop a good embouchure, a way of blowing through pursed lips and controlling the buzz." Likewise, to play a poem you need to refine a style; the title poem states: "Style takes care of its own; / chops make the rep." For McNeilly, stylizing jazz poetics is about finding fulfillment with the "scratchy, flawed recordings," with the "flaws themselves"—at root, their poetics. Jazz, and the *vers libre* of the poems, embodies the spit, crackle, and improvisations of performance. Armstrong's impromptu scatting in "Heebie-Jeebies" (for the first time on record) was the result of a mistake; such mistakes make "Jeebies" a poetic act: "Fumbled leads, obbie scat / and pig Latin / aren't just mistakes: / they make their own music."

Typographically representing such extemporaneous happenstance is certainly a challenge: a challenge that occasionally makes *Embouchure* appear fixated by the page, even as each poem riffs down the page. Like a recording, these poems can only represent various constituencies of essence: "Twelve inches of black paste / tired to capture / its collective essence" ("Buck"). Most fecundly, McNeilly's poetic vignettes capture unheard sounds—with some irony—as evidenced in the poem, "Unknown": "their music's unsung source." Another instance of recovery is in the dedications to the women trumpeters whose chops equal their male counterparts: "The sad truth was she could / rip them to shreds / with one or two choice lines, / but never got the chance / to strut her stuff" ("Meoux"). Such discrepant engagement makes *Embouchure* a compelling read, even as words sometimes fail, as reflected in "Wingy," which asks: "who needs words / when you've got a solid riff?"

McNeilly's poetic portrayals do not preclude ending; rather, much like Amiri Baraka's notion of "the changing same," they suggest 'new' possibilities for substantial relistenings. As every note has its own shape, its own mouth, so too does every musician in this collection. *Embouchure* is about getting into the grooves of history ("you find a groove") in order to respond to the present. Certainly a follow-up on bop/post-bop trumpet players would make for a great companion, with luminaries such as Lester Bowie, Miles Davis, Diz, Clifford Brown, Dave Douglas, Freddie Hubbard, Cynthia Robinson, Phil Cohran, and so on, as possible candidates. A fine debut collection that spits some "good lip / service" in homage to some of the players who not only helped to define American music, but modern and postmodern poetics.

Discovery Passages

Garry Thomas Morse
Discovery Passages. Talonbooks $17.95

Reviewed by Lorraine Weir

From the arrival of Captain George Vancouver and the RMS Discovery in Kwakwaka'wakw territory in 1792 to the settler naming of the body of water between the mainland of Vancouver Island and Quadra Island as Discovery Passage several decades later, this part of what was to be named "British Columbia" has been the object of relentless colonial intervention. Decimated by epidemics which reduced the population from a pre-contact estimate of 19,000 to roughly 1000 by 1921, and subjected to multiple depredations of language, culture, identity, land, and resources, the Kwakwaka'wakw also found themselves construed by colonial politicians and bureaucrats, ethnographers and collectors as "the absolute other of Europe" as Christopher Bracken writes in *The Potlatch Papers.* Bracken notes also that for Franz

Boas, the Kwakwaka'wakw were among the very few Indigenous peoples on the coast to be "uncontaminated by European influence" and therefore a compelling location for decades of ethnographic research.

Of particular interest to Boas as well as to missionaries and Indian agents was what was referred to as the "potlatch," a Chinook word meaning "gift" and a term not used in Kwak'wala. The prohibition of this "gift" is spelled out in Section 114 of the Indian Act (1886) which, like other provisions of the Act, specifies a rigorous distinction between "Indians" and "persons," a strategy which strips "Indians" of the rights accorded "persons," and legitimates not only the prosecution of the "potlatch" but the extinguishment of property rights and of self-determination. What was "discovered" was theft and dispossession, the confiscation and sale of potlatch regalia and other objects, and their efficient relocation from the Indian Agent's woodshed to museums in Ottawa, Toronto, and New York where George Heye, founder of the Museum of the American Indian, happily received them. And so to the great museums of Europe, which cultivated an interest in the property of the Kwakwaka'wakw while Boas collected "Kwakiutl" stories and Edward Curtis staged photographs and made a film, *In the Land of the Head Hunters*, recently refurbished and a subject of much current contention.

This is the briefest of summaries of some of the contextual information which Garry Thomas Morse draws on in *Discovery Passages*, a long poem (as I read it; others have seen it as a linked series of poems) of extraordinary stylistic virtuosity and power which ought soon to find itself among the canonic texts of contemporary Indigenous and Canadian writing. Inheritor of Modernism's reinscription of the European classical epic, Morse brings Joyce and Olson, Sappho and Heraclitus, Homer and Dante, but also Ginsberg and Marlatt, and Bowering and Blaser (among many others) to this haunted journey to his mother's ancestral territory. What are the protocols of entry in such circumstances? To discover is, as both colonial history and etymology indicate, to re/invent. But coming, as Morse writes, from the far side of "white/wash," the English language, "the myth of being *clean*," and the "long clean lines" of Modernism's epic conventions, how enter? Remembering the Kwakwaka'wakw practice of cedar plank removal with "Tree left, alive," how write a beginning at all in the language of assimilation, imposed by residential school, and associated with settler technologies of "silviculture" and fish farms, and the concomitant destruction of the environment?

The journey begins with shadows which might be islands, safe places which might be chimaeras, and moves to a visit to Alert Bay, walking the boardwalk after arriving on the night ferry and discovering the 'Namgis graveyard, with its sign in English warning pedestrians to stay clear of its fenced area. "Keep off the Grass," writes Morse with characteristic irony, reminding us of the Indian Act's prohibition of "noxious weeds" on reserves as well as of the settler history of this part of the 'Namgis town, known as 'Yalis. Here, Hudson and Spencer established a salmon cannery in 1870, employing Kwakwaka'wakw people in factory labour where they had long practiced their own salmon fishery, and beginning the process of economic transformation which is represented later in *Discovery Passages* with a photograph of the Canadian five dollar bill and its image of the salmon seiner owned by Morse's great-uncle, Harry Assu, from the old days of wild, not farmed, salmon and of copious harvests whose gradual undoing both seiners and canneries precipitated.

The journey proceeds via an "Envoy" which, like "'makola" before it, sounds its passage first in Kwak'wala. "P'alxala," fog, "has come to the coast" and the poet cautions us, "no longer advise / me how to handle / my /

own /particulars", whether those particulars be "kerfed box," soulcatcher, or carved argillite and perhaps whether, as in "Potlatch," "you" have forgotten all this and forgotten that "This too / is a / *gift*" and that "I am other." Anticipating the great central sequence of erasure poems derived from the letters of colonial officials and those accused of potlatching, "Potlatch" pushes angrily back at the racist assumptions of those who expect to find variously, as Bracken writes, the "Kwahkewlth" or "Kwawkewlth" or even the "Kwakiool." Other others are encountered in "Conversations with Remarkable Elders," not the noble sources of Boas' stories, but their descendants in contemporary Alert Bay whose bitchy, colloquial narratives of drugs, arson, and eagle slaughter contrast the supposed utopia of Sointula a short ferry ride away.

Balancing on a "Contra/punctus" redolent of Joyce and Zukofsky, the poet begins a threefold closure of this section of *Discovery Passages* with its evocation of the effects of colonization, by creating an entry through dream to his ancestral home in Cape Mudge as a Hamat'sa dancer who knows the traditional protocol of introduction: "Name, rank, & kin." Language remains an issue, highlighted in "Tongue" via the beginning Kwak'wala student's delight in a loan word from English, "abals," followed by the tongue and lip-twisting challenges of "*Xwalkw*, *k'ikw*, *kw'ikw*, *xwak'wana*" (village site that was the original home of the 'Namgis, totem, eagle, canoe). Finally, "Copper" invokes that traditional symbol of wealth, rank, and lineage in Kwakwaka'wakw society, and the poet calls on his copper to "bear / witness / to every name" and memory while "*The* / *Document*" is read.

What is read in "No Comment," this second section of Morse's long poem, functions as a record of the period of attempted potlatch suppression, an honour song fashioned out of the words of Indian Agent William Halliday, Sergeant Angermann, Superintendent General Duncan Campbell Scott, and John A. Macdonald (among others) with the responses of several of the Kwakwaka'wakw accused. As one form of erasure meets another, Morse's flawless orchestration works a minimalist masterpiece, an auto-exegesis of attempted genocide which concludes with Halliday's 1923 directive to cease prosecution of the potlatch.

In the next section of *Discovery Passages*, Morse turns to operetta, following the silent culmination of "No Comment" with the raucous, Gilbert and Sullivan tones of "The Indian Picture Opera," a redaction of Edward Curtis' travelling slide show made to promote his book of photographs but equally an acid commentary on the recent reissue of Curtis' film, *In the Land of the Head-Hunters*, which Morse deftly places among the "Rom coms" and counterbalances in later poems with sometimes comic versions of traditional stories of Bak'was and Dzunuk'wa, followed by an erotic version of his great grandfather's traditional story of Wiwek'am, a creation story accounting for the coming of eulachon (candlefish) grease and fertility to the Ligwilda'x. Contrasting this poem is "Hot Blooded: A Love Poem for Duncan Campbell Scott," in which the colonial agent of assimilation and residential schools is addressed as a sexual predator whose sanctimonious "Onondaga Madonna" reveals his violent sexual fetishes and fantasies. In a bravado conclusion, the poet takes his "shit back" and performs a defiant Hamat'sa dance in the face of the monster. In "Wak'es," the poet is in a similar mood though leavened with wry humour as he calls on the Lenape on whose traditional territory New York stands, invoking their assistance with the return of Harry Assu's carved frog, now in the National Museum of the American Indian, whose ownership of Assu's property is ironically attested by the photograph of wak'es in their possession.

Morse is a master of tonal balance, a virtuoso composer with an ear for epic contrast, and a poet of complexly binary intertexts for whom an envoi leads to no single destination. *Discovery Passages* closes with two contrasting poems, each breathtaking in its force. "Interpretative Dance–for Franz Boas" crosscuts a version of the traditional story "Weka'yi" from T'sakwa'lutan (Cape Mudge) with a narrative of salmon canning and the arrival in 1906 of the butchering machine which came to be known as the "Iron Chink." Both are narratives of the interpenetrating worlds of land and water, and both tell of trickery though with different consequences. Out of trickery comes healing in "Weka'yi," and the young man who descends to the undersea world becomes Kate'nats, a great healer and forefather of his people and an augury of the time "when our relations / will no longer / leave blanks / in our writings." Contrasting this origin story is a story of theft, whether of salmon or land or way of life or language, a theft which extends to the intellectual property rights owned by specific Kwakwaka'wakw families in relation to specific dances including that represented in the archival photograph of Franz Boas posing in mid-Hamat'sa leap through a hoop, alias a "loop- / hole in / intellectual / properties." Like the theft of wak'es, the theft of a dance is called into the context of the responsibility of the witness to give an accurate account of what they have seen and heard, a responsibility which extends to those who conducted the anti-potlatch campaign and to those responsible for the pedagogical practices and ethical violations of residential school. Since the ecology of salmon and cedar is, from a Kwakwaka'wakw perspective, inseparable from the ecology of family and community, each in balance with the other, the violation of one is a violation of the whole. Thus, multicultural Canada operates within the "loop-hole" of language theft and the "500 lines" which constitute the final poem in *Discovery Passages* stand as testimony to that violation and its impact on all Kwakwaka'wakw people: "I will not speak Kwak'wala," the residential school punishment which proliferates across the last pages of the book and which is defied by all of *Discovery Passages*.

In the end, we are promised "another / story." Perhaps it begins with the poem's final lines:

"*Kwak'wala'mas*?
K'i. K'isan kwak'wala."

(Do you speak Kwak'wala? No. I don't speak Kwak'wala)—Morse's affirmation of the work of resistance of which this book is a consummate example.

Dynamic Equivalences

Mareike Neuhaus
"That's Raven Talk": Holophrastic Readings of Contemporary Indigenous Literatures. Canadian Plains Research Center & U of Regina P $34.95

Reviewed by Sylvie Vranckx

In Indigenous Studies, interdisciplinarity is not a fashion but a strategy for avoiding fragmentation of knowledge: its division into airtight disciplines has been criticized as Eurocentric and artificial. Mareike Neuhaus follows the push for holistic methodologies in her groundbreaking *"That's Raven Talk."* "[T]he first comprehensive study of North American Indigenous languages as the basis of textualized orality in Indigenous literatures in English," it interweaves recent and older sources as well as literature, linguistics, anthropology, and cultural history.

The cover illustration, combining a Pacific Northwest Raven and a Cree syllabics typewriter, provocatively suggests that writing has become an Indigenous way. For Neuhaus, Native and Inuit writers appropriate English-language writing and its genres to assert their rhetorical sovereignty: she defies a tendency to underestimate the impact of

Aboriginal linguistic and discourse conventions on literatures composed in English. Moving from Jeannette Armstrong to Roland Barthes, she bases her argument on the holophrase or one-word sentence typical of many American Indigenous languages. Thus, the Cree *kikînohtenitawikociwîcinehiyaw'kiskinohamâkosiminâwâw* conveys "you folks wanted to come and try to learn Cree with me" and displays semantic density: it is a significant narrative unit that forms part of the grid of a story. Because this polysynthetic structure does not exist in English, its function can be fulfilled by the paraholophrase, a phrase equivalent in effect that can only be identified from the narrative context, as it lacks the morphology of the holophrase. Thus, the translation technique "dynamic equivalence" preserves the impact of the source text rather than any formal correspondence. (Para)holophrases belong to linguistics, rhetoric, and literary criticism: they are figures of speech. They constitute what Van Camp calls "Raven Talk," the vernacular of *The Lesser Blessed*. "Holophrastic reading" is therefore "a culturally specific reading strategy for textualized orality in Indigenous literatures in English." The works analyzed are *Call Me Ishmael* by Ishmael Alunik (Inuvialuit); *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares* by Alootook Ipellie (Inuit); *The Lesser Blessed* by Richard Van Camp (Dogrib); *Green Grass, Running Water* by Thomas King (Cherokee); and *Blue Marrow* by Louise Halfe (Plains Cree).

This book is impressively detailed, from a linguistic glossary to an appendix discussing a personal translation from Cree. Neuhaus guides the reader through the steps and recapitulates her highly technical argument—though one wonders if the lingo of linguistics is relevant to the average person on a reserve, so to speak. Thus, she demonstrates in her own writing her argument about textualized orality. She invites reader participation through conversational turns and operates a *mise-en-abyme* of the narrative frames that she detects in all five authors: the chapters have opening, closing, and internal frames. These repetitions enable one to read each chapter on its own, but the repetition can be tedious.

This dedication is also visible in Neuhaus's upholding of the mutual participation of the author/speaker and reader/listener. Praised by Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee) for its "profound ethical regard," *"That's Raven Talk"* avoids the traps of Eurocentrism. Neuhaus presents holophrastic reading as a "theoretical construct" that should be evaluated based on its usefulness. She stresses reader involvement and responsibility, and avoids the ethnographic present: for her, Native traditions are living, breathing, dynamic. One also learns in the acknowledgements that she studied Intermediate Cree and consulted Cree and Inuit teachers. She indicates the diversity of Native literatures in the plural and selects authors with varying ethnolinguistic groups, geographical areas, generations, and exposure to language and culture, working with different genres and degrees of holophrasis (most of her corpus was written by men, but hopefully further research will take more women's writing into account). Aware of the ethnocultural diversity within the category "Inuit," she selects Inuit writers from two generations—though it would have been worth noting that the Dogrib are traditional enemies with the Inuit and Cree in the NWT. The acknowledgements mention that research requires "human interaction" and end with thanks in Cree, Polish, German, and English.

Therefore, it seems surprising that Neuhaus does not reflect on her status as a European scholar, whom the biographical note presents as Renate Eigenbrod's "temporary settler," one who completed her PhD in Germany and received a research grant and two postdoctoral fellowships in Canada. This information would have belonged in the introduction along with

Eigenbrod's positionality of the (im)migrant reader. Indigenous studies in Germany are a fraught context; this could have fostered self-reflexivity about what Hartmut Lutz calls "German Indianthusiasm."

All in all, Neuhaus provides a refreshing, nuanced, and convincing new voice. I look forward to reading more by her and by researchers taking up her concepts, especially in Native women's writings.

Family Secrets

Monique Polak
Miracleville. Orca $12.95

Jamie Zeppa
Every Time We Say Goodbye. Knopf Canada $29.95

Reviewed by Gisèle M. Baxter

One assumption often made about small town life is that everyone knows everyone else, which would seem to make keeping secrets difficult. Another assumption, however, is of a sort of general reticence that seems at odds with this age of social media and the pressure to be constantly connected, so that small towns seem dislocated in time even when used as the settings for contemporary novels.

Monique Polak's young adult novel *Miracleville* is set in the present, in the Quebec town of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, where two teenaged sisters respond in different ways to their family's catering to the influx of tourist pilgrims drawn by the saint's association with healing miracles. The elder Ani is herself religious, while her younger sister Colette is wild and boy-crazy. Ironically, Colette responds more practically when their mother is injured: while Ani frantically reads accounts of miracles, Colette reveals an almost instinctive ability to care for the paralyzed woman as she inches towards therapy and recovery. The events push Ani into a process of discovery: as she strives to learn more about the basis of her faith, she finds herself learning more about a priest who has been an influence on her, and about her mother, who despite her physical similarity to Ani, was in her youth much more like Colette.

Miracleville's use of Ani's voice, present tense, and frequent dialogue propels the plot, and allows for identification with this girl's quest for identity, if not with her preoccupations. The tone is brisk, often comical and straightforward, yet there is a keen sense of observation in the precisely chosen detail. The pace offsets what could otherwise be an overabundance of pathos and melodrama given the number of issues this short novel introduces: the discovery of sexuality, the loss of faith, the betrayal of vows, disability, misplaced desire, and the intimacy and limitations of small town life. Polak's well-established reputation as a children's/young adult writer is apparent in the confidence with which she maintains this balancing act. As is often the case in fiction assuming a young audience and dealing with personal crisis, the resolution is perhaps a little too neat, but there is still a sense of latency, appropriate given the ages of the sisters. *Miracleville* would make a good prelude to discovery of Dodie Smith's supremely confident bildungsroman *I Capture the Castle*, which defies easy audience assumptions.

Jamie Zeppa is better known as an essayist and travel writer, whose *Beyond the Sky and the Earth: A Journey into Bhutan* has been much lauded. *Every Time We Say Goodbye* bodes well for her addition of novelist to her writing resume. This family saga spans much of the twentieth century, focusing on several generations of a family in Sault Ste. Marie, and the eventual discovery of truths about parentage by Dawn Turner as she grows up in the latter part of the century and strives to find a niche, a sense of home and belonging. Zeppa's use of a fairly even third-person narrative allows several characters a voice and perspective, while also

permitting a fairly detailed development of setting: this is a very specifically located novel. The departure from strict chronology through the frequent insertions of Dawn's story allows a greater sense of cause and effect, of transitions in attitude and opportunity, and gives a greater depth to the story's eventual arrival at revelation and overtures of forgiveness and reconciliation. Given the intensely personal nature of the story, the maintenance of third-person narration does seem to rob Zeppa's tale of a strong sense of differentiation of personality among its key characters. However, Zeppa does not aim at the sort of regional Gothicism or eccentricity sometimes associated with chroniclers of a small specific place. The evenness of tone keeps the novel from the sort of sentimentality and melodrama its densely clustered series of events might otherwise achieve, and yet allows for more depth and detail, and a subtle sense of the transition of eras, than the rapid pace and relative economy of *Miracleville*.

This is unsurprising, as *Every Time We Say Goodbye* is a story partly concerned with youth, rather than a story primarily aimed at a young audience. And yet, while Zeppa takes on all stages of life through her characters, she is perhaps most effective in narrating Dawn's childhood, in the way she captures the child's imperfect comprehension of observed, absorbed detail, and the child's increasingly determined yearning for a reliable family and a place in the world.

L'orientalisme au Québec?

Janusz Przychodzen
Asie de soi, Asie de l'autre : Récits et figures de l'altérité. PUL 29,95 $

Compte rendu par Chris Reyns-Chikuma

On s'étonne qu'il ait fallu attendre deux ans pour écrire le compte rendu de ce petit livre publié en 2009 car il est certainement intéressant et il bénéficie de deux préfaces prestigieuses. La première, très brève, de l'historien Yves Laberge, insiste sur l'intérêt d'une étude de l'imaginaire, même quand celui-ci est littéraire. Dans la deuxième, intitulée « Liminaire : Une appartenance orientale », beaucoup plus longue (dix-neuf pages), stimulante bien que très peu structurée, Simon Harel, professeur de lettres à l'Université du Québec à Montréal, et un des premiers grands spécialistes de la littérature migrante, replace le Québec dans le complexe identitaire contemporain, entre la France et l'Europe, la double américanité (étatsunienne et sud-américaine), et un « Orient des lettres québécoises [qui est] [m]oins une extranéité [qu']une zébrure, la faille d'un eurocentrisme que nous portons avec difficulté » (10), tout en rêvant d'un nouveau passage du Nord-Ouest qui ouvrirait vers l'orient.

Après une « Présentation » des cinq essais très claire par Przychodzen, Danielle Constantin se concentre sur deux romans de Yolande Villemaire pour montrer comment cette jeune auteure « déterritorialise » la langue soit en mettant en scène des récits imbriqués et enchâssés se passant en Amérique mais parsemés de termes sanscrits, soit en réécrivant une tradition culturelle millénaire indienne d'un fils qui veut se consacrer à la danse rituelle traditionnellement réservée aux femmes. Ching Selao montre comment Ook Chung, « canadien-né-au-Japon-de-parents-coréens-écrivant-en-français », écrit pour « sortir de la conception traditionnelle du moi unitaire [en tant que] condition du recouvrement authentique de l'expérience vécue » (Taylor). Michel Peterson étudie l'œuvre de François Peraldi, psychanalyste travaillant sur le mythe de Kâlî pour faire parler « ces mythes [« orientaux-indiens »] que les mythes grecs ont fait taire ». Przychodzen montre que Pierre Saurel, auteur du seul roman d'espionnage canadien des années 50-60, dans sa vision définitivement orientaliste, est moins imprégné de la vision romantique

typique des Européens sur l'Orient et davantage de l'idéologie de la guerre froide du duplessisme comme « critique à peine voilée de la modernité ». Enfin, Pierre Rajotte constate qu'avec les récits de voyage publiés après 1940, au lieu de l'idéalisation de l'autre caractéristique des récits d'avant cette date, apparait la négation de l'autre fondée sur une dépréciation de soi évitant tout autant l'intersubjectivité, base de la reconnaissance de l'Autre. On ne peut que regretter qu'à la longue liste de récits de voyage en fin de volume ne soit pas jointe une bibliographie des œuvres clés utilisées.

Literary Thrills

Andrew Pyper
The Guardians. Doubleday $29.95

Timothy Taylor
The Blue Light Project. Knopf $29.95

Reviewed by Brandon McFarlane

Timothy Taylor and Andrew Pyper have oddly parallel careers. Both began writing in the mid-1990s; both eschewed professional careers; both their debut novels—*Stanley Park* and *Lost Girls*—were best sellers; and both have garnered laudatory reviews. But there is one significant difference. Literary critics and literary awarding agencies have recognized Taylor's fictional offerings while all-but-ignoring Pyper. As the Toronto-based writer has repeatedly lamented since he bleeped onto the Canlit radar, the "literary establishment" has dismissed his writing as insignificant, superficial, and decidedly unliterary. And, to a certain degree, he's right. What makes Taylor's writing so literary and Pyper's, well, so not?

The question is pertinent not simply due to Pyper's public musings but because both novels are being marketed and received as literary thrillers. The term has been appearing in book reviews and dusk-jacket copy, and seems to describe texts that fuse the archetypes of the thriller genre with the pretensions of "literary" realism—psychologically realistic characters that have a purpose beyond advancing the plot; a tendency to avoid cliché language in favour of subtle metaphor and symbolism; and an interest in using fiction to creatively comment upon broader social phenomena. Both novels certainly invite the label. The major plot arch in *The Blue Light Project* involves a terrorist attack. A man holds hostage the studio audience for "KiddieFame"—an insidious reality show where the audience votes celebrity-craving preteens off the program. By fragmenting the text and switching between narrative perspectives, Taylor creates a cast of compelling characters while simultaneously developing suspense as each shift in perspective temporarily suspends and yet advances the plot. *The Guardians* is a haunted-house story set in a thinly disguised Stratford, Ontario. A partied-out promoter suffering from Parkinson's disease leaves Toronto to attend the funeral of a high school friend. When he comes back to town—and I am trying to avoid spoilers here—the narrator begins recounting his and his friends' involvement in a long-forgotten disappearance. Things become darker when, the day after the funeral, a second young lady has gone missing under eerily similar conditions. The narrator confesses his role in the first mystery and becomes an amateur ghost-hunter attempting to prevent a second homicide. Much of the story's suspense originates from the unreliable narrator who struggles to accurately recall the past and experiences hallucinations due to his degenerative disease. Pyper has penned a ghost story that becomes all the more riveting and realistic due to the unreliable narrator's unfortunate health problems.

The novels are examples of the high-mimetic—a term Northrop Frye used to describe texts that are written "realistically," but where the characters have extraordinary powers and inhabit slightly fantastical

worlds. Taylor's characters are subtly superhuman. They are capable of amazing physical feats: one character wins an Olympic Gold medal despite a broken ankle; another magically navigates the city's topography scaling walls and jumping between buildings. Their abilities are hyperbolic and the strategy romanticizes the cityscape and certain privileged relationships to the city. Pyper's novel is a ghost story after all. So there are ghosts. The characters have visions. And the plot has its own internal logic despite the sudden twists, turns, and abrupt reversals. These characteristics are certainly found in other literary texts. Taylor's characters are similar to those in Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion*. And there is a long history of ghosts and haunting in Canadian literature. It would be a mistake to deny both novels a "literary" status because they have engaging plots and some fanciful characteristics.

The difference, and it is a big difference, between the two novels is that Taylor uses the thriller and romance motifs to present an abstract interrogation of contemporary culture. Competing groups battle to dominate the city's mental space—between aesthetes and corporations to control the street's image, and a parallel conflict between those who wish to remain invisible and those who garishly seek fame. The plot, characters, and settings are analogic—they represent abstract ideas and the privileged concepts are romantically aestheticized and triumphant. *The Guardians* is just a ghost story. The text does gesture towards endorsing some form of "lost" masculinity where bros stick up for bros—the protagonists' lifelong friendship originates from a high school hockey brawl. Pyper does undermine the chaps' tendency to evaluate women solely upon their sexual desirability when one of the four reveals that he is homosexual—a revelation that suggests all their sexism is just part of the "dude" act. However, such didacticism is offered in a hackneyed and explicitly moralistic scene in the last few pages. Pyper's real intention is to scare the reader and he succeeds at his task.

The Blue Light Project and *The Guardians* can certainly be called "literary thrillers," but a more accurate term would be the "mimetic thriller" because "literary" seems to primarily describe a heightened use of realist aesthetic strategies rather than a tendency towards literary abstraction. Pyper likes to complain that he is not taken seriously as an author, but he conflates "serious" with "literary." Pyper is an excellent writer and *The Guardians* is yet another example of his mastery of suspense. But he is primarily a genre writer and a damn good one. He'll get his accolades from the *Globe & Mail* and the *New York Times*, but will once again be snubbed by the more "prestigious" Canadian awards—unless, of course, he manages to gain a "people's choice" nomination for the Giller Prize. Contrarily, *The Blue Light Project* will be prominently represented on such shortlists. Taylor imagines a glorious vision of beauty and artistic revolution—the brilliant Blue Light Project—that overthrows greed, chaos, and corruption. The prose is saturated with a poeticism and romanticism reminiscent of Ondaatje's Toronto classic (minus the nationalism). *The Blue Light Project* prophesizes a role for urban art that reminds us that unless we aestheticize and romanticize the city, our urban environments merely become the embodiments of soulless capitalism.

L'histoire, autrement?

Chantal Savoie, dir.
Histoire littéraire des femmes : cas et enjeux.
Nota bene 21,95 $

Compte rendu par Valérie Lebrun

C'est sous la direction de Chantal Savoie qu'a pris forme l'idée d'un collectif qui réactualiserait la question de l'histoire littéraire

des femmes autrement que par une visée politique. Constatant avec raison un manque, ou une incohérence dans l'histoire littéraire des femmes, Savoie propose un projet novateur et inspirant.

C'est au cœur de la tension entre texte et contexte que se situe ce collectif qui propose une dizaine d'analyses de cas précis « dans la perspective de prioriser la matière qui était restée en marge d'une histoire littéraire plus traditionnelle ». Cette *Histoire littéraire des femmes* se démarque donc par son exigence « d'aller au-delà de l'anecdote, d'en problématiser les enjeux et d'en systématiser la portée en les transposant en composantes plus objectives ». D'ailleurs, le choix d'isoler des cas précis, mais à valeur exemplaire, et d'y concentrer une analyse des rôles occupés par les femmes dans la production littéraire, traduit l'une des plus grandes forces du collectif en permettant d'échapper, comme le note Savoie, à « une histoire de l'exclusion ».

Les analyses proposées sont divisées en deux ensembles suivant les deux principaux angles de recherche. Le premier angle est celui du genre littéraire et de la poétique. Il gouverne les analyses rigoureuses et originales de Marie-Ève Thérenty, Sara-Juliette Hins et Geneviève Dufour à propos des femmes et la presse. Si Thérenty permet une recontextualisation et une compréhension nouvelle de ce que fut la chronique dans le journal quotidien parisien au XIX^{e} siècle, Hins et Dufour redécouvrent l'œuvre d'Éva Circé-Côté en se plaçant du côté de sa littérarité plutôt que de son potentiel idéologique. Le deuxième angle est celui de la sociologie et de la sociocritique. C'est ainsi que Lucie Robert replonge, par une analyse réflexive fort rigoureuse, dans les débuts de la dramaturgie des femmes au Canada français en reconstruisant le réseau des différents systèmes reliés au domaine littéraire et culturel puisque, comme l'écrit Savoie, « [l]e théâtre oblige, lui aussi, à penser l'histoire littéraire autrement ». Le texte qui suit nous garde au théâtre, mais cette fois, c'est par une étude des pièces d'Adèle Bourgeois-Lacerte que Roxanne Martin offre une analyse des plus éclairantes des contraintes imposées par le contexte de production et de réception, auxquels les femmes de lettres de l'époque ne pouvaient complètement échapper. Michel Lacroix propose ensuite une étude prenant racine dans les ambitions littéraires et le travail de mise en marché des œuvres de certaines écrivaines. Il fonde son analyse sur Michelle Le Normand dont l'imposante correspondance et autres récits intimes lui ont permis de « documente[r] d'une manière inédite l'activité d'auteur-éditeur . . . ». Si Marie-Pierre Gagné montre le dialogue entre la constitution « d'un projet d'écriture au féminin avec les attentes sociolittéraires liées à la signature dans un périodique féminin rural de la fin des années 1980 » et ce, par une étude du feuilleton « Tu seras journaliste » (1938-1940) de Germaine Guèvremont, c'est par une volonté de repenser les filiations de la tradition littéraire au féminin qu'Émilie Théorêt présente « une étude des conditions sociologiques et formelles de la réussite littéraire » de la poète Rita Lasnier. L'ouvrage se termine par les textes de Claudia Raby et Marie-Frédérique Desbiens qui se distinguent par la fraîcheur des idées qui y sont développées, mais aussi par une sensibilité, un engagement qui manque souvent dans ce genre de collectif universitaire. Le travail que mène Raby en retraçant le parcours de la très noble Jeanne Lapointe, pionnière de la critique féministe québécoise, la pousse à redessiner l'une des « premières trajectoires intellectuelles institutionnelles au féminin ». Desbiens, quant à elle, démystifie avec vigueur les rapports entre les femmes et le roman historique à partir d'œuvres choisies de Françoise Chandernagon et de Chantal Thomas.

Enfin, il est évident que ce projet auquel nous convie Chantal Savoie en est un d'envergure pour la continuité des études dans le domaine de l'histoire littéraire des femmes. Toutefois, il ne faut pas oublier que

les analyses sur lesquelles repose cette *autre* histoire littéraire se sont construites dans une dynamique universitaire et que certaines réflexions sont parfois très pointues. Il faut donc accueillir cet ouvrage non pas comme une réponse figée et souveraine des enjeux d'une histoire littéraire qui demande, aujourd'hui plus que jamais, à être précisée et détournée, mais plutôt comme une ouverture à penser au-delà des évidences-clichées, à voir en cette « histoire littéraire des femmes » le meilleur moyen de penser autrement la littérature.

British Columbia's *Iliad*?

Bertrand W. Sinclair
The Inverted Pyramid. Ronsdale $18.95

Reviewed by Mark Diotte

To celebrate the 125th anniversary of Vancouver, the Association of Book Publishers of British Columbia together with Vancouver Poet Laureate Brad Cran have created the Vancouver 125 Legacy Book Collection—a project to bring back ten classic books about British Columbia. A mixture of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry, the list includes Ronsdale's reprinting of Bertrand Sinclair's novel *The Inverted Pyramid*. Actively publishing from 1908 to 1954, Sinclair is the author of over fifteen novels, the most critically successful being *Big Timber* (1916), *Poor Man's Rock* (1920), *The Hidden Places* (1922), and *The Inverted Pyramid* (1924).

While *The Inverted Pyramid* is perhaps the most enduring and literary of Sinclair's novels aside from *Poor Man's Rock*, surprisingly little has been written about it other than in Betty C. Keller's popular biography *Pender Harbour Cowboy: The Many Lives of Bertrand Sinclair* (2000) and Richard Lane's *Literature and Loss: Bertrand William Sinclair's British Columbia* (2000), along with brief mentions in academic articles about the literature of British Columbia.

In the opening pages of the novel, the young protagonist Rod Norquay asks himself, "Why was there no *Iliad* of the pioneers, no Human Comedy of men and manners peculiar to the North Coast?" To some extent it seems as though Sinclair is reaching toward this goal. The novel ranges from 1909 to 1920 and follows the story of the Norquay family from a survey of Old Norquay's immigration during the fur trade, to their family success in the logging industry, and finally, to the creation and collapse of the Norquay Trust company. The plot revolves primarily around Rod, but also includes his two brothers: Phil Norquay, head of the timber business, and Grove Norquay, founder of the Norquay Trust. One of the major strengths of the book is the attention paid to historical detail. Sinclair vividly portrays the particulars of the timber industry, including the workers' demands for better working conditions as well as the financial and environmental catastrophes that occurred in early-twentieth-century logging. Similarly successful is the depiction of greed amidst the major players involved in the Norquay Trust (which is itself a story based on Vancouver's Dominion Trust of 1903 that went bankrupt amidst scandal in 1914).

Another significant strength of the novel is the way that Sinclair uses Rod and his conversations with Norquay Senior to advocate for an early version of environmental conservationism and to support restraint within logging practices. It is also through Rod that Sinclair implies that capitalism is unsustainable. Instead, Sinclair suggests that another model is necessary—one where profit comes from thinking of workers as an integral part of business and treating them with dignity, respect, and equality.

The Inverted Pyramid is also the story of romance between Rod and Mary Thorn, the daughter of a family considered by the Norquays to be of a lower class. A close reading of the novel suggests that the

Norquays' dislike for Mary Thorn results from the possibility that her mother is not white. A foremost critique of Sinclair's work has been that he does little, if anything, to represent the history of non-white minority figures in the logging industry. Further, his historical representations operate primarily within a patriarchal ideology.

Nevertheless, Sinclair's sweeping narrative of failure and fortune on the west coast of British Columbia drives the reader forward in the novel. He creates characters we both love and despise, and he provides readers with a glimpse into some of the processes that shaped the province.

Budapest Boy in Canada

George Sipos

The Geography of Arrival. Gaspereau $25.95

Reviewed by Richard Teleky

The 2011 Charles Taylor Prize for literary non-fiction was awarded to George Sipos, a poet and former bookseller who lives on Salt Spring Island. In his charming memoir of a boyhood in London, Ontario, he tells of his family's arrival from Hungary, after the abortive uprising of 1956, and his subsequent youth in an unfamiliar city. What makes *The Geography of Arrival* come to life is Sipos' clever use of the guidebook format to recall the places of his past, places that helped him acquire a new language and a Canadian identity: the northeast corner of Dundas and Ridout Streets, the McMahon Pool, the Colborne Community Centre, Victoria Hospital, and St. Peter's Basilica, among others. Cumulatively, the memoir's short chapters—each focused on a particular place that engaged Sipos—take on the quality of snapshots in an old family album.

Impressionistically recounted with a sweet-tempered nostalgia, *The Geography of Arrival* is not a traditional immigrant memoir because the values, traumas, and traditions of the old country (a rich part of most immigrant stories) have little place in it, although they must have figured in the young Sipos' childhood. Nor is he particularly interested in the psychology of arrival. Just eight years old when he came to Canada with his parents, and an only child, Sipos seems to have had almost no connection with the country and traditions he lost. Instead, he appears to have accepted naturally the local and commercial offerings of his new home: the plastic toys contained in a box of cornflakes, hockey on television, the frogs to be dissected in grade nine, Orange Crush at an annual August fair. Like all Canadian children, then, he was simply there, ready to grow up in the world around him while trying to make some sense of it.

Not much happens in *The Geography of Arrival*, yet places can be filled with mysterious drama to a child. Unlike *Mama's Bank Account* (1943), Kathryn Forbes' classic account of her Norwegian family's life in San Francisco, Sipos' memoir doesn't offer his family as interesting characters; the stories, conflicts, and dreams of their lives remain in the background. His book, however, has a similar warm-hearted tone because the boy George exhibits an endless curiosity about his new city. The lack of tension might at first seem a weakness, but in fact it becomes a strength of this memoir because the guidebook format is a structural metaphor for all childhood impressions, reminding readers of the way their own neighbourhoods once shaped the geography of their imaginations, and of the potential drama in ordinary daily life. This is not a probing confession in the manner of Eva Hoffman's wonderful *Lost in Translation* (1989), another evocation of a Central-European childhood outside of Central Europe, in Canada. At times I missed hearing more about Sipos' homeland—Budapest and the meaning it must have had for his family; as someone with Hungarian forebears, I wanted more specificity, more paprika. But this can be found in the

splendid fiction of Canadian Hungarian writers such as Tamas Dobozy, Judith Kalman, and Joseph Kertes. Ethnicity is not the core of Sipos' subject.

An examination of remembered places depends almost entirely on the quality of a writer's prose. As a stylist, Sipos avoids the temptation of over-writing so often prevalent in impressionistic work. Clean sentences based on keen, subtle observation, and nearly unmediated memory give the book an admirable quality of immediacy, even a delicacy that is never vague or airily poetic. This memoir probably won't make anyone plan a visit to London, Ontario—nor is that its intention—but Sipos' evocation of encountering his childhood haunts through memory is a gentle prod to readers to revisit, in the same way, cities of their own.

Only Connect

Merrily Weisbord
The Love Queen of Malabar: Memoir of a Friendship with Kamala Das. McGill-Queen's UP $27.95

Reviewed by Stella Algoo-Baksh

The Love Queen of Malabar is a multi-layered exploration of the relationship between the author and Kamala Das, the Indian writer whose *My Story* once shocked the subcontinent with its revelations about her brutal experiences as a child-bride. It documents the growth of a friendship between the two women that is marked by mutual warmth and empathy and an acceptance of each within the family of the other. Additionally, the book has a significantly biographical dimension. In an amalgam of letters, interviews, recordings, and private conversations, Weisbord offers a compelling examination of Das' life. In her depiction of the early years of Das' marriage, for example, she unflinchingly concretizes the physical and psychological damage inflicted on the fifteen-year-old bride, damage that would induce a protracted distaste for and sublimation of normal sexuality. She reveals Das' belated rediscovery of her sexuality in a series of liaisons, a phenomenon soon reflected in the eroticism of her subject's poetry. Weisbord vividly captures the many faces of Das, skillfully navigating the latter's changing moods and an apparent inconsistency that is clearly illustrated by her provision of care for her ailing husband, despite his cruelty and disloyalty. Here, Das' rather unconventional assertion that financial generosity is an effective strategy for securing some men's love further illustrates her complex personality. In contextualizing Das' life story, Weisbord attempts to pinpoint the historical and social forces that have shaped Das' experience. Among these are gender-related currents in a supposedly matrilineal Keralan society that is, in fact, penetrated by rigidly patrilineal and anti-feminist mores, a situation that generates hostility toward her when she speaks boldly about human—and especially female—sexuality. Present, too, are religious bigotries that confront her because of her conversion to Islam as she pursues a romantic relationship with a young Muslim man. While Weisbord tentatively identifies various influences on Das' life, she concludes that to the very end Das remains an enigma.

Perhaps inevitably, Weisbord's "memoir" reveals something of her own growth and thus becomes essentially a dual biography. While she arranges visits by Das to Canada, Weisbord discloses, she herself goes to India, and her willing participation in Keralan life ultimately enhances both her understanding of Das and her appreciation of Keralan culture. Further, she becomes sensitized to issues of objectivity and legality that surface in writing about a living person who is a friend and to the problem of confidentiality that occurs in dealing with the intimate details of the private lives of the subject and her family. *The Love Queen of Malabar* foregrounds the life of a

woman widely acknowledged as one of India's pre-eminent poets, but it also illuminates the simultaneous journeys of both author and subject toward a more inclusive view of humanity. Reacting enthusiastically to the manuscript, Das observes to Weisbord, "You have reconstructed me." The reality is that, in a vital sense, Weisbord and Das have helped to reconstruct each other.

Those Voices Speaking Now

Rudy Wiebe, ed.
Rudy Wiebe: Collected Stories, 1955-2010. U of Alberta P $39.95

Reviewed by Neil Querengesser

In what continues to be an oft-quoted passage from Rudy Wiebe's "Speaking Saskatchewan," a shy young boy during his first day in the rural schoolhouse is introduced by his teacher to shelves full of books that will lead him throughout his life to a blessed continuing epiphany, hearing "human voices speaking from everywhere and every age," to which "[h]e will listen . . . now for as long as he lives." Wiebe has of course not only listened to those voices over the years, but also augmented their number abundantly through his own many works of fiction and non-fiction, speaking as "himself" and through a rich variety of narrators and narrative personae. His storytelling gifts are evident throughout this remarkable collection of one and fifty tales, which offers a substantially complete and satisfying retrospective of his published short fiction.

The collection is thematically organized into four sections that allow the reader to experience Wiebe's development over a half century in his characteristic topics and themes. The first, "Face to Face, Looking Northwest," includes the kind of writing for which Wiebe is perhaps best known, as he calls into life the people and events of Canada's nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Northwest. Included are vivid evocations of such memorable First Nations figures as the Cree chief Maskepetoon, whose prescient and courageous gifts for peacemaking meet their ultimate challenge in his Blackfoot neighbours and adversaries; a non-Cree speaker, who attempts to relate the bitter ironies leading to the tragic death of Almighty Voice; and a poignant narration by Poundmaker, as he foresees the devastating effects of the treaty to which he is a reluctant signatory in "They Year We Gave Away the Land." Artist Paul Kane, Colonel William Francis Butler, the "mad trapper" Albert Johnson, and a variety of named and unnamed European explorers, settlers, and descendants populate many of the other stories set in this time of encounter, conflict, and tragic subjugation. Underlying all is the omnipresent land, grounding, as always, Wiebe's writings, always having the word last.

Stories of pioneer settlement make up most of the next section, "So Much to Remember." They are often notable for their point of view, such as that of the middle-aged mother of six, who moves to central Alberta with her husband and three sons in "After Thirty Years of Marriage"; or of the young girl, who accompanies her father as he delivers Coca-Cola to businesses on his Crowsnest Pass route and is a terrified witness to the lingering psychological effects of the Hillcrest mining disaster a half century earlier; or of the young boy, whose later reminiscences evoke the spirit of southern yuletides past with poignant nostalgia in the much anthologized "Chinook Christmas."

"Parallel Realities" includes several stories in contemporary settings at once realistic and strange. Wiebe's remarkable range as a storyteller is evident as one moves from the wry and somehow believable allegorical tall tale, "The Angel of the Tar Sands," to the horrifying inner mind of a psychopathic killer in "Did Jesus Ever Laugh?" Other

stories in this section are equally notable for their deftly simultaneous combination of the familiar and the strange.

The stories in the final section, "Now and Wherever," are set in contemporary times, many of them narrated by various authorial personae, who often trace and contemplate their position in a complex web of cultural and family history through a variety of locations ranging from European capitals to the Canadian prairies to the high Arctic, and elsewhere. Some of them, like others in this collection, are narrated by Adam Wiebe, whose resemblances to the author the reader may be tempted to allow at his or her own peril. Stories of embattled farmers standing up for their rights, accounts of liaisons between middle-aged men and younger married women, and tributes to Alberta's two major cities are indicative of the wide range of subject matter to be found in this section.

While these fifty stories are arranged thematically, the textual apparatus also conveniently allows one to place them in bibliographical and chronological context to enrich subsequent readings. Almost half of the stories were written in the 1970s, the most productive period of Wiebe's literary career, and it is interesting to explore the connections between these stories and those that precede and succeed them. And the bibliographical details of first publications comprise a story in itself. The collection concludes fittingly with one of the author's first short stories, his high school prize-winner appropriately entitled "Predestination," the "O. Henry twist ending" of which somehow just feels quintessentially Wiebe.

Canaries in the Coalmine

Herb Wyile
Anne of Tim Hortons: Globalization and the Reshaping of Atlantic-Canadian Literature.
Wilfrid Laurier UP $42.95

Reviewed by David Leahy

Herb Wyile's latest book, as its parodic title implies, "highlight[s] the disparity between outsiders' expectations about life in the region and the more complicated and less idyllic lived realities of Atlantic Canadians." It is a significant contribution to Canadian literary criticism and cultural studies for three major reasons. Firstly, its regionalist focus is thoroughly resistant to neoliberalism, using the theories of space à la Edward Soja and David Harvey. It problematizes, in the manner of Ian McKay and James Overton, nostalgia for "folk" culture and themes—often driven by tourist dollars and Central Canadian chauvinism. It astutely explores the multiple ways in which so much contemporary literature of Atlantic Canada imaginatively contests the negative dictates of globalized capital. All of these approaches simultaneously allow Wyile to foreground and focus upon what is culturally distinct about each of his selected literary examples. The book is divided into three thematic sections—to give just one example of how these sections work, Section One, "I'se the B'y That Leaves the Boats: The Changing World of Work," contains three chapters: "Sucking the Mother Dry: The Fisheries," "'Acceptable Levels of Risk': Mining and Offshore Oil," and "Uncivil Servitude: The Service Sector." This section cogently offers poignant readings of literary examples that retell the recent history of the evisceration of the Newfoundland fishery due to corporate and governmental mismanagement; that dramatize the often tragic human consequences of other primary industries, such as mining and oil in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland; that trouble the Disneyfication and

commodification of local cultures; and that re-historicize and thereby reveal the deep historical roots of local forms of oppression. This said, literary works from Prince Edward Island are absent, presumably due to the province's limited output, and works from New Brunswick get relatively short shrift—in part because Wyile chose to occult David Adams Richards as the "*eminence grise*" of the book, rather than to submit his writing to "political, social and economic considerations."

Secondly, the book's multidisciplinary introduction, like the framing political-economic, historical, and cultural material and analyses for each of the literary works under study, be they novels, poems, or plays, can serve as exemplary models for materialist, politically engaged critiques of other contemporary Canadian and postcolonial literatures. Wyile does an excellent job of creating a political sense of the individual texts and their relationships to major and quotidian events, as with the analyses of the novel *February*'s account of the Ocean Ranger disaster, of Leo McKay's fictionalization of the Westray Mine tragedy in the novel *Twenty-Six*, of Alistair Macleod's melancholic portraits of Cape Breton's economic migrants, or of "the impact of neo-liberal policies on the lives of public servants and those they serve" in a work like Wendy Lill's *Corker*, while simultaneously doing justice to these writers' art and formal strategies. Only in a few minor instances do the explications fail to live up to the book's central objective. For example, the analyses of George Elliott Clarke's *Execution Poems* and *George & Rue* are not that successful at situating them in terms of today's concerns about the impacts of neo-liberal political-economics, culture, and values.

Thirdly, while Wylie makes much throughout the book of other Canadians' "patronizing acceptance [of] and growing impatience" with Atlantic Canada, and their often blindly predatory vision of the region as a site of "therapeutic sanctuary"—a bourgeois practice that holds true, it can be said, for most rural parts of the country vis-à-vis its larger, metropolitan centres—his conclusion suggests that "if the present condition of Atlantic Canada—its literature and beyond—is not in and of itself of interest to people outside the region, what might be of interest is the way in which the region's economic, social, and cultural fortunes may provide an important cautionary tale." Or, as he cites Michael Clow: "given the increasing light-footedness of capital and the political and economic readjustments ensuing from international agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, it is not unreasonable to speculate that it may be the ultimate fate of the rest of Canada to be 'Maritimized'" in ways that "will undermine any internal democratic processes and make us helpless to set an alternative course." Time will tell to what extent *Anne of Tim Hortons* is recognized as an indispensable canary in the coalmine for Atlantic Canadian *and* Canadian cultures.

VOIR DIRE as Fictional Structural Procedure in *Tay John*

Kevin Roberts

Howard O'Hagan once told me over a couple of Bushmills in his Victoria apartment, sometime in 1978 I think, that the law had very little to do with truth, that law courts were really halls of fiction and a real good story was about all you could expect from witnesses, and that generally each witness could honestly contradict each other and even create individual fictions which they believed to be true. Any car accident witness statement tells us this is accurate. O'Hagan told me he had studied law at McGill, got his degree, and managed to convict one man and get another defendant off. O'Hagan liked to downplay his education at McGill. He preferred to be seen as a simple horse wrangler while in truth he had a keen, well-read, and sophisticated mind. Howard O'Hagan was a lot more than the tough mountain man image he projected. Though it was sad to see this tall, virile man in a wheelchair, his mind was still lively and acute. He loved argument, debate, the mystery of the imponderable. He also liked yarns and stories, particularly those that had inexplicable edges, but like the grass, just grew out of nowhere. He once told me to write like that—as the grass grows—naturally and without affectation. *Tay John* is written in that fashion. But O'Hagan's training as a lawyer has a lot to do with the way in which the novel *Tay John* emerged.

I remember those conversations because I don't think there has been a recent clear reading of Hagan's *Tay John*. It's curious to me that academics run about with self-provided templates about the "novel," sure of their probity, and apply them to books which have no intention of ever fitting into their specific design. Whatever the "novel" is, it seems to me to be as fluid and mutable as the bits and pieces of journals and diaries and character sketches and travel sketches which constitute its genetic ancestry. Similarly, anyone who writes fiction knows that the implicit decisions about voice, point of view, selection, exclusion, and order are key to what turns out to be the interest in the story.

I skip through a lot of contemporary fiction because it is boring, preoccupied with cementing numerous bits and pieces together into huge politically correct tracts, which all too often overwhelm the story's frail plot. You can skim whole pages of unnecessary background. It tells us too much. It is too earnest. The fragmented but insightful glimpse is, I think, more valuable than the laborious plod through detail. And I'm not sure we are actually intended to believe everything we're told in *Tay John*. Much fiction is the pleading of a case, the careful marshalling of evidence, the argument for the defence or prosecution of the characters, the unravelling of the inner facts, circumstances, motives for their actions, and the implied judgment of the events at the end. *Tay John* is only in part like that. I think it's true as readers we like to have

something to work out ourselves, to kick about in our minds, as long as there is some kind of implicit structure to guide us. *Tay John* is the kind of fiction that never arrives at the stage of judgment.

As a novel, *Tay John*'s structure has been tried and found wanting. It is seen as a "rough-edged chronicle" or a half-formed fictional text. This is simply incorrect. *Tay John* certainly does have a carefully conceived structure, based on a collateral examination, similar to a pre-trial voir dire—examination for discovery. What O'Hagan had in mind in *Tay John* is based on simple legal precepts. The novel ponders the quasi-legal question—who was Tay John? What makes a mythical figure? The "case" of *Tay John*, in reply, presents a great example of typical sprawling voir dire, a text which examines the circumlocutious web of evidence and witnesses, leaving a circular trail of shreds, like the recurring tufts of hair, mentioned in the novel. All of this, the reader, as jury member, lawyer, or judge, has to sift through.

Tay John is more like an examination for discovery than an attempt in court to explain or argue a case. Like Conrad, O'Hagan leaves us to consider the interstices of the unknowable, content to present only that which is visible, the shell around the nut. And no one, including the author, is under oath in order to make a decisive declaration. Readers only have to look at the section headings of the novel, "Hearsay" and "Evidence without a Finding," to realize that O'Hagan was simultaneously creating and criticising in legal terms the very existence of his mythical figure in *Tay John*. Moreover, O'Hagan suggests that distance creates the myths. Proximity questions them. The circular structure of the novel brings us as reader-deliberators to consider the case at first from long distance—the distance of myth—then from closer witnesses' observation, to our own first-hand observation at Lucerne, and then from diminishing distances as the witnesses become marginal once more, and the narrative merges again into the hint of the supernatural. The whole novel is subject to the concept of law.

From the beginning of the novel, Tay John as a character is in trouble with the law. From both Indian and white perspectives, he makes decisions or falls into situations which lead him slap-bang against rules and cultural order. He never has a home or an accepted cultural base. From the beginning he is an outsider. The first section, for example, employs all the authorial distance and mysteries of a voir dire whose intention is to ask questions about the background and context and historiography of a character about to be put on trial, whose genealogy and family and social background need to be thoroughly explicated in order to reveal just what the case might be about. Some aspects of it are like a pre-trial report or like a lawyer putting a case together. Hence, we read of Red Rorty's religious madness largely from his misunderstanding of the Bible, of Tay John's possible birth out of the dead earth, his suggested ancestry, the possible reasons for his alienation, his denial of a leadership role, his inherited genetic incapacity to deal with women, and his series of his inexplicable encounters with the supernatural. None of this has presented us with evidence, but merely as the rambling information pertinent to a case that a major voir dire would require.

O'Hagan cleverly employs a prose style, pseudo-Biblical at times, to distance us from the plaintiff/defendant, Tay John, using a telephoto lens to keep the figures mysterious and far-off, merged with nature and indigenous mythology. Later in this circular trial, O'Hagan, like a clever cinematographer, will bring us in close up, right face to face with the defendant, so that we, as readers/jury, make up our own minds about his character. But only very briefly do we see Tay John in close-up in the dock. O'Hagan quickly pushes the lens even

further out, so that at the end of the novel, Tay John is a mysterious figure in the landscape again.

But in the middle, Denham becomes our eyewitness. However, Denham's reliability as a witness is also debatable. Jackie's story is designed by O'Hagan merely as hearsay, a bar tale, and thus not admissible in a proper trial. Yet it is from "Jackie's tale" that we, as reader/jury, develop most of our image of Tay John as a larger-than-life heroic dominator of natural forces, the supernatural figure of myth. But it's a pretty clever fictional move on O'Hagan's part to both create a larger-than-life mythical figure and yet debunk its very existence at the same time, by undermining the verity of the hearsay tale that brings Tay John closer to our view. Denham is as much a barfly, a gossip, as he is a real mountain man. He's a gossiping misogynist macho bullshitter, progenitor, maybe, of Webb in Kroetesch's *Badlands*. Similarly, our picture of Ardith is largely Denham's. And Ardith is as far off from Jackie's understanding as Tay John. Denham observes Tay John but doesn't lift a finger to befriend or support him, even though he is the hero of Jackie's tale. He is merely all "mouth and trousers," as one's old aunty used to remark. Denham, or his nephew, used to be found in every small beer parlour on Vancouver Island. Now he probably plays golf in a pink shirt at a local country club.

O'Hagan also employs a neat fictional trick with other clothing as he brings Tay John closer to the jury/readers. Starting with the red tunic Tay John is given by the French gold seekers, Tay John undergoes costume changes that reflect his cultural transition and his inevitable debunking as hero. His animal skin clothing at McLeod's cabin changes to the Western dress he acquires from the Alderson hunting party. He is now dressed up for a white trial and by white rules. But in typical Jungian fashion after the trial at McLeod's cabin, where Tay John's simple honesty appears to win out, but only because the charges are dropped, the black cowboy hat goes spinning off in the wind, as if implicitly Tay John has tried and rejected the fake Western values of the hunting group he has guided.

Curiously enough, until Julia speaks at the trial, all the men are convinced of Tay John's guilt. Perhaps if Tay John's genetic histories or past actions were admissible evidence, for example, Schwab's breech clout incident, the reader/jury might have developed a more jaundiced view of the defendant. However, Tay John's story is balanced by Julia Alderson's reluctance to pursue the matter, either because of her teasing question the previous night, or because the exposure of her claims amongst the all-male gathering, including her husband, is too dreadful to contemplate. Tay John rides off scot-free.

We never do find out what really happened and that, of course, is part of O'Hagan's overriding plan for the novel. Rarely do we see events actually happen. They are reported to us in a manner that makes the bulk of them unsuitable for legal purposes but intriguing as fictional modes. But at Tay John's trial, again there is no real evidence, except that of a witness who changes her story for reasons that remain unclear.

The whole fictional process of *Tay John* as a legal expedition into the verity of mythical figures takes a series of sideways dances. We are left to ponder whether Tay John really is the mythical superhero, killer of grizzly she-bears, lone hunter of the wild unknown Rockies. Or is he merely a sucker for women like both his uncles, Red Rorty and Father Rorty, who end up destroying themselves over sexuality?

Ardith Aeriola may give us a clue here, if not some convincing evidence. She is the catalyst for the final fugitive status of Tay John. Both she and Tay John are outsiders. Ardith is a fugitive from at least a voir dire of her own, if not legal charges herself back East. In terms of justice, the haze again neatly covers the reality of her life with

hearsay, based as it is on Denham's shaky account. As tempting worldly Eve in the Rocky Mountain wilderness, Ardith manages to unbalance at least three men, probably four. Denham is teased, taunted, and rejected, so his evidence about Ardith is dubious. Father Rorty shows his genetic proclivity to destroy himself in dealing with female flesh, and ends up in a soul-destructive imitation of a New World Christ, complete with New World stigmata martin bites in his belly. Religious law has done him in, as it has his brother Red Rorty. The truth of the Word of the Bible takes a shellacking in O'Hagan's *Tay John*. Anyone who thinks the Word fits into the Rockies is doomed. O'Hagan makes sure of that—witness Tay John's literal interpretation of the Bible after the card game gambling at McLeod's cabin, and the subsequent mutilation of his hand.

Similarly, anyone who takes hearsay or story for truth and builds on it is bound to fail to comprehend the essential diversity of evidence. I think O'Hagan is warning us that the Word, in law, as in religion, is merely subject to interpretation, to fictional persuasion.

Dobble is less subject to religious problems, but vulnerable to commercial venality and economic lust. He picks the wrong person in Ardith, though on the surface she looks a good bet for someone like Dobble. Pathetic though he is as a non-virile male with his Aphrodene girdle, he is certainly not macho like Denham or Tay John. But Ardith assumes her role as offended lady and Tay John's assaults on the persistent Dobble send the unlikely pair away from the reader/jury's brief close-up encounter, moving to far wilderness/valleys where only tufts of information—all hearsay, all subject to doubt, and all inadmissible evidence—drift back to create, once again, the larger than life myth of the "heroic" Tay John and his unlikely back-to-nature Eve. The panoramic lens again pushes Tay John further away but paradoxically enlarges his status.

However, while Tay John is close to the reader at Lucerne, he is remarkably unremarkable, almost childish in his speech and pretty well under Ardith's thumb. Through her, O'Hagan employs the neat image of the little bear cub against the once proud bear totem of Tay John. This contrasts with the epic figure of Denham's tale of the earth-shattering battle by the creek between the grizzly and the silent, handsome hero, Tay John. Born again from inside the bloody grizzly, Tay John's mythic stature is reduced at Lucerne, perhaps by civilization itself, to banality. Tay John makes bear noises in the bush to scare his skittish uncle, Father Rorty. This is a comic version of the wilderness hero.

It's not hard here to see the duality that O'Hagan presents—the myth built by hearsay, reduced by familiar presence. What, then, is the true nature of Tay John? What kind of superhero is he? We hear later on that Ardith may not be happy out in the wilderness with him dressed in rough animal skins and eating moose meat. But that, again, is mere male speculation that she's ready to jump up behind a horse and ride off, leaving Tay John in his natural state. But who can blame her? After the fleshpots and silk fashions of New York, is Tay John the ideal love companion for Ardith? But the question is again only an interpretation. It is the trooper's story and inadmissible. Even though her singing lacked talent, we are told, why does a worldly city woman stay out there in the wilderness? Love? Fear? There are certainly better prospects for her than Tay John. We don't know. Human motivation is never as simple as many novelists want us to believe. And O'Hagan rarely tries to explain in any depth the strange roots of the drives that send Red Rorty, for example, out into the wilderness as an unlikely preacher, or what pushes Father Rorty into the catastrophic sin of imitating Christ. Nor do we really know what winds up Denham's clock, to make

him tick. Is he one of those men who simply hang around bars a lot, a blowhard, part-time this and that, Jack of all mountain trades? No. We have to take Denham, like the rest of the story, with an enjoyable grain of salt.

Nor is O'Hagan overly sympathetic to his characters, including Tay John. He simply exists in wonderfully mysterious time, a lost, wandering figure torn between cultures, caught up in changes he has no clue about, or many life skills to handle. And the further mythical status proffered once more by O'Hagan, as if to lock us into further intriguing deliberations, is that of Ardith's pregnancy and the potential rebirth of yet another character from within the earth. Her possible death and that of Tay John by a retreat into the frozen snow, the natural cathedral, is yet another assumption. Yet we are led to believe, from this astounding event, another bothersome heroic figure may return, born again, as Tay John himself from the earth itself. In this sense, *Tay John*'s success is that the figures and events seem to live outside of the author's control or direction, destined by their "shadows" to fulfill some obligations which have nothing to do with the writer, as if it is all mere wonderful hearsay offered for the reader's sifting.

But again, as the heading of the novel section tells us, this final section is all Evidence without a Finding, and the legal comprehension of the Word is silent on its veracity. Not silent, however, is the obvious manner in which O'Hagan has employed legal terms and perspectives to build his circular examination of the case of Tay John. And the reader as jury is left to consider the tufts and wisps of fictional portrayal before rendering a verdict. As such, *Tay John* is indeed a compelling and successfully structured fiction. O'Hagan also told me that *Tay John* "wasn't a real novel." What did he mean by that?

The jury is still out.

Stick Pen

Jason Blake
Canadian Hockey Literature: A Thematic Study. U of Toronto P $27.95

Jamie Dopp and Richard Harrison, eds.
Now is the Winter: Thinking about Hockey. Wolsak & Wynn $25.00

Sheema Khan
Of Hockey and Hijab: Reflections of a Canadian Muslim Woman. TSAR $25.95

Holden Stoffel, ed.
Saskatchewan Sports: Lives Past and Present. Canadian Plains Research Center $19.95

Don Morrow and Kevin B. Wamsley
Sport in Canada: A History. Oxford UP $29.95

Dave Toms
Footprints: Canadian Sports Stories: Summer. McArthur $19.95

Reviewed by Laurie Ricou

Over the past decade, many books on Canadian sports have appeared. Some, such as Dave Toms' *Footprints: Canadian Sports Stories: Summer* (2004), alert us, albeit with tabloid brevity and breathlessness, to the un-noted, the ones we too easily forget: Arnie Boldt, pioneer Paralympics high jumper, or, though he has more of a literary heritage to conjure with, Tom Longboat. Biographical dictionaries, such as *Saskatchewan Sports: Lives Past and Present* (2007) edited by Holden Stoffel, provide a glimpse of more neglected Canadian sport stories: Phil Lederhouse (1915-91), "one of the greatest blind golfers in the world." Stoffel's book also pays some attention to writers who make athletes' reputations: for example, David Dryburgh, sports writer for the Regina *Leader-Post*. CanLit fans might like to see David Carpenter or Steve Shriver in such a catalogue. In partial contrast, a basic textbook *Sport in Canada: A History* (2005) by Don Morrow and Kevin B. Wamsley, historians at the University of Western Ontario, turns more than occasionally to folk poetry to demonstrate popular images of Canadian sport. In one set of enthusiastic rhyming couplets, Barbara Ann Scott is "Canada's Valentine," granted license "to skate school figures in our heart." This extremely limited bit of context establishes some dimensions of this review. One is to notice the neglected and overlooked. Another is, appropriately for this journal, to reflect on how sport is written, and to wonder how literature contributes to and questions a dominant cultural trope.

Hockey is hardly overlooked in this country. But academic (or near-academic) studies of hockey have been scarce. This neglect makes Jason Blake's *Canadian Hockey Literature* indispensable. Its Notes and Bibliography provide a surprising sense of the range and variety of little-known hockey writing, even to those who are convinced the topic is ubiquitous in Canada. Blake's study is primarily a survey: it is confined with few exceptions to English Canada and to fiction. Fiction, Blake asserts, "offers a nuanced, literary view of the game." But, given this early rationale, the focus on fiction and on thematic approach means the nuance—both in story, and equally in poetry (think of Shriver on

the lexicon of the dressing room)—often eludes. But, the plot and character descriptions and summaries are clear and helpful indices to ideas of nation, violence, and the freedom that inhere in skating on ice. Stylistic analyses are rare, but I was continually impressed by the range of allusion (Richard Ford to Johan Huizinga to Don DeLillo and Rick Mercer), and this enthusiast's comments on Carrier's hockey sweater transcending the language divide, or his nice analogy (hockey is a sonnet—shinny is free verse) are some of the genuine delights of this book.

Kelly Hewson's "You Said You Didn't Give a Fuck about Hockey" is the final essay in *Now is the Winter: Thinking about Hockey* (2009), a collection of twelve pieces originating in a 2007 conference. Hewson tells how she became "a citizen of the hockey nation" during the Calgary Flames' 2007 Stanley Cup run, and then complicates that story with a shrewd tongue-in-cheek unpacking of three terms: National, Hockey, and League. A deft and irreverent "close reading" of the word "hockey" culminates in a celebration of "non-normative" hockey texts, including opera, film, songs (her title comes from The Tragically Hip), erotica, and the game imagined in the Ivory Coast, Antarctica, and the South Asian diaspora. Hewson's critical alertness to complications of the normative national identity echoes in much of the rest of the collection, which includes Anne Hartman on the trickster dimension of women's shinny, Brian Kennedy on "scripting" the NHL game according to Bakhtin's carnivalesque, David McNeil's affectionate speculations about hockey photos as text, Sam McKegney on sports writing and racialization of the Jonathan Cheechoo story, and E. W. Mason on storytelling techniques in New Zealand sports writing. The collection is supplemented by a rich bibliography and a helpful index. Along with the Jamie Dopp and Richard Harrison collection, students of hockey writing must pay close attention to these works.

In the discussion period at the end of the fourth of Adam Gopnik's 2011 Massey Lectures, the first question concerned why he had not said anything about women's hockey. "I left that part out," he apologized, "to fit the speaking time allowed, but it's the best demonstration of my argument that hockey can be compelling without the goonery." Sheema Khan's *Of Hockey and Hijab* relates the stunning beauty of an un-violent (almost) women's game to the violence—actual and virtual—of a society uncomfortable with Mohammed. These short essays shift topics and connections readily, modestly advocating for intercultural dialogue in every compact paragraph. Many of these pieces do not focus on hockey, but hockey is the most persistent cultural touchstone. Take for example, "Funny," whose topic is the "cartoon fiasco of 2006." Khan opens wondering why bruiser Dave Semenko played on the same line as the elegant Wayne Gretzky. She finds an answer from Don Cherry. But then she reflects on the enforcer explanation—both for the Oilers, and for those outraged by cartoons in a Danish newspaper. "The strong man is not the one with physical prowess, cautioned Muhammad, but the one who controls oneself when angry." From this alert—pitched at both non-Muslim and Muslim readers—she turns to doctrine and history on the treatment of prisoners. Prisoners could win their freedom by teaching ten children how to read. "Imagine," she notes in a characteristic wry turn to the interrogative, bartering literacy for freedom. "Shouldn't this be somewhere in the Geneva Conventions?" The essay moves then from the Bush White House, to Canadian troops in Afghanistan, to an affirmation of common values of dialogue, hope and respect. These are nicely summed up in a personal recall of her son building Islamic calligraphy using Lego (a Danish toy) and urging Canadian Muslims not to boycott Danish food products, but buy Lego with its potential to build possibilities for their kids.

Khan's advocacy for "strength in diversity" is the more persuasive for her constant inclination to "address tensions within her own tradition first." She provides helpful summaries of Koranic tenets and of the five principles of Sharia, while turning repeatedly to an attentive reading of the Koran and what the Prophet says. Readers of this journal will also be pleased by her steady attention to language, semantic nuance, etymology, and the subtleties of translation.

Khan's musing on intercultural reciprocity is an accumulating essay on Canadian identity in the world. That it turns so often to hockey is a cliché that works. "No game is more stirring," Kahn writes. And whether she is telling about the awkwardness of Muslim women amidst the "casual nudity of the locker room," starting an intramural hockey team for women at Harvard, taking her son to a Habs game, or tearing up at the playing of "O Canada," this is a testament to what she claims is the alternate Canadian trait—dialogue. Hockey is talking to the hijab. Stirring.

Contributors

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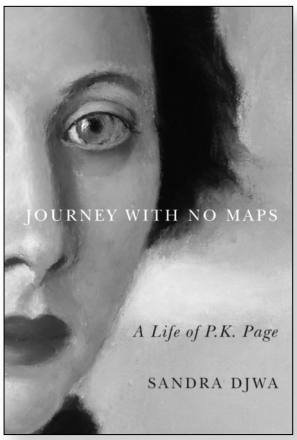

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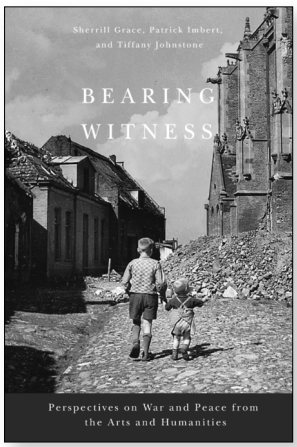

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